

OLDE WHEELS

The Quarterly Magazine of the Rushden Historical Transport Society

WINTER 2024

ISSUE 265



Free to Members



RHTS.CO.UK



Non-Members £1

A Brief History of the Society

- 1976 Advert placed in Evening Telegraph by the past president Richard Woodcock, 8 people met at the Rose and Crown and RHTS was born.
- 1979 First Cavalcade held in Hall Park, Rushden.
- 1980 RHTS purchase Bristol Lodekka bus "651", the Society flagship.
- 1984 Society obtains lease on Rushden Station Site from NCC
- 1986 Transport Museum opened in the original Waiting Room and the Ladies Waiting Room transformed into a Victorian themed bar
- 1987 Station threatened with demolition
- 1996 Purchased Station site from NCC
- 1998 Society lodges plans to extend railway track towards Higham Ferrers. Arrival of steam loco Barclay 0-4-0, "Edmundsons" and donated by Castle Cement Co Ltd 0-4-0 Sentinel diesel shunter.
- 1999 Excavation of 25,000 cu.yrds waste from railway cutting ,plans grants to lay 700 yards of track beyond Shirley Road Bridge.
- 2000 Sidings laid at back of running line, Gresley Buffet car acquired
- 2002 Arrival of "Cherwell" 0-6-0 , refurbishment of Buffet Car.
- 2003 Ex Rushden fire engine , ENV250T acquired , final payment on HQ
- 2007 Station roof re-slatted with grant assistance.
- 2008 Consultation with NCC regards extension of line beyond Shirley Road bridge, the bridge surveyed and vegetation cleared.
- 2009 HMRI permission to run passenger Heritage train service, Edmundsons back in steam, Bristol bus "651" leaves to go for restoration. 50th anniversary of last passenger train to run on line, opening of railway on 13th June 2009.
- 2011 Opening of phase 2 , extension of line to Prospect Avenue.
- 2012 Cavalcade cancelled due to waterlogged fields
- 2013 Visit of the Duke of Gloucester to the Station
- 2014 Repainting of "Edmundsons" , in preparation for trip to Blaenavon Steam Gala
- 2015 Restoration of Scammel 3tonne Mechanical Horse
- 2016 40th Anniversary of the formation of the Society
- 2017 Goods Shed purchased from NCC , Last running of "Edmundsons" before 10 year boiler service
- 2018 Cavalcade cancelled - waterlogged fields, mini Cavalcade held at Station
- 2019 Goods Shed roof replaced with slate
- 2020 Purchase of 2 Pacer train units , RHTS receives a lifeline grant of £32,000 from Government's £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund.
- 2021 Re-opening of the railway to passenger trains using Pacer units.
- 2022 R.H.T.S. receives funding for improvement to car parking and toilet facilities
- 2023 Shop and waiting room /community room opened on upper platform

OLDE WHEELS

The official magazine of Rushden Historical Transport Society
Charity no. 285535

The Station , Station Approach, Rushden, Northants,
NN10 OAW

Tel. no: 0300 302 3150
Email secretary@rhts.co.uk

R.H.T.S. Board of Trustees 2023

Chairman: Richard Lewis
Vice-Chairman : Robert Smith
Treasurer : n/a
Secretary : n/a
Membership Secretary: Diane Parker
President : John Sugars

Trustees:

David Floyd,
David Chambers, Mark Lawman,
Colin Robinson

Bar Committee 2023

Chairman: Andy Whitehead
Treasurer: David Clipston
Secretary: Sean Lever

Members:

Tony Board, Rod Coleman,
Richard Fereday, Ryan Love, Joss Hart, John
Hynes, Simon Bishop (Cellarman)



RUSHDEN TRANSPORT
MUSEUM & RAILWAY

Registered Charity No: 285535

Mother's Day Afternoon Tea

Sunday 10th March 2024
1.30pm & 3.30pm

Treat Mum to a delicious Afternoon
Tea with a glass of bubbly.
Every Mum will receive a gift

Book online at
www.ticketsource.co.uk/rhts
Price: Adult £20 Children £15

The Buffet Carriage at
Rushden Station
Station Approach, Rushden,
Northants, NN10 0AW
0300 302 3150
www.rhts.co.uk

CONTENTS

TRUSTEE DETAILS.....	3
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT	6
100 YEARS OF MG	8
EVENTS AUTUMN 2023	13
SANTA EVENTS 2023	16
RUSHDEN STATION CATS.....	20
RAF DESBOROUGH	23
EDITOR NOTES	25
RUSHDEN & DISTRICT QUERY MOTOR CLUB – PT 1	26
AN APPRECIATION OF DONALD DAVISON	31
LOST BUILDINGS OF RUSHDEN–BUS DEPOT	34

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE:

All submissions for the next issue should reach the editor (editor@rhts.co.uk) by **28th of March 2024**.

Whilst every effort will be made to include all articles received in *Olde Wheels* they may not appear straight away or, if space is limited, We are always pleased to accept members' photographs for publication.

Front image : Rushden Station—1985—Thomas Tomlin

Rear image—31 206 at St Pancras Station—1987—Nic Joynson via FlickrR

**** Contributions to the newsletter not necessarily the views of trustees or the editor ****



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT– Winter 2024

Comments

I guess that my first comment is that we have actually reached 2024. To some of us it does not seem too long ago that the challenge was to reach the year 2000. Anyway, I trust that we have all recovered from the festive season and are raring to get going in the new year!

This last year has pretty much seen all of our different activities in operation. I believe that we have had a series of successful events organised by a lot of volunteers and we have a good base to build on for future events. The new station waiting room and the shop have been in operation and have proven to be very useful assets. One spinoff is that the waiting room can also be hired out for election-type activities. We now need to sit down across the patch and do some strategic thinking as to what it is we wish to achieve in the longer term. This applies to the railway, vehicles, station bar, the shed, model railway and the museum. We need a cohesive group of activities going forward which will enhance our visitor experiences and increase our ability to raise revenue. I am hoping that some strategic-thinking sessions will be taking place early this New Year.

Activities and Thanks

Since the last Olde Wheels we have continued with a variety of events including Halloween, a craft show, buffets, and the Santa Specials. Well done all round to the many organisers and volunteers who have helped with these events. The Pacer trains have really shown how useful they are for fundraising events. The power of the Internet is clearly demonstrated by the fact that all of the tickets for Halloween and Santa Specials were sold online. Nonetheless, we do need to think about how we keep in contact the large number of non-internet people. It is very noticeable that grandparents now make up a smaller number of attendees at events. We are now starting to organise the events for 2024, and the first Classic Car Show meeting has already taken place. This leads conveniently to the next point!

Volunteers

We do need more volunteers across the patch. This is for the general organisation before events, as well as on the day. Several new members have come forward to help, and it is particularly useful to have some skills with computers! New volunteers also means bringing new ideas which has to be very useful. The railway needs more volunteers to operate the trains. The Pacer trains have shown that they can be very effective fund raisers, but have to have volunteers. We will be arranging some volunteer information events early in the New Year. Any help is always welcome..

Membership

The membership crossed the 500 threshold just before Christmas, something that has not happened for a long time. However, since January is when many renewals are due, there will be some members who decide not to renew and the total number may slip back. You may notice now when you swipe your membership card through the till that a date appears next to your name. Most of the cards have been updated and should all be completed by the end of January. The large date displayed is the date when your membership actually runs out. However, your card will continue to give you the member discount for a further month. But please try to renew before the card stops giving you discount.

The Shed

The shed event season has now finished following a successful two-day Craft Fair, and commercial hire. Many thanks to all who helped with these events. The shed has proved to be a very good venue for events, for example the next Craft Fair has a long waiting list of stall holders wishing to attend. Although a bid was sent to the Heritage Lottery for a new heating system, we fell foul of changes coming in January and consequently have to revise the bid to meet the new criteria. This will be submitted later in January. Quite annoying but out of our hands. A sponsor, Snowdon Homes of Higham Ferrers, has been found to enable us to complete the new toilets, and this work is proceeding steadily. Many thanks to Snowdon Homes for stepping in to fill the gap. We hope to complete the toilets ready for the new season of events.

AGM

As briefly mentioned last time, it has been necessary to move the AGM in order to allow the accounts to be fully completed. The possible shortcomings of previous years, combined with the effects of Covid, have been responsible for this situation. Robert has spent large amounts of time in sorting this out and also setting new procedures in process. I am pleased to say that some additional volunteer help is now on the scene.

RHTS Ltd vis-a-vis CIO

You may recall that we had successfully set up RHTS Ltd as a charitable company limited by guarantee (CCLBG). We have not used this company to date, due to problems with our bank in trying to update signatures, etc. We were then advised that we would need to open new bank accounts for RHTS Ltd. Then followed the killer statement that the bank would not open one for us!! Hence we are looking at other banks. However, the Charity Commission now has a very similar organisation which is basically the same as the Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee which we have set up. This is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The CIO needs a constitution which is basically the Articles of Association already used for the CCLBG, but with a slightly revised order of clauses with some minor additions. Consequently we have revised our Articles into the constitution format needed for a CIO, and are checking with the Charities Commission to see if they are acceptable. The beauty of the CIO is that virtually no changes are required to make the switch, and the same protection is given to members and trustees as with the CCLBG. Sorry it all sounds a bit involved, but definitely time for an update.

Contact

As mentioned, we shall be having some meetings to recruit new volunteers which are needed across the society. Always pleased to have a chat on 07960 950821, or email me via secretary@rhts.co.uk. Alternatively, come down to the station on a Wednesday or Saturday which are volunteer days.

Best regards,

Richard.

100 Years of MG



The convention for the celebration of anniversaries is to start from the date when the event first occurred. The first Morris Garages sports cars were produced in 1923, but the models branded as MG did not appear until 1924. Some celebrations of the 100 years started last year, but the current company is marking 1924 as the date for the celebration.. The company over its 100 years, has had many ups and downs under several different owners.

Morris Garages/MG Car Co. (1923-35)

William Morris started by building bicycles from a premises in Birmingham. He turned his attention to motor cars and sold and repaired various makes from his premises named Morris Garages. In 1922 William Morris appointed his head salesman, a young Cecil Kimber as general manager. The MG name, based on the initials of the garage, first appeared in 1923 on a Kimber bodied bullnose Morris Cowley special. the model recognised today as the first ever MG ,”Old Number One”.



(Above 1923 “Old Number One” - pinterest.com)

The following year 1924 saw a range of MG badged models sold as ‘Kimber Specials’. In 1928 MG production was transferred to an old leather works in Abingdon. During the next few years the company produced many successful models including the M-Type/Midget.

(Opposite 1929 MG M-type Midget, Bonhams Auctions)



Morris Motors /MG Car Co. (1936 -1952)

In 1936 the company came under the control of Morris Motors. One of the first models to be built after MG came under the control of Morris Motors was the 1936 TA Midget, the first of the company’s T-Series sports cars. This model was synonymous with the company’s image during the second world war with RAF pilots. In the period up to the outbreak of the second world war Morris Motors and its MG, Riley, Wolseley and other subsidiaries became part of the Nuffield Organisation. During the war, Cecil Kimber left MG over a dispute about wartime production and sadly lost his life in a train crash in 1945 at Kings Cross station.

(Below: 1936 MG TA - Castle Classic Cars)



US servicemen who came to Britain during the Second World War fell in love with the MG sports car. The first car MG produced after 1945 was the two-seater TC which would find its way to the North American market. This was quickly followed by the 1947 YA saloon, and in 1949 a new version of the T-series of sports car, the TD.

(Opposite: 1947 production of the MG YA saloon and TC sports car)

(Below: MG YA saloon car)



British Motor Corporation (1952-68)

The economic pressures following the Second World War led to the Nuffield Organisation merging with the Austin Motor Company to form the British Motor Corporation (BMC) in 1952. The T-series of sports cars continued with the 1953 TF sports car based on a chassis frame design over 20 years old.

(Right: 1953 MG TF - SussexClassicCars)



In the 1950s there was a growing trend of badge engineering within the BMC group and the ZA Magnette, based on a Wolseley 4/44, was introduced. This was MG's first mono-coque bodied car. It only sold in moderate numbers, but was a forerunner of many more badge-engineered MGs to come.

(Left: 1956 MG Magnette - image Wikipedia)

In 1956 the TF series was replaced by the MGA which was a big step forward from the previous sports cars. This car was a great export success, with over 90,000 exported in its six years of production. 1961 saw the MG Midget, a smaller sports car than the MGA based on the Austin Healey Sprite.

(Right: 1960 MGA - image: H & H classics)



1962 saw the MGA replaced by the MGB which went on to become an international best seller. Sales for the MGB, MGC and MGB GT V8 combined totalled 523,836 cars in its 18 year production run.

In 1966 BMC merged with Jaguar to become British Motor Holdings and 2 years later with the Leyland Motor Corporation to become British Leyland.

(Left: MG MGB - Classic Cars and Campers)

British Leyland – (1968-1986)

The merger that created BL resulted in some rationalisation in the use of engines from within the group for MG models, such as the 3 litre six-cylinder engine used in a version of the MGB known as the MGC. This model was distinguished by a raised bonnet to accommodate the new engine.

(Right: MGC 1968 - image treasuredcars.com)



During the 1970s, there were no new MG models apart from a V8 version of the MGB GT. The MG name was regarded as just another marque. The MG-badged 1100 ceased production in 1973, followed by the Midget in 1979, and the MGB in 1980 with the closure of the Abingdon factory.



Austin Rover Group – (1986-2000)

In 1982, BL created the Austin Rover Group and the MG name was revived with the introduction of a range of badge-engineered cars based on the Metro, Maestro and Montego. But in 1988, in yet another change of ownership, the company was sold to British Aerospace.

In 1992, the company introduced in limited numbers the RVR8; a two-seater convertible based on the MGB bodyshell, with a 3.9 litre V8 engine. This was an exercise to test the market for a new MG sports car. In 1994, British Aerospace sold the Austin Rover group to BMW. The new owners provided cash to develop a new MG sports car; the mid-engine 1.8 litre MGF, which was unveiled in spring 1995.

(Right: MGF—Image MG Car Club)



MG Rover – (2000-2005)

BMW sold the Rover Group's car and engine manufacturing assets to the Phoenix Consortium in 2000 and the revived company was renamed MG Rover. An expansion to the MG range followed in 2001 when MG Rover launched three badge engineered MGs based on the existing front-wheel drive Rovers. These were the Rover 25 based MG-ZR, mid-sized 45 based ZS and larger Rover 75 based ZT.

2002 saw the introduction of the MG TF 2 seater sports car replacing the MGF and for a number of years was Britain's best selling 2 door sport car. The company was in need of new models and entered into negotiations with several prospective partners. In April 2005 car production at Longbridge came to halt when the company went bankrupt.



(Above: MG ZT—Image Classic Car Auctions)

NAC MG UK – (2005-2009)

The remains of the company were acquired by the Chinese Nanjing Automotive Company and renamed NAC MG UK Ltd. Assembly equipment from Longbridge was exported to China. MG ZR and MG ZT cars were produced in China for the Chinese market. The MG TF resumed production at Longbridge in September 2008 with a limited edition of 500 cars. In the next couple of years, further limited editions of the TF were built at Longbridge. In 2007, Nanjing Automotive merged with the Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation and a new chapter in MG's history was about to get underway.



(Above: MG TF LE500—image autocar.co.uk)

MG Motor UK – (2009-present)

The first new MG car was launched in 2011. Built at Longbridge from CKD kits imported from China, the MG6 was a five-door hatchback with a 1.8 turbocharged engine. The car was not a great sales success, with under 3,000 sold during the five years on sale in the UK, but it did re-establish a dealer network selling the MG brand. It was the MG3 small hatchback that put the company back on the map, selling almost 30,000 examples since 2013.

(Right: MG6 GT - Image Motormatch)



Now, in 2023 the company is on track to sell almost 80,000 vehicles this year. Sadly production no longer takes place in this country, although development of MG-badged vehicles takes place at a London-based design studio. There are rumours of a new MG factory in Europe in the near future, but it is uncertain whether it will be in the UK.

The company will return to the sports car market in 2024 with the MG Cyberster. This car is all electric and quite large; Jaguar XJK size. Hopefully, a smaller sports car will appear in the future, perhaps MGB size? As a brand, the future of MG is assured for the long term, and let us hope in the form of a UK-based production facility.

(Below : MG Cyberster—image Carwow)



EVENTS AUTUMN 2023

1940'S WEEKEND—15/16th OCTOBER 2023



This year's 1940s weekend took place on the Station platform, organised by the Bar Committee. Dance lessons with the Swingsters took place over the whole weekend, whilst on Sunday "Winston Churchill" made an appearance with May Blossom. Well done to Joanne, John, Peter and all the helpers from the bar and buffet car for the weekend.



HALLOWEEN 2023—27/28th October 2023

After the success of the past Halloween events this year saw two Halloween evenings in order to meet the potential demand for tickets. The event ran on the Friday and Saturday evenings. Tickets once more sold with over 900 passengers enjoying the event.. Thanks must go to all the volunteers from the Society who dressed up for the event, without you none of this would be possible.. Some of the comments from our lovely visitors are shown below.



Thank you to all the staff that made this awesome for kids x "

\ Brilliant event. well planned for both adults and children



*Well done to all!!
The station looked amazing!*

CRAFT FAIR – November 24/25th 2023

The 2023 Christmas Evening Craft Fair has become a favourite event with a long waiting list for crafters and traders who want to come along to the event. This year entertainment for the evening was provided by “Standing In The Wings” (local performing arts theatre group based in Rushden). Emphasis was put on supporting local businesses with over 45 traders taking part.



Santa Events 2023

For 2023, Christmas events were run on three consecutive weekends during late November and December. For the first and third weekend Santa Special trains were operated from the Station. The second weekend saw a collaboration between the railway and buffet car offering “Brunch with Santa” and a Christmas Afternoon tea on the Sunday.

This year the Santa Specials events offered 1500 seats, over 86% on the seats were sold. Santa this year had a new grotto constructed in the waiting room on the top platform. (see following article :)

Thanks must go to the volunteers from the Society and some of their family member for performing a variety of roles at the event, this included being a Christmas Elf , operating the train, working in the buffet car, working in the shop, administration of the ticket sales and of course Santa and Mrs Claus. A special thanks to DGF Control Systems, Terra Projects, R S Jumps and Standing In The Wings for building the Grotto and Santa’s sleigh.



The “Brunch with Santa” event provided children with a train ride, brunch in the buffet car and a visit from Santa including a present. A second “Brunch with Santa” session was held for children with autism and sensory needs. Both events were full for each session and very well received by the children and parents with many complimentary remarks received from the parents on our facebook pages. On the first Saturday of the New Year “Mince Pie Special” trains were run for the afternoon.

Creating a Christmas Scene

Mention Christmas and, depending on your age, Santa is one of the first things that springs to mind. Knowing that family events are a key part of the RHTS calendar, the wheels started turning to create something special for the younger members of the community.

Calling on the support of several local businesses, Amber our events administrator started planning Santa's Grotto 2023. Now, the brilliant danger is, when you ask a theatre company, an equestrian fencing company (all about the transferrable skills!) and two electrical companies to get involved, it's always going to be bigger than you might have visualised. And that's exactly what happened when DGF Control Systems, Terra Projects, R S Jumps and Standing In The Wings jumped at the chance to collaborate and develop Amber's ideas into this year's grotto reality.

Having discussed the initial plans, the ideas inevitably grew and, once a final design was confirmed in early November, R S Jumps set about cutting the picket fence to size, along with the walls and features for the grotto. Standing In The Wings then arrived armed with paintbrushes to turn plain timber into cosy red walls, frosty picket fences and snowy icecaps.

Working behind the scenes, Terra Projects and DGF Control Systems were calculating how much power was going to be needed for the lights and mirror ball intended to create some festive fun in the grotto. Standing In The Wings also began gathering decorations for inside and outside the grotto to create a magical scene.

Fast forward to early December, and the station platform was waiting for the installation to begin. Once the picket fence was up, rope lights were added to the fencing and trellis entranceway with real fir trees. A red sleigh, snow effect carpets, a red carpet for our VIP guests, and an inflatable Santa and Snowman all presented a great spectacle for those passing RHTS. It was finished with a large postbox, complete with two wicker owls, ready to accept all the letters to Santa with present requests and wishlists from the visiting children.



Inside one of the sheds, the grotto was being installed - a comfy, homely house for Mr and Mrs Claus to welcome lots of local children. Along with the sparkling mirror ball, there were holly garlands, an inviting leather armchair, a crackling fire, greetings cards from some well known friends and, of course, plenty of presents for visitors.

Twelve hours later, and the scene was set for the arrival of the Santa Special and the families booked in for the event. Santa and Mrs Claus were settled into their new home for the weekend and seemed very happy with the facilities.



The team were delighted to be at the platform when the first train of guests arrived, and to see the expressions of joy on the faces parents and children alike. Their cries of ‘Look!’ and ‘Wow!’ certainly made it all worth the effort!

All four companies thoroughly enjoyed working together, and working alongside RHTS to create something special for 2023. They have already started planning what might be possible for 2024 so watch this space. It’s already sounding very exciting!

For more information about the teams behind the installation, please visit their websites and social media pages:

DGF Control Systems - www.dgfcontrolsystems.co.uk / Facebook: D G F Control Systems Ltd / Instagram: dgfcontrolsystems

Terra Projects - Facebook: Terra projects

R S Jumps - www.rsjumps.co.uk Facebook: R S Jumps / Instagram: rs_jumps17

Standing In The Wings - www.standinginthewings.co.uk / Facebook: Standing In The Wings / Instagram: standinginthewings1



Charity No:
285535

RUSHDEN HISTORICAL TRANSPORT SOCIETY

Rushden Classic Car Show

Sunday 4th August 2024
Hall Park, Rushden
11am - 4pm



**CLASSIC CARS - FOOD & DRINK -
TRADE STANDS & MORE**

Exhibitors book a space for your classic car
online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/rhts

£5 per car exhibit plus a booking fee

Public entry by donation on the day

(suggested minimum donation of £3 per person or £10 per family)



Kindly supported by Rushden Town Council

Sponsored by Kingtools

administrator@rhts.co.uk



0300 302 3150 www.rhts.co.uk

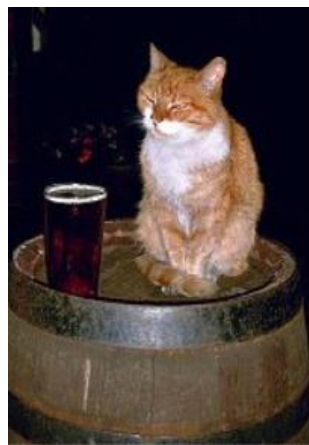
 RHTSCARRALLY

RUSHDENRAILWAYSTATION



RUSHDEN STATION CATS

There are lots of famous felines living in railway stations across the country. Some have thousands of Facebook friends, others have released their own book, and one has even enjoyed a promotion in ranks to 'Senior Pest Controller'. The original Station Cat at Rushden came onboard in 1997. It was affectionately known as the "Mk1 Cat" or simply "The Station Cat". The cat died in 2006 and was buried in the flower bed at the side of the Station platform with a headstone (see images right and below).



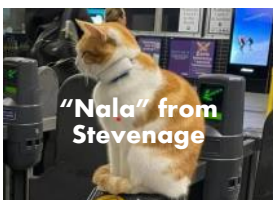
"Alfie" arrived, or rather "turned up" at the Station as a stray, in 2007 and decided to make the place his home. He became the star of the "Rushden Station Cat" Facebook page and his fame spread around the globe. Alfie became ill in June 2017 and despite the best effort of the vet and his carers, he died on 12 June 2017. Later that year a memorial was erected next to that of the previous station cat in November 2017.



A replacement “Alfie” was found in 2020; a rescue cat “Thomas” who arrived via a Cat Charitable organisation. He was found to be the ideal cat for the Station, feisty but friendly. Thomas soon became a favourite with the customers, visitors and Facebook followers. Like his predecessor “Alfie”, he receives gifts from all over the world. One of the furthest was from New Zealand in 2022. Now aged seven, “Thomas” carries on the traditional role of a friendly, streetwise cat at the local railway station. To see the latest news about “Thomas”, why not follow “Rushden station cat present and past” Facebook page.



Other Station Cats



UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

MAR 10 Mother's Day Afternoon Tea

MAR 31 Easter Bunny Express

APR 7 Spring Wedding Show

Jun 29 Armed Forces Day

Jun 29 1940's Dance for AFD

AUG 4 Classic Car Show

For more info see:
www.rhts.co.uk



[rushdenrailwaystation](https://www.facebook.com/rushdenrailwaystation)

RAF DESBOROUGH

RAF Desborough, was a former Royal Air Force airfield north of the town of Desborough, Northamptonshire. It was built during 1942/43 by Tarmac Ltd. as a Class A airfield intended for use by heavy bomber and transport aircraft (in accordance with the relevant Air Ministry specification). It had three tarmac runways, 29 hard standings, four type T2 aircraft hangers and one type B1 aircraft hangar. The accommodation for personnel was temporary, with dispersed camps to the south of the flying field.

The airfield opened in 1943, and was home to the following units during its three years of operation until 1946.

- No.84 OTU – Operational Training Unit, September 1943 to June 1945
- No.102 FRS – Refresher School
- No.108 EGS / E108 EGS – Gliding School, formed in May 1944 to train on transport and glider tugs with Dakota and Horsa gliders.
- No.1381 (Transport) CU – Transport Conversion Unit, October 1945 using Dakota aircraft

With the introduction of new heavy bombers such as the Avro Lancaster and Handley Page Halifax, the Royal Air Force required a programme to train crews to operate these heavy bombers. Part of the programme was an assignment to an operational training unit to gain experience before final posting to operational squadrons. RAF Desborough was home to the No.84 OTU to train crews in night flying using Vickers/Wellington aircraft.



After the airfield closed in 1946 the land was used for agriculture. The hangars have become home to several local businesses. In 2015 planning permission for a solar farm was granted, but the development did not proceed. However, planning permission has been approved once again for a new project which is due to start construction in 2024. It is projected to supply enough electricity to power 15,000 households.

Philip Bettles & Catharine Young

Training Accident at Desborough 1944

Unfortunately, RAF Desborough being an Operational Training Unit, accidents due to weather or technical problems happened quite frequently. One such accident occurred on the evening of September 5th 1944.

The Vickers Wellington X HF570 with a crew of six took off from RAF Desborough at 21:10 hours for a night navigation training flight. At the end of the exercise at around 02:00 hours the crew had received permission to reduce height to 1000 feet in preparation for landing. On approach to the airfield the starboard engine failed, leading to an emergency landing. The landing went badly and the plane hit a tree and crashed into a paddock on Feakin's Farm in Harrington Road. Three members of the crew lost their lives in the crash: Pilot officer Reg Byrne (23) of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF); and Royal Air Force Voluntary Reserve (RAFVR) members Sgt. Bill Barnett (32) and Sgt, Eddie Brisbane (19).



A memorial marking the site of the air crash was unveiled in 2022 by the families of the crew members who lost their lives. Made of York Stone, with an engraved granite plaque, it is dedicated to the three men, and also to other airmen who lost their lives while stationed at RAF Desborough with bomber command's No.84 Operational Training Unit. The memorial was erected after one of the airmen's family from Australia got in touch with local historians in Desborough. The Desborough Civic Society then negotiated with a housing developer for a grant and the use of an area in the new housing estate to be used for remembrance.



Editor Notes

A Happy New Year to all our members. It has been a sad end to 2023, with the loss of one of our active members over the past decade. Donald Davison drove the class 31's based at Rushden from the reopening of the line in 2009 until the pause in railway operations in 2018. Sadly, Donald's son-in-law Derek (who was also a former member of the Society) passed away a few days prior to Donald's passing in mid-December.

As a tribute to Donald, I've included an article "Dedication to Donald Davison" from a 2016 edition of Olde Wheels.

Sadly, another member who recently passed away was Gordon Thacker of Kingsmead Park, Rushden. Gordon was one of the original founder members of the Society when formed in 1976. He served on the main committee for several decades, and his contribution to the Society was immense. R.I.P. Gordon.

Another sad loss is that of Pete Newman. Pete had served on the bar committee for many years even when not in the best of health. He was a member of that committee up until his passing this month. He will be sadly missed by all his friends at the Station, especially in the bar. Let us raise our glasses to Pete.

As we all know the effect of inflation over the past two years has put pressure on many of the activities undertaken by the Society. The Olde Wheels magazine is no exception. The price of postage is the main culprit and, unfortunately, this cost will now have to be passed on to members if they wish to receive a copy of the magazine outside our main catchment areas.

I would be grateful if you could convey your wishes regarding how you would like your future copies of Olde Wheels delivered. Included in this edition is a slip to send to the Society when renewing your membership by post. I've decided to re-introduce the option of picking up your copy from the Station Bar. However, when important documents (e.g. AGM notices) need to be included in the distribution, this option will be suspended and the magazines will be posted out or sent by email.

The options will be:

- i) Collect from the Station Bar
- ii) Electronic Copy
- iii) Distributed by our volunteers (Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irchester, Raunds, Finedon, Irthlingborough, Stanwick and Chelveston.)
- iv) Posted to your home address by Royal Mail (this option will incur a £3.50 surcharge on your membership to cover postage.)

Finally, I am very grateful to all our contributors to the magazine during the past year. I would love to receive more and diverse contributions from all parts of the society. Please contact me at cathisadamond99@hotmail.co.uk with suggestions or feedback.

Catharine Young

RUSHDEN AND DISTRICT QUERY MOTOR CLUB – PART 1 1931 –1940

By Richard Lewis

I was a member of RDQMC from around 1963 until the early 1980s when the club essentially faded away. Over the years I have collected a large amount of information, pictures etc., and also given the occasional talk. Sadly, most of the members are now no longer with us and as I am writing this it is eight days away from the funeral of another very old ex-member. But as you can see, I joined the club some sixty years ago so any former members will now be very well advanced in age! I have decided to write these articles in four, hopefully compact, parts. In the early days the photographic records are very limited, but from the early 1950s records improved. There were also several years of reduced activity during the Second World War.

And so to the club in which I spent many happy years. The Rushden and District Query Motor Club, RDQMC, was formed on February 25th 1931 at a meeting in the Railway Hotel (assumed now Wetherspoons) in Rushden, when twenty-nine members were present.

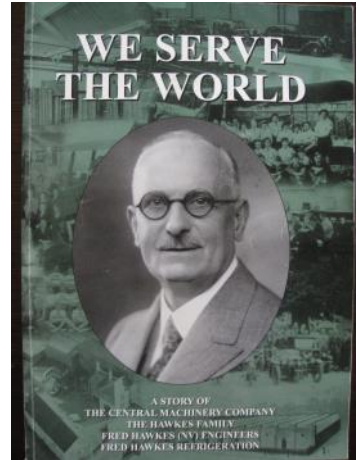
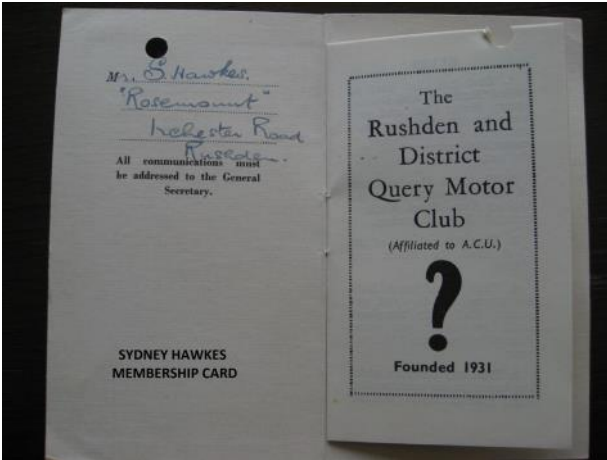


Above: Railway Hotel circa 1950 (from Hearts and Souls website)

The objective of the club was: “The encouragement and protection of Motor Car and Cycle interests in this district. The club endeavours to meet the requirements of both competition rider and the tourist by organising various Sporting events, Social events and picnic runs, lectures etc., throughout the year”. By the third annual meeting, the membership had risen to over one hundred.

The members were generally well known in the local community and were mostly owners of motorcycles, this being well before the days of widespread car ownership. The name “Query” seems to have stemmed from not knowing what to call the club, and the suspicion is that the name was “borrowed” from the Leicester Query Motor Club which was very successful at the time.

One of the founding members and the first secretary was local business man Sidney Hawkes who established the Central Machinery Company, Fred Hawkes Engineers and Fred Hawkes Refrigeration. His original membership card is shown below left:



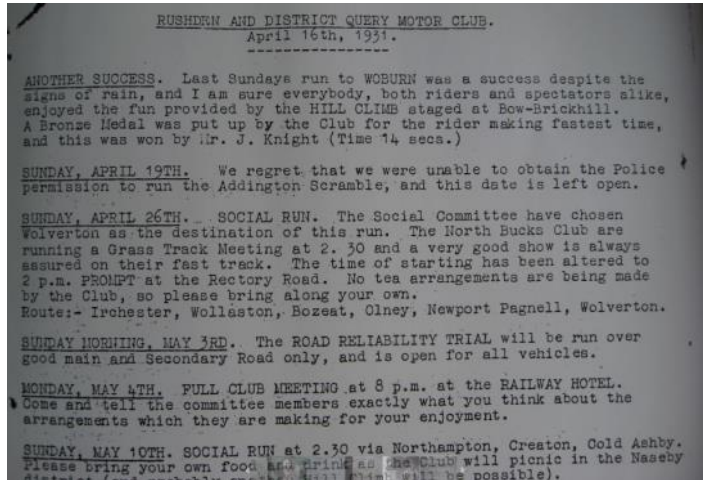
In 2004, a book about Sidney Hawkes was prepared by Eric Fowell called 'We Serve The World' and one chapter is devoted to RDQMC (I wrote some of it). The front cover of the book is above right. Unfortunately, the Fred Hawkes businesses have all since disappeared now but the name is still visible on one of the factories in Portland Road in Rushden.

The club set off with an amazing number of events in their first year which included: four motorcycle trials, four motorcycle hill climbs, four dances at the Windmill Club, eight Social Runs/visits, an aeroplane trip, and the Annual Dinner. The visits included trips to Pye Radio, Clacton, Ketton Cement, Whipsnade Zoo, Leicester Speedway, Wolverhampton and the Thames Valley. In their first full year, 1932, they organised 52 events including the first motor cycle 'All Night Trial' which ended in Great Yarmouth. They also helped with the local Carnival Fete and Parade, and this association continued until the club ran out of active members some 60 years later. On April 5th 1932, the club hired an Argosy aircraft owned by Imperial Airways to take twenty members from Croydon airfield to Sywell airfield – at a hire cost of £6.10! , those were the days I guess! The club raised considerable funds as can be seen from the article on the right from the Evening Telegraph reporting the 1932 Annual General meeting.



The 1932 AGM was held at the Waverly Temperance Hotel in the High Street, Rushden. The club started a monthly newsletter which continued throughout the life of the club. These records have survived in several large books. An extract from one of the first, dated April 16th 1931, is shown below.

The range of events being organised is clearly shown in this short extract. All of these events were for motor cycles and it is seen that motor cycle scrambles featured from the start. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, I have managed to collect very few really early competition photographs. I have collected information from as many former members who could find anything, copied information originally held by Eric Folwell, and there is quite a lot of additional information on the Rushden History Society 'Hearts and Soles' website.



1931 also saw the setting up of a joint 'inter club reliability trial' which was called the 'Three Counties Rally'. This involved four clubs from Northants, Beds and Bucks. The event was held on public roads and required the route to be

Three Counties Trophy Inter-Club Team Trial, September 18th, 1938

AVERAGE SPEED 24 M.P.H. ALL CHECKS WILL BE INDICATED BY WHITE CARD
From Start to Turn R (s.p. Newport) equals 4.4 miles. Check your Speedometer error.
ALL GATES MUST BE CLOSED

MILES	ROUTE	TIME
0	OLNEY, Market Sq., R (s.p. Weston Underwood), R (s.p. Ravenstone) bear L thro' village, S.O., R (s.p. Newport), L (s.p. Gayhurst) to Main Rd., S.O., R (s.p. Tathall End) to	2.30
7.6	TATHALL END, R (s.p. Hanslope), R (s.p. Hartwell), S.O. towards Hartwell, L (s.p. Bozenham Mill), bear R then L to	2.49
10.8	CHECK, S.O. then L (s.p. Grafton), S.O. over canal to	2.57
13.2	GRAFTON, bear L to Main Rd., L, R (s.p. Towcester), L (s.p. Stony Stratford), R (s.p. Deanshanger), L (s.p. Puxley), in 1 mile approx. R along grass track, follow road to	3.3
19.6	ROSE & CROWN INN, S.O., Fork R, R at Church, L, thro' Wicken towards Leckhampstead, S.O. (s.p. Lillingstone) to	3.19
22.8	LECKHAMPSTEAD, S.O. then L (s.p. Lillingstone), L at Cross Rds. (s.p. Akeley) to Main Rd., L and 1st. L (s.p. Leckhampstead) to	3.27
27.6	CHECK, L then R (s.p. Buckingham), L (s.p. Foscott), Fork R at Church to Main Rd., L then R (s.p. Thornboro'), R in village (s.p. Padbury), S.O. over Cross Rds., bear R (s.p. Padbury) to Main Rd., L, R at Cross Rds. (s.p. Padbury Station) to	3.39

MOTOR CYCLE TIME TRIAL INSTRUCTIONS 1938

covered at a constant average speed, typically 30 mph. The winning club was the one whose three best riders had the lowest aggregate number of penalties. This event was held every year. An example of route instructions

The Evening Telegraph reported regularly on the activities of the club, and an extract for formation of the Three Counties Rally is shown right. Every annual event had a trophy to be held by the winning club or member, and individual replicas were presented to the winning members. The Three Counties Trophy was purchased for a cost of £15, which is about £1000 at today's value. Many trophies were presented over the years by individual members or companies.

MOTOR CLUB.—Sunday proved to be a red letter day in the first year of the Rushden and District Query Motor Club. Club officials were jointly responsible (with officials from four other local motor clubs), for the arrangement of an inter-club reliability trial, which is to be known as the "Three Counties Trial," and which is to be run as an annual event. A total of 88 entries was received and the 14 members of the Rushden club, who started from Olney at approximately 2.30 p.m. completed the 60 miles course in the required time.



A few years ago, the Rushden History Society sent me a photograph of a winners' replica which had been presented to G.W. Gell in 1937. The club's old minute books tell us how long the recipient served as a committee member.

Left: The early trophy is for the Three Counties Rally – the ITCC standing for Inter Counties Time Trial.

The incredible fundraising of the club, and thus charitable donations made, is shown in the cutting on the right from the Evening Telegraph.

In its first three years, the club raised over £380, which is the equivalent of over £18,000 today. Most of the money raised was given to local charities.

On that quite amazing financial point, I will finish Part 1 of the RDQMC story, covering the years up to 1940.

**ONE POUND A WEEK
FOR CHARITY**

**FINE THREE-YEARS RECORD OF
RUSHDEN QUERY MOTORISTS**

NEW TRIALS LEAGUE

Some interesting figures came to light on Monday night at the third annual meeting of the Rushden and District Query Motor Club. Mr. F. G. Deane, financial secretary, explained that dances—their main source of income—had raised during the three years of the club's existence, a total of £380/1/5, which represented an attendance of 7,507 and an average per dance of 577. The total sum paid to charity was £147, or an average of about £1 a week since they started!

Standing In The Wings &
Rushden Historical Transport Society
Invite You To

Spring Wedding Fair

Sunday 7th April 2024, 11am - 3pm

Rushden Goods Shed, John Clark Way
Rushden, NN10 0FW

Bridalwear, Cakes, Catering, Florists, Decor
Stylists, Menswear, Photographers, Venues
and much more...



Free Entry Free Parking * Bar Open

weddings@standinginthewings.co.uk



(Reg Charity 285535)

www.rhts.co.uk

www.standinginthewings.co.uk/weddings

All details correct at time of going to print

AN APPRECIATION OF DONALD DAVIDSON

The president of the Rushden
Historical Transport Society



Donald was born in Banffshire on 1 January 1939.

He started work on the railway on 25 October 1954 at Perth South depot number 63A, an ex Caledonian Railway shed. He worked from 8 AM to 4 PM as a cleaner which involved cleaning, fire raising and preparation of locos for traffic on six days a week.

In January 1955 he was promoted to passed cleaner, became then acting fireman and went on to 3 shifts.

After the 1955 strike he went to Oban where he worked up to 4 cattle trains per night. He was not passed for main line working so they sent him out 'banking'. This was the term for using a light engine to assist trains over the heavily graded line to Connel Ferry.

In April 1956 he went on loan to Crieff to release drivers so they could be taught to drive the newly introduced diesel railcars.

In June 1956 he went to Blair Atholl on loan/relief for regular staff to take annual leave

In August 1956 he went back to Crieff on loan for them also to take annual leave and to learn the diesel rail cars.



Friday, 20 May 1960 Donald was involved with the B.B.C. television programme "Railway Roundabout" when crewing 2 Caledonian 4-4-0 Pickersgill locos, engines No 54485 and 54486, working the Royal mail from Perth to Inverness.

You can watch programme on You Tube by visiting this link:

<http://bit.do/railround>

(P B White House & J Adams were the editors and producers of the series of films produced between 1958 & 1962).

In 1967 Donald was made surplus to requirements and had to work three shifts but the foreman was not allowed



to use him as the depot had to work on its complement. A sort of demarcation resulting from loss of work through closures.

In June 1968 after getting his redundancy papers, he applied for a vacancy at



Kings Cross. On 12 August 1968 he left Perth to start at King's Cross. First accommodation was at Ilford hostel and in May 1970 moved to a house in Hatfield.

"I met Ellen and got married in 1959 and now have three children Roseann, Danita and Calum. We moved to Rushden in 2006 and in the summer of that year Ellen and I had a walk to Rushden party in the Park. As we walked past the Rushden transport tent we were approached by Andy West who invited us to see photos of the station. Amongst these photos was the class 31



loco and I said that that was the first loco I had learned to drive at the Ilford training school. Andy said that if I came up on Wednesday to the station he would introduce me to Dave Chambers the owner of the class 31 loco and the rest is history."

Footnote from Dave Chambers:

Meeting with Donald! Luck on my part, misfortune on his? In any event we have worked together in relative harmony for about nine years, mostly in renovation of the class 31's. When I acquired 31206, I had very little knowledge of the mechanics and none whatsoever about driving the thing so Donald's arrival was a Godsend. Many hours we've spent often on very mundane tasks within the locos, clearing years of debris or scraping down prior to painting. It was during these times that Donald has shared with me stories of operating incidents (mostly

humorous), also of old railway company practises/prejudices that have persisted into recent years. The old pre-grouping companies were very protective of their work and routes and could be the cause of much friction especially at joint depots such as Perth. Perth was home to some of the top locos, Gresley A4's and my favourite, Stanier Big Lizzies that Donald used to work to Carlisle. Still a member of ASLEF over 60 years, the finale to his career was driving the intercity 225 up Flying Scotsman train into Kings Cross and thence his retirement.

Of course his interest in railways did not end there as we are endlessly maintaining and servicing our two class 31's. On running days nothing gives Donald greater pleasure than enlightening our public and showing the enthusiasts around.

Dave Chambers



Lost Buildings of Rushden (Newton Road Bus Garage)

Although not one of the most attractive buildings the United Counties Bus Depot in Newton Road was a good example of 1930's industrial buildings. The depot was located on the corner of Rectory Road and Newton Road, the current site of Lidl supermarket. The building was the first United Counties Bus Depot in the area, built in 1936.. It was built to a design still seen in another local United Counties (Stagecoach) depot in Kettering..



An air-raid shelter was incorporated into the building before the outbreak of the second world war. The canteen was opened on the first floor of the depot in 1948. The depot had its own set of traffic lights to control entry on to Newton Road. (see right)



The Society's own Bristol Lodekka bus "651" was based at the depot from new in Feb 1964 until the closure of the depot in 1980 when the bus was withdrawn from service. (see above left — image Bristol Lodekka survivors website.)



(Left: the depot shortly after closure in 1980- Northants Live)

When the Rushden depot closed in 1980 it was taken over by local builders' merchants Toselands who moved there from Albert Road. When they moved out in 1990, the Council took over the site and in June 1983 the building and yard was opened as a recycling centre.



(above: Rushden Recycling centre- image www.rushden-heritage.org)

The site was closed as a recycling centre in 2014. It was demolished to make way for a new supermarket and car park.

(all images; www.rushden-heritage.org)





Class 31 206, currently owned by committee member Dave Chambers at St. Pancras Station 1987
(image by permission of Nic Joynson—Flickr)