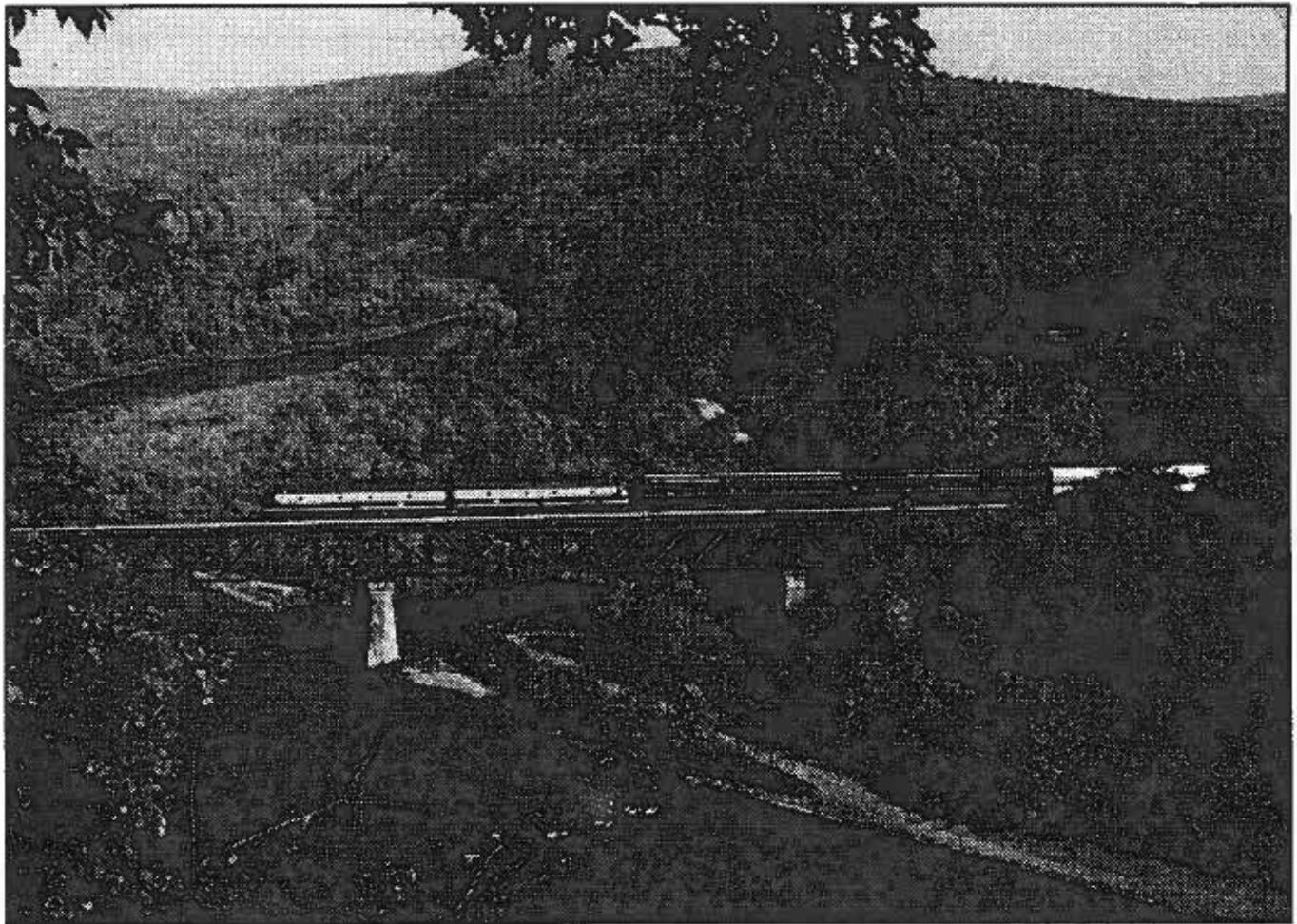


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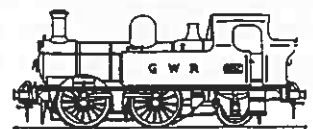
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# MARLOW DONKEY



**IN THIS ISSUE...**

**GREAT CENTRAL TRIP  
TRAINSPOTTER'S TALES  
EXPLORING DISUSED LINES  
ALL THE LATEST LOCAL NEWS**





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## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

About this time of year the Committee is busy arranging next year's programme, one of its most important roles. Each year however it becomes more and more difficult to identify and locate suitable speakers. There are of course several who have entertained us in the past who we willingly reinvoke whilst others are, frankly, best forgotten. Of the former group many have become good friends of the Society, for example Ron White who wound up the last season in his own unique style and Wally Richards who opens the new. However we cannot rely on these old stalwarts alone and the search for new speakers goes on. You can assist us, if you know of someone who can give an interesting talk please let a member of the committee know.

We are also giving thought to venues for trips next year, in particular the summer coach trip. This year attendance was low and many wives did not come along because they felt there was not much for them to do which is a very valid point. Bearing this in mind, and after discussing it with Gavin our coach driver, we have provisionally decided to visit the Llangollen Railway next July. As well as being a very picturesque line not so often visited by our members, the town of Llangollen has much charm and interest for visitors in itself - and it is one place where an ex-GWR station is located in the town! There are other attractions in the town including canal trips with real horsepower so hopefully this trip will prove popular with the entire family.

One of the highlights of this year was the visit to Bristol which made us realise that for a RAILWAY society we actually use the rail network precious little. We are therefore proposing to organise further day trips by rail in 1995 with York and the Central Wales line among the likely destinations. At first glance the cost may appear to be a deterrent but for parties of ten or more we can obtain substantial discounts. The chosen destinations will hopefully appeal to the wives as well. More details in the December "Donkey". We also have more interesting ideas in the pipeline involving trains but until our feasibility studies are complete they must remain under wraps.

At the time of writing however it would be difficult to make any plans for rail trips as the network is once again disrupted by another long hot summer of industrial discontent. Hopefully by the time you read these notes all will be resolved but I wouldn't like to place any bets. One can certainly sympathise with the signalmen (Have you noticed how in the interests of PC they've become Signalling Staff or Workers) who receive a pittance for a highly skilled and responsible job upon whose action hundreds of lives depend every day. In some

other countries they are regarded in the same class as air traffic controllers whilst drivers are the equal of airline pilots and get paid accordingly, here these groups are paid less than many council manual workers who have no life dependent responsibilities. Can this be fair? One has to question the performance of Railtrack in these proceedings. The new organisation gives the general impression of total incompetence - in addition to the strikes there are stories of disputes between it and the TOU's over pathing (including bringing the Brighton line to a stand one evening) an unnecessary light engine mileage during steam ferry moves. Perhaps the trouble stems from the top.

One good piece of railway news on strike day five (13 July) was the commencement of work on the new A1 when the widow of the late Arthur Peppercorn set in motion the machinery to profile the huge steel plates which will form the locomotive's main frames. I will admit that when the project was first announced in 1990 I was to put it mildly sceptical but now thanks to the foresight and support of hundreds of individual and corporate sponsors the locomotive is actually under construction. We may argue over the choice of prototype but it is a tremendous step forward for British preservation (I suppose preservation is the wrong term) and a sad indictment on the current state of the British railway industry that by the end of this year the only main line locomotive under construction in this country will be a privately financed fifty year old design. Is this really what our so-called Government intended by introducing private enterprise and capital to our railways?

Coming up in October is our most ambitious Society trip to date, a long weekend visit to the Hartzbahn, in the old East Germany. We've managed to keep the price down to a very reasonable £220 plus food and beer. I realise this is a large sum to many of you struggling to bring up families and pay the mortgage in the straightened times however it does represent extremely good value (we are £50 cheaper than the last Steam Railway trip) and if we can get a party of ten or more we could reduce the price even further. Why not give it some thought and spend a few days seeing a real steam railway at work. Peter Robins, our German expert, will lead the group.

Finally I must congratulate Mark Hopwood who has now taken over from Peter Robins as Area Retail Manager at Slough. It's good to know this important position which includes the branch, remains "in house".

*MA*

# TIMETABLE

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS & EXCURSIONS

All meetings are held at the Royal British Legion, Station Approach, Marlow at 19.45 for 20.00

### MEETINGS

- Thurs 20 Oct**      **InterCity Great Western in the '90s**  
**John Cronin - Fleet Engineer (GWTOC)**  
Following our May visit to the HST Depot at Bristol's St. Philip's Marsh this talk will offer us the opportunity to hear the latest plans of Great Western Trains. One of the first six 'shadow franchises', Great Western are our local InterCity operator.
- Thurs 17 Nov**      **Aspects of Signalling**      Mike Hanscombe  
Our friend Mike Hanscombe returns again to entertain us with his wealth of knowledge on railway signalling.
- Thurs 15 Dec**      **Christmas Buffet & Social**  
Our regular Christmas event where you can meet fellow members and partners for eating and socialising! Can we have volunteers to give a 10 minute talk or slide presentation of general interest, with a light-hearted theme!.

- Thurs 19 Jan**      **Annual General Meeting**  
As usual, the business part of the meeting will be brief and followed by a selection of members' slides
- Thurs 16 Feb**      **Meeting - To be Advised**  
The Committee have yet to decide the exact format of this meeting. Details in December 'Donkey'
- Thurs 16 Mar**      **Ken Nunn Collection**      Graham Stacey
- Thurs 20 April**      **Stewarts Lane**      R.N Hardy
- Thurs 18 May**      **Llangollen Railway**      To be Advised
- Thurs 15 June**      **Bridges & Viaducts**      T. Edmonds  
A photo journey.
- Thurs 20 July**      **Scottish Industrial Scenes & Locomotives**  
Tim Speechley



## SOCIETY NEWS

### PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND TRIPS

In June we were promised an in depth look at the Settle & Carlisle railway and that's just what we got when John Birkbeck took us on a photographic journey over the entire line. Virtually every station, signal box, bridge, viaduct and tunnel was illustrated in a variety of seasons and showing the everyday traction on the line not just the steam specials. Those of us who chase the latter were given much inspiration for future visits - provided we can remember where they were!

Ron White once again entertained us in July with a further selection of trannies dug out from the depths of the Colourail archive. In addition to giving us his own unique perspective of things GW, Ron had a wonderful assortment of pre and postwar slides covering all of the Big Four. Throw in a few BR diesels, Dundee trams and some wonderfully eccentric Irish equipment and you had an eclectic mix.

The annual coach trip this year was on July 10th to the Great Central Railway and once again was highly successful and blessed with clear blue skies. A full illustrated report appears in this issue.

### SOCIETY TRIP TO THE GERMAN NARROW GAUGE

We are organising a long weekend visit to the former East German Hartzbahn metre gauge system from Friday 21 to Monday 24 October. The estimated cost is approximately £220 which covers return London Heathrow - Hanover air fare, car hire and accommodation; food and drink are extra.

The Hartzbahn is one of the last outposts of working (as opposed to preserved) steam left in Europe and is famous for its massive ten-coupled tanks, beautiful wooded mountain scenery and unspoilt east German towns. Our visit will allow ample time for train riding and lineside photography whilst we hope to include shed visits and night photography/video sessions. The group will be led by Peter Robins who has much experience of Germany and the Hartzbahn in particular.

Times are changing fast in Germany and it is unclear how long this "time machine" will survive. Join us now for an unforgettable bargain weekend.

### THE CHRISTMAS BUFFET

Yes, that time of year is fast approaching once again and with it our annual end of year social event. The format will be much the same as previous years so once again we are appealing for a small number of volunteers to present short programmes of general entertainment. If you are willing to assist please contact Eddie Lewcock as soon as possible.

### THE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The Committee is aware that some members are becoming tired of the Photographic Competition in its present form, equally there are many members who look forward to the event each year. It will take place again as usual in February 1995 but we are anxious to hear your views on possible modifications or replacements. Please give the matter some serious thought and let a member of the Committee know. We will have a discussion on the subject at the AGM.

### SMOKING AT MEETINGS

Another concern that has been brought to the notice of the Committee is the sensitive subject of smoking at Society meetings. Increasingly of course public events are being declared no smoking but we do not wish to dissuade the small number of members who do smoke from attending meetings with such a ban. However we would ask smoking members to refrain as much as possible and to occupy the left hand side raised area at the rear (nearest the bar).

Thank you for your co-operation.

# RAILWAY ROUNDABOUT

## NOTES AND NEWS



### SPRING LANE BRIDGE DEMOLISHED

One of the few remaining major reminders of the original Wycombe Railway line between Bourne End and High Wycombe, the Spring Lane underbridge at Wycombe Marsh, was demolished early in July.

Next May will mark the 25th anniversary of the closure of the line and in the interval the Woburn Green station site has become a housing estate whilst Loudwater is now an industrial estate. Most of the bridges are gone and the trackbed sold for other use or reclaimed by nature. Even so, some rosy eyed individuals dream of reopening the line or routing an LRT system over it.

### 47's ON THE MARLOW BRANCH

Whilst MDRS members were gathering in Marlow for the GCR trip on 10 July a rare engineer's train was at work on the branch. Powered by 47.016 "Atlas" and 47.366, it was intended to cover the entire line recovering discarded materials and undertaking repairs to the track. However this took longer than expected and the train got only as far as Furze Platt before retreating to Maidenhead to permit the Sunday passenger service to commence.

It was proposed to repeat the trip the following weekend but this was cancelled. The branch could do with a visit from the weed killing train.

### NSE MOVES NORTH WEST

John Sears reports that his current place of employment, Manchester Piccadilly, has a strangely familiar look about it these days as large numbers of former NSE class 101 Heritage DMU's and class 309 Clacton EMU's have taken up new duties with Regional Railways North West. Most are still in NSE livery and several of the former still sport Thames logos on their flanks. It brings a whole new meaning to the short lived Network NorthWest marketing initiative of a few years ago.

### HEATHROW PROGRESS

In addition to the major work being undertaken for the Stockley flyover on the GWML just west of Hayes, much other work can now be observed along the route. A major work site is to the east side of Stockley Park Road (A408) just north of junction 4 of the M4 where the portal of the tunnel into the airport will be situated. In the airport itself work is well underway from an access site adjacent to the central bus station. A rail station here will serve Terminals 1 to 3 with a single track extension continuing in tunnel to Terminal 4. As yet no work has started on the Heathrow Express terminal within Paddington or electrification of the main line and is unlikely to begin for some time, the trains have still to be ordered.

However, work has been continuing on the rebuilding of the Spring Bridge between Ealing Broadway and West Ealing to facilitate electrification. This has involved revisions to Thames Trains main line services on Saturdays from 27 August to 24 September and daily on the Greenford branch from 26 August to 3 October.

### ACCELERATING THE DONKEY

It seems that ever since the end of steam in 1962 branch trains have been allowed 12 minutes for the journey between Maidenhead and Bourne End in either direction. With the introduction of Turbos and the 1994/95 timetable this has been reduced to 11 minutes, an 8% acceleration! But, the saving, between Maidenhead and Furze Platt, applies in the down direction only. Up trains still take 12 minutes due to the timed release of the Maidenhead home signal.

### STEAM OUT OF PADDINGTON?

It seems this autumn and winter could see quite a fair amount of steam action out of Paddington. It is proposed to operate specials on most Saturdays and Sundays during October, November and December to Bristol or the East Somerset Railway. The latter will see the locomotives, 5029 'Nunney Castle' or 6024 'King Edward I', being turned on the triangle at Foster-Yeoman's Merehead quarry.

Also expected is the return to the main line of 35028 'Clan Line' following its major overhaul at Southall with a least one return trip from Paddington to Exeter possibly over two days and a series of Santa Specials originating from Kensington Olympia and following a circular route passing the former North Pole Junction!

At the time of writing dates, destinations, locomotives and times were still to be confirmed. We will of course seek out as much information as possible and announce it at the monthly meetings.

### RUSSIANS SAVE GM's IRISH BACON

By now most members will be aware of the delivery by air of the first of Irish Rail's new GM diesel locomotives on 7 June 1994, the remarkable sight of the gleaming locomotive emerging from the open nose of an Antonov An124 being carried by most of the British magazines. The reason quoted was to ensure the prototype was delivered early enough to permit staff training on the type before the next nine arrived by sea at the end of July.

The Donkey can exclusively reveal that this was a classic case of economy with the truth. The builders, GM's Canadian plant at London, Ontario, were well behind the scheduled delivery date for the new units and were facing huge penalty payments for none performance. It was determined that it would be cheaper to charter the An124 from a Ukrainian company, have it fly empty to Canada and return with 201 than to pay the penalty clause.

No doubt it caused much grieving within GM that they had to use a Russian aircraft as no American aircraft, even the C5-A Galaxy, could take the 118 ton load, the largest ever locomotive and second largest single item ever air freighted. To rub it in the An124 appeared at an airshow in London during its layover.

Thirty two of the new JT42-CWH units are on order (201-232) plus two for Northern Ireland Railways (114/115). Externally an updated class 59, they pack 3000hp V12 710G3B engines, AR10 alternators and D77 traction motors. The latest form of EMD's EM2000 full micro-processor control is incorporated and, for the first time in Ireland, ETH thus avoiding the need for a separate generator van.

Thanks to Jim Boyd, editor of Railfan magazine and former EMD employee, for this news.

### COVER PHOTO:

**The glorious fall colours had yet to reach their peak on 16th October 1993 as New Jersey Transit's pair of EMD E8s in Erie livery cross the Delaware River at Millrift, Pennsylvania. This shot won the Modern Traction class in the 1994 Photographic competition. (Mike Walker)**

# GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY, Annual Society Visit

## Tim Speechley

On Sunday 10th July, the society made its annual coach trip. On this occasion 37 members and guests visited the Great Central Railway in Leicestershire. A relatively early start was made (8am from Marlow and even earlier from Wycombe) and what was perceived as a rather circuitous route chosen for the outward run via the M25 and M1 in an attempt to avoid traffic destined for Silverstone and the British Grand Prix. In fact, very little traffic was encountered and arrival at Rothersthorpe Services was much earlier than expected allowing a longer stop and full English breakfasts to be consumed by some.

The rest of the journey passed uneventfully latterly through the suburbs of Leicester where my eye was caught by a sign in an antique/junk shop advertising "Pianola Rolls for sale" - not something one expects to see very often these days.

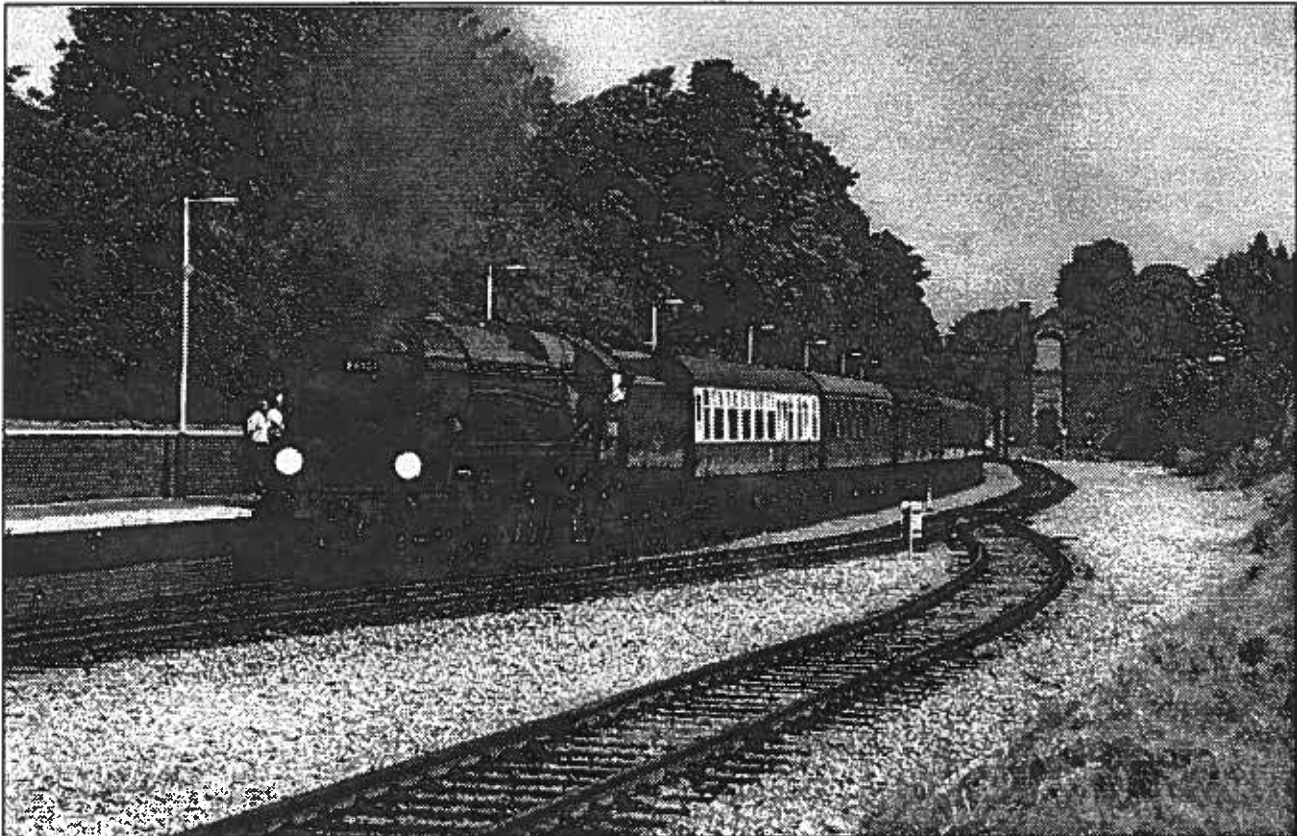
Arrival at Leicester North station, appropriately up a road called "The Sidings", was just before 11 O'clock in plenty of time for our planned 11.45 train to Loughborough. Despite a relatively cloudy start at home the sun had been blazing most of the way up the motorway and we were relieved that there was some breeze at the GCR's newly constructed, but as yet, buildingless (and hence shadeless) southern terminus.

After quite a wait with little to do but enjoy the good weather we were rewarded by the arrival of West Country No. 34101 "Hartland" from the north and heralded by the sound of a very non-standard chime whistle. She made a splendid sight in immaculately clean BR green but a few adverse comments were made about the black background to her nameplate - surely red was the norm?

The GCR staff were very helpful and ensured we had ample accommodation in the first coach. **Hartland**, running tender first, slipped characteristically as we departed and steady progress brought us to Rothley where Deltic D9019 was seen in the sidings. There were a number of sales stands on the platform and a small model railway layout (Good job, the weather was fine!)

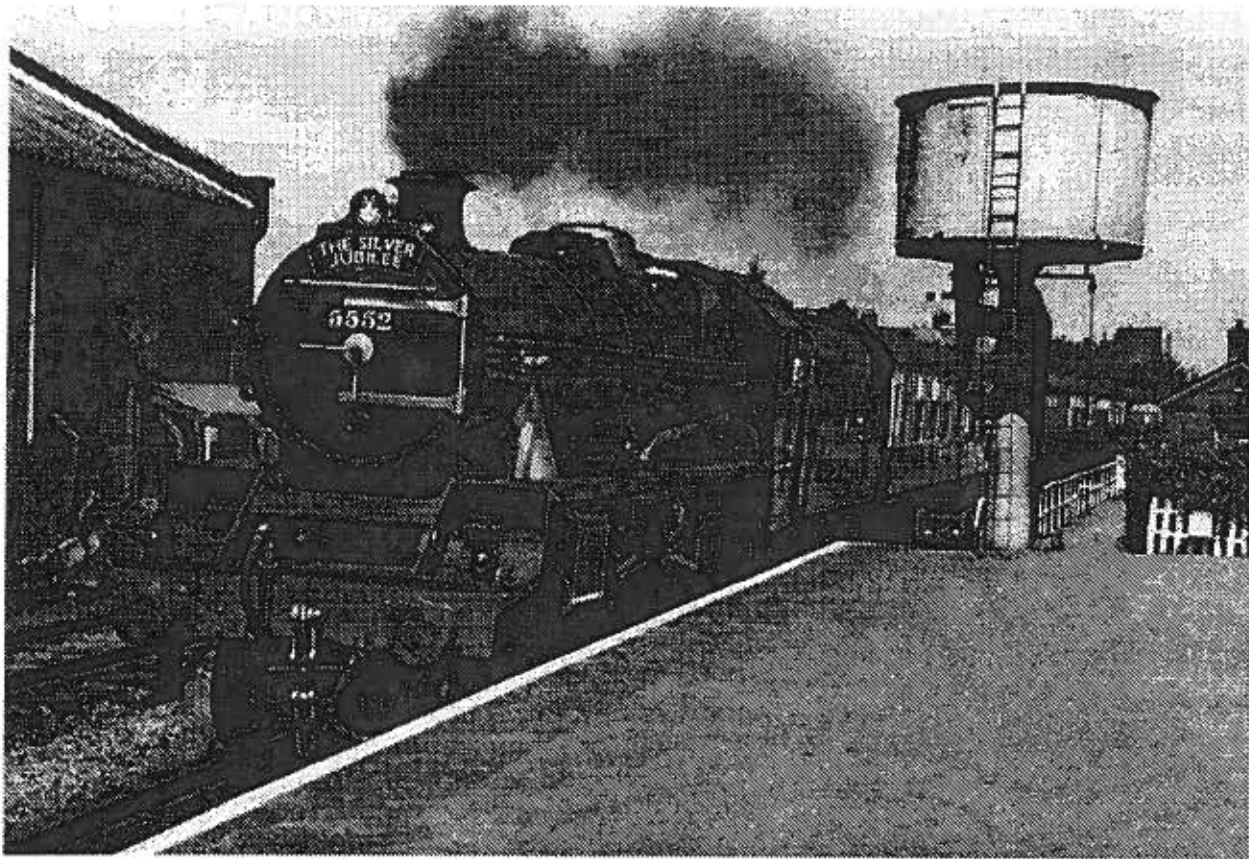
Onward we passed the developing site of Switchland sidings where a number of vehicles awaited restoration and the "Windcutter" wagons were stabled. At Quorn and Woodhouse D5401 and two small industrial diesels were seen along with several signalboxes, both complete and dismantled.

Approaching Loughborough I noticed that the A6 road overbridge which features in so many published photographs of the GCR was undergoing rebuilding. It is to be hoped that the new bridge does not transform a good photo spot too adversely.



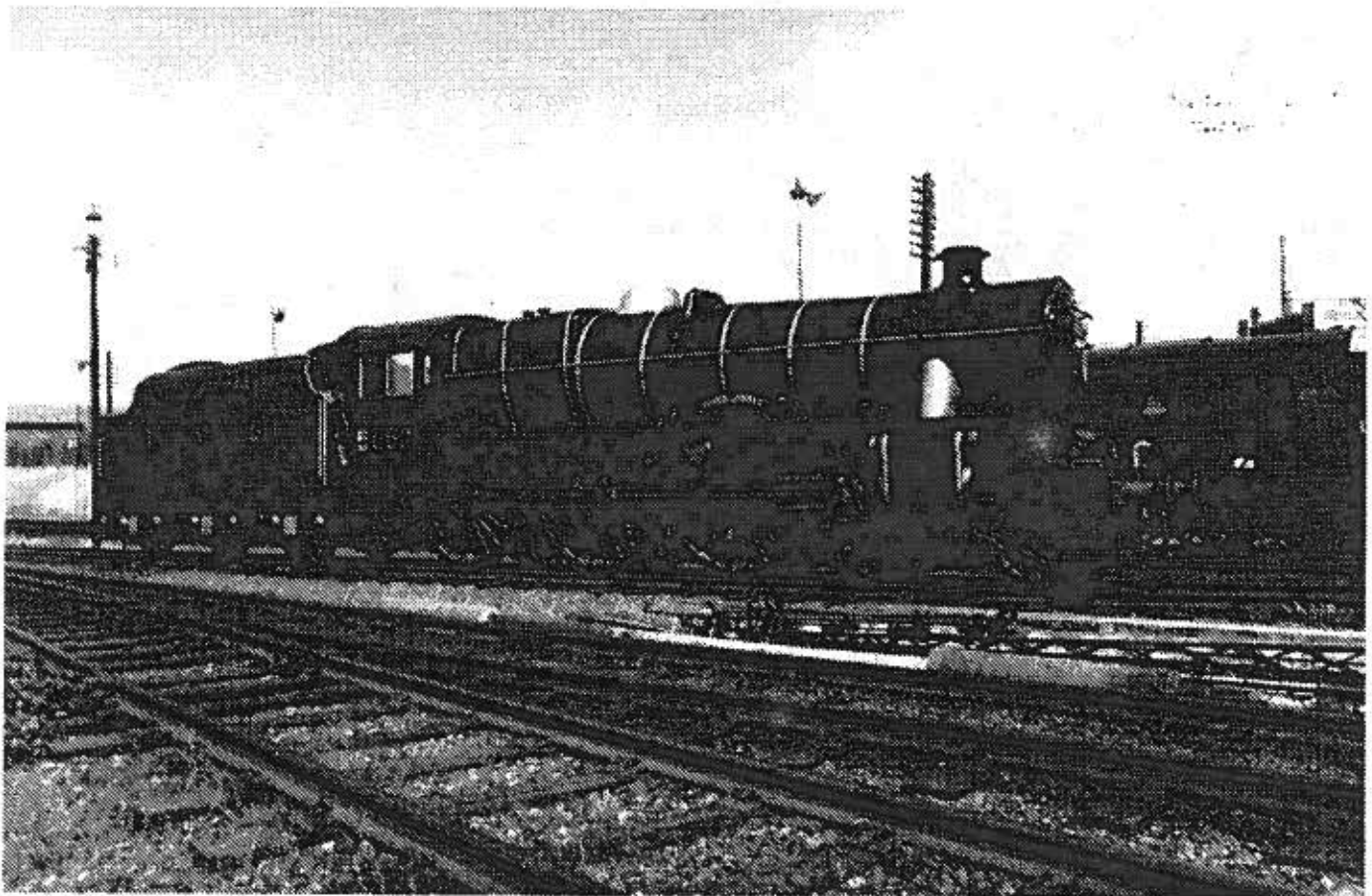
West Country No. 34101 'Hartland' arrives at Leicester North station on the Great Central Railway on 10th July. (Alan Costello)





45593 'Kolaphur' masquerading as 5552 'Silver Jubilee' enters Loughborough Station on 10th July. (Alan Costello)

Taking a rest at Loughborough we again feature 5552. Many engines in steam and diesel preservation are now being restored to the condition of fellow class members. (Alan Costello)



And so to arrival at Loughborough Central - a fine example of the single island platform arrangement so beloved of the G.C. Arrangements were made to visit the shed at 13.45, though unfortunately the GCR could not spare anybody to give us a guided tour.

I decided to walk to the first overbridge south of the station in order to photograph Hartland departing with the next train. Our Chairman considered this to be an excellent idea and accompanied me. Unfortunately, this bridge has particularly high sides and whereas Mike could just about shoot over the top, I could not and some mountaineering was required - the ample abutment top providing a good resting place. Shortly afterwards Messrs. Robins and Greatorex arrived, the latter also suffering from Duck's Disease, joining me on my elevated perch.

Once 34101 had left there was little time before the 13.00 dining car train with "Kholapur" masquerading as 5552 "Silver Jubilee" was due out, so I stayed put until after that departure.

Retiring to the Great Central Railway Hotel adjacent to the station one found a large proportion of the party unbibing and it was with some reluctance I downed the last of my beer rather hurriedly to meet up for our 'shed' visit at 13.45. En-route in the yard I noted 13180 (an 08 type shunter) D4067 named "Margaret Ethel - Thomas Alfred Naylor" (a hermaphrodite 08?), D8098 and a rather nice Ransomes and Rapier steam crane. There was also a very derelict Peckett 0-4-0ST alongside the path.

Without a guide, our visit turned quickly into many individual visits as particular items caught personal fancies. Outside the shed were 7029 "Clun Castle", N2 69523 having work done on its valve gear, 5224 (GW 2-8-0T) and 08788 plus a couple of boilers sitting on the ground detached from their locos.

I peered into the firehole door of 48305's boiler and was surprised to find two overall clad volunteers taking turns at expanding tubes into the tube plate. I watched with great interest for some minutes as one of these chaps put every ounce of effort he had into the task. When he had finished I jokingly said to him "I bet you don't need to go jogging to keep fit". "No", he said, "I run four miles every night" - I wish I'd kept my mouth shut!

Inside the main shed building were (4)5231 rubbed down ready for painting; the frames of 48305 and a GWR Prairie tank; 34039 "Boscastle" complete; 61264 - frames and motion; 6990 completely dismantled; 92212 looking more or less complete and 2509 "Silver Link" (actually "Bittern" acting the part) having its old tubes burnt out and removed. I was impressed - what a sight those A4s must have made in that lovely Silver/Grey livery rushing up and down the G.N. main line!

Beyond, in the open or under less substantial protection were a very rusty Jinty painted up as 'Thomas the Tank Engine' (47906); a rather decrepit D3101; an unidentified 0-4-0 ST lacking its saddle tank, the tenders for the 9F and the B1 and finally in its own shed 35025 "Brocklebank Line" progressing very well.

We returned to the station taking the opportunity to have a close look at the re-created "Silver Jubilee" loco which was taking water having just arrived with a train from Leicester North. Although featuring raised chromed letters and numbers the rest of the silver components (steam pipes, dome, boiler bands) are painted and in my opinion the end result is more like what I imagine the Pakistan Railways would do to a Black 5 than a true recreation of the 5552 of 1935. Nevertheless I commended the GCR for using this method to advertise its own silver jubilee in 1994. I'm all in favour of variety when it comes to liveries and identity changes.

After our shed visit most people opted to go by coach for a visit to the proposed northern extension of the GCR at Ruddington. However, I decided it was just too hot to sit on a coach any longer than necessary and so I stayed in the vicinity of Loughborough station to take some more photographs. Similarly, Keith Brown and Gordon Rippington headed south by train to examine the other stations on the line witnessing a fairly extensive lineside fire with major fire brigade attendance en-route.

So far as I can ascertain the visit to Ruddington was not as successful as had been hoped. Operated completely separately from the rest of the line a demand for an extra £2.00 per head admission fee came as quite a shock and the negotiation of a 50% reduction on the spot was very commendable. Nevertheless I get the impression that there was little to see - the most notable item mentioned by several people being an ancient charabanc formerly operated by the famous Nottingham-based operator Barton, which was giving rides.

Having opted to stay behind I had to run hard to get back to the overbridge to photograph 5552 on the 15.00 departure which left me very hot as the day had turned into a real scorcher. I had anticipated this and returned to the station to change into my shorts which I had brought as a cunning precaution against overheating.

For the first time I found myself on the platform without a train in it and I noted a DMU pleasingly restored in green and a fine teak coach on the adjacent line.

Hartland was due back at 15.35 so I sat on top of the narrow wall opposite the station to get a shot. Unfortunately it didn't arrive until nearer 16.00, by which time my nether regions had gone more or less dead. 34101's departure, due at 16.00, was also much delayed and I photographed this from the bridge used earlier (more mountaineering onto the parapet). Finally I awaited the return of 5552 tender first with what would become our train for Leicester North. The only suitable vantage point necessitated yet more "sitting on the fence" and one part of my anatomy was very relieved when Silver Jubilee finally arrived almost half an hour late - in fact later than our planned departure time of 16.50.

I hurried back to the station where the rest of the party had presumed I'd simply got lost again. My shorts prompted a few comments, none of them terribly complimentary! We departed at about 17.10 and had an uneventful return to Leicester North, where the Jubilee was photographed in glowing sunlight as it ran round the train and collected the coach which had been left there in the morning as a temporary Booking Office.

Thence back onto the coach and homeward bound by 18.00. Excellent progress was made initially via the M69 and M40 but we ran into solid traffic at the Banbury junction (thanks to the Grand Prix) and Gavin decided to take us into Banbury and via the A34 to Oxford before rejoining the motorway. Even here the traffic was very heavy indeed but at least it was moving and we decided to drop the Wycombe contingent first before arriving, eventually, at Marlow at 21.08. With tongues hanging out a small group of us braved the noise of the Marlow Donkey's quiz night and partook of a couple of pints in the pub garden before making our separate ways home.

I had had a very enjoyable day out and I hope the other participants did so too. As always, thanks are due to Gavin for getting us there and home again safely and comfortably.

# MY INTEREST IN RAILWAYS - The First 20 Years

## Keith Brown

I did not like going shopping with my mother when I was five years old. For start I could not see over the counters at Woolworths. It was just a bore to me being then just a little chap. That is until one day I saw clouds of steam gushing out of a gap between the bank and Lavell's sweet shop opposite Wembley Central station. When the steam had cleared I looked down this gap, which was at the top of a flight of stairs that led to a footpath alongside the up slow WOML. What I saw was coal wagons clanking along the up slow in to the station and a guards van with chimney smoke bringing up the rear. A moment later a 'streak' 6244 King George VI rushed through and starting to complete the last stage of its journey from the north.

Shopping trips now took on a new interest. Requests to see just one more initially turned to 'Can I stay for ten minutes please'. I was beginning to get very interested in this and imagine my pleasure when my Mother told me that she would leave me to watch the trains while she did her shopping. I was firmly told not to move away from this spot, as if I would. Nowadays a mother dare not, or should not, leave a child for a minute at such an age as I was then in case something nasty may happen to her child. What has this country of ours come to? That's how it all started and I have been fortunate enough to be in close proximity to the railways ever since.

My Father served in West Africa during World War II and I well recall that when he was on leave on one occasion he took me with him to Park Royal. I have still retained his copies of the Railway Magazine, copies between 1918-1930 period. Still good reading on dark winters evening. It was on this visit that I saw my first GWR locomotive, a Hall, 4903 'Aldenham Hall' which was engaged in shunting in the yards at Park Royal alongside the Western Avenue (A40). It certainly looked very smart although doing menial work but I think that seeing it had a deep impression on me.

About this time, 1944 roughly, my Mother's friend in the local Women's Institute came to tea one afternoon and she told me that her two sons were railway mad. The plus point to me was that her eldest son was thirteen years old and travelled with his brother further afield to see his favourite trains. Those lovely words; "Did I want to go with them on their next trip", flowed from her. A quick glance in the direction of my Mother saw her nod of approval which was just what I wanted. I was at last off on a hobby and furthermore have these two friends to this day. Needless to say, when we get together the subject is soon centred on what's happened of late on the railway front.

The first trip on which I accompanied them, was to their favourite vantage point at Old Oak Common. The 652 trolleybus from the end of our road took us to Craven Park where we changed to a 628 trolley to Hythe Road along the Scrubbs Lane. In those days bus conductors carried racks of coloured tickets which were punched at the appropriate numbered fare-stage where the passenger joined the bus. I remember the 4d (approximately 1.5p) ticket was brown with a white stripe and the 7d (2.75p) was pink and white.

Alighting from the trolley we walked over the bridge across the GWR mainline. Once over the mainline there was a grassy bank where we sat and watched the procession of trains with far flung destination boards. Behind where we sat was the North London line where we saw freight trains struggling up the sharp incline from North Pole Junction signal box to Mitre Bridge, where sometimes they relinquished their train of carriages to a fresh locomotive, for it was here that the regional boundary was.

After a few hours and a couple of sandwiches later we crossed the Scrubbs Lane and walked along the banks of the Grand Union canal to the unofficial entrance to the shed. They were not called depots in those days. The entrance was a gap in a chain link fence. How many miles of fencing have been used over the years to keep

spotters out? At a guess, sufficient to extend from OOC to Paddington. No this is not a quiz just an article, so no entries to the Editor please! On my last visit recently I see that the wire fence has been replaced by concrete fencing but sections have been broken away for the current generation to gain access.

That first visit around the four turntables and the columns of locos on either side of the coaling plant netted me about eighty numbers to underline in my ABC. One lesson I did learn that day was that ashes thrown out from the fire boxes were very hot indeed.

Between Scrubbs Lane and the shed along the canal bank was a small footbridge and a flight of stairs that railwaymen used to reach the carriage sidings. The flight of stairs were used in my day as a brilliant vantage point to see the expresses as well as the empty stock movements to and from the carriage sidings. The flight of stairs were used in my day as a brilliant vantage point to see the expresses as well as the empty stock movements to and from the carriage sidings. The stairs were like a grandstand, first there got the positions at the top and had a better view. Many, many Saturdays were spent there, after the household jobs my Mother gave me had been completed, sitting with my ABC, some sandwiches and a bottle of lemonade. Who said train spotting did not teach you anything. I soon found out where Perranporth, Penzance, Plymouth, Newquay and Paignton were as looked them up in the atlas when I reached home but only after I had done the underlining in my ABC.

A friend of the family was a retired Great Central driver and one Sunday he took me to Neasden shed alongside the North Circular Road. This was my first official shed visit with the foreman knowing and what is more, conducting our tour of the thirty or so locos on shed that morning. I remember 'Butler Henderson' was on shed and the retired that he had driven this loco and other members of the class on the fast timing to Leicester on many trips. I returned to Neasden many times to see the locos which hauled football & hockey internationals to Wembley in the early '50s. One could always get a rare loco from either a Scottish shed or from some obscure Yorkshire or Lancashire shed. Locos off the Southern or Western would visit for servicing prior to their return trips. For some reason Hall class locos did not seem to like Neasden as on two consecutive Saturdays a Hall was derailed in Neasden yards and urgent work had to be performed to rerail the loco in order to release it and its stable companions for their return journeys.

Apologies, I jumped to the early 50's above but to keep the events in chronological sequence it was in 1948, when at the age of twelve, I and my two friends who, by now, had become inseparable went on a spotting holiday to West Wales basing ourselves in Tenby. Those slides that were shown at the AGM bought back many vivid memories of that holiday. Neyland, Pembroke and Carmarthen were all visited as well as stopping off in Swansea on the return journey. We sent our postcards home saying we were having a wonderful time, but on that holiday not much time was spent on the beach as most holidaymakers do.

At the age of thirteen I started at Ealing Technical College. The schooling was good, but the walk home alongside the railway on the footpath that led to Ealing Broadway station was even better. The regular working that I saw then was the 3.55 pm Paddington - Fishguard express, usually worked by a Castle of which 5055 'Earl of Eldon' was a regular performer. I stayed there longer and longer in those summer afternoons, so much so that one evening the Conductor on the 112 bus home would not honour my bus pass, as it was only valid up to 5 pm.

At the entrance to Ealing Broadway station in those days were some racks which held handbills advertising excursion trips from Paddington on Sundays. Each handbill I recall was of differing colours and the destinations were to places such as Bristol, Newport,



Cardiff, Swindon and Wolverhampton. Swindon appealed to me then and at a price of 6/- (30p) I had to have some of it. Arrangements were made for a works pass for three people and a shed pass also so that not a single loco would be missed. After Swindon we went on to the others in turn. They were very good value for money, even in those days.

The day dawned bright and sunny on the first of our trips to Swindon. The faithful 662 to Paddington and a quick walk down Eastbourne Terrace took us to the departure board to see the platform our train was leaving from. Having seen what was on the front end we settled ourselves down to a great day. Arriving at Swindon at about 11.45 am we had ample time to eat our sandwiches prior to assembling at the works entrance at 2 pm. My Mother's sense of humour displayed itself as I pulled the sandwiches from my haversack. One packet was labelled Elephant and cucumber and the other squirrel and tomato. As about thirty young and some not so young lads assembled outside the works entrance about ten minutes prior to 2 O'Clock, the excitement grew as the minutes ticked by. One by one we showed our passes and the tour got underway. South Wales two and three numbered tanks were new to me and the locomotives lined up that had just been repainted in that beautiful Brunswick green remain a lasting memory.

Our next trip was to Newport and Bristol. The weather was not so kind to us this day and I well remember the very long walk to Ebbw Junction NPT, but it was worth it as many more new cops were observed. Then across to PILL in the docks with many more unusual types of loco on shed. The splendid article on Newport by Stan Verrinder, in the summer edition of the 'Donkey', again brought back fond memories.

It was on the return from this trip that the overall costs of the days visit doubled. The train was late at Swindon due to a poor steaming loco and a pilot was attached with a view I hoped of recovering some of the lost fifty minutes. What worried us was the departure time of the last 112 bus from Ealing Broadway where we intended to alight. Imagine our horror as we rushed through West Ealing and there did not appear to be any signs of breaking for the Broadway stop. About two hundred yards from the platforms at Ealing Broadway, everything was thrown on and the train came to a shuddering stop and we three stepped out, not onto the platform, but onto the ballast. Only the last three coaches were actually alongside the platform.

There were quite a few passengers that night picking themselves up and dusting themselves down as they walked unsteadily up the ramp on to the platform proper. Yes, you have guessed right, the last 112 had gone and we were forced to either walk or to get a taxi. The latter won and our finances lost. Our next trip had to be delayed to allow our pocket money to build up again.

The last of these excursions my two pals and I ventured on to Wolverhampton visiting Stafford Road, Oxley and Tyseley on the way back. The train that day was delayed at High Wycombe on the down run due to single line working between that station and Princes Risborough. My head was out of the window as we reversed back past High Wycombe Middle Box on to the up line. Little was I know to know then that forty years later I would be walking over the footbridge practically daily where the Middle Box used to be.

The Queen's Coronation was in 1953, a landmark in my spotting days. A visit to the grandstand referred to earlier in this article saw the usual collection of lads and the well known greeting of "what's on shed" revealed that my last Castle 4090 'Dorchester of Penzance' was in. A quick walk down the canal bank in anticipation brought me to the hole in the fence. In I went, down the grass bank and in the entrance by the turntable nearest the canal. I was then confronted by two important objects. One was a she, my last Castle. Why were they always referred to as 'She's'? The other object was a he in the uniform of a police officer. "Name and address laddie", he said and thinking quickly and I

expect going rather red in the face I gave some details which I have never entered again on any application forms. That was the first and only time that I did not complete my visit to the shed of all sheds. At least all the Castles were now in the book, but it took me over a year to clear the last one. I was told on many occasions that it had been up to London, but until that day it had always eluded me.

Leaving college I took my first job at Maples in Tottenham Court Road. This entailed a daily journey to Euston using the DC lines from Stonebridge park station. Two daily visits to see the locos on shed at Camden was a bonus. Having already completed the two pacific classes on the Midland region, the fun was to see how quickly one could see all of them again. Six weeks was my record but on other occasions one or two seemed to be very elusive for quite some time, probably due to works visits. My lunch breaks of one hour were usually spent either at Kings Cross or St Pancras. The geography knowledge was enhanced once more by discovering where Bihar and Orissa, Baroda and the likes of Bechuanaland and Bastutoland where. I was usually in time at Kings Cross to see the departure of the 1.18 pm to Leeds. This was usually worked by a V2 2-6-2. What a versatile and strong loco class. I can still see in my mind's eye the old railwayman whose job it was to polish the brass handles of those Gresley teak coaches. He only ever seemed to work on the old platform 10 (now 8). Who and where were the handles on the other side polished? I expect there was a similar polisher at the likes of Newcastle and Leeds. Do you remember the cinema like arrivals waiting room at Euston in the days of the Doric Arch and before buzz boxes infiltrated the scene. It was situated at the end of Platform 1 and during winter months it was not unusual to see the minutes late column exceeding 400 minutes. Awaiting passengers at least had some comfort while they waited. After a while the DC electrics got boring, so I changed at Willesden Junction on to the steam hauled commuter trains from the likes of Tring and Bletchley. That was in the days when Willesden Junction was a vast complex of platforms and tunnels linking one to another.

By 1955 National Service intervened but I was still kept abreast of the railway scene as Trains Illustrated was posted out to me each month from month. I am glad to say they all returned safely and I snatch a read of them still from time to time.

Finally, in 1960 I got married and my wife and I moved to Bow Brickhill, a small hamlet, but at least it had its own railway station. Situated on the Bedford to Bletchley line the service was very convenient for getting to work, but the timetable compiler of the time made life difficult for us in getting home in the evening.

I consider I have been very lucky in pursuing the hobby I did. I have met many friends on platform ends, my gazetteer knowledge of the system has been of great benefit in my employment and at least my wife knows where I am, sure in the knowledge that I am not getting into bad company.

# LOCAL EXPLORING - Horspath Tunnel, Wheatley

## Julian Heard

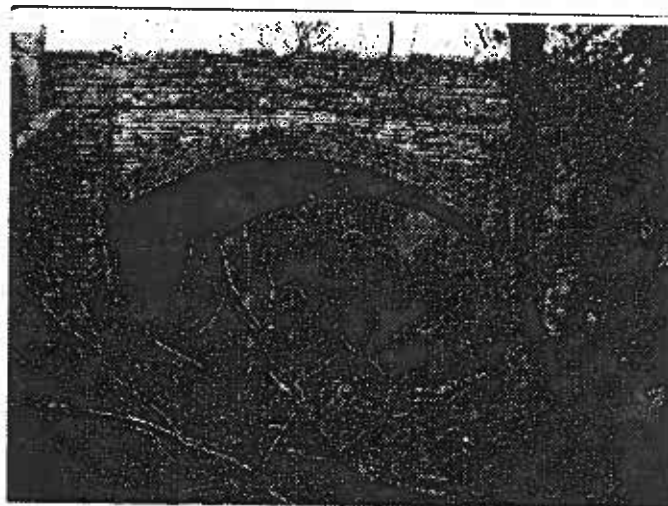
A colleague and good friend of mine, Geoff Melling, the local 'pedalling plod' of Marlow east area, ie the very friendly type who supposedly aren't out to nick everything in sight, is also an avid railway enthusiast. Although he has yet to yield to pressure to join our society, he can usually be found gently circulating around his beat (at two speeds - very slow and stop) drinking cups of tea! In fact if you give him a cup of tea AND talk about railways you are almost guaranteed a form of local diplomatic immunity! (and a return visit?). You have been warned. Some members have even been caught - Mr NORRIS to name but one (even though he lives on the west side)!

Anyway, after that introduction on with the article. Geoff has a strong interest in collecting railwayana and exploring old lines, so on a free day in April we had an afternoon out. First visiting Barbara's Antiques in Goring (the shop had a railwayana section) then on to the site of the old depot at Oxford where we spent an hour or so rummaging around. It is quite surprising what can still be found at this location, as well as identifying the remains of such features as the turntable pit, we recovered a BR ashtray (you know, the flip over type which deposited its contents all over you when the kids "What does that do dad"! ) and a ceramic lampwick holder marked LMS. Geoff's most prized finds here are an old firing shovel and a pricker. He clearly knew a lot about this location having visited it many times as a young lad in the 70s, but what he didn't know about was the old tunnel at Horspath, Wheatley. When I mentioned this to him he said something to do with, I think, the Oxford Rowing Club, 'Rollocks' is what I thought it was anyway! Anyhow, after further discussion and a look at the map, I convinced him that there was a tunnel and I had visited the site about twelve years ago.

Although time was now getting on, this tunnel suddenly became a priority visit on the way home and after a few swear words directed at yours truly, for not remembering exactly where to find the entrance, we came across the overbridge in Butts Road, from which access can be gained. The tunnel mouth is about 150 yards from the road at this point and although now screened by foliage the trackbed leading into the hill can still be made out. I seemed to recall that you could actually see the entrance from the road on my previous visit but it was blocked up and grilled. Not deterred by the fact that it was probably closed off, we followed a path leading down to the track bed which is now a small stream and found on reaching the portal, that the grill had long since been vandalised giving access. No torch and time fast running out if the wrath of 'er indoors' was to be averted, we simply had a quick glance around and planned to return. Then just as we were about to leave we had 'find of the day', a piece of very early broad gauge rail - later found to be BARLOW rail dating from 1853 and comparatively rare. Don't tell Geoff that there is another bit supporting the corner of the old Bourne End

goods shed, otherwise you could find that it has suddenly collapsed!!! With the rail tucked out of the day, an exploratory visit was now considered urgent if only to recover the rail.

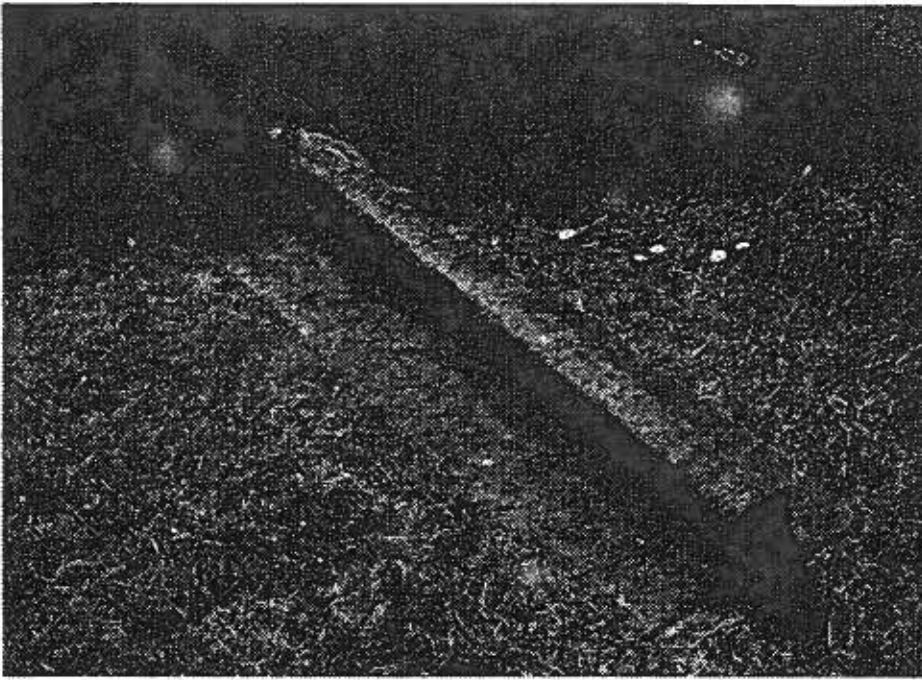
By way of a little history, the tunnel is on the now closed section of the Wycombe Railway between Princes Risborough and Cowley Works. The line originally built to broad gauge reached Thame in July 1862. The section from Thame through to Kennington Junction was started in December of that year and necessitated two major engineering works, one being the 526 yard Horspath Tunnel and the other, a 70 yard bridge over the Thames at Kennington. These structure were completed by 1864 and the line opened to traffic. Broad gauge, however, was short lived, the line being converted to standard in 1870. Until 1906 this line was the shortest route to Paddington from Oxford via, of course, Bourne End. Then the GW/GC Joint line was opened to Marylebone providing an even faster route. The line was survived in its entirety until the Beeching cuts of the '60s came into play; passenger services ceased in January 1963 and goods in 1965. It is, however, of note that the line appears to have provided an emergency relief route until sometime into the late 60s as there are several photographs around depicting traffic in 1967. As is well known, the line was not completely closed but truncated (I believe that the cost of tunnel repairs was a primary factor) with the Oil terminal at Thame being served from Princes Risborough until quite recently, and the Cowley works plant still dispatching daily car trains via Kennington Junction.



**Above Right:**  
Butts Road over-bridge  
looking towards the tunnel.  
(Julian Heard)



**Below Right:**  
The tunnel portal at the  
Horspath end. (Julian Heard)



The Barlow rail dating from 1853 before sectioning.  
(Julian Heard)

As planned, Geoff and I returned the following weeks armed with a powerful torch. I also had stout leather boots, Geoff didn't - big mistake! We made our way down to the tunnel and entered into the darkness. Although 500 odd yards is not particularly long, you cannot see any light from the other end. This we discovered is due to the tunnel curving to the right. Walking through the tunnel is quite an eerie experience, even the light of a 'Maglite' torch doesn't seem to penetrate very far and although fairly dry underfoot, there is a distinct dankness about the atmosphere. Following the route of the track bed there is a noticeable uphill gradient and regular alcoves on each side, once used by PW gangs. The lining of the tunnel appeared sound enough, although there is a lot of evidence of water permeation which has left many quite colourful deposits on the brickwork. As we continued round the curve a small speck of light indicated the other end and somehow appeared very comforting, the tunnel is not really a place to be alone in. Checking carefully around with the torch, a GWR railchair, several old bolts and even the remains of an old moped were found. We thought of asking local plod to come and check out the bike but the probable reply was unlikely to be very polite and certainly unprintable..... As we got nearer to the end of the end of the tunnel two things caught our eye, the first was the remains of an old mile post secured to the left hand side and the second was a distinct offset ridge in the lining which indicated that perhaps the engineers didn't quite get the alignment right initially. Finally, we reached the end of the tunnel which is also blocked up and has a grilling, fortunately this has been bent away so you can get out, albeit through a mud bath. Geoff's pristine suede walking boots started to take on a slightly grubby look as we left the tunnel! It was certainly nice to be back in daylight and for a while we looked around the brickwork of the Portal before moving on.

For some reason most of the cutting has been filled on the Wheatley side of the tunnel and gives the appearance of being a conservation area. Certainly the rabbit population and a young fox scampering around supported this view as we strolled along the route. Looking back, only the top arch of the tunnel was now visible over the infill. After several hundred yards the route drops back down to the old track bed level and the stream reappears to cover most of it. The route is now on a falling gradient towards Wheatley and is quite difficult to follow due to both the stream and undergrowth - Geoff's boots were looking worse by the minute! In the end we gave up on the trackbed and took a path along the remaining embankment which takes you to the outskirts of Wheatley village but with no access due to the encroachment of private property. We returned by much the same route although a slight error meant that we ploughed through three or four inches of really boggy

water - Geoff now had wet feet as well as boots of a very different colour to when we set out. The message is, of course - be sure to take the right footwear even on a fine day.

After a brief spot of lunch we decided to try tracing the trackbed back towards Oxford but after being accosted by a local resident who thought we were some nasty men who had come to take some trees down, and some very serious undergrowth we had to give up. Not deterred, we went on to the site of Horspath halt, but again were beaten by the undergrowth. Finally, an access off the Horspath Road, a few hundred yards from the Morris Cowley siding buffers, afforded success in reaching the track bed by an old bridge (presumably a farm crossing) and we made our way down to the stops. A general nose around did not produce much of any interest apart from rows and rows of new cars in a security pound and there were no train movements. It was now back to the car and a well earned jar or two in 'The Railway' at Wheatley (worth a visit to look at photographs of the old station etc on the walls). Incidentally, the old piece of rail has been sectioned and a small section was even presented to Terry Dearling for services to Fawley.

If you want to do a little exploring the tunnel makes for quite a pleasant outing, access is easily gained from Butts Road over-bridge, Horspath. To find Butts Road, take the Wheatley exit from the M40, go into the village centre and turn left into Station Road, carry on up the hill for about a mile and then take the right turn for Horspath and Cowley. Butts Road is on the right as you descend the hill a few hundred yards before the old bridge over the road. Remember to take a good torch, wear stout boots and go with a friend for safety reasons - whilst I believe the tunnel to be safe, it is still a hostile place if anything happens to you. Happy wandering.

Just by way of a final word, I was talking to Doug, the regular driver and ex-BR fireman at Fawley and he told me that he had quite a few turns on the old route with goods trains. Apparently the tunnel was disliked by enginemen because of its tight clearance, uphill gradient from Oxford and lack of any ventilation shafts which lead to choking exhaust fumes on the footplate. The trick to reduce this was to let the fire go down and ease the regulator a bit - always the trade mark of an experienced crew.

## BOOKSHELF



### Alan Costello

**NETWORK SOUTHEAST  
O.P.C.**

**M. Lawrence  
ISBN 0 86093 494 2**

The subtitle of Sector - Privatisation sums up the contents of the book. It looks at each of the sectors that comprised Network South-East before April this year. Each chapter shows the changes that have occurred in the relatively short period. Old DMUs have been replaced by Turbos and the old electric EPB sets by the Networkers - the electric equivalent of the Turbos. A large number of photos show the changes. A look forward to what will happen in the future is also given.

**THE INTERCITY STORY Edited by M. Vincent & C.Green  
O.P.C. ISBN 0 86093 524 8**

A look at another of the parts of British Rail now being privatised. The InterCity name was first used for the weekday express from Paddington to Wolverhampton via High Wycombe in 1950, but in 1966 it was used as a marketing name for the new electric service from London to Manchester and Liverpool. The book contains nine chapters looking at various aspects from the introduction through to the design and, finally, a look at the future by Chris Green. The book ends with a 'fact-file' giving a complete list of statistics including locos, routes and marketing details.

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

### Roger Bowen

The autumn of 1969 reminds me that some of our current railway projects go back a long time.

For example, plans were a heel for a channel tunnel terminal at Cheriton for the ferry terminal and near Saltwood for the passenger terminal. Manchester City Council decided not to promote a bill in parliament for a proposed eleven mile rapid transit line from Northenden to Higher Blackley. Fears that Swindon Workshops would shut shortly were unfounded unions were told by the Minister of Transport.

Contracts were placed for the Advanced Passenger Train Project - Hawker Siddley Dynamics Ltd for the design and manufacture of the suspension and braking units. Leyland Gas Turbines Ltd for the 350hp/400hp turbine engines and GEC-English Electric for manufacture of the body structures.

The Locomotive Club of Great Britain leased, on a yearly basis, a two mile section of Bowater's Industrial Light Railway between Siringbourne and Kemsley, Kent.

## TEN YEARS AGO

### Roger Bowen

The Chairman's notes referred to the publication of the 1000th edition of "Railway Magazine" in August 1984. Complimentary comments were made of a talk on the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust - a departure from the "mainly steam but always railways" policy when booking speakers.

**THE RAILWAY EMPIRE  
J. Murray**

**Anthony Burton  
ISBN 0 7195 5170 6**

The author describes the work of Britons in building railways around the world. British influence can be seen in most countries, but especially in Commonwealth countries. The engineers didn't trust the local labour and would often take the Navvies with them (eg 2000 were recruited to work in Australia). Most countries soon took over their own designing and building, but even in the 1920s the British were helping the Portuguese to build the Benguela Railway.

**THE LITTLE TRAINS OF BRITAIN John Timpson  
Harper Collins ISBN 0 00 218425 7**

A look at the narrow gauge for a change. 41 railways are covered in the book, 10 in great detail. A description of each railway gives the route, distance, gauge and approximate dates of operation. The location is shown and, where appropriate, a detailed map showing the route. The author describes his visit to each of the ten railways and includes interviews with employees. As the width of the book is longer than the height, the large number of colour prints are shown at their best.



In October the closure of the Longmoor Military Railway by the end of January 1970 was announced. However, it was hoped that the line would be kept alive to be used as foundation for a national historic transport centre.

British Railways accepted the Yorkshire Dales Railway Society's bid for the 18 acre Emsay station site together with associated railway track. The Great Western Society's first ever open day at its Didcot headquarters took place on 20th September 1969.

The seven Class 77 (EM2) Co-Co 1500 volt DC electric locomotives E27000 - E27006 had been sold to the Netherlands Railways and had been shipped from Harwich on the "Cambridge Ferry" in October 1969.

Finally, it was recorded that North Eastern Railway inspection saloon No. 305, built at York in 1902, and latterly numbered DE902177 had been purchased by Mr W.H.McAlpine and restored to NER livery at the BR Workshops in York.

Articles included one of the 1984 Society outings to the Great Central Railway and a detailed one on the West Somerset Railway by Eddie Lewcock. Mike Walker contributed a lively article on one of John Diffey's trips to Scotland - the 05.03 High Wycombe to Fort William!! Finally, a Mike Walker American article - what else!! - the Great Western Railway of Colorado!!