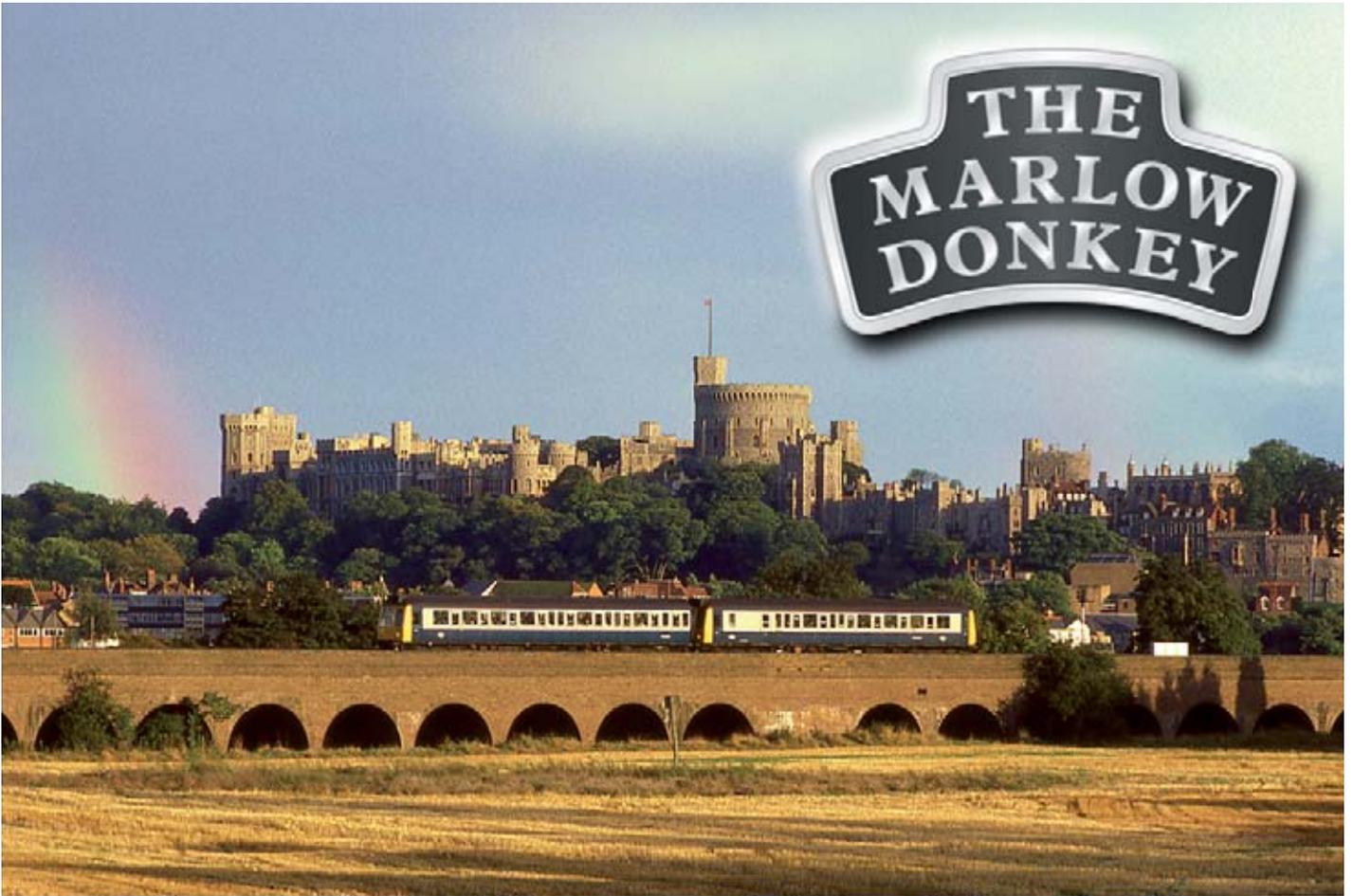


THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

144

March 2014



Contents:

Stood up, so I went to Basingstoke

The Railways of Buckinghamshire

A Connecticut Yankee - Part 3

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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The contents of the *Marlow Donkey* represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Society

CONTENTS

TIMETABLE - Forthcoming meetings	Page 2
CHAIRMAN'S NOTES Tim Speechley	2
SOCIETY & LOCAL NEWS	3
TOURING LONDON'S TERMINI Mike Walker	5
STOOD UP, SO I WENT TO BASINGSTOKE Mike Page	7
THE RAILWAYS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE The Aylesbury Branch Mike Walker	11
A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT Part 3 Don Woodworth	15
AVOIDING DAWLISH Mike Walker	19

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

*Top: A Windsor to Slough Class 121 DMU working on the afternoon of 26 September 1981.
Photo: Don Woodworth. (Article page 15).*

*Bottom: Class 421 4-CIG set 7356 inbound to Southampton 10 April 1971.
Photo: Don Woodworth. (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 20 March **FRENCH HIGH SPEED RAIL** Michael Bunn
The well-known authority on French railways returns to recount the story of the TGV from prototypes to the present day.
- Thursday 17 April **THE BULLEID PACIFICS** Collin Boocock
Collin, a former BR manager, is an acknowledged expert on the Bulleid Pacifics having worked with them at Eastleigh.
- Thursday 15 May **BEECHING'S SURVIVORS** Richard Crane
Richard, the Chairman of the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association, returns to illustrate the railway post Dr Beeching's reshaping in the 1960's.
- Thursday 19 June **THE RAILWAYS OF SCOTLAND** Les Nixon
Postponed from 2013, Les Nixon is an excellent and well-known railway photographer, active for at least 50 years, and his pictures have appeared in numerous books and magazines. **Please note that is a joint meeting with the RCTS and starts at 19.30.**

FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Friday 30 May **DAVID BUCK'S PRIVATE RAILWAY**
A Friday late afternoon/evening visit has been arranged, with all three engines including the Finnish Pacific Lady Patricia in steam. A suggested donation £10 per head which includes refreshments
- Saturday 28 June **THAMES VALLEY & GREAT WESTERN OMNIBUS TRUST**
The visit includes a talk about the vehicles which includes a 1927 GWR Guy and a guided tour of the storage shed before stepping aboard one of the buses for ride around the Windsor area. £15 per head including a buffet lunch and the tour.
- Saturday 16 August **THE WOTTEN LIGHT RAILWAY**
An afternoon visit to the 15" gauge Wotten Light Railway in North Bucks. Further details to follow.

Bookings for any of the above should be made with Julian Heard on 01628 527005 or julian@jeh.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Only one thing can be the main subject of these musings, the weather. I do hope by the time you get to read this we will be enjoying some improvement but as you will all be aware the winter has been absolutely appalling with record amounts of rain (and wind), resulting in widespread flooding and absolute disruption to power supplies and our rail network. Poor First Great Western seems to have borne the brunt of the chaos, though many other operators have also been affected. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the news reports from Dawlish, the extent of the damage being so extensive and showing you can't mess with the forces of nature. I'm astounded that Network Rail's engineers think they will be able to get the line back into service so quickly but we'll have to see. I hope none of you members have been affected directly by the flooding in the Thames Valley and in Marlow in particular. I can think of nothing worse and am very thankful I live on top of a big hill.

I was glad to get the AGM over and done with. Although it does seem to be a bit of a formality, I am always a little worried beforehand, though I'm not sure why. It was good to get Vincent Caldwell on as a full committee member
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and I am very thankful he has taken on the role of Secretary from Malcolm, having shadowed him for the last few months. The Society doesn't run itself and a good Secretary is crucial. Malcolm devoted a lot of his time to the job and he'll be a hard act to follow, though I'm sure he will still advise if necessary. Many of the rest of us have been "in post" for an awfully long time and I think we are coming to a stage when some new blood will be essential. Fortunately the "old blood" continues to show willing and only through them are we able to arrange our speaker programme and visits. This does take quite a lot of effort but we must be doing something right, as our membership is increasing. Staggeringly, six new members joined on the evening of the AGM. May I welcome them to our Society and encourage full participation in our activities. Can I also ask them to come and say "hello" to me at future meetings, please, as I like to know all the members individually but am finding it hard to keep track these days.

Best wishes and good gricing to you all.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

The past couple of months have seen an unprecedented number of new members joining the Society. Mike Cole from Maidenhead joined at the January meeting and this was followed by no less than six signing up at February's AGM. These were: John George from Maidenhead; Chris Nitsch of Lane End; Peter Cowley of Marlow; Mike Marr of Watlington; David Britten of Abbots Langley and Tony Pratt all the way from Canterbury.

A big welcome to you all and we look forward to seeing you at meetings and other Society events.

This potentially takes our total membership to the high sixties which is a record for the Society and is in complete contrast to many groups such as ours where membership is in a steady decline.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Our Christmas social was once again an enjoyable occasion thanks in no small part to those members who put in so much effort both before and on the night to ensure things ran smoothly. John Fowler came up with another of his fiendishly difficult quizzes (admitting he wasn't sure of some answers - what chance do we have?) but by some means Chris Waite managed the top score so it falls to him to come up with next year's brain teaser.

In January our guest was Ian Sylvester with a programme entitled East of Afghanistan. Some of us weren't quite sure what to expect but were treated to a tour of Pakistan, India, Thailand, Malaya, Burma, Vietnam and China with a fast paced and non-technical digital presentation.

Following the usual swift conclusion of Society business at the February AGM, the floor was given to our old friend Ron White who once again rummaged through the slides he'd retained from Colour-Rail and this time took us from Baker Street to Brill with a few other local attractions thrown in. Although now 82 and, as Ron puts it, the body may be giving out but the tongue is as sharp as ever ensuring we had a truly entertaining evening.

NORMAN ASTON-SMITH TROPHY

This year two articles tied for first place in the ballot but we were spared any difficulty as the two top articles were parts 1 and 2 of Don Woodworth's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. This is the first time it has been won by an overseas, non-member contributor but Don is coming over in May so we shall ensure he at least gets to hold it.

Your Editor wasn't sure what the reaction would be to this article, Don is an old friend, but the vote seems to confirm you are enjoying it. There are several more episodes to come!

FORTHCOMING VISITS

As you will see from page 2 we have three outdoor trips booked for the coming months which we urge you to support.

David Buck has invited us back to his garden in Fifield where his Finnish Pacific is now operable albeit on a short length of track and will be in steam.

Also in Fifield we shall be paying a visit to the Thames Valley & Great Western Omnibus Trust on Saturday 28th June. Whilst some may raise an eyebrow, there are many members who are interested in old buses and this collection includes the only surviving GWR Roadmotor, a 1927 Guy which is fully restored. Restoration proceeds on a Western National Leyland Lion of similar vintage and many newer but classic vehicles. Our visit will include lunch and a ride around the district in one of the Trust's vehicles although probably not the GWR Guy.

Later in the year we hope to arrange a visit to the new Reading Train Care Depot - understandably FGW have more pressing matters to deal with at present and to London Underground's Neasden Works probably in October. More details to follow.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE DONKEY

Were it not for Mike Page and Don Woodworth, this issue would be very slim indeed. As it is your Editor has been forced to pad it out with his own ramblings.

Can I once again appeal to you all for contributions in the form of articles etc. *The Donkey* survives only on your contributions so please don't leave it to someone else.

Articles can be on any subject related to the vast world of railways and don't have to be technical theses (although they would be welcome) but can be about trips or memories or things that have made an impression.

Phil Searle has been inspired by a recent article in *Steam Railway* by David Wilcock about his memories and came up with the idea that as individual members we could retrace our lives so to speak and try to show how we became interested in railways, like from what age, how we were influenced by others (if applicable), and to include any gaps in the enthusiasm (like during the teenage period). In addition what events in the world of railways has kept the enthusiasm alive to the present day.

This is an excellent suggestion and Phil has agreed to kick things off in the next issue or so. Hopefully it will inspire more of you to follow suit as we all have our own unique "railway journeys" and memories to share. I'm waiting to hear from you!

RCTS MAIDENHEAD MEETINGS

The Maidenhead & Windsor branch of the RCTS have the following meetings planned for the coming months:

Mon 24 March Brunel: His Life & Times by Peter Lugg

Mon 28 April GW Electrification by Network Rail

Mon 19 May Branch AGM and members' contributions.

All meetings are held at the Cox Green Community Centre, Highfield Lane, Cox Green, Maidenhead starting at 19:30 and MDRS members are always welcome to attend.

FLOODS DISRUPT SERVICES

The big story of recent weeks has been the disruption caused by storms and flooding to the railway network with First Great Western probably being among the worst affected.

In addition to the well-publicised storm damage in Cornwall, at Dawlish and the flooding on the Somerset Levels, there has also been extensive flooding in the Thames Valley most notably at Hinksey, south of Oxford where the Thames inundated the tracks bringing services almost to a halt.

One of the worst affected sections was the GWML between Maidenhead and Ruscombe where rising ground water, the water table is reported to have been 60 feet above normal, flooded the tracks in Waltham Cutting and got into the signalling equipment, in particular the control boxes, putting all signals to red especially on the Relief Lines.

After a week of heavy disruption with trains being “talked” through the affected area reducing the line capacity from its usual 25-30 trains per hour to just five or six and with the floods showing no sign of receding fast, Network Rail and First Great Western took drastic and unprecedented steps to restore a more normal service starting on 16 February.

By then things had returned pretty much to normal on the less badly damaged Main Lines but on the Reliefs the track was raised by around 50mm through the flooded area to ensure the rails were above the water.

Several signals were taken out of use and covered over creating a single, extended block through the area. On the Down Relief this extends from DR25 at Highfield Lane to TR106 by the Milley Lane bridge and on the Up Relief from UR28 at Weycote Bridge to UR25 near the M4. The entrance signals to these extended blocks, DR25 and UR28 were modified to show only red or green aspects rather than the usual R/Y/G whilst DR28 and UR26 were modified to become yellow/green distants for the exit signals. They were in turn preceded by Fixed Distant boards replacing signals DR27 and UR27B which, along with DR26 and UR27A were out of use.

This is thought to be an unprecedented course of action in this country but it has allowed services to run at nearer normal speeds and up to three quarters of the normal service being operated. At the time of writing, late February, there was no indication as to how long it would be before full normal working is restored.

UNKNOWN SUBWAY FOUND AT READING

A while ago the Reading station project team discovered an abandoned subway running north/south beneath the station at the east end of platform 10. This subway was not any drawings but through investigation they believe the tunnel may have led to an old brewery on the north side of the station. Here is a photo, the intention is to inspect the subway/tunnel, make sure its structurally sound and install
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FGW 43041 'Meningitis Trust' leads 1A19, the 13:30 Bristol Temple Meads to London Paddington cautiously through ground water flooding at Shottesbrooke [Top] . 15 February 2014.

Due to flood damage around Shottesbrooke, Relief Line signals DR27 and UR27B have been disconnected and replaced by fixed distant boards extending the sections. The effect of raising the rails, which return to their normal level at this gantry can also be seen [Above]. 19 February 2014.

two photos: Mike Walker

an inspection hatch in the platform for future maintenance. As the NR engineer says, at this stage there is no sign of Lord Lucan, Red Rum or any beer!



photo: Network Rail

TOURING LONDON'S TERMINI

Mike Walker



Those who feel the money to be spent on HS2 would be better spent on the existing railway should have joined our tour of London's terminal stations on 23rd November to see how vast sums are already being spent to improve the stations and the capacity of the lines serving them.

Around a dozen members, some with partners, gathered on The Lawn at Paddington to meet our guide, David Wadley from the LT Museum. After the customary introductions we made our way down platform 1 pausing to view the location of the new Crossrail station now under construction which has seen Eastbourne Terrace temporarily removed. There's not much to be seen as the works are hidden behind tall hoardings.

We paused for some time on the footbridge at the "country" end of the trainshed whilst David explained the history and development of the station which opened in 1854 replacing the original station on the west side of Bishops Road and originally had three spans to the train shed covering just single arrival and departure platforms with sidings in the middle. The cross transepts were provided to allow short carriages to be shunted across the sidings.

The fourth span was added in 1916 and has

Looking down Span 3 at Paddington [Top] with FGW 166204 about to depart from platform 8 with 1D27, the 10:50 fast service to Oxford.

The new north entrance to Paddington station [Right] alongside the Paddington Canal basin.

All photos: Mike Walker

recently been extensively refurbished after years of uncertainty during which it was threatened with demolition and replacement with a high-rise office block above the high numbered platforms.

The Hammersmith & City line station on the north side has been completely rebuilt and was approaching completion at the time of our visit. We went outside to inspect the new, largely glass north entrance which fronts onto Paddington Basin. Several of the party were surprised how close to station the canal is and that it is at a considerably higher level than the railway.

Returning inside we noted that in a sign of the times, there is no ticket office in the station before a lengthy wait for an eastbound H&C train (or was it a Circle Line?) to take us to Kings Cross.





The magnificent frontage of Cubitt's Kings Cross station has been revealed [Above left] for the first time in nearly a century.

The new departures concourse at Kings Cross [Above right] looking towards platforms 9 to 11.

60009 Union of South Africa approaching Finsbury Park [Below] with 1Z69, the Railway Touring Company's 'Tynesider' from Newcastle, running around 10 minutes early.

glimpse the rebuilding work and the new additional tracks being installed around Borough Market as part of the Thameslink upgrade.

From Waterloo we made our ways home after a most interesting day. And remember, similar levels of investment are going on all over the country.



Kings Cross has undergone a massive transformation in the past few years. The uninspiring seventies concourse has been swept away and replaced with an open space revealing the simplistic elegance of the original station, now cleaned to show its yellow brickwork.

The new concourse between the station and Great Northern Hotel is a great improvement with masses of circulating space and a mezzanine housing retail outlets all under a vast swooping glass roof. We noted several Japanese girls taking their pictures at the shrine of "Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " thoughtfully provided by Network Rail.

After fighting our way across the road (why no pedestrian crossing?) we inspected the refurbished trainshed at St. Pancras (but not the hideous new bit) and then David and several of the party took their leave and headed for home. However, the remainder decided to go back to The Cross and take a local out to Finsbury Park so we could observe 60009 Union of South Africa arriving with a special from Newcastle. Duly done, we followed it back to the terminal where appropriate homage was paid.

Our next leg was to go to the subterranean depths of St Pancras to catch a southbound Thameslink train which took us to Blackfriars, another station transformed out of all recognition but there was little time to spare as another Thameslink arrived to take us to London Bridge.

There was even less time to spare here before catching a Waterloo-bound train but it did give us a chance to



On arrival back at Kings Cross, David Collins managed to cab 60009 [Above]

First Capital Connect 319436 rolls into Blackfriars [Right] forming 2T47, the 14:24 Bedford to Brighton Thameslink service.



Stood up – so I went to Basingstoke!



What to do when a girl stands you up in London? Why, go to Basingstoke and watch trains, writes Mike Page.

It was like this: I had arrived in London Paddington from Wellington (Shropshire) on Friday evening on September 6, 1963. During dinner with a 'newish' German girlfriend (I had met her in Germany and she was now an 'au pair' in London), she broke the news that she was not going to be free that Saturday until about five p.m. Well, what to do?

Steam was fairly scarce at all the London stations except Waterloo. Not wishing to want to spend all that time in a terminus, the idea occurred to me that an interesting place to watch trains was Basingstoke, especially as the summer timetable was still in force and there were bound to be many 'extras'. I was staying at a YHA hostel near Tottenham Court Road. So next morning, after an early breakfast, I joined the Northern Line to reach Waterloo.

There was certainly plenty of steam about. Sitting at the buffers were Standard 3 tanks 82024 and 82016. Recent arrivals waiting to be freed were 'West Country' (WC) Pacifics 34016 *Bodmin* (71A Eastleigh) and 34009 *Lyme Regis* (70A Nine Elms). I joined the queues to buy a day return to Basingstoke then walked up the platform containing the 08.35 Waterloo – Bude, which stopped at Basingstoke. To take me there was a quite clean rebuilt 'Battle of Britain' (BB): 70A's 34090 *Sir Eustace Missenden*, Southern Railway.

Also performing station pilot and empty coaching stock (ECS) work were 82023 and Standard 4 tanks 80012 and 80148. Not so long ago ex-GW pannier tanks had been performing these duties having replaced M7 0-4-4Ts and E4 0-6-2Ts. Whistles were blowing so I hurriedly joined

Nine Elms's 'Battle of Britain' 34090 Sir Eustace Missenden with the 08.35 Waterloo – Bude is ready to leave Basingstoke. Note the extensive yards either side of the main lines.

All photos taken by Mike Page on September 7, 1963.

the train consisting almost entirely of Bulleid main line stock. 34090 lost his feet occasionally pulling out though helped by 82016. As we passed Vauxhall station, the very last built Standard 4 tank, Brighton (75A)'s 80154, sat on a back platform with a milk train.

Clapham Junction was hiding most of its shunters, though 'Standard Five' 73115 *King Pellinore* (70A) was waiting to pull out of the carriage sidings facing Waterloo tender first. We whistled a warning through 'The Junction' and began accelerating towards Wimbledon. Our next stop was to be Woking.

Non-stop trains tore through Woking, scaring the life out of the shoppers waiting for their locals to Waterloo. 'Merchant Navy' (MN) 35004 *Cunard White Star* (70E Salisbury) showed no regard for them, whistling a long warning before roaring through. Another 'Merchant Navy' slammed by shortly afterwards: this time it was 35007 *Aberdeen Commonwealth* (70E). As we accelerated briskly away from Woking one of Feltham (70B)'s S15 4-6-0s, 30834, was spotted idling about in the engineers' yards. Very soon we began moving into the 70s. One of Guildford (70C)'s 'U' Class 2-6-0s 31625 came ambling along the up slow with a mixed freight. It did not seem long before the brakes were going on as we slowed for Basingstoke.

Apart from the removal of the Southern Region station signs and the semaphore signals, Basingstoke on the railway side is not that much different today from the Basingstoke in 1963. Some sidings, a small marshalling

The Marlow Donkey

yard and the loco shed (70D) had long disappeared after electrification to Bournemouth and Weymouth in 1967 and the closure of Nine Elms goods yards. Basingstoke town itself was still more of a rural market affair in 1963 than the business centre of concrete and glass we see in the 21st. Century.

Most local trains to Reading General had been diesel (two-car Hampshire ‘Thumpers’) for some time, but Western Region steam still appeared on some cross-country passenger and freight. I chose the south end of Platform One for observation as 71A’s unrebuilt and grubby WC 34097 *Holsworthy* made a careful start across the junction with an up semi-fast. Her place was taken by a cleaner unrebuilt WC 34104 *Bere Alston* (71A) arriving with a Weymouth-Waterloo.

I suppose it’s always a bit unnerving to see a big ‘Pacific’ hurtling towards you in the seventies across a junction with a long train: rebuilt BB 34087 *145 Squadron* (70A) wasn’t stopping for anyone as she whistled aggressively all the way through the station! Her train was the 09.00 Waterloo-Sidmouth.

So, what kind of day was it going to be? Well, by the time I boarded the 14.23 departure about four hours later from



TOP

The 08.46 Salisbury – Waterloo slows for Basingstoke with Salisbury’s own ‘West Country’ 34048 Crediton. The locomotive shed is on the right behind the locomotive.

MIDDLE

Nine Elms’ Class ‘U’ 2-6-0 31617 manfully starts a Basingstoke – Portsmouth via Eastleigh train at Basingstoke. Note the lack of any ‘high-rise’ buildings by the station.

BOTTOM

Rushing Basingstoke at speed is Battle of Britain 34083 605 Squadron heading back home to Exmouth Junction with the 10.35 Waterloo – Bude.



Basingstoke on a Salisbury – Waterloo semi-fast with Urie S15 30499 (70B) some 40 steam trains had passed through or called since my arrival that mid-morning.

The 'tally' included eight 'MN', 19 'BB' and 'WC', eight 'Standard Fives', one 'Standard Four' 2-6-0, three ex-GW 'Hall' 4-6-0s, two U 2-6-0s and one Q1 0-6-0. The Q1, 70B's 33004 with '11 o'clock FLYER' chalked on her smoke-box, performed station pilot duties. Why 11 o'clock? Well one supposes that the '11 o'clock' might have referred to the time the loco came off shed and its crew were in a hurry! I don't think 33004's unofficial naming had nothing to do with Basingstoke!

The U 2-6-0s were 70A's 31617 and Guildford (70C)'s 31797. 31617 left from Platform One with a Basingstoke to Portsmouth train at about 10.30. She had a fair load of some 11 coaches. I guessed she had brought the stock from Clapham Junction or Guildford. The other one, 31797, had arrived later with a Waterloo-Basingstoke local.

While the BBs and WCs came mostly from 70A, 71A and 71B (Bournemouth), the 'visitors' included a very strong representation from Exmouth Junction (72A). They included rebuilt WC 34024 *Tamar Valley* with the 06.40 Exeter-Waterloo, unrebuilt BB 34083 *605 Squadron* on



TOP

It seems that Bournemouth is using one of Brighton's 'Battle of Britain' Pacifics, 34089 602 Squadron for a Bournemouth – Waterloo train. The day was dull and I only tried a couple of shots in this rather dark cutting just north of Basingstoke station.

MIDDLE

It was always nice to see a Southern 2-6-0 amid all the Pacifics: Guildford's 31797 approaches Basingstoke with a local train from Waterloo.

BOTTOM

Watch out for the local '11 o'clock FLYER'! Guildford's Q1 33004 was acting as station pilot at Basingstoke on September 7, 1963. What the '11 o'clock FLYER' was, I have no idea, but 33004 was 'flying' nowhere that day while I was there!



the 10.35 Waterloo-Bude and other points west, rebuilt WC 34108 *Wincanton* with the 11.32 Sidmouth-Waterloo, unrebuilt BB 34069 *Hawkinge* on an unidentified up train and unrebuilt BB 34080 *74 Squadron* on another to Waterloo. Quite a good day for any 'spotters' lean on 72A Pacifics! Surprising too, perhaps, was Brighton (75A)'s rebuilt BB 34089 *602 Squadron* turning up on a Bournemouth-Waterloo (about Mid-day),

The named trains saw 70A's 35030 *Elder Dempster Lines* on the down 'Atlantic Coast Express' and 70A's 35020 *Bibby Line* on the down 'Bournemouth Belle'. The down 'Pines Express' had been rerouted from Crewe via Whitchurch, Wellington, Wolverhampton (Low Level), Birmingham (Snow Hill), Oxford and Reading's West Curve to Basingstoke since the start of the Winter 1962 timetable. Engines were changed at Oxford so surprisingly another 72A 'BB', the unrebuilt 34084 *253 Squadron*, came clattering across the junction with the down 'Pines'.

There were a number of 'cross-country' trains to be seen such as Oxford (81F)'s 6970 *Whaddon Hall* working through with the 07.32 Wolverhampton (Low Level) – Portsmouth (maybe engines had been changed at Oxford?). 71B's rebuilt WC 34047 *Callington* had the 09.28 Bournemouth-Liverpool taking the train on to Oxford. About an hour later, Reading (81D)'s 'Hall' 6924 *Grantley Hall* came off shed to wait in a siding at the end of Platform Six. She was waiting for a Bournemouth-Leicester train, which arrived with 71B's rebuilt 'WC' 34040 *Crewkerne*. The engine change was quite smart and 6924 was soon away.

Now Bournemouth must have been getting short of 'Pacifics' as Standard 4 2-6-0 76056 brought in a Bournemouth-Newcastle train. There was no respite for the '76-thousander', which fortunately had the large BR1B tender to get her, presumably, to Oxford. Showing no sign of fatigue she accelerated the train competently enough towards Reading. The next 'cross-country' to

arrive was a Sheffield-Bournemouth with Banbury (84C)'s 6979 *Helperly Hall*. I did not see which loco replaced 6979, as I had to join my train to Waterloo.

Among the usual menu of Waterloo-Bournemouth/Weymouth, - Salisbury/Exeter/West Country trains was an odd one: the 09.25 Wimbledon-Weymouth with 70A's rebuilt 'WC' 34093 *Saunton*. There was one Waterloo-Southampton Docks working with 71A's very smart-looking rebuilt 'WC' 34039 *Boscastle*.

The journey back to Waterloo with 30499 was quite sedate calling at (if memory serves me right) Farnborough, Woking, Wimbledon, Surbiton and Clapham Junction. The engine's motion was making a continuous, quite melodious, ringing sound. The classic sound was very different to the 'heavy metal' repertoire from a run-down LMS loco, a Gresley V2 or a clanking and banging WD 2-8-0!

Although I'd seen no freights at Basingstoke, 70B's S15 30834 had a down freight near Woking and another 70B loco, Q1 33010, was shunting in Woking's yards. Back at Waterloo only three steam locos were in view, I guess it was the 'quiet' afternoon period. 80154 had empty stock, 72A's rebuilt 'BB' 34062 *17 Squadron* waited with a train for the West Country and Redhill (75B)'s S15 30835 had a local to Basingstoke.

Well, that was an unplanned half-day of train-watching with not a single diesel locomotive in sight! It was very different from when I last watched Southern Region trains in 1956 on Clapham Junction, when the early 'King Arthurs' and some T9 4-4-0s were about working the semi-fasts and locals, let alone the 'Lord Nelsons' on Bournemouth and Southampton Docks trains.

By-the-bye I took the shed allocations from an Ian Allan 1963 Loco Shed Book with Southern information dated to January 30, 1963. I can provide the notes of all the day's observations should anyone be interested.



Banbury's smart-looking 6979 Helperly Hall is arriving at Basingstoke with an inter-regional Sheffield – Bournemouth train.

The Railways of Buckinghamshire

THE PIONEER BRANCH

Mike Walker

Parts 1 to 3 of this series appeared in the Marlow Donkeys of March to September 2011.

Aylesbury had become the county seat of Buckinghamshire in 1725 so it was to be expected that the town felt somewhat ignored when Stephenson routed the London & Birmingham Railway some miles to the east. As a result a meeting was held at the White Hart Inn, Aylesbury on 10th November 1835 to consider the possibility of building a railway to connect the town with the L&B. Among those attending were prominent local land-owner Sir Harry Verney and Robert Stephenson. The result was the formation of the Aylesbury & Cheddington Railway Company with the latter as engineer.

The construction was authorised by Act of Parliament on 19th May 1836 with an authorised capital of £50,000 but work was delayed because the London & Birmingham was promoting the Cheltenham Oxford & London & Birmingham Railway which would have left the L&B at Tring and run via Aylesbury making the A&C superfluous. After that scheme failed, the failure of Medley's Bank in Aylesbury further delayed the start of construction.

Eventually the required land was acquired and the first sod cut on 12th May 1838 with the contractor, J R Chapman, predicting the opening by November of the same year although this proved somewhat ambitious.

The line was just 7½ miles in length and having curved away from the main line at Cheddington ran arrow straight to its destination. There were no major earthworks, apart from a single shallow cutting, no bridges except for a couple of culverts and no intermediate station. The terminal site in Aylesbury was behind the High Street served by two new roads called Station Street and Railway Street, the former is now part of Upper Hundreds Way which forms the ring road.

The first train ran on 27th May 1839 and the formal opening ceremony was held on 10th June 1839 which was declared a public holiday in Aylesbury and all the shops shut for the day. The line had cost £59,000 to build and had the distinction of being the first purpose-built branch line constructed in the country if not the world. The first train left Aylesbury at 7.00 am and consisted of five first and third class carriages with every seat taken as were those on every train that day - rides were free! Public services started the following day with the L&B, which had agreed to operate the A&C for £2,500 per annum in December 1837, running the trains using two Bury 2-2-0s, *Aylesbury No.1* and *Aylesbury No.2*.

The line proved a great success and in its first half-year of operation carried 19,565 passengers earning the company £5,735 and quickly putting two local stage coach operators out of business. Goods traffic began in November 1839. In July 1846 the L&B leased the A&C for a period of five years and at the same time merged with companies to the north becoming the London & North Western Railway.

In 1851 the LNWR revived the eastern end of the CO&L&B scheme to construct a branch from Tring to Oxford which would have used the western half of the Aylesbury branch and crossed the High Street on the level which was met with some opposition. In view of this and the opening of the Buckinghamshire Railway in 1850 which gave the LNWR access to the Dreaming Spires, nothing became of the proposal.

An intermediate station was opened in 1857 where the line crossed the Long Marston to Wingrave road by a level crossing. It was called Marston Gate and situated 2m 55c from Cheddington and was actually in Hertfordshire, a small part of that county intruding into Buckinghamshire in this area. Initially it was only a platform with tickets being sold by the crossing keeper. A commodious station house was erected in 1862.

The opening of the Wycombe Railway's branch to Aylesbury in 1863 and its subsequent extension as the Aylesbury & Buckingham to Verney Junction in 1868 had little effect on the LNWR branch, the distance to London was 6 miles greater via High Wycombe and Maidenhead than it was via Cheddington.

The prospect of the Metropolitan Railway extending to Aylesbury and providing a single seat ride of only 38 miles to London, 5 miles shorter than the LNWR route, did spur the Premier Line into improving its facilities at Aylesbury. The original A&C station had proved somewhat cramped particularly for goods traffic and it was inconveniently situated in the back streets. It was therefore decided to construct a new terminal, south of the original, facing onto the High Street, a far more prominent location.

The new station was opened on 16th June 1889 and whereas the original had separate arrival and departure platforms, the new station had a single platform with a train shed covering a third of its length. The main station building, in attractive orange-red brick, was across the track behind the buffer stops and faced onto the High Street with a semi-circular driveway surrounded by lawns. The line into the station curved off the original just west of the Park Street level crossing which is where the signal box was located. The old station site became the goods station and as a result capacity was greatly increased. The town's small gas works was located in the 'vee' between the two stations.

The Metropolitan Railway finally arrived in Aylesbury in 1892 and as feared had an immediate effect of draining off much of the LNWR's passenger traffic, a situation which became worse when the Great Central arrived a few years later providing more direct travel options for passengers wishing to head north. It was a decline from which the branch never recovered.

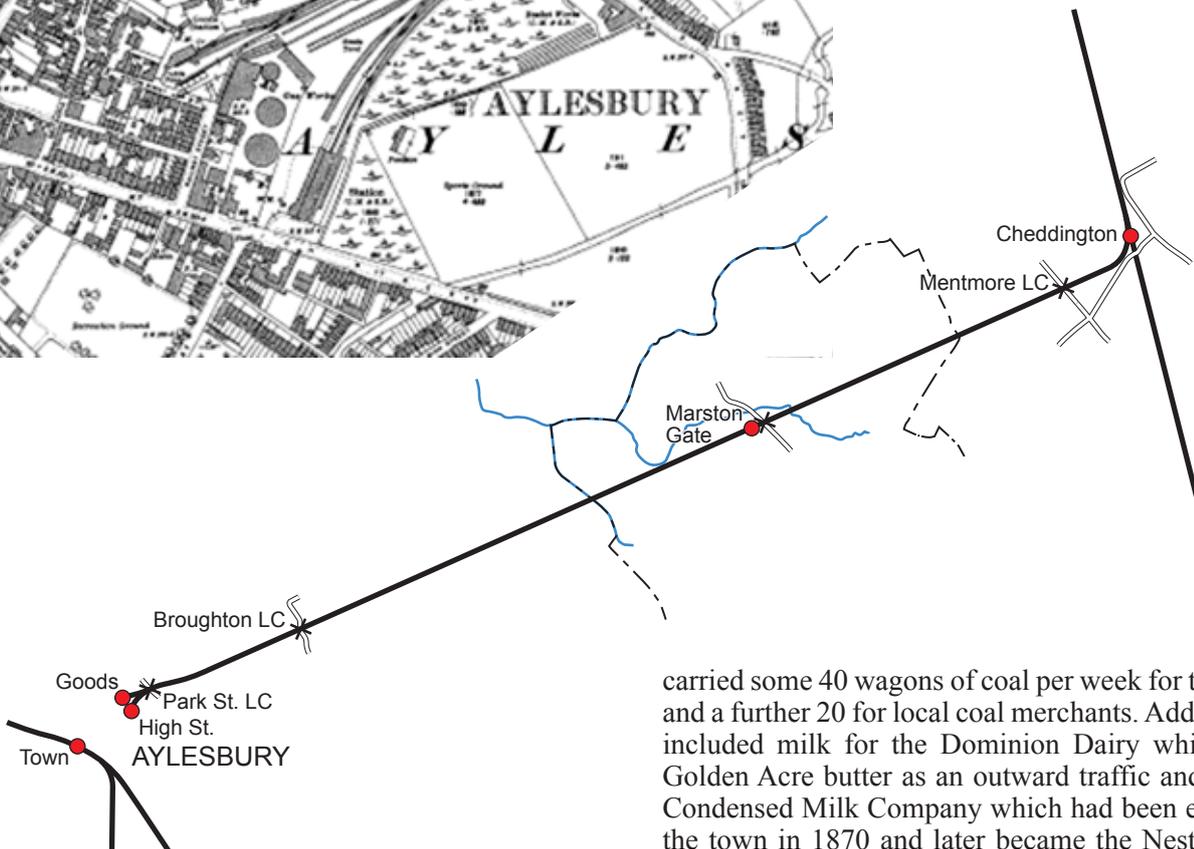
Goods traffic however remained buoyant with a remarkable variety of traffic being conveyed. In addition to the usual general traffic for local shops and businesses the line



This is the original Aylesbury & Cheddington station fronting onto Station Street.



Below is a map of the branch and inset an extract from a 1920s 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map showing the layout.



carried some 40 wagons of coal per week for the gas works and a further 20 for local coal merchants. Additional traffic included milk for the Dominion Dairy which produced Golden Acre butter as an outward traffic and the English Condensed Milk Company which had been established in the town in 1870 and later became the Nestlé Company. This too created outbound traffic.

received hops and barley for brewing and vats of Guinness for bottling whilst another major company in the town, printers Hazell, Watson & Viney, took in deliveries of paper and despatched books and magazines to destinations across the country. Finally, New Holland shipped up to 40 wagons daily of farm machinery produced in their local factory. Agricultural traffic of a different type were cattle to and from the town's market.

Marston Gate also had a healthy goods traffic mostly farm-based around cattle and milk with up to fifty churns being loaded daily, much of it making the short trip to Aylesbury. Plums and damsons were also despatched in season often amounting to 10-15 tons daily. Inbound traffic included horse manure from London.

An unusual traffic for the branch was generated by the osier reeds which grew in the swampy area on the south side of Aylesbury station. These were harvested and used in the manufacture of wicker baskets, hampers and the like. The LNWR opened a factory in Aylesbury in 1880 which in its heyday between the 1890s and 1920s produced averaged 2,000 baskets a year of sizes varying from waste paper baskets to 22 cu. ft hampers. Additional osiers were shipped in from Cambridgeshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire which continued after the local beds had been abandoned in the late 1930s until the factory closed on 31st December 1947.

The next day saw the formation of British Railways bringing together all the town's railways for the first time, although London Transport was still running to Aylesbury. No doubt for its own internal purposes rather than of any benefit to the travelling public, the LMS (LNWR) station became Aylesbury High Street from 25th September 1950 (the goods station had been known by the same name since 1st July 1950) with the former GW-GC-Metropolitan joint station becoming Aylesbury Town from the same date.

However, time was running out. Whilst goods receipts remained healthy passenger numbers had sunk to an all-time low. It might have suited the LMS to operate the service to maintain a presence in the town but not BR. As a result the last passenger train left Aylesbury High Street on 2nd February 1953 behind 46601.

Goods traffic continued but gradually succumbed to road competition and changing circumstances and closed on 2nd December 1962.



Two pictures taken from the the footbridge at the Park Street level crossing in Aylesbury looking along Stocklake towards Cheddington.

Above in a pre-grouping view, an unidentified tank engine arrives with the branch passenger.

Below 8F 48729 approaches with a freight formed entirely of coal wagons destined for the gas works or local merchants. The year is 1962 and the branch will survive for only a few months more and evidence of the rundown is clear.

Photo: Colour Rail BRM1372



The Route Described

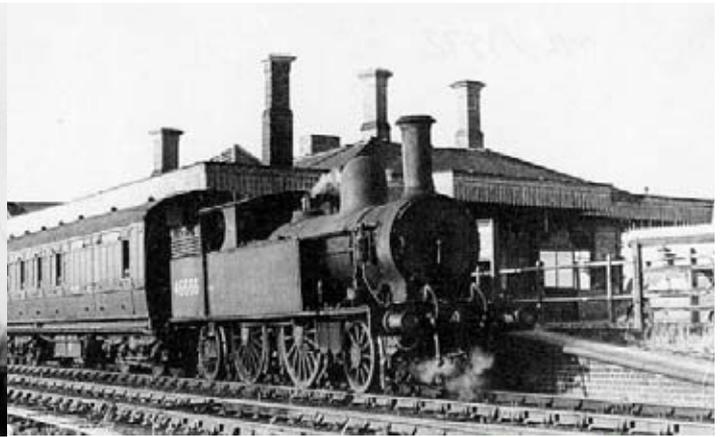
Aylesbury branch trains used a curved platform on the west side of Cheddington station adjacent to the Down Fast line. The actual junction was a little to the north just beyond the signal box. The station had typical wooden LNWR buildings which were erected when the main line was quadrupled in the 1860s. These in turn were replaced during the electrification with the present nondescript structures but that was post-closure of the branch.

Leaving Cheddington the trains rounded a sharp curve to the right through approximately 90 degrees after which the line was straight all the way to Aylesbury. Indeed, at night it was possible to see the lights of the town as soon as the straight was reached.

At 50½ chains came Mentmore Level Crossing, the first of four on the branch. Crossing the Cheddington to Ment-



Marston Gate station looking towards Aylesbury.



2-4-2T 46666 waits to leave Cheddington for Aylesbury.

more road, it was manned and drivers were required to whistle a warning one mile out - something which must have been a little difficult to do coming from Cheddington!

The line now crossed open farm land, crossing into Hertfordshire at 1 mile 28 chains, until just after passing Betlow Farm on the down side at 1 mile 68 chains it entered a shallow cutting some 550 yards in length, the only notable earthwork on the line.

A small stream was crossed by a culvert at 2 miles 39 chains after which Marston Gate crossing followed at 2 miles 55 chains and again drivers had to whistle one mile away. The crossing here was protected by signals which were operated from a 6-lever open frame on the up side beyond the crossing. The station was on the down side after the crossing and the station house dominated the scene. At the far end there was a single goods siding on the up side with the connection facing towards Cheddington. The siding was provided with a loading platform and loading gauge. Marston Gate was fully staffed with its own Station Master for many years. After closure the station house lay derelict for several years before being refurbished as a private dwelling. More recently it would appear to have been demolished and replaced with a less attractive structure.

The line continued over flat country crossing another culvert over a stream and back into Buckinghamshire at 3 miles 66 chains and then onto Broughton Crossing at 5 miles 63 chains. Once again this was manned by a crossing keeper and a one mile warning whistle was required.

After the 6¼ milepost the outskirts of Aylesbury were reached as the line ran alongside a residential road called Stocklake. At 7 miles 5 chains came Park Street Level Crossing and Aylesbury Signal Box which was on the up side on the Cheddington side and operated the gates with a wheel, something which happened many times whilst the yard was being shunted. In front of the 'Box' was the line's only bridge, a steel lattice footbridge which was provided after a fatal accident when a pedestrian was struck by a train.

Beyond the crossing the line split. Passenger trains rounded a curve to the left whilst goods trains carried straight on into the yard. This was also the location of the engine shed, a single road affair, 150ft long which closed on 30th September 1950. Between the yard and the station there were more sidings, one of which served the gas works.

As mentioned the 1889 station had a single 400ft platform partly covered by a train shed. An unusual feature was that it had no run round. Trains were propelled out of the station then the loco would retreat to a siding whilst the train returned to the platform by gravity thanks to a 1:160 gradient. After closure the buildings became a wine store.

Events

The branch endured few incidents. In 1849 an unmanned goods train left Aylesbury and got all the way to Cheddington and then on to Leighton Buzzard before running out of steam.

During World War II a bomb exploded near Marston Gate and a land mine caused damage to the engine shed at Aylesbury.

After the line had closed completely, the branch platform at Cheddington was used to stable the stock from the train involved in the Great Train Robbery of 8th August 1963 whilst police carried out their investigations.

On a brighter note, the branch saw at least one royal visitor when the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, rode over the line on 12th July 1883 on his way to Waddesdon Manor. It seems the LNWR did little to decorate the station although the townsfolk did.

So ends the story of a branch line that despite its historic beginnings led most of its life in relative obscurity, overshadowed by its later neighbours.



Aylesbury High Street looking towards the buffer stops shortly before final closure.

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT

Part 3 Travelling About Col. Don Woodworth

Don Woodworth, a friend of the late Dave Theobald, spent 8 years living in the UK in the seventies and eighties whilst serving with the US Air Force. A lifelong rail enthusiast, Don continues his look back at his experiences during that period which led him to explore almost every mile of the network and provides an interesting perspective on our railways at that time from the viewpoint of an outsider.



During my first posting to the UK, my wife and I lived in RAF housing at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk for most of our tour of duty. It was about a 12 mile run each way to and from the RAF Mildenhall air base. My route took me from the gently rolling hills around the village of Feltwell down into the fenland near Lakenheath and then on to the air base. I always liked it when I got to the flatlands of the fens – their charm is subtle but it grows on one – and was never sorry if my timing had me stopped at the Lakenheath level crossing for the 04.00 ex London morning train which usually appeared around 07.00. I am very partial to the music of the British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams and, on lucky occasion, the BBC would have one of my favorite of his compositions, “The Lark Ascending,” playing while I waited for the train to pass on a sunny summer morning. Life did not get better than this!

A bit farther east of this location, this line left the flatness of the fens and skirted the southern boundary of Thetford Forest and the Battle Area used by HM Forces for training exercises. The line was accessible at Santon Downham, and the contrast with the fens was marked. I would sometimes take my son with me to this area because there was a nice rise on a walking path along the tracks from which one could safely watch trains without danger – with one exception. I knew that

With a bit of advance planning, I would usually stop along the side of the B1112 road a bit north of the Lakenheath level crossing to ensure a view point that showed the great openness of the fen country. On the morning of 16 April 1974, I was rewarded by BR Class 31 on the 04.00 ex Liverpool Street newspaper train en route to Norwich. The winter wheat is well along in this photo and will be ready for harvest and another few months.

poisonous adders existed in the UK and that they were sometimes seen in this area. Lucky me – I spotted one sunning itself on a cool October afternoon along the path we were using to walk in to our location. In keeping with time-honored custom, my son and I gave Mr. Snake a wide berth before carrying on to our chosen location for an afternoon’s gricing.

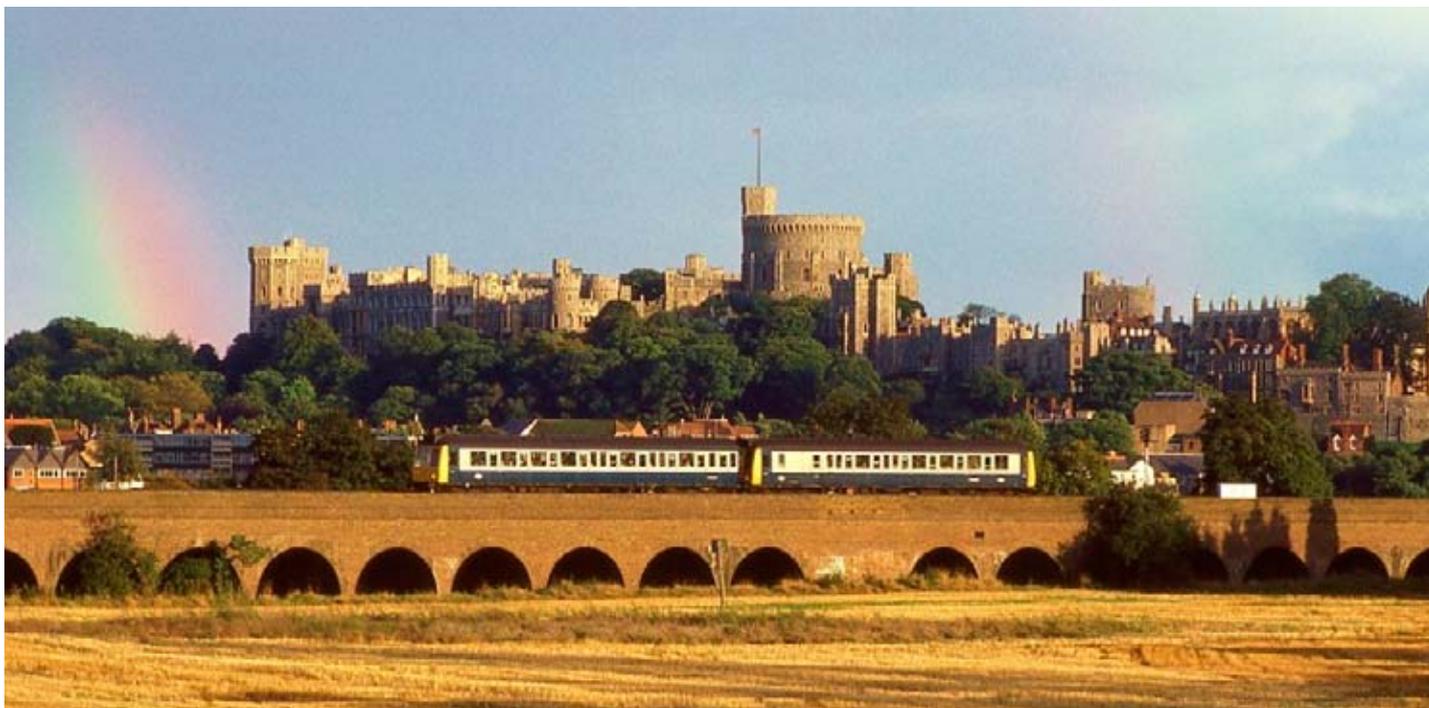
On other occasions, my wife and I (later with kiddies during our second posting) would travel south to Marchwood near Southampton to visit my English aunt and my cousins for the Easter or Christmas holidays. I avoided motoring anywhere near central London like the plague, always preferring a somewhat circuitous route that would combine a bit of sight-seeing (and perhaps a bit of gricing) along the way. The most fortuitous example of this occurred in September of 1981 when we were headed south to meet my cousin and take her on a trip to Germany with us. God must have been smiling that day as we passed Windsor Castle and observed a DMU set setting out on the GWR line to Windsor, complete with a rainbow in the background.

When visiting in Marchwood, my family was usually sympathetic to my gricing proclivities and I was most often able to bunk

When visiting in Marchwood, my family was usually sympathetic to my gricing proclivities and I was most often able to bunk



A hybrid DMU formed of GRCW Class 100 E56099, and Cracens Class 105 E50359 on an ex Ely Norwich stopping train eastbound in the early afternoon of 24 October 1971.



A Windsor to Slough Class 121 DMU working on the afternoon of 26 September 1981 with a rainbow behind the castle.

off for an afternoon of railway photography in the local area. BR's Southern Region was a totally different world from the fens, so I always enjoyed the railway activity there – the ubiquitous EMU's and locomotive types seldom seen in East Anglia unless on a run-through excursion.

Class 421 4-CIG set 7356 inbound to Southampton on the early afternoon of 10 April 1971. This photo would likely have been taken whilst waiting for my cousin to come claim my wife and me from the railroad station on our first trip to Hampshire. We almost didn't get collected as I was unable to ring up my aunt's home with the phone number that we'd been provided. This was before STD came to Britain and what I learned the hard way that afternoon was that the dialing prefix changed depending upon the area from which one happened to be calling and hence a local code book was a necessity.

I particularly like this photo that includes in the background some of the great cranes used to work the Southampton docks. I had previously heard about them from my Aunt, whose father had worked on the docks, and who had told me about being evacuated to the country during WW II when Southampton was a victim of the blitz.

My first sighting of a Hymek, also on 10 April 1971, as D7086 brings in a train during the early afternoon. Being new to the UK at the time, I did not realize that these locomotives were starting to live on borrowed time in 1971 and would be totally gone by 1975. I'd have spent more time tracking them down had I known. To the best of my knowledge, D7086 never received a TOPS number nor was it saved for preservation.





I learned that the Southern Region was where Class 33s were more often to be found. I caught D6054 (33004) with a westbound train arriving at Southampton, again on the afternoon of 10 April 1971. I rather liked the 33s as their Sulzer prime movers seemed to have a gutsier bark to them than the English Electric locomotives that I was most used to hearing in East Anglia. Once in a while, a 33 would sneak into Fenland, as I recall a heads up I received from one of my friends at the Cambridge Railway Circle alerting me to the fact that a 33 would be used on a special train to the spring Tulip Festival in Spalding – an event that I happily recorded.

Trips to Wales.

My take on Britain is that it is like a giant onion with so many interesting layers to be peeled off that one is lucky to be able to see all there is to see in a lifetime, let alone just eight years of a posting that also required me to work for a living. At the start of our first posting, my wife & I equipped ourselves with a large AA Touring Map, The Shell Guide to Great Britain, The AA Illustrated Guide to Britain, Treasures of Britain, Roman Britain, and The Past All Around Us and mapped out a campaign to see as much of the UK as we could. I progressed to the point that on one of the trips Dave Theobald and I took, he quizzically asked me “Don, how do you know about all this stuff?” to which I winked and said, “Dave, you should read more!” We strove mightily to see as much as possible but there always remained “just one more thing” around the next bend. Maybe in my next life time!

During our first posting to the UK, my wife pursued the completion of her university degree. For her class in geology, there was a field trip to Wales and I was forced to go along for moral support. Oh hardship, can one spell Ffestiniog? Over 40 years later, my tongue still suffers from having tried to pronounce Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch, but who would not want to visit St. Mary’s Church in the hollow of white hazel near a rapid whirlpool and the church of Saint Tysilio near the red cave. I gave up and called it Llanfair P. G.!



No picture of standard gauge railroading in Wales would be complete without a photo taken at Llanfair P.G. This station was opened to traffic in 1848 and served until closure between 1973-1993, before again being opened to traffic again in 1994. Even though closed to passengers when my wife and I visited on 22 Jul 1973, it was still open to tourist traffic. From the track over-bridge, I photographed an unidentified Type 4 hurtling eastward on an express on the morning of 22 July.



My wife and I were on the platform at Bangor, Caern. on the afternoon of 27 May 1972. We had come in on some bug boxes from Holyhead, arriving at 15.00, and were scheduled to depart at 17.37 for Llandudno Junction, where we would change to another set of bug boxes to take us onward to Llandudno. Timing was perfect for a cup of tea and a snack as we both were suffering from a case of the mid-afternoon munchies. It turned out not to be the world’s best cup of tea we had at the station

buffet. They used one of those machines that sounded more like one’s throat was being cleared than tea being brewed and I think we must have had the 100th cup of tea brewed from the same tea bag as steam and hot water was passed through it at high pressure. Happily, this turned out to be a prelude to the appearance of our train headed by 220 (40020) Franconia with its steam generator giving a strong impression of it being an honorary steam locomotive



On 22 March 1980, I had occasion to ride an excursion over the Central Wales line hauled by two immaculately turned out Class 37s. The train did not stop for photo run-bys as I was accustomed to experiencing in the States, but we did have a stop in Llanwrytd Wells, Brecon. as we made our way northeasterly and

I was able to get a nice photo of 37179 and 37182. I was rather surprised to see a headlight on the lead locomotive, not my usual experience in the UK, and upon inquiry was told that the engines used on this line were so equipped due to the frequency of rock falls.



Fishguard, Pemb. is not a place I recall reading about or seeing in photos. I suspect that most people traveling there by train are intending for onward movement by Sealink ferry to Rosslare in the Irish Republic. The gentleman with the dog on the platform

and myself were probably the two lone exceptions on 20 June 1980 when I photographed 47482 with the chartered Sealink ferry Stena Normandica as a background prop in this rail-maritime scene.

To be continued ...

AVOIDING DAWLISH

The damage caused to the railway at Dawlish in February might have been avoided if the Second World War hadn't intervened. MIKE WALKER looks at the GWR's Dawlish Avoiding Line.

There were many who questioned Brunel's wisdom at locating his railway along the beach between Dawlish Warren and Teignmouth but at the time he had little option. The line has been breached many times, the first being in 1855 only eight years after it opened.

The Dawlish Avoiding Line was first proposed in 1933, to avoid the high cost of maintenance associated with the SDR sea wall, and keep the Exeter to Plymouth Line working.

But in 1935, Chancellor of the Exchequer Neville Chamberlain proposed establishing an independent special purpose vehicle finance company, backed by a government loan guarantee limited to £26.5million. This could then be drawn down by any of the big four railway companies, with the GWR allocated "eleven fifty-third parts" to support the projects it had submitted for inclusion in the agreement, all of which had to be completed by 1 January 1941. Under the 1935 Finance Act, the GWR initially submitted just one proposal in the Treasury agreement (First Schedule, Part 1, Clause 2) which read: "Construction of a new deviation line from Dawlish Warren to Newton Abbot".

The proposed 16 miles 1933 scheme within the two draft 1936 bills, diverted from the existing line south of Exminster. The scheme then went south through Kenton to Dawlish about 0.6 mile inland, then heading southwest under Holcombe Down avoiding Teignmouth, before rejoining the existing line to the east of Bishopsteignton. It was costed at £3M, and included three short tunnels and one long tunnel of 2,624 yds under Holcombe Down. Parliament passed the Great Western Railway (Additional Powers) Act 1936, in which DAL is cited as "Railway No 1" amongst several listed.

However, the GWR to enable other schemes developed a shorter route. This scheme of 8 mi deviated from the railway bridge over the Hackney Canal near Newton Abbot, and re-joined the main line at a point 62 chains north of Dawlish Warren towards Cockwood, alongside the River Exe. However, in 1937 the GWR returned to a scheme closer to the original, called "Railway No 2". Adding a further 7 miles, it commenced at the same point south of Dawlish on the initial deviation route (authorised earlier by the 1936 Act), terminating close to Exminster at a junction 5 chains south of a bridge carrying Milbury Lane over the line.



4037 South Wales Borderers approaching Dawlish on a foul day with the waves breaking across the promenade and train in September 1960. Colour-Rail BRW176

earlier by the 1936 Act), terminating close to Exminster at a junction 5 chains south of a bridge carrying Milbury Lane over the line.

The GWR started construction in Spring 1939, with surveyors poles in place along the proposed route by the summer. However, after Germany invaded Poland in September, prompting the outbreak of World War 2, all work stopped.

Work was never restarted, and after the post-War nationalisation British Rail sold the purchased land. The powers of the associated Act of Parliament only lapsed in 1999. Now it may yet be revisited as an alternative to reopening the LSWR line via Okehampton. Alternatively, and more likely, the whole idea will be forgotten once more.

