

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

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Panniers Under London

A Requiem for Oxford's GWR Locomotives

The Railways of Buckinghamshire - Part 2

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: 6023 leads 6024 on the day Didcot re-launched 6023 King Edward II
2 April 2011. Photo: Doug Hill.*

*Bottom: L95 makes a spirited departure from Neasden through Wembley Park
Photo: Tim Speechley (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 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.
- Thursday 15 September **STEAM ON ROAD AND RAIL** Malcolm Ranieri
A return visit by this popular photographer.

FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Saturday 4 June **THE HOLLYCOMBE COLLECTION** by car
Plenty of railway interest here on the Hampshire/Sussex border. We plan a society visit by shared cars, at group rates, £11 adults £9 seniors, on the railway weekend. More details from Mike Hyde.
- Monday 27 June **FGW DRIVER TRAINING SIMULATOR** by car
We have arranged a series of four 1-hour sessions for members on FGW's Class 165 driver training simulator at the Reading Diesel Depot starting at 15.00, 16.00, 17.00 and 18.00. More details from Mike Hyde.
- Sunday 7 August **BREDGAR & WORMSHILL RAILWAY** by car
This little railway in Kent comes strongly recommended - a day of narrow-gauge action. We travel in shared cars - if your travelling companions agree, add on a visit to the Spa Valley Railway or Sittingbourne & Kemsley before or after if you fancy. More details from Mike Hyde.

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 for the latest details.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Since my last ramblings were written there have been some momentous world events. Democratic moves in Egypt, Libya, Syria and elsewhere have met with variable success, and of course the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Who could fail to have been amazed and at the same time frightened by that huge wall of water carrying everything before it. An enduring memory is that picture of a train on its side, looking like a discarded necklace. How lucky we are to live here in the UK, where such powerful acts of God are very few and far between. Nevertheless, nature can have a dramatic effect here and our heritage railways have suffered as a result of the winter weather. The most recent has been the Gloucester-Warwickshire line which has succumbed to not one but two existence threatening embankment slippages, the first at Gotherington and the second, early this year, at Chicken Curve, just north of Winchcombe. This "double whammy" has left the railway unable to operate conventionally and in a very difficult position financially but many other preservation lines have leapt to their assistance with offers of loaned equipment and benefit galas. In our own small way, we too contributed with the recent collection and I would like to thank all those members who dug deep in their pockets and gave towards the £300 we were able to send. It is only a drop in the ocean but I'm sure every little helps and it is a very good cause.

I have been fortunate recently, with two steam specials running up the GW main line on weekdays, enabling me to pop out from the office and grab a photograph. On Friday 13th May (not at all unlucky for me) two Black Fives were on the penultimate leg of the "Cathedrals Explorer", bang on time, despite coming all the way from Carmarthen. Back in April, 70000 *Britannia* worked from Oxford to Canterbury and back. I was rather taken aback when I saw her in black livery but odd colours seem to be very much in vogue at the moment. Of course 6023 *King Edward II* has recently reached the end of its epic restoration at Didcot and appeared to the thronging masses in early BR blue, a colour that, www.mdrs.org.uk

in my humble opinion, does not suit a King at all. Perhaps it has been painted thus simply to emphasise to people in general that the GWR used green because that was the right colour for their locomotives and went well with the brass and copper embellishments. I for one hope that 6023 will soon return to its rightful colour, be it GWR or BR green. As an aside, Didcot has been busy lately for the recreated Railmotor has been completed and started its running-in on the Llangollen Railway. Some friends of mine went to see it and whilst accepting that it is a marvellous piece of work they have nonetheless dubbed it with the name "coach on fire" !

Another new appearance in an unexpected colour was *Bittern's* return to the main line in Garter Blue but with skirts and masquerading as *Dominion of New Zealand*. It looks great (from the pictures I've seen) but a little odd with the second tender. After "Mallard's" short return to main line running in the 1980's ended, I never expected to be able to see again an A4 in original condition (disregarding the double chimney), so this is a real bonus. Finally on the colour issue, I have also read that *Flying Scotsman*, reputedly nearing the end of a very protracted overhaul by the NRM, is alleged also to be coming out in black. When I first saw this I was certain it must be an April fool joke but apparently not and in fact, by the time you get this copy of the *'Donkey'*, it may well have appeared already. Fortunately I think the black will soon give way to Apple Green, always my favourite for this loco.

We have been blessed with fantastic weather during April and May and I do hope we won't have to pay for it by enduring a lousy summer. Wherever you are going, I hope you enjoy yourselves and please don't forget to support the Society's meetings and trips as well.

Best wishes to you all.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBER

Once again it is a pleasure to welcome a new member to the Society, Dave Clarke from Hazlemere.

With all renewals in, we have only lost three members from last year and start this with a healthy total of 62.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The March meeting was one of those of complete nostalgia when Peter Groom took us back to the last years of British steam with a trawl through his collection of black and white images taken in the late 1950's and early 1960's over much of the network.

Arriving for the April meeting your editor was asked by Ron White what he knew about South America. The answer was "It's the big lump below North America" to which Ron replied "That's more than I do." Only Ron could present a whole evening on subject about which he knows comparatively little and make it both entertaining and hilarious.

Phil Marsh, chief correspondent for the *Railway Magazine* and part-time main line steam fireman and guard returned in May for a second trawl through his Railway Retirement with particular emphasis on his exploits with main line steam.

VISIT TO BEECHES LIGHT RAILWAY

We had another excellent day at the Beeches Light Railway as, along with our friends from the RCTS and Fawley we had the railway almost to ourselves under virtually clear skies, the sun always shines over Steeple Aston!

DHR 19 was in steam and after lunch was giving rides around the circuit mostly with Adrian Shooter at the regulator. The first trip was a little fraught as it had difficulty getting around the steepest and most sharply curved part of the track as oil

had been deposited by Adrian's Model T Ford inspection car which had been in operation earlier. After two failed attempts, sand was applied to the rails and the climb successfully, and noisily completed. Even after the adhesion problem had been solved, 19 put up a spectacular and noisy performance on each circuit.

The inspection car was inspired by a similar vehicle operated by the US Sandy River & Rangeley Lake RR and comprises a genuine 1925 Model T on a purpose built chassis, it too was giving rides.

Our thanks to Adrian and Barbara Shooter for once again hosting a great day.

FORTHCOMING VISITS

In addition to those mentioned on page 2 of this issue there are several other items to bring to your attention.

Thanks to our friends at FGW we have been fortunate to arrange a session on the **TURBO DRIVER SIMULATOR** at Reading on Monday 27th June. However this has been frustrating for several who are keen to go so we are hoping to arrange a second session in August. Details from Mike Hyde.

Following the visit to the **BREDGAR & WORMSHILL LIGHT RAILWAY** on Sunday 7th August there is the opportunity to go on to either the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway or the Spa Valley Railway. Using shared cars it should be possible to cover both options.

The **GARDEN & WOODLANDS RAILWAY** at Thame is the late Ted Martin's superb 7¼" gauge garden railway and thanks to Mrs Martin operating days continue to which MDRS members are welcome. Dates are Sunday 19th June, Sunday 24th July, Saturday 20th August, Sunday 11th September and Sunday 9th October, in each case starting at 12 noon. If you'd like to go to any of these events please contact Julian Heard or John Cox (jacox100@hotmail.com). A donation would be welcome.

DAVID BUCK'S RAILWAY at Fifield. David will have two locomotives in steam on Friday 7th July for other groups but has a few spare places. If you have NOT previously been to this venue and would like to go, please contact Julian Heard.

SOCIETY DIGITAL PROJECTOR

With an increasing number of speakers preparing digital presentations we have purchased a digital projector. Hopefully its less than successful first outing in May was down to unfamiliarity!



Adrian Shooter's superbly restored Darjeeling-Himalaya no.19 put up a great show on his Beeches Light Railway along with his replica Model T inspection car during the Society's visit on 1st May.

photos: Mike Walker

FIRST SEEKS A NEW GW FRANCHISE

FirstGroup have confirmed they will not be seeking to take the extension of the Great Western franchise from 2013 to 2016. When awarded the present franchise in 2006 it was for a basic period of seven years but had the option for an extension of a further three years. Since then however much has changed. The franchise agreement required First to pay a hefty premium to the DfT in the final part of the franchise which would have in any event been a challenge. But now we have three major projects underway or planned for the extension period, Reading, Crossrail and GWML electrification, plus the wider economic situation which were not anticipated and which would make delivery of the premium even more difficult.

They have therefore decided not to take the extension option but to allow the DfT to draw up a new specification for the next franchise which is expected to 15 to 20 years and aggressively bid on that. Mark Hopwood explained their thinking as follows:

"By announcing this now, the Department for Transport can develop longer term franchise plans for the management of the Greater Western franchise and the delivery of key projects on the route.

"We at First Great Western look forward to drawing on our unrivalled expertise and experience to bid for the new Greater Western franchise and continue to develop key projects across our network. It is a great credit to the Government, particularly in this economic environment, that they have continued to support investment in infrastructure, as well as announcing significant investment in new Intercity Express trains.

"With our unique knowledge of the franchise we believe we are best placed to capture benefits through a longer-term franchise and continue to deliver on major projects like the redevelopment of Reading station, electrification of the Great Western Main Line, the Intercity Express Programme and Crossrail.

"First Great Western remains focused on delivering a high quality service for our customers in the region, now and throughout the remainder of the franchise. We will continue working with government and industry partners to implement the investment on this route over the next decade."

Some have suggested that First are "handing in the keys" and walking away in the way that National Express did on East Coast. This is not the case, NX defaulted only 18 months into a franchise when they realised they'd got their sums badly wrong, in the case of Great Western the franchise has reached a pre-determined point where reappraisal by both sides is possible. It is, of course, a serious gamble by First. Although they have held the franchise since the earliest days of privatisation there is no guarantee they will be successful this time round. They will no doubt be up against some strong competition.

However, we wish them well. Under Mark Hopwood and the present management the operation has been transformed for the better from the dark days of 2006-8 and they deserve to continue.

SPECIAL TRAINS

The following are currently scheduled to operate through our area in the next few months although as always they are liable to alteration. Full details and timings will be carried in our e-newsletters as available.

On Saturday 11th June *Bittern* running as 4492 *Dominion of New Zealand* works the *Cathedrals Express* from Paddington to Shrewsbury and back via Hereford in lieu of *Tornado*.

The following week on Saturday 18th June, both the Brits,

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70000 *Britannia* and 70013 *Oliver Cromwell* are due to double-head from Paddington to Minehead and return for the Railway Touring Co.

The same route is followed on Saturday 2nd July by the *Cathedrals Express* with *Dominion of New Zealand* again.

Spitfire's *Root'n'Branch* tour originally planned for 2nd April will bring top-and-tailed Class 37s to Bourne End in the early hours of Saturday 16th July.

Steam Dreams' trip from Aylesbury to Norwich originally booked for 31st March is now scheduled for Monday 29th August. The locomotive has not been confirmed.

Finally on Saturday 17th September *Dominion of New Zealand* is again running out of Paddington this time to Taunton from where it will be assisted by *Nunney Castle* to Plymouth.

CHILTERN LINE CLOSURE

To enable a final blitz on the Evergreen 3 project, a decision has been taken to virtually shutdown the Chiltern Line for two weeks in August along with continuing weekend closures until then.

From Saturday 13th to Saturday 20th August the line will be closed between Marylebone and Northolt Junction and Harrow-on-the-Hill whilst Neasden South Junction is remodelled. During this time a reduced service will operate on the High Wycombe line to and from Paddington with some Birmingham services diverted via Reading. Amersham line passengers will have to change to and from the Met at Harrow-on-the-Hill.

Between Sunday 21st and Saturday 27th August the main line will be closed entirely south of Bicester North to permit the remodelling of Northolt Junction, the completion of the through line at Princes Risborough and realignment work at High Wycombe. During this time buses will link GW & GC Joint Line stations with those on the Met & GC line (which will be running normally) whilst passengers from Banbury and the north will be able to use FGW services.

The full accelerated timetable may start on Monday 6th September but it seems increasingly likely to be put back until December.

NEW TRAINS FOR CHILTERN

Chiltern finally took delivery of their four 2-car Class 172 DMUs during May and introduced initially on a Marylebone to High Wycombe diagram although they will eventually be employed on a new local service from Marylebone to Gerrards Cross once the new timetable begins.

More interesting is the arrival on 4th May of the second passenger-carrying Class 121 'Bubblecar' W55034. This has been overhauled and restored in its original BR green to an outstanding standard that any preservation group could be proud of and is being used on the Princes Risborough to Aylesbury shuttles with blue sister 55020.

photo: Geoff Plumb



PANNIERS UNDER LONDON

David Collins



In London Transport service the Panniers spent much of their time working trains out to the tip at Croxley where L90 is seen [Above] whilst an unidentified member of the class got to stretch its legs near Croxley [Below].

Two photos: Tim Speechley



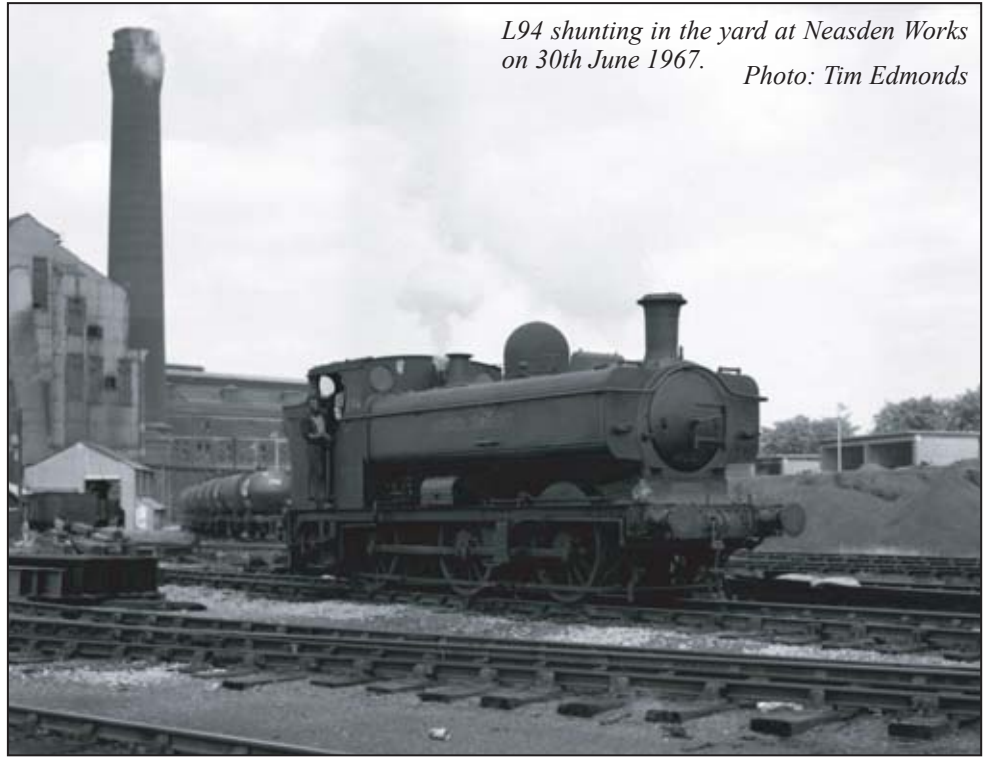
As all railway enthusiasts are aware, steam traction on British Railways officially came to an end on 11th August 1968. After that date the only standard gauge steam locomotive permitted to work specials on BR was the A3 Pacific No. 4472 *Flying Scotsman* due to an agreement between Alan Pegler and the BR Board a few years before. Besides that there were a few pockets of steam sprinkled around the country. These were mainly industrial tank engines shunting on short lengths of track at collieries, factories, power stations etc. and the various preservation schemes around the country. There was, however, a part of the public railway in the capital that still used main line steam locomotives, albeit for shunting.

London Transport had been operating steam services alongside its electric services on the Metropolitan Line since its inception in 1933. Although responsibility for locomotives for passenger services north of Rickmansworth had transferred to the LNER in 1937 along with the transfer of the larger ex-Metropolitan Railway locomotives, a fleet of steam locomotives had been retained to work departmental trains on the sub surface lines, they having the benefit of being able to work over lines with the power supply turned off. As well as the former MET locos, these included some industrial type locos built by Hunslet and Kerr Stuart for the District Railway (including two built to tube tunnel loading gauge) and a pair of 0-6-0 Peckett saddle tanks used for shunting at Neasden. By the mid 1950s these locomotives were reaching the end of their economic lives, dating from the 1890s. The possibility of replacement with diesel shunters were looked into, however it was decided it would be better to replace them with surplus steam locomotives from British Railways and negotiations begun between them and LT.

In 1955 trials were undertaken with an ex-Great Northern J52 0-6-0ST (a loco even older than the loco it was meant to replace). These were not very successful owing to the locomotive developing all manner of defects, the cab windows offering poor visibility in tunnels and clearance problems. Thence an ex-Royal Ordnance tank engine was looked at but again turned out to be unsuitable.

The first suggestion of using former Great Western 57xx Pannier was in a letter to the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Western Region in January 1956 requesting the loan of a member of the class for trials on LT. This was duly agreed and on 27th February 7711 arrived at Lillie Bridge Depot. Modifications carried out to bring the loco up to LT operating standards included the fitting of trip cocks and a slight reduction in the height of the cab to bring it within the loading gauge of the tunnels between Finchley Road and Baker Street. The trials included shunting work at Lillie Bridge and Neasden and trips over the Metropolitan and District Lines, working as far out as Aylesbury. These proven satisfactory, LT purchased and overhauled the loco which was painted in their house colours of maroon and given the number L.90 - the prefix L standing for locomotive. Since the cost of the locomotive was favourable at £3,160 it was decided to purchase a second loco, this being 5752 which received the same modifications and entered LT traffic as L.91 in April 1957.

The 57xx panniers were ideally suited for the purposes intended for them by LT since they were built by the GWR for shunting and light freight workings. Introduced in 1929 to the design of C. B. Collett, they were descended from a line of pannier and saddle tank design dating back to the days of the broad gauge and were arguably the most distinctive Great Western design with over 800 examples being produced - one of the most numerous locomotive types in Britain. As a result most sheds on the GWR had an allocation and as well as their intended purpose they were soon found to be useful on light passenger trains being given the yellow GWR route availability and placed in power class C. After nationalisation some found their way to other regions, some being used on empty coaching stock at Waterloo while others found their way to the Scottish Region. They were no strangers to LT as members of the class were used in the construction of the Central Line extension to West Ruislip while others were fitted with condensing equipment for working over the Circle Line to Smithfield Market.

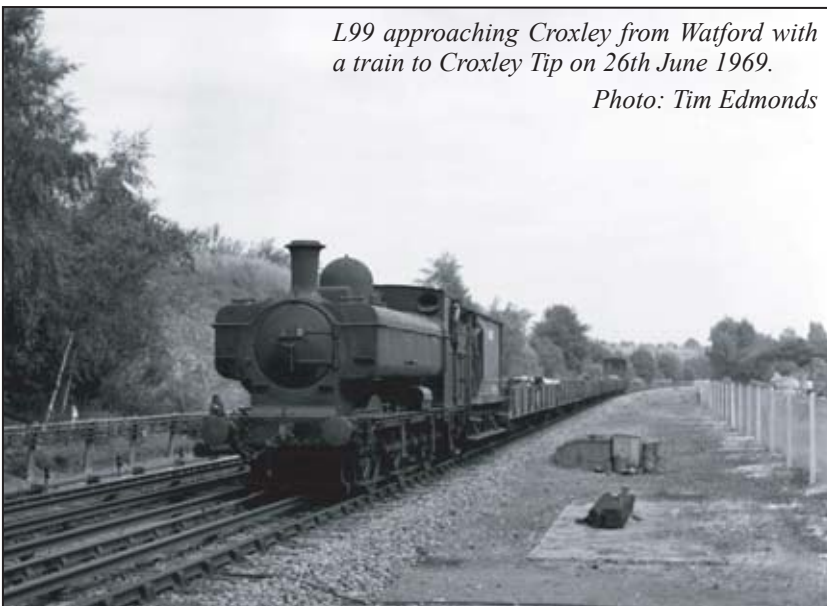


L94 shunting in the yard at Neasden Works on 30th June 1967. Photo: Tim Edmonds

Following the first two panniers, a further eleven were purchased by LT over the next six years with approximately two arriving each year. They were all of 1929-30 vintage and had a wide range of backgrounds; five were built by the GWR's Swindon Works, four by the North British Locomotive Company of Glasgow, two by Kerr Stuart & Co. of Stoke on Trent and one by Armstrong Whitworth & Co of Newcastle. In GW and BR days they were based at a range of locations from the London area to South Wales and Cornwall.

The initial pair were withdrawn in 1960-61 when they were in need of extensive firebox repairs and it was felt more economical to replace them with a loco recently withdrawn by BR and as a result 7760 and 5757 inherited the LT numbers L.90 and L.91. Another interesting fact about the initial pair was that unlike the other eleven they retained their vacuum brake equipment. Presumably this was so that they could substitute for BR locos on LT passenger trains north of Rickmansworth, although there's no record of this ever happening. LT retained running powers beyond Quainton Road until 1981, much to the surprise of BR when LT exercised them on 10th October to deliver 2 underground cars using battery locos L18 & L38! The powers have since been withdrawn.

By the time LT had purchased the last panniers in 1963, the last of the former Metropolitan and District Railway steam locomotives had been withdrawn and scrapped. The only two to survive into preservation were 4-4-0T A Class No. 23, which was initially preserved in the British Transport Museum at Clapham before moving to the LT Museum in Covent Garden, 0-4-4T E Class L.44 (formerly Met No. 1) which was purchased by the London Railway Preservation Society and now resides at Quainton Road. There was also a scheme to preserve an F Class 0-6-2T for possible display at Neasden which came to no avail. On a happier note, 1963 was the year the Underground celebrated its centenary and pannier L.98 (7739) took part in a parade of historic Underground stock at Neasden Depot hauling a cable laying train.



L99 approaching Croxley from Watford with a train to Croxley Tip on 26th June 1969.

Photo: Tim Edmonds

L95 makes a spirited departure from Neasden through Wembley Park.

Photo: Tim Speechley



The regular duties undertaken by the panniers were hauling engineering trains on the sub surface lines working as far afield as Aylesbury in the west (even though Metropolitan passenger services had been cut back to Amersham in 1961 LT engineers trains still ventured there until 1967) to Upminster in the east, transfer freights between LT and BR at Kensington Olympia, shunting at Lillie Bridge and Neasden Depots, transfer freight between Lillie Bridge and Acton Works which took them onto the Hounslow and the Ealing Common-Rayners Lane branches of the Piccadilly Line. As well as working trains with spoil from tube tunnel excavations to the Croxley Tip on the east side of the Watford branch triangle just north of Moor Park. Access was only possible via the southbound line which meant the locos running through to Watford for reversing. For this reason Watford Met station was equipped with a water tower even though it had been served by electric trains since its opening with the exception of the short lived LNER service from Marylebone. These workings were the most documented since they operated during the day on public lines, whereas most other workings took place either at night or in non-accessible places. Additionally the steam shed Neasden Depot was visible from the North Circular Road and on passing Metropolitan and the then Bakerloo Line trains, photography was easier here whereas Lillie Bridge is situated above the District Line tracks at West Kensington.

The type of rolling stock that the panniers worked with consisted of 20 ton hopper wagons, 10 ton ballast wagons, flat wagons, cable wagons and a variety of ex BR brake vans.

During their time with LT the panniers were generally maintained at Neasden Depot with the locos returning to BR for heavy overhauls, these being carried out at Swindon and latterly at Eastleigh Works on the Southern Region. However by the late 1960s with all BR steam locomotives withdrawn and the facilities to maintain them removed the question of future overhauls was raised. LT doing them in house was not an option, so it was decided in 1966 that the panniers would be disposed of as and when they came up for heavy overhaul and

replaced by either diesel shunters or battery locos of which there were plenty following the construction of the Victoria Line.

The first withdrawals took place in 1967 when L.96 (7741) was scrapped at Neasden under contract by the Steel Breaking and Dismantling Company of Sheffield, followed by the second L.91 (5757) and L.97 (7749) the following year. Over the next two years four more of the locos were withdrawn leaving three for the final year.

In February 1971 the stores workings between Acton Depot and Lillie Bridge ceased followed soon after by the transfer of the Watford Tip workings to battery loco haulage. The last revenue earning trip by a pannier ran on night of 14th May between Lillie Bridge and Neasden via Ealing Common and Rayners Lane hauled by L.90 (7790). The last hurrah however was on 6th June 1971 when L.94 (7752) worked a demonstration freight train from Moorgate to Neasden Depot. By this time enthusiasts were well aware of this pocket of standard gauge steam, the last LT Panniers had survived six years longer than their BR sisters and four years longer than the last main line service into London, and as a consequence LT received requests for depot visits. It was even suggested by the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society that a special passenger train hauled by panniers should be operated but this was turned down owing to the fact that the locos had no vacuum brakes and the cost of obtaining equipment from withdrawn engines at Barry scrap yard would be prohibitive. However the final run was witnessed by thousands of spectators on the platforms of immediate stations at Neasden Depot where there was a collection of underground rolling stock on display, including the last two former Metropolitan Railway electric locomotives No. 5 John Hampden and No. 12 Sarah Siddons. The large crowds were especially evident at Barbican and Farringdon stations, where the train passed through on the City Widened Lines, in scenes reminiscent of the last runs of LT's trams twenty years previously.

The day brought an end of an era of 108 years of steam locomotives working on London's Underground. This had started as it had begun with GWR locomotives, since the GWR had provided broad gauge 2-4-0Ts to work the MET's first trains in 1863 between Paddington and Farringdon. However it was not quite the end of the GWR panniers outside preservation as a few soldiered on in industrial use until 1980s.

It had been originally planned to preserve L.94 as part of the LT Museum's collection. This never materialised and instead she was preserved at the Birmingham Railway Museum in Tyseley where she was restored to GWR condition as 7752 and a few years later took part in the Stockton & Darlington's 150 anniversary cavalcade (for 2011 she reverted to LT colours). She was joined at Tyseley by L.90 (7760) whilst the third of the final trio, L.95 (5764) was purchased by the Severn Valley Railway. In addition three of the 1969 withdrawals were saved for preservation; L.92 (5786) was purchased by the Worcester Locomotive Society and based at the Bulmer's Railway Centre (now defunct) before moving to the South Devon Railway. L.89 (5775) went to the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway later appearing in the film "The Railway Children," whilst L.99 (7715) remained in former Metropolitan territory at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre with former Neasden stablemate MET No. 1.

Most of these locomotives have been restored to GWR or BR condition, but with the shorter cabs and other modifications can be identified as former LT machines. For a short while in the 1970s 5775 appeared in LT maroon as L.89 either side of painted umber in connection with filming and at the time the KWVR was applying its own liveries to locomotives (a later LT Red scheme not being accurate). Also in the early 1990s 7760 and 7715 reverted to their LT liveries and identities for reasons detailed below.

The Underground had not seen the last of the panniers. For in 1989 to celebrate the centenary of the Chesham branch it had been decided to run steam specials on the Metropolitan Line in June. The initial choice for motive power had been MET No. 1, but for the first weekend she wasn't available due to a mechanical fault. So a replacement was found in a later development of the panniers in the form of Hawthorn designed 94xx pannier No. 9466 built by Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn of Newcastle in 1951 and preserved at Quainton Road being privately owned. With MET No.1 ready for the next weekend 9466 remained on standby duty. However the success of the event lead to "Steam on the Met" weekends almost every year up until 2000 with 9466 appearing in 1990, 96, 98, 99 and 2000. These events brought L.90 (7760) and L.99 (7715) back to their old haunts in 1993 when they ran on the MET from Harrow-on-the-Hill to Amersham during two



L94 arriving at Neasden with the last train special on 6th June 1971.

Photo: Tim Edmonds

weekends in May. Thereafter they took part in a one off Steam on the District in June hauling shuttles between High Street Kensington and Ealing Broadway in company with Sarah Siddons. In contrast to BR steam operations volunteer crews were allowed to drive their locomotives with a LT pilotman on board.

The last "Steam on the Met" event in 2000 did not end the Underground's association with the panniers as 9466 was overhauled in 2004 in the old steam shed at Neasden Depot with a trial run on the Met. A further appearance, albeit static, was made in August 2009 when L.99 (7715) appeared at the Upminster Depot Open Day. At this time she was on long term loan to the Spa Valley Railway and painted in GWR livery, but in 2010 she was painted into LT maroon for a London Railways' Gala. She is currently loan to the North Norfolk Railway. But will a pannier return to the four rail network?

I hope this article gives an insight of the last steam workings on a public railway in Britain. If you are interested in reading more on the subject I can recommend Red Panniers by John Scott-Morgan and Kirk Martin (published by Lightmoor Press) which has a detailed history of the locos, recollections from LT enginemen and photographers, and some excellent photographs. Also the DVD Sparks and Steam from Transport Video Publishing has some film footage of the Panniers in action alongside former MET steam and electric locos.

LT No.	GWR No.	Builder	Works No.	Date Built	Date to LT	Date Wdn	Disposition
L89	5775	GWR Swindon	-----	9/29	8/63	1/70	Preserved at Keighley & Worth Valley Rly (D)
L90 (1 st)	7711	Kerr Stuart	4446	3/30	10/56	9/61	Scrapped at BR Swindon Works 1/62
L90 (2 nd)	7760	North British Locomotive	24048	12/30	1/62	6/71	Preserved at Birmingham Rly Museum (S)
L91 (1 st)	5752	GWR Swindon	-----	4/29	3/57	11/60	Scrapped at BR Swindon Works 6/61
L91 (2 nd)	5757	GWR Swindon	-----	5/29	12/60	12/67	Scrapped at LT Neasden Works 9/68
L92	5786	GWR Swindon	-----	1/30	4/58	9/69	Preserved at South Devon Railway (A)
L93	7779	Armstrong-Whitworth	1135	11/30	10/58	12/67	Scrapped at LT Neasden Works 9/68
L94	7752	North British Locomotive	24040	11/30	12/59	6/71	Preserved at Birmingham Rly Museum (S)
L95	5764	GWR Swindon	-----	6/29	5/60	6/71	Preserved at Severn Valley Railway (A)
L96	7741	North British Locomotive	23937	2/30	1/62	12/66	Scrapped at LT Neasden Works 9/67
L97	7749	North British Locomotive	23945	2/30	12/62	9/68	Scrapped at LT Neasden Works 1/70
L98	7739	North British Locomotive	23935	1/30	12/62	11/68	Scrapped at LT Neasden Works 1/70
L99	7715	Kerr Stuart	4450	5/30	6/63	12/69	Preserved at Bucks Railway Centre (A)

A: Active during 2011, 5786 at Chinnor

D: Displayed pending overhaul

S: Stored pending overhaul



photo: Mike Walker

This spring has seen many special moves locally. On 7th April 70000 *Britannia* returned to main line service and is seen passing Shottesbrooke on its way from Oxford to Canterbury [Above]. On Easter Saturday it ran again from Paddington to Stratford-upon-Avon.

On 2nd April the GWS relaunched 6023 *King Edward II* into service [Below] after its lengthy restoration.

photo: Doug Hill



two photos: Peter Robins



On Good Friday 'Black Five' 45305 and 70013 *Oliver Cromwell* ran light through Maidenhead [Above] on their way from Southall to Bristol ready to take the 'Great Britain IV' from Bristol to Penzance on East Saturday.

On Easter Sunday the last leg of the 'Great Britain IV' from Bristol to Paddington was entrusted to 5029 *Nunney Castle* which passed through Taplow [Left] in fine style on the Up Main.

Springtime Specials



photo: Vincent Caldwell

photo: Tim Edmonds



Another locomotive returning to service after restoration is the unique Clayton Class 17 D8568 which was launched into traffic [Above] at Chinnor on Royal Wedding day, 29th April.

The VSOE British Pullmans made two round trips over the Chiltern line to Haddenham & Thame Parkway on 10th and 12th May. The return working of the former passed through Saunderton [Left upper] powered by 67019 with 67025 on the rear.

Another mega-tour was the 8-day 'Cathedrals Explorer' the last leg of which from Carmarthen to London was handled by 'Black 5s' 45407 and 44871 seen between Burnham and Slough [Left lower] on Friday 13th May.

The next day the same pair ran light over the Chiltern line from Southall to the SVR and were caught [Bottom right] approaching Princes Risborough.

Twenty minutes earlier the preserved Hastings DEMU had passed over the line on its way from Hastings to Quainton Road. The new car park at High Wycombe provides a splendid viewpoint [Bottom Left].



photo: Tim Speechley

photo: Mike Walker

photo: Peter Robins



A requiem for Oxford's GWR locomotives!



The locomotive scenario at Oxford changed almost overnight on January 2, 1966, writes MIKE PAGE. It was the day that the Western Region of British Rail finished with standard gauge steam locomotives - well, almost!

I say almost, because the Western Region (WR) could not quite stop what the London Midland Region (LMR) insisted on doing, that is sending freight from Banbury through Oxford to Didcot, Reading and the Southern Region using mostly Stanier 8Fs and 5s and Riddles 9Fs. One supposes too that the WR authorities were really niggled by the LMR's insistence on continuing to use Black 5s on the York-Bournemouth/Poole trains. Otherwise, the only other steam locomotives to be seen around Oxford in early 1966 were the 40 or so dumped in the steam locomotive depot's yard.

When I got off a Banbury-Oxford DMU (a 116) before the start of Hilary term in mid-January, 1966, it was hard to believe that virtually all of those Halls, Granges, Manors and the few 2-6-2Ts and 'matchboxes' (we called pannier tank 0-6-0PTs 'matchboxes' in the West Midlands) were alive and busily puffing around just a couple of weeks ago. It was the next day, when meeting up with fellow undergrad 'train spotters' that I learnt that steam-hauled passenger trains were not quite dead yet. Banbury shed's 'Black Fives' continued to power the York-Poole trains and the odd freight. Maybe a dozen steam driven freights a day continued to break through the Western Region's 'Steam Barrier'.

In 1965. Banbury would exchange the Eastern Region's English Electric 'Type 3' (37) for a Hall, Grange or Black Five for the trot along to Oxford where a Southern Region (SR) loco would take over. The Banbury engine would then be turned and serviced quickly on Oxford shed to take over the Poole-York. The up 'Pines Express' ritual was different in that a Brush/Sulzer Type 4 (a 47) would arrive at around 14.15 in Oxford to hand the train over, usually, to a 'Merchant Navy', which had brought the down 'Pines' in earlier. For example, on October 12, 1965, Landore's D1735 (don't ask me how that got on the 'Pines', ask Crewe!) handed over to Bournemouth's 35011 *General Steam Navigation*.

Not long after 35011 had slipped and slithered out of the

Having replaced Landore's Brush 4 (Class 47) D1735, 35011 'General Steam Navigation' eases the up 'Pines Express' away from Oxford on 12th October 1965.

All photos: Mike Page

station, Weymouth's rebuilt 'West Country', 34018 *Axminster* drifts in past the cemetery towards us with the Poole-York, only it's Cardiff Canton's 47 D1599 that waits to take the train forward. 34018 dashes off to the shed, as it is 14.35 and she's got to be turned, watered and back in the up south sidings by 15.10.

We look at the shabby GWR wooden station buildings, which in 1965 seem ready to fall apart. The station area is fully GWR semaphore signalled. Standing by the bay platform at the north end on the 'up' side we can watch pannier tank 3677 shunting the old LNWR yard where that railway's terminus is still intact.

The signals are 'off' for a down through fitted freight with Willesden's 45292. The next northbound pass-through is very odd. We watch an Ivatt 4 2-6-0, Heaton Mersey's 43106 (now on the Severn Valley Railway), and looking very 'ex-works' from Eastleigh, towing Nine Elms' Standard Five, 73112. The 'Standard Five' has no smokebox door, so where is 43106 taking 73112? Crewe, maybe: or perhaps anywhere where they have a spare smokebox door lying around.

Hunting around for a smokebox door: Ivatt '4' 2-6-0 43106 creeps past Oxford cemetery towards the station towing smokebox doorless 73112 on 12th October 1965.



The Marlow Donkey

6861 (formerly 'Crynant Grange') hands over the York-Bournemouth to 34018 'Axminster' on 12th October 1965. Both engines look to be 'workaday' clean and have steam to spare.



Almost immediately, signals clear again for another down freight and Cardiff East Dock's 9F 92224 is in a hurry with a long train of mineral empties, only the 16t wagons are not as clean as those on today's Great Central! Meanwhile, they've turned and watered 34018, which now comes through off shed, before Banbury's 45454 heads by light engine for home.

The signals are 'off' for the York-Poole, approaching at 15.15 headed by Tyseley's now nameless 6861, formally *Crynant Grange*. As well as being reasonably clean, she is steam-tight too. Let's go to the south end and watch the engine change; 6861 moves off smartly to be replaced by the equally clean 34018. She departs at 15.22 with only one short slip.

We look at our watches: it's not teatime yet, so we'll hang about to see what comes next. It's all quite routine. Oxford's 6923, formerly 'Croxth Hall' drifts through towards the shed, then signals clear for an up fitted freight with Old Oak Common's D1701. Something is now throbbing from near the cemetery. Sounds like an old canal barge, and yes, it's a Derby/Sulzer 2 (25) D7587 from Saltley on down freight 5M08, which is most likely heading for Birmingham's Washwood Heath sidings.

Another five minutes? OK, and here comes a Bristol (Bath Road) 'Hymek', D7081, on 6V31 heading south. We really now have to go, but the up through pegs have cleared again almost immediately and, no! A B1? A B1 is on the 'carflats'! It's too murky to photograph Hull Dairycoates' 61306 (which survives

today at Llangollen as *Mayflower*, a name formerly carried by 61379 of Immingham). One can only suppose that Banbury has had to cope with a failure. So 61306, probably off a fish train from Hull (via the Great Central), has found itself with a 'fill-in' job, perhaps covering for a failed 47, which normally handled these carflat trains now.

So, up until the end of the Michaelmas term in 1965, Oxford had remained one of those rare stations where steam locomotives from all of the former 'Big Four' railway companies could be occasionally observed on everyday service trains. Formerly, D16s and B12s worked Cambridge-Oxford trains, while the odd B1 or K3 off the GC might come south from Banbury. At one time, the occasional Southern 'N', 'U' or 'Q1' might get as far as Banbury with a freight. There also used to be a regular B1 working on a York-Swindon train. Maybe that October day when 61306 returned north was the last day for such 'all the Big Four' observations at Oxford.

Thinking now about D7081: diesel hydraulics appeared occasionally. Apart from the freights and parcels workings on the Worcester or Banbury lines, the 'Hymeks' vied with increasing numbers of 47s for the control of the Paddington-Worcester and Hereford expresses. But they were not so common working north to Banbury.

It's 5th November 1965, it's raining and Weymouth's Standard Five 73018 has arrived on time with the Poole-York, but there is no Banbury Hall or Black Five waiting to take over. Instead,

Newton Abbot's D7017 comes off shed to do the trip to Banbury - that was a surprise! Occasionally you might see a 'Warship' at Oxford such as Plymouth Laira's D830 *Majestic* (the one with Paxman engines) heading an up Cornish clay empties train at 09.30 on 23rd October.

How many of you remember the dilapidated 81F Oxford shed? It stood just beyond the end of the down platform past the signal gantry. I'd seen medieval barns in better condition!

57xx pannier tank 3677 and 6815 (formerly 'Frilford Grange' have been coaled at Oxford shed's typical GWR facility and await their next move on 2nd November 1965.





A rather mucky 'Modified Hall' 6965 (formerly 'Thirlestaine Hall') brings a string of empty mineral wagons under the signal gantry at the north end of the station. The shed building is just on the left beyond the platform, 19th November 1965.

How fitters could work under such conditions left one speechless. It's now 2nd November 1965. We've watched Bournemouth's clean 34017 *Ilfracombe* (still wearing full nameplate and town crest) hand over the Poole-York to Southall's 6998 (formerly 'Burton Agnes Hall').

Cardiff Canton's D1691 had brought in the southbound 'Pines' and waits while Bletchley's 8F, 48554, precedes it onto the shed watched by a 'Big Prairie' 6131 passing southwards with the Kingsbury branch freight. We leave the station on the down side; walk through the station yard and into the shed foreman's office. There is no objection made to our request to enter the hovel. Inside the shed's dark interior, with sunlight shining through gaps in the roof and walls, stand 'Halls' 6923, 6953 and 6947, a big 'Prairie' 6156, Standard 4 2-6-0 76033 (from Guildford!) and another 'Hall', 7922.

We walk around to the coaling stage and ash pits where quite a clean Grange, 6815, and pannier tank 3677 are being attended to. Next to the main line, 6126 is blocking 34017's and 48554's access to the turntable. Also nearby are 9773, 6999, 7925, 48749 (Mold Junction!) and 73166 (Exmouth Junction!).

Beyond the yard tracks of the 'quick' stretches the ever-growing population on the tracks for the 'dead'. We find 6868, 73031 (Gloucester), 44666 (Saltley), 6957, 92216 (barely five years old!), 4962, 6910, 6132, 73003 (Bristol Barrow Road), 90258 (Lostock Hall!), 6161, 6874, 3751 and 6921. By 31st December, these loco yards would be packed with dead engines.

My last day on Oxford station in 1965 was 9th December. There was so much steam in action, you would have hardly have thought it would all be gone in less than a month's time. Bournemouth's rebuilt 'West Country' 34021 *Dartmoor* handed the Poole-York over to Oxley's D1683, which had earlier handed over the southbound 'Pines' to Bournemouth's 35027 *Port Line*. Around the same time, new 47s, D1918 and D1920, as well as Banbury's 92213, had passed through on freights. Gloucester's 6956 heads for the shed while 6967 was shunting in the south sidings. 3677 was busy as usual in the LNWR yards. 6106 appears on the Kingsbury branch freight before my 116 DMU arrives to take me to Banbury. As we passed the shed yards, I noted that Nine Elms' 75078 and Saltley's 45006 had joined the sad line of the 'dead'.

I arrived back in Oxford on Sunday, 16th January 1966, left my

bags in the luggage office, and went to inspect the long lines of dead engines in the snowy shed yard. I still have the list if anyone is interested. Having assumed full dieselisation at Oxford, I did not expect to see any steam action, so I headed straight for the shed yard, which is why I nearly missed seeing Saltley's 44919 romping energetically southwards with a train of house coal at 13.55. Then half-an-hour later, Aston's 44859 also went through on a southbound fitted freight - so all was not as 'steam dead' in Oxford as the Western Region would have wished! Black Fives, such as 45426, 45331, 44942 and 45089, still handled the York-Bournemouth/Poole trains, these engines now running through from Banbury to Poole on the SR.

My last observation was on 14th May 1966, when Bournemouth's 34044 *Woolacombe* carried on through to Banbury on the northbound Poole-York train. The day before, 44942 had headed south on the working, so it must have come to grief. Today it was, surprisingly, Holyhead's, well-kept 45493 on the southbound, so what had happened to 34044 after it had got to Banbury was anyone's guess!

Guildford's Standard '4' 76033 prepares to leave the dilapidated Oxford shed building on 2nd November 1965.



The Marlow Donkey

Stoke-on-Trent's 'Black Five' 44859 rushes a southbound fitted freight through Oxford station on a snowy 16th February 1966.



So briefly that was my view of Oxford towards the end of WR steam. I believe the only survivors to be resurrected from the 'dead' at Oxford shed were 6106 and 6998. On January 16, 1965, 6998 stood greased and cleaned inside the shed keeping diesels D1742, D6328 and D6356 company. I don't know how long those North British hydraulics worked around Oxford. There was no sign of 6106, which may have already been moved to Didcot.

Today, back in Oxford, there's very little or nothing of the old steam railway scene left now. The old LNWR terminus stands proudly, and most beautifully restored, at Quainton Road. After the death of WR steam in the first week of January 1966, a few pannier tanks soldiered on at Tyseley, Oxley and Croes Newydd for a few more months before ex-GWR steam faded away completely from British Rail. That then only left a few ex-GWR 'panniers' working with London Transport and at one or two coalmines into the 1970s.

Stoke-on-Trent's Stanier 8F waits for the road south with a Washwood Heath (Birmingham) - Southampton freight by the north yards in Oxford while Western Lines Brush 4 D1693 heads north with a freight for Hereford on 19th February 1966. Not a single colour light signal to be seen and everything from the 'steam age' is still in place. Beyond the 2-8-0 can just be seen the tracks of the Oxford-Bletchley line, which still had a regular passenger service using either DMUs or a diesel loco and coaches.

Like some elephant's graveyard, 17 locomotives lie cold and unwanted in Oxford shed yard on 19th February 1966.

Left to right: first row: 6972, 6872, 6132, 6959 and 90258. Second row: 73166, 9773 and 7907. Third row: 4920, 6944, 7927, 6984 and 6990. Far right row: 92235, 92216, 3677 and 6956.



The Railways of Buckinghamshire

LONDON & BIRMINGHAM

Mike Walker

Barely had the World's first common-carrier main line railway, the Liverpool & Manchester, opened for business in September 1830 than planning commenced for the construction of the London & Birmingham Railway linking the country's two largest cities, a distance of 112 miles. The idea had first been suggested as early as 1823 before even the pioneer Stockton & Darlington, when the engineer John Rennie formed a company and planned a route which would have brought it along the Wye Valley through High Wycombe and thence to Oxford and Banbury. Shortly after Francis Giles, a canal engineer who had studied under Rennie and later became engineer of the London & Southampton Railway, formed a rival company with the intention of taking a route through Hemel Hempstead, the Watford Gap and Coventry. Neither project attracted support so in late 1830 the two merged to form the London & Birmingham Railway.

Although George Stephenson was asked to be the new company's engineer he declined and recommended his son Robert for the post. He was duly appointed in 1833 at an annual salary of £1500 which would be around £1.24 million today. Company secretary, Richard Creed, put forward two additional possible routings. The first in 1831 was to the east through Hertford, Baldock, Bedford Northampton and Rugby. His second proposal was for a more direct routing through Tring then passing north of Aylesbury to Buckingham, Brackley and Warwick. This foundered due to the opposition of the Duke of Buckingham who refused to allow the railway to be built across any of his lands. Stephenson finally selected the route we know today.

The first application for parliamentary approval foundered in the Lords in 1832 but a second attempt received the Royal assent on 6th May 1833 with an authorised capital of £5½ million or nearly £16 billion at today's prices. Plans were finalised by 1835 and construction got underway employing around 20,000 navvies for nearly five years. The first section, from Euston to Boxmoor (now Hemel Hempstead) opened on 20th July 1837, extending to Tring on 16th October of the same year. It had been hoped to open the rest of the line to Birmingham in one go and to coincide with the opening of the Grand Junction Railway (Birmingham to Newton-le-Willows) but delays in completing the 1 mile 656 yard Kilsby Tunnel and the Wolverton Viaduct meant that the line was extended from Tring to a temporary terminal at Denbigh Hall. Here the line crossed Watling Street and from Birmingham south to Rugby on 9th April. Stagecoaches (The first rail replacement service?) ferried passengers between Denbigh Hall and Rugby for five months until the final section opened on 17th September.

Apart from this temporary terminal, originally only two stations were provided in Buckinghamshire at Wolverton and in the village of Linslade although it was named Leighton for the neighbouring town Leighton Buzzard which was on the other side of the River Ouzel in Bedfordshire. Further stations were added at Cheddington in 1839, Bletchley in 1846 and Castlethorpe in 1882. The line was built as double track but was widened to four tracks during the 1870s.

In 1846 the L&B merged with the Grand Junction, which had already absorbed the Liverpool & Manchester, and the Manchester & Birmingham to form the London & North Western Railway. This in turn became a part of the London Midland & Scottish Railway at the 1923 grouping.



Fowler 4P 'Compound' 4-4-0 41122 standing at the old Bletchley station on 27th August 1958.

Photo: Alan Morris

The lines from Euston to Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester were electrified as part of the BR Modernisation Plan using the 25kV 50Hz overhead system. The wiring was done from north to south with the wires reaching Bletchley in 1964 and continuing to Euston in 1965 with public services beginning on 18th April 1966. Unlike some later schemes such as that on the East Coast, this was almost total rebuilding with new buildings being provided at all five of the county's stations. The line through the county was re-signalled in 1963-64 as part of this modernisation with a new Power Box at Bletchley replacing 19 manual signal boxes.

The line enters our county at Folly Bridge (33 miles 4 chains from Euston) which carries the B488 Upper Icknield Way and county boundary over the line which at this point is on a 1 in 333 falling gradient through the famous Tring Cutting which at 2½ miles long and an average 40 feet deep was the largest cutting on the pioneering railways. The cutting comes to an end just beyond the next overbridge, no. 116, which carries the B489 Marsworth Road over the line. Tring Cutting Signal Box was located on the down side just before the bridge and Pitstone cement works dominated the view on the up side. Latterly operated by Tunnel Cement until closure in 1990, this had its own internal railway network which connected to the main line at exchange sidings just to the north of the bridge. Today virtually all trace of this has gone and the site redeveloped as an industrial park and housing.

Having emerged from Tring Cutting the line runs onto an embankment and crosses Cheddington Road and the Grand Union Canal and continues in a straight line to Cheddington station. Just north of the canal bridge at 34m 60c Network Rail has installed Wheelchex equipment on all four lines. This scans each wheel that passes and checks for serious flats or other defects including loads outside acceptable limits. If a

The Marlow Donkey

fault is detected an alarm is sounded in the controlling signalling centre (Rugby) and the train can be halted for examination.

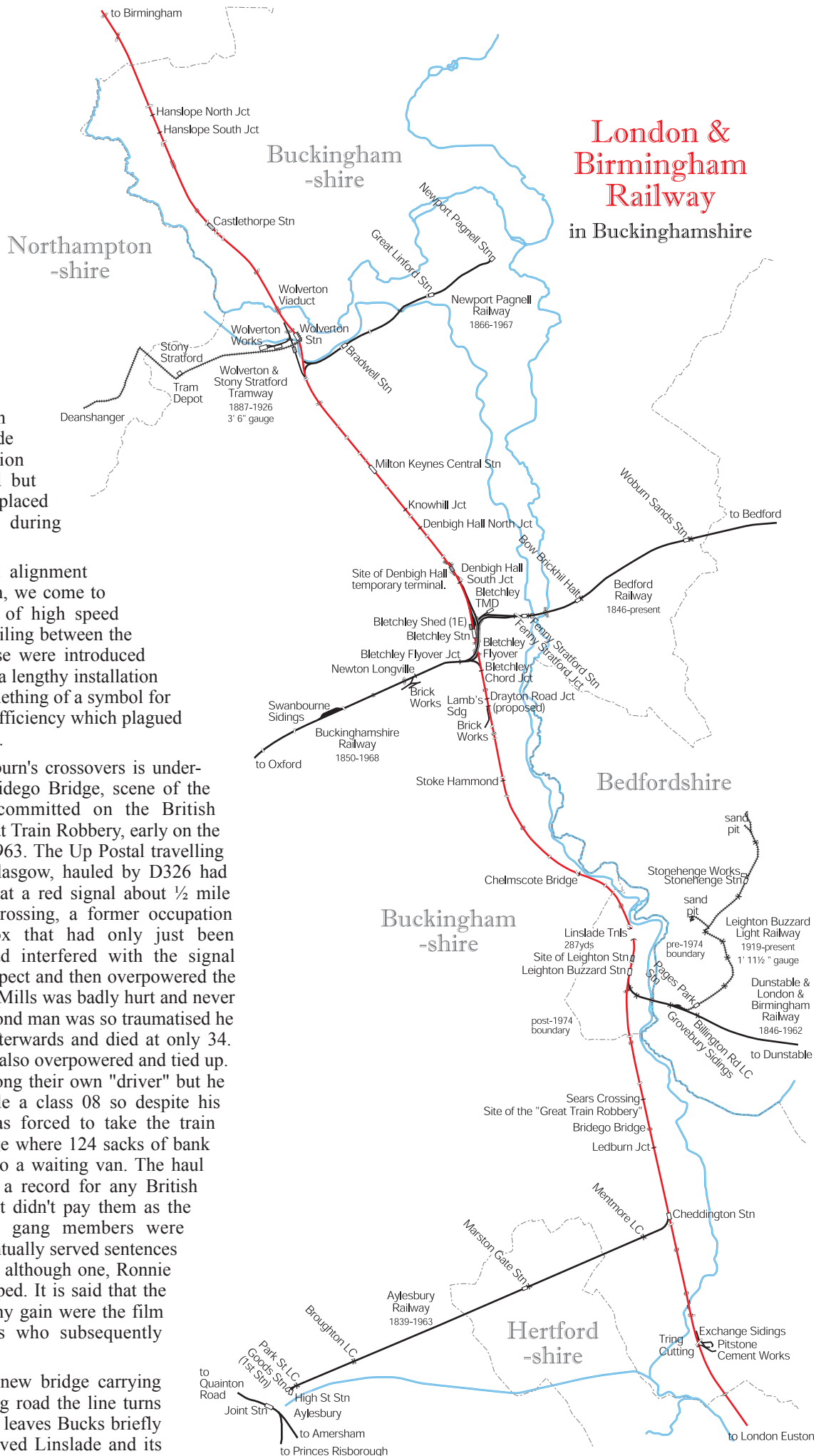
Cheddington station at 36m 8c opened on 9th April 1839 to serve the branch to Aylesbury that opened two months later. The branch trailed in on the down side round a sharp curve to a platform face, now gone, behind the down fast platform. The branch closed to passengers in 1953 and to goods a decade later. The original station buildings were of wood but were swept away and replaced by typical sixties boxes during the electrification project.

Continuing in a straight alignment just slightly west of north, we come to Ledburn Junction, a set of high speed crossovers, facing and trailing between the fast and slow lines. These were introduced into service in 2003 after a lengthy installation period which became something of a symbol for the cost over-runs and inefficiency which plagued the latest WCML upgrade.

At the north end of Ledburn's crossovers is under-bridge 127 known as Bridego Bridge, scene of the most notorious crime committed on the British railway network, the Great Train Robbery, early on the morning of 8th August 1963. The Up Postal travelling post office train from Glasgow, hauled by D326 had been brought to a stand at a red signal about ½ mile further north at Sears Crossing, a former occupation crossing and signal box that had only just been abolished. The gang had interfered with the signal wiring to display a red aspect and then overpowered the engine crew. Driver Jack Mills was badly hurt and never worked again and his second man was so traumatised he always carried a knife afterwards and died at only 34. The mail train crew were also overpowered and tied up. The gang had brought along their own "driver" but he only knew how to handle a class 08 so despite his injuries Driver Mills was forced to take the train forward to Bridego Bridge where 124 sacks of bank notes were off-loaded into a waiting van. The haul was worth £2.6 million, a record for any British robbery at the time but it didn't pay them as the fourteen of the sixteen gang members were caught by police and eventually served sentences of up to thirty years each although one, Ronnie Biggs, subsequently escaped. It is said that the only people who made any gain were the film and television producers who subsequently dramatised the affair.

After passing under the new bridge carrying the Leighton Buzzard ring road the line turns due north and since 1974 leaves Bucks briefly as boundary changes moved Linslade and its

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environs into Bedfordshire. Just to the north is a neutral section in the overhead. Still curving slightly to the east, the line comes to Leighton Buzzard station. The present station opened on 14th February 1859 replacing the original L&B station which was on the north side of the Southbury Road overbridge just beyond today's station. Both were known originally as simply Leighton, the full title not being adopted until 1911. The branch from Dunstable opened in 1846, trailed in on the up side just after the bridge over Wing Road south of the station which was provided with a bay at the south end of the up slow platform. The branch closed to passengers in 1962 and goods in 1965.

Leighton Buzzard was the scene of the worst accident to have occurred on the county's railways. On 22nd March 1931 the 11.30 Euston to Glasgow express hauled by 'Royal Scot' class 6114 *Coldstream Guardsman* derailed due to excessive speed whilst being switched from the down fast to down slow lines by means of the old crossovers at the south end of the station. The locomotive and several coaches overturned causing the deaths of the driver, fireman, a restaurant car steward and three passengers. The driver had been given a printed notice before leaving Euston that he would be switched because of engineering works so, apart from a simple lapse of attention, it is hard to identify a reason for the accident.

North of Leighton Buzzard the line curves quite sharply to the west and passes through Linslade Tunnels. The layout here is unusual as there are three parallel bores each 287 yards long. The up fast and down slow lines share the original double line bore whilst the down fast and up slow lines each have their own single line bores added when the line was quadrupled. With the lines through the middle bore reversed to normal practice, something which can be disconcerting when encountering a Pendolino emerging on full tilt on the curve in the opposite direction and on your left not right!

Emerging from the tunnels the line continues curving to the west and passes under Stoke Road and over old Linslade Road. At the next footbridge it re-enters Bucks and the curve reverses to the right as it passes under the acutely skewed Chelmscote Bridge, site of another former signal box. Just beyond the next overbridge are the Stoke Hammond hot axlebox detectors on the up lines. The curve finally ends by Stoke Hammond village where another signal box was located between the two road bridges. It is now a straight run into Bletchley. There used to be a brickworks just north of the new bridge carrying the A4146 over the line which had rail access from a connection controlled by Lamb's Sidings Signal Box. This part of the Vale of Aylesbury sits on a belt of clay and therefore a number of brickworks formerly surrounded Bletchley. Only a few chains north is the proposed Drayton Road (formerly Bletchley South) Junction, another high speed crossover which has been partly installed for more than five years. It will not be fully commissioned until the area is resignalled and Bletchley Panel abolished, possibly in another couple of years.

The view entering Bletchley is dominated by the flyover which was built in 1957-60 linking the up main line, Cambridge and Oxford lines as part of an ambitious scheme to route freight traffic away from London. Even before it was completed plans changed and it has been something of a white elephant ever since. Bletchley station opened in 1846 coincident with the opening of the line to Bedford. It became an even more important junction in 1850 when the line to Oxford opened. This trailed in on the down side under where the flyover now crosses and at various times there was a west to south chord forming a triangular junction. First laid in 1854, it was removed ten years later and partly relaid in 1934 to serve another brickworks. It was fully reinstated in 1942 to help with wartime traffic and finally closed in the early 1960s. After withdrawal of passenger services on the Oxford line in 1967, the original connection was removed leaving only the line across the flyover.

Bletchley station was rebuilt in 1881 and eventually grew to six platforms. The 1881 buildings were impressive stone and red brick

structures but like the others along the line were replaced by "modern" structures during the electrification, despite BR having spent £200,000 on an extensive refurbishment in the late fifties!

There was a serious rear end collision in the station during the evening of Friday 13th October 1939 when the 7.50pm Euston to Stranraer express headed by a Black 5 ran into a G2 0-8-0 which was attaching a coach to the 7.37pm Euston to Inverness express. The driver of the latter, a porter, a postman and a member of the RAF were killed and 40 injured, many of them standing on the platform. Both locomotives were badly damaged as was the station refreshment room. It is thought poor visibility may have led the driver of the Stranraer train to miss the signals.

A reasonably large locomotive shed was established in 1851 on the down side at the north end of the station to provide motive power for local services to Euston and the lines to Oxford and Cambridge. Following a brief period on intense activity during the period the wires ended and locos were changed at Bletchley it closed on 15th July 1965 and the site is now the station car park. A replacement depot for the electric traction was established on the down side of the Cambridge branch (which diverges at the north end of the station) beyond the flyover. This in turn closed in 2008 but is currently being used by Chiltern Railways as one of the locations to store its Mk3 cars pending refurbishment.

Bletchley still retains an extensive yard on the up side north of the station used to stable EMUs. This comes to an end at Denbigh Hall South Junction where the connection from the flyover also trails in. Immediately north of here the line crosses Watling Street on a sharply skewed under bridge followed by a newer crossing of the modern A5. Between them is the site of the temporary 1838 terminal. Having curved to the left once more, the line now straightens and heads northwest towards Milton Keynes. The line is now in a cutting again crossed by several bridges. Between the second and third is another set of crossovers (down slow to fast, up fast to slow) known as Denbigh Hall North Junction and just after the third bridge is the new Knowlhill Junction where the down fast splits form a new reversible line put in during the expansion of Milton Keynes Central.

Milton Keynes Central is the newest station on the line opening on 17th May 1982 to serve the commercial heart of the new city which encompasses Bletchley to the south and Wolverton to the north. Originally the station had five platform faces with a bay on the up side but in 2006-08 it was enlarged and now has seven. It has developed into a stop for log-distance as well as local services and largely superseded Bletchley. At the north end of the station is the site of Loughton Siding and signal box. This was a goods loop alongside the up slow but could also be used as a goods delivery point.

Continuing north westwards, there is a second overhead line neutral section at Stacey Bushes just before the line crosses over the A422 Monks Way. Milton Keynes' infamous concrete cows are nearby on the down side but not visible from the railway as it approaches Wolverton.

Originally the line passed through on a more-or-less straight alignment with only the slightest curve to the right. Wolverton was chosen as a station site as it was roughly half way between London and Birmingham and trains made an extended stop here whilst passengers sought refreshment, the best time for the early trains was 3 hours but most typically took around 4 hours. The station, which opened in November 1838 replacing a temporary station at Wolverton Park, became renowned for its pork pies and the company acquired a nearby pig farm to ensure supply. Wolverton was also chosen as the location for the line's locomotive works and became the LNWR's carriage works after locomotive work was moved to Crewe in 1865. To allow these to expand, the main lines were moved to the east in 1881 resulting in reverse curves to both the north and south of the station and curving platforms. The rebuilt station was on the north side of Stratford Road whereas the old one was on the south side. The main buildings were of wood and

The more recent past on the London & Birmingham: On 18th April 1990 Class 87 87020 'North Briton' has just left Bucks at Folly Bridge [Right] propelling a south-bound train towards London.

Later the same afternoon 86609 and 86636 head north [Below] with a Freightliner train at Great Seabrook south of Cheddington.

Two photos: Mike Walker



located on the overbridge but BR demolished them in the early 1980s just as Milton Keynes Council was preparing to list them. Today there is a "temporary" building in the car park on the up side.

The original main line became part of the internal works lines and access line from the south. This joins the main lines by burrowing under the fast and down slow lines then has a switchback arrangement to climb up between the slow lines. The works continue in business today although reduced somewhat in size and is managed by Railcare who undertake overhauls and refurbishment of a wide variety of modern stock. The works is also the home of the Royal Train but that is currently under review.

Wolverton had also become a junction in 1866 when a branch was opened to Newport Pagnell. This connected south of the station trailing in alongside the Grand Union Canal. Some years later a south-facing connection was added. The branch was closed to passengers in 1964 and to goods in 1967.

North of the point where the 1881 deviation rejoins the original alignment is the Wolverton Viaduct whose construction and a landslip in the approach embankment contributed to the delay in opening the line throughout. This impressive structure includes six semi-elliptical 60 foot spans and crosses the River Great Ouse at a height of 51 feet.

After another gentle curve to the west the line comes to Castlethorpe station at 54m 60c. This opened in 1882 and was the only station on the L&B route in Buckinghamshire which did not become a junction. It was rebuilt in the early sixties for the electrification only to be closed in the face of fierce local opposition on 6th September 1964. The down fast and island platforms are still visible but are decaying fast. A set of watertroughs were provided just north of the station.

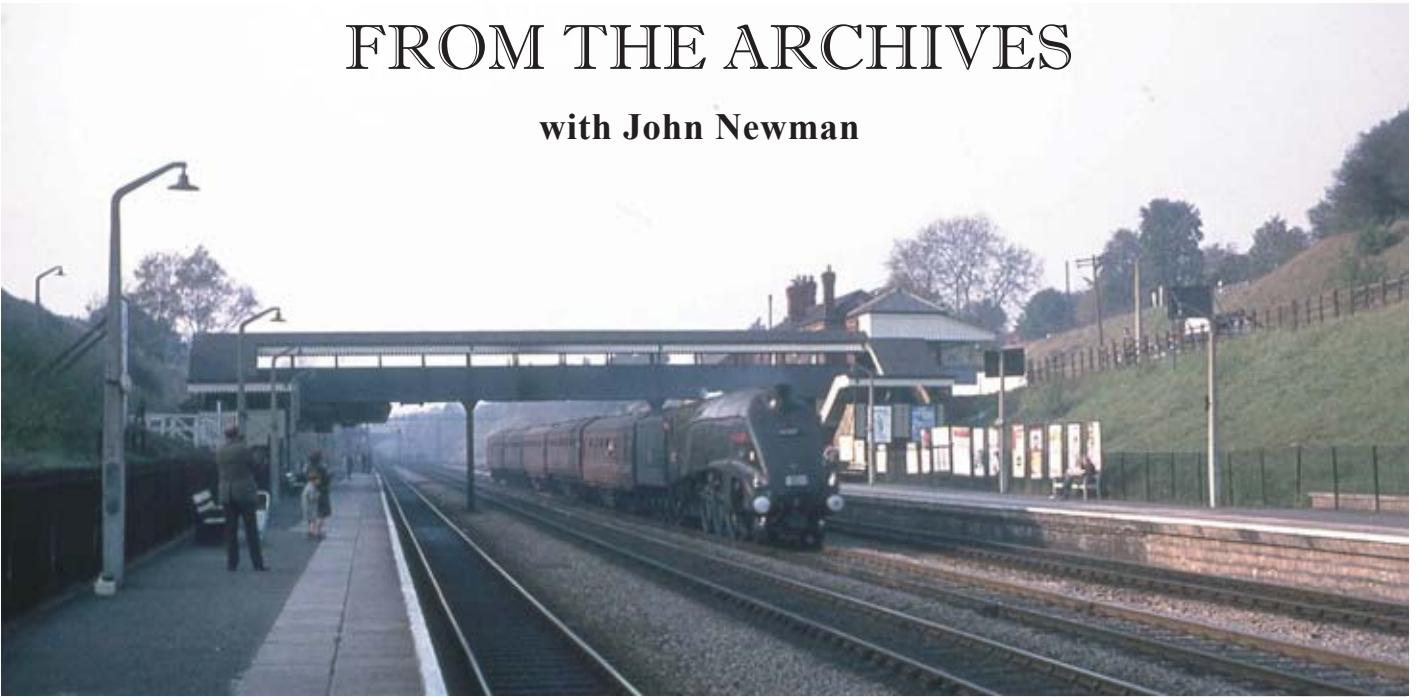
Nearly two miles north of Castlethorpe and stretching for nearly ½ mile are Hanslope South and North Junctions. These high speed crossovers mark the point where the four tracks split from being paired fast and slow lines to become the main lines to Rugby through the Kilsby Tunnel and the loop lines through Northampton to Rugby, although they continue to run side-by-side for a further 4¼ miles until diverging at Roade where the junction used to be. Hanslope Signal Box used to stand at the north end of the present complex.

Finally at 57miles 52chains the line leaves Buckinghamshire and enters Northamptonshire.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

with John Newman



It's the 23rd of November 1965 and Gerrards Cross looks very different to today but there's still steam to be seen. A4 Pacific 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* passed through with a lightweight special from Manchester to Paddington for the newly

formed A4 Preservation Society followed twenty minutes later by 'Black Five' 44971 on the 11.15 Nottingham to Marylebone newspaper empties. Note the few onlookers for the Streak had not stayed for the Five.

AND FINALLY...

Gordon Rippington spotted this piece of railway humour during a recent visit to the Swanage Railway's Herston Works. It would appear that 34072 *257 Squadron* has gained a second nameplate: *Goering*. But look closely at the class lettering, it reads: "Battle of Britain Runner-up Class"!

Some humourless souls might complain this is not "PC" but please, not to the editor!

