

**The interior of an LNER Tourist open vehicle as restored by the Severn Valley Railway. (Author)**

Before the advent of the railways it was only the well-heeled who could afford to have a means of transport other than using their own two feet and this would be either on horse-back or in a carriage. In the eighteenth century sedan chairs had been an alternative over relatively short distances and tended to be used to avoid the mud and other filth which coated the streets of the towns and villages. It was therefore unsurprising that when the passenger-carrying railway came along these better-off people opted to occupy different, and generally superior, categories of accommodation to those whom they considered to be their inferiors. Nevertheless so long as they could find the wherewithal this would be the first time for many of 'the poor' to be able to travel more than a few miles from their homes. Although they might all be part of the same train and start and arrive at the same time, it was the quality, or lack of it, of the accommodation which distinguished the various categories of traveller. This is not intended to be a full treatise on the development of the railway carriage, which has been done in a number of books by those who have specialised in the subject and also in *Backtrack* for April 2015, but simply a few observations noted over the years.

There were inevitably many trains which catered for first and second class passengers and the standard of their accommodation proved to be very different. The earliest first class vehicles had bodies of timber with ornate mouldings covering the joints between the panels while seats were padded with arm and head rests; the insides of the bodywork and door were often padded with upholstered panels. For the middling sort of passenger (the terms upper, middle and lower class were not generally in use then) the second class coach had to suffice – these had box-like wooden bodies and windows might be glazed though they could just be an open space in the door; they were sometimes, but not always, divided into compartments by partitions. If the occupants were lucky there might be a little padding on the seats. There would, of course, have been no form of heating in either class.

The poorest were expected to travel in 'carriages' which were, in effect, no better than open goods wagons and sometimes with little more than sides and ends a couple of feet high, particularly on the Great Western Railway. It was not unknown for passengers to fall out of them and seating, where any was provided, would be nothing more than wooden benches and mostly there would be no cover whatsoever; holes in the floor were to allow rainwater to drain away but of course these also allowed draughts to rise. In winter these poor unfortunates would suffer badly and in a case on the GWR in 1841 one such passenger had literally frozen to death by the time he reached Bath. All this was little better than travelling outside on a stagecoach and many railways refused to provide any third class accommodation. It is interesting and instructive to read about many railway companies' attitude to third class passengers in George May's article about sleeping cars in *Backtrack* for February 2015.



## SOME THOUGHTS ON PASS

BY ALISTAIR F. NISBET

The GWR's third class vehicles were generally run with goods and cattle wagons – formed into 'luggage trains' as the nineteenth century press was wont to term them – with no guarantee of when or even if they might reach their destination. This company was not the only one that practised such discrimination for the London & South Western Railway and London & Birmingham were known to do likewise; on these lines it was not unknown for third class passengers to be turned out of a train when it was decided that it would go no further that day, no matter that they had paid a fare to be conveyed to their destination. Installation of springs and spring buffers contributed to ride quality but again some lines, including the GWR, resisted this move for all classes, claiming such refinements would weaken the frames.

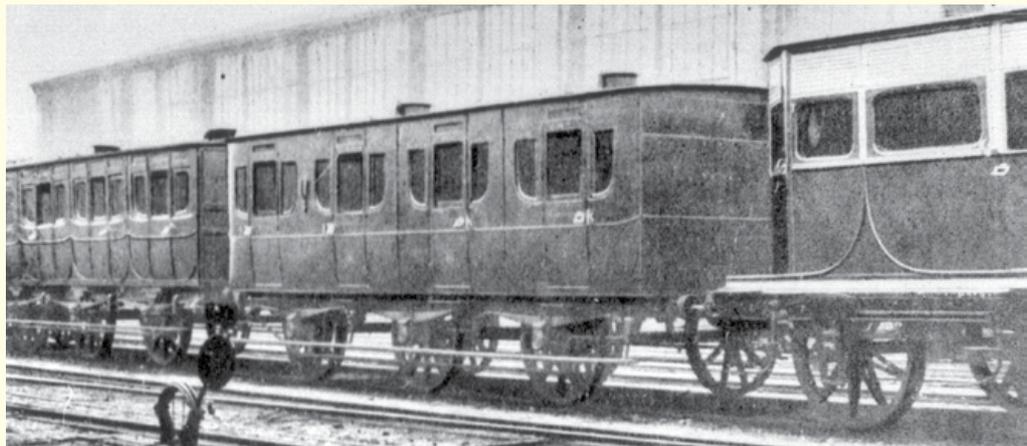
When a Select Committee of Parliament was set up to inquire into railway safety it called the GWR's Brunel to give evidence but he was somewhat off-hand in his consideration of how third class passengers should be conveyed, saying all passengers should be

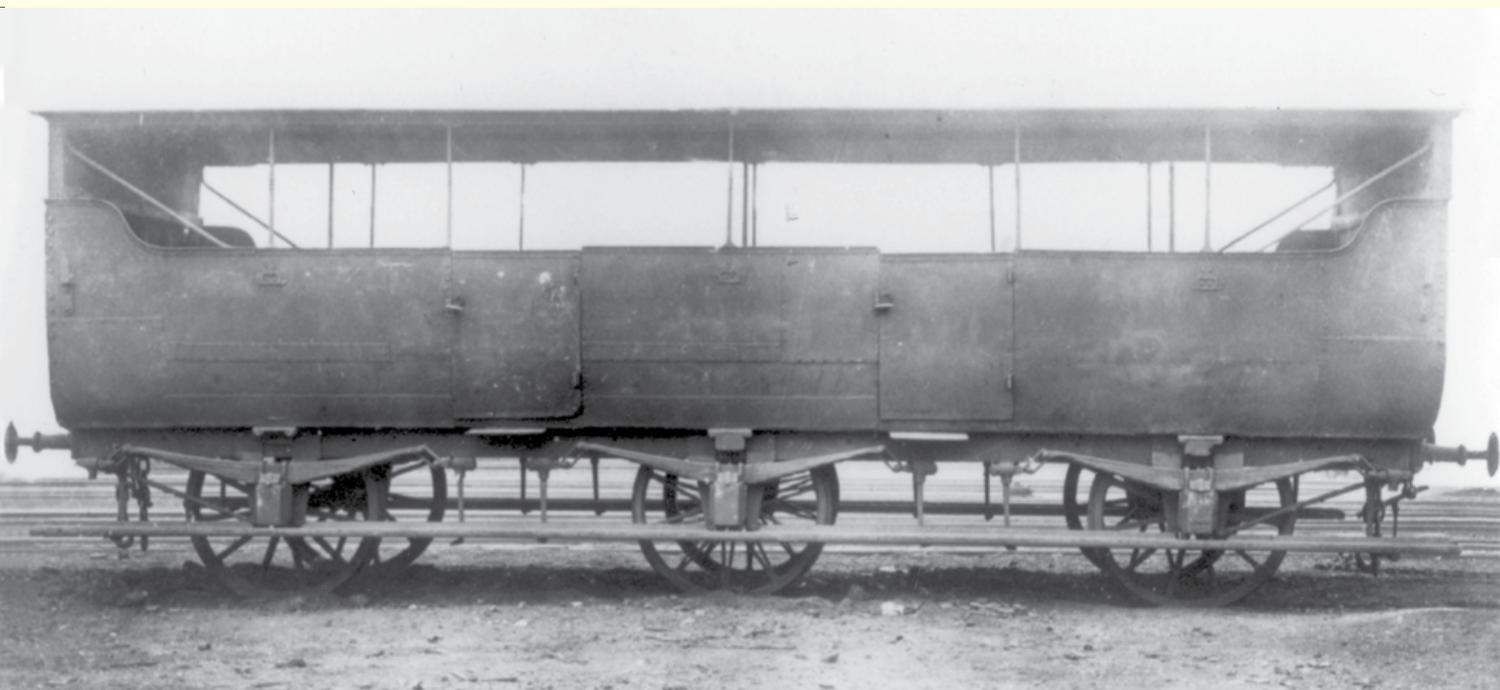
seated with their back to the engine with cushions behind them but on no account should cushions be provided for the third class. His words came back to haunt him after the Great Western's Sonning Cutting derailment on Christmas Eve 1841, which was caused by an earth slip. This caused an outcry to be raised when it became known that nine passengers had been killed and another seventeen seriously injured, all of whom had been travelling in open third class vehicles attached to a goods train. The Board of Trade (BoT) therefore wrote on 1st January 1842 to all the railway companies thus: "...the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade have thought it their duty to ascertain whether proper precautions are taken to ensure the safety of the poorer class of passenger upon Railways generally".

Each company was then asked to state:

1. By how many and what description of Trains in the course of the 24 hours are Third-class passengers taken?
2. At what hours do such Trains start, at what speed do they travel, and how long do they take to perform the Journey?
3. What is the construction of Third-class

**A later period GWR six-wheel third class vehicle – covered and with glass in the windows by now. (Historical Model Railway Society)**





## ENGER ACCOMMODATION

carriages specifying

a) whether provided with Springs and Sprung Buffers the same as other Passenger carriages?

b) Whether closed, partly closed or open?

c) Height of Framing or Panelling at ends and sides?

4. Whether any partitions in the body of the Carriages and if so their height and position?

5. How many Passengers each Carriage is constructed to carry?

6. Whether there are seats for the Passengers and if so how arranged?

7. Whether Third-class or other Passenger Carriages go with Trains partly composed of Luggage Waggon; are such carriages placed before or behind the Luggage Waggon and is such position invariably presented or is it altered according to the weight of the Train and other circumstances?

Not many of the companies' responses have survived but it is interesting to read the one from the Arbroath & Forfar Railway: "Four trains take 3rd class passengers as well as goods and all classes of passengers from Arbroath at 8.30, 11.45am, 3.0, 5.30pm. Also from Arbroath goods trains run at 15mph at

11.45 and 5.30pm. The other two are passenger trains and run at 20mph. The goods take 1 ¼ hours and the passengers one hour.

"Most 3rd class vehicles have springs and spring buffers and those without are being altered. Some are open, some closed. In open ones the panelling at the ends and sides is 3 ½ feet above the floor. Each can carry 30 passengers, sitting back to back. 3rd class vehicles always go behind the luggage wagon. The comfort of the 3rd class passengers is always an object of particular attention. There are two covered 3rd class vehicles for winter or bad weather."

All this eventually led to the passing of Mr. Gladstone's 1844 Regulation of Railways Act which not only established the principle of third class passengers being conveyed in covered carriages at not less than 12mph and at a fare not more than 1d a mile but imposed requirements on all railway companies to provide at least one such service every day on every line – the Parliamentary Train.

These trains were distinguished as such in some timetables while others simply said that a particular train conveyed passengers at Parliamentary fares. Once these trains and

**An early example of a GWR broad gauge third class coach, covered and with higher sides than heretofore but still open to the weather.**  
(Historical Model Railway Society)

fares were mandated it was noted that some 'superior persons' were 'trading down' to travel thus and save money and it was rumoured, though never proven, that various tactics were used to discourage them including putting chimney sweeps in the same compartments or, failing that, sheep and pigs.

An article published in *The Railway Magazine* in January 1942 discussed the quality of passenger vehicles and in particular third class ones on the North British Railway (NBR) in the mid-1860s – they were described as four-wheelers 18 ½ft over headstocks and 7 ½ft wide with five compartments having plain wooden seats accommodating 50 passengers. The carriage was of the open type (presumably as to internal layout rather than roofless) and was lit by two oil lamps. The author suggested that fourth class might have been more hygienic. According to Rixon Bucknall, at one time the NBR had a reputation for smelly coaches, rather dilapidated stations and a disregard of punctuality – particularly in the Borders area where there were many odious comparisons to be made with the nearby North Eastern Railway.

**The mid-Victorian view of how the third class passenger was expected to travel.**  
(Author's Collection)



### Railway Passenger Duty

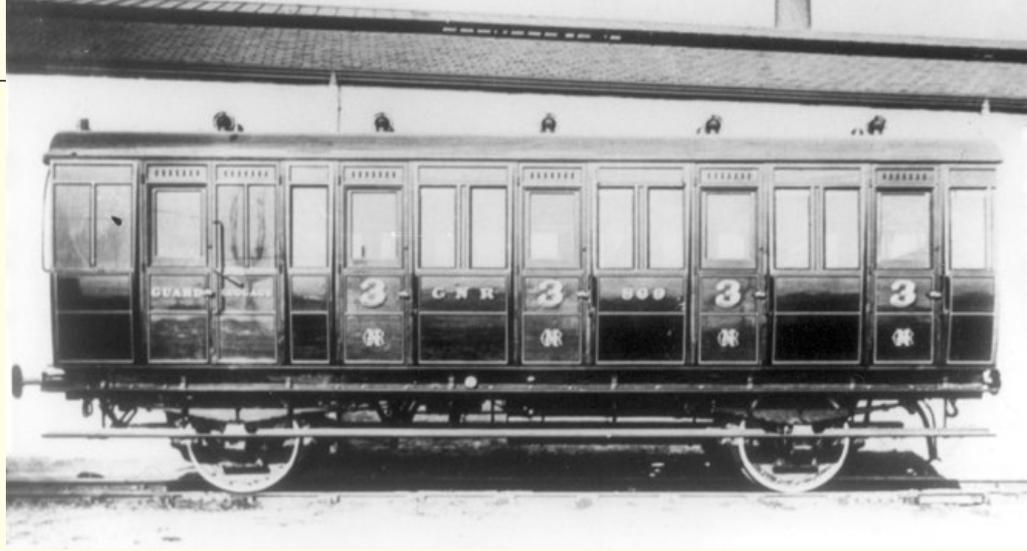
Various Acts had imposed duties on stage carriages and horses and the Stamp Act of 1842 had likewise imposed a duty of 5% in respect of all passengers carried on railways. Besides introducing Parliamentary fares, the 1844 Act had in effect exempted the companies from some of that tax by ensuring that it did not apply to fares of 1d per mile on such trains. The BoT had since then approved some amendments to the limit of one train calling at all stations each day, this being permitted in order to provide for quicker transit by running more than one train, each of which called at a proportion of all the stations. By 1872 the practice had developed so that Parliamentary passengers were carried by all but the fastest

expresses. However, this did not meet with universal approval within Government for, since 1869, the Board of Inland Revenue (IR) had insisted that the BoT did not have powers to exempt these trains and had therefore started to harass the companies. Accordingly on 12th December 1872 representatives of the companies met the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to put the case against the Inland Revenue – this had come about after an action had been raised by the Attorney General against the North London Railway, which did not have third class vehicles but carried its Parliamentary passengers in second class. The Chancellor supported the IR in how it applied the law. At the close of the meeting the PM said their arguments would be considered very carefully.

The same day *The Times* carried a lengthy editorial in which it was claimed that "...the poorer classes had on the whole gained far more by Railways than the rich and have made more use of their opportunities". It was not merely "...Third Class carriages but excursion trains, market trains, holiday tickets and workmen's trains which bear witness to the immense facilities this afforded".

There was much room for question as to whether such a tax should be maintained, particularly as it had already been removed from hackney carriages. It remained in force for around another ten years, eventually being abolished by the Cheap Trains Act 1883 which, *inter alia*, established workmen's trains and appropriate fares for them.

**An LMS brake third No.26966 as restored by the Severn Valley Railway. The locomotive is the restored LNWR 0-6-2T 'Coal Tank' LMS No.7799 which was visiting for a gala weekend. (Author)**



**A Great Northern Railway third class four-wheel carriage of 1875.**  
(Historical Model Railway Society)

### Second Class is respectable

Second class had become respectable in the 1850s when it was "favoured with severely stiffed seats and backs of shiny leather", all part of the new Victorian middle class. The well-known nineteenth century chronicler E. L. Ahrons apparently referred to London, Chatham & Dover Railway carriages as "poverty stricken rabbit hutches" for they had been without even brakes until 1890 and with only oil lighting until the end of the century. The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway, by way of contrast, had all its trains, including those inherited from the East Lancashire, fitted with a continuous braking system. The down-side of this was that no lighting or heating of any sort was available in third class and neither was there any upholstery or cloth on the seats. Its excursionists in 1860 could expect to be transported in cattle wagons fitted with portable roofs and seats – presumably a tarpaulin and benches. Not all

railway companies had kept the three classes of vehicle for the Caledonian abolished it as from 1st May 1886 except on those routes where the London & North Western's through coaches ran.

In October 1893 the periodical *Engineering* was, according to the *Dundee Advertiser*, making "a plea for the 2nd class passenger". This was in the course of a discussion of the classification of Railway Passengers with the journal saying that recent 'improvements' in third class vehicles had resulted in their occupants "having practically all the advantages of Second Class without paying the extra fare".

The author was of the opinion that if second class was abolished on all lines this was unlikely to run into any opposition from season ticket holders. However, it was noted that in London, where short distance travel led to small differences in fares, many folk travelled first or second class "to obviate the



chance of associating with a sailor who has just landed at the docks and who regards it as necessary to maintain the tradition of Jack ashore”.

Presumably this was a barbed implied reference to the alleged propensity of mariners to “spend all their tin on ladies and drinking gin” as one folk song has it. Likewise the ordinary working man was “not the most acceptable fellow-passenger when he has his working, perhaps oily, garments on”.

According to the author Cuthbert Hamilton Ellis some railways never had second class – in the case of the Great North of Scotland he contended that this was because it served an area where people watched their pennies very closely. Second class was abolished on the Midland Railway from 1st January 1875 when the company began upgrading its third class vehicles to a standard which was, in effect, second class anyway. Ellis lived close to the LSWR and records that prior to 1918 its corridor first class vehicles had two-a-side seating, second had three and third four-a-side while in non-corridors the standards were three, four and five respectively. Even a non-corridor second was “lavishly upholstered, ceilings and partition panels were, apart from the fascias with their pictures, “covered with rather ornate lincrusta-walton and the mouldings were picked out in gold paint”.

He was less generous in his description of the South Eastern & Chatham Railway’s third class, regarding it as “often so mean” but its second class was the best in the country. The London, Brighton & South Coast’s second came nowhere by comparison, even though it was far better than the Great Northern’s. CHE concluded that we may “bask in the belief that it is possible to be first class, rich and vulgar or second class, poor and intellectual”.

### Third Class evolves

The traditional third class compartment coach gradually evolved to have a sliding door to a side corridor with three-a-side seating or four if the armrests were raised. The seat stuffing material could be horsehair which occasionally made its way through the covering to scratch against short-trousered legs. Later this was replaced by coil springs which after some years began to reveal their age when bottoms were lowered on to them. Above the seat backs the dividing walls tended to feature pictures of interesting places served by the owning company – frequently these were reproductions of watercolour paintings but in some cases there were black and white photographs or maps of the company’s routes. Some compartments featured individual reading lamps above the three seating positions plus a ceiling-mounted one – sometimes complete with a lampshade. These were not, of course, confined to third class.

Earlier compartments had an external door but these were later replaced with large picture windows and doors were only at vehicle ends and occasionally at a midpoint transverse passage. First class was similar but compartments were wider and seats were deeper and featured more comfortable



**One could not always be sure of obtaining one’s fair share of seating space as this Victorian sketch illustrates.**  
(Historical Model Railway Society)

upholstery.

By the 1930s there were the first signs of how future coaches would be laid out with the advent of the London & North Eastern Railway’s Tourist Stock – in essence an open vehicle divided into bays. This became the standard layout for the Southern Railway (and later Region) suburban trains although until the 1960s there was usually one compartment coach per four-car set. The motor coaches on the 4-COR units built for the Portsmouth Direct electrification also had this layout. Starting with the experimental XP64 set, which led to the MkII stock, virtually all new vehicles thereafter were of the open type and this has been continued into the privatisation age. One notable exception was the MkIII-based 5-WES sets built for the Bournemouth line which contained some compartments for first class passengers – in spite of many commentators saying it was not practicable. Nowadays some of the current Train Operating Companies, notably first Great Western, have removed virtually all tables and bays from their vehicles to leave only airline-style seating so that as many rush hour passengers from Didcot and Reading to London as possible may be squeezed in.

### No more Third Class

First class was abolished on London’s suburban lines during World War II and passengers soon became used to having to travel in crowded cramped conditions. When the British Transport Commission announced the national abolition of third class the *Manchester Guardian* noted, on 1st December 1955, that it had “...seldom been loved, often resented and sometimes bitterly hated”.

The editorial considered that when third disappeared only the lonely firsts would be marked, all others being non-class-distinguished. The newspaper quoted Hamilton Ellis’s *British Railway History* as

saying that “First class was high caste, second class as low caste and third class was outcast.” The writer said he had been told in childhood by a socially impeccable aunt “You may travel first if you can afford it and third if you can’t. Second class means lady’s maids and footmen.”

It was also claimed that the abolition was to appease travellers from the Continent. In response to the BR announcement Ellis penned an article for *Trains Illustrated* suggesting, *inter alia*, that third would soon become second and second become first. According to his reasoning the GWR had for a time been a “four class railway – first, second open, second closed and common wagons”. He contended that second class was originally intended for the Lower Orders but soon became “elevated into a provision for bagmen, junior clerks, virtuous widows in straitened circumstances and other people who could scrape half-crowns together but who did not carry sovereigns loose in the pocket”.

### Letter to the Editor

As was so often the case the editor of *The Times* received numerous letters pointing out how the various companies regarded the different classes of carriage. The Great Western received more adverse publicity when a correspondent signing himself ‘X’ complained on 25th September 1873 that when he and his wife had recently travelled by that company from High Wycombe they were invaded by two drunken labourers and their families who used “the most abominable and obscene language” all the way to London. He said that “people of small income like myself travel by one of the superior classes in the hope of securing decent companions rather than for the sake of more comfortable carriages”.

### Frozen First Class feet

In a literary piece in the *Bradford Observer* for 8th August 1850 the writer suggested “In winter, even in an English First Class carriage, there is no protection against frost and damp; but in nearly all the foreign railways no sooner does the winter set in than the first class traveller finds the bottom of his carriage provided with a long tin full of hot water. In the cold months masses of woollen cloth and railway wrappers are seen shaking in the corners of the first class English carriages with shivering comfortless, human beings inside them, despairing of any sort of warmth whatever”.

Another instance came on 8th January 1885 when ‘A MYSTIFIED ONE’ complained that he had been unable to obtain at Victoria a hot water tin (ie a footwarmer) for a lady friend in a third class compartment for Eastbourne – these apparently were only permitted for those passengers going to Hastings and an appeal to the guard had been unsuccessful, even though most of the hot footwarmers remained unclaimed. This brought forth a number of other letters in a similar vein including one from ‘F B E’ who said that Hastings passengers had the choice of South Eastern or LBSC trains, hence the Brighton company’s



**The interior of a London & North Western Railway first class compartment with its comfortable-looking seats and large armrests. (Historical Model Railway Society)**

favourable treatment of them. There was, however, no competition to Eastbourne and therefore no incentive to treat these passengers any better so they just had to suffer.

Interestingly the LBSCR's public timetable dated May 1899 informs its users that footwarmers are available for first and second class passengers at no cost – one should apply to the station master. There was no mention of only being available on certain routes. Epsom was another place served by two companies and here the Brighton provided footwarmers as a matter of course, yet 'CONDEMNED TO TRAVEL ON THE SOUTH WESTERN' said the LSWR never provided them unless requested by a "purse-jingling passenger". The class of travel was not mentioned but first can probably be assumed. Many other companies provided footwarmers, of course, and they were usually mentioned in their public timetables. Their Working Timetables and/or Appendices generally gave the staff details of

where such warmers were to be provided and who was to be responsible for ensuring they were.

Some paragraphs in the North British Railway's General Appendix dated May 1901 list the points between which footwarmers were to be supplied and which class of passenger was to receive them – on the majority of the main lines both first and third could have them and it tended to be only on secondary routes or short branches that they were limited to first class. Not every station on the route could supply them though, it being mainly the termini which did. It was the station master's duty to ensure that they were available and that cold pans were to be replaced with hot ones "as often as may be necessary". Once they had been taken from the boiler they were to be rubbed over with an oily cloth and at no time must they be placed before a fire. When being removed from the carriages they were not to be thrown down on to the platform but

**The working man who has dared to enter a first class compartment seems to be the subject of the beady eye of the railway official outside. (Author's Collection)**



laid carefully aside until again required. If any belonging to other companies were found they were to be returned immediately.

The Bishop-Coadjutor of London for North and Central Europe was moved to write at great length to *The Times* from the Austrian Tyrol, comparing travelling conditions in England somewhat unfavourably with those found in France and Germany. His letter was duly published on 6th June 1892 and in this missive he claimed that in the latter country the guard made his way along the outside of the train every twenty miles or so to check that all was well in the carriages. It was hardly a safe procedure to recommend for adoption unless the good Bishop-Coadjutor thought a side corridor was outside the vehicle. He considered that although speeds here were greater than elsewhere, in comfort, convenience and the protection of passengers this country was far behind the Continent, painting a rather bleak picture when he claimed that "women are assaulted in railway carriages and travellers are found wounded, and sometimes dead". Provision of ladies' carriages ought to be strictly enforced on all trains but these were "the eccentric exception rather than the rule".

So far as heating was concerned he scorned the hot water tins of the UK and instanced how in Germany "an artificial fuel is inserted from without and regulated from warm through temperate to cool by a handle fixed in each compartment". Could he have been referring to steam heating pipes?

### Press comment

As always *Punch* had somewhat sardonic views on the different classes of traveller, some of which appeared in editions of *Mr. Punch's Railway Book*; for instance, there was the chapter entitled 'The Rough's Railway Guide' in which the 'ready rough' was encouraged to regard a third class carriage as a sort of travelling Alsatia where brutal blackguards could find sanctuary – "no third class carriage is ever full so long as one more brawny brute can violently force his way into it".

A letter in the *Carlisle Journal* of 22nd June 1860 complained about Sunday School teachers in an excursion train who had travelled first class while their charges were left to their own devices in third class.

Over 30 years later the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* for 28th July 1894 carried a paragraph in which it claimed that there was a simple way of distinguishing between the different classes of carriage. To back this up it related how two people had a 'misunderstanding' over opening a window in a second class compartment – the lady had cuttingly said to the other traveller "You don't appear to know the difference between second and third class". The gentleman responded by saying "Oh madam, I am an old railway traveller; I know all the class distinctions. In the first class the passengers behave rudely to the guard, in third the guards behave rudely towards the passengers while in second the passengers behave rudely to each other." The paper then invited anyone to dare to contradict the truth of the matter.

According to the *Daily Mail* of 11th January 1905 the North Eastern was experimenting with abolishing first class travel on (an unspecified) part of its line – the Duke of Northumberland had presided over a





**Excursion passengers who were squeezed into first class carriages were often the subject of letters of complaint to the editor of *The Times* and other newspapers.**  
(Author's Collection)

protest meeting the day before. The paper's resident 'expert' noted that already the Tube railways offered only one class as did the main line companies where they used railmotors.

A paragraph in the *Dundee Advertiser* dated 10th April 1920 noted that it was now possible to reserve a seat beforehand on one of the English railways. The writer thought it was a tip which the "Great Railway Companies" might adopt on such journeys as Scotland to London. He claimed that if one wanted to secure a decent, or even any, seat (and especially one in third class) it was necessary to go to the terminus at least an hour before the train was due to start, there to seize a place in a compartment "and hold to it with that tenacity which comes of a belief in possession being nine points of the law".

Perhaps something of an exaggeration but nevertheless mostly true. A few months later the same newspaper carried a few paragraphs, this time on 15th September, on the subject of the first class carriage and its future, or

possibly lack of one, saying it was rare to find the manager of a great railway company seriously considering the abolition of first class travel. The development of the motor car and the advancement of proletarian politics were cited as the likely causes of its eventual demise.

This had come about because the Great Eastern's Sir Henry Thornton had been reported as suggesting that one standard type of carriage was coming, mitigated by an arrangement in virtue of which "certain additional comforts" would be provided for those willing to pay for them. The additional comfort that was really wanted was a seat or the guarantee of one and it would be a great reform if, for an additional fee, the railways were to guarantee that the seats they sell would actually be available to the purchasers. No doubt the railway companies would have responded to those comments about seats by saying that legally they were only obliged to convey the passengers and not to provide a

seat as well. Such sentiments about finding a seat are often expressed nowadays, not only in respect of commuter travel but also about the abysmally short trains operated over long distances by such operators as CrossCountry.

Many newspapers reprint small selections from their earlier editions and the *Glasgow Herald* was no exception for on 20th February 1948 it had a bit from 100 years previously. "It is remarked that the 1st and 2nd class carriages of the Caledonian Railway are very comfortable. The 1st class ones are fitted up with most beautiful patent rugs for the feet, manufactured by Mr. Taylor of Lochwinnoch, the patentee. The 2nd class carriages have stuffed seats and are partly stuffed at the backs. The 3rd class ones are barbarous and ought to be immediately put to rights. They have no glass windows but a board to shut against the weather." This was apparently a direct lift from the *Railway & Shipping Journal*, a common practice then.

### Advent of the no-smuts train

Every newly-recruited newspaper reporter seems to find it a necessary rite of passage to have published a derogatory article about the country's railways so it is something of a surprise to see the *Dundee Courier's* 1956 description of how there was a "Rush to be first on the no-smuts train".

This was a report on the introduction of Metro-Cammell diesel multiple units on the Gleneagles to Crieff and Comrie service and included the names of various people who had apparently left home early to be on the 7.58am from Comrie. The absence of the guard's green flag was noted, the exchange of buzzers being just like a conductress belling the bus driver".

The compartments were "wide and spacious with fresh beige upholstery [some-what impractical-sounding], air conditioned, calculated to be cool in summer and warm in winter. Windows were large with none of those dangling leather straps with holes that never seemed to be in the right place".

Instead the long narrow windows were made to slide apart – presumably the source of the 'air conditioning'. It seems possible that the

**A GWR composite carriage, No.6622, built to Diagram E.151 in 1936.**  
(Historical Model Railway Society)





**The interior of a BR Mk1 third class compartment – four a side and no armrests but a central mirror on both walls. (Historical Model Railway Society)**

writer had never been on a train previously for many open vehicles had such sliding windows by that date, complete with the wee notice telling passengers not to open them wider than the downward pointing arrows to avoid a draught. It was also reported that members of Crieff Town Council were to make a trip to Gleneagles on 22nd June to “give a lead to the townspeople and encourage them to use the new means of transport”. They were even prepared to pay their own fares! No doubt the ratepayers raised a cheer at that news.

For the record the reporter mentioned that this was not the first diesel car to run in public service in Scotland for that honour had gone 46 minutes earlier to the 7.12am from Galashiels to Peebles and Edinburgh the same day.

**Rainbow rolling stock**

In the mid-1870s the LYN had gained a reputation for having particularly poor standards of cleanliness and general discomfort in its carriages. It therefore came as something of a surprise to the editor of the *Northern Echo* on 27th January 1876 when he noted that the company intended to change the colour of both tickets and vehicles to reflect their class – first was to be yellow, second to be brown and third was blue. Composite carriages would henceforth be painted in the separate areas according to their class.

**Lighting**

At first there was no lighting in any class of vehicle although later on oil-lit lamps were provided – in many instances these were dropped through a hole in the vehicle roof by an employee walking along the length of the train. These lamps could be somewhat smoky and the presence of the hole added to the potential for draughts. Later still gas lighting was introduced, the gas being stored in a bottle or reservoir beneath the vehicle although after some disastrous accidents in which the gas ignited there were moves to discourage this.

According to the *Dundee Advertiser* dated 17th October 1883 a new method of lighting

carriages was now in use in certain parts of the country – electricity. A scheme patented by a Mr. Cheesewright had just been introduced to the LSWR and used a battery which did away with the use of steam engines and dynamos. The same method was also in use on a dining room carriage of Leeds trains and the South Eastern Railway’s Continental trains. The GER was also known to be using something similar.

**Labelling**

It was, of course, necessary to be able to distinguish from the outside of the vehicle where the various classes were accommodated and at first this tended to be by marking on the carriage doors the class – this in fact continued until early British Railways days but only in

so far as first class was distinguished by the figure ‘1’. In the 1960s there was a gradual change from this to the yellow line at cantrail level which was said to be inspired by European practice. The LNER and some of its predecessor companies had used lettering on the doors, particularly on teak stock and examples of this may be seen on some of our heritage lines, notably the Severn Valley.

In the early days of BR much discussion took place about how the new Mk1 coaches should be distinguished and the use of permanently attached labels was decided on as well as the ‘1’ on the doors. The responsibility for the placement of the labels was also the subject of correspondence and it was eventually decided in August 1950 that it would be devolved to the Carriage & Wagon Dept. Outdoor Staff. A lengthy document was issued on the 30th showing exactly where and how labels were to be placed. It also gave guidance on how to decide whether replacements were needed. On older stock it was decreed that ‘NO SMOKING’ labels did not need to be given a coat of varnish although newer ones had to conform. Defaced ‘SMOKING’ labels were not to be replaced but simply removed. Labels for first class were to be 10½in long and coloured blue and white, those for ‘LADIES ONLY’ were to be 9in long in green and white whilst ‘NO SMOKING’ was to be triangular in red and white. All were double sided.

**Banned**

The Peter Simple column in the *Daily Telegraph* of 3rd December 1968 noted that second class passengers between Liverpool and Birmingham and between Birmingham and London had been refused admission to the first class restaurant cars, allegedly on the grounds that they ate too slowly with the result that passengers holding first class tickets were unable to obtain a seat in said cars and therefore could obtain nothing to eat. Presumably the buffet cars were insufficiently grand for these personages.

**The BR Mk1 era as seen post-privatisation – first class compartments on a 4-VEP unit in Network SouthEast livery plus additional Stagecoach embellishments. The window stickers are pure BR. (Author)**

