



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The wartime footplate crew of a slow, small engine puffing gently across the Kent and Sussex countryside side kept a sharp lookout at the buffer beam of their little locomotive, on a summer morning in 1943.

ON it some days, as if by magic, various dead animals and birds might appear, if they misjudged the train's desultory speed.

This gave the hungry railway men the enticing possibility of some meat flavour to their otherwise vegetarian rationed wartime diet. Maybe a rabbit stew or pigeon pie?

And looking in the supposedly empty box wagons might produce a cabbage or potato, a cauliflower or beetroot. Such humble fare, together with large cheese and pickle sandwiches and enamel jugs of tea were what helped the hungry chap survive long shifts.

As they passed isolated rural cottages they might deliver or collect parcels, or maybe some building materials, in fact, anything bulky or awkward. But this rural lifestyle was vanishing, consigned to the memory of history.

As told by Bill Wiggly

a crossing keeper in the 1950s.