

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

140

March 2013



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Reading: - The Big Push

Underground 150

We're going to Leamington

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Top: The 116 DMUs arrived in 1957 and this one is to go to Hartlebury via Snow Hill and Stourbridge Junction on August 6, 1965. Saltley's 8F 48133 comes by with an up fitted freight on May 16 1966.

Photo: Mike Page. (Article page 15).

Bottom: A train of empty mineral wagons is being brought off the Banbury line onto the connecting spur to take D7566+D7500 onto Coventry through Avenue's yards on May 16 1966.

Photo: Mike Page. (Article page 15).

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Rd, Bourne End at 7.45 for 8.00pm.
(Except June starts 7.30pm)

- Thursday 21 March **THE RAILWAYS OF PORTUGAL** Anthony Bowles
Tony Bowles from the Restoration and Archiving Trust, and the Continental Railway Circle, will give a talk on 'Railways of Portugal', largely in the days of steam.
- Thursday 18 April **WELSH STEAM IN THE 1960's** David Mitchell
David Mitchell has a lifetime of railway knowledge at his fingertips, and takes us through his experiences in his presentation of Welsh Steam in the 1960's.
- Thursday 16 May **ON AND OFF THE FOOTPLATE PART 2** Bill Davis
Bill returns with his own unique presentation of his life as a railwayman.
- Thursday 20 June **THE RAILWAYS OF SCOTLAND** Les Nixon
Les Nixon is well known as one of the country's leading rail photographers of many years standing so we can expect an entaining evening looking back to the steam era. Please note this is a joint meeting with the RCTS and **starts at 7.30pm.**
- Thursday 18 July **GOING ON HOLIDAY TO IRELAND 1940-1960** Mike Page
Postponed from last year, Mike recalls his travels on family holidays to visit relatives in the west of Ireland during two decades of change on Ireland's railways.

FORTHCOMING VISITS

The following have been suggested for society visits during 2013. Further information about these will be posted as and when they are confirmed.

- The G&WR at Toddington following their various track repairs.
- An escorted tour of London Terminal Stations by a LT Museum member.
- The Swindon & Cricklade Railway, with either 'Steam' or Didcot.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Back in January we had the opportunity to witness what was probably a once in a lifetime occurrence. I'm talking about the steam running on the underground in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the opening of the first part of the Metropolitan Railway. So what did I do? I missed it! I should have gone on the first weekend but something (life?) got in the way and either I forgot or couldn't go. The second weekend was beset by awful snowy weather and although Gay and I had planned to go up to town for a meal and then to see a couple of the specials, we chickened out because of the conditions. Looking at footage on You-tube (how apt) the proper underground stations were very crowded, giving limited scope for photos or video but I really would have liked to have been part of it. Maybe there will be another opportunity in the future but somehow I doubt it.

Turning from celebrations of old railways to brand new developments, it was interesting to see the proposals for the northern extension of HS2. I see that Derby and Nottingham will have to share a joint station to be built on disused land at Toton, whilst Sheffield's will be out of the city at Meadowhall, necessitating either another train or a tram to access the city centre. No doubt the precise route will be subject to all sorts of negotiations but somebody in the business of promoting railways in that area said to me that it ought to utilise the old Sheffield Victoria site. One wonders if the planners have had Ryanair in as consultants as their flights seldom arrive anywhere close to the cities they purport to be going to. I see that the line might be open by 2033, when I'll be 82, so I don't think I'll worry too much about it.

I'm very pleased I took a day off work on the 29th January, for that was when the Society visited First Great Western's HST simulator at Reading. I had not been able to go on either of the previous Turbo simulator visits, nor the South West Trains' one

at Basingstoke, so this was my first encounter with "driving" a train. It was great fun but quite stressful at the same time and the braking in particular took a lot of getting used to. I would love to have more practice but I don't think I've got space at home or that FGW would let me have it. It did make you realise what the real drivers have to do and how they need to concentrate but I was rather staggered to hear that some of them can now earn up to £70,000 a year.

As I write this we have recently had the AGM. Congratulations to Mike Page on his successful retention of the Norman Aston-Smith Trophy for his Leamington article in the Donkey magazine. I understand I was a close second, so I must try that bit harder in future. Well done also to Tony (and Sue) Keen for living up to their name and being so enthusiastic in helping at the Christmas socials and at other times, resulting in their receipt of the Eddie Lewcock Cup. As I reported during the meeting, our volunteer to take over secretarial duties from Malcolm, John Newman, has very reluctantly had to withdraw this offer because he and his wife have decided to move closer to family in Scotland. This does leave us with a bit of a problem, so if you feel you could help in this respect please contact me. Many of the committee have been "in post" for decades and we are going to need new blood (maybe different blood would be a better term, looking at the membership!) sometime soon.

I'm hopeful that March will bring some much needed spring warmth, after what has been a very long and cold winter, enabling us all to get out and enjoy our favourite trains in whatever form that may be.

My best wishes to you all.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBER

Once again we welcome a new member to the Society, David Scott from Marlow.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The annual Christmas social was as usual a most enjoyable informal gathering. Your Editor apologises for the quiz, I thought it would be fairly easy but the results proved me wrong! John Fowler was the winner and as a result will set next years... Thanks to those members who helped with the setting up, serving and clearing away.

The subject for the January meeting was Nineteenth Century Monorails. At first sight that might seem a very short subject but Adrian Garner has uncovered a fascinating collection of both proposals and actual lines many of which were absolutely incredible. It turned out to be a most enjoyable and informative evening.

The business part of February's Annual General Meeting took precisely 16 minutes to conduct which wasn't quite a record. It was followed by a presentation by Grahame Boyes entitled The Railway Journey in Art in which Grahame showed how artists had depicted the early development of the railway, not so much the hardware but the human elements both working on and riding the railway.

AND VISITS

Twelve members made a return visit to FGW's driving simulators on 29th January and this time tried out the newly installed HST simulator. As always we had a most enjoyable time and proved once more that it's not as easy as it might appear to drive a train.

Our efforts made quite an impression to the extent that they were discussed the following day at an FGW team meeting. Once again our thanks to FGW for indulging us.

The "cab" of the new FGW HST simulator. This view was taken after it had been shut down and the crew had retired to fill out its "please explain" reports but when operating it is a faithful reproduction of an actual HST cab with all the controls and systems fully operational. In addition to the main view ahead through the windscreen there are complimentary views through the side windows and it is even possible to look back and inspect the train from the door - useful when the rear power car catches fire!

Photo: Roger Woodham



COMMITTEE CHANGES

Following the AGM there have been a couple of minor changes in the roles of committee members. Mike Hyde and Julian Heard have swapped roles and are now Vice-Chairman and Outings Organiser respectively.

NORMAN ASTON-SMITH TROPHY

For the second year running Mike Page took the Norman Aston-Smith trophy for part one of his article 'We're Going To Leamington' which concludes in this issue. Once again Mike was unable to attend to collect it. As some of you may know, not only does Mike live in Cambridge but his wife is very ill and he has to act as carer.

Runner up was Tim Speechley for his article Early Days in the December issue with Tim Edmonds and David Collins tying for third.

At this point can I make my usual appeal for contributions. At the moment my stock of material is

EDDIE LEWCOCK CUP

This year the cup, which is presented to the member not on the committee who has done the most for the Society, was presented to Tony Keen and his wife Sue for their most welcome efforts to ensure the Christmas Social went off so well. Thanks and well done to you both.

DONKEY DISTRIBUTION

With various retirements coming up we are no longer able to get the hard copy *Donkey* printed for free. Fortunately only a few members still take printed versions and these will continue but the AGM passed a resolution that allows the Society to make an additional charge to new members for the *Donkey* if they take it in printed rather than on-line form.

STEAM SPECIALS

Due to the on-going works at Reading very few steam specials or other charters will be working over the GWML from the middle of March until well into 2014. However there are two runs with *Earl of Mount Edgcumb* over the Chiltern Line in late March/early April followed by a trip to Salisbury. A brief list is as follows:

Thursday 28 March

5043 Tyseley to Marylebone and return, an evening test run.

Saturday 6 April

5043 Tyseley to Marylebone and return. The up train is non-stop.

Saturday 13 April

5043 Solihull to Salisbury and return via Reading West.

As always detailed timings when available will be given in the e-newsletters.

RCTS MEETINGS

The Maidenhead & Windsor RCTS Branch have the following meetings arranged for the rest of the season.

Monday 25 March

Fifty Years Behind The Lens Geoff Plumb.

Monday 22 April

The Work of the Rail Accident Investigation Branch
Chris Ford

Monday 20 May

Branch AGM followed by members' presentations.

The June meeting is a joint one with the MDRS at Bourne End - see page 2 for details. All RCTS meetings are held at the Cox Green Community Centre, Highfield Lane, Cox Green, Maidenhead SL6 3AX starting at 19:30 and MDRS members are welcome to attend.

CROSSRAIL AND ELECTRIFICATION

Work has started in many places in preparation for Crossrail and the GWML electrification. Over Christmas the west end of Acton Yard was remodelled to allow the construction of an additional up relief line and underpass whilst work has begun on the remodelling of Airport Junction at Hayes along with additional crossovers in that area. These projects are intended to reduce conflicting moves at these busy points.

At Maidenhead the old Goods Shed has been demolished and the area is being cleared. Crossrail project offices have been established but the area will eventually house stabling sidings for Crossrail trains.

Several overbridges have already been rebuilt to allow increased clearance for the OHLE notably Shottesbrooke and Lower Basildon along with several on the B&H line to Newbury. More are currently being rebuilt and will be replaced over Easter including Duffields Bridge at Sonning and several around Dolphin Junction and Hayes will be replaced over Easter taking advantage of the big shutdown at Reading.

Although the main electrification works along the GWML are not due to start until next year, several masts and gantries have been erected in the Reading area as part of the current remodelling.

LOCAL LINES BATTLE THE SNOW

Both Chiltern and First Great Western attempted to run full timetables during January's snow unlike other operators to the south who appeared to raise the white flag and give up before the first flakes had even fallen.

The decision of both operators was vindicated and for the most part services worked reliably although at the height of the blizzard Chiltern were victims of an unrelated equipment failure at South Ruislip.

As the snow started to fall on 20 January John Tuck snapped 165114 in the bay at Twyford on the Henley train.





READING: The big push

This Easter sees a series of full and semi-blockades of Reading station during which the new station will be brought into use. MIKE WALKER reviews what has been achieved to date and what remains to be done.

It was as far back as 2008 that, after years of proposals and planning, work started on the long-awaited rebuilding of Reading station. At first there appeared to be little evidence of anything happening but in fact much preparatory work was underway moving utilities and signalling cables for example. The first real evidence for the casual observer that things were starting to happen came during the big blockade over Christmas and New Year 2009-10 during which the Caversham Road bridge west of the station was rebuilt and signalling control transferred to the TVSC at Didcot to allow the Panel Box to be demolished as it stood right where the new platforms were to be situated.

From the spring of 2010 things really started to move as tons of material were brought to site to build up the area north of the existing station where the new platforms and trackwork would be situated. As mentioned this area was previously occupied by the Goods Lines and Panel Box but the rest of the site, originally part of the GWR S&T works, was at a lower level.

After that work started on the construction of the new platforms and, most impressively, the new, 30 metre wide, transfer deck which connects all platforms with a new south entrance on Station Hill and a completely new north entrance. At the same time work was progressing on the "Southern" platforms to extend them from 8 to 12 car capacity and provide an additional third platform. This

165103 departing from Platform 11 under new signal gantry 2 on Saturday 2 February 2013. After Easter Platform 11, currently a bay, will close to allow it to be rebuilt as a through platform serving what will become the Up Main Loop. The new Platform 12 is to the left with the other new platforms beyond it.

Photo: Peter Robins

work, which involved extending the Vastern Road bridge, was completed in April 2012 at which time the platforms were renumbered to bring some logic into the scheme and allow for the new platforms.

The west end bays, 1 - 3 were the only ones unchanged. The new Southern platform became 4 and the former 4B and 4A, 5 and 6 respectively. The former Down Main platform 4 became 7, the Up Main 5 to 8, the Down Relief changed from 8 to 9 and the Up Relief from 9 to 10. Of the bays, the old Platform 7 at the west end of the island platform had closed early in the work to allow the construction of the transfer deck but its opposite at the London end changed from 6 to 16. Whilst this might seem illogical it was a simple expedient to number it above all the new platforms so no further renumbering would be required to confuse the public (and staff!) further. It will be taken out of use at Easter along with the through Up Main..

At this time the station was in probably its worst condition. More than three quarters of the original station buildings had by now been demolished leaving precious few facilities for customers. It became a joke that train managers would announce their trains were arriving at "what's left of Reading station", but, as the old saying goes, you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs and in truth the work has interfered little with day-to-day operations.



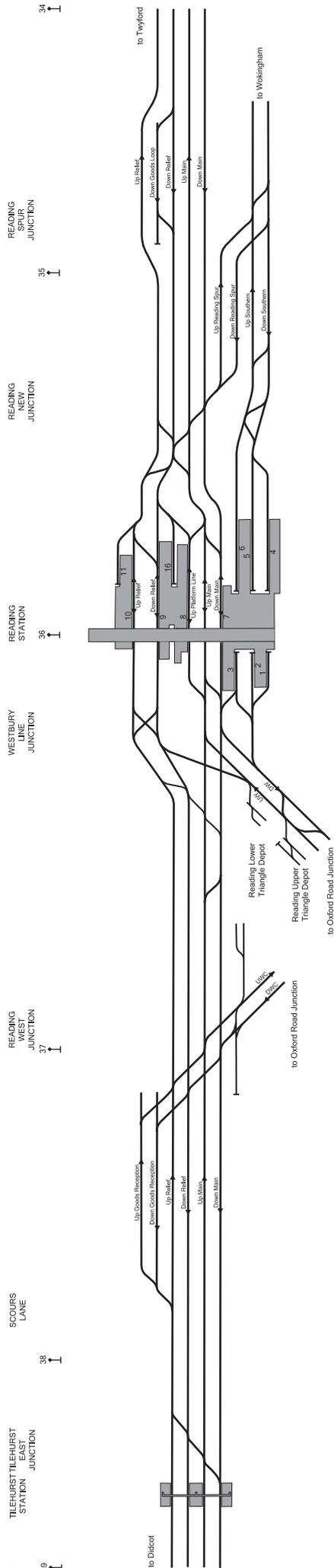
Two photographs showing the remarkable transformation that has taken place in 3 months. Taken from the same spot on the footbridge, the picture above shows the Panel Box and BR telephone exchange awaiting demolition in August 2010, the Goods Lines already lifted.

Photo: Mike Walker

By February this year the new platforms and their associated trackwork are nearly complete along with the impressive new transfer deck. The new north entrance obscures the old Royal Mail building which, for now, survives having been used as offices by the project team.

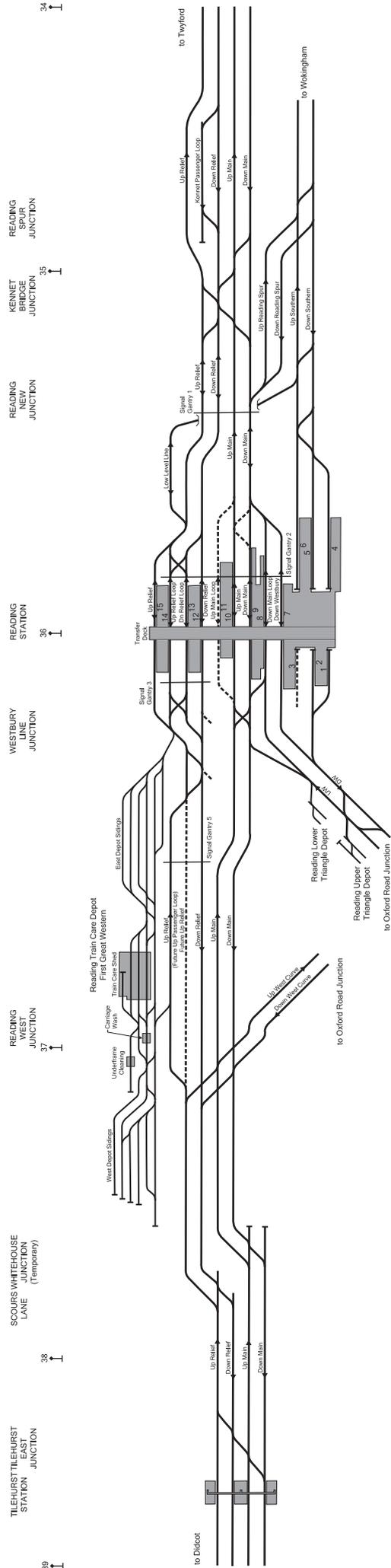
Photo: Peter Robins





READING STATION AREA PRE-EASTER 2013

Note: Diagrams are schematic and not to scale.



READING STATION AREA POST-EASTER 2013

Lines shown with broken lines will be brought into use at a later date.

The works to be carried out at Easter are extensive and will need to be executed with military precision. Between 23:45 on 28 March and 04:00 on 2 April there will be no trains operating between Hayes & Harlington and Didcot whilst between 23:00 on 6 April to 03:30 on 8 April there will be no trains between Maidenhead and Didcot. In the intervening period there will be a much reduced service through Reading. During the blockades reduced Bristol and South Wales services will run via the Chiltern line and West of England trains to Waterloo with buses catering for local travellers. The extended blockade over Easter is to allow several bridges between Reading and Hayes to be replaced for electrification and other Crossrail related work.

At Reading as a precursor to the main work, the northern end of the footbridge will close from 1 March to allow demolition as it stands in the way of laying the final pieces of track into the new platform. This breaks the link between the station and car park and as a result customers will need to walk via the old subway which is being reopened and takes takes 15 minutes! This will be a public right of way with no access to the platforms.

During the blockades the trackwork will be remodelled as shown in the accompanying diagrams. Starting from the Twyford end, the Goods Loop at Kennet Bridge will be upgraded for passenger use in the down direction and to provide a reversing facility from the station. Next comes a new set of crossovers in front of the Suttons Business Park which will be designated Kennett Bridge Junction and replace those currently closer to the station.

A new Low Level line connecting the Southern lines with the new platforms will be commissioned making use of a long-abandoned tunnel originally built in 1858 to connect the SER lines with the GWR low-level goods yard.

Through the station major changes will take place. Platform 7 which currently hosts the majority of down express services will henceforth see only those heading for the West of England via the B&H and to Basingstoke. Platform 8 will principally handle reversing Cross Country services. Trains to and from Bristol, South Wales, the

In this view looking east from the old footbridge in February this year we see the newly laid Relief and Relief Loop Lines entering the new platforms, numbers 12 and 13 directly below us and 14 and 15 to the left. The Down Relief will serve Platform 12 and the Up Relief 15 with the Down and Up Relief Loops serving 13 and 14 respectively. An unusual feature, not often used these days, is the scissors crossover between the Relief Loops, there is another at the other end. Beyond the Vastern Road bridge, alongside the BMW dealership in the background, the Low Level line branches off.

Photo: Peter Robins



Cotswolds and fast services to Oxford will use platforms 9 and 10 with local services using 12 to 15.

These changes mean that Westbury Line Junction at the west end of the station will be simplified greatly reducing the number of conflicts which arise although not for the present eliminating them entirely.

To the west of the station out to Scours Lane near Tilehurst the Main Lines will be slewed to the present Relief Line positions and the Relief Lines to the former Goods Lines although the Up Relief will for the time being be what in the final scheme will be the Up Passenger Loop.

This is a largely temporary layout which frees up space to allow the construction of the massive flyover which will carry the Main Lines over Westbury Line and Reading West Junctions and the dive-unders which will finally remove the remaining conflicting moves in the Reading area, the only flat junction which will remain is that at Oxford Road which will not present a problem.

Work on this second phase of the project will start immediately with completion scheduled for 2015 when the entire rebuilding will finally be complete.

To allow the construction of the new connections from Reading West, the present Lower and Upper Triangle Diesel Depots, home of FGW's Turbo fleet, will have to be demolished although a few of the upper sidings will be retained for engineers' use. To replace them a new depot has been constructed on the site of the old west yards and will be progressively brought into use this summer. It is equipped from the start to handle both diesel and electric traction and will be wired from the start so that operating procedures from Day 1 assume it is a live electric depot. In another change of practice, main line drivers will work only as far as the stabling sidings at each end with depot drivers working within the site itself. Like most modern depots it will also have its own control centre with all moves being signalled.

The work at Easter is as mentioned extensive and lead to some short-term disruption but will result in a new and much improved station delivered on-time and on budget.



UNDERGROUND 150

John Tuck

Like many other enthusiasts I applied for a ticket to ride the Underground 150 Steam specials. The deadline passed, so for a couple of months I thought nothing more of it other than watching the publicity build on the BBC website, then I received an email about a week before the first run saying I was on a reserve list, there were tickets available for the last train of the day on the last day. A chance to say "I rode on the last steam train on the underground". Despite the high cost of a 35 minute ride at £150, that's just over £4 per minute I purchased a ticket, after all this really was a once in a lifetime experience.

So on the day I decided to travel from Twyford and park for free rather than spend £20 for 12hrs parking at Reading. I could not travel from my home station of Winnersh due to the late running of the steam special. Departure from Twyford was on the ubiquitous class 165 however despite careful planning there was a signalling problem at Ealing which delayed my arrival at Paddington by nearly an hour! Whether this was cable theft again or maybe it was down to our esteemed Editor! Fortunately I had allowed plenty of time, so after a brief visit to my father I made my way to Earls Court to see the first train of the evening the 18:19 ex Kensington Olympia. Deciding where to view and photograph the train at Earls Court was a real challenge the best spots having been taken an hour beforehand. I found a spot just above platform 1 at which the train Met 1 and her train would be arriving, the lighting was not great but acceptable. Met 1 opened up on the approach to Earls Court, I believe there a slight climb, once in the station the train was restricted to 10mph, this restriction applied to all stations. Having started at Kensington Olympia the train passed through Earls Court, continued to Gloucester Road where it did a very quick reversal to continue to Moorgate with *Sarah Siddons* leading, in fact the reversal was so quick that by the time I had descended to the platform for an almost immediate departure to High Street Kensington *Sarah Siddons* and her train had already passed through! So like many others I continued around the Circle, many getting off at Baker Street I decided to go onto Great Portland Street as I knew the architect-

Met 1 steams triumphantly through Earls Court with the first train of the night the 18:19 from Kensington Olympia on 20th January 2013.

photo: John Tuck

ture was an appropriate period setting and it used to be my local station many years ago. On arrival I had time to seek out a much needed coffee. It was a very cold night, as I waited for the first Moorgate - Edgware Road train with about 20-30 other enthusiasts all trying to work out the place to photograph the train, it was not the position of the photographer that was important it was the position of the train along the platform due to the variable quality of lighting. However along she came, what an awesome noise and sight. The locomotives and the carriages were immaculate, and Met 1 opened up about 20 metres before the end of the platform. Yes this really was a once in a lifetime experience, despite the FGW delays and the very cold temperatures this was worth it.

Sarah Siddons was the newest vehicle on the train having been built in 1923, Metropolitan No 1 was built at Neasden in 1898, and the newly restored Jubilee carriage had not carried passengers on the underground since 1906! [My reference to this fact was the souvenir booklet given out by LT, which also states the carriage last ran on the Underground in 1905!] The consist with Met 1 leading was Milk Van No 3 (acting as support coach), Jubilee stock carriage No 353 built 1892 by Cravens of Sheffield, then the Chesham set built 1898 - 1900, then *Sarah Siddons*.

After seeing the train pass through Great Portland Street I made my way to Liverpool Street where I knew I could get some good cheap, hot food, then proceeded with hot food back to Farringdon as this was a well lit station, with a nice curve, it was here I took some reasonable photographs and this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aD4G1yj2Hg8>

I was on the 22:35 departure from Moorgate, and had received very precise instructions to follow including two pages of safety



A daylight VIP special was run on Sunday 13th January. No 10 mph speed restriction was applied as Met 1 stormed through Notting Hill Gate [Above]. The return working [Above right] led by 12 Sarah Siddons was passing Barbican.

two photos: Mike Walker

information! The instructions included being at Moorgate by 21:30 all passengers had been preallocated a carriage and compartment, each carriage had a steward and after being given a wrist band and souvenir booklet we were ushered a carriage at a time down to the Metropolitan line platforms passing a London Transport Museum shop on the way. Once on the platform we were held back by barriers until the arriving train passengers had disembarked, when they had cleared the platform we were allowed on a carriage at a time. The atmosphere and anticipation was quite something. This really was the last steam train on the Underground or is it! So there I was sitting in a compartment of carriage 387 with 7 other people, windows open.

We departed Moorgate on time, I was fortunate being in the front half of the train but having said that the sound of Met 1 travelled well through the Underground. I was impressed by the acceleration, and how the crew were prepared to open her up, slowing to 10mph for each station has its advantages. At the busier stations there was something of a party atmosphere, at more than one station there was a round of applause as the train passed through. The only station where people were completely enveloped in steam was Kings Cross/St Pancras which of course has been rebuilt (take a look at YouTube).

Soon enough we came to Kensington High Street where we were held for a few minutes before journey's end at Earls Court. Time here to try and see the loco, soak up the atmosphere before dashing off to Paddington for the last train to Twyford. A 166 DMU home, clean and bright but no character but it took me home. A long day and a late night but worth it.



An almost surreal image taken from inside one of the Bluebell 'Ashbury' coaches showing a modern Circle Line train at Kensington High Street.

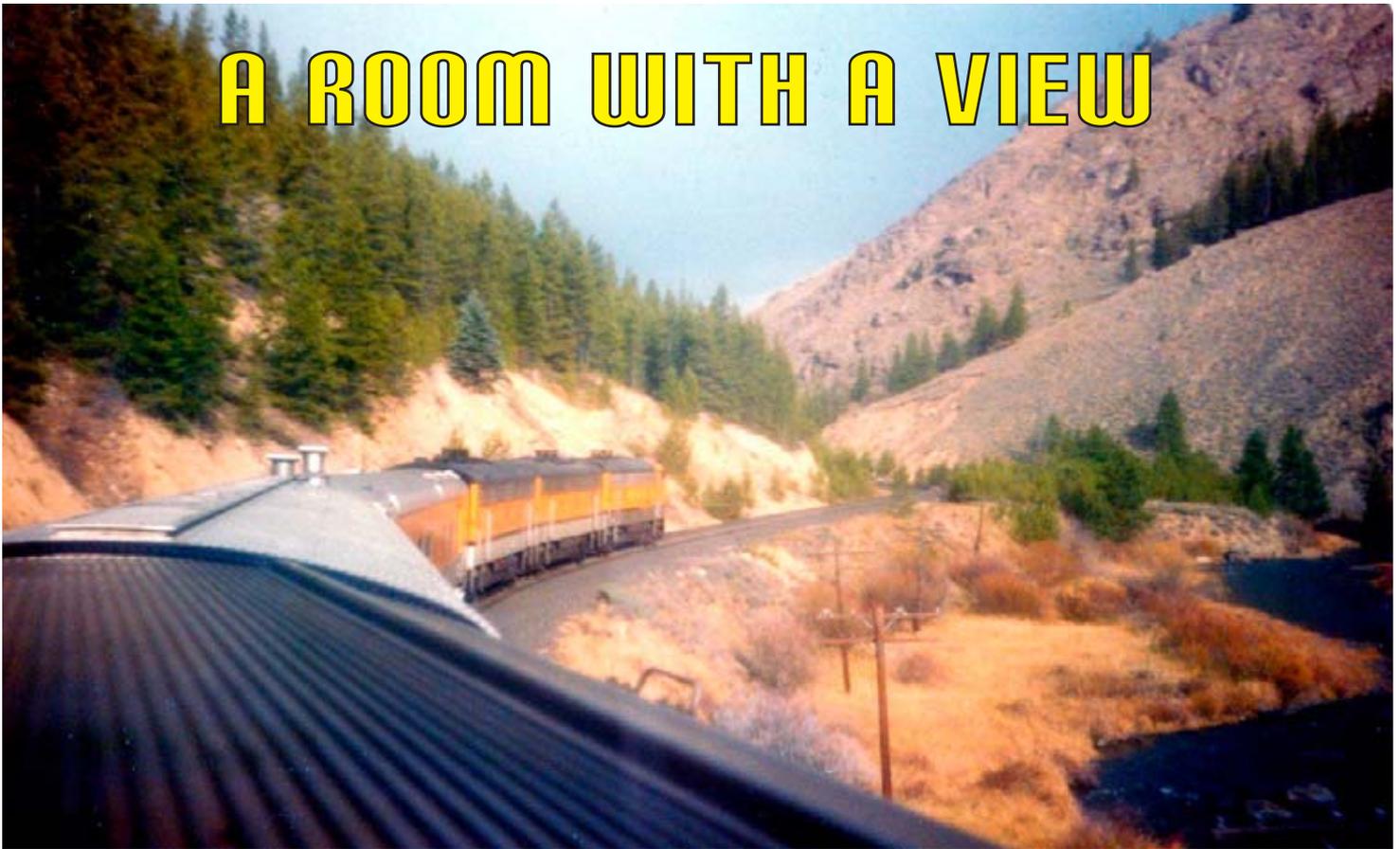
photo: John Tuck

At Moorgate one of the latest S Stock trains was displayed alongside Met 1.

photo: Keith Bailey



A ROOM WITH A VIEW



It is often thought of as an American icon but in fact its reign was somewhat brief. MIKE WALKER presents a short history of the Dome Car.

The concept for the dome car arose in 1944 when Cyrus Osborn, a senior executive of General Motors, was riding in the cab of one of his company's new Diesel-electric locomotives over the Denver & Rio Grande Western. As they passed through Colorado's stunning canyon scenery [Above] he thought how much better the view was from the cab compared to that enjoyed by the passengers in the train and started to think of how they could be given the same view.

His idea was simple. Put a glass dome on the roof of a passenger car and the patrons would get an even better view than the Engineer. As is often the case, bringing a simple idea to fruition took a little doing.

First to adopt the idea was the Chicago Burlington & Quincy Railroad which rebuilt a stainless steel coach, 4714, originally built by the Budd Company in 1940, in its workshops at Aurora, Illinois in 1945.

Named *Silver Dome* [Right], it differed from the later purpose-built cars in several respects. The dome itself appeared to sit on the roof of the car rather than set into it and due to the structure of the car the original floor was retained throughout. As a result and to maintain sufficient headroom the seats in the dome were mounted quite high with very restricted headroom, particularly those on the outside, whilst the dome aisle was sunken.

Below there was an aisle each side below the dome seats and the space below the dome aisle was used for lockers and two rows of longitudinal seats arranged back-to-back. The original seating was retained at each end. The car went into service in June 1945 on the *Twin Zephyr* between Chicago and Minneapolis which followed the Mississippi River for many miles.

The first purpose-built dome cars were constructed in 1946 by Pullman-Standard for the *Train of Tomorrow*, a concept passenger train sponsored by General Motors. Each of its four cars was equipped with a dome which GM dubbed *Astra Domes*. The *Star Dust* was a coach, *Sky View* a diner, *Dream Cloud* a sleeper and *Moon Glow* an observation-lounge.

All photos by the author.



Like the *Silver Dome*, the domes were constructed of flat panes of glass but were sunken into the roof to provide deeper side glazing. The car floors were depressed under the domes ensuring normal headroom on both levels. Each of the domes contained forward facing seats whilst the space below was used for seating, lounges or, in the case of the diner, the kitchen.

Having made a 65000 mile nationwide tour the *Train of Tomorrow* was sold in 1950 to the Union Pacific who used it for many years between Portland and Seattle.

The Burlington having been satisfied with passenger reaction to its prototype dome car ordered 10 from Budd in 1947 for the *Twin Zephyr*, 8 coaches and a pair of round-ended observation lounges which were split between two trainsets plus the pioneer *Silver Dome* which was joined by a second home built car in 1949 to balance the sets. These new Budd cars, which the Burlington

called *Vista Domes*, were the first to feature curved glass in the domes which improved the appearance of the cars.

These were followed by 30 Budd built cars purchased jointly by the Burlington, Denver & Rio Grande Western and Western Pacific for the *California Zephyr* which was inaugurated in March 1949 and ran between Chicago and Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco. This was the first of the long-distance Domeliners to serve the west and each train contained 5 domes in its 11 cars, 3 dome coaches such as the *Silver Bronco* [Below], a dome-buffet-lounge and on the rear a round-ended dome-sleeper-observation-lounge like the *Silver Sky* [Bottom].

They set new standards for passenger comfort and service quickly making the CZ the most popular way to go west. Its route took it through the canyons that inspired Cy Osborn and the DRGW erected a monument in Glenwood Canyon in the form of a model dome car.





There now followed a flurry of dome car acquisitions with Budd supplying 3 dome coaches to the Missouri Pacific who called them *Planetarium Domes* and put them on the *Colorado Eagle* in 1948. These were followed the same year by three Budd built trainsets for the Chesapeake & Ohio's *Chessie* but this train was cancelled before entering service and after brief use on other C&O services the six domes were sold, the three dome-sleepers to neighbouring Baltimore & Ohio and the three round-ended dome-observation-lounges to the D&RGW who modified them in an ungainly manner for use on the *Royal Gorge*. These cars had a unique style of dome incorporating both flat and curved glass in the side panes being trapezoidal in shape to give an appearance of speed. They were also lower to allow for the tighter clearances in the east.

The B&O purchased two dome coaches from P-S in 1949 which it dubbed *Strata Domes*. Again to deal with tight clearances the domes were only 21" above the roof rather than the normal 28". They were used on the *Columbian*, an overnight train. This produces an obvious problem which the B&O tackled by fitting the cars with powerful roof mounted floodlights to illuminate the passing scenery!

In 1950 Wabash took delivery of four cars from Budd for the *Blue Bird*, two dome-coaches and two dome-parlour-observations.

The Santa Fe became the second of the western railroads to purchase dome cars when it took delivery of six *Pleasure Domes* from Pullman-Standard in 1950 [Top] for use on the *Super Chief*. An unusual feature of these cars was that typical P-S flat glass domes contained rotating parlour seats reducing the capacity from the usual 24 to just 16. With just one dome car per train this was a pretty meagre provision.

1952 saw additional cars built for the Wabash, Missouri Pacific and the *California Zephyr* then the Milwaukee Road took the whole dome car concept to a new and higher plane.

Pullman-Standard built ten cars with full length domes [Bottom] which the Milwaukee called *Super Domes* and put to work on the *Morning* and *Afternoon Hiawathas* between Chicago and Minneapolis and the *Olympic Hiawatha* to Seattle. These enormous cars weighed in at 100 tons and rode on 6-wheel bogies. The domes contained 68 seats with a cafe below. The huge glass area took a considerable amount of cooling and each car had its own diesel generator set to drive the air-conditioning. The full domes however provided a inferior view than the regular short domes particularly fore and aft.

The CB&Q added to its fleet in 1953 with four more Budd cars, two dome-dormitory-coach-buffets and two square ended dome-sleeper-observation-lounges for the *Kansas City Zephyr*.

The years 1954 and 1955 marked the high point of dome car construction. First, the Santa Fe, taking a cue from the Milwaukee introduced fourteen full domes built by Budd which it called *Big Domes*. Similar in size to the Milwaukee cars they were built in stainless steel and considerably lighter at around 86 tons but the air conditioning and visibility problems remained. The domes were configured as lounges and they were used on the *El Capitan*, *Chicagon*, *Kansas Cityan* and *San Francisco Chief* trains.



In response to the Milwaukee operating domes to the Pacific North West the Northern Pacific placed 20 cars into service on its *North Coast Limited* between Chicago and Portland/Seattle. A mixture of dome coaches and sleepers they were built by Budd but had flush rather than fluted sides and were painted two-tone green. Four of the cars were actually owned by the CB&Q which operated the train east on Minneapolis and two by the Spokane Portland & Seattle which operated the Spokane to Portland section.

The first domes in Canada started to be delivered to Canadian Pacific in 1954 for the *Canadian* and *Dominion* trains which started service in 1955. Part of an order for 173 stainless steel cars the fleet included 18 dome-coach-buffets which CP designated Skyline cars and 18 dome-sleeper-observation lounges which were virtual clones of the CZ cars. CP designated these *Park* cars such as the *Banff Park* [Above]. CP called its fleet *Scenic Domes*.

Southern Pacific eschewed the use of regular dome cars claiming insufficient clearance in its tunnels but it built seven 3/4 domes in its Sacramento shops. Rebuilt from conventional cars these featured a full length glass roof but were lower than domes. Inside a quarter of the car was taken up with a cocktail bar at floor level whilst the remainder of the car was a high floor lounge.

Despite having bought the *Train of Tomorrow*, the Union Pacific was somewhat slow in buying domes not taking the plunge until 1955 when it started to take delivery of 35 cars for its *Challenger* and *City of Portland* and *Los Angeles* trains. These were built by American Car & Foundry, the only domes they produced, and the fleet



comprised dome-coaches [Below], square-ended dome-observation-lounges and ten dome diners which had 18 dining seats in the dome fed by a dumb waiter from the kitchen below. These ACF built cars had single panes of curved glass in the domes rather than two as used by Budd - compare the two photos on this page.

The last new convert was the Great Northern which took 16 short and 6 full domes from Budd in 1955 for the *Empire Builder* which connected the same end points as the *North Coast Limited* and like that train some of the cars were owned by the CB&Q and SP&S. The short domes were all coaches and the full domes lounges and, like the *NCL* cars, had painted bodies.

Thereafter deliveries were repeat orders, six Budd cars for CB&Q's *Denver Zephyr*; two additional NCL cars for NP and six P-S cars for the Union Pacific and Wabash's joint *City of St. Louis* which were the last built in 1958.

This brought total production to 235 cars, 157 from Budd, 35 AC&F, 34 Pullman-Standard and 9 homebuilds split between 15 railroads.

As trains were withdrawn cars were sold elsewhere. Six of the Milwaukee cars went to Canadian National and other cars went to Alaska, Illinois Central, Norfolk & Western and Auto-Train.

Amtrak inherited around 100 domes but replaced them with the bi-level *Superliner* cars whose lounges are a poor substitute.

Today the only regular service is provided by VIA with its *Canadian* using the CP cars. Otherwise domes can be found in UP's heritage/executive fleet and in museums or private car service. In fact a remarkable 194 of these wonderful cars still survive.



WE'RE GOING TO LEAMINGTON!



Leamington was one of those places you could see locos from all regions. MIKE PAGE concludes his memories of spotting there recalling the day the Southern seemed to take over.

Both 2C's and 84D's work concerned mostly shunting, local passenger and trip/pick-up freights. There were some through freights working between Banbury and Nuneaton via Leamington and Coventry. Usually Nuneaton engines or Banbury WDs handled those (from personal observation). Coming from Banbury, you might see (such as on November 24, 1951) Nuneaton's 8F 2-8-0 48020 or 'Duck Eight' 49120 creeping slowly into the General station's goods avoiding lines only to descend gingerly on a connecting spur behind Avenue's down side station buildings into the ex-LMS yards.

I suppose there were no significant new arrivals at 84D during the early 1950s, apart from the transfer of Croes Nwydd's 58xx 0-4-2T 5811 to act as stationary boiler at the shed. It replaced, said the Railway Observer a GW loco '1287' – anyone know what sort of loco 1287 was? It is only sketchily described in an Ian Allan ABC for 1943 as a '1501 Class 0-6-0T'.

Until the dieselisation of local services to and through Leamington from Birmingham (Snow Hill and Moor Street) in 1957 there had been no significant change in the motive power scene until the first 'Standards' arrived. Old Oak Common gained five

Throughout 1965, Stanier 'Black Fives' became more and more common on the ex-GWR lines taken over by the London Midland Region in 1963. Oxley's 44843 puts on steam north of Leamington with a freight for Birmingham on August 6, 1965.



For a few months during 1966 7029 Clun Castle was based at Tyseley, Birmingham. One of her regular jobs in BR service was to work the 06.25 Bordesley-Banbury freight and the return working, which she is doing here just south of Whitnash on Monday morning May 16 1966.

All photos by Mike Page

'Britannias' in early 1952 (70015/7/8/20/3), which appeared sporadically on Paddington-Wolverhampton jobs until transferred to Cardiff (Canton) in the mid-1950s. Standard Class 3MT 2-6-2Ts (82000-9) arrived at Tyseley in 1952, which seemed to work mostly the Moor Street-Stratford on Avon services.

At the Avenue station, the Webb 2-4-2Ts remained in action into 1955 on the 'push-pulls' (or 'motor trains' as the Midland Region called them). I believe 2C's 46604 was the last to go. Two Standard 3MT 2-6-2Ts, 82020/1 were reallocated from the Southern Region to Nuneaton in 1955, and which appeared quite often in Avenue station until they were moved on to Shrewsbury a year or so later. Then Stanier 2P 0-4-4Ts came to 2C: 41909 on 10/9/1955 followed by 41902. They were used on the Leamington-Coventry-Nuneaton 'motor trains'.

So, what could you see through Leamington in the 1950s? From my own notes taken in 1957 it appears I took a trip to Leamington and back from Wolverhampton (Low Level) on Monday July 22. I must have taken the 12.35pm departure

Perhaps not so stylish as the ex-GWR railcars they replaced, the Class 122 'bubble' railcars arrived in 1958 and took over the off-peak services such as Leamington-Stratford. This one emerges from under the Grand Union Canal on August 8 1965.





On the north side of Leamington near the Grand Union Canal overbridge, Tyseley's green liveried 73026 has shut off steam as it slows for the down yard with a mixed local freight, which includes some wagons of spent ballast on August 6 1965.

(ex Birkenhead) to Leamington as my notes recorded Holyhead's then unnamed 'Britannia' 70048 ex-works on the northbound Birmingham-Glasgow seen from Platform 3 on Low Level. The 'Glasgow', 11.25am off Birmingham (New Street), would have been arriving at Wolverhampton (High Level) about 11.50am (via Bescot).

On Low Level, Old Oak Common's 6000 *King George V* arrived with the 8.10am Paddington-Birkenhead to be replaced by Shrewsbury's 1026 *County of Salop*. Mention earlier of the Standard 3MT 2-6-2Ts at Tyseley in 1952: they disappeared to South Wales sheds in late 1953, but then half of them reappeared at Wellington (Salop – 84H) in 1957, which is why 82009 was waiting in the north Bay with a local to Wellington. 'My' train to Leamington arrived behind Shrewsbury's 4915 *Conover Hall*. She was replaced by 81A's 6016 *King Edward V*, which added five more coaches and a restaurant car while Stafford (5C)'s 'G2a' 49115 was seen through the gaps in the buildings bringing a freight into High Level station off the Stour Valley line.

So we set off passing one of Oxley's 28xx 2-8-0s 3861, a Weymouth (82F) 'Grange' 6828 *Trellech Grange* and a yet to be renumbered 43xx 2-6-0 9316 off Worcester (85A) on the way to Snow Hill. Two 'Halls' were seen too, these being 81A's 6978 *Haroldstone Hall* and 85A's 7920 *Coney Hall*. It is hard to imagine now, but in running between Wolverhampton and Birmingham I noted seven pannier tanks shunting at Bilston (Central), Wednesbury (Central), Swan Village, West Bromwich, Handsworth & Smethwick and Hockley.

During the five minute or so wait at Snow Hill, Taunton (83B)'s 5992 *Horton Hall* rolled in with a parcels train while a type uncommon to Snow Hill sat in one of the bay platforms, Kidderminster (85D)'s 45xx 2-6-2T 5518.

Emerging from the Snow Hill tunnel seven more pannier tanks, mostly Tyseley (84E)'s, were seen working in Bordesley and Tyseley yards as well as clean 3749 from 84H. The latter had probably been repaired at Tyseley. Then on the way to Leamington we were passed by three 'Halls', a 'Grange' and a 28xx before running up into the General station past the Ford foundry and 84D's 3624 busily shunting.

Waiting on the down goods road behind the station was Banbury's WD 90261 with empty iron ore hoppers, probably on www.mdrs.org.uk

her way from Stewarts & Lloyds' integrated iron & steel works in Bilston back to the quarries near Banbury. 6016 got the 'right away' and blasted cleanly away from the station as 84D's 6634 sidled in onto the down through road with a pick-up freight.

The station, its signals and general appearance were as much the same as when the station had been rebuilt with 'art deco' styled architecture during 1936-39. The original station had dated from 1852. But the GW was not the first into Leamington as the line from Coventry had established a terminus at Milverton (about a mile or so away) in 1844, until eventually reaching 'Avenue' in 1854. The Avenue station as seen in 1957 was probably not that different from the brick station as built in 1860, except that standard LMS upper quadrant signals had replaced the LNWR ones.

So I stayed at the south end of the down platform from where you could also see comings and goings through 'Avenue'. 90261 eventually left for Banbury while coming up the gradient from Warwick was Severn Tunnel Junction (86E)'s elderly 2803 with a load of tankers. As she drew to a halt behind the station, Rugby's 48914 came over the LMS bridge with a mixed freight. As the 'Duck Eight' slowed its train to shunt in Avenue's yards another 28xx appeared from the Banbury direction: 84C's 2855 with a load of iron ore probably heading for Bilston.

2803 had now got the road and was pulling out, but a distant chime whistle raised my hopes – a 'Britannia' perhaps? No, in came Tyseley's 'Standard Five' 73037 with a lengthy south-bound parcels, so she would be with us for at least ten minutes. On reflection, all the 'Standard Fives' up to 73089 had chime whistles, but were gradually removed as drivers complained of them getting 'gunged up' with soot, so standard 'single noters' replaced them and were fitted as new to 73090 onwards. The last two I heard with chime whistles were Tyseley's black 73024 and green 73026 in 1965.

While the station staff was dealing with 73037's parcels train, Tyseley's pannier 9753 came through light engine, presumably to collect a northbound pick-up goods. Then in came a 'cop'! Plymouth Laira's 6849 *Walton Grange* on a down holiday relief. 73037 and 6849 departed and next to come in from the north was Oxford's 6922 *Burton Hall* (an engine which lasted to the end of WR steam) with a Wolverhampton-Oxford semi-fast. As the passengers got off and got on, Nuneaton's 48716 came

cautiously up the connecting spur with a mixed goods to wait for the road to Banbury. As 6922 departed, W29W came trundling through to access the south bay. It was followed by another Oxford 'Hall' 4903 *Astley Hall* on an Oxford-Wolverhampton semi-fast.

Well, I could go on: that Saturday was very busy at Leamington. Three more 'Duck Eights' passed through Avenue (Rugby's 49417 and 49413 and Nuneaton's 49112). Two local trains were seen: Nuneaton's Ivatt Class 2 41323 on a 'motor train' and Stanier Class 3 40087. More 'Halls' appeared, the outstanding ones being Cardiff (Canton)'s 4974 *Talgarth Hall* and Carmarthen's 4935 *Ketley Hall*.

After reluctantly leaving the station to visit relatives the journey back to Wolverhampton that evening was with Old Oak Common's 7025 *Sudeley Castle*. Engines of note seen on the return journey were Truro's Hawksworth pannier 8412 on a southbound pick-up freight near Tyseley, presumably 8412 had been repaired there as had Duffryn Yard's 7758 seen shunting at Bordesley. Snow Hill station revealed W19W waiting to go to Dudley and Tyseley's 3101 on a transfer goods.

1957 brought the first big change on the Leamington scene with the arrival of the Type 116 three-car DMUs and the single unit 'bubble cars'; the latter replaced the GW railcars. Then from 1958 onwards Banbury was allocated new double chimney 9Fs 92213-15/26-8/32-4/50. These replaced the 28xxs and WDs on the iron ore workings to Bilston and South Wales.

The devastating 'bombshell' landed in early 1962 when the 'Western' diesel hydraulics began to replace the 'Kings' and 'Castles' though for a brief period on Leamington you could 'cop' those rare Laira 'Kings' transferred to Old Oak Common. The Paddington expresses were increased to an hourly frequency replacing withdrawn expresses on the Wolverhampton (High Level) – Euston route during electrification works and the rebuilding of Euston itself. I suppose that the last 'King' to grace General station in BR days was 6018 *King Henry VI* when it pulled an Stephenson Locomotive Society Special from Snow Hill to Swindon and back on April 28, 1963.

On the day before, Saturday April 27, any of the uninformed standing on the General's platforms might have thought that the Southern Region had taken over! I did not know that Birmingham City was playing at home to Southampton in an FA Cup semi-final. I was riding the up 'Pines Express' pulled by Oxley (now 2B)'s 7014 *Caerhays Castle*. The first I knew about it was to see Eastleigh (70D)'s rebuilt 'West Country' 34028 *Eddystone* standing light engine on the centre up road in Snow Hill

Station. If that was not surprise enough, a Bulleid whistle from the tunnel preceded the arrival of Salisbury (70E)'s 34052 *Lord Dowding*! What on earth was going on?

7014 got the 'Pines' going and again, to my astonishment, we met Nine Elms (70A)'s unrebuilt 34094 *Mortehoe* blasting up Hatton Bank followed closely by Bournemouth (70F)'s rebuilt 34040 *Crewkerne*! The 'Bulleids did not stop coming: I got off the train at General to enquire of the group of 'spotters' at the London end of the down platform of what was happening.

As soon as I got there, the down through 'pegs' dropped and 70A's 34088 *213 Squadron* appeared. A few minutes later, 70A's 34050 *Royal Observer Corps* came through. One was now becoming drunk from Bulleid consumption as 70F's 34045 Ottery St. Mary completed the procession. Only one 'special' was headed by a GW loco, Reading (81D)'s 7919 *Runter Hall*. Two other specials also headed by Bulleid Pacifics had reached Snow Hill the via Worcester and Stourbridge Junction route assisted by an 8F and a 9F up Brierley Hill bank.

I was staying with relatives in Whitnash, so I was ready for the return of the 'Southern Specials', all of which passed by in the mid-/late-evening including 70F's 34042 *Dorchester* and 70D's unrebuilt 34098 *Templecombe*. Well, what a Saturday that was! There were a few other occasions when Bulleid Pacifics came through Leamington, such as 70A's unrebuilt and Giesl Ejector equipped 34064 *Fighter Command* with the down Tallylyn Railway Special on September 28 1963 and 70F's 34053 *Sir Keith Park* on 6/8/1965. The former I saw at Wolverhampton and the latter in Whitnash cutting heading the south bound ECS from her down working of the 09.50am Bournemouth-Wolverhampton.

By 1965, former GWR motive power was definitely on the way out, it had been after the London Midland Region had taken over the ex-GW lines north of Banbury in 1963. Stanier 'Black Fives' and 8Fs along with Ivatt Class 4 and 2 2-6-0s and more 'Standards' began to 'rule the roost'. Though the pannier tanks, and particularly the Collet ones, fought a 'rear guard action' into late 1966 working from 2A, 2B and 2C before those sheds closed that year.

In contrast with 1957, the scene in Leamington was very different on August 5, 1965. There were changes underway to signalling and track work, including a new direct link onto the Coventry line. Again my trip began at Wolverhampton (Low Level) where Saltley's 76048 was station pilot while Shrewsbury's (now 6D) pannier tank 3788 passed through light engine

A train of empty mineral wagons is being brought off the Banbury line onto the connecting spur to take D7566+D7500 (both locos allocated to D16 – Nottingham Division) onto Coventry through Avenue's yards on May 16 1966.





The trainspotter at the lamp post on the right [Above] is ecstatic at seeing probably his fourth Bulleid Pacific passing through Leamington that day on April 27 1963: yet more were to come! Nine Elms' 34088 213 Squadron heads one of ten football specials from Southampton to Birmingham Snow Hill.

Completing the Bulleid 'procession' of football specials through Leamington on April 27 1963 [Below] is Bournemouth's 34045 Ottery St. Mary.



The football specials return south: Nine Elms' unmodified 34094 Morteheo blasts out from under the local farm track bridge over Whitnash cutting on the climb up to Harbury on April 27, 1963.

Not a football special: Bournemouth's 34053 Sir Keith Park heads the up ECS of the 09.50 Bournemouth-Wolverhampton (Low Level) south through Whitnash cutting on August 6, 1965.



followed by Oxley (2B)'s 3776 with a brake van. Our Brush 4 (Class 47) was heading for the tunnel as, unusually, 2B's 42957 (2B now had three Stanier 4 2-6-0s) waited on the descending spur from the Wednesfield and Walsall lines. We passed Bescot (now 2F)'s 48366 shunting at Wednesbury Central and Oxford (81F)'s 7925 *Westol Hall* stood station pilot at Snow Hill.

We passed Bordesley yards where 2B's 44944 waited with a goods and Tyseley (2E)'s 4635 was shunting at Solihull. Banbury (2D)'s 92247 was waiting with empty iron ore hoppers at Hatton to follow us and later caught up with us at the 'General'. During the late morning on August 6 I walked to the cutting north of Leamington where the Grand Union Canal crossed over the main line. First to appear was 2E's 7915 *Mere Hall* on a down goods followed shortly by 2B's 44843. The 09.30 Wolverhampton-Paddington came by with D1685 and then 2E's green 73026 appeared with an up pick-up goods.

Back at the 'General', 2A's 12062 was shunting the up yard and D3985 the down yard while Rugby (1F)'s 46459 potted about what was left of Avenue's yard, the station having been demolished. 2D's 92234 drifted through the centre roads of the 'General' with a down fitted goods followed by 2A's 73156 heading light engine towards the down yard. Now an up fully fitted goods came pounding up the bank in charge of 2B's 45263. By now 2B had no 'Halls' and just three 'Granges'. Before Old Oak Common (81A)'s D1711 arrived with the 11.10 Paddington-Aberystwyth/Pwllheli (the former 'Cambrian Coast Express'). D1711 was passed by 2E's 48133 on an up 'car flats' train to Oxford. At last we get an ex-GW 4-6-0: Worcester (85A)'s 6848 *Toddington Grange* on a down 'Class 6' goods: so you can see how the Leamington locomotive scene had changed!

Before Leamington shed (now 2L) closed in 1965, it had in late 1964: 2210/1; 4120/5/33/51/71/6/8/5153 and 6644/71/97. They were used mostly on local freight, parcels and shunting jobs while the 2-6-2Ts also worked some 'peak hour' commuter services to and from Birmingham. The very last 'Castle' to be seen in service was 7029 *Clun Castle* working out of Tyseley on a freight turn to Banbury and back. She and 4079 *Pendennis Castle* finally rang the British Railways funeral bell for ex GWR steam on March 4 1967 when both locos headed the 'Zulu' and 'Birkenhead Flier' specials respectively from Paddington to Chester and return.

My own very last shots of BR steam through Leamington was of a 9F on a northbound iron ore train followed by 7029 running light engine on June 11 1966 and Banbury's 92247 on an up fitted freight in Whitnash cutting on September 9 1966. Banbury shed had closed by the end of 1966. Steam did not die, though, because after the lift of the five-year 'Steam Ban' in 1973, regular summer season steam in the form of the Marylebone-Stratford on Avon specials ran through.

I would imagine that during the last 39 years or so, practically every preserved steam locomotive with a main line certificate has passed through the 'General' station. Indeed you can stand on the London end of the down platform and see the 1936-39 station is mostly complete, except that trees have grown where the goods lines passed behind the down platform, while the semaphore signals are no more. So apart from the occasional steam special working it is very easy to imagine Carew Castle coming to a stand with a Paddington express while the ghost of yet another 'Duck Eight' wheezes by through Avenue!

Regarding the mystery GWR tank loco 1287, part 5 of the RCTS Locomotives of the GWR lists it not as a 1501 class but one of the 1076 or 'Buffalo' class, which were built as double-framed 0-6-0 side tanks and later became saddle tanks and finally pannier tanks. In the case of 1287 it was built at Swindon in 1/1878 and had a saddle tank from new getting panniers in 2/25. It was condemned in 9/39 but subsequently reinstated and ran until 4/46 when it was finally withdrawn from capital stock. Again it cheated death and was employed as a stationary boiler first at Newbury then Leamington being finally cut up in 10/53 – Editor.

My last 'steam shot' on Leamington Spa General station was of former Annesley and now Birkenhead-based 9F 92073 dusting the local neighbourhood on Wednesday July 6 1966. She had been held at signals and is moving cautiously down the centre road with more iron ore for Bilston. 'Rationalisation' and resignalling is under way: the former through avoiding lines on the left have been reduced to sidings. The 'Avenue' station has been demolished and a new spur north of the General station connects the main line with the line to Coventry. Services had been withdrawn on ex-LMS lines to Nuneaton, Rugby and Weedon.

