

A FRENCH FARCE IN WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Some new light on an early East & West Junction Railway locomotive

Barry Taylor

'The jury, after a short consultation, agreed on a verdict for the plaintiff – damages £30'.

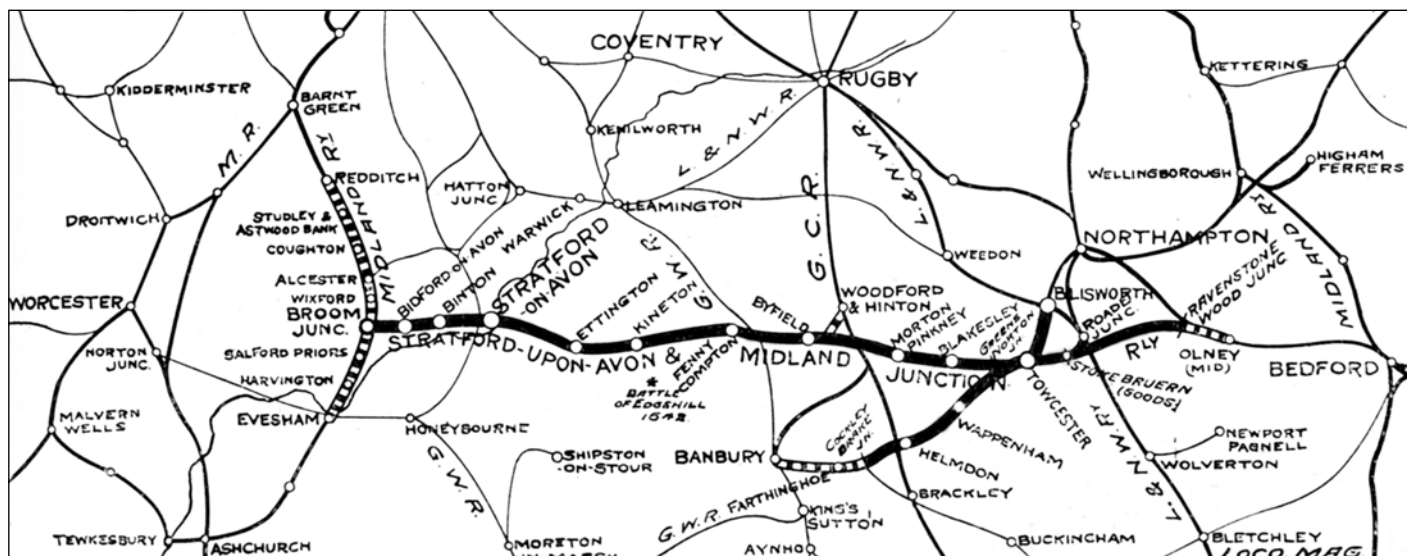
So reads the last line of a fascinating report in the *Northampton Mercury* newspaper of 11th March 1876, about a court case involving the East & West Junction Railway Company and the Sun Fire Office. The claim was that a locomotive of the said railway company had, on 21st May 1875, emitted sparks which caused a fire in a lineside property near Woodford Halse. At first glance there is probably nothing too remarkable about this; indeed, the report does mention that, amongst others, the Great Northern Railway Company had in the past agreed to pay for this type of damage on their own line, rather than allow cases to go to court. However, a more detailed examination of the report does reveal some extremely interesting information about one of the E&WJR's otherwise rather shadowy locomotives of the mid 1870s, namely an elderly 0-6-0 tender locomotive of French origin, *La Savoie*, apparently known locally as 'Savoy.'

The E&WJR, together with the Northampton & Banbury Junction Railway and the Evesham, Redditch & Stratford Railway, eventually evolved into the better known Stratford upon Avon & Midland Junction Railway, through a series of amalgamations culminating in 1910, and resulting in a modest network of mostly single lines straggling across sparsely populated areas of Northamptonshire and Warwickshire. The initial aims of these companies were, however, much grander, with intentions of linking the iron ore fields of Northamptonshire to the furnaces of South Wales. The N&BJR was first on the scene, with proposals to link not only Northampton with Banbury but also to extend onwards through Blockley and Ashchurch, and thence to Monmouth and Ross, and the company name was changed to the Midland Counties & South Wales Railway to mirror this ambition. However, by May

1866, when the first section of line was opened to traffic from alongside the L&NWR main line at Blisworth to Towcester, there was already a realisation that this grand scheme was unlikely to succeed and the title quickly reverted to the N&BJR. The banking crisis of the same year delayed further construction, until the line was finally extended in 1872 to the L&NWR at Cockley Brake Junction, on the Bletchley to Banbury line.

Meanwhile, in 1864, the first sod had already been cut for the construction of the East & West Junction Railway at Greens Norton, near Towcester. T.R. Crampton was the contractor for the new scheme, which was once again intended to link Northamptonshire with South Wales but this time via Byfield, Fenny Compton and Stratford upon Avon, and with running powers in the east over the N&BJR to Blisworth and Northampton. Once again, finance was difficult to obtain and progress was slow, with the first isolated section from Fenny Compton to Kineton finally opening on 1st June 1871. Another two years were to pass before the line was finally completed, as a through route from Greens Norton to Stratford, on 1st July 1873, using N&BJR facilities at Towcester in the east and the Great Western station at Stratford in the west. The E&WJR then opened their own temporary Stratford station in the Old Town district in 1875, quickly followed by a permanent structure in January 1876. The story is completed in 1879 with the opening of the Evesham, Redditch & Stratford Railway line from Stratford upon Avon, to Broom Junction on the Midland Railway's Evesham Branch. The ER&SR had running powers over the Midland line, thus continuing the dreams of tapping the lucrative South Wales traffic but, critically, the junction at Broom faced in the wrong direction for through running and this omission was only rectified during World War II with the opening of a new curve.

However, despite the completion of the route, all had not been well with the E&WJR, with the company financially exhausted through



Map showing the route of the Stratford upon Avon & Midland Junction Railway. The erstwhile East & West Junction Railway portion of this route ran from Greens Norton Junction, near Towcester, to Stratford. Byfield lies almost centrally along the route. FROM THE LOCOMOTIVE MAGAZINE, NOV. 1911



The East & West Junction Railway commenced passenger services on 1st June 1871, on an isolated section of the line from Fenny Compton to Kineton. This is the first train arriving at Kineton station, hauled by the Manning, Wardle 0-6-0ST which the company bought from the contractor, T.R. Crampton. It would shortly be numbered 1 and also carried the name *Little Kineton*, although whether this was bestowed by the E&WJR or the contractor is not clear. Note the tall double arm signal; signalling is believed to have been supplied by the Railway Signal Co. of Fazakerley, Liverpool. Kineton was one of the more important stations on the S&MJR line, boasting a service to and from London via a stop by the train hauling the GCR through coach from Marylebone to Stratford. FROM THE LOCOMOTIVE MAGAZINE, NOV. 1911

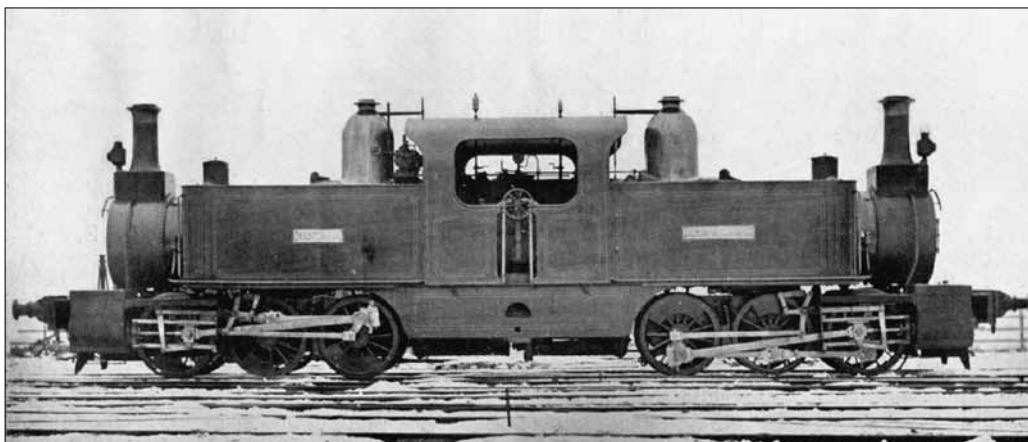
the extended construction of the line; it finally succumbed in 1875, when the Court of Chancery appointed a Receiver to manage affairs. Passenger services had been inaugurated in 1871, between Kineton and Fenny Compton, utilising a Manning, Wardle 0-6-0 saddle tank that had actually been used in the construction of the line and

which afterwards was to become the first of a short series of E&WJR No. 1's, despite returning to its roots at a Woodford gravel pit for a time after 1874. Somehow, a service must have been operated for the first two years until the line was extended to the east and west in 1873, and in anticipation of that opening, six new locomotives

A broadside view of the first E&WJR No. 1, the Manning, Wardle 0-6-0ST *Little Kineton*. Built in 1870, to Works No. 178, it was obviously new to the contractor building the line and thus was a sensible acquisition by the E&WJR in 1871. From circa 1874-77, it was in use at a gravel pit at Woodford owned by T.R. Crampton, which may indicate that he had in fact leased the engine to the E&WJR. After this, it returned to the line, as No. 1 again, although possibly minus its nameplates. It was photographed here at Stratford on Avon by Harold Hopwood on 23rd May 1904, coupled to a GCR coach and following rebuilding by the E&WJR in 1896, with a new boiler and new cylinders. Its livery on the E&WJR is believed to have been light chocolate brown with yellow lining. In 1911, No. 1 was sold to the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Light Railway, who named it *Morous*. BRIAN ARMAN COLLECTION



A view of the second E&WJR No. 1, the double Fairlie locomotive built by the Yorkshire Engine Co. of Sheffield in 1873 for a Mexican railway. It arrived on the line in 1876, along with a second single Fairlie engine from the same maker. Both locomotives were in use for around a year before the passenger service was suspended. Given that at least one of the engines seems to have been hanging around the YE Co's yard for possibly 3 years before its arrival, along with the E&WJR's parlous finances, it is again a possibility that the locomotives were hired and not bought. FROM THE LOCOMOTIVE MAGAZINE, NOV. 1911



were ordered from Beyer, Peacock, comprising three each of that maker's typical 2-4-0 passenger tanks and outside framed 0-6-0 goods engines. It is not clear just how many of these locomotives actually found their way to the E&WJR, as the company was not able to finance their purchase and, by 1875, all six had been resold by Beyer, Peacock to the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway.

Thereafter, the line was operated by a variety of secondhand and hired locomotives through to 1880, when the financial situation had improved enough for Beyer, Peacock to supply one of their rather industrial outline 0-6-0 saddle tanks. This locomotive became another No. 1 for a time, before being sold on to a Yorkshire colliery (where it survived in the unlikely guise of No. 0 until the late 1950s), following which the E&WJR obtained a Yorkshire Engine Company 2-4-0 tank from the sale of the defunct Potteries, Shrewsbury & North Wales Railway. Indeed, the history of the successive E&WJR No. 1's could form an interesting study in itself but it is the poorly documented period between 1873 and 1880 with which we are concerned here, when the E&WJR flirted with a variety of exotic locomotives, forever in search of a bargain to enable them to continue operations. The unusual use of two Fairlie patent locomotives has already been well reported, these being an 0-6-6-0 'double' Fairlie originally intended for a Mexican railway and a 0-4-4 tank locomotive of more usual appearance which later found its way to the Swindon, Marlborough & Andover Railway as their No. 4. These two seem to have been acquired around 1876 and only served on the E&WJR for a year or so, with the 'double' Fairlie being returned to the makers in 1877 and later leaving for a far more appropriate life in Peru. Meanwhile, the tank locomotive seemingly appeared at a Paris exhibition in 1878, before joining the ranks of the SM&AR.

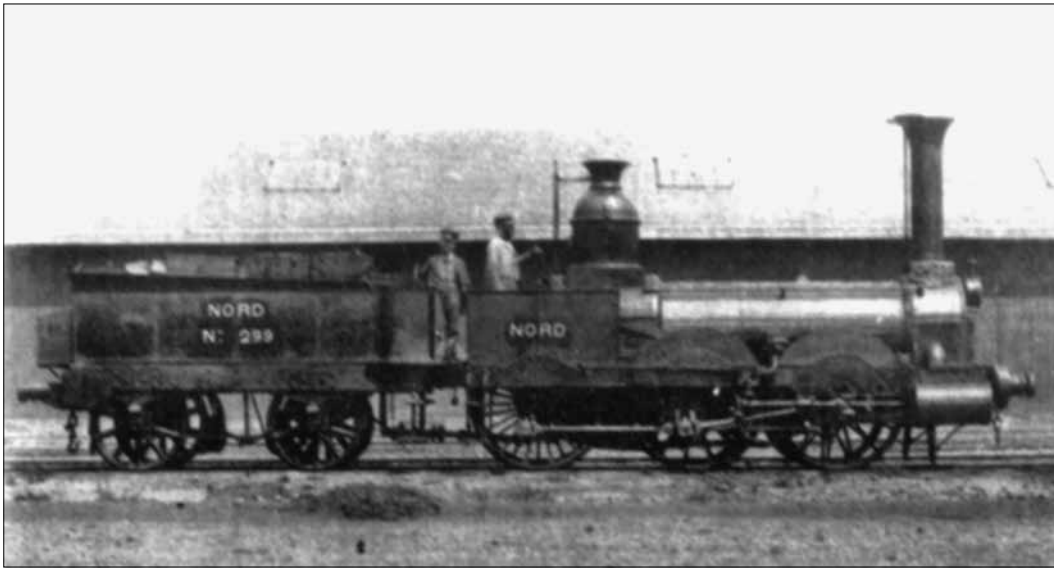
Prior to the appearance of the Fairlies, the E&WJR had, however, managed to find another couple of bargains in the unlikely shape of two French built locomotives, which found their way from the continent through the hands of Thomas Brassey, the railway contractor. These two outside cylinder tender locomotives, a 2-4-0 named *Ceres* and an 0-6-0 named *La Savoie*, were reputedly purchased by Brassey in 1858, from the Chemin de Fer Rhone et Loire for use on his contracts in the Savoy region. Quite how they then came to be at Stratford upon Avon is not at all clear, although some sources have indicated the involvement of a certain William Barber Buddicom in the transaction, and his links with Brassey and his activities with French railways are well known. It seems that these two imports arrived on the E&WJR around 1875 and both appear to have operated on the line for some years. Indeed, *Ceres* is said to have worked the first passenger train on the new extension from Stratford to Broom in

1879, which despite being nominally independent, was operated by the E&WJR, notwithstanding the suspension of passenger services on their own 'main line' from 1877 to 1885. The other locomotive, *La Savoie*, was rebuilt as a saddle tank in 1880 and eventually found its way, again reputedly via Brassey, to the Bute Trustees at Cardiff, where it survived until around 1907, by which time it had been further rebuilt and received the Cardiff Railway numbers 25 and then 32.

However, returning to our court case, it seems that *La Savoie*, which is mentioned by name (although as '*Savoy*') had been engaged on goods work between Byfield and Woodford on the day in question. Sparks emitted from the engine had allegedly set light to a hovel and stable situated close to the line, then in the use of a farmer named Hitchcock, who had in turn rented the property from a Miss Caroline Hunt. Miss Hunt is recorded in a local directory of the period as a principal landowner in Woodford parish, and a George Hitchcock was resident in Hinton House (near Woodford) and owned land in both that parish and also nearby West Farndon. A clue to the actual location is the statement that the train was ascending a gradient of 1 in 100, which extended from half a mile before to a quarter of a mile after the site of the fire. The train was stated to have left Byfield at 1.50pm and, indeed, part of the defence case was that it could not have reached Woodford by the time of the outbreak of the fire at 2.00pm. This, therefore, places the site very firmly on 'Byfield bank,' the stretch of 1 in 100 that commences from a point east of Byfield station and continues to a summit near the Woodford to Eydon road bridge. In 1875, this was just plain track but would of course later (from 1899) include the area where the E&WJR would bridge, and become connected in both directions to, the Great Central main line, thus forming a short lived triangular junction at Woodford West. A more precise identification of the site is difficult but the above information certainly puts the farm in question at a point either north or south of the line and probably immediately adjacent to the settlements of Woodford or West Farndon.

However, apart from these details of strictly local relevance, the report of the case, rather unusually, does go into more detail regarding the locomotive, giving us some interesting clues as to its origins and condition at the time.

The appellants, the Sun Fire Office had paid Miss Hunt the sum of £30 in settlement of her claim for fire damage but then, by virtue of the conditions of their policy, proceeded to sue the railway company, claiming negligence on their part in the way that the locomotive was operated. The charge was that the engine was so constructed as to allow sparks and burning coals to fly from the chimney and



Harry Jack has discovered this faded view of a Nord Railway 0-6-0 in a French book entitled *La Machine Locomotive en France – Des Origines au Milieu du XIXe Siecle* by Jacques Payen with Bernard Escudie & Jean-Marc Combe (Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1988). It shows Nord 0-6-0 'Buddicom' No. 299, one of a series of four (No's 297-300) delivered in 1848 and probably photographed in 1856. The Bourbonnais type engines, with their outside cylinder sticking out at the front, lasted for a long time on three-coupled goods engines. Today, this is almost certainly as close as we will get to illustrating the E&WJR's *La Savoie*.

that the gradient in the vicinity increased this possibility, as the locomotive was 'not fitted with a brick arch or grid', or 'any other device to prevent live coals being ejected'. Models and plans were produced in court to show how such appliances could prevent sparks but Mr William Pole, MRSCE, an engineer of Westminster appearing as an expert witness for the defence, refuted these claims. He stated that such appliances were not in common use on British locomotives and were mainly used in Norway and Russia, where wood was the major fuel and the likelihood of sparks therefore greater. He also stated that he had examined the engine 'Savoie', being one of only two that the company owned and that it had been constructed by Buddicombe [sic] of Rouen, and was originally a 6-wheeled goods engine but was now 'running with two'. The engine driver, Robson, when questioned stated that the train had a light load of seventeen trucks, of which thirteen were empty and he did not remember any sparks flying, although at the time of passing the point in question, he was busy 'getting his dinner', presumably in the certain knowledge that there could hardly have been anything else about on the line! After consideration of various other legal and technical submissions, statements about the direction and velocity of the wind, and a calculation of the length of time that it would have taken for sparks to fly from the engine to the hay and straw that became ignited, the jury found for the plaintiff, the Sun Fire Office.

From this seemingly general account, we do have an interesting glimpse of the locomotive affairs of the E&WJR in the mid 1870s. Firstly, it does confirm *La Savoie* as being in use on the E&WJR by May 1875, presumably as a direct result of the inability of the company to sustain the purchase of the planned Beyer, Peacock locomotives. It also seems to confirm that the 'foreigner' was still named whilst running on the E&WJR, although it is possible that the anglicisation of its name to 'Savoie' in the newspaper report could perhaps indicate some conveyed knowledge of a previous name, rather than one which it still carried. It does also seem to confirm the locomotive as actually being built by Buddicom in his works at Chartreux, Rouen, rather than him just having been involved in its transfer to the E&WJR. In all probability, the engine carried a works plate indicating its origin and this information may therefore finally discount the suggestion made in some sources that the locomotive was a product of another French manufacturer, Andre Koechlin. *La Savoie* is also stated to have been one of only two locomotives owned

by the E&WJR in mid 1875 and this may confirm that the other was the second French import, *Ceres*. The only other known candidates would be the Manning, Wardle 0-6-0ST which had inaugurated services in 1871, or possibly another rather shadowy 2-4-0 tender locomotive, which is said to have been on the E&WJR around this time. The Manning, Wardle, however, is said to have been relegated to working at Crampton's Woodford gravel pits by 1874, although it would later reappear on the E&WJR again. The 2-4-0 in question, built by George England in 1861, was reputedly on hire to the line for a short time, having been part exchanged in 1875 by its previous owners, the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway, for new 6-coupled saddle tanks supplied by Fox, Walker of Bristol. However, the knowledge that *Ceres* did work passenger traffic between Blisworth and Stratford for a number of years (until suspension of services in 1877) may just suggest that it was the 'other' locomotive then owned by the E&WJR, with its companion *La Savoie* being used to keep the freight services running. The whole situation is an interesting indication of the parlous state of the E&WJR at that time and, indeed, the sparse level of its operations, which were shortly to be restricted to goods only working when the financial situation deepened.

So what were the true origins of *La Savoie*? As mentioned earlier, most published sources suggest that the two French locomotives were purchased by Brassey from the Chemin de Fer Rhone et Loire in 1858 and may have been built by Andre Koechlin et Cie of Mulhouse. However, an article in the *Locomotive Magazine* of November 1911 states that 'we have recently come across some interesting particulars of the locomotives used in the early days of the [East & West Junction] railway' and goes on to mention that the locomotives were said to have been designed by Buddicom and brought to this country by Crampton. These confirmations of the Buddicom lineage, together with the fact that the locomotives did not reach the E&WJR until around 1875, some seventeen years after reportedly first passing into Brassey's hands, suggests that perhaps the Rhone et Loire locomotives may not in fact have been the ones which arrived at Stratford upon Avon.

Mention should also be made of a very interesting article published in *Backtrack* magazine in October 1997, entitled 'Strangers on the Shore', which discussed 'imported' locomotives and proposed that *La Savoie* was possibly one of the 'RL' series of the French PLM, numbered either between 0.30-0.34 or 0.36-0.38, having been

taken over from the Rhone et Loire line and then passed on to Brassey. The accompanying photograph, claiming to show a similar type, is a distant view of a train on a viaduct at Montargis, south of Paris, in 1866, headed by a rather antique looking short wheelbase 0-6-0, with outside cylinders, open cab and 4-wheeled tender. This information was apparently gleaned from the publication *Le Chemins de Fer PLM – La Vie du Rail* (La Regordane 1993), which includes a list of the Rhone et Loire stock as taken over by the PLM on absorption in 1857.

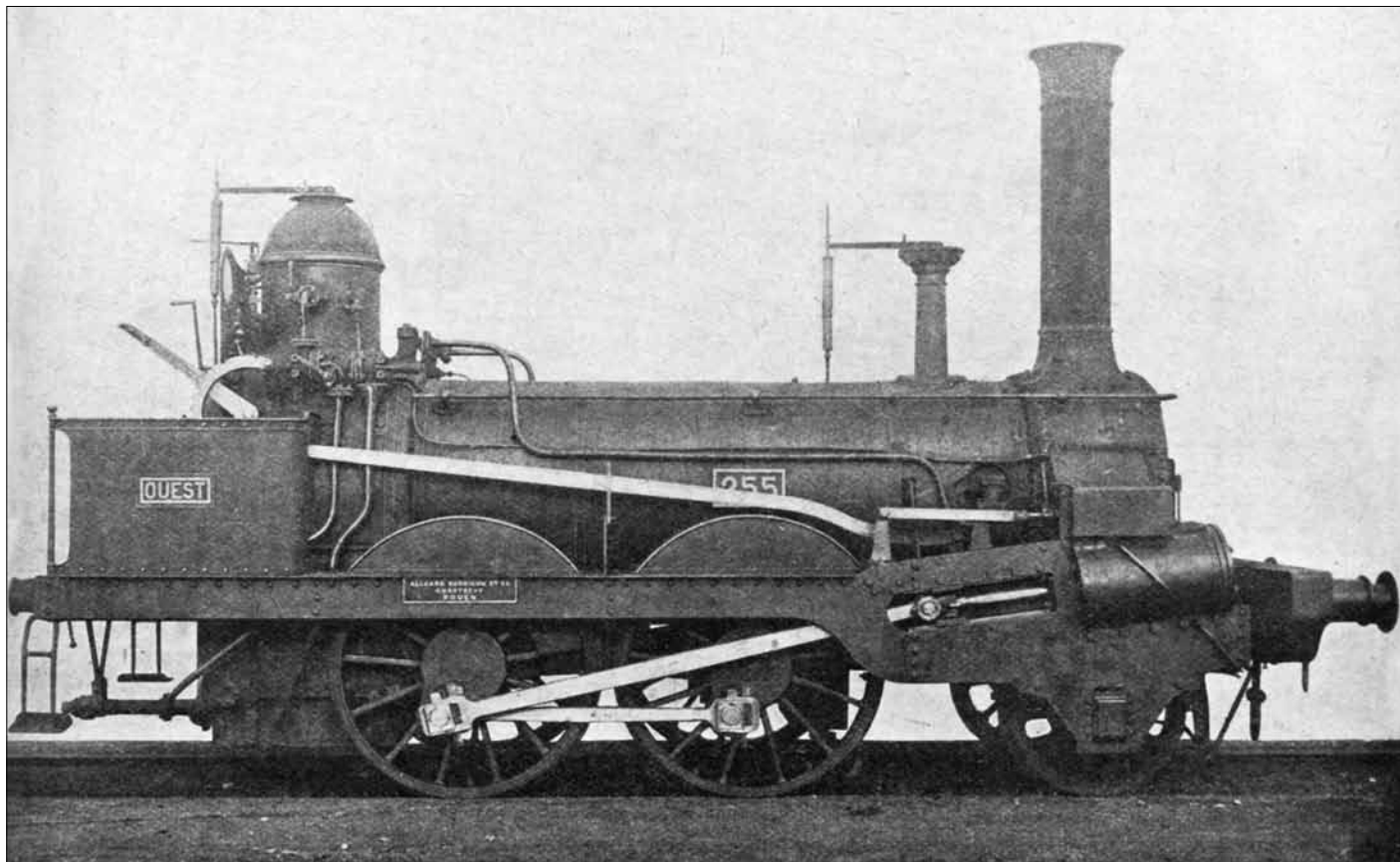
There are of course very few other clues available but it is nevertheless still tempting to search for locomotives of confirmed Buddicom origin to find an alternative answer. The vast majority of the Buddicom-built French locomotives seem to have been concentrated on the lines of the Chemin de Fer de L'Ouest, or its earlier constituent companies. Although initially akin to looking for 'needles in haystacks', an examination of the relevant volume of Dr John Davies' *French Locomotive List* series of booklets (published by the author in 1998) does provide one rather intriguing possibility. In 1857, Buddicom delivered a batch of sixteen 0-6-0 tender locomotives to the original order of the Cie. Rouen-Havre but which were actually delivered to the Chemins de Fer L'Ouest, then recently formed by amalgamation of a number of minor companies. These locomotives were numbered 431 to 446, and possessed 1370cm driving wheels and 430 x 560cm outside cylinders – tolerably close to the stated dimensions (4ft 9ins wheels and 18 x 24ins cylinders) of *La Savoie* when it reached the Bute Trustee's hands after leaving the E&WJR. However, what is intriguing is that fifteen of these locomotives went on to be rebuilt between 1872 and 1875 with a shortened wheelbase and survived to be taken into L'Etat stock,

with the last example being withdrawn as late as 1919. The missing locomotive, which was never rebuilt, is stated to have been 'sold circa 1875' – the very year in which *La Savoie* is to be found misbehaving near Woodford Halse.

Also interesting is the information that several of the early French Buddicom 0-6-0 classes were quite quickly modified to the 0-4-2 wheel arrangement, by the removal of the coupling rods from the rear pair of wheels. This correlates with the need to shorten the wheelbase during the rebuild of the above mentioned class and may also be reflected in the fact that *La Savoie* was reported as 'running with two' on the E&WJR; presumably this can be interpreted as running with just two wheels coupled, rather than only two out of the six wheels being driven.

This is of course all speculation and the evidence very circumstantial but at least it does offer an alternative to the perhaps now slightly unsatisfactory theory of the Koechlin and Rhone et Loire ancestry, and does provide at least a possible glimpse of this fascinating antique, which must have appeared very strange indeed to local eyes as it clambered up Byfield bank. Perhaps readers with more knowledge of the early French railway scene can add some further comments and it would be interesting to know whether any more precise record exists of the sale in 1875 of the Buddicom locomotive. It is also tempting to speculate whether the 2-4-0 *Ceres* may have come from the same Buddicom stable; unfortunately, the aforementioned locomotive lists are less accommodating in this respect.

It is still possible to visit the 'scene of the crime' today; a marked footpath leads off opposite to a sharp right-hand bend, midway along the minor road between the site of Byfield station and Eydon village. A short walk then leads to a remarkably well preserved metal



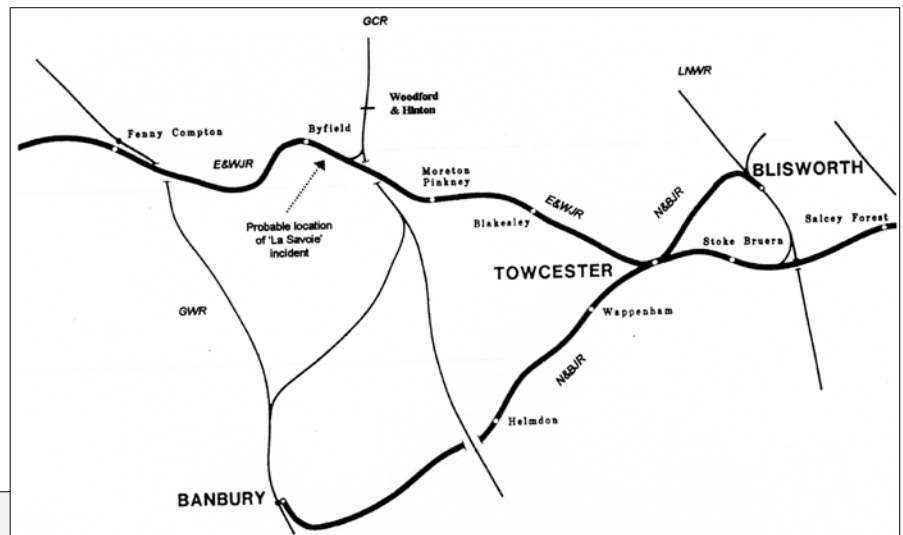
A view of Ouest Railway 'Buddicom' 2-4-0 No. 255, which is believed to have been very similar to the E&WJR 2-4-0 *Ceres*. No illustration of a Buddicom 0-6-0 similar to *La Savoie* has so far been found. FROM THE LOCOMOTIVE MAGAZINE, JUNE 1916

girder footbridge that still crosses the route of the E&WJR line, from which point there is a good view in both directions; westwards down the gradient towards Byfield and eastwards to the junctions at Woodford West. The latter location has now been turned into a pocket park and nature reserve but the trackbeds of the triangle of lines, together with the massive bridges carrying the Eydon road above, are all easily explored.

A brief mention was made earlier of another S&MJR constituent, the Northampton & Banbury Junction Railway, who also were possessed of a very interesting but poorly documented early locomotive history. The N&BJR intended to commence operations in 1866 with a batch of ten new locomotives – 0-4-2s of both tank and tender configuration from Neilsons of Glasgow. In a situation reminiscent of the E&WJR, finance was not forthcoming, and only two tender and three tank locomotives were completed before the order was cancelled. Quite whether any ever reached Blisworth is debatable but they were soon back in Neilson's yard, two of each later being sold nominally to the Solway Junction Railway and thereafter entering Caledonian Railway stock. The N&BJR soldiered on for a time with hired or borrowed motive power, with the name of Isaac Watt Boulton of Ashton under Lyne featuring significantly. In October 1866, the N&BJR gave up the struggle and arranged for the L&NWR to provide locomotives on a hire basis but, by 1872, they were ready for another try and purchased a selection of antiques from various sources. However, by 1875, the N&BJR had finally given up on trying to operate the line themselves and once again turned to the L&NWR, this time on a longer term basis, with that company providing locomotives and passenger stock until the amalgamation into the S&MJR in 1910. Further researches into the files of the same newspapers that revealed the *La Savoie* incident, have also provided some

very interesting advertisements for the sale of various locomotives at places such as Blisworth, Towcester and Wappenham, all situated on the N&BJR line. Whereas some of these, dated in the late 1860s and early 1870s, are quite obviously concerned with the disposal of surplus contractors' equipment from the various stages of the building of the line, there are others which clearly involve the sale of N&BJR owned locomotive stock, following the decision to once again work the line with L&NWR locomotives after early 1875. Relevant details are given of the engines that were for sale and, whereas these do appear to corroborate our existing knowledge of the known early N&BJR motive power, they also reveal interesting details of other locomotives which may not have been previously recorded. It is therefore hoped that, after more research, it may be possible to further report on the early locomotives that operated on this very obscure but fascinating stretch of line.

Finally, I must acknowledge the work of fellow members of the Northamptonshire Industrial Archaeology Group (NIAG), whose meticulous trawling of Northamptonshire newspaper archives of the 19th century provided the initial promptings towards the eventual compilation of this article.



ABOVE: Sketch map showing the probable location of the lineside fire involving *La Savoie*, along with the other railways which connected with or crossed the E&WJR in the vicinity.

LEFT: A view taken from a train on the S&MJR, approaching Woodford West Junction signal box from Byfield – just about where the ‘crime’ might have been committed. The bridge in the picture is the one mentioned in the text that still exists today. Judging from the lineside figures, this must have been one of the enthusiasts specials that traversed the route in its final years. BARRY TAYLOR COLLECTION