

OLDE WHEELS

The Quarterly Magazine of the Rushden Historical Transport Society

WINTER 2025

ISSUE 269



Free to Members



RHTS.CO.UK



Non-Members £1

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 loco Barclay 0-4-0, "Edmundsons" and 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
- 2006 Improvements to track layout and Museum site.
- 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 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 mini Cavalcade held at the 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 new toilet facilities
- 2024 Society purchase carriage from class 309 for use on railway to increase capacity.
- 2025 - Grant awarded from Mick George to repair and renew Goods Shed floor

OLDE WHEELS

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

**The Station , Station Approach, Rushden,
Northants, NN10 0AW**

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

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DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE:

All submissions for the next issue should reach the editor (editor@rhts.co.uk) by **18th of May 2025**.

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 images : Class 31 “206” undergoing repainting Autmn 2025.

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



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT—Winter 2024

I noticed that my report last time was a bit lengthy and each time it is not easy to come up with a whole new range of comments. So I will try to be briefer! We have had a pretty busy time since the last edition but this is the quieter time until April. This does mean that our fund raising is much quieter but our overheads continue and are increasing. New ideas for fund raising events are very welcome.

Last time we thought that the AGM would be in December, but a later date of Monday March 31st has been set. More details on this later.

This does mean that by the time you are reading this there will be about 2 months before the AGM and it is essential that we have some new blood for trustees – as I may have mentioned before!

Activities and Thanks

We have had a pretty successful run with events on the railway, shed, buffet carriage and the bar and also with the museum opening.

Many thanks to everyone who helped in any way and to the hidden members working away on the keyboards.

The programme for 2025 is being prepared with the largest fund raiser now being the Classic Car Show. This latter event will be taking place on Sunday August 3rd in Hall Park – and any help will be appreciated. Last year we had around 115 marshals and could still do with a few more!

Membership

The number continues around the 510 mark. Each year we gain around 60 members but also about 50 do not renew. Also, we are not very good at welcoming new members. Although in some cases members only join to mainly use the station bar, and why not, most new members list the activities that they are interested in and could help. Although Mojo, our membership data base, sends out a welcoming email, since nearly everyone has mobile phone now, a phone call to new members would be a good thing to do and see how they can work in. If someone would like to do this telephoning, then please let us know!

There is a Special General Meeting on January 20th which should remove a membership application anomaly. This will remove the need for a proposer and seconder, which is basically how we operate, and make us fully inclusive.

Gift Aid

Just a brief update on this one. I think we have now got the procedure sorted out properly. At present we cannot claim this on membership subscriptions since members have a benefit at the bar with lower prices. However we are looking into this situation. We can claim on donations but please tick the Gift Aid box that you agree to this - anyone who wants to sign up to Gift Aid please let us know. A real bonus is that we can claim on bucket collection donations up to £8k pa, which is ideal for the car show. All donations are very welcome and Gift Aid can add 25% to the donation. Donations with your membership fee or dropped in the Membership Box in the bar are very welcome – and many thanks to everyone who has made donations already.

Grant Applications

Unfortunately the Government Levelling Up grant of £610k for major developments on the railway, which we had been advised by North Northants Council that we would obtain, has gone the same way with the new government as Pensioners Winter Fuel Payments. NNC are continuing to make approaches to HMG but I think we must assume it is lost. This means about 400 charitable groups across the country have also lost similar sizes of grants – there were about 10 in each county.

We have been successful with a Mick George grant to lay a new damp proofed concrete screed on the shed floor. This will eliminate the ingress of water and also give us a really smooth floor. This work will be done in early February.

An application has also gone in to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a heating system for the shed. At the time of writing there was still about 4 weeks to go before a decision is known so fingers crossed.

It is difficult to see the Society raising the funds for major projects and hence the reliability on grants. There are many sources for grants and the Society, as a good community facility which caters for a wide range of people, can be well placed to apply. Let us know of any projects, but preparation is the key!

Strategic Plan

We have been working to a notional Strategic Plan and as a result we obtained the funding for the shed car park and toilets. Similarly the now lost Levelling Up Grant was to use this plan.

However, a meeting has been held to discuss the overall way forward and I hope to publish this in the not too distant future, but it is largely following the notional plan.

Shed Bar

The shed bar was made as a small unit originally and then extended. Although a lot of work went into the bars, the layout never really worked for staff and customers. As I write the shed bar has been largely stripped down. We will be using as much of the original as possible, so that work will not be wasted, but to produce a single long bar with end staff access. This bar will be mainly a bottle bar which fits in much better with the event type of activity. Many thanks to the volunteers on this work.

Site Jobs Sub Committee

This group has been set up primarily by newer members who have joined and worked on lots of jobs that the shed needed, but have now been completed. This group now looks at jobs across the site and has lists. Work is done on Wednesdays and Saturdays normally and any craftsman or pair of hands is very welcome. Please contact us if you can help.

Volunteers

Same comments essentially as last time. We have to organise events in order to pay the bills and try to generate additional funds for the future development of the society.

We will be organising a Volunteer Day shortly when the site will be fully open and members will be available to chat about what is needed. Also members to help with our events are needed as also mentioned last time.

CIO

The wheels are now in motion for the change to

The CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) which will take place on April 1st 2025. This timescale is a bit later than originally thought, but has several benefits. This date also sets the AGMs date which will be held on Wednesday 16th April. This timing was made in conjunction with the Society accountants since his will give 6 months of the existing structure and also coincides closely with the tax year ending. The next CIO year will end on March 31st 2026. This also means that future AGMs will be held in the warm summer rather than the cold winter.

Contact

I have only covered some aspects of our activities and I am always pleased to have a chat about any items on 07960 950821 or via secretary@rhts.co.uk. Alternatively come down to the station on a Wednesday or Saturday which are volunteer days. Wasn't shorter - sorry!!

Best regards

Richard

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

(A)

RUSHDEN HISTORICAL TRANSPORT SOCIETY – REGISTERED CHARITY No. 285535

2024 AGM

DATE – Wednesday 16th April 2025

TIME – 8 PM

LOCATION – GOODS SHED

(B)

RUSHDEN HISTORICAL TRANSPORT SOCIETY – CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 1208427

INAUGURAL AGM 2025

DATE – Wednesday 16th April 2025

TIME – IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ABOVE MEETING (A)

LOCATION – GOODS SHED

NOTES

These are the official notices for the existing Society 2024 AGM and the CIO 2025 Inaugural AGM.

Following the decision to convert the Society into a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) as resolved by the membership at previous AGMs, the above meetings will - (A) conclude the activity of the existing society and (B) start the society activity as a CIO.

Meeting (A) will be the final AGM of the existing society and will have the general format of the usual AGMs. The 2024 accounts will be presented, and discussions held as appropriate but there will be no election of trustees and committees.

The assets of the existing society are all due to be transferred on April 1st 2025 and this process is now underway. The entire society assets will be transferring and all staff will be continue to be employed under the same conditions with all accrued benefits transferred. The process for the staff is the TUPE system. This AGM is the dissolution of the existing society as agreed at the last 2023 AGM.

In reality there should be no visible signs of any changes, but some of the generally unseen operating and reporting procedures have to be changed slightly in order to be working to the CIO constitution.

Meeting (B) will be the inaugural AGM of the Society as a CIO. The primary agenda items will be the election of trustees and members of committees. These procedures will be essentially the same as with previous AGMs but under the CIO Constitution. The latter constitution has also been agreed by the membership at previous AGMs.

There will be at least one amendment to this constitution, which is to remove the membership anomaly of requiring a proposer and seconder. This was done for the existing society at the SGM in January. Other amendments and discussion items can be discussed if they are sent to the secretariat in the usual manner at least 21 days before the meeting.

Future Dates The above meetings date have been set in conjunction with the Society accountants. Future society financial years will end on March 31st. The AGM should then take place in June or July. Accounts will be prepared for the existing society for the 6 months from October 1st 2024 to March 31st 2025 and the next CIO accounts will then be from April 1st 2025 to March 31st 2026. These will be presented at the 2026 CIO AGM. We trust this is all ok, but if you have any queries please contact the office or drop a note in the membership box or 07960 950821 or secretary@rhts.co.uk.

RUSHDEN AND DISTRICT QUERY MOTOR CLUB – PART 3 THE ROARING SIXTIES

Where we ended last time

We ended Part 2 as the 1950's drew to a close with motor cars having taken over completely from motor cycles and the club was gaining new young members with cars and also still had some very active older members. The club also had several members who had businesses and gave additional support to the club. A very large range of trophies was available and most of the original ones were solid silver.

The 60's were to see a lot of changes which really enhanced the overall activities of the club. Motoring was still pretty cheap as was petrol. You could use your car for local car rallies and not need extra car insurance. Cheap cars were available for a bit of tuning and then charging around fields for off road events. Also a lot of members were very capable in repairing cars when problems arose with some actually owning garages. An expensive car was not essential, but it helped, since the main thing was to have good fun.

The club was organising car rallies, autocrosses, driving tests, treasure hunts and social events.

Image right: Driving Tests - Sunbeam Rapier

Image below: Autocross—Ford Anglia



The club Annual Dinner Dance was now being held at Overstone Solarium and the 1961 ticket cost the princely sum of £1. And it was the best night of the year!

Move to the Unicorn Pub

In the early 60's the club moved to an upper room at the Unicorn pub in Rushden. Some of the younger members set up a 4 lane Scalextric track which could be left assembled between meetings. As with too many of the club activities it has been very difficult getting pictures of the activities. No mobile phones then!

Image right: The Unicorn—Rushden

As has happened to so many of our old pubs they have been demolished or converted into flats, and the latter pub is now flats



The new navigator

I personally came on the scene in late 1963 having left college but not actually owning a car. I was however very interested in the navigating side of car rallies and after having ridden on several events as the 'third man', promotion came and I was taken on as a navigator.

I was somewhat spoilt I guess since the first car I was navigating in was a Ford Zodiac, as seen in the picture opposite with driver John Holloway.

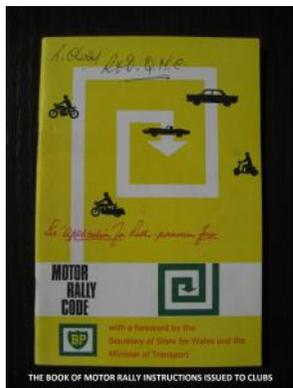


EARLY TASTE OF VICTORY.
JOHN HOLLOWAY &
RICHARD LEWIS
AT THE ANNUAL DINNER

The car rallies generally had an average speed of up to 30mph and used cryptic clues to sort out the route. Hence speeds were quite low really – until you went wrong! Myself and John Holloway were quite a good team and started to win some rallies and consequently received our first award at the next Annual Dinner, see image from a press cutting on the left..

Control of motor rallies

The club rallies could typically have up to 15 entries so they were not particularly large. However Mr Government had been thinking of all these mad car drivers charging around the country lanes with no control and there was some poor press arising from some of the antics that we got up to – see the press cutting! On the right.



The result was a Government document requiring all car rallies with more than 12 entries to be authorised by the RAC (for HMG), and paying the appropriate fee of course. Coincidentally the Northamptonshire Chief Constable at the time was John Gott, who was probably able to prevent the controls being too punitive – he raced MGB sports cars!!

From the point of view of the club where the number of entries was only around 12, then this was a major chore if we ended with 13 entries.

MCAAC emerges

However, in Northampton was a very keen rally navigator named John Smeathers who was a member of the Blackbird Auto Club. John was in fact a paraplegic and although wheelchair based, was a fiendish organiser and navigator.

John came up with an idea that transformed the local motor club activities in the county. In early 1966 John contacted all of the local motor clubs in the county.

A meeting was arranged with 2 representatives of each club and held at the Two Brewers pb in Olney.

From this meeting the Mid Counties Association of Auto Clubs was formed. Everyone agreed that it would be better for each club to organise an RAC authorised car rally in turn and this would lead to bigger entries and cross club competition.

The founding motor clubs in 1966 were:

British Timken Motor Club
Blackbird Auto Club
Kettering Car Club
Mid Northants Motor Club
Nene Valley Motor Club
North Bucks Motor Club
Rushden and District Query Motor Club
Wellingborough Motor Club

The MCAAC was almost an instant success. Driven by John Smeathers a range of new events immediately got underway.

The first car rally was held on April 3rd 1966 and had over 60 entries. I was navigating for a new driver now and in the hot seat of a Ford Cortina driven by Dennis Mobley.

Speaking very modestly we were the winners of this first rally. We also won the second MCAAC car rally but we were thwarted with the hat trick since only coming second in the third rally.

The MCAAC now set up a whole new range of interclub competitions which started with the car rallies but then added autocrosses, hill climbs and then social events with treasure hunts, quizzes and dances.

The off the road autocrosses could have up to 100 entries so competition was pretty fierce. The biggest car rally was the Andre Baldet Night Rally. This was a 200 mile night rally and was the one to win. The trophy had been donated to the Blackbird Auto Club by Andre Baldet who owned several local garages.

The image opposite shows the wife of the MCAAC chairman presenting an award at the annual dinner in 1967 to Bert Loasby, the organiser of the difficult Baldet Rally.

New championships were set up for rally drivers and navigators and off the road events and eventually for the quizzes.

Each year ladies from the clubs entered a competition to select Miss Mid Counties,



An annual dinner or dance was held and one of the first was at the Salon in Northampton with over 400 members and friends attending. The guest of honour at the Salon Dance was World Champion Motorcycle Sidecar Champion, Will Sparrow. Will is seen in the image below with various club members.



Members of the Query Club also competed for their own trophies, with the best entry on each MCAAC rally also winning a Query Club trophy. Thus a new and exciting time began for the Query Club and the other member clubs of the MCAAC.

A new clubroom - The Gearbox

One of the new members in the 60's was Barry Green whose father Derek just happened to be the licencee at the Griffin pub in Higham Ferrers. At the rear of the pub was an old stable which still had a long manger where the cattle were fed. Derek made an offer to the club that if we put in a new concrete floor and lighting and some heating then we could use this stable as a clubroom. The club members included builders and electricians and so the conversion was made and the new clubroom was called the Gearbox.

Unfortunately in spite of all of the events that took place there I have no photographs. The clubroom eventually became the new kitchen for the Griffin and this is seen below.



Rushden Carnival

The club had been involved with Rushden Carnival since 1931 in one way or another. In 1967 the club took over organising the carnival parade. With the advent of motor cars it was much easier to put entries in the parade. No health and safety concerns in those days and the parade just set off without any road closures to worry about! The crowd was encouraged to throw coins at the floats – much too dangerous now!!

In 1964 the club put 6 cars in the parade. These would charge up and down and frequently grab ladies from the crowd. The parade started from Glassbrook Road and ended at Spencer Park. In later years it started and finished in Hall Park.



Thus as the 60's drew to a close the club was pretty much at its peak of activity, which was now all built around motor cars.

In addition to the car rallies, off the road events and social events with both RDQMC and the MCAAC the club also published a monthly magazine called Gear. Competition between clubs was very keen and we had all met a lot of new friends. The RDQMC annual dinner at Overstone Solarium had 250 guests and had to be limited in numbers.

A busy decade also for the author who was MCAAC chairman in 1967 and RDQMC chairman in 1969 but all very enjoyable. However things were getting much more expensive and many members were now getting much older.

The final chapter will be in the next edition – The 70's Peak and Oblivion

Railway News

Whilst we currently have only a very small workforce, some progress is being made. A programme of repairs and refurbishments have been started . The Brake van has had newly metal sheeted ends installed, whilst the Open seated Tube wagon has had replacement buffers fitted to comply with the ORR recommendation.



A new maintenance platform has been constructed on the back road along with a re-sited maintenance workshop. This has recently had a power supply installed for ancillary equipment.



The class 31 is moving along slowly , but there has been a large amount of work done on the bodywork of the loco , it is hoped it will be back in service during the coming year. The class 309 has had some attention to the bodywork and interior during the past 6 months , this work will be continuing.

There is slow progress with the buuble car but members Brian Mead and John Sugars continue to work on the project on a regular basis. One of our younger members Alfie Bryant is involved with servicing the Robel Maintenance vehicle.!!!

Finally the Mk1 coach is coming to the end of a long interior restoration , this year attention will be on renovating the bodywork ready for it going back into service.

Dave Chambers

On the Buses – Malta’s Classic Buses.

On a recent holiday to Malta I had the opportunity to travel on one of Malta’s classic buses. On my last visit to the island over 20 years ago the classic Malta buses were a feature of the island but now modern buses have taken over. The unique nature of the Malta bus stemmed from the tradition of local ownership of the buses by the drivers and the practice of customising them.

The Maltese Bus service had its origins in the 1920’s with the introduction of a bus service between Malta’s capital and nearby St.Julian’s. There was a rapid expansion of bus services with open competition between operators, as a result the appearance and roadworthiness of the buses was not the “best”.



Early buses wore an olive green livery with a black stripe. In the 1930s, buses were painted different colours according to the route they operated. In 1975 buses were painted green, and from 1995 vehicles carried in a yellow (lower) and white (upper) livery, relieved by a red band just below the window line. Gozo buses were grey with a red band below the window.

With the formation of the Traffic Control Board in 1931, greater regulation meant that operators began to upgrade the appearance of their buses. This led to the tradition of showing pride in the vehicles through decoration and customisation of the buses.



Early types of buses had a front engine mounted in an extended bonneted nose. The buses were mainly of British manufacture, with marques such as Bedford, AEC, Leyland and Ford.

Malta buses had a unique appearance due to the practice of re-building or modifying of bus bodies in local workshops using local carpenters and mechanics. Later classic Malta buses had elaborate grilles and headlight arrangements, curved windscreens and sloping roofs.

Slowly the older Maltese buses were replaced by vehicles of a conventional bus or coach designs sourced from redundant/ buses primary from the UK..



Although popular with tourists, a large part of the Maltese population had become increasingly frustrated with a slow and unreliable bus service. With the network of bus routes reaching most remote villages, many Maltese depend on the bus service on a daily basis. Between 1981 and 1987 the fleet was drastically modernised with the import of over 260 second hand buses from the United Kingdom followed later by imports from China and Turkey of modern buses. By 2011 the majority of the classic Malta buses had been retired.

It is still possible to ride on one of the classic buses, several companies offer trips throughout the island, personally I boarded one such bus on a trip from Valetta to Marsamxett bay in the south of the island to visit the weekly Sunday Market. The trip was delightful reminding me of outings with members of the Society to the Weiland Beer Festival in a 1950's OB coach . The constant sound of the whinny transmission resonating throughout the vehicle brought back happy memories of trips out driven by the late Pete Dines.



CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Christmas is one of the most important times of the year for the Society. This is the last chance to make good income until the spring of the next year. The craft fair and Santa themed railway events are some of the most popular events with the public.

The craft fair was run over 2 evenings in late November. The event has gained a reputation as an event with stalls selling quality items. Amber our events co-ordinator ensures that there is the minimum duplication in goods for sale and stalls are of the best quality possible.

As can be seen in the image opposite the event was well attended on both evenings.



The first weekend in December saw the first of the Satan Special weekends, The first day of the Santa Special the 7th December coincided with the arrival of Storm Darragh over the area. The outdoor Christmas display items were removed, but the trains were still able to run and Santa was available in his grotto. Thanks must go to Standing In The Wings for decorating Santa's grotto and to R S Jumps for building our fantastic new sleigh,





The following weekend saw another weekend of Santa Specials trains. This weekend the weather was good all tickets for both days were sold out. There were some very nice comments on Facebook regarding the event.

Thank you so much to all involved in this event. Everything has been thought of, down to the smallest detail. This is our second year and we highly recommend this event. If you haven't booked, please give it a try.

Once again, a brilliant experience today for all our family. Thank you very much to all involved.



The following weekend further Christmas events took place with “Brunch with Santa” and an Autism & Sensory Friendly Brunch with Santa . Both events had good ticket sales and praise from many customers. To conclude the Christmas events the buffet car held a Christmas themed Afternoon on the last Sunday before Christmas.

.A thank you to all members and friends of the Society who volunteered over the festive period.

Museum Matters December 2024

Well, that's it then! Nearly the end of another season for the stalwart museum volunteer stewards who have welcomed 2015 visitors to the Rushden Transport Museum. The museum is in the wonderful Victorian station rooms that are a permanent reminder of the railway heritage that enabled Rushden and Higham to prosper at the height of the local boot and shoe industry.



This year has been particularly enjoyable, for those of us who volunteer in the museum, as we have co-ordinated displays and activities to match the RHTS events and train rides, bringing visitors through our doors to look around and hunt for a variety of objects hiding amongst the exhibits. Both young and old seemed to have had a rewarding time. Even if the Halloween 'spooks' made them jump!

The museum also displays other artefacts and photographs of local transport related social history. So, if you are a member and fancy getting more involved in the Society, then the museum can offer you opportunities in a variety of roles with a friendly team. Although we have shut our doors to the public except for the 'Santa Specials', they are open to members who feel they would like to volunteer in the museum. The Museum Management Group (MMG) can organise a guided visit for you with information about the collection and what we do.

Our museum is accredited (like a kite mark) and as such, we have been granted funds from Museum Development Midlands (MDM) to help us recruit and train new volunteers in the role of document conservators, digitisers and researchers of our less accessible documents and photographs. With this additional help, the result should be that the museum has new resources to show our visitors in the museum and hopefully online. Just as important, the documents will be more appropriately stored. The essential skills required are the ability to handle documents

carefully and observe detail, beyond that we can develop skills together to produce accessible resources and information.

I have volunteered in the museum since 2012 when I first joined the Society, and one of my favourite things is to discover something about an object or the story behind a photograph. I hope some of you would like to have a go too. The example below shows a British Railways vest, on closer inspection the label on the inside shows that it belonged to W. Rich, who was a foreman at Rushden goods yard. This was great information as we had just received some photos of W. Rich working in the goods yards at Higham and Rushden, so a little more of the 'story' was pieced together.

W. Rich 's vest



W. Rich at work loading /unloading goods in 1965

The dataloggers in the museum show us that the conditions during the winter months are extreme, so for the comfort of our volunteers and to help minimise harm to the collection, the work will commence in April, probably on Friday afternoons. If you are interested in helping us with this type of work, please either phone/text Sally (07837206484), text Jane (07526138056) or email museum@rhts.co.uk, stating your membership number and contact details, and we will be happy to give you more information and arrange a meeting with you.

The MMG would love to open the museum more often next year, but we can only do that with your help. All potential stewards will have an induction with an MMG member and a fully supported probation period after which you will be asked to sign a volunteer's agreement. So, if you like chatting with people and enforcing a few simple rules, then this might be an option for you, and if two of you want to work together that's even better!

Come along and become part of the Rushden Transport Museum team



RAF/RAE Thurleigh part 3

The closure of the airfield in 1994 didn't mean the end of the site, over the past 30 years the infrastructure has been remodelled into several commercial and leisure activities. The site of the Twinwoods airfield has also been developed into an events venue along with 2 museums.

Thurleigh Airfield Business Park

The main site of the Thurleigh airfield is now known as Thurleigh Airfield Business Park. Located only six miles north of Bedford, the site is home to over 20 businesses and is a major source of employment, with over 500 people employed on site. Many buildings have new uses and there are even some new ones. The runways are still intact along with the hangars and infrastructure of the airfield. The Eastern end has used part of the runways to provide an excellent Motorsport venue run by Palmer Sport and named as Bedford Autodrome.



The Business park is the home of the 306th Bombardment Group Museum sited in an original wartime building donated by Dr Jonathan Palmer, of Bedford Autodrome, and opened on 27 July 2002.

Twinwoods Business Park

The wind tunnel site is known as Twinwoods Business Park. Some of the wind tunnels are still in use whilst parts of the site have been developed for commercial purposes. One of the 4 horizontal wind tunnels is now owned by the Red Bull Formula One team for developing their championship winning cars.—see right



The vertical spinning wind tunnel was operated for a number of years as a leisure facility by the “Bodyflight” and later by the “Twinwoods Adventure” companies as a body flight experience (where the airflow simulates skydiving in a vertical wind tunnel). These businesses have now ceased to trade , although the tunnel and building have now been given protected status. Today over 20 companies operate from the site which also includes the Yarl’s Wood immigration centre.

Twinwoods Airfield

The Twinwoods Airfield is known as the airfield where band leader Glenn Miller left in 1944 for Paris , the plane carrying him was never seen again. The airfield control tower now houses the Glenn Miller Museum. The museum contains a restored control room, RAF displays, an aviation art exhibition, and a room dedicated to Glenn Miller and his music.

Other former airfield buildings house the Twinwoods Aviation Museum, This museum holds large collection of RAF and USAAF uniforms and equipment, along with artefacts recovered from German and Allied aircraft crash sites.



*** Please note that the museum have very limited opening hours, full details of opening hours see: www.twinwoodaviationmuseum.org

The rest of the site is now home to the Twinwood Arena , this arena has been sculptured into the landscape as a natural bowl. It is home to the largest vintage music and dance festival in the UK each August.



Details of the Twinwood festival can be found at: www.twinwoodevents.com

Philip Bettles/Catharine Young

The Transport scene from “Up North!”

As many members will know I have moved up North, not a permanent move but I will be spending a considerable amount of time in Northumberland. I'm living in a small town called Wooler located at the foot of the Cheviot Hills. First impressions are of a place that time left behind. The nearest Chinese is over 15 miles away in Berwick on Tweed, no McDonalds or KFC within 1 hour's drive. But the place has a certain charm and a wide range of traditional essential shops such as a butcher, bakers, newsagents, a book shop, hairdresser, and pubs.

The historic transport scene in the area is not as buoyant as the Northamptonshire scene at first glance, partly because the population is a lot less and spread over a large rural area. But there are one or two similarities, one is the Wooler the town was once served by a branch line and some of the infrastructure such as the Station building and Goods Shed still exist.

I have discovered 2 heritage railways within 30 minutes drive of Wooler. The 15” Heatherslaw Light Railway (also known as the Ford and Etal railway) is located in the village of Ford near the Scottish Border. Set up by Neville Smith and Sid Ford in 1989. It operates a route from the village of Heatherslaw to Etal 2 miles away.

The other railway is a heritage line operating standard gauge is the Aln Valley Railway. This operates from just outside Alnwick and has 2 mile of track running towards the coastal village of Alnmouth. This railway reminds me very much of the set up at Rushden.

Events such as Steam rallies / classic car are not so prevalent as Northamptonshire, but I have come across a large steam rally at Corbridge in June and a vintage rally in the south of the county in August. But then just a mile from where I am living I find the Chillingham Castle Vintage Rally in July, perfect ! So expect a report later in the year.



Going forward I will continue to produce an “Olde Wheels” every quarter, but if any member wishes to take over the position of editor please let Richard Lewis or myself know and I can discuss what the position entails. I'm always available for help and advice.

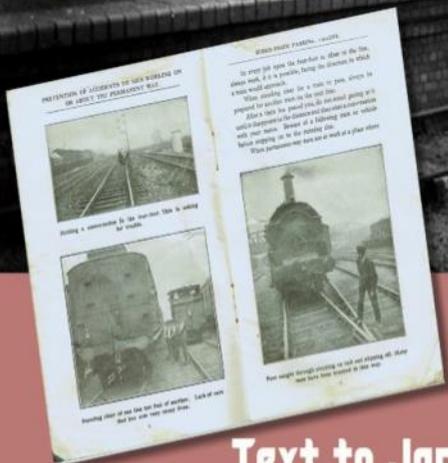
COME, JOIN US at Rushden Transport Museum

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Text to Jane 07526138056
or Sally 07837206484
Contact email: museum@rhts.co.uk

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The Museum are looking for volunteers, if you feel you could help our please contact them using the details on the poster above

HST 125 in Mexico

I came across this story regarding the use of the retired HST sets in Mexico on You Tube. In original British Rail livery, the train is seen at a crossing and then hitting a car. At first, I thought this was a computer-generated video, but further research showed this as an authentic video. See: YouTube ([Our HST in Mexico. Intercity 125 incident on level crossing.](#))



Over the last 10 years, most UK railway companies have already retired their Intercity 125 high-speed trains and replaced them with more modern units. In 2023 the Mexican government purchased 11 former (HST) coaches and three HST class 43 diesel power cars.

These units have been purchased to operate on the upgraded Isthmus of Tehuantepec Railway from Coatzacoalcos to Salina Cruz. This is part of a government-owned railway system in Mexico. The Tren Transísmico, or Interoceanic Railway, was officially launched on December 22, 2023, by the President of Mexico.



Image above: The Rail Hub

During spring 2024 further units were acquired with 3 more sets arriving in the Port of Coatzacoalcos to be used on the Coatzacoalcos to SalinaCruz route. The units are in the liveries they had before export. 43007 shown on the deck of the ship above is in original InterCity blue-grey livery.

Already in service are a number of units from the GWR company. Below is the Tehuantepec No. 3007 (former Great Western Railway No. 43170) departing from departure from Salina Cruz, Mexico, for Coatzacoalcos on Jan. 4, 2024, now in its Mexican livery.

Image below: Trains Magazine



Mexico is not the only country to find a home for HST units, Nigeria has also found a home for a number of HST units for the new Lagos Red Line project.

The **InterCity 125** or **High Speed Train (HST)** is a diesel-powered passenger train built by British Rail Engineering Limited between 1975 and 1982. A total of 95 sets were produced, each comprising two Class 43 power cars, one at each end, and a rake of seven or eight Mark 3 coaches. The name is derived from its top operational speed of 125 mph.

British Rail (BR) initially developed the HST as an interim measure in the early 1970s, as delays and cost concerns began to threaten their primary high-speed train project, the Advanced Passenger Train (APT). The HSTs are now widely considered to be among the most successful trains to have operated on the British railway network, both in terms of their initial impact and their longevity their introduction into service between 1976 and 1982 resulted in significantly reduced journey times, and large increases in patronage on the routes on which they were operated. The trains proved to be a reliable workhorse, remaining in front-line service for decades. The first withdrawals began in 2017, 41 years after they were introduced. Now in 2025 units are now finding a new life overseas.

Image right: Wikipedia





RUSHDEN TRANSPORT
MUSEUM & RAILWAY

Registered Charity No: 285535

Mother's Day Afternoon Tea

Sunday 30th March 2025
at 1.30pm

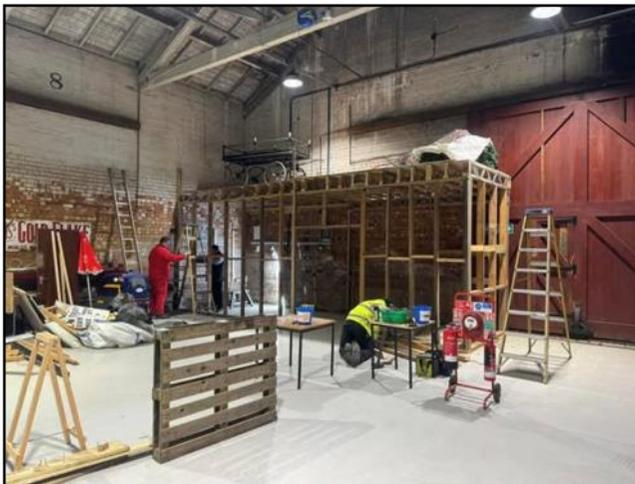
Treat Mum to a delicious Afternoon
Tea with a glass of bubbly.
Every Mum will receive a gift

Book online at
www.ticketsource.co.uk/rhts
Price: Adult £25 Children £15

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www.rhts.co.uk

GOODS SHED NEWS

As the event season has finished until Spring, this is the ideal opportunity to implement several improvements to the Goods Shed. As already mentioned in the “Chairman’s” notes we have been successful with a Mick George grant to lay a new damp proofed concrete screed on the shed floor. During the month of January work commenced on preparing the shed for the new floor. The existing cleaning and storage unit has been dismantled in preparation. The unit will be reinstated once the work has been completed.



Another project ongoing in the Goods Shed is the rebuilding of the bar. This will provide more working space for the bar staff. The bar is being converted to a bottle bar as the lack of a cellar and only occasional use means a traditional set up with barrels is uneconomical and hard to maintain.



Finally the new toilet block will be commissioned in the next few weeks ready for a new season of events. All sanitaryware has now been installed with electrical work and general finishing touches to be completed. Hopefully these toilets will be in operation for the start of the new events season.

Station Bar News

Improvements to the Station building and surroundings:

Work in the R'Ale End Bar is set to take place in 2025. This will allow the venue to be marketed effectively for the year ahead. Please contact the Bar for details on how R'Ale End can be hired.

The repair and replacement of lighting on the platform, which was removed after the Sausage and Cider Festival will take place this spring, these lights are deemed crucial for winter events.

Additionally, a Community Public Access Defibrillators is to be installed on an outside wall at the station. Fundraising for the project has already surpassed £1,000. The defibrillator will be added to a national register, ensuring emergency services can easily locate it.

There is a programme of works to be carried out during the coming year, including the painting of the Station and potential additional signage, advertising the Society, Bar, Museum and Goods Shed. The guttering on front of building needs repairing along with the need for re-pointing of some brickwork.

Events

Looking ahead to the coming year, a number of exciting events are on the horizon, including the highly anticipated 40th Anniversary of the Station Bar, set for September 6, 2025. There will also be re-scheduling of existing events, the Sausage and Cider has been moved from its August Bank Holiday date to late July. A new event will be a Spring Beer Festival in late April.

Members

Sad news, life member Paul Belbin passed away, after a long period of poor health, on Christmas Day.

Last January saw the passing of long-standing member and bar committee member Pete Newman, in memory of Pete the Sunday raffle on the 26th January was held in his memory, £200 was raised for the Air Ambulance from this raffle. The Bar has agreed to fund raise for the Air Ambulance for 2025 .

Memorial benches for Pete Newman and Pete Stanton who also passed away in the autumn of last year were unveiled towards the end of the year.

Please come down and support the bar and the activities in the coming year.

STATION BAR **2025 EVENTS**

SPRING BEER FEST

SAT 26TH & SUN 27TH APRIL

SAUSAGE & CIDER FEST

FRI 25TH, SAT 26TH & SUN 27TH JULY

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE BAR

SAT 6TH SEPTEMBER

BEER & MUSIC FEST

**FRI 26TH, SAT 27TH & SUN 28TH
SEPTEMBER**

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND OPENING TIMES VISIT
WWW.RHTS.CO.UK

UPCOMING EVENTS 2025

Mar
8

Rushden Craft Market
11 -3 The Goods Shed

Mother's Day
Afternoon Tea

Mar
30

Apr
20-21

Easter Bunny Express

Spring Beer Festival

Apr
26/27

Jun
28

Armed Forces Day

Sausage & Cider Fest

Jul
25/26/27

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