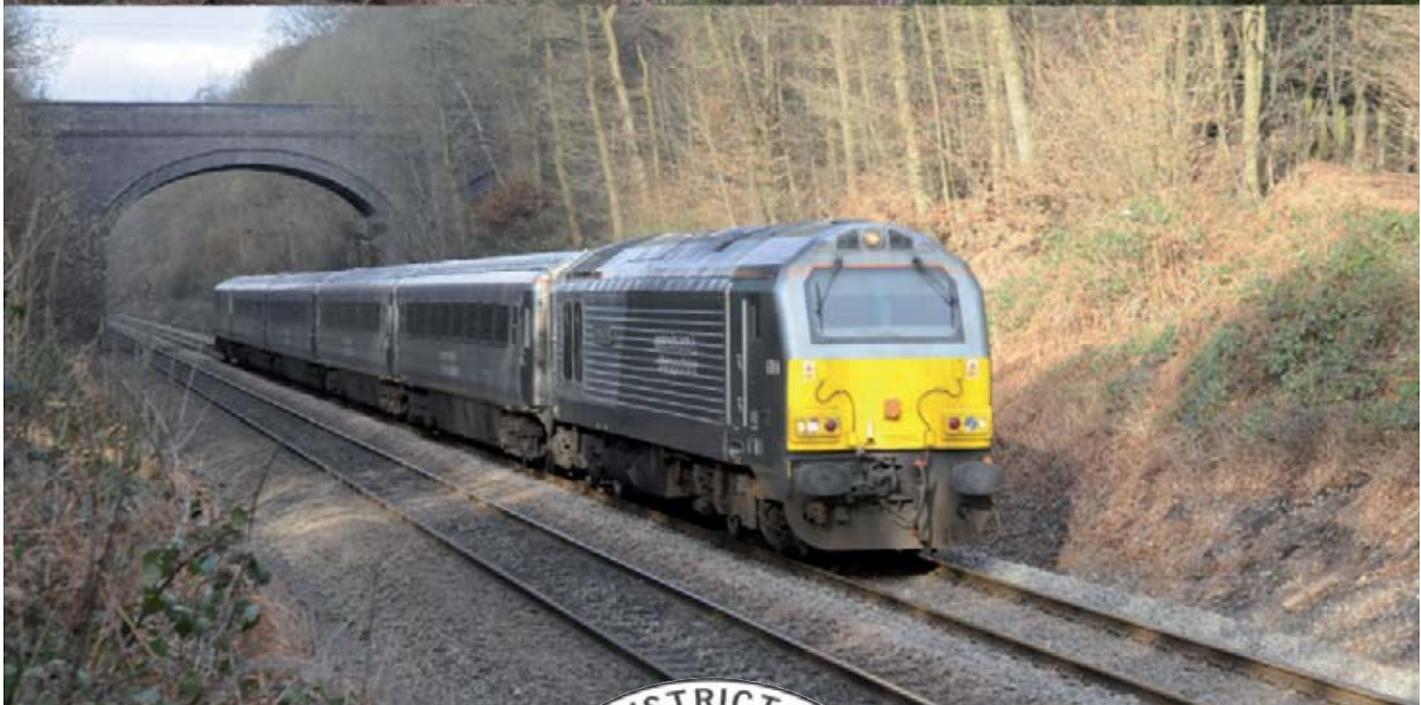


# THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

# 132

March 2011



Contents:

Farewell to Wrexham & Shropshire

A Brief visit to the Rhur in 1961

The Railways of Buckinghamshire Pt. 1

# The Marlow Donkey

## The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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

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#### FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

*Top: 9466 leads the return working of "train A" just south of Sandplace Halt on the Looe Valley Line.  
Photo: Joe Lynch. (Article page 10).*

*Bottom: The penultimate W&S up working, the 07.23 from Wrexham to Marylebone with 67014  
Thomas Telford leading (and the right way round!) approaches the soon to be closed foot crossing just east of  
Seer Green & Jordans. Photo: Chris Waite (Article page 5).*

# 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 March **THE FINAL YEARS OF UK STEAM** Peter Groom  
A photographer whose work will be familiar to many of us, Peter will present some pictures from the final years of steam in the UK.
- Thursday 21 April **A TOUR OF SOUTH AMERICA** Ron White  
On his last visit the inimitable Ron took us on a fascinating pictorial trip round Southern Africa. This time he turns his attention to South America - an evening not to be missed!
- Thursday 19 May **A RAILWAY RETIREMENT Part 2** Phil Marsh  
Phil gave us a really entertaining evening with part 1 - so look forward to another enjoyable time as the journey continues ...
- Thursday 16 June **EXETER TO PLYMOUTH BY THE "OTHER" ROUTE** George Reeve  
A look at the Southern's inland route between Devon's two cities. This is a joint meeting with our friends from the Maidenhead branch of the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society.
- Thursday 21 July **A SEVENTIES MISCELLANY** Tim Speechley  
An evening of photographic delights from our chairman's archives.

## FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Sunday 1 May **BEECHES LIGHT RAILWAY** by car  
We have been invited to pay a return visit to Adrian Shooter's Beeches Light Railway at Steeple Aston, Oxfordshire. See page 3 for full 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

I had a group of young Italians visiting me recently and quite out of the blue one of them asked me "Tim, do you have any weird or unusual hobbies?". Immediately I thought somebody had mentioned trains to them but it turned out that they had previously been in Belgium, where the chap who does the equivalent job for Fiat there has four military tanks in working order - three Shermans and something else, that he uses quite regularly. After hearing that it was a lot easier to tell them of my railway enthusiasm and even they thought it was quite normal, despite there not being a lot of Italian enthusiasts ("Griceri"?). Some weeks earlier I'd spent some time with an emissions engineer and he admitted to me he was quite an enthusiastic modeller, though that too is not particularly common in Italy. He suggested it was done more in the northern countries because it was cold most of the time, so we developed indoor hobbies whereas the Italians tended to have more outdoor pursuits.

Talking of indoor hobbies, I'm no philatelist myself, but did you see the set of loco stamps recently introduced by Royal Mail? It was a set of four entitled "Classic Locomotives of England". I was surprised at the choice of subjects - a Dean Goods in black and white on the 1st class, an industrial Peckett 0-4-0ST (60p - colour), an L&Y 4-4-0 (88p -B&W again) and lastly a WD 2-8-0 in colour on the 97p. This seemed an odd mix and I wonder who chooses the subject matter. Don't get me wrong, they were nice stamps, especially the WD, just an odd mix. It follows another set that came out only last August featuring some very nice black and white shots of a streamlined LMS Coronation at Euston in 1937 and "Evening Star" on the (last?) "Pines Express" on the S&D on the standard 1st class letter stamps. I do like to buy a number of [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

these to keep for communications (mostly birthday cards) for like-minded friends. There were four other more expensive stamps in this set but I didn't get those.

These days so much of our communication is done by e-mail and I find it lends itself to informality, even at work. I have been in communication for some time with a guy in New Zealand who imports motorhomes. I happened to mention the Society to him in one of my mails and gave him the web site address. He came back to me the next day to say he'd spent two hours on it with great interest. Turns out we are much the same age and in the 60's he was quite an enthusiast and photographer, growing up in Whalley on the Blackburn-Hellifield line, and often visiting Lostock Hall, Rose Grove as well as further afield, like Holbeck. He told me he had amassed quite a collection of photographs but that at some point (after emigration?) his parents had chucked it away. A salutary lesson for all - keep your "rubbish" well protected from unbelievers. I know I have to.

As I write we have just had the AGM, resulting in little change on the surface. However, there will have to be some changes in who does what within the committee, though details have yet to be decided. We will be looking out for some enthusiastic member, preferably willing to do some paperwork, to join us. Could it be you?

As March progresses we have the prospect of some better weather and more opportunities to indulge in our hobby. Wherever you go and whatever you do, enjoy yourselves, and don't forget to publicise the MDRS whenever you can.

*Tim Speechley*

# SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

## NEW MEMBERS

Our membership numbers continue to increase with three new members joining in the past few months, Mike Emerson from Maidenhead, Max Gardiner from Cookham and Norman Marriott from Tylers Green. A warm welcome to you all.

Meanwhile renewals have been coming in at an encouraging rate but inevitably there are a few stragglers which, hopefully, is an oversight. Thank you for your continuing support.

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Christmas social in December was the usual enjoyable event with Mike Hyde acting as Master of Ceremonies and yet another fiendish quiz dreamt up by Julian Heard. Julian also provided the background entertainment with an ongoing slide and video review of the society's year. Unfortunately numbers were down this year which may, may not be due to the weather.

For the January meeting Kim Winter showed us a remarkable collection of films of the extensive temporary narrow gauge systems which were constructed to serve the Western Front during World War I.

February's presentation after the AGM had been delayed by a year because Adrian Palmer had stood aside last year to allow Don Woodworth to give his show in memory of Dave Theobald. It was worth the wait. Adrian showed slides of his travels in Europe since 2005 in chronological order and it served to emphasise two things, firstly what a good photographer he is and secondly what a hell of a lot of travelling he does. We were treated to a wide variety of subjects, steam, diesel, electric, trams, ancient and modern, from a very wide range of countries including Belgium, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Albania, Italy, the former Yugoslavia, Portugal and, rather surprisingly for a European show, Egypt. By no means the complete list, it was a most interesting evening and I'm sure we'll be asking him back again soon.

## VISIT TO BEECHES LIGHT RAILWAY

Adrian Shooter has graciously extended an invitation for the Society to make a return visit to his Beeches Light Railway on Sunday 1st May 2011. Those who attended our previous visit a back in 2007 will know that Adrian has put together an impressive recreation of the Darjeeling-Himalaya Railway in his back garden at Steeple Aston in Oxfordshire and if you didn't go then it's worth it this time as it's a great day out.

There is a charge of £25 per person to cover the steaming costs and catering which last time was an excellent BBQ luncheon with salad and trimmings etc. It is proposed we



get there by shared cars. Adrian would like some idea of numbers as soon as possible so you are invited to contact Julian Heard by phone 01628 527005 or email [julian@jeh.org.uk](mailto:julian@jeh.org.uk) as soon as possible to be added to the list. Julian will need to collect either full monies or a £10 deposit at the March meeting. So far we have a dozen members who have put their names down.

A number of other visits are being planned for the coming summer and further announcements will be made as soon as possible.

## COMMITTEE NEWS

At the AGM Julian Heard and Mike Hyde were both re-elected to the committee but as no member volunteered or were nominated to stand the vacancy created by Roger Bowen's recent decision to stand down goes unfilled for the present. The committee may co-opt a member in due course.

## NORMAN ASTON-SMITH TROPHY

This year's winner was Peter Robins for his photo-feature on the Last Days of the Slough Estates Railway which appeared in the December issue.

## EDDIE LEWCOCK CUP

Also at the AGM the Eddie Lewcock Cup was awarded to Mike Walker for his efforts as editor of the *Marlow Donkey* and the weekly e-newsletters.

## RCTS MAIDENHEAD

Our friends at the RCTS continue their monthly meeting programme through the spring and an interesting programme is on offer as follows:

### Monday 28th March

An Evening with Chris Green

### Monday 18th April

The Railway Photographs of R C Riley - Rodney Lissenden

### Monday 23rd May

Branch AGM followed by members' presentations

Our June meeting which will be at our usual venue and time at Bourne End will be a joint meeting with the RCTS. This is because they do not organise their own meetings during the summer and this is a way of providing them with a meeting - and perhaps recruiting some more new members to the MDRS!

We would also recommend their March meeting when they have the former NSE and Virgin chief Chris Green as their speaker. Chris is an excellent and entertaining speaker so it would be good if a number of MDRS members went along to swell their numbers.

Meetings are held at the Cox Green Community Centre, Highfield Lane, Cox Green, Maidenhead, SL6 3AX commencing at 19:30.

*Adrian Shooter's superbly restored Darjeeling-Himalaya no.19 in action on his Beeches Light Railway during the Society's last visit in 2007. Let's hope for similar weather this year!*

*photo: Mike Walker*

The Marlow Donkey

## CHILTERN UPGRADE DELAYS

Work on Chiltern's Evergreen 3 project has encountered a number of unexpected delays. As a result the company has decided to defer the introduction of its new speeded-up Chiltern Mainline timetable from May to late August at the earliest. This will allow the outstanding works originally planned for April and May to be rescheduled over a longer time with the final major works being conducted in August when passenger numbers are traditionally lower.

This represents a complete redraft of the existing timetable to take advantage of the line speed enhancements afforded by the Evergreen 3 project, notably the 100mph maximum speed over a large part of the Joint Line.

The most important change is that High Wycombe will be served by an hourly semi-fast train to and from Birmingham Snow Hill. The hourly fast trains to Birmingham Moor Street will run non-stop in each direction between Marylebone and Banbury with additional stops beyond at Warwick Parkway and Solihull only. In the peak hours a couple of trains will operate non-stop between Marylebone and Warwick Parkway. It is anticipated that the Snow Hill trains will be progressively converted to loco-hauled operation.

Also from the start of the May timetable Chiltern will assume operational responsibility for the Oxford to Bicester Town service from FGW as a prelude to the introduction of the new Marylebone to Oxford service. Incidentally the public enquiry into the works necessary to upgrade the line for this concluded on 28th January and it is anticipated that Chiltern will get the go-ahead to start work without undue delay.

## STATIONS TO BE IMPROVED

FGW have announced enhancements to two of the branch stations. Marlow is to receive an additional waiting shelter on the platform and be connected to the town's CCTV network at a cost of around £10,000 and Cookham will get a new bike rack.

The new customer information screens at Maidenhead are due to be installed in April. They were being installed at Taplow as we went to press.

## SPECIAL TRAINS GALORE!

There appears to be a feast of special trains planned along the GWML and Chiltern Line over the next six months using both steam and diesel power.

Potentially the most interesting and unusual occurs on Saturday 2nd April when Spitfire Railtours are running what they call the Root & Branch Tour. It starts the previous evening from Paddington and makes its way down to Lymington Pier but it comes back and visits Henley, BOURNE END and Windsor & Eton Central before heading to Euston and then spending the rest of the day exploring the old Southern.

To ensure it is off the Thames Valley branches before the service trains start running means it will probably be at Bourne End sometime between 04.00 and 05.00. It will be formed of WC Mk1 and Mk2 stock top-and-tailed by Class 37s.

www.mdrs.org.uk



*During the Reading blockade the 07.30 Bristol Temple Meads to Paddington approaches High Wycombe on 1st January 2011.*

*Photo: Tim Edmonds*

Almost as noteworthy is the running of a Thumper DEMU over the GW&GC Joint line when Hastings Diesels bring their unit 1001 to Quainton Road on Saturday 14th May. The train is also planned to set down at Beaconsfield and Aylesbury.

On Thursday 31st March Steam Dreams are operating a Cathedrals Express from Aylesbury to Norwich which will operate via High Wycombe. Originally booked to be hauled by *Tornado*, it will now be in the charge of 70013 *Oliver Cromwell*.

Thursday 7th April Steam Dreams are running another Cathedrals Express starting at Oxford and running to Canterbury via the GWML and Kensington Olympia. This time 70000 *Britannia* is the booked loco.

Wednesday 13th April a Steam Dreams Cathedrals Express comes up the GWML on its way from Basingstoke to Lincoln behind 34067 *Tangmere*.

Easter weekend will be busy. On Easter Saturday 23rd April Steam Dreams have another Cathedrals Express this time starting at Paddington and running via the GW&GC Joint Line to Stratford-upon-Avon behind 70000 *Britannia*.

On Easter Sunday 24th April the final day of the Railway Touring Company's nine-day Great Britain IV marathon sees 5029 *Nunney Castle* bring the train from Bristol up to Paddington.

Saturday 30th April, RTC have The Royal Duchy from Paddington to Penzance, locomotive to be announced.

Saturday 11th June Steam Dreams have a Cathedrals Express from Paddington to Hereford and Shrewsbury with 60163 *Tornado*.

Saturday 18th June RTC is taking 70013 *Oliver Cromwell* from Paddington to Minehead and back as The West Somerset Explorer. This will use the new turntable at Minehead. Steam Dreams follow the same route with a Cathedrals Express on Saturday 2nd July behind 60163 *Tornado*.

Quite a list but it must be stressed that this is provisional, no doubt some of the planned dates will fall by the wayside and others might be added. Further updates as they become available.

# Farewell to

# wrexham & shropshire



In the March 2008 issue MIKE WALKER described the process of starting up the Wrexham & Shropshire Railway, Sadly he now concludes the story.

The announcement early on the morning of Wednesday 26th January that the Wrexham & Shropshire Railway would cease operations after the last train on Friday 28th January didn't really come as too much of a surprise to those within the industry although for your writer the timing was a surprise as only the previous afternoon I had been asked to go ahead with updating their route diagrams to incorporate the upgraded Chiltern main line.

It had been obvious for some time that the company which started operations with such high hopes on 28th April 2008 was struggling to attract sufficient passengers to make it viable. Despite gaining an enviable reputation for a level of customer service unrivalled by any other regular service trains in the UK and had achieved the stunning passenger satisfaction rating of 99% its backers eventually concluded that there was no prospect of the company making an operating profit let alone repaying the start-up investment and reluctantly, after studying all possible options, pulled the plug.

Wrexham & Shropshire had been conceived in 2006 as an "open access" operation to return direct rail services between Wrexham and Shrewsbury and London, in the former case for the first time in more than forty years. It was a joint venture between Renaissance Trains which had previously launched Hull Trains and Laing Rail the parent of Chiltern Railways.

Initial operations were beset by the late delivery of their own stock from refurbishment at Axion Rail, Marcroft, which meant trains operated with blue and grey Mk3s hired from Cargo D topped-and-tailed by the company's five dedicated Class 67s which were available from day 1 assisted as required by others from the DB Schenker fleet. Although the DVTs started to appear in the spring of 2009 it was not until late

that year that the first complete W&S train was ready for service and early 2010 before the third and final set was available. Subsequently, four additional Standard class cars were added to fleet refurbished at Wabtec, Doncaster.

With its own stock finally in operation the company was building a reputation for quality. Its Standard class was in many ways superior to other operators' First class and the on-board staff did everything they could to ensure their passengers had an enjoyable ride and kept them informed when problems arose.

*The penultimate up working, the 07.23 from Wrexham to Marylebone with 67014 Thomas Telford leading (and the right way round!) approaches the soon to be closed foot crossing just east of Seer Green & Jordans.*

*Photo: Chris Waite*

*Train Manager Steve Holt autographs the headboard as 82301 waits to take the final departure from Marylebone.*

*Photo: Mike Walker*





All entire available W&S staff rode on the final train after posing for a group photograph at Marylebone. Despite the uncertainty of their futures, all were in good spirits and proud of a job well done. A wreath was laid on the stop blocks in traditional railway manner.

Photos: Mike Walker



W&S provided a complimentary full silver-service dining experience for First class using fresh locally-sourced ingredients. These meals were also available to Standard class passengers at competitive tariffs.

Another feature of W&S operations was its dislike of "bustitution" when engineering work closed its regular routes. As a result its trains found themselves at various times diverted via Crewe and Stafford, down the WCML, round a variety of seldom used lines in west London and to both Euston and Paddington. Your writer never ceased to be amazed at how the drivers and train managers managed to learn all these routes! The downside was that although passengers didn't have to change modes, it did add an awful lot to journey times and that tended to dissuade regular passengers from travelling although a lot of "rare mileage" bashers took advantage!

Despite its success with passengers the company was not to be a success commercially. In the last year alone its operating losses amounted to £2.8 million and total losses including the start-up costs have been in the region of £13 million. Further there was no prospect of this being reduced let alone starting to become profitable. The initial weekday service of five trains each way was soon reduced to four as an economy measure and further reduced to just three with the current timetable. Whilst this reduced costs it also had the effect of reducing even further the number of passengers.

The directors looked long and hard at all options including integrating with Arriva Wales - Chiltern had assumed many back-office functions previously; all are part of the DB Reggio group of course. But reluctantly the decision to close was taken at the end of 2010 although the staff were not told until the

night before it became public just two days before operations ceased.

So what were the main factors that conspired to derail this bold attempt?

First, although extensive market research carried out in North Wales and Shropshire before launch looked promising, in reality the area probably has too small a population to sustain such a service and provide the required mean 65% load factor and those that did travel were mostly for leisure purposes and had booked APEX tickets often for less than £10.

Second, Virgin Trains did all they could to obstruct the service. They invoked the unique "moderation of competition" in their franchise agreement to prevent W&S from stopping at Birmingham New St., International or Coventry or to provide a full service for Wolverhampton. They also barred W&S from using the WCML and Euston except for diversions.

Lastly, due to the need to take a circular route around the West Midlands and run to Marylebone journey times were too long for many would be passengers. Ironically, the second and last of these would have vanished next year. Unlike the open access operators on the ECML who can serve York and Doncaster then blast down to The Cross at 125mph, W&S always had one arm tied behind their backs.

The final train on 28th January carried almost the entire team of 55 and despite the uncertainty for the future all were in good spirits. There were a few tears but no bitterness, just pride in a job well-done.

Thank you to everyone involved with W&S and good luck for the future.



Managing Director Andy Hamilton



Driver/Instructor Steve Roast  
Operations Manager Mark Edlington



Driver Tony Stickells and wife.



Driver Paul Belton

# A RAILWAY ABC

**In September 2010 JOHN SEARS returned from his new home in Northern Ireland to enjoy the final major events of GW175.**

George Best Belfast City Airport is being extended, which means that now passengers ascend to the first floor departure area, descend to the gate and then climb the stairs to the aircraft. It's a sort of built-in platform change, I suppose.

On Goldline route 261, the 8.25 from Enniskillen had arrived right time at 10.40 at the Europa Bus Centre. Not quite the conveyance that Great Northern would have provided back in the 1950s, the last decade in which trains ran from Enniskillen, it had at least used the track bed of the old line for several miles early in its journey. It had also followed the ghostly track of the old, fabulous, Clogher Valley Railway. Closed in 1941, it was one of those three-foot gauge lines that beguile and bewitch long after they fell victim to their own obsolescence. From the bus stop near the Fair Green stop, the Clogher Valley's first out of its junction with the Great Northern in Maguiresbridge, through Brookeborough, Fivemiletown, Clogher, Augher and finally Ballygawley, the 261 follows the A4 which itself follows the route the Clogher Valley took. In Fivemiletown and Augher the railway took to the middle of the road, indeed in Augher, the station stop was also in the street. As was the Western Pacific's station on 3rd. and Washington in Oakland although several hundred tons of stainless steel never appeared at Augher.

The station buildings on the line were built on a grand scale for such a rural line, just like those on the North Eastern's Cornhill branch from Alnwick to Coldstream. And, just like those, many of them are still complete in all their glory. As on the Cornhill branch and the Wycombe Railway, they are all to a very characteristic style with a two storey section for the station master, and a long single storey section containing the usual station offices. Four are visible from the bus: Brookeborough, where a section of track has been relaid in the platform, and a couple of items of rolling stock have been restored, Colebrooke - a wayside halt with a station building fit for the local planter lord, Fivemiletown at the western end of the street-running, and Augher, now a cafe, just before the mini-roundabout at the cross roads marking the centre of the village. Patronage has been much what the Clogher Valley would have expected: six on at Maguiresbridge, no one at Brookeborough, one on, one off at Fivemiletown, no one at Clogher and two on at Augher



*Brookeborough station; note the restored coach in shelter.  
unless stated, photos: John Sears*

Back at City Airport, Flybe have decided that the plane - a Dash 8 Q400, a Bombardier Aerospace product - needs a new part, which, we're not told, and despite it having been on the apron for at least two hours, they're going to take more time to fit it. The call to gate time of 12.20 comes and goes; at 12.30

passengers for BE263, the 12.50 to Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield are called. Those passengers troop to the door (to the corridor to the gate) where they're told that the plane isn't ready. Eventually, at 13.00 the doors are opened and we can walk to the gate. Now aboard the plane, the captain tells us about the part.

Final approach is down the ECML over Bawtry and arrival is about half an hour late. In a poor display of incompetence - or rather what is actually a very good display of incompetence! - the shutter to the exit from the arrivals hall is locked down and we have to call someone to get it unlocked and raised. Outside there are three bus shelters with no clear indication of where they serve. The furthest is the one at which First's 91 should appear at 14.33 for the half-hour trip to Frenchgate in Doncaster. It's at least seven minutes after that when the bus does arrive, sans any indication of the fare to Doncaster (it's £2.70) and that the terminus is adjacent to the railway station. As a consequence it takes a good three minutes for the 12 or so passengers to buy their tickets after asking the fare and "Does it go near the railway station?" Nil points for First, as any bus serving an airport should carry the fare writ large, and whereabouts in town it goes - most of its passengers will be first-time, or very infrequent travellers.

After a crew change 200 yards from the bus station, we finally arrive 11 minutes late, and East Coast's 14.40 from Leeds to Kings Cross, 15.15 off Doncaster, is being whistled away as a would-be passenger arrives on the platform. Annoying, but not too much of a problem, thanks to today's inter-city frequencies. The next train is 15.36, the 14.05 from Newcastle; all-stations to Grantham, then non-stop to the Cross. T'other side of the station the 14.00 from Kings Cross to Aberdeen runs in, full and standing, the announcer has been warning the waiting passengers, but how many will follow the advice not to board if they haven't reserved? The 15.36 averages 79 to Retford, 82 thence to Newark North Gate and only 71 on to Grantham, from where it can finally travel a decent distance without stopping, and runs up to London at an average of 98 mph. Five late off Doncaster, we're one late into Kings Cross, denied right-time thanks to a slow south of Knebworth, no doubt something to do with Welwyn Viaduct's double track.

Extremely helpful is the announcement that the 18.12 to Basingstoke will leave from Waterloo's platform nine, made at the exact second one of its passengers emerges from the Underground. The train is three class 450 Siemens units, twelve cars, and with six minutes to go there are plenty of seats; however on departure it's almost full. It runs the twenty-eight miles to Brookwood in even time, switching to the slow line just east of Woking. Farnborough next; then off at Fleet to repair to the Hogget in Hook for supper and a couple of beers.

On Saturday morning train dispatching on Reading's number four is as bad as it ever was, with down trains being allowed to sit in the platform just long enough to ensure that each of the following trains is checked. Wonder if all that new infrastructure will change that? 43195 leads in *The Brunellian*, though I rather think it should be *The Brunellian*, five very lightly-loaded standard class cars, the kitchen car and two firsts, well-loaded. 43022 on the rear helps it depart just before its booked 9.43 - hooray! We take the Berks and Hants and are off to Swindon, the great way round via Lavington and Trowbridge. A great British breakfast arrives and rather preoccupies your scribe, but he is able to note that because of a stop near Thatcham, we are about three late through Newbury. As the train runs through Trowbridge and Melksham the

passengers are told of the new through train that will run up in the morning peak from Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge to Paddington and back in the evening, from next May's timetable. They will use the line through Hawkeridge Junction rather than the one-time route through Devizes. Long before he was aware of the bane of the enquiry clerk's life - amendments - your scribe once caught a train from Trowbridge to Devizes (a three car Cross-Country set) expecting it to continue to Westbury via Patney. Oh no, said the driver, it goes empty stock!

A second signal stop, this one before Thingley East Junction, cannot prevent an arrival at Swindon that's a minute early. The passengers leave the train; descend the stairs to the subway and without any bother exit through the barriers because they are, at a busy time on a Saturday morning, all wide open. There's a 1965 Bristol MW (what, MW?!) coach available for the transfer to STEAM, but the day's sunny and the walk is better for us. Gathering in the entrance hall we are being denied access, as "someone" has forgotten to tell the museum staff that our travel tickets should be accepted for admission. A rather harassed woman asks if anyone is "in charge" and your author calls out "Yes, that chap with the dark glasses" as he spots James Abbot pressing through the throng. Eventually we are counted through the doors and can spread out amongst the displays.

It's easy to be biased about God's Wonderful Railway, but it has got more right to that description than any other, and the sight of *Caerphilly Castle* assuages any sore eyes - but perhaps that tender is better behind a locomotive with four fewer wheels?



The exhibits and layout are well thought out and particularly celebrate the work of those employed in The Factory. At times their efforts must have been in spite of, not because of, their conditions of work. Rules abounded, most necessary, but did "they" really need to issue permits for cycles in such a seemingly begrudging manner - blue permits were only issued under "exceptional circumstances", but all they allowed the holder to do was wheel, not ride, their bike into the works "for storage purposes only". The section of timber-frame shows how coach-building technology has evolved, and surely also tells us that such skills must be maintained. How else can we in the present keep the past for the future?

The Bristol coach is waiting and gains an extra passenger before it double de-clutches its way back to the station. Someone's playing about with the trains, as the late-running 12.30 from Bristol, due off Swindon at 13.11, is moved from platform 1 to platform 3, delaying the 12.15 Paddington to Cheltenham, which is switched from 3 to 1 after the 13.11 has cleared the station. Apart from musical platforms 60010 rolls through on empty Murco tanks and is recorded by several photographers. Lunch is served after departure at 13.45, and it's very good. Catering is in the very capable hands of one of Great Western's crews. It is odd though that seats in the kitchen [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

car aren't in use, which would have made the need to serve into car H unnecessary. At Wootton Bassett we head off down the Badminton line, next stop Bristol Parkway, where arrival is three late. It's straight ahead at Filton West Junction, under the line from Bristol, and on down past BAE through the freight terminals to Avonmouth. We trundle on through Clifton Down Tunnel and transit Bristol's northern inner suburbs to Temple Meads. A brief stop and then we're off to Ashton Junction and the Portishead Branch. Mr. Brunel's bridge over the Avon Gorge is finally in sight, outlined against the clear blue sky. It might not be as long as the suspension bridges built over estuaries in the last decades of the Twentieth Century, but its position atop cliffs is second to none.

43022 heads inside the port complex at Portbury, but not very far - the rear of the train is just west of the M5 viaduct. There's little to see apart from the cars in the storage compounds, chain-link fencing and, ahead of the train, the line to Portishead curving left away from the line into the port. We spend a few seconds more than booked before setting off back along the branch and through the tunnels under that bridge to Temple Meads and the near two-hour break during which the train is run along the line past St. Phillips Marsh depot so that the first class will again be at the London end. The time is also used by the chef to prepare dinner. Departure from platform nine is a minute late by the "confirmed times" on page two of the guide for the trip, five early by the "working timetable" on the back page. We'd been told in the publicity for the trip that it could be put in a loop to provide enough time for dinner to be served leisurely, but the working times are innocent of any stay in a loop, although the 38 minutes allowed from passing Swindon to arriving in Reading's number five include "allowances" that total 14 minutes.

Despite diners having been phoned by Pathfinder, there is a little "fun" as some dispute the main course that the stewards believe they've ordered. The member of the M&DRS is content with his; though the dinner is not as tasty as lunch, it's perfectly edible and it's lovely to enjoy a full meal on a train. This diner's first was second sitting of lunch on the *Flying Scotsman* as it lived up to its name on the descent of Stoke Bank; savoring steak and kidney pudding as we flashed over all those level crossings north of Peterborough - delicious! Back in the Vale of White Horse our progress is slowed considerably as we're put inside at Challow for about 25 minutes to finish our meal and settle the drinks bill. The steward's gadget has the brains to store our seat number as the tag for our drinks for lunch as well as dinner. The American couple across the aisle has forked out for quite a pricey bottle of wine; they come from somewhere near Marlow and were enticed onto the train by an e-mail from Great Western. Slowed before Didcot, we're into Reading at 19.51, and again it's take your pick - 22 late by the working times, three late by the "public" ones. Passengers leave the train, this one for a forty-odd minute wait for the 20.32 to Plymouth, the first leg of the trip to Cornwall for the final day of steam on the Looe branch.

43190 heads out of Reading at 20.34 on the eleven-stop journey to Plymouth, where it's due at 23.48. Those 11 stops will occupy nearly 21 minutes, nearly three of them at Castle Cary alone; no wonder the train manager asks passengers leaving the train to close the doors to speed up the dispatch of the train. We run a few minutes adrift of the timetable all the way until Totnes, reached at 23.17 and run into Plymouth three minutes early. The loading's been pretty good all the way, and those left walk off the train from platform 4 and head for their various occasions. Your scribe heads off to his guesthouse, five minutes away. The bed is comfortable, the shower room as cosy as the cab of a 153, the host just short of annoyingly fussy, and the breakfast tasty.

The duty manager at Plymouth station on Sunday morning is scuttling about - something appears to be up. It transpires that the HST to form CrossCountry's 9.05 to Penzance is late - trouble at Laira; in the meantime various GW units shuffle about, including a 150, which repairs to platform 3 to become the 9.30 to Gunnislake. The 9.25 GW train to Penzance departs on time, formed of another 150, with XC finally getting away at 9.28! That HST will form the 11.24 from Penzance to Edinburgh. Whilst all this has been going on the *Tamar Syphon II* has arrived in platform 4: 37685 plus four MkIIs and 9466. It isn't busy, to say the least, and gets away a minute late at 9.36. Progress to Saltash is slowed by the glut of preceding trains and we stop, in vain, five late. No matter, the sun's shining again and that marvellous route through Cornwall is as stunningly beautiful as ever. A stop at St. Germans and we're into Liskeard, where nearly everyone dutifully leaves the train and disperse to their chosen vantage point to photograph the train as it shunts across to the up line and round the passenger-unfriendly link to the old Liskeard and Looe station. Nearly everyone, as a surprising number appear to be worthy enough/inherently safe enough to remain aboard.....



*A shame about the tail lamp! 9466 heads into Liskeard.*

9466 looks pristine in its anachronistic livery, so glossy that it looks like a model. It sounds great as it urges the rest of the train up the 1 in 59 back into the station from the trailing crossover at the west end of the station. The shunt moves are followed by the faithful crowd, and soon everyone is milling around the Looe branch platform enjoying the sights and sounds of steam on the Looe branch for the second time in nearly fifty years. It's worth spending time in the old station, which has displays of historical photos and maps of the mines and railways of the area.



*Not what it seems! Watering the Pannier in number 3 at Liskeard. Photo: Joe Lynch.*

Back in 1921 the Great Western operated a daily goods train, a mixed (down direction only) and six passenger trains. There were some interesting additional workings: one a down train at 21.11 on Thursdays and Saturdays, its loco returning light to

the shed at Moorswater. Nowadays such a train would be described as "a service after the late service". The other passenger working is a Monday only 6.35 from Looe, loco light from Moorswater. Running as required, and only on the last Monday of each month is the 16.30 cattle train from Looe. The 18.28 from Looe ran with an additional loco attached as far as Coombe Junction. It was returning to the shed at Moorswater from an unbalanced down passenger.

Today we're all aboard and away, round and down to Coombe Junction on the link built in 1901. Reversal is quickly achieved and the bosky route down the East Looe is pursued. There's not much of the canal that preceded the original railway except some double arches at overbridges, and, apart from the alignment, luckily there's nothing left of that original line. The last track on a passenger railway using rail laid on granite blocks was replaced here just before the Great Western took over in 1909. There are good numbers of people at all the vantage points, and when the valley finally opens out into the estuary so do the views. Trees are lovely, in moderation, but the Looe branch comes a close second to the Esquimalt and Nanaimo for a surfeit of them. We've been warned that the ten-minute turn-round at Looe won't be long enough to allow many passengers off to photograph the English Electric Type 3 diesel-electric locomotive, and also that the short platform will be a further limit. There's no problem and so we're off back up the valley on time with the Hawksworth 0-6-0PT steam locomotive in the lead.

Even after Coombe Junction steam is providing the tractive effort; 9466 sounds powerful and is pushing the whole train up the 1 in 40 for the first half-mile or so until we're under Liskeard Viaduct. Four early is the result - more time for lunch, which is taken in the Old Stag, just across the road from Liskeard's recently refurbished station.



*Something of a station about it? The Old Stag in Liskeard.*

Sharp's Doom Bar goes down well, as does a scrumptious prawn baguette. Post-prandial exercise is limited to observing the traffic on the railway; business on the last Sunday in September is good. Your author boards the 14.43 (the 10.57 Paddn) for a trip westwards over the voluptuous curves of the Cornish main line. There's a temporary speed restriction round that sweeping curve before Gwinear Road, where the platforms are still in place years after closure. There are plenty of lower quadrants west of the Tamar, and St. Erth is well-equipped to signal the junction for the line to St. Ives. Over the footbridge at the bay platform 150246 arrives to form the 16.11; about 40 passengers leave, but only 15 or so wait to board. The sun has now vanished behind clouds, so your hungry scribe limits his stay in St. Ives to finding the nearest pasty shop; mission accomplished he returns to the station. Even on Sundays the timetable on the line is a true shuttle, and the reason is clear as at least 60 passengers gather for the return of the 150 and its 16.56 departure. Most leave the train at Lelant Saltings and

The Marlow Donkey

only ten leave the train at St. Erth. There's time to watch the semaphores drop, first for the 17.26 to Penzance and then for 43145 at the head of the 17.30 to Paddington. Par is the limit of this journey, where a very comfortable room in a B&B awaits.

The next morning the sounds of waves breaking lazily on the beach precede breakfast and the walk back to Par station, where the 7 48 from Newquay, all 153329 of it, arrives early, but with only 11 passengers. It shunts out of the platform and 66037 appears from the down main with 37 empty clay hoppers and they all clump and grind round the curve through St. Blazey and on up into the valley to Luxulyan, sounds clear in the still morning. 43174 and Mr. Brunel himself, more prosaically 43003, run in as the 8.46 to Paddington via Bristol, one of those long-distance locals cum inter-regional cum inter-city services that of the long-distance TOCs Great Western has more than most. About 20 board at Par, 14 more at Bodmin Parkway, Liskeard goes uncounted, five at St. Germans. Saltash is next, again uncounted as only cars H to E are in the platform, and we roll into North Road on time. Up on the lower slopes of Dartmoor five more join us at Ivybridge, and we continue round its southern skirts through Brent, where the signal box stands yet, forty-seven years after this passenger changed out of a new inter-city dmu, bought a half return to Kingsbridge (for 1/11!), and joined the four through coaches from Paddington. 63XX diesel power took them along that sylvan glory of a railway and then back to Newton Abbot. In 2010 there's another change at Newton for Paignton and a rather full 142009 still in North Western "gold star" livery proceeds to Torre, Torquay and Wafly Swoter.

Or maybe it's Paignton, certainly *Goliath* is stabled as an icon of the - gasp! - Dartmouth Steam Railway & River Boat Company. A quick trip down to the prom finds the tide's in. A quick trip back to the station finds the 142 is filling; it departs just before some Arriva stock and its class 67 bookends arrive as the 8.00 from Cardiff Central. On leaving Torre it's about 80% full. Half get off at Newton Abbot, and we continue towards Exeter. By Dawlish it's full and standing, and ten more join at the Warren. A very basic hourly service appears to be suppressing demand in the Torbay conurbation, and reduces the attractiveness of using rail throughout, as it cannot provide good connections in both directions at Newton Abbot. Shuffled stock appears just west of Teignmouth as a Silverlink liveried 150 passes, but it will replace rather than augment GW's fleet.

We wait patiently outside St. Davids for the slightly tardy down *Cornish Riviera* to leave so we can cross to platform 1. CrossCountry are again in trouble, as the announcer tells us that the 12.48 to Manchester is cancelled - it's the 9.40 from Penzance. The Great Western Hotel is also in trouble; shabby "unchic" is the style of the bar, chatting to friends rather than attending customers is the barmaid's. Never mind, the Jollyboat Brewery's "Hart of Oak" is a very potable draught and fills the wait for Stagecoach's 13.16 departure on route 56 to Exeter International Airport. Two get on at St. Davids and eight more at the bus station for the trip out of town. Three of us get off at the airport, where the bus shelter sits forlornly outside the terminal building, 50 feet or so away from where the terrorists now allow the buses to stop. Of the airport and its facilities, least said, soonest mended. Flybe get their 15.25 away on the dot, and into its goal of George Best 15 early, and this passenger can catch the 17.05, rather than the 18.05, from Belfast to Enniskillen.

So, four days, six buses, two planes and 14 trains; add in some good company, good food and beer and all that scenery and railway interest. It could almost be the start of a railway ABC: A is for Augher, B is for Brunel, C is for Cornwall....

*East Lancs? no, South Devon. 142009 sits at Paignton.*

*9466 leads the return working of "train A" just south of Sandplace Halt - note the milky-white exhaust.*

*Photo: Joe Lynch.*



# CHINNOR UPDATE

**Mike Hyde**



*Two photos: Mike Hyde*

Our nearest standard gauge preserved line is at Chinnor as many of you know. In case you have not been for a while, let me update you. First of all when you go, you might think you have missed the site entrance. The Chinnor Cement Works have gone and in their place Taylor-Wimpey are building an estate of well over 150 houses including a care home and offices. Shortly, probably by the time the 2011 railway season opens on Sunday 20 March, the entrance will have moved 100 yards up the road towards the Chiltern Hills. There is a new roundabout which will bring you back towards the railway then into an enlarged and improved car park.

You then walk to the pedestrian entrance steps and there you will immediately see the signal box (actually a large Ground Frame) purchased over 2 years ago from a family in Maidenhead. It originally came from Mouldsworth in Cheshire so it was not Great Western but previously CLC (Cheshire Lines Committee). The story is told on an information board by the box. The Operator or 'Bobby' will be pleased to show you around if he is not too busy.

*In July 2007 the C&PRR celebrated the 50th anniversary of the withdrawal of passenger trains on the branch by recreating the last trains with 9682 taking the identity of long-scrapped sister 4650 [Above] and borrowing Autocoach W225W from the South Devon Railway.*

*The new signal at Chinnor [Right] presents a ghostly image during the big freeze of December 2010.*



Turn around and you cannot miss the signal post erected a year ago. The main signal-arm is not yet operational and the second bracket has no arm. However the main line towards Watlington or the sidings is controlled by a signal-disc mounted below the main arm. As the site develops the signal post will play a larger role. Incidentally the 'box' controls the points in/out of the sidings and the loop as well as ground signals to/from these lines. Also the pedestrian crossing gates are locked by the 'Bobby' when trains are due to move. So don't rattle the gates to get in but be patient and wait. It is a matter of safety which we all take seriously.

So now you are in. Visitors do not need to ride the train if they simply want to look around, visit the book shop or purchase a tea and bun.

Yes, the 'Cambrian Buffet Car' is still in position, welcoming and reasonably priced. The station itself, rebuilt by members a few years ago and winner of a Heritage Award, features the ticket office and Shop. Lots of railway books and videos are on offer at very good prices. Separate Toilet facilities are to hand and at the end of the platform is a green sitting out area.

Until recently the duty locomotive was GWR No.1369, an outside-cylinder pannier tank from the South Devon Railway (ex Weymouth docks). For the 2011 season the engine will be 0-6-0 pannier tank GWR 5786 also from the SDR at Buckfastleigh. Sundays are the usual operating days with 5 services (4 in steam) but Bank Holidays and some Saturdays are also open. Tickets start at £9.00 for an adult but are valid for unlimited travel on the day for the 7 mile round trip. Many Sundays have 'to die for' cream teas. Special days abound but the Steam & Diesel Gala Days are 5 June and 7 August. If you are in to Murder Mysteries with onboard dining or fancy a Fish & Chip supper with Quiz (where did that idea come from?) check the time table for the evening dates and book.

Finally, if you have spare time and would like to work on a 100% volunteer railway, why not join? If in doubt attend on 21 May Open Day and check out the opportunities!

For the future two major projects are scheduled. Of course getting into Princes Risborough has been an objective for a long time and our negotiations continue. We all hope this year will bring some good news from discussions tho actual works may have to wait a while yet. Currently highlighted is the [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)



*Another visitor to the line has been GWR Small Prairie 5542 seen arriving at the superbly reconstructed Chinnor station on 8th August 2009.*

*Photo: Mike Hyde*

Maintenance Shed Appeal. The plan is to construct down the yard a two-road workshop to take two coaches and a locomotive with repair and training facilities. A start may have been made by Easter.

So even more reasons to visit.

Mike is a volunteer on the C&PRR and can often be found keeping order in the role of Station Master at Chinnor - Ed.

*The unique preserved Clayton Class 17 diesel D8568 is expected to return to service at Chinnor this summer after a lengthy and complete overhaul.*

*Photo: Mike Walker*



Mike Page takes...

## A brief visit to the Ruhr in 1961.



Back in September, 1961, the then Iron and Steel institute took some 20 apprentices on a coach tour of The Netherlands and Germany to visit factories. As one of the apprentices, I was dually excited at the prospect of visiting foreign factories and using any free time to chase trains.

We went, sadly, by coach from Wolverhampton to overnight in a YHA hostel not far from Oxford Circus. We all took the 'tube' to Liverpool Street to catch the morning boat train to Harwich Parkeston Quay. There were mostly Brush Type 2s (31s) and a new English Electric Type 3 (37). I was 'off' diesels and so didn't photograph D6702. It was also too gloomy to photograph N7 69632 having arrived with a parcels train and L1 67716 and N7 69688 having brought in empty stock. The only steam I saw on the way to Harwich was another N7 69714 sitting, in steam, in Colchester shed yard.

The British Railways steamer *Saint Edmund* took us across the North Sea to Hoek van Holland on a hot sunny day, so cold beer and deck chairs went down very well during the six-hour 'voyage'! The only glimpse of steam locos in Holland was at the Royal Netherlands Blast Furnaces (today's Corus) in Ijmuiden where some German-looking 0-6-0Ts (rather like the Deutsche Bundesbahn (DB) Class 80s) were busy with ladle cars. Unfortunately we had had to leave our cameras at the reception desk.

I did spend about 30min drinking evening coffee on one of the platforms of Amsterdam Central (a novel experience then!) while watching the very French-looking dark blue Dutch 1100 series B-Bs and the EMUs.



*Netherlands State Railways French-built 1154 meets a sister loco [Above] at Amsterdam's Central station. There were sixty of these built by Alstom between 1950 and 1956 but they proved unpopular with drivers due to their rough ride and cramped cabs - in their later days NS had to pay a bonus to get their drivers to handle them!*

*NS 1205 also at Amsterdam Central [Left] was built in Holland by Werkspoor to a design by Baldwin who also supplied the bogies and other parts. A total of 25 were built between 1951-53 as part of the Marshall Plan.*

*All photos: Mike Page*

We moved on to Duesseldorf by coach arriving on the dark evening of September 18. The small hotel was right by the viaduct carrying the all-steam Duesseldorf-Neuss - Moenchen Gladbach line. We were deafened by a passing steam loco's safety valves exploding - that's what it sounded like - as we got off the coach. German firemen on the 'Einheitslokomotiven' (standard locomotives built 1927 onwards) knew about it if they let the safety valves lift!

I could barely contain my impatience as we traipsed around two factories next day - though the visit to Krupp in Essen included the locomotive plant. There the ten pre-production V160 diesel hydraulic B-Bs were being assembled. German enthusiasts nicknamed these engines 'Lollo' after Gina Lollobrigida as the cab and 'nose' of these engines were similar to the film actress' well-endowed upper

profile! The guy who took us around the works showed me pictures of the two advanced class 10 pacifics under construction in 1955, the building of which he was very proud to have been involved with. He sadly showed us the ruins of a once very large forge, where the RAF had decimated Krupp's 12,000-ton open die forging press.

As soon as we had returned to the hotel, I headed for the Hauptbahnhof (main station). The original, I imagine pre-/post-war rebuilt, train shed was in-situ (it looked nothing like today's). About half the station was wired at 15kVA AC for trains on the Dortmund-Duesseldorf-Koeln (Cologne) lines. Locomotives were blue E10 B-Bs and green E40 and E41 'universal' B-Bs.

My first 'steamers' seen were ex-Prussian 'P8' 4-6-0, 38.2997 sitting with a local pointing towards Neuss at 17.46, and '50' 2-10-0, 50.2327, passing through light engine. Ready to leave was two-cylinder 'Pacific' 01.183 of 1927 vintage on a D-train to Koeln - so not all traffic on that route was electric. Eight minutes later, at 18.03, a two-cylinder, 1930s-built '41' 2-8-2, 41.365, came smartly through off the Neuss line with a long freight, while rebuilt, oil-burning '01.10' three-cylinder



*Ex-Prussian 'P8' 4-6-0, 38.1714 waits for departure time at Duesseldorf Hauptbahnhof.*

Pacific, 01.1011, came to a halt with an E-train (Eilzug - 'semi-fast'), I imagine, from Hamm. Built in 1939/40, these engines were formerly streamlined. Many were rebuilt with new all-welded boilers and roller bearings throughout. They spent their last days on the Rheine-Emden/Norddeich and Hamburg-Kiel lines into the early 1970s.

Two more P8s appeared in the next ten minutes, 38.2513 and 38.3623 on locals, followed closely by another ex-Prussian loco a T18, now DB class '78', 4-6-4T, 78.727. At 18.26 I had to leave the station to join the group for dinner with people from Krupp (at the Krupp family's Villa Huegel). So that first 30 minutes or so of German steam was very satisfying and I couldn't wait for the 'day free' in the itinerary, on September 22.

Unexpectedly one of the visits on the afternoon of September 21 had been cancelled, so after viewing an electrical transformer plant near Koenigswinter, we were let loose for an hour or so. It was fascinating to learn that this factory's management were literally scared of Britain joining the infant European Union as they would have to face very stiff competition from Crompton Parkinson, Brush, English Electric and AEI. How things have changed!



*Heavy main line action at Koenigswinter with Class 01 Pacific 01.092 [Left] and a Franco-Crosti-boilered Class 50 2-10-0, 50.4030 [Above].*



I left the group to find the main line running through the centre of Koenigswinter. Then, the east bank of the Rhine was wired, but not energised, and all traffic seen in about an hour or so was steam. I could not get over the speed of the 40/50-wagon freights, cantering through the middle of Koenigswinter at 45-50mph. All were class 50s. One or two, such as 50.562, still had the full 'apron' ahead of the cylinders. I was able to photograph 50.1327, 50.562 and 50.2355. I considered myself lucky to have snapped a Franco Crosti-boilered 50, 50.4030. The DB had rebuilt around 30 of these engines in a similar fashion to our 'Crosti' 9Fs, except that the DB had spent money on using high chrome alloy steel to offset corrosion in the exhaust passages.

Two locals with P8s and 'Reko' (reconstructed) six-wheel coaches appeared. These coaches were post-war bodies mounted on mostly ex-Prussian six-wheeled chasses. One local was headed by 'P8' 38.2721. Pacific 01.140 drifted by with an E-train from Frankfurt/Main to Koeln and 01.092 went in the opposite direction with a D-train to Passau.

On the way back to Duesseldorf we passed the extensive marshalling yards at Gremberg where three Prussian G8 or DB '55' 0-8-0s were seen in the distance active on hump work. The coach stopped briefly at Gremberg station for a 'natural break'. Not expecting to see anything in a couple of minutes, I went cameraless onto the platform only to find a '55' with two wagons. I dashed back for my camera - but too late - the '55' had departed!

*Another of the numerous P8 4-6-0's 38.3541 standing at Wuppertal Oberbarmen.*

That evening I spent half-an-hour at the Hbf working out next day's freedom. Before the tour I had read in European Railways magazine that a surviving class 85 2-10-2T was being used on the bank at Erkrath, between Wuppertal and Hagen. The DB 85 engines were much larger than the preserved Prussian T20 (DB 95) 2-10-2T. The 85s had originally been designed for handling traffic on some steeply graded, and then recently electrified, lines in Bavaria. The bank at Erkrath is about as steep as, and as long as, Lickey near Birmingham, though not with so much traffic as one would have observed on Lickey.

The day on September 22, was rather bleak, and after the previous night's revelries I was much later getting up than I had intended. My 'Personenzug' (local train) to Wuppertal, at about 9.30 am, was headed by P8 38.3602. Before we set off, 41.107 came through with a freight, again off the Neuss line.

On the line to Wuppertal we passed extensive goods yards in the Duesseldorf suburbs, with mostly 50 2-10-0s present. We passed a rebuilt, three-cylinder light Pacific, 03.10 and a post-war two-cylindered class '23' 2-6-2 on trains heading for Duesseldorf as well as more 50s and P8s. As we neared Wuppertal, we crossed with the 'Seilbahn' - the overhead railway, which still had the original pre-war cars. Then as we rolled into Wuppertal Eberfeld, a 78 4-6-4T passed propelling a

*Class 78 4-6-4T 78.362 rolls into Wuppertal Vohwinkel [Left] with a local comprising of 4-wheelers whilst Class 03 Pacific 03.1015 [Below] awaits departure.*





train of pre-war, end balconied, four-wheel coaches nicknamed by the Germans as 'Thunderboxes'. I then hadn't realised that the DB ran push-pulls with such coaches.

The Eberfeld station had the remains of an arched overall roof, which framed 'my' train with 38.3602. Then I caught a class '03' two-cylinder, light Pacific 03.077 arriving with an E-train from Hamm. I was only there about 15 min to see 38.3602 depart and then I joined an E-train for Hamm, with 03.1008 as far as the Oberbarmen station. These 03.10 light, three-cylinder Pacifics had new, all-welded, boilers similar to those fitted to some rebuilt 01s. All the 03.10s on the DB had gone before locos were renumbered computer-style.

After taking some more shots of 78s, 38s and 03.1054 on an E-train to Koeln, my local to Hagen, stopping at Erkrath, came in with 50.2760. This loco was one of a number of 50s seen running without a chimney extension, and I had photographed it earlier at Duesseldorf. Perhaps there was a line in the Ruhr with limited clearances, or had these 50s originally worked in France, where the loading gauge height was lower?

My arrival at Erkrath brought disappointment, as there was no '85' there, but a standard, class '44' . three-cylinder, heavy 2-10-0, 44.599 instead. The crew told me that 85.007 had been replaced two weeks ago. Ah well! I had a wait of about 30 min, during which a P8 arrived on a local to Wuppertal. My train for Hagen came in surprisingly with an 01. Even though the train consisted of only four 'Reko' bogie coaches (again, post-war rebuilds of old Prussian coaches), 44.599 came on the back and neither loco made any real noise as we cantered up the bank. As we rolled into Hagen, a Prussian 'G10' 0-10-0 57.1854 was shunting one of the yards, but no other 57 came near the station while I was there. Hagen had maybe ten of those locos at the time.

The journey back to Duesseldorf was with an E-train headed by another 01 as far as Wuppertal Vohwinkel, where I spent an hour or so watching mostly class 44 2-10-0s coming off shed. More 78s turned up as well as a Prussian T16, or DB class '94' 0-10-0T, 94.414, on a transfer freight and 'standard' class '86' [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

*P8 4-6-0 38.3602 standing beneath the remains of the overall roof at Eberfeld.*

2-8-2T, 86.072, running light engine. I had never seen a rebuilt 03.10 with chimney extension before, but 03.1016 on an E-train to Hagen looked very odd as the chimney extension had a wide rim.

I thought the driving practice was interesting on all the trains I rode, namely, thrash out a fast acceleration to line speed (even with the 38s and 50s), cruise at 50-60 mph, then slam the breaks on just when you thought the train was going to overshoot the station. I was amused that passengers intending to detrain positioned themselves at the coaches' doors a good five minutes before arrival - then I saw why, as trains rarely 'hung about' at stations for more than a minute or two! Another practice was seeing the stationmasters standing to attention at the small stations as we went through.

We apprentices were treated on the return to England with a flight from Duesseldorf to Southend in a Convair CV-440. I well remember that the engine noise lingered on in one's ears for some hours afterwards! It was interesting to have briefly sampled German steam in the Ruhr, as it was only a few years later that wires went up on the Duesseldorf-Hagen and Neuss lines.

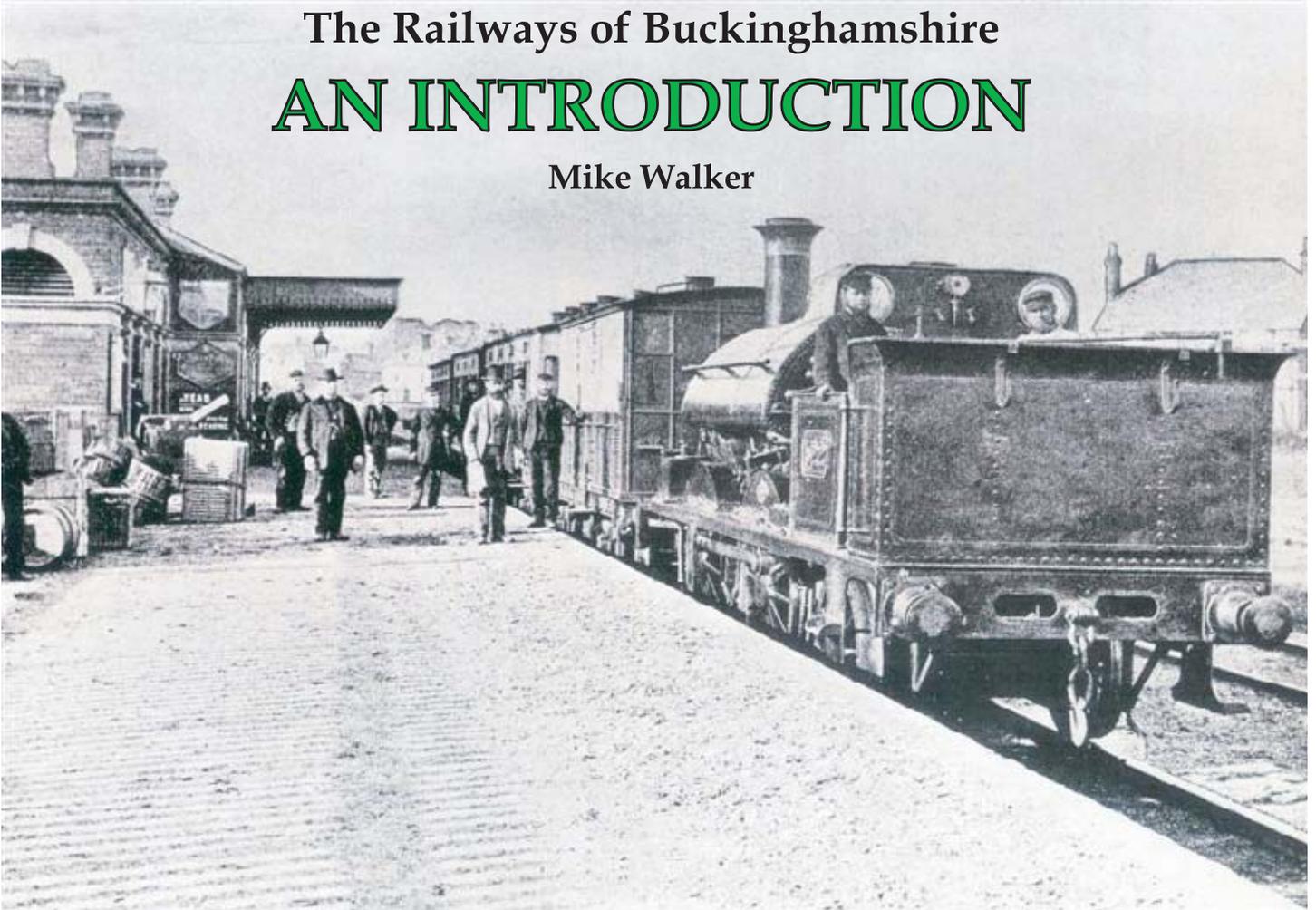
*Lufthansa D-ACEX, a twin-engined Convair CV-440 sits on the apron at Duesseldorf ready to take the party back to Southend.*



# The Railways of Buckinghamshire

## AN INTRODUCTION

Mike Walker



*This well known early photograph shows Marlow station soon after opening in 1873, the loco is 0-4-2T 522.*

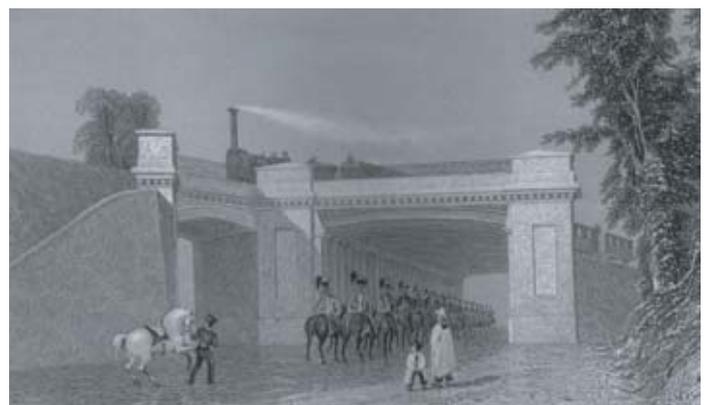
This series will examine the history of each of the railways that have served the county, taking one route at a time in the chronological order of opening and examining their construction and subsequent operation to closure or the present day. These will inevitably be fairly outline portraits of each line but references will be included to more detailed works on each line if further details are sought. For the purpose of this series, the county is defined by its traditional boundaries as they existed before the local government reorganization of 1974 which saw the Linslade area transferred to Bedfordshire and the Slough district to Berkshire.

At the dawn of the railway age in the 1830s, Buckinghamshire was still largely a rural backwater. It had few towns of note apart from Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe and industrial activity was largely confined to agriculture and the furniture trade around High Wycombe largely thanks to the beech woods covering the Chiltern Hills. It is therefore not too surprising that the coming of the railways in the county was somewhat slow and piecemeal.

Two of the first trunk lines in the country, the London & Birmingham and the Great Western kicked off the railway era in Buckinghamshire within months of each other in 1838 and a year later the first true branch line in the country opened between Cheddington on the L&B and Aylesbury. Progress from then on was slow and patchy with construction largely confined to the peripheries of the county, Bletchley to Bedford in 1846, the Leighton Buzzard to Dunstable branch in 1848 followed by not one, but two branches to Windsor in

1849. Although this latter town was never in Bucks, both the branches to it passed through the county. Following on from this came two important railways promoted to serve the county's heartland, in the north the Buckinghamshire Railway (1850) connected Bletchley with Buckingham, Banbury and Oxford, whilst the Wycombe Railway (1854) introduced rail service to the south of the county by connecting High Wycombe with the Great Western at Maidenhead. The WRC later went on to extend north to Princes Risborough, Aylesbury and Oxford over the following decade. However it was not until 1868 that the two systems were linked with the opening of the Aylesbury & Buckingham Railway.

*The county's first terminal was here at Denbigh Hall near Bletchley where the London & Birmingham crossed Watling Street.*



Thereafter construction consisted of a number of short branches to Newport Pagnell (1868), Brill (1871-2), Watlington (1872), Marlow (1873) and West Drayton to Colnbrook in 1884. However the closing years of the 19th century witnessed something of an explosion in construction as the Metropolitan Railway drove its way out through the heart of the Chilterns between Chorleywood and Aylesbury in 1892 as an extension of its 1889 line to Chesham. From 1899 this was shared by the Great Central who had built south from Nottinghamshire to meet the Met at Quainton Road. The GCR would also enter into partnership with the Great Western to build the last new main line in this country (until recent times) from Denham to High Wycombe then north from Princes Risborough to Bicester and Banbury (GWR) and Grendon Underwood (GCR) which opened in 1906.

By the grouping in 1923 the county boasted railways owned by the Great Western, Great Central, London & North Western, London & South Western, Metropolitan and Midland. In addition the Stratford-on-Avon & Midland Junction trains used Olney on the Midland as their eastern terminal. Additionally the county could boast two roadside tramways, the Brill branch and the Wolverton & Stony Stratford although it never had any electric street tram systems. Even after grouping the county could claim it was served by all of the Big Four, a distinction it shared only with Middlesex.

In addition to the lines that actually got built there were dozens of proposals mostly during the era of 'Railway Mania' in the 1840s and '50s that were abandoned without any construction being carried out. Some were put before parliament for approval but failed; others didn't even make it that far. Most will not be covered in this series but interested readers are urged to obtain a copy of *The Railways of Buckinghamshire from the 1830's* by F G Cockman and published by The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society (ISBN 0-949003-22-0) which outlines them all.

The railways brought with them an increase in the county's population particularly in the south and following the Second World War. They also brought a change to light industry, again in the south. However to this day the northern part of the county remains largely rural and lightly populated - something that is particularly noticeable north of Princes Risborough where the Chiltern line passes through an area known to the crews as "the great green desert". As a result many of the branches have closed. The Wolverton & Stony Stratford Tramway didn't survive the general strike of 1926 and the Brill branch soon succumbed after becoming a part of London Transport in 1933 and a year later in 1936 passenger services were withdrawn between Aylesbury and Verney Junction. BR went on to close all of the old Buckinghamshire Railway, the former Great Central north of Aylesbury and most of the county's branches finishing with Bourne End to High Wycombe in 1970. Only the Chesham, Marlow and both Windsor branches survived thanks to all having thriving commuter traffic.

Those lines that were not closed were in several cases downgraded, particularly the two former Joint Lines, with the northern part of the GW Direct Birmingham line even threatened with total closure at one point. As it was it was singled and so rationalised that only a fairly infrequent service could be offered.

In the closing years of the nationalised era there was some redress as the GW&GC Joint Line was chosen to trial the concept of Total Route Modernisation but it was to be the success of Chiltern Railways that would bring about a dramatic improvement in the line's fortunes along with those of Metropolitan & GC Joint line to Aylesbury.

Traditional local goods services, which were provided to most stations in the county, have vanished with most disappearing in the 1960's with Slough being the last in the late 1970's. Whilst much freight still passes through the county on the West Coast and Great Western main lines, the only surviving flow within the county are the trains of containerised domestic waste from London and Bristol which is taken to a landfill site at Calvert. For a short period recently this has been augmented by trains of spoil from the Olympics site in east London.

The county can also boast one of the few remaining railway workshops in the country. Wolverton works were opened at the mid-point of the London & Birmingham in 1839 and handled locomotive overhauls and even some construction until that work was removed to Crewe in 1868. Thereafter it became the LNWR and later LMS carriage building and repair works continuing in that role into the BR era. Although it is some years since construction ceased, the works, now managed by Railcare, remains busy overhauling and refurbishing rolling stock.

With the coming of the 21st century we have the prospect of a new age of railway development within the county. Chiltern have opened a brand-new station, Aylesbury Vale Parkway, north of the county town which is only the second new station opened in the county since the 1920's the other being Milton Keynes Central. By 2014, if all goes to plan, Chiltern will have opened a new connection between its main line and the Buckinghamshire Railway at Bicester. Whilst this is outside the county, it will restore through, direct train services between South Bucks and Oxford for the first time since 1963 and there are increasingly positive signs that by the end of this decade the whole of the Oxford to Bletchley line will be carrying passenger services once more together with services from Aylesbury to Milton Keynes.

All this is overshadowed by the controversial plans to route High Speed 2 through the heart of the county from the Chalfonts to the Vale of Aylesbury and thence northwards along the route of the old Great Central. Even though much of the proposed route will be in tunnels and out of sight it has still attracted outraged protests from the Nimbys living in the Chilterns and elsewhere in the county in complete contrast to the welcome extended to the first railway age. Hopefully the objections will be overruled in the national interest and the first trunk route of the second railway age will pass through our county just as the first did 162 years ago.

# RAILWAYS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

