

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

103

March 2003



Contents:

Cambrian Radio Cruise

Return to Sorrento

Vietnam Voyage

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

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS.

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

B1 61041 at Maidenhead in 1959. Ken Lawrie

Latest Copy Date for next issue of The Marlow Donkey 1st May 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 17 April	DIESELS AT WORK IN CORNWALL	Nigel Spate
Thursday 15 May	RE-APPRAISAL OF WEBB	Martin Bloxsom
Thursday 19 June	40 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHY	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

Sunday 20 July	Dean Forest Railway	Coach
September	Welsh Highland Railway	Car

Please: NO TALKING DURING PRESENTATIONS

Please note: The above programme is subject to change

*4921 on the Down Main about to enter
Sonning cutting in the early 50's
Ken Lawrie*



WOLVERHAMPTON - A TASTE OF THE CONTINENT

A visit to Birmingham at the end of August gave me the opportunity to sample the Midland Metro, the first section of which was opened from Snow Hill station to Wolverhampton St George's in May 1999. The last time that I had travelled by rail from Snow Hill to Wolverhampton was in 1970, when I took the 'bubble car' from the semi-derelict remains of the old Snow Hill along the rump of the GWR main line to Wolverhampton Low Level. The new tram route uses the old railway alignment for much of its length, until at Priestfield it diverges into a spectacular section of street-running along the A41, only part of which is on reserved track. The system is electrified at 750v DC from overhead wires, and is worked by a fleet of 16 articulated trams built by Firema in Italy and maintained at Wednesbury depot.



At the end of the street section, Midland Metro car 03 is about to swing across the A41 Bilston Road towards Priestfield station with a Snow Hill service.

Note the road markings and sign, 27 August 2002.

Fares are collected by conductors, and to explore the system I bought a Metro/Bus Day Ticket, which gave me unlimited travel on the trams and local buses for only £3.50. In the event I didn't use a bus, but after a run through from Snow Hill to St George's I returned in stages (there was a tram every 8 minutes) hopping off and on at various of the 23 stations to take photos and explore. I was impressed by the ride of the trams, by their acceleration (0 - 50 kph in 10 seconds) and by their cleanliness. The stations and track were little vandalised and generally clean and tidy - doubtless helped by the 24-hour security cover given by British Transport Police. The ride is an interesting one, with scenery varying from inner city and industrial

wasteland to attractive greenery, both wild and landscaped. In particular the cuttings through the West Bromwich area seem almost rural, and for some sections there is a footpath alongside. Undoubtedly the most impressive part of the journey, both from the tram and from the lineside, is the street section at Wolverhampton. This has given a distinctly continental flavour to this part of the West Midlands, and has certainly changed some driving habits along the Bilston Road!
Tim Edmonds



On the attractive section in West Bromwich, where the track uses the route of the former GWR main line, Midland Metro car 10 calls at Dartmouth Street station with a service to Snow Hill, 27 August 2002.

HANSON'S NEW SWITCHER

Mike Walker

As reported in the September 2002 issue of the Railway Magazine, quarry operator Hanson Aggregates (formerly ARC) have acquired an EMD SW1001 switcher for use at their Whatley Quarry in Somerset. This unit is similar to the one purchased new by Foster Yeoman in 1983 but has been acquired second hand through US locomotive dealer and rebuilder National Railway Equipment (NRE) of Dixmoor, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. The RM reports that the unit was the former Inland Steel no. 120. This is incorrect, for a start, Inland Steel 120 was a larger SW1500 and it is currently active with Chicago commuter operator METRA in track maintenance work as their no. 6.

The true identity of the Hanson unit is much more interesting. It was built as a model SW1001 by EMD in April 1972, carrying builder number 37903 and order number 712086. This latter number gives us a clue, it's in the EMD export series. The loco was one of 5 built for the Boke Power Project in Guinea, West Africa along with some SD40-2's and export G22W's. Boke's railway was laid in connection with the construction of a dam and power generation scheme. EMD 37903 carried Boke number 204.

In late 1982 Boke 204 was involved in a serious wreck and badly damaged. It was returned to the US to dealer and rebuilder Peaker Services of Brighton, Michigan for repair. Peaker decided not to repair the unit but instead supplied a second 204, another SW1001 that had been built by EMD in 10/68 (b/n 34263 o/n 4550-2) as Ford Motor Co. 10015 for use at the Dearborn plant near Detroit. EMD 37903 meantime languished at Peaker's who eventually went out of business and their assets eventually passed to NRE.

I wonder if Hanson know the "new" loco has been sitting in a scrap line for nearly twenty years?

RAILTOURS

I found these on The Watercress Line web site. They are such interesting railtours with an interesting combination of motive power, from past experience the prices are usually reasonable though they are not published for these tours.

Saturday 23rd August -

"The Weymouth Boat Train"

Experience 'double headed' steam to Weymouth, with banking out of Weymouth on the return, together with a cruise on a steam ship.

Pick-ups and set downs at Alton, Aldershot and Woking. Route from Woking via Basingstoke, Southampton, Bournemouth and Weymouth. Optional cruise along the Dorset coast on SS.Shieldhall during the layover (numbers will be limited). Return via the same route.

Locos - 73096/34016 double heading

Saturday 13th September - Alton to Worcester

Participate in a loco swap at Worcester with the SVR.

Route from Alton via Aldershot, Guildford, Reading, Oxford, Moreton in Marsh to Worcester. Return via Cheltenham, Stroud, Swindon, Reading to Alton.

Locos - 73096 to Worcester, 60009 from Worcester.

Sunday 5th October -

"The Daylight Countryman"

Enjoy another Sunday roast lunch on the mainline.

Route from Alton via Farnham, Guildford, Reading, Basingstoke, Eastleigh, Fareham, Havant, Guildford and back to Alton.

Loco - 60009.

Saturday 25th October - Alton to Worcester

Time to reverse the loco swap at Worcester with the SVR.

Outward route from Alton via Aldershot, Guildford, Reading, Swindon, Stroud, Cheltenham to Worcester. Return via Moreton on Marsh, Oxford to Reading, Guildford and Alton.

Locos - 60009 to Worcester, 73096 from Worcester.

The Watercress Line, The Railway Station, Alresford, Hampshire, England, SO24 9JG

Tel No: 01962 733810 Fax No: 01962 735448 e-mail: reservations@watercressline.co.uk

To the Editor

I was pleased to read in the December 'Donkey' that our redoubtable Chairman had gone to the trouble of organising a coach trip in search of Santa Steam.

Reading between the lines it seems that one of the members propensity for visiting every available toilet probably caused the timetable to get so far behind that you all mistook the foghorn on the I.O.W. ferry for another sort of 'steamer'.

No chance of catching up after that!

Maybe a coach with attached 'mod-cons' will help to maintain schedule next time, although it looks as if the driver did a damn fine job in getting to all points of the compass without exceeding his time allowance, or getting caught for speeding.

Thanks for confirming that in this day of political correctness we can still have a chuckle at our chosen pastime.

Yours faithfully

Ken Laurie 'Newcomer'

A VISIT TO BLIST HILL MUSEUM, IRONBRIDGE.

For those, like me, past sunning themselves lazily on the shores of the Mediterranean, there are many other compensations in Britain for holidays. One such is the Ironbridge Gorge near Telford. Home, not only of the world famous Iron bridge but also a cluster of museums scattered around the area.

Britain had to wait for the Napoleonic Wars which sent the price of hay rocketing up, thereby giving a chance opening in the economy for steam to take off.

Unfortunately the engine was not steamed on the day of my visit but regular steamings do take place.

Other interesting exhibits are the giant steam blowing machines used in conjunction with the Works on the site producing still, on occasions, the only wrought iron in Britain. Remains of the nearby Blast furnaces for iron production lie close by.

Nearby a partially repaired Severn Trow lies in a shed awaiting further work. These boats provided transport for various materials on the river Severn which of course passes through Ironbridge.

Recent research on how the Iron Bridge itself was constructed, resulting in a half scale part reproduction

of the bridge arch being erected over the canal on site. This was the subject of a recent TV programme.

Staff are dressed in period style and there is plenty to interest both sexes on site. After finishing the tour, if you have enough 'steam' left, the preserved Horsehay Railway is close at hand. Run by a handful of volunteers it is comparatively unknown outside the area.

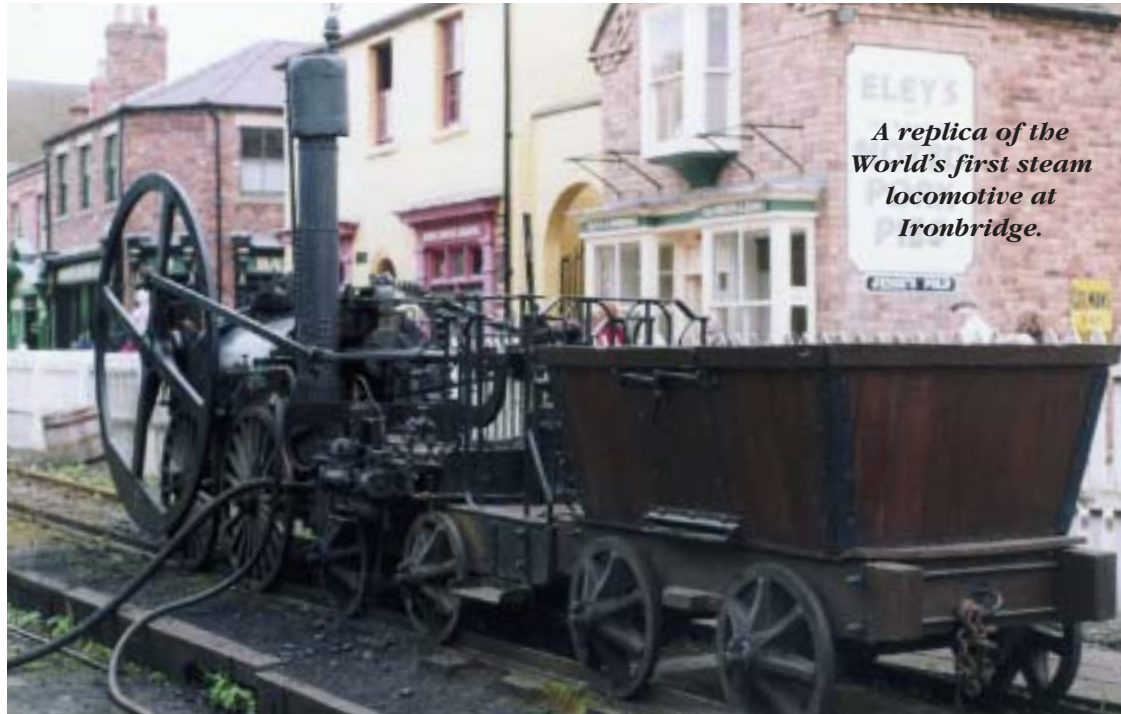
Edgar Lewcock.

From an engineer's point of view the most interesting is Blist Hill, where a small Victorian type village has been created. It houses a range of exhibits linking it back to the earliest days of iron production in the area.

After passing through the modern entrance, the first building encountered is a Bank where old time money can be obtained in exchange for the current coinage of the realm. A number of shops on site sell various items in both old and new currency. In passing, I personally picked up a brand new coal shovel of a type now unobtainable in most places but very useful for collecting bits and pieces around the garden and patio.

A short way along the street on the left hand side there is a short plateway layout complete with point, wagons and a reproduction of the world's oldest steam locomotive dating from 1803/4. One was built for Coalbrookdale and a second, similar but I believe not identical, for South Wales where it won a wager for £500 which guaranteed its memory for posterity as the PEN - Y - DARREN locomotives.

The construction of the plateway can be clearly seen from the photograph although the original rails could not stand the loco weight and broke up rapidly when steam came along.



INTERNET CORNER

Would you like to see what the governments transport plans for this region are? Even though published in 2001 they still make interesting reading, even if it is just to see how things are progressing!

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/trans2010/factsheets/se/index.htm>

It will be interesting to see what comes to fruition. The SRA has already scuppered some of these plans. Maybe the Donkey editor in 2010 will do a review!

Transport 2010, the 10 Year Plan for the South East, includes: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex.

Quote from website: 'If the South East's prosperity is to continue to bring benefits to the region and the country as a whole, significant improvements are urgently needed to the road and rail infrastructure.'

Some highlights from Transport 2010 are:

- Transport 2010 will deliver a £180 billion funding package, both public and private money, over the next ten years.
- All regions will benefit from Transport 2010 through UK rail spending and the Highway's Agency trunk road network in England. £59 billion will also be allocated to local transport investment outside London through local authorities.
- The plan does not contain a regional funding allocation. Individual regional projects will be determined by bodies such as the Highways Agency and the Strategic Rail Authority and on the Local Transport Plan settlement later this year.
- Each region will get a substantial slice of the £180 billion.

Benefits across regions, including London, will include:

- Widening of 360 miles (576 km) of trunk roads and motorways;
- 100 bypasses (30 national and 70 in local plans);
- Modern bus services, and up to 25 tram and light rail systems;
- Upgraded and expanded rail network with 50 % more passengers and 80% more rail freight;
- Increased priority for walking and cycling in five year LTPs;

Benefits in the South East (Excluding London) from Transport 2010

Road Based Studies

Government Offices and the Highways Agency are working on the following road based and other studies:

- The Handy Cross junction of the M40 at High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire
- A404 Handy Cross Improvements - Carriageway Widened
- A404(M) - Additional Safety Fences
- M4 Junctions 8 & 9 Improvements - Signals Modified and Carriageway Widened

Multi-Modal Studies

Options they are studying include:

- Targeted motorway widening and other improvements, including the M25 and M4;
- Junction and signalling improvements at the Handy Cross junction of the M40;
- Opportunities for improving rail services into London;
- Electrification and dualling of the Hastings to Ashford line (providing

potential links to Europe and north London via CTRL);

- Improved rail services along the South coast from Southampton to Folkestone including links to Ashford and East Kent;
- New Ore-Bexhill 'metro' service, including a new station at Glyne Gap in East Sussex;
- Alternatives for freight traffic;
- Short sea shipping and other modes for both passenger and freight services.

Rail

- Completion of CTRL to St Pancras, opening up fast travel from London and Kent to Paris.
- Completion of Thameslink 2000. We have asked the shadow Strategic Rail Authority to explore possible new system linking rail networks north and south of London.
- A new East-West rail link through London, such as Cross Rail.
- Improved East-West rail links from Oxford to Ipswich.
- West Coast Main Line capacity improvements.
- Improved rail access to Heathrow, including the Airtrack proposals.
- Increased rail capacity from Paddington to Reading, including enhancement of Reading Station and surrounding interchange area.
- Reducing overcrowding on rail commuter services into London.
- Capacity enhancement on the Chiltern Line.

Light Rail

Transport 2010 includes billions of pounds of public and private investment for light rail schemes. This could allow a new light rapid transit system in South Hampshire, linking Fareham to Gosport and Portsmouth, subject to the normal requirements for value for money appraisal and planning powers and satisfactory funding arrangements being agreed with the authorities.

<http://www.bants.gov.uk/lrt/>

<http://www.bekonscot.com>

What about visiting this good local web site, if you have not been to the actual village you may well be encouraged to visit the real thing after visiting their web site.

Bekonscot now claims to be the oldest model village in the world (opened 1929). They also now have a 7.25" gauge ride on line and some 2' gauge wagons dicovered during its construction.

Do you use a stopwatch to record train

performance? That is now out-dated technology the modern way to record performance is by using GPS, to find out more visit:

www.watercressline.co.uk/rtlist.htm and click on the [75mph](#) just below the brilliant photo of Canadian Pacific passing through Farnborough at speed, the best panned shot I've seen in years.

A DAY ON THE 'CAMBRIAN RADIO CRUISE'

Ken Lawrie

A holiday at Llandudno, North Wales, in July 1957 provided the opportunity for me to travel on one of British Railways 'value for money' rail tours in that area, the 'Cambrian Radio Cruise'. This tour is so named because a commentary on passing places of interest is given over a loudspeaker system throughout the train.

As the train started at Rhyl, I had to take a connecting train from Llandudno via Llandudno Junction, this being one area to be worked by diesel multiple units. Entering Rhyl station we passed the locomotive depot (6K), which was to the north of the main line, adjacent to the station. Engines seen here included those of a variety of designers:- Hughes 2-6-0 No. 42888, Fowler 0-6-0s Nos. 43378/96 and 4-4-0 No. 40420, Aspinall 0-6-0s 52162/72, Ivatt 2-6-0 No. 46423, and Stanier 2-6-0 No. 42976. In addition Standards Nos. 73093 and 80053 were on shed.

At Rhyl I boarded the 'Cambrian Radio Cruise' consisting of about seven coaches, completely cleared of all floor fittings, with comfortable separate armchairs facing out of the unusually long windows. A buffet car was also provided. Hauled by Standard class '4' No. 75033, we crossed the estuary of the River Clwyd, later passing the castle at Rhuddlan. This is at the entrance of the wide Vale of Clwyd, which lies south-east from Rhyl to Ruthin. The railway line followed this valley for the whole of its length and many beautiful views



were to be seen by the traveller on this train. I mention this because only a very few passenger trains, mainly special excursions, used this goods-only line from Rhyl to Denbigh, where the line from Chester to Ruthin via Mold joins it. Normal passenger trains were also non-existent over this stretch of line from Ruthin to Corwen, so that patrons of these special trains were privileged to see the countryside denied to other railway travellers. As we passed through Denbigh 0-6-0 No. 52356 was noted standing in the station, in a very grimy condition, typical of the majority of engines seen in that part of the country. 2-6-2 tank No. 80052 was seen later as we trundled through Ruthin, and a little further south 2-6-0 No. 46448 passed us as we waited at Gwyddelwern, a one hut unmanned passing loop on this

goods-only line.

At Corwen the line joined that from Ruabon to Barmouth on Western Region territory, and followed the River Dee along the valley of Edeirnion to Bala Junction, where ex-GWR Mogul No. 7310 was seen. Here the 'Cambrian Radio Cruise' took the line to the south of beautiful Bala Lake, and the line to Blaneau Ffestiniog branched right to the north of Bala Lake. Part of the continuation of the narrow gauge line from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Portmadoc was being run by the fledgling Ffestiniog Preservation Society. There is also another station at Blaenau (Midland Region once again) where one can board a sightseeing (B.R.) diesel

multiple unit set, shuttling from there to Llandudno Junction. These particular trains seemed well patronised from my observations.

Returning to the subject of this article, Bala Lake $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and $\frac{3}{4}$ miles wide was to be seen on the right as we continued to Dolgelley, passing the cliffs

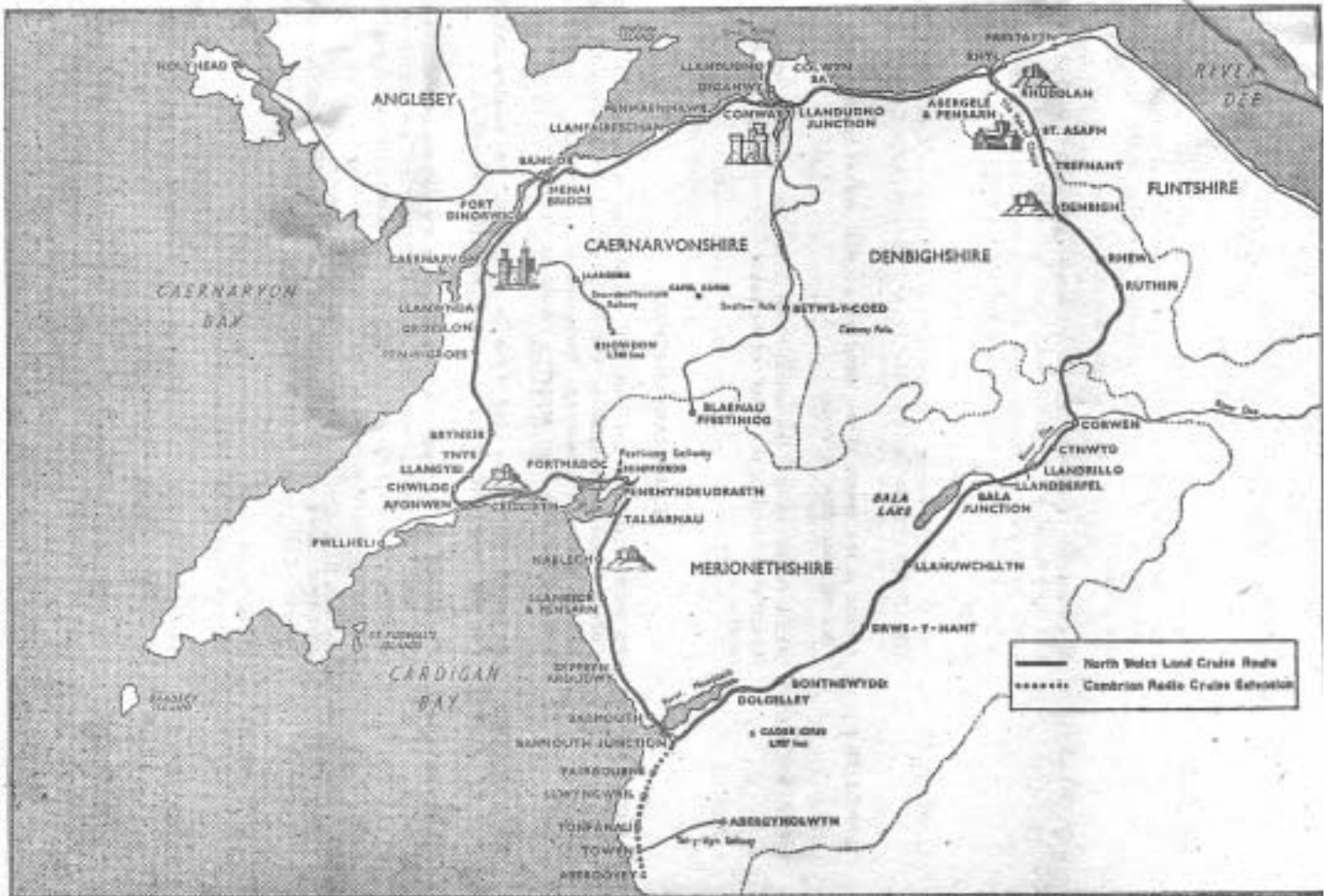


Left

75033 preparing to take out the 'Cambrian Radio Cruise' from Rhyl.

11 July 1957

ROUTE OF THE CAMBRIAN RADIO AND NORTH WALES LAND CRUISES



of Cader Idris (2927') on the left. Once again the line followed a river estuary from Dolgellau alongside the River Mawddach to Barmouth Junction. At Barmouth Junction the train was pulled past the points on the junction with the line to Aberdovey and 75033 was uncoupled and ran round the train. The train was then hauled backwards to Aberdovey, passing through Towyn, home of the Tal-y-llyn Railway, abandoned by its former owners and now run by enthusiasts. Aberdovey was the halfway mark on this excursion and our train stopped here for about an hour for passengers to see this well-known beauty spot. Due to an almost incessant downpour, which eased off to a

heavy drizzle at its best, the majority of the people stayed aboard the train. Whilst waiting in the station our engine was transferred back to its former position at the head of the train, during which proceedings W.R. 0-6-0 No. 2239 and 2-6-2 tank No. 5556 passed through, heading for Barmouth.

Returning to Barmouth Junction, we crossed the estuary of the River Mawddach, passing 0-6-0 No. 2247 and tank No. 4555 in Barmouth Junction station. The line follows the coast from Barmouth to Afonwen, passing through Llanbedr where 0-6-0 No. 2286 was seen and Harlech renowned for its men and also its castle, still to be seen in all its glory. The main line continued to Afonwen, crossing the already mentioned line from Portmadoc to Blaenau Ffestiniog at Minffordd, the line to Pwllheli branching off to the left at Afonwen as our train turns north to Pant Glas. Once again we are on Midland Region metals from Afonwen for the rest of the journey. Views of Moel Hebog (2566'), yr Wyddfa, the central peak of Snowdon (3560'), Elidir Fawr (3029') and Moel Perfedd (2750') are to be seen on the right in that order on the



Left

46448 Just picked up the tablet from Guyddelwern Halt on the Denbigh - Rhyl line.

11 July 1957

The Finest and Most Unique Rail Tour in Britain

THE CAMBRIAN RADIO CRUISE

IMPOSING SCENERY • ARMCHAIR SEATS • CAFETERIA FACILITIES
AMPLIFIER EQUIPPED FOR DESCRIPTIVE COMMENTARY AND MUSIC

Mondays to Fridays 24th June until 13th September
except Monday 5th August

way to Caernarvon. Passing through Pen y Groes the goods-only line to Nantlle can be seen branching off to the right. Also along this stretch the trains attains its maximum height above sea level at Pant Glas (480').

Entering Caernarvon over the River Seiont excellent views of Caernarvon Castle were to be seen. Caernarvon was also the junction with yet another goods-only line in North Wales, this one to Llanberis, although the writer believes that diesel multiple units may have used the line for holiday trippers during the summer months. From Caernarvon the line ran alongside the Menai Straits, and leaving Treborth, the Menai tubular railway bridge could be seen on the left, as also could the suspension road bridge. The line from Holyhead joined the Caernarvon-Bangor line at Menai Bridge station and we had to wait for a goods train hauled by Midland Region 'Crab' 2-6-0 No. 42971 to clear the line before we could proceed.

Shortly after passing the Menai bridges, the line turned inland to Bangor, renowned I believe for its intellectual inhabitants, where another goods-only line ran to Bethesda. Bangor station lies between two hills, both of which necessitate tunnels, the first about 150 yards long, and the second about 220 yards in length. Bangor (6H) locomotive shed was adjacent to the station

between the two tunnels, our train passing through so quickly that only Nos. 41230 and 40202 were identified. On a subsequent visit the shed contained about fifteen engines including ex-Lancashire and Yorkshire 0-4-0 saddle-tank No. 51221 and 0-6-0s Nos. 52119/30/69, all of Class 27, first introduced in 1889. From Bangor to Penmaenmawr the line followed the coast, a quarry at the latter town being connected to a loading pier by a small bucket railway. Judging by a more recent visit, this quarry business is thriving tremendously.

A little further along the line, entering Llandudno Junction, the line passed the precincts of Conway Castle, and through the tubular bridge at Conway, built with portals that match the architectural style of the castle. Alongside this bridge were two road bridges; the old suspension bridge, old-time bugbear of the traffic to and from the Isle of Anglesey along the North Wales coast from Chester, and there was also a recently completed contemporary reinforced concrete eyesore, which more than coped with modern traffic problems. Changing trains at Llandudno Junction, I boarded the connecting train to Llandudno, headed by 2-6-2 tank No. 41120, completing a very interesting day out, marred only by the typically Welsh inclement weather.

PIONEER. (*Ken Lawrie*)

Fare	From	Time table
<p>20/-</p> <p>Children under 14 years 13/6</p> <p>Holiday Runabout Tickets are not available for travel by this train.</p> <p>† Passengers for Colwyn Bay and Rhyl change at Llandudno Junction on return.</p>	LLANDUDNO	depart
	DEGANWY	..
	LLANDUDNO JUNCT.	..
	COLWYN BAY	..
	RHYL	..
	TOWYN	..
	ABERDOVEY	..
	ABERDOVEY	..
	TOWYN	..
	LLANDUDNO JUNCT.	arrive
	DEGANWY	..
	LLANDUDNO	..
	COLWYN BAY	..
	RHYL	..
		am
		9. 45
		9. 50
		10. 00
		10. 10
		10. 35
		1. 45 pm
		1. 50
		3. 30
		3. 35
		6. 45
		7. 00
		7. 05
		6. 55
		7. 15

HEADING WEST

by Mike Hyde

The September 2002 edition on the M&DRS Newsletter very kindly reprinted (not at my request, I add) my article from last year – WHERE TO GET YOUR KICKS. Basically it reported on a rail journey across USA following the 'mother road', Route 66. Accomplishing the same journey this year albeit two months later in the year, I had bright clear blue skies west of Chicago every day. Amtrak, fresh from its annual federal grant, performed remarkably well. Most 24-hour journeys lost about an hour each but with slack time built into the last leg, an early arrival was usually achieved. Yes, I got to Los Angeles and had more than sufficient time to wander about the famed Union Station taking photos. The Pacific run of the 'Coast Starlight' to Oakland was most enjoyable although I did particularly look forward to the run north of San Luis Obispo climbing over the Cuesta Pass. The later seasonal run this year, meant that there was no viewing of the Cajon Pass en route by the 'South West Chief' into LA. Mornings started that much later and evenings pulled in earlier. But the runs on the 'California Zephyr' over the Sierra Nevada and a day later, following the Colorado River through the Glenwood, Gore and Byers Canyons, were brilliant. A few additions to stock and fresh building works at the Colorado Railway Museum at Golden near Denver made a return visit worthwhile. *Mike Hyde - Oct 2002*

RETURN TO SORRENTO OR JUST ONE MORE CORNETTO!

Mike Hyde

I don't know about you but I believe that the standards on EUROSTAR have fallen, at least slipped, over the past year or so. I suppose it is only to be expected after a settling in period or perhaps its just cutting back to improve viability of the service. Little things, like no champagne in First...unless you know to ask for it. Certainly I have found that the meals and service on the Brussels trains is better than the Paris service.

My latest venture in 2002 was to Southern Italy with 3 adults starting with Waterloo to Lille. Normally easy enough, but a lineside fire or signal failure (both reasons were given) found us at Kensington Olympia facing north! We later headed in the correct southerly direction but we had lost so much time we not only missed our connection for Lyon but the one after. This was crucial in order for us to get to Torino to pick up our sleeper. Eurostar recommended going to Paris (Nord then Bercy) and trying from there. We did and had it not been for the time (60 mins) and helpfulness of the Bercy ticket clerk we might still be there. Paris - Torino fully booked and to Roma. We were advised Paris - Aix Les Bains with a 6.00 am change! Eventually he found us 4 seats on a Bercy to Firenze train, plus seats Firenze to Napoli. We jumped at them. With luck we would be in Catanzaro the following night rather the subsequent morning. In fact we made our new connections and only arrived 4 hours late, much relieved. Our roundabout journey necessitated paying supplements but it was quite a pleasant journey.

So why Catanzaro? Simple, to join a rail tour of Calabrian 950mm narrow gauge and mainline steam on Sicily. What do you mean there is no steam on the island? We took our own locomotive over with us! Catanzaro city sits on the top of a rock outcrop several hundred feet above the narrow coastal plain. It has a standard gauge service from Lamezia and to the neighbouring seaside thus linking west and east coastlines. Because of the climb the separate narrow gauge used a rack – Strub system to reach the city. It was once steam hauled but more lately LM2.700 Class



Right: Railcar M4e 355 joining the rack to descend from Catanzaro Citta to Lido.

Left: FCL 353 fills its side tanks at Pedace.

diesel pushed. We had our own Fiat Railcar M4e 355 suitably covered in graffiti (they did invent the word) as are most trains. After a run down and back we set out the 100 kms or so for Cosenza with a steamer up front, 0-8-0T FCL 353 built 1926 by Borsig. The last time I was on this line, some 4 years ago, we never made our destination by train because the distance was too great for one afternoon. We failed again this time and bussed from Rogliano. It really needs the whole day or a break of journey.

Next day was No.353 again, to take us up the scenic branch to San Nicola Silvano via Camigliatelo. San Nicola is the highest rail station in use in Italy. Yes, in Italy, at 1,406 metres. The line on to San Giovanni in Fiori is currently closed due to engineering works but

San Nicola is a great place to stop for lunch. Four years ago it was just another deserted rundown station in the middle of nowhere. Now a restaurant serves passing road traffic, train excursions from Cosenza and tourists to La Sila mountains (also a winter ski resort). Four retired diesel railcars of different liveries are set up in a siding and form the bar/restaurant. Excellent idea and good food.

The next day most of the party headed by coach to Sicily with a brief stop off at the NG station/depot at Gioia Tauro. But stalwarts took the early morning train to Villa S Giovanni to join our loco on its ferry across to Messina. One of the few remaining train ferries in the world it carries freight and inter-city trains as well as lorries, etc. The

coach party were to meet up with our loco in Catania next day, prior to which they had a tour of Mount Etna, saw the 2001 lava flows and evidence of many earlier eruptions.

For 2 days we had the services of FS 2-8-0 Class 740.009 with diesel No.445.1001 in support, if needed. 3 carriages plus a goods/brake van made up our train for the circular tour of SE Sicily via Siracusa, Ragusa, Gela and back to Catania. We chased the train from just south of Catania to Siracusa but the opportunities for photos were few, plus the overhead electric wires were obstructive and the scenery was mainly industrial.

Left: FS 2-8-0 740.009 enters Siracusa ahead of its special train.



At Siracusa we saw 740.452 sitting in a siding looking outlandish in an orange paint scheme. Later the landscape became much more acceptable. 009 did not give of her best but whenever possible she performed solo of the diesel. Apart from her brief visit last year for a film production, this was the first (fare-paying) steam train on the island since it all finished 1960/70s. In fact the line from Gela to Caltagirone via Niscemi had probably never seen a steamer before as it was built after steam finished (absence of water towers noted). New stations were abandoned and one wondered how it all survived – EC money! On this part of the tour, by arrangement with our FS hosts, we had lunch in the railway staff canteen or restaurant which was unusual but the food was good. Regulars were quite surprised to find 40 or so Brits occupying their lunch tables but never complained.

The following day started in Borgo station, Catania with a ride on a 1937 vintage Fiat diesel railcar No. ALn 56.06 on the 107 year old Ferrovia Circumetnea (FCE) 950mm line around the base of Mount Etna. Although the day was spoilt by low cloud the journey



Above: Vintage Fiat Railcar FCE ALn 56.06 waits patiently at Biancavilla.

Left: FAL No.402 climbs the lons S bend and viaduct up to Pietragalla



was exciting, spectacular and well worth it. Our 'car struggled up one climb due to wet rails but a run at it solved the only hic-up of the morning. The line serves several small towns and is well used judging by the frequent railcars. It crosses a number of former lava fields, some not so old, but open countryside at other times. Incidentally the line no longer runs from Catania Porto

but part of the line is now taken up by the Metro. At Giarre we boarded the regular mainline 'Archimede' IC732 service to Messina, train ferry once more and on to Lamezia Terme Central. By coach through the wonderful Pollino National Park to Potenza.

For our final day we joined up with a small party of rail photographers, principally from Switzerland, who had hired a steam train CEMSA 1930 2-6-0T Ferrovie Apulo Lucane (FAL) No.402 to run from Gravina to Potenza. We met them at Forno and during the day proceeded to San Nicola just short of Aviglianiano with



Above: The magnificent roundhouse at Chambéry, France.

Below: One the last SNCF Turbo Railcars in use at Lyon Perrache.



Thus ended our tour of Southern Italy which was very successful for the most part, especially given that four years ago we said it was not worth repeating! Railways and hotels seem to have learnt their lessons and are better geared to handle tourists. Certainly our FS colleagues could not have been more helpful. Judging by the number of new houses and private cars the region has become more prosperous and the poverty of old is not present or is not to be seen. I now look forward to a further return, especially to the little restaurant we found in Sorrento

photo stops at intervals. One interesting stop was at Genzano where we detached the steamer by diesel and placed it on the turntable before reversing it on to the train so that later we could detach the diesel and pose the steam train (facing the way we had come) with either carriages or the freight cars we had with us. Unfortunately the loco was not able to function in steam although we achieved run pasts by pushing with the diesel.

when we had several hours to spare in Naples on our return overland journey; a one hour train ride via Pompei.

Mike Hyde

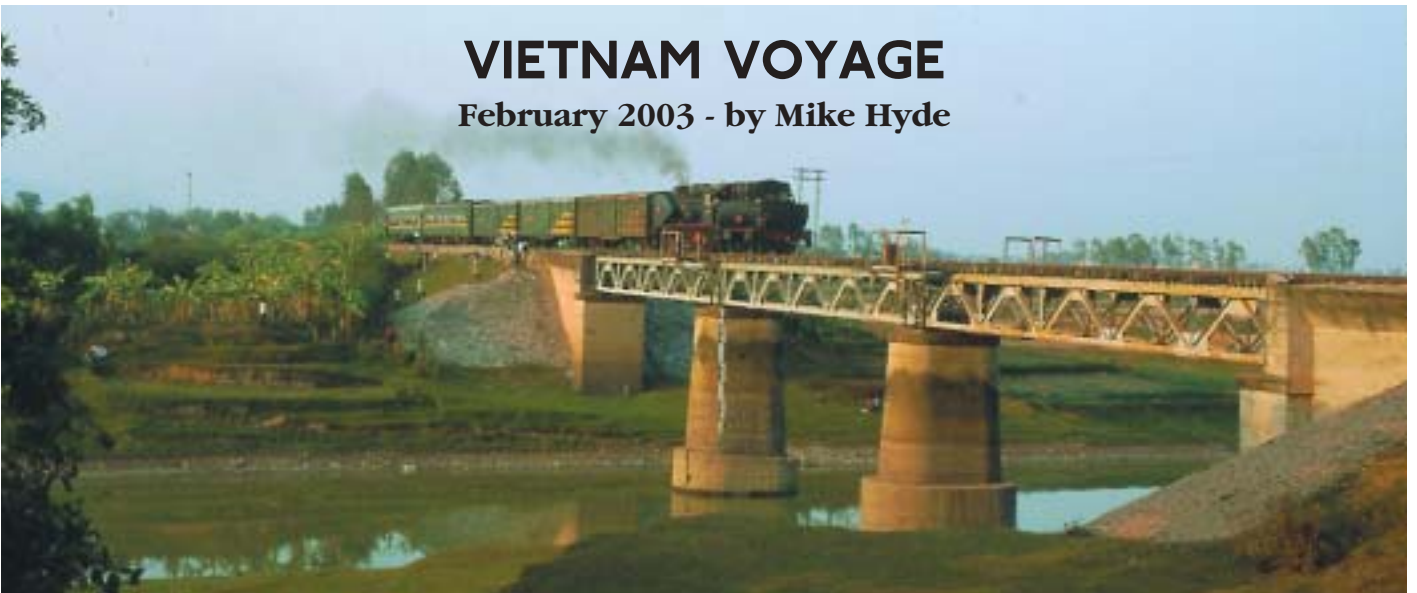
I make no apologies for including in my submitted tour photos, pictures of the magnificent roundhouse at Chambéry and an ancient turbo railcar seen in Lyon Perrache, April 2002.



*Left:
5029 'Nunney Castle' takes 'The Elgar Explorer' special towards Burnham on its way from Paddington to Worcester.
24 August 2002*

VIETNAM VOYAGE

February 2003 - by Mike Hyde



Our thoughts of this country are coloured by newsreels and war films. Even though 'that' war finished in 1975 people still wondered why I should want to visit this former part of Indo-China (once together with Laos and Cambodia). Well, it has a very efficient and well-kept railway and has still just a little steam.

Hanoi was our initial base, for several days. A city teeming with life, nearly all mounted on bikes or mopeds. If you go, do not even think about hiring a car! The flow of traffic has to be seen to be believed: Imagine the Royal Tournament motorcycle figure of eight display but with a dozen riders, side by side, plus bicycles and pedestrians all milling around. It works and nobody loses their cool.

pumped water from a fishpond up the embankment into the tender for about an hour. Boiled fish for tea?

We made a series of 1 or 2 day trips from Hanoi. Each day we had one carriage fitted with wooden bench seats, one diner (!) and 3 wagons (boxcars), the latter presumably for effect only because we never saw anything loaded or unloaded. Up country and heading south we added a sleeping car. A matching set all green. Passenger trains, diesel hauled, were usually blue or green, sometimes mixed. Express trains were red, white and blue: very smart too.

Our first trip was down the Red River to the port of Haiphong. Here we released our loco and wagons for a bit of photographic shunting amongst the cranes, ships and their loads. No one seemed to mind our being there but the loco did get boxed in at one time by lorries. We adjourned the next morning for a day of rest sailing around the World Heritage site of Halong Bay and its many islands.

We bussed to Luu Xa next morning only to end up down a long narrow country road at a bridge that was neither wide enough or high enough for us. A local helpfully pointed out a short cut to the main road! True it had an unmade clay surface, was one vehicle wide



Our steam charter consisted of a 2-8-2 loco and tender, class 141 No.190, the only operational steamer on Vietnam Railways (DSVN). These locos were originally French designed (SNCF class 141?) and made in China and Vietnam. We also had No.167 on one day (see later) but hauled dead at the rear, one way. 190 performed very well with the regulator wedged wide open by a wooden block! Fuel was coal dust well wetted down and the slurry fed in by hand. It seemed to last forever for although we stopped for water, we only once refuelled en route, and only then after a long haul. Water stops were invariably taken by the loco detached and away from the station at a water column. However we once stopped at a country station and



and ran along the top of a dyke. It was a nice day so we enjoyed the scenery for the next hour plus. Watched bricks being made, a common active around Hanoi, saw fishermen counting their catch and generally enjoyed the break in the weather. Most of the time up North it was cold, hazy and smoggy in town but today the sun shone. At the Thai Nguyen Steel works, Luu Xa, they put on a show for us.

As we had lunch on board our train, a tank engine towed a fleet of wagons in the background from one site to another, and then, as if they were coming out to play, 2 more steam tanks appear from the works and ran alongside our train in the station. Standard gauge 0-6-0T ex Chinese GJ No.1037 and pre-war 2-6-2T NG Japanese No.131-436 . They accepted our suggestion to hook up some wagons and shunted up and down.

Vietnam is metre narrow gauged for all internal operations but the main lines northwards to the China border are also standard gauge. So the steel works had dual gauge for raw material imports and finished exports. All our lines appeared well maintained and ballasted. Normal service is by a variety of Diesel locos, the most common for local trains being the class D4H. These passed or crossed us at appointed stations since the main lines are single track. All stations were



started by passing hazy paddy fields but by early afternoon the peaks started to appear. By 5.30 pm it was dark as we changed over to diesel. The next morning we started back from Dong Dang's attractive station by steam. We left 141.167 here because of a hot box but were reassured it would be returned to Hanoi not dumped. 3 days later I believe I caught a glimpse of it at its home depot. We did point out to DSVN that if it were possible to get it functioning, it would give them at least 2 steamers for tourist trains.

Moving on we next headed northwestwards to Pho Lu for a break in the mountains at Sapa. Again 141.190 performed halfway to Yen Bai before handing over to diesel. Classes D12E, D5H, D10H seen en route were supplemented on a depot tour by Classes D4H, D10H (otherwise DFH21), D12E, D5H (these were ex.Queensland Railways, re-engined by Caterpillar). The latter class carried friendship badges and ours, for the leg to Pho Lu, had flags at the front. In addition there were 3 very odd railcars Z01, 02 (lorry chassis) and 03. The latter was similar to other brightly coloured modernish single railcars we had seen elsewhere and which were also enclosed each in a metal cage. Here at the depot our steamer was turned on the 'Y' and placed on the rear of our train. Upon further investigation of the depot we



manned by 6 or 7 uniformed and smiling staff. In Vietnam everyone has a job even if lowly paid so 5 might do what we would have one person or even a machine doing. The children learn English (and Chinese) which they like to practice on you – favourite is, what is your name?

D4Hs are rather small but powerful locos pulling up to 8 carriages. Class D16E.2006 was seen hauling coal wagons from Pha Lai power station. Class D14E from China (JMD1360) are large new locos seen at Yen Vien depot. Here, with prior approval, we were able to wander at will and not only saw new and used diesels, but sidings full of 8 old steamers, classes 141 and GP6.

Our next expedition was north east to Lang Son, via Kep, a days ride into the mountains. As usual the day

discovered rusting tank engine 131- 402 at the tail of the 'Y', but still on the rails.

Sapa was a beautiful stop, if quite a hike to get there. The Victoria 5star Hotel runs an overnight luxury train from Hanoi to Lao Cai, an hour further up the line than Pho Lu but unreachable for our steamer. The mountain road is being improved and our 2.1/2 hour bus ride should be halved next year. This is the area inhabited by many of the ethnic (minority) peoples quite different from the mainland Vietnamese. It is a scenic location with a colourful weekly market.

Unfortunately, this weekend was the Lunar New Year, the Tet Festival. For 5 days everyone goes home and almost nothing happens. We observed this from the lead up to the holiday with sales of peach trees (as our Xmas trees), through the quiet lull to the after period



and a call at Hoi An to see some craft workshops.

At this point some tour members opted for a short flight to Saigon (otherwise HCMC) and the rest rejoined the Reunification Express for 17 hour run through the night in 4 berth 'soft sleepers'. Hard sleepers hold 6 and have thinner mattresses! 2 minutes before time (5 am) we were in warm HCMCity. Another plinthed 141. Our holiday concluded with a city and museums tour

hustle of traffic and trains as everyone returned from whence they came! Whilst Tet is usually about the same time each year the actual day is not set till late so we could not know in advance when booking. However may I wish all my readers – Chuc Mung Nam Moi! – which loses something without the accents and other pronunciation signs but means 'Happy New Year'. Such proclamation banners appeared everywhere.

One of our railway highlights was to spot some locos in an abandoned siding at Van Phu which on our return journey we were able to stop and briefly investigate. We counted 7 class 141 locos and tenders hidden under the vegetation all numberless except for 166. They appeared complete of most parts but very rusted and clearly dumped away from the main depot. With our faithful steamer we



headed back one final time to Hanoi. Then off south in the morning to Bim Son cement works for some more shunting!

Our coach followed with the luggage so a dozen or so

and a day trip to the Mekong Delta. Rail lines in Saigon have been truncated over the years ending at the main station. But on a coach ride we did see evidence of the former tramway /railway to the delta and possible former rail or joint-use bridges now exclusively for road vehicles. Rumour has it the railway to My Thu might be rebuilt one day!

As always it is impossible to convey the true extent of sights, sounds and smells. Actually the latter were surprisingly lacking. North was colder than the south but the people if anything were friendlier in the North. It is a very agricultural country which grows and exports a lot of rice. Overall an interesting, safe, enjoyable place if not exactly exciting but I would go back in a couple of years, perhaps provided steam survives.

The Railway Touring Company: Feb 2003 Mike Hyde

used it to chase the train and get some action shots quite separate from the usual false starts and staged runbys. At BS we said 'goodbye' to our steamer and crews before setting off overnight behind diesel to Hue. A wait here utilised by some for a rickshaw ride to the old town and then a change to train E1 'The Reunification Express'. A good job we had reserved seats. Vietnamese travel light so with no luggage space other than overhead racks, some cases took up seats or blocked the passage much to the concern of the trolley boys. And so to Da Nang and a plinthed class 141 outside the station. A former major US base during the American War (as they see it) with a day visit to the ancient remains of Cham civilisation at My Son



SARDINIA EVERMORE

Mike Hyde

So you are wondering where to go? You are interested in trains, especially steam and particularly narrow gauge. Even if it is a little dirty, footplate rides would not go amiss. However, your wife/partner/husband/friend/son/ travel companion is not so keen. Travelling alone is not a problem but you'd rather not. OK. What if the scenery is magnificent, different everyday, photographable? Warm and sunny? Good hotels, lunch and dinner, free wine, great company and a tour you can only do by train.? Interested?

A marvellous Italian island awaits you. Surrounded by golden beaches some of which you might just get chance to visit, a bit of shopping, possibly a boat trip, comfortable coaching and someone to ensure you stay the course! SARDINIA -The island that time, if not DH Lawrence, almost forgot (more of him later). Speak Sardi or Italian? No? Never mind, Si! or Encore! will do. I almost forgot, the trains.

Apart from 4 standard gauge steam locos stored at the capital, Cagliari, plus another in a Sassari housing estate, steam is only to be found on the 950mm NG railway system. Named FdS- Ferrovie Dello Stato/ or Della Sardegna if you prefer. It also runs most of the blue buses which are often stabled at former stations. The NG only works in the season, normally May, to avoid forest fires. Some 22 steam locos are recorded but less than a handful are operational. Many are rusting away or have been cannibalised. 3 are ex FCS and 1 is ex SFS, these being two of the former companies on the island. FdS also runs diesel railcars (automotrici) of old and new styles, together with Bo-Bo Class LDe diesel locos (rather like Claytons).



Above: FCS 402 taking the spiral Sardinia.

Mike Hyde May 2001

There are three separated systems – in the north, from Alghero to Palau (west to east coast) with a short branch from Sassari to Sorso; across the centre from Bosa Marina to Nuoro (west coast to central east); and a southern 'Y' formation running north from Cagliari to Mandas where it divides, north to Sorgono and east to Arbatax on the coast. Other than short stretches in the north and one in the south, most of the lines climb the mountainous interior by twists and turns even loops and spirals. The NG touches the SG only in Sassari, crosses at Macomer and nearly meets at Cagliari.

Starting with the odd one out, SFS No.3 is a 2-6-0T built 1931 by CEMSA, named 'Nulvi' but called 'Wally' by everyone and plated on the rear accordingly! Up to last year 'Wally' has not been a strong runner and was often out of service. Even last May she/he sounded terrible, with a sticking piston. The crew took her sprinting up and down the line in Sassari. With regular thumps with a hammer, after an hour he/she sounded fine. In fact the loco performed perfectly all day and was a joy to be with. From FCS are three locos. In order of age, first

Left

FCS 5 at Bosa-Marina, Sardinia

Mike Hyde May 2001





Left

FCS 402 on one of the island viaducts, Sardinia

Mike Hyde May 2001

service trains. Not least is an allowance for several photo stops along the way. Whilst the weather is usually kind, inclement activities or environmental difficulties can affect the timings. For example rain on the rails or grass on the line! Both true. So the idea is to be totally flexible, fatalistic, relaxed and to soak up the scenery as well as the wine.

You may need a call in the mornings but watches, mobile phones, laptops and radios are not required. A good appetite and a reasonable camera are essential. Footplate rides are at own risk but not compulsory.

is No.43 'Goito' a 2-6-0T built 1894 by SLM in Winterthur. Next is No.5 'Sulcis' 2-6-0T bred by Breda in 1914 and based in Macomer. Then, favoured by many for its bulky shape, No. 402 2-6-2T a new boy in 1931 by OM. Both 402 and 'Goito' are kept at Cagliari and cover the southern lines.

The poor quality of the cheap South American coal does not help them neither does their infrequent use. Each has its dedicated/ back up crew who seem to love the footplate roles which appear interchangeable at times. It beats driving diesels and gives them status, as well as overtime! Crews are usually invited to lunch on RTC tours. Even the train crews are regulars on the steam runs and meet tours each year. For them, it beats ticket collection on the railbus.

Each leg of the journey has to take account of availability of water and the length of the day overall, to appointed overnight train/passenger stop. Then there is the convenience of lunch location and access to our coach, if necessary, plus any cross-over points with

Ah yes, DHL! In 1921 Mr Lawrence visited Sardinia. All his peers and socialities sailed on by or kept to the Italian mainland – as do most people today! DHL stayed 8 days and travelled about usually by rail. He hated Sicily but loved Sardinia and to the natives' surprise and delight he wrote a book about it. 'Sea and Sardinia'. This endeared him to the island forever (will my jottings have the same effect, I ask) to the extent that in 2001, the 80th Anniversary, a celebration was held and a plaque unveiled in his memory. As we were from England and using the oldest loco plus vintage coaches, we were invited as VIPs. We featured on Italian (RAI) TV as well as in the press. A scruffier bunch of tourists you would not have seen but it was fun. As to the plaque, it was temporarily mounted on the station building on the platform side. It is to featured in a square to be named after DH Lawrence...but it has not been built yet!! That's Sardinia. Wonderful!

Mike Hyde.



Left:

'2800' class '2821' on the up relief at White Waltham in the 1950's

Ken Lawrie

Remember

If you are connected to the internet let 'The Donkey' Editor have your e-mail address.

He will send you a pdf of 'The Donkey' and will see some of these pictures in glorious colour.

Contact John Tuck at:

tuck@tesco.net or

john@hansonzandi.co.uk

SPRINGING BACK TO - 1978 AND 1988

Compiled by Tim Edmonds

25 Years Ago

On 17 March Bristol City Council opened the Bristol Industrial Museum in a former dockside warehouse on Princes Wharf. To link it with the nearby SS "Great Britain", on some weekends former Bristol Port Authority 0-6-0ST "Henbury" was to work a passenger shuttle service.



Above

The train indicator at the end of Platform 1 at Kings Cross shows the departure of "The Hull Pullman" for the last time, 5 May 1978.

Two preserved railways began passenger-carrying operations over the Easter weekend at the end of March using trains comprising a locomotive and a single coach. On the Gwili Railway, ex Earley Power Station 0-4-0ST "Myrddin" worked a shuttle service over half a mile of track from Bronwydd Arms. Unfortunately no steam loco was ready for service on the Shackerstone Railway, so trains between Shackerstone and Market Bosworth were worked by a diesel.

The last train of red 1938 stock on London Transport's Northern Line made its final journey in normal passenger service on 14 April, completing the replacement by modern silver trains that had begun in 1972.

From the beginning of the new timetable on 8 May there was an initial introduction of six HST sets on the East Coast Main Line, offering accelerated timings for many services. Fastest scheduled runs between London and Edinburgh were with the 10.10 up and 10.00 down "Flying Scotsman", timed at 290 and 292 minutes respectively compared with the previous timings of 328



Below

The train indicator at the end of Platform 8 at Kings Cross shows the departure of "The Yorkshire Pullman" for the last time, 5 May 1978.



Above

47443 at the head of "The Yorkshire Pullman" on its final departure from Platform 8 at Kings Cross, 5 May 1978.

and 327 minutes. Also from 8 May the last two ECML Pullman services, the "Hull Pullman" and "The Yorkshire Pullman", were withdrawn leaving the "Manchester Pullman" out of Euston as the only surviving Pullman service on BR.

Wembley Hill station was renamed Wembley Complex from 8 May to reflect that it served the new Wembley Conference Centre nearby, as well as the various sporting establishments.



Above

On the day of Eric Treacy's death at Appleby station, 92220 "Evening Star" approaches Appleby southbound with "The Border Venturer", 13 May 1978.

The Right Reverend Eric Treacy, formerly Bishop of Wakefield and a leading railway photographer since the 1930s, died on 13 May at the age of 70. He collapsed at Appleby station, on the Settle and Carlisle line, where he had gone to photograph "Evening Star" working the "Border Venturer" railtour.

15 Years Ago

Twelve class 73 electro-diesel locos were renumbered from the 73/1 series to 73/2 and designated solely to InterCity traffic (including "Gatwick Express" duties).

After years of restoration, former GWR 4-6-0 "Foxcote Manor" was formally recommissioned on the Llangollen Railway on 9 April. On 27 March it had taken charge of the 11.00 from Llangollen to Berwyn, its first revenue-earning train for 23 years.

Completion of the Exeter resignalling project was marked by the official opening of the new signal centre at Exeter St Davids on 14 April. It took over control of around 100 route miles and replaced 31 mechanical signal boxes between Athelney and Totnes.

The Ian Allan Railway Heritage Awards for 1987 were presented on 14 May, when the new Kidderminster station on the Severn Valley Railway won the British Rail Award for the most meritorious entry. Winner of the award for the Best Independent Railway was the Festiniog, with the Keighley & Worth Valley second and the Bluebell third.

A major feature of the new timetable, introduced on 16 May, was the start of services on the "Thameslink" line through the refurbished Snow Hill tunnel between Farringdon and Blackfriars. Using dual-voltage EMUs, these included hourly trains between Brighton and Bedford, two each hour between Gatwick Airport and Bedford and between Purley and Luton. Brighton also benefitted from the introduction of "The Sussex Scot", a new through service to Scotland via Reading, Oxford and Birmingham.



Overlooked by the new signal centre at Exeter St Davids, HST power car 43026 "City of Westminster" awaits departure on a wet and chilly Holy Saturday, 2 April 1988.

Recently renumbered from 73102 to 73212, electro-diesel "Airtour Suisse" passes LUL Lillie Bridge depot and approaches the A4 bridge in the early morning sun, 11 May 1988.

