

# THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

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Where are they now?

GWR Cattle Wagons

Okehampton in the 1980s

What to do with a Week's Annual Leave

# The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

## COMMITTEE

President:	Mark Hopwood CBE	
Chairman:	Mike Hyde. 11 Forty Green Drive, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 2JX	
	Tel.: 01628 485474	email: michaelahyde@uwclub.net
Treasurer:	Peter Robins. 1 Chalklands, Bourne End, Bucks., SL8 5TQ.	
	Tel.: 01628 527870	email: pd.robins@btopenworld.com
Secretary:	Vincent Caldwell.	email: vincent@mosesplat.uk.
Webmaster:	Dave Woodhead.	email: dave.woodhead@uwclub.net
Outings Organiser:	Brian Hopkinson.	email: hopkinson005@gmail.com
Publicity:	Keith Gower	email: gowerstowers@btinternet.com
Donkey Editor:	Mike Walker, Solgarth, Marlow Road, Little Marlow, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 3RS.	
	Tel.: 07791 544426	email: mikewalker@solgarth.eclipse.co.uk

**Website:** [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

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### Front Cover Photographs

*Two atmospheric images from Peter Robins (article page 13).*

*Top: 20221 & 20217 head a coal train over the Forth Bridge. 25 September 1979.*

*Bottom: No 17 shunts wagons over the weighbridge at Bedlay Colliery. 25 September 1979.*

# TIMETABLE

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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

Thursday 17 June      **SOUTHERN LOCOMOTIVES LTD, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**      Nick Thompson

Nick Thompson is a board member of SLL, a not-for-profit company which owns eight locomotives including six Bulleid Pacifics. His presentation outlines the history and structure of the group, and focuses on the restoration and overhaul of the locos.

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

Tebay on Ebay is a digital dip into David's growing collection of negatives and slides acquired from various sources over a number of years. This personal show shares his affinity with railway scenes that resonate, both with an interest in photography, as well as nostalgia for scenes that were once so familiar. Most are pictures he would like to have made himself but there are many that it would never have occurred to him to compose. Some are from before his time, but most are from those impressionable years of his youth over fifty years ago when the traditional railway was rapidly disappearing. Lots of locations may be familiar but the variety of images depict the railway in varying settings and moods. The show is a personal tribute to photographers, both known and unknown, wittingly or unwittingly imaginative enough to see their subject in a wider context. It is shared as fitting recognition of their efforts in recording what has now come to be regarded as an integral part of social history.

Thursday 19 August      **KIDDERMINSTER MUSEUM PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION**      David Postle

David is in charge of the Kidderminster Railway Museum photographic archive which has a vast collection of images starting with glass plate images from the late 1800's until the end of BR steam in 1968. The subjects cover all aspects of railways and their infrastructure and there is a bias to GWR.

Thursday 16 September      **WAR AND PEACE**      Simon Colbeck

Thursday 21 October      **TRACKS IN THE MIST**      Colin Brading

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

When the lockdowns for Covid 19 started back in March last year the 'spare' time seemed to drag by at first but it gave the opportunity to do some clearing out or jobs that had been put off. Now we are nearing, we hope, the conclusion of such lockdowns and we can visit pubs and restaurants (unless rules change between me writing this and you reading it). Heritage railways have opened up which means I have a weekend job at Chinnor and members can go out taking photographs to interest us.

Naturally your committee have carefully considered the question about instigating club meetings again. In theory after 17 May indoor events could operate at 50% capacity provided the venue agrees. After 21 June there should be no legal limit on social contact – officially stated to be subject to review. However we are mindful that not everyone is anxious to mix in a confined area even with Covid 19 precautions (both for individual and venue). For example, those who have not had a second jab or those in an at-risk group/age or those who may have suffered from the virus in some way. Simply put many people having complied with the rules so far are not yet prepared understandably to face the risk, however slight, of contracting Corona virus.

The widespread use of media platforms such as Zoom, Skype and MS Teams has certainly helped societies keep in touch and

[www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

offer entertainment to members and guests. MDRS have done this successfully and attracted many new watchers worldwide leading in fact to a number of new members. Disappointingly some existing members have not joined in possibly because of not having the IT equipment or not feeling at ease with the method. There is no doubt that such methods are not as enjoyable as attending a presentation or meeting friends and socialising. Equally some find the comfort of a home seat, not having to go outside in all weathers or having to 'not drink and drive' very accommodating.

So what has all this led up to? It may please some and not others but the committee have decided that they will continue with Zoom presentations until the end of the year. As for 2022 we hope that a return to regular meetings (hopefully) at Bourne End Community Centre, as before, can be achieved. We have a list of good speakers and subjects lined up for the months ahead so I hope you will join in. Fingers crossed that the rest of this year will pass uneventfully, that many of you will have a holiday somewhere and you get to see trains in action. If you take photographs please send them in to the Editor with appropriate captions. For now I am looking forward to hearing Adrian Palmer on 20 May and Nick Thompson in June. See you then.

*Mike Hyde*

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# SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

## NEW MEMBER

Once again our numbers have increased with Peter Hicks from Wooburn Green joining the Society. Welcome and we hope you enjoy our activities.

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Our meetings have continued to be conducted on Zoom and have been well attended by members and guests.

In March David Langton gave us a look at 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.

In April Mike Walker took us on a tour of branch lines in Devon and Cornwall during the fifties and sixties, an evening of pure nostalgia featuring 14xx tanks and Small Prairies along with some Southern O2s and the occasional green Diesel.

North Korea, Madagascar and other exotic locations were the locations visited by Adrian Palmer for our May meeting.

## HIGH WYCOMBE REPEATER - AT LAST!

An ongoing moan by regular passengers at High Wycombe has been the practice of parking a 2-car unit at the far end of platform 1 thereby requiring a long walk. The reason for this was to allow the driver of a departing train to be able to see the signal at the end of the platform before starting the train.

A banner repeater has now been installed at the end of the platform on the right side which can be seen from any point along the platform which means that trains of any length can be drawn up to the stop blocks saving customers a walk.



*An idea of how the vegetation on the branch has been cut back. 165121 approaching Spencer's Bridge forming the 14:00 Marlow to Maidenhead on 18th March 2021.*

*Photo: Nigel Hunt*

## MORE BRANCH WORKS

Network Rail continue to be busy working along the Marlow branch following the major relaying programme between Bourne End and Marlow last winter.

The most recent works centre on the various crossings along that section of the branch. Spade Oak, Caldicot Lane, Ivory Field and Mill Lane crossings have all been upgraded to OMSL (Overlay Miniature Stop Light) crossings which, as the name suggests, have red and green warning lights to advise crossing users if it is safe to cross the line; audible warnings are also provided. These are activated by the approaching train. As a result of the improved user interface, the requirement for drivers to sound the horn approaching the crossings has been removed.

One result of these works has been the appearance of signs reading "No Public Access" on the pedestrian gates at Spade Oak crossing which has caused some confusion. It seems that it is actually a private crossing providing access to the dwellings on the river bank whose residents are the only people with a legal right to use it. However, it is accepted by NR that the crossing is used by the general public (there is even a car park on the north side) and the crossing upgrade has been designed with that in mind and general users are extremely unlikely to be challenged. The signs have been provided to ensure liability is covered in the event of an incident.

Crews have also been busy cutting back the vegetation along the entire branch from Maidenhead. This is most welcome. In recent years the lineside has become very overgrown. For example the cutting between the Terrys Lane and Rowbarrow bridges between Cookham and Bourne End has been a virtual tunnel of trees. The problem is; it has a bad habit of growing back again - quickly.

## MAIN LINE STEAM

After an absence of two years several main line steam specials are booked to run in this area over the coming months as follows:

Steam Dreams are starting their trips to Windsor from Victoria behind 61306 on Tuesdays starting on 1st June through to 14th September.

They are also operating a number of other tours. On 6th June 60103 *Flying Scotsman* is booked to run from Paddington to Southampton and two weeks later, on 20th June it is heading for Portsmouth.

On 18th July SD are running a Victoria to Salisbury special via Reading and on 31st July from Paddington to Weymouth. In both cases the loco is to be confirmed.

The Railway Touring Co. are planning trips from Paddington to Worcester on 12th June again with 60103; from Slough to Par with 60163 *Tornado* on 11th July repeated on 1st August and 21st and 29th August with 6233 *Duchess of Sutherland*. On 24th July and 14th August the same loco will haul trips from Paddington to Minehead.

## HERITAGE AWAKES

With the easing of lockdown on 12th April the heritage industry swung rapidly back into action.

The Swanage Railway was one of the first and on 19th April 80104 is seen steaming away from Corfe Castle with the 13:35 from Norden. The wreath on the smokebox door was a tribute to HRH Prince Philip whose funeral had taken place two days earlier.

*Photo: Gordon Rippington*



The Mid-Hants Railway held a gala at the end of the month/early May.

Two guest locomotives were in action, 5526 from the South Devon and 4612 from the Bodmin & Wenford which is seen approaching Northside Crossing with an Alresford to Ropley shuttle on 30th April. The loco was a late substitute for 6435.

*Photo: Mike Walker*



The Didcot Railway Centre also reopened its outdoor exhibits from 14th April with steam operations on Wednesdays and weekends. 4144 was in action on 21st April.

The indoor attractions including the museum and the popular Signalling Centre were reopened from 19th May with the third stage of the Government's lockdown relaxations.

*Photo: Nigel Hunt*

A similar pattern of reopening took place at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre up at Quainton Road.

On 25th April NCB Austerity 66 (Hunslet 3890) was in action working passenger trips in the Up Yard. This locomotive, new in 1964, has the distinction of being the last standard gauge steam locomotive built in this country before *Tornado*.

*Photo: David Collins*



# WHERE THEY ARE NOW?

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

## Peak Rail to start rebuilding

Following final planning permission is to start rebuilding the first 2 miles of the Matlock – Buxton line which was lifted by BR in 1970. A further planning application for the next section Darley Dale to Rowsley has been submitted.

**Progress:** Darley Dale to Matlock (Riverside) was opened to public services in 1992, Rowsley (South) was reached in 1997. Major development of a quarry site allowed Peak Rail to attain its objective of reaching Matlock in 2011. Their ambition to reach Buxton is still alive and the railway is in discussion with various parties to try and achieve this. Peak Rail has amongst its fleet 4 ex GWR locos: 4588 2-6-2T undergoing restoration at Tysley, 5553 2-6-2T owned by Pete Waterman, undergoing overhaul at Crewe Heritage Centre. Also owed by Pete Waterman are 5224 2-8-0T & 6634 0-6-2T both these locos are listed as 'stored'.

Sources: Steam Railway, [www.peakrail.co.uk](http://www.peakrail.co.uk) & [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak\\_Rail#Steam\\_locomotives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peak_Rail#Steam_locomotives)

## Ryde Rail Festival

The Ryde Rail Festival was held on 21st June 1986 offering:  
At Ryde St. Johns Road · Workshops Open · Steam Tractor · Sales Stands · CAMRA Real Ale Bar.  
At Sandown Station · Brake Van Rides and a bus shuttle to the IoW Steam Railway.

**Progress:** This year sees big changes on the Island Line as a £26 million investment is seeing new rolling stock (Vivarail Class 484 ex London Underground D78 stock) which should have been in service by the time you read this. Track relaying and even a new passing loop at Brading, so allowing a 30 minute service.

Sources: Steam Railway and [www.southwesternrailway.com/destinations-and-offers/island-line/island-line-upgrade](http://www.southwesternrailway.com/destinations-and-offers/island-line/island-line-upgrade).

## GWR Pannier 9629

This Pannier found its self on a short section of track outside the Cardiff Holiday Inn. Robert Adley MP, Rail Enthusiast and Author was a director of Holiday Inn and had instigated the arrangement. It had been cosmetically restored with an incorrect dome and chimney at Carnforth as the work was done to a budget. The loco had left Barry in 1981.

**Progress:** After spending 9 years on display the Marriot Hotel Group donated it to the Pontypool & Blaenavon Locomotive Group in 1995. It is currently under restoration. The Pannier Tank 9629 Group are restoring the loco, early in 2020 the cab and bunker were dismantled, towards the end of 2020 they were being reassembled. The cylinder block was positioned between the frames in June 2020. No news of the boiler, it looks like a long restoration job, so it maybe a number of years before you see 9629 in steam.

Sources: Steam Railway and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/283265498472809/about>

## S&DJR 2-8-0 BR 53808 - S&DJR 88

The Somerset & Dorset Trust's largest asset this loco was re-wheeled at Washford on the WSR in January 1986, it was hoped to have it in steam later that year for the first time since its withdrawal from service at Bath Green Park in March 1964. It would be ready to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the S&DJR in 1987.

**Progress:** 53808 did return to steam but in August 1987 rather than 1986. In spring of 1996 it was withdrawn for overhaul, returned to service in S&DJR blue in December 2005, this time running until October 2014, this overhaul was completed by February 2016. 53808 is now based at the Mid Hants Railway for the duration of its boiler certificate.

Sources: Steam Railway & various web sources.

## LNER K1 2-6-0 2005

A major overhaul was completed by NELPG at the ICI works Wilton. Aided by a 36 strong Manpower Services Commission team managed by ICI. The loco was re-commissioned within the ICI works hauling ICI Freightliner wagons.

**Progress:** 62005 its correct number as it was built in 1949, therefore was never in LNER ownership or livery is still in NELPG ownership, is based on the NYMR. From 1987 the K1 became well known for its association with the West Highland line. In 1994 the K1 was paired with K4 *The Great Marquess*. Before restoration of the K1 it was planned for the K1 to donate its boiler to the K4! In 1994 the K1 was withdrawn for major overhaul, returning to service in 1998, in 1999 and 2000 she appeared in 'Steam on The Met' (still in my opinion one of the best steam events ever, I'm sure many MDRS members have pictures of the K1 at these events).

The K1 returned to Scotland in the 2000s, including 2020, this time in authentic BR Black as 62005.

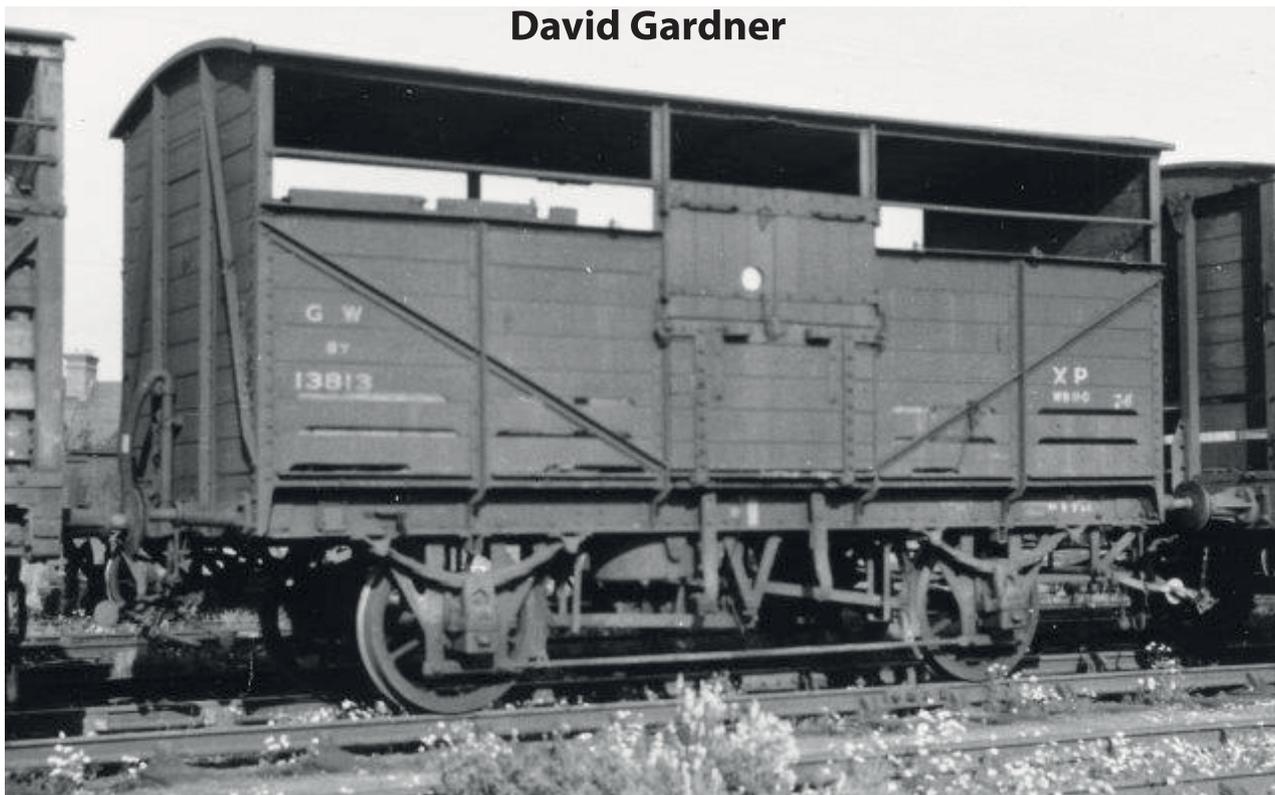
Sources: Steam Railway & <https://nelpg.org.uk/>



*S&DJR 2-8-0 53808 undergoing light mainenance at Minehead on 26th July 2020 prior to its transfer to the Mid-Hants Railway.  
Photo: John Tuck*

# GWR CATTLE WAGONS

David Gardner



*Diagram W5 No.13813 at Coton Hill Yard, Shrewsbury in August 1949. Fitted with D-C 3 brakes. Photo: D. M. Lee*

During the early years of the railways little concern was given to providing special accommodation for the movement of cattle by rail. If and when the need came about the beasts were most likely herded into open trucks and tied down to prevent them moving. However, as early as 1853, I. K. Brunel pointed out to the GWR Board the detrimental effect caused to wagons by their being used indiscriminately for both cattle and merchandise goods. He proposed that wagons designed to carry cattle should be built and the first purpose-designed cattle wagons soon began to appear and were in general use by the 1860s.

A photograph taken of cattle wagons at New Milford around 1873 shows a line of 12 or so comparatively modern looking wagons though 3 are roofless. New Milford was later renamed Neyland. The GWR even from those early days, built cattle wagons in three sizes, 18ft long, rated as large, medium at 15' 3" in length and 13' 6" short. These were all internal dimensions. Wheelbases were 11' 0" large, 9' 0" medium and 8' 6" small. Cattle wagons were put into a 'W' diagram in the 1905 GWR index so that large was termed W1, medium W2 and small W3. The earliest medium wagons, then simply referred to



*Diagram W11 No. W106484 at Kettering on 16th September 1952. It still retains GWR grey livery apart from newly painted top doors which may be bauxite.*

*David Gardner collection*



Two examples of BR-built wagons clearly showing how they were based on the earlier GWR design.

Left: B892477 to Diagram 1/352 at Templecombe on 5th June 1962.

Below: B893675 to Diagram 1/353 at Dorchester West on 20th September 1952.

Both photos: A. C. West

as Mex in the telegraphic code book, were outside framed and one medium cattle wagon was experimentally built of iron. It was soon found that one sided brake levers became fouled due to slots along the bottom planks but it wasn't until the 1920s that the slot above the lever was filled in.

One innovation designed by F. G. Wright, Assistant for Works for Loco, Carriage and Wagon Dept., and F. W. Marillier, Manager Carriage and Wagon Works, was a partition locking device to prevent customers from tampering with the partition to obtain more room for their cattle without paying for the extra space. Improvements during the early years of the 20th century included O.K. oil axleboxes in place of grease, Dean-Churchward both side brakes, longer buffers, vacuum brakes and screw couplings. Many W1 wagons were thus converted to W5.

Until 1943 all GWR wagons were given telegraphic code names. That for cattle wagons was Mex, later changed to Mex A for unfitted or Mex B for fitted wagons. Later diagrams W8 and W10 had a 11' 6" wheelbase while W11 and W12 had a 11' 3" wheelbase. All these later types were vacuum fitted as built. As early as 1888 the GWR produced an experimental cattle wagon known as a Pedigree Cattle Truck and given the Telegraph Code Beetle B. This was vacuum fitted and had 3' 6" Mansell wagons to run in passenger trains. It was given the Diagram W4. A larger Beetle B with groom attendant compartment was Diagram W6 at 23' 0" long with a 14' 0" wheelbase and gas lighting came out in 1907.

This was followed by Diagram W7 which was 26' 0" long and a 16' 0" wheelbase, twenty being built in 1909/10. A further ten were built in 1926. Then in 1931 Diagram W13



W106274 seen at Bournemouth on 31st August 1962 is an example of a former Diagram W10 cattle wagon which has been converted to serve as a Fruit Van under the new Diagram Y10. Those converted for Ale traffic retained their original appearance.

Photo: A. C. West



came out, similar to W7 but with oil lighting and compartment mouldings sheeted over. W14 from 1937 reverted back to gas lighting. From W7 these vans were referred to as Beetle C.

After nationalisation BR continued to build cattle wagons largely to the GWR design with a batch of 600 12 ton wagons with 11' 0" wheelbase to Diagram 1/352 built in 1950 which followed a previous batch of 150 wagons from 1949 and 700 wagons to Diagram 1/353 which were of 8 tons capacity – a throw back to GWR wagons. Lastly, a further 160 of Diagram 1/353 were built in 1952. Why BR decided to produce so many new cattle wagons is a mystery, given that they were also building large batches of LMS design, 1100 wagons in total, to Diagram 1/350 and also SR design wagons to Diagram 1/351. All BR-built cattle wagons carried B89xxx numbers.

Given that the GWR was already losing cattle traffic to road hauliers by the late 1930s, converting some older W1s to Ale

traffic in 1939 and some Diagram W10s to fruit vans in 1940, where did BR think its revenue for new cattle wagons would come from?

The GWR never built cattle wagons in large numbers and many pre-nationalisation wagons were only a few years old in any case. Therefore cattle wagons, instead of their intended purpose, would carry pigs to Calne, and broccoli and other vegetables from Cornwall to London or other big cities.

By the 1960s there was little work left for them. Some lingered on, often forgotten at the end of a siding. One BR-built Diagram 1/350 was photographed at Shrewsbury in the winter of 1974/75. A few were modified by removing the roof and used for tunnel inspection wagons and lasted until 1989, possibly longer. I never knowingly witnessed any cattle wagons in their intended use but the smell hung around for a long time after the cattle train had passed. Pity the poor guard at the end.



*Two Passenger Cattle Wagons or Beetles seen around 1949. W989 (Above) at Tyesley Carriage Sidings is to Diagram W14 whilst W721 (Below) at Henley-in-Arden is to Diagram W7.*

*Both appear to have already gained BR crimson livery; in GWR days they were brown.*

*Both: P. J. Garland collection*



# OKEHAMPTON in the 1980s

Tim Edmonds

As I write this at the end of April 2021 the railway from Crediton to Okehampton is being refurbished in preparation for the promised reinstatement of regular passenger services later this year. It will be nearly 50 years since the closure to passengers of this stub section of the former LSWR Plymouth main line, which took place after the 20:55 left Okehampton for Exeter on 3rd June 1972 and involved the closure of stations at Bow, North Tawton, Sampford Courtenay and Okehampton. The line remained in use for ballast traffic from Meldon Quarry and occasional use by the army, enthusiast railtours and, for a while, incoming fertiliser and animal feed traffic to Okehampton. The former junction with the Barnstaple line at Coleford was removed and thence to Crediton became two parallel single lines.

I got to know the line in the 1980s during regular visits to see family in North Devon. Okehampton station remained remarkably intact but several visits were off-season when shadows fell early and mists rolled down off Dartmoor, which rather restricted photo opportunities. Parts of the station found use as a Training Centre, but I saw 'To Let' signs for the Goods Shed in place for at least six years – fortunately it survived and is now a Youth Hostel. There was always the hope that I might photograph one of the Meldon Quarry ballast workings, which I managed only

once – there was no Realtime Trains to help in those days! In 1985, West Devon Council sponsored two return 'Devon Rail Moors Link' trains from Exeter Central to Okehampton on four Saturdays, calling at St David's and Crediton and timed to allow a stay of over five hours. The first ran on the late Spring Bank Holiday weekend and the rest in the summer peak – I managed to be in Devon for two of them, when a 3-car class 117 DMU was in action. There were also two pre-Christmas shopping excursions from Okehampton to Exeter on 30th November and 14th December 1985, which I was not able to witness. The following year trains ran on four peak Saturdays under the name 'Dartmoor Rambler'. I was around for the second of them, when the train comprised the latest in passenger comfort in the form of two class 142 'Skippers'. These trains did not continue in subsequent years and regular use of the line was confined to ballast trains from Meldon Quarry. It is entirely possible that the Okehampton by-pass, built in 1988, would have taken some of the trackbed had not this use of the line continued. The next chapter of the story came in the 1990s, with the sale of the quarry and the railway to ECC Quarries, restoration of the station to include a model shop and café, and then the start of the Dartmoor Railway operation, but by then my regular visits to North Devon had come to an end.



*Seen from the south, the morning train from Exeter approaches Okehampton across Fatherford Viaduct, just east of Okehampton, on 27th July 1985, the second day of the 'West Devon Moorslink' service.*



*Seen from the north, the returning afternoon train heads across Fatherford Viaduct on the inaugural day of the 'West Devon Moorslink' service from Exeter, 25th May 1985.*



*On a grey morning two of the new class 142 'Skipper' DMUs form the morning 'Dartmoor Rambler' service from Exeter Central to Okehampton, passing the remains of Sampford Courtenay station. 2nd August 1986.*

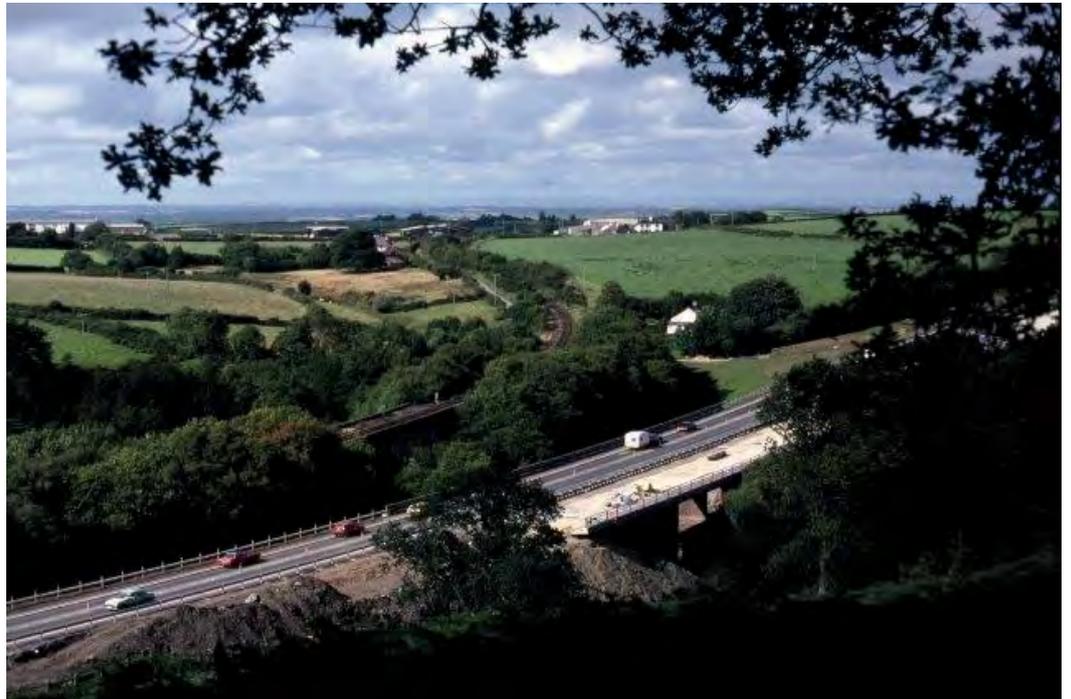


*Okehampton station as it was on 7th November 1986, fourteen years after closure, with most of the buildings still reasonably intact.*



*A patch of November sunshine catches 47256 heading a ballast train from Meldon Quarry through Okehampton station on 7th November 1986.*

*The construction of the Okehampton by-pass ruined an excellent photo viewpoint of Fatherford Viaduct, but at least the railway survived. 17th April 1988.*



*No takers for the Goods Shed at Okehampton on 22nd April 1992 after six years with this sign up, while the passenger station slumbers.*

*Waiting for the trains to return – the beautifully-restored platform 3 at Okehampton station, with model shop and café occupying the main building on the right. 16th April 1998.*



# What to do with a week's Annual Leave or One crazy week

Story and pictures by Peter Robins



*Llantarnam Abbey adds to the early morning mist whilst shunting wagons at Aberaman on Monday 24th September 1979.*

Working as a relief ticket office clerk, I had to make every day of Annual Leave count photographically. Most of my colleagues would spend a week's leave on the beach, in the garden or just with their feet up. Not me. This was my first full week off in 1979 and I planned to make maximum use of my week off even if it left me less refreshed at the end of the week than at the start. It was my "bucket list" at the time and involved a lot of careful planning. There was little scope for late running or cancellations.

## Monday 24th September 1979

Knowing that NCB steam was not going to be around for much longer and my Annual Leave was at a premium, I wanted to have a final day at Mountain Ash in South Wales. Unfortunately, this involved a 04:00 start to pick up a friend and drive the 140 or so miles to get there. The Mountain Ash system included collieries at Deep Dyffryn and Penrhiwceiber and a Phurnacite plant at Abercwmboi.

Steam activity had dwindled over the last few years so it was a case of driving along the road which was close to the railway until I could see steam. Eventually steam was seen rising from No.8 (RSH 7139 of 1944) and *Llantarnam Abbey* (Barclay 2074 of 1939) near Aberaman. The valley was shrouded in mist and the sun was in no hurry to climb above the valley sides which made photography then later scanning and processing quite challenging. Both locos seemed to spend most of their time running light engine with very occasional shunting work. Old Mountain Ash favourites *Sir John* (Avonside 1680 of 1914) and ex-GWR No.7754 were now dumped outside the shed. Just after midday, *Llantarnam Abbey* came out to play again to shunt some wagons over the weighbridge then the crew decided to have a long siesta.

Most of the action at Mountain Ash was in the morning so it was game over early afternoon. After a short spell photographing "Modern Image" at Llanwern (a "Peak" and a class 37), I headed back home, dropped off my friend and tucked into a good dinner at home. Straight after dinner it was a walk down to Maidenhead station to get a train to Paddington then on to Euston. My "bed" for the night was the first compartment of the *Royal Highlander* from Euston to Coatbridge.



*On the same day Austerity No.8 is shunting wagons at Mountain Ash.*

## Tuesday 25 September 1979

Arrival at Coatbridge on the overnight sleeper was at about 04:30. It was cold and drizzly. I was still feeling quite tired and I knew I had a two mile walk to Bedlay colliery at Glenboig. After about 15 minutes the drizzle turned to full bore rain. Brilliant! My only option was to try and hitch a lift - something I had never done before. Fortunately my luck was really in. After about 10 minutes a massive (for 1979) eight wheel coal lorry stopped and the driver beckoned me into his warm and dry cab. He asked where I was going and I said Bedlay colliery. He looked at me a little strangely then said in deep Glasgow brogue "You're lucky as that's where I'm going". Having been dropped off outside a warm and dry mess room, I thanked the driver and proceeded to dry off.

I had previously written off and obtained permission for my visit so I duly reported to the colliery manager where I was kitted out with a regulation hard hat. The manager was proud of his "wee pug" which had just been overhauled and said it should last for another 25 years! Unfortunately the colliery closed two years later in 1981 but the "wee pug" No.17 (Barclay 2296 of 1950) survives on the Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway. There were two other locos at Bedlay - No.6 (Barclay 2043 of 1937) also at Bo'ness and No.9 (Hudswell Clarke 895 of 1909) now at the Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial Life.

Bedlay colliery was only eight miles from the centre of Glasgow and set in rolling hills. After shunting wagons at the colliery, the "wee pug" would take about eight or nine loaded wagons up the bank to the exchange sidings. This could be quite a long and drawn out affair as "wee pug" was obviously working to its absolute limit. Quite a bit of sand was applied to the rails as it slowly slipped its way up the bank. At the exchange sidings Class 20 No.20100 had just brought some empties in and the method of getting them down to colliery was interesting to say the least. Most of the handbrakes on the empty wagons were pinned down and "wee pug" had to push them down the bank.

Again this was a morning operation and after bidding farewell to the colliery manager, I headed back to Coatbridge. A spell of modern image photography at Haymarket then Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh where finally the sun made an appearance, was followed by a trip to North Queensferry at the north end of the Forth Bridge. The semaphore signals had recently been replaced by colour light and Forth Bridge North box was derelict. The *Travellers Fare Centenary Express* passed with a class 40 at the head but the sun had all but gone - Oh to have had a digital camera at that point! I returned to my B&B in Edinburgh to a meal and a very welcome good night's sleep.

*In dire weather conditions (Right) No.17 shunts wagons over the weighbridge at Bedlay Colliery on Tuesday 25th September 1979.*

*Meanwhile, No.6 and No.9 sit at Bedlay Colliery awaiting the call to duty. (Bottom left)*

*20221 and 20217 (Bottom right) head a coal train over the Forth Bridge passing the closed Forth Bridge North Signal Box.*



### Wednesday 26 September 1979

After breakfast at my B&B, I took a bus to Whitburn and walked the short distance to Polkemmet colliery. No.8 *Dardanelles* (Barclay 1175 of 1908) stood guard outside the entrance. The pit shafts were sunk in 1913 and it became one of the most successful pits in central Scotland producing around 4,000 tons a day in the 1950's. From the colliery it was a steep climb to the exchange sidings and two locos had to work hard to move eight or nine fully loaded mineral wagons. Polkemmet also had a reputation for having the dirtiest locos on the NCB system.

Having again written for permission, I met with the colliery manager and was provided with my regulation hard hat. After photographing the dumped locos on site, I noted two very grubby locos being coaled and watered in preparation for some more work. A different No.8 (Barclay 1296 of 1912) and No.25 (Barclay 2358 of 1954) backed onto a load of eight fully loaded coal wagons bound for the exchange sidings. I was so taken in by the sight of these two locos brewing up and blowing off steam that I missed my cue to walk up the bank to a photo-spot by the colliery. I wandered up the bank to see them returning to the colliery but waited there for the next run. About an hour later there was a repeat performance unfortunately with a bit of high cloud obscuring the full brightness of the sun.

Polkemmet colliery finally closed in 1986 in controversial circumstances as a result of flooding which occurred during the 1984-1985 miners strike. Unfortunately the site suffered from burning bings, which is persistent spontaneous combustion in the massive spoil tips left after mining. This resulted in noxious fumes which when propelled by a prevailing wind were very noticeable to road users on the M8. Initial attempts to move the bing resulted in the whole of the town of Whitburn becoming polluted, children suffering with asthma and cars being pitted with acid rain. Fortunately, the bings have now been successfully dealt with and where they stood is now Polkemmet Country Park with No.8 *Dardanelles* as a static display. The two working locos have both been preserved at the Scottish Industrial Railway Centre at Ayr.

Because I was on a strict schedule, I left at about midday to head back to Edinburgh and then on to Kings Cross. After a quick dash to Liverpool Street, I boarded the Hook Continental boat train to Harwich and caught the ferry to Hook of Holland.



*No 8 Dardanelles acting as the gate guardian at Polkemmet colliery.*



*On Wednesday 26th September, The other No.8 shunts at Polkemmet.*

*Later No.8 teamed up with No.25 to head a loaded train on the climb away from Polkemmet Colliery.*



## Thursday 27 September 1979

The trick on the Harwich - Hoek ferry was to go to the Smorgasbord restaurant when it opened - I think it was about 04:30 - pay the entrance fee and help yourself to a good helping of Full English Breakfast. Timing was of the essence so I would stay in the restaurant for about an hour then about thirty minutes before docking have a full continental breakfast and make up a few filled rolls for lunch. Food - Sorted!

The plan was to photograph and ride behind the NS 1500 class / ex BR EM2 class which operated between Den Haag and Venlo. The weather was not as kind as it could have been but I managed to get reasonable shots at Tilburg and Eindhoven. No's 1502

(27000 *Electra*), 1503 (27004 *Juno*) and 1505 (27001 *Ariadne*) were covering three of the diagrams. Also photographed was "Baldwin" 1200 class No.1211 which was covering one of the other diagrams. These locos were designed by Baldwins of America and 25 were built by Werkspoor in Utrecht between 1951 and 1953. They were retired by NS in 1998 and apart from five which had a stay of execution with ACTS Nederland until 2010, four including No.1211 have been preserved.

All too soon, it was back on a train to Rheine in Germany to find accommodation for the night. Fortunately, having made five previous visits to Rheine, I was confident of not being out on the streets for the night.



*NS 1505 (Formerly BR 27001 Ariadne) at Tilburg with a train from Den Haag to Koln.*



*NS 1211 "Baldwin" at Rotterdam with a train from Venlo to Den Haag.*

## Friday 28 September 1979

After another welcome good night's sleep and breakfast, I wandered down to the station at Rheine where it was strange and a bit sad not to see any steam. Elderly class 104 electric locos, built in the mid 1930's and before many of the steam locos that I photographed some four years earlier, still operated local services to Munster. The line to Emden had been electrified and the purpose of my visit was to photograph the class 220/221 (V200/V200.1 or Warship) which were operating the service prior to the changeover to electric traction.

Five V200 prototypes were built by Krauss-Maffei in Munich in 1953/1954 with a further 81 following in 1956, 20 of which were built by MaK in Kiel. The V220.1 or class 221 was a more powerful version of the V200 and were built in 1962. Having been concentrated in the north from 1977, the class 220/221's were withdrawn by DB by 1984.

At Rheine I met a friend who had come over to Germany as part of a larger group, mainly from the Diesel Traction Group, and most of whom were just riding the trains. This is also the friend who twisted my arm to go Germany for steam in 1975 - I am forever grateful to him! We mostly rode the trains as the sun had done a disappearing act again travelling between Rheine, Leer and Oldenburg meeting other members of our group at various locations throughout the day.

We stayed in Hotel Bruns at Lathen which provided all amenities with typical German efficiency. There was even a small industrial steam loco plinthed in the grounds. Only when writing this article, did I find out that it was VOEST-Alpine Stahl No.100-6 built by WLF (Wiener Lokomotivfabrik Florisdorf) in Vienna, works No 3237 of 1939. After a superb evening meal at the hotel, we all trooped down to a local night spot where there was much drinking and dancing - to a greater degree by certain others in our group!



*Veteran DB electric 104 018 leaves Rheine with a train to Munster on Friday 28th September.*



*221 145 leaves Leer with a train from Koln to Norddeich.*

## Saturday 29 September 1979

Our group of around 20 met for breakfast. Some of our group were a little worse for wear after the drinking and dancing of the previous evening. Fortunately my friend and I had been a little more sensible the previous evening and were raring to get out in the beautiful morning sunshine. Most of the morning was spent in the Lathen area photographing the procession of class 220/221 worked trains.

After taking photographs at Lathen, we headed down to Meppen where I wanted to recreate some of the photos I had taken there four years earlier with steam. I recall that it was far less bother to photograph around the recently installed electrification masts that certain railways that come to mind!

This was my last trip to the Rheine - Emden line and as we headed back to Rheine on the train, I was noting photo-spots I had used for 042 and 043 steam locos in previous years. At Rheine we waited for our train to Rotterdam and Hook of Holland for the overnight ferry to Harwich.



*Plinthed industrial loco outside the Hotel Bruns in Lathen. The 0-4-0T was VOEST-Alpine Stahl No.100-6 built by WLF (Wiener Lokomotivfabrik Florisdorf) in Vienna, works No 3237 of 1939.*

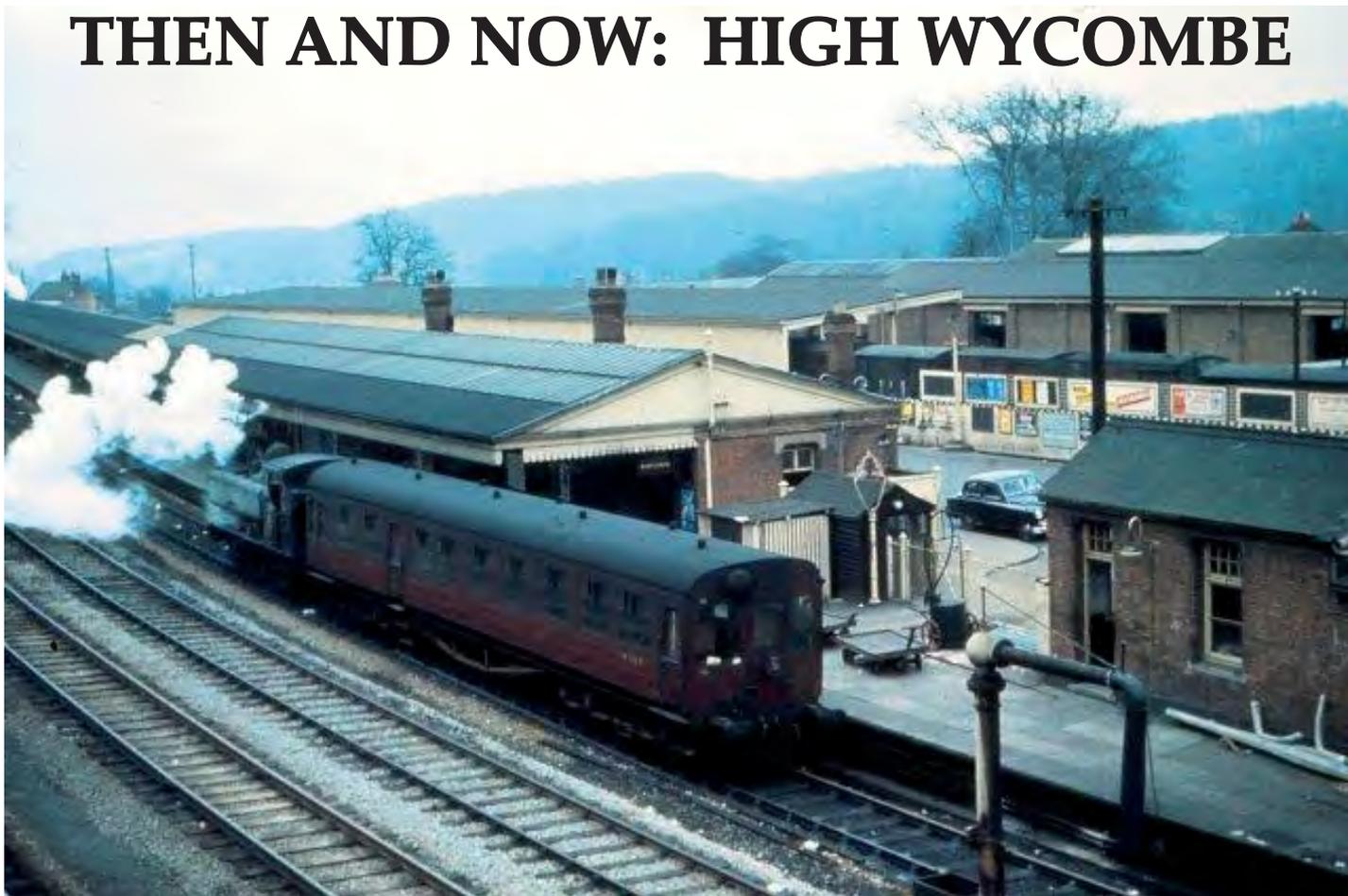


*220 022 leaves Meppen with a Hagen - Norddeich train on Saturday 29th September. The resemblance to the WR Warships is obvious.*

## Sunday 30 September 1979

It was always an anti-climax on the return journey as we headed home from Harwich. After saying our farewells, I headed back towards Maidenhead and a well needed rest. Back to work on the Monday for another week then on the Saturday it was off to Heathrow Airport. Four weeks of steam in South Africa - where we met two fellow photographers who later became MDRS members - but that is another story!

# THEN AND NOW: HIGH WYCOMBE



This time we compare the view from the Amersham Hill bridge in High Wycombe. Sixty years ago, 5420 propels Autotrailer W236W away forming the 9.45 to Aylesbury on 12th March 1961.

*Photo: Gerald T. Robinson*

Chiltern 68010 *Oxford Flyer* calls at High Wycombe leading 1R23, the 10:37 Marylebone to Birmingham Moor Street on 25th March 2021. The once busy goods yard has been replaced by the car park.

*Photo: Nigel Hunt*

