

that for much of the day there are now three trains an hour from Banbury and Bicester to London. Hugh Jones himself provides a lucid explanation of these developments, which is strengthened by contributions from some of those most closely involved with the company. The book is a substantial contribution to the history of 'Banburyshire'.

This story of commercial success, decisive management and policies that benefit customers, stimulates some questioning of traditional approaches to the history of railways. The Great Western and British Railways clearly provided express passenger services on the Bicester cut-off that satisfactorily met the needs of customers in the West Midlands, the Borderland and on the Welsh Coast from 1910 until 1967, although how many passengers actually caught boats for Belfast or the Isle of Man on Merseyside might be questioned. In the days when most freight went by rail overnight express goods trains provided valuable services to manufacturers and retailers. By contrast it may be doubted whether the local services by autocar ever provided public benefits that justified their costs, and their provision from 1910 perhaps reflects the conservative attitudes and the entrenched hierarchies that by that time pervaded the railway industry. Passenger services on the new line were logically planned, but those between Banbury and London through Oxford remained into the 1960s bizarrely inconsistent following precedents set in the distant past, some perhaps in the days of the broad gauge. The rise of Chiltern Railways appears to this historian to reflect the earliest decades of the railway industry, when Peter Mottershead, born at Burnage near Manchester in 1835, had, at the age of 18, 'an inclination for railroading'. He worked first for the Shrewsbury & Chester and then for the Great Western, becoming a driver at the age of 22 in 1857. From 1860 he drove the daily freight train from Wolverhampton to Basingstoke, was one of the last drivers of broad gauge locomotives from Birmingham, and with his own locomotive, *Alma*, could cover the 43 miles from Oxford to Leamington in 35 minutes. He emigrated in 1873 and was still driving locomotives in Iowa at the age of 73 in 1908. He portrays his early career as a time when young men were as enthusiastic about railways as many were about computers in the 1980s. Those involved with the rise of Chiltern Railways were not particularly young men and women, but their enterprise reflects that of the pioneers of the industry. The Bicester cut-off may have been part of 'the line that nearly died', but it now bristles with life and energy and its post-centenary history promises to be exciting.