

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

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December 2011



Contents:

Wonderful, Winterful Copenhagen
Memories of the Darlaston Loop
Ghostly Happenings on the Branch

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: The exterior of Copenhagen København-H station on Saturday 28th November.

Photo: Tim Edmonds. (Article page 5).

Bottom: Former LMS jackshaft drive diesel shunter 12004 arrives on the GJR route from Darlaston on 16 June 1962. Photo: Mike Page. (Article page 13).

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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

- Thursday 19 January **RAILWAY SAFARI** Geoff Warren
Tonight, globe-trotter Geoff takes us away from the winter cold with a trip to Kenya.
- Thursday 16 February **MY ENTHUSIASM FOR RAILWAYS** Mark Hopwood
Following the usual brief AGM business Mark Hopwood will tell us what has driven him from enthusiast and MDRS member to Managing Director of First Great Western.
- Thursday 15 March **THE HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT OF RAILWAY TRACK** Peter Lugg
Track is something we tend to take for granted and ignore. However it is the very foundation of the railway and worthy of some investigation.
- Thursday 19 April **FROM PADDINGTON TO PENZANCE** Ron White
This is an evening not to be missed as Ron takes on a trip over the full length of our favourite railway narrated in his own irreverent style.

FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Saturday 21 January **WOLVERTON WORKS VISIT** by car
Starting at 10.30 and lasting approximately 2 1/2 hours, this will be a private tour of the only railway workshops in Bucks, today busy with overhaul and refurbishment work. See page 3 for more details. Bookings to 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

Looking back at my notes over the years, I frequently seem to be encouraging the membership to get out there and visit preserved railways or chase some main line steam. Unfortunately this seems to be very much a case of "do as I say not as I do" because I don't seem to have been anywhere to see trains for such a long time. Gay and I had a week in Devon at the beginning of October and although we visited some places within earshot of steam on both the South Devon and Paignton to Kingswear lines, I didn't manage to point a camera at an active loco throughout the holiday. We did do some walking on closed trackbeds, including a crossing of the LSWR viaduct across the town of Tavistock and also quite a lot of the old Yelverton to Princetown Branch on Dartmoor. This was an amazingly circuitous line through interesting scenery but you have to wonder if it ever paid a bean to its investors. I was intrigued to see some old broad gauge track sections still in use as fence supports and the like over a hundred years after the broad gauge ceased to be and over fifty years since this branch line closed. The site of the terminus at Princetown is largely unused but one new building there houses the Dartmoor Brewery, whose products I did sample and can recommend.

Although I get to see a lot of magazines, on various railway and other transport related subjects, I don't normally spend much time looking at articles or adverts about railway relics. This changed recently as the collection of a long-time, recently deceased, friend who had been living in Canada was repatriated and auctioned. You may have seen pictures of the "25 Squadron" nameplate and crest in the mags and I was pleased to see they made £25,000 and other items quite substantial amounts of money too. It seems crazy to me that

these lumps of metal can command such enormous sums, especially as I have seen their "provenance", the letters from BR confirming the prices and delivery costs, often for amounts such as £7-10-0 (for a GWR nameplate, delivered to one's door). Now, of course, they were never bought as investments but instead because we loved the locos that carried the plates. At the time, seven pounds ten shillings was a lot of money to a young enthusiast, earning maybe ten pounds a week, but he had to have it and was prepared to spend out for these mementos of a period of intense activity, yet great sadness, the end of an era. I'm pleased my friend's relics will have brought a bit more financial stability to his widow but I wonder if their new owners will appreciate them as much as he did, despite their vast expenditure?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who sponsored me for the Chilterns Three Peaks Charity walk again this year. We were blessed with decent weather and I think my group of walkers did it considerably quicker than in previous years and probably with less pain. Maybe we are getting fitter? Thanks to your contributions I managed to raise about £350 for the Iain Rennie Hospice at Home.

All that remains now is to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year. I look forward to seeing you in 2012, for which we have arranged an interesting programme of speakers and plan to have some diverting visits. Your continued support is much appreciated.

My very best wishes.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBER

We are pleased to welcome another new member, Philip Clarke who comes to us all the way from Aylesbury, we hope you will enjoy the ride.

This means we finish the year with the membership once again extremely healthy and numbering just over sixty.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Our new season was started with something a little different when the well-known photographer Malcolm Ranieri made a welcome return visit to present a programme entitled 'Steam on Road and Rail' which as the title suggests divided between steam locomotives on the rails both here and overseas and the world of non-rail steam engines with an A-Z guide to preserved traction engines, road rollers, ploughing engines and those magnificent showman's engines.

It is fair to say that October's presentation on Japanese railways by Richard Tremaine somewhat "bombed" in that he used un-edited material straight from his video camera. Richard certainly appears to know his stuff but had failed to do the preparation. The committee makes every effort to obtain the finest quality speakers but very occasionally they fail to live up to our expectations and standards. Our apologies to all.

Thankfully normal service was restored in November when Geoff Plumb returned for a second visit continuing his 'That was the year that was...' from where he left off last time by moving on to 1966. Despite being so near the end of steam Geoff had managed to capture a host of high class images of the closing years of British steam in all its "glory". We now look forward to 1967 next time!

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions become due for renewal in January. The good news is that Peter Robins has decided to keep the rate unchanged for the coming year, that is £16.00. The reduced rate for those of you who live some distance away and therefore attend meetings only on rare occasions remains at £8.00 with a meeting attendance fee of £2.00. Visitors to the Society's meetings will be asked to pay a £3.00 admission fee although that will be reduced to £2 for our friends from the Maidenhead RCTS branch in a reciprocal arrangement.

Please use the form supplied with this issue so we can ensure our records are kept fully up to date. We look forward to your continued support.

NORMAN ASTON-SMITH TROPHY

As usual voting will take place during the Annual General Meeting in February for the Norman Aston-Smith Trophy which is awarded annually to the author of what is considered to be the year's best contribution to the pages of the *Marlow Donkey*.

Unlike some years, no "obvious" candidates stand out but we've once again enjoyed a varied selection of high quality articles. Voting forms will be distributed with the rest of the "AGM info" in January and you are asked to look back over the past three and this issue to make your selection.

VISIT TO WOLVERTON WORKS

Thanks to Railcare, we have been able to arrange a visit to Wolverton Works on Saturday 21st January 2012 starting 10.30 for a 2 1/2 hour escorted tour of the site.

HV vests will be provided but stout shoes/boots are highly recommended. The surface is uneven, we will be crossing running lines and there may be some well work and steps to climb. There are no refreshment facilities on site so bring your own snack/drinks.

Car Parking is available. There is no charge for the visit. There are some restrictions on photography which will be explained as we go but do bring your camera if you wish.

Approx 1 mile away is the Milton Keynes Museum which holds exhibits relating to the Wolverton and Stony Stratford Steam Tram - refreshments are available here. You may choose to walk the track bed of the Newport 'Nobby' or pay a visit to the Grand Union Canal aqueduct.

RCTS MAIDENHEAD

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

Monday 19th December

West of Watford - Nigel Spate

Monday 23th January

Rail Atlas of Great Britain & Ireland - Stuart Baker

Monday 27th February

Narrow Gauge Notebook - Bob Shaddick

Monday 26th March

High Speed Railways of the World - Gordon Pettit

Monday 23rd April

Transforming the Great Western - Mark Hopwood

Monday 28th May

Branch AGM followed by Members' presentations

In June we will again be holding a joint meeting with the RCTS at Bourne End on our usual evening - more details next time

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

LOCAL STEAM

A number of steam specials are booked locally for the next few months.

Friday 30th December 6024 Paddington to Stratford-upon-Avon and return via High Wycombe.

Sunday 12th February 6024 Paddington - Bristol return.

Saturday 25th February 60163 Birmingham Snow Hill - Paddington.

Thursday 1st March 6024 Paddington to Cardiff return.

Saturday 10th March 60163+71000 Paddington - Plymouth 60163 Taunton - Paddington.

All dates are provisional and subject to change. Further details will be posted in the email newsletters as they become available.

PROGRESS AT READING



The work on rebuilding **Reading** station is starting to gather pace with visible changes taking place almost daily. Following the demolition of the old Power Signal Box in the summer a large amount of fill has been brought onto the site on the north side of the station and earth-moving machinery is preparing the raised area [**Above left**] that will support the two new island platforms.

Work has also begun to demolish the buildings on platform 9 [**Above right**] which will also become an island and those at the west end of platform 4 to make space for the construction of the new transfer deck next year.

The additional Southern platform is nearing completion [**Below left**] with commissioning being scheduled for the Christmas break. It will be able to accommodate 12-car trains and the existing 4A and 4B platforms will also be lengthened which has required the widening of the Vastern Road bridge.

The Christmas break will also provide an opportunity to renumber most of the platforms only the present platforms 1-3, the west end bays remain unchanged. The new Southern platform will be no.4, the present 4A and 4B become 6 and 5 respectively, the down main platform 4 becomes 7, the up main at present 5 will be 8 and the present 8, 9 and 10 become 9, 10 and 11 respectively. The London end bay presently no.6 will be temporarily renumbered 16 (it will be eliminated in the final scheme) and its counterpart at the west end, no.7, will close at Christmas to allow work on the new transfer deck to proceed.

East of the station the long-disused 1858 underpass has been restored and a new embankment created to bring the line up to the main line level (it originally gave access to the low level

Three photos: Mike Walker



goods depot) and awaits track laying. It will allow trains on the Gatwick service to run into the new platforms without incurring conflicts with the main and relief lines.

To the west the former yards have been lifted and more earth moving is in progress to prepare the site for the new depot whilst the reconstruction of the notorious Cow Lane underbridge is well advanced.

Apart from the Southern lines, there will be no major closures at Reading this Christmas and New Year.

Meanwhile at Slough

Meanwhile up the line at Slough more changes are taking place with a new footbridge under construction at the London end. The present footbridge is narrow and lacks lifts and therefore makes FGW's second busiest station largely unusable for disabled passengers. Its replacement (**Below right**) addresses both these problems.

Initial work has begun but the remains of the original Brunelian station have been discovered under the surface of the island platform so there is a pause whilst the archaeologists take a look.

Other work at the station will include a total rewiring and upgraded passenger information systems whilst a joint project with Slough Borough Council will see the forecourt improved.

Also at Slough, the Slough New IECC, which opened in 1992 and controls from Paddington to Heathrow and Stockley, will close over the Christmas break and its functions transferred to the Thames Valley Signalling Centre at Didcot. The original Slough Panel will follow next year.

Artist's impression: Network Rail



Wonderful, Winterful Copenhagen

Tim Edmonds



*Copenhagen Ørestundstog arriving at Ørestad in the snow
One of the dual voltage Ørestundstog units (Danish 25kV,
Swedish 15kV) heads into the station from the airport with both
head and tail lights on - I don't know why.*

All photos: Tim Edmonds

The luck of the draw

In the summer of 2010 I won a draw at a business conference in London, the prize being a free place at EuroSTAR 2010. No, this was nothing to do with the Channel Tunnel, but the European Software Testing and Review conference to be held in Copenhagen that winter. It was a valuable prize - but I had to get myself there and pay for a hotel.

The conference ran from Tuesday 30th November to Thursday 2nd December but, since neither Veronica nor I had ever been to Denmark before, I decided to make the most of it by adding a weekend at the beginning for both of us. Veronica is a teacher, so we planned to get a late flight out on the Friday night (27th) with Veronica returning on Sunday night and me on Thursday night. Booking in the summer got us cheap seats on SAS scheduled flights and a good room at a hotel close to the airport and within walking distance of the conference centre. The plan was that we would use the railways to do some sightseeing and visit the Christmas markets on Saturday and Sunday, then I would have the Monday to explore more of the railways before attending the conference. A colleague at work who had been to Copenhagen in February warned that it could be very cold, so we both looked out our warmest clothes and suitable footwear...

Freezing Friday

You remember the big freeze that started at the end of November 2010? Well imagine that, but a bit closer to the Arctic! We arrived at Copenhagen in the snow during the coldest November there for 120 years. Flights were affected and for a while we were unsure we were going to get there at all. We arrived at Heathrow to be offered seats on the delayed preceding flight and, after a further wait, our eventual take-off time was close to that of the original flight. There was another delay as we waited to land at a white Copenhagen airport, but SAS pilots are used to the snow and we touched down onto a frozen runway on which I would have felt uneasy driving my car. There were cheers from the passengers as we came to a halt. By now it was around midnight and with snow falling we decided to take a taxi to the hotel rather than risk a late-night train.

Metrospective

Our hotel was the Crowne Plaza Towers, in a ribbon of new development along line M1 of the Metro. Adjacent was Ørestad station, an interchange with the main line railway that also served a large new retail mall and offices. Our room was on the 24th of 25 floors, with a panoramic window overlooking the main Metro depot. Set inside an oval loop between Ørestad and the terminus at Vestamager, it was laid out below us like a train-set.

The Metro is run by Ansaldo and currently comprises two lines, both sharing a route from Vanløse in the west through the city centre to Christianshavn. From there line M1 heads to the relatively isolated terminus at Vestamager while line M2 continues from Christianshavn to Lufthavnen (the airport) where there is another main line interchange. The outer sections are on the surface, often on viaducts, while the central sections from Fasanvej Solbjerg to Islands Brygge (M1) and Lergravsparken (M2) are underground. Trains are 3-car articulated units and operation is automatic, with the windows front and rear giving an excellent view - including the well-lit underground sections. The present system was completed in 2007 but extension is in progress with the construction of the 15.5km 'Cityringen', a circle line with 17 new stations, scheduled for completion in 2018. This will include a connection to the main København-H (Central) station for the first time. However, problems have been encountered in tunnelling under buildings in the historic city and these have resulted in some costly delays.

Saturday in the snow

Saturday dawned a gloomy, grey day with the threat of more snow - not the best for sightseeing. Also, Veronica was already concerned about getting home and wanted to switch to an earlier flight on Sunday. So we decided to ride the long way to the airport, on the Metro via Christianshavn, for Veronica to



rebook, then return to the city centre and explore on foot. We walked cautiously along the snowy pavements to Ørestad station to purchase 'City Pass' tickets, covering the Metro and all trains and buses in zones 1-4 - the city and inner suburbs including the lines to the airport. My 72-hour ticket cost 180DK (about £21) while Veronica's 24-hour version was 70DK (about £8). You punch it on a yellow machine the first time you use the ticket - this prints the date and time and starts the validity period. There are no entry/exit barriers but ticket checks can be made at any time. I experienced only two, both on the Sunday, one on the Metro and one on a main line train.

This first journey proved to be a most interesting experience, since the snow was causing problems on some of the surface sections on the Metro. Heading for Lufthavnen on line 2 our train was terminated at Amager Strand where, after a short delay and in falling snow, we boarded a train on the opposite face of the island platform and worked wrong-line to the terminus with the other track temporarily out of use. This was done with a member of staff in attendance at a console which he unlocked and pulled up from under the front window. I was

Room with a view [Left] Copenhagen Vestamager Metro depot through the window of my room on the Crowne Plaza Towers Hotel's 24th floor.

A Copenhagen Metro train leaving Ørestad [Above] with a snowy road in the foreground. The train is departing for the terminus at Vestamager. The main line goes at right angles under both railway and road at this point.

sitting in the front and could see the speedometer on the console, from which it appeared that operation of the train was limited automatically to 28kph. The only manual operation was switching on the windscreen wiper! On our return journey a little later two-line operation had resumed, but still with a staff member in attendance and speed limited until the underground section was reached. There the console was locked away and normal operation resumed.

Leaving the Metro at Christianshavn we explored the area around the picturesque old harbour before heading for Nyhavn and its Christmas Market. With snow-covered pavements and a chilly breeze we certainly needed our stout shoes and warm



Copenhagen Østerport ME1529 with a double-deck push-pull train. 3300hp of Co-Co super power - this is one of the first series delivered in 1981-3 by Henschel. Note the snow-plough.



With its coupling bagged to keep out the snow, a S-Tog line C train arrives at Copenhagen Vanløse with the Metro station on

clothing and, as snow began to fall again, we took refuge in a cosy bar for lunch with a large glass of Julebryg - a tasty dark Christmas beer. Still on foot, as dusk fell we traversed the main shopping area to enter the famous Tivoli Gardens, lit up with Christmas lights. After dinner at a restaurant nearby we headed for Central station and a fast train direct to Ørestad - just six minutes away. Since the opening of the Øresund bridge in 2000 this line is now one of the busiest in Denmark and its services reach Malmö in Sweden via Copenhagen Airport. Trains are operated jointly by DSB (Danish State Railways) and First Group and are worked by dual-voltage EMUs known as Ørestundstog.

Sunday diversions

Our objective on Sunday was to see Den Lille Havfrue (The Little Mermaid), the iconic statue of the eponymous character from the Hans Christian Anderson story, situated to the north of the city centre and reached via Østerport station. This was once a terminus for trains from the north, but in 1917 a connecting line to Central station was opened, mainly in tunnels. These days Østerport is the terminating point for some trains from the other direction, including diesel powered double-deck push-pulls from Kalundborg, which also serve Central and the intermediate station at Nørreport, where there is an interchange with the Metro. The weather was cold and grey again, but we had no trouble in getting a fast train into Central, then changed onto one of the red S-Tog inner suburban units (which include vehicles with bicycle storage) to reach Østerport. Although it was a quiet Sunday morning, I was delighted to find DSB Co-Co diesel electric ME1529 throbbing in the station with a set of double-deckers. I was also interested to note that the steps down from the footbridge included a track to guide bicycle wheels - stations on the GC London extension had a similar arrangement and you can still see one at Loughborough Central.

Another chilly walk took us to the snow-decked Little Mermaid, then along the waterfront, past the Kastellet (castle) and Amalienborg (royal palace - just in time for the changing

of the guard) back to Nyhavn. After lunch we then took the Metro back to the hotel to pick up Veronica's baggage and then the main line train to the airport for her to catch the flight home.

With the light deteriorating, I decided to use my City Pass to ride the trains. What seemed like a straightforward route, taking in the Metro to its western terminus and then looping round to Central on the S-Tog, proved to be quite an adventure due to a combination of the snow and engineering works. First I took the Metro out from the airport through to the end of the line at Vanløse. This involved a change at Frederiksberg, where some trains stop short, and then a long delay at Flintholm, just one station from the terminus. There were no announcements, not that I could have understood them if there were, but clearly there was a problem with ice and snow. A member of staff appeared from somewhere and set off on foot for Vanløse through the lineside drifts. Although I could have changed onto the S-Tog at Flintholm, I stayed put because I was keen to travel the full length of the Metro. Eventually the problem was sorted and we were on the move again.

The Metro terminus at Vanløse is on a lower level than the S-Tog station, which is an exposed island platform and was bitterly cold - without my winter jacket and thermal trousers I would have been frozen. I decided to take the next city-bound train on line C, which showed on the timetable and the station indicator for Klampenborg via København-H. The reality proved to be rather different and, with the station and train announcements only in Danish, it was also very confusing. The first problem was that the train actually terminated at Valby, a junction station, from where I had to take another train to get to Central. I caught an S-Tog on the connecting line B only for this to terminate at Dybblesbro. Yes, Sunday engineering works had taken the line out between there and



The exterior of Copenhagen København-H station on Saturday 28th November. It's only 17.02 but the temperature is well below zero.

Next day it was an all-diesel lineup in the station, with IC3 5274, an ABB Scandia articulated DMU on the left and ME 1511 with a push-pull set on the right.



Central (the next station) and passengers had to go up the narrow stairs from the island platform and along snow-covered pavements to board replacement buses. What made this doubly irritating was that had I known this in advance, I could have crossed to the other side of Valby station and picked up a diesel push-pull to Østerport on the main line. This was apparently unaffected by the S-Tog closure. Given the deteriorating weather conditions, language problems and the uncertainties of Sunday timetabling, I did not risk returning to Valby to try for the next push-pull but followed the throng and took the bus to Central. Even the main airport line had cancellations and it was a relief to pick up a train to Ørestad fairly quickly. I had a large Julebryg and a bar meal back at the hotel and was pleased to get a message from Veronica of her safe arrival at Heathrow. By now it was snowing again...

Monday - minus fifteen

Monday 29th November was the worst day of the winter weather, with temperatures reaching -15°C and falls of up to 40cm of snow. Public transport was seriously affected - 120 trains were cancelled and three S-Tog lines were not operating. On the Metro there were problems reported on the surface section to Vanløse where I had been delayed the previous evening.

Although I had intended to travel on more of the suburban network and perhaps do some linesiding, this was no longer a sensible option. Instead I first had a quick return trip from Ørestad to Vestamager to complete my travel over the entire Metro system, then headed for Central station to observe operations. The main line departures display was full of



This DSB winged wheel logo is to be found on the roof of Copenhagen's Hotel Astoria. Presumably it was once a railway hotel.

EA3022 arriving at Copenhagen København-H with a train from Amsterdam on Monday 29th November. This was the one I nearly missed - note the gricer getting a close-up!



cancellations and delays so I took the first train to København-H, arriving at about 09.30. Several lines were working to an emergency timetable with a reduced frequency, and the many cancellations included the through train to Stockholm. I noted that most platforms had been cleared and/or gritted - unlike the pavements outside - and that staff were assigned to removing embedded ice and snow from the sliding train doors during station stops.

There is a variety of EMU, DMU and loco-hauled trains to be seen at Central, with inner suburban, regional, inter-city and international services including, somewhat appropriately, some ICE workings from Germany (which are routed via the Puttgarden - Rødby train ferry). The Kalundborg push-pulls ran on a half-hourly timetable and seemed to be coping with the weather, so I made sure that when I had had enough of the bitter cold on the station (just over an hour was plenty) I was on the right platform to ride on one of these. At this point I noticed two photographers at the end of the next platform and the reason soon became apparent as the late-running overnight train from Amsterdam arrived behind blue-liveried DSB Bo-Bo electric EA3022 - the last of the class to enter service. I had to make do with a snatch shot. Soon ME1531 propelled a train of double deckers into the station and I climbed aboard the last carriage, adjacent to the loco, for the short but exhilarating ride through the cuttings and tunnels to Nørreport and a hot drink.

I did not venture far after that, but did explore some more of the city centre, including a climb to the top of the remarkable Rundetårn (round tower) - once an observatory and attached to the west end of a baroque church - for a panoramic view. By mid afternoon I headed back to Ørestad on the Metro as the temperatures plummeted and all modes of transport continued to struggle with the wintry weather.

To the Bella Center and City Hall

My City Pass did not expire until 10.00 on Tuesday and, since the conference did not begin until mid-day, I decided to return to see some more of the action at København-H. This time I arrived an hour earlier on a sunny morning, which made photography tricky as the line is in a cutting and would not be in direct sunlight until much later. To try and keep warm I left Central and walked alongside the cutting the short distance to Vesterport station, an island platform served only by the S-Tog. From there I returned along the other side of the cutting, all the

time having a view of comings and goings on the railway. Services had recovered from the previous day, but there were still delays and cancellations. I timed my return to Ørestad so as to arrive just before my ticket ceased to be valid. After a chilly wait to get a shot of a Metro train on the bridge above a main line train I walked the short distance to see the Metro depot at street level. Then I returned to the hotel to change and took another cautious walk to Bella Center and the conference.

The next two and a half days were thoroughly enjoyable and did include one return railway journey and a bit of sightseeing. On Wednesday evening there was a conference awards ceremony and dinner held at the City Hall, close to the Tivoli Gardens and Central station. I knew how quick it was to get there by train and persuaded several others that shared taxis were likely to be considerably slower than the train, as well as more expensive, if they didn't mind a ten-minute walk at the other end.

City Hall is a magnificent building, completed in 1905 in the Italianate style, and we had freedom to roam much of the building. The awards were in the vast main hall and not only were two of the three winners Brits, but the 'European Testing Excellence Award 2010' went to Paul Gerrard, who lives in Maidenhead and whose computers host the MDRS website for us! The dinner was a superb buffet of Danish delicacies served in the richly decorated Council Chamber - and there was plenty of Carlsberg to wash it down.

Thursday ... and would I get home?

"Aren't you on the 20.10 Heathrow flight, Tim?" called a friend at the lunch break on Thursday "It's been cancelled, you'll need to rebook". I needn't have worried. He was booked on the BA 20.10 flight, but I was on the SAS flight in the same take-off slot. All SAS flights to London that day were fine, but all the BA flights were cancelled. As I collected my bag from the hotel that evening to take the courtesy car to the airport, I watched a queue of BA-booked Brits fighting over the last few rooms for an extra night's stay. The weather was bad, but I returned safely to Heathrow with little delay.

So ended an adventurous and eventful first visit to Denmark. It had been a successful one, thanks to travelling suitably prepared for winter conditions and not least because of the decision to fly with SAS - it certainly pays to 'go local'!

FROM THE ARCHIVES

A look back to 1957 with Alan Costello

Below: 5975 *Winslow Hall* pilots 7004 *Eastnor Castle* on a down train passing Radipole Halt in the summer of 1957 on what could possibly be a summer Saturday boat train from Birmingham.



Above: Having been turned at Weymouth the same pairing of 5975 and 7004 storm their way back up Upwey Bank with the afternoon return working.



Left: 3846 leads 5314 at the head of a freight past Radipole July 1957. The Mogul had already been withdrawn and was on its way to Swindon Works for scrapping.

Below: King 6003 *King George IV* piloting 5384 at Newbury on 21st July 1959. The train left Paddington at 6pm and it was split at Newbury. The first half would continue to Weymouth with 5384 (unusually a Weymouth allocated 2-6-0 instead of a Hall) whilst the King followed with the rest of the train to Trowbridge via Devizes.



An open day was held at Eastleigh Works on 7th August 1957. Among the exhibits was the other *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe*, 30757 which was one of a pair of 0-6-2T's built by Hawthorn Leslie in 1907 for the Plymouth Devonport & South Western Junction Railway which operated the branch from Bere Alston to Gunnislake and Callington. It was withdrawn at the end of 1956 and was awaiting its fate which occurred a few months later at Eastleigh.



Also present at the Eastleigh Works open day was the last surviving Brighton Atlantic 32424 *Beachy Head* which outlived the rest of its class by more than a year being finally withdrawn in April 1958 and cut up at Eastleigh the following month.

A replica of this handsome machine is currently being constructed by the Bluebell Railway.

Another exhibit at the Eastleigh Works open day was Stanier 8F 48774. This run-of-the-mill locomotive had quite an unusual history.

It was built in August 1940 by North British for the War Department as WD 320 but operated on the LMS and GWR as 8246 for some time before serving overseas. On return in 1948 it was one of three 8Fs sent to work on the Longmoor Military Railway as LMR 501 where it remained until all three were sold to BR in 1957.

It seems that BR initially didn't realise what they'd bought as all three were numbered 90733-90735 at the end of the WD Austerity locos. To further add to the confusion this loco was initially numbered 90743 rather than 90734 in error. After a short time the mistake was rectified and the trio became 48773-48775. The first of the group survives on the Severn Valley but 48774 was less fortunate being scrapped by Birds at Long Marston in December 1965.



Finally a pair of photographs taken at the old Euston on 26th August 1957.

Stanier Pacific 46210 *Princess Patricia* is seen propelling empty stock out of the terminal. At this time the loco would be wearing green livery as it has the old "monocycling lion" crest on the tender.



The second of the LMS prototype diesel-electric locomotives 10001 rests under the trainshed roof after arrival.

By this time it had swapped its original black and silver livery for standard green with steam-style lining around the waist.

What a pity neither of these pioneer locos, arguably the most significant development in British locomotive history since the *Rocket*, was preserved although a scheme to build a replica has recently been announced.

Memories of the 'Darlaston Loop' railway



In most of our youngest years there was a local railway, which sparked off railway interest. In my case it was the little-known 'Darlaston Loop' line in the depths of the West Midlands, writes Mike Page.

There are no trains to be seen in Darlaston today, except along the nearby old Grand Junction Railway line on the east side of the town. The railway scene in Darlaston was very different back in the 1940s and 50s. Toddler memories of the old London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS) in the immediate post-war years formed an ongoing interest in trains and Black Country railway history as I grew up surrounded by factories and railways.

Where's Darlaston? Where's the 'Black Country'? You may well ask! The 'Black Country' was so named because between 1750s and the First World War it was covered with soot from the numerous coal mines, iron works, coke ovens and brickworks! The area was roughly centred along a 30ft thick coal seam, which ran roughly southwest to the northeast. The 'border' towns of the Black Country are Wolverhampton, Walsall, Smethwick, Oldbury and Dudley. A 'peninsula' stretched out to Stourbridge. The river Tame once flowed through a broad and beautiful valley between a limestone ridge in the west and a sandstone ridge in the east, each rising to short of 1000ft.

While the 'Industrial Revolution' was reputed to have begun in Coalbrookdale near Bridgnorth, 'Industrial Metals Production' really 'kicked off' in the Black Country, which had the main ingredients for making iron: coal, iron ore and limestone. The River Tame and its subsidiaries provided water power for 'trip' forging hammers, driving machinery and the like.

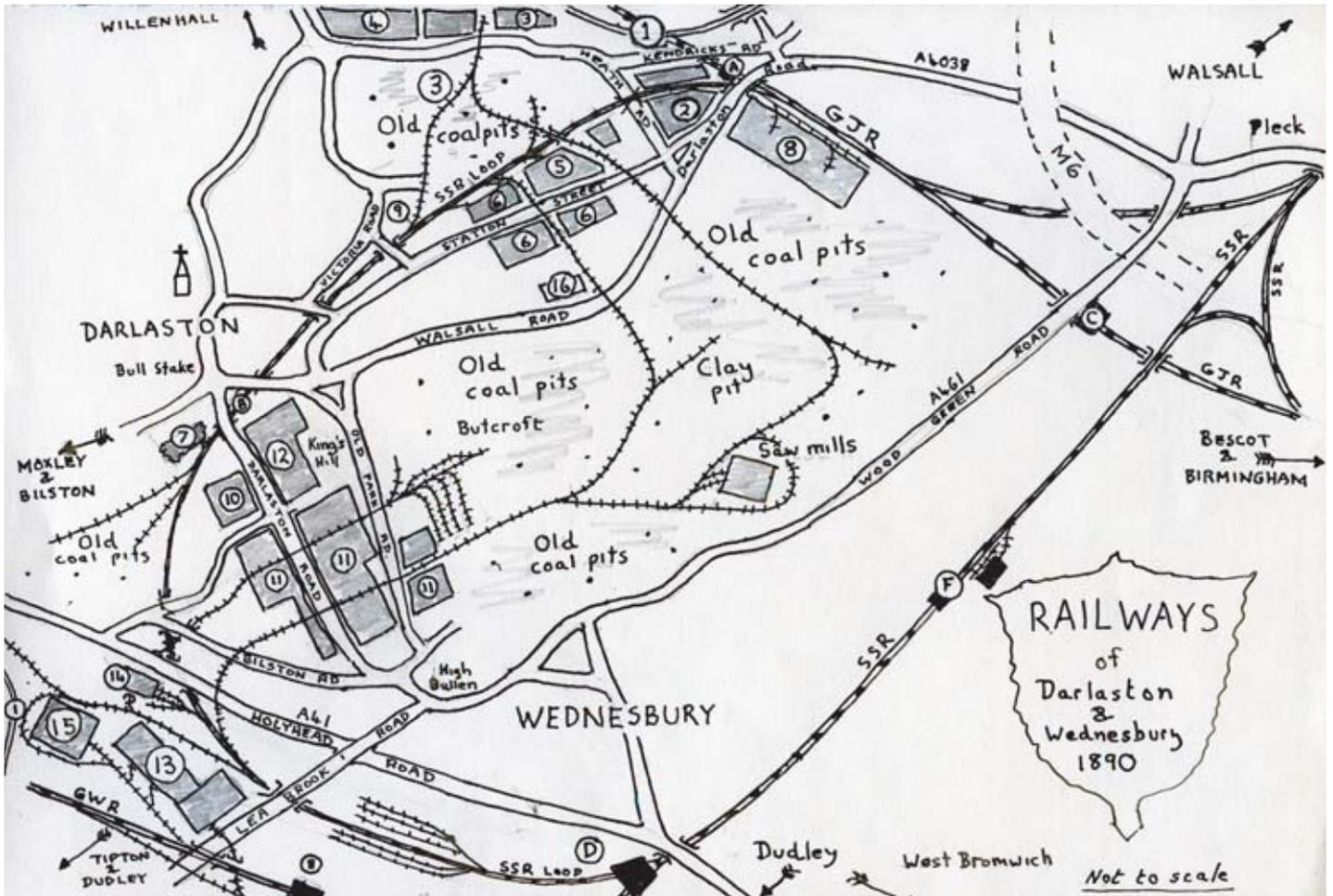
The iron masters had become very frustrated by the 1790s: the Black Country lay on a plateau and there were no usefully navigable rivers nearby. They were at the mercy of the River Tame and its subsidiaries provided water power for 'trip'

The first Darlaston station on the old Grand Junction Railway may have looked something like this in 1838 or so. The Birmingham-Walsall canal is on an embankment in the background (as it still is today). The Darlaston Road in the foreground is on a bridge today and the Kendrick Road is on a bridge beyond the station area. On the left is the site of the later E.C. & J Keay construction factory and beyond the canal grew the Rubery Owen factory 'empire'

Drawing by Mike Page.

Living in the Black Country before the 1970s, you could still see the railways serving the larger foundries, forges and rolling mills. Large internal railway complexes served the integrated iron and steel works of Stewarts and Lloyds in Spring Vale, Bilston, the steelworks of the Patent Shaft & Axletree Company in Wednesbury and Round Oak on the former Earl of Dudley's industrial sites.

Darlaston, Wednesbury and Walsall were the first Black Country towns to gain a public railway. The former town's station at James Bridge (a mile from Darlaston) and the latter two towns' station on Wood Green Road (though two miles from Walsall and a mile from Wednesbury!) were commissioned in 1837 on the infant Grand Junction Railway (GJR). James Bridge station (later Darlaston and closed in 1965) lay between the bridges of the Darlaston Road on the way to Walsall and Kendrick's Road. Walsall's station lay on the Wood Green Road near today's Junction 9 on the M6. The Walsall station, later renamed Bescot Bridge, closed in 1850, following the building of today's Bescot station in 1847. The GJR was designed mainly as a freight railway and linked Birmingham with the then much publicised Liverpool and Manchester Railway, via Crewe and the London and Birmingham Railway (L & B). Many iron masters remained frustrated as the GJR bypassed Walsall and Wolverhampton (it was built on the cheap) and lay some miles from Dudley. The GJR and L & B used the Curzon Street terminus station near Vauxhall, Birmingham, and were combined with others to form the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) in 1847.



When Darlaston's trains began to impress on this toddler's mind, LNWR equipment was still in regular use: signal boxes, signals, stations, goods sheds and even some of the locomotives. Darlaston gained a second station in 1863. When the former South Staffordshire Railway (SSR) had established routes from Walsall through Wednesbury (Town) to Dudley (1849), with connections at Bescot and James Bridge to the GJR and to the Great Western Railway (GWR) at Wednesbury and Dudley, a 'loop' line was also built (1863) from James Bridge through the middle of Darlaston (Darlaston Town station) to wind round south-westwards to Wednesbury Town station with a junction facing back to Walsall.

The 'Darlaston Loop' served, at first, the growing Darlaston Iron Works at James Bridge and smaller companies such as nut and bolt producers, iron foundries and coalmines. Eventually the local coalmines were all worked out by the 1900s, while Darlaston Iron Works had developed into F H Lloyds steel founders.



Not screaming at the barber's got a train ride from Darlaston station (above) to Walsall. Walsall's Webb 2-4-2T 6704 is on an evening Wolverhampton-Walsall push-pull in August 1947.

Photo: W.A.Camwell, Don Powell collection, 'Rails Around Walsall' by John Boynton, Mid England Books published 1996.





In this view on the Darlaston Loop in 1969, we are looking towards James Bridge. A line from Butcroft once crossed the overbridge. A line also went under the bridge towards the left. Beyond the bridge we can see Heath Street level crossing.

Photo: Mike Page

Nearby was E.C. & J. Keay, constructional engineers, (who, for example, supplied fabricated girders for bridges and structures all around the world as well as the GWR's Birmingham Snow Hill Station rebuild in 1912). It was established at James Bridge, along with, for example, large nut and bolt plants, such as the Atlas Works, owned by the Guest, Keen & Nettlefolds group, the Alma Works and Charles Richards & Sons. There was also a large drop forge owned by Garrington (later GKN) and the then enormous manufacturing, drop forge, foundry, machine shop and sheet metalwork/fabrication sites of Rubery Owen. The Rubery Owen Darlaston 'Empire', employing some 5000 in 1960, lay mostly between the Willenhall Road, the Walsall Canal and GJR as well as both sides of Heath Road near Darlaston Green. It reached its peak size in the mid-1960s. So there were numerous private sidings and works' branch lines.

Back in 1945, steam engines were everywhere. For example, if you took the Walsall Corporation Route 38 bus from Darlaston (Bull Stake) to Wednesbury (High Bullen) in the late 1940s through Kings Hill and along the Darlaston Road you would find yourself in a canyon formed by large factory buildings belonging mostly to the 'Old Park Works' of the Metropolitan Cammell Company and Rubery Owen. Your bus might get stopped at one of two railway crossing places by a man with a red flag as a little 0-4-0T, such as Patent Shaft's 'Shifter 1', brought a train of new wagons or strange foreign coaches across the road. The 'Old Park' supplied wagons and coaches to many railways in the 'Old Empire' as well as British Railways.

Or, catch a Midland Red Route 274 bus from Moxley (War Memorial) to Wednesbury (High Bullen) along the Holyhead Road. You might get stopped after crossing the bridge over the 'Darlaston Loop' while another of Patent Shaft's 0-4-0Ts brings a line of wagons across the Bilston and Holyhead Roads from the Old Park Works. Another might be puffing through the tunnel underneath. The internal trains used the tunnel line to bring fabricated bogies and axles, as well as steel products from the Patent Shaft to the Old Park. There might also be one of Bescot's or Walsall's ageing Victorian LNWR 'Coal Engine' 0-6-0s shunting the Rose wagon repair works on the western side of the Holyhead Road nearby.

One of my earliest memories was of being fascinated by overgrown tracks coming out of the back of the Old Park Works as we walked along an unmade road (today's Old Park Road) in 1945 into Wednesbury. The weed-covered tracks led into derelict industrial wasteland where once coalmines and a large sawmill flourished. In the 1880s, this area, known as Butcroft, was also linked up by rail, in two crossing points on the main Darlaston-Walsall road. One line led onto the

'Darlaston Loop' and the other crossed over the 'Loop' and Heath Road into Rubery Owen's railway sidings. Today, the Butcroft area is one large housing estate built in the early 1950s.

Back on the 'Darlaston Loop', say in 1945, one of our neighbours in All Saint's Road, a retired Mr. Fisher who had worked at Keay's, is taking this three-year-old on one of the regular afternoon walks. We have seen a long-funnelled 0-6-0 goods engine pushing some large bogie goods wagons carrying steel girders and plate across a level crossing at Heath Street into the back of Keay's. Once the crossing was clear, we follow a path paralleling the line towards the centre of Darlaston and go underneath an old railway bridge that was once part of the line from Butcroft. The engine is now busy shunting the sidings of the Atlas Works, with open wagons of steel coil, bolster wagons with bar and box vans, the latter to carry out, one supposed, boxes of nuts and bolts.

Shunting has finished, so we would walk on, passing Darlaston Baths on the right to cross over the tracks on an iron footbridge from Victoria Road onto Station Street. From 1863 until 1883, the Darlaston Loop had an intensive local passenger service of some 56 trains each way, each weekday. The service on the 'Loop' was based on trains shuttling out-and-back, between Darlaston and James Bridge and Wednesbury. The arrival of street-running steam trams in 1883 brought the train service down to 18 trains/day, then the LNWR, against much local opposition, closed Darlaston Town station in 1887. There is no trace of the Town station today.

The engine was now getting on its way towards Wednesbury. It would probably shunt sidings of a scrap yard on the south side of Darlaston Road bridge, maybe drop a few wagons for repair at the Rose Wagon Works by the Holyhead Road, then exchange the train's wagons for more at Wednesbury Town station sidings to bring back around the 'Loop'. Towards the end of the shift, this 'trip' freight would then come back and collect and deposit more wagons before carrying on through James Bridge to return to Bescot's extensive marshalling yards for more shunting.

I learned much later in life, from a retired, 93-year-old Bescot engine driver (in 1994) that the engine would have been one of Bescot's old Webb LNWR 'coal engines' built from 1873 onwards. Bescot (3A), Walsall (Ryecroft - 3C) and Wolverhampton (Bushbury - 3B) engine sheds used these old-timers for odd jobs, such as local trip working from the marshalling yards out to local factories and goods stations, up until 1950. They were then replaced by more 'modern' ex-Midland Railway 2F 0-6-0s of 1878! The veteran driver had

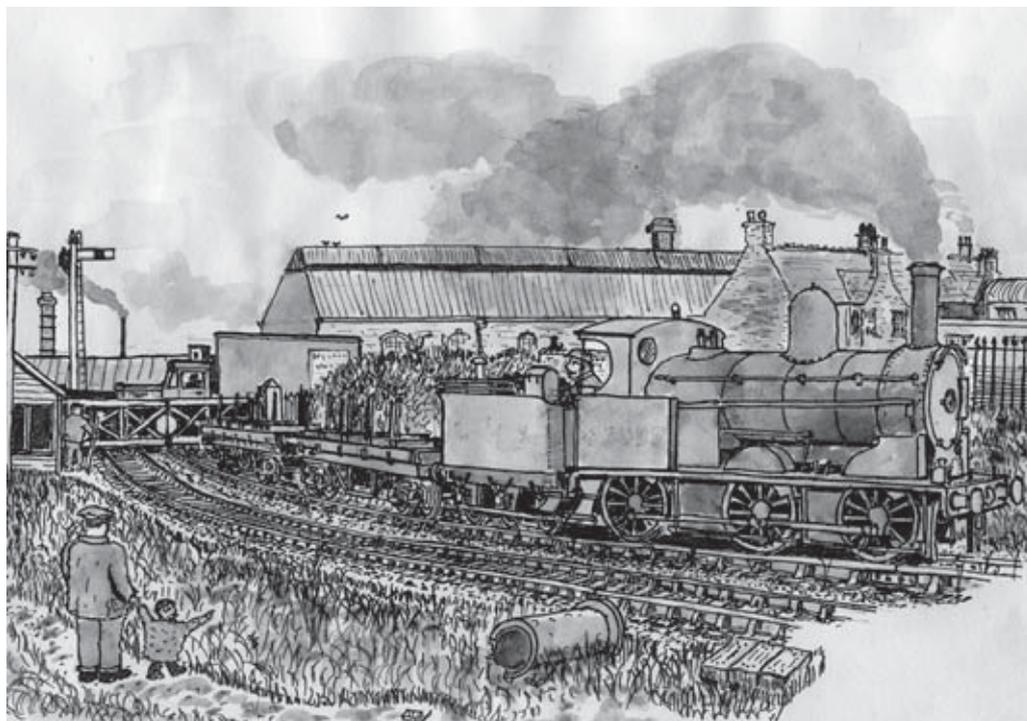
The Marlow Donkey

told me that he had often worked on the old 'coal engines' on the 'Darlaston Loop' job in the late 1940s; he remembered in particular, engine 28097. How I'd love to find a photograph of 28097 or one of her 'coal engine' sisters, shunting on the 'Loop'.

Seeing trains was becoming essential to me and one of my Uncles realised I could be bribed to be 'good'. For example, I hated having my hair cut. After another screaming session at Cowley's barber shop (it is still there) in Pinfold Street, Darlaston, my Uncle Vin said that if I was good next time I would get a square of chocolate (sweets were scarce, being on ration) and a ride on the train from James Bridge to Walsall. So I was 'good' next time, and subsequent visits to Cowley's resulted in catching the 37 bus to James Bridge and a ride behind an ancient 1890s Webb 'push-pull' LNWR 2-4-2 tank engine - like Ryecroft shed's LMS 6661, 6679 or 6712 - to Walsall. The last of these engines (46712) survived at Walsall into 1954.

I loved the old Walsall station. It was semi-circular with its straight frontage facing Park Street. Impressive columns held up its domed roof. A three-year old could delight in stamping on the wooden floor to raise echoes. Once through the lattice iron ticket gates, you walked down a wood and glass corridor on a bridge with steam rising on both sides from trains waiting below. The corridor made a 'T' junction with a similarly covered footbridge serving the platforms.

When we lived in Darlaston, and later in Moxley, we often took an excursion from Walsall to Sutton Park on a Saturday or Sunday. I distinctly remember on one occasion that it was an LNWR 'Super D' 0-8-0 goods engine that did the honours.



It appears that local photographers almost ignored the Darlaston Loop as no pictures have been found of trains working the line. So here is an impression of Webb 'coal engine', Bescot's 28097, pausing for a break after shunting the sidings of the E.C. & J Keay factory seen beyond the engine (based on a 1969 photo of the derelict line). At the time, roughly 1945/6, Bescot had two 'coal engines' 28097 and 28199. Walsall had eight and Bushbury, three. The Midland 2Fs were creeping in by then as Bescot had received three. The LNWR 'Cauliflower' 0-6-0s were also still active in the Black Country area.

Drawing by Mike Page.

Fowler 4F 44358 comes off shed at Bescot on June 16th, 1962 taken from the footbridge over the former GJR route looking towards Birmingham. The SSR routes to Dudley and Walsall diverge off to the left. The shed is on the right.

Photo: Mike Page



The last of these engines, 49407 and 49430 worked from Bescot into 1964. Bushbury's 48895, loaned to Bescot, still sported 'LMS' on the tender 16 years after Nationalisation!

We would all pile out of the suburban compartment carriages at Sutton Park to go over an iron lattice bridge and up a long steep path into the park. Then later we would be waiting on what to me seemed quite a large country station after a day in Sutton Park. We relied on the porters to shout out which train was ours. They could be returning to Wolverhampton, Walsall or Birmingham (via Washwood Heath). There were no destination boards on the coaches so a porter shouted "Birmingham, this train!" or "Walsall and Wolverhampton!" as the station gas lights fought the darkening evening gloom. I was very surprised when going there with a girlfriend in 1961 to see just how small Sutton Park station was.

The passenger train service from Walsall via Sutton Park and Saltley to Birmingham succumbed to the 'Beeching Axe' in 1965 along with the Walsall-Wolverhampton and Walsall-Dudley services. I noted when passing through Sutton Park on a steam excursion train in 2000 with preserved GWR pannier tank 7760 that all traces of its station had gone, but the now overgrown steep access path could still be seen in the bushes.

When we moved from Darlaston to Moxley in 1946 it brought us nearer to the old Great Western Railway line running between Wolverhampton (Low Level) and Birmingham (Snow Hill). From my parent's bedroom window I could watch green engines with brown and cream coaches dashing between gaps in the houses some quarter of a mile away in Bilston.

A local Aunt and Uncle introduced me to the old 'Great Western' on a walk up Bradely Lane, onto a path paralleling the railway that led past the site of Bradely and Moxley station (demolished in the 1930s) and on past the 'Rocket' pool. It was like a walk out into the country in those days.

Unlike the often black and dirty LMS engines and dark maroon coaches, the GWR ones looked a lot cleaner and the brown and cream coaches looked very smart. The passenger engines wore a Brunswick Green with polished brass work, polished brass nameplates and copper-capped chimneys. I have a memory of seeing 'Bullfinch' (A Bulldog 4-4-0) as well as the 'Stars' like 'Queen Maud'. Yet even at the age of five, I thought the LMS engines looked much more modern and workman-like!

The Darlaston Loop functioned on into the early 1970s. One of its regular Midland 2F engines, such as 58122 or 58277 from Bescot, could be seen busily shunting the Atlas works as I made my anxious way down to our dentist in Victoria Road in 1953. These old engines were eventually replaced by the more modern Ivatt Class '2' 2-6-0s built in quantity after 1948, such as Bescot's 46426. In turn, quite old English Electric-built diesel electric shunters with jack drives, cascaded from Crewe, such as 12004 of 1939, took over the Darlaston Loop work in the 1960s. I imagine that the later built British Railways D3000 (08) shunters carried on the work until the line closed.

The 'Loop' closed gradually. Originally built as a single line, it was doubled in 1872 as freight traffic grew and remained open as such until the late 1920s. Goods traffic decreased somewhat during the Depression and operation was reduced to a single track, with the other used for storage of spare wagons. There was some increase in traffic during World WarII, after which it gradually declined until the Beeching cuts in single-wagon freight stimulated its acceleration towards disuse. The last section in service was from Wednesbury (Town) to the Patent Shaft site until the company's closure in 1985.

Well, the 'Darlaston Loop' is only a memory now, and I regret never having taken any photographs when that line was functioning. There is still part of the cutting, used as a walkway, in the centre of Darlaston between Victoria Park and Avenue Road. Also the site of the junction at James Bridge can be seen too, as the road bridge has two arches, one for the GJR (electrified) and a disused one for the 'Loop'. Between Darlaston and Wednesbury are some remaining sections of the embankment. I guess it was those walks along the 'Darlaston Loop', which started a life-long interest in trains!

The only known 'action' shot of a train on the Darlaston Loop: D7629 brings a weed-killing train from the Darlaston direction towards the Holyhead Road bridge, Wednesbury in 1967

Photo: Roger Crombleholme -Railways of the Black Country Volume One: The Byways by Ned Williams, Uralia Press, 1984.





Darlaston Station on February 15th, 1964 looking towards Bescot. The junction with the Darlaston Loop was beyond the Walsall Road bridge. 45180 heads a train of down coal empties towards Willenhall and Wolverhampton.

Photo: Mike Page

Former LMS jackshaft drive diesel shunter 12004 arrives on the GJR route from Darlaston. Wood Green station was sited near the overbridge in the background, June 16th, 1962 .

Photo: Mike Page



GHOSTLY HAPPENINGS ON THE BRANCH



As usual on the third Thursday of the month, Richard had attended the MDRS meeting which for the last year or so had taken place in Bourne End Community Centre.

Being a Marlow resident and non-driver it was a less convenient venue for him but apart from dry summer evenings when he cycled to Bourne End, the train was his ideal choice of transport.

On the evening in question the talk had been most interesting and he had partaken of rather more liquid refreshment than usual.

The discussion around the bar had centred on the evening's speaker and how entertaining his presentation had been. All were of the opinion that he should be invited back on another occasion. Richard was offered a lift back to Marlow but without looking at his watch he declined the friendly gesture.

However, when he got to Bourne End Station he discovered that he had missed the last train to Marlow and what's more the return service to Maidenhead had also gone for it was now nearly half past midnight.

How had the time passed so quickly? He wished that he had accepted the lift after all. What was he to do now? Well he wasn't going to kip out on the station bench that was for sure.

No, he would walk to Marlow. It was a fine moonlit night and he did have a return ticket, so why shouldn't he walk along the railway line, which was a far more direct route to his home. He set off at a reasonable pace but the excesses of the evening soon made him feel tired.

He had up to this point kept his eyes towards the ground. He did not after all want to trip on the railway sleepers or any other obstacle that might send him flying.

After about 15 minutes of walking, Richard stopped to look at his surroundings.

The first thing he noticed was that there were telegraph poles alongside the line. Surely these had disappeared 25 or more years before? Then he saw that Spade Oak Farm was in its original form and how he had remembered it from his boyhood days. Was he dreaming or was it the effects of the drink?

He continued his journey but noticed that his walking pace had now quickened. Indeed at times even increased to a run. He was now on the outskirts of Marlow and quite close to Fieldhouse Lane, but there were no industrial units visible, only fields. He spotted the old fixed distant signal which had been replaced by a white board and printed distant arm during the 1980s.

Then he heard it, a distinct whistle followed by the thunderous roar of a locomotive approaching at speed. The next thing Richard became aware of was a steam engine hurtling down on him. It was only then that he realised that he was actually standing on the railway line.

In utter horror but too late, he tried to jump out of the way, but the nearside front buffer of engine No 1445 caught him on the side of his body and he was spun clear of the track.

Richard awoke to the sound of a diesel horn. It was still dark as the Class 165 DMU trundled past him on its way to Marlow, the first train of the day.

He looked at himself, his clothes torn and his hands and legs cut and bleeding, but apparently no bones broken. He discovered that he was tangled amongst a large clump of brambles and just trying to extricate himself caused further pain and bleeding as the cruel thorns dug into his flesh.

Once free it was a short but painful few yards to the road crossing. He was relieved that it was still very dark as he dreaded what anyone seeing him would think of his appearance.

On reflection he decided not to continue along the railway line, short as the distance was, but went round the back road passing the Rugby Club then onto his home. On entering the hall of his house he passed a mirror. Looking into it he noticed that his hair had turned white and his face, even dismissing the cuts and bruises, now looked at least 10 years older.

Were the occurrences of the night before real, a spectre or just a nightmare caused by over indulgence? Whatever it was, Richard would remember that night for the rest of his life.