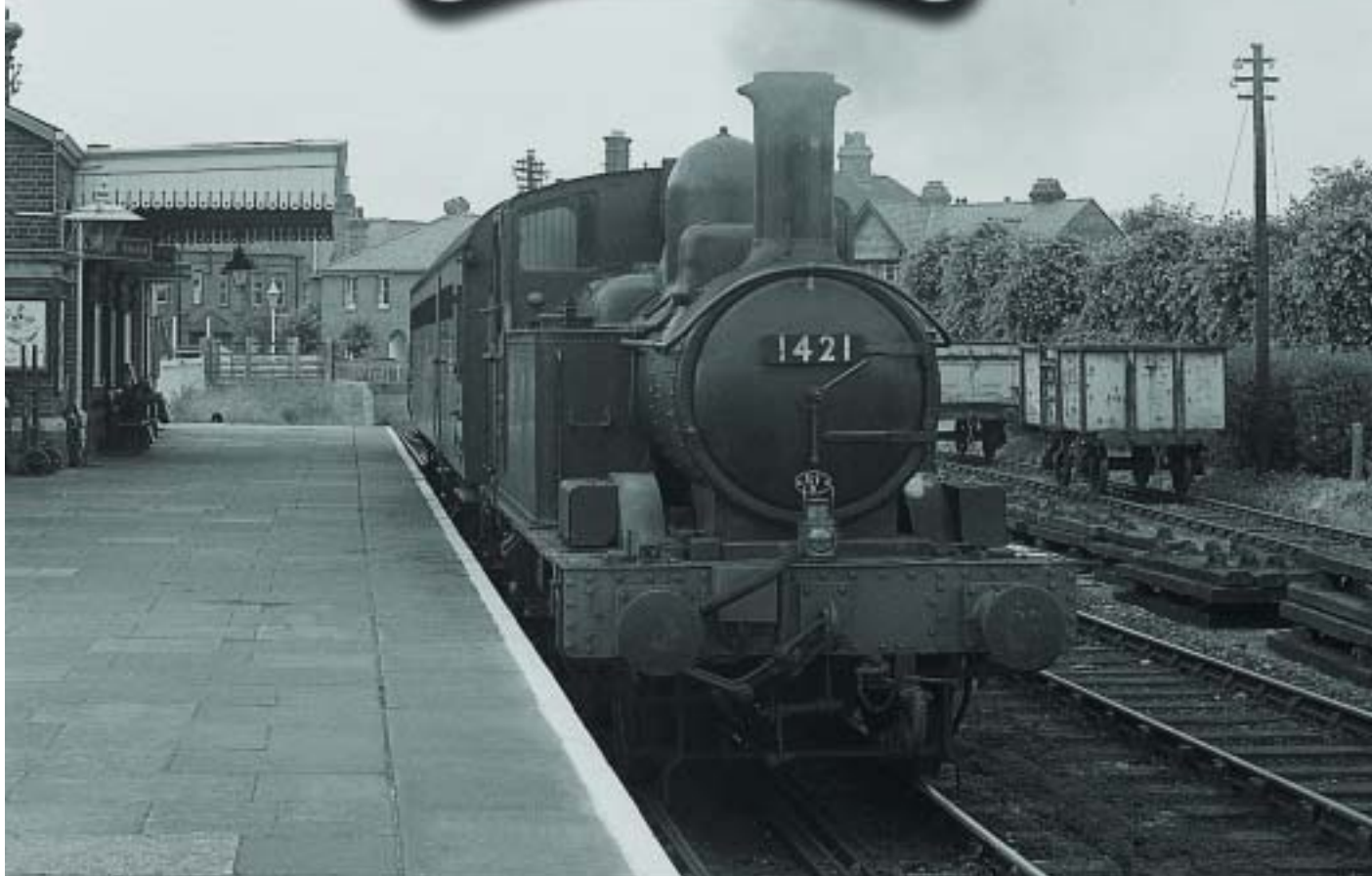


THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

102

December 2002



Contents:

Rippington's Magical Mini Tour

Five Juliet Six One

Railways of New Zealand

The Marlow Donkey - The Magazine of the Marlow and District Railway Society

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS.

More of MDRS member Ken Lawrie's collection of negatives from the 1950s & 60s.

Top: No. 1421 at Marlow, August 1961. Ken Lawrie

Bottom: (Left) 7906 Fron Hall at Maidenhead 1959. Ken Lawrie

Built December 1949. March 1959 shed allocation Reading. Withdrawn March 1965.

(Right) B1 61166 at Maidenhead on the branch. Ken Lawrie

Latest Copy Date for next issue of The Marlow Donkey 1st February 2003

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TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held at: Royal British Legion, Station Approach, Marlow at 7.45 for 8.00 pm.

2003

Thursday 16 January	PHOTOGRAPHIC EVENING	MDRS Members
Thursday 20 February	AGM / BRING & BUY	
Thursday 20 March	RAIL REGULATOR	David Sexton
Thursday 17 April	DIESELS AT WORK IN CORNWALL	Nigel Spate
Thursday 15 May	RE-APPRAISAL OF WEBB	Martin Bloxsom
Thursday 19 June	B & H or 40 YEARS	Dave Canning
Thursday 17 July	DEAN FOREST RAILWAY	Peter Adams
August	No Meeting	
Thursday 18 September	MODERN RAILWAY OPERATING	Mark Hopwood
Thursday 16 October	ISAMBARD K BRUNEL	Gordon Stephens
Thursday 20 November	RAILWAY AIR SERVICES	John King

EXCURSIONS 2003

25-27 April

Baie de Somme

By Car

For further information see The Donkey Issue 93, June 2000 or connect to the following web sites:

www.chemin-fer-baie-somme.asso.fr

www.trains-fr.org



July

Dean Forest Railway

Coach

Please: NO TALKING DURING PRESENTATIONS

Please note: The above programme is subject to change

IMPORTANT NOTE

There has been a misunderstanding on the location of some of the photos taken by Ken Lawrie. They were marked 'W. W.' your editor took this to mean West Wycombe it is in fact a reference to White Waltham, so apologies for this error. *John Tuck, Editor*

RIPPINGTONS MAGICAL MINI TOURS - THE CHRISTMAS COACH TRIP

As many of you know our avid Chairman and ex Hogwarts Headboy, Gordon Rippington, has been a wizard at arranging many summer outings to a wide variety of venues for the Society but this year saw the introduction of a winter magical mystery tour in the quest of Santa Steam.

On a cold and damp December Sunday morning the usual MDRS crowd gathered at 07.30 outside the Royal British Legion in Marlow and boarded the 48 seater coach hired from Dumbledore's of Hazlemere. Departure was prompt at 07.45 and with a near full complement we headed north to our first scheduled stop for breakfast at the 'Greasy Spoon' just south of Preston. It was good run with the coach flying along an almost empty motorway and only stopping three times en route for Tim Speechley to empty his bladder. Unfortunately the service at the cafe was a little slow, taking over half an hour to get everyone fed instead of the allotted ten minutes. Therefore, Gordon decided to cancel the detour to the Ravenglass and Eskdale and we headed straight to the East Lancs. Railway only to find that we were too early for the first Santa train and risked missing the 'Christmas Cracker' steam special over Shap if we waited around. However, we all piled in to the gift shop at Bury to show our support for line and Gordon bought a copy of *'Harry Potter's - Big RED Engines of the GWR'*

Back on the coach we headed towards Shap. On arrival at Scout Green the keen photographers braved the biting cold wind and no sun, to set themselves up at a variety of line side locations, and waited and waited. Finally, the sound of a distant whistle was heard, photographers ran to take up their positions, various utterances of a rather unpleasant nature were directed at anyone who was in the frame wearing a bright red jacket, and cameras started rolling in anticipation. When the train failed to appear after five minutes, it was discovered that the whistle sound was nothing more than 50p plastic affair bought by one of the party's offspring at Bury and blown as a dare from his sister. The sprog in question was now banished to the rear of the coach and under threat that he would not see Father Christmas or go on another MDRS trip if he made a single squeak. With the trip now running a little behind schedule, Gordon got everyone back on the coach so that we could get to Aviemore in time for the first Santa departure on the Strathspey Railway. With everyone seated and accounted for the coach set off but had not got more than 200 yds down the road when the steam special was heard storming up the bank on its way to Carlisle. Gordon just managed to record the final trails of smoke on his video as the train went out of view.

The Strathspey Railway runs for five miles from Aviemore to Boat of Garten but owing to a traffic jam caused by a herd of Reindeer loose on the road, we arrived a little late and were only able to photograph

the back of the train leaving the station. But we were not deterred as Gordon thought that this would make a good ending to his extensive video coverage of the outing. As it was the winter timetable, no other trains were running and we did not have enough time in hand to await the service train's return. After a quick breeze around the station gift shop where Tim Speechley bought 'Ian Allan's - ABC of Fiat Motor Cars' and visited the gents, we re-boarded the coach and set off for our planned luncheon stop at Kidderminster on the Severn Valley Railway.

Lunch at the SVR was a brief affair as the earlier delays had had a knock on effect to Gordon's casual schedule. But there was still time to peruse the shop, where Mike Hyde managed to purchase a unique copy of 'The illustrated History of High Wycombe Bus Garage during the Napoleonic Wars'. We then went to catch our train only to find steam services suspended due to a delivery of the wrong kind of water conditioner! (Tesco dishwasher salt instead of tanning). No one admitted to wanting to travel behind the pair of 'Westerns' hastily brought down to power the train so without further ado we all got back on the coach and headed for our next scheduled stop. - The West Somerset Railway travelling via the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway where the photographers took panoramic views of the site as the coach went over Toddington Bridge. We then made Tim's 25th toilet stop of the day. It was at this point we took a wrong turn and missed the West Somerset altogether.

Arriving unexpectedly at Haven Street on the Isle Of Wight, (the traffic hold up for half an hour in thick fog turned out to be the deck of the IOW ferry) we anticipated the imminent departure of the advertised triple headed 'Mince Pie Express' to Santa's Grotto at Smallbrook Junction only to find the line blocked by heavy snow fall, so buses were replacing trains. Eddie Lewcock quickly purchased a book called 'Isle of Wight Steam Railway Winter Replacement Bus Services in Colour' from the station shop while Gordon looked at the map to see where we could go to as an alternative.

After some deliberation we set off for the Bluebell Railway. By the time we got there it was getting quite late and the last Santa train had already gone. However, Mike Walker managed to persuade the gift shop volunteer to stay open another few minutes and he emerged a short while later carrying a copy of 'The Rough Guide to American Preserved Railways' stating that this would be useful for planning next year's trips.

By a stroke of luck, Tim Edmonds recognised a family from Marlow, leaving Sheffield Park station after visiting Father Christmas. With mum and dad clearly suffering from the effects of too much free sherry and mince pies, he convinced them they were now railway enthusiasts and referred them to Peter Robins. Peter

promptly signed up one full, one regular and two junior members and before the ink had dried on the cheque Gordon had sold them a club tie and taken their names plus a deposit for next year's summer outing! (Don't know where we are going yet so Gordon described it as a bargain priced mystery tour)

Not put off by the fact that even Peter Greatorax didn't have a single picture of Santa Steam to win the Photographic competition and that John Tuck was still seeking an exclusive scoop for the 'Donkey', Gordon decided that we just had time to call into the Mid Hants on our return to Marlow.

On arrival at Alresford, the place was in darkness and there was no one to be seen. To save face we broke into the railway gift shop where several members snapped the last few remaining copies of 'The Trainspotter's guide to C&A Anoraks in the 70's' Being an honest lot (or more likely the fact that there was there was an officer of the law present, namely the Hon Sec), the appropriate monies were left on the counter and Peter wrote out an MDRS cheque to cover the damage caused getting in. We then called it

a day and finally arrived back at Marlow gasping for a beer to the sound of the landlord of the Marlow Donkey locking up.

The raffle held on the final leg was won by Mrs Elsie Rockingrate. - A pensioner from Petersfield, who accidentally boarded the coach when it stopped to let Tim pay a visit, thinking it was the service bus to Bognor Regis. She was also signed up as new member.

Everyone thanked Gordon and agreed it had been a good day although there were one or two comments that the trip could have been a little more ambitious. Our worthy chairman has noted these concerns and based on the success of this year's winter tour he said that he would book something on a grander scale next year!

A compilation of the Video coverage of the trip including exclusive views of the Gents at Kidderminster, when the camera was briefly switched on by accident will be shown at the Christmas event.

Julian Heard

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

This year being the Society's 25th anniversary has made it a most rewarding year with the membership being swelled by four new members, a welcome change of fortune over recent years. So gentlemen please keep up the good work in promoting the society.

With the festive season upon us may I take this opportunity to wish all members and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Gordon Rippington Chairman



BRUNEL WAS RIGHT

Mike Walker

The recent revelation of First Great Western's pipe-dream of building a LGV style high speed line to the west reminds me of an exchange whilst I was doing my Personal Track Safety training at CCL Rail Training at Crewe. Our tutor was David Guest, one of the founding partners of CCL and a Devonian native with more than thirty years experience rising from the footplate to, briefly, Training Manager at EWS. Chatting before the course started we both agreed that there was only one real railway, the Great Western.

As the other members of the course were rookie First North Western conductors with little knowledge of the industry he was getting down to basics and explained the terms Up and Down and that multiple tracks were also designated as Fast or Slow. He went on: "In some parts of the country they don't use Fast and Slow but Main and Relief. (turning to me) Why's that Mike?"

Quick as a flash, I replied: "Well on the Great Western our Relief lines have a higher permissible speed than most of the so-called Fast lines in this part of the world. The terms Fast and Slow seem inappropriate."

"Precisely", replied David, "If they'd listened to Brunel 150 years ago we could have had 150 mph trains long ago without all these expensive upgrades and tilting trains!"

Finally, it's encouraging to see that Isambard Kingdom Brunel was voted into the BBC's Top Ten Britons of all time, not George Stephenson. Look around you, the Thames Tunnel, Clifton Suspension Bridge, Bristol Harbour, the SS Great Britain and, of course, the Great Western Railway. The man was a genius – just don't mention rats!

Since Mike Walker wrote this IKB has been voted the 2nd Greatest Britain - Editor

SUBURBAN TRAIN SERVICES IN AND AROUND CARDIFF

Keith Brown

In the past when I have been examining the all-line railway timetable the forty or so pages dedicated to table 130 "Valley Services" have been quickly passed over. As Wales & Border Trains took over the franchise from Valley Lines recently in the summer of 2002 the opportunity was there to have an in depth look at the suburban weekday services around the Welsh capital.

The area covered extends westwards to Maesteg and eastwards to Newport, northwards to Merthyr Tydfil and Barry Island in the south. All these locations are within 28 miles of Cardiff Central. There are 69 stations on the system, nine of which are at the end of their respective branch and ten where trains terminate short of the end of the branch. All the terminal stations have a regular off peak service pattern, not quite clock face departures, but nearly so. To have achieved this pattern the diagrams of the units involved is quite complex as will be explained later. 32 train diagrams cover a normal weekday workload plus four diagrams for class 158's which visit either as an early morning or late evening fill-in turn. The classes involved are 142, 143, 150 units and class 37's with coaching stock.

Under the new franchise there appears to be more flexibility. For instance a class 158 starting from Penzance at 0652 which has visited Manchester Piccadilly (1429-1503) returns to Maesteg at 1911 and then departs to Gloucester. Even at London's Waterloo if you are up early enough you will see on the departure board the destination of the 0505 (MX) is Maesteg arriving at 0911. On Mondays this train starts at Reading at 0600. There is one through working each way between Barry Island and Birmingham. An hourly off-peak service from Newport to Pontypridd operates, the latter being the junction station for the branches up to Aberdare, Merthyr Tydfil and Treherbert.

You will observe from the table below that 23 of the 36 train diagrams call at Barry Island each weekday. Cardiff Bay, which is a one-mile branch line from Cardiff Queen Street, has 54 departures daily. This station serves the vast new housing and industrial developments in the old docks area. Cardiff Central caters for in excess of 330 suburban train movements daily in addition to the mainline services calling there. Cardiff Queen Street has equally as many suburban services but no main line traffic. For the energetic among you to cover the whole suburban system takes just over 13½ hours. A day Valley Lines rover ticket costs £6, -quite cheap this as the train operator does not expect people to undertake such a marathon.

Terminus	Miles from Cardiff Central	Departures in day	Off-peak frequency	Train diagrams involved
Aberdare	23	17	Hourly	11
Barry Island	9¼	53	20 minutes	23
Cardiff Bay	1½	54	15 minutes	15
Coryton	6½	25	½ Hourly	9
Maesteg	27½	14	Hourly	9
Merthyr Tydfil	23½	16	Hourly	12
Penarth	3¾	41	20 minutes	18
Rhymney	23¾	17	Hourly	17
Treherbert	23	29	½ Hourly	14

EDITOR'S NOTES

A new year approaches and it can be a time for reflection on 2002, as the Chairman has mentioned it has been a good year for the society and I am sure you would join me in thanking all those who organised the special trips, in particular the trip on the SVR. Grateful thanks go to all who have provided articles, done typing and checked copy for The Donkey

We have been fortunate in the past to have the photocopying of The Donkey done for us. Your committee has had to look at the cost of doing this commercially, this copy you hold in your hands would cost 96p times this figure by four and it makes our membership fee good value, so if there are members who have access double sided copying please let one of the committee members know.

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Sadly I have to report the passing on of one of our members 'Graham Dell'.

John Tuck Editor

Summary by location of Arrivals from and Departures to:		Aberdare	Abercynon S.	Bargoed	Barry	Barry Island	Birmingham	Bristol T.M.	Caerphilly	Cardiff Bay	Cardiff Cent.	Cardiff Q.S.	Cheltenham	Coryton	Fishguard	Gloucester	Hereford	Maesteg	Manchester	Merthyr	Newport	Penarth	Pontypridd	Radyr	Rhymney	Taff Wells	Treherbert	Waterloo	Ystrad Mynach	
Location	Arr	X				8				1	3												3	1						
	Dep.	X				13				2	2							1					1				1			
Barry Island	Arr			2		X	1		2	1	6	2	1	2						3					4		16		1	
	Dep.			8		X	1		2	1	6	2		2						1			2		3	1	17			
Cardiff Bay	Arr					1			12	X	1	28		9																
	Dep.		1	1					9	X		32		7									1		1	1	1			
Coryton	Arr					2				7	1			X				8		X			1	4						
	Dep.					2				9	3			X				8				1	2			1				
Maesteg	Arr										1	1		8				X	1								1			
	Dep.									1		1		8		1	1	X	1						1			1		
Merthyr	Arr					1					5									X			10	1						
	Dep.					3					5									X		8								
Newport	Arr						1				1										X						2			
	Dep.										1											X								
Penarth	Arr			8						1	3		2	1								X			9	8				
	Dep.			1							3	1		1										11		8		2		
Rhymney	Arr					3					4				1									X						
	Dep.					4					2													X						
Treherbert	Arr					17				1	2															X				
	Dep.					16					2															X				

Excludes Empty Stock Workings

FIVE JULIET SIX ONE

Mike Walker

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to have your own special train to go just where you want it to? Fat chance with today's bureaucratic railway! My professional duties involve me producing route diagrams for the training and assessment of traincrews. These are based on Railtrack's - sorry - National Rail's! - signalling diagrams, Sectional Appendix and the Ordnance Survey but to ensure everything is in order I have to ride up and down each line in the cab and check them out. With Thames or Chiltern this is easy, all their routes are used by regular public service trains. Okay, so getting from Northolt to Paddington and back by Chiltern is a challenge but the service is there.

First North Western on the other hand is a different matter. Some of its public services run very infrequently - the fabled Stockport - Stalybridge service for example - and there are a number of lines around Manchester which are used only by FNW trains in transfer movements over otherwise "freight only" lines. A problem arose with Todmorden. Although Arriva run regularly through the station my cab pass is not valid with them. FNW serves Todmorden with two morning trains that start there and go into Manchester and one back in the evening. In each case the balancing workings are ECS. However there is no crossover at Todmorden so the trains actually continue to Hall Royd Junction to reverse and one of the morning trains is booked to go right through to Hebden Bridge to maintain route knowledge in case the Hall Royd crossover is out of action. One evening in mid-September I caught the 1850 Manchester Victoria to Todmorden and rode it out to Hall Royd. The equipment was a 156 and a 142 coupled so when we got to Hall Royd we had to climb down from the 156 and walk along the cess and climb up into the 142. Not easy as the train was standing inside Millwood Tunnel! Add to this the rapidly encroaching darkness and you'll appreciate I wasn't very successful in checking this line.

Discussing the problem with Mark Hopwood, FNW's Operations Director, he said: "No problem, we'll run you a special out to Hebden Bridge in daylight". I was somewhat taken aback, Don't National Rail want sixteen weeks notice etc.? Apparently not. We wandered round to Train Planning, asked them and got confirmation. "All we need is 48 hours notice to diagram a set and driver and let Railtrack (sic) know what we are doing". So arrangements were made to go out to Hebden Bridge and I took the opportunity to explore further and asked for the Ashburys line to be included - well, it's sort of on the way!

So it was that 5J61 - Five Juliet Six One - Mike Walker's own personal special train was arranged for Tuesday 8th October 2002. It was booked to use a set that normally spends a few hours spare at Manchester Victoria and was booked to depart from Vic at 1105

but we hoped to get away early. Ha! You'll be lucky. Control told us to take the unit standing at Platform 2, 142064, but this plan was thwarted by an Arriva 150/2 which was booked for the 1048 to York which promptly "failed" with doors that wouldn't prove themselves shut. FNW's resident troubleshooting fitter at Vic, Sean rolled up sucking his trademark cigar and carrying his tools in an old hold all. He soon got things fixed (allegedly the ATN crew hadn't changed ends correctly!) but the train left about 1100. My driver went off to seek further advice and came back saying that whilst FNW Control and Railtrack Control knew all about our little jaunt, the latter hadn't put it on TRUST and Manchester North IECC knew nothing! However details were on their way as we speak and, oh, by the way, can you take the train at Platform 3. This turned out to be 142005, freshly repainted in FNW's dark blue with gold stars.

We got in set up the reporting number, made sure the blinds both ends read "Not in public service" and waited for the road. At 1114 we got a green and UF indication followed by a RA given by the platform supervisor and we were off. The journey started with a race as a Bury bound Metrolink tram left simultaneously but it was no contest as our Nodding Donkey clawed its way up the 1 in 59 of Miles Platting bank, the tram rapidly disappeared into Collyhurst Tunnel. Passing Miles Platting itself I gave a suitable gesture to the head office of my former employers, perhaps a little unfairly, if they hadn't made me redundant I'd not be doing this now!

We passed Newton Heath, FNW's principal DMU depot, and were relieved to find a green signal as we passed Moston - the Vitriol Works bobby was expecting us. However our luck was running out, the 1103 stopper to Rochdale and the Oldham Loop was ahead so Castleton East's down distant was at caution. The outer home was at danger until just before we stopped, clearing to yellow. Both these are colour lights but the next two, the intermediate and inner homes are semaphores, each being pulled off at the last minute as we approached, but the semaphore section signal at the far end of Castleton Station remained on so we had to stand for a few minutes. Once it cleared we got a clear run through Rochdale as the 1103 had already cleared the station and disappeared down the branch. Our concern now was a following ATN Trans-Pennine Express that we didn't want to delay.

Our clear run continued through Smithy Bridge and into the Preston PSB control area. After Littleborough my driver was careful to ensure I was aware that the signals protecting the emergency crossover were semi-automatics, I confirmed I was. Something I wasn't aware of was that the permissible speed drops from 70 to 65 mph at the west portal of Summit Tunnel - Railtrack's Sectional Appendix states this occurs at 16m

40c, some three quarters of the way through the 1 mile 1125 yard tunnel. Draft diagram quickly marked up! Summit Tunnel is infamous for the serious fire involving a tanker train several years ago. My driver says he knew the crew involved and he had the job of towing out of the tunnel what remained (not much!) of the tankers after the fire was extinguished. There are actually three Summit Tunnels with very short bores at each end followed by another short one, Dean Royd, just to the east after which we resume 70 mph running. Half a mile further on comes Winterbutlee Tunnel beyond which is Walsden station and the two Gauxholme Viaducts. This is deep in the scenic heart of the Pennines.

Todmorden station passes and we slow to get a good look at Hall Royd Junction. My driver points out that if you were to make a move from the up platform to the down line via the crossover you can't see the controlling ground signal from the station and, as there is an automatic signal on the up line between the station and crossover this is a highly irregular and potentially dangerous move. I'm concentrating on my diagrams so I don't comment but I later think this through and it occurs to me that it could not be done – you can not make a back up move in Track Circuit Block territory! Perhaps he was testing me to see how much I know! Anyway, we slowed across the junction to verify that the ground signal that provides for up direction moves does not as we suspected have a telephone to Preston PSB. Instead you have to walk to the ground frame controlling the engineer's sidings and use the one there, most irregular and requiring a notation on the diagrams.

We are now through Millwood Tunnel and into rare mileage territory.. Two more tunnels, Castle Hill and Horsfall follow in quick succession. Entering the latter the driver reprogrammed the NRN from channel 17 to 31. We note that signal PN311 which protected the now removed Eastwood emergency crossover is still marked as semi-automatic, is it and why? There's a brief 55 mph restriction for a curve from 22m 20c to 22m 40c then as we pass over the boundary between Railtrack's North Western and London North Eastern Zones the speed is reduced to 65. It's a bit like seeing where a county boundary is by the change in the quality of a road surface!

We've left the Preston control area and the next signal is marked HB3 for Hebden Bridge. Weasel Hall Tunnel is followed by a sweeping right curve and a yellow at HB4 just before the station. We slow and pull up beyond the crossover just beyond the platforms. I'm busy making notes but my driver asks me to look out of my side and check we are safely in the rear of the ground disc controlling the crossover. I confirm we are and we quickly change ends. I make more notes as we slip across to the up line and start our return journey. Soon after the following ATN train passes us.

Near Eastwood we encounter a gricer with camera who shoots us. Did he just get lucky or did he get a tip off? Either way, you don't often see a FNW 142 in

these parts, especially midday. Anyway he was lucky we had a gleaming, freshly painted unit. The rest of the run back to Newton Heath was uneventful.

At Thorpes Bridge we came to a stand at a red signal to allow a sister 142 to rattle across the junction onto the Oldham Loop then got a position 1 feather to take us onto the Up Passenger Loop – rare mileage! Better was to come. As per my request we turned left at Brewery Junction and took the sharply curved (10 mph) Brewery Curve, definitely non-passenger territory. The 142's long wheelbase didn't like this one bit and screamed in defiance. At Philips Park West Junction we crossed over the Ashton Line, used by services to Stalybridge and Wakefield, and onto the freight only Ashburys Line. This is 20 mph throughout and winds its way through some pretty rough parts of Manchester. After Philips Park South Junction, where the curve from Baguley Fold Junction on the Ashton Line comes in, we pass pretty close to the new stadium built for the Commonwealth Games. I suggest that a station should have been built here but the driver observes the closed Park station on the Ashton line is just as close but the company didn't seize the opportunity. "What do you expect", he says "we are run by a bus company!"

A red greets us as we approach Ashburys West Junction so it's time to get down and phone the 'box. Soon we are on our way and cross onto the main line and pass Ashburys station. As the track layout here does not permit reversal we have to continue east all the way to Guide Bridge. This is the old GCR Woodhead route and I've already mapped it out to Hadfield and Glossop so I sit back and enjoy the ride. My driver reminisces about what was there in the old days – so much has been lost.

At Guide Bridge we get another red at the end of the platform. "Now what?" cries the driver in frustration. Almost immediately the answer is revealed as an ATN 158 comes off the Stalybridge line and crosses our path. Nevertheless, my driver decides to consult with the Guide Bridge signaller to make sure he knows what's happening. We get a yellow followed by another with a position 1 feather at Guide Bridge East Junction and slip into the Passenger Loop. Here we change ends again and I'm asked to make sure we are in the clear. A further consultation with the signaller follows to make sure everyone knows we are going back to Victoria not Piccadilly and after a few minutes we head west again back to Ashburys.

Here, a young lady gets up expectedly as we pass the platform but we don't stop as we are signalled straight onto the Ashburys line. Immediately we are faced with an advanced warning sign for a 5 mph emergency speed restriction. As this has an arrow to the right we conclude it must refer to the Baguley line at Philips Park South Junction but at more than a mile and a quarter from the junction it seems an excessive distance bearing in mind the normal 20 mph maximum speed. My driver concludes that it's been put there rather than at the normal braking distance to avoid it

being vandalised!

At Philips Park South Junction our assumption is confirmed, the point is being replaced. We decide that it looks pretty rough our way too so we reduce to 5 mph to be on the safe side. This was not a good idea! Between Philips Park South and West Junctions the line is on a steep climb with a sharp left hand curve equipped with a check rail. It's not quite as sharp as Brewery Curve as the normal speed is twenty, but not today. The 142's have a long wheelbase and at our slow speed the running and check rails combined to act like a vice on the wheel flanges bringing us almost to a stand. The 142, like other "modern" DMU's, are equipped with systems that automatically shut down the leading car if the differential speed between the cars varies by more than 5% to avoid them parting. This promptly cut in further impeding our progress. It took a lot of deft throttle handling to get us out of this mess, a process that took several minutes. I was glad I

was with an experienced man, a newer recruit would have lost it, and my driver admitted he'd thought we'd have to summon assistance. But finally we crept round to West Junction and took the Ashton line round to Miles Platting where we rejoined the main line and scurried down the hill towards Victoria. One last brief pause at a red before we were summoned into platform 2. In accordance with the rules we crept in at 10 mph and stopped six feet from the buffer stops. "What do think, that's six foot isn't it?" I was asked as we alighted. I mumbled agreement although I reckon it was nearer eight.

By now it was 1340 and we were both hungry so we adjourned to the office via the sandwich shop and discussed the trip. This will probably have to be repeated in the next few months as there are other routes to be surveyed that don't get a passenger service.

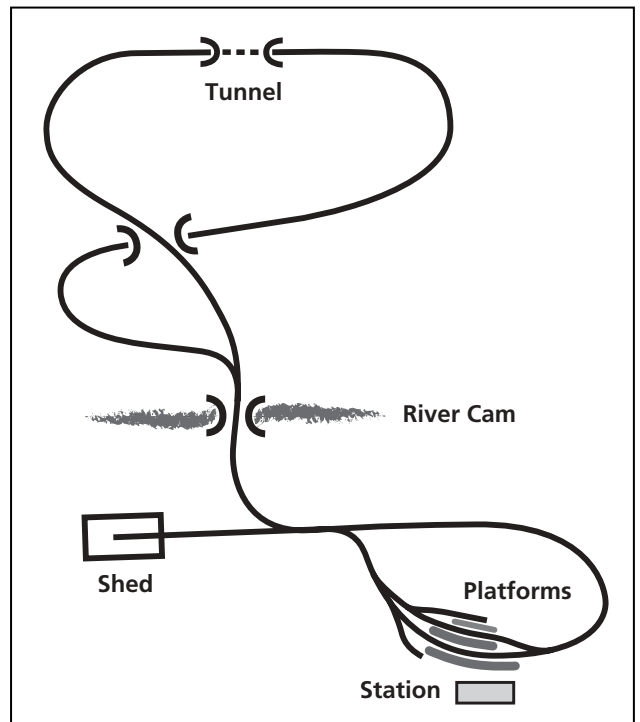
AUDLEY END MINIATURE RAILWAY

By Alan Costello

Audley End House is situated west of Saffron Walden and is signposted from the M11. The house, owned by Lord Braybrooke, is open to the public during the summer and is worth a visit to see the house and its extensive gardens. On summer Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and school holidays the Audley End Miniature Railway (also owned by Lord Braybrooke) operates. The entrance to the railway and its car park is opposite the entrance to the grounds of the House.

I visited the railway on 23rd September 2001 when they had a steam gala day. As well as operating 4 steam engines on the main railway, a local engineering club was running trains on an oval track (one of the engines being a 14xx class 0-4-2T). The railway was opened in 1964 (by Stirling Moss). The main layout has the gauge 10.25ins and is just over 1 mile long. The station building is made of wood and contains a small souvenir shop. On the walls are pictures of the engines and their drivers with a note showing which engine and driver is working that day (one of the drivers is Lord Braybrooke). The station has 2

through platforms and 2 sidings, together with a water tank. There is a signal gantry at the end of the platforms. After leaving the station, trains pass a scaled down signal box, under a footbridge, and then reach the single line main circuit at Audley End Junction. Soon after they pass the engine shed and veer right. The line then passes over the River Cam and enters woods before reaching a junction. When I travelled on it, the train continued straight on before passing over the return line. It then turned left before doing a 180 degree turn to the right. After passing through a short tunnel the line does another 180 degree turn to the right and crosses the line (underneath this time) before another 180 degree turn (this time to the left brings it back to the junction. The passage of the



Left. No. 24 passing under the footbridge (note signal box in background)

23 Sept. 2001



Left. No. 489 Sara Lucy approaching Audley End Junction.

23 Sept. 2001

train over the points changes them causing alternate trains to go round the circuit in different directions. I'm not sure how this worked when 2 trains were on the circuit at one time (with the other two in the station). The train continues to the junction near the station where it continues straight on before looping round to enter the rear of the station ready to start again.

Much of the line is through trees, but to keep children amused a large collection of cuddly toys has been placed close to the line on the ground and also in the trees.

Four trains were being operated using the following steam locomotives. 1) 3548 Lord Braybrooke 2-6-2 built in 1948. 2) Barbara Curwen 2-4-2 built in 1997. 3) 489 Sara Lucy built in style of a Denver & Rio Grande 2-8-2 in 1977. 4) 24 a 2-6-2 built in 1991 also in the style of an American loco, which I don't know ,but maybe someone there does. (The lettering on the tender is S R & R L). Also



3548 Lord Braybrooke at Audley End Station

13 Oct. 2001



on display at the station were 691 Henrietta Jane - a 0-4-0+0-4-0 petrol hydraulic and 682 Doris a 0-6-0 petrol mechanical. Outside the shed was Western styled D1011 Western Thunderer a 6-6w petrol mechanical. 691 was built by A. Crowhurst whilst the rest were built by D. Curwen.

I enjoyed the visit which I combined

Above. Petrol locos 682 Doris and 691 Henrietta Jane at Audley End Station.

23 Sept. 2001

with a tour of the house and gardens and returned in October for another ride before it closed for the winter. Only one train was operating (with 3548 in charge) but was full during the time I was there.

Right. Barbara Curwen and 3548 Lord Braybrooke wait at Audley End Station.

23 Sept. 2001



A SEVERN VALLEY WEEKEND

Early each year I look with some anticipation through "The Marlow Donkey" for the destination of the July trip. Since moving to Wiltshire in 1988 I think I've only managed to attend two of these outings. The first being the West Somerset Railway when my youngest daughter and I were able to board a coach at Leigh Delamere M4 services (in those days it was possible to drive into the staff car park off a minor road but things have tightened up since then). On the second occasion the family and I drove to Swanage meeting up with MDRS members outside the station there.

This year's trip was somewhat different as reaching the SVR involves a less than direct route and I had decided from the outset to travel by rail to get there. Originally it had been hoped that my wife and I would go for the weekend but she works Saturdays and couldn't get time off. Knowing the popularity of the area I rang Bridgnorth Tourist Information Centre in April and within a couple of days had booked a B&B in the town for two nights. I couldn't get a rail ticket direct to Bridgnorth from Chippenham so it had to be Kidderminster and as Super Savers are not available in this area on Saturdays in July and August I had, with much muttering to get a Saver. However, at £27 it was still reasonable particularly as I had £26 worth of rail vouchers to use up. So for just £1 in cash I was able to purchase my return tickets.

I caught the 7:45am from Chippenham, which gave me my first ride on one of the new First GW Adelante trains. The chocolate box corporate colour scheme does not appeal to me; in fact I think it one of the most tasteless liveries to date. Whilst these units are externally very quiet due to the under-floor engines there is an annoying internal noise. There is also less legroom and I wonder with only five carriages how they will fare on heavily used services given that H.S.Ts have 7 or 8 coaches. We arrived at Bristol Temple Meads 5 minutes early at 8:10am, then it was over to platform 3 to await the 8:30 Virgin service to Newcastle. This was an HST and unusually for a cross-country service left on time. Travelling via Yate and Cheltenham Spa we were held up in the Birmingham suburbs and reached New Street 10 minutes late at 10:06.

My train for Kidderminster was not due to leave until 10:43 so I had time for a wander round. There are ticket barriers at this station so I didn't chance trying to get out but moved from platform one to another in an effort to get a better view of Virgin Heritage locos, both diesel and electric, which seemed to be in great abundance that day. However, New Street is a bit of a black hole and I wasn't able to get much in the way of decent photographs. To my amazement the H.S.T. I'd arrived on didn't leave until 10:40 – a full 40 minutes late. Seven minutes later the Central Trains class 150 sprinter I was on finally got away. At Stourbridge Junction the John Parry People Mover was stabled in the bay for use to Stourbridge Town. This unit was formerly used on the Bristol Harbour branch where I saw it several times.

Arrival at Kidderminster was 11:23 by now 6 minutes

late. I walked in to the town, after a stroll along the canal, picnic lunch and half of beer, I caught a Choice Travel bus to Bridgnorth travelling via Arley and Highley. After an interesting journey lasting about an hour I alighted in High Town's main street. Bridgnorth has both a High and Low Town, linked by numerous steps. You certainly need to be fit, but for the less energetic there is the Castle Hill Cliff Railway. Dating from 1892 it drops 111 feet and is 201 ft. long. It cost a mere 70p return and was an experience not to be missed. There is also a footbridge linking the SVR station with High Town. The most amazing thing about Bridgnorth apart from the marvellous views is the number of pubs, over 50.

On Sunday morning I made my way to the railway station for the 11:00 departure to Kidderminster. An 8F 48733 was in steam alongside the down platform but my train was hauled by 46443 an Ivatt mogul and left 10 minutes late due to points failure. After a while the guard came through. I explained that I wished to board the 12:15 from Kidderminster but he thought the change over might be a bit tight, so I got off at Bewdley. While there, I visited the 'N' gauge model railway but the operator was having problems and began cursing and kicking the side panels. I decided to leave him to it. As soon as the delayed 12:15 ex-Kidderminster came in I made my way down towards the dining cars but neither the bar attendant or waitress seemed to have any idea of a party from Marlow, particularly one comprising 30 members so I went back towards the engine end. The final carriage was locked and a fellow passenger informed me it contained a private party. This raised my hopes slightly until the guard came back to say it was for loco support crews. At Bridgnorth I detrained and walked along the platform but didn't recognise anyone getting off the dining section or anyone left on the train. Assuming there had been a last minute change and the MDRS were travelling on the 1pm train I crossed the bridge and boarded the delayed 1:30 for Kidderminster. As soon as this train was on its way I glanced across to the other train only to see Mike Walker and Pete Greatorex still eating their lunch. At Hampton Loade I got off and rushed over the barrow crossing to catch the Bridgnorth bound train. "No need to rush young man" called a guard. "Say that again" I thought – at 58 I'd hardly call myself young.

On reaching Bridgnorth again I found several MDRS members on the footbridge and was pleased to meet Gordon Rippington and John Tuck for the first time. Unfortunately the S.V.R. would not allow us as a group to visit the works or loco shed due to Health & Safety regulations. Surely a responsible group like ours should be given credit for common sense. Given this rebuff a few of the party including John Sears and Mary Dove decided to go back to Hampton Loade where there was a special event day. Here I met a larger than life Peter Robins and a few others. One of the things happening between trains was a procession of two man P.W. trolleys. There were also some stalls of Railwayana and I managed to pick up a replica smoke-box door shed plate (84E) Tyseley for £6. One of the locos in action

was 1501, which I haven't seen working since the 1960s when these engines worked between Old Oak Common and Paddington on empty stock workings. When it was time to leave I caught the last but one train to Bridgnorth, which was hauled by 7802 Bradley Manor, while my MDRS colleagues boarded the corresponding service to Kidderminster. Both trains by this time running about 28-30 minutes behind schedule. I decided to have a quick drink in the 'Railwayman's Arms' on Bridgnorth station and was delighted to see the name plate for High Wycombe Middle Signal Box. Oh! The times I stood on the footbridge next to that box, for it was my favourite photo spot in the 1960s. Other local items of interest were totems from Henley-on-Thames and Windsor and Eton Riverside. After an evening meal at the boarding house I returned to the 'Railwayman's Arms' which was fairly heaving with patrons. It was obviously a popular pub, possibly because the beer was so much cheaper than elsewhere.

On the Monday morning I had originally planned to catch the 11am train to Kidderminster. As services had been so badly delayed the previous day and no one could guarantee that trains would keep to time, I decided with 6 minutes between S.V.R. time-tabled arrival at Kidderminster and National Rail departure, that I just wasn't going to chance it. I therefore caught a bus again though being a weekday it was a different operator, which left at 8:30am and was a nice new bus with seatbelts though nobody used them. The fare was £2.65. Suddenly I realised I hadn't got my wallet and with over £100 in it I was worried to say the least. I asked the driver if he had seen it: "You put it in your top pocket" was his reply. After several panic stricken minutes I found the said wallet under the seat, it must have dropped out of my pocket as I sat down. Sighing with relief I began to enjoy the journey. We seemed to do a complete circuit of Bridgnorth Low Town before heading through Hampton, Highley and Kinlet as well as the Wyre Forest. There were some real characters on the bus and apart from my rather shaky start the rest of the trip was pure pleasure – the only annoying thing about going by bus was the 10 minute or so walk to the station. However, I had plenty of time so had a good look over the S.V.R. station with its cobbled forecourt. The main building is based on Ross-on-Wye and has to be one of the best new station buildings in preservation. The train for the 10:30 departure was alongside the platform with 7802 again at its head, but with some 20 or so minutes to go nothing much was really happening. Meanwhile at the main line station there was a large crowd of passengers waiting for trains to Birmingham. With services in that direction badly delayed due to points failure in the Droitwich area it sounded like a repeat of the previous day's happening. Fortunately as I went on to the platform services got going again, though from the outset I decided not to go via Birmingham anyway, but in the opposite direction, which gave me a choice of two routes.

Now, I could have gone to Hereford then via Abergavenny and Newport then to Bristol etc. or by changing at Worcester go via Cheltenham or Oxford. In the end I decided to travel to Hereford first then re-trace

my way back to Worcester then on to Oxford. While awaiting the 10:17 to Hereford I had a good look at the array of semaphore signals both on the main line and the S.V.R. and the sight was quite impressive. My train for Hereford came in 5 minutes late but we were held up for a few minutes longer outside Droitwich Spa where at the north end of the Birmingham platform was a double starter signal identical to that at Bewdley. I must admit that until I saw the Droitwich example I thought the S.V.R. one was unique. Worcester Shrub Hill was and still is an absolute paradise for semaphores of all types and the track layout also does not appear to have been rationalized. However, this situation will not last as Railtrack apparently had this area high on its list for re-signalling and track relaying. As far as the superbly restored gem of a station of Great Malvern, the wonderful old lower quadrant signals prevailed but thereafter the line was single in parts and the odd colour light came into view. Despite this, signal boxes abounded as at the now quite lonely Malvern Wells, where the station closed in 1965. Colwall and Ledbury tunnels are and always have been single.

Arrival at Hereford was 12 minutes late and here I broke my journey to visit the city having a very good and cheap lunch before going to the cathedral. There I saw the Mappa Mundi – one of the oldest maps in existence though it's not like any map you would find nowadays. After hurrying back to the station I caught the 13:04 GW service to Paddington. This was actually one of the normal Thames Turbo units and not an H.S.T. as I'd expected. The line beyond Worcester through Evesham, Moreton-in-Marsh and Kingham to Oxford was not a patch on the Kidderminster – Hereford line stations and track looked uncared for. Our arrival at Oxford was 5 minutes down at 14:50 and here as I had a wait until 15:31 I decided to see what developments had been taking place in Oxford itself. I was certainly not impressed with the college building, which now towers over the onetime site of the LMS station – as Prince Charles might say: "it's a monstrous carbuncle". Surely Oxford of all places should have done something more in keeping with its other buildings. Back at the station Virgin Voyagers were coming in thick and fast including the 15:19 to Birmingham New Street, which had two sets of units in its formation. My train, a Thames Turbo in early livery, left on time and apart from being held up at Morton, Didcot to allow two late running HSTs through, the journey was fairly uneventful. After a ten-minute walk I was home, tired but thoroughly satisfied with the weekend's events.

The SVR has great character and a somewhat relaxed manner of operation, which harks back to how branch lines were in the 1950 and early '60s. It is without doubt the best way to see the River Severn. The Railway Company also has some lovely old stock, both carriages and wagons and a good variety of locomotives. What's more Bridgnorth is a great place to stay and without aircraft flying over the area it's also very quiet. I can't wait to go there again!

David Gardner

Chippenham, Wilts - July 2002

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE RAILWAYS OF NEW ZEALAND

Alan Morris

In January 2002, I was able to visit New Zealand for the first and probably the only time in my life. I had five aims in view, firstly, to see the country, secondly, tour both North and South Islands and observe the flora and fauna, thirdly to meet three cousins of mine for the first time, and, fourthly, to escape the British winter for a month. And oh! I nearly forgot - to observe the railways as and when I could.

My wife and I booked a 15 day 'ultimate' New Zealand tour which included coach, train and boat travel. It seemed to offer the right balance between my aims, and I was really looking forward to it, even if it was a lot to pack into the three weeks we had in the country.

New Zealand has a land area roughly similar to that of the UK, but currently has a population of only 3.8 million people (+48 million sheep!), so there is plenty of space between larger centres of population. When the railways were built mainly in the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, the population was nearer one million, so there was neither the need nor the funding to build other than a mainly single track railway, with passing loops, which remains the case over much of the system still operating today. The gauge adopted was the unusual one of 3' 6", presumably because it cost less than standard gauge, and there are many tight curves, grade crossings and other economy measures. In addition there were a lot of rivers needing substantial bridges to cope with the raging torrents which occur when the snow melts on the mountains in Spring, and also, but not least, several mountain ranges to be crossed.

The most difficult mountain crossing was in the Hutt Valley, north of Wellington, where, until 1955 trains on the Napier to Wellington line were lifted over the Rimutaka summit which had an average 1 in 15 gradient on its Eastern side, and a mere 1 in 35 on the West. The method of train working adopted was that of John Barraclough Fell, an Englishman, who had patented a system in 1863, whereby locomotives were designed with two engines, the normal adhesion engine and an inside engine, driving horizontal gripping wheels pressed against a raised double faced centre rail by substantial springs. To minimise drawbar strain, up to five of the Fell 0-4-2T's were spaced throughout the train, a procedure that involved every South bound train being remarshalled for the climb, and again at the summit where the Fell locos were removed. North bound trains had Fell brake vans added, fitted with hand operated brakes which gripped the centre rail. Brake shoes often lasted only one trip! The expense of working the line can be gauged from the fact that for a trainload of 260 tons, 5 drivers, 5 firemen, a train guard, 4 brake van guards and, no doubt, sundry other staff were needed. The time taken for the passage of one train can be imagined.

The Rimutaka incline was officially closed on 3rd November 1955, being replaced by a 14 mile deviation

which included a tunnel over 5 miles long but with a ruling gradient of only 1 in 70. Only one of the Fell locomotives has been preserved, at Featherston, and this is believed to be the only extant Fell locomotive in the world.

Railway spirals are not only found in the Canadian Rockies, Tehachapi in California, the Simplon tunnel between Switzerland and Italy, the Ffestiniog Railway at Dduallt but also in New Zealand, on the main Wellington to Auckland trunk route where the descent from the Waimarino plateau northwards towards the valley of the Wanganui river had to drop 700 feet in only 4 miles. This was achieved by the Raurima spiral, which comprises 3 horseshoe curves, a tunnel and a complete circle, with the maximum gradient of 1 in 50.

In North Island the only long distance passenger trains still operating are from Auckland to Wellington (685 kms) one each way in daylight ('The Overlander') and night sleeper trains on the same route ('The Northerner'). There are also some electrified commuter services out of Wellington on both the Hutt valley and on the main line towards Palmerston North. In Auckland the original main station on the outskirts of the City seems to have become a backpackers hostel being replaced by a newer station nearby. Apart from the long distance trains just mentioned there is a limited commuter and local service operated by some fairly ancient 2 car DMU's. Auckland now has a population of about 1.3 million so has traffic congestion problems at rush hours. The City authorities have decided to build a new station right in the city centre near the famous harbour front, and work on this and its approaches via a sharp bend from near the present station is underway. Whether this is part of a more ambitious scheme for new improved and extended commuter services I did not find out.

Until October 2001 there were three more passenger services, all daily return trains, from Tauranga to Auckland ('The Kaimai Express'), from Auckland to Rotorua ('The Geyserland'). Both these DMU operated trains were withdrawn as unprofitable, as was the locomotive hauled daily return Wellington - Napier service ('The Bay Express').

In South Island there were only three regular passenger services, Christchurch - Picton - Christchurch ('The Coastal Pacific'), Christchurch - Greymouth - Christchurch ('The TranzAlpine'), and Christchurch - Invercargill, both ways ('The Southerner'). I said there were three as there are now only two, The Southerner being withdrawn on February 10th 2002. Of this, more anon.

The NZ railways (Tranz Rail) were state owned until 1993 when they were sold to Wisconsin Central, then headed by Ed Burkhardt. With the sale of Wisconsin Central to Canadian National the New Zealand Railways were again sold, this time to the Australian West Coast



Above: Two N.Z. co-co diesels backing on to the 'Trans Alpine Express' at Christchurch 05.02.02.

One in old Tranz Rail blue, one in Wisconsin era 'Fruit Salad' livery

Railway, which is 50% owned by the Anglo-French Connex Company. The West Coast Railway have now sold the remaining passenger services to a company called Tranz Scenic and the Auckland commuter services back to the state. Complicated isn't it, just like railways in the UK only different. Locomotives are currently running in 3 liveries, Original Tranz Rail blue, something like Wisconsin Central red, (which enthusiasts call the fruit salad livery), and West Coast Railway livery of black with yellow ends, (enthusiast speak - bumble bee livery). Diesel locomotives seem to mainly be built by or based on designs by American General Electric. There are some Japanese 1966 built Bo-Bo-Bo's used on the tourist Tieri Gorge Railway, and some electric Bo-Bo-Bo's used on the electrified part of the main trunk route from Wellington northwards.

So what were my railway experiences in NZ? Before setting off on our 15 day tour, we had a three day coach trip to the Bay of Islands. There have been no passenger services north of Auckland since the late 1960's, but at least the railway is still used for freight as far north as Whangarei and perhaps beyond. However a few miles north of there, at a grade crossing, I noticed the New Zealand bush re-establishing itself on the track. There was a preserved steam railway further north at Opua, but this has not operated for the last year or so due to lack of funds. During this short trip I only saw one train, taking timber to a sawmill, but as the excellent main road was frequently near to the railway, it was obvious that the working railway was well maintained.

Back in Auckland, we paid a visit to the Skytower (telecommunications tower with a public viewing area – said to be the tallest building the Southern hemisphere), from which the railway was visible, including a building adjacent to the line marked Auckland Steam Centre. Unfortunately, I did not have time for a visit.

We set off on our 15 day tour which initially was through an almost rail free zone until on day three we reached Tauranga which is a sizeable coastal town. The port there appeared to generate quite a substantial

amount of container traffic by rail. There was a diesel loco depot and plenty of train movements in the docks area. We travelled on to Rotorua where the terminus was a sorry sight, with rusty rails and a sign indicating that it was available for lease. I do not know if the whole branch from Morrinsville was closed with the cessation of the daily passenger train, or whether there is some freight on at least part of the branch.



Above: Preserved water tower at Tuatapere, South Island N.Z. The railway closed about 30 years ago but the tower has been well maintained. The railway used to be just the other side of the hedge.

Day 5 and we travelled on to the city of Napier, which was rebuilt in the 1930's in the then fashionable 'Art Deco' style following an earthquake. Napier has rail connected docks with some signs of activity. It was from here that, according to our original itinerary, we should have boarded the Bay Express for our 5 hour journey to Wellington. We were about three months too late, so continued in the coach, which was built on a 1985 Leyland Tiger chassis. Our driver thought it was 'better than these modern Volvos'. The only good thing about this part of the journey was that the main road (Route 2) and the railway ran side by side for much of the way, though trains on a Saturday afternoon seemed to be non existent. So we duly arrived in Wellington, capital city of New Zealand, which is built on an active earthquake zone. It is a very hilly city with many houses built on steep volcanic slopes, some of which have their own mini-funicular railways to get to their front doors! The next day we went up on Wellington's cable car (100 years old during February 2002) from the city centre to Kelburn near the botanical gardens. After touring the city and visiting 'Te Anau', the magnificent national museum of New Zealand, we went to the docks to board the ferry across the Cook Strait to Picton in South Island. The ferry is operated as a link between the railway systems of North and South Islands, and carries trains in transit on a dedicated railway deck. Although it was Sunday afternoon, quite a lot of wagons were loaded on board by a small centre cab diesel shunter, bringing back memories of Dover Marine. Wellington obviously has a quite a busy railway, as apart from some EMU's on suburban services, two double headed freights left the docks area within a few minutes, heading north.

After a enjoyable ferry crossing in fine weather during which we had a school of dolphins swimming and leaping near the ship, we arrived at Picton which has a station near the ferry terminal. Though there a number of ferries during a day only one has a train connection. This train, 'The Coastal Pacific', leaves at 1.40pm for Christchurch.

Anyone arriving at another time of the day without personal transport has to continue their journey by other means. We stayed overnight in Blenheim, only about 30 minutes from Picton. On day 7 we spent the morning in and around Blenheim, where, amongst other things, we visited an open air museum of rural life, which had a superb 5" and 7 1/2" gauge track for local model engineers to demonstrate their handiwork as well as the Blenheim Riverside Railway, a 2' gauge tourist line which offers 40 minute trips along the Taylor river. The trouble was the museum is open at weekends and the Riverside Railway on the first and



Above: Blenheim Station at the northern end of South Island sees 2 passenger trains per day. The 'Coastal Pacific' from Christchurch – Picton and return 04.02.02

Most of those waiting are using coach rather than the train.

third Sundays of each month, and I was there on a Monday! By 2pm we were at Blenheim station awaiting the 2.10pm to Christchurch (the 1.40 from Picton-see above) which arrived headed by a single Co-Co diesel and comprised 4 coaches and a luggage van. New Zealand Railways, when Government owned, had built up a network of coach routes complementing the rail network, mainly connecting with towns without a railway service. At privatisation the coach network was sold off and now competes with rail. While we waited for the train two coaches stopped at the station, one which was on its way to Christchurch in direct competition with the train. A lot of those waiting on the station boarded the coach. The line to Christchurch follows the East Coast and has good sea views on one side and on part of the journey, the Kaikoura mountains on the other. This line is the North - South trunk route so it was disappointing to see only one freight train going in the opposite direction during an almost 5 hour journey. We did see, briefly, a little of the preserved Weka Pass Railway which branches off the main line at Waipara, and which had a steam train in an adjacent platform as we passed through.

Day eight was another 'rail day' and we were at Christchurch station by 8am to find it a hive of activity.

The first train, the northwards bound 'Coastal Pacific' to Picton had already departed at 7.30am, whilst the 'Southerner' to Invercargill due off at 8.15 was at the platform. It consisted of only two coaches and a luggage van hauled by one of the usual Co-Co diesels, but was well filled. The station at Christchurch was a fairly new structure having only one platform which had replaced the original building nearer the city centre. After the departure of the 'Southerner', the stock for the 'TranzAlpine' arrived, this time with eight coaches, a luggage van and in the centre an observation car. Two diesels in contrasting liveries were coupled on. This train is aimed solely at the tourist market and appeared to be absolutely full. We departed on time at 9.00am in pouring rain and after some quite fast running across the Canterbury plains began to climb into the mountains of the Southern Alps, crossing massive viaducts, through spectacular gorges and river valleys until we stopped at Arthur's Pass. By now the weather had become fine and sunny and many of the tourists departed to their motor transport. It was a surprise to be half way round the world and suddenly be greeted by a friend from Chesham who was leaving the train. This cross-Alpine line carries coal trains west to east from one of New Zealand's few coal mines near Greymouth and two were seen at passing loops on the way. The latter part of the journey was delayed by many 'slows' across bridges etc., and we were about 45 minutes late arriving at Greymouth. Then it was back to motor transport for the next few days, as there are very few railways on the West coast of South Island, and never have been. There is however one branch line that goes south from Greymouth and runs near the coast and close to the road. Once it went to a small town called Ross, but now only goes to Hokitika but it does serve some industrial sites and is said to operate a few freights each week. An interesting feature of this line is a combined single width rail and road bridge. When we passed over it there was no road traffic coming the other way and unfortunately no train, but I expect it would be interesting to be there when a train is crossing as there are no signals or traffic lights. Do they have someone with a red flag?

On our way to the pleasant resort of Queenstown on Lake Wakatipu we stopped at the preserved gold mining village of Arrowtown where there was, surprise, surprise, an immaculate ex-LT 'Routemaster' bus (RM1660) used for local tours. There are no railways at Queenstown, but there is a steamship 'Earnslaw', which plies the lake daily.

This ship has twin boilers, coal fired by hand, and a triple expansion engine. Built in 1912 in New Zealand, it was brought to the lake in pieces by rail to Kingston at the Southern end of the lake. 'The Kingston Flyer' still operates between the village of Kingston and Fairlight, a hamlet about 8 kms away. At one time it ran to Lumsden 40 kms away but this was too costly and the Fairlight – Lumsden section was abandoned years ago. For a railway preservation scheme this line was unusual in that it was operated by NZ rail, which has

now been privatised. While we were in NZ the future of the line was very doubtful, but before we left, it was reported that two Australian business men had bought the line and it will continue to run. There are three steam locomotives on the line, two of them Class Ab Pacifics, built in the mid-1920's, which look in very good condition, and an American built 2-4-2 tender loco (Rogers of New Jersey?) which was in good external condition and kept under cover. We travelled the line in some delightful wooden compartment coaches with end balconies and side corridors protected on the outside only by a handrail and wire mesh! At the Fairlight end of the line the loco swapped ends by means of a 'Y', the first time I have ever seen this normally North American practice. I took a lot of photos., but later discovered that I had not latched the film in properly so finished up with zero.

We left our coach tour on day 13, February 10th in Invercargill to visit my three cousins who lived locally. The 'Southerner' train which has linked Invercargill and Christchurch daily for much of the last Century was withdrawn on that day, but as my hotel was close to the station I was able to see it off. It was a low key affair. It consisted of two coaches and one luggage van hauled by a grubby Co-Co diesel. It was fully booked with 154 passengers, and when I made enquiries as to why more coaches had not been provided I was told that none were available due to them being required on the 'TranzAlpine' (see above) from Christchurch from where two cruise liners had docked.

There were about 20 enthusiasts present for the departure including a gent in full Scottish regalia playing a lament on his bagpipes! The freight yard at Invercargill was quite busy with container traffic, most of which was associated with the port of Bluff about 20 kms further south. The most annoying thing about the withdrawal of the 'Southerner' was that we had intended travelling back to Christchurch on it on February 12th, and so missed it by two days. We travelled by Air New Zealand instead. The one consolation of this was that we had some time in Christchurch to see the vintage trams which travel round the City centre. Next morning (at 4.30am!) we set off for home.



Above: Vintage trams in daily use in Christchurch N.Z. 12.02.02



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Right

Society Chairman Gordon Rippington presenting Ted Martin with a cheque from the MDRS on the occasion of our visit to his garden railway at Thame. 17/8/2002

Tim Edmonds



CUMBRES & TOLTEC NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

by Mike Hyde

A recent visit (Oct 2002) to this wondrous of narrow gauge railways left me feeling a little concerned about its operation and its future. True it was the end of the season with a week to go and perhaps everyone was tired but I sensed something else. Bob Wright, the solid reliable chief engineer, was nowhere to be seen. No black Stetson in conversation with the crew or on the frame doing a spot of last minute greasing. It appears he has left but I obtained no explanation. Two locos only in operation, one from either end of the line. One in reserve but really very poorly in the shed. End of the season blues perhaps but forest fires in the neighbourhood had caused loss of trade and compulsory trackbed works including substantial rock removal work had added to the operational bill.

From reading the CRM newsletter, listening to local conversations and onboard broadcasts, it appears that shortly before their planned May opening day, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) had required that 2 sections of the trackbed near the halfway point at Osier, be attended to before trains ran. At one point, the rock had to be blasted away to move a new trackbed well back from the then drop to the river below. Thus a continuous service was unattainable with trains running only to Los Pinos from Chama.

Once again, just as the service from Antonito was to resume, all activity was shut down due to the risk of forest fires. It has been a very dry summer in Colorado with serious fires in many places including near the Durango to Silverton line where services were also curtailed for weeks affecting both railroad and local business adversely. A fire started by a train in 18 June caused a helicopter to be used to drop water on the fire to extinguish it. Thereafter for nearly a month, steam trains only ran to Hermosa with diesel along part of the High Line from Rockwood.

Inspite of a major fund raising campaign by the Friends of the C&TSRR, lack of ticket income seriously affected the financial position of the railroad and, in turn, their ability to undertake locomotive overhaul work. Locos Nos 463 and 497 will pass out of service the end of this year whilst 487 has only one year on its boiler. 484 should be out shopped soon but only with the help of the Friends and private donations was the wages bill met. Proposals for operation in 2003 are being invited.

To avoid or even combat lineside fires, a water tank is available on each train and fire-fighters on maintenance of way trolleys follow each service. In addition the railroad have acquired a 1,000 gallon fire truck surplus to Army requirements and staff have been given appropriate training in fire fighting. It seems that things get tougher when you are down but it is to be hoped that with the full support of members, friends and the community, this magnificent institution will survive the latest hurdles in the true pioneering spirit and come out stronger. But just in case matters do not improve significantly, get your name down for a visit very soon!

Mike Hyde OCT 2002

WINTERS PAST - 1977/8 AND 1987

Compiled by Tim Edmonds

25 Years Ago

First locomotive on the Canterbury & Whitstable Railway, Stephenson's 0-4-0 'Invicta' of 1830, which had been an outdoor exhibit for many years, was taken in mid-December to the National Railway Museum store at York for restoration.

On December 16, Her Majesty the Queen formally opened a 12-mile extension of the London Transport Piccadilly Line from Hatton Cross to Heathrow Central. The extension was opened to the public at 15.00, from when the A1 bus service from Hounslow West station was withdrawn.

The Merseyrail electrification of the Liverpool Central - Garston line was opened on 3 January, with reopened stations at St Michaels, Aigburth, Cressington and Garston.

Class 50 diesel electric locomotive 50035 was named 'Ark Royal' after the aircraft carrier of the same name, the ceremony being carried out by the ship's captain at Plymouth station on 17 January. This was the first of the class to receive a name.

On 6 February full electrified outer suburban services were introduced on the Great Northern lines out of Kings Cross. The electrification was only as far as Royston, which meant the withdrawal of through trains between Kings Cross and Cambridge and the operation instead of a DMU shuttle from Royston. This meant the end of the popular semi-fast 'Cambridge Buffet Expresses', the final working being the 19.30 from Kings Cross.



Above

The booking hall at Heathrow Central station, Piccadilly Line, shortly after it opened to the public, 16 December 1977.



Above

Plaque commemorating the opening of the Piccadilly Line's Heathrow Extension by The Queen on 16 December 1977. (picture taken 16 November 1991)



Left

On the penultimate day of through diesel services, a DMU awaits departure for Cambridge from the suburban platforms at Kings Cross, 4 February 1978.

15 Years Ago

'Santa Specials' operated between Marylebone and High Wycombe during December, with the locos including 4498 'Sir Nigel Gresley', 35028 'Clan Line' and 5305 'Alderman A.E. Draper'. All were paired with 'Ethel' carriage heating units.

On 7 December full Radio Electronic Token Block signalling went into operation over the 42 miles of the West Highland Extension line between Fort William and Mallaig.

The first 5-car set of class 442 'Wessex Electrics' was formally handed over to Chris Green, Director of Network SouthEast, at Derby on 18 December. Third rails on the 32 miles between Bournemouth and Weymouth were ceremonially switched on at Wareham station on 11 January, in preparation for testing the class.

A landslide at Mallerstang on 5 January left a section of the Settle & Carlisle line unsupported at an embankment between Aisgill viaduct and the site of Mallerstang signal box. Fortunately this was discovered by an inspection before the arrival of the 06.30 train from Carlisle to Leeds. By 11 January the embankment had been completely rebuilt and normal line working with DMUs could resume, with locos allowed to pass by 13 January.

Commuters arriving at Winnersh station at 08.00 on 15 February were offered hot sausages and a glass of Bucks Fizz, to celebrate the opening of new station buildings there by John Redwood (MP for Wokingham). Station improvements also included lengthening the down platforms to accommodate eight-coach trains.



35028 "Clan Line" and an ETHEL unit passing the new platforms at Sudbury Hill station with the afternoon Marylebone - High Wycombe "Santa's Steam Special", 5 December 1987.

5305 "Alderman A.E. Draper" and an ETHEL unit approaching Sudbury & Harrow Road station with the returning morning "Santa's Steam Special" from High Wycombe to Marylebone, 18 December 1987.

