The Chairman's Notes

Unfortunately I have to inform the membership of the death of Jean and Mike Chrisp's son, Anthony. Anthony was heavily involved in Society activities when he was a junior member of the Society and was one of the few members who could consistently mix the concrete for the mainline at Colney Heath just as those who were laying it required. At this sad time for the whole Chrisp family, the Council has sent condolences to Mike and Jean on behalf of the Society.

On a happier note, last month I attended the Branchline event at Colney Heath, and all the members of both Societies appeared to be having an enjoyable time, and the members of the Branchline whom I spoke to had nothing but praise for our railways and our membership. To all the members who put in time and effort to make this event successful, I would like to congratulate you as you did the Society proud.

Both the Marine and Garden Railway held what I am told were successful events at Colney Heath in June and the Marine Section has another Regatta planned in July. Some of the Traction Engine members attended the Leighton Buzzard Bypass Rally, and a few members attended all had a good time (for most of the weekend anyway).

The 'OO' Section are progressing with their extension to their permanent layout which is going to double as a new exhibition layout. The North American Section is playing trains, as they would say.

Tony Dunbar and the Video Section are finishing off the kitchen and toilet at HQ, and I must congratulate them on the job they have done. For not much money the Society has been able to improve the facilities at HQ, because of their efforts.

The Slot Car Section has donated some folding tables to the Society as well as having replaced the 'skids' on the chairs at HQ. This has made life a lot easier for all at HQ to use the meeting room to set up layouts etc. without the hours of set up time required to stack the chairs before. Thanks to Ian and the boys for their efforts; it is appreciated.

Lastly the Loco Section is going to be entertaining the Video Section and the North American Section in July as well as playing host to a couple of birthday parties and schools. Please come along and support these events, particularly as the birthday parties are an important source of income.

Enjoy July at whatever activity you choose to do!

Donal Corcoran

Secretary's Snippets

The Society received a very nice thank you letter from the Branch Line Society. It was a very good evening, my thanks to all those who worked so hard to make it a success.

David Harris

Jean and Mike Chrisp thank all who have expressed their condolences with kind and sympathetic words following the death of their son Anthony.

Marine Mutterings
By Bernard Lambert

The boating season is well advanced and the first North London Regatta is now behind us. We had a decent turnout of visiting clubs and some leisurely competition - all covered separately by John elsewhere in the News Sheet.

The water has been well used on most Sunday and Thursday afternoons and we hope to see many of you there with your boats for Marine evenings at Colney Heath on the fourth Friday each month.

Do not forget our two remaining major events:-

Sunday 25th July – North London Regatta. Sunday 1st August – Vintage Toy Boat Regatta.

Enjoy the boating - Bernard Lambert

Report on Marine Open Day 23rd May 2004

By John Morgan

Arriving at the site, I was surprised (really?) by the lack of bodies. Okay I was early, but the members do seem to stay away in their hundreds when we have an Open Day! As far as guests are concerned, I think there are many other boating opportunities in May which gives a "which-one-to-attend" conundrum. The first problem – the bridge

over the cuckoo lone had been removed, I'm indebted to two of the ground-level railway gang who helped put it back and cannot apologise enough for not asking their names for this – sorry lads.

The usual group who can be relied upon for dawn to dusk help, Bernard; Harold Barrow and George Case were to hand. None, including myself, missed the memory exercise required to erect the gazebo, which is no longer required following the last winter project to build a permanent structure.

Guests trickled in, but it was soon apparent that, as the last time we tried a May event in 2002(?), numbers would be low. I was very pleased to have been able to gather up some youngsters, some who were "just visiting" and take them round the course, and their appreciation of the certificates was very gratifying (all received "a taking part" one just for having a go). A minority view I know, but if we don't encourage the youngsters, who will keep this wonderful site going after us? I gave them a practice run so they could see what it was all about then let 'em loose. I could have let most of them compete with the grown ups, their scores comparing very well.

Much thought was put into the preparation of the course. I wanted to keep as much of it as possible in the centre of the lake, but without making it impossible for skippers to work out the route they should be following. That would leave empty spaces round the outside to give the free sailors a clear run. This was, I believe, successfully achieved by the subtle use of coloured buoys: as far as I can recall, no-one lost their way. Half a dozen had a go with another five juniors. I'll ignore the young chap who wanted to see if a transmitter would float (they don't). No harm was done and it quickly dried out with some TLC from our guests.

I do hope the annual July event will draw in the support. Historically, it is the most successful of our Open Days - not a blade of grass not covered by models and chairs – we shall see… Not owning a boat is no excuse as the club model is well up to the task, as demonstrated by the pressed ganged juniors, who very quickly mastered the technique.

Tyttenhanger Gazette
by Roger Bell

After the hot days of the previous few weeks, the evening at the track for the June Loco' meeting seemed quite chilly as a cold breeze blew through the trees. The barbecue was a good source of warmth as was a cup of coffee. I watched a Midland Compound being prepared for a run on the table top railway. The meths fired loco' was soon in steam and pulling its four coaches with ample power. I reminisced of my loco spotting days at Luton station when at 11-15am on a Saturday a Midland compound would double head with a Jubilee to haul the 'Thames Clyde Express' on its dash to the North.

A yacht was sailing on the pond, a Kyosha Fairwind to be precise; it was a beautiful scale model with many deck fittings. It struck me that for those who choose not to spend another decade or two, or three, building another loco' one could choose a boat

next time and still enjoy the same company within the club. The yacht was 900mm long 225mm beam and 1560mm tall and weighed 4200g. The Fairwind is the most popular model in the range. The hull is blow moulded ABS and the two piece aluminium mast packs down for storage. The kit costs £190 plus servos and two-channel radio control, for the main and jib sails plus rudder. A display stand is included in the kit. All one has to do is to screw the fittings in place and rig the sails; the instructions are easy to understand. Any good hobby stores will sell one. The web site to look at is www.ripmax.com

At 9pm as rain threatened I decided to leave, and on reaching the steaming bays found an undaunted group watching an American style 5"g 'Marie E' raising steam. After some ten minutes he was away on the main line, the steam and smoke very visible in the chill air.

As I drove home I felt that I'd had an enjoyable evening, perhaps a yacht next time, it did look good.

News from the Tyttenhanger Committee
By Donal Corcoran

The June 2004 Tyttenhanger Committee meeting took place again on the 1st of June. Attention was drawn to the completion of the tiling within the new kitchen at Colney Heath and the Tyttenhanger Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank John Mills for the effort which he put in to this job.

Those who have been up to Colney Heath in recent weeks may have noticed that some parts of the site have been redecorated by intruders following their most recent entry to our site, on this occasion the unsecured trolley was stolen, luckily a kind hearted member of the public found the trolley and notified us where it was and so it was collected and the minor damage is being repaired.

The entrance to Colney Heath has changed, with a mirror being sited to aid both drivers of cars and drivers of engines at the level crossing.

Enjoy July!

The June General Meeting
by OMAH

Our new Chairman, Donal Corcoran opened his first meeting on a sombre note with the sad announcement of the sudden and tragic death of Anthony Chrisp who had taken his own life. Mike and Jean were obviously devastated by this event and while written condolences would be welcome they could not handle phone calls at this time.

Donal then introduced our speaker for the evening, Derek (DAG) Brown, who would be outlining the use of CAD drawing.
(I would like to begin by apologising for not being able to put into words the depth and excellence of this demonstration which by its very nature was graphic.)

Derek used a laptop and a video projector to illustrate his points, taking as an appropriate example some of the drawings for *Anna*, the 7 ¼ in. loco currently being described in the M.E. by Derek and Mark Smithers. Derek began by outlining some of the advantages of CAD drawing and the way in which one is enabled to get a component, or the whole project, in the mind and put it on paper and observe the way in which they interacted. He first entered a drawing office at the age of seventeen and is a stickler for doing things in the way he was taught and observing the conventions of engineering drawing layout.

There are many generic CAD packages available running from the cheap to the astronomic. While it is not necessary to go for the higher priced, such as 3D Autocad the lower cost are also best avoided. Derek uses Visual CADD which was (I think) c£200 plus a further £100 update. The ideals are:- User Friendly. Disciplinary Accuracy, Flexibility, Ability to Modify, Speed, Self Checking, and Camera Ready prints.

Most people these days have a PC: they can expect a fortnight's hell producing the first drawing, which will look awful, after which it will get easier and better. One of the first things that Derek developed after getting used to the system was what he called a 'model' and can best be described as a cross between a menu and a database. In appearance it is a collection of every commonly used symbol; lines, arrows, +_, decimals, fractions, fonts, etc, oriented to suit proper drawing practice, ie ½ in. on its side to be in line with a vertical dimension.

Derek believes this feature to be unique and it saves him half an hour on an average drawing. For his first demo he drew a buffer stock and buffer. Although no one else seemed to have any problem I could not initially relate what Derek was producing, which was a half stock. As soon as he clicked the 'mirror' button and the other half appeared as though by magic 'the penny dropped'. Having drawn the buffer he then demonstrated the self-check facility by 'dragging' the buffer shank into the bored hole in the stock to prove a fit. If it had been oversize an interference colour outline would have appeared, QED. Derek then went on to show how it can be used to set up and check valve events and to improve them if necessary.

An example of this was the valve gear for *Anna* which had die block slip in reverse. This was corrected by moving the lifting link ¼ in. ahead of the centre line to offset the fault. The drawings are produced in 'layers' each with a different colour. This enables the user to self check correspondence and/or conflict between components and the general arrangement. An example of this was shown and corrected by changing the position of three holes in the frames. Having a complete set of drawings enables Derek to have components made to order for customers. Frames can be laser cut by sending a CD with co-ordinates to suit the machine used without the need for a drawing. Likewise the drawings, description, photos if required are sent via a CD to the M.E. for the articles.

Among the various niceties demonstrated was the ease with which the scale can be changed. One of Derek's customers had asked if it was possible to upsize the loco to 10 ¼ in. This was done with a few keystokes by increasing all the dimensions by the ratio of the scales. The only problem was the decorative framework on the cab roof, rather like that on a station canopy. Just increasing the dimension would spoil the ratio of holes to cab length and breadth, a small bit of measurement and division sorted that one.

We had a good turnout and it was obvious from questions asked that there was a fair degree of interest and knowledge in the ranks. I sat next to Roger Bell who is contemplating having a go, to which end he had bought a copy of DAG's book, "CAD for M.E." by D.A.G. Brown, £6-95 from Nexus Specialist Interests, (usual disclaimer).

An excellent evening: I only wish I could have done better justice to it: the applause showed that those present certainly had.

Great Locomotives Never Die
They Just Go Local

By Peter Kearon

A brief look at the twilight years of five of the most famous British Locomotive designs of the pre-war years seen in the 1950s. Apart from the early 1900s when Churchward's incomparable Saints and Stars appeared, the greatest years for locomotive design and construction this country has ever seen were those of the 1920s and 1930s. By good fortune the writer was able to witness some of these classic engines when they were no longer working top link duties and when the spectre of the scrapyard was all too clear.

S.R.

During the mid 50s the call of love regularly took me to London but the demands of work made my return to Southampton in time for breakfast next morning imperative. There were plenty of evening trains from Southampton to Waterloo invariably Merchant Navy hauled but returning south meant joining the half past midnight newspaper train from Waterloo which stopped at numerous stations before finishing at Southampton Terminus (Dock) station at around 6am., The average time for this 100 mile journey was rather less than 20mph. It may appear to have been rather less than noteworthy but for the fact that this duty was entrusted solely to Lord Nelson-class engines.

When "Lord Nelson" emerged from Eastleigh in 1926 she was claimed to be "The Most Powerful Passenger Engine in Great Britain". Photographs taken at the time

showed a handsome outline with a single chimney, shallow tender and without smoke deflectors. Sadly this class of just 16 engines failed to live up to the expected performance; Maunsell, and later Bulleid, put great efforts into improving them but finally to no great avail.

But it didn't matter to this passenger. A front end inspection at Waterloo revealed the title of some great sea lord or admiral adorning the nameplate. It was time to find a comfortable corner seat and enjoy five hours sleep lulled by the gentle exhaust beat of an old timer working out its retirement years. Southampton Terminus station gave a brief opportunity to admire again one of a famous class.

LMSR.

Prewar, and well into the 1950s, railways jealously guarded their boundaries and none more so than the extremities of the joint GW-LMS north-south line between Hereford and Shrewsbury. LMS engines, generally unrebuilt Royal Scots and Patriots, could enter Hereford station from the north but could go not an inch further and to my knowledge at that time no LMS-built engine ever penetrated the pure GWR system at this location. (Rules are meant to be broken and under BR management by the early 60s rebuilt Royal Scots were regularly used on through Cardiff- Manchester services).

Locomotive power going north from Hereford during the 1950s could not be forecast. The Cardiff portion of the evening train would leave behind a Grange or a mogul and joined at Pontypool Roads with the Bristol coaches brought in by a Hall or Castle. Sometimes this engine would take the combined train through to Shrewsbury; on other occasions a returning LMS engine would take over at Hereford and work through to Crewe. It was time to sleep.

Awoken at Crewe by the sound of buffers it was clear that an engine change was being made but the thought of leaving a warm carriage and walking along a bleak platform at 6am was not appealing and not necessary as the mystery would be revealed at Liverpool, Lime Street. But for regular (monthly) travellers there was no mystery, - this service was the realm of Stanier "Princess Royal" pacifics.

Every schoolboy knew of the exploits of "Princess Elizabeth" in 1933 taking a train non-stop from Euston to Glasgow in rather less than six hours. These engines were truly wonderful machines which would surely forever head the most prestigious LMS express trains. Alas, good though they undoubtedly were, the Duchesses were better and soon the Princess Royals were restricted to the London - Liverpool service and later to the Crewe- Liverpool section where I was able to enjoy the pleasure of being hauled by a one-time great engine. It remained only to walk along the platform at Lime Street to see which of the 12 Princesses (or Lady or Queen or even the oddly named Duchess) had headed that local train.

LNER

The Great Northern Railway's famous "Great Northern" and the LNER's even more famous "Flying Scotsman" (the intermediate engine "Sir Frederick Banbury" remained forever anonymous) were known to every schoolboy in the land. These A1s,

later A3s, got better and better and were only partially sidelined by the more glamorous A4s.

But diesels in the shape of Deltics and Brush 1500(later 4700) series took over more and more of the expresses while Brush and Sulzer classes were given the local work. But in 1962 I was still able to use one steam-hauled service, a morning Peterborough - Kings Cross semi-fast which stopped at Finsbury Park which allowed me to enjoy the three mile journey into the terminus behind a New England A3, often "Melton "or "Tracery". No fireworks, just the pleasure of hearing one of these famous engines still at work. One day a Brush brought in the train; it was all over. It just remained for "Blink Bonny" to appear and take out the very last A3-hauled service train from Kings Cross.

By the following year A4s were becoming rare visitors but by good fortune a lucky opportunity offered itself. I was going home from Kings cross to Potters Bar, my new home, on a Sunday afternoon and spotted that a Cambridge semi-fast would be quicker than my usual all-stations Welwyn Garden City -bound diesel railcar.

As we pulled away into Gas Works Tunnel I was surprised to see steam coming back along the tunnel wall; an open window allowed me to hear the soft exhaust beat of a big engine. Out at Finsbury Park to see what was heading this unimportant train; I was surprised and delighted to discover that it was an A4 - "Gannet". Our journey up through Wood Green (as it was then called) Hadley Wood tunnels and the stiff climb to Potters Bar was no more than a gentle amble on a schedule which made slight demands on that classic engine, one of the last remaining working representatives of a truly great class.

GWR

The Kings were built for a purpose; to tackle Dainton and Rattery banks after a journey from London without having to stop for a banker at Newton Abbot. A non-stop "Cornish Riviera Express" London to Plymouth behind the most powerful passenger engine in Great Britain (having cunningly but easily pushed ahead of the claims made for "Lord Nelson") must have given great satisfaction to the smug Great Western directors

For 30 years these engines had operated exclusively between Paddington, Plymouth, Bristol and Wolverhampton and occasionally Shrewsbury. They were permitted through the Severn Tunnel but within sight of Newport took the branch at Maindee Junction and headed north through Caerleon (Roman Isca) to Hereford and perhaps Shrewsbury. Under no circumstances were Kings and 4700-class consolidated engines allowed to reach Newport and Cardiff.

Having said that in 1943 a rumour swept through our school claiming that a King was in Cardiff which information led to an avalanche of boys descending on Canton sheds to find "King William III" outside the carriage sheds in steam and facing London. The circumstances remain unexplained but were not repeated for another 15 years.

When the simply awful "Warship" -class diesels appeared there was great pressure from Euston to remove Kings from prestige trains and at that time it was found that

after all Kings could safely work through to Cardiff. Soon they were removed from their previous sheds and appeared at Cardiff. But discarded engines are never the best and it was soon clear that run-down Kings were no match for Canton's splendid Castles. My very last steam-hauled journey from Cardiff to Paddington in September, 1961 featured double-headed haulage with two unusual engines, "Criccieth Castle" as the train engine with (now preserved) "King Edward I as pilot. At Paddington I asked one of the drivers the reason for using such super power. His sad response was, "They're a couple of clapped out engines."

Kings had no place to go. Perhaps the last time I saw one in steam was an evening in Newport where a King coupled to just one parcels coach and two milk vans stood at the up platform waiting for signals to Pontypool Roads. In 1968 two Kings and various Warship diesels stood together at Woodhams' Barry yard. The 40-year old Kings were rescued and splendidly restored; the discredited 8 year-old diesels were cut up. Perhaps justice had been done.

Postscript
I took a photograph at Barry in August 1965 which unfortunately it has not been possible to reproduce in the News Sheet. 6024 King Edward I, 6023 King Edward II and 5526 were lined up in Woodhams' yard. All three engines were eventually rescued; King Edward I remained at Barry from December 1962 until March 1973 but King Edward II was destined to remain for another ten years.

Hudson's Bay Railway
By Clive Winter

Remember when a lot of the world map on the classroom was red? How railway lines ended in the middle of nowhere? Names like Alice Springs, Birdum, Churchill? Here's one pupil who was distracted by the map; dreamed what it would be like to go to the middle of nowhere on a train. Why were these names there? Why build a railway to the middle of nowhere? Nobody does that. Not even terribly enthusiastic colonial English chaps in pith helmets, shorts, and long white socks - do they?

In the summer of 1979 I was flying southwest over Hudson's Bay in a big fat 747, Beethoven symphony from the headphones. Hudson's Bay, that big blue intrusion into the red of Canada on the schoolroom map. Flying over water for a long time. Land came into view under the wing. At last, something different to look down at from the cloudless sky. This was before seatback video route maps. Land, the shoreline of Hudson's Bay, an estuary, with a port and a very big building. And a RAILWAY line. A straight line across the middle of nowhere. It had to be Churchill under me. It's the only place on Hudson's Bay where the rails meet the tidewater. No road comes in from the outside world. I was intrigued.

17th October 2003. Four Points Hotel, Winnipeg Airport. 5am. Outside it is freezing, by English standards anyway. Safety briefing session for group. Wear your thermals. The wind is the thing to protect yourself from. Don't take chances. Fellow passengers ask about the chances of seeing polar bears, and the aurora borealis, and how much snow is there. I am also thinking about the 1697 kilometre train ride back: they were

flying back. I wanted to know just how remote this place is, and you only find out on the ground. There was a fabulous sunrise as the Voyageur Airways Dash 8 flew us north. Descending across The Barrens into Churchill that straight line across the middle of nowhere appeared again. This time I could see a telegraph line alongside, cutting though pools of mushy ice and the muskeg which overlay the permafrost. And therein lies this route's problem – stability.

The tour bus was not your usual luxury coach. It was a yellow school bus with the single word 'Nature' covering the School Bus sign, and one key difference - a rifle next to the first aid kit above the driver's head. We started on the sights. First the Polar Bear Compound for recidivist bears. A bear trap, so that we knew what it was at the back of most restaurants. The town dump – one of our party had been there last October and in a desperate effort to see a bear, any bear, even a recidivist bear scavenging, they'd had to go to the town dump. Miss Piggy – a crashed C46 freight plane. Cape Merry. The Eskimo museum. Then what? Well, there is the grain elevator, and the VIA rail station.

The grain elevator was the building seen from the big fat 747. Its capacity is 14000 tonnes or 5 million bushels. Started in 1931, the first wheat was shipped in 1932, three years after the railway arrived. There are five deep sea berths having a depth of 9.5 metres at low water. The tide range is about 5 metres, and of course it freezes. The shipping season is short, beginning mid July, and in 2003 the last ship was expected to leave in the first few days of November. There's a small oil terminal serving the Inuit communities along the bay. It doesn't seem like a serious economic proposition, so why is the port there?

It is perhaps difficult for us to realise how deep was the resentment of Canadian Pacific Railway by the settlers as the prairies were opened up in the years 1883 to 1914. CPR had a monopoly and exploited it: the growers wanted competition. Railway construction started from Hudson Bay Junction, Saskatchewan to The Pas in 1910 and on towards the wide, shallow and unprotected mouth of the Nelson River. By 1914 port facilities were being built, including a 17 span bridge to man-made island. One small problem – a port requires a harbour. In 1916 the work was suspended because of World War 1. The bridge is still there. Canadian National Railways timetable for the summer of 1923 shows a train on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday in each month, as far as mile 214 from The Pas. No name, just a mile post. The middle of nowhere again. In 1926 the decision was taken to divert the line to Churchill and three years later the first train arrived.

During my stay a grain train arrived - two CN locomotives with full width safety cabs, hauling about 80 Canadian Wheat Board hoppers, each one loaded with 90 tonnes of wheat. The ground shook as it rolled on up to the elevator. On Tuesday morning the VIA train arrived from Winnipeg, about 3 hours late. It reversed out of town to the wye so that the whole train was turned: two F40PH diesel locomotives, a crew accommodation/baggage car, and six passenger cars. Two 3000hp locomotives for such a small train? Seven cars require heat, and in case one fails there's a back up. The nearest spare might be at The Pas, 900 kms away if not actually at Winnipeg, another 800kms on. Canada is big, very big, and empty.

The timetable showed the train taking 10 hours 25 minutes to cover the first 360 km. to Ilford – 34kph, not exactly Eurostar then. Why? Sinkholes – the dips in the rail line caused by the progressive thawing of the permafrost tundra under the track. Now here's a different civil engineering problem. The Hudson Bay Railway was one of the earliest attempts to build a railway over permafrost. From about 30cm below the surface the ground is permanently frozen – or was. The sinking problem is isolated at the south end but becomes continuous at the north end. It occurs over about 600 km. of the line from The Pas. Since the opening in 1931, track quality has deteriorated, maintenance costs increased, and operational hazards are a major concern. Apparently track maintenance costs for this line are about three times the norm for railways in western Canada. Modern hoppers carrying 90 tonnes of wheat have axle loads in the order of 25t and demand much higher quality track than the loads of the 1930s did. Solution – thermosyphens or heat pipes. These are driven into the ground to the depth of several metres. They conduct heat away from the frozen terrain which supports the track – this heat extraction is helping preserve the permafrost. Do they work? They do. The first were installed in 1987 and were closely monitored. Now over many stretches of line there are these curious posts about 10 metres apart on either side of the track with what look like dayglo yellow sleeves over them.

Another conspicuously different lineside feature is the telegraph poles. Conventional poles driven into permafrost don't work. They fall over. The solution - telegraph tripods which sit on the surface. Three poles braced together near the top, one extended up for the familiar cross pieces carrying the insulators from which the wires were strung.

Having arrived 3 hours late in the morning, the Northern Spirit left 2½ hours late that evening - crew rest periods. I was assigned a roomette in the Snowy Owl car, between the Chateau Marquette sleeper and the Beluga Whale roomette. After a day spent largely on my feet I was ready to turn in. 0620hrs at Gillam still dark. 0755hrs daylight at Ilford, apparently a favoured fishing spot for one of the Governor-Generals in the late 1920s; probably why there's a depot building and passing loop. Hours later a stop near Boyd, yet another name in the timetable marked with a star - train stops on request. The notes read "Sign post. No facilities", they mean it. No shelter, just the sign. There were some log cabins near the track. Through the trees a frozen lake and that was it. Some very bulky packages were manhandled from rail level into the baggage car. At Sipiwesk the train crawls around the side of a wye, and then an hour later another wye before reversing into Thompson. This is as far as the highway comes so it's busy – ish. Crew change. Refuel. Away only 2 minutes behind schedule. Another 50 kms of forest and we are . . . going around the other leg of the wye at Sipiwesk. This train has gone 50kms along a branch line and come back. These railways on the old schoolroom map are different.

Wabowden, 701 kms from Churchill we set back into the siding. After 18 hours it's the first meet with another train. The northbound passenger. We should have crossed at Thicket Portage 1½ hours ago, so the northbound is 3 hours late, again. Start forward on the main track. Stop. The switch into the siding has to be locked by the train crew before proceding. Rules are rules even in these remote places, the wildlife can get into real mischief up here. The beavers had. Remember that helpful beaver in 'The Lady and the Tramp'? Human loggers fell the trees in the same direction. Not the beavers. They'd had a grand time: fallen trees every which way. Stumps had nice

cones at the top. The beavers dams – tidy they are not. Did I see one of these toothsome rodents? No. "By their works shall ye know them"

Another night. Across into Saskatchewan, through Canora, the Canadian Northern Railway town, Grandview, too dark to tell, Gilbert Plains, Dauphin. Now we are on the prairies, speeding, well relatively speeding, eastwards to Winnipeg. It is dawn and a most spectacular sunrise. The sun is making the whole sky gold and red as it is reflected off the base of the clouds above us. About 3kms off to the south another train can be seen, probably 100 freight cars long and by the full height multimark emblem on the locomotive it is obvious that it is a Canadian Pacific freight. The geography of Canada dictates that all the transcontinental routes converge on Winnipeg. Portage la Prairie and now the train is only 2 hours late – will I be able to connect with The Canadian to get on to Toronto? Final arrival at Winnipeg Union station contrived to be 2½ hours late, but The Canadian is running 2 hours late, so no problem, and there's time for a long walk. The Canadian, 22 cars long, including 5 domes cars and still only two of those 3000hp F40PH locomotives. Are all Canadian trains 2 or 3 hours late? No. Not all. My train from Toronto to Niagara Falls wasn't .

Did I see the Aurora Borealis? One cold cloudless sub-arctic night the sky was the most amazing array of green light - rolls and folds and, and just what did they put in the fish we had at dinner? Polar Bears? Polaroid is nothing to do with cameras. It's a Canadian word – it's what the big white bear gets when he's been sitting on the cold ice for too long. How many? Don't know. After 20 you stop counting, and we didn't go to the dump.