Editor’s Note: Peter found a copy of the Programme booklet for this Savings Week which contains advertisements for various Reading companies who were participating together with write-ups on their activities. It gives a fascinating glimpse of industrial activities in Reading in 1948 but is quite a thick booklet so this is the third excerpt following those in BIAG News 38 & 39 covering various other Reading companies. One more to come in the next issue!
STAND 32
BRITISH RAILWAYS (WESTERN REGION)

This exhibit demonstrates various apparatus used for signalling and traffic over the region system.

- **Exhibit I.** Mechanically operated semaphore signals.
- **Exhibit II.** Electrically operated light signal.
- **Exhibit III.** Locking Frame, for operating points, signals, etc., and ensuring that conflicting movements cannot be made.
- **Exhibit IV.** Double Line Electric Block Telegraph and Bell for controlling the running of trains from one station to another. Electric indicators (repeating the aspect of signal arms, etc.).
- **Exhibit V.** Electric Train Token Instruments for controlling the running of trains on single lines.
- **Exhibit VI.** Automatic Train Control; the Company’s apparatus for assisting the driver in locating signals in low visibility and fog.
- **Exhibit VII.** Point motor for operating points electrically.
- **Exhibit VIII.** Automatic Telephone Exchange.

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GASCOIGNE MILKING MACHINES
HAVE WORLD WIDE DISTRIBUTION
AUTO-RECORER
“POSITIVE” MILKER
GASCOIGNETTE
MOBILE BAILS
3/30 STERILIZER
AUTO-WASHER

GASCOIGNE KEE KLAMP SYSTEM
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GASCOIGNE EQUIPMENT Ltd.
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STAND 33
THE GEORGE H. GASCOIGNE CO. LTD.
Kee Klamp and Tubular Constructors.

It was originally intended that the Geo. H. Gascoigne Co. should concern themselves entirely with the construction of tubular milking stalls for the mother company (Stand 30). However, the highly ingenious Kee Klamp soon became popular with all branches of industry, and in almost all branches, storage racks, erection towers, and countless other tubular constructions can be found throughout Great Britain, Europe and the Empire.

The Air Ministry and the American Air Force during the war soon found the great value of the easy-to-build maintenance platforms, inspection towers, hanger and gun turret stands. These are still in service on most of the R.A.F. Stations in Great Britain.

Tubular construction seems to have unlimited possibilities for the future, and enquiries are being received from the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., in fact, from all parts of the world. Unfortunately, like many industries in these times, it is impossible to cope, even in a small part, with the ever-increasing demand.

*Page Forty-seven*
FACTORY BRIDGE, KING’S ROAD, READING

Edwin Trout

The mid 1930s saw the improvement of King’s Road – Reading’s main thoroughfare eastward – by a programme of road widening and straightening, and replacement of the existing Factory Bridge in front of Huntley & Palmer’s biscuit works.

Factory Bridge dated from the nineteenth century. It was a 31 ft wide iron-girder structure and crossed the Kennet & Avon Canal on the square. Accounting for two footpaths, the main carriageway was only 21 ft wide and had the additional complication of carrying two tramlines. It was demolished in 1935 and over the following months replaced by a 40 ft wide reinforced concrete bridge, skewed to cross the canal on the diagonal.

At 44 ft the approaches were even wider, and to achieve the NW-SE axis a row of houses on the north bank of the canal was demolished – making way for a 344 ft long retaining wall of bush-hammered concrete, and the ornamental gardens that remain today.

The new bridge consisted of a main span of 45 ft, and a secondary arch carrying King’s Road over the towpath. Reinforced concrete staircases on the south side facilitated access between the towpath and the bridge. Pipe ducts were built into the bridge allow for the carriage of gas and water mains. New parapets were built of bush-hammered concrete with Aberdeen granite chippings and a small addition of basalt to provide contrastingly dark specks. Unlike the chippings, the concrete widely used in the project was locally produced, using Aldermaston sand and Theale ballast.

Building the bridge was a complex project. To allow continued traffic flows a temporary bridge of timber was built alongside. Cranes were installed along the newly cleared north bank and used to drive piles and place the concrete. Then a gravitating brickwork sewer under the towpath, topped by a 60-year old rising main, had to be accommodated in the new works. Demand was such that the sewage system could be shut down for a maximum of only four and a half hours, so in the end the sewer was replaced by a 24 in diameter steel pipe.

By 1936 the work on the bridge and its environs was complete. Though most of the Huntley & Palmer factory has been cleared, the scene in the accompanying photographs is recognisable today.
READING BRIDGE REFURBISHMENT

Edwin Trout

Known to all who cross the Thames at Reading, Reading Bridge is a local landmark – a tangible consequence of the absorption of Caversham within the borough in 1911. Delayed by the Great War, it was opened to traffic in October 1923.
Intended as a showpiece for concrete construction, it was reinforced according the Hennebique system, designed and specified by LG Mouchel & Partners of Westminster. It was (and is) an elegant structure of an open spandrel design. The main span is 180 ft long, rising 18 ft, and is formed for four arch ribs that support secondary beams and the deck. Above, the width between parapets is 40 ft, with a roadway of 27 ft.

Construction was undertaken by the contractors Messrs Holloway Brothers (London) Ltd, who erected a complex system of falsework to sustain the concrete in situ during casting. The photograph above reveals the simple, unsupported arch, but in practice the bridge required the installation on each bank of massive abutments 50 ft long x 45 ft wide and, for access, the construction of arched approach roads.

The simple exposed concrete was finished with bold mouldings for cornices etc, while the parapets are of Portland stone.

To test the bridge 31 heavy vehicles – tractors, lorries, steam rollers – passed simultaneously onto the bridge, with a total weight of 372 tons. Yet deflection at the centre was less than ¼ inch.

After best part of a century the load today amounts to 24,000 motor vehicles, and the time for refurbishment had come VolkerLaser was the company chosen.

A preliminary task was to fill in the void below the southern approach structure with foamed concrete, and decommission it as a highways structure. 1500m³ of foamed concrete was injected by ProPump Engineering and, three months after pumping it was topped off with grout.
The abutments were thickened using a shear bolt system, and carbon fibre plates – thin, strong, lightweight and non-rusting – were stuck to the soffit of both the deck and beams. Even the spandrel columns were wrapped in carbon.

During a fortnight’s closure, the carriageway was stripped and carbon fibre rods and plates installed. It was then waterproofed and re-surfaced.

And to finish, the parapets repaired and cleaned. Once again Reading Bridge is looking as good as new.
AUTUMN WALK – SATURDAY 15th OCTOBER 2016

Bob Haskins

The Coley Branch

The Coley Branch Line (a.k.a. the Coley Goods Branch) was a single-track branch off the Reading to Basingstoke Line, running 1 mile 61 chains from the Junction (approx. 200 yds. north of Southcote Junction) to Reading Central Goods.

The railway was authorised for construction by the Great Western Railway (Additional Powers) Act of 4 August 1905 as a means to reduce goods traffic on the main line. The line opened in 4 May 1908 allowing freight trains to reach Reading Central Goods depot. The depot was built by Henry Lovatt and Company of Wolverhampton. Before the yard and depot could be constructed the GWR had to re-site a Masonic Temple that stood on the land. The single line was operated on the one engine in steam principle and was freight only. After a reduction in demand, the goods depot was closed on 25 July 1983 and on 20 January 1985 the connection at Coley Branch Junction was removed. Since its closure much of the route of the line has become a path for walkers.

After diverting south-eastwards from near Southcote Junction, the track was crossed by a brick and iron footbridge adjacent to a signal post (removed 2001). The line then entered a cutting. Emerging from the cutting, the line traversed an embankment which raised it from the surrounding Kennet flood plains. A skew arch bridge took the line over the Holy Brook, after which a semaphore signal 618 yards from the junction was situated. A number of ditches and channels were culverted under the embankment, which reduced in gradient as the line entered Reading. After passing under Berkeley Avenue, the line reached the depot and broke into ten sidings arranged in pairs each with a roadway. The yard had offices, a goods shed and cranes. It handled coal, timber, brick, stone, straw, hay and fertilizer. There were connections provided to the CWS jam factory, Anglo-American Oil (later to become Esso), Baynes the timber merchants and H&G Simmonds brewery. One branch continued north-east to Simonds Brewery and to Bear Wharf where there were three short sidings. These sidings were removed on 20 March 1969 excepting a very short section in Fobney Street which we’ll see later.

[1] Coley Branch Junction. The branch line to Reading Central Goods opened 4 May 1908. Spot the hazard warning signs for leaves on the line.


[3] Site of Southcote Junction Signal Box. The 35 lever signal box was located, in the fork, to the south of the branch junction.


[5] The Coley Branch. Note for much of the way the line is on an embankment. This was formed from spoil used in the widening of the Southcote Junction and material from West Ealing where another goods yard was being constructed.

[6] Bridge over the Holy Brook. There is a footpath that leads down to the Holy Brook but we’ll not be taking this today.
[7] Culverts under the line. A number of culverts can be spotted under the line.

The Holy Brook

The Holy Brook is a channel of the River Kennet. The origin and nature of the brook is unclear but it is likely parts are natural while others were created in mediaeval time to supply water to watermills and fish ponds.

The Holy Brook leaves the main channel of the Kennet at Arrowhead near the village of Theale and flows north of the main channel until it rejoins the river just to the east of the centre of Reading adjacent to Reading Abbey. The brook is six miles in length and served Calcot and Abbey Mills; both belonging to the abbey. The first stretch of the channel forms the boundary of suburban Reading but once entering the town it is culverted in many places and can only be seen intermittently … if you know where to look. The eastern end formed the boundary of Reading Abbey, driving its mills and supplying water to its latrines before entering the Kennet.


[Bridge across the Coley Branch]

 Builders plate on Berkeley Avenue Bridge

[10] Berkeley Avenue was started in the last decade of the 19th century and completed with the construction of the bridges over the River Kennet and the Coley Branch line in 1908. It was named after John Berkeley Monck MP for the Borough of Reading from 1820 – 1830.
[12] Site of Anglo-American Oil depot. The depot was located opposite the Nissan car showroom.
[13] Site of Messrs. Baynes, Timber Merchants. The site of Baynes timber yard is now occupied by Lok’nStore and their sawmill is now home to Sehmi Timber and Builders Merchants.
[14] GWR Boundary Post, a second example can be seen adjacent to the steps leading from the towpath up to Berkley Avenue.
[16] Site of Reading Iron Works. The iron works operated on both sides of the Kennet with buildings either side connected by a bridge.
[17] Site of Simmonds Brewery. H&G Simmonds brewery operated from this site overlooking the Kennet between 1789 and 1960 when it merged with Courage Barclay Limited to become Courage Barclay & Simmonds Limited. The site was finally cleared of all buildings by 1980 to make way for housing and the Oracle Shopping Centre.
[18] County Lock (106) and Weir. County Lock is the last (or first if you prefer) lock under Canal and River Trust (CRT) jurisdiction. Boaters heading east are now faced with traffic light control as the channel ahead narrows and can be tricky to navigate. The navigation here is known as the ‘Brewery Gut’.
[19] Stables. The building, now occupied by Loch Fyne, was the former stable block of H&G Simmonds.
[20] Former H&R Simmonds Malthouse, Grade II listed Malthouse now converted to exclusive town flats.

[21] Railway Track, the only remaining track of the former branch line.

[22] Holy Brook. If time permits, we’ll trace the Holy Brook to its confluence with River Kennet next to Reading Abbey and take a look at the Grade II listed three remaining arches of the Abbey Mill.

The Kennet and Avon Canal

The section of the Kennet and Avon Canal that we’ll see today has origins in work that was authorised in 1715 to make the River Kennet navigable from Reading to Newbury. Work commenced in 1718 under the supervision of surveyor and engineer John Hore of Newbury. Despite considerable local opposition from farmers, traders and carriers the Kennet Navigation opened in 1723. Independently in 1727 the River Avon navigation was restored between Bristol and Bath, eventually this led to plans to form one through route with the opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810.
Map: Reading and the Coley Branch c. 1920

Bibliography:

Berkshire’s Least Known Branch Line by Paul Joyce (Backtrack Magazine Vol. 28 No. 12 December 2014 pp 714 - 718)
Reading Central Goods Depot by John Copsey & Chris Turner (GWR Journal No. 74 Spring 2010 pp 84 - 117 Wild Swan Pubs.)
Self-Guided Historic Pathways Walk: Coley Park, Reading by Dennis Johnson (Reading U3A June 2014).
The Branch Lines of Berkshire by Colin G. Maggs (pub. Amberley Publishing 2011)
The Holy Brook by Adam Sowan (pub. Two Rivers Press 2003)
### FORTHCOMING 2016-17 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

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All meetings are held on Monday evenings at the Church Hall of St Mary’s Church, Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD and start at 7.30pm. Access to the church hall is through the right hand side passage.

**Travel Guidance:** By bus, St Mary’s Church Hall is within a two minute walk from St Mary’s Butts and a five minute walk from Oxford Road where many Reading Corporation buses stop

By car, the Church does not have a car park but vehicles may be parked off-road on the market stall hardstanding area in Hosier Street. Alternatively, there is a public car park in the Civic Centre adjacent to the Church. St Mary’s Church has a web site with a map: [http://www.cofec.org/stmarys.html](http://www.cofec.org/stmarys.html)

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**EDITOR’S NOTE:**

We also had a fascinating visit to the BMW Mini Plant in Cowley on November 4th organised by Peter Trout. Unfortunately, photography was not allowed so an illustrated article on the visit will not be possible!

Particular thanks to Edwin Trout for his contributions – the article on the Reading Bridge refurbishment is a synopsis of the talk he gave at the October AGM. Also, Peter Pribik’s contribution of the Souvenir Programme for the Silver Lining Savings Week in 1948 continues to provide some interesting articles and there’s more to come (probably for one more issue!). Again, does anyone else have something like this somewhere in their files?

John Coulson ([jcoulson@theiet.org](mailto:jcoulson@theiet.org))

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**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Thursday 26th January 2017** - Workshop Day to start processing the Lawrence Cameron Slide Collection. Please contact Bob Haskins if you are interested in participating ([contact@biag.org.uk](mailto:contact@biag.org.uk) mobile: 07812 045163).

**Editor’s Note:** Bob Haskins has given me a list of Lawrence’s slides that he showed at the BIAG meeting on 21 November. I have not included in this issue of BIAG News due to space constraints but, if any members are interested please contact me and I will email or send them a copy.
QUESTION??

John Dearing, one of our members, has received a query concerning a chimney in the back yard of The Bugle pub (144 Friar St). The question is, given its location - more or less at the back of the ex-Oatsheaf (46 Broad St) was the chimney originally part of Dowsett’s Brewery which was on that site?

Do any members know more about this or have any information? If so, please let us know (e-mail: contact@biag.org.uk)

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WINTER EVENTS

Crofton Beam Engines

Members who joined the BIAG visit to Crofton in June will be aware that major repairs are being carried out on the Lancashire boiler there over this winter. The boiler has a regular annual inspection but, every ten years, it has to undergo a more rigorous inspection where all the insulation and surrounding ductwork is stripped off so the boiler is completely exposed for detailed examination by the boiler inspector. This major strip-down is taking place over this winter and the opportunity is also being taken to replace a large number of rivets. This riveting work will be carried out by specialist contractors.

Crofton is planning to hold a number of working Open Days on Saturdays between January and March 2017 but the exact dates will depend on the contractors’ work. If you are interested in seeing the exposed boiler and the progress of the work, dates for these Open Days will be published on the Crofton Beam Engines website (www.croftonbeamengines.org) as soon as they are known.

Other events

Events for next year are still in the planning stage and further information will be available in subsequent issues of BIAG News and at future meetings. Suggestions for events are welcome and, if you have any ideas, please contact Bob Haskins (e-mail: contact@biag.org.uk mobile: 07812 045163).

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For general BIAG business, please contact the Secretary: PETER TROUT (Tel: 01491 682002) 7 WEST CHILTERN, WOODCOTE, READING, RG8 0SG

Submissions to BIAG News are welcome in any format. Please send your contributions with an IA theme such as articles, letters, pictures, jokes, cartoons, cuttings from journals etc. to:

JOHN COULSON (Tel: 0118 9402526) 3 THE CRESCENT, CRAZIES HILL, READING, RG10 8LW or e-mail jcoulson@theiet.org

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