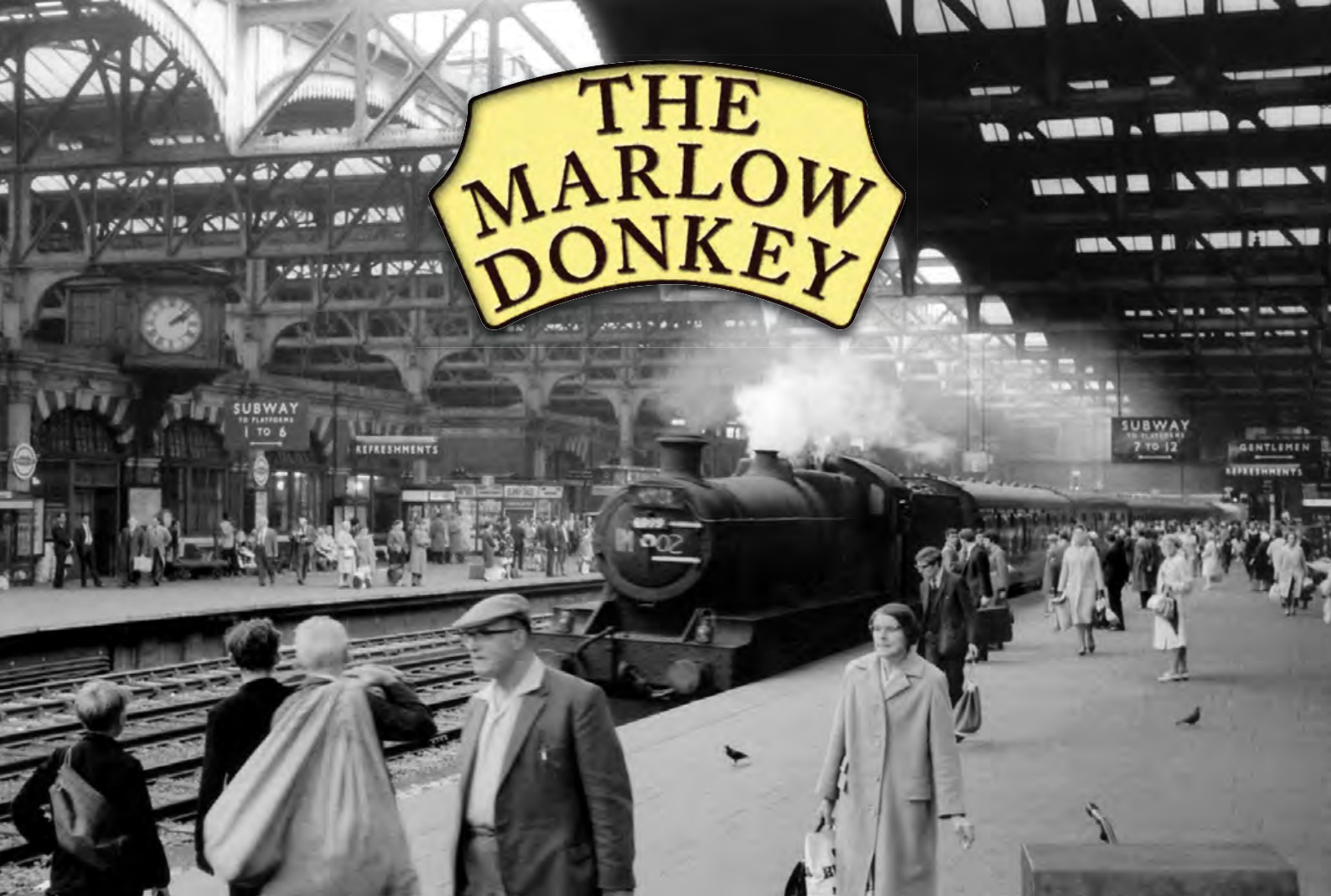


THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

178

December 2022



Contents:
Relaying The Branch
The Rise & Fall of Birmingham Snow Hill
Tickets Please
How I Became Interested in Trains

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 |
| Assistant Webmaster: | Richard Preece | email: richard.preece225@outlook.com |
| Outings Organiser: | Brian Hopkinson. | email: hopkinson005@gmail.com |
| Publicity: | Martin Stoolman | email: martinstoolman@hotmail.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

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

Two very evocative shots of Birmingham Snow Hill. Photos Mike Page. Article page 5.

*Top: Oxford 'Modified Hall' 6999 arrives among the holiday-makers with the 9.23am Bournemouth to Liverpool.
28 August 1965.*

*Bottom: Oxley 'Castle' 5063 Earl Baldwin calls with the south bound relief 'Pines'
Manchester/Liverpool to Bournemouth. 20 June 1964*

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

Peter's presentation contains a variety of images with a general transport but mainly railway theme. Steam, diesel and electric traction at work in Britain and abroad are included as well as some buses and trams. There are also some more unusual and interesting transport related images which could be considered "completely different".

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

Geoff's Presentation will cover India's metre gauge railway network which extended to over 25 000 km at its peak size, almost as extensive as the Broad Gauge system; but is now reduced to less than 2 400 km. The metre gauge was sometimes sidelined by visiting steam enthusiasts, lacking the glamour of the big broad gauge locos or the remarkable diversity of the narrow gauge lines. However, up to the 1990s, steam was dominant in many metre gauge regions. The photos in this presentation were taken between 1980 and 1990, representing most of the existing steam loco classes in varied settings from north to south.

Thursday 16 February **AGM Followed by THE RAILWAYS OF NORTH & SOUTH KOREA, NORTH BORNEO & TAIWAN** Adrian Palmer

Adrian's Presentation will include a tour around Asia; and covers both sides of the Korean border with some active steam in the north. Also a few trams and trolleybuses. North Borneo will see the preserved steam operation. Taiwan will see preserved locomotives and some of the day to day operations on the mainline. High speed trains are seen in South Korea and Taiwan.

Thursday 16 March **GETTING OVER COVID, STRIKES & CHRISTMAS** Mark Hopwood

For his latest "Presidential Address", Mark looks at the challenges that have faced GWR during the past difficult and challenging year and how the company has fought to overcome them.

Thursday 20 April **THE ROUTE OF THE MASTER CUTLER** Richard Crane

Richard's presentation follows the route of the premier GC route train of the BR-era from Marylebone through to Sheffield.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

The railways in the UK have been facing a difficult time of late. The big boys often have passengers but no or few trains and the heritage lines have trains but fewer passengers although all that will change for the Santa & Mince Pie Specials.

The society has been soldiering on with monthly illustrated talks and pleasingly we have new members joining either as Full or Associate Members, the latter choice for those living further away and unable to attend the slowly growing number at the Bourne End venue (free parking but not free beer).

Some of you may have felt recently that you have been used rather like guinea pigs as we have tried to master the technical difficulties. Digital projections in the Hall were straight forward and we were additionally able to master Zoom in most cases. Then we tried to film photograph images on the wall and relay them by Zoom. It all took time to set up and the quality was not always very good but the slides were of considerable interest. However they could not be copied digitally due to copyright issues so we had to operate as best we could.

Nevertheless full marks to the IT team of Peter, Richard and Dave and thanks to the speakers who cooperated during the

period. We look forward to more regular evenings in the hall and on Zoom in the New Year after our Christmas gathering, even if Georgie's fine spread was not on the menu this year.

Just an early reminder that the MDRS Annual General Meeting will be held at the BECC on Thursday 16th February 2023. My time on the committee as Chairman is coming to an end and hard working Hon Secretary Vincent has indicated for some time that he desperately wants to be relieved of the Speaker Coordinator role from other duties. Is it just the job for you? In the past year we were pleased to recruit Richard and Martin to the team and we would welcome any willing and able members to put their names forward. Please sound me out or Vincent as needs be or indeed any committee member for a chat.

I know it is what nearly everyone says, every year, but do have a good, pleasurable and safe Yuletide.

Enjoy some of the many Christmas Railway Specials out there and be positive about a Happy New Year.

Mike Hyde

SOCIETY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

We've had a rash of new members join us in recent weeks: Pat Fitzgerald from Isleworth, Matt Hill from Oxted, Brian Place from Harrow, David Sharpe from Burnley, Andrew Smith from Borehamwood, John Tigg from Leighton Buzzard, Robin Patrick from York, Robert Smyth from Wirksworth and George McVitie from Sunderland. Welcome to you all.

Many of these have been attending our meetings by Zoom and have enjoyed them so much they have decided to sign up so they can continue following the committee's decision to restrict Zoom access to members only.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

In September we welcomed Simon Colbeck once again, this time in person. Simon's presentation was curiously titled The Masked Gricer and was a review of how he'd survived lockdown with visits and scanning the slide collections of others. A real potpourri with something for everyone.

Canon Brian Arman returned in October to continue his exploration of the GWR broad gauge. After an initial visit to south west Wales, he took us back to Swindon and thence through Bristol as far as Flax Bourton. Brian has a wonderful collection of images and is undoubtedly the expert in all things broad gauge. Sadly, he still uses slides which did present us with a challenge for those on Zoom.

November's meeting was also presented via slides but, having learnt lessons the previous month, hopefully the result was better. Ken Livermore took us back to the 1950s and 60s for a look at steam at the various London termini and their associated sheds. Possibly due to the preceding month's issues, this was the best attended meeting at Bourne End since before the pandemic.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions become due for renewal in January. The good news is that Peter Robins has once again decided to keep the rate unchanged for the coming year, that is £16.00. The reduced rate for those of you who live some distance away and therefore attend meetings only on rare occasions remains at £8.00 with a meeting attendance fee of £2.00.

However, the anticipated rising costs of room hire and speakers' expenses mean the rates will almost certainly have to rise for 2024. A proposal will be put to the AGM for a vote.

Remember, the Society now has a bank account with Lloyds which has a number of advantages over the previous account for both members and the treasurer. If you have on-line banking, you may make bank transfers to the Society.

The sort code is 30-95-36

The account no. is 62236160

If you wish to pay your subs by this method, please put "SUBS" and your name (including initial) - e.g. "SUBS-J.BLOGGS" - in the reference, and MDRS in the "Pay" box if required. You could also set up a Standing Order to pay MDRS every 1st January which would be most convenient for both parties.

If you wish to pay for anything else by this method, please reference accordingly - e.g. "XMAS-J.BLOGGS" (Xmas) or "DON-J.BLOGGS" (Donation) or as advised. If you have any issues with the reference, please drop an e-mail to pd.robins@btopenworld.com advising of the payment.

Of course you may still pay by cash or cheque. Please note that ONLY cheques made out to "MDRS" or "Marlow & District Railway Society" will be accepted by the bank.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As usual the Society's AGM will be held at the beginning of the February meeting and as in previous years, the relevant documentation will be distributed in advance to all members. Please take a look at these on receipt to allow business to be conducted swiftly on the night.

COMMITTEE VACANCIES

As you will see from Mike's Chairman's Notes on the previous page, he is stepping down and Vincent Caldwell would also like to be relieved of arranging speakers for meetings.

These are both crucial roles in running a successful society such as ours so we really need some of you to step up and offer your services for the committee. Not necessarily in those posts, we can possibly reallocate roles within the existing committee, but the vacancies must be filled.

If you feel you can help, please contact Mike or Vincent - contact details on page 1.

RCTS MEETINGS

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

Monday 23th January

Railway Holidays in the West Country Part 1, Cornwall - Stuart Warr

Monday 27th February

Incidents from a Railway Career - Clifford Perry

Monday 27th March

The Electric Railways of Merseyside - Charles Philips

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.

MAIDENHEAD MODEL EXHIBITION

After being cancelled at the last minute last year, the Marlow, Maidenhead & District Model Railway Club will once again be holding their annual exhibition on Saturday 7th January from 10:00 to 17:00 and the location is the Cox Green Community Centre, details as above.

DONKEY CONTRIBUTIONS

After a healthy supply of contributions over the past year or so, my stock of articles is now, once again, getting perilously low so the annual appeal goes out once more. Articles can be on anything rail related and cover any period. If you don't have suitable illustrations we can probably come up with something.

If you feel you can help please get in touch - detail on page 1 - and we can discuss ideas.

A feature of this, and the December issue for many years, is the ghost story penned by David Gardner. Sadly this might be the last as David tells me he run out of ideas. Hopefully something will come to him before next year!

RELAYING THE BRANCH

Our branch line was closed during half-term week, 22nd to 30th October, to permit the relaying of the line between just south of Cookham station and the beginning of the embankment across Cock Marsh towards Bourne End. The old jointed, bullhead rail was removed along with all the old ballast and replaced by continuous welded rail on a mixture of concrete sleepers as far as the summit at Terry's Lane then steel sleepers towards Bourne End. The change is determined by the nature of the substructure below the track.

Much of the required materials was brought in by rail with two ballast trains arriving on Wednesday 26th October, the second top-and-tailed by 66551 and 66568, the former catches the low afternoon sun as it creeps up to the worksite.



The track was relaid in the preceding days and Wednesday's two trains delivered the major part of the ballast, the first into the four foot and the second for the shoulders as seen above. A pair of road-rail excavators equipped with ploughs then spread it.



A tamper was booked for the following night to consolidate the new ballast after which further fresh ballast was applied by another train and the process repeated. It takes a surprising amount of ballast once it is compacted into place.



66551 was back again on Saturday 29th October with an unidentified sister top-and-tailing 21 MLA low sided bogie open wagons which were being loaded with scrapped sleepers, both wood and concrete, and the old ballast; a considerable amount of which had been dumped alongside the line between the Terry's Lane and Rowbarrow bridges as can be seen here.

This work leaves only the remaining section of line across Cock Marsh and the Bourne End station area still laid with jointed rail, the whole line from Maidenhead to Cookham plus the Marlow branch having been relaid in the past few years. No date has been given as to when this last section might be dealt with.

Photos: Mike Walker

THE FALL AND RISE OF BIRMINGHAM (SNOW HILL) STATION



Some stations, which were well known during ‘trainspotting 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.

There were sporadic appearances of the handful of Kings still ‘on the books’ at 81A into early 1963, when they replaced ailing ‘Westerns’ – and 47s – until December 1962. The last appearance of a King at Snow Hill in BR days was 6018 *King Henry VI*, which worked a Stephenson Locomotive Society ‘Last King’ tour to Swindon and back on 28th April. Allocated temporarily to 84E. 6018 was ‘run in’ for a week on locals to Leamington Spa (General).

From GW enthusiasts’ point of view things had begun to go downhill in January 1963, when the LMR took over the ex-GW lines north of Banbury. 84A closed and the remaining ‘Castles’ were transferred to Oxley (84B). That year, Brush Type 4s (TOPS 47) began replacing the ‘non-standard’ (as BR saw them) diesel-hydraulics and worked the *Pines* through to Oxford. The remaining titled trains began to fade away. For example: the *Cornishman* title was transferred to an LMR service while the *Cambrian Coast Express* and *Inter-City* lost their identities.

Oxley’s ‘Castles’ worked mostly parcels and ‘odd jobs’, including fitted freights, up to winter 1964. Perhaps the last ‘Castle’ to be seen on an ordinary service working at Snow Hill was 85B Gloucester’s 7022 – without her *Hereford Castle* nameplates – working through one early morning on Saturday 15th May 1965, with the 21.25 Exeter to Oxley fitted freight.

From January 1963 onwards, as ex-GW locos in the LMR controlled West Midlands area became due for overhaul, the LMR replaced them with ‘Black Fives’, Stanier 8F 2-8-0s, Ivatt Class 2 and 4 2-6-0s Standard 4 2-6-0s, 4-6-0s and

On 17th November 1962, Old Oak Common’s 6018 King Henry VI worked the Locomotive Club of Great Britain’s ‘King Commemorative Rail Tour’ from Paddington to Wolverhampton (Low Level), seen here at Birmingham Snow Hill. The tour ran on with a 56XX to Stourbridge Junction via Wombourn and then via Dudley Port (High Level), Perry Barr, Stechford on to Leamington Spa (Avenue). From there, the train ran onto the Stratford-upon-Avon & Midland Junction Railway to Blisworth and finished up in the early hours, with an ex-LMS 4F 0-6-0 at London Marylebone!

All photos by the author

2-6-4Ts - new ‘cops’ for the local spotters! These locos came in as the Government began imposing Beeching Report cuts. These particularly affected wagonload freight; even so, the local sheds seemed very reluctant to dispose of the very useful Collett ‘pannier tanks’, which worked on into late 1966 outlasting the more modern Hawksworth ‘panniers’.

New cops? Well: if you had happened to be on Snow Hill station on 17th April 1963 and, like me, was not aware of Southampton FC playing Manchester United in a FA Cup semi-final at Birmingham’s Villa Park stadium, you would have been somewhat surprised to have seen Eastleigh shed’s clean (71A) rebuilt ‘West Country’ 34028 *Eddystone* simmering on the Up centre road. The next minute, a Bulleid whistle sounded in the tunnel and charging into the station came ‘Battle of Britain’ 34052 *Lord Dowding*. Stay put and you would have logged 34088, 34094, 34050, 34045, 34095, 34040, 34042 and 34098! You would have been forgiven for thinking that the LMR had handed its ex-GW responsibilities over to the Southern Region!

We saw an increasing number of enthusiast ‘specials’ through Snow Hill in the early/mid-1960s with locos ranging from the preserved 1400 0-4-2T 1420 and 4500 2-6-2T 4555, Gresley 3442 *The Great Marquess*, to ‘Battle of Britain’ 34064 *Fighter*



Command, 72008 Clan Macleod, 70012 John of Gaunt, 4472 Flying Scotsman to 46245 City of London.

In the summer of 1965, the Summer 'reliefs' to the South and West Coast resorts continued, and with all its 'Castles' now withdrawn, Oxley got the loan of three 'Britannias' (70045/47/53) to help the 'Black Fives' and the few remaining 'Halls' and 'Granges'. Even the occasional Bulleid Pacific made an appearance such as Bournemouth shed's (71B) 34053 *Sir Keith Park* working through to Wolverhampton (LL) with the 09.50 from Bournemouth on 6th August 1965. 34053 worked the ECS back south on the same day. Not so many reliefs ran in 1966 and then on 11th September 1967, came the 'switch on' of the Stafford-Wolverhampton (High Level) – Birmingham (New Street) – Euston electrification. What we all had feared, happened: the cessation of the Birkenhead – Birmingham (Snow Hill) - Paddington services.

To celebrate (or mourn!) the transfer of all London-Birmingham/Wolverhampton trains to the LMR, 7029 *Clun Castle* and 4079 *Pendennis Castle* headed *The Zulu* and *Birkenhead Flier* specials on 4th March 1967 from Paddington to Chester via Snow Hill. Snow Hill station was literally mobbed with not just enthusiasts but also seemingly, half of Birmingham, to see the trains pause and depart. The final 'Castle' curtain came that Sunday 5th March when 7029 headed a Stephenson Locomotive Society special from Snow Hill through to Birkenhead (Woodside).

So what next? The Transport Users Consultative Committee recommended a service of 24 trains/day on the Snow Hill – Wolverhampton Low Level service and 14 trains/day on the Snow Hill – Stourbridge service. Leamington and Stratford-upon-Avon services were moved to New Street and a 'shuttle' from there to Langley Green set up. Shrewsbury – Wolverhampton trains were moved to the High Level station. Snow Hill tunnel was scheduled for closure on 15th November 1967, but was to be retained and maintained. The Colmore

From the Summer timetable of 1963, the Pines Express job onwards from Wolverhampton (Low Level) to Oxford became a Western diesel job, while the relief 'Pines remained steam. At Birmingham Snow Hill on June 20, 1964, Oxley 'Castle' 5063 Earl Baldwin calls with the south bound relief 'Pines (Manchester/Liverpool to Bournemouth via Crewe, Shrewsbury, Oxford and Basingstoke).

Row main entrance was closed and passengers were redirected to use the dingy Great Charles Street entrance until a gap was made at platform level into Livery Street.

Things got worse for Snow Hill when all the Stourbridge locals were diverted to New Street from 6th March 1967. Meanwhile, all Leamington/Stratford-Birmingham trains were diverted to Moor Street and New Street stations. The last train to traverse Snow Hill tunnel was the 17:52 to Leamington on 2nd March 1968.

On 4th March 1968, the Wolverhampton (Low Level) Snow Hill service using the Class 116 DMUs was reduced to peak hours only and then used Class 122 'Bubble Cars' from 5th August. This service became a 'pay train' from 3rd May 1969, while Snow Hill became the World's largest 'unstaffed halt'!

By 1970 very few passengers were using the remaining service, so British Rail announced its closure on 31st March 1971. The then recently formed West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority (WMPTA) took over the service, but then closed it on Saturday 4th March 1972. Snow Hill Station was demolished, but the track bed safeguarded. So, was that the end?

As some had forewarned: Birmingham New Street station became congested by the 1980s! In 1988, the WMPTA lodged a Bill in Parliament for the reconstruction of the line from Snow Hill to Smethwick Junction to reintroduce a Stourbridge 'Jewellery Line' service. After much deliberation, Parliamentary approval was gained in 1992, but without any funds. The



By 31st July 1965, ex-GWR motive power was on the retreat, with more ex-LMS and BR Standard locos taking over. Still active was Oxford's 'Modified Hall' 6991, formerly Acton Burnell Hall arriving with 1M59 Portsmouth – Wolverhampton (Low Level) holiday express.

On 31st July 1965, 'Modified Hall' 7915, formerly Mere Hall of Tyseley is drawing to a halt with the 10.55am Pwllheli - Birmingham holiday express.



WMPTA gained a £5million grant from the European Development Fund and work began in January, 1993 – including a new Snow Hill station.

'Jewellery Line' services began on 24th September, 1995 after a 'Gala Day' the day before when BR Standard 2-6-4T 80079 (from the Severn Valley Railway) brought steam back to Snow Hill: running shuttle trains ('Black Diamond' specials) to Stourbridge. The Jewellery Line scheme cost £28million (peanuts by today's costings!!). The trains also ran on to Dorridge and Leamington.

More trains appeared: the service to Marylebone Station in London, via Leamington, Banbury and West Ruislip began, to be taken over by Chiltern Railways after privatisation. Chiltern introduced diesel-operated (Class 67, later 68) 'push-pull' sets made up with Mark 3 coaches. And more were to come!

Back in 1984, the study 'Rapid Transit in the West Midlands' (trams, that is!) was published, with the first route, Snow Hill to Wolverhampton centre, using the old GW trackbed as far as Priestfield Junction, announced in 1988 and a construction contract signed on 3rd August 1995. The first day of public service began on 31st May 1999. Since then, we have seen the 'Metro' tram service extended to Birmingham New Street station and soon, beyond to Five Ways, while in Wolverhampton, Metro trams will soon reach the station there (the former High Level station).

For the steam enthusiast, things got even better in the 21st century with the inauguration of the regular Summer service, the 'Shakespeare Express', running on weekends between Snow Hill and Stratford-upon-Avon, using preserved steam locos from the Tyseley museum.

So there you have it: a station that withered away and died, was demolished, and then rose again, in rebuilt form, like a 'Phoenix' from the ashes, well, from a demolition site! Today's Snow Hill is now a busy one with expresses and semi-fasts as well as locals via Banbury to London Marylebone and via Stourbridge Junction to Kidderminster and Worcester. And: you can still have a ride behind a 'Castle'!



Stanier 5 45263 based at Oxley is just arriving with the 1.11pm Portsmouth to Wolverhampton (Low Level). It's likely that 45263 had worked to Portsmouth and back on 31st July 1965.



9F 92073 had spent some years at Annesley on the former Great Central, but resided at Banbury. Possibly the loco had picked up the bulk cement working from a plant near Handsworth & Smethwick, north of Birmingham Snow Hill on 1st July 1965.



Oxford 'Modified Hall' 6999 – formerly Capel Dewi Hall arrives among the holiday-makers with the 9.23am Bournemouth to Liverpool on 28th August 1965.

In spite of the 'Midlandization' of ex-GWR lines in the West Midlands, the 'pannier tanks' or 'match boxes' as West Midlands spotters nicknamed them, still soldiered on in September 1965. On 15th September Tyseley's 3625 waits for the road back, presumably, to its shed after shunting at Hockley, Smethwick or West Bromwich?





London Midland takeover: Ivatt Class 2 46442 of Tyseley has a transfer goods from Hockley for Bordesley and greets Stanier 8F 48016 of Saltley heading a Down through freight on 29th September 1965.

It is Mid-day at Birmingham Snow Hill on 28th December 1966 and the station has only a few months more of 'main line' status. The Birmingham Pullman has just arrived, while our '47' waits departure with our train for Paddington.



TICKETS PLEASE!

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

Martin Stoolman

It's now July 2000, and I am beginning to realise just how taxing many West of England trains can be in the Summer. Fridays are always busy, so coming in for work on a July Friday you just know your day will probably be fairly horrible, particularly if you are due to work an afternoon down service from Paddington.

Friday 14th July 2000 was indeed fairly typical - I was booked for the 13:33 from Paddington to Penzance as far as Exeter. The inbound HST only arrived at 13:23, leaving just 10 minutes for the set to be cleaned, and the reservation labels secured to the backs of all the seats (not a quick job on a fully reserved train). But at least the station staff did do it. Occasionally if an inbound working was very late they wouldn't, leading to no labels and no end of passenger frustration and arguments over reservations. That is one good thing about today's trains; the seat reservations all pop up electronically at the push of a button – when it works of course! Back to July 2000, and the cleaners at Paddington had, as ever, done a fantastic job in getting it all done by departure time. Unfortunately though the train still had to be boarded, and with over 400 passengers plus their luggage and bikes that is not a quick operation. In the circumstances though an 8 minute late departure at 13:41 was not too bad. In typical fashion though we lost a further 5 minutes in running, no doubt partly due to waiting for platform 4 to become available at Reading.

As was common with such trains I had no chance to even think about checking tickets before Reading. First of all I had to remove the members of a stag party who had decided to plonk themselves down in First Class. Getting

individuals to move in these circumstances is generally fairly easy but when you get a large group of males who have already had a few, that is harder. Generally though there is one sensible member of the gang, and, by working on him, reason can normally be achieved. So I marched them through to their reserved seats in Coach C towards the front, in the process having to remove others who had sat down thinking nobody was going to turn up. Some refused to move at first, saying their original seats had been “double booked”. I have deliberately used quotation marks here as double bookings are a myth. In fact throughout my career I can only remember one genuine double booking, and this was with a hand written ticket made out by a travel agent who had, I suspect, written down the seat number incorrectly. My method of dealing with such “double bookings” was to invite the person or people to come along with me to the seat(s) in question whereupon I would inspect the reservations of both parties. Always one of them would be booked on a different train, or would be travelling on the correct train but on the wrong date. The reaction of the person in the wrong would range from one of complete embarrassment and apology, to one of total denial or refusal to admit any fault. What action I then took often depended on the reaction, although a common trick in the interests of customer relations would be to allow the miscreant to continue to sit in that seat while inviting the passenger with the genuine reservation to enjoy the comforts of first class.

We lost a further 5 minutes in the platform at Reading trying to load the hordes on platform 4 onto what was already an almost fully loaded train. This was not unusual,

An extract from Martin's log of his journey with the 13:33 Paddington to Penzance on 14th July 2000 which he describes in detail above.

Note the driver was a “Mr Duff”, pity therefore it was an HST and not a Class 47 and coaches!

| FIRST GREAT WESTERN TRAINS CO. LTD. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-------|-------|----|--------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 13.33 HST TRAIN FROM: PADDINGTON | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Name of Driver | | | | | Stationed at | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MR DUFF | | | | | EXETER | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TO: PENZANCE ON: FRI. DAY THE 14 OF JULY 2000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| H.S.T. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| General remarks as to cause of delay and location. Formation of train, including alteration to load during journey. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13.23 | PADDINGTON | 13.23 | 13.41 | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14.00 | READING | 14.00 | 14.12 | 12 | 5 | | | | | 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| 15.14 | TRUNTON | 15.14 | 15.29 | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15.16 | EXETER | 15.16 | 15.34 | 18 | 3 | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| 15.41 | EXETER | 15.41 | 15.57 | 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

General remarks:
 INWARD STOCK ONLY ARRIVED AT 13.23. SEAT RESERVATIONS WERE DONE, BUT HAD TO SORT OUT DOUBLE BOOKINGS (FULL TRAIN). ALSO GROUP ON A LATE DOWNED TICKETS STAG DO IN FIRST CLASS - HAD TO MOVE THEM TO THEIR CORRECT SEATS IN COACH C. BLOCK CLAIMING ON WRONG TRAIN FROM READING (FOR NEWBURY) BUT NO TICKET, NO MONEY. SEVERAL PEOPLE GENUINELY ON WRONG TRAIN FROM READING (FOR NEWBURY, WESTBURY, BAILEY ETC) BLOKE SUFFERING FROM EPILEPSY IN COACH F - PARTIAL ATTACK JUST AFTER TRUNTON (GOING TO PAR). OFFERED MEDICAL HELP BY DRIVER BUT REFUSED. ASKED RESTAURANT CREW TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. THEN WALKED TO T.O.S. FOR FIRST TIME ON JOURNEY (ONLY MANAGED TO GET CHECK IN H, G, E AND HALF OF D). ONLY TO FIND IT SWEEPED FULL OF BIRDS - WINDING TO CLASH TRAINS.

Accommodation and cleanliness of stock: £650.00

Weather: DRY, SOME SUN COOL.

A FGV HST in the original First livery overtakes a Thames Trains Class 165 at Ruscombe Church on 28th July 1998

Photo: Dave Theobald



with trains piling up behind and delay minute fines accruing! Passengers on those stationary trains would of course have been enjoying a fine view of the gas works, a view that I have to say I got thoroughly sick of over the years. The re-modelling of Reading was a fantastic feat, and all those delays for down main line trains trying to access the station have been consigned to history – as indeed has the gas works!

Back to the year 2000, and after leaving Reading 18 minutes late (next stop Taunton) I began to check a few tickets. Unfortunately I quickly came upon a male saying he was on the wrong train and was trying to get to Newbury. Not only this, he had no ticket and no money anyway, and had availed himself of a seat in first class! However before I could deal with him the staff in the buffet drew my attention to several other “genuine” customers who had boarded the wrong train at Reading, with hoped-for destinations including Newbury, Westbury and Bristol. For each one I had to work out a way for them to reach their intended destination from our next stop (Taunton), authorising them to do so at no extra cost by writing on and signing their ticket, including the train's headcode (1C42) as a way of authenticating it for any other Guard/Ticket Inspector. This I did for the genuine ones. As for our friend with no ticket in First Class, I don't record what I did but I would certainly have ejected him from the comfy seats, probably then leaving him to his fate as he tried to get back from Taunton to Newbury with no money – with so much else to deal with on that train I think I would have seen that as punishment enough.

After this I would have made a further attempt at checking tickets. My record shows that all I had time for during the whole journey was first class plus the rearmost coach and

a half in Standard. Certainly in those days there was an element of pride in handing over a train at Exeter to the Penzance Guard (who would also be on his way home), and being able to report that all the tickets were “up tight”. But on some occasions, as here, it just was not possible. Other problems I had to deal with were two people including a pregnant lady struggling to find seats (luckily I found them a couple of vacant ones in First Class), and a gent suffering from epilepsy in coach E. I offered to seek medical help for him but he declined, so I organised for him to sit close to the Buffet where the crew there could keep an eye on him. Meanwhile up at the front my Exeter driver was doing well and managed to regain 3 of the lost minutes after Reading, only for all of them to be lost again due to increased dwell time at Taunton! With no Tiverton stop we did recover a couple of those minutes on to Exeter St David's, but would lose all of them again and more in the platform there. The reason? A very common one.... bikes!

Shortly before arriving at St David's I tried to make my one and only visit to the Guard's Van (TGS) at the front, in order to gather up my kit. I tried the partition door between the office and the van area which once upon a time would have been used for parcels and mail, but was now kitted out with six spaces for bikes. Try as I might I could not force it open but just as we were rolling into the platform I did, only to find the reason.... the staff at Reading had allowed it to literally get chock a block full of bikes. And this was now a problem on several levels! The immediate problem was that I could not access the Central Door Locking panel which I needed to do to release the doors. Luckily there was another panel in the passenger compartments between coaches A and B. The only way to

reach that one was by pushing my way through all the passengers with luggage queuing to get off (and complaining to me that the doors were still locked!). After a delay I was able to release the doors and exit onto the platform. The next problem was what to do about the bikes. Emergency equipment is kept in the van of an HST and has to be accessible at all times, which is why there is a strict rule that up to six bikes only are allowed. Goodness knows how many were in there on that occasion. Not only would the Penzance Guard relieving me have been singularly unimpressed, but I would not have been able to get through to the office to retrieve my kit either! My log book does not reveal how we got out of this (I had filled up the page!), but perhaps we got lucky and enough of the bikes came off at Exeter so that the maximum would not be exceeded for the remainder of the journey. Either way they had caused delay, and safety could have been compromised.

The carriage of bikes was a problem throughout my career, as it was for all my colleagues, and for the managers as well. Endless meetings were called to try and find a solution to the problem, but all were fruitless. And when the 180s (or Adelantes) came along, of which more in a future article, the problem became even worse. But one could hardly blame the cyclists. In the old days you had to pay as much as half fare in order to carry a bike with you, and this would have been stored among the mail and parcels in the huge amount of van space then available on a typical set of engine and coaches. However in the early 1970s BR began to carry less and less postal items on passenger trains, what remained being transferred to specialist parcels and mail trains. This resulted in large amounts of superfluous van space, prompting some bright spark in higher management to make the carriage of bikes completely free, the thinking being that this would encourage more passenger volumes while using up what was otherwise wasted space on the trains. All well and good of course, until designers of new trains did away with the surplus van space and then there was a problem.... how to cope with all the bikes. That was then further compounded by the growing view that cycling was good for the environment, making the railway companies very afraid to do anything that was likely to upset the cycling lobby - like re-introducing charges; while at the same time failing to make adequate on-train provision for them. The HSTs did have some extra space in the power cars, and occasionally us Guards could make use of it to get us out of trouble. But doing this was fraught with problems: they were not accessible to the public and could only be unlocked by a member of staff with the right key, and, in

addition, at many stations the power cars would generally not be platformed.

My log books are littered with references to delays caused by bikes. Typically it would be something like on Saturday 12th January 2002 when I drew up at Reading with the 09:30 Paddington to Plymouth, only to find a cyclist waiting at the rear of the train when the van was right at the front. He proceeded to try to ride his bike up the platform but was rightly told to dismount by platform staff. He then took an age to get to the van, secure his bike, get off again and make his way along the platform to a passenger coach. The resultant delay was 5 minutes – not uncommon. A problem location was Westbury where, due to the signalling arrangements, up trains arriving on platforms 2 and 3 would sometimes have to stop with the van off the platform. On Thursday 4th August 2011 I recorded a 6 minute delay at Westbury with the 11:06 Paignton to Paddington while I got the driver to draw up in order to retrieve a small boy's bike from the van and stem the poor lad's tears. We were already 7 minutes late and those lost additional minutes turned into a 17 minute late arrival at Paddington.

Incidents later in my career involving bikes included a chap with two bikes and a heap of luggage struggling to join the 11:01 Penzance to Paddington at Tiverton Parkway on Sunday 28th August 2016. (How can you ride two bikes?). Then a few weeks later on Saturday 1st October working the 07:30 Paddington to Penzance at Totnes, a cyclist had just retrieved his bike from the van when he thought he would be helpful and close an open train door for me. Unfortunately in the process he tripped over his bike and landed in a heap on the platform injuring himself. I had to delay the train while I summoned over the only member of station staff (who had been dealing with an up train) to give the poor guy medical attention. Stranger still was when on Monday 6th May 2013 I finished my shift at Exeter, arriving on the 21:45 from Paddington via Bristol which terminated there at 01:07. The handful of passengers we had on board dribbled out through the exit, and while the Duty Manager checked the train I grabbed my bags and made my way out of the Guard's van. To my surprise there was a bike still there in the rack. How can you forget your bike? Of course it is possible that the absent minded person hadn't even been on my train; it could be that the bike had been riding around in the van undetected and unclaimed for most of that day. After 24 hours the Duty Manager sent it up to the Bristol lost property office with all the coats, umbrellas and gloves, so let's hope it was reunited with its owner. Lost a bike anyone?

Wearing the short-lived initial version of FirstGroup corporate livery, 43041 City of Discovery passes Ruscombe on Down Main leading the 14:00 from Paddington on 22nd November 2001.

Photo: Mike Walker



HOW I BECAME INTERESTED IN TRAINS

CHRIS WAITE



Bearing in mind that neither my father nor his two brothers were remotely interested in railways, other than as a means of transport, there must have been something in the air in the early 1950s. They each had a son. One became a driver on the KWVR, another became a railway engineer, whose working life began on designing the non-articulated bogies for the Advanced Passenger Train and ended as a consultant, refusing to sign off as fit for purpose the stock for the Kuala Lumpur metro and then there was me. I never worked on the railway, but was bitten by the bug at an early age.

For the first 5 years of my life, I lived in Trawden, Lancashire, a village some 3 miles from the nearest railway, which was at Colne. Though never on a railway, it was, until 1928, served by trams and surprisingly a short section of the tram tracks survive to this day.

The occasion of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on Tuesday 2nd June 1953 meant that an extra day was added to the usual Whitsun bank holiday and the family decided to take advantage of this by spending a few days in Southport. My first recollection of a train came on the outward journey, probably on Saturday 30th May, when we changed trains at Preston. I was told that, as we had several minutes to wait for our connecting train, I could go with my father to look at the engine which had brought us from Colne, which I'm fairly sure was a Black 5 4-6-0.

In my eagerness, I broke free from my father's hand and raced ahead along the platform. I was just about level with the locomotive cab when the safety valves lifted. This sent me back along the platform even faster – I didn't stop until my hands were round my father's neck! Not the most auspicious start for someone who would turn out to be a lifelong railway enthusiast.

Over the next couple of years we made more trips by train to the Lancashire coast - we didn't have a car in those days

Where Chris's railway adventure began: Black Five 45373 at Colne on 30th May 1967.

Tram tracks still in situ at Trawden, Lancashire 94 years after they were last used!





Royal Scot 46169 The Boy Scout on an up Manchester passing Castlethorpe on 5th July 1958.

John Wells / Kidderminster Railway Museum

- but I have no particular recollection of these. I do, however, remember being given more than one of the Rev. Wilbert Awdry's books to keep me entertained on such journeys. The turning point, though, was to come in August 1955, when a change in my father's job meant moving to Slough.

In Lancashire at the time, schools had a different summer holiday pattern from most. Instead of a 7-week holiday starting mid to late July and extending till early September, there was a 5-week break from early July to early August followed by a further 2 weeks at the beginning of September. This meant that just a couple of weeks after my father had started working in Slough, my mother took me by train from Colne to Slough, so that she and my father could start house-hunting.

There were two problems with the move. Firstly, to buy a house of similar size would require approximately 3 times the money that would come from the sale of the house in

Trawden and secondly, my mother had just restarted working as a teacher and had gone to some trouble to get me accommodated in the local infant school several months earlier than normal. The result was that over the next 14 months, until a house in Slough had been purchased, my mother and I made numerous journeys from Colne to Slough and back – by train.

My mother was very worried about undertaking a long train journey with a 4-year old, but with a combination of the Awdry books and a window to look out of, I was

46169 again, this time on the up Mancunian passing Wolverton on 27th September 1959.

John Wells / Kidderminster Railway Museum



content, even if I did find 1950s seat moquette to be rather unkind to my tender skin.

The southbound journey invariably started with a journey on a bus belonging to the Burnley, Colne and Nelson Joint Transport Committee (BCN or 'the Corporation bus' for short) in order to board the 8am from Colne, which conveyed four (more at busy times) through coaches to London Euston. The route was via Blackburn, Bolton and Manchester (Victoria), stopping at principal stations, to Stockport, where the through London coaches were drawn back by the station pilot onto the long viaduct and then attached to the rear of 10am from Manchester (London Road), which stopped only at Macclesfield and Stoke-on-Trent on its way to Euston. Scheduled arrival was shortly after 2pm, though, I'm sorry to say, in practice was often quite a bit later.

Motive power to Stockport was often a Stanier or Fairburn 2-6-4T, but could be a Black 5 4-6-0 or even an 8F 2-8-0. From Stockport to London, it was usually a Camden Royal Scot 4-6-0, the most regular performer being 46161 *King's Own*, though I also remember 46158 *The Loyal Regiment*, 46169 *The Boy Scout* and 46170 *British Legion*.

My mother wouldn't travel on the tube, so it was a taxi to Paddington and then to Slough by either the 2.42pm Paddington to Reading, formed of suburban stock and almost certainly hauled by one of the ubiquitous 61XX 2-6-2Ts, or the 3.18pm Paddington to Didcot and Bedwyn, which split at Reading and was, as I remember, a 'Hall' turn with a motley collection of about ten ex-GWR Collett and Hawksworth corridor coaches.

The northbound journey would commence with the 08.30 from Slough. This was the 7.12am from Newbury to Paddington, with similar stock to the 3.18pm. Again this was a Hall turn, frequently 4939 *Littleton Hall*. Scheduled arrival was at 8.56am and my memory is that this train was always punctual whenever we used it.

Then it was back across to Euston for the 9.45am London to Manchester *Comet*. This had a similar stopping pattern to the 10am up and again conveyed through carriages to Colne, always at the rear of the train and detached at Stockport.

We were sometimes at Euston before the stock arrived and it was interesting to see what brought it in. It could be anything from a 'Jinty' 0-6-0T to an 8F. Head-end power was again usually a Royal Scot 4-6-0, but I think this was a Longsight turn as, on one occasion, I remember Britannia 4-6-2 70043 *Lord Kitchener* being used.

The Comet usually departed from platform 14 at Euston. The train on the other face (platform 13) would be the LMR's most prestigious train, the 10am *Royal Scot* for Glasgow. As we departed it was always a thrill to see the one of Stanier's masterpieces, a Princess Coronation 4-6-2, at the head of the '*Scot*'.

From Stockport, the onward journey to Colne, where scheduled arrival was at 3.20pm, but was usually later, haulage was by a Lower Darwen 'Crab' 2-6-0. The train terminated at Colne and, while waiting for the bus back to Trawden, I remember enjoying watching the train reverse over the bridge, the last sight being of the Crab's very high running plate above the parapet as it propelled the stock into the carriage sidings.

I'd always been fascinated by numbers and at some point on one of the early journeys I started calling out the numbers that I saw on the cabsides of locomotives. It was not long after that I was given the Ian Allan London Midland Region abc and so my trainspotting career began.

By October 1956, we had settled into our new home and shortly after moving in, I was taken to the local park, ostensibly to ride on the swings. It didn't take me long to notice, however, that the GWML ran along one edge of the park and so I had to have the Western Region abc as well. The die was cast!

6127 sets out from Slough with a down stopping train in the mid-1950s. The first vehicle is a vintage GWR 'Toplight'.

Collection of David Gardner



MYSTERIOUS WELSH VALLEY INCIDENT

David Gardner

Dai Reynolds and Bryn Harris had been working together on coal trains for some time since Bryn had been made up to a passed fireman. Both were dyed-in-the-wool Taff Vale men, despite the GWR having owned the lines and its locomotives for 25 years and also both had never worked for an employer other than the GWR and now they were part of the nationalised British Railways.

Little had changed though, they still drove the same TV engines which, despite their age, performed well enough, as did the 10 and 12 ton wagons, better repaired now than during the long years of war. So long as the axleboxes were greased or oiled and the brakes worked everybody was happy.

Dai and Bryn were based at Cardiff Cathays and on this particular Friday morning in May 1950 the weather was fine. They had had quite a varied week so far, travelling to Ebbw Vale via Crumlin low level one day, Mountain Ash and Aberdare on the TV line another, as well as taking coal or coke to Cardiff or Barry Docks. It was always empties one way and loaded trucks the other.

Some might say the work was monotonous but not this pair. They took life as it came, enjoyed the scenery even if much of it was coal mines and slag heaps.

Bryn spoke up for once, 'That 56 we took to Ebbw Vale wasn't a patch on our TV 0-6-2s or for that matter Rhymney R1s or Class As. The 56 class has too much front overhang and I can't understand why the GWR didn't just make some more of our own, they're much better engines'. 'I agree' said Dai 'Collet should have asked Welsh enginemen and engineers first instead of off-loading us with second-rate locos. Mind you, our 72s are pretty powerful beasts and the GWR built them' Bryn replied. Dai was silent for a moment, then said 'We've got a trip on the Pwllyrhebog cable incline later today with some empties then bring some full wagons back to the yard. Before that, though, we have to go to Treherbert with some empties for Lady Margaret Colliery'.

Today their loco was Taff Vale A class 0-6-2T No. 305 which was waiting for them in the yard already coupled up to 15 empty coal wagons and a brake van. Huw Morgan the guard came up to give them the details and after Dai had checked that all was well with the loco they set off. By the time they got to Treherbert and the colliery it was late morning, where they uncoupled the last 5 empties along with the brake van pushing them into a siding. The other 10 wagons were pushed into the loading siding. Engine no. 305 was driven over to the shed and Taff Vale 0-6-0T No. 195 which was simmering outside ready for them was manoeuvred by Dai to the other side to collect the 5 empties and brake van.



Ex-Taff Vale Class A 0-6-2T No.309 at Swindon after withdrawal in 1953.

Countanch collection

After some tea and a quick bite to eat the train was ready to depart. However before they left Treherbert it had started to rain and by the time they had passed Pentre it was chucking it down. This was not going to be very pleasant climbing an incline, even one that was cable operated. What's more it was getting dark. The only way to get to the Pwllyrhebog branch was via Tonypandy where the branch veered off. The brake van was uncoupled and put into the head shunt there and guard Huw Morgan decided to ride in the loco rather than sit in the brake van for an hour or so.

It was possible to propel the wagons up to the incline but Dai preferred to haul them so they pushed the wagons into one of Clydach Vale sidings and the engine run round and coupled to the other end before propelling the wagons back towards Tonypandy, gaining the incline branch alongside the former Pwllyrhebog signal box. They crossed over the Rhondda River bridge then while waiting at the bottom of the incline for the chain and wire rope to be connected to the loco, Dai filled in Bryn Harris and Huw Morgan with a bit of history of the branch.

It was opened in 1863 and taken over by the Taff Vale Railway in 1894. The actual incline was one mile long but at 1 in 13 the steepest in Wales and their loco was one of three built especially to work the incline in 1884. The wire ropes are connected to large drums which wind the train up the incline and take the strain of one descending Dai informed his companions.

Since before they left Treherbert it had been raining steadily and though very heavy at times it had now turned to drizzle and fortunately wasn't as dark as it had been.

By this time the brakesman had connected up the chain and wire rope and the loco and wagons began to ascend. Bryn looked up towards the summit and called out in alarm as through the misty drizzle he could see a train descending at speed. 'Bloody 'ell, mun' said Dai, 'let's get off this loco before we end up as mince-meat.' All three jumped clear. They could see the terrified look on the faces of the runaway train's crew, then just as 0-6-0T No. 195 was about to be hit, the descending loco and wagons passed through and disappeared. 'Well, I'll be blowed', Bryn muttered, 'what do you make of that?' 'It could only have been a phantom train' replied Dai, 'Let's get back in the engine and finish the job we're here for'.

5687 receiving attention at Cardiff Cathays Works possibly in late 1940s.

L. Wells / collection J. Suter





7202 2-8-2T an ex-Cathays engine at Cardiff Canton in 1961.

K. Swain

When they arrived at the top end they were met by the Brakeman Ewan Price. After the three shaken railwaymen explained what they'd seen, Ewan didn't seem too surprised and said there had been at least two runaways many years previously. 'If you three go into the cabin, we'll get you some tea and I'll tell you about the near tragedies we've had here.'

A few minutes later they were all sat around a table drinking hot mugs of tea. Ewan began his tale. In 1885 when the three tank engines were less than a year old, Driver Rees Davis and his stoker Basset Edwards were descending the incline with some loaded coal wagons when the cable snapped and they hurtled down. They tried everything to stop the train but it was no use and made a bit of a mess at the bottom but thankfully both men were unhurt. Then in 1912 a similar thing happened when Driver Banks and his son Ted were in charge. They managed to keep the train on the track even round the bottom bend and as far as Tonypandy before they eventually brought the loco and trucks to a stop.

'So what we saw was a ghost train of one of those runaways then' said Dai. 'That's right' answered Ewan, 'oh and by the way we have a loaded train with engine no. 193 ready for you to take down rather than wait for the one you brought up to be sorted out. 'That will be great' both Dai and Bryn said in unison. Loco No.193 was already chained to the incline cable and Driver, Fireman and Guard clambered up into the cab ready to depart. 'We have a man ready for you at the bottom to unhitch the chain' said Ewan.

They descended the incline quite slowly as they didn't want another runaway. At the bottom after the chain and cable were released they moved on to recouple up the Guards Van from the head shunt and Huw Morgan climbed up onto the veranda no doubt glad of a bit more space. He then waved a green lamp and the short train set off once again for the final leg of their journey. It had been a long day but at least the last hour or so had been dry. All three would remember the strange apparition and fright it gave them for years to come.

Ex-TVR H Class 0-6-0T no.195 near summit of Pwllyrhebog incline branch on 5th May 1951.

P. J. Garland collection



THEN AND NOW: BOOTLE



Back in 1979 Bootle's Oriol Road station on the Mersey network still retained much of its steam era atmosphere as LMS built Class 502 M28349M rolls in with the 13:30 Southport to Liverpool Central on 3rd March that year.

Forty three years later the infrastructure has been reduced and replaced by trees; only the bridge girders confirm its the same spot as 508122 arrives with with 2U39, the 15:13 Southport to Hunts Cross on 27th June 2022.

Both photos: Peter Robins

