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December 2024



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Tickets Please - Part 11

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: Ex Corris Railway No. 4 Edward Thomas crossing the viaduct at Dolgoch Falls. August 2024.

Photo: John Tigg. Article page 4.

Bottom: No 1 Talyllyn arrives at abergynolwyn. August 2024

Photo: John Tigg. Article page 4.

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.

Thursday 19 December **STEAM VARIETY IN NORTHERN CHINA** Peter Robins

Starting with a 1988 visit which covered from Nancha in the North East to Lanzhou in the North West, the show includes loco construction at Datong and Tangshan as well as the older JF/RM/SL classes at work. Later visits made between 1992 and 2004 include various industrial locations on both standard and narrow gauge including Anshan steelworks, Chengde and Hunjiang as well as mainline action at Zhongwei on the edge of the Gobi Desert, Yebaishou and the spectacular JingPeng Pass.

Thursday 16 January **DIDCOT RAILWAY CENTRE - DEVELOPMENTS** Alan Price

Barry Scrapyard - Where are they now? Alan, of the Great Western Society, will take us through a 4 part journey detailing how the locomotives were rescued from Barry Scrap Yard to Didcot Railway Centre.

Thursday 20 February **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and INDIA ~ Part 1** Peter Robins

Following formal business of the Annual General Meeting, Peter will take us to India which was always a wonderful but slightly frustrating country that was full of surprises - some good some not so. From five visits made between 1981 and 1996, both presentations include a variety of steam classes at work on broad and metre gauge and on a number of the charming narrow gauge lines at various locations. Industrial lines also feature as does steam over the border in Pakistan.

Thursday 20 March **50 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHING RAILWAYS** Charles Roberts

Charles Roberts has been taking photographs of railways since 1973. In this presentation he looks back on the last half century of camera work, from an inauspicious start, through his early trainspotting days and subsequent travels throughout Britain and beyond. The talk features some of his favourite railway images and recurring theme, as well as examples of simply being in the right place at the right time. Stories of running the gauntlet of shed masters, guard dogs, armed security staff and border officials to get elusive pictures also feature.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Well, here we are almost at the end of another year. It seems the old adage of time passing quicker the older one becomes is true. It only seems like yesterday that we were celebrating last Christmas.

It has been another successful year for the Society. Membership has remained around the 100 mark which is very encouraging and attendance at meetings continues to be good although it remains frustrating that many who live close to, or even in Bourne End, choose to attend on Zoom rather than attend the community centre in person.

We have had an excellent and varied programme of speakers this year ranging from reports on progress on one of our new-build locomotives - the LMS Patriot in January - through to a look at the delights of Pendon in October which opened many eyes. We welcomed back some 'regulars' such as Geoff Plumb (February) and Richard Crane who took us on a tour of Home Counties branches (May). A highlight was the March visit of Brian Arman who finally completed his Broad Gauge journey from Paddington to Penzance - the only regret being there's no more to look forward to! From within our own ranks, Tim Speechley (June) and Martin Stoolman (August) gave us excellent presentations.

One of the highlights of the year was our visits to GWR's Driver Training Academy in Reading. Over three full days, nearly thirty members took the opportunity to try their hand driving a Hitachi IET on the simulator, finding it's not as easy as it looks.

Once again, our sincere thanks to our friends at GWR for giving their valuable time and allowing our use of this expensive asset. It was thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part.

One of those who took part was Dave Woodhead, our former webmaster, on his last outing before his sad passing a couple of weeks later. Dave had been pivotal in dragging us into the digital world and he is much missed.

The year also saw the passing of a great friend of the Society, David Buck who had made us so welcome at his private railway in Fifield on several occasions. We had been looking forward to another visit but, sadly, that was not to be.

My thanks to all of you who have provided photographs and material for both the '*Donkey*' and the newsletters. Please keep them coming.

Personally, I find I'm increasingly disinterested in the modern scene these days. It might be efficient but I find the scene too standardised and, frankly, boring. That's why I've been getting increasingly involved in modelling in past couple of years. It was good to see so many members at the exhibitions I've taken Helland Wharf to.

All that remains is to wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year and we hope we can look forward to your continuing support in 2025.

Mike Walker

SOCIETY NEWS

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

In September Mike Dodd presented the curiously titled 'Biscuit Tin Discoveries' Mike uncovered a biscuit tin a while ago, containing Black & White negatives of all shapes and sizes, including several glass plates. These negatives were part of the collection of the late Frank Saunders and ranged from the 1940's through to the 1960's both in the UK and Europe. The show showcased some of the images found in that biscuit tin and we were able to solve some of the mysteries

October was something different as we welcomed Chris Webber from the Pendon Museum Trust to talk about this amazing model which was founded 70 years ago by Roye England, an Australian who came to live here in the 1930s and fell in love with the Vale of the White Horse, Pendon has set out to preserve this rural idyll in miniature. In addition to recalling the back story, Chris explained how the highly detailed models are created.

November was also a little different in that it was not illustrated. Mike Romans recalled incidents from his long career in operations on the old Western Region and then Eurostar reminding us how different things used to be when the railway seemed to be run on alcohol! We were pleased to see our President in attendance although what he made of those 'different times' can only be imagined.

PENDON VISIT

Following the interest generated by the October meeting, we are planning to visit Pendon sometime in the new year probably on a Saturday afternoon.

We hope to choose an occasion when John Ahern's classic Madder Valley Railway is being operated but Pendon is currently shut for its annual winter hibernation and no dates have yet appeared on their website.

Once they do, we will select a date and publicise it in the newsletter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions become due for renewal in January. The good news is that Peter Robins has decided that once again a revision is not required. The rate will therefore be 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.

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.

RCTS MEETINGS

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

Monday 27th January

Railways during the Second World War - Robin Mathams

Monday 24th February

Eurostar: Where do we go from here - Chris McCandless-Stone

Monday 24th March

Gems of the H C Casserley Archive - Robert Freeman

Monday 28th April

East Anglian Railways in the 2020s - Iain Scotchman

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

The Marlow, Maidenhead & District Model Railway Club will once again be holding their annual exhibition which is on Saturday 11th January from 10:00 to 17:00. Adults £6 Children 5-14 £3 (under5's free) Family 2 adults+2 or more Children £15 and the location is the Cox Green Community Centre, details as above.

DONKEY CONTRIBUTIONS

Your Editor currently has a number of articles sitting in the 'Pending' folder awaiting publication in the next couple of issues but, as always, I'm open to offers of additional material. 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.

PLATE REPLACEMENT

As some of you might know, the identification plate on the Bourne End to Marlow Train Staff went missing some years ago when it used to sit in the open ground frame.

The Society is now arranging for a replacement to be made.

GREAT WESTERN WEEKEND

JOHN TIGG

It was only while editing the photographs of my August Bank holiday weekend in mid-Wales that I suddenly realized each place visited had a Great Western historic connection.

My original plan was to visit the Rheidol Steam Festival over two days, visiting their new museum and see guest loco *Palmerston*, from the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland, in action on the Vale of Rheidol. Spend the first day at Aberystwyth and travel the line and the second going lineside. And on the way home drop into the Talyllyn to hopefully see the three newly overhauled engines since my last visit in early 2023. However, on closer examination of local maps it is very difficult to

lineside the VoR and so plan two evolved. Scanning an Events Page I discovered the Bala Lake Railway was holding a Steam Gala and checking the Talyllyn website I found that two of the three locos I wanted to see there were rostered for the Monday.

Living in Bedfordshire an early Sunday morning run up the M1, M6 and M54 then A5 dual carriageway gets me to Shrewsbury in a little over 2 hours and from there are a number of different routes either due west via Welshpool or north along the A5.

So where did I go and what did I see?

Llangollen & Corwen Railway

Stopping in the car park at Corwen gave me the opportunity to see the finished station, with its canopy now completed, on the embankment above the car park. Unfortunately too early for the site to be open but what a wonderful job viewed from down below as seen here.



Bala Lake Railway August Steam Gala.

Twice a day during the gala a 'Three Train Crossing' of Quarry Hunslets at Llangower loop was scheduled. Whilst the journey from home had been sunny and dry it started to rain in Corwen and by the time I arrived at Llangower the rain was torrential blowing off the lake. The 'modus operandi' for the three train crossing was as follows: the first service train of the day passes through the loop and continues to Bala followed 30 minutes later by a slate goods which pulls forward into the loop. The service train returns from Bala into the opposite loop. The slate goods then pulls

forward and shunts into the opposite loop behind the ex-Bala service train. The second service train then passes through the loop on to Bala and the first service train leaves to return to Llanuwchllyn. The loco from the slate goods then runs around its train and 20 minutes later leaves for Llanuwchllyn.

But on the Sunday morning things didn't quite go to plan.

On arrival at Llangower with the first service train, *Velinheli* (also spelt historically as 'Felinheli') the recently overhauled guest loco from Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland arrived with the driver-concerned that there were steaming



Velinheli struggling back into the loop at Llangower some 20 minutes late.

concerned that there were steaming problems. However, it departed nearly 10 minutes late and some 20 minutes later the slate goods hauled by *Holy War* arrived in the loop stopping at the north end to await the return of *Velinheli* from Bala. The second service train, double-headed by *Winifred* and *Alice*, arrived on time but alas no sign of *Velinheli* from Bala. Whilst there are radio communications between Llanuwchllyn and Llangower there are none between Llangower and Bala. After a tense 20 minute wait *Velinheli* appeared at the start of the loop obviously struggling. There then took place numerous discussions between Control, the Llangower blocksman and the various drivers and guards as to the best action to address the issue which culminated in the decision to remove *Winifred* from the Bala bound train to pilot *Velinheli* back to Llanuwchllyn departing over 30 minutes down. *Holy War* then ran round its train and after pulling forward in the loop left just over 10 minutes late.



Alice departs Llangower with *Winifred* now double-heading *Velinheli* and *Holy War* with slate goods behind in opposite loop.

GWR 2-6-2 Rheidol Tanks – No.7 in unlined GWR Green livery and No.8 in unlined BR Black with early 'Lion over Wheel' emblem and 'Llywelyn' nameplate.



Vale of Rheidol – Rheidol Steam Gala

After a spirited dash from Bala to Aberystwyth on arrival a change of plan. To travel by road to Devil's Bridge, instead of by the train, to photograph *Palmerston* climbing through the cutting and into the station from the bridge above.

Since my last visit in 2019 the station buildings and carriage shed have been built finishing the platform side of the station and more spectacularly the transformation of the 1938 built standard gauge loco shed into a fine museum building.

With a full timetable of services arriving and departing the station my time until after the departure of *Palmerston* on its late afternoon journey to Devil's Bridge was spent between the museum and photographing the departures and arrivals. The ex-GWR 2-6-2 Rheidol Tanks – No.7 in GWR unlined Green and No.8 in nostalgic unlined BR Black carrying its *Llywelyn* nameplate with early 'Lion over Wheel' emblem, 1927 Hanomag NGG13 2-6-2+2-6-2 Garratt No.60 *Drakensberg* and

obviously *Palmerston* hauling a three-coach rake on local shuttles before its final full line excursion. This is not the first time *Palmerston* has worked on the VoR having been hired to cover a motive power shortage in 1912, 1913, 1914 and again in 1920, 1921 and 1922. On this occasion the VoR had offered to undertake the locomotive's 10 year overhaul in exchange for it spending time on the railway until after the Gala Weekend

Outside the museum Quarry Hunslet *Margaret* was giving driver experience rides towards the carriage shed, whilst on display were the remains of rare locomotive Gwalior Pacific No.762, which in due course is planned to be overhauled for use on the VoR.



Palmerston running around its train with the museum in the background.

In the main museum currently on display are:

GWR Standard Gauge 4-4-0 'Dukedog' 9017 *Earl of Berkeley*.

Padarn Railway 4ft gauge 1848 0-4-0 *Fire Queen* and coach.

Rheidol Tank No 1213 in unlined Great Western livery.

Arn Jung 600mm 1908 0-6-2WT with 4 Wheel Tender *Graf Schwerin-Lowitz*.

Maffei 597mm 1906 0-8-0T ex-Brigadelok with Henschel & Blom auxiliary Bogie Tender.

Couilliet 600mm 1895 0-6-0T *Sabero* ex-Hulleras de Sabero and HdeS Directors Coach.

Dick Kerr 1' 11 1/2" 1918 0-6-0 Petrol Electric locomotive.

De Winton 1' 11 1/2" 1897 0-4-0VB *Pendyffryn* ex-Pen-Yr-Orsedd Slate Quarry.

Isle of Man 1909 'Pairs' Carriage F.68.

VoR Cattlewagon 38089 in grey with GW markings.

Ford Model T from the late Adrian Shooter's Beeches Light Railway.

Many exhibits on display are from the late Peter Rampton's 'Collection X' and only recently been seen in public.



Great Western 4-4-0 Dukedog 9017 Earl of Berkeley in the new museum formerly the standard gauge 1938 loco shed.

Palmerston climbing the cutting into Devil's Bridge station.

Another spirited dash to watch *Palmerston* climb through the rock cutting into Devils Bridge station and then photograph the train departing back to Aberystwyth. Meanwhile in the yard *Wren* was giving driver experience rides up and down the short length of track in the car park.



Talyllyn Railway

Since my last visit, a photo charter in early 2023, No.1 *Talyllyn* in striking psuedo Great Eastern Blue livery, No.2 *Dolgoch* in Indian Red and most recently No.4 *Edward Thomas* minus nameplates in lined Grey have returned from overhaul. Whilst it would have been nice to see all three only *Talyllyn* and were rostered for Bank Holiday Monday.

During late morning and early afternoon I visited Abergynolwyn, Tywyn and Dolgoch including overlooking the viaduct to photograph not only *Talyllyn* and *Edward Thomas* but *Sir Haydn* and *Tom Rolt*. Also in the rakes of carriages were two of the new coaches built by the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway.



No.1 Talyllyn in striking psuedo Great Eastern Blue livery, arrives at Abergynolwyn.



No.4 Edward Thomas currently nameless and in lined grey livery awaits departure from Tywyn Wharf.

No.4 Edward Thomas crossing the viaduct at Dolgoch Falls on its way to Abergynolwyn.



Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway

Another spirited drive from Abergynolwyn to Llanfair Caereinion for the departure of the last train of the day. Due to leave Llanfair at 15:45 the train finally departed at 16:00 after *The Earl* shunted one coach off the rake and paid a visit to the ashpit. Apparently the Polish coal they are using is creating excessive ash necessitating the ashpit visit after each trip as well as creating a lot of dark smoke (great for some photos). Shortly after departure of the service train, Mitsubishi diesel DL-34, on initial 3 year hire from the Alishan Forest Railway, came off-shed and departed towards Welshpool.

Following the train, I drove to the layby next to Sylfaen halt and watched the its smoky progress up to and through the halt and on to Sylfaen bank and finally to Welshpool where *The Earl* watered and ran around its train before departing (smokily) back to Llanfair Caereinion.



Talyllyn No.6 Tom Rolt calls at Dolgoch.



Alishan Forest Railway Mitsubishi diesel DL-34 on shed at Llanfair Caereinion.

822 The Earl running around its train at Welshpool.



822 The Earl approaching Sylfaen Halt.



So for those who haven't already worked out the Great Western connections:

- Llangollen & Corwen Railway – resurrected standard gauge on the trackbed of the GW Ruabon to Barmouth line.
- Bala Lake Railway – narrow gauge built on the trackbed also of the GW Ruabon to Barmouth line.
- Vale of Rheidol – former Great Western narrow gauge line.
- Talyllyn Railway – No.3 *Sir Haydn* and No.4 *Edward Thomas* both ex Corris Railway former Great Western locos.
- Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway – former Great Western narrow gauge line.

A GLIMPSE OF SWITZERLAND

In July this year **David Allen** made a very enjoyable (but expensive!) visit to Switzerland using a Swissrail pass to get around.

On 17th July Widmer Rail Services 4e4 430 112 heads a train of tanks through Montreux station which will probably pause at the extensive Lausanne Triage yard. WRS is a relatively new company that operates open-access freight trains and hires locomotives and personnel to other operators. The locomotive was originally a Swiss Federal Railways Re4/4 II.



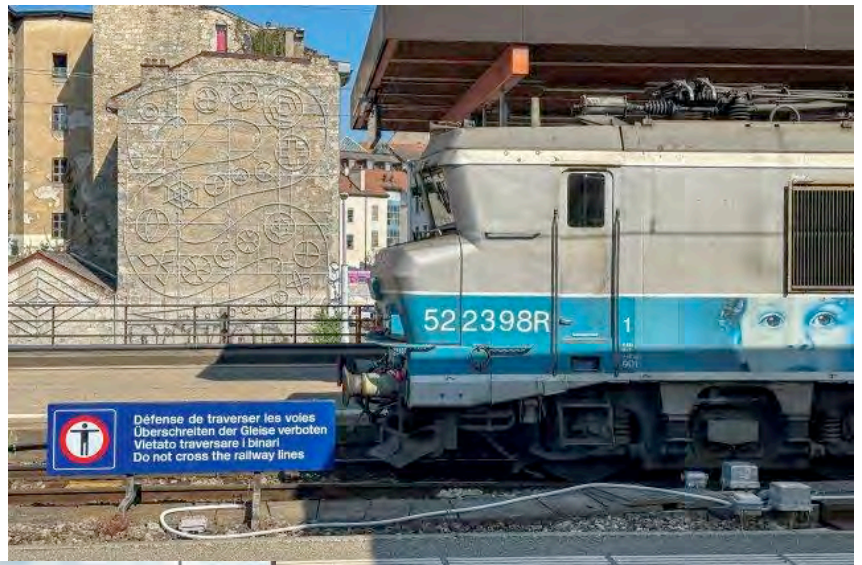
A young lady purchases her ticket as the 11:02 Zwiesimmen to Montreux GoldenPass Panoramic service approaches Allieres on 17th July 2024. The power unit is MOB 9201 which is from Stadler and built in 2016.

The Montreux Oberland Bahn operates 75km of metre gauge lines from Montreux to Zweisimmen and a branch from the latter to Lenk.

The 13:50 Montreux to Zwiesimmen GoldenPass Panoramic service enters Gstaad formed of the same stock on the same day.



On 20th July 2024, SNCF 522398R after arriving at Geneva Cornavin station propelling the 07:08 service from Lyon Part Dieu.



The west end of Interlaken Ost station on 21st July 2024. On the left, the Berne Lötschberg Simplon 14:08 GoldenPass Panoramic departure to Zwiesimmen and (right) the 14:00 Swiss Federal service for Romanshorn. Both locos are 4e 460 (Lok 2000).

On 23rd July 2024, Transports publics genevois (tpg) tram No 1836 leaves Cornavin (alongside main station) on a route 15 from Nations to Ziplo. The pedal bikes are very much part of the Geneva scene!



The *Savoie* is one of eight paddle boats operated by Compagnie Generale de Navigation sur le Lac Lemman (CGN) on Lake Geneva. Five, including the 1914 *Savoie* remain steam driven. This view shows it leaving Geneva Jardin Anglais on 23rd July 2024 forming the 12:35 to Yvoire (France).

MY NEXT OVERSEAS ADVENTURE

Chris Waite



Chris concludes his travels in India startig at Vadodara.

Saturday 12th January

We rose early and visited the broad gauge shed (4WP, 16 WG, 4 AWD/CWD) before making our way to the 2'6" line at Pratapnagar, where first we saw P class 4-6-0 No.606, one of 4, all built by WB, 2 in 1929 and 2 in 1949, and then joined 215 Down 'Fast Passenger' to Dabhoi, behind ZB 2-6-2 No.63 (Bagnall 1952).

The first 2 ZBs were built by Bagnall in 1928, followed by 2 more (1 Bagnall, 1 Hanomag) in 1932. No more followed until 1951 with 8 from Corpet Louvet, then another 10 from Bagnall and 15 from Krauss-Maffei in 1952. Finally in 1959 Đuro Đaković built 12, 6 for the Western/South Eastern Railways and 6 for the Kosi Irrigation Project.

The journey to Dabhoi took just over 90 minutes and the friendly crew of No.63 were happy for us to join them on the footplate, two at a time.

Dabhoi was the junction of several ng lines and had two 2-8-4Ts as station pilots: B class No.0557 and C class No.560. There were 6 Bs, built by Hudswell Clarke from 1910 to 1912 and 3 Cs, built by Kerr Stuart in 1921. Within an hour or so of our arrival, 3 ZB arrived or departed.

It was then time to visit what, at the time, was reputed to be the busiest narrow gauge shed in the world. On the day of our visit there were 16 locos present - 12 ZB, 1 B, 2 C and 1 P.

There was a lull in traffic around midday, allowing time for a stroll around this busy and fascinating town, before returning to the station, where loco No.1, the sole Hanomag ZB, rolled in with a freight. We then departed on 200 Up Mixed, the 13:33 to Jambusar, headed by ZB No.74 (Corpet Louvet 1952) for the 90-minute trip back to Pratapnagar.

We photographed the departure of 200 Up from Pratapnagar and were then persuaded by our taxi driver that, on our way to Vadodara Junction, about 7 km away, we should visit the Laxmi Vilas Palace, complete with crocodile pit.

WCG-1 2,600hp C-C No.20030 a typically-Swiss 'crocodile' built in 1928 by SLM at Winterthur, works no. 3200, on an ecs working. A later batch of these locos was built by Vulcan Foundry.

All photographs by the author.

We left Vadodara at 17:35, aboard broad gauge 15 Down *Saurashtra Express* for the 2-hour run to Ahmedabad. There, after a 2 hour wait, we joined the through Bhavnagar carriage conveyed on metre gauge 24 Down *Somnath Mail* as far as Dhola Junction.

Sunday 13th January

At Dhola, the carriage was detached, shunted and an hour later attached to 30 Down Fast Passenger, which reached Bhavnagar on time at 06:55.

Bhavnagar was a junction between the mg line from the north-west and a 2'6" gauge line than ran southwards along the coast to Mahuva. It was one of the very few locations for which permission to visit the depot had been refused.

The first sight seen after arrival was a group of seemingly transvestite men on the end of the platform, beyond whom was mixed gauge PTS 4-6-4T No.956, built by Vulcan Foundry in 1949 and similar to the PT 4-6-4T that we had seen in Lucknow, the 'S' simply designating that it was originally on the Saurashtra Railway. This was shunting an industrial siding and had the words 'Gun Master' painted on the cylinder covers. We gathered from this that the siding led to a munitions factory and assumed that this could be the reason for the refusal. We eventually got a photograph of this loco, but not till after the men had dispersed – they were most keen that they should not be photographed!

The station pilot was the very last of the 264 YL 2-6-2s to be built - No.5112 (Mavag 1957). The first 10 YLs were RSH products of 1952. In 1956 over 200 were built, by Henschel and Hitachi, with 40 from Mavag in 1957.

With an American-inspired body design and looking maybe a little reminiscent of the prototype 'Deltic', WCM-2 a 3,120hp Co-Co No.20181 (Vulcan Foundry E103/English Electric 2315 of 1956).



Nearby, 2'6" gauge W class 0-6-0 No.585, one of 20 built by Bagnall from 1912 to 1938, was on an metre gauge wagon being shunted by HPS 4-6-0 No.31648, a Hanomag product of 1930, one of 20 such locos built for the Saurashtra Railway from 1912 to 1947 by four builders, the others being North British - 16, Bagnall - 2 and Hunslet - 1. 31648 had spent several years on the North Eastern Railway and had only recently returned to its original patch.

Although we didn't have permission, we decided to see if the local shedmaster was in a good mood. When we got to the gate, the security guard, who barely spoke English, was just about able to convey to us that at that time on a Sunday (it was around 08:00), there was nobody in authority there. Based on his virtual lack of spoken English, we guessed he couldn't read written English, so decided to try it on and producing our permit for other depots, which was on official note paper, we persuaded him to let us enter the shed.

A member of the Railway Protection Force, complete with khaki uniform and rifle, accompanied us and made sure we did not enter or photograph the workshops, which contained 2 more PTSs and 2 of the 3 OJ 4-4-0s, built by Bagnall in 1943 for the Jaipur State Railway, but we encountered no difficulty in viewing and photographing the locomotives on shed, which included two 2'6" gauge W class locos, the sole WS (the last of the Ws built and the only one to be superheated) and 23 metre gauge locos - 6 YG, 9 YP, 2YL, 3 PTS, 1 HPS, 1 PS 4-6-0 - No.31147 (WB/1937)) and 1 NS 4-6-0 - No.31099. The PS and NS were also ex-Saurashtra locos, 15 PS were built from 1907 onwards, 31147 being the last, while just 4 NS were built, all by NW, 2 in 1934 and 2 in 1936. The one disappointment, though, was that there was no sign of the 4 non-standard N1S 4-6-2s, built for Saurashtra by Bagnall in 1948.

We departed Bhavnagar at 12:15 on 21 Up *Bhavnagar Mail*, hauled by YP No.2199 (Krauss Maffei/1954). This train conveyed 7 bogies, all 2nd class, apart from a brake composite that had just two 1st class compartments both of which had been marked as reserved for us. When our tickets were checked, the guard was adamant that these compartments were for our exclusive use.

The first important stop on the journey was at Dhola Junction, where we arrived, most unusually for India, 7 minutes early. www.mdrs.org.uk

This meant that we had 15 minutes for a quick look at the shed, which was adjacent to the station. There were just 8 locos here - 2YP; one of the very early 1909 batch of HPS (No.31087); three of the ex-Assam YD/1 2-8-0s, Nos.30298-300, built by Vulcan Foundry in 1927 and similar to a YD, but with a narrower boiler and 16"x24", rather than the normal 17"x24" cylinders and 2 of the N1S Pacifics that we'd missed at Bhavnagar - Nos.962/3.

The next significant stop was Botad Junction. We had again arrived 7 min early, despite a 3-minute late start. This again gave time for a quick shed visit - 5 YP, 2YG, 1YL and 2 WD, one of which was from the small batch built by Davenport. Returning to the train all was not well. YP 2199 had been detached. There was also a kerfuffle on the platform. Two smartly dressed Indian couples had bought 1st class tickets and were not happy to find that the only 1st class compartments were fully reserved.

After some discussion we agreed to share one of the compartments. This was, however, not the end of the matter. It was a hot day (by British standards) and we had turned the fans on. This did not go down well with the two ladies, who were wearing saris. There was no compromise this time, we were not going to give up part of our reserved accommodation and then swelter.

With nothing to entertain us other than the station pilot, another of the NS 4-6-0s, and a paper-chewing goat, we had waited more than an hour before YP 2335 (Tata/1957) backed onto the front of our train. We chatted with the loco crew, who said that we'd be welcome to join them on the footplate.

The crew were keen to make up time, but we were brought to a stand by signals on four separate occasions. It was during one of these, while we were on the footplate, that a large betel leaf containing a white substance was passed among the driver and two firemen. We were asked if we wanted some. Not being sure, we enquired as to what it was. The reply was "we think you call it 'speed'". We declined.

It transpired that, apart from an hour's break, they had been on duty since the small hours and they reckoned it was the only way to keep alert!

Arrival at Ahmedabad was 46 minutes late, helped by a very generous 26-minute allowance for the last 6km from Sabarmati.



Monday 14th January

After a night in a hotel, we arrived at Ahmedabad station and noted a WP and a WG on bg trains and a WD and two YBs shunting on the metre gauge lines before joining what would be our 'home' for the next 23 hours – WR metre gauge 2 Down *Delhi Mail*, due to leave at 08:35. This train had an air-conditioned bogie, except that it was not entirely air-conditioned. At either end were a couple of 'ordinary' 1st class compartments, the air-conditioned section was in the middle and consisted of a bed/sitting room for 6 people, a two-berth coupé and an attendant's compartment. It was built pre-1955 and internally it was wood-panelled.

The 12th January was spent on the Western Railway 2'6" gauge line between Pratapnagar (Vadodara) and Dabhoi. Greeting us on arrival at Dabhoi were:

C class 2-8-4T No.560 (Kerr Stuart, 1921) on shunting duties [Above] and slightly smaller B class 2-8-4T No.0557 (Hudswell Clarke, 1912) [Below].

Twelve months later, the B & C classes were all noted out of use, though some Cs returned to service by early 1982, possibly because the intended replacements, the much smaller W 0-6-2s, were not powerful enough.



After travelling for 90 minutes, the first major stop was at Mahesana, where the station pilot was B2 4-6-0 No.31036, one of 11 such locos built by Bagnall for the Gaekwar's Baroda State Railway (GBSR) between 1948 to 1951. The shed here was just north of the station and, from the carriage window, we noted 7 YD, 4 YB, 4 YP 1 B, 1 B1 and 2 more B2. The B and B1 were predecessors of the B2, built by Bagnall for the GBSR, there were 6 of the former and just 3 of the latter.

Around lunchtime, our attendant asked if we'd like tea and biscuits. Generally speaking we'd found that Indian biscuits were rather dry and very sweet, so we asked if we could have cake instead. He didn't have any, but when we got to Abu Road station, 4 minutes early and with a scheduled 20-minute stop, he invited me to follow him. We walked out of the station, down a road, through a market and, after almost 10 minutes, arrived at a shop which sold cakes. How he knew it was there, I've no idea. Anyway, with cakes duly purchased, we went back to the train.

Back at the station, we were told that departure would be a few minutes late, giving time for a look at the adjacent depot with 5YP, 4YD, 1 YG and Nos.32001/3 - 2 of the 5 GR 2-8-0s, built by Bagnall in 1934 for the Rajasthan Railway's 'Ghat' (mountain pass) section between Marwar Junction and Mavli. These had recently been displaced from such duties by YGs.

The afternoon passed quietly, but shortly after 5pm, we arrived at Marwar. Here were 3YG, 1 YP and another B2, but also G1 4-6-0 No.127 and G2 4-6-0 No.308. 23 G1s and 9 G2s were built at Ajmer between 1924 and 1930.

Three hours later, we arrived at the next significant stop. This was Ajmer, where we were due to wait for 20 minutes. I had read that Ajmer depot, which was alongside the station, was home to several unusual locomotives, so, although it was dark and there was no permit, I decided to go and have a look. The rest of the party stayed on the train.

I'd got about half-way round, when I heard a long hoot from a diesel locomotive. This was the indication that a train was about to depart. Although I was sure our train was not yet scheduled to

leave, I decided I'd better abort the clandestine depot visit and get back to the station.

Initially, I was relieved to see that the hoot had come from a train going in the opposite direction, but it was between me and our train and, as was customary, was departing at little more than walking pace. When about 10 of the 20 bogies had passed me, there was another hoot. This time it was from our train and there wasn't time to run along the nearest platform and get to the footbridge, which was at the far end.

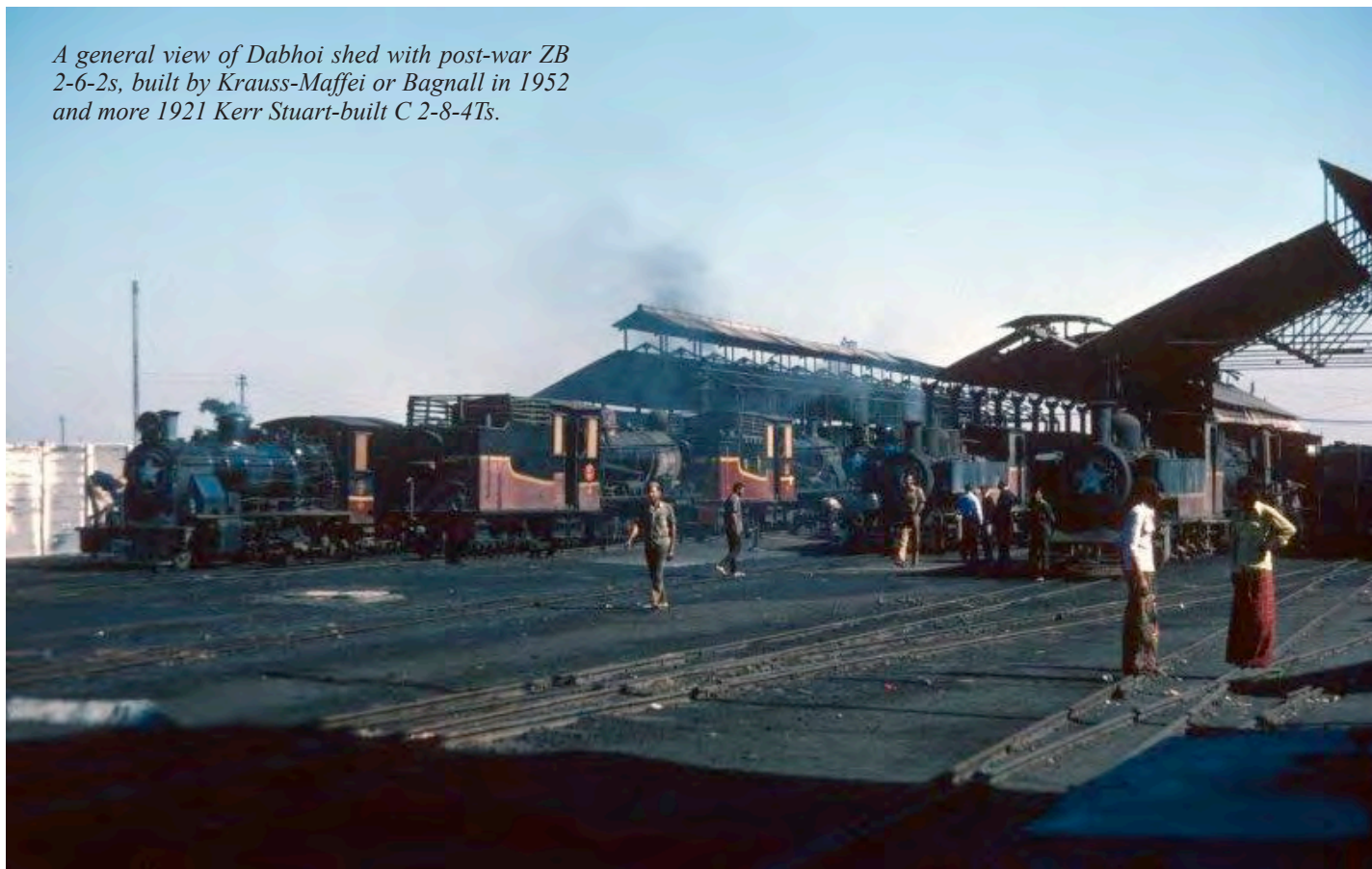
It seemed to take an age for the remaining 10 coaches of the other train to pass, but when it had done so, I could see that 2 Down was still there, so I scampered across the tracks. I'd just got to the slope on the end of the platform when, to my horror, it started to move. At first, I was going faster than the train, but as I got to the rear bogie it began to outpace me, so I grabbed the handrails of the rear door, which, as was normal practice, had been bolted from the inside. I banged on the door and, fortunately, was heard by a fellow passenger, who, when he had got over the surprise of finding a European clinging to the outside of the train, let me in.

About 15 seconds later, the train ground to a halt with the rear half of the train still in the long platform. I looked out and there was some consternation among the station staff. I saw this as my opportunity, so I jumped off and ran along the platform till I got to our bogie. Once aboard, I learned that the reason for the sudden stop was that one of my companions, realising I was missing, had pulled the emergency cord and, to make matters worse, the wooden beading above the cord had fallen off.

I assumed that there would now be big trouble. One member of our party was, however, a carriage and wagon engineer and, when nobody was looking, or so he thought, he reached out and re-set the cock that indicated that the cord had been pulled, so that when the guard came to check, it was back in the normal position.

A few minutes passed and the train started to move again. Then the attendant, who had witnessed the entire event, appeared

A general view of Dabhoi shed with post-war ZB 2-6-2s, built by Krauss-Maffei or Bagnall in 1952 and more 1921 Kerr Stuart-built C 2-8-4Ts.





The level crossing at the eastern end of Dabhoi Junction station with bullock carts and even a dromedary.

saying ‘Of course, I saw nothing, but I think I will be getting a very good tip in the morning’ – and so he did!

Was it all worth it? Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time and apart from 6 YP, 1 YG, and 1 WD, I did see 2 GR 2-8-0s, 2 more G2s, and 11 locos from 5 classes that we’d not otherwise seen: 1 of the 3 BR 4-6-0s (Bagnall 1949), 4 of the 6 ex-Jodhpur Railway MJ 4-6-0s (Hunslet 1939) and 6 locos from the old BBCIR - 4 D2 4-6-4Ts built at Ajmer 1928/9; 1 G 4-6-0 (Ajmer 1922) and 1 YF 2-6-2 (Krupp 1930).

Tuesday 15th January

This was our penultimate day in India. We arrived at Delhi some 40 minutes late, shortly after 08:00. After checking into a hotel, there were two aims for the day. The first was a visit to the Indian National Railway Museum and the second was to see if we could get 2 footplate passes for the following day, when we would be travelling to and from Agra on the WP-hauled *Taj Express*. We ascertained that to do this we would need to go to the Ministry of Railways offices.

The visit to the museum, which was, and presumably still is, very well laid out, took place around lunchtime and it was mid-afternoon when we got to the Railway Ministry. Obtaining the passes was relatively straightforward but it

There always seems to be something special about a locomotive bearing the No.1. This is one of just 4 pre-war ZB 2-6-2s and the only one built by Hanomag (in 1932) arriving at Dabhoi from the Samlaya direction with a lengthy freight. In 2022, the tall structure in the distance to the right of the signal still stood, but everything else had changed. The line is now broad gauge and electrified.



took some time for the necessary paperwork to be prepared. We would, however, be obliged to sign letters of indemnity and, for these, we would have to go to the NR offices. On getting there, however, we were told that we had been misinformed and that we would instead need to see the stationmaster at New Delhi station.

So, it was back in a taxi and off to the station. By this time it was 5pm. The stationmaster was most accommodating, but could not find the appropriate indemnity form for us to sign. Not to worry, the appropriate wording was in the manual, which he produced. The only problem now was that his secretary, who had gone home for the day, had locked her typewriter in a cupboard and taken the key.

Eventually a young assistant was summoned. We were to follow him. He led us out of the station and into the nearby open-air market. There he found a public letter writer, who had two typewriters – one for Hindi script, the other the normal qwerty keyboard. Despite having got the typewriter, the letter writer couldn't read English so we were invited to sit on a wooden box, which had formerly contained oranges, and type out our indemnity forms.

Job completed, we were led back to the station, where we signed the forms, which were then approved by the stationmaster.

Wednesday 16th January

An early start – 80 Up *Taj Express* was due to leave at 07:15 and we wanted to be in good time. There at the platform was the train with a resplendent WP. Five of the party boarded the A-C class coach, another of the pre-1955 vehicles, while the two of us who had obtained passes introduced ourselves to the charming Driver Singh, who welcomed us aboard WP/1 No.7733, one of the last batch, built at Chittaranjan in 1966.

Apparently, the drivers of the *Taj Express* had their own assigned locomotives, the cabs of which were adorned by a

plethora of brass artefacts. Driver Singh's regular locomotive, No.7713, had been in works, but had returned and he was in process of transferring the brasswork back from No.7733, which evidently was the spare. He was therefore most apologetic that the display was not up to his usual standard. It nonetheless looked impressive.

Departure was 3 minutes late and although speed never exceeded 93km/h and the stop at Mathura was extended while attention was given to the motion, arrival at Agra was 2 minutes early.

We did not have a permit for Agra, but after we had taken photos of the footplate crew at the station, we were invited to travel with them to the depot, which held the usual broad gauge mix of WP, WG, WL and CWD.

The rest of the day was spent visiting the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort, before returning on 79 Down with WP/1 No.7656 (Chittaranjan 1965). Although we did not have a footplate pass for this journey, Driver Mehta and his crew were most keen that we should join them, so we took it in turns to do so.

Once back at New Delhi, we just had time to bid farewell to the crew before gathering our bags for the taxi to the airport and another Boeing 747-200 forming BA 018, the 02:10 flight home. It is perhaps ironic that, during my three weeks in India, I didn't once get an attack of 'Delhi belly' - that waited until I got back to Heathrow. Whether it was the chicken served on 79 Down on its way from Agra or the airline meal, I shall never know.

In those three weeks, despite having nothing confirmed before leaving the UK, I saw more than 850 steam locos, from 56 different classes, plus 4 sub-classes - something I would never equal on subsequent tours anywhere. This did not include the museum locos.

I returned to India two years later and included Pakistan and the Khyber Pass line, but that trip was planned earlier and so was far less of an adventure.



P class 4-6-0 606 built by Bagnall in 1949 on station pilot duties at Pratapnagar.

TICKETS PLEASE!

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

Martin Stoolman



For many passengers the only time that they usually interact with the train's guard is when he or she comes through the train and checks their ticket. Indeed some will be under the impression that this is all we do, and I hope these articles have already dispelled that particular notion among the readership of this publication at least! Indeed the fact that it has taken me a dozen articles to finally get round to highlighting this aspect of the job rather proves the point I think.

Guards/Train Managers/Conductors, call them what you will, are not of course the only on board railway employees who check tickets. In common with most other train companies, Great Western employs a team of revenue protection inspectors. They can usually be distinguished from us guards because they will always give your ticket close inspection and ask you for your railcard (where appropriate). They play strictly by the rules too, by which I mean if you have no ticket and no "reasonable" excuse, you can expect to be charged the full Open Single fare for the journey along with a penalty fare if appropriate. They have the power to issue Unpaid Fare Notices if nothing is forthcoming. Nowadays they can also be distinguished by the fact that they wear "body cams" so footage of the conversation with the customer can be recorded. These were just coming in about the time I retired. They were resisted at first until it was realised that they were there not to check up on the employee (although the company no doubt sees that as a useful bi-product); more they help to prevent abusive behaviour from the passenger and assist in "proving" wrong-doing in any prosecution case.

It is not that us guards lack these same powers; we don't, and in fact I did issue quite a few UFNs in my career. However our other duties make it difficult to carry the process through. Basically you have to be reasonably sure that an interruption is not going to come along during the conversation, as if you leave the miscreant while you attend to a station for example, you can bet

First Great Western 43024 leads the 06:15 Paddington to Paignton along the Exe Estuary near Starcross on a glorious 15th September 1999, just a couple of months before Martin started work at FGW. The trailing power car, 43191, is still in the original Great Western Trains livery.

Photo: David Mitchell

your life that said person will no longer be in his/her seat when you return to complete the paperwork! On the other hand a Revenue Protection Inspector is able to focus entirely on that exchange and see it through to its conclusion, even if it means alighting with the passenger at that person's intended stop (or even at an unintended stop!).

Like them or loathe them, ticket gates have revolutionised the attitudes of the travelling public towards the need to purchase a ticket before you board. Looking back to when I first started, it is incredible to think that all stations on the First Great Western system were open, including Paddington, Reading and Bristol. The newly privatised companies saw customer relations as all-important, and we were positively discouraged from upsetting customers (who were no longer to be called passengers) by being "nasty" to them if they didn't have a ticket. We were simply told to sell them what they wanted. Also we were down to just one on board ticket inspector for the whole of the West of England, and he was only in that job because they couldn't make him a Guard due to him being colour blind. The result was of course that people increasingly got wise, and simply went straight to their trains, only buying a ticket if asked. Honest people questioned why they should buy a ticket in advance when they didn't see staff actively pursuing passengers who had not bothered.

For us, the task of checking tickets became one of trying to sell as many tickets as possible to the people who didn't have them, but of course the more people we had to sell to, the more others went unchecked. There is only so much time between when a

journey starts and a journey finishes. But we didn't mind... in those early days we were getting 5% commission on all tickets we sold, so we weren't doing too badly especially on full fare trains such as the 05:55 Exeter St David's to Paddington. As for the rail companies, it gradually began to dawn on them that their fluffy attitude towards the "customers" was costing them a fortune in lost revenue. And so began the long process of reversing the process....

The speed with which we were able to sell tickets back then was also hampered by the clunky ticket machines of those days. Named "Sportis" they were big and heavy, and were only capable of selling a fairly limited range of tickets. Thus if somebody wanted a ticket, let's say from St James Park (Exeter) to Chelmsford via London, completing the transaction would involve a long walk back to the guard's van in order to retrieve the National Fares Manual, a heavy tome running to several hundred pages. Even then such a fare might not be there, and one had to commence the process of adding several fares together in order to come up with what was hoped was the correct fare!

Eventually along came "Avantix", a machine that had virtually all the fares in it, so at last the railway could dispense with the printed fares manual - one less thing for us Guards to have to lug around! However with progress, inevitably comes increased complexity, and whereas the old Sportis machines were cumbersome, they were reliable; the new machines not so much. Finally in the Summer of 2017 I was introduced to the delights of "Star Mobile", a very clever machine which could give travel information as well as issue every ticket under the sun - and detect "dodgy" debit and credit cards too. The only trouble was it relied on a decent mobile signal (not something that is prevalent along the Berks & Hants route to the West Country). Also it consisted of a separate ticket machine and card reader, and these two had to be "paired up" at the start of a shift. Rather like humans, all too often they would not talk to each other, while other pairings seemed to get along just fine! The photo included with this article when a brand new Star Mobile was being tried out, was taken in April 2016; thus it took over a year for enough of the problems to be ironed out so that they were deemed reliable enough for us Exeter Guards to use them. Even so, on one of my first trips with one on Monday 17th July 2017 I pressed a wrong button according to my log and managed to lock myself out of it! It's a good job I retired before being trusted with one of the all singing and all dancing machines that they use nowadays, capable of not just reading bar codes but zapping mobile phones and all sorts...

A method of payment that has been around for years is the travel warrant. They are generally issued by third parties, typically the military to armed forces personnel going home on leave or being transferred between duties. We were told always to charge the full open fare if these were presented for exchange on the train which we happily did, especially in the days of 5% commission! MPs tended to use warrants issued by the House Of Commons, for use when travelling to and from their constituencies. One particular West Country MP used to bring a book of these warrants onto the train, park himself in first class, and not only use them to buy a ticket for himself but also any mates he was travelling with. Unsurprisingly, when the scandal over MPs' expenses broke some years ago, this particular MP was one of the ones who was rightly named and shamed. Needless to say he did not seek re-election.

One of the most bizarre uses of a warrant that I witnessed was a year into the job when, on Thursday 1st February 2001, I was working 1C74 the 19:33 Paddington to Plymouth and a man got on at Newbury. When I went to check his ticket he presented me with a warrant from Newbury to Lincoln! He was clearly confused and disturbed, and would not tell me why he was insisting on travelling on a Plymouth bound service with a travel warrant to Lincoln. However I took the warrant off him and



On an unknown date in the early 2000s, Martin is seen on the platform with one of the old "clunky" Sportis ticket machines over his shoulder. We are not sure of the location. Does anyone recognise that gable in the background?

Photo: Rob Hawkins

issued him with a Newbury to Lincoln via London ticket (as prescribed by the warrant), telling him he would need to get off at Westbury, wait 45 minutes, and catch the next train back to London. I endorsed his ticket to that effect, although I am not sure I had thought through how he was going to get a train from London to Lincoln at that time of night! Anyway on the approaches to Westbury he became abusive to both me and the Customer Host in the buffet and refused to get off the train, threatening to throw himself under it if we made him get off. In the end I contacted British Transport Police who agreed to meet the train at Exeter and remove him, which they duly did. The warrant was actually issued by Social Services but, in my naivety, I failed to connect that with his behaviour. Nobody had trained us on how to deal with people suffering "mental health problems" back in 2001, and I doubt I had even heard of the expression!

On Wednesday 15th March 2006 I was working another evening commuter train from Paddington, 1C92 the 17:33 to Exeter St David's. On checking tickets I came across a person I describe in my log book as an "awkward woman in coach E". She was travelling on a ticket from London Terminals to Exeter St David's via Honiton. This was of course not valid from Paddington and when she refused to pay the difference in cost, I issued her with an Unpaid Fares Notice for the whole single journey from Paddington to Exeter. To say she was extremely affronted at this is an understatement; indeed so forceful was she in her protestations that afterwards one or two regular passengers around me checked if I was alright. A couple of days later I was called into the office by my manager regarding the incident. It turned out that she was Maria Wallis, the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police, having 3,500 police

officers under her along with 2,000 civilian staff. She had subsequently complained to First Great Western senior management, insisting I should receive a severe reprimand for embarrassing her and treating her so badly. Fortunately my manager had no such compulsions; at the end of the day she was the one in the wrong no matter who she was.

There have been amusing encounters too. For many years my wife Maureen was the administrator at the Methodist Church in central Exeter, and had to deal with many folk coming in off the streets seeking a bit of “Christian shelter”. One particular homeless man (who was harmless) had taken to coming in, and even told Maureen his life story about how he had been kicked out by his wife and had been forced to leave her and his child in Bath; he was now homeless in Exeter. But now someone had contacted him to say that a flat was available for him to share in Torquay and he needed to go down and take a look at it. He told Maureen that, whilst he had managed to dodge paying the train fare when he had travelled down from Bath to Exeter, he was reluctant to try it again so please would the Church pay to buy him a ticket to Torquay. Maureen explained that the Church did not give out money, but that she would, after work, take him

over to the station and buy him a ticket to Torquay herself to help him out (she’s good like that). Anyway for whatever reason it did not happen, but she told me the full story that evening over supper. The very next morning I was on a shift that involved working a stopping train from Exeter to Paignton and, when we stopped at St Thomas, a rather scruffy bloke got on who began giving me a sob sob story about how he was homeless and how he couldn’t afford a ticket, but please would I let him go to Torquay as he desperately needed to look at a flat. I immediately put two and two together and said, “Oh, the railway knows all about you. You’ve split up from your wife and kid and have already dodged the fare from Bath in order to get down to Exeter, but...” (I didn’t tell him about how I knew all this of course and, suffice it to say, he was stunned into silence) “...because I’m kind hearted and you have been upfront, I’ll buy you your ticket, but don’t ever try to dodge a train fare again as all the gods of the railway know all about you and are watching you all the time.” He did look ashen, but whether he tried to dodge a fare again I do not know; however I certainly enjoyed that particular moment!

Martin (2nd from left) in the mess-room at Exeter St David’s on 27th April 2016. Martin’s boss is 3rd from left, while on the extreme right is a Revenue Inspector from Reading who had been tasked that day with trialling one of the new “Star Mobile” ticket machines to see how it performed along the Berks & Hants route. (The answer was not very well - see text).

Photo: Rev. David Hardy



*With best wishes for a
Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year*

