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THE BRANCH LINE

Times are changing, but it is only in the rate at which they change that there is any difference between now and any other period in history; with every change there comes resentment from some section or other of any race. The particular resentment with which we are dealing here concerns the closure of branch lines.

If the railways are to pay, it must be obvious to any level-headed person that economies will have to be made. That branch lines will be closed down even more frequently than they were in the past is one of those economies which we may not be able to avoid. Many of us (if we examined the matter objectively) would find that we resent this on sentimental rather than on practical grounds.

In November last, the Branch Line Society announced, somewhat unexpectedly, a policy of resistance to the closure of branch lines, including the raising of a petition. At the same time they announced the possibility of co-operation between our two Societies in the collection of historical facts. Although, at the first meeting of the Branch Line Society, the proposal for active opposition to the closure of branch lines was dropped, certain loopholes were left, and the Council of the Railway & Canal Historical Society feel they should make it clear that, while members are naturally free to do as they wish individually, this Society is concerned principally with historical research, and is not affiliated to or in association with any body or society whose activities include, or may include, criticism of the British Transport Commission's policy on any matter. Such activities are not part of our objects, and the Society wishes to disassociate itself from them entirely.

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THOUGHTS ON THE WRITING OF RAILWAY HISTORY

By Gordon Biddle

The immediate reaction of a good many people, on being told that one is interested in railway history, is "Ch! How dull!" Whether that reaction is actually expressed depends upon the extent of the acquaintanceship, but I think there is little doubt that it is

felt, not only by the layman, but by persons already interested in other aspects of railways.

At one time, this kind of thinking applied to history in general. It was largely considered to be a dull subject at school, and it is only in recent years that enlightened methods of teaching have dispelled the contention. In particular, excellent work has been done by present-day historians like Professor G. O. Trevelyan. But in the railway world, the old illusion only too often still clings. This prompts a number of questions, but before I pose them I must say that they are offered as food for thought, and I am not attempting to make categorical answers.

First of all, the more general questions.

To write attractive railway history, does one need a literary style? I am not going to suggest that such an ability is absolutely necessary, or that we should descend to the extreme of popular press standards. Indeed, I think it is true that when a writer is fortunate enough to be able to write "stylishly", strict historical accuracy often tends to be subordinated to it. Disastrous results ensue to the work's academic value. On the other hand, it may be of definite advantage to have an appreciation of style, even if we cannot practise one ourselves, in order to preserve a lively sense of criticism of our own efforts.

How far should the historian confine himself to historical and technical details, and how much "leavening" should be put into, say, the history of a particular line by way of descriptions of the countryside and other surrounding features? I do not infer that writers should emulate the authors of early railway guides, with their voluminous details of the scenery for miles around; but does not the true art of making an account "live" lie in the building up of that character which every railway possesses? To do this, of course, not only scenic details, but also the economic, and possibly political, backgrounds to the story are vital. Equally important are social developments. Do railway historians fail to emphasize these aspects? Here let me make a plea for more generous allusions to railway architecture. Stations in particular make some of the greatest contributions to a line's character.

From these points arises the important question of space. Do our railway journals place too severe a limit on the length of historical articles? Confinement to a succession of facts may cramp the style of many a budding historian.

And now to more specific problems which will, I suspect, prove to be the more contentious.

The question of annotations and sources can be thorny. A piece of work can be criticized for not containing sufficient references, while another may be condemned because it is a mass of footnotes. Annotations do not add to ease of reading; lots of little figures sprinkled across each page may deter the general reader at the outset, yet some form of reference is necessary if the accuracy of the work is to be judged, and the account to be of permanent value. Again, is it better to insert footnotes, or should all references be lumped together at the end? Should sources be placed in a separate bibliography? The work can be more easily read this way, as a continuous narrative, but there is little doubt that for reference purposes it is exasperating to be continually turning to the back of a book, and then to try to pick up the threads of the text again.

Similar problems apply to Acts of Parliament and dates. Is it really necessary to quote both the precise date and the Act? Do we intend to clutter our writing with too much information which might more conveniently be placed in appendices, both for improving the text and for better reference? The same point applies to distances. Often we find them given in miles and chains, and then repeated in tabular form at the end. The use only of the latter method might considerably enhance the appeal of a work.

Finally, the history of most lines, but particularly the early ones, needs very little "telling", yet often a number of devices are used in an attempt to emphasize the highlights of some event, startling, amusing or tragic. To return to Trevelyan, his English Social History is an object lesson in letting facts speak for themselves.

Needless to say, these are only some of the questions which come to mind when considering the writing of railway history; there are many more. Neither are they all my own. Some have been advanced by others during correspondence and discourse, but I feel sure these friends will welcome a wider field of discussion. Perhaps the Editor will allow readers to present their views as well? The objects of the Society include the words "to foster and maintain investigation and research." If we can help railway history to be more widely appreciated, surely that particular object will have been well served?

(No doubt some readers would like to express their own ideas about this interesting topic. Letters should reach me by March 10. - Ed.)

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"STOKERS AND POKERS"

C. L. Mowat

Readers of recent works on railway history and railway lore have been regaled with accounts of railway working in the 1840s taken from the pages of a book published by John Murray in 1849: Stokers and Pokers; or, the London and North-Western Railway, the Electric Telegraph, and the Railway Clearing House, "by the author of 'Bubbles from the Brunnen of Nassau.'" They may, if the title is mentioned, have wondered what such an oddly-named book was about. It is worth a moment's attention, as one of the earliest popular accounts of railway working - a class of railway literature still very much with us.

Stokers and Pokers was written by Sir Francis Bond Head (1793-1875), author of a number of miscellaneous works of which one other, Highways and Dryways, the Britannia and Conway Tubular Bridges (1849), is of railway interest. Head was an officer in the Royal Engineers, was present at the battle of Waterloo, and on retiring from the corps in 1825 made laborious prospecting expeditions in Argentina and Chile for the Rio Plata Mining Associations. In 1834 he was made an assistant poor-law commissioner; in 1835 he was suddenly translated to Upper Canada as its lieutenant-governor, and served in the province during the rebellion of 1837 - which led indirectly to his recall. His elder brother, Sir George Head (1782-1855), was an officer in the commissariat of the army and also served in Canada; he was deputy Knight-marshal under William IV and Queen Victoria. He is best known for his Home Tour through the Manufacturing Districts of England in the summer of 1835. Yet another man of the same family name, though unrelated to the two brothers, had a rather similar career: Sir Edmund Head Walker (1805-1868), a scholar, linguist and translator, an assistant poor-law commissioner and subsequently one of the commissioners (1841), governor of New Brunswick (1847) and governor-general of Canada (1854-1861).

Stokers and Pokers is written in a clear and lively style, seasoned with occasional amusing anecdotes; as when a driver says to his stoker, concerning the noises of the wind in the newly-erected telegraph wires beside the line: "I say, Jack, ain't they a giving it to 'em at Thrapstone?" It begins with a long chapter, from which several writers have quarried, on the construction of the London & Birmingham Railway, and especially of the Kilsby tunnel, the ways of the navvies and the achievements of the early engineers. Head mentions that 26 men lost their lives in the construction of the tunnel, "two or three of whom were 'navvies', killed in trying, 'for fun' - as they termed it - to jump one after another across the summits of the shafts."

Chapter three describes the scene at Euston on the departure and arrival of trains. The approach of up trains, gliding down the bank from Camden under the care of the bank-riders, was still announced to the "little signal-office" on the up platform by the "loud melancholy whine" from the compressed-air pipe from the mouth of the tunnel at Primrose Hill, whereupon the signalman sounded a bell and, at night, turned up the 67 gas lamps above the curving platform of 900 feet, at which "the beautiful iron reticulation which sustains the glazed roof appears like fairy work." After arrival, the carriages were moved individually on to the sidings by the turntables along the platform line, and were at once inspected, greased, searched and cleaned, outside and in, by an army of cleaners, male and female. There is also an excellent chapter on the sorting and dispatch of parcels from the Parcel Delivery Office; by day parcels were sent in the "break-waggons" of passenger trains, by night in special vans, two for Birmingham and one each for Manchester, Liverpool, Carlisle, Newcastle, Derby and Nottingham.

The chapters on the two railway towns, Wolverton and Crewe, will be familiar to readers of Canon Lloyd's Railwaymen's Gallery. The working day in the shops at Crewe was then from 6 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. (4 p.m. on Saturdays). The Company was a benevolent landlord and employer, providing houses, a school, a church, public baths, health insurance (at Crewe), a reading room at Wolverton whence a "flying library" of 600 volumes circulated in 19 boxes carried by train to various stations. The refreshment rooms at Wolverton were famous. Their staff consisted of "a matron or generallissima," seven "very young ladies to wait upon the passengers," four men and three boys as waiters, one man-cook with his kitchen maid and two scullery maids, two housemaids, a still-room maid to make tea and coffee, two laundry maids, a baker, a baker's boy, a garden boy and an "odd man." The staff had to cross back and forth between the North and South refreshment rooms according to the direction of the train next expected. Travellers arrived parched and ravenous, for they consumed annually "182,500 Banbury cakes, 56,940 Queen cakes...43,800 pounds of meat...16,425 quarts of milk...8,088 bottles of lemonade, 10,416 of soda water, 45,012 of stout, 25,692 of ale... and we regret to add, 666 bottles of gin, 464 of rum, 2,392 of brandy."

We may pass over the chapters, all full of fascinating detail, concerning the engine sheds at Camden (with 18 coke ovens making coke for the engines' fuel), the lost luggage office, the "flying post-office" (T.P.O.), the Railway Clearing House, and the public telegraph service. One of the best chapters is that on the "Goods Department" at Camden, which describes the reception and dispatch of outward traffic collected by the two rival concerns, Pickford and Chaplin & Horne, the Company's agents.

There is no separate chapter on traffic working, but several incidental references are supplemented by the appendix, which reproduces the Company's rules and regulations concerning signals, enginemen, guards, breaksmen, stationmasters, ballast engines, and the working of the tunnels at Lime Street and Wapping, Liverpool. Trains were worked on the time-interval system, regulated by the signals given by the policeman at each station by flag or lamp or by semaphore (particularly at junctions). "Auxiliary Signals, worked by a wire, are placed 500 yards in advance of the Station Signal Post" at many stations, giving the caution indication (green light) when the red was "turned on at the Station." Fog signals were also used. Pointsmen had charge of points, usually two at each station working twelve-hour turns. At Crewe there were three pointsmen continuously on duty, one of whom was responsible for 17 pairs of points. "His box stands between the Liverpool and Chester lines." "Nothing can apparently be more cheerless than the existence of these poor fellows," adds Head; but remarks that he has invariably found them contented and interested in their duties, as is shown by "the flowers which we observed blooming around their little wooden habitations." The antiquity of modern methods is demonstrated in the instructions for single-line working during relaying in Kilsby tunnel in February, 1848: trains were to be regulated by policemen using the telegraph line through the tunnel to send "Line clear," "Line blocked," "Train in," "Train out."

In his final chapter, "Moral," Head raises a question still, alas, familiar. Are fares too high, or has Parliament compelled the railways to set them too high for profitable working? "When, therefore, in the rapid development of our great national railway system it was found necessary for the accommodation of a fraction of the public to apply to Parliament for powers to make these unremunerating branch lines, the companies were certainly in theory entitled to expect the extra assistance we have explained (authority to levy upon a branch "higher tolls than are sufficient on the trunk line"); instead of which they were practically informed that, unless they would consent to LOWER their tolls altogether, they would not be allowed to develop their system by the construction of any branch lines."

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DICKENS AND THE IRON ROAD

H. Chase

"A railroad opened from Rochester to Maidstone which connects Gadshill at once with the whole sea-coast By and bye we shall have the London, Chatham and Dover too, that will bring it (Gadshill) within an hour of Canterbury and an hour and a half of Dover."

(Extract from letter from Dickens to his biographer, John Forster: August 1857.)

Readers of Dickens's works who have confined their attention to the long novels only, and have read the awe-inspiring and allegorical descriptions of railway travelling, for instance in Dombey and Son, or the rather ill-tempered accounts of American trains in Martin Chuzzlewit and American Notes, may well be surprised at the barely concealed exultant note in the above extract, and find it difficult to reconcile the two widely divergent views.

The fact is that Dickens the novelist regarded railways in a different light from Dickens the man in the street, Dickens the essayist, and particularly Dickens the editor. In the novels, we are all familiar with the finely described coach journeys: the genial red-faced coachmen, the ring of the horses' hoofs on the road, the jingle of the bells, the fanfare on the guards' horns, and all the rest of the somewhat idealized conditions, all of which are described with a kind of nostalgic zest. In the essays or "papers", as will be seen later, a much more realistic and appreciative approach to the railway will be found and, as the short-lived editor of the Daily News, Dickens hailed the railways as "progress in its most spectacular shape."

The "Rochester-Maidstone Railway" to which he refers was, of course, the extension of the South Eastern Railway's North Kent line, which had been opened in June 1856, and the "Chatham and Dover" was to be completed from Strood to Faversham in 1858 as the first portion of the East Kent Railway. It is curious that he should have called it the London, Chatham & Dover, as it was not, in fact, called this until 1859. The nearest stations to his home were Higham on the S.E.R., frequently mentioned in his letters, and, presumably, the old Rochester & Strood station on the L.C. & D. Sole Street seems never to be mentioned; it was about four miles from Gadshill.

In a letter to Wilkie Collins, dated August 25, 1859, Dickens wrote: "I want to come to Broadstairs next Wednesday by the mid-day train." This is interesting, as there was no railway to Broadstairs until 1863, so the journey must have been made on the South Eastern to Ramsgate, and thence by road.

After a somewhat unsuccessful visit to the Isle of Wight in September 1849, he mentions in a letter that he travelled on the "Portsmouth Railway to Reigate" (now Redhill), and thence by the South Eastern to Broadstairs via Canterbury and Ramsgate. Later in his life, when giving his "Readings," he travelled almost entirely by train, but says very little about his journeys. He was a passenger in the boat express which was wrecked at Staplehurst in 1865, and wrote of this in the post-script to Our Mutual Friend.

There is practically no reference at all to railways in most of his more popular books, except for an allegorical chapter heading in Pickwick Papers, and a reference to construction work in Chapter LV of Bleak House. In Old Curiosity Shop, that tedious couple, Little Nell and her grandfather, travel partly by canal, and it is much to be regretted that the barge did not sink!

Railways are mentioned in the following books:

Martin Chuzzlewit: descriptions of travelling in the United States, but not in England, where the coach still flourished (1842), although Mrs. Gamp does make reference to the "screechin' railroad ones" (engines), and their alleged devastating effect on expectant mothers.

American Notes: quite lengthy descriptions of U.S. Railways.

Dombey and Son: interesting account of the London & Birmingham line at Camden Town in Chapters VI and XV, together with a metaphorical description of the journey to Birmingham. Later in the book appears the gruesome account of Carker's death on the S.E.R. at Paddock Wood.

Hard Times: Several references to travel in Coketown (Preston).

Our Mutual Friend: references to the London & Greenwich Railway, the Great Western in the Henley-on-Thames district (with some odd descriptions of signal lamps); also to Paddington Station, though not by name.

Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices (with Wilkie Collins):

reference to the L. & N.W.R. in the Chester district.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood: This last and unfinished work contains several references to the S.E.R. at London Bridge and "Cloisterham" (Rochester); also to the L.C. & D.R. None of these is mentioned by name, but the inferences are clear.

Of the shorter works, in Reprinted Pieces, there is a delightful account of a journey to Paris in 1851, and a brief account of the railway at Folkestone in "Out of Town." In The Uncommercial Traveller, two papers, "The Calais Night Mail" and "Dullborough Town," contain references to the railway at Dover and Chatham respectively; also to French lines. In Christmas Stories, there is reference to the London & Greenwich in "The Seven Poor Travellers". This book also contains the well-known ghost story "The Signalman."

A few years ago, there appeared in the Dickensian quarterly an ingenious attempt to fix the "date" of the Edwin Drood mystery from clues elicited from the strangely roundabout journeys the characters make from Cloisterham to London, but when these were correlated with other references in the book, the attempt was found to have miscarried.

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"A NEW STEAM-BOAT FOR CANALS"

"A newly-constructed apparatus by Christie and Company, of London, is now working upon the Duke of Bridgewater's canal between Runcorn and Preston Brook. It consists, first of all, of a simple barge, which carries the engine, but, of course, has no paddles. It propels itself, with whatever burden is attached to it, by means of a rope, one end of which is made fast at Runcorn and the other at Preston Brook; there are two barrels fixed in the engine-boat, which are made to revolve round their centre-pieces by the power of the engine, and, as they go round, they wind up one end of the rope and let out the other; so that when the barge is at either of the above-mentioned places one barrel is bare and the other filled with the coil. The rope that is loosed falls, by its own gravity, to the bottom of the canal, so that there is no obstruction offered to other vessels ... On Tuesday last, six loaded barges were attached to the boat, four of 40 tons burden, and two smaller boats, making altogether 250 tons burden, independently of the steam-boat, which it took to Preston Brook, about 5½ miles, in two hours. It seems fully to answer the expectations of the trustees, and it will enable them to clear the docks of the different carriage barges at a wonderful rate of dispatch - "Liverpool Mercury." (This appears to be an old thing applied to a new purpose - Ed.)"

(From Herapath's Railway Journal, Dec. 4, 1847).

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We very much regret to record the death, on September 19, of Rendel H. Wyatt. A Cambridge graduate, he was a schoolmaster until 1933, when he turned to social work, being Joint Warden of the Manchester University Settlement for seven years. In 1948 he developed an idea that had long been in his mind, and founded the Canal Cruising Company at Stone, and built up a canal cruising hiring business at the old canal wharf. Mr. Wyatt was a firm believer that canal traffic and the volume of pleasure traffic could be increased and become an alternative method of transport to the roads. The business is being carried on by his family.

In the January, 1955 issue of the Journal, Mr. M. D. Greville asked members to send him any corrections which should be made in this work, and the following is a list of those he has received, together with those he had already noted. Definite contemporary evidence is available for all these corrections, except obvious errors; no others have been included. He will be glad to receive any further corrections (with sources) which could be embodied in a later list.

PAGE

- 80 Line 12: 1923 should read 1922, when L. & Y. and L. & N.W. Rlys amalgamated.
- 87 Feb. 10 - Maryport & Carlisle: Should be Brookfield to Low Row - 4 miles
(Wigton to Brookfield and Aspatria to
Low Row opened Dec. 2, 1844). Total
for year therefore $290\frac{1}{4}$ miles.
- June 9 - Manchester & Birmingham: Goods only. Cheadle to Poynton (3 miles)
opened for passengers Nov. 24.
- Dec. 22 - Sheffield, Ashton & Manchester: Should read Dec. 23 (22 was formal).
- 98 Line 20: The three stations were not closed until Oct. 1, 1855.
- 244 Feb. 6 - Preston & Wyre: Should read Feb. 16.
- March 18 - London & Brighton: Should read March 16.
- April 15 - Manchester & Leeds: Should read April 13.
- June 18 - North British (Edinburgh-Berwick) Should read June 22
(Haddington Branch) (18 was formal)
- 245 Nov. 6 - Newcastle & Carlisle: Passenger opening March 1, 1847.
- Nov. 16 - London & North Western: Should read Nov. 18.
- 321 L. & N.W. - Ormskirk to Rainford: Delete. Total should thus be $165\frac{3}{4}$ miles.
- 325 Lines 33 and 35: For L. & N.W. read North Union.
- 336 April 1 - Colchester, S. V. S. & H.: Should read March 31.
- 337 June 7 - Dublin & Drogheda: Opening was first week in June.
- Aug. 21 - E.U. & Hadleigh Jc.: Goods only; passengers Sept. 2.
- 338 Dec. 1 - L. & N.W.: Should read Sept. 15. (Limited opening - full service Dec. 1).
- 388 March 1 - E. Counties: Should read Goods Feb. 1; Passengers March 1.
- April 3 - Newmarket: Opened Jan. 3 (Goods); April 4 (Passengers).
- 389 June 6 - Lancashire & Yorkshire } For Shaftholme read Askern;
June 7 - Great Northern } date should read June 5.
- July 18 - L. & Y. (West Riding Union): Should read July 17.
- Footnote to Leeds & Thirsk (Jan. 5): Passenger opening was June 1.

- 390 Sept. 3 } East Lincolnshire: For Firstby read Firsby.
Oct. 1 }
Oct. 1 - East Lincolnshire: Should read Oct. 2.
391 Oct. 1 - London & South Western: Should read Sept. 1.
Oct. 2 - Eastern Counties: Should read Goods Aug. 15; Passengers Oct. 2.
392 March 30 - Norfolk: Should read March 20.
393 July 21 - M.S.J. & A.: Should read July 20.
Aug. 1 - M.S.J. & A.: Add "and extension to London Road." Mileage correct.
394 Aug. 1 - M.S.J. & A.: Add "and extension to London Road." Mileage correct.
Sept. 22 - Manchester, South Jc. & Altrincham.
Altrincham to Bowdon $\frac{1}{2}$ m. Total should thus be 811 $\frac{3}{4}$.
Oct. 1 - London & South Western: Should read Oct. 8.
Oct. 29 - North British: Railway Times of Nov. 3, 1849, reporting this
(passenger) opening stated that line had been open
"for some time for goods traffic."
Dec. 1 - E. Union: Should read Goods Dec. 3.
395 June 21 - Bolton, Blackburn C. & W. Yorks: Should read June 22.
396 June ? - North British: Date was June 17.
Sept. 8 - Newmarket: Should read Sept. 9.
Dec. 9 - E. & W. India Dks & Birmingham Jc.: Should read Dec. 7.
397 June 1 - North British and Y. N. & E.: Should read: "North British -
Kelso (Maxwellheugh) to Sprouston June. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ m."
"Y.N. & B. - Sprouston to Sprouston June. 1 m."
Oct. 1 - Leeds Northern: Opened Aug. 4 (Goods) and Aug 18 (Passengers).
Oct. 1 - E. & W. Yorkshire Jc.: Opened July 21. For Starbeck read Knaresborough.
Oct. 6 - Newmarket: Should read October 9.
399 Footnote to York, Newcastle & Berwick (Dec. 20): Passenger opening was
June 1, 1853.
481 No. 21 - East of Fife: For Aug. 8, 1857, read Aug. 11, 1857.
483 No. 42 - Northern Counties Union: For April 12, 1862, read April 8, 1862.

The L. & N.W. Rly Delph branch is omitted by Lewin, but it has not been possible to obtain contemporary evidence of the opening date (Sept. 1, 1851) quoted at the time of the recent closing. The Editor would be glad to hear from any member who can supply this.

RECENT LITERATUREWilliam J. Skillern

- AICKMAN, Robert. Know your Waterways. (1955). (Coram, 5/-).
- ELLIS, C. Hamilton. The North British Railway 1955. (Ian Allan 25/-)
- GREVILLE, M. D. Chronological List of the Railways of Cheshire, 1837-1939 (1955). (Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, 2/3). (Also in "Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire," Vol. 104, 1954).
- HASKELL, Daniel C. A Tentative Check-list of early European railway literature, 1831-1848. 1955 (Baker Library, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Soldiers Field, Boston 63, Mass., U.S.A. \$5, or 35/-).
- HOLT, G.O. A Short History of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, 1955. (Railway & Canal Historical Society, 3/9). Duplicated typescript.
- PEARSON, F. K. Snaefell mountain Railway, 1895-1955 1955 (Light Rly Transport League, 1/-).
- ROLT, L. T. C. Red for Danger: a history of railway accidents and railway safety precautions. 1955 (John Lane, 16/-).

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- BRANCH LINE NEWS. The Journal of the Branch Line Society. Monthly from October, 1955. (Gratis to members of Branch Line Society, 19 Worcester Street, Stourbridge, Worcs.) Duplicated typescript.

ARTICLES:

- Captain William Peel, V.C., and the Sandy-Potton Railway, by Peter Hull. (In "Bedfordshire Magazine," Vol. 5, No. 34, Autumn, 1955).
- The Building of Cork's Tunnel, by Walter McGrath. (In "Cork Weekly Examiner," Christmas Number, December, 1955).
- The First Railway to East Grinstead, by Jeoffry Spence, (In "East Grinstead Observer," June 17 & 24, July 1, 1955).
- The Canal with 200 years history: (the Sankey Brook Navigation). (In "Widnes Guardian," September 19, 1955).

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CORRESPONDENCE

Sir, - In the July number of the Journal, Mr. Williams asked the very relevant question about the significance of particular pieces of information, i.e. whether they were unusual or not. He especially mentioned Parliamentary legislation, and while his suggestion of wide reading is the only safe method, there are several books in this field which may be of use. In any case, to read widely in the private railway Acts - which number thousands - can become a full-time job.

The contents of private Acts were not a matter of chance, and depended partly on the Standing Orders of the two Houses of Parliament, and also on the general railway Acts. The Standing Orders of the Commons have been examined recently, in great detail, in O. C. Williams, The Historical Development of Private Bill Procedure and Standing Orders in the House of Commons (H.M.S.O., 1948-9, 2 vols.) This is a necessary reference book for any serious student of transport history. Also important, but less detailed, is F. Clifford, History of Private Bill Legislation 1885-7 (2 vols.)

The first general railway Acts of importance were passed in 1845, and they can be found, with later legislation and decisions of law courts (together with commentaries), in various law books published from time to time. One useful book is H. Codefroi and J. Shortt, The Law of Railway Companies, 1869. There are various editions of Halsbury's Laws of England. Prof. O. Kahn-Freund's Law of Inland Transport is the standard book at present; it concentrates largely on rates and charges, but has a great deal of historical material. Before 1845, Acts of Parliament tended to vary, but a useful summary of the clauses in railway Acts can be found in Appendix 31 to the Second Report from the Select Committee on Railways, 1839. Of particular interest in the present context are the annual reports of the Railway Department of the Board of Trade on Railway and Canal Bills, which began in 1855. All railway Bills were examined by the Board of Trade, and any peculiar or unusual clauses were commented on. This might well provide a short cut when trying to decide on the importance of a particular piece of legislation.

Other books of relevance and usefulness are:

- E. Cleveland-Stevens: English Railways: their Development and their Relation to the State. 1915.
- C. C. Wang: Legislative Regulation of Railway Finance in England. Published in 1916 in Illinois.
- G. H. Evans: British Corporation Finance, 1775-1850. Baltimore 1936.

Yours, &c.
H. POLLINS.

BOOK REVIEWS

"INTRODUCING CANALS. A Guide to British Waterways Today"
by Charles Hadfield. Published by Ernest Benn Ltd. Price 16/-.

Unlike other forms of transport, inland navigation has been singularly neglected by historians and writers. It is only in comparatively recent years that a revival of interest has taken place which has led to the appearance of a modest number of books on the subject.

Revived interest in our inland waterways has often centred on the sentimental and picturesque, and has thus tended to obscure the economic reasons why so many of our smaller canals are unused commercially today.

Mr. Hadfield has already done much to fill the gaps in the story of the canals. With "Introducing Canals" he has written a thorough and interesting introduction to the waterways aimed rather at the general reader than the specialist. Adequately illustrated, it is essentially a practical book in which the author has set out the sort of things that he himself would like to have known about canals twenty years ago.

There are chapters dealing with the commercial side of canals, their shape and form, on where to hire boats, and how to explore and navigate along them. What makes the book so useful to would-be historians is the historical bias that has led the author to include a chapter on the exploring of derelict canals, and a gazetteer and index listing all canals of any importance that have been built in Great Britain. The former chapter sets out a dozen selected itineraries around the more interesting spots in our canal system which have already been proved to be a good basis for a weekend's field work. In the gazetteer, the author has given historical notes on each canal. This information cannot so readily be obtained elsewhere, and inclusion in "Introducing Canals" will make this book an invaluable "first reference."
J.M.P.

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"RED FOR DANGER" by L. T. C. Rolt. Published by The Bodley Head.
Price 16/-.

Most of us have read Mr. Rolt's "Narrow Boat" with great enjoyment, and found his more adventurous voyage in Ireland delightfully described in "Green and Silver." Readers who had no interest in canal history digested a good deal of it in these books, and found it palatable. The author's name on "Red for Danger" will, therefore, arouse expectations of a most readable volume and, since accounts of railway accidents must inevitably reveal details of early railways, we hope to find this book leading its readers to a deeper interest in the history of railways.

A railway accident is a horrible, unnerving experience and the author relates the details vividly and dramatically. Yet his descriptions are never as sensational and gruesome as those to be found in certain newspapers of the time. The masterly reports of Inspecting Officers have been carefully condensed into narrative form, and the story of developments in railway operating safeguards is told in language which the layman can clearly understand.

Some of the particulars of the earlier accidents may be open to dispute. The experimental locomotive which exploded at Bromsgrove in 1840 was named Surprise according to contemporary accounts and not, as Mr. Rolt says, Eclipse. Occasionally errors have passed into print undetected, as in the statement that Thirsk is on the Great Northern main line, and that Frodsham Tunnel was, in 1853, on the "Chester & Warrington Junction Railway." Neither can one agree that it is "unlikely that the track circuit will ever put the British railway signalman out of a job." It has already done so in many places, and the few words on modern signalling installations shows that Mr. Rolt knows it.

The publisher claims that every major accident between 1840 and 1940 has been dealt with in this book. What, one might ask, constitutes a major railway accident? Evidently not the number of casualties, since there is no mention of several which were particularly disastrous from that point of view. Nor is an unfortunate combination of circumstances the criterion, for there is no reference to the accident at King's Langley in 1935 (where four trains were involved), nor to the unusual Oakley Junction collision in 1938. However, the better known accidents, Abergele, Armagh, Salisbury, Quintinshill and the like are all discussed, but enough material is left out to provide a second volume on the subject, which would be equally attractive.

G.O.H.

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"CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE RAILWAYS OF CHESHIRE, 1837-1939"
by M. D. Greville. Published by the Historic Society
of Lancashire & Cheshire, 10 Beach Priory Gardens,
Southport. Price 2/3.

This volume is similar in layout to the previously published "Lancashire Chronology," and consists of only ten pages, but what wealth of material is contained in such small compass! The author's name is sufficient guarantee for the careful and painstaking research necessary to ensure the high standard of accuracy essential in a publication of this nature. The layout is based in the constituents of the companies formed by the 1923 Grouping, followed by the various Joint Lines. It might have been better, since this is a chronological list, to have included the early constituent companies of the major lines in front of the list of lines opened by these major companies, thus keeping the entries to a more strict date order.

The uninitiated in Cheshire railway history may be led astray by one or two entries, and an additional explanatory note here and there would have been advisable: for example, the Stockport to Sandbach opening on May 10, 1842 is true enough, but it should be made clear that the Stockport station at that time was the present Heaton Norris station. Similarly, the entry for Cheadle to Poynton Collieries should carry a note to the effect that Cheadle refers to the present Cheadle Hulme station.

The Cheshire Lines Committee line from Stockport to Altrincham lost its regular passenger service from Skelton Jc. to Deansgate Jc. (33 chains) in 1930-1 when the local service between these two towns was withdrawn. This has been omitted.

The author and the Historic Society are to be congratulated on publishing this chronology in their Transactions and, furthermore, making it generally available in the form of a reprint. It provides a valuable addition to the small number of accurate books dealing with the railway history of the North West. It is unhesitatingly recommended, not only to the natives of the area, but to the railway historian at large. The writer does not remember a more profitable expenditure of 2/3 for a long, long time.

G. H.

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NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY

HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES

Membership List. A new list will be forwarded to members shortly. Only two members have resigned, and although eleven have failed to renew their subscriptions, it is hoped that this is only an oversight. The total number of members up to December 14 is 95. This is an excellent figure for a Society having such limited interests as ours, but it is imperative that we should aim at having at least 200 members in order to make our efforts felt and appreciated. The Council hopes that all members will do their utmost to encourage their friends to join. Copies of the prospectus are available on request.

Notes on Society Visits. A member has asked whether Notes issued in connection with Society visits and outings can be made available to members who are unable to take part. There are usually a number of copies of these Notes left over, and the Hon. Secretary will be glad to supply members upon request and receipt of a stamped and addressed foolscap envelope. Application should not be made until after the date of the particular event.

Publications received. The following have been received and gratefully acknowledged since publication of the last Journal; "Chronological List of the Railways of Cheshire, 1837-1939", by M. D. Greville - from the author; "Illustrated Guide to the Midland

Railway Exhibit at Derby Museum", from J. B. Sheldon; "Waterways," Staff Magazine of British Waterways (No. 2) - from the Public Relations Adviser, B.T.C.; "Captain William Peel, V.C., and the Sandy-Potton Railway," from G. N. Webb; "The First Railway to East Grinstead" from Jeffery Spence; "The Building of Cork's Tunnel," from W. McGrath (for details of these last three see "Recent Literature.")

REPORTS ON EVENTS

London. A very successful meeting was held at the B.T.C. Historical Records Section at Royal Oak on October 15, by kind permission of the Archivist to the Commission, Mr. L. C. Johnson. Mr. Johnson opened the proceedings with a short talk on the work of the Records Section, following which 22 members and 2 visitors were conducted round the Records Office. Tea was arranged at a nearby restaurant by our member, Mrs. A. M. Hadfield, and the occasion was considered by everyone to have been most enjoyable.

Birmingham. The Local Group for this area paid a visit to the stations of one-time London & Birmingham and Grand Junction Railways at Curzon Street on November 12. Seven members and three visitors were present, and under the guidance of Mr. Wood, Chief Clerk of the Goods Department, the party inspected the buildings and other relics of the original stations. The Society's thanks are due to Mr. Wood and British Railways for their kind co-operation.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1956 Programme. A programme for the coming year will be forwarded to members shortly. Dates will be given for fixtures in the early part of the year, and approximate dates for other events, in order that members may book them well in advance. Final dates will be given in the April Journal where necessary.

Annual General Meeting. This will take place at Gloucester during the weekend meeting, May 5 and 6. The business meeting, which will take the same form as that of last year, will be held at the Midland & Royal Hotel, Gloucester, during the evening of May 5. There is still some accommodation at the hotel for members wishing to stay there. The full programme for the weekend will be sent to members, with the Agenda, in March.

London. A meeting will be held in March, and advice about this will be given in the 1956 Programme.

Birmingham. The Local Group will be holding a meeting at the Chamber of Commerce, 95 New Street, Birmingham, at 7 p.m. on January 17 next. Mr. M. D. Greville will give a talk on "Some Pitfalls of Research into Railway History."

Derby. A meeting will be held at the Museum & Art Gallery, Wardwick, Derby, at 3.45 p.m. on February 25. A visit will be made to the large Midland Railway exhibit in the Museum, followed by tea, and then a lecture. The meeting will close in time for members to catch last trains home.

North West. It is hoped that a meeting will be arranged at Carnforth in mid-January. Members will be advised.

Although these meetings are intended primarily for members living in the areas concerned, all other members who are able to attend will be very welcome. The Society's objects will be achieved more quickly if members from different parts of the country can get to know each other.

LOCAL GROUPS

As mentioned in the Journal last April, the formation of Local Groups has been considered. A Group has been set up in Birmingham, to serve members in the Midlands, and the local organizer is Mr. P. L. Dyke, 273 Old Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcs. Endeavours are now being made to set up similar Groups in London and Manchester, and also for the North West and the East Midlands. Details of forthcoming meetings will appear in the Journal, and organizers are asked to keep in touch with the Editor. Notices should be received by him not later than the 10th of the month preceding publication.

QUERIES SCHEME

The response to the scheme announced in the October Journal has so far been nil, but it is hoped that some members may consider it useful and send in queries.

LIVERPOOL & MANCHESTER RAILWAY

The Society's publication, "A Short History of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway," by G. O. Holt, is now available, price 3/9 post free from the Hon. Secretary. Sales are proceeding well, and members who have not yet obtained a copy are advised to send their remittances now.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The sub-committee appointed to deal with this matter is now engaged upon preliminary work, and reports of its progress will appear in the Journal from time to time. For such a publication to be of real value, it must be both accurate and comprehensive, and the task involved in preparing it is of considerable magnitude, and will take some time to complete. The members of the sub-committee are The President, Sir Arthur Elton, Bt., Charles E. Lee and William J. Skillern.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There have been several enquiries about what other members are interested in. Anyone interested in some particular line, or who has an unusual approach to the study of railways or canals should write to the Hon. Secretary, who will keep a record.