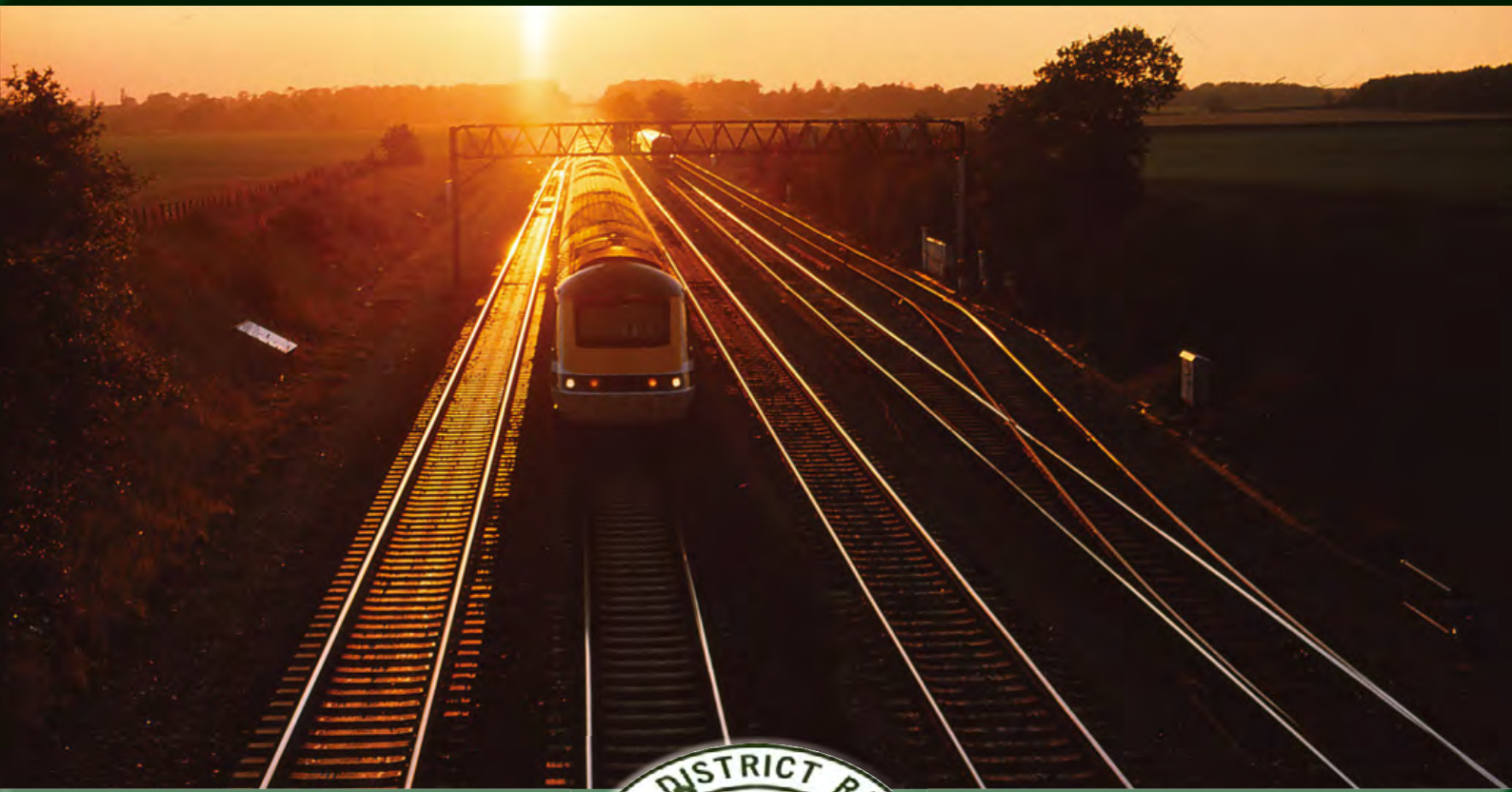




# 150 YEARS of THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition  
**181**

September 2023



**Contents:**  
Marlow Donkey 150 Commemoration  
GWR Pannier Tanks  
My First Overseas Trip  
Tickets Please - Part 7

# 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: Turbo 165122 at Bourne End branded with 150th anniversary of The Great Marlow Railway plaque.  
Inset: Members of MDRS, MMPA, RCTS and GWR staff gather in front of 165122 at Bourne End. 27 June 2023  
Photos/Copyright: Mike Walker. Article page 4.*

*Bottom: An up HST service comes out of the sunset at Ruscombe chased by a 165. 31 October 1997.  
Photo/Copyright: Mike Walker. Article page 19.*

# 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 (except September see page 3).

Thursday 21 September      **SRI LANKA: BROAD GAUGE TO GREAT WESTERN**      Simon Colbeck

The railways of Sri Lanka. A wide ranging look at this beautiful island railway system. Featuring steam and heritage diesel traction from the last ten years and a fascinating selection of archive colour images of steam at work on the island in the 1960's and 1970's.

Please note, this programme will NOT be available on Zoom.

Thursday 19 October      **THE CHOLSEY & WALLINGFORD RAILWAY**      Tony Stead

Tony will talk about how Wallingford was disappointed not to be, as was once suggested, connected to the GWR. The formation of The Wallingford and Watlington Railway Company was to connect Cholsey, Wallingford, Benson and Watlington to the GWR. The talk will consider the branch history and the trials and tribulations faced by the company.

Thursday 16 November      **GETTING THE RAILWAY OFF THE GROUND  
THE LIVERPOOL OVERHEAD RAILWAY**      Colin Brading

Just seven miles long, the Liverpool Overhead Railway (the 'Dockers' Umbrella) was a truly pioneering venture with unique character. From its inception, through innovative construction methods and many technological 'firsts' in operation, it transformed the nature of urban rail travel far beyond the city that it served so well for more than sixty years.

Thursday 21 December      **BALTIC COAST EXPRESSES**      Peter Robins

In 1990, Enthusiast Holidays ran a tour called the *Baltic Coast Express* from London via Poland, the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to Leningrad, now St. Petersburg. The return journey was via Finland, Sweden and Denmark. It was only the second major railway tour to Russia and whilst there were a few minor teething problems, the tour was a success. This presentation starts with images taken between 1975 and 1985 on previous visits to Germany and Poland then follows the tour through Russia to Finland.

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I started these notes last time by observing that the weather was improving. Well that was June; July was a washout and August, so far, isn't anything to shout about. Perhaps we'll get an Indian Summer but I'm not holding my breath!

Despite the weather, we've had a most successful summer with both the June and July meetings attracting large audiences both on line and, more importantly, in the hall at Bourne End. For the July meeting we actually achieved the landmark of having more members attending in person than on line since we were forced into the latter by the pandemic. For both, it was nice to see several of our Associate Members attending in person rather than virtually and good to catch up. Hopefully good live attendances will continue going forward.

Both those two meetings featured our local railways which proved popular and the 150th anniversary of the *Marlow Donkey* has generated much interest among the local population. After some initial hesitation, GWR came up trumps and marked the event with special embellishments on 165122 and a reception at Bourne End (see page 4). A few weeks later the Marlow Society held a film show featuring the branch in the town's Liston Hall. Unfortunately, so many wanted to see it, the 100 seats available were quickly sold out and many were turned away on the night. As a result the films will be shown at the Royal British Legion hall during the Marlow Heritage Day on 9th September.

The dismal weather means I've done very little railway connected of late just as I've been unable to keep up with the garden - the weeds have been thriving - and don't even mention the cricket season! A couple of weeks ago I was asked by our resident village Aussie what I thought of the Ashes. Diplomacy (never my strong point) was called for but we agreed it was the Great British Weather that cost us an outright series win and enabled the Aussies to salvage a hollow "win".

I have, however, used the time to do quite a bit of modelling on my exhibition layout Helland Wharf and taken the opportunity to attend several model railway exhibitions. Something I've noticed is the explosion in the number of small "micro layouts" (which Helland Wharf is) and I must admit I'm growing ever more attracted to this type of layout as it is possible to actually "complete" a layout in a relatively short time.

I'm hoping we get a decent autumn as there are several events I would like to attend. First, the SVR's Diesel Gala which was shaping up to become a feast of hydraulic actions until an incident grounded the Hymeks and, second, I'm awaiting the return to operation of the graceful LSWR T3 4-4-0 563 on the Swanage Railway which is imminent.

Whatever you do in the coming months I hope the sun shines on you and it's enjoyable.

Mike Walker

# SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

## NEW MEMBERS

We've had further new members join us in recent weeks: David Allen from Durham and Michael Byrnes from Portland, Oregon in the USA! Welcome to you both.

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The past three months have proved notable in that attendances at Bourne End are finally starting to get back to something like pre-pandemic levels and there have even been occasions where the live audience outnumbered those on Zoom. This is most encouraging as it helps create a more social atmosphere in the hall and provides a live audience for the speaker which is always welcome. Now you've taken the plunge, hopefully you will continue to attend in person.

In June our Chairman, Mike Walker, celebrated the 150th anniversary of the *Marlow Donkey* with a programme that looked at the history of the line and the trains that provided the service over the years along with a detailed trip down the line. The narrow gauge operations of the Marlow Sand & Gravel Co. were also covered along with local bus services.

In July, we continued our local history theme when David Lane presented a fascinating look at the Early Years of the Wycombe Railway. David has spent years researching the line and has unearthed all manner of previously unknown material including many of the original drawings - Network Rail have been very helpful in trawling the depths of their archives with remarkable results. David has used much of this to create a series of virtual reality images of, in particular, the old High Wycombe station as it would have appeared at opening enabling one to actually go inside. The evening was extremely popular with many local residents attending too, so much so that we used every chair in the hall!

August was more varied in subject matter when Paul Chancellor returned to present a Tenth Colour-Rail Journey. This featured the work of ten different photographers, including Trevor Owen, John Spencer Gilks, American Emory Gulash (who made two visits to the UK in the late sixties) and Paul himself showing how each used different styles and approaches in their photography. The result was a smorgasbord of images in both monochrome and colour from the mid-fifties to the present day.

## NO ZOOM IN SEPTEMBER

A reminder that Simon Colbeck's Sri Lanka presentation in September will *not* be available on Zoom as he is concerned that his images might be downloaded by those taking part. Sadly we found this out too late to cancel and seek an alternative speaker for the meeting which therefore will be a live only meeting held in the Bourne End Community Centre.

## FIFIELD VISIT

We had hoped to arrange a joint visit with the Fawley Museum crew to David Buck's private railway in Fifield sometime this month. However, as many of you know, David's health is not good at the moment leading to him being hospitalised for treatment and as a result the visit can not go ahead as planned.

David has said he considers it postponed rather than cancelled and we hope to arrange a date sometime in the spring.

In the meantime, our best wishes go to David.

## BRIAN SPARROW

It is with sadness that we have to advise you that Brian passed away in mid July after a long illness. Brian had been an enthusiastic member of the Society for many years and also a long standing volunteer at both Fawley and Chinnor. He was particularly interested in engineering matters having served an apprenticeship with Bell Punch at Uxbridge. His great passion was drag racing and he wrote a number of articles on the subject. We think of his wife Sheila and daughters Katie and Wendy at this sad time.

*Roger Bowen*

## MALCOLM'S BOOKS

A big thank you to all of you who made purchases from Malcolm's book collection. In total we raised £180 which has been forwarded to the Parkinson's Society. Both the Society and Malcolm's family have expressed their gratitude.

## RCTS MEETINGS

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

Monday 25th September

Railways at a Junction - Fraser Pithie

Monday 23rd October

East Anglia in Transition (1980s to date) - John Day

Monday 27th November

The Great Train Robbery - Ian Boskett

Monday 18th 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 (except November). MDRS members always welcome. To register to attend by Zoom visit <https://rcts.org.uk/windsor-maidenhead/events/> and follow the link there.

## SCALEFORUM 2023

The Scalefour Society which exists to promote 4mm/foot scale modelling to the highest standards, is once again holding its Scaleforum gathering at the Cressex Community School in High Wycombe on 23rd and 24th September where some stunning examples of the best in modelling will be on display including John Farmer's superb recreation of Marsh Sidings at Parkend in the Forest of Dean.

The show is open to the public both days from 10:30 until 17:30 on Saturday and 16:30 on Sunday. Admission is £12.00 but that does cover both days and accompanied children are admitted free.

## GREAT ELECTRIC TRAIN SHOW

The weekend of 14th/15th October sees the 10th Great Electric Train Show held at the MK Stadium in Milton Keynes. As usual there will be around 30 layouts in various scales/themes and full trade support. Centrepiece will be all three of Pete Waterman's Making Tracks WCML layouts linked to form a single 150' long layout.

Doors open 10:00 to 17:00 (16:00 Sunday) with admission from £15. <https://www.keymodelworld.com/greatelectrictrainshow>

## MARLOW DONKEY 150 COMMEMORATION

GWR marked the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Great Marlow Railway on the 27th June 1873 in style on 27th June 2023 with a reception for invited guests at Bourne End

and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque on both sides of Turbo 165122 – not actually a naming but a nice and unexpected embellishment.



There was a good turnout of MDRS members present along with those from the Windsor & Maidenhead RCTS branch and, of course, the Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Association. Sadly, Mark Hopwood was unable to be present as he had to attend a funeral but he was represented by Ruth Busby, GWR's People & Transformation Director who welcomed guests along with Simon Gillibrand, Network Rail's Head of Metro Rail for this part of the Western.

Ruth also had the task of cutting the excellent birthday cake which was skilfully divided to ensure everyone got a piece.



Members of the MDRS, MMPA, RCTS and GWR staff gather in front of 165122 at Bourne End including (from Left) Sheila and Mike Hyde; Helen Edmundson, GWR Cookham (What a splendid name for a purveyor of railway tickets!); Tony Gammond, GWR Bourne End and Ruth Busby. Other MDRS members visible include: Alan Machon, Julian Heard, Roger Dye, Peter Robins, Brian Hopkinson and Luke Ripley.

All this frivolity did lead to some delays to the service but, hey, you're only 150 years old once!

*Photos: Mike Walker*

# GWR PANNIER TANKS

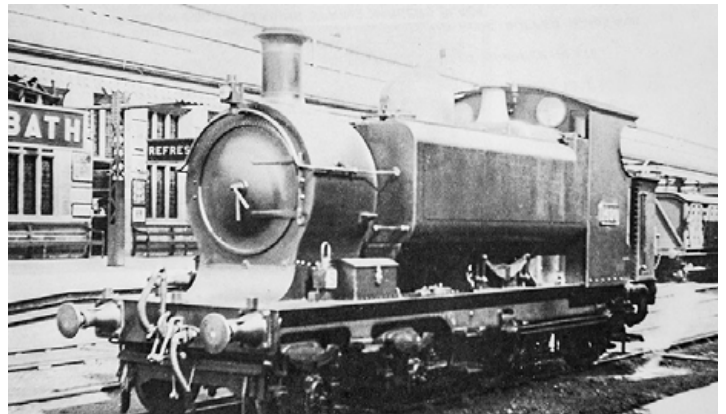
## Part 1: The 'Large' Pre-grouping Locomotives

David Gardner

One of the most distinctive features of GWR locomotive practice was its use of pannier tanks, something almost unknown elsewhere. For much of its life from the latter part of the 19th century through to the first years of BR, the company had more than 1000 0-6-0 tank engines on its books at any one time and these were mostly saddle tanks. With the adoption of the square topped Belpaire firebox, in place of the traditional round topped type, came the problem of fitting a saddle tank. This wasn't confined to the GWR but other companies adopted side tanks. Whilst lowering the centre of gravity, side tanks had the disadvantage of restricting access to the inside valve gear commonly found on such locomotives. As a result, the GWR adopted the pannier tank instead; compatible with the shape of a Belpaire firebox whilst retaining access to the valve gear, albeit at the expense of a slightly higher centre of gravity – anyone who has travelled on a pannier at speed will know what that means! The company did adopt side tanks for tank engines expected to run at higher speeds, in passenger service for example. In general, pannier tanks replaced saddle tanks when locomotives received new Belpaire boilers during overhauls. Occasionally, a pannier would revert to a saddle tank if a Belpaire boiler was replaced by a round topped one. The fitting of pannier tanks to former saddle tanks started around 1902 with initially a small number being "short" tanks; that is to say they did not embrace the smokebox. There was also a staggering variety in the form and shapes of bunkers and cabs fitted to these locomotives meaning that even within the same class, two never looked completely alike.

The first pannier tank was actually a new build. No.1490 built in 1898 was an experimental 4-4-0 with outside frames and short pannier tanks which left the smokebox exposed. It had been designed as a possible successor to the Metro 2-4-0 tanks but was found to be too heavy and unstable and spent most of its life as a shunting engine first at Bath (as shown above right) then Swindon before being sold out of service in 1907.

Photo: H. C. Casserley



**The Crane Tanks** In April 1901 Swindon built two 0-6-4 crane locos no.17 *Cyclops* and no.18 *Steropes*. They had 4' 1½" driving wheels and 2' 8" bogie wheels and were fitted with Belpaire fireboxes and pannier tanks from the start. Although details of where these engines worked are sketchy by 1918 no.17 was at Stafford Road Works, Wolverhampton and no.18 was allocated to Swindon Works. In April 1921 a third crane loco, no.16 *Hercules*, was built and allocated to Swindon Works. Finally, in December 1933 no.17 also moved to join the other two crane engines at Swindon though it is doubtful they did any further work. They were very similar to the 850 class of 0-6-0 (which will be dealt with later) but had a bogie extension to hold the crane. However their use declined with improvements in handling facilities and all were withdrawn from service in September 1936 although they were not broken up until the following year. It is interesting to note that one of the crane engines was used on construction work during the rebuilding of Paddington Station possibly between 1913-15.



## The Pre-Grouping Classes

The RCTS splits the pre-grouping GWR 0-6-0 tank engines into three groups as follows:

1. Swindon built tanks of the 1076, 1813, 1661, 1854, 2721 and 2729 classes.
2. Wolverhampton tanks (large) of the 302, 1016, 633, 645 (and 1501), 119, 322 and 655 classes.
3. Wolverhampton tanks (small) of the 850 (and 1901) and 2021 classes.

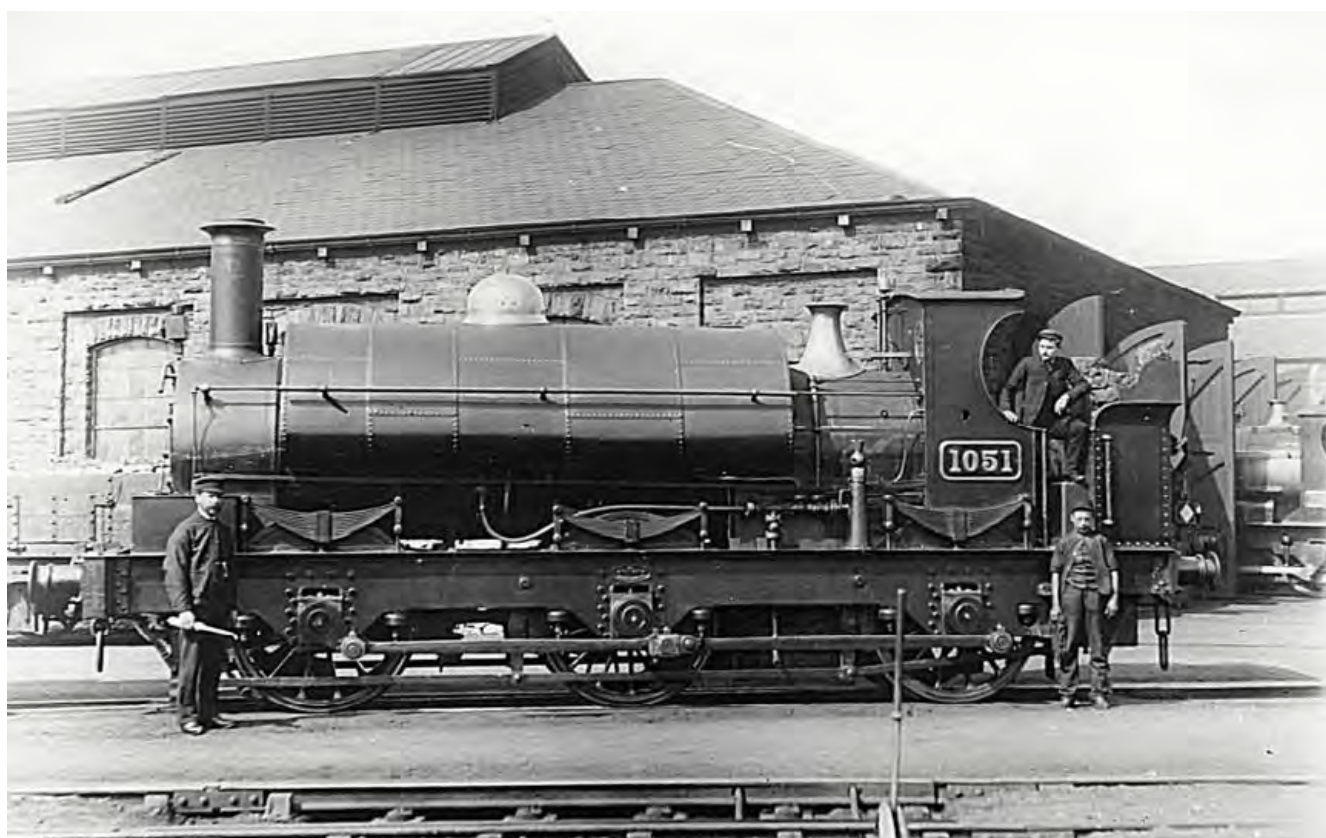
Let us now examine each in detail starting with the "large" types which had 4' 7½" driving wheels.

**302 class** We must now go back to the 1860s and 70s when Wolverhampton Works under George Armstrong built eight double frame saddle tanks numbered 302-9. These came out between 1864 and 65. They had 4' 6" wheels and a wheelbase of 7' 4" + 8' 2". At the same time they had short saddle tanks but they were later rebuilt with full length tanks and wheel size increased with thicker tyres to 4' 7½". All received cabs in the 1880s. Pannier tanks were fitted to all but 302 between 1911 and 1923. While 302 was withdrawn as a saddle tank in August 1918. 307 was fitted with a spark arrester chimney for work at Didcot Munitions Depot reverting to a saddle tank at the same time between 1922-27. In 1925 nos.303/5-7/9 received larger bunkers. Apart from 302 all were withdrawn between May 1928 and July 1932.

**1016 class** Another George Armstrong design built at Stafford Road Works, Wolverhampton was built between 1867-71. They were numbered as 1016-75 had a 7' 4" + 8' 2" wheelbase and 4' 6" wheels later increased to 4' 7½". They were distributed between Northern and Southern Divisions and all except 1020/5/9/32/5/1040/3/63/7/8/74 were fitted with pannier tanks between December 1911 and January 1928. Nos.1029/35/43/68 were withdrawn between November 1910 and June 1914. Nos.1028 and 1065 were fitted for Autoworking in June 1925 and 1061 in December 1927. They were fitted with double frame chassis and the class lasted into the late 1920s and early 1930s. The last to go was 1047 in July 1935.

**1076 or Buffalo class** were Swindon built and had a 7' 4" + 8' 4" wheelbase and wheels of 4' 6" later increased to 4' 7½". In all 266 engines were constructed and combined three separate classes. Construction started under Joseph Armstrong's tenure and continued under William Dean. Locos were built as follows 1076-81 (1870), 727-56 (1872-3), 947-66 (1874), 1134-53 (1874-5), 1166-85 (1875), 1228-97 (1876-8) and 1561-1660 (1878-81). Nos.1228-57/1561-80 were built as convertibles but 1228-37 and 1561-65 were broad gauge from the beginning. The others were converted to broad gauge between 1884 and 1888. All were converted to narrow gauge (standard) between September 1891 and March 1893. Apart from the original 15 broad gauge locos all had double frame chassis with extended axles so when they were converted to Broad gauge the wheels were on the outside of the double frames. The running frame was then extended outwards with curved splashers. Nos.1076-81 originally had side tanks. Pannier tanks were fitted between 1911-28. Locomotives nos.729/42/7/54/948/1150/84/1277/1581/91/4 1612/8 remained as saddle tanks while engines nos.728/957/1167/1652 and 1660 were sold to the Rhondda & Swansea Bay Railway between January 1912 and July 1919. No.957 returned to the GWR in December 1921, the rest in January 1922. Engines nos.1563 and 1591 were sold to the Neath & Brecon Railway in October 1911 and December 1912 respectively, returning to the GWR in October 1922 and August 1922. No.1591 was scrapped on return as no.15. Although 1184 was withdrawn as early as October 1903,747 went in March 1911; 754 in July 1911; 948 in March 1915 and 1277 in June 1911. Other saddle tanks lasted into the 1920s, the last No. 1594 was not withdrawn until June 1930. Pannier tanks were fitted between 1911 and 1928 (1234). The class lasted well into the 1920 and 30s. The last, no.1624, was only withdrawn in April 1946 as were 1585 and 1287 which was then used as a stationary boiler at Newbury and Leamington and was only cut up in October 1953, well into BR days.

*1016 class no.1051 in near-original condition with a short saddle tank of five unequal segments.*



*1026, one of the first batch of the 1016 class, at Reading shed on 18th October 1919 shortly after being fitted with Q class boiler and small pannier tanks. Later, the tanks were slightly deeper.*



*1076 class convertible 1566 in broad gauge guise circa 1884-92. Note the wheels are outside the frames.*

*Locomotive Publishing Co.*

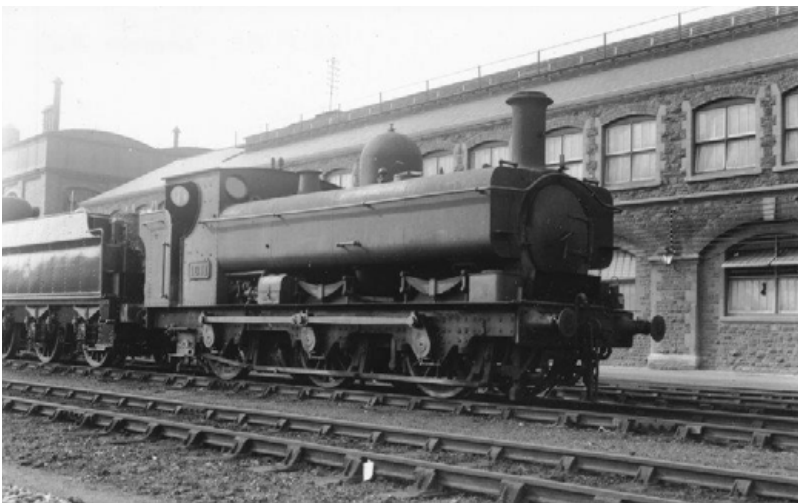
*Another 1076 class 1610 built as a standard gauge saddle tank but seen at Swindon on 11th September 1927 fitted with pannier tanks and a spark arrestor but retaining its open cab.*

*H. C. Casserley*



*1611 is another 1076 class locomotive fitted with a full cab similar to that fitted to the "modern" 57xx class. Swindon Works 29th September 1945.*

*C F H Oldham / Lens of Sutton*





**119 Class** These were built at Wolverhampton between 1878-83 with a wheelbase of 7' 4" + 8' 4" and 4' 6" wheels. They were Nos.119-21/3-30. Originally built at Swindon as tender engines, they were officially described as renewals. The missing number, 122, was always a tender engine. They were rebuilt as saddle tanks and had sandwich outside frames as well as plate inside and described as indestructible. No.127 built in 1881 was withdrawn in November 1910 and 119 in April 1919. The rest received pannier tanks between August 1913 and December 1923. After working mainly in the north, apart from 128 which remained at Old Oak Common between 1906-18, they ended up in South Wales. In 1930 no.120, which was the last in the class, was transferred to Oswestry and finally withdrawn in September 1933. The others went between 1926 and 1928 apart from 129 and 130 which were withdrawn in May 1919. Like other classes thicker tyres increased wheel size to 4' 7½".

**322 class** These were originally Beyer-Peacock tender engines and were rebuilt at Wolverhampton between 1878-85. They had an 8' 0" + 8' 3" wheelbase and 5' 0" driving wheels later increased with thicker tyres to 5' 2". They were numbered as 322-7 and had double frames. No.325 received pannier tanks in August 1918 followed by 326 in November 1919 and 327 in October 1920. Nos.322/3 had to wait until April 1925 and February 1925 respectively. No.324 remained a saddle tank and was withdrawn in April 1921. The class worked principally in the Midlands but particularly at Stourbridge. No.326 was taken out of service in October 1928 and the others followed between 1930-2.

**645 class** Built at Wolverhampton with a 7' 3" + 8' 3" wheelbase and 4' 6" wheels later increased to 4' 7½". Nos.645-56 were built between 1871/2, Nos.757-75 were built in 1872-3; nos.1501-60 came out in the years 1878-80 and nos.1901-12 in 1881. No.655 was sold to the Carmarthen & Cardigan Railway in May 1876 and 767 was sold to the South Wales Mineral Railway in June 1875. Nos. 648/52/63/772/1515/44/56/59 remained as saddle tanks while the rest of the class received pannier tanks between July 1913 and September 1930. Most of the class lasted into the 1930s and nos.1537/2/8/42 came under B.R. ownership. No.1542 was lettered British Railways in GWR Style and lasted until February 1952. They had inside frames.

**655 class** Another Wolverhampton design very similar to the 645 class with the same wheelbase of 7' 3" + 8' 3" and 4' 6" wheels increased at a later date to 4' 7½". Nos.655/767 were reused numbers following disposal of two from the 645 class as noted above. They were built along with 1741-50/71-90 between 1892-94 followed by nos.2701-20 in 1896/7. These engines worked in the Northern Division during their early years then after 1923 moved to Central Wales, Weymouth and Southern Depots. Pannier tanks were fitted to all but 1778 between 1912 and 1930. Withdrawals began in October 1928 with saddle tank 1778 then three more were scrapped in March/April 1929. Four were withdrawn in 1939 but reinstated and three of these including eighteen others passed into BR ownership with twelve lasting until 1950. One loco, no.1741, was sold to Amalgamated Anthracite Collieries Ltd., Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen in January 1939 and at a later date transferred to Cefn Coed Colliery, Crynant where it lay derelict for some time. It was finally scrapped in 1953.



*119 class no.123 at Newport on 10th October 1926.*



*322 class no.327 which started life as a 0-6-0 tender locomotive and seen here late in its life with a P class boiler and pannier tanks.*



*645 class no.759 at Stafford Road Works, Wolverhampton on 8th September 1935.  
C F H Oldham / Lens of Sutton*



*Very similar 655 class no.2716 at Stafford Road Works, Wolverhampton on 3rd August 1935.  
H F Wheeler collection*



*1813 class no. 1850 whilst not the first of the class to receive pannier tanks was one of the first to get full length tanks fitted in May 1910.*

**1813 class.** Built at Swindon in 1883-4 under William Dean, they had a 7' 3" + 8' 3" wheelbase and 4' 6" wheels increased to 4' 7½" with thicker tyres. They were numbered 1813-32 and 1834-53. Strangely for a new class, no.1813 was sold to the Pembroke & Tenby Railway in June 1883 becoming no.7 *Holmwood*. At this time it had side tanks but it returned to the GWR in July 1896 and was fitted with saddle tanks as did all but two of the class within 5 years apart from no.1851 which received saddle tanks in April 1909. However No.1850 reverted to side tanks. Meanwhile no.1813 *Holmwood* received short pannier tanks in July 1903 followed by nos.1814 and 1823 in November 1905. From May 1906 to April 1927 the rest of the class were fitted with pannier tanks apart from no.1829 which retained its saddle tanks and most of the class had enlarged bunkers from 1924. Several locos were fitted with enclosed cabs and nos.1826/7 were fitted with an early form of Audible Signalling Apparatus in April 1918 and nos.1816-22/3/4/8/31/5/9/41/4/6-51/3 received the later A.T.C. in 1930/31. Most of the class were at work in the Southern Division with only no.1824 in the

North by 1921 and 1842 later. Withdrawals started in May 1928 with no.1842 with most going in the 1930s. Six made it to the end of World War II and only no.1835 became part of BR stock but was withdrawn in January 1949. In their final form they looked like the 655 class.

**1661 class.** Built at Swindon these were another Dean design constructed during 1886-7 with 7' 9" and 8' 0" wheelbase and 5' 0" wheels which were later increased to 5' 2". They had double frames and numbered 1661-1700. Thirty-one of the class received pannier tanks between November 1910 and August 1926. Four of the class, all saddle tanks, were withdrawn in 1911 and eight were sold to Welsh railway companies in 1906 but returned to GWR in 1922. They were somewhat misfits with inadequate steam braking and were involved in several accidents including one involving No.1661 in which the driver and fireman died. Apart from the four early saddle tank withdrawals and No. 1677 in March 1915, all survived into the 1920/30s. The last to go was No.1685 in October 1934.

*1661 class no. 1673 with open cab, Churchward style bunker and flush rivetted tanks.*



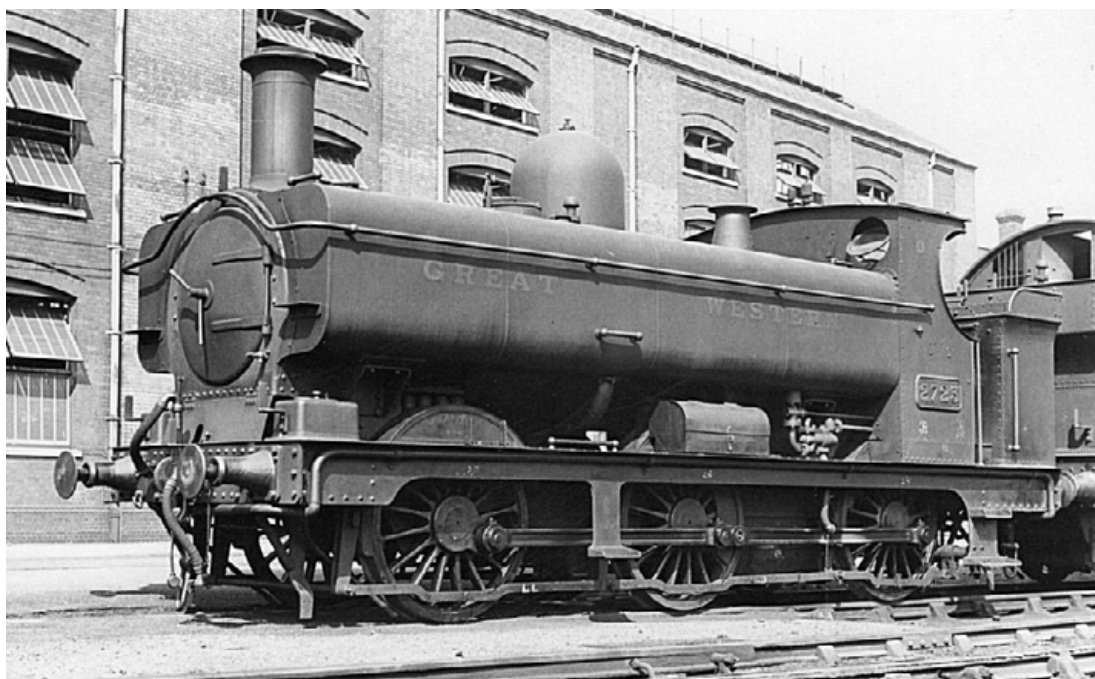
1854 class no.1891  
at Cardiff Canton  
MPD on 19th June  
1949.

R S Carpenter  
collection



**1854 class.** Built at Swindon Works between 1890-5. They had a wheelbase of 7' 3" + 8' 3" and wheels of 4' 7½" after initially having 4' 6" wheels. Numbers were as follows in order of construction. Nos. 1854-93,1701-40, 1751-70, 1791-1800,1894-1900, 905-7. Apart from No.1879 the entire class were fitted with pannier tanks starting with no.1868 which is understood to have received them as early as May 1905, then no.864 in November 1909. The rest followed from 1910 to August 1932. Withdrawals started in 1928 when five went including the only saddle tank. Another was withdrawn in November 1929 then a few more in the 1930s. However ten of the class withdrawn in 1939 were reinstated and lasted out the war. No.1795 was again withdrawn on 8th March 1947 then reinstated for shunting the Swindon Factory on 15th June 1947 but withdrawn a third time on 26th June 1947. A total of twenty-three locos entered BR stock in 1948 but all were gone by the end of 1950 except no.1861 which lasted until November 1951. Note should be made of no.1729 which was badly damaged by enemy action on 3-9-1942 and cut up a month later.

**2721 class.** These were built between 1897-1901 at Swindon and had the now standard 7' 3" + 8' 3" wheelbase with 4' 7½" wheels. They carried the nos.2721 to 2800. They were very similar to the 1854 class only differing in having coil springs above the axleboxes instead of laminated springs beneath them. The coupling rods were also fluted. No.2800 was renumbered 2700 in December 1912. The original number then passed onto the first of Churchward's 2-8-0 goods locos. The entire class received pannier tanks over a period from May 1909 to June 1933. However no.2796 received short panniers from March 1904 until May 1909 when presumably it was fitted with standard full length type. The entire class lasted into the 1940s and forty-four entered BR stock. Four engines withdrawn from October 1946 to 2-8-1947 were reinstated for shunting Swindon Factory. Three lasted two months in this service but no.2735 was withdrawn after only 2 weeks. No.2794, withdrawn in November 1949, was sold to Lilleshall Co. Shropshire in October 1950 and was scrapped in September 1958. The rest had gone by 1950.



2721 class no.2723  
outside Swindon Works on  
7th September 1935. It  
has flush rather than snap  
head rivets on the tanks.

Part 2 next time will cover  
the small wheeled  
panniers and those  
absorbed locomotives  
which were fitted with  
pannier tanks.

# MY FIRST OVERSEAS TRIP

Chris Waite



I was very much a late starter in venturing outside Great Britain and my first trip was not to a popular destination, unless you happen to be a steam enthusiast – East Germany.

It all began on the ‘Lord Bishop’ railtour from London to Appleby in late September 1978. This was one of two tours organised in memory of the late Eric Treacy, renowned railway photographer. On the return journey, I found myself sitting next to Mike (no, not our esteemed editor), who at the time was living in Windsor, for a dining car meal that started north of Settle and did not end until we were south of Rugby. The reason for this protracted dinner was that the battery in the dining car was flat and meal service had to be suspended every time the train stopped. The evening was capped when a trainee waiter decided to overload the tray of dirty dishes and glasses so he couldn’t really see where he was going and promptly tripped on the connection between the dining and kitchen cars sending the whole lot flying – still, it cut down on the washing up!

Anyway, after this adventure, Mike and I became firm friends - a friendship which has now lasted almost 45 years – and the following spring I was persuaded to go on my first overseas tour. So, on a Friday evening in early June, I, along with about 40 others, assembled at Liverpool Street for the relief boat train to Harwich (10 coaches hauled by 31129) and then an overnight ferry to Hook of Holland, where I took my first photograph on mainland Europe – NS (Netherlands) class 1100 Bo-Bo electric No.1146, built by Alstom in 1952. This was to haul our train via Rotterdam and Utrecht to Hengelo, where the train divided, and 1951-built sister loco 1120 took over for the short hop to the German border, where it, in turn, was replaced by DB (West German) class 110 Bo-Bo electric 110 450 (built by Krauss-Maffei in 1967).

The train proceeded via Osnabrück (time for a photo of a DB ‘Warship’ class 220 diesel hydraulic) and Hannover to Helmstedt, where DR ‘Ludmilla’ Co-Co diesel electric 132 493, built in 1977 at what was then known as Voroshilovgrad (later Luhansk), took over. After Helmstedt the train crossed into East

*NS trains awaiting ferry passengers at Hoek van Holland on Saturday 2nd June 1979. On the left is the familiar shape of an ex-BR EM2 Co-Co 1506 (Gorton/1954, the former 27002 Aurora), with Train D215, the 08:34 to Innsbruck and 2,030kw Bo-Bo 1146 (Alstom/1952) with Train D231, the 08:28 to Berlin/Bad Harzburg/København.*

*All photographs by the author.*

Germany (DDR) and called at the village of Marienborn before running non-stop to Berlin Zoo (West Berlin). The purpose of the Marienborn stop was to allow anyone entering the DDR, but not going via Berlin, to alight. We were bound for Rostock, almost on the Baltic coast, so we changed onto a local train to Magdeburg hauled by a DR class 110, not an electric, but a B-B diesel hydraulic (later DB class 201), built at Henningsdorf, Germany. From Magdeburg, it was a D-Zug (old-style German express) to Rostock, with 1974-built ‘Ludmilla’ 132 160.

It was on this train that I noticed that, while every station was bedecked with flags in celebration of the DDR’s 30th anniversary, there was no water, soap or loo roll in any of the carriages, such were the joys of the ‘people’s paradise’. To make matters worse, 132 160 failed at Butzow, to be replaced after a 25-minute delay by B-B diesel hydraulic 118 329 - another ‘Warship’ lookalike. So, some 4 hours after leaving Magdeburg and more than 24 hours of travelling overall, our weary group reached Rostock, where we spent the night.

On Sunday morning, another 1974 product, 110 691 headed the train as we set off for Bad Doberan and transferred to now well-known 900mm gauge ‘Bingerbahn’ to Ostseebad Kühlungsborn behind 2-8-2T 99 2322, built by Orenstein & Koppel in 1932. Here I discovered the delights of a ‘Schwarze Johanna’ – a very indulgent blackcurrant ice cream concoction. I was surprised to find this, as food had hitherto been very basic, but I learned later that Kühlungsborn was a popular destination for Communist party members to take their families on holiday. After a couple of hours by the sea, it was back to Bad Doberan, this time with 99 2321, to photograph the street running.

Before the next narrow gauge train arrived, we noticed that standard gauge 2-10-0 50 0066 (BMAG of 1941) was making up a goods train nearby and ascertained that it would soon be heading westwards, so a photo of the departure was taken.

I always found it odd the way the different 'Iron Curtain' countries took to railway enthusiasts. In Poland, getting a cab ride was easy, but taking photographs could result in unwanted attention from the police. In the DDR, however, cab rides were almost impossible, but by 1979 photography was generally no problem.

Our time at Bad Doberan concluded with 99 2322 arriving with the 14:32 from Kühlungsborn and 50 0046 (Borsig 1940) departing with the 16.19 Personenzug (local passenger) from Rostock to Wismar.

The original plan had been that on reaching Rostock we should take a fast train to Stralsund and spend the night there as the next day was to be spent on the island of Rügen. The request to stay in Stralsund was, however refused – the authorities seemed to regard it as failure if they didn't say 'no' at some point – so Monday morning found us bleary-eyed on the 06:30 all stations from Rostock to Stralsund with 110 124 and then on the 09:00 from there to Putbus, which was again 110 124 to Bergen and 110 129 thereafter.

At Putbus we had a long wait before travelling on the 11.40 to Göhren behind 99.4801, a 750mm gauge 2-8-0T built by Henschel in 1938. We returned behind the same locomotive on the 14.39 to Putbus, before transferring to the 16.09 to Stralsund, with 110 129 to Bergen and then 110 766.

On arrival, we had time to photograph 3-cyl Class 03.0 4-6-2s on expresses to and from Berlin and one of the rare Class 142 Co-Co diesel-electrics. These were a sort of 'Super-Ludmilla', with a 2,940kw power unit. Just six were built in 1977-78 before it was decided that the lines on which they were intended to be used would be electrified. 118 136 later took us back to Rostock.

Tuesday began with a more civilised start time of 08:42, yet again to Stralsund, this time double-headed by 110 221 and 110 652. Here we had an hour before taking a D-Zug to Pasewalk with 132 279. At the time, Pasewalk shed was host to a number of Class 50 2-10-0s, some of which were duly photographed before we boarded the 13:43 to Angermünde with 132 245.



We had almost 3 hours at Angermünde to photograph a succession of steam-hauled freights, mainly with Class 50, but also 3-cyl 2-10-0s 44 0256 (Borsig/42) and 44 0592 (SACM (Alsace)/43).

Our journey continued to Berlin Lichtenberg with Pasewalk-allocated 4-6-2 01 0504 on the 13-coach D917, 14:01 Barth to Dresden. 01 0504 had originally been 01 224, a Henschel product of 1938, but was substantially rebuilt at Meiningen in 1962. The train departed Angermünde some 17 minutes late, but an enthusiastic crew reduced the deficit to just 9 mins by Lichtenberg, with a top speed of 116km/h. We remained on board to Berlin Schönefeld, where 2 of the DR's answer to the Trans Europ Express, high-speed 4/5-car dhmus 175 014/5 (built Görlitz c.1967) were seen forming the 'Karlex' service from Karlovy Vary (formerly Carlsbad) to Berlin.

We then continued to Magdeburg on two diesel-hauled all station trains, finally arriving shortly before 11pm.

Wednesday was a day when everything went pear-shaped, though, as we shall see, every cloud has a silver lining.

We had originally been offered a free day for 'sightseeing' in Magdeburg prior to leaving late afternoon to Leipzig, where we were to spend the next night. Before leaving the UK, however, it had been agreed that we could instead travel to Lutherstadt Wittenberg to see the 2-cyl class 03.2 4-6-2s, but that morning,



**Above** DR 1,472kw B-B diesel hydraulic 118.119 (LKM 275106/1965) at Rostock Hbf on 3rd June 1979.

**Left** DR 900mm 2-8-2T 99.2321 (OK 12400/1932) with Train 14139, the 10:04 Ostseebad Kühlungsborn to Bad Doberan, crossing 99.2322 (Orenstein & Koppel 12401/1932) with the 10:05 Bad Doberan to Ostseebad Kühlungsborn at Heiligendamm on 3rd June 1979.



*DR 2-10-0 50.0066  
(BMAG 11624/1941)  
departing Bad Doberan  
with a westbound freight  
on 3rd June 1979.*

while taking photographs at Magdeburg Hbf, we learned that these had ceased work at the end of the winter timetable, some 10 days earlier. Lengthy negotiations with the German guides allocated to the group ensued. It was decided that we'd go to Leipzig, deposit our luggage and then go via Zwickau to Glauchau, where the last few 58.3 3-cyl 2-10-0s were still working.

Our D-train to Leipzig arrived late from the north behind a diesel, which was replaced by 211 064 (later DB 109 064), a Henningsdorf-built Bo-Bo electric of 1974. We departed some 25 minutes late, but suffered numerous signal checks so that the deficit had increased to 65 minutes by Leipzig, where we arrived with minutes to spare before departure of the train to Zwickau, behind 211 032.

By the time we reached Glauchau, it was already after 3pm and

in just under 3 hours all we saw were light engine movements. So, after a frustrating day, we boarded D906, a Dresden to Erfurt express, hauled by 132 142 and bound, or so we hoped, for Gera, where we'd see some 01.5 4-6-2s before continuing to Leipzig. It was not to be.

Up to this point, the weather throughout the trip had been mainly sunny and hot, though increasingly sultry. We had got only as far as Meerane, just 10km from Glauchau, when the train ground to a halt. A few moments and the train guard advised that an approaching thunderstorm had damaged the signalling equipment and it would be at least an hour before the train would be on the move.

At this point we noticed that, about 100 yards away, 58 3047 was simmering in the goods yard at the end of a short freight. Much to our surprise, permission was given for a few of us to get down



*DR 900mm gauge 2-8-2T  
99.2322 (Orenstein &  
Koppel 12401/1932) with  
Train 14147, the 14:32  
from Ostseebad Kühlun-  
gsborn, departing Stadt-  
mitte, Bad Doberan on  
3rd June 1979.*

*DR narrow gauge 143 C diesel hydraulic 199.301 (LKM 263001/1966) with a train of timber waits at Eisfelder Talmühle for the arrival of 2-10-2T 99.0244 (LKM 134021/1956) with Train 14403, the 09:35 Wernigerode to Nordhausen on 7th June 1979.*



and walk over for a closer look. The storm was getting ever nearer and the friendly crew invited us into the cab. We stayed there for some considerable time before panic set in. D906 was moving and we were still on 58 3047!

We need not have worried. The driver of D906 was simply drawing up so that our carriage was as near as possible to 58 3047, thus minimising the length of our walk in the rain!

We didn't get to Gera that day. The onward connection would have been long gone, so instead we alighted at Gössnitz and took an electrically-hauled local train from there to Leipzig.

Thursday dawned gloomy and the weather remained so all day. The plan was to travel to Wernigerode, make a single trip over what is now the Harzquerbahn to Nordhausen and return to Leipzig via Sangerhausen. Thus, we found ourselves on the 06:58 Eilzug (semi-fast) from Leipzig with 132 343. This gave an advertised 6-minute connection into the 09:35 from Wernigerode to Nordhausen, but we arrived 6 minutes late. Fortunately, common sense prevailed and the 09:35 was held to make the connection and we departed about 5 minutes late behind narrow gauge 2-10-2T 99 0244 (built 1956 in the former O&K works at Babelberg). The journey to Nordhausen in the rain and mist was unremarkable and we arrived in sufficient time to make our connection to Sangerhausen behind 132 017.

The original intention had been to spend most of the afternoon at Sangerhausen photographing freights, which were both hauled and banked by Class 44 2-10-0s, but in view of the gloomy weather we stayed only 90 minutes before taking an all-stations P-zug to Halle, connecting there on to a similar train to Leipzig. The earlier return to Leipzig meant there was time for a bonus - a return trip to Gera, the outward journey of which, on the 17:51 Eilzug, was booked for steam. The performance of 4-6-2 01 0524, rebuilt in 1964 from 01 129 (Henschel/35), was not quite up to that of 01 0504 two days earlier, but with a top speed of 102 km/h, time was more or less kept and, after the tribulations of the previous day, we were content when we boarded the diesel-hauled 19:20 back from Gera to Leipzig.

The schedule for Friday was to take an early train to Saalfeld and spend most of the day there before heading for Erfurt, where our last night would be spent. It was with some relief, therefore, that we woke to find a sunny morning.

The day began on the 07:31 from Leipzig behind 118 179. Although this was an Eilzug, it continued over the border to Nürnberg and was a lengthy train formed of DB (West German) stock, which meant soap, paper towels and water! It was also very well filled, mainly with elderly people, presumably visiting relatives in West Germany for the weekend - East German pensioners were permitted to travel to the West provided they took no more than 10DM with them.

Arrival at Saalfeld was slightly late at about 10:20 and over the next 90 minutes I recorded 17 steam movements of three classes - class 01 4-6-2, class 44 2-10-0 and class 95 2-10-2T. The last mentioned was a class of 45 locomotives built between 1922 and 1924 by both Borsig and Hanomag and were based on a Prussian design.

We then had a shed visit, followed by a break for lunch. It was then decided to travel on the 14:22 departure behind 95 0043. This train was advertised as going to Eisfeld, but at the time engineering work meant that it was a replacement bus service between Gräfenenthal and Ernstthal. In any event, Westerners were not supposed to travel beyond Marktgölitz (21km from Saalfeld).

We returned to Saalfeld on the 15:35 from Marktgölitz, again with 95 0043 and saw another 14 steam movements in 75 minutes after arrival. Departure was on the 17:51 all stations P-zug to Weisenfels, formed of six 6-wheelers, hauled rather incongruously by 01 0521, a 1964 rebuild of 01 144 (Krupp of 1935). We took that train as far as Göschwitz and continued from there electrically-hauled to Erfurt. By the end of the day, we had seen 28 locomotives in steam or serviceable - 12 x Class 01.5, 13 x Class 44 and 3 x Class 95, plus 5 stored locs: 2-8-2s 39 1060 & 41 1130, 2-10-0s 44 1270 (coal-fired) & 58 3014 and 2-8-4T 65 1049.

The start of Saturday was not my finest hour. After dinner on the Friday night, most of the group, sensibly, headed upstairs for a good night's sleep. Mike and I, however, were persuaded to linger for a drink with our German guides. What harm could there be in an extra beer? Unfortunately, it was not just the one and there followed several vodkas - you can guess the consequences and to this day I've not been able to stomach vodka, even in small doses.

*DR 2-10-0 No.50.0034 (BMAG 11858/1942), one of the legendary Kriegsloks, and 736kw B-B diesel hydraulic No.110.416 (LEW 12925/1971) at Angermünde on 5th June 1979.*



*DR 3-cyl 2-10-0 44.0256 (Borsig 15242/42) pauses at Angermünde with a southbound freight as 2-cyl 2-10-0 50.0019 (BMAG 11931/1942) departs with Train 15112, the 14:30 to Schwedt, at Angermünde on 5th June 1979.*

*One of the famous Class 01 Pacifics, 01.0521 (Krupp 1427/1935) with Train 4006, the 17:51 to Weiffenfels, at Saalfeld on 8th June 1979.*







*DB 2,200hp B-B diesel hydraulic 220.051 (Krauss Maffei 18295/1957) at Osnabrück Hbf on 2nd June 1979.*

*These, of course, formed the basis of the Western Region's 'Warship' class.*

*Another DB modern classic: 7,780kw Co-Co No.103.105 (Krauss Maffei 19465/1970) departing from Köln Hbf on 10th June 1979*



To make matters worse, when I got up on the Saturday morning I couldn't remember where I'd put my passport and thought I must have left it in the hotel bar, which, by this time, had been locked. So, with the rest of the group waiting to depart, the hotel manager was roused and the bar was searched, to no avail. Eventually someone asked me where I usually kept the passport and, sure enough, there it was in my jacket pocket. Needless to say, when I wasn't catching up on much needed sleep, I kept a low profile for the rest of the day!

With my delay, it was as well that we did not have a train to catch, but some of the morning's activities could not reasonably have been done by train, so we travelled by hired coach. Our first destination was Blankenheim, just east of Sangerhausen, to photograph the class 44-hauled freights that we'd missed on Thursday. From there we would go to Alexisbad, for what is now the Selketalbahn. Unlike now, this was an entirely separate operation from the Harzquerbahn, using narrow gauge Class 99.59xx 0-4-4-0 Mallet tanks and the unique 2-6-2T 99 6001 (Krupp, 1939). We rode behind the latter, on the 11:45 to Gernrode, and stayed there to see 99.5904 (Jung, 1901) arrive 45 minutes later. We then took a class 110-hauled standard gauge train to Quedlinburg and changed there for Halberstadt, where the depot had not long before been allocated 2 unrebuilt class 01.2 4-6-2s, but, sadly, we were to discover that these were already out of regular use.

The DR frequently converted its steam locos from coal to oil-firing and back again, depending on fuel costs. Up to this point all the sg steam we saw had been oil-fired, but around Halberstadt locally-produced steam coal was available, so here they used coal-fired class 50.35 2-10-0s.

To conclude the day, we took a diesel-hauled train to Güsten and changed there for Magdeburg, where we had ample time before boarding D440 overnight to Köln (Cologne) via Oebisfelde, Hannover, Bielefeld and Hagen.

On the Sunday morning we had almost 3 hours in Cologne (time for photos of modern West German electrics) before boarding train D224, the 'Wien-Oostende Express', for Ostend, which departed behind electric 110 145 (built Henschel 1958), replaced at Aachen by SNCB (Belgian) Bo-Bo 2225 (built La Brugeoise 1954), with assistance up the hill out of Aachen from DB B-B diesel hydraulic 215 011.

I didn't note the name of the ferry from Ostend to Dover, but the tour concluded with the usual boat train rake of 3 x 4-CEP emus to London Victoria, on this occasion Nos.7178/22/92.

Looking back more than 40 years later, the tour would seem to have been exhausting and I don't think I'd now want to undertake something similar, but I must have enjoyed it as I signed up for numerous later tours across five continents – I was hooked!

# TICKETS PLEASE!

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

Martin Stoolman



*Flooding by the River Exe at Cowley Bridge Junction outside Exeter. The line to the left is the Barnstaple branch whilst the inflatable booms are an effort to keep the worst of the water out of the signalling equipment..*

*Photo: Network Rail*

In October 2000 I was celebrating the end of Year One as a Guard on First Great Western. We were now Train Managers as opposed to Senior Conductors, with more responsibilities and a slightly enhanced rate of pay. I had a steady career to look forward to. Or did I? Through the Autumn of 2000 the railways were in meltdown following the tragic derailment at Hatfield caused by “Gauge Corner Cracking” - or, to put it another way, the completely irresponsible lack of basic maintenance by Railtrack. But it wasn't just the track that they hadn't been maintaining; the lineside too had been pretty much left to its fate. Wet weather was highlighting all the blocked drains and culverts, and so flooding of the line was common. Temporary speed restrictions were everywhere, and the timetable became a work of fiction. Emergency schedules were introduced and passenger numbers plummeted. Would the country be prepared to fund the huge backlog of maintenance that was going to be necessary to put all this right? These were truly dark times, with the whole future of the railways in serious doubt.

In mid November travel by rail out of the West Country was fraught with problems, but at least the main line through Cowley Bridge Junction, just east of Exeter, re-opened on the 11th following a two week closure caused by flood damage. All trains were having to go via Swindon though, the direct route being closed, and the average time from Exeter to Paddington was about three and a half hours - an hour longer than it should have been. It was rough for the passengers, and it was rough for the on board staff too; doing overtime had virtually become normal. All the temporary speed restrictions were trying

the patience of some drivers, and my log of a journey on Wednesday 15th November is slightly hair raising. The train was the 18:03 Paddington to Penzance, routed this evening via Swindon, Trowbridge and Westbury. My driver had made it very clear to me in the mess room at Paddington that he wasn't going to be hanging about as he was desperate to get back to watch a football match, and he didn't want me delaying things either. He wouldn't have been best pleased therefore when we left Reading 4 minutes late due to me having problems with one of our HST's doors! We then suffered further delays awaiting passage through the single line section via Melksham, and so were 27 minutes down approaching Westbury. If I said that arrival time at Exeter was just 1 minute in arrears you will realise just how determined that driver was to see his football match! Whether he got a “please explain” when he next booked on for duty I know not.... There were no on train recording devices in those days.

I hesitate to say that this sort of thing was very much the exception, and almost every train I worked during this period was late, even by the revised schedules. Travelling by train was therefore only to be done by the truly determined. Fair play then to Peter Mandelson, the then Northern Ireland Secretary, who was on board my 06:34 Penzance to Paddington with his various aides on Wednesday 22nd November 2000. We left Exeter four minutes late at 09:42 and pulled into Paddington seven

minutes late at 13:17, actually not too bad for those troubled times. However Railtrack's deficiencies were not the only thing that caused delays, as FGW could also come to the party by substituting a locomotive hauled set for an HST. My train back from Paddington that same day, the 14:15 Paddington to Plymouth, was one such. My log book shows we had green signals all the way, but still lost 19 minutes to Bristol; it would have been the HSTs behind us that were getting all the yellows and reds! However 47846 managed to claw back 6 of those minutes to Exeter, a good (and possibly even legal!) effort.

But just as things looked like they were starting to get a little better the Autumn weather decided it wasn't done with us quite yet, and for me Thursday 7th December was going to be a day to forget. The direct Berks & Hants route via Newbury had at least finally reopened, albeit with extended journey times, but the line between Plymouth and Newton Abbot was shut this morning to allow Railtrack to replace many of the deficient rails on this stretch. That meant that, after booking on at 11:05, I first had to work an HST set down to Newton Abbot which was then booked to form the 12:30 back to Exeter and through to Paddington. All weekday trains were supposed to have a Customer Host operating the buffet with another looking after First Class. Today's first bit of bad news was that the rostered crew were stuck in Plymouth, the wrong side of the line closure, and therefore there was to be no catering whatsoever throughout to London. But my new grade of Train Manager meant that I was supposed to do everything I could to provide a catering service in such situations, and, with no stops between Taunton and Reading and a 1 hour 44 minute time allowance between these two points, this was a perfect opportunity to put my catering skills to the test. So I abandoned ticket checking and opened the buffet. Whilst I had attempted to staff a buffet before (see my previous article) this was the first time I had tried to do it while juggling my Train Manager role at the same time. We had all been put through a Health and Hygiene course, and I was pretty good at making teas and coffees, but beyond that I really didn't have a clue. I well remember having lots of bacon baps stacked in the fridge behind me and a customer coming up and asking for one. I recall looking at this bacon bap, looking at the microwave, and then being struck with horror as I realised I had no clue how long this thing was meant to be cooked for. There was no helpful writing on the packet either. I have no idea how I got out of that; I certainly wouldn't have attempted to serve it, and I guess the customer was not happy. Now I come to think of it, I was lucky that he or she didn't demand to see the Train Manager - now that would have been an interesting conversation!

But if that was all I had to worry about on this particular shift then I should have thanked my lucky stars. Rather, it was a fact that there were no stars of any description out that night, only a lot of heavy rain. It had already started as senior driver Andy Snowdon and me, with an HST set and a goodly load of passengers, set out from Paddington on the *Golden Hind*, the 18:03 to Penzance. The signaller was clearly unaware of this train's status or more likely didn't care. He didn't let us out until 18:07 and then kept us behind a 90 mph Turbo unit through to Reading, from where we departed 12 minutes late, next stop Taunton – or so we thought. In deteriorating weather conditions we

were halted on the approaches to Castle Cary where the preceding stopping service was being held. Eventually we were allowed into the platform under caution and had to wait there while that aforementioned service “examined the line” due to reports of flooding at Athelney, between Somerton and Taunton on the Somerset Levels. Sure enough it was found that flood water had already reached the top of the rails so the line there was closed. The obvious thing to do instead was to take the diversionary route via Yeovil and Honiton (the former London & South Western route) but it was quickly discovered that this was also closed due to flooding at Pinhoe near Exeter. The only option left was to reverse to Westbury and then proceed via Trowbridge, Bath and Bristol – a very long way round. We were already just under an hour late when we finally got going, only to have to make an emergency passenger stop at Bristol Temple Meads to pick up further stranded customers who were trying to make it through to stations further west. On walking through the train I quickly discovered that they were not the only people we had picked up. “Is this train not stopping at Didcot?” enquired a gentleman who, it transpired, had already boarded a train at Reading, fallen asleep, and found himself at Bristol! O dear, definitely not his night.

We were almost exactly two hours late by the time we pulled into Taunton... but it was not all over. Our starting signal was firmly at red, and it soon became known that there had been reports of flooding in the Norton Fitzwarren area, and once again the train in front was in the process of examining the line. The track was indeed flooded but it was eventually decided to allow us through at caution (something that probably wouldn't happen nowadays); I believe this was on the basis that if we did not get going soon, known troublesome rivers further on such as the Culm and the Exe would burst their banks and we would never get through. Eventually we pulled into Exeter St David's at 23:15, precisely 163 minutes late. I had completed a 12 hour 10 minute shift, breaking the rules of “Hidden” (established after the Clapham disaster of 1988 laying down that safety critical rail workers must not work more than 12 hours). I therefore had to complete some paperwork, but at least I could then go home. It was far worse for the passengers on my train wishing to continue to Newton Abbot, Plymouth and beyond; there had been a landslip on the sea wall stretch and the train was terminated where it stood. Road transport was arranged, but goodness knows at what time in the early hours anyone for Truro or Penzance finally got home. And as for our poor chap trying to get to Didcot, let's hope he made it back before midnight, although any supper that might have been made for him would have long since been consigned to the bin I have no doubt!

Sadly the banks of the River Exe did eventually burst that night, and once again, for the second time in less than a month, the main line through Cowley Bridge Junction was closed for the foreseeable future. The main problem for the engineers here wasn't just ballast getting washed away from under the tracks and having to be replaced – that is relatively easy to rectify. It was the damage to the expensive signalling equipment that was the real show stopper, all of which had to be renewed yet again. Many months later the electrical wires were raised up on stilts so it is now much more resilient; it was a shame that the engi-

neers did not think of doing that in the first place when the outdated but robust mechanical signalling was replaced back in 1985.

So for the next ten days it was a case of us Exeter staff being conveyed in taxis to and from Taunton in order to work trains for London that were starting and finishing there. But of course Control seemed to forget that it takes a taxi a lot longer to get between these two points than it does a train! Therefore, on Wednesday 13th December, senior driver Richard Westlake and I probably did well to start our 07:42 to Paddington only 9 minutes late from Taunton. We then had to be stopped and cautioned for more flooding at Athelney, but we were allowed through this time, only to then hit over-hanging tree branches on the approach to Castle Cary. The good news however was that, by then, the many speed restrictions caused by cracked rails were gradually being lifted, although the emergency schedules remained in place. This gave us plenty of recovery time, so, although departure from Castle Cary was 17 minutes late, we made up 8 minutes on to Westbury. We then had to proceed at a snail's pace along a stretch between there and Pewsey due to two

minor landslips having been reported, but despite all of the above we were only 10 minutes late into Paddington.

So was there now light at the end of the tunnel? There was. The main line through Cowley Bridge reopened on Monday 18th December in time for the lead up to Christmas, and gradually more of those speed restrictions were lifted as schedules slowly returned to something approaching normal. Prior to the mayhem, we had been enjoying some years when line closures due to planned engineering works were almost unheard of, but in the background the network was gradually falling apart unnoticed. Reality had arrived, and now the Government had to pay up in order to deal with the huge backlog. But nobody in those dark days could have foreseen the huge rise in passenger numbers that was about to begin, despite everything that had gone on. I would have many more incidents and accidents to deal with in my career, often, ironically, involving over-crowding! But the future of the railways was now rosy, and my career was assured.

*To be continued...*



*An up HST service comes out of the sunset at Ruscombe chased by a 165 on 31st October 1997.*

*Photo: Mike Walker*