

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

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40 Years of Inter-City 125 on the Western

How Railways Took me Over

Last Summer of Steam on the Cambrian

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

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Front Cover Photographs

Top: An unidentified HST passes Freshford in the Avon Valley on 6th November 1994.

Photo: Dave Theobald. Article page 9.

Bottom: Norwegian 2-6-0 376 from the K&ESR double heading with SNCF Pacific 231K8 on the dual-gauge section of the Baie de Somme. Photo: Gordon Adams. Article page 5.

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 16 June **THE INTER-CITY STORY** Chris Green
Chris Green needs no further introduction as probably the most high-profile manager in the rail industry both pre and post-privatisation. Tonight he concentrates on BR's successful Inter-City brand which he led as Sector Director in the early 1990s. This is a joint meeting with the RCTS and starts at 7.30pm not 8.00pm.
- Thursday 21 July **VICTORIAN & EDWARDIAN RAILWAY TRAVEL** David Turner
Dr David Turner, Railway Historian on the Victorian and Edwardian era, will give a presentation on Railway Travel through this period.
- Thursday 15 September **STEAM ON THE MET** Andy Barr
Andy Barr, Head of Heritage Operations at the London Transport Museum, presents a programme on the remarkable series of special steam operations we have enjoyed on the London Underground Metropolitan and District lines in recent years.
- Thursday 20 October **THAT WAS THE YEAR: 1962** Geoff Plumb
Geoff Plumb needs little introduction having entertained us many times previously. This time he turns his spotlight on 1962 using material both of his own and his collection as that year was right at the start of his photographic career.
- Thursday 17 November **THE GOLDEN AGE OF SWINDON Part 3 THE COLLETT YEARS** Brian Arman
Brian Arman returns with the final part of his excellent trilogy looking at the golden era of Swindon Works, this time the Collett era which saw the development of such iconic locomotives as the Castles and Kings, not to mention the Halls and many smaller locomotives.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

For an awfully long time I have been thinking of changing my camera and after months and months of agonising over which particular model I should buy, during which time I actually gave up the idea, only to return to it again, I finally did the deed and am now the proud possessor of a Nikon D7200. What I hadn't appreciated was that this very sophisticated piece of kit doesn't come with a nice little printed user manual but instead you can download it from the Nikon web site - all 400 pages of it - though it is supplied with a paper booklet describing the ways to utilise the various menus, another mere 200 pages. I think you could probably put a three-year degree course together based on these and they are really daunting. Nevertheless I have been out and about, eager to use my new and rather expensive "toy" and from the initial results, despite my lack of familiarity, they seem to be pretty good and certainly justify my decision to change.

Needless to say I wanted to get out and photograph trains as soon as I could, so I headed first to the "Joint Line" and then to the Great Western main line. It is very apparent that this latter's days as a photographer's paradise will very soon be over. We are all very aware how much behind schedule the electrification is but so many of the spots I have used over many years are now already spoilt because the lineside masts have been erected. Once they are all in place and the wires have gone up it will be very difficult indeed, if not impossible.

Of course a lot of the trains I was seeing were HST's and these are now celebrating 40 years in service - not a bad record for what was seen initially as a "stop-gap". The April edition of "Railway Magazine" had an excellent supplement outlining the history of what is considered by many to be Britain's most successful train. Although I wasn't living in this area at the time, www.mdrs.org.uk

I well remember doing a BR Round Robin trip not long after they were introduced and thinking how fast, quiet and comfortable they were. The HST took Tim Edmonds and me to Swansea, where we got a Central Wales line dmu to Shrewsbury and then returned to Euston, the electric hauled coaching stock riding rather erratically compared to the outward journey. I think this cost us around £5 each - those were the days! By sheer chance I was at Taplow on the first day in service for the power car that has been repainted into the original Inter-City 125 livery. I was on the temporary footbridge there and saw this very yellow front end approaching from a long way off but although I realised it was something unusual, was unable to get a picture of it. Later in the day I was at Maidenhead Bridge (as yet mastless) and was lucky enough to get a broadside shot of it heading west. I hope I'll have a chance for a better photo at some point in the future.

Whilst talking of fast trains, I had a visit to the great metropolis recently and was able to sample Southeastern's "Javelin" service as part of my perambulations, though only from St. Pancras to Stratford International. It's not the most interesting of journeys, being mostly in tunnel, but boy is it quick and I'm sure there are a lot of Kent commuters who are very thankful for these services. There was a Marlow connection too, because the unit I rode in was named "Sir Steve Redgrave". The Docklands Light Railway and Croydon trams seemed rather slow subsequently but were very interesting nonetheless.

I hope all of you will be getting out and seeing some trains now the weather is improving. Perhaps we'll bump into one another somewhere.

Tim Speechley
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SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

We have enjoyed three very different and highly entertaining meetings this spring.

In March, Colin Boocock returned to tell us the story of Eastleigh Works from its opening as a carriage and wagon works in 1891 and locomotive works from 1908 through to the present day as it continues to serve the rail industry. Colin spent many years there as a manager in the BR years and is therefore well placed to tell the story.

This was followed by Anthony Coulls in April who provided an insightful look at the work of the National Railway Museum from his perspective as the Senior Curator of Rail Vehicles (or as he puts it, "Curator of Everything Too Big To Pick Up"!). Anthony explained much of the museum's thinking and how it decides on what to preserve and how to present it. His views on a certain topical subject were also interesting and possibly not "on message".

Finally, in May, Tom Painter from Chiltern Railways returned this time accompanied by his colleague Ian Lake. However, on this occasion Chiltern Railways were not the focus but instead they presented an in-depth look at the railways of Japan. Both have taken part in the annual Anglo-Japanese industry exchange programme and gave us a comprehensive overview of the history of Japanese railways followed by an in-depth look at how it operates today. One thing that stood out was the toilet bowl at the training centre - it seems Train Conductors in Japan are expected to be able to rectify a blocked loo mid-journey. Imagine asking the RMT to agree to that!

COTSWOLD FESTIVAL OF STEAM

As this issue was going to press we were looking forward to our visit to Cotswold Festival of Steam at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway on Sunday 29th May. A full report will appear in the September issue.

PETER ROBINS' RETIREMENT

Peter Robins retired from his post as Senior Performance Analyst at Great Western Railway at the end of May to devote more time to his hobby - domestic pressures permitting! We wish him a long and happy retirement.

DONKEY CONTRIBUTIONS

My file of material awaiting publication is again virtually empty and therefore I am once again pleading with you for contributions.

FAWLEY STEAM FESTIVAL

The poor weather on Saturday and Sunday didn't prevent thousands flocking to Fawley over 20-22 May to mark Sir William's 80th birthday.

As with the previous events there was an eclectic collection of vintage transport on display, rail, road, agricultural and military along with flying displays and a parachute drop by the Red Devils.

Guest of honour on Sunday was HRH Prince Michael of Kent who took a ride on the footplate of No.31 with Julian Heard firing - he'll dine out on that for months!



photos: Tim Speechley



SPRING STEAM

There have been three main line specials in our area this spring. On 26th April the first leg of this year's RTC *Great Britain* railtour was hauled by 46100 *Royal Scot* between London Victoria and Plymouth via the Great Western Main Line. David Catton got it in Sonning Cutting [Right].

On 11th May the Belmond British Pullman ran a round trip from Victoria to Bath and Bristol behind 60163 *Tornado*. The return trip was caught at Wokingham [Centre] in a rare patch of sunshine.

60103 *Flying Scotsman* appeared back on the Great Western ten days later when it worked a *Cathedrals Express* from Paddington on 21st May and seen approaching Twyford [Bottom].



photo: David Catton



photo: Mike Walker

BANBURY 'BOX FINALE

The two signal boxes at Banbury will close in late July when a blockade will be placed on the line to allow remodelling and resignalling of the area. Control will move to the West Midlands Signalling Centre at Saltley along with the area currently controlled by Leamington.

This marks the end of semaphore signalling and absolute block working on main lines in our area. The South 'Box which dates from 1908 will be demolished to make way for the new depot but the 1900 built North 'Box may become a museum.

www.mdrs.org.uk



photo: Peter Robins

ADELANTE FIRE

A small electrical fire broke out on the centre car of 180108 as it passed through Twyford on 1P24, the 08:08 Oxford to Paddington on Wednesday 18th May. The train stopped just east of Ruscombe church and the fire was promptly dealt with by the Train Manager. This didn't stop what seemed to be half the local fire and ambulance services descending on Twyford and Ruscombe.

There were no injuries and with the fire out, the train was backed up to Twyford to detrain the passengers before continuing empty to Old Oak Common.

Baie De Somme 2016

The French metre-gauge Baie de Somme line held one of its tri-annual festivals on 15th - 17th April.

Although we didn't have a group visit on this occasion a couple of members attended including Pete Greetorex who arranged for his travelling companion Gordon Adams to provide some photographs of the event which, for once, appears to have been blessed with sun shine.



As with previous events, a number of visiting locomotives from across Europe took part. These included the Norwegian 2-6-0 376 from the K&ESR double-heading [Above] with SNCF Pacific 231K8 on the dual-gauge section between St. Valery Canal and Noyelles and pushing Nord 4-6-0 230D9 [Bottom left] which was visiting from the Mulhouse museum but was not in steam.

Another standard gauge visitor was *Fred*, a British 0-4-0ST (Avonside 1925) from Maldegem in Belgium [Bottom right].

On the metre gauge, Germany's Harz Bahn supplied its unique 2-6-2T 99.6001 seen [Right] idling at Noyelles.





Another international visitor was Jura-Simplon 0-6-0T 909 from Switzerland arriving at Cayeux [Above left] with a train from St. Valery.

In a repeat of an attraction at the last festival, Froissy Dompierre 0-4-0T 5 ran on a specially laid 60cm line through the streets of Cayeux [Above right].



CFBS-based Corpet Louvet 0-4-0T 25 leads a remarkable cavalcade of no less than eight locomotives [Left] cresting the climb out of St. Valery on the line to Cayeux.



TIV (Tramways d'Ile et Vilaine) 0-6-0T 75 was making a return visit to the CFBS festival having attended the 2013 event. Here [Right] it climbs out of St. Valery with a mixed train for Cayeux.

Non-steam participants included AR86 [Below left] a 1934-built tram from the ASVi tramway museum in Thuin, Belgium which shuttled along the quayside at St. Valery.

Also making a return visit was this former Paris Metro train [Below right] which has been equipped with a diesel-generator set in one car which operated on the dual gauge section between St. Valery and Noyelles.



STATION RELOCATION AT BROMSGROVE

Tim Edmonds



My son and his wife moved to Bromsgrove in March 2016 and a visit to see them at Easter gave me the opportunity to spend an hour at Bromsgrove station. These photographs were taken on the morning of 29 March, when I found a bleak unstaffed pair of short platforms, with no facilities beyond meagre shelters, a few cycle racks, a ticket machine and a small car park. This has become increasingly inadequate in recent years, with the growth of commuter and leisure traffic to Birmingham and significant numbers of passengers to Worcester and points south. From a railway enthusiast's point of view its redeeming features are a view up the 1 in 37 Lickey incline to the north and a footbridge providing a reasonable photographic viewpoint. All this will soon be changing with the much-delayed completion of a new Bromsgrove station on the site of the goods yard, to the south of the existing station. It will have four platforms capable of accommodating six-coach trains, a staffed ticket office, passenger waiting room and toilets, a large car park and a bus interchange. The current plan is to open the station in June 2016 and then work will start to electrify the line from Barnt Green to enable the extension of some Birmingham suburban services to Bromsgrove.

Photographed from the south end of Platform 2, the 07:00 Cardiff to Manchester Piccadilly CrossCountry Voyager service speeds past construction work on the new station. While the building is substantially complete, nothing has yet been done to provide new track for the additional platforms – presumably this will be done as part of the electrification work.

Seen from the road bridge at the north end of the station, two-car unit 170521 speeds past Platform 1 with the 07:45 Cardiff to Nottingham CrossCountry service. Construction work on the new station proceeds in the background, where the new car park will extend both sides of the buildings. The poor facilities at the old station are all too apparent.





Forming the 08:49 Birmingham New Street to Hereford London Midland service, 170635 pulls into Platform 2 for its Bromsgrove stop. Note the Lickey incline in the background.

Photographed from the north end of Platform 1, the 06:00 Leeds to Plymouth CrossCountry HST service heads down the Lickey with 43301 at the front. Such shots will not be possible from the new station.

All photos: Tim Edmonds



40 Years of Inter-City 125 on the Western



This summer marks the 40th anniversary of the introduction of the iconic HST or Inter-City 125 trains on the Western, initially on the old timings prior to the launch of 125mph services to Bristol and South Wales in October 1976.

Still an everyday scene 40 years after their introduction, First Great Western 43181, 43187, 43145, 43035 and 43092 form an impressive line up at Paddington. on 25th June 2009.

Photo: Mike Walker

Much has been written about the development and operation of these trains but we can all no doubt remember our first sighting and, better still, first ride - possibly taking advantage of the Western Region's bargain introductory offer of £1.25 return!

Rather than rehash old material, we present here a photo feature showing how the trains have changed in their four decades of faithful service to BR, its successors and customers.

The Western Region was already experienced in running fixed-formation high speed trains. In 1960 it introduced three "Blue Pullman" sets which provided luxury, albeit a little rough-riding, travel connecting Paddington with Bristol, South Wales and Birmingham. The latter operated via High Wycombe [Middle] and was the first to be withdrawn in March 1967 but the other two continued until 1973.

A year previously, the prototype High Speed Train had been completed but testing had been somewhat disrupted by industrial action. Once this had been resolved, initial testing was carried out on the Eastern but with the Western Region given the honour of receiving the first production trains it was only natural that the prototype to commence passenger service on that region. This momentous day was 5th May 1975 and here it leaves Bath that day on the 16:45 Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads.



Photos: Above: Ron North Below: Peter Robins



The production trains started to appear in spring 1976. The power cars had been redesigned by Sir Kenneth Grange to provide what would become a timeless look and the “Pullman” style livery of the prototype was replaced with the standard blue and grey.

The first two power cars initially had black around the cab and along the forward bodysides but this was changed to blue before entering service.

Here, power car W43023 leading set 253011 calls at Reading in the early months of operation.

Photo: Mike Walker



Photo: Ron North

After a fairly short period, the livery of the power cars was amended to continue the carriage livery along the whole side of the power cars with the waistbands and dark grey continuing around the nose. The Inter-City 125 lettering was replaced by *INTER-CITY* and the swallow motif added. Many think this was the best livery the trains have ever carried.

Diverted off its normal route an unidentified HST passes Freshford in the Avon Valley on a Bristol to Paddington working on 6th November 1994.

Photo: Dave Theobald



With the sectorisation of BR in the mid-eighties, Inter City adopted the so-called “Executive” livery of beige with dark grey around the windows plus red and white waistbands.

Initially the power cars retained a similar style of painting as before with the new colours being applied only to the van area at the rear and the front section exchanging blue for black thereby returning in a way to the originally rejected scheme.

This livery is modelled by 43146 arriving at Reading. Note that at this time there was still an attempt to run them in sets, this 253040.



Photo: Mike Walker

In December 1998 First, which had held a minority holding in Great Western Trains, took total control and renamed the company First Great Western.

The new owners lost no time in modifying the livery with bold gold and thin green stripes being applied to the white area below the windows. On the power cars the “Merlin” was replaced by the First Group logo.

In this view an unidentified set overtakes a Thames Trains Class 165 at Ruscombe Church on 28th July 1998.



Great Western was one of the first two privatised franchises to come into operation in February 1996 and the management buy-out team adopted this green and white livery. The brand Inter-City was retained on the trailers but replaced by what was described as a Merlin bird logo on the power cars.

43004 *Swan Hunter* was caught passing Ruscombe on 31st October 1997.

The green First Great Western scheme was soon replaced by First Group’s corporate colours of indigo blue and magenta applied in what became known as the “Barbie” style. Gold bands were retained on the trailers to denote their “premium” status and early repaints had these white fronts to the power cars.

43176 leads an up train past Manor Farm at Cholsey on 20th March 2003.

Three photos: Dave Theobald

The overall effect of the original “Barbie” livery was not a success - the white on the power cars proved difficult to keep presentable. The livery was therefore quickly modified again to replace the white areas with blue. Taste is a subjective thing, but this livery style was probably the worst applied to the Western HST fleet particularly the trailers where the gold stripes clashed with the magenta “Flying F logos.

43175 unusually takes to the Up Relief line passing Ruscombe Church as a sister unit speeds west on the Down Main on 20th May 2005.



By the middle of the first decade of the 21st century the original Paxman Valenta engines were becoming tired and increasingly difficult to maintain. Alternatives were sought and eventually it was decided to replace them with new MTU 16V4000 units. At the same time the power cars were practically rebuilt and the FGW trailers refurbished introducing the controversial “sardine can” accommodation in standard class.

The livery changed again to a more refined blue with magenta doors and the “Dynamic Lines” in house colours. The first two power cars done also briefly carried these lines as demonstrated by 43009 at Didcot on 3rd April 2006.



Photo: Brian Daniels

This brings us to the current First Great Western livery with the power cars in plain blue and the “Dynamic Lines” confined to the trailers.

Incredibly this livery has now been in use for ten years which means it is now, by a considerable margin, the longest-lived scheme worn by the trains in their Western careers.

43127 *Sir Peter Parker 1924-2002/ Cotswold Line 150* is seen passing Shottesbrooke at the head of 1A08, the 06.54 Taunton to Paddington via Bristol on 7th April 2011.

Two photos: Mike Walker



But, for the latest franchise starting in September 2015 the operation is turning back to its heritage and returning to the name Great Western Railway although still operated by First. This is in line with the latest DfT policy to introduce permanent names for franchises rather than those of the incumbent.

Regrettably only one set, LA15 and power cars 43187 and 43188 are scheduled to get the new green livery seen here on launch day due to their planned early retirement.



In recent years several of the Western fleet have been decorated with special promotional or commemorative schemes. To record them all would take a feature of its own but an exception must be made to illustrate 43172 which has been named *Harry Patch The last survivor of the trenches* and wears this stunning evocative wrap to mark the centenary of World War I.

On 4th May this year it was trailing on 1L55, the 11:28 Swansea to Paddington at Swindon.

Photo: Peter Robins

HOW RAILWAYS TOOK ME OVER

Mike Hyde

“That’s the morning train from Waterloo” my father said as the floor trembled and the cups rattled. “It is due into Plymouth Friary shortly having dropped off carriages at Exeter” he added. Probably the ‘Atlantic Coast Express’ I thought, since my father was not really a railway fan. This earth tremor effect would happen several times a day as the trains came and went into/from Devonport (Kings Road) station. Our house was built almost over the entrance to a long tunnel just outside the station. In earlier days the station was the terminus of the LSWR before it was turned into a through station to accommodate the new railway line down the Tamar River from Tavistock. It was now Southern territory with the initials ‘L’ and ‘W’ painted out on metal railway signs.

I loved to see the BoB and West Country Pacifics coming through with their distinctive wheel sounds and streamlined casing. A little shunting went on by tank engine which ran down the branch to the former Ocean Liner quay, used in the 1940s by the Admiralty for military supply purposes. It was a wonderful granite built station but even as I did my morning paper round from the WH Smith’s bookstall I could see the passenger numbers and the trains reducing. My attention was therefore drawn to Devonport (Albert Road) where GWR held court with their shiny green locos and chocolate and cream carriages. Not that there was much viewing opportunity other than peering over a road bridge or two. So it was off to Plymouth (North Road) where there was a lot to see from the fence at the side of the station area. I did not have a camera only my ABC and company with some pals from school which was only a few hundred yards away.

Whilst I enjoyed the trains and the railway magazines my passion was for omnibuses. The City transport was my focus with their red and cream Leylands. TD1s and PD2s and no single deckers in those days but I had seen some olduns in the depot at Milehouse. The trams had gone but the tracks remained often roughly covered in a layer of tarmac. Western National came along with its Bristol K to take me to school, then one day a strange beast called a prototype Lodekka arrived for a short time. By now we were getting into highbridge buses as opposed to offset upper-gangway lowbridge buses and in a few years’ time I saw the arrival of Atlanteans and Bristol VRs. Devonport Kings Road was shortly to be no more and in my future absence a college was built on the flattened site. Shame! It was obviously time for me to leave home and earn a penny or two in this bright new world.

Moving around the country I regret that I failed to take note of the imminent rail closures such as the S&D whilst in Bath and the gradual disappearance of those dirty smelly steam engines. However all was not lost as I did note the various liveries of bus companies as I moved about and benefitted from the relentless extension of motorways which I welcomed on my many north-south journeys.

But this is supposed to be a tale of railway interest. Well, it came good in the end you might say. I did keep up my following of all things transport from aircraft, ships and



Mike on the footplate of 4468 Mallard at the NRM York in September 2014.

vehicles to locomotives plus the infrastructure. The usual man-things of cars, sport and females tended to take up time but the occasional Railway exhibition or Swap-meet or model Railway Show helped to ensure I stayed reasonably level-headed. At least until I settled down with a craving to travel abroad. Initially I (we) decided to take day trips by train (dining of course) then holidays overseas with railway trips to link the centres of tourism. It was on one of these overseas trips that I had an offer I could not refuse. I had done a bit of travelling in parts of Italy as well as South Africa, Canada and New Zealand so when asked subsequently to lead tours to these places it seemed sensible to say ‘yes’. Then another company we had travelled with also asked me about possibly going to Scotland and/or Wales. Suddenly my spare time and approaching retirement which had seemed destined to be quiet, apart from a little gardening, DIY and dog walking, now presented me with a rather full diary. Just the way I like it.

As well as joining the MDRS I had enrolled at Chinnor Railway (C&PRRA) and the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quanton Road in support of local rail societies. It was not long before each of the latter had me volunteering at weekends, that is, when I was not out on the (rail)road with tours. I still find it very satisfying to view or discuss railway subjects at the society, then to be part of a working branch line or railway museum and to take

The Marlow Donkey



people on holidays to places I like, particularly by a method of transport I enjoy. Then again there are models – die cast or electric not fashion or photographic! My collection of buses and trains, books, videos and DVDs seems overpowering to family and visitors but reassuring to me. Not having a layout (I will not go into the home debate) it means I have to make do with my five display cases and overspill occasionally just standing and admiring them. Or picking up a book to check a fact or viewing a video to hear those wonderful sounds of working engines or even browsing through photo albums of earlier tours. Not forgetting ‘YouTube’ or *Railway Herald*.

Railways have given me a lot of pleasure and taken me to places I never dreamt of seeing. Even with a large gap in my middle years the lure of the iron-road especially with steam working on it is still very strong. Whether it is narrow gauge in Africa, standard gauge in Canada or different gauges anywhere in Britain it somehow gets in the blood. Steam is the attraction preferably working and seen in context.... but I do have to admit that a massive train with several diesel locos front, back and centre working through the Tehachapi Loop, California is awesome! Bring it on.

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Mike's travels have taken him far and wide to places such as Ecuador where he travelled on the famed Guayaquil & Quito Railway. Mogul 11 seen here being refuelled with oil in October 2007, was built by Baldwin in 1900.

At Chinnor, Mike can often be found working the 'Box'. Here he pulls off the Down Home. August 2012.



50 years ago – last summer of steam on the Cambrian Coast

Tim Edmonds



I first encountered the Cambrian Coast line through family holidays in 1954, 1956 and 1960. We stayed on a caravan site at Llandanwg, just south of Harlech, in a leaky caravan for the first year, then in a chalet. The fence at the back of the site overlooked the railway as it curved round onto a coast section and GWR locos still ruled the roost, including Manors and Dukedogs as well as more mundane motive power. I can remember travelling there by train (luggage in advance, of course) and on one occasion, I think in 1956, flooding caused us to miss our booked train from Paddington. We were accommodated on a later through train, which made a special stop for us at Llandanwg Halt.

By the time I made a visit in August fifty years ago the railway network in mid-Wales had been savagely cut and steam was in decline. Gone were the old Cambrian main line from Welshpool through Oswestry to Whitchurch, together with the connecting cross-country lines and branches. The remaining passenger services ran from Shrewsbury to Machynlleth, thence to Aberystwyth via Borth and to Pwllheli via the coast line. Many of the local trains were in the hands of DMUs and most of the remaining steam workings were handled by the standard 75xxx 4MT 4-6-0s, working from sheds at Shrewsbury (6D) and

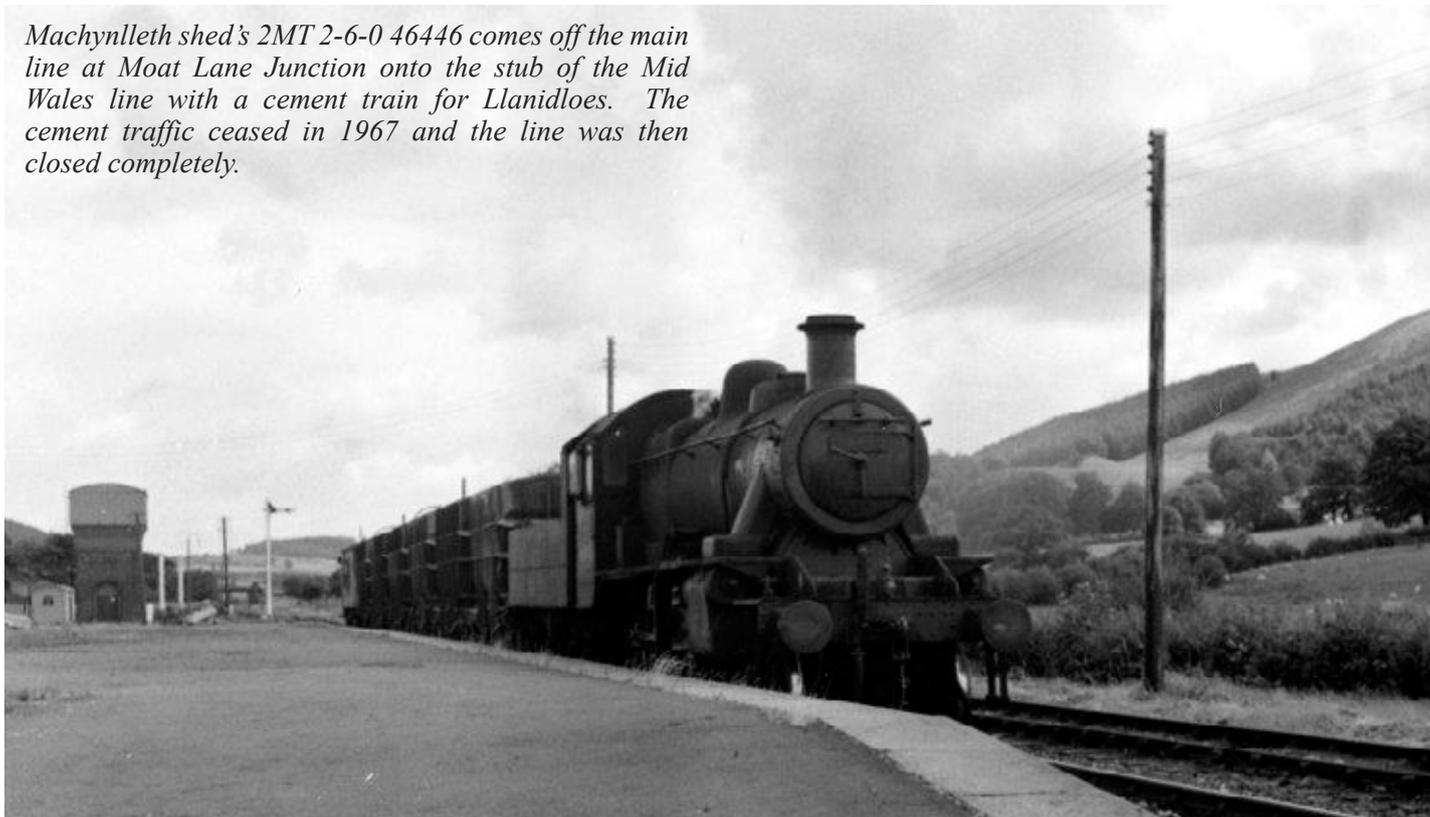
A view from the castle showing three spotters on a bench at Shrewsbury station alongside Machynlleth based standard 4MT 4-6-0 75012. 2nd August 1966.

All photos by the author.

Machynlleth (6F). During the last year of its existence Machynlleth had an allocation of about half a dozen, supplemented in the 1966 summer peak by three standard 76xxx 4MT 2-6-0s, with a pair of ex-LMS Ivatt 2MT 2-6-0s for local goods workings.

In the spring of 1966 it was clear that the end was close and a cycling holiday with my father that August gave me the opportunity to see a little of the last steam action in the summer peak. Travelling by train on Tuesday 2nd August from Old North Road (our local station on the Cambridge – Oxford line) to Shrewsbury, we then followed a meandering route through Mid and South Wales, returning from Shrewsbury on Thursday 17th August. Our overnight stops were in Guest Houses or Youth Hostels. Because my father was a narrow gauge enthusiast our itinerary took us to the Talylyn, Vale of Rheidol and Welshpool & Llanfair railways, via a lot of scenery and various non-railway sights.

Machynlleth shed's 2MT 2-6-0 46446 comes off the main line at Moat Lane Junction onto the stub of the Mid Wales line with a cement train for Llanidloes. The cement traffic ceased in 1967 and the line was then closed completely.



The opportunity for seeing some standard gauge steam came on several days – notably when we had overnight stops at Machynlleth, Towyn (as it was then spelt) and Borth. This included seeing the Aberystwyth and Pwllheli portions of the well-loaded Saturday ‘Cambrian Coast Express’ being combined at Machynlleth – a manoeuvre which had at one time been carried out at Dovey Junction. One fortunate unplanned encounter with steam was during a visit to Moat Lane Junction to see what remained there. Moat Lane station and loco shed had closed at the end of December 1962 when services were withdrawn from the former Mid Wales Railway between Newtown and Brecon via Builth Wells. A stub survived from Moat Lane to Llanidloes to handle cement traffic for the construction of the nearby Clywedog Dam. This originated from Aberthaw and now had to go the long way round via Shrewsbury rather than the much more direct but now closed Mid Wales route. While we were looking at the station one of Machynlleth’s Ivatt 2-6-0s, 46446, arrived from the Newtown direction with a cement train for Llanidloes. We later saw the same loco run light engine through Caersws towards Machynlleth, so it must have left its load and returned immediately.

Machynlleth shed closed to steam on 6th December 1966, although it was still used for servicing and stabling purposes for the next three months. Remarkably, Oswestry Works was still overhauling steam locos until the end of the year. The last job was the re-tubing of 75024, which had been one

of Machynlleth’s final allocation and subsequently went to Carnforth. Steam working continued from Shrewsbury shed, where a few standard 4MT 4-6-0s handled the remaining loco-hauled passenger services on the Cambrian. Shrewsbury shed closed to steam on 6 March 1967, part of the changes which included the end of through services from Paddington to Birkenhead, Aberystwyth and Pwllheli. The *Cambrian Coast Express* survived until the end, the last trains running on 4th March, and gave the opportunity for the crews to give some spectacular performances over Talerddig bank. Locos known to be active on the Cambrian at the end were 75021, 75029, 75033 and 75048, of which 75029 survives in preservation on the North York Moors Railway.

2-car DMU calling at Caersws station with an up local service to Shrewsbury. 5th August 1966.

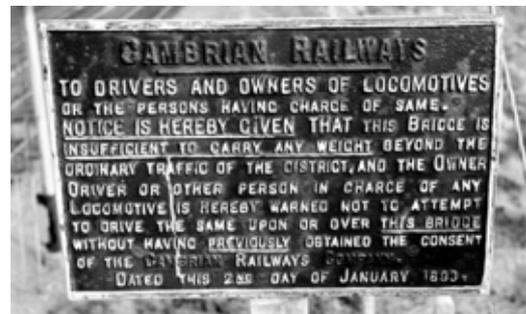




4MT 4-6-0 75016 arriving at Machynlleth with one portion of the Cambrian Coast Express – I think that this was the Coast section, but don't have a note to confirm it. 6th August 1966.



One of the pair of Ivatt 2MT 2-6-0s allocated to Machynlleth, 46521 rests between duties. Little did I think at the time that 33 years later I would be firing and driving this loco on a Footplate Experience course on the Severn Valley Railway. 6th August 1966.



A cast-iron Cambrian Railways sign still extant by the road bridge south of the station at Towyn.



The Aberystwyth and Coast portions of the heavy summer Saturday Cambrian Coast Express have been combined at Machynlleth and are ready to tackle Talerddig bank behind 4MT 4-6-0s 75053 and 75016, both Shrewsbury locos. 6th August 1966.

Machynlleth shed, with grimy standard 4MT 4-6-0 75033 on the left. Framed at the other end is standard 4MT 2-6-0 76043, one of three members of the class transferred to Machynlleth from the West Midlands in June 1966 to assist with the summer traffic. 6th August 1966.



Standard 4MT 4-6-0 75053 crests the 1 in 75 bank and approaches the level crossing at Llandre, between Borth and Aberystwyth, on a down goods. The station here had closed the previous year. 9th August 1966.



Standard 4MT 4-6-0 75009 pulls into a busy Towyn station with the coast portion of the Cambrian Coast Express. 8th August 1966.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

TAKING THE WATER



Colour-Rail DE1588 / Mike Walker collection

Whilst it is common knowledge that Diesels had steam heating boilers until the universal adoption of electric train heating, what is not always appreciated is that in the early years their tanks were replenished using steam infrastructure. For example, above we see North British Class 43 Warship D838 *Rapid* taking a drink from a water column at Bristol Temple Meads in February 1963.

Even more remarkable is that the early English Electric Type 4s, and possibly others, had scoops so they could replenish their tanks on the move as demonstrated by D204, below, scooping up on Bushey Troughs as it headed for Euston in 1959.

Steam & Sail D466 / Mike Walker collection

