

Autobiography of an engineman

FIRST started to read *Toton Engineman – The Autobiography of a Railwayman*, published by our sister magazine *Steam World*, when I picked up a set of proofs in the office, writes **Norman Wright**. I was captivated. Then they were whisked away to the printer.

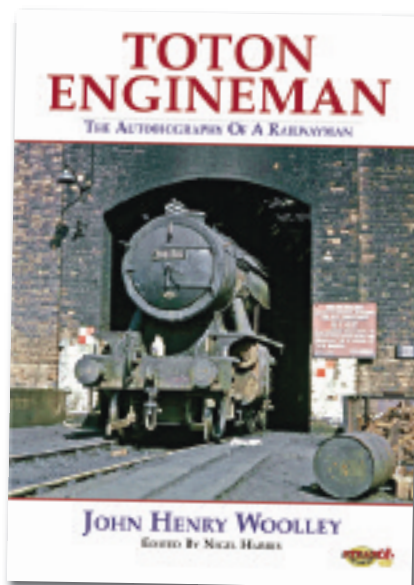
I couldn't wait for the finished product to arrive, something I never thought I would say about a railway book. This is so much more than that. It's a social history of British working life in the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies, cataloguing many of the huge changes we have all lived through.

When John Woolley started work at the Toton marshaling yards near his home at Long Eaton between Nottingham and Derby in 1954, he had the burning ambition to be a driver. That meant starting at the bottom armed with an oily rag as an engine cleaner.

John progressed to fireman on the footplate of those steam machines – a skilled job in itself – and achieved his ambition to drive trains on the Midland line but only after diesel power had taken over from steam. He finished his career as a manager with responsibility for area freight operations including the Toton yards. After retiring with 40 years' service, John wrote this story of his working life.

It's full of the characters who worked in all areas of the railway business; they were often highly skilled, without much formal education, and were dedicated to the railway industry but fiercely independent.

Sadly, John died in 1998 after enjoying



only four years of retirement. His manuscript lay unpublished but it was an ambition of his wife Caryl and daughters Helen and Sarah to see it in print. An overheard conversation alerted *Steam World* consultant editor Nigel Harris to its existence and he joined the drive of the Woolley family to fulfill their dream.

With more than 200 wonderful pictures, beautifully printed and produced in hardback, the book is priced at £19.95 (ISBN 978-0992739805). You can buy it direct for £21.90, including £1.95 towards postage and packing, from *Steam World* (Toton Offer), *Steam World* Publishing, First Floor, 2 King Street, Peterborough PE1 1LT by cheque, or to pay by card, tel: 01733 427513.

Cushion your tablet

After the iPad comes the iCushion – designed to lessen the likelihood of 21st century complaints that doctors are now calling iPad Hand and iPad shoulder.

Tablet computers are the fastest growing sector of the market and over-50s are buying them in their hundreds of thousands.

The iCushion from Mobiletoyz.co.uk is a new way to make using them even more enjoyable while protecting you from repetitive strain injuries and future aches and pains. It supports your tablet on a cushion, holding it at the optimum angle while freeing up your hands. It has been developed by Leicester company MangoTree Ventures, which specialises in products that bring life and technology closer together.

Choice tried one out and found it the perfect accessory for the full size iPad or even the iPad mini. It works just as well on the lap, sitting up in bed or lying down.

■ Priced at around £24.95 from: (www.mobiletoyz.co.uk), tel: 020 3287 0725.



RHS grows for gold

Half a million sunflower seeds will be sown by gardening groups this year, starting in National Gardening Week (April 14 to 21), to celebrate 50 golden years of Europe's largest community gardening campaign – the Royal Horticultural Society's Britain in Bloom.

'Growing for Gold' is this year's theme. Many of the 300,000 volunteers, who work year round to transform our towns and villages, will be sowing a variety of pollinator-friendly sunflowers, all provided free by the RHS. RHS community gardening groups,

local councils, schools and other organisations will stage thousands of 'Growing for Gold' events during National Gardening Week. Britain in Bloom began in 1964 when the tourist board wanted a way to market the country through floral displays. Since the RHS took over in 2001, its focus has widened to include helping the environment and strengthening communities.

■ Website: (www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloomlaunch), tel: 020 7821 3069.