

## 150 Years and still going strong!



Shipton Station



Celebration Train



Ascott Station

**150 years ago, on Saturday 4th June 1853, the first Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway train steamed into Shipton and Ascott stations**

Before the coming of the railway, people in the Cotswolds did not travel far. Now the railway gave easy access to cities such as Oxford and London. New businesses also sprung up near the stations, such as the mill at Shipton and the coal merchant at Ascott.

In May 1964, the dreaded "Beeching Axe" was hovering over the Cotswold Line. Originally, Charlbury, along with Ascott and Shipton were for the chop, fortunately all survived!

### **Our Life Line**

Increasing concerns about the viability of this slender silver thread through the Cotswolds led to the formation of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group (CLPG) in 1978. It aims to encourage the fullest use of the Line so that closure does not become an option. Soon afterwards British Rail announced its intention to withdraw all through trains to London and replace them with ageing diesel units shuttling between Oxford and Worcester. The CLPG saw this as literally, the end of the Line and British Rail was persuaded to retain the two most important

history, the Cotswold Line enjoyed the use of brand new Turbo trains, and the through service to London was reinstated. This generated a large increase in passenger numbers and several extra trains and stops have since been introduced to cater for demand.

### **Use it or Lose it!**

Shipton and Ascott stations have survived for 150 years, but the future depends on whether the rail industry can be convinced that people would use them more if more trains called. It is one of those "chicken and egg" situations. The CLPG would like to see more trains calling at Ascott and, particularly, Shipton, where it feels that there is potential for far greater usage. The letting of new franchises from April 2004 could significantly influence this.

For details of the CLPG, please visit web site [www.clpg.co.uk](http://www.clpg.co.uk) or write to the Membership Secretary, 4 Sandford Rise, Charlbury, Oxon. OX7 3SZ.

*An exhibition of local railway memorabilia is currently on display in Charlbury Museum as part of*