

# LEICESTER NORTH

## MAY 2009 NEWSLETTER

No.  
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## Into Summer!

At last, with the weather improving and the introduction of the GCR's Summer Timetable, we can look ahead to our regular summer features. The next being the ever popular "Thomas the Tank Engine" weekend.

But the most interesting event will be the 40th Anniversary, celebrating (if that's the right word to use) forty years since the London Extension was terminated by the blade of Beeching's axe. Interesting, if only because such a celebration has not occurred before.

The recent **Diesel Gala** was a little quieter than expected (at least from this station's point of view), so one can only hope that people are deciding on priorities now that we are well into a credit squeeze and are saving their cash for what we all hope will be a big attraction.

At the other end of the line, work is going on apace at the newly acquired **Loughborough Goods Offices** removing much of the non-period alterations that have accumulated over the decades of the twentieth century, and exposing many of the original Victorian features, and which will, once again be returned to their former glory for all to see.

The end of May should furnish details of the Consultation that is now in progress into future developments on the GCR. So much depends on what transpires during the next few weeks, in that decisions on whether to go for "**Bridging the Gap**", extending the line by about a mile at either

end, doubling the track to us, or several other ideas will be revealed. All in all, a very exciting time.



Class 37 "Dalziel" 37314 Photo B. Rowe.

Here at your local station work has continued with the perennial activities that have to be done, such as repainting the platform edge, routine work on the embankments, to try to make them more attractive, (not an easy task, with only a handful of regular volunteers), and general tidying up where possible.

Time, perhaps for the usual reminder that more volunteers would be welcome.

The bridge at the north end of the station has been receiving some much needed attention during the past two or three weeks, and at last the rapidly growing, but unwanted trees that were gaining an ever increasing foothold in the masonry have been removed by the Bridge Team.

Many of you may remember that Peter Lynch, who sadly passed away last November was in charge of that team, a team who are very often overlooked by the majority of visitors, as their vital work often goes on behind the scenes, in all weathers.

Stephen Butt, from **Radio Leicester** very kindly paid us a visit on Wednesday 29th April, to have a look at what is happening here at your local station.

He interviewed some of the staff and will feature us on 10th May at 3.00pm in his very popular Sunday Nostalgia programme, and which, we hope will encourage more Leicester folk to come and see what is happening at our end of the line.

### BUFFET

In addition to our usual offers, our **BUFFET** now has an **extended range of food on offer.**

**We now have a range of freshly prepared sandwiches available, also sausage rolls which can be had either cold or hot.**

### 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](http://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)

**W**ith 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

#### LEICESTER NORTH

0116 261 0946

#### LOUGHBOROUGH CENTRAL

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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

May 2-4: Days Out with Thomas

May 9/10: 40th Anniversary of closure of the GCR

June 7: Collectors' fair and toys and trains

June 13/14: Wartime weekend

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 29-31: Days Out With Thomas

September 12/13: Diesel Gala

September 25-27: Great Central Beer Festival

October 9-11: 'Steam Railway' Gala

October 31-November 1: Wizards Weekend and Halloween Night!

November 5: Bonfire Night