

# *Left Hand Running*

The January 2009 Newsletter of The British Train Society  
www.britishtrainsociety.org

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## **A View From The Footplate**

First of all let me wish all our members a Very Happy New Year. Let's all look for better things in 2009 for the country and put the bad experiences of last year behind us. Also I would like to thank you all for the thoughtful and generous gift of the LNER K3 that was given to me by the club at our Open House last month. The thought behind it and the excellent work of John Struthers was especially appreciated. Lois and I will miss the opportunity to entertain so many friends at our new location but maybe we can think of another venue. Again a sincere thanks to all and best wishes for 2009.

Not much on the calendar at this time as we are trying to recover from the Holiday festivities and the issues of moving. I will look forward to seeing many of you at Harry's on the 17<sup>th</sup> where we can launch into the project of assembling our display layout. Harry tells me he has ten modules on site so we should have a good representation to begin with. My own layout is now prepared for dismantling, all the rolling stock is packed and it now awaits the saws to take down the tables and hopefully I can reconstitute in some form at my new place. It is a sad experience as I have had so much pleasure and satisfaction from so many elements of the project. So on to newer things!

As far as the coming year is concerned our first priority is to work on our display module so that we have smooth running operation as well as being pleasing to the eye. I think this year we should perhaps give more emphasis to our web so that is a more complete picture of our organization. So there we are, Happy New Year to every one and Happy Modelling

Don Buchanan

## **Module Rework Project**

We are going ahead with our plans to rework the under module wiring and track work as necessary on all sixteen of the modules. The location for this project has been changed to Harry Raynis' house in Naperville because of Don Buchanan's imminent move out to Batavia.

All of the modules need to be moved to Harry's place by the first week in January so the work can begin. Fun and Run sessions and regular BTS meetings will probably become module work sessions throughout January and February.

Harry will be in touch with each of the module owners/custodians to arrange for the moves. We need a volunteer to act as Project Leader for the electrical and track work. Please call Harry or Don if you are interested.

If there are no other recommended changes or additions to the module specifications by the end of the year, we will go with what Ralph Transue and John Struthers have put together by that time.

All ideas, thoughts and comments are most welcome now. But don't wait to speak up, because this project is our highest priority and will begin in January.

## **Calendar of Coming Events**

January 11<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 am – 3:00 pm  
Great Midwest Train Show  
Wheaton (DuPage County Fairgrounds)

January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1:30 pm  
BTS Regular Meeting  
Naperville (Harry Raynis')

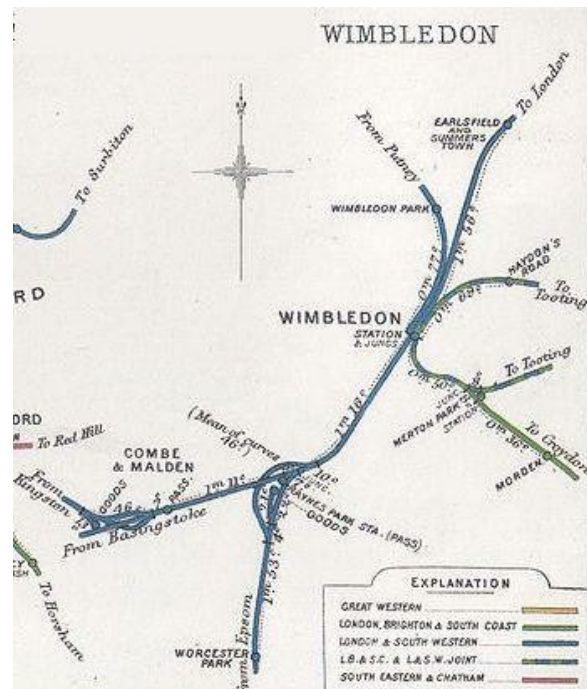
## One Foggy Night

by Martin Venn

The winter of 1962 – 63 was noted for being one of the worst ever known in southern England. At that time I was still living with my family in the London suburb of Teddington. About 5 miles SE of London's Heathrow Airport, and on loop line from London's Waterloo station. One travels out via Wimbledon, Kingston, and returns via Richmond, and Putney. As were just about all the suburban services on the Southern Region, it was 3<sup>rd</sup> rail electric, at 750v DC. To the best of my memory, the bad weather started after November 5<sup>th</sup>. This is "Guy Fawkes Day". A day which is celebrated by setting off fireworks, and has to do with preventing "The Houses of Parliament" from being blown up in 1665 (I think). Fog started that night, and was around just about every day though December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Then just after Christmas, we had heavy snow, which lasted through the end of March. But that's another story.

At that time I was at my second location in my career on BR (S) at Raynes Park, which is on the main line from Waterloo at mile post 9 (a mile west of Wimbledon; Teddington at MP 14). There a line branches to the south for routes to Chessington, & Epsom.

My job was a "Signal Lad", often called a "Booking Boy". I had to record on a large table everything that happened in ½ minute intervals. We were quite busy with up to 64 trains per hour (about 34 – 40 off peak). All were passenger trains except for a few freight, parcels, and milk trains. The signals in the area were four aspect colored light. Train describers were used on the main lines, and three position block instruments on the branch. All were fully track circuited. I did two shifts, Monday – Saturday: 06:30 – 13:30 and 13:30 – 20:30.



London fogs could be very, very thick. I can remember riding home on a bicycle one night, (from my first job at Feltham Junction), when I could not see the car lights in front at about 6'. At that time the British Railways legal definition of fog was when visibility was less than 200 yards. Each signal box had in its special instructions for that signal box, (which dealt local variations to the rules). The designated fog marking point was included in these instructions. When this point could not be seen, you had to start fog working. This was more involved in manual block areas, and where semaphores were in use with paraffin lamps. In the Rules & Regulations books, there was a line which appeared frequently." During fog and falling snow:-". We had our own version: "During fog and falling snow, some go fast and some go slow." This was ever true.

One evening during this time, on a particularly foggy night, trains were running late and out of course. Many of the up trains in particular were out of course. My signalman's main task was to regulate the up local traffic. I had to advise the Control, as to the sequence of the trains. Waterloo had to know in what order they were, so as put them in the correct platform. We spent

much time identifying which was which. The up steam trains were the hardest. Most carried one of six head codes. These were oil lamps placed on the front of the locos. On the Southern Region, unlike the rest of BR which had four positions on the loco to denote the class of train, we had six positions, denoting the route the train was taking. In the fog and with steam drifting from the locos it was easy to misread them. So as you can imagine; I was happy when it was time to go home.

My usual train home was the 20:30 Waterloo to Shepperton. But on this night I think that it was the 20:17 Waterloo to Waterloo via Kingston & Richmond. As I waited on the platform, other trains passed. It seemed that they crept up on you. All were traveling at slower speeds. Even the arcing from the third rail seemed less powerful. The train arrived with a single 4SUB unit of the 1950s era. I walked up to the Motorman, and introduced myself, and asked if he would like an extra pair of eyes in the cab with him (a good excuse to get a cab ride). He welcomed me. So for my journey I stood looking out the right hand front window.

Looking forward I saw the signal gantry at the end of the platform. There was a signal for each line (Down Local & Down Through). Each with a four aspect colored light signal. Both were automatic. Our signal show green. We received the OK from the guard and we set off. The Motorman said that it been a rough night. The line is on an embankment with fields, sports grounds and allotments on both sides. The fog got quite thick; about 100' visibility. As we approached the A3 main road bridge over the tracks, the next signal appeared showing double yellow indicating that next signal was at single yellow, and the one after that was red (signals are about 400yards apart) This was the correct aspect as we would be branching off at that point. The next signal was in a cutting where the fog lingered, and a single yellow showing. The cutting ended as we entered New Malden Station. As we ran into the platform, the signal ahead

changed from red to green with three white lights above the green at a 45 degree angle to the left.

Upon leaving New Malden the train curved to the left, on to the Teddington Branch. Then it curves to the right, and dropped down at 1 in 48. Malden Crossing Home signal is clear. After passing under the main line, there is a level crossing, with a signal box: Malden Crossing; the first signal box on the line which used Sykes lock & block signaling. All the signals on the line are semaphores lit by paraffin oil lamps. The up line has joined us, having been the third track to the right on the main line. The line continues to the right, passing New Malden's goods yard to the left, which is controlled a ground frame, released from Malden Crossing. We approach the next signal: Malden Crossing Down starting signal, with Norbiton's Distant signal under the home. Both are showing clear, which is what we expected. Norbiton Signal Box is closed out, and was rarely use at this time. This means that the block section is extended to the next box at Kingston. Norbiton's signals remain in the off position all the time' and the block signaling equipment is switched through. So unless a signal wire breaks, the next signal that might be ON is Kingston's Distance signal. The fog get very heavy along here and there is a large area of allotments to the right. The line is now straight as far as Norbiton Station. We pass through a low cutting and pass Norbiton's Home signal. The station is on a left hand curve. As we leave the station we pass Norbiton's Starting signal. The ground has dropped away as we cross over a road. The line continues to curve to the left, and is now on a high embankment. This embankment is quite high, with the tops on the two story houses being level with the track bed. Back yard to the right, and a road parallels the embankment to the left. The fog now gets very heavy. Visibility drops to about 8 to 10 feet. The motorman is proceeding very cautiously. We are looking for Kingston's Down Distance signal. The fog drifts across the line, and visibility is from a few feet to

about 20. Kingston's signal is very high up, and by itself. The line now starts to curve to the right and we should have seen the distant signal. The motorman asks me if I have seen the distant signal. I said no. We are now approaching Kingston Station, where there is a home signal a short distance from the platform. There are times when this signal is ON. Trains may be crossing from the up line, over the down to the bay platform. There is another home signal at the end of the platform, to protect these moves. But no one wants to run a red signal. The fog lifts a little, and we see more lights. Then Kingston's Outer Home signal comes into view, and is off, so we proceed into the station.

After a short stop we were off again. The inner home signal was off as we dropped down short grade at 1 in 112. Still on a high embankment, passing a large coal fired power station to the right and commercial buildings on the left, we approached the bridge over The River Thames. The fog was still heavy and getting thicker. The bridge has three spans, and about 300' long. Even in normal time trains cross the bridge at about 25 to 30 MPH. We were doing less than that. Looking down we could get a glimpse of the water below. Coming off the bridge we pass Kingston's Starting signal and Fairfax Road Crossing distance signal in the off positions then curving to the right and into Hampton Wick station which is also on an embankment. The line is now straight for about a mile & a quarter. Upon leaving we crossed a main road, and over the next half mile the line drops on a grade of about 1 in 100 I think. We Pass Fairfax Road Crossings Home signal with Teddington's distant off. There is a gas works to the left followed by coach storage sidings on the left, and houses backed up to the line on the right. The fog is a little less dense, but still bad. Beyond the carriage sidings to the left is Bushy Park and it looks thick in that direction. We start to slow up as the line curves to the right and pass under Teddington's Home signal, and slow to a stop. I thank the motorman, and wish him a

safe trip back to Waterloo. The line is never far from the river so I know that he is going to be in thick fog most of the time. I collect my bicycle, and head home which is about a mile away. Visibility is about 60'. As I ride I hear the bang of a detonator from the railway as fog men are out, giving warning the drivers that the distance is at caution. This is at Shacklegate Junction where the Shepperton line branches off the loop line. I am glad to be home, and have a greater respect for all train drivers.

