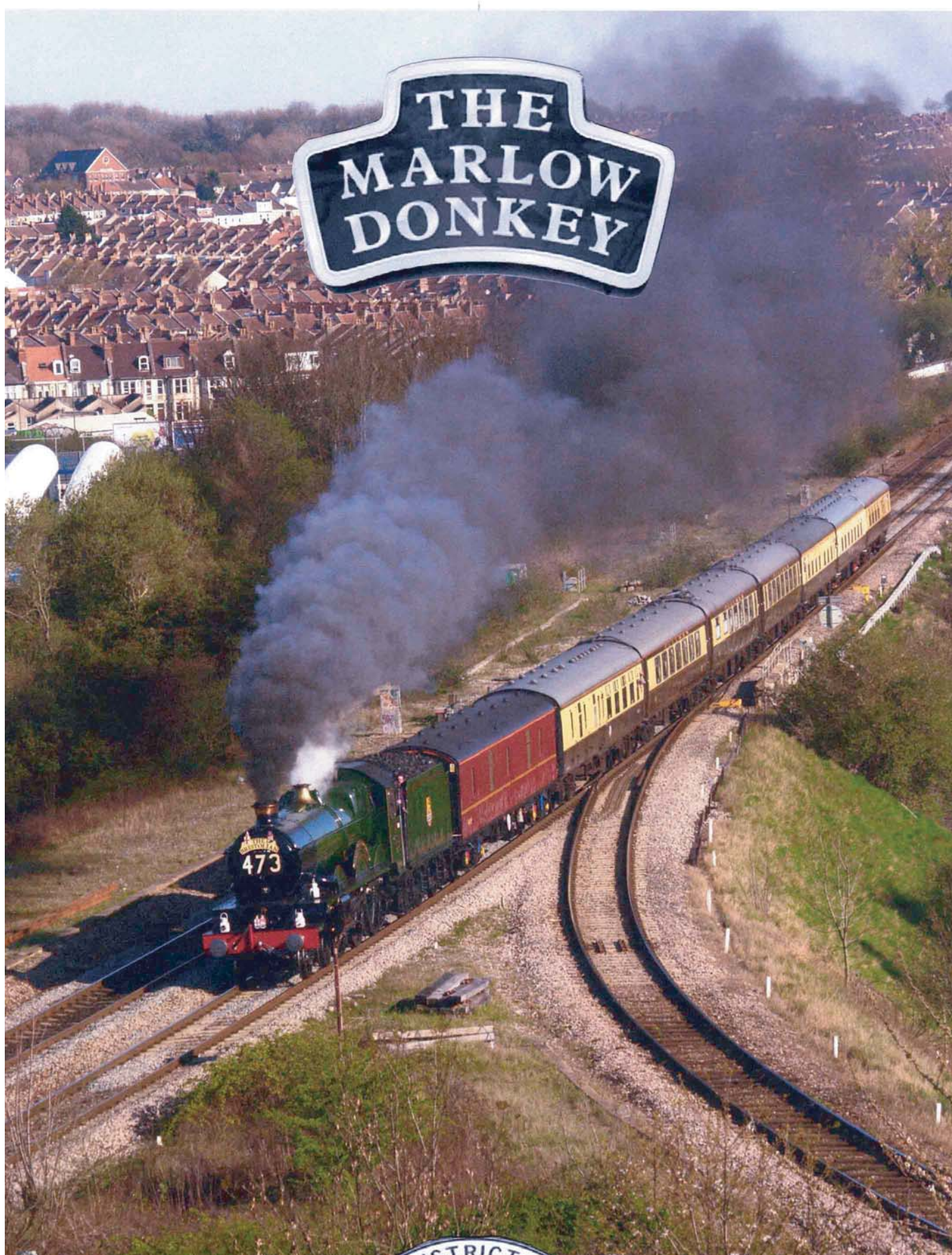


# THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

# 129

June 2010



Contents:  
Visit to Old Oak Common  
Dampfspektakel 175  
Ireland in the 40's & 50's

# The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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The contents of the *Marlow Donkey* represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Society

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### FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* storms past Narrowways Hill Junction on the climb out of Bristol as it starts its record-braking dash back to Paddington on 17th April 2010.

*photo: Mike Walker*

# TIMETABLE

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Rd, Bourne End at 7.45 for 8.00pm.

- Thursday 17 June                      **REBUILDING THE WELSH HIGHLAND**                      Andy Savage  
Andy is a leading volunteer on the WHR and brings us up to date on this remarkable project as it approaches completion.
- Thursday 15 July                      **A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO BRITISH RAILWAY SIGNALLING Part 2**                      Mike Walker  
Following on from part 1 last year which looked at mechanical signalling, Mike examines modern power signalling and associated systems.
- Thursday 16 September                      **THE ALAN MORRIS COLLECTION**                      Julian Heard  
Julian presents a selection of photographic images from the collection our late member Alan Morris, taken by both himself and others.
- Thursday 21 October                      **FROM MY FATHER'S COLLECTION**                      David Cross  
David has been delving into the treasures of the photos taken by his late father, Derek Cross, and will be sharing a selection of top-class pictures with us.

## FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Thursday 12 August                      **RETURN VISIT TO FIFIELD**                      by car  
David Bucks has invited the society to visit his private railway at Fifield once again. Two steam and one diesel locomotive should be in use. See page 3 for details.
- Saturday 18 September                      **STATFOLD BARN RAILWAY**                      by car  
We have been fortunate to secure places for a return visit to this superb private site near Tamworth but you must book straight away! See page 3 for details.

*Please note: The above programme is correct at press time but subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Please check the Society's website [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk) for the latest details.*

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

How often do you read the captions to pictures on calendars? I have a nice forward planner type calendar with Barry Freeman paintings of railway scenes on display in our kitchen so I can mark up when I'll be out and about and Mrs S can arrange our social diary around those events. The other day I actually read the caption to May's picture, which shows a GWR "Star" and remarks on the long length of service these locos provided, from introduction in 1907 until withdrawal of the final member in 1956, practically 50 years. This prompted me to think about other classes of loco and although some freight and shunting types built in the Victorian era lasted through to the 1950's or 60's there are other famous classes that really did not have a very long life. The A4's for example lasted about 30 years and the A3's a maximum of around 40. The "Castles" were built over a very long period but even the oldest only made just over 40. The GWR was noted for trying to get the best value for their money and I suppose the 28xx 2-8-0's were a good example of this, as they made 60 years in service.

To put this into perspective though, the A60 stock on the Metropolitan Line to Amersham is approaching 50 years old. You tend not to think of this type of rolling stock as being terribly "substantial" but, despite overhauls, I think getting to 50 is a remarkable achievement and bearing in mind their imminent replacement, now may be the time to go out and get some photos. I suppose London Transport must have set a high standard for the build quality of its trains, as examples of two generations of tube stock have ended up on the Isle of Wight, the current examples dating from 1938 I think. Of course the oldest HST's are 34 years old this year and still in front line service. I wonder how many miles some of them have done? Perhaps we should have asked during our Old Oak Common visit - did anybody find out? Given their age I am always [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

amazed how modern the HST fleet still looks and they are certainly much more comfortable to ride in than most newer trains.

Talking of new trains, the route for the proposed HS2 rail line was announced prior to the election and the wailing of nimbys was heard far and wide. It was good to see that Murray Tremellen had a letter published in the local paper pointing out the benefits of the proposed line but I fear it may have little effect. Of course the change of Government may have a major impact on such proposed developments, not only HS2 but also Crossrail and the Western electrification. We shall see.

We have had a major change in the Society, with the first meeting held at Bourne End Community Centre. From a personal perspective I think it's an improvement over our previous venue but it was a shame it was so very hot and we will endeavour to do something to improve the ventilation and hence the temperature for future meetings. I think we had a thoroughly entertaining inaugural presentation from Bill Davies, who was pleased to see so many of us in attendance. Thank you for your support. Speakers are very aware of numbers and get a lot of satisfaction from a good turnout. I was very surprised to get a phone call from Ron White the day after his African presentation just to say how much he had enjoyed his evening with us, principally because he knows at the MDRS he will get some dialogue going with the audience which enhances his showmanship. We are planning to get him back again soon and in the meantime there are more excellent presentations lined up for the rest of the year.

Now let's hope we have a good summer and wherever you get to, enjoy yourselves.

*Tim Speechley*  
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# SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

## NEW MEMBERS

Once again it is a pleasure to be able to welcome two new members to the Society; David Catton from Earley and Roger Dye from Hambleden.

As we had only one non-renewal this year our membership now stands at 57 which is probably an all-time record which is encouraging when so many groups such as ours seem to be in decline.

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS

We have enjoyed three superb presentations during the spring. In March Geoff Plumb entertained us with a stunning collection of slides of British steam he took back in 1965 when he was only 15 years old. Geoff has since gone on to be a TV cameraman and "unofficial" photographer for Chiltern and W&S.

In April it was a great pleasure to welcome back our old friend Ron White who proved that there is still life after Colour-Rail. This time Ron delved into his own collection to take us on a tour of southern Africa delivered in Ron's own inimitable style. Ron obviously enjoyed the occasion as much as us because, as Tim Speechley mentions, he called a couple of days later to tell us.

All railwaymen have a good stock of stories to tell about their careers and when you get one who is as good a speaker as Bill Davies, who came in May, you are assured of a great evening. Bill has recently retired as a Driver Standards Manager with First Capital Connect after a 40+ year career on and off the footplate and his exploits kept us well amused.

Be assured, all three will be making return visits in the not too distant future.

Our enlarged membership is reflected in the meeting attendances which have consistently been in the upper thirties or low forties for some months. Such large gatherings are much appreciated by our guests - there's nothing worse than being invited to address a meeting attended by only a handful.

## FORTHCOMING VISITS

Unfortunately we had to cancel our planned visit to the Hollycombe Steam Museum on 5th June due to insufficient support but we are hoping for better support for two more visits to private railways which you can't normally go to.

First, David Bucks has kindly invited us to revisit his short standard gauge line in his garden at Fifield on **Thursday 12th August** commencing at 19:30. We had a visit there in July 2008 and this time David hopes both his steam locos will be in operation and his recently acquired Barclay diesel. Restoration of his Finnish loco continues. Mike Hyde is co-ordinating arrangements and taking reservations. The idea is to share cars as much as possible and maps of the location will be available at the July meeting. If you can't get to the June or July meetings Mike can be contacted on 01628 485474 or by email at michaelahyde@uwclub.net.

We have been fortunate to secure places at the annual gathering at the **STATFOLD BARN RAILWAY** near Tamworth on **Saturday 18th September** courtesy of owner Graham Lee. Again this is a return visit as we attended the 2008 event but it is still well worth a return as there is always a good selection of visiting locomotives of various gauges in addition to the home fleet. Statfold is also home to the reborn Hunslet Locomotive Company and the workshops are usually open. The whole day is an excellent family event and is highly recommended and should not be missed.

You can find out more about the railway, its origins and collections by visiting their website at [www.statfoldbarnrailway.co.uk/index.php](http://www.statfoldbarnrailway.co.uk/index.php)

Tim Speechley is handling the arrangements but bookings must be made by our June meeting at the latest as we have to let them know numbers well in advance. There is a modest charge of £8 per person and we again propose to share cars for transport. If you are interested but can't make the June meeting, please contact Tim on 01494 638090 or at [tim.speechley@ntlworld.com](mailto:tim.speechley@ntlworld.com).

In addition, member Adrian Palmer is organising a visit by the Continental Railway Circle to the Bredgar & Wormshill Railway on Thursday 1st July 2010 which MDRS members are welcome to join.

The railway is situated in a scenic part of the North Downs between Maidstone and Sittingbourne. Although Hollingbourne is the nearest station, Sittingbourne is a better choice as taxis are readily available. There is ample parking on site and full information about this delightful railway is on their website at [www.bwlr.co.uk](http://www.bwlr.co.uk)

The meeting point will be Sittingbourne station at 13:30. He suggests anyone arriving by car could give a lift to those arriving by train otherwise a taxi will be needed, approx. £8 but can be shared.

They will have the use of the railway from 14:00 until around 18:00 subject to the prevailing weather conditions. There will be opportunities to ride the train and take photographs. Also there will be a workshop visit.

The operating locomotive will be one of the two Fowler locomotives preferably 13573 if its restoration is completed, otherwise it will be No. 9 *Limpopo*.

The cost will be £10.00 for the afternoon including light refreshments. Please make cheques payable to Continental Railway Circle and provide a contact telephone number or email address. You are recommended to book in advance to secure your place as numbers are limited. Bookings to A. K. Palmer, 46 Heathside, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 9YL Tel. 01932 850624 Email [akpalmer@talktalk.net](mailto:akpalmer@talktalk.net)

## RCTS MAIDENHEAD

Our friends at the RCTS are currently taking a summer break but meetings will recommence in September - details in the next issue.

## CHILTERN TO STEAM TO CHINNOR

Chiltern Railways have announced they are to run a through special from Banbury to Chinnor on Saturday 3rd July to celebrate the centenary of the opening of the Bicester Cut-off and as their contribution to GWR 175.

The train will be top and tailed by Pannier tanks 9466 and 9600 with six of the Tyseley chocolate and cream set. Contractors will temporarily relay the missing connection between Network Rail and the C&PRR for the weekend.

Details of times and bookings will be available from Chiltern nearer the date.

## SUMMER MAIN LINE STEAM

In addition to the above several other steam specials are booked in out area over the summer.

On Saturday 19th June UK Railtours are running the 'Great Western 175' from Paddington to Minehead. D1015 *Western Champion* heads the outward train with 6024 *King Edward I* on the return.

A week later, on Saturday 26th June, 6024 is in action again when it takes Steam Dreams' 'Cornish Riviera' from Paddington down to Penzance. This tour is a three day event and it returns to Paddington on Monday 28th June with 5029 *Nunney Castle* piloting 6024.

On Saturday 10th July, 6024 is back in action for UK Railtours when it takes 'The Royal Oak' from Paddington to Worcester Shrub Hill. This is planned to operate via High Wycombe and Birmingham on the outward trip, returning via Swindon and Reading.

Finally, on Saturday 28th, August 60163 *Tornado* is to run 'The Bristolian' from Bristol to Paddington and return. This replaces a similar run scheduled for 26th June which was cancelled through a lack of support - well how can you top 17th April?! This train runs again behind 6024 on 2nd October.

As always, updates and times will be given in the Society's e-newsletter as available.

## FGW TURBO REFRESH

The first examples of the units refreshed under FGW's £8 million scheme are now in traffic. The seats have been reupholstered in a new material and the flooring recovered. The walls have been repainted in two shades of lilac and the doors, handrails and grabs in "First pink".



www.mdrs.org.uk

This brings them broadly in line with the West of England fleet and to some degree the HSTs. The Class 166s will also get improved air conditioning. New customer information displays are to be included but supply difficulties mean that for now the old units remain.

Whilst nowhere near the amount of work carried out by Chiltern, the refresh does improve what have been very tired and travel-worn units of late.

## EVERGREEN 3 DELAYED

Both phases of Chiltern's Evergreen 3 project have been delayed. First the collapse of Jarvis, which had been named as main contractor, has delayed the main line upgrade work whilst a new contractor is appointed.

Meanwhile, an unexpected number of objections have been raised to the Oxford leg of the plans requiring a public enquiry to be held. This expected to delay this part of the project by at least one year.

## STRANGER ON THE BRANCH



photo: Mike Walker

Network Rail test train 950001 made a rare trip over the entire Marlow branch early on Sunday 14th March and is seen entering Bourne End.

## MARK NAMES HST

One of the easier parts of Mark Hopwood's job is to name the occasional train. On 23rd April he named 43025 for the Institution of Railway Operators at Swindon along with Chris Daughton, chief executive of the IRO.



photo: Mike Walker

photo: Peter Robins

# SOCIETY VISIT TO OLD OAK COMMON

Story and pictures by Mike Walker



Saturday 20th March was a dismal day weather-wise but it didn't dampen the spirits of the eighteen or so members who took part in the Society's visit to First Great Western's Old Oak Common depot kindly organised by FGW Managing Director and Society member Mark Hopwood.

Unfortunately, Mark was unable to join us but we were made most welcome by the depot manager Dermot Fahy. Following an introduction over a cup of coffee and suitably kitted out in regulation safety boots and very attractive OOC hi-viz vests, we started our tour.

The section of the Old Oak site occupied by FGW is basically the former carriage sheds [Top] but two major new structures have been added, the Heavy Lift building [Centre] erected to handle the Class 180s around 2002 and a new wheel lathe. The old "Factory", the BR diesel depot, is now closed pending demolition and between the FGW depot and the main line is the Heathrow Express facility.

Our first call was at the Heavy Lift building where an HST trailer was over the bogie drop [Bottom] which can also be used for removing other underbody equipment - Dermot pointed out the advantages of this compared to the practice of jacking up the entire train: it can't fall off! The large black objects are upgraded Class 43 cooler groups awaiting installation. Also in the building was 43179 awaiting a new exhaust silencer and several Class 57 engine cylinder assemblies - another upgrade currently in progress.





Next we visited the wheel lathe housed in another new building [Top]. Trains do not need to be uncoupled and either a complete train, single vehicle, bogie or wheelset can be turned. The train is accurately positioned by a remote controlled battery powered tug and when in position, the "rails" are retracted and the wheelset is measured by laser and compared with the required profile. The lathe then automatically machines the wheels to the correct profile. Two axles can be treated simultaneously and the whole process takes about 15 minutes.



We also took a look through the *Night Riviera* sleeper train whilst member Phil Searle took some close up photos of 57602 *Restmorel Castle* which is used on that train.

Although no longer used by FGW, 180102 was in residence. Old Oak is to undertake work on the type operated by Hull Trains and it was being used to "refresh" staff skills.



The tour lasted almost twice as long as expected and was fascinating. Thanks to Mark for his organisation and his team at Old Oak for giving their time to show us around.

# Dampfspektakel 175



Over Easter the German railways celebrated their 175th anniversary with a steam spectacular attended by no less than seven members. JOHN FOWLER sets the scene whilst CHRIS WAITE and MARK HOPWOOD provide the photographs.

After much humming and haring as to whether I would go or not I finally joined Steve Ollive of Maidenhead RCTS and his friend Tony, staying in Saarbrücken.

Thus on Wednesday 31st saw us at St Pancras International to catch the 08:55 to Paris. Arriving in Paris Nord we trundled our suitcases the short distance to Paris Est to catch the 13:09 ICE 3 to Saarbrücken. Unfortunately we were late boarding due to a suspect package on the next platform. This seemed to be treated in the usual casual French fashion and cumulated in a one of the searchers carrying the suspect package casually down the platform presumably to be disposed of somehow. After a fast run on LGV Est we branched off onto the conventional line, where the train came to a really sudden stop for no apparent reason, but by golly don't they have good brakes! Then after a short run over the border and into Saarbrücken, where we arrived in time to travel on the trams out to where they come off the street onto the heavy rail line at Brebach on the line to Saargümlimes.

So what was the Dampfspektakel? Basically it was a large number of special trains, using steam or heritage diesel or electric loco haulage, based around Trier in the Moselle Valley and Gerolstein in the Eifel mountains. Plus there was a small Planfdampf where service trains were steam hauled vice the normal DMU. It was run over 5 days from 2nd to the 6th April.

The main problem was that that it was not possible to travel on every steam train over the period so you had to be selective, but even so I managed to travel on 8 steam hauled trains and saw several others at several places.

So what were the highlights? How about 0110 1066 (3 cylinder Pacific) on a postal special from Cochem to Trier, complete with a staffed travelling post office from which I sent successfully sent several post cards, or a 78 (4-6-4T) from Trier to Gerolstein which whipped its train up to 60 mph.

Although perhaps the highlight of whole trip was actually the shortest run behind steam we did. It being on a one coach steam 0-4-0T hauled special working from Brohl narrow gauge station to the Rhine Harbour. This involved crossing the standard gauge Rhine Westbank line (mainly passenger) on an overbridge and a reversal in a headhunt at the bottom of the flyover by the  
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mainlines. Then a run through the standard metre gauge transfer yard, on mixed gauge track, past the Brohltal Bahn's standard gauge locos. As well as being a metre gauge preserved line they also have a couple of diesels including a V200 (original Warship), which are mainline certified which they hire out for freight haulage. Another reversal and we were propelled down into the harbour over a level crossing across a dual carriageway. Now came the interesting bit, as there didn't appear to be a runround loop just a set of facing points. The loco uncoupled and went into one siding and the points were changed and the guard unwound the handbrake and the coach trundled down into the other siding. The loco then came onto the front. Unfortunately we weren't allowed to be in the coach as it freewheeled down the slope but this was not so bad as it meant I could video the action.

All in all we travelled around 3000km over the 6 days, very exhausting but very enjoyable. Thanks to Steve Ollive for his meticulous planning which by and large went well and for putting up with me for all this time.

To sum up it really was a Dampfspektakel, the major problem being you either travelled on the trains as we did or what Peter Greatorex did and chase the trains by car to photograph them in the countryside. Photography at the stations was difficult due to the crowds on the platforms.

*John Fowler*



On 5th April ex-DR Cl 01.5 4-6-2 No. 01 509, built as recently as 1963, was crossing the bridge over the Moselle at Bullay [**Opposite top**] with the 11:07 Koblenz to Saarbrücke.

Running an hour late, ex-DR Cl. 50 2-10-0 No. 50 3610 storms past Murlenbach [**Right**] with 10:27 Trier to Gerolstein on 2nd April.

Not all the locos taking part were modern or large. This superb 1914 Jung-built 0-6-0T No. 2234 [**Opposite bottom**] is normally based at the museum in the old DB depot in Gummersbach-Dieringhausen. It was built originally for the Kleinbahn Bielstein-Waldbröl, some 15 miles east of Cologne. During the Dampfspektakel it was used on shuttles between Gerolstein station, where it is seen, and the depot just outside Gerolstein at Pelm.



Former Prussian, later Romainian Class P8 4-6-0, No. 2455 crossing Ramsteiner Brücke (south of Kordel) with the 15:34 Gerolstein to Trier on 5th April [**Left**]. Around 3950 of these versatile locomotives were built between 1908 and 1926.

Rebuilt ex-DB Class 01.10 4-6-2 No. 012 066 was approaching Ramsteiner Brücke [**Bottom left**] with the 1:59 Trier to Koln on 5th April. The 3-cylinder Pacific was built by Schwartzkopff in 1939 and was originally streamlined.

Freight was also steam-worked during the Dampfspektakel and on 6th April a classic Kriegslok Class 50 2-10-0 No. 50 2740 made a fine display [**Bottom right**] passing Pelm with the 09:25 Gerolstein to Ulmen train.



Class 01 4-6-2 No. 01 118 has retained the original 'Wagner' smoke deflectors. It was built by Krupp in 1934. After the war it ran on DR. In the 1970s it was based in Dresden, being a regular on Dresden-Berlin expresses until 1978. It was then put into store but in 1980, an oil shortage allowed it a final fling on expresses out of Saalfeld. Early on the 4th April **[Right]** it was at Trier with the 07:34 to Saarbrücken



Class 23 2-6-2 No. 23 042 paused at Bitburg-Erdorf **[Below left]** whilst working the 12:27 Trier to Gerolstein on 3rd April. It deputised for a Class 38 (P8) 4-6-0 which was originally booked for this service which is appropriate as the Class 23s were introduced by the DB in 1950 to replace the ageing Prussian locomotives.



A timeless scene was created at Gerolstein museum depot on 7th April **[Bottom]** when Losheim-based 0-6-0T No.26 *Merzig* (Henschel 23701/37) posed on the turntable with 2-10-0s 52 8134, 52 6106, 58 311 and 50 2740 in the background.

Another Kriegslok, Class 52 2-10-0 No.52 6106 was leaving Daun **[Above]** with the 11:25 Gerolstein to Ulmen on 6th April. The Class 52s were an "Austerity" version of the Class 50 stripped of all frills to reduce weight and speed construction.





Mark Hopwood got this superb shot [Left] of Class 41 2-8-2 No. 41 360 in full cry as it left Koln with the 09:15 Koln Deutz to Trier train on 2nd April. The picture was taken from another special train, a Dortmund to Gerolstein charter which had been booked for Class V200 (the inspiration for the Swindon Warships) haulage. but in the event that loco failed and was replaced by a Class 212.

CFL (Luxembourg Railways) 5519 also took part in the Dampfspektakel working international trains between Trier and Luxembourg where it is seen [Below] after bringing the 11:17 from Trier on 4th April. Built at the Wiener Lokomotivfabrik in 1948 it is almost identical to the German Class 42 2-10-0s.

Although the event was marketed as a Dampfspektakel - steam spectacular - preserved classic modern traction also featured including former DB E10 121 which with 103 235-8 topped and tailed the 'Rheingold' between Dortmund (depart 06:02) and Trier (arrive 10:49) the train would reverse at Koblenz. the 1958 Henschel built electric was at Trier [Bottom left] on 4th April.

Former Danish State Railways Class MY A1A-A1A No.1138 was crossing the Bullay bridge [Bottom right] with the 12:13 Bullay to Saarburg on 5th April. These 1900hp diesel-electrics were built by Nohab-GM and were supplied to several Euro-pean operators, a sort of 1950's Class 66.



# THE BLUEBELL AT FIFTY

David Collins

2010 marks a number of anniversaries in the railway world. Perhaps the most significant one is the 50th anniversary of the first standard gauge railway preservation scheme - the Bluebell Railway.

The route was part of the Lewes & East Grinstead Railway which was authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1877 and completed in 1882. Constructed by an independent company, right from the start operations were handled by the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway with ownership passing over to them by the Act. The line's earthworks were constructed to a double track width, although only the line north of Horsted Keynes received double track. Horsted Keynes was also the junction of a branch to Haywards Heath on the London to Brighton main line, which opened in 1883. It became known as the Ardingly branch after the intermediate station.

As the line passed through a sparsely populated area with little industry, little profit was made. Although the line provided a useful secondary route to the south coast and the Ardingly branch was electrified by the Southern Railway in 1933 (electrification was proposed for the rest of the line in 1938 but abandoned due to the Second World War). At the same time the SR introduced economies which resulted in the closure of several signal boxes along the route. Losses continued after nationalisation, with the result that British Railways proposed closure in 1954. This came into effect on 28th May 1955. However, local residents campaigned to get the line open again, stating that the original act required a number of trains to run daily calling at specified stations. As a result BR reintroduced a minimum service in 1956, the trains usually consisting of one coach. With the line still running at a loss, the following year BR sought permission from the House of Commons to repeal the act, which was successful and the service was withdrawn as of 17th March 1958. The electric service from Haywards Heath to Horsted Keynes remained until 1963.

During the last years a number of railtours ran over the line with a variety of locomotives including the Brighton Atlantic *Beachy Head* and a South Eastern & Chatham Railway C2X 0-6-0. A noteworthy tour ran on 12th July 1959. Titled the "Bluebell Special" the train was organised by the Lewes & East Grinstead Railway Preservation Society which had been formed with the aim to reopen part of the line using volunteer labour (a first for a standard gauge line). The original proposal was to reopen the entire line as a commercial service using an ex Great Western Railway diesel railcar. However this scheme failed to attract sufficient support, and the society failed to raise funds to acquire the entire line. Consequently the society decided to preserve the 5 mile section from Sheffield Park to Horsted Keynes as a steam railway museum piece (by this time the end of steam on BR had been announced with the 1955 modernisation plan) under the title of the Bluebell Railway, a name dubbed on the line in service days due to the number of bluebells growing in the woodland between Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes.

The initial locomotive purchased by the society was a 0-6-0T LBSCR Terrier No. 32655, which arrived at Sheffield Park under her own steam on 17th May 1960 along with two carriages, a LSWR Lavatory Third and a SR Corridor Brake Composite. The locomotive was renamed with her original LBSCR number 55 and given her original name, *Stepney*. As the society would not be given access to Horsted Keynes station (a situation which would be resolved at the end of 1961)



*SECR 27 prepares to depart from Sheffield Park on 21st September 1968 when the station looked very under developed compared to today.*

*photos: Tim Edmonds*

and trains would terminate half a mile to the south at Bluebell Halt with no run round loop, a second locomotive was required. It had been hoped to purchase another Terrier, but BR would not release any of the 11 then still in service. So a SECR Wainwright 0-6-0T P Class No. 323 was purchased and named *Bluebell*. Services on the preserved line started on 7th August 1960 with the two coaches being topped and tailed by both locomotives. Liveries for the first season were light blue for carriages and plain black for locomotives, however by 1962 55 had been painted in LBSCR ochre (or Stroudley's "Improved Engine Green") and 323 in a non prototypical blue livery.

Initially, the society had hoped to build up a fleet of ex Brighton locomotives for the line, indeed the original choice for the first locomotive had been a D1 tank. Alas by time funds could be raised for additional motive power such locomotives had been cut up (a shame for us today). So the society widened its search to the rest of the Southern Region and ultimately the whole of BR.

A few weeks after the opening a 0-4-0T industrial loco called *Baxter* was purchased, but after a couple of steamings she was found unsuitable for passenger traffic and was laid up until overhauled in the 1980s. More successful purchases were a second P Class Tank (briefly named *Primrose*), a North London Railway 0-6-0T (previously in use on the Cromford & High Peak line in Derbyshire), a LSWR Adams 4-4-2T No. 488, a LBSCR E4 No. 473 *Birch Grove* and Terrier No. 72 *Fenchurch*. A "foreigner" arrived in 1962 in the shape of the GWR 4-4-0 "Dukedog" No. 9017 from the Cambrian lines and was reunited with her original name *Earl of Berkeley* after the donation of the nameplates. These were carried by a Castle after the GWR removed the Earl names from the 4-4-0s following objections from Earls about their titles being given to old fashioned looking locomotives.

As well as locomotives, a collection of historic rolling stock was being built up. Most trains in the 1960s were made up of the ex Metropolitan Railway "Chesham" set, while coaches of Southern Railway (or its constituent companies) were purchased for restoration. Exceptions to this were the London & North Western Railway Observation Saloon and the Great Northern Railway Director's Saloon.

Since the Bluebell was still rail connected at this time, several railtours worked onto the line from BR, bringing locomotives such as GNR J52 0-6-0T No. 2471, LSWR T9 No. 120 (later to become a Bluebell resident) and Caledonian Railway Single Driver No. 123 to the line, as well as taking Bluebell

The Marlow Donkey

locomotives off on BR tracks. This practice ended in 1963 when the Haywards Heath to Horsted Keynes branch was closed and the track northwards to East Grinstead was removed (an interesting fact was that the contractors hired Bluebell motive power for this). Closure was marked by 55 and 473 double heading a special from Brighton to Horsted Keynes on 27th October. Subsequently incoming and outgoing locomotives and stock have had to rely on low loaders for transport.

The Bluebell's policy of operating trains with small tank engines ended in 1967 when a BR Standard Class 4 No. 75027 was purchased. She was the last locomotive to be bought direct from British Railways (albeit at the eleventh hour). Thereafter locomotives were sourced either from defunct preservation schemes in the south, such as the Ashford Steam Centre and the Longmoor Military Railway, or rescued from Barry Scrapyard. These include many large main line locomotives such as Bulleid Pacifics (examples of all three types have worked on the Bluebell, both in rebuilt and unrebuilt condition), SR Classes Q, U, V, S15 and USA Tanks and BR Standard Class 2 and 4MT (both tender and tank), a Class 5 "Arthur" (73082 *Camelot* - one of the class allocated to the Southern Region which carried names transferred from the King Arthur Class) and a 9F - a class still being constructed at the time of the Bluebell's conception. Additional pre-grouping locomotives to arrive at the line were two SECR locomotives, 0-6-0 C Class No.592 and 0-4-4T H Class No. 263, and a LSWR 0-4-0 B4 Dock Tank, No. 96 *Normandy*.

The Bluebell processes a fine collection of rolling stock. As well as many coaches from the pre grouping era, ex SR Maunsell and Bulleid coaches along with BR Mark 1s make up the bulk of the service trains. In addition the railway has a rake of Pullman Cars and several goods wagons.

After a period of consolidation, in the early 1980s thoughts had turned to extending the railway northwards towards East Grinstead and the national network with a Light Railway Order being granted in 1985. The first mile was laid in 1990 which carried shuttles starting from Horsted Keynes and usually worked by one of the smaller locomotives. In 1992 rails reached the site of West Hoathly station where a temporary run round loop was installed. The station had been demolished at the time of BR closure and the local residents objected to a replacement being built. This section included Sharpthorne Tunnel, the only tunnel on the line and the longest on a preserved railway in the UK.

Construction continued towards Kingscote station with the trackbed having been reclaimed from a horticultural nursery and new drainage channels having to be dug. Services commenced to Kingscote in April 1994, this station was acquired in the mid 1980s and restored to 1950s appearance. Thence followed a nine year gap before work on the final section to East Grinstead commenced. This project was slightly more difficult because it included a major engineering structure in the shape of Imberhorne Viaduct, which required major work to make it suitable for traffic again. Another, slightly larger, difficulty was that Imberhorne Cutting was filled with household waste in the 1960s and 1970s. However by 2009 rails reached both sides of the cutting, and thanks to a fund raising effort by the preservation society, removal of the landfill by rail has commenced. So it won't be too long before Bluebell trains can run into a new station at East Grinstead and an interchange with Southern services from London Victoria.

The Bluebell has long been known for its 100% steam locomotive policy, although to assist with extension works traffic, a 08 and Class 73 Electro-diesel have been hired in, but fortunately they failed to make an impact on passenger services. Let's hope this remains the case in the future.

The railway remains one of the country's leading heritage lines and is a popular location for film and TV work. The headquarters at Sheffield Park include a fully equipped workshop and locomotive shed along with excellent catering facilities and a well stocked gift shop, while Horsted Keynes is home to the Carriage & Wagon Department's restoration base and one of the best second hand railway bookshops. Planning restrictions at Kingscote have meant that no retail outlets can be based there and public car parking is prohibited, so as a result at weekends and daily during the school holidays a connecting bus service operates to and from East Grinstead station. For many years this was a vintage Routemaster, but this has been superseded by a regular bus provided by a local operator.

Various special events are held throughout the year, the main ones for enthusiasts being the Branch Line weekend held in February which features the smaller locomotives and vintage rolling stock, while the Giants of Steam event in October focuses on the larger locomotives. Visiting locos are very much a feature of these events. For example this year saw Standard Class 2 2-6-0 No. 78019 from the Great Central Railway and Fairburn 2-6-4T No. 42085 from the Lakeside & Haverwaite Railway visiting, as well as No. 473 making her debut after overhaul, freshly painted in Southern Railway livery. Additionally this year sees the Golden Jubilee celebrations take place on the first weekend of August and should see Furness Railway No. 20 and the newly built A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* visiting the line (there is a possibility that 60163 might be the first locomotive to access the Bluebell at East Grinstead).

As well as opening up to East Grinstead, there is a possibility that the branch to Haywards Heath might be rebuilt, as the trackbed was purchased in the mid 1990s. There is also a chance that electrification may be reinstated, making it the only section of preserved railway in the country to enable heritage electric stock to operate. Another project being undertaken on site is the construction of a brand new H2 Atlantic at Sheffield Park utilising parts of a Great Northern Atlantic and various parts from former LBSCR locomotives. This will fill a major gap in preservation and would suit the Bluebell perfectly.

The Bluebell Railway is certainly one of preservation's success stories and one of the best places in the country to see steam locomotives at work, even though the scenery may not be as spectacular as some other preserved lines. As a life member of the preservation society, I feel confident that it will continue to go from strength to strength and reach its centenary in 2060 still in good shape. Here's to the next 50 years of Bluebell Steam!



*Horsted Keynes also exhibited an air of near neglect back on 9th May 1970 when a handful of passengers waited to board a train for Sheffield Park behind 27.*

# Travelling to Ireland in the 1940s and 50s

By Mike Page



Small boys always expect termini to be large and grand, so Limerick is a bit of an anti-climax. It has two island platforms under twin-peaked roofed train shed. In 1949, the city seemed to have a mixture of horse/donkey-drawn and motorised traffic. Along the side of the station were a number of old single-decker, green CIE buses, being loaded up in the cobbled yard. One man stood perched on the top of each bus receiving cases, boxes and bundles thrown up to him for stacking by the porters below.

Our train for Abbeyfeale was not due to leave until 5 pm. But the question yet to be answered was: was it to be 5 pm 'new time' or 'old time'? The CIE ran to British Summer Time ('new time'), while everyone else remained with 'old time' (Greenwich). Having established that it was 5 pm 'new time', we set off, uncertainly, to have some lunch and look at the shops. One had to be really sure about which 'time' the train ran, as there was only one train a day, each way, on the Tralee line. Only the Irish could unwittingly succeed to confuse the English over old time and new time, yet were always sure themselves of when events were supposed to happen!

Later, we returned to the station at 4 pm 'new time' - just in case. There was no engine in sight yet, as we walked past two obviously occupied cattle trucks, a six-wheeled full brake, a bogie clerestory coach and two more modern looking, but still very wooden corridor coaches, one of which was a third brake. One of the 'modern' coaches was lying about its age, as it sagged in the middle and was still gas-lit.

Eventually, a J15 0-6-0, Tralee's 156 I think, backs down onto our train, which had filled up quite considerably. We puff out, grinding around a very sharp, right-hand junction immediately at the platform end. After calling at a few stations, we clatter around a curve into the Newcastle West terminus at 6.13 pm. The 156 uncouples and then sidles past us to access a turntable in the yard and then returns to what was the back of the train.

Departure scheduled at 6.30 pm is still some ten minutes away. No one is in a hurry. Local children lark about among the

*With only one passenger train each way a day, the highlight at Newcastle West was when the Limerick to Tralee train (a journey of just over 43 miles scheduled to take 3 hours 25 minutes!) was booked to wait at the station for 17 minutes to pass the daily goods in the opposite direction. On 2nd April 1953, J15 107 was working the Limerick to Tralee train on which Mike Page had travelled three years previously.*

*photo: Anthony Burges, collection of Mike Page*

lengthening shadows on the platform; some of the townspeople with time to spare swap stories and news with the passengers. The inevitable donkey brays of its boredom of having been left standing in the goods yard. As soon as the train departs, we realise we are now downwind of our beefy friends!

We set off towards the high, rolling, patchwork hills of Western County Limerick. Our steady pace begins to get slower and slower as 156 struggles now to hold a daisy-picking pace. We are climbing that Banagh Bank. We safely reach the summit in a rock cutting and tunnel without a stop. The day, after all, had been dry.

After calling at Banagh, we drift on down the valley with the Banagh Hill now behind us and I am now impatient to see Abbeyfeale Hill. Soon the long headhunt with earth buffer stop and a few forgotten cattle wagons come into view, then the grey stone goods shed and station - we are there! Granny waited on the platform, with one of the few local hire car drivers, while other folks waited on foot or with ponies and traps in the station yard.

Was it not strange, as a child, that the journeys back always seemed far too quick! Haste meant I'd be soon back at school in Bilston! Our J15 did not have to work too hard to get us to Limerick by 11.15 am. Then a big-boilered, high-wheeled, Coey D12, like the 306 in 1953, would whisk the 12.00 pm to Waterford at what appeared to be 'break-neck' speeds to its first stop: to make connections with Cork and Dublin expresses at that marvellous, if eccentric invention, Limerick Junction.

The Marlow Donkey

*Limerick Junction looking east on 12th September 1955 as 800 Maedbh departs with the 11.25 Cork to Dublin train. Ahead of the loco is the North Signal Box which stands at the flat crossing of the Dublin - Cork and Limerick - Waterford lines. The line on the left of the signal is the bay used by Waterford to Limerick trains which, having crossed the diamond, reversed in from the left of the picture. Trains from Limerick to Waterford would take the line on the extreme left to access the bay at the south end of the station then reverse back out onto the Waterford line and cross the diamond.*

*photo: Alan Jarvis*



No doubt you may already know that there were two phenomena peculiar to Limerick Junction. One has not changed - it still lies in the middle of nowhere some 23 miles from Limerick! The other has changed: once, every train arriving at that station's platforms came in backwards! Oh, you got that wrong, you might say as our D12, having branched right off the Waterford line, apparently approaches a bay platform. Ignoring that idea, the D12 carefully treads along behind the station and past a second bay at the south end to enter a long headshunt. After a brief wait for points to be changed, and now guided by our guard - with his hand not far from the guard's brake one imagined- the D12 slowly backs our train into that second bay at the Cork end of a single long platform.

[www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

*On the same day, 801 Macha sits in the Cork-bound half of Limerick Junction's main platform with a Dublin to Cork train. This would have arrived and reversed into the platform via the srossovers before continuing its journey. The Dublin-bound train in the above photograph would have called at the section of the main platform in the foreground, again drawing up beyond the crossover and reversing in. Today, alterations to the track layout allow all Dublin - Cork services in either direction call where 801 is standing, without reversing, whilst all Limerick - Waterford service use the former "Limerick Bay" but still need to reverse out in or out depending on direction.*

*photo: Alan Jarvis*

As we climb down onto, what seemed to me, a very low platform, a train clatters over the two-track main line at the Dublin end. It is the late-running 10.50 am Waterford-Limerick, which should have got there before us. This train also probably had a D12, which halts and then backs its train into the bay at the Dublin end - the bay our D12 forsook. The expectant passenger numbers have now considerably swelled on the long main platform. Those who know will go, perversely, to the north end for Cork and the south end for Dublin.

Signals on the 'up' main line drop their arms. Here comes our train, the 12.15 pm off Cork, with a big, green Bredin B1a 4-6-0 striding towards us with the brakes full on. Her number is 800. Her name is *Maedbh*, after a mythical Irish queen, and the legend is cast in Irish script over the leading driving wheel. She has a varied lot of coaches, including some rather new-looking steel-panelled ones as well as an old Pullman dining car.

Signals have also cleared for the Cork train. It too comes by at speed, steam blowing from Watson 4-6-0 409's safety valves and the brakes full on. The 409 also has a ripe mixture of stock and a gas cylinder wagon on its tail.

The two expresses are at rest. All is quiet for a moment, then point rodding and signal wires grind and shake. There is a whistle from the 409 and slowly, the gas cylinder wagon of the Cork train leads 409's careful reversal into the north end of the platform. A whistle from 800 precedes her shunting movement then she backs her eleven-coach train into the platform's south face. There you have it! Two Irish steam giants at rest, facing each other, smokebox to smokebox.

We get the 'right away' first and 800 eases our train over the crossover. Once our last coach is clear, Queen *Maedbh* shows she is no ancient ambler but one of Ireland's three biggest express engines and accelerates us purposely away from the 'Junction'. We are in the third coach, one of the steel-panelled ones. I remember this, because of the strange pull-down door windows - they did not have a window strap. Instead, my aunt had to squeeze the shiny steel top to release the window. Now you can clearly hear 800's fierce staccato exhaust. We are soon bounding along at a very fine speed. 800 screams at every station and level crossing: "Out of the way! This lad has to get back to school!"

Over the holidays, as I remembered them, I saw all three 'Queens' at Limerick Junction as well as 502 and 500 and some of the 400s. We sometimes had afternoon tea in the old Pullman diners that some of these trains boasted. The CIE had, I believe, inherited three of them.

In 1949, our train from Cork pulled carefully into Kingsbridge at 4.30 pm. Normally we took a cab or taxi into Dublin city for tea near to Westland Row, where we would join the boat train to Dun Laoghaire. I could never wait to get onto the station, as there were usually a number of trains stopping, or running through to and from Bray or further down the coast. Engines and coaches variety was extensive. The boat train waited in a bay on the down side and could be anything from a 2-4-2T, through the various tank engine classes, to a J 0-6-0.

In 1954, we had been told at Kingsbridge that a train now ran through to Dun Laoghaire, departing at 7.35 pm. So we

left luggage office, to find a café. All parents seemed to live in fear of missing trains, so we returned at about 6.30 pm, to be told our boat train would depart from the 'arrival' platform. The 3.30 pm from Cork eventually rolled in at 7.25 pm headed by a Coey 4-4-0 piloting a 'Woolwich' mogul. This elegant rake of coaches - mostly the all-steel types - also included a Pullman diner.

Into the now empty Pullman we went, reclining again, and thankfully, in deep seats. Eventually, six or seven coaches of the train - appreciatively including ours - were pulled out of the station. You can imagine a twelve-year-old's amazement to see that an F 2-4-2T (F1 or F2, not sure now!) was doing the honours! It ran by to couple on the other end and tow us through Phoenix Park and Amiens Street. There, I was puzzled to see a shiny black 4-4-2T 'No.1', as I had already spotted CIE No.1, a D17 4-4-0, in the yard at Limerick. Doubtlessly I had seen a GNR T2 4-4-2T of that identification, as I had learned later from an Ian Allan 'ABC Irish Locomotives'.

After leaving Amiens Street, the 2-4-2T steadily worked us up to 30 mph or so, which seemed quite quick as we dashed along the viaducts across Dublin and through Tara Street station! All too soon after leaving Westland Row we were alongside the sea wall and beaches and soon we could see Carlisle Pier.

The 'Cambria' left soon after 8.40 pm. Three hours or so later, we arrived at Holyhead. There was usually some confusion among the 'grown ups' over which train was to be ours. In 1952, I was trying to stop my parents from joining the Manchester train, as the train for Crewe was in platform 2. We mostly slept until the train was inevitably held for some minutes alongside Crewe works - usually next to the night shift in the boiler shops - or opposite Crewe North sheds. During one of those waits, in 1954, I found myself staring through a gap in the works fence at 0-4-2T 47862.

Under the lights and behind a line of coal wagons could be seen the long profiles of Duchesses and a Princess Royal, as well as Black Fives and Scots. The loco yard lamps highlighted the lazily drifting smoke and steam. Crewe in the early hours - in

*Great Northern Railway no.2, a class T2 4-4-2T shunts a cattle truck at Dublin's Amiens Street (now Connolly) station in the 1930's. Despite their vintage appearance, the twenty members of the class were built in the 1920's by Beyer Peacock and Nasmyth Wilson.*

*photo: Bernard Edmonds, collection of Tim Edmonds*



1949 or any year - was paradise for a young trainspotter. The hour or more waiting there must have been tiring and galling for the grown-ups, who could not share my delight at seeing the *Duchess of Buccleuch* or *King's Own* - neither one of which was pulling our long awaited train. The only relief for the parents and aunties was the steamy, cigarette-smoky, packed buffet.

In 1953, a spotlessly green *Sir William A. Stanier F.R.S.* drifted in majestically with a Glasgow-London. The grown-ups would not listen to a train-spotter who knew that no "Semi" would go to Wolverhampton! They got off just in time, after checking with a porter who told us the train was "Next stop Rugby!" Our train eventually arrived behind the inevitable Stanier Black Five.

My last journey to Abbeyfeale as a child was in the summer of 1955. Changes were well under way. For one, I had persuaded my mother that we should take a day train from Wolverhampton (Low level) to Chester, to get to Holyhead, board the ship and get bunks, before the crowds arrived. My real interest was to go past Wrexham (6E), which I had seen earlier in the year on a Sunday day excursion to Birkenhead. It was full of Eastern locos!

On our way to Chester this time, 6E was a bit of a disappointment. Instead of C13s and N5s there were 84000s and Stanier 3 2-6-2Ts, except for an N5, 69362. From Chester, our Holyhead train had Chester's 73071, which to my disappointment, only blew its chime whistle once when entering the Menai Straits bridge. At Holyhead, while my mother had already ensconced herself in a bunk, I at last saw a needed, then un-named, 'Britannia' 70049 arriving on the 'Irish Mail'.

There had been no real change at Dun Laoghaire, and we rode in an ancient six-wheeler to Westland Row, pulled by a J15. At Kingsbridge, it was a shock to find that the Limerick train was now made up of AEC railcars.

My next trip to Abbeyfeale wasn't until 1964. By then, diesels had really begun to take over on both sides of the Irish Sea. It was an English Electric 'Type 4' (40) that took me to Holyhead on the 10.38 pm from Wolverhampton. The 'Cambria' and 'Hibernia' were still active, but it was a 141 class General Motors B-B that took me to Westland Row. At Kingsbridge I chose a train to Limerick Junction, pulled by two 141's. The Metrovick 'A's and 'B's were on freights. I spent the journey looking for fast-disappearing green coaches! Then the train to Limerick was also 141-hauled. There was no train to Abbeyfeale, the passenger service having ceased the year before. On my return, at least the journey back to Wolverhampton was steam with Aston's 45430 as far as Crewe. Surprisingly, 45430 was exchanged for Crewe South's 70025 *Western Star*, which only dawdled along with our train.

Today, there is no comparison. The CIE is now IE (Iarnrod Eireann). Many of the 141s have gone and traffic is mostly DMUs. The Dublin-Cork trains no longer have to back into Limerick Junction, though the Limerick-Watford DMUs maintain the tradition.

Happily, I suppose, I had missed the wholesale slaughter of Irish steam between 1958 and 1963. Who now would willingly go train-ship-bus-train-bus to Abbeyfeale, when it is too easy to fly to Shannon and hire a car?



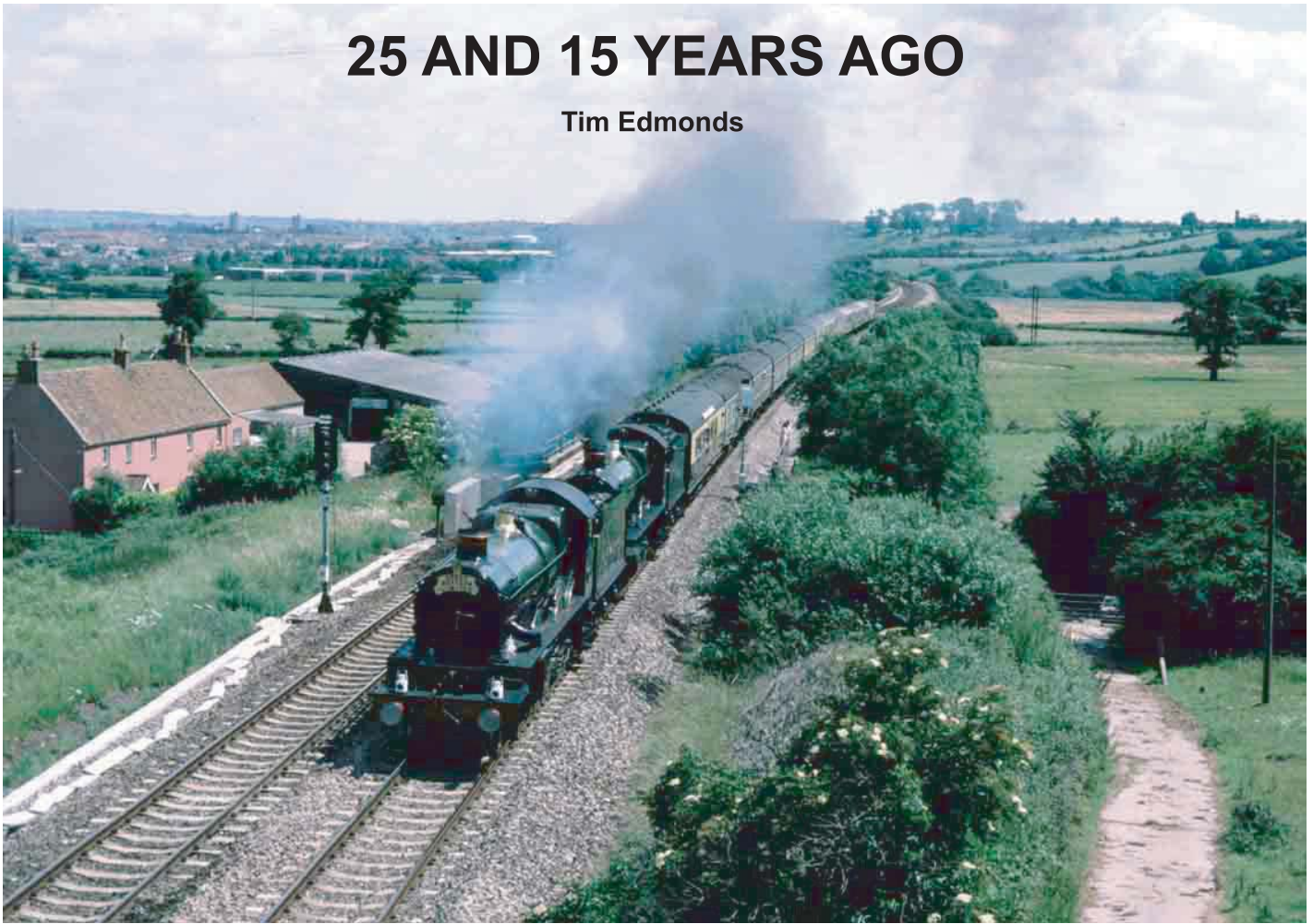
*By Mike's last rail and sea visit to Ireland, diesel railcars had taken over and a decade later replaced them. GM-built class B Bo-Bo B159 waits to depart from Dun Laoghaire Pier with a train to Dublin on 4th August 1976. The Pier lost its rail services in 1980 and today these 'Small GMs' and loco-hauled passenger trains are virtually extinct, multiple units having taken over once more.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*



# 25 AND 15 YEARS AGO

Tim Edmonds



## 25 YEARS AGO

The Central Electricity Generating Board held an Open Day at its Castle Donington Power Station in north Leicestershire on 23rd June, when both its 0-4-OSTs were in steam and giving demonstration runs with coal wagons. Also on site was visiting LMS 0-6-0 4027 from Butterley.

The last trains ran between Tunbridge Wells and Eridge on Saturday 6th July, on which day the stations at Tunbridge Wells West and Groombridge were closed completely and a valuable cross-country link was lost. The following day the connection at Grove Junction, Tunbridge Wells, was removed.

As part of the GW150 celebrations, on 7th July Western Region ran a "Great Western Limited" special from Bristol to Plymouth, double-headed by 5051 *Dryslwyn Castle* and 4930 *Hagley Hall*. Alas, after a signal stop at Aller Junction, the 14-coach train stalled on the 1 in 36 gradient of Dainton bank and had to be banked by 50 045 *Achilles*, which was detached from a following train.

On July 25th Speedlink and Guinness announced the biggest single distribution deal by Railfreight with the drinks industry. Worth £1.5million, this was to deliver 96 million pints of Draught Guinness from Park Royal to regional depots at Bristol, Gateshead, Glasgow, Runcorn and Selby within 24 hours of leaving the brewery, and represented a move back from road haulage to rail. On the same occasion two ex-BR shunters, 08 022 and 08 060, were received by Guinness at a hand-over ceremony at Park Royal. Painted in Guinness corporate colours, they were named *Lion* and *Unicorn* and replaced a pair of Planet 4wDM locos named *Walrus* and *Carpenter*.

*Before meeting its demise on Dainton Bank, the "Great Western Limited" makes good progress behind 5051 Dryslwyn Castle and 4930 Hagley Hall at Long Ashton, just west of Bristol, on 7th July 1985.*

*all photos: Tim Edmonds*

From 29th July the name of Didcot station was officially changed to Didcot Parkway, in recognition of the opening of a 600-space free car park on the site of the former GWR provender store. A footbridge and path linked the car park to the station concourse.

*On 1st June 1985, just weeks away from withdrawal of the service, a Class 207 DMU approaches Eridge station with a service from Tunbridge Wells Central via Groombridge.*



The Marlow Donkey



*At CEBB Castle Donington Power Station, loco number 1 (RSHL7817/1954) takes loaded coal wagons on a demonstration run during the Open Day on 23rd June 1985.*

## 15 YEARS AGO.

The Thames Trains depot at Reading, responsible for the company's fleet of Class 165 and 166 units, was awarded the international quality accreditation ISO9002. The certificate was presented to Andy Morris, the depot's senior technical officer, by BRB chairman John Welsby on 9th June.

On 6th July the final run of the Guinness distribution train took place, with Transrail-liveried 56 054 *British Steel Llanwern* working the 19.10 from Park Royal to Ordsall Lane, Manchester. The traffic reverted to road haulage.

In response to the annual round of pay-bargaining, and following a ballot of members, ASLEF called a series of one-day strikes starting in July. However, after strikes on 14th and 18th July, the dispute was called off on 24th July when union leaders and BRB agreed a deal cutting the working week from 39 to 36 hours by May 1997.

An unusual reuse of a former railway line was officially opened on 21st July with the completion of a new section of the A689 road over Newton Cap viaduct at Bishop Auckland. The eleven-arched viaduct over the River Wear was built as part of the North Eastern Railway line from Leamside, opened in 1857, but had been disused since the withdrawal of passenger services in 1964 and goods in 1968. The imaginative scheme to build a road across the viaduct enabled a traffic bottleneck over a single-carriageway 14th century road bridge to be by-passed.

And finally... speaking on the subject "Over bridges and viaducts" at the Marlow & District Railway Society's June meeting was one Tim Edmonds (then resident in Leicestershire) while the following month a certain Tim Speechley presented a talk on "Scottish

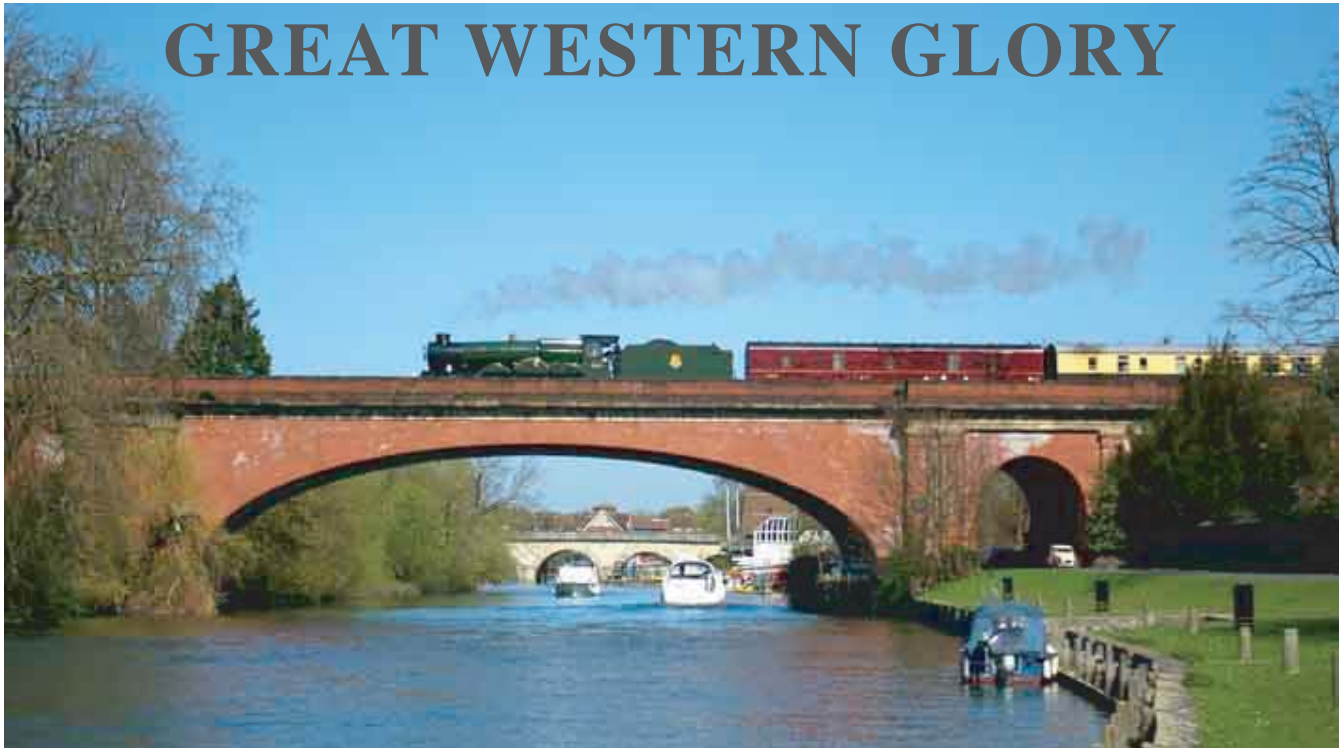


*Just two weeks away from its reincarnation as a road bridge, the former NER Newton Cap viaduct at Bishop Auckland is seen on 7th July 1995.*



*On a day when ASLEF struck and very little moved on the national railway network, General Purpose Track Removal and Maintenance Machine DX98212 takes advantage of a clear road at Strathcarron on the Kyle of Lochalsh branch, 14th July 1995.*

# GREAT WESTERN GLORY



*Tim Edmonds*

On Saturday 17th April First Great Western and Vintage Trains joined forces to operate a high-speed non-stop steam-hauled special from London to Bristol and back as part of the Great Western 175 celebrations. Hauled by Castle-class 4-6-0 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* the down train was caught crossing

possible as such trains are normally on the Relief Line. Later in the morning, and still under a cloudless sky, the train stormed out of Box Tunnel, by now running around ten minutes early and arrival at Temple Meads was fourteen minutes early. Network Rail have recently cleared vegetation from around



*Mike Walker*

The return journey was by way of the Badminton line and even quicker. With most of the senior FGW and local Network Rail management on board along with a mobile communications centre on the train, other traffic was regulated and diverted to allow the special a clear run up to London using the Main Line

all the way. As a result it steamed triumphantly into Paddington in 110 minutes cutting 46 minutes off the schedule and only five minutes slower than the old *Bristolian* schedule. The 118 miles were reeled off at a start-to-stop average speed of 65.8 mph!