

LEICESTER NORTH

NEWSLETTER

FEB. 2011

No. 37

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

WINTER GALA SUCCESS!

Remarkable, wasn't it? With newspapers reporting on cancelled and delayed trains on the national network, here on the GCR not only did services continue but actually increased, with extra trains being added for the "Santa Special" event, which, by all accounts, was a phenomenal success, (congratulations to all who "braved the elements" to ensure that success.)

Even this station managed to continue to function during the month of December despite the rather sparse timetable (from Leicester North's point of view)

During the month of December, and behind the scenes things were happening, in the form of an awareness drive (via our newsletter) and which is continuing, and has been quite favourably received.

Many more people will now be made aware of our existence, as a result of agreements by various libraries in the city and also the Leicester Tourist Information Offices in Town Hall Square and hopefully soon, 'Radio Leicester' to publicise our station more widely, and it is to be hoped that this will result in an increased footfall during 2011.

Don't forget also that you, our visitors, make very effective ambassadors by telling your friends and families about us, and, of course, an increased profile of this station will also help accelerate improvements here.

The unusually severe weather conditions that we have been experiencing in recent weeks has curtailed, somewhat, our maintenance team's activities, exacerbated by the fact that Mike, our maintenance gang leader, is recuperating from a knee operation, so will be out of action for several weeks, so nothing of note to report at this time, the exception being that Les has been busy repairing the roof of the waiting room, which had been leaking for quite some time owing to damaged tiles, and has necessitated some work inside too. This job has taken longer than originally expect-

ed as the bad weather has restricted the time that he could spend on the slippery roof, but, as will be seen in the waiting room, the ceiling still needs to be completed, which is a bit of a problem though, as Les has now left us (any offers to finish the job?)



There is still no news regarding the occupation of the ill fated "Green Acres" site adjacent to us, but there seems to be almost constant activity there by council workers, so we must continue to be patient and hope that all will be sorted out soon, and hope that by the next issue of this newsletter we will have more definite news to impart.



By the time you read this issue of our newsletter the GWR Auto Coach will have left our railway. It has been wonderful to see something really unusual and indeed, novel, and will be remembered for a long time.

It is a fact, that owing to the GCR's uniqueness in the heritage railway world, such a wide variety of fascinating examples of railway history can be seen to such advantage, not just as museum exhibits but as working examples, for the present generation to experience and enjoy.

With almost a whole season ahead of us, I think it is safe to say that there is every chance that there will be more interesting locos attending the various galas that are scheduled for this year, so watch this space!



At the time of writing, the commercial evaluation on the recent "Winter Steam Gala" is not to hand however, if the number of visitors who utilised Leicester North Station are typical of the railway as a whole, I think it is fair to say that it must have been very successful (the first main event of the year can prove to be a pointer for the year ahead.)

Ticket receipts for the Saturday were thirty per cent up on the same period last year, proving yet again that there are many in the Leicester area who are prepared to use us if the attractions are right.

Or is our ongoing "Awareness Campaign" beginning to bear fruit? If so, then the best is yet to come!

The decision to double-head a couple of trains, leaving a loco behind at our platform No. 1 certainly tempted many to remain who might have not done so, enhancing the station environment and providing opportunities for photographers, which seemed to attract quite a few, by the way.



BUFFET STAFF REQUIRED!

Volunteers urgently needed at this station, particularly buffet staff, please see station master for details

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THE GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY (1899-1969)

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 LEICESTER NORTH

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LOUGHBOROUGH CENTRAL

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Leicester North Arrivals & Departures every Sat. and Sun. from 5th February to 27th March 2011 Except Special Events.

'Special' timetables apply on 'Gala Days', 'Ivor The Engine' events etc!



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 in the Waiting Room.)



If you are wondering how the original station used to look, see the above photograph. It was a typical GCR station with the usual "Island" platform, accessed via a flight of stairs from the bridge. If you look to the left you will see where the original staircase descended from the bridge (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 photo of the original station on the wall of our waiting room.

Pre Beeching the railway continued south, the next main station being Leicester Central, from there continuing on to Whetstone, Lutterworth, Rugby and finally terminating at London St. Marylebone.



VISITORS BOOK

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

Forthcoming Attractions on the GCR

February 12/13: Diesel Running Weekend

February 13: St Valentine's Sunday Luncheon Dining Train

February 14: St Valentine's Pullman Dining

February 26/27: Enthusiasts' Event - Mini Steam Gala

March 5/6: Meet Peppa and George

March 6: Quorn Swopmeet

March 13: Charnwood Borough Council Guided Cycle Ride

March 25-27: 1960s Gala

April 3: Mothering Sunday Luncheon

April 9/10: Mini Steam Gala

April 22-25: Easter Steam Special

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.

Arrivals

10.12. 10.45. 11.45. 12.45. 1.57. 2.45. 4.13.

Departures

10.15. 11.00. 12.00. 1.00. 2.10. 3.00. 4.25

Leaflets advertising 'Drive a Train Experiences', Dining Trains etc available from Waiting Room!