

LEICESTER NORTH

JULY 2009 NEWSLETTER

No. 19

This Newsletter is an independent publication, and whilst every attempt is made to ensure accuracy of information, any discrepancies are not the responsibility of Great Central Railway

"D Day" + 65 Years!

The anticipated effect the "Economic Squeeze" would have on the GCRs "Annual Wartime Weekend" did not materialise, thank goodness, in fact, the theory that more people would be utilising local attractions, instead of going further afield seems to have been borne out with a six hundred increase in the number of visitors attending the event celebrating the sixty five years since the Normandy Landings. A total of over four and a half thousand visitors were recorded along the line.

With wet weather predominating prior to the event, anxious scanning of weather forecasts caused not a few to fear the worst, but, in the event, glorious weather was the order of the day and here at your local station the platform was thronged with people (many in 40's costume) enjoying the sights, sounds and refreshments that were available.

It was very encouraging to find that quite a few visitors were local people who had been made aware of the event by a leaflet drop by staff members (a new initiative) so more of this type of publicity is planned for the future, along with announcements on Radio Leicester and in the Leicester City Council's "Leicester Link" magazine.



By the time that this newsletter is in print or online, there will have been a Leicester North Station promotion at the annual Birstall Gala, and which, we hope, will result, not only in more people becoming aware of our existence, but hopefully joining us, as volunteer's are always needed, and welcomed.

How About You?

Return of an Old friend!

After an absence of ten years a locomotive that many will remember has been completely overhauled and is back in service. I refer of course to the GCR's Gresley Tank Loco "N2". 0-6-2 No 1744 Resplendent in it's new livery of green and with letters and numbers in gold it makes a wonderful sight.



This particular loco was built in 1920, and was originally designed for local passenger services. A total of sixty were built, the last one in 1929 and some continued in service until 1962.

NEW CANOPY

As you will have noticed, our new canopy is taking shape and should be completed during this month (July). Thanks to a generous donation by "Biffa" under their "Biffaward Scheme" work has been able to re-commence earlier than had been expected, and means that completion will be that much sooner.

At the moment, station maintenance staff are busy preparing the dagger boards that will add a decorative effect to the canopy surround, and as there are more than three hundred of them, you will agree that it is no small job to accomplish, but when finished I'm sure you will agree that the station will look all the better for it, opening up, as it will, the opportunity to sit in relative comfort, and out of the worst of the weather, on the platform, perhaps enjoying some light refreshments as well, and

not having to endure the lack of space in the Buffet/Waiting Room.

It is hoped to hold a "Canopy Launch" opening ceremony, to which we hope to be able to invite local dignitaries, local radio and possibly a band for the occasion, so look out for announcements when dates are finalised.

Also now that our station profile is being raised we are hoping that there will be many more opportunities for "events" that will interest and encourage more visitors from Leicester and the immediate locality to take advantage of this station.

"CONSULTATION" PROGRESS!

It had been hoped to update readers with the decisions that Atkins Consultants had taken regarding the future direction our railway was going to take, but unfortunately there had been no news at the time of publication of this newsletter.

Rest assured, however, that as soon as any decisions are announced we will inform you of them, either in the next issue, or by notices on the station platform.

VISITORS BOOK

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

NEWSLETTER!

This newsletter is now available "online".

Please go to:

www.gcrailway.co.uk

Click on "About Us", scroll down to "Press Releases" and you will see it.

RE-CREATING THE EXPERIENCE



Leicester North Newsletter

THE GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY (1899-1969)

(A Short History)

With its continental loading gauge, slow curves and lack of grades steeper than 1 in 176, the Great central was years ahead of its rivals 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 those of his rival's.

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 be the government of the day.

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

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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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 rebuild.

To have rebuilt 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**), any donations that you feel able to make, to speed up these proposals would be most welcome, (please use the donation Box which is situated in the waiting Room.)



If you are visiting us for the first time and are wondering how the original station used to look, see the above photo.

It was a typical GCR station, with the usual "Island" platforms, and which were accessed via a flight of stairs that descended from the bridge parapet.

If you face the track and look to the left you will be able to see where the stairs were situated (now 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 photograph of the original station hanging in the waiting room.)

If you look to the right, beyond the "Stops", you can see Leicester in the distance, Leicester Central Station" (see photo below) being the next stop, south of here, from where it continued south, passing through Whetstone, Lutterworth, Rugby and on to London St Marylebone.

From there it was proposed to continue beneath the capital and on to the channel coast.



Leicester Central Station, Great Central Street, 2005.

Forthcoming Attractions on the GCR

July 4/5: 4-BIG, including VIP ceremony, Sunday, July 5

July 15: Wednesday evening Griddle train 'Leicestershire Huntsman'

July 25/26: Summer Steam Gala

August 2: Toy and Train fair at Loughborough Central

August 8/9: Get Some In! National Service and Veterans weekend

August 12: Wednesday evening Griddle train 'Leicestershire Angler'

August 29 -31: Days Out With Thomas

September 2: Wednesday evening Griddle train 'Leicestershire Farmer'

September 12/13: Diesel Gala

September 23: Wednesday evening Griddle train 'Leicestershire Poacher'

September 25-27: Great Central Beer Festival