

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

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The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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Front Cover Photograph

St. Blazey Roundhouse 23 March 1959 (further images page 11 & 12).

Photo: Ken Lawrie.

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

For the present, all meetings are being conducted on Zoom starting at 7.30pm.

Thursday 18 March **OPERATOR TURNED TIMETABLE PLANNER** David Langton

David's presentation will basically follow his railway service, starting with 18 months on the Graduate Training Scheme, and then his first job after training as Shift Supervisor at Derby St Mary's freight yard in the late 1970s. He was then Traffic Manager at Workington and relief Station and Traincrew Supervisor at Carlisle in the early 1980s. Then to Plymouth in early 1985 doing various Area Management roles until his 1992 move to Manchester as a Timetable Specifier / Planner with Regional Railways. He always had a desire to be involved in Planning and what better background than from Operations Management. Following the takeover by First Group he continued with FNW and got involved in Franchise Bidding as an add-on to his core job. He moved to TPE soon after its formation in 2003, and remained in a Planning and Franchise Bidding role until retirement at the end of 2017.

Thursday 15 April **WEST COUNTRY BRANCH LINES** Mike Walker

Another trawl through the archives to visit the branch lines of Devon and Cornwall in the days when the area was a mecca for summer holidays where the sun always shone on pristine beaches reached by trains hauled by Small Prairies, O2s or the occasional (real) Diesel.

Thursday 20 May **NORTH KOREA, MADAGASCAR AND OTHER EXOTIC LOCATIONS** Adrian Palmer

Adrian's presentation covers his Overseas Travels with the Loco Club of Great Britain between 2009 and 2019.

Thursday 17 June **To be confirmed**

Thursday 15 July **FROM TEBAY TO eBay** David Pearce

Please note that you have to register for each meeting as a separate meeting ID and passcode is generated by Zoom. We send out an invitation to register a few days ahead of each meeting by e-mail. When you receive this please follow the link contained which will generate a further message containing the relevant meeting ID and passcode. Don't think that because you have registered for a previous meeting you don't have to register again and can reuse the same details.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Spring is in the air, the snow has gone (in these parts) and the grass is growing. Hopefully rail excursions will start moving and Heritage lines operating soon, if not sooner. I will have to dust off my Station Master's uniform, let out the sides because of lockdown eating and drive over to Chinnor. I do miss the hiss and noise, usually from the engine, and look forward to seeing the smiling faces of the loco crew as well as the passengers.

Your committee have continued with the series of Zoom meetings each month which have been reasonably attended by members, by visiting RCTS individuals and other guests. The more the merrier but if you have difficulty with joining in do please give Dave Woodhead a call or speak to Peter Robins. They can advise on the limited equipment you need and the way to register. A great pity if you missed Peter's Christmas presentation called 'A touch of Winter' followed in January by Terry McCarthy's 'The GWR in South Wales'. A real Travelogue attracted us in February following the AGM when Colin Miell conducted us along the Trans-Siberian and the Trans-Mongolian railways. Try not to miss David Langdon's 'Operator turned Timetable Planner' if you get this Donkey in time nor Mike Walker's 'West Country Branches' in April. A full Zoom programme has been planned for the remainder of the year, if necessary, although we

all hope that it will not be too long before we take our seats in the Borne End Community Centre when we and they reopen. Members will be advised as soon as the position clarifies.

The Annual General Meeting passed under the chairmanship of our President Mark Hopwood CBE – the society was delighted to applaud his award. He was able to maintain the record for a brief well presented meeting due to the pre-circulated paperwork from Secretary Vincent Caldwell. Reports were noted and the minutes from the 2020 AGM were approved. The annual accounts prepared by Treasurer Peter Robins were also approved. Members were pleased to agree that Brian Hopkinson be re-elected to the committee, following his three-year term in office. The membership approved a change to Rule 5.5 of the constitution. The amendment stipulated that the accounts would be subject in future to independent examination rather than requiring a full audit.

Is that a light I see at the end of the tunnel or is it a.....? Answers on a postcard to the Easter Bunny. 'An oncoming train' is not accepted. Above all Stay Safe and keep training.

Mike Hyde

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

One bright spot in the otherwise unrelenting gloom caused by the pandemic has been the large number of new members we have attracted in the past year. They are both local and more distant and bring our total membership to well in excess of 80 - an all-time record for the Society. What is even more encouraging is that those who live in the local area have joined as full members in the hope of being able to enjoy real meetings in the not too distant future.

The latest recruits are: Vic Branfoot from Hartlepool, Steve Sharp from Burgess Hill, Malcolm Crawford from High Wycombe, John Medley from Maidenhead, Chris Zaremba from Gerrards Cross and Graham Collett from York. Welcome to you all.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Our meetings this winter have continued to be conducted on Zoom and have been well attended by members and guests. Our February meeting saw a maximum attendance of 98 which caused a few anxious moments as our license only extends to 100 participants. Whilst attendance by members continues to rise slowly it would be great to see more of you.

In December, Peter Robins provided a suitably wintery selection of photographs from both the UK and around the world with one common denominator - snow!

Terry McCarthy opened the new year for us with an

excellent presentation charting the history of the GWR in South Wales from its initial construction through the gauge controversy, grouping and up to nationalisation. A seemingly huge subject which was covered in a very professional style - we all learnt something.

Following our another of our famously brief AGMs in February, Colin Meill took us on another marathon this time riding the Trans-Siberian and Trans-Mongolian Expresses across Russia and China. In addition to the railways, Colin gave us a flavour of the cities and countryside along the routes.

RCTS MEETINGS

Our friends in the RCTS are also conducting their meetings on Zoom and have the following meetings planned for the remainder of their 2020-21 season.

Monday 22nd March

Western Enterprise Colin Brading

Monday 26th April

What the Future Holds for Britain's Railways Gareth Dennis

Monday 24th May

Volunteering on the GWSR Richard Morris

MDRS members are welcome to take part in these sessions and if wish to do so please register in advance of each meeting you wish to attend by going to <https://rcts.org.uk/windsor-maidenhead/events/> and follow the instructions.



A recent new freight flow on the Chiltern Line sees stone trains running from Tytherington quarry near Yate, north of Bristol, and Calvert in connection with the building of a HS2 construction base there. On 19th February DB Cargo 66150 is seen approaching High Wycombe with the 07:07 Tytherington to Calvert.

Photo: Mike Walker

WHERE THEY ARE NOW?

John Tuck looks back at news from 35 years ago and asks where they are now.

Council funds Bulleid injector

Thanet council donated £1,400 from its lottery funds to Manston Preservation Group who are restoring the BoB locomotive at Richborough Power Station Kent. 34070 *Manston* was purchased from Barry for £6,900 in 1981.

Progress: With the closure of Richborough power station it meant the group was requested to vacate the site and found a 'home' on the Great Central Railway at Loughborough. A decision was made to join Southern Locomotives, the engine was moved to Sellindge in Kent in September 1998.

As with most Bulleid Pacifics rescued from Barry Manston did not have a tender so a new one was made. Steel plate for the frames had to be specially rolled as imperial thicknesses are no longer produced.

Manston entered service on the Swanage Railway on 14th September 2008. Its boiler ticket was due to run to mid-2018, however it suffered a low speed shunting collision on 24th July 2017, and it was decided to withdraw it for overhaul in addition to repair of the crash damage. It's hoped to return the loco to traffic in 2021.

Sources: Railway World & Southern Locomotives Ltd
<https://southern-locomotives.co.uk>

Bristol Harbour Railway

More than 11,000 passengers travelled by GWR Toad in 1985. Ex Port of Bristol Authority Peckett *Henbury* (No.1940 of 1937) gave a 100% reliability over the 30 operating days. It's hoped for a repeat in 1986. *Henbury* was one of 40 engines working Bristol docks in 1937.

Progress: *Henbury* took part in the opening ceremony of Bristol Industrial Museum in 1978. In 1981, *Henbury* made railway history as the first preserved steam locomotive to pull scheduled freight on main line rail. As Bristol City Council own both the docks and the M Shed museum where *Henbury* resides she has been under the same ownership since 1937! Currently under restoration following expiry of her boiler certificate in 2014 you can purchase boiler tubes at £12 each.

Sources: Railway World & <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed/whats-at/working-exhibits/>

WD 90775

Following purchase from Greece in 1984 the WD has undergone extensive restoration at the MHR and boiler overhaul at Messrs. Plenty of Newbury. 90775 is expected to debut on the MHR in the spring of 1986.

Progress: After a working life in Greece of 27 years, 951 was eventually repatriated in August 1984, arriving back in the UK at Ipswich Docks onboard the Greek vessel *Empress*. Before departing from Greece many worn parts had been interchanged with good (or better) ones from the other 'scrap' locomotives to ensure that restoration in the UK would be a fairly straightforward task. Also secured at the time were a considerable number of 'new' spare parts including some complete firebars still in their NBL crates!

In 1992 when its MHR owners sold it to the Essex Locomotive Society who transferred it to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway (NYMR).

In late June 2003 it moved to the North Norfolk Railway on loan and in the following year, due to commitments on their other engines at the NYMR, the owners put the engine on the market www.mdrs.org.uk

with a substantial six-figure asking price. The Society was exceedingly fortunate in that a generous benefactor enabled us to secure its purchase in 2006 for future use on the NNR.

90775 was taken out of service in March 2009 for a major overhaul. In May 2017 the locomotive moved under its own steam, returning to traffic at the end of May on the North Norfolk Railway.

In September 2017 the locomotive was given the name *The Royal Norfolk Regiment*.

Sources: Railway World & Sources:
<https://preservedbritishsteamlocomotives.com>

Flying Scotsman & Sir Nigel Gresley

4472 and 4498 are to be based at Marylebone for the first few months of 1986 on *Shakespeare Express* duties covering for *Clan Line* which is due to resume duties following completion of a bogie overhaul.

Progress: As for *Flying Scotsman* I think more than enough has been written about 4472, she now awaits resumption of main line duties whenever that maybe!

As for 4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley* the 21st A4 to be built she joined the 50th anniversary of *Mallard's* record run on 3 July 1988, the National Railway Museum assembled three of the four UK-based A4 Pacific locomotives at the museum, the first time this had ever been done in preservation.

During 1994, *Sir Nigel Gresley* spent some time at the Great Central Railway then at the East Lancashire Railway. The locomotive then moved to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway in 1996, and is based there. She joined 'The Great Gathering' at the NRM in York where all 6 preserved A4s were gathered.

Since 2015 *Sir Nigel Gresley* has been undergoing heavy overhaul with hoped for completion during 2022 of course Covid has disrupted the work schedule. The overhaul is taking place in the NRM workshop, only off site work has been able to progress under Covid conditions.

Sources: Railway World & Sources:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LNER_Class_A4_4498_Sir_Nigel_Gresley



4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley* leaving *Chearsley Viaduct* with the *Thames-Avon Express* from *Marylebone* to *Saltley* on 16th February 1985.

Photo: Mike Walker

THE DONCASTER SCHOOL COLLECTION

Peter Robins visited this hidden collection in 2018.

For nearly three years, a good friend and I have wanted to visit Doncaster Grammar School which houses one of the largest collections of railwayana which is not regularly open to the public. Partly due to the proximity of the famous works, and partly due to receiving a signed photo of Sir Nigel Gresley, the school railway society became a thriving concern in the 1930's. At its height, one in six pupils was a member. Whilst some schoolboys were content with playing with the society's model railway, some of the older pupils and teachers were collecting the real thing. As the railway industry rushed to dispose of steam in favour of diesel, many railway nameplates and relics found their way to Doncaster Grammar School. The school "stash" eventually grew to around 2,000 items including over eighty nameplates. Unfortunately the former teacher who managed the collection passed away a few years ago leaving the collection with an uncertain future.

In recent years the former grammar school has changed to Hall Cross Academy and a new custodian allows visits, usually Thursday evening and by prior appointment. The first date offered was the date of the MDRS AGM so I decided to pick another date, a couple of weeks earlier

On arrival at Doncaster station, we were picked up by car and

driven to Hall Cross Academy. The collection is kept in the old clock tower which is reached by a long narrow spiral staircase. We had been advised that taking a camera bag up the stairs would not be easy and they weren't joking! We were also advised to beware of a step down then a step up at the top. Apparently one visitor last year, a certain former conservative MP who now travels the country with his Bradshaw guide didn't take heed and had a slight stumble. Once at the top a vista of nameplates, worksplates, wagonplates, industrial plates, totems and other items opened up before you. If there was a competition to cram as much railwayana into as small a space as possible, Doncaster would win. The actual tower where the clock was originally situated was reached by performing a sort of limbo dance under some signalling instruments. Here more wagon plates and industrial nameplates lined the walls which were about 30 foot high. One of the amazing things was that even after I thought I had seen all the nameplates, I kept finding more. In the tower, I saw the back of a brass plate, turned it round and there was *Highland Chieftain* ex A2/1 60507. One plate, *Duchess of Rutland*, I didn't even spot until processing the photos. Thanks are due to our hosts for the evening, Pete and Brian who manage the collection and made us most welcome.

Amidst the worksplates and industrial nameplates can be seen *Worsley - Taylor*. This nameplate came from ex GCR 11E/ LNER D10 Director 62659, which was built at Gorton in 1913 and withdrawn in November 1954. The D10 class was a success and was the basis for the D11 Improved Director which includes the now preserved *Butler Henderson*. Just below a row of Peckett worksplates, *The Grammar School Doncaster, A.D. 1350* can be seen. This nameplate was fitted to HST power car 43045 in October 1983, removed in July 1989, refitted in June 1991 and removed again in September 2015. Also visible are totems from Carntyne and Bordesley and a nameplate from BR standard SMT 73113 *Lyonesse* hiding in the top right.



Another view shows mainly worksplates from a variety of makers including ALCo, Barclay, Beyer Peacock, Black Hawthorn, Greenbat, Hudswell Clarke, Markham, Metropolitan Vickers, Nasmyth Wilson, North British, Peckett and Simplex.



Helmingham Hall from LNER B17 Sandringham 61647 keeps company with some wagon plates and signal lamps. The loco was built at Darlington in 1935 as 2847 and withdrawn in November 1959. Also visible are the signalbox board from Scrooby near Retford, a Hunslet diesel radiator plate, and you can see how I missed *Duchess of Rutland* ex LMS Coronation 46228. This loco was built at Crewe in 1938 with streamline casing which was later removed and withdrawn from Crewe in September 1964.

GWR cabside plates and signal finials surround two Southern nameplates. *Bradfield* came from Schools 30923 which was built at Eastleigh in 1933 and withdrawn in 1962. 30923 was originally named *Uppingham* but the school objected

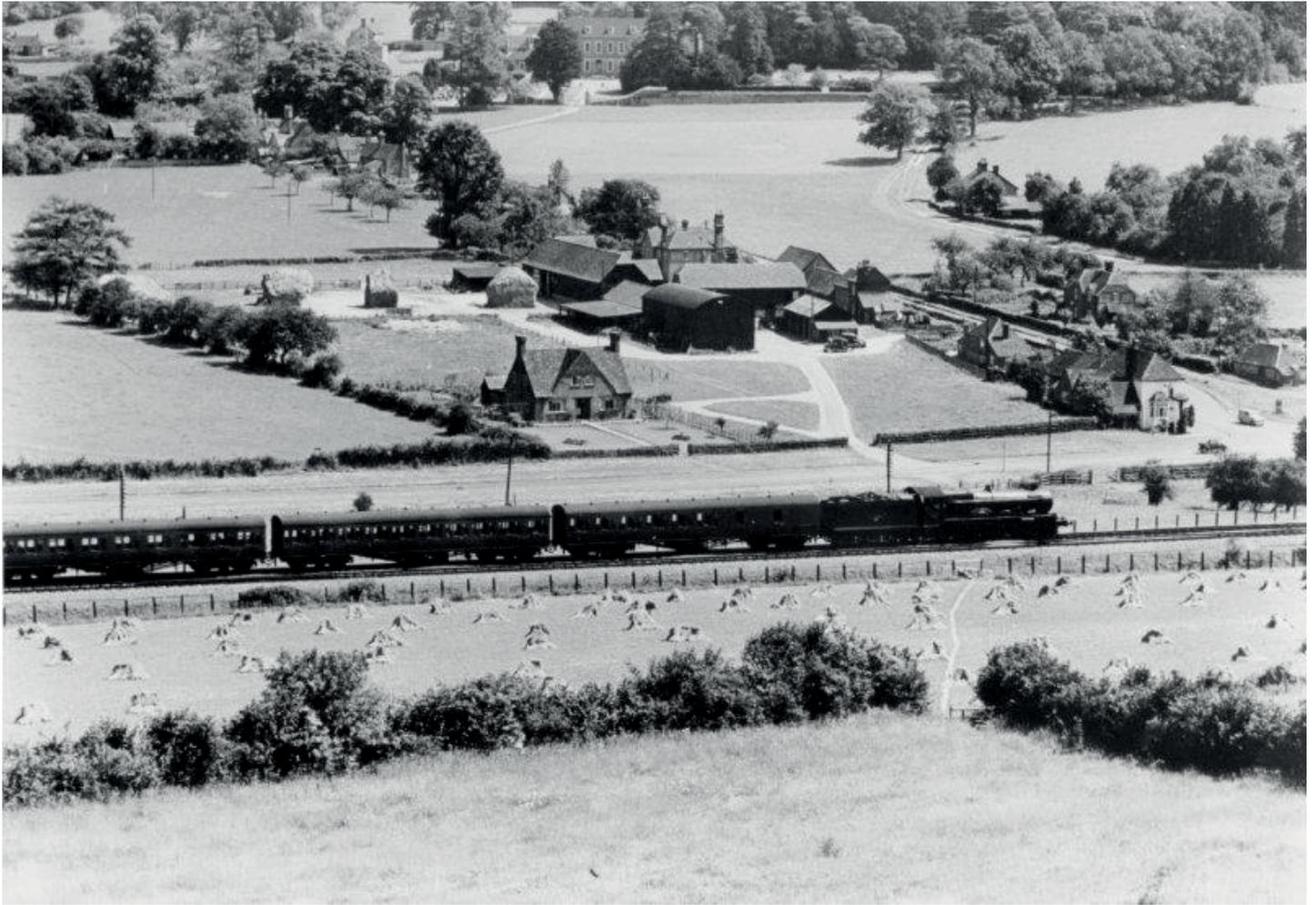
and the loco was renamed *Bradfield* after the school near Theale. *Lord Howe* came from Lord Nelson 30857, which was built at Eastleigh in 1926 and withdrawn in 1962. Two more nameplates are partially visible behind other artefacts. *County of Montgomery* came from the left hand side of GWR County 1021 which was built at Swindon in 1946 and withdrawn in November 1963. *Ellerman Lines* came from Merchant Navy 35029 which was built at Eastleigh in 1949 with air-smoothed casing which was later removed in 1959. After withdrawal in 1966, 35029 was sent to Barry scrapyard prior to being turned into a sectioned exhibit in York museum. A totem from Goole is also prominent in the picture.



These two nameplates are from the locos which worked the 08:00 Euston to Liverpool to 8th October 1952 and were subsequently involved in the disastrous double collision at Harrow. The pilot loco was LMS Jubilee 45637 *Windward Islands* which was built at Crewe in 1934. The train engine was 46202 *Princess Anne* which was built at Crewe in 1935 as a steam turbine-mechanical loco, and more commonly called the Turbomotive. After a turbine failure in 1949, it was considered uneconomic to repair so it was decided to rebuild it in conventional form in 1952. Both of these locos were written off with the rebuilt 46202 having been in service for less than two months. A nameplate from SR King Arthur 30752 *Linette* hides in the shadows behind.

Fatality at Bradenham Crossing – the accident of 1929

by Tim Edmonds



In 2008 I visited the Dashwood Mausoleum at West Wycombe, prominently located on the hilltop next to the church of St Lawrence. On walking back through the churchyard an epitaph on a gravestone caught my eye. It read “Edward Algernon Stone. Born 16th February 1906, accidentally killed 5th Dec. 1929 in the performance of his duties as a postman at Bradenham Railway Crossing”. Situated between West Wycombe and Saunderton, the crossing was familiar to me as a way to reach suitable photographic viewpoints when steam specials started running out of Marylebone in the mid-1980s. However, I did not know of this accident and quick checks in books and online found no mention of it. A search of back-numbers of the Bucks Free Press (BFP) at High Wycombe Library revealed a short report published on 6th December, the day after the accident, and a lengthy report on the inquest in the following week’s edition on 13th December. Apart from checking the minutes of the GW&GC Joint Committee and the GW Register of Accidents at the National Archives, I did not have time to pursue this any further at the time.

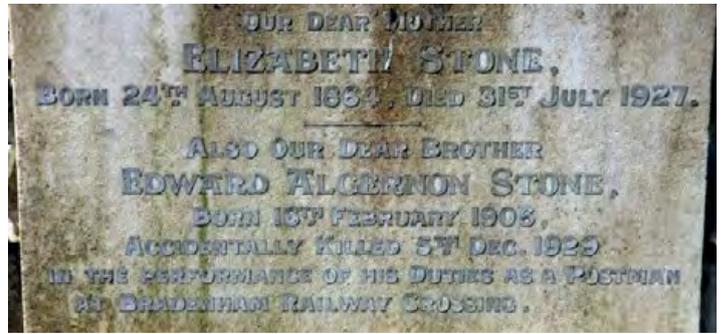
My notes were filed away until extended home time during the COVID-19 pandemic led me to look them out, and the increased availability of online archive and library sources have enabled me to uncover more of the story of the unfortunate postman and his demise. This article summarises the story and examines some aspects of the operation of the railway and the eventual closure of the crossing and diversion of the public footpath. When looking for a suitable archive photo of Bradenham Crossing as an illustration I found one by searching the excellent SWOP website (Sharing Wycombe’s Old Photos – there is a link on the Links page of the Society’s website).

A summer view of Bradenham Crossing from c1960 showing a ‘Castle’ class loco on up train of non-corridor stock at the site of the 1929 accident. The footpath approaching the crossing is clearly visible. The Red Lion is at the road junction on the right middle distance. It was taken just north of Noble’s Farm, which is to the photographer’s right. (Photo from SWOP and reproduced courtesy of High Wycombe Library, Ref. RHW24635)

The victim and the accident

Edward Stone was a 23-year old man from a local family. Since April 1927 he had worked as an auxiliary postman at West Wycombe, where he lived, and was responsible for the West Wycombe – Bradenham round. This included both Bradenham village and various outlying hamlets and farms, one of which was Noble’s Farm. This was reached on foot via a public path from the main A4010 road near the Red Lion pub, across a field then over the railway on the level at Bradenham Crossing. Originally opened by the Wycombe Railway in 1862 as an extension of its Maidenhead – High Wycombe line to Princes Risborough and Thame, this section was rebuilt as part of the Great Western & Great Central Joint Railway, opened in 1906. It was thereby converted from a single-track branch to a busy double-track main line. Stone used the crossing regularly on his round and would be expected to exercise caution there. It is also likely that he would have been familiar with the times of the passenger trains.

What made Thursday 5th December 1929 different was the weather. There were severe storms, with heavy rain and near gale-force winds causing numerous incidents nationally on the railways and elsewhere. Stone seems to have cycled from West



Edward Stone is commemorated in the churchyard at St Lawrence, West Wycombe, on a plot and gravestone shared with his mother, Elizabeth, who had died two years earlier. The condition of the stone has deteriorated since this photo was taken in 2008 as can be seen in the close-up of the inscriptions on the headstone, showing damage due to weathering by 2013.

Both Tim Edmonds

Wycombe and his timesheet showed that he was at the village Post Office in Bradenham at 8:45am. He then delivered post on foot to Gale's Farm at about 9:00am and was crossing the railway on his way back when he was hit by the 8:57am train from High Wycombe to Aylesbury. This was a GWR auto train being driven by Herbert Henry Buckingham of Aylesbury from the trailer at the front. With him in the driving compartment was James Reed, an LNER permanent way inspector from Princes Risborough who had worked on the line since its upgrade. Fireman Harry Carter of Aylesbury was in the locomotive propelling from the back, but there is no mention of a guard or any other railway employees on the train. After the accident Buckingham set the train back to the crossing to find Stone dead in the six-foot. Carter walked to the Red Lion to summon the police and the ambulance. PC L Adams of West Wycombe arrived to take charge and, after a local doctor had confirmed death from a fractured skull, the body was moved to the blacksmith's at Bradenham. The BFP reporter does not say what action the crew took to protect their train, but presumably they informed the Saunderton signalman. It is not clear how long it (or any other traffic) was delayed, but there is nothing to suggest that the unfortunate driver and fireman did not work their train on to Aylesbury, since it was blocking the main line. The GWR Register of Accidents merely records the accident and fatality, not the details. It is possible that there is information in the Parliamentary online records, but I have not been able to check this since they are accessible only via membership of an academic institution.

The inquest

The Coroner held an inquest on Saturday 7th December at the Red Lion, Bradenham, in front of a jury of seven local men. Representing the railways were Inspector Mabbett of the GWR, Mr A Standing of the LNER and Mr W H Baker, Station Master at Saunderton. There were also representatives from ASLEF, the Union of Post Office Workers, the GPO, and the Police. The jury heard that the train had departed from its booked 9:05am stop at West Wycombe in heavy rain and a gale force wind. As it approached Bradenham Crossing at about 40mph, Stone was walking towards the down line. Driver Buckingham sounded the warning gong on the coach and braked, but Stone continued to cross the line and was struck by the train. Reed, the PW inspector, pointed out that there had not been an accident at the crossing before and that visibility was good in both directions – he was backed up by PC Adams. However, Herbert Kingham of Gale's Farm, a regular user of the crossing, described it as "a very dangerous place". Witnesses were also questioned on the character of the deceased and whether the railwaymen involved had been vigilant in performing their duties, but the key issues

were the weather and the victim's clothing. Because he cycled from West Wycombe, Stone had been issued with GPO clothing for a cyclist – a cape to go over his overcoat rather than a full-length mackintosh. It seems that either this had blown over his head or that he had intentionally used it to shield himself from the wind and rain. The jury concluded that the death was accidental and that no blame was attached to anyone.

The train

The BFP reports give enough detail to show that the auto train had multiple coaches, so it probably looked like the train in the 'then' picture of Handsworth Junction on the back of the December 'Donkey'. There is no information about the locomotive. This was before the introduction of the familiar auto-fitted 14xx 0-4-2Ts and in 1929 the largest class of GWR locos fitted for auto working was the 517 class 0-4-2T. No 1156 was based at Aylesbury at this time, so this is a likely candidate. Other possibilities were a 455 class 'Metro' 2-4-0T or a 2021 class 0-6-0PT. The inquest was not told how many passengers were on the train and none were called as witnesses.

The lack of a guard is interesting, but some digging around on the internet and requests to various specialist organisations have shown that guard-less working of push-pull trains was permitted in some circumstances. It was a practice that seems to have begun during the First World War and continued through to the British Railways era. The General Appendix to the GW Rule Book effective from 1st August 1936 includes a note that "on certain branch lines, where specially authorised, a Guard will not be employed on auto trains provided the number of coaches on the train does not exceed three vacuum-fitted vehicles" and there were modifications to several rules to cover such cases. In 1960 the BR Push and Pull Trains General Instruction 17 states that "a guard need not be employed on 'Push and Pull' trains, where authorised by the regional Operating Officer, provided the number of coaches on such trains does not exceed three, and that the train is composed entirely of vehicles fitted with automatic brake throughout". There was an appendix that listed the lines where this practice was authorised. This included seven Western Region lines, but not the former GW&GC Joint line.

On auto trains the guard's duties would include issuing tickets at halts and other unstaffed stations. Until a few weeks before the accident all the stations on the route of the 8:57am from High Wycombe were staffed, so this would not have been necessary. However, on 11th November 1929 the unstaffed Monks Risborough & Whiteleaf Halt had been opened just north of Princes Risborough and it is not clear what arrangements had been made for issuing tickets there.

Diversion of the public path

Something that did not form part of the inquest hearing, but which was raised while the jury were considering their verdict, was that there was a low underbridge just to the south of the level crossing, which offered a safe way of crossing the railway. It was privately owned by the Bradenham Estate and gave access to fields west of the railway. A retired naval officer, Vice-Admiral Mortimer L'Estrange Silver CBE JP, who lived at The White House, Bradenham, was representing the owner when he said that instead of using the level crossing "people might use the path under the archway", adding that "it was a private way, but the owner would raise no objection to it being used". Most of the people present at the inquest, including the jury, were local and must surely have known of its existence and who owned it. However, no names were mentioned, and it took some genealogical research and obtaining copies of several wills from the gov.uk website to identify this person.

Henrietta Tempest, daughter of Sir Robert Tempest Tempest, 3rd Baronet Ricketts, was a very wealthy woman. Following the deaths of her father in 1901 and her childless younger brother in 1909, she inherited the family's ancestral home in Yorkshire and an estate in Perthshire provided that she reverted to the family name. Her husband, John Hicks Graves, who owned the Bradenham Estate, changed his name to Tempest to enable her to claim her legacy. He died in 1915 and, because his wife had her own money, she inherited only his personal effects but could remain living at Bradenham Manor House. He left the Bradenham Estate to his unmarried sister Beatrice Graves, who lived in Hereford. Beatrice's will, made in June 1929, records that she had already passed her interest in the estate over to Henrietta, her sister-in-law. So, at the time of the accident, it was Henrietta who owned the path under the railway bridge. Vice-Admiral Silver's involvement was because he was cousin to John and Beatrice, and, as a Justice of the Peace, would have had to approve any change to public rights of way.

After Silver had spoken, Standing, the LNER representative, asked him whether, if the path over the crossing were diverted through the underpass, there would any objection to it becoming a public path. Silver was unable to give this assurance. It seemed that Henrietta Tempest would allow an informal arrangement for the public to use the bridge as an alternative, but that the official public path would remain over the level crossing. Standing clearly followed the matter up with the railway because the GW&GC Joint Committee meeting on 23rd July 1930 authorised an application to the Justices for the diversion. However, nothing more happened to the proposal.

The fatality had brought into focus the safety of the crossing but the obvious solution that had been rejected in 1930 did not happen for another 73 years until Chiltern Railways was reintroducing fast main line services to Birmingham. As part of a

programme to eliminate many foot crossings on the line, Bradenham Crossing was closed by an Order in 2003 and the footpath was at last diverted through the underbridge. As for Edward Stone, his story was forgotten apart from his churchyard epitaph. It is still there, but the gravestone had deteriorated badly through weathering the last time I saw it.

Postscript – railway fatalities then and now

On the evening of 5th December 2020, the 91st anniversary of the Bradenham Crossing accident, there was a fatality on the Chiltern line where it runs alongside the West Wycombe Road in High Wycombe. At the time of writing little detail has been given about this, so perhaps it was a suicide. However, it is interesting to contrast the resources required to deal with these events, always bearing in mind that the first was in daylight and the second was after dark.

In 1929 the Bradenham Crossing fatality was apparently handled by a doctor summoned from Princes Risborough to confirm cause of death, a village PC to 'take charge' and an ambulance. Delays to train services are not known but appear to have been minimal. The body was quickly moved to the village blacksmith's and the inquest was held in the pub two days later. In 2020 the West Wycombe Road fatality drew fire crews from High Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Amersham, Aylesbury (urban search and rescue) and Maidenhead – around 40 firefighters and officers in total. They assisted the British Transport Police, Thames Valley Police and Network Rail. There was disruption to train services for the rest of the day. At the time of writing the inquest has been set for 21st April.

Bradenham Crossing in 2010 after closure to the public and diversion of the path through the underbridge. The gate is locked and monitored by Network Rail.



The view from the A4010 towards the railway in 2010 after closure of Bradenham Crossing to the public and diversion of the path through the underbridge, which is through the field gate in the left middle distance. The old path crossed the field in the foreground diagonally from the roadside gate on the left to the crossing gate on the right.

Both Tim Edmonds



KEN LAWRIE VISITS...

Long serving MDRS member Ken Lawrie travelled far and wide in the fifties and sixties photographing the railway scene. Here is a selection from his collection.

The famous roundhouse at St. Blazey in Cornwall plays host to a variety of Pannier and Small Prairie tanks on 23rd March 1959. From left to right we have: 9673, 8733, 8719, 4559, 5519 and 3705.



Moving to the opposite end of the turntable we see the standard GWR coaling stage with visiting Mogul 6379 plus Panniers 7709, 1664 and 9673 once more.

The 16 ton mineral wagon at the end of the coal stage ramp looks to be in unusually mint condition for such wagons.



4552 in clean lined green livery was one of a number of Small Prairies allocated to St. Blazey to work the Bodmin, Looe and Newquay branches.



Modified Hall 6977 *Grundisburgh Hall* blows off whilst waiting to take a down train out of Newton Abbot on 27th March 1959.

Day four, Monday, 30th August: Devon and Cornwall

Off on the 8.55 from Exeter Central, Queen Street until 1933, although it is central to Exeter, being a bit over 300 yards from the High Street. Down to St. David's, then up and up to Okehampton, 750 feet above sea level. In contrast to the big-dipper ride of the South Devon Railway, the railway round the north and west slopes of Dartmoor is basically one up, and one down. The ultimate summit is 950 feet up, a mile or so west of Meldon Junction. From there it's only 12½ miles down, with a ruling gradient of 1 in 78, to Halwill Junction, where the bubble car forming the 10.40 to Wadebridge sat in the down bay. The van was at the buffer stop, and in those days drivers still obeyed the Rule Book, which said that blinds must be raised during daylight, and so passengers could view the line. It was the August Bank Holiday, the first at the end of the month, which was probably the reason the train was very full; however, there was still a space at the front for one more. Off we went, down the first part of the North Cornwall Railway. Way back in 1864 powers had been granted to the Launceston, Bodmin and Wadebridge Railway (presumably it would have been a continuation of the Launceston & South Devon Railway). They lapsed, and it was 1882 before the NCR, backed by the South Western, gained its powers. However, work was slow, as were the funds in coming, and it was 1886 before the railway between Halwill Junction and Launceston opened. Another six years later the line reached Tresmeer, high up on the northern edge of Bodmin Moor, another year on Camelford was the terminus, and finally Wadebridge had another railway in 1895. The line on to Padstow was eventually open in 1899.

Dropping downhill, we stopped at Ashwater, and then Tower Hill, named after a nearby farm, apparently. Gradients were three miles down at 1 in 73/82 before Ashwater, another half-mile of 1 in 73 after Ashwater, and then nothing steeper than 1 in 110 before Tower Hill. I noticed that the train was slowing without the driver moving the brake lever, so how? Oh! Surely not an authorised use of it – the driver was lifting his hand off the dead man's handle. On over the Tamar into Cornwall, about a mile short of Launceston, where the late-comer for once got a better station site, immediately south of the GWR station, which remained open for passengers until June, 1952. Why so long? The GW station in Salisbury had been closed in September 1932. War-time needs led to a connection between the GW and SR here, when the trailing link from the GW, just before the stations, opened in 1943. After Launceston the line spends much of the next 14 miles climbing to its 800 foot summit about a mile west of Otterham station. There was plenty of 1 in 73, although there were brief stretches of level track. The first 2½ miles are now the course of the Launceston Steam Railway, a 1 foot 11½ gauge line which opened on Boxing Day in 1983. Regrettably, it's one that won't be operating this year. Its western terminus is at Newmills, which could claim to be that place's third station.

The North Cornwall's stations had, ahem, a house style reminiscent of the Wycombe Railway's: a gabled station house end-on to the platform with a single-storey building for the various offices. Many of the station buildings on the line have been given other uses. Egloskerry is the Old Station B and B, next was Tresmeer, now a home, then came Otterham, from 1992 the site of the British Cycling Museum, but now even that's closed. Otterham was the railhead for Davidstow Moor, at 970 feet asl the highest airfield in the U.K.. With absolutely nothing between it and Newfoundland, it was subject to "unpleasant" winters. Aircrews didn't have to suffer for long though, it was only operational for two years until September, 1944. Perhaps aptly,



An unidentified GRCW single unit calls at the typically North Cornwall station at Otterham with a service from Padstow. 1st July 1966.

Pictorail 1241

one type based there was the Wellington. Once over the summit it was three miles to Camelford, some 1½ miles from, and 130 or so feet higher than, the town it served. Three sweeping curves took the line down another 50 feet or so in a bit over two miles to Delabole, with the slate quarry yawning immediately east of the station. The quarry had had an extensive narrow gauge network. Once again the gradients steepened, much of the way to Port Isaac Road was at 1 in 73/5. It was truthfully named, being nearly 3½ miles from its town, to which it was connected by the B3267, which ran from Port Isaac to the A39 just east of St. Teath. The section of the B3267 between the B3314 and St. Teath has been down-graded to C category, which is no surprise; Google Earth reveals it to be one of the narrowest of lanes in a county of narrow lanes. Port Isaac Road station appears, at least it appeared in 2018, to still have its platforms.

It was a little less than three miles on to St. Kew Highway, most of it down at 1 in 73, and 330 yards of it through the line's only tunnel, under the hamlet of Trelill. All the stations had loops and both lines had platforms. St. Kew itself is a hamlet about a mile and a half north of the station. Yet another saint giving their name to a settlement. Cornwall was either very religious, or needed a lot of saintly attention. Even Launceston contains a saint's name – St. Stephen. Egloskerry is "St. Kerry's church". St. Kew was the sister of yet another saint, St. Docco, and the Cornish name of the village refers to him, not her, and means "church of St. Docco". There was a settlement called St. Kew Highway on the main road, now the A39, before the railway arrived. Three miles on, mostly at 1 in 75 down, to the bridge over the River Camel and convergence with the Bodmin & Wadebridge Railway, which had opened way back on the 4th. of July, 1834. That was 54 years before the GWR's line from Bodmin Road opened and connected it with another railway. The junction with the Bodmin line had been taken out in 1907, and the two routes ran together but separate to Wadebridge station. On to Padstow, by no means level, with 22 changes of gradient - one must presume that its engineer wasn't a fan of billiards.

A quick turn-round and back through Wadebridge to reach, on a Bodmin Road service, the newest station I was to visit on my rail-rover, Boscarne Exchange Platform, opened in 1964 to serve the Bodmin North service, which was then cut back to a shuttle between there and the new station. In fact, it was two stations in one, with the actual platform on the Bodmin General

The Marlow Donkey



AC Cars railbus W79978 at Bodmin North ready to form the 14:00 to Boscarne Exchange Platform on 30th August 1965 and the Southern Railway 'Private Road' sign.

All photos by the author unless stated.

those surprisingly early rural railways, like the Kington Railway, granted royal assent in 1818. The B&W began life in 1831 when local Sir William Molesworth engaged a Plymouth engineer called Roger Hopkins to survey the route. Royal assent was given in 1832, so the works were completed in two years. The opening special train was policed by special constables sworn in for the day, and paid 2s. each. Main traffic from Wadebridge was sea sand, used as a soil conditioner, and coal. Outwards traffic was mostly metallic minerals – tin, copper, lead, iron pyrites. Later, of course, china clay became its business. Passengers didn't need to fear for their lives; speed limits were six mph towards Bodmin, but eight mph towards Wadebridge, which seem counter-intuitive. The single fare was 8d. "outside" and 1s. "inside"; although the line used a passenger car called "the omnibus", the fares reflected an open coach and an enclosed coach rather than a converted stage coach. Built for a total cost of £35,498 – that's everything, including the Parliamentary costs, locos and rolling stock, it made £84 3s. 10d. profit in its first nine months. The three halts between Wadebridge and Bodmin North, Grogley, Nanstallon and

This milestone at Bodmin North reading 6 miles, 7 furlongs, 3 chanis and 8 yards is a relic of the original Bodmin & Wadebridge Railway opened in 1834.



AC Cars railbus W79978 again, this time standing at the ground level "platform" at Boscarne Junction around the time of John's visit.

Collection of Mike Walker, photographer unknown

line, and the North line served by a rail-level "patch of sleepers". One clambered up the steps into a railbus, W79978 on the day I travelled, not long arrived from its earlier sojourn on the Cirencester and Tetbury branches, closed in April, 1964. I was to travel on it again, from Grosmont to Pickering. Built by AC cars in 1958 it is now on the Swindon & Cricklade Railway, so not far from Kemble. After the closure of the Bodmin Road to Padstow line and its twig to Bodmin North at the end of January, 1967, W79978 set off to Grangemouth where it had another year before it was withdrawn from BR service in January, 1968, the last first-generation railbus. Since then it's been on five heritage lines. For a small beast, it's not scared of distances. With more than a handful of passengers it set off up the ever-steepening grades to Bodmin North: 1 in 50 at first, and 1 in 40 briefly, just before the terminus. I had 45 minutes there, wandering about exploring the station, which had a very intriguing mile marker, which counted not just miles, but furlongs, chains and yards, carved into a stone block.

From Wadebridge to Bodmin North we followed, mostly, the course of the Bodmin & Wadebridge. Mostly, because when the line was closed in 1886 for rebuilding – it took until 1895 for the passenger service to be restored – some deviations were made. It does seem likely that its re-opening was tied to the arrival that year of the North Cornwall. Before suspension the passenger service was down to Monday, Wednesday and Friday, to Bodmin at 10.00 in the morning, returning at 16.00. Not quite the "never on Wednesday" service offered by the Denver & Rio Grande Western before Amtrak took over the "Main Line through the Rockies", which was out from Denver on Monday, back from Salt Lake City on Tuesday, and so on, but skipping Wednesday so the service operated on the same days each week. Wednesday was for maintaining the trainset. The line was one of



Dunmere, all, at one time, had GWR-style pagoda waiting shelters. Not surprising perhaps, given the flip-flopping of regional responsibilities in BR days, but there's a photo of Dunmere in 1934, showing its pagoda shelter. Mac Hawkins in "LSWR West Country Lines Then and Now" suggests that they "may stem from the modernisation of the line and improvement of the service when the GWR joined with it in 1888." That seems unlikely; the halts opened in 1906, according to Colonel Cobb, which is when a railmotor started working on the line. It worked until 1914. Perhaps the GWR felt like being helpful, or could it be they provided the shelters as a sort of part-payment of their track access fees?

Back at Boscarne, it was a short walk to the train, then up the hill to Bodmin General and down to Bodmin Road, for the short run down to Lostwithiel, and then up and down to Par. There the Newquay train was waiting. It's a fair way to Newquay, 20¾ miles, round that, what, 130° curve, wriggling up the 1 in 37 through the Luxulyan Valley under the Treffry Viaduct on the original 1842 Treffry's Railway, which ran between Bugle and Par Harbour. In 1874 the line was extended by the Cornwall Minerals Railway to link up at St. Dennis Junction with its Burngallow to Newquay Harbour line. The intermediate stations opened in 1876, with Quintrel Downs opened by the GWR in 1911. Three of the four original stations have had their initial name changed: Luxulyan was Bridges, Roche was Victoria, and St. Columb Road was Halloon, a farm just down the road to St. Columb. That station's near Indian Queens, almost an echo of Victoria. Indeed, the OS maps of 1888 and 1930 have a singular "Indian Queen", apparently the name of a pub - given to it after Victoria became Empress of India in 1877? In Newquay, beyond what is now a single-platform station hiding behind some shops on the main drag, part of the course of the railway to the harbour is a footpath, laid in brick, with concrete edging sunk in two parallel lines to "represent" the rails. The line closed in 1926, after four years out of use. No time to explore on my first visit, with a seven-minute pause before returning to Par. A later trip was on a "Skipper" in their chocolate and cream days, and my last began by plane, one of the recently-departed Flybe, from Belfast George Best City Airport, on the last flight of the summer in 2016. There were only about 30 of us on G-JECF, a De Havilland Canada Dash 8-400; built in Toronto in 2004, it is now stored after a brief spell with PassionAir. I left on the 9.52, the first Sunday train. Luckily in 51 years my note-taking had improved, so I can tell you that I joined 150101, which formed the 9.52 to Par, the first train of the day. Back in the summer of 1958 the timetable shows 21 trains on Saturdays; operating the timetable at that level must have been fun. Unlike today, when on summer Saturdays the intermediate stations get a parliamentary service, in 1958 most trains called at all the stations. There were some that didn't, including the 10.00 to Paddington, which called only at St. Columb Road, and only to pick up. It is



150101 at Newquay on the 09:52 SuO to Par on Sunday 11th September 2016.

described as "Restaurant Car Train to London (Paddington) arrive 4.55 pm". Back in 2016 we picked up no one at Quintrel Downs, one at St. Columb Road, two at Roche, one at Bugle, and no one at Luxulyan. About 40 passengers got off at Par. It's an "external" branch, one where the main line junction isn't a destination in itself, unlike, say, Maidenhead for the Marlow branch. Hopefully the plans to re-instate the line from St. Dennis, and run trains between St. Austell and Newquay will come to pass, and give the locals a reason to use "their" railway more.

From Par it was on to Plymouth, and an hour's wait for the last train of the day to Exeter via the L&SW route, the 19.45. It ran through to Exeter Central, probably all stations except Crediton and Newton St. Cyres. The latter is understandable, but why no call at Crediton? By 1965 the ex-Plymouth Devonport & South Western Junction route to St. Budeaux Victoria Road had closed, and trains used the GW route and the 1941-opened connection. Until 1890, when their own route opened between Lydford and Plymouth, L&SW trains had used the GW's route via Yelverton. The climb up to the summit began immediately after Tamerton Viaduct, and continued for about 19 of the next 25 miles. There were brief downhill stretches, the longest about a mile and a half between Bere Alston and Tavistock. Uphill was mostly 1 in 70 something. Even in August, by this time daylight was fading fast, so little was visible. The line between Bere Alston and Meldon lasted longer than other "withered" sections, closing in May, 1968. By then the up line across Meldon Viaduct had been taken out of use. Okehampton's regular service to Exeter lingered another four years before resuming as an occasional weekend treat. Work to extend platform 2 at St. David's will help support more Okehampton trains from the "Summer" of 2021, we're told.

Number-taking that day saw 13 numbers recorded, four bubble cars, three Gloucesters to one Pressed Steel, a three-car set, the AC Cars railbus, two 08s, a Hymek, a 63XX N.B. Type 2 and D604 Cossack. I think that the heavyweight Warship was in the sidings at Lostwithiel.

Day five, Tuesday, 31st August: Devon and Cornwall

A late start, 9.40 off Exeter Central, and then the 10.07 from St. David's, all the way to Truro, reached just over three hours later. What a stretch of railway that main line is - the Exe Estuary, the seawall and tunnels through Dawlish ("black stream"), the rush alongside the Teign estuary, then the switchbacks and viaducts across the southern slopes of Dartmoor. Next come the terraces of Plymouth and Mr. Brunel's swansong across the Tamar. Why was he never knighted, or ennobled? The Victorian railway engineers all seem to have been denied, or denied themselves, perhaps, any honours. On through Cornwall, over more viaducts and summits, and, reminiscent of the down approach to Durham, over a viaduct with views of a cathedral, Truro. Its cathedral, the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was started in 1880. My copy of "Cathedrals", published in 1925 by the Great Western Railway, describes its style as being "...Early English, with characteristics of the first part of the thirteenth century." The book, with a preface written by "His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury to Viscount Churchill, Chairman of the Great Western Railway" and which begins "My dear Churchill", starts its chapter on Truro with this somewhat brief sentence: "The journey from Exeter to Truro by the Great Western Railway is a delightful one." Amen.

Across to the down bay for the Falmouth train; once planned as the main line of the Cornwall Railway, the railway arrived in Falmouth as branch. The Plymouth to Truro section opened in May 1859, but the Falmouth extension languished after its contractor failed. New rights were obtained in 1861 and the line, which had eight viaducts and two tunnels, was opened in August 1863, with a link to Falmouth docks opened in January, 1864.



150129 leaves Falmouth Docks on the 12.36 to Truro on Sunday 11th September 2016.

space for a police station and car parking. The original bus shelter has at least been replaced with a solid building with an open-fronted waiting area. The day ended with a return up the rather too bosky line to Liskeard, and on to Exeter.

Rather more numbers were recorded this day: a total of 22, with seven 63XX diesels, four Westerns, four 08s, two Hymeks, three Gloucester bubbles and one trailer, plus a motor second from a Swindon Cross Country set. A rare day, with no lines covered that have since closed, though the section from The Dell, opened in 1970, on to the terminus was closed for five years, before being re-opened as Falmouth Docks, with The Dell becoming Falmouth Town.

Day six, Wednesday, 1st September: Devon, Dorset and Somerset

The day began heading east up the South Western line from Exeter Central on the 9.35 to Seaton Junction, one of the few trains in the timetable at what must have been the nadir of the line's fortunes. In the winter timetable there had been five through trains to Waterloo: 6.20 from Central, then 7.20, 10.30, 14.20 and 17.20 from St. David's. The Plymouth to Brighton train still ran, typically with a Warship, at 10.55 from Plymouth, 12.25 from St. David's. The 10.30 took two hours to reach Salisbury, a similar time to today's trains, although there are rather more of them now, with the first from St. David's at 5.20, and the last at 19.25, and usually hourly. However back in 1965 the 10.30 made seven stops, whereas typically now there are 12, the service being little more than a local one that happens to run through to London. The 10.30 was perhaps a little too selective with its stops – calling at Sidmouth Junction, then Axminster, Crewkerne and then Sherborne, ignoring Honiton and Yeovil Junction. By Salisbury it was ten minutes ahead of the 7.50 from Plymouth, which was all stations except St. James' Park Halt from Exeter – that's 18 in all. One truly long-distance local was the 10.05 from Torrington to Salisbury, arrive 14.20. Another was the 17.15 Plymouth to Eastleigh.

The branch to Seaton, from what was for eight years from its opening known as Colyton for Seaton, opened in March 1868, and managed to last 98 years before closing in March, 1966. Only four and a quarter miles long, with two intermediate stations, Colyton and Colyford, the journey time was a surprisingly

The end of Looe platform at Liskeard on Tuesday 31st August 1965 and, below, the old station at Looe on the same day.

Fourteen trains a day in 1965, with gaps of up to 101 minutes, have grown to today's half-hourly. 1965's timetable was very strange, with three units being required for the first three trains from Truro, together with the loops at Perranwell and Penryn. The planners' life must have been a lot easier in those days – more infrastructure, but fewer trains. I have no records of patronage in 1965, but in September, 2016, the 13.35 from Falmouth Docks, the original Falmouth, had reasonable business, including a group of teenagers on at Penmere, who were off at Penryn, before tickets. About 40 got off at Truro.

Back in 1965 it was off to Liskeard for a trip to Looe. It seems I had a wait of 40 minutes before we set off to Coombe Junction, down at 1 in 40/45 over the link that finally opened in 1901. It was the last part of the Liskeard & Looe Railway, which had opened in 1860 between the Liskeard and Caradon at Moorswater, and Looe harbour. It partly replaced the Liskeard and Looe Union Canal, which had opened as late as 1828. The canal was always difficult to work; with 24 locks, its 7 miles took 8 hours to navigate. It staggered on until 1909, leaving a few remains. Passenger service over the new railway took a while, not beginning until 1879, with two trains a day (three on Saturdays!) between Moorswater and Looe. Frequencies built up, with 11 down and 12 up trains on summer Saturdays in 1958, with some shown as non-stop between Liskeard and Looe, and some crossing in the loop at Coombe Junction. The first station at Looe closed in 1968, being shunted up the line a little way to make





First Great Western 153368 arrives at the present Looe station with 2L85, the 14.25 from Liskeard on 21st May 2010.

Mike Walker

brief ten minutes along the down grades to the last mile or so of level track alongside the estuary of the River Axe into Seaton. Up trains were allowed 13 minutes to cope with gradients of up to 1 in 76. Duly returned to Seaton Junction, it was a six-minute wait for the train to Axminster. After the Western Region took over in 1963, there had been a brief interlude of ex-GWR locos working with auto trailers when diesels failed to appear. Later in the day I saw one-time Donkey, and “Titfield Thunderbolt” stand-in, 1450, awaiting collection from, well, a place I failed to record. It had been withdrawn only a few months before, from Exmouth Junction shed, so perhaps that’s where it was. 2251 class 3205 was certainly stored there, and was duly noted as a “cop”. Seaton Junction had been extensively remodelled by the Southern in 1927/8, rather in the style of the GW’s expansive stations on its new lines in the early 1900s. The main line platforms were served by loops off the main lines, and the Seaton branch train got a platform it could run into directly, rather than back into as previously. Plenty of Exmouth Junction concrete products were used to build the new station.

After a six-minute wait, it was a six-minute journey to Axminster, for a cross-platform but 43-minute connection into the Lyme Regis train, like the Seaton train, another single car. How it loaded is lost in time, but the route, twisting uphill right from the platform end for most of four miles to Combyne, much of them at 1 in 40, was as exciting as I expected. The final couple of miles down to Lyme Regis were not as steep, though they did begin with almost a mile of 1 in 40. On that stretch came the infamous Cannington Viaduct, built by “Concrete Bob” who a few years earlier had built another concrete viaduct at Glenfinnan on the Mallaig Extension. This line was opened in August 1903 by the Axminster & Lyme Regis Light Railway, but the L&SWR took over in 1907 because revenue was poor. One has to ask why the L&SW thought it worthwhile! The terminus was only about ¾ mile from the sea front, but 250 feet above it, an average gradient of a little under 1 in 16. Other members of the Radial Tanks used on the line until 1960 had, until the late 1920s, been used on the railway at Wadebridge. The line closed in November, 1965. My three-minute stay was all I had in Lyme Regis until a visit in the early 1990s, by bus from Axminster.

Back at Axminster, another loco-hauled stopper took me back to Exeter Central, where, during my 62-minute wait for the 15.50, I saw 34006 *Bude* on the Brighton to Plymouth train, almost certainly steam-hauled after a diesel had failed. The 15.50 spent 126 minutes getting to Ilfracombe, all stations except Newton St. Cyres and Yeoford. The line’s uphill most of the way to the summit near Coplestone, and then declines gently downstream.

After Morchard Road it follows the Yeo, then the Taw after Lapford. The station at King’s Nympton was called South Molton Road until 1951. It was one of the most optimistic of “road” stations. South Molton, served since 1873 by the Devon and Somerset’s line, is over six miles away as the crow flies, let alone how the drunkard wanders. Now the line has a single passing loop, at Eggesford, but back in 1965 it had double-track to Coplestone and again from Umberleigh to Barnstaple Junction, with loops at every station on the single-track section. Once again the service frequency increases – now it’s up to hourly – and the rationalised infrastructure fails to. The line had originally opened in 1854 as the broad gauge North Devon Railway & Dock, linking at Crediton with the Exeter & Crediton, which had opened in 1851. Barnstaple Junction to Ilfracombe was the Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, which opened in 1874, with its sharply-curved bridge over the Taw and then the dramatic three miles of 1 in 40 up to Morteheo, and the plunge down at 1 in 36 for 2¼ miles to Ilfracombe, where the station was only just out-done by Lyme Regis. It was a bit under 250 feet above sea level, but also about ¾ of a mile from the sea front. The line had been doubled as early as 1891, doubtless because train speeds over the mountain soaked up capacity. Barnstaple Junction to Ilfracombe closed in October, 1970; Okehampton excepted, the last of the withered arm to be axed. Apart from the Chard branch, already closed in September 1962, in a little over five years since the Torrington to Halwill line had closed in March, 1965, all the L&SWR lines west of Wilton South had closed, except the main line, the Exmouth branch, and the line to Barnstaple. Lyme Regis in November, 1965, Seaton in March 1966, Sidmouth a year later, Bude and the North Cornwall line in October, 1966, Gunnislake to Callington a month later, Padstow January 1967. Much of the network west of Okehampton lost its freight in September 1964. Five and a half years to close what had taken decades to build.

A final stretch of now-closed railway began back at Barnstaple Junction, on the 19.04 to Taunton. At 45¾ miles, it was more than a branch line, and had been operated like a secondary main line. It was built by the Devon & Somerset Railway, opening in stages westward: Norton Fitzwarren to Wiveliscombe in 1871, the rest of the way to Barnstaple in 1873, and the connection to the L&SW in 1887. Proposals to serve the route had been made as early as 1845, when a grand plan linked Launceston, Okehampton, Hatherleigh, Torrington, Bideford, Barnstaple and Taunton. One of the more intriguing “might have beens”. Local traffic was always sparse, but year-round through carriages between Paddington and Ilfracombe operated for much of its life, and other through trains were a feature of summer Saturdays. Typical through trains were timetabled to London, Wolverhampton, Cardiff. Even the Cornish Riviera slipped coaches at Taunton for Ilfracombe. It was clear that the GW regarded Ilfracombe as an important traffic source; the timetable for the line in 1902 is titled “Dulverton, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe”. The GW added two halts, Morebath Junction in 1928, and Yeo Mill in 1932. Morebath Junction was actually just across the fields from Morebath, unlike Morebath station, which in true country railway fashion was about two miles away. The 43XX Moguls which were the mainstay of the line up to the end of steam in 1964, were fitted with Whitaker token exchange gear to help speed up the operation of non-stopping trains. Works in 1937/8 to increase its capability included doubling from Norton Fitzwarren (from Taunton had been quadrupled in 1932), platform extensions, and longer loops with higher-speed points.

Despite the need for better provision for the long-distance traffic, local business was poor. The statistics from Swimbridge, the first station out of Barnstaple, tell the story. In 1903 the three staff cost £167 in wages (about £1 1s. 5d. each, per week); total revenue was £1,559, £325 of which were passenger receipts (about £6 5s. per week). The First World war saw the wages bill



Eggesford in August, 1971: a view up the line towards Exeter, concrete nameboard, barriers and working signal box which was originally at Ashendon Junction, the original having partly slipped into the adjacent river.



Class 118 set P473 departs from Kings Nympton bound for Barnstaple probably in the mid-1970s.

up to £487 by 1923; total receipts were up to £2,901. The passenger receipts at £556 still covered the wage bill, but by 1940 the three staff cost £578, £147 more than the passenger income. Business in September, 1965, had no freight income to help pay the bills, and about seven people were on platform 2 at Barnstaple Junction waiting for the 19.04 to Taunton. When it arrived, the two outer cars of a three-car set, a man turned to his wife and commented that it wasn't much of a train. Her reply was "When they see how few of us there are, they'll probably send one of those back." We set off, heading east under the setting sun. With arrival at Taunton not booked until 20.42 the lucky passengers in the front seats (your scribe and the married couple) were treated by the driver to "blinds up" all the way. Here, as with the North Cornwall trip, my lack of note-taking really annoys me now. Just how many passengers did we have at the stations? The route meanders slightly but is almost due east, with two major viaducts at Castle Hill, or Filleigh, 94 feet high, and the Tone Viaduct, 101 feet high and east of Venn Cross, and significant summits at East Antsey and Venn Cross, with a ruling grade of 1 in 60 up to the former, and then 1 in 58 down to Dulverton. The same gradients, in the same directions, applied to the climbs to Venn Cross. The operating instructions for the line paid particular care regarding goods trains shunting at East Anstey and Venn Cross: both stations sat at the summits, so runaways were a constant risk. Much of the line's route west of South Molton was used for the North Devon Link Road, including the piers of Castle Hill viaduct. Both viaducts were constructed with wrought-iron lattice girders to support the track. The conversion for road use was simple, remove the girders and lay cast-concrete decking.

Freddie Huxtable's "The Taunton to Barnstaple Line", a marvelous three-volume description of all aspects of the line, is packed with details. The timetable in 1904 had three through workings from Ilfracombe to Paddington: the 8.30 Plymouth and the 10.50 Kingswear conveyed portions, the latter including a coach slipped at Reading, and there was the 12.15 from Ilfracombe, which conveyed through coaches for Birkenhead. In 1924 the 9.30 from Ilfracombe took seven coaches up the bank, one heading for Manchester, the rest to Paddington. A brake compo was added at Barnstaple, with four from Minehead added at Taunton; one of those was slipped at Reading. Even Torrington had through services over the line, a feature which lasted to the end in October, 1966. In the winter 1955/6 timetable, in the days when it appeared no one was counting any beans, there were ten trains each way. Down it was six passenger and four goods, Up there were seven passenger and three goods workings. Two turns required engines to make just one return trip from Taunton

to Barnstaple Junction. One appendix in Huxtable gives the "Daily Minutes Lost" for the 9.55 Ilfracombe to Paddington in August, 1930. Timekeeping on Saturdays was poor, the train being 40, 30 and 30 late in London on the first three Saturdays of the month. Things then improved, with the final two Saturdays showing 10 and 15 late. Most of the delay minutes were charged to "signals" with only one entry, just three minutes, against "engine". Passenger traffic data shows how patronage fluctuated. The trains loaded better the closer they got to Taunton – the 6.55 from Barnstaple in the first week of May, 1932, averaged nine passengers out to East Antsey, six stops out, but 53 at Milverton, the last branch station before Taunton. During the second week in November that year the 16.33 from Taunton left with an average of 63 passengers, but carried only ten on arrival at Barnstaple. The figures for the first week of November, 1937 show an average daily total of 204 passengers aboard on departure from Taunton, and a total of 36 arriving at Barnstaple.

Back from Taunton to Exeter, and my last night with the family friends. On the next day I caught a through train from St. David's to Shrewsbury, probably the Plymouth to Liverpool train, booked via the Severn Tunnel and the North and West. However, my first trip over that scenic delight – the scenery is in the gorgeous category all the way from Pontypool Road to Nantwich – would be later. On arrival at Temple Meads we heard that a derailment meant a new route, which included one more stretch of now closed railway. We were sent off to Worcester, then the old Worse & Worse through Kidderminster and Stourbridge Junction and on to Wolverhampton Low Level and Wellington. In fact, it was probably two sections, as the Midland route out of Bristol didn't close until 1969. Number-taking increased, 21 different types: 25 diesels including two 45s, four Hymeks and seven Class 47s, two only DMU cars, a Gloucester bubble and the motor second of a Derby three-car suburban set, and a whole slew of steam types -12 - with four Standard classes, including a Britannia and three 82000 Prairies, a Dub-dee, a Hall, a Grange, two Manors, three 57XX types and three 56XXs

Collected from Shrewsbury, it was off to re-join my family, who were staying with some of Mum's relations in Calverhall, on the plain near the Shropshire-Cheshire border. Future rail-rovers would be all-line, a week's treat between the summer vacation spent working in Slough TIC (train information centre), with its water supply in a carrier filled in the area manager's loo, and its slops bucket, emptied into the drain outside – this is the late 1960s, not the late 1860s! – and my return to uni in Glasgow. Plenty more now-closed lines.....

THEN AND NOW: WOODVILLE SIGNAL BOX

Something different this time from **Tim Edmonds**.

Woodville is a station in South Australia, on the broad gauge (5ft 3in) Port Line between Adelaide and Outer Harbor. The signal box controlled the junction with the branch to Grange and an adjacent level crossing. The 'then' photo was taken by my friend Brian Gerner on 27th February 1973 and shows one of the SAR 'Red Hen' diesel units arriving with an Outer Harbor train. These units were built between 1955 and 1971 and formed the backbone of the Adelaide suburban services until the 1990s. They comprised a power car and non-power car, here strengthened with an additional non-motor carriage in the middle.

With modernisation of the Adelaide suburban lines and introduction of automatic train control, Woodville signal box became redundant and was moved to the National Railway Museum at Port Adelaide for preservation. I took the 'now' picture at the Museum on 27th March 2017 during a visit there with Brian. Much of the original lever frame and other equipment survives and has been adapted to control the museum's operational 18in and 3ft 6in gauge lines which can be seen on the left. There is also a 2ft gauge track in the picture, on which is displayed 0-6-2T No 2 from Millaquin Sugar Mill (Queensland) and built by Perry at Mile End in 1946. The signal box differs from that in the 1973 photo in several respects. It has been mounted on a different



base at the museum, hence the need for longer steps up. The canopy over the doorway is narrower - it used to cover an extension to the building, perhaps housing a toilet, which has been removed. Also, there seem to be only four windows across the front, compared with five on the old picture, so presumably this had to be replaced.

