

# THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

# 177

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Contents:

- Marlow Donkey Night Turn
- The Fall & Rise of Birmingham (S. Hill)
- Tickets Please - Part 4
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# The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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

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### Front Cover Photographs

*Top: 1421 on the Marlow Donkey at Marlow on the final weekend of steam. 7 or 8 July 1962.  
Mike Peart (Article page: 5)*

*Bottom left: 5026 Criccieth Castle departs Birmingham Snow Hill. 6 October 1962.*

*Bottom right: 57XX 0-6-0PT 9753 on a transfer goods at Birmingham Snow Hill. 14 July 1961.*

*Bottom right (lower image): 56XX 0-6-2T 6604 on a transfer goods approaching Birmingham S. Hill. 9 June 1962.*

*All images Mike Page (Article page: 5)*

# TIMETABLE

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held in the Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Rd, Bourne End at 7.15 for 7.30pm or can be attended on-line on Zoom (see page 3).

Thursday 15 September **THE MASKED GRICER** Simon Colbeck

Simon's Presentation provides a pictorial diary of what he got up to during the COVID pandemic. From scanning his own and other peoples slides to photographing Modern Traction and Preserved steam. This varied show has something for everyone, 1960's steam, including Marlow, 1980's diesels, overseas steam and recent images of the railway today including heritage lines.

Thursday 20 October **BROAD GAUGE JOURNEY 2 – SWINDON WESTWARDS** Rev. Brian Arman

The Reverend's presentation begins with the journey from the west end of Swindon Junction with a brief visit to the workshops and then heads west through Wootton Bassett, Chippenham, Box and Bath; and takes an in depth look at Bristol from both the GWR and Bristol and Exeter Railway perspectives. Leaving Bristol we traverse the B&E main line and branches to Taunton. If time permits, we will proceed onwards to Exeter.

Thursday 17 November **LONDON STEAM IN THE 50's AND 60's** Ken Livermore

At the time period covered by Ken's Presentation, there were a dozen termini and some eighteen operational locomotive depots, the London area was a paradise for railway enthusiasts in the 1950's and early 1960's. Ancient and modern steam locomotives could be found mixing their duties with the newly introduced "Pilot Scheme" diesels. Each of the "Big Four" railway companies were well represented with many of their most impressive steam locomotives still kept in spotless condition for the most important duties. At the other end of the scale, humble shunters went about their business in vast goods yards and sidings. Ken's presentation sets out to capture the glamour and grime of everyday railway operation in the Capital before much of it was swept away by modernisation.

Thursday 15 December **AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT** Peter Robins

Peter presents a festive programme that will include transport topics to appeal to all tastes.

Thursday 19 January **STEAM IN INDIA – METER GAUGE MEMORIES** Geoff Warren

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

It is pleasing to see that the society still has a strong following and attracts supporters from across the globe. Many come from sister organisations (mainly male) such as RTCS or LCGB and then there are Guests. Some go on to join the society and become members which is a welcome move. We therefore judge that we must be doing something right.

Obviously as well as the social aspect it is the subject and quality of our monthly talks which are the magnet. True we sometimes have minor difficulties combining a meeting venue and a Zoom presentation but once on our way the speaker has our attention. August brought back Colin Brading with 'Tracks in the Mist – Part 2' with a marvellous presentation based on the Swansea & Mumbles Railway plus the Wantage Tramway. Most of us know something about each but Colin provided history and photographs to add to that knowledge.

September features the 'Masked Gricer' with the return of Simon Colbeck. For Zoom read Zorro? If you join us in October another favourite visitor, Rev Brian Arman, will continue his Broad Gauge journey from 'Swindon to the West'. Another talk not to be missed.

Already our 2023 programme is building. If you have any talk suggestions or you recently heard good speakers, let us know. Even better if you would like to be the 'Speaker Arranger',

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programme talks and dates, Vincent Caldwell our Secretary would like to hear from you. A fascinating and challenging role in the society which Vincent combines with secretarial duties but which he would like to separate. Please give it some early thought and contact Vincent if you can help him.

We pride ourselves on the quality of our in-house magazine, the *Marlow Donkey*, edited by Mike Walker and which you receive each quarter. Copy and photos are always welcome. Another excellent glossy publication I look forward to receiving, being a GWS Member, is the *Great Western Echo*. In the Summer edition I noted a plug for 'The Broad Gauge engines of the Great Western Railway'. Compiled by none other than the Rev Canon Brian Arman! See an earlier paragraph.

At the start I mentioned our following, that's you. We appreciate that there may be good reasons for you to stay at home and watch on Zoom. However as we move further away from that virus it is much better, if possible, for a society to mix and mingle, share a story or a laugh and put a face to a name. If you can make the Community Centre at Bourne End (parking and bar available) please come along. Nevertheless members and Guests (potential members?) are welcome whatever option they chose.

*Mike Hyde*

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# SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

## NEW MEMBERS

It is a pleasure to welcome two new members to the Society, both from Maidenhead. Laurence Hansford having joined us at June's meeting and Brian Locker who joined us in August.

## BRIAN MUSCHAMP

Sadly we have to note the passing of Brian Muschamp who has been a member for many years but sadly lost a 3½ year battle with pancreatic cancer in July. He regularly attended meetings before Covid and has joined the Zoom meetings since.

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS

In June David McIntosh, the Education Officer for the Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Trust, presented a programme on Gresley's A4 pacifics looking at the types origins and then at each of the locomotives in detail.

For our July meeting Richard Crane took us on a pictorial journey along the 77 mile Oxford to Cambridge line as it was up to closure in 1968 and compared it with progress of restoring the rail link now progressing as the East-West Rail Project.

In August Colin Brading returned with Part 2 of his Tracks In The Mist presentation. This time the spotlight fell on the Swansea & Mumbles Railway which largely used double-deck electric tramcars and, closer to home, the Wantage Tramway which connected the Berkshire market town with the GWR main line which had passed it by.

## ELIZABETH LINE OPENING

Transport for London (TfL) has announced that from 6th November Elizabeth Line services from Reading, Heathrow and Shenfield will operate through the central core rather than terminating at Paddington (Main Line) and Liverpool Street respectively as they do at present.

Those from Reading and Heathrow will diverge from the GWML at Westbourne Park and enter the Crossrail tunnels calling at Paddington (Low Level) before continuing to Abbey Wood. Trains from Shenfield will leave the GEML at Bethnal Green and run to Paddington (Low Level) where they will terminate then continue to Westbourne Park sidings to reverse.

This will provide a peak service of 22 trains per hour between Paddington and Whitechapel, the last station before the lines to Shenfield and Abbey Wood split at Stepney Green Junction. The eventual aim is to increase this to 24 trains per hour in 2023.

A Sunday service will also be introduced through the central core from this time.

The much delayed station at Bond Street is finally expected to open in the early autumn ahead of the full service start but the exact date has not yet been announced.

## BRANCH CLOSURE

GWR and Network Rail have announced that the entire Maidenhead to Marlow branch will be closed from after the last train on Friday 22nd October until the start of service on Monday 31st October (coinciding with the school half term holiday) for major engineering works.

This is understood to be the relaying of the final section of jointed track on the branch between Cookham and Bourne End.

During the blockade rail replacement buses will operate connecting the branch stations. Full details can be found on the GWR website.

## RCTS MEETINGS

Our friends in the RCTS have the following meetings planned for the coming months.

Monday 26th September  
Australia 2020 - Stuart Hicks

Monday 24th October  
The Final Years of BR Steam - Derek Huntriss

Monday 28th November  
Installing the Station Canopy from Maidenhead on the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway - Dr. Tony Stead

Monday 19th December  
Branch AGM

Meetings are held at the Cox Green Community Centre, Highfield Lane, Cox Green, SL6 3AX starting at 19:30 and like ours by Zoom. MDRS members always welcome. To register to attend by Zoom visit <https://rcts.org.uk/windsor-maidenhead/events/> and follow the link there.

*The recent strike days produced the unusual sight of the Mountfield to Southampton gypsum working using the GWML rather than the more normal Southern route. The empty wagons were tripped from Mountfield to Tonbridge the previous (non-strike) day then forwarded to Southampton on the strike day.*

*On Saturday 25th June, in a lucky burst on sun, 69001 Mayflower nears Twyford with 4Z13, the 07:30 Tonbridge to Southampton empties.*

*Photo: Peter Robins*



The Marlow Donkey

# MARLOW DONKEY NIGHT TURN

**John Smith**

These notes cover a typical night's activity at Marlow railway station with locomotive 1445 and autococh W229. The final day of *Marlow Donkey* steam haulage was Sunday 8th July when 1421 took over.

The loco and autococh covered over 200 miles a day (97 miles morning and 115 miles afternoon). The loco returned to Slough shed one a week, during the night, for servicing and boiler washout.

On the night of our visit the night fireman was H. Trott from Slough shed.

## The Nightly Routine

After the last run into Marlow, the loco is uncoupled. The coach is left in the station platform and the loco driven up to the points beyond the engine shed, near SW sign. It then reverses into the siding, passing the coaling stage, and is coupled to a coal wagon which contains coal briquettes. The driver now goes home, having handed over to the night fireman from Slough shed.

The wagon is drawn to the coaling stage and uncoupled there. The loco moves to the engine shed and stops in the entrance. One of the whistles is removed from the loco and a flexible armoured hose is attached in its place. Steam is now supplied to a vertical pump housed in an adjacent small brick hut.

With the pressure falling below 100lbs the loco spends 2/3 hours drawing water from a well, by means of the pump, which discharges into the trackside tank. The fireman meanwhile shovels sufficient coal briquettes, from the wagon onto the coaling stage, to cover the next day's requirements.

When the water level in the tank is sufficient to cover the following day, the hose is disconnected and the whistle replaced.

The fireman then removes the fire door hood and cleans the fire which is about 12" thick. The residue and clinker are broken up with a long pricker and shovelled out onto an ash tip. Enough glowing coal, kept alight with the blower, is left on the firebars. Fresh fuel is added and the fire door partially closed with the blower open slightly.

The fireman now reverses the loco out of the engine shed entrance and moves up to the wagon at the coaling stage. He cleans the ash out of the loco smokebox, having first turned on the blower. He then shovels coal briquettes direct from the wagon into the loco bunker until it is piled high.

The wagon is then pushed clear of the coal stage, with the brake rod down, but not pinned. It will be positioned opposite the station building.

The loco is driven past the engine shed, where the points are re-set and it returns to the station platform and couples up to the autococh. The boiler is filled using the injector. The fireman can sometimes snatch some rest at this point before preparing the loco for the next day's work.



*The fire is thrown out of 1421 as it stands outside Marlow shed during the midday break on 29th June 1962. The coal wagon would be a perfect model. .*

*Mike Walker collection, photographer unknown.*

Steam will be raised to working pressure, a good fire built up and the water tanks filled from a tap and hose on the station platform. The loco lubricators are filled and the motion oiled. All this activity is completed before the regular driver arrives.

All the above was carried out in primitive working conditions with the only illumination available being a single flare lamp.

*1445 is being coaled from a wagon in the "Khartoum" siding at Marlow, you can't see the poor lad doing it, but he's there, trust me. March 1962.*

*Photographer: C R Gordon Stuart / Colour-Rail BRW2196.*



# THE FALL AND RISE OF BIRMINGHAM (SNOW HILL) STATION



Some stations, which were well known during ‘train-spotting days’ in the 1950s/60s, have either closed completely, died slowly or have been totally rebuilt. A station that underwent all three phases was Birmingham (Snow Hill) where at one time, writes MIKE PAGE, a local spotter could sit back happily and watch a busy steam show.

When I was eleven (1953) my parents at last allowed me to explore the local railways alone or with train friends. We lived in Moxley, located on the old A41 between Wednesbury and Bilston (say four miles south east of Wolverhampton).

Wolverhampton (Low Level) was an attraction reachable by trolley bus (two old pence for a ‘child’) or by walking to Bilston (Central) on the ex-Great Western (GW) Wolverhampton – Birmingham line and paying about eight old pence for a cheap day return. If pocket monies allowed: Birmingham (Snow Hill) was also reachable.

Local trains, until June 1957 when Class 116 DMUs took over, consisted usually of a ‘51XX’ 2-6-2T and four or five ex-GW suburban coaches. An alternative was the Didcot/Oxford – Wolverhampton semi-fast service, which called at Bilston (Central). Motive power could range from a ‘43XX’ or ‘93XX’ 2-6-0 up to a ‘Castle’. I was too late to experience one of Leamington’s (84D) ‘Saint’ 4-6-0s, such as 2902 *The Lady of the Lake* or 2933 *Bibury Court*, which used to work one of these diagrams until 1950 or so.

The Snow Hill station in 1953 was essentially as rebuilt during 1909-11. The impressive overall roof used prefabricated steelwork supplied by E.C & J Keay of James Bridge, Darlaston (the factory lay about 10min walk from where we used to live in Darlaston until December 1946). The roof protected two wide island platforms, which had buildings sporting decorative glazed brickwork. The roof was open over the through roads of the central four-track layout. Glass screens protected passengers on the east side (Snow Hill Ringway) and on the

*Spotters look on as Tyseley’s BR Standard 4 4-6-0, 75003, approaches from the north with an Up peak hour local. Standing station pilot on the right is Tyseley’s ex-GW ‘Grange’ 6861 Crynant Grange on 14th July 1961.*

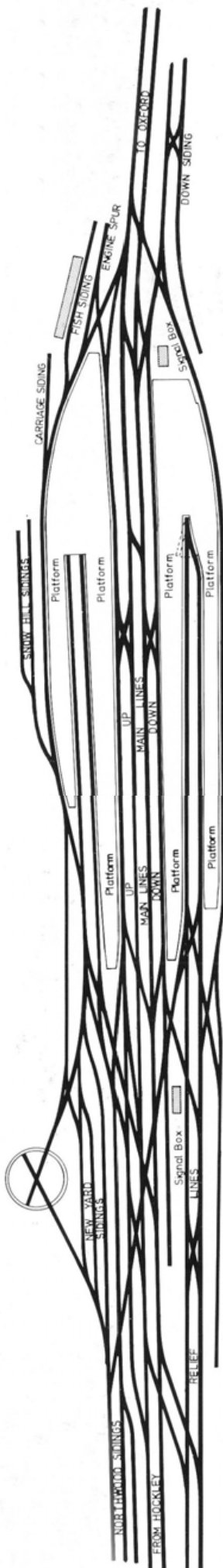
*All photos by the author*

west side (Livery Street). A rather grand hotel building faced Colmore Row. I still have an early childhood memory of seeing the trams leaning over as they came out of Snow Hill Ringway into Colmore Row (late 40s up until 1952).

There was a two-track tunnel at the south end, and a subterranean parcels depot on the west side. As the land fell steeply away to the north, much of the station was built on a brick-walled embankment so the station always had an ‘airy’ feel about it. Each island platform had two bay platforms at the north end, which accommodated local trains to and from Stourbridge, Dudley and Wolverhampton. The lines crossed Great Charles Street at the north end and then descended sharply into a wide cutting and two short tunnels under Birmingham’s ‘Jewellery Quarter’ before emerging into Hockley goods yards and station. The gradient rose from the north at about 1 in 47 and from the south, through the tunnel, at 1 in 45!

The main difference between Snow Hill station and the London Midland Region’s (LMR) New Street station, as far as train-watching was concerned, was that Snow Hill had a busy flow of freight traffic. LMR freight mostly avoided New Street by using the Camp Hill line.

At Snow Hill you could expect anything the old GW could offer in the form of locomotives and coaches of most builds since 1900 or so. If you had been watching in, say, 1947, the spotter might have seen one of two outside-framed ‘Aberdare’ 2-6-0s (2625 and 2663) based at Oxley (84B). A ‘Bulldog’ 4-4-0, such as 85A Worcester’s 3393 *Australia* or 84F Stourbridge’s 3450 *Peacock* could turn up on a local from Worcester, a ‘Saint’ on an Oxford-Wolverhampton semi-fast service, or a ‘Star’ on a slower service to Paddington or a cross-country service to Margate, Weymouth or Cardiff.



**BIRMINGHAM SNOW HILL STATION**  
Circa 1960

In 1953 a few 'Stars' survived, such as Wolverhampton (Stafford Road) 84A's 4049 *Princess Maud* and 4053 *Princess Alexandra*, while the new excitement was to see one of Old Oak Common's (81A) 'Britannias' (initially 70017/8/20/23 and joined later by 70015 from 30A Stratford) or Cardiff Canton's (86C) 70025-29. The latter would occasionally work a Cardiff-Birmingham service, sharing with 'Castles' and 'Halls', until the original Swindon-built 'Inter-City' DMUs took over in 1958 or so. By then, the 'Britannias' based at 81A and 83D Plymouth Laira (70016/19/21/24) and 70022 at 83A Newton Abbot had all been transferred to join their other Western Region sisters at 86C.

Named trains included the *Inter-City* (Wolverhampton – Paddington), the *Cambrian Coast Express* (Paddington – Aberystwyth/P-wllheli) and the *Cornishman* (Wolverhampton – Plymouth/Penzance). In the summer, the latter service could include one or two reliefs – producing locos from 83D or Newton Abbott (83A), and even 83F Truro. Summer specials serving Margate, Hastings and Weymouth produced engines from Reading (81D), Oxford (81F) and Weymouth (GW – 82F) – or any loco going spare.

The specials and 'reliefs' to the Welsh Coast resorts could sport 'Dukedog' outside-framed 4-4-0s from 89C Machynlleth as well as their 'Manor' 4-6-0s.

The 'Kings' from 84A and 81A worked the heavier Birkenhead – Chester – Shrewsbury – Wolverhampton – Paddington service to and from Wolverhampton. 'Kings' were banned north of Wolverhampton until around 1959.

Through freight trains were mostly fitted/partially-fitted Class 'C', 'D', 'E' or 'F' along with 'block' trains of bananas/fruit, oil and iron ore. The latter served integrated iron & steel works at Round Oak (near Dudley) and Stewarts & Lloyds (Bilston). Outgoing goods ranged from metal products such as forgings, castings and pipe and manufactured goods – you name it! Destinations included Southampton, London, Newport (South Wales) as well as Swindon. Locos included the ex-GW 2-6-0 classes, the 4-6-0s of 'Manors', 'Granges' and 'Halls' as well as 28XX/3850 and R.O.D 2-8-0s. It was usually in the early mornings or later evenings when an 81A or 84B '47XX' 2-8-0 appeared on fitted freights. The occasional Stanier 2-8-0 and ex-London & North Western G2/G2a 0-8-0 ('Duck Eights' to us Midlands spotters!) off the Central Wales line would appear as well. Banbury (84C), Bristol (St. Philips Marsh – 82B) and Cardiff Canton might send their WD 2-8-0s along too.

*Tyseley's '57XX' 0-6-0PT 9753 is down to walking pace with a lengthy transfer goods from Hockley to Bordesley on 14th July 1961.*



*Coming in with the 17:35 Wolverhampton (Low Level) to Paddington is Old Oak Common's 'King' 6029 King Edward VIII on 14th July 1961.*

*The Taylor & Challen building was the office block of a company, which built specialised power presses.*



A real treat to seasoned spotters could be seeing one of 81A's condensing pannier tanks (9700-10), a spark arrestor pannier tank (like 84F's 1621 – sub-shedded at Kidderminster for working the Cleobury Mortimer – Ditton Priors branch), a 'Deans Goods' or a 'Cambrian' 0-6-0. Other 'foreign' pannier tanks appeared too from far-flung sheds. Very uncommon were the 67XX pannier tanks, which were mostly based in South Wales. There were not many pannier tanks in the 77XX series in the West Midlands either. Such visitors would have been overhauled or repaired at Wolverhampton's Stafford Road Works or had visited Birmingham's Tyseley (84E) shed repair shop. Not so common either were the 'push-pull' 14XX 0-4-2Ts, of which Stourbridge had three.

There was plenty of local freight for the 0-6-0PTs (nicknamed 'match boxes' by us!), including transfer trips between shunting yards at Halesowen (via Old Hill), Stourbridge Junction, Soho & Winson Green, Hockley and Oxley (Wolverhampton) to Bordesley yards (between Snow Hill and Tyseley).

On a typical trip from Bilston (Central) to Snow Hill on a school summer holiday Saturday in 1957 I noted seven pannier tanks shunting along the way: at Bilston (Central); Wednesbury (Central); Swan Village; West Bromwich; Handsworth & Smethwick and Hockley.

Stourbridge Junction's (84F) 56XX 0-6-2Ts would appear on local freights too as well as repaired engines 'running in', including 'Dukedogs'. Those pannier tanks bringing 40 wagons up the 1 in 45 in the tunnel always appeared to have 'just made it', as they emerged from the gloom, their exhaust echoing around the station. They probably had taken a 'run' at the climb. Larger engines had always shut off as they left the tunnel – unless they had been checked on the approaches. Certainly a checked 'King' or a 'Castle' would let everyone on the station know about it!

The locos with heavy freights that always seemed to have matters well under control on the approaching gradients were the ex-GWR 2-8-0s, and later, the Standard Class 9F 2-10-0s.



*At Snow Hill on 9th June 1962, one of Tyseley's 57XX 0-6-0PTs, 3625, has unusually been sent down a platform road with a Down transfer goods. The large office block over in the left background belonged to steelmaker Stewarts & Lloyds.*





What about diesels? Well, in the 'steamy' days until June 1957, ex-GW railcars would sidle in on some off-peak locals from Dudley and Stourbridge Junction. 84F maintained W8, 14 and 29W. One of the two ex-GW parcels cars, W17W, based at Southall (81C) often appeared, usually with a GUW in tow, on its way to and from Wolverhampton (Low Level). As for diesel shunters: Tyseley (84E) had 15103 in 1952 until it was replaced by 13004 from the first batch of '08s' in 1953. Then 13025-29 appeared followed by 13192 so that by 1956/7, you might see one grind through Snow Hill on its way to shunt at Hockley.

1953 saw the first batch of 'Standard' Class 3 2-6-2Ts (82000-9) allocated to 84E and new Standard 4 and 5 4-6-0s from WR sheds. The 82000ers seemed to concentrate their [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

*Tyseley's 56XX 0-6-2T, 6604, heaves a heavy transfer goods, probably from Hockley, up the short sharp rise from Birmingham's 'Jewellery Quarter' into Snow Hill on her way to Bordesley on 9th June 1962 and meets fellow Tyseley loco 51XX 2-6-2T 4111 waiting to fetch empty stock.*

activities on Birmingham (Moor Street) to Stratford-on-Avon services, only occasionally appearing at Snow Hill. A year later, they were all sent to South Wales, but spotters could cop the ex-South Wales 56XX and 41XX locos sent in exchange.

A brief look at LMR visitors: apart from the Western Region-based Stanier 8Fs and ex-LNW 0-8-0s, occasional visits by Stanier 'Black 5' 4-6-0s were made on football excursions, say from Manchester, to Snow Hill (usually for West Bromwich Albion matches (the 'Baggies')). The trains for the



*Kings meet: watched by the crew of 6021 King Richard II, former Plymouth Laira King 6016 King Edward V arrives with a Birkenhead to Paddington express on 9th June 1962. 6016 had been transferred to Wolverhampton Stafford Road.*

*6021 then departs with a Paddington to Birkenhead express. The first six or so coaches, plus restaurant car, will be taken off at Wolverhampton (Low Level).*

*The overline building on the left was the North Relay interlocking for the 1960 scheme. The panel, the first of the WR Turn-Push NX panels, was located in the former downside first class waiting room on the station.*



*At the start of the Winter 1962 timetable, Birmingham Snow Hill lost the named trains Cambrian Coast Express, Cornishman and later The Inter-City but gained the rerouted Pines Express. For a while, the 'Pines' was worked forward from Wolverhampton (Low Level) to Oxford by a Stafford Road 'Castle', in this case 5026 Criccieth Castle on 6th October 1962.*

Long standing resident of Wolverhampton Stafford Road shed is 6011 King James I, which has just arrived with the 13:10 Paddington to Birkenhead train on 9th June 1962.



'Baggies' unloaded at The Hawthorns halt near the stadium and the locos, after depositing the stock at Handsworth & Smethwick, came through for servicing at Tyseley. But no average trainspotter (me included) could recover from the surprise – nay shock – of Crewe North's 'Coronation' 4-6-2 46237 *City of Bristol* one May Saturday in 1955 when she had charge of the 14.35 Wolverhampton-Paddington. 46237 was undergoing 'road tests' on the WR for a week or so.

LMR 'Pacifics' appeared at Snow Hill again in February 1956: the 'Kings' had had to be withdrawn for inspection owing to bogie frame fracture(s) so the LMR lent two 'Princess Royals' and two 'Coronations'. These were: 46207 *Princess Arthur of Connaught*, 46210 *Lady Patricia*, 46254 *City of Stoke-on-Trent* and 46257 *City of Salford*. The 'Princesses' worked some Paddington-Wolverhampton services and the 'Coronations' the Paddington-Plymouth trains. 'Castles' from other sheds were also drafted in. A couple of weeks later, most of the 'Kings' were back in action again.

Well apart from the dieselisation of local services, nothing much more happened until the advent of the 'Blue Pullman' service in 1960. The station area was also resigalled to full 'colour light' operation. Then, as electrification works on the Euston-Crewe route got going in 1961, the (Birkenhead)

Wolverhampton – Paddington services were increased to hourly while dieselisation of the Paddington-Plymouth services saw 83D's 'Kings' transferred to 81A much to the joy of West Midlands spotters!

Joys are often short-lived as the 'Western' (TOPS 52) diesel-hydraulics began to appear from June 1962 onwards and soon we were to say goodbye to the 'Kings' after 10th September 1962. We gained a new 'titled train' working, the *Pines Express*. This train running south of Crewe used to avoid Wolverhampton and followed the old Grand Junction route via Bescot to Birmingham New Street and on via Bath Green Park to Bournemouth.

In the winter 1962 timetable. The *Pines* was re-routed via Market Drayton, Wellington (Salop) and Wolverhampton (Low Level). There, an English Electric 'Type 4' (TOPS 40) handed over, usually, to an 84A 'Castle', or occasionally a 'County', to go via Snow Hill to Oxford, where a Southern Bulleid Pacific took over for the run to Bournemouth. The *Pines* summer Saturday 'relief' in 1963 featured a Class 7 (Royal Scot or Britannia) from Crewe to Wolverhampton where, again, a 'Castle' or 'Hall' took over for the Oxford leg.

*To be continued.*

# TICKETS PLEASE!

Recollections of a Great Western Train Guard 1999 to 2018 (Part Four)

Martin Stoolman



*First Great Western 43098 leads the 1A78, the 06:45 Penzance to London Paddington through Castle Cary on 16th May 2013. Unusually the train was short of one of its two FOs.*

*Photo: Mike Walker*

June 2000, four months into the job, and it just had to happen: I was booked to work over the Glastonbury festival weekend. In case you don't know, for the railway this involves making Castle Cary into a railhead to cater for all those young music festival lovers. Trains (including specials) arrive from Paddington, Bristol and the West, and deposit hundreds of excited, expectant people at a remote junction station with a staff complement of one, that was never designed for these numbers. Road coaches take over the car park and convey all these people plus their tents to Pilton Farm for a fun packed couple of days and nights.... or so they hope.

Most then return on the Sunday or Monday, the amount of mud being brought onto the trains with them being directly proportional to the amount of rain that has fallen! You always knew which trains had stopped earlier at Castle Cary by all the mud on the floor (and occasionally on the seats) which there was rarely time to remove before the train came out of service at the end of the day.

Over the years handling of the event has slowly improved. Many extra staff are deployed on the platforms, including revenue protection staff undertaking full ticket checks. Attempts are made to direct festival goers to the special trains and away from the normal services to spread the crowds, and there is a speed restriction for non-stop services to aid safety on the narrow platforms. There is even a cleaning point which returning punters have to attend in order to have their muddy boots washed off! None of this was in place in the Summer of 2000....

The 13:27 Paignton to Paddington of Saturday 24th June, booked to call at Castle Cary at 15:06, should not in theory have been impacted, being right in the middle of the festival, or so I thought. In fact I deposited about 40 people there and picked up around 80 disheveled and tired young-

sters, with just one member of staff on the platform to help me ensure they all got on in the right places and shut the doors behind them. Once on the move I tried checking a few tickets before heading back to my Guard's Van ready for the Westbury stop. Of course the van (or TGS on an HST) is strictly off limits to the public, not least because of the unlocked exterior doors. Imagine my surprise then when I clapped eyes on four youngsters sitting in a circle in the middle of the van, gently strumming on guitars and singing songs! It really was like a scene from the film "A Hard Day's Night" where the Beatles do something very similar. However such romantic thoughts were definitely not on my mind as I saw my job potentially disappearing if this was discovered. Needless to say they had no tickets either and no money, just a note from the police to the effect that they were the victims of theft and had had all their cash stolen from their tents. Once I had recovered my poise somewhat, I took pity, and calmly ushered them out of the van and towards some spare seats up the train, carefully avoiding the "quiet carriage" of course! After Westbury I did some further ticket checking, and quickly discovered that nearly all the 80 people who had boarded were terminating their festival experience early, having become victims of one sort or another, so I did not sell many tickets but did see lots more police notes! One can just imagine the reaction of their parents when they got home. But at least it showed that it wasn't just the railway that needed to sharpen its act; security at the festival was sadly lacking too in those days. If you go to the festival now of course it is all very different, but so is the price you have to pay in order to get in!

Sunday I had off, but Monday saw me booking on at around 05:00 in order to work the 05:55 commuter train up to Paddington, arriving at 08:32. Well, normally it's a commuter train, but on this day it was somewhat different. The train called Castle Cary at 06:46 and nowadays attempts are made to protect it by having enough staff to direct returning festival goers to any specials. You might think that 06:46 would be too early for them but you forget that they probably haven't actually slept! So any thoughts I had that the hour of the morning might save me were quickly wiped when I saw the crowds on the platform as we drew in. Of course none of them had peak fare tickets either, normally mandatory on this early London arrival. However somebody had apparently made the decision to allow them on anyway in view of the number that needed to be shifted.

The returning Glastonbury crowds are often referred to as "the great unwashed" for very good reason. I am sure you can paint the picture yourself: smartly dressed commuters trying to get to London for meetings sitting amongst unclean, tired, noisy youngsters, none of whom really wanted to be there. The only saving grace was that it had been a dry weekend; the scene if they had all been caked in mud too can only be imagined! As it was, the businessmen and women, many of whom were season ticket holders and all of whom had, by contrast, paid a lot of money for this "experience", were none too happy.

We managed to get everyone on at Westbury, but at Pewsey it became a squeeze, with some regulars remaining on the platform as we departed. Whether they physically could not get on or whether they simply took one look and chose not to get on is open to conjecture. The looks on the faces of the usual 200 or so commuters lining the platform as we drew into Newbury however requires no description from me. All I could do was sit in my guard's van for the rest of the journey, which for me was the safest place to be anyway! And it was really good

news when, having left Castle Cary 4 minutes late while everybody boarded, we arrived at Paddington bang on time at 08:32. An on time arrival for that train always has been the number one priority for its regular clientele, so that was a big relief. But for those of you thinking that I managed to hide away from the wrath of those normal customers you would be wrong; I worked the train for the whole of that week so was on the wrong end of many sarcastic comments, and some of them had not even forgotten about it by the time we got to Friday!

There are some things about those early days that can be looked on with nostalgia however, but seem like a whole lifetime away now. As late as 28th March 2001 there is a note in my journal regarding the 12:33 ex Paddington HST explaining a 2 minute delay at Castle Cary as "unloading boxes of flowers". Yes, Red Star Parcels was still going (remember that?). Such a sensible idea; after all, given that the passenger train was running anyway, so this brilliant service could be provided at marginal cost. But in the end I suppose the accountants in the now privatised railway system couldn't get their heads around this national service, born in the days of British Rail of course.

Something else that we all took for granted, and went back almost to the dawn of the railways was also swept away not long after I started. It was done no doubt under the auspices of cutting costs, although there were actually some managers at the time who really did think that what was introduced instead would be an improvement. What is it that I am talking about? Well, do you remember when all major stations had a local public address system with, shock horror, a trained full time station announcer with the experience and local knowledge to enable him or her to broadcast accurate information to the waiting passengers on the station? Sadly one fateful day in the Summer of 2000 the automated Customer Information System (CIS for short) was rolled out across the network... and chaos ensued!

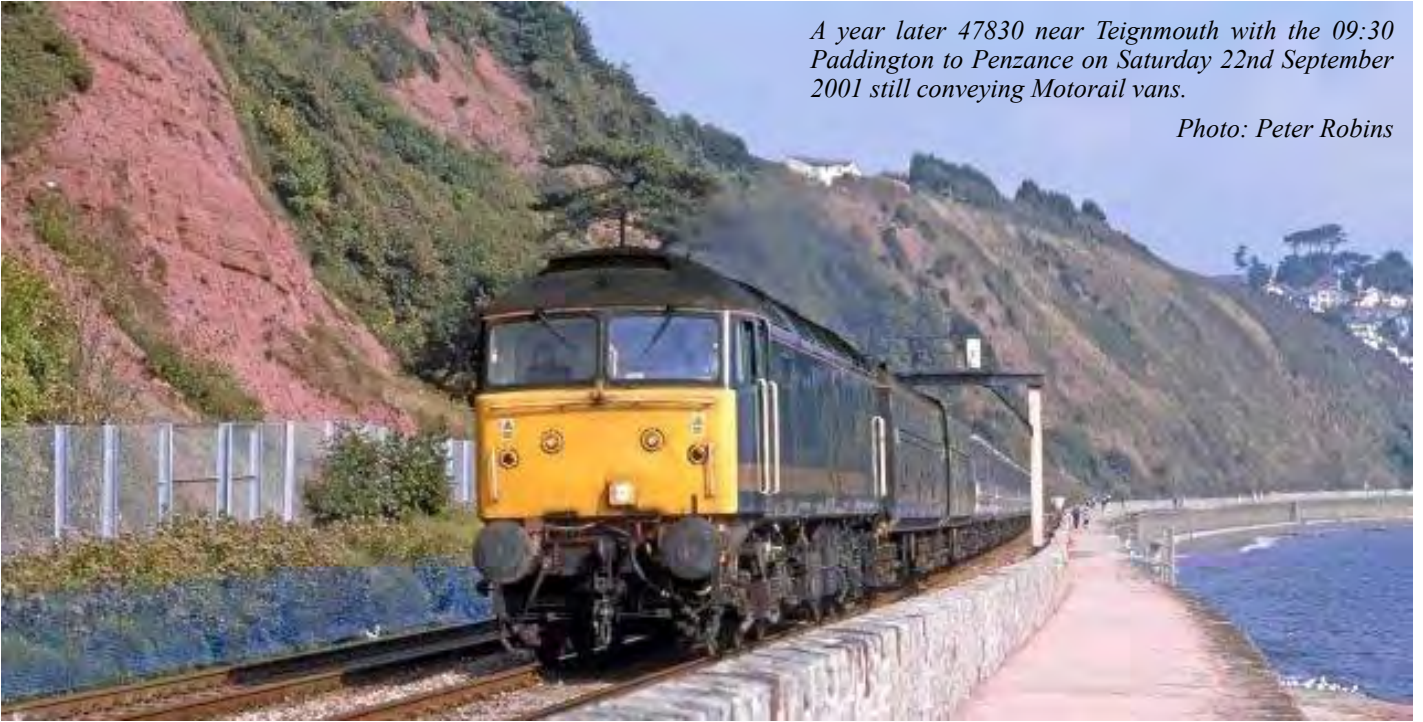
*First Great Western  
47815 Great Western  
passes Waltham with  
the 09:33 Padding-  
ton to Penzance on  
Saturday 24th Sept-  
ember 2000. The two  
Motorail vans are at  
the front of the train.*

*Photo: Peter Robins*



*A year later 47830 near Teignmouth with the 09:30 Paddington to Penzance on Saturday 22nd September 2001 still conveying Motorail vans.*

*Photo: Peter Robins*



It is very sad that both passengers and staff rapidly had to get used to not trusting anything that came over the tannoy, from that day forward. How we all longed to hear a reassuring human voice again! Okay, various people over the years have managed to refine it so today it is better than it was back then, but it still goes into meltdown when serious disruption occurs – just when you need accurate information the most. Back in 2000 it was always causing mayhem at critical locations like the old platform 4 at Reading which nearly all down main line services had to use. Many were the times I and my colleagues drew in to find that the wrong train was being advertised on the screens due to one “late runner” upsetting the usual sequence. More delay would ensue as the train was held while we made announcements in an (often vain) attempt to persuade people that the information screens were wrong and this was not their train. The restoration of a permanent local announcer at Reading was carried out a few years ago after much campaigning, but sadly this was akin to closing the stable door after the horse has bolted.

My own first experience relating to the inadequacy of CIS was when I drew into Exeter St David's with a late running 18:15 Paddington to Plymouth via Bristol on Friday 11th August 2000. I failed to realise that throughout our “station dwell” we were being advertised as the fast 19:03 Paddington to Penzance. I wondered why so many people got on! So not only did we leave with many customers believing they were heading straight for Cornwall, but we also left with the buffet crew for that train who had also been fooled by the false automated information!

Another ex-BR institution that was still in existence when I started was Motorail, although in the early 2000s it was a mere shadow of the halcyon days of trains like the famous Kensington Olympia to St Austell service of the 1960s and '70s. But at least First Great Western made the effort, with two Motorail vans hitching a ride on a normal passenger service, each van capable of taking 3 or 4 cars as I recall. Of course this could only work with traditional loco and coach formations so the Paddington to Penzance

sleeper train was ideal, but the remaining non-HSTs could also be used – and were. However the last daytime train that I worked with Motorail vans was on Saturday 1st September 2001 when I was Guard on 1A65, the 11:40 Penzance to Paddington with two vans attached containing six cars, the locomotive being 47712, on hire from Fragonset. The service struggled on in association with the Sleeper train for a further couple of years, more often than not with no cars at all. The fact that I made a note in my journal to the effect that on Friday 1st August 2003 there were four cars being conveyed on the up service (22:00 Penzance to Paddington) demonstrates how the service was dying. In fact that was the last Summer. Vans continued to be occasionally attached to the Sleeper train throughout the following Winter, presumably just to keep the wheels and axles fresh, but I have no further record of them actually being used.

So what killed the service off? Only the decision makers of the time will know, but there was one event that certainly will not have helped the cause. That incident involved an up journey into Paddington, and three cars occupying one of the vans. After loading, all cars of course had to have their handbrakes on, in addition to which scotches were used under the wheels as an additional precaution to prevent movement. The story went that the car in the middle was a very specialist sports car and the member of staff at Penzance loading it did not know how the handbrake worked – and what happened about the scotches seems also to be a mystery. The unhappy fact is that this expensive vehicle spent the entire journey rolling around in the van, smashing into and writing off the two other vehicles (not to mention itself) in the process. Quite how nobody heard all the smashing and banging as the journey progressed is a further mystery. The faces of the people who opened up the doors of the van upon arrival at Paddington can only be imagined, and I dread to think what the reaction of the car owners was! All this had nothing to do with me, it was my day off, but unsurprisingly the story was all round the messrooms the following day.

# Vintage Railfan Recollections

Colonel Don Woodworth, USAF (Retired)



**Having retired from military service, Don completes his rail memoirs back at home reflecting on how things have changed, an not always for the better.**

After I retired from the USAF in July of 1981 at age 48, my goal was to move back home to Connecticut and find a job there until being able to retire a second time at age 65. I found what I thought was a super job as the Deputy Director of Rail Operations for the State of Connecticut. The state underwrote the cost of commuter service into New York City over the former NY, NH & H RR (since become MetroNorth), so this would have been interesting and challenging work. Things seemed to be going pretty well until I was informed of the very low starting salary. As I had two children approaching university age, and Connecticut is a very expensive place to live, I swallowed hard, thanked the nice people for their time, and explained that I needed a job, not a hobby.

I subsequently found a job as a defense contractor back in St. Louis, MO at nearly 5 times the starting salary offered in Connecticut and the rest was history. I engaged in a wide variety of logistics oriented projects in my new job, the most significant of which was finding a way for the Air Mobility Command (formerly the Military Airlift Command) to reduce ground time servicing for cargo aircraft (without, of course, significant expenditure of funds). No problem – I'd always wanted to become a magician!! So it was on 11th September 2001 that I was leading a conference of specialists recruited from across the globe at a conference at the headquarters to discuss implementation of an experimental program for more quickly turning and re-launching cargo aircraft when – during a refreshment break – we watched the horror of 9/11 unfold on a television in the conference room. This changed life as we knew it!!

Needless to say, the event played hell with air travel across the globe. Anyone who has flown since that time is keenly aware of all the security changes that have necessarily occurred. More subtle changes crept into the world of gricing as well. Where once the railroads were reasonably open and tolerant of gricers, [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

CSX SD60I leads leased GCFX SD40M-2 #3065 and Iowa Chicago & Eastern SD40-2 #6414 to apply 9,800 hp to an eastbound train working upgrade approaching the East O'Fallon Road crossing in Fairview Heights, IL on 2nd December 2006 just after roads had been cleared following an ice storm. Interestingly, the reporting initials of the Iowa Chicago & Eastern locomotive were "ICE." The train is approaching the steepest and most heavily curved portion of the line on a gradient of about 1.5% (1 in 59) on the short, sharp 8 mile grade taking its train to an altitude of about 400 ft. above the flat river bottom land. Ice is very ephemeral and, just two hours after I took this photo, all of the ice had disappeared.

*All photographs by the author*

we suddenly became victims of paranoia if spotted with a camera in the vicinity of a railroad line. Don't even think about bunking an engine terminal!! Even if parked by a line at a suitable site out in the country, people would call the police on their cell phones and before long a friendly police officer would appear – only to find he was dealing with a polite and friendly eccentric who happened to enjoy photographing trains. My encounters with the police were always amicable but it became tedious-cum-frustrating after a while to go through the identification drill about one out of every five times I went gricing.

So, this has become the new normal. With the advent of Positive Train Control (PTC) and Precision Scheduled Railroading by the major carriers, the length of trains has increased by a factor of two while the frequency has decreased by an equal amount. The significant downturn in business due to the global Covid pandemic hasn't helped either. Where a year or so I could go out on a major double-track main line near my home in O'Fallon, IL and expect to get four or five trains in an afternoon, I can now expect perhaps two – if I'm lucky! The major and growing shift away from coal to natural gas and more environmentally friendly sources of energy has also driven down traffic levels. A combination of boring sameness of locomotives; lack of



interesting line side features; graffiti fouling some 80-90% of the freight cars in any given freight; the dreadful sameness of Amtrak equipment; and less-than-receptive friendliness on the part of most carriers has (at least for me) has made gricing an increasingly boring and frustrating pass-time.

When they first appeared on the railroads of the United States in the late 1960s/early 1970s, widecab locomotives modeled on exotic ditch-light equipped Canadian locomotives that periodically strayed into the United States were in interesting and sought-after variety. Jump ahead some 30-40 years and nearly everything on the rails is a widecab. The novelty has long since worn off and one now needs a loco spotters guide book to distinguish between the many subtle variations. I feel now how gricers must have felt in the late 1940s/early 1950s with the flood of EMD FT/F3/F7/F9 cab units and GP7/GP9 hood units flooding the American market and “every diesel looked the same.” How times haven’t changed!

Valmeyer, about 40 miles south of where I live, is one of my favorite gricing places in the St. Louis area, primarily because of the great limestone cliffs north of the very small town. After the Great Flood of 1993, when the Mississippi River some three miles west of the town burst its banks and flooded Valmeyer to a depth of about 12 feet, most of the 1,200 residents moved to a new, purposely constructed town about a mile away safely atop the high bluffs. About a dozen die-hard families remained in the old town which is separated by the main line of the Union Pacific RR (former Cotton Belt-MoPac) that stretches from East St. Louis, IL just 25 mi. to the north all the way to Texas.

I feel about the same way regarding modern diesels as my late friend Mr. W. E. J. (Bill) Last, a BR engine driver for nearly 50 years, described the changing British railway scene at the time of his retirement in 1986. He referred to the ever growing number of diesel multiple units replacing locomotive-hauled trains as “bug boxes” (the term was not used endearingly!). Were Bill still living today, he’d be totally nonplussed about all of the fancy high-speed “bug boxes” that have virtually made all locomotive hauled trains disappear from the metals of Britain.

Until recently, I could usually count on photographing from four to six trains on an afternoon at Valmeyer. With the advent of PSR (noted earlier), train length has approximately doubled and frequency halved making an afternoon’s gricing problematic at best. When one combines significantly decreased frequency of trains with look-alike engines and the cursed graffiti that now afflicts roughly 85% of the freight cars in any given train, the impetus for railway photography rapidly declines. The saving grace for Valmeyer is its great cliffs, spectacular in fall colors or in the myriad shades of green come spring, which provide a fascinating backdrop for trains like the one shown here with UP SD70M #3890 and GE ES44 (UP model C45AH) #8176 with UP SD70Ace #8716 cut in midway in the train headed north at 1526 on 5th March 2019 on the home stretch of its long journey to East St. Louis, IL. Notice the cars stretched out behind the locomotives, all covered with the curse of the gricer – graffiti. Some misguided souls consider graffiti to be an art form but I take the opposite view – it’s the defacement of private property and it stinks!!!

In the States, about the only saving graces still left are great bridges and mountain scenery. With long-distance travel largely problematic – at least until Covid inoculations become wide-spread – it’s like having a year torn out of one’s calendar. I have found it increasingly more interesting to spend my time scanning the vast collection of color slides that I’ve accumulated over the years and writing for railway and philatelic (my other hobby) publications as opposed to spending increasingly non-productive time along the tracks.

In the years since I began gricing in the mid-1960s, the majority of passenger trains that once operated in the United States have disappeared and with them the many railroad stations that once supported passenger traffic. Some remain to serve Amtrak and some have happily been re-purposed for other things but the



great remainder have disappeared, as have freight stations, interlocking towers, many historic railroad shop complexes, and (of course) all of the accoutrements of the steam age. With so many look alike locomotives and the increasingly limited number of liveries to be found, and the general “sameness” of Amtrak, opportunities for interesting photos have been mostly reduced to only a few basic options: interesting scenery in which the type of locomotive really doesn’t matter; interesting track patterns; and bridges and tunnels. I especially love bridges. Unless the railroads can find a way to levitate trains, bridges will be with us as long as there are railways.

This leads me to the former Chesapeake & Ohio RR’s (now CSX) great Sciotoville, OH bridge over the Ohio River which separates southern Ohio from northern Kentucky. The bridge is a steel continuous truss span carrying CSX across the Ohio River between Siloam, a junction located north of Limeville, Kentucky (KY), and Sciotoville, OH on the north side of the river. It was designed by Gustav Lindenthal and built in 1906 by C&O subsidiary Chesapeake & Ohio Northern Railway as part of a new route between Ashland, KY and Columbus, OH for the movement of Kentucky coal to heavily industrialized Ohio. The bridge is continuous across two 775 ft. long spans and is considered an engineering marvel. It held the record for the longest continuous truss span in the world from its opening until 1945.

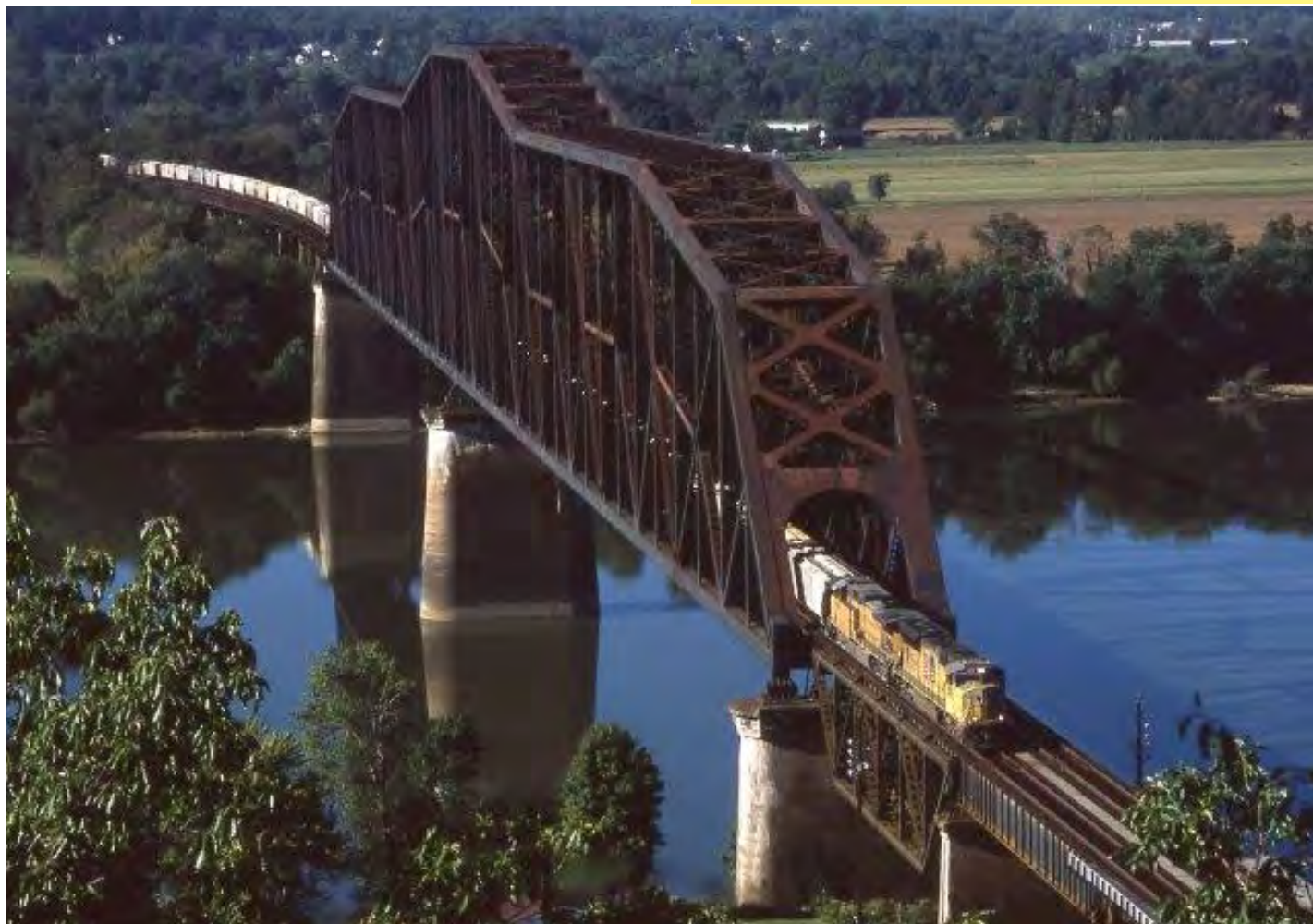
As it turned out, this was the least of my problems. I had forgotten about the nearly invisible larvae of a pestilential insect called a chigger. I had assumed that since it was fall and there had been a few frosts, that these cursed little creatures would be done for the season. Not so! About six hours after I took this photo, my skin started to itch like mad from the 30 or so welts made by these little buggers as they burrowed into me. Unlike an annoying mosquito bite which usually dissipates in 5 or 6 hours, chigger bites are the gift that keeps on giving and I itched miserably for the next 15-20 days. Hence, I have come to refer to this

aerial shot of the great Sciotoville Bridge as “The Great Chigger Adventure Panorama.”

If gricers have a fault, it is often that they are often so focused on photographing the machines they love that they sometimes overlook the friends with whom they enjoy gricing. To this, I plead guilty. This was recently brought home to me quite forcefully with the unexpected death of my good friend Tom Irion with whom I’d been friends for over 50 years.

I met Tom at the Bay Area Electric Railway Museum (mentioned earlier in this article) when I returned from service in Vietnam. Amongst a wide variety of occupations in his lifetime, Tom was an engine driver for the Sacramento Northern Railway and for the Southern Pacific Railway. He loved steam and electric locomotives. He was blessed with an encyclopedic memory and what he didn’t know about railways was probably not worth knowing. He owned a Shay locomotive at the museum which I helped him maintain and which we sometimes

This bridge had long been on my bucket list of “must photograph” locations. I had previously done the south end of the bridge but I what I most wanted was a panoramic view looking down from the high bluffs on the Ohio side of the river. I achieved this long-held goal with considerable trepidation of the morning of 25th September 2014 when I caught UP #5109 and an unidentified companion working a train north into Ohio at 10:00. I’d have greatly preferred to have a CSX locomotive leading but one takes what one can get in such situations. I say this in all truth as the only way into this location was an arduous hike of a mile or so through increasingly rough terrain in order to find a very precarious location in which I literally had 1/250th of a second to nail the shot – hence the reason for my not having the number of the second unit. I was too busy trying to keep my balance and avoid an unscheduled trip down at 1 in 15 slope to my doom.





My late friend Tom Irion poses in front of Iowa Traction Railroad #60 at Mason City, IA on 29th September 2008. Tom believed, as I do, that there can never be enough wire in the sky, and with this as our guiding premise we visited Mason City in the fall of 2008. The ITR has led a charmed life since 1897 and is last electrically powered freight railroad in the United States. It currently functions as a terminal railroad servicing a multiplicity of business with a roster of four electric locomotives built between 1917 and 1923. No. 60 is the oldest, built in 1917 for the Youngstown & Ohio River RR; sold to the Union Electric Railway in Kansas in 1932; and finally to the ITR (where it still happily resides) in 1948. The line operates from its shops in Emery, west of town, and currently serves about 5 of its original 12.2 miles. Operations are interesting in that locomotives are stationed at strategic locations along the line and cars are handed off a euphemistic main line train for switching by the other locomotives. The line usually only operates for a few hours in the morning but Tom & I were blessed for the three days we visited as operations went on for the better part of the day for three days running.

operated. He sold the locomotive when he got married and, many years later following a difficult divorce, I would sometimes tease him about making the wrong choice on what he let go. (-:

Tom and I have many wonderful trips together – several to Mexico; a visit to my home in New England – a revelation as he'd never been east of the Rocky Mountains- and a wonderful trip to Iowa some years ago to visit the Iowa Terminal RR. I was tempted to make the penultimate photo in this article one of the splendid Mexican 4-8-4 Niagara that Tom and I ventured south to see so many years ago but, heeding the my own adage, I have elected to include instead a photo of his smiling mug in front of one of the wonderful little electric locomotives still operated by the ITR as I was never smart enough to photograph him in front of one of these wonderful Mexican locomotives.

If old age doesn't catch up to me too soon, I hope to return to gricing after the Covid pandemic eases as there are still a significant number of projects remaining on my "To Do" list – mostly involving photographing large bridges on densely traveled lines and at least one tourist line in the state of Maryland which will soon be returning to service a restored Chesapeake & Ohio RR compound 2-6-6-2 articulated locomotive of 1949 vintage, which will be the largest operating steam locomotive east of the Mississippi River (the Union Pacific's 4-8-8-4 "Big Boy" rules the west and the country overall!!).

Save for military service just before and during WW II, my father spent the majority of his working life with a company that built heavy machinery in the town of Derby (pronounced as it appears rather than as "Darby" in the UK). For many years, my family had only one automobile so, if I wanted to use the car after becoming old enough to drive, I'd have to get up early in the morning to drive Dad to work and then pick him up when his working day was done. Derby Junction, just north of a railroad location called Turkey Brook, was close by to where my Dad worked and was the junction of two important NY, NH & H RR lines – a heavy freight line to the west at Maybrook, NY (now largely out of service) and a heavy secondary freight and passenger line north to Waterbury, CT and points beyond. There was a manned interlocking tower with a friendly operator at Derby Junction, so the location was a magnet for a young gricer. My Dad never had to worry about my being late to pick him up as I was often over by the tracks several hours before I had to be at the front gate of his factory.

The great bridge over the Hudson River that carried the Maybrook Line to its destination burned in 1974 and this once busy line is mostly no more. In my youth, though, cars were often set out and picked up at Turkey Brook for trains on the busy line to Waterbury.

US law was changed in 1982 (the state of Virginia was a hold-out until 1988) to permit the railroads to do away with the use of cabooses on the ends of their trains. Except for their

retention for use under special operational circumstances, cabooses have almost totally disappeared from the American railroad scene – replaced with faceless End-of-Train (EOT) devices. Though cabooses have been gone for nearly 40 years now, I still feel that the end of a train looks totally naked without one – proof I guess that how one was imprinted upon at an early age really never goes away.

So all is not lost – just radically changed, and not particularly for the better, since I began gricing in my early teens some 63 years ago back home in Connecticut. The late Jim Boyd, a well-known American railfan and publisher (and also a friend of Mike Walker) once opined “May you live long enough to see

your ordinary stuff turn into timeless classics.”

This profound utterance takes on ever increasing validity as the companies and equipment that I grew up with have disappeared with sobering finality as time has passed. I am certainly reminded of this each year when I make my annual pilgrimage from Illinois to Connecticut to visit family. One of my stops always includes the churchyard where my Dad is buried. The cemetery dates to the 1790s and, in one corner where my Dad lies are many kind people that I knew while growing up. I always stop to remember them but, in another generation, it’s likely that no one will. Time is not kind to the people and trains we love.



I will conclude with a photo taken near where my long gricing journey began with a photo of caboose C-522 bringing up the end of westbound NY, NH & H RR freight NO-9 at Turkey Brook, CT on the frigid winter afternoon of 20 Dec 1963. Don’t look for Turkey Brook on a map of Connecticut – you won’t find it; it’s a railroad location. I was about 1.5 years

ahead of graduation from university at the time and 1.8 years from a military career that ultimately took me all over the world – but, until I die, my heart and memories will remain keyed on scenes like this when American railroads still looked like railroads.

## EDITOR’S FOOTNOTE

I find myself in total agreement with Don on the boring state of modern railroading, not just in North America but also here in the UK which is why I haven’t crossed the Atlantic since 2005.

But during my many visits I was fortunate to meet many like minded individuals who became good friends like Don and who shared their passion.

On 14th April 2002 Don took myself and three fellow Brits to “Don Ball’s Curve” at Lawrence, Kansas, a classic location named for the photographer who made it famous. UP 6586 and SP 176, both GE AC4400CW’s, lead a westbound coal train.

Thanks for your friendship, Don!

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



# THEN AND NOW: STRAND ROAD, PRESTON



The short, steeply graded branch from Preston station to the docks crosses Strand Road on the level. An unidentified 08 makes its way back towards the station protected by no more than a man with a red flag sometime around 1970.

*Photographer unknown*

Today, Strand Road has been improved and a proper barrier controlled crossing installed. Colas 70810 makes its way towards the docks with 6M32, the 03:13 loaded bitumen tanks from Lindsey refinery on 17th August 2022.

*Photo: John Sears*

