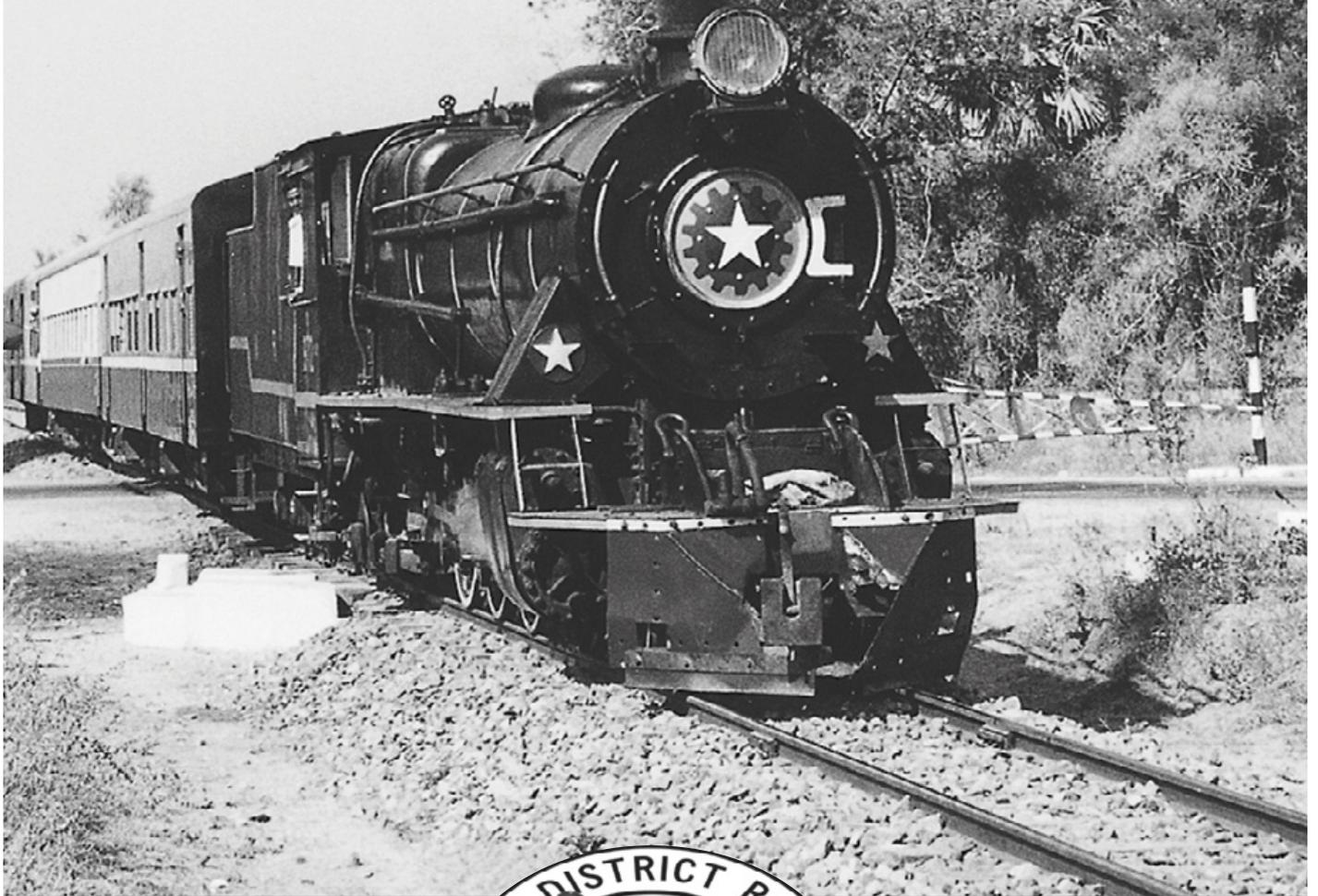


THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

96

June 2001



Contents:

Spinning Jenny
Road to Mandalay

The Marlow Donkey - The Magazine of the Marlow and District Railway Society

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH.

YD 972 ex Bagan, Myanmar (Burma) 2/2001. By Mike Hyde (see article 'On the Road to Mandalay')

Latest Copy Date for next issue of The Marlow Donkey 10th September 2001

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TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held at: Royal British Legion, Station Approach, Marlow at 7.45 for 8.00 pm.

2001

Thursday 19 July	RAILWAYS OF THE CHILTERNS	Roger Bowen
August	No meeting	
Thursday 20 September	WORLD STEAM	The Two Peters
Thursday 18 October	INDIAN STEAM	Dr Brandham
Thursday 15 November	AMERICAN RAIL TOUR	Mike Walker
Thursday 20 December	CHRISTMAS GATHERING	

DAY TRIPS

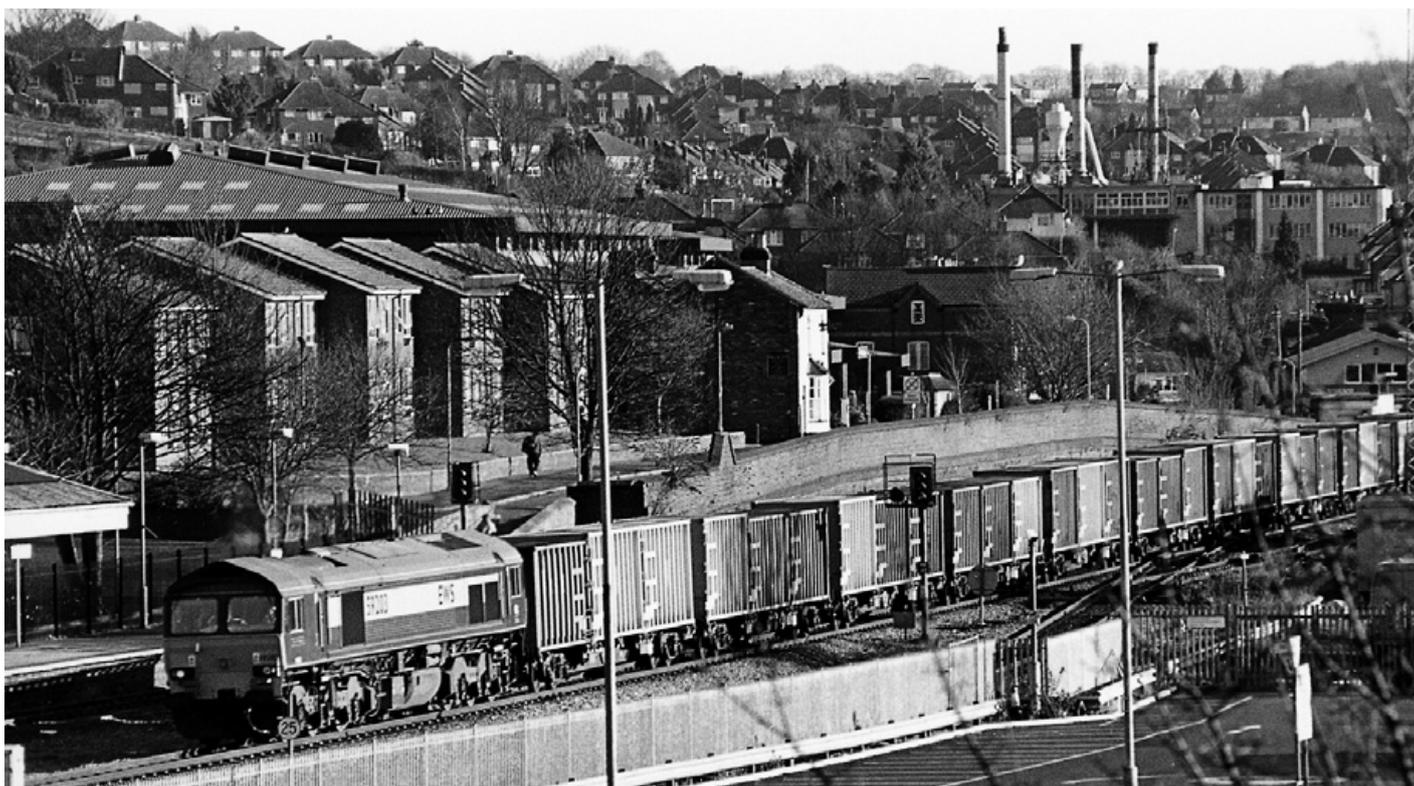
Sunday 1 July	CRICH TRAMWAY MUSEUM	By Coach
Coach cost	Entrance fee: Adult £5.90, Senior £5.20, Child £2.80	
Adult £12.50 Child £8.50		

WEEKEND TRIP

April 2002	BAYE DE SOMME	By car
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Please: NO TALKING DURING PRESENTATIONS

Please note: The above programme is subject to change



Seen from Easton Street multi storey car park, 59203 takes the 10.50 Brentford Refuse Transfer Station - Calvert 'binliner' train through High Wycombe station. - 7 January 2001

SPINNING JENNY MERRYMAKER

As a change from socks and handkerchiefs I was asked by one of my family what I required for last Christmas. A contribution to the cost of a rail tour I thought would be a change and duly a cheque was received among all the other Christmas presents. I decided on a Hertfordshire Rail Tours trip mainly due to their exceptional prompt refund of monies paid for the aborted Shildon trip last year. I have heard of some people that were kept waiting quite some time for their tour operator to make the refunds. So to show thanks it seemed only fair to support them.

The above named tour on the 24th February 2000 was selected which traversed the Pennines twice with Wigan as its final destination and the option to alight at Manchester if that City was of more interest. From the railway press I discovered that the tour was fully booked shortly after I had made my reservation. The weather the week leading up to the day was fine but the forecast for the day was not promising with sleet and snow predicted and temperatures around the zero point so warm clothing was a must. However apart from a slight covering of snow on the morning the journey to Potters Bar, my selected pick-up point was easy. My first surprise of the day was to discover that the four-£1 coins I had taken for the car-parking fee were not required, as parking at this station is free on Saturdays & Sundays. A good start to the day.

Upwards of 100 passengers had assembled on the platform by the due departure time but another ten minutes elapsed before 90033 in Railfreight livery brought its fourteen coach train in. The fourteenth coach was most welcome; as this was the generator car to supply much needed heat to warm the feet and hands that had stood for so long on the platform. Although I booked standard class I found my seat in a first class one in a compartment for six in the first/composite brake. My other five companions for the day were very knowledgeable and interesting and we all soon got down to putting the railways and Railtrack to rights.

With further pick-ups at Stevenage & Peterborough our next scheduled stop should have been Doncaster Decoy North Junction to exchange our electric loco for one suitable for the journey across the Pennines. To our surprise the train pulled in to the newly built Doncaster Royal Mail platform which due to its height meant that leg stretching was out of the question as the doors of the carriages were lower than the platform. It is meant to be so, not an error in the plans, those being in Imperial and the builder working in Metric. 66034 backed on to our train and departure was some fifteen minutes late as we took the little used, for passengers at any rate, line to the left towards Hexthorpe & Mexborough. A pathing stop was built in at Sheffield Midland but this was not utilised so a reduction to our lateness was recouped to the tune of six minutes. Passing through the 3mile 930yards Totley Tunnel we came upon the well known Earles' sidings where Freightliner liveried 66515 was waiting to take a rake of cement wagons away. The route from here to Manchester Victoria was the circuitous one via Hazel Grove, Stockport & Denton. Victoria station was not ready for us and a wait at the top of Miles Platting bank made arrival a fraction over five minutes down on schedule.

About half of the occupants, myself included, alighted here but the train continued via Eccles and Springs Branch to Wigan North Western. Hertfordshire Rail Tours supply a small booklet with interesting facts about the two locations visited together with maps and timings. Wigan Pier is actually a hump on the bank of the canal where coal from the local collieries was once loaded in to barges. According to the booklet it was the comedian George Formby senior that made the pier famous in his act at the Wigan Hippodrome.

Many of the passengers that alighted at Victoria sampled the new Metro route out to Eccles. This route has similarities with the London Docklands Railway as it journeys through a townscape. The new cars on this route (20xx series) I am told are not compatible with the 10xx series which are causing some problems. I chose to go to Piccadilly station for an hour or so as this has only recently been refurbished and the glazing replaced in the roof. I agree they have made quite a good job it and it is so clean and airy unlike some dungeon like rebuilt stations that are now in existence. For a good selection of coach livery this is the place to come to and a bonus if one is still thrilled to see first generation DMU's at work. Eleven were observed, working the New Mills Central and Rose Hill Marple services. Seven were in the old Regional Railways colours but the green set that used to ply from Llandudno Junction to Blaenau Ffestiniog was also observed as was a Strathclyde liveried set. Adding to the colours were both the Northern Spirits blue & gold and maroon & gold examples as well as Central Trains green and yellow, Greater Manchester's and Liverpool's own PTE colours and First North Westerns blue with gold stars. Oh I nearly forgot Richard's red and black Virgin stock. It is all very well having image branding but the station announcer spent a great deal of time apologising for the late running of this and that and it is punctuality that I am sure customers would prefer to all the various shades and hues.

On returning to Victoria, I like many others commented on the tunnel like effect of this station since it has been rebuilt with offices above similar to Wembley Central and Birmingham New Street. It is now very cramped with one platform numbered 3a, 3b & 3c with three trains regularly occupying the platform. The darkness in the station was most apparent when it spoilt a good photo shot of three class 56's in Loadhaul livery stopping for a crew change in the station. On time we were reunited with our train and left promptly behind 66034 again for the Diggle route over the Pennines. Healey Mills was passed in darkness but a couple of lines of withdrawn class 37, 47, & 56 were visible awaiting their last journey to the Wigan cutting up site.

Despite display screens at Doncaster and station announcements that our train was not for public use a passenger armed with beer cans boarded the train in the hope that it was going to Hull. Fortunately he made quite a bit of noise, sufficient to attract the attention of the train operator, who removed him and said beer cans to await a service to that city. The return journey in darkness was uneventful except for the stimulating conversation with fellow passengers and a visit to the Transport Diversions well stocked book/video stand in the brake compartment. A final hot drink from an

equally well stocked buffet which did not close immediately the train left Peterborough was sufficient to meet my needs until arrival on time at Potters Bar. A trip of 457 miles for minimal cost was most enjoyable. I did not win any of the ten raffle prizes but was pleased to learn that £680 had been donated to Macmillan Nurses as proceeds from the raffle.

Keith Brown.



ON THE RAILROAD TO MANDALAY

YB 533 Ex Bago to Kaikyo

Q. Where did you go this time? A. Myanmar. Q. Myanmar? Where is that? A. Burma to you. Between India, Thailand and China. Q. Ah Yes. Didn't the British build their railway and wasn't it the place of the notorious Death Railway in WW2? A. True to both. Q. Why there? Isn't it a bad government or something? Don't the papers tell you not to go there? A. Well first off they still run steam on scheduled rail services. And, Yes it does get in the papers but not often. But I prefer to see and judge for myself. Besides, if reported acts by foreign governments, army or dictatorships, stopped you going abroad it would certainly seriously cut your options for travel!! Enough of politics, we went for the trains, the scenery and the experience. And we were not disappointed or harassed or arrested or prevented from going anywhere or photographing whatever or mixing with locals or drinking their beer.

A long flight via Singapore (others went via Bangkok) to Yangon (Rangoon – you get used to 2 place names eventually) got us to our first-class hotel by a lakeside. The next morning presented a 3-hour ride around the Yangon Circular Railway, roughly 30 miles from start to finish. Some 38 stations/halts included such

names as Pagoda Road, Shan Road, Ahlone Road, Panhlaing Road, (did a GWR engineer name them?), Insein (a tour of the loco works followed later), Golf Course, Mingaladon Bazaar, and Kanbe. The line is basically a commuter loop out into the countryside and back. Our modestly armed (one Lee Enfield between four) Railway Police kept the crowds off our steam charter and did not appear officious but usually shy. Our loco was a British built 2-6-4 tank engine ST 754 based at Insein and appearing in good working order. The roomy footplate held a crew of often up to four including the immaculately dressed white-suited driver looking for all the world like an admiral minus battleship. Its true to say that throughout the whole trip, all crews and officials were friendly and tried to be helpful. In fact every service, footplate ride, photostop, even itinerary or stock change we asked for, we almost always got. Where else can you do that?

Insein Works were at lunch when we arrived. But the Assistant General Manager kindly broke off from his curry to greet me and conduct us around his site. Set in a garden like area was SL3, a plinthed 0-6-0 saddle tank. What struck me as soon as we entered



YD 962 at Darbain

the workshops was the unusual quietness (even when they were all ex-lunch), the tidiness and the relative cleanliness. The workshops looked well equipped to undertake all heavy engineering work. YD 974 was on a 6 months overhaul, YC 626 was minus its boiler but due out in April, Railcar 27 was said to be awaiting a new body and a pile of DF diesel cabs and loco-wheels were pending reuse. Also present outside were YB 508, YB 529 and ST 753. Plinthed and seemingly complete, was Garratt 2-8-2 2-8-2 GC 837. It made my day – what if they ever ran it again?! Not far away was sister GC 823 in very poor state, Tank Y59, Green coloured Tank AS144, rusting YC 624, frame from YD482, ‘BR’ ST782. An interesting place to wander at will. Afternoon sightseeing in Yangon.

Yangon is at the southern end of Burma. A vast river delta of flat rich agricultural lands. The coast actually runs several hundred miles further south narrowing all the time. It was down here, 2 weeks later, we travelled by train from Bago to Kaikyo and Mattoma thence by ferry to Moulmein. We stayed overnight and

returned but some 30 miles further south is the War Cemetery for the Death Railway which joined Thailand through the mountains and on to the Bridge on the River Kwai and Kanchanaburi (visited 6 years ago). But I am jumping ahead.

The following morning MR (formerly BR, i.e. Burma Railways) YD 962, 2-8-2 from the Vulcan Foundry, steams us to Bago, a busy bustling market town on the main am train for years! I should perhaps mention that frequently we crossed passenger and freight trains diesel hauled, usually by Class DF (Chinese?). Also not uncommon were petrol (?) rail cars driven on the railtrack by rubber tyred wheels, one either side, between the single wheels on the four corners of the car. Each railcar usually towed 2 or 3 passenger LRBT vehicles each running at odd angles to the horizon, the perpendicular and to each other. These trains were frequently well loaded. I manage a short, noisy, bumpy run in one later from siding to station with children jumping on and off at will. The cars are numbered in the LRBE Series and we saw from No.1 at Bago to as high as No.64. I was able to note at Nyaunglebin that No.59 was a 1996 Nissan but the origin of others is uncertain.

There then follows 2 nights in a luxury hotel in Mandalay with visits to markets, pagodas, monasteries and other interesting places by day. A gentle nine-hour boat cruise down the Irrawaddy



MR YC 629 Ex Mufama

River gets us to Bagan, the old capital and site of thousands of ancient temples, etc. Another superb hotel awaits us as well as sight seeing. Whilst some relaxed, in order to save time on the following day because of the long run to Pinyinana, rail oriented

passengers take our afternoon train from Bagan’s ornate Burmese station to Kyaukpadaug (said YA-PA-DA). Next morning we are bussed to where we left the train and embark behind YD972. A brief water stop at Tang Chwingyi allows us to ‘visit’ the sub-shed complete with Diesel DB 303 and Trailer car which seemed to be the home of the crew. At Pinyinana we change engines to YD973 and pay a return visit to the shed before departure. YB536 is on



YC 629 To Mandalay



YD 972 To Pyunmana

jacks getting frontend attention and obviously going to be late for the branch train. YD 964 and the Alco D1032 are present. On to Bago and another shed visit. Present are YD957, YC629 and YB533 our loco for the next day. Out back are the frames and remains of YB501, 505,509,521,523,545, cab off a YD and tanks off a ST. A sad sight!

Being a junction station, Bago then set us off in a SE direction to Kyaiko as mentioned earlier. YB533 is in charge plus a BTE (6 persons) and an Upper Class Coach (21 persons). With false starts and run-bys (why spoil a winning formula?) we make our lunch stop and an impromptu visit to Mokpalin shed. Another rail graveyard comprising YB543, YC625, 622, YD446, 516, ST768. Pride of the depot is ST778 looking ready to run. Tucked away is armoured car DCA8516, because we were getting nearer to bandit country. We crossed YD970 at Boyagyi. Lunch at a wonderful restaurant a few minutes from Kyaiko station subsequently lead us to the Golden Rock Pagoda Hotel. Now here's a tale. Coach to the foot of the mountain. The party

LRBE 24 Local to Kaiyko



DF 1228 To Mottama

splits into 2 with each in the back of a large pick up cum small lorry. What seems like an age (and I am in the cab!) and we are only at the half way base camp. A 15 minute wait w h i l s t descending vehicles arrive. Then off again for another bumpy climb at fast speed to the next base.

station is several miles south on the other side. Road bridge being constructed. Return journey next day and train YC629 takes us back to Kyaiko. Long coach run back to Yangon for final night and eventual flight home via Singapore the following day. Visits en route to War cemetery and to tourist shop.

Finally a short ride to the hotel. A beautiful spot but still an hour's walk to the top. Exhausting but achievable with sheer determination in spite of locals egging you on to take a sedan chair ride at £6 a go one way!

The following morning refreshed, on to Mottama. YC629 again leads. How well these locos are turned out. Always on time and crew ready to go. Another false start. Paddy fields, diesel crossing, overhaul a LRBE Railcar – all par for the course now. Getting blasé. Yes, visit to Mottama shed and sight of unusual LRBT182 plus APRC003 (armour protected railcar), YD969, YB534 and diesel. It is hereabouts I believe I lose my spectacles from my shirt pocket! From the ferry, a former train loading ramp is noted but the nearest

A fantastic country; a mixture of India and China. A wonderful people; friendly, patient, and willing. Not a crowded country, busy but relaxed. I just wish others were naturally like them. Lets hope they do not get swamped by the modern world. This trip by RTC- 'Steam to Mandalay'. *Mike Hyde. February 2001.*

RUNNIN' THE 5.15 TO HICKSVILLE

Mike Walker

Nowadays it's well nigh impossible for anyone not employed in a train operating position to ride in the cab of a British train – I know, my present professional role requires me to do just that and it's a long process to get authorised! Over the Pond, whilst the Federal Railroad Administration may hold a similar view, individual employees are far more likely to bend the rules to way beyond breaking point. However unlikely, I assure you all that follows is true – honest, m'lud!

For me America's Long Island Rail Road will always be a kind of Utopia where it seemed anything was possible and those to whom it should matter would look the other way. Long Island is that large chunk of real estate shaped like a 130 mile long fish caught by the hook of Manhattan. The LIRR has the virtual monopoly of rail services on the island and is the continent's busiest commuter rail system handling nearly 7 million passengers daily. The western third of the island is dense suburbia, Queens, Brooklyn and Nassau County, served by frequent electric services. The remainder is rural with hot spots of affluence which makes Gerrards Cross look down market. This is served by diesel push-pull trains. It was first authorised in 1835 (a good year) and in 1900 became a subsidiary of the mighty Pennsylvania Railroad – the "Standard Railroad of the World". In 1966 it was taken over by the state of New York and twenty years later I got to know it intimately thanks to it's second most senior engineer (driver) who became a lifelong friend. Reggie and all the other "perps" mentioned here in have now retired and the Statute of Limitations has expired so the tale can be told.

DO YOU WANT A GO?

During my frequent visits to the Big Apple it had become my custom to stay with Reggie and his charming wife Vera. Reggie would often invite me to accompany him on his shifts. One evening we were heading towards Manhattan with a 10 car Metropolitan EMU. The Metropolitans are 2-car stainless steel sliding door trains built in the 1970's. They can be formed into trains of up to 12 cars and run off a 750v dc third rail. The cabs of these trains are cramped cupboards on the right hand side with public seats on the left (If you've ever seen the film "Taking of Pelham 123" you'll understand what I mean). Anyway, we were sailing along with the cab door wedged open and me sitting alongside when Reggie turned to me and asked: "Do you want a go?" I was gob-smacked and politely declined. A couple of miles passed. "My (then) twelve year old daughter can run these". That was it, I was not being upstaged by a twelve year old, especially a girl!

At the next stop we changed places and under the watchful eye of

Reggie I drove my first ever train, with several un-suspecting passengers, down a main line. After a couple of stops we changed back again as Reggie thought it was a bit much for me to drive into Jamaica station (the LIRR's answer to Clapham Junction and overlooked by HQ) on my first go. After a turnaround at Penn Station in the heart of the city I took the train back east under cover of darkness and hit the ton on the racetrack through Woodlawn and Forest Hills. How I smiled later when BR trumpeted its Plastic Pigs getting up to three figures as a world first – the LIRR had been doin' it for years!

Within days I'd graduated to the big boys toys, the diesel services.

Then on the LIRR this generally meant a 2000 hp EMD model GP38-2 Bo-Bo freight diesel on the east end, a train formed of old EMU cars with their motors and controls removed whilst the west end had an APCU – Auxiliary Power Control Unit. These were rebuilt from 1940's era "streamlined" locomotives but had had their traction equipment removed and now provided only a cab and train lighting and heating power. Occasionally EMD MP15AC units, really only glorified switchers, substituted at one or both ends. They were horrendous monstrosities!

LOOK DAD - NO BRAKES!

Driving a train is far more difficult than a car even if you don't have to steer. Whatever you do, apply power or the brake takes a long time to react. At first it seems crazy to apply power down hill with a sharp bend at the bottom but when you realise there's a sharp climb straight out of the curve and that's when the power begins to take effect, it makes sense.

Knowing the road really is absolutely vital. Stopping is a challenge too if you are to stop exactly where you intend without covering the last mile at walking pace.

It becomes more difficult still if the train had any 2800 series cars in the consist. Instantly recognisable by their lower rooflines they were converted from the EMU stock Pullman-Standard built for serving the 1958 Worlds Fair at Flushing Meadow. I used to dread seeing one in our train because when they were rebuilt for push-pull service the LIRR had trouble with the brakes. So what did the resourceful souls at Morris Park 'shops do? They isolated their brakes of course! One day three of our five cars were 2800's – that's half the train with no brakes! That day I really did arrive at walking pace.

It wasn't only brakes that got overlooked. One warm summer day I was running GP38-2 272 on an eastbound train. The throttle was in notch 4 and we were cruising along a tad below the legal 50 limit when I glanced at the ammeter. It seemed we were pulling a colossal 2500 amps! Do that on a 47 and you'd be



Reggie Tonry grabs the orders for train 4040 from Joanne Sutherland at the LIRR's PD Tower in Patchogue on June 21st 1987

frying tonight! This didn't make sense so I looked closer, and called Reggie over, "look at this". After an equally close examination he shrugged his shoulders and returned to his seat saying "that's it, I've seen it all now". The needle had been lost so someone had carefully painted one on the inside of the glass! Quality of maintenance, you'll understand, was not the LIRR's forte.

YOU'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL HERE

When the LIRR was built it was part of the original New York – Boston route. Passengers rode the LIRR out to Greenport on the north east tip of the island and got a ferry to the mainland to catch another train to Boston. At Greenport the LIRR tracks used to go past the station and onto a pier. The latter has long since gone but the rails go almost to the water's edge and this being America, and more particularly the LIRR, there's no luxuries like a buffer stop just a couple of wheel chocks. At the other end of the station is a level crossing over a main street.

The first time I took a train into Greenport Reggie gave me a tough briefing. "You have to get well down the station" he said "or the rear end won't clear the crossing circuit and the gates will be down for the hour we're in town and we'll get hell from the cops". So I did as I was told. I'd been to Greenport so I knew how close the sea was and entered the station extremely gingerly. On we went slowly down the station until the view ahead was entirely wet. Out of the corner of my eye I could see Reggie's hand hovering on the emergency brake but I brought us smoothly to a stand. Great care was taken to ensure we set 266 up correctly to push out then we got off. The Geep was standing up to its axles in weeds and ahead of the pilot was about 15 more feet of rusty rail. Charlie, our regular conductor and a laconic Brooklyn-Italian, strolled up looked at the un-occupied section and asked "so what's wrong with that piece of rail then?" We then adjourned to the local ice-cream parlour but not before Reggie once more checked 266's set-up, something he repeated on our return. At least the public appreciated having 100 feet less to walk.

COPY THAT, PD OUT.

My unofficial place on the LIRR roster became so accepted that I was even using the train radio. The morning shift operator (signaller) at PD Tower in Patchogue was a cheerful young lady, Joanne. She became quite used to finding me taking the train orders from her as we passed PD and then exchanging comments on the radio along the lines of:

"LI 11 to PD, over".

"PD. Go ahead LI 11".

"Okay PD, this is LI 11, we've got 268, five cars and a pack in the clear at MS. Switches locked and lined".

"Thank you eleven, number 14 will be along shortly".

"Yeah, we can see his lights now".

"Copy that, PD out".

Nothing as sophisticated as signals out on the east end. Train movements are controlled by written orders and radio instructions and it works – most of the time!

CROSSING ETTIQUETTE

America has more than its fair share of level crossings and accidents at them as the majority are completely open with no more than a marker sign – and trains do not slow. Instead they just blow "14L" the rule that calls for two long blasts, one short and one long on those melodious five-chime horns until the crossing is occupied. But even barriers are no barrier to the fool-hardy.

One day I was standing at Bridgehampton station. We got the highball and I responded with two short toots and set off. Ahead the half barriers at a crossing fell and I started my — o — routine only to see a car weave around the barriers ahead of me. I responded by giving him full force of the horns and slamming the throttle into Run 8 then got ready to dump the air if he stalled. The old Geep responded in style with a voluminous eruption from the stacks which together with the assault of the horns, hopefully, put the fear of god into that idiot and would make him think twice next time! Provided he didn't stall there was no danger, slamming open the throttle for a short while did not up the speed.



"So what's wrong with this piece of track?" Reggie Tonry, Charlie DelVecchio and EMD GP38-2 266 at Greenport on July 4th 1987

LEAVES ON THE LINE

We are not alone in suffering from leaves on the line. One fine autumn day we were eastbound to Montauk doing about 50 when the overspeed trip (set for 89 mph) went off with a deafening siren in the cab. My complacency was shattered and Reggie started laughing. "you've hit some leaves and she's slipping" he shouted "give a touch of the independent (brake) and a blast of sand". I did and normal service was resumed. Reggie said it was common but he always let trainees find out this way rather than tell them in advance in summer – it's a lesson you don't forget.

A BIT SHORT? SET YOUR OWN PAY

A favourite layover was breakfast in the deli beside Babylon station. One morning though Reggie got on the radio and asked to take his train for washing which was agreed. So we walked to the other end and set off towards Babylon yard. Coming down the lead the wash rack op. radioed to ask if we were washing our train but Reggie declined and we parked up in a vacant yard track. When it was time to leave we returned to the station again by-passing the washing plant. I was mystified and peeved at missing my visit to the deli.

"Unscheduled switching move" observed our man, "extra half-day's pay".

"But you asked to do it and didn't even wash it".

"You know that, I know that, he knows that (gesturing to the tower op as we passed) but the pay office don't".



A LIRR 'Metropolitan' (left) leaves Jamaica station in Queens alongside a diesel push-pull train trailed by power pack 615, a former Great Northern ALCo FA1, as the commuters head for home on October 19th 1988

ROCK 'N' ROLL SUNDAY

One Sunday morning I was mighty glad I wasn't driving. We were running the Speonk to Babylon shuttle and had a MP15AC on the west end. All was normal until we rounded a curve near Bay Shore and the unit lurched so violently we nearly fell off our seats. Looking behind the train also rocked wildly and instantly Reggie was radioing Charlie to make sure everything was still on the rails. "What the hell was that?" cried Charlie to which Reggie said he caught sight of a badly lined rail too late to slow. He then radioed the chief dispatcher at Jamaica to report the incident and we were told a track crew would be sent out. When we came back we slowed right down and walked the train across the badly dipped track joint.

This was the first of four round trips we had to do that day and on our second we found a track inspector about a mile east of the site. Reggie again radioed the DS and told him the guy was in the wrong place but he was still in the same general area when we came back again. Reggie slowed right down, leant from the cab and told the trackman in no uncertain terms where and what the problem was. Later we heard on the radio that "nothing wrong had been found"! Furious, Reggie used the telephone to report the matter to head office on a line that is recorded (as is the radio traffic) "I'm making damn sure if somebody hits the dirt there, my butt's not on the line".

That evening the Cannonball would be along. This is the hottest train on the Montauk line, not a push-pull it includes parlour cars for the wealthy to ride back from their weekend retreats in the Hanptons to the weekday flats in the city, it's more civilised than a stretched limo on the Long Island Express- (haha) way. It's crew would probably be unaware of the situation so Reggie and I went to the scene and when we heard her horns in the distance he lit a fusee (a red flare) and set it in the track. Whilst the engineer saw it and dumped the air the train still rocked its way over the defective joint at around 25 mph before stopping. We walked up to the locos and Reggie and the engineer conferred after which the engineer had a meaningful exchange of views with the DS the content of which does not bear repeating! Next morning the track was finally repaired.

HE'S JUST A RAILFAN

One carefree morning I was bowling down the mainline and brought us smoothly into Hicksville station. Reggie was snoozing in the left hand seat. As we rolled in I saw a guy with a clipboard ahead looking at us. "Who's this guy Reggie?" Reggie looked up and said not to worry. The stranger then climbed aboard the locomotive and came into the cab. I became uncomfortable especially when he was introduced as a Road Foreman of Engines (Motive Power Inspector to you)! There I was, a foreign, non-railwayman sitting at the controls of a public train. God, I thought, I'll be lucky to get away with less than 10 years on Rykers Island for this. Reggie introduced me as "Mike, visiting

from England", to which the RF replied "hi, pleased to meet ya – do ya work for Brit (sic.) Rail?" Before I get the chance to lie my way out of a tricky situation, Reggie injects "no, he's just a railfan!". I think, please ground, open and swallow me!

By now we were getting "two to go" from behind and Reggie says "come on then, let's go". There was nothing for it but to go along and make damn sure I did a perfect job. First the clear signal ahead had a flashing red auxiliary aspect which told me we had to pick up orders. Reggie stood behind me, leant out of the window grabbed them and handed them to me. In accordance with the rules I read them aloud as did Reggie then the RF before they placed them on the control stand where they would remain visible – they warned us of a temporary speed restriction.

After a few more, I think, perfectly executed station stops we rolled into Ronkonkoma where the RF announced he was getting off, phew! Reggie tried to persuade him to accompany us to Greenport but the RF said he had a party to go to. "Hell", says Reggie, "it's the fourth of July, We've all got parties to go to". I'm sat there thinking, please just go! Eventually they both got off and I looked down to see them and Charlie in a huddle on the platform. Finally Reggie bounded back on board and gave me the highball.

"You're for it now, he was a Road Foreman. How many laws have we broken?" I asked.

"Oh, he's no problem. Just remember this. He's a recovering alcoholic and I'm a past local President of the BLE (union). I can make things far worse for him and he knows it". There was a pause before he continued. "Anyway when we got off Charlie said 'I assume Mike's running the engine', and then [when we agreed] he said 'thought so, the ride was too smooth to be you'".

It seems the RF was quite impressed with my show of train handling but then I had been taught by the best.

A LOOK AT SUMMERS PAST - 1976 AND 1986

Compiled by Tim Edmonds



6201 'Princess Elizabeth' emerges from Ludlow tunnel into the station with the northbound leg of the 'Stanier Centenary' special. 5 June 1976

25 Years Ago

On 5 June the Princess Elizabeth Locomotive Society ran a special train from Euston to Chester to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Sir William Stanier. The 'Stanier Centenary' was headed by LMS Stanier Pacific 6201 'Princess Elizabeth' from Hereford to Chester and return.

On 11 June the ill-fated experimental Advanced Passenger Train (APT-E) arrived at York for display in the National Railway Museum.

After storage in Leicester for some years, ex-Great Central 2-8-0 class 04 63601 was moved by road to Longsight depot, Manchester. On 20 June it was towed between two brake vans by 40010 to Dinting Railway Centre, where it was intended to restore it to working order.

15 Years Ago

Closure notices were withdrawn from the lines between Marylebone and Harrow-on-the-Hill and Northolt Junction. The proposals, first announced in 1984, involved closure of stations at Marylebone, Wembley Complex, Sudbury & Harrow Road, Sudbury Hill Harrow and Northolt Park, the diversion of High Wycombe line trains to Paddington, and the truncation of the Aylesbury line services at Amersham (with passengers transferring to the Metropolitan line).

The new Hornsey Electric Maintenance Depot was completed in readiness for the completion of the Great Northern suburban electrification. On the site of Ferme Park Up marshalling yard, the new depot was built to maintain the class 312 and 313 EMUs. The adjacent former steam and diesel shed was converted into a store.

Following an increase in both freight and passenger business on the Highland main line, work began on restoring to double track the 23½ miles between Blair Atholl and Dalwhinnie over Druimuachdair summit. This section had been singled between 1963 and 1965.

F.W. Hawksworth, last Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Great Western Railway, between 1941 and 1948, died at Swindon on 13 July aged 92.

The first two Roumanian-built class 56 locomotives, 56001 and 56002, were landed from the train ferry at Harwich on 4 August. After inspection at Colchester depot, they left for Tinsley on 7 August.



The new Electric Maintenance Depot for the Great Northern Electrification, seen from the footbridge at Hornsey looking towards Finsbury Park. 1 August 1976

On 10 June the former London & South East sector of British Railways launched its new image as 'Network SouthEast', with a new livery of dark blue, white, grey and red for locomotives and rolling stock. There also began a programme of station refurbishment, with new signs and colours including bright red lamp-posts. The following week Chris Green, Director of Network SouthEast, marked the start of work on the ThamesLink line by mechanically digging out a section of trackbed in Snow Hill tunnel, between Blackfriars and Farringdon.

Following the official withdrawal by NS (Netherlands Railways) of the last four workable class 1500 locos (ex-BR class 77/EM2) at the end of May, the EM2 Locomotive Society organised a



On the EM2 Locomotive Society's 'EM2-NS1500 Farewell Tour', the last four serviceable members of the class lined up on display at Boxtel Yard during a photographic stop. 14 June 1986

final passenger working on 14 June. On 15 July 1502 (formerly 27000 'Electra') and 1505 (formerly 27001 'Ariadne') returned to Britain for preservation at the Midland Railway Centre and the Greater Manchester Museum of Science & Industry respectively.

Excursion specials between Exeter and Okehampton were chartered by West Devon Borough Council on four Saturdays during the summer. Two return DMU trips were run by the 'Dartmoor Rambler' on 26 July and 2, 16 and 23 August.

World steam speed record holder 4468 'Mallard' worked the first (6 July) and last (25 August) of the 'Scarborough Spa Express' excursions between York and Scarborough. Other locos in the operating pool for this train were 3440 'City of Truro', 4472 'Flying Scotsman', 4771 'Green Arrow', 34092 'City of Wells' and 92220 'Evening Star'.



On the second week of operation of 'The Dartmoor Rambler' services, a 'Skipper' DMU forms the 09-36 Exeter St. Davids - Okehampton and is seen passing the remains of Sampford Courtenay Station. 2 August 1986

All pictures taken by Tim Edmonds

BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LANDS END

Mike Walker

A few months ago, a fairly new Thames Trains' driver found himself held at a red signal on the Down Relief at Twyford. He got on to Reading Panel where the "bobby" said he was holding him until an up HST had passed then he'd send him "across Lands End".

Somewhat mystified, the driver replied: "This train's going to Oxford and as far as I know the railway only goes as far as Penzance!"

Signalman: "Don't you know where Lands End is?"

Driver: "Yes, it's the tip of Cornwall".

Signalman: "No, it's what we old-timers used to call Twyford West Junction".

This shows the value of train operators giving their crews as detailed information as possible. I remember some years back how one of our members 'Mark Hopwood' looked bemused by Peter Robins and I referring to the Chocolate Poodle pub at Lavington. Mark said he'd frequently seen reports of "trains passing the Chocolate Poodle 10 late" or whatever but didn't understand it. We explained that said hostelry was as close as matters to the old London and Bristol Divisional Boundary and now marks the division between Reading and Westbury Panels. Old timers preferred the pub name to something more technical. Mark hasn't forgotten!

Lands End, Twyford? Well that's a pub of course!



On the main demonstration line at Didcot Railway Centre 0-6-0PT 3738 brings the shuttle from the Oxford Road station into the Eynsham platform.

1 April 2001

RAMBLING...

John Sears

It cost the equivalent of twenty pence and carries on its back cover an advert for 'The Modern Writing Instrument' - a Biro, cost £1.74. A refill and service for your Biro was offered for twenty-five pence. A Biro in those days was obviously aimed at the serious writer. But on! The opposing train has cleared the main and we can leave the siding. Turning to the front cover reveals the magic words 'Bradshaw's British Railways Guide' and the date December 1947.

Come, if you will, back to the Great Britain of more than fifty-three years ago. Where to start? Well, that's the reason for the title of this piece. There is just so much that is intriguing, or strange, or amazing, or just downright puzzling. Wonderful. Yes, that's the word: the 1129 pages are full of wonder. We shall ramble through its pages at will, going where whimsy leads. Let's get on at Bushmills, en route to the Giant's Causeway, or at the gloriously named Woodenbridge Junction.

Place names are fascinating in themselves. How about Ryme Intrinseca? No, that's not valid - never served by a station, the nearest is still Yetminster on the G.W.'s line to Weymouth. It had nine down trains on weekdays in 1947, and has eight now, a rare example of a better service in 1947. An example close to home will show what irregular services most lines had in those times of austerity in the fight back to normality after the war. Trains on Mondays to Fridays from Bourne End to Maidenhead in the off-peak were at 9.52, 10.36, 13.20, 15.19, 16.33. More a country branch than suburban link. Back in 1892 Beatrix Potter holidayed in the West Country, describing the Great Western as a 'great railway'. In the winter of 1947 that railway offered trains from Paddington to Bristol at 5.30, 9.05, 10.45, 13.18, the last with calls at Wantage Road and Challow and dragging itself into Temple Meads at 16.25. But wait! On Fridays it became the 13.15, ignored everywhere except Bath Spa and arrived at 15.37.

There was far more variation in the service in those days. The 6.05 from Oban to Edinburgh (Princes Street) called at Dalry Road in Edinburgh on Wednesdays only, whereas the 12.05 called every day. The 16.45 from Oban conveyed sleeping cars for Euston on Mondays and Thursdays. They returned on the 19.30 from Euston on Wednesdays and Fridays. Now a Friday sleeper from London makes sense, but was the Thursday sleeper from Oban anything other than a way to get the car back to London after its Wednesday trip from the Great Wen? A Sunday night run from Oban would have made much more sense than Monday, but there was no service from Oban on Sundays. However, there was a train to Oban. A train left Stirling at 8.35 for all stations to Oban except Kingshouse Platform, Killin Junction and Ach-na-Cloch. What on earth was the economics of that? Eighty-two miles of line open for one train? Did the staff donate their labour?

Kingshouse Platform was a request stop, a mile south of Balquhidder station, the junction for the line to Comrie, and Crieff, where the line split again, one branch to Perth, the other to Gleneagles. Kingshouse Platform was in fact that mile closer to Balquhidder, but had the disadvantage that 'No luggage or bicycles will be put out or taken in' and could only be used for journeys to or from stations to the south, not towards Oban. Two trains each way ran between Balquhidder and Comrie, running for miles along Loch Earn and calling, by request, at Dalchonzie Platform. There 'heavy luggage' was banned and passengers wishing to join trains had to give notice at least five minutes

before their intended train left its previous stop. That surely means that the platform had staff in attendance, but why? For a total of seven possible stops? (There was an additional train each way between St. Fillans at the east end of Loch Earn and Comrie, plus the train at 7.36 mentioned below.) Perhaps it was a public goods siding, but even so the train service spanned over twelve hours! Perhaps there was a phone to the manned stations either side. That illustrates another facet of 1947. St. Fillans had its first train at 7.36, a through train to Edinburgh, and its last at 19.33, to Comrie. It was staffed for all that time, during which seven passenger and probably two freight trains called. Is it any wonder that the line closed at the beginning of October, 1951?

Let's travel back to place names. East Anglia is a happy hunting ground. There's Spooner Row, upon whose up platform your author once alighted, and where the 17.54 restaurant car train from Liverpool Street to Norwich called at 21.26. On the complex of lines between Cambridge and Sudbury were Sturmer, and Sible and Castle Hedingham, a station which served the villages of Castle Hedingham and Sible Hedingham, and hence perhaps ought to have been called 'The Hedinghams'. Yes, Sible is a variation of that dragon of a wife down in Torquay. A few miles further south-east the line to Tollesbury ('Light Railway') was embellished with Tolleshunt Knights and Tolleshunt D'Arcy. A somewhat cryptic note reads 'Tickets (single only) and Local Tickets are issued on the train'. Does that mean that passengers could buy returns if they wanted to travel on the branch to, say, Feering Halt, but not if they wished to go up to London?

The Cambridge to Mildenhall line, which survived until June 1962, had a station called Quy. Three trains each way provided the service, and anyone travelling to somewhere such as Worlington Golf Links Halt had to 'travel in special car provided'. They would also, if joining at Quy or 'the halts', buy their tickets on the train. On the Bury to Thetford line, four trains a day also had a special car for the use of passengers to and from Seven Hills Halt. Ingham, the first stop out of Bury, sold its own tickets, whereas all the other stations relied on the guard. How many staff worked at Ingham to keep it open from the first call at 7.11 until the last at 18.57? Another 'special car' worked the Framlingham branch from Wickham Market (compare High, or 'Chepping' Wycombe) for use at Hacheston Halt. These special cars were equipped with steps to allow for the low platform heights. The last trains so equipped were probably the railbuses used on lines such as Boscarne Exchange Platform to Bodmin North.

Life must have been easy on such branches. After the departure of the first train of the day at 8.38, the staff at Framlingham next saw a train at 9.56, which returned to Wickham at 12.30. The next train, in at 13.43 stayed until 15.15 and didn't get back until 18.35! But it wasn't just branches with hours between trains. While not as bad as Denver to Salt Lake City in Rio Grande Zephyr days: the scene, Denver Union at 7.35 on a Monday 'Have I missed the train?' 'Yes.' 'When's the next one?' '7.30 on Thursday.', somewhere like Grantham was far from rushed. The morning's down main line trains were the 7.02 to Leeds, the 10.06 local to Doncaster (or perhaps Hull, the timetable isn't clear), the 11.38 WSO to Tyne Commission Quay for the boat to Bergen, and the 11.58 MSO to Newcastle.

Wisbech still had two stations, which are not given any differentiating suffixes, one on the March to Magdalen Road line

(ex Great Eastern) and the other on the Peterborough to Sutton Bridge route of the fabled Midland & Great Northern Joint. Both routes had some gorgeous names. First stop out of March was Coldham, for Pear Tree Hill, while on the M & GN, which had a level crossing with the March to Spalding line, were Wryde and Tydd. The latter name is recorded as 'Titt'early in the middle ages, from the Old English titt 'a teat', describing the small rise in the fens whereon the village lies. On the Sutton Bridge to Bourne line came Counter Drain and Twenty. Does anyone remember the two car dmus used out of Kings Cross before electrification? They were a poor design for suburban services, with only two doors per side. They were originally intended to be sent to dieselise the M & GN, but were diverted after most of it was shut in March 1959. 'We closed 150 miles of railway when we did the Midland & Great Northern' boasted Gerard Fiennes in his autobiography 'I Tried to Run a Railway'.

What were the armies of clerks and managers crunching in those years before Beeching? What might have been the result if they'd been more aware? Page 953 has more examples of wonderful services, the branches from Hull to Hornsea and Withernsea. In these days of 'parliamentary services' like Stockport to Stalybridge one can only wonder why on Mondays only Wassand, between Hornsea and Siggleshorpe, had its sole service of the week, when the 10.50 from Hornsea picked up, and the 16.20 from Hull set down. Wassand station was about half a mile from Goxhill, which is a farm and a church, and was named after Wassand Hall, a good two miles away across the fields. Siggleshorpe was about three miles from its station; in fact Siggleshorpe was just as close to Hornsea station. Four stations up the line came the station at the delightfully named Swine. Both branches had a Sunday service, comprising one return working from Hull at about 8.00, and another at about 19.00. Yet again, one can only wonder at the economics of it all. What happened at Hornsea station between the departure of the morning train at 9.17, and the evening working at 20.15? Presumably the staff worked a split shift, but even so probably received seven hours pay for about two hours work.

The distance of many stations from the places they purport to serve has been noted above on the Hornsea branch, but perhaps the Great Western was the most renowned for this feature. Unfairly maybe. Bradshaw sometimes indicated how far a place was from its station. Kimbolton, on the Cambridge to Kettering line, has note 'F': 'Station 2¼ miles from Kimbolton'. However, Raunds, the next stop towards Kettering, hasn't any such comment, even though it and its station were a good two miles apart. At least the Great Western was honest, with its 'Road' description. Many such stations later actually gave their name to the place which grew up around them - Grampound Road and St. Columb Road, both in Cornwall, are just two examples. Another Road station - Llanrhystyd Road, the first stop out of Aberystwyth on the line to Carmarthen should have been given a note - it was over six miles from Llanrhystyd.

Some of the service frequencies are hard to credit nowadays. Where's this? Trains from London at 9.20, 10.03, 11.20, 12.10, 13.00, 14.00 and 15.15, all except the last third class only. It was Maidenhead. And here; trains at 9.10, 9.20, 10.25, 11.20, 12.15, 12.25, 12.50, 13.25, 14.05, 15.12, and 15.15? Wycombe is the answer, the trains in italics being from Marylebone. The 12.15 ran non-stop with restaurant car on its way to Manchester London Road. Now that's something Wycombe hasn't got today - through trains to the East Midlands and the North West, even if they did take five hours all but four minutes for the journey. Of the Paddington trains, the 9.10 was another restaurant car non

stop train, on its way to Chester or Birkenhead Woodside (the timetable doesn't say), the 9.20 and 11.20 ran via Bourne End and the 12.25 and 13.25 ran via Greenford. Salisbury to Westbury had seven trains on weekdays, now that total is reached before 11.15. And 'owsabout this then? Trains left Euston for Glasgow Central at 10.00, due 18.50 and at 13.00, due 22.05. Off the Cross for Edinburgh at the same times, the East Coast trains arrived at 18.17 and 21.32. Examples this summer are the 17.30 from Euston due at 22.55, while from Kings Cross the 17.00 is due in Edinburgh at 21.13 - taking less than half the time of 1947.

Fifty-three and a bit years on, what wouldn't I give to go back to those times to see what it was all really like. To be walking the mile and three quarters from Kirkby Lonsdale up to the station to catch the 19.02 to Tebay, there to catch the 20.05 to Kirkby Stephen and on to Barnard Castle, over Belah Viaduct and Stainmore Summit. A marvellous ramble through the Pennines. But perhaps the call of Hardy's Wessex is strongest, to the Bridport branch, to that pub near Toller station, in the village of Toller Porcorum, another of those posh Latin names common in that part of the world. In 'The Bridport Branch' by Jackson and Tattershall there is a picture taken in 1957 of the staff of Bridport station. There are thirty-five people in it: gangers, loco men, signalmen, at least six clerks and, proudly in the middle, the station master.

Sic transit gloria mundi.

Oh! Quay? It means 'cow island'.