

*Tony Hancock*

# Archives Magazine

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**THE  
TRUTH  
ABOUT  
THE  
RAILWAYS**

**THE  
HANCOCK  
REPORT**

***Focus on Bingham Road Train Station***

**The Online Magazine of the Tony Hancock Archives**



## INTRODUCTION

Following the Beeching Report on the re-shaping of British Railways, it became obvious that a need existed to show that our railway system is run by *people*. That despite its enormous size and complexity, British Railways is a *human* organization, with human faults - and virtues. That it is aware of the problems of the travelling public, and their complaints - and is constantly working to improve its service and to put right things that go wrong.

Thus it was decided to launch an advertising campaign which would amuse - but also inform. The objectives were to show some of the railway's past shortcomings in a humorous light, and also to say something about the tremendous efforts being made to establish British Railways as the finest in Europe.

After many hours of discussion the Hancock Report was born. Anthony Aloysius St John Hancock was cast in the role of presenter of the public's complaints - with no holds barred! He turned out to be an excellent choice. Well-known as a comedian, Hancock had established a basically sympathetic personality, yet was also known as something of a grouser. He was exactly the man to put British Railways in their proper place!

The situations chosen for illustration were those which often give rise to complaints. Cold wet stations, late trains, cuts in service, dirty carriages, and so on. Plenty of material for eight interesting advertisements. As a 'point de finesse' Dr Beeching himself was brought into the campaign to round it off at the end.

As Tony Hancock had so many engagements the photographs had to be taken over a four day period during February 1963. You may remember the terrible weather! It was so cold the day that the Bank Holiday shots were taken that the photographer's cameras froze solid! There were plenty of laughs along the way and many of them were brought about by Hancock's irrepressible humour - just look at the perfect expressions in the first advertisement; the attendant on the Bristol Pullman was helpless with laughter! Other amusing events spring to mind; the faces of the carriage cleaners at Hampton Court when dustbins of rubbish were spread all over their nice clean floors; the anxiety of the Inspector at Waterloo when the arrivals board showed every single train to be 45 minutes late. It was hard work - but it was fun.

The advertisements appeared and we waited to see what the response would be. It was good - extraordinarily good! And that's what prompted us to reprint the advertisements in this booklet. Many people asked us where they could get copies of the pictures. If you were one of these people - here you are! The Hancock Report! Complete and unabridged! We hope you enjoy it.



## **THE TRUTH ABOUT THE RAILWAYS**

*Here it is - the latest and greatest of all 'reports' on the Railways -THE HANCOCK REPORT! Takes over where the Beeching report leaves off. Tells the public all!*

'So this feller Beeching says to me "Hancock, we've called you in because we want a really top-brain on this job". Seems *his* report on the Railways didn't exactly set people wild with joy. So he wants me to follow it up and tell 'em what to do. Well, I'm a busy man already. But he talks me round in the end. "The nation needs you Hancock", he says "£ 100.000 a year and free luncheon vouchers." So here I am on this Diesel thing. Ninety miles an hour and no nonsense about seat-belts. The V.I.P. treatment! There may be a catch somewhere though. They can't fool me that their trains are like this ...'

But the real facts are:

- Over 3,000 powerful new Diesels are now speeding-up main-line services throughout the country.
- At least 501 expresses every day have a start-to-stop average of 60 mph or more.
- Rail gets you there quickly and comfortably, right from city-centre to city-centre.



## **THE WAY AHEAD**

*(In a bold pioneering venture, truly in the spirit of this second Elizabethan age, Hancock battles his way by road to the sea)*

'Come Bank Holiday and I'm off. I said to Beeching. It's goodbye to the sweat and grime of your rotten old office I'm for the open road. (Well, I paid good money for this car so I wanted people to see me in it.) "You go by road if you want to. Hancock lad." he says to me. "you'll find yourself in good company." Ah well -- you can't be right all the time. These exhaust fumes taste lovely. Only thing that worries me is those chaps last year who never reached the coast at all ...'

### **The straight facts:**

- Trains get you there fast and safely - while cars and coaches are still queuing.
- You can choose train times to suit you, *there and back*. You don't have to leave early to beat the jams.
- You save money too. British Railways sell real bargains in cut-price Day Trips and Mid-week Travel.



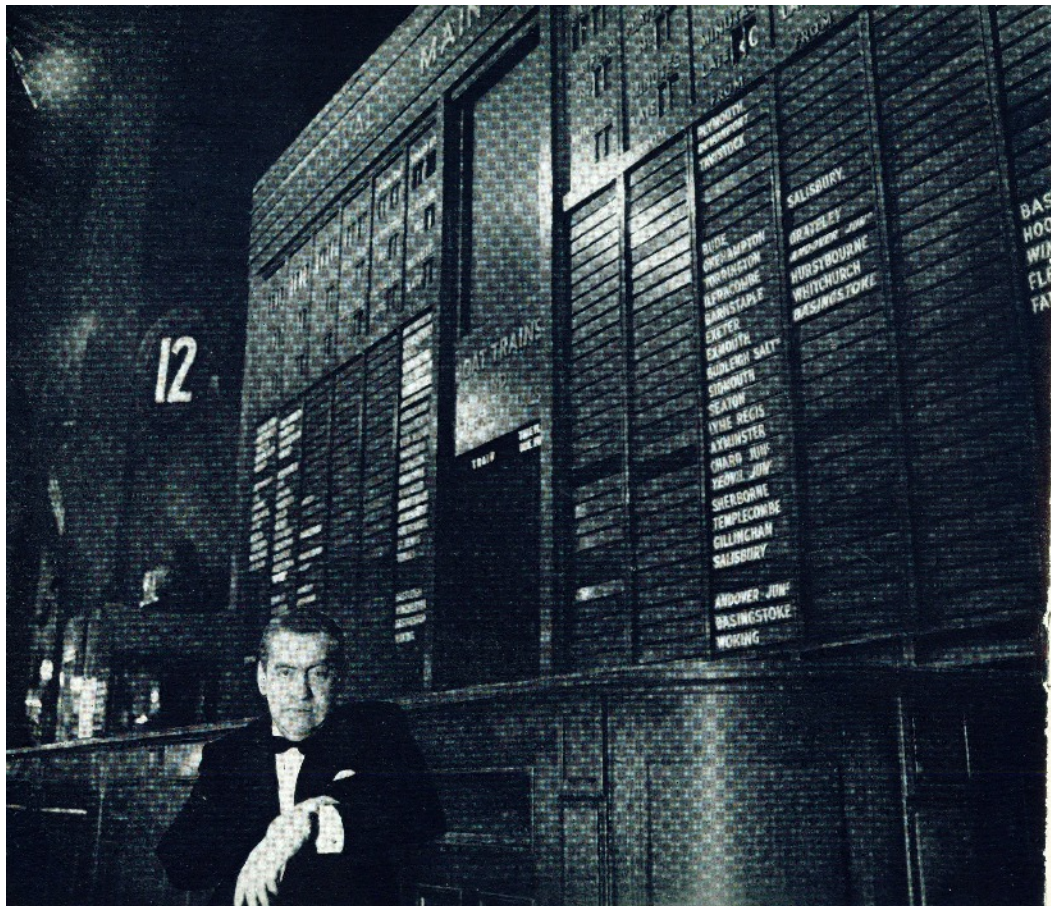
## **THE TRAIN THAT WASN'T**

*(Cuts in services, trains removed from the timetable, the changes hit Hancock where it hurts. But does he take it lying down? ... Yes.)*

'That Beeching! Look what he's done now - removed me favourite train from the service. 29 after midnight, and very cosy too - the 'fall abouts special' we used to call it - only one passenger per carriage, so you could really put your feet up and make yourself at home. "You can cut what trains you like, but you can't cut *mine*," I said to Beeching. "I've heard that before, matey," he says, "but we ain't running a private chauffeur service, not even to please you. I'll sort him out good and proper, one of these days, see if I don't.'

The '£. s. d.' of the matter:

- At present some trains run almost empty.
- These services lose the Railways large sums of money, waste man-power and equipment. Economies must be made.
- The few people affected may have to use other forms of transport or travel earlier.



## **BETTER NEVER- THAN LATE?**

*(Are some of the trains late all the time? Or all of them some of the time? Or some of them sometimes? Or all, all the time? With shrewd questions like these, Hancock continues investigating our Railways!)*

'Fog on the line ... failure in the signals ... repairs to track ... engine feeling tired ... there's always some blinkin' excuse. One-and-a-half hours I've been waiting to meet this little lot. Looks like they've mislaid it altogether. "So you think this is the way to run a railway?", I said to Beeching. (That sorted him out, I can tell you. Let no one say Hancock is afraid to speak his mind.) The 'big speed-up' indeed! I could do better on my own two feet!'

### **A closer look**

- All transport gets delayed sometimes. The Railways in fact have a better record than road or air - in all weathers.
- People remember when trains are late, and forget the countless occasions when they're on time
- The Railways overall punctuality record has improved steadily in recent years, and it's still improving.



## **LITTER- LOU'S PARADISE**

*(Research by a masterful team of experts - headed by Hancock - reveals that many people are dissatisfied with Railway cleanliness. - You could have told us. - Wait, read on)*

'Filthy! Just look at it. The whole train is all over litter, fruit peel and nasties. Beats me where it all comes from-Unless the Railways have special machines for blowing rubbish into carriages. "If you can't keep things a bit tidier than this" (I said to Beeching) "it's not much point me and the public trying." No Sir, I shall carry on as usual - putting me feet on the seat and making a jolly old mess of my carriage whenever there's a chance. As a gesture of protest!'

**A different viewpoint:**

- Most trains are swept clean before each journey, but the public can help a great deal by doing their best to keep them tidy.
- Better and faster cleaning equipment is coming in, (especially for quick turn-rounds at rush hours).
- The Railways are doing their share: but this is a problem that ultimately can only be solved by the thoughtfulness of passengers.



## **STONE- AGE CENTRAL**

*(Old-fashioned stations, gloomy waiting rooms, inconvenient conveniences-again Hancock tangles with the Railways. All thinking people must read on!)*

'That Beeching makes me laugh, he really does. "The stations is the gateways to the Railways", he tells me, "First impressions count, so we're improving them". And he expects me to do a public-relations job for this lot! Draughts up me pants, rain down me neck, and not enough light to read the timetable. You've bitten off more than you can chew here, Doc. I said. Better blow up the whole pile and start again ...'

But the facts are these:

- Brighter stations *are* important.
- As quickly as we can, we want to reach the stage when all stations are clean, cheerful and comfortable.
- This is a big task. There are so many to tackle.
- We are going about this in three ways. First, we are rebuilding : in the last three years 127 stations have been completely altered or rebuilt. Secondly, we are making major alterations: work is being done now, or will be started soon, on a further 134 stations. Thirdly, we are giving a face-lift treatment to the rest - many hundreds - that we expect to keep open to passengers.



## **CRUSH- HOUR CHAOS**

*(The rush-hours! Hancock exposes the full truth beneath public misunderstanding. Read on, patient reader.)*

'Whew! Each man for himself, women and children to the wall. I'm beginning to wish I hadn't taken on this Railway job, I can tell you. "Investigate the suburban services, Hancock," this Beeching feller says to me. "The Railways didn't create the rush. Look into the question of staggering office hours." Staggering hours - I ask you! The only thing this merry mob think about is staggering into their corner seats and devil take the hindmost. Make one continuous train from London to Brighton so people can walk along the corridor, that's my answer!'

The plain facts:

- Staggered hours *are* a practical answer. As fast as the Railways put on more trains, more people rush to fill them.
- Rail travel is so popular because, however crowded, it's much faster than road.
- Rail is also *cheaper*. Season tickets average half the price of bills for comparable car journeys.



## **GOODBYE FOR NOW?**

*(This is the last of the present series of 'Hancock Reports'. How has Dr. Beeching put up with Hancock for so long?)*

'Here's a snap for my scrap - book. Me and the Doctor enjoying a friendly chat on the steps of the office after the day's work is done. "Only too glad to have been able to help, Doc." I said, "Anytime the Railways need sorting out, you know who to send for." "Thank you Hancock," he said (rather quiet-like). "It's just possible we may need your services again, but then it's possible we may not." I suppose I shouldn't have said quite all I did, in my Report. Never mind, I'm not sorry. I've got my public to think about. All those millions of passengers on the Railways-they need someone to stick up for them. Hancock - friend of the people, that's me.'

Dr. Beeching explains:

- Yes, in these advertisements Hancock has said some hard things about the Railways, just as passengers themselves often do. I hope, however, that this shows we *are* aware of passengers' grumbles, that we *do* care about them, and that we *are* finding the answers.
- Basically our task is to take the services which grew up before the age of the motor car and to reshape them to meet the real needs of the *modern* travelling public.

**Bingham Road Station** used in the Tony Hancock film **'The Rebel'**(1960) where he jumps in the train and gets out the other side and into the London bound train.



*Stairs up to the platform in autumn of 1984 - shortly after the platforms were demolished*



## **FOCUS ON BINGHAM ROAD STATION**

[http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/b/bingham\\_road/index.shtml](http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/b/bingham_road/index.shtml)

**Above link operative at  
time of writing**

WESTERN REGION

GRANADA — SHREWSBURY — 6th MARCH WEEK

**TONY HANCOCK**

PLUS COLOSSAL CAST, IN  
THE HANCOCK SHOW

COMBINED RAIL AND THEATRE ADMISSION BOOKINGS will be issued to

**SHREWSBURY**

FOR THE EVENING PERFORMANCE commencing 6-15 p.m.

DURING THE PERIOD

MONDAY, 6th MARCH to SATURDAY, 11th MARCH, 1961

FROM	DEPART				Combined Rail and Theatre Admission Tickets	
					Middle Circle and Stalls	Back Circle and Balcony
ALBRIGHTON	6.45	—	—	—	10.5	9.5
COSFORD	—	—	—	—	10.5	9.5
SHEFFAL	—	—	—	—	9.5	8.5
OAKENGATES	—	—	—	—	9.5	8.5
WELLINGTON	—	5.30	8.0	—	8.5	7.5
LLANDUDOL	—	—	3.30	—	14.5	13.5
NEWTOWN	—	—	6.40	—	12.5	11.5
WELSHPOOL	—	—	—	3.20	12.5	11.5
SHREWSBURY	6.15	7.35	8.15	1.15	*—Change at WELLINGTON. A—Special Cheap Day Fare.	

SX—Sundays excepted. SO—Sundays only.  
PASSENGERS RETURN SAME DAY.  
Station WELLINGTON to ALBRIGHTON—SHREWSBURY departs 8.0 p.m., 10.15 p.m. SX and 10.10 p.m. SO.  
Station WELSHPOOL to LLANDUDOL, SHREWSBURY departs 10.0 p.m.  
Children under 14 years of age Half the Appropriate Rail Fare (fractions of 1s. charged as 1s.)  
Plus Full Theatre Admission Charge of 4s. or 5s.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR THE BOOKINGS SHOWN ABOVE AND OVERLEAF, WILL BE THREE DAYS BEFORE THE DATE OF EACH PERFORMANCE.

FOR SIMILAR FACILITIES FROM LUDLOW AND STATIONS TO CHURCH STRETTON, ALSO STATIONS WREXHAM (General) to GOSWEN SEE OTHER SIDE.

**British Railways Handbill**  
**Western Region**

**Combined Rail and Theatre admission tickets to see**  
**Tony Hancock in Hancock Show in Shrewsbury**