

# LEICESTER NORTH

## NEWSLETTER

JULY 2011

No.  
42

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## "WOW! THAT'LL TAKE SOME BEATING!"

If you don't understand the meaning of our headline, then you must have missed one of the highlights of the "Railway Year", and by that, of course, I'm referring to "Operation Crossbow" the title of this year's annual wartime week end.

This event is usually a success, but nothing could have prepared us for what was about to happen, not only at this station, but all along the line.

With the weather looking a little doubtful, it was with some trepidation that your local station staff set about preparations for the "Big 'Un", and with nothing more in mind, (bearing in mind that the country is in the throes of a recession) than to hope that it would at least end in a positive result financially, and also prove to be sufficiently attractive to tempt enough visitors to make it a repeat of previous years, with regard to ticket and buffet receipts.

Visitors sometimes do not realise the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes, prior to the event taking place, as our volunteers attempt to re-create an entirely different environment, converting Leicester North Station to "Lé Birstall" (a fictitious French railway sta-

tion in German Occupied France) and which, we hope, is sufficiently authentic and sympathetic to the age that is being portrayed, to enable our visitors to enter into the spirit of the thing.

Once again we have to thank "Panzer Lehr" our popular German re-enactment group for "pulling out all the stops", as it were to help us realise that result, and congratulate them for all the hard work that goes into their preparations.



Fine weather on the Saturday ensured that things got off to a good start, with ticket receipts equaling those of 2010 by 10.00 am, and at the end of the day exceeding the combined Sat./Sun. receipts of last year.

Buffet receipts were also excellent, also exceeding those of 2010, and even allowing for the rather inclement weather on the Sunday, combined receipts were in excess of 2010's, a record for this station and a tribute to our volunteer staff who did such a fantastic job.

Thanks must also be directed to temporary staff who offered their time and energy to enable us to reach this result, so thanks Kath, Irene, Roz, Sarah and Sue!

The added attractions of a singer who entertained us with many wartime songs, and a 24 piece band who also played many Glen Miller arrange-

ments and other appropriate material also added an extra incentive for visitors to linger here instead of moving off to other stations, as did the skirmishes that the re-enactors put on.

All in all, a wonderful result, and one that we can justifiably be proud of.



### BITS & PIECES!

It hasn't gone unnoticed that the ceiling in our waiting room looks in a bit of a mess (it might have been attributed to bomb damage during the WW 2 Event, but can no longer be.)

We are still awaiting repairs to the water damage caused as a result of vandal activity on the roof some months ago, so we hope that you will bear with us until such time as repairs can be undertaken.

Now that things are a little quieter, we hope to commence work on our new flower beds at trackbed level.

A source of topsoil has been found, so as soon as we can arrange transport things will start to happen.

In the meantime our maintenance team continue to cope with the 101 things that constantly need their attention in and around the station area.

Finally, we welcome **Arthur** and **Charles**, two recent volunteers to our station, and hope that they will quickly get used to us and our quaint ways!

Photos Courtesy of "Panzer Lehr."



RE-CREATING THE EXPERIENCE

### **NEWSLETTER!**

This newsletter is now available "online".

Please go to: [www.gcrailway.co.uk](http://www.gcrailway.co.uk)  
Click on "About Us", scroll down to "Press Releases" and you will see it.

# Leicester North Newsletter

## THE GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY (1899-1969)

With its continental loading gauge, slow curves and lack of grades steeper than 1 in 76, the great Central was years ahead of its rival's routes into the capital.

Add to the aforementioned the plan to continue under London, and then. After travelling south, to traverse the English Channel via a Channel Tunnel, one can see that it would have been a wonderful asset to the nation.

Who knows how much further it would have developed by the present day?

The Great Central Railway (London Extension) was the brainchild of the Victorian Industrialist Edward Watkin, who envisioned a rapid rail link to the continent that would have been far superior to those of his rivals.

Unfortunately, by the 1950's the national network was under acute threat from road transport, which was reaping the benefits of the new motorways that were being constructed, and which was also suffering from a serious lack of investment by the government of the day.

This, coupled with the fact that many of the areas served by the GCR were also covered by other lines, which had always resented the GCR (considering it to be an interloper) made it inevitable that it would be the first to go, under the "Rail Rationalisation Plan", the now infamous "Beeching Plan".



## LEICESTER NORTH STATION

The original station that used to stand on this site was known as BELGRAVE & BIRSTALL, but by the time that the present heritage railway had reached this far south the buildings were in such a sorry state, owing to vandalism, that the decision was taken to re-build. To have re-built to its original specification would have been prohibitively expensive, so the present station is something of a compromise, (plans are, however, in the pipeline to make many improvements) so, if you feel that you would like to help to speed up these proposals by making a donation, please use the Donation Box that can be found in the waiting room.



If you are wondering how the original station used to look, see the above photo. It was a typical GCR station with the usual "Island" platform, accessed via a flight of stairs from the bridge. If you look at the bridge you will see where the staircase descended to the platform (the aperture has been bricked up)

The present station is sited a little further south than the original.

The two intermediate stations ROTHLEY, AND QUORN & WOODHOUSE, still being intact will give you a better idea, although there is a photo of the original station on the wall of our waiting room.



Pre-Beeching the railway continued south, the next station being Leicester Central, from there continuing on to Whetstone, Ashby Magna, Lutterworth, Rugby Central, Charwelton, Woodford & Hinton, Brackley Central, and then, travelling on GC/ Metropolitan metals finally terminating at London St. Marylebone.



Leicester Central Station, (1925) Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Front Street, Wigston Magna Leics. Tel. 0116 2571080.

**Please remember to sign our Visitor's Book, which will be found in the Waiting Room.**

### Forthcoming Attractions on the GCR

**Pullman Fine Dining with Hercule Poirot**

Friday 15th July.

**Mail by Rail Gala -**

July 23-24

**Teddy Bears Picnic -**

July 26-28 and August 2-4

**'Signal to Murder' Murder Mystery -**

29 July

**Maharaja Express IV, The Maharaja magic is back! -**

Wednesday August 3

### TELEPHONE NUMBERS

#### LEICESTER NORTH

0116 261 0946

#### LOUGHBOROUGH CENTRAL

01509 230 726

### Train Times At This Station (2011, WEEKENDS, 2 APRIL to 29 OCTOBER)

"Special" timetables apply on Gala Days, "Ivor the Engine", and other events. Please check on actual day of event	<b>ARRIVALS</b>								Leaflets advertising "Drive a Train Experiences", Dining Trains, etc are available in waiting room		
	10.12	10.45	11.45	12.45	1.30	2.07	2.45	3.48		4.30	5.13
	<b>DEPARTURES</b>										
	10.15	11.00	12.00	1.00	1.45	2.20	3.00	4.00	4.45	5.25	