

BOOK REVIEWS

Boat Trains: The English Channel & Ocean Liner Specials History Development & Operation

Martyn Pring

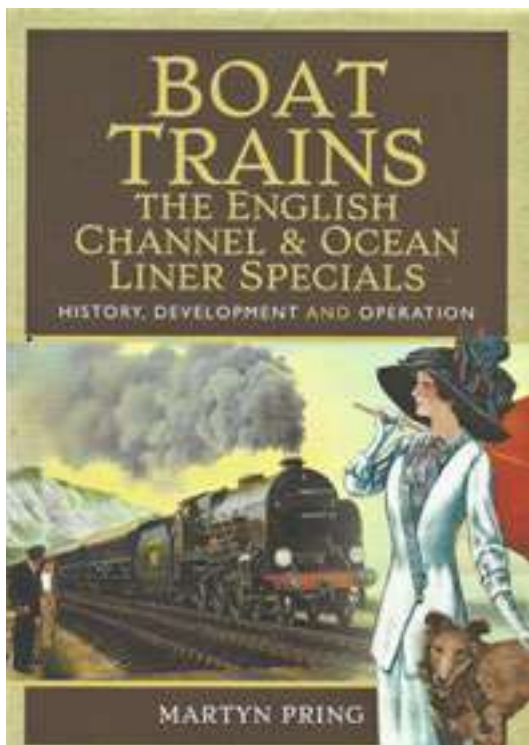
384pp, hard cover. Extensively illustrated in colour and monochrome. Published by Pen & Sword Books Ltd. ISBN 978 1 52676 192 7. £35.

‘Never judge a book by its cover’ is a saying that was never truer than in the case of this volume’s eye-catching jacket. Although the title and art deco design – featuring a Lord Nelson class locomotive and a fashionable lady of the 1930s – might seem to imply that this volume is just about the Southern’s boat trains to Dover and Southampton, nothing could be further from the facts.

The six chapters giving a general shape to the book are: Victorian and Edwardian Travel Progress; Inter War Years – A Golden Age of Travel; Post War Travel Resumes; The Boat Train Has Had Its Day; Great Cross-Channel Boat Train Expresses and Ocean Special Boat Trains. Should readers, having seen the contents page, still assume that they are about to spend their time aboard the Golden Arrow or the Cunarder they will soon be disabused. These and other relevant Southern topics are certainly covered in great detail, but so are the similar activities of the Great Western and the L&NWR/LMS – the former particularly in relation to Plymouth services, and the latter to Liverpool and Tilbury. The domestic aspect is balanced with coverage of railways at journey’s end, not only in Europe and North America but also, to a lesser extent, in India and South Africa.

The maritime side of the story receives nearly as much attention as the railway content, with much detail included of shipping lines and the great liners. The book is none the worse for that, making as it does an interesting change, and takes the narrative to most corners of the planet! Also featured are the Southern’s trains serving the Imperial Airways flying boats which operated from Poole Harbour, together with Short’s Rochester-built S23 (the civilian version of the RAF’s Sunderland).

There are tenuous K&ESR connections, one being the transfer of the Hastings line Pullmans



to Southampton boat trains, which of course included *Barbara* and *Theodora*, as well as information attributed to the late Julian Morel in his role as Catering Superintendent of the Pullman Car Company. That gentleman was influential in the 1980s as a member and advisor in the establishment of our own Pullman services.

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Change at Robertsbridge The Rother Valley (Light) Railway (1897 – 1904): its directors, promoters and investors

David Penn

242pp, soft cover. 47 illustrations, plus bibliography, list of references, index and list of illustrations. Published by David Penn. Available from Amazon at www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B08WQC6FZJ. eBook £5, paperback £8.65.

Railway histories can be placed on a spectrum ranging from the popular photographic albums at one end, like *The Kent & East Sussex Railway* by Jonathan James (Mainline & Maritime, 2020),