

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

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Kenyan Safari 1984

When the Diesels Came

45 Years Ago

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Top: D1048 Western Lady at Whitmarsh, Leamington Spa. 24 December 1962.

Photo: Mike Page. (Article page 11).

Bottom: Former LMS Prototype 1001 at Willesden MPD, 3 May 1964.

Photo: Geoff Plumb. (Article page 11).

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Rd, Bourne End at 7.45 for 8.00pm.
(Except June starts 7.30pm)

- 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.
- Thursday 17 May **A COLOUR-RAIL JOURNEY** Paul Chancellor
Ron White's successor as proprietor of Colour-Rail, Paul will be bringing us up to speed with the latest additions and changes to the catalogue and business which has now gone digital!
- Thursday 21 June **THE GOLDEN AGE OF SWINDON WORKS 1880-1924** Brian Arman
The title says it all. Brian will be taking us on an in-depth tour of the works and staff at its zenith. This is a joint meeting with the RCTS and **STARTS AT 7.30pm**.

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

I suppose the big news since the last edition has been the announcement that the Government has given the go ahead for HS2, despite the level of opposition from many quarters in the Chilterns area. From a national perspective this was really the only decision they could make, as the argument regarding the creation of more capacity on the existing lines, for more stopping passenger and especially freight trains, is a pretty overwhelming one. Personally I have been in favour for this very reason from the outset but it has been difficult at times to justify that support because the other "hat" I wear is as the Secretary of my local Environmental Society. We try to look after our local common and woods and watch out for unwanted planning in our immediate area, recently fighting the plan to build a massive sports complex on the Wycombe Air Park site. At a recent committee meeting it was pretty clear I was in a minority of one regarding HS2 and I can sympathise with those people who live very close to the projected route. Nevertheless, there has been some terrible scaremongering about the likely effects, much as there was when HS1 was built. I think the subsequent experience from that line has shown it to have been far less damaging than was feared and major scars on the landscape have healed almost completely in a relatively short time. The public seem not to know much about railways and appear to be envisaging the sort of impact, in terms of size and intrusiveness, that is the M25, whereas the railway will be narrow and the noise intermittent and brief. The first trains are not due to run until 2026, so I wonder how many of us will be around to see them anyway.

In a previous *'Donkey'* I mentioned that I had agreed to judge another society's photographic competition, despite nobody there knowing if I could take a picture or not. I had to look at around 320 images in eleven different classes, embracing slides and prints, steam and non-steam, British and foreign and come up with first second and third

in each. It was a truly daunting task and it took me many hours of viewing and re-viewing before I came up with the results. Then you have second thoughts and wonder if your initial choices were correct. In some cases, especially the prints, it was very difficult because some people produce large ones and others were just postcard size but I was trying to look at content, compositional inspiration as well as an interesting subject and technical competence. I think some of my choices were received with a little disbelief but as I told them "the judge's decision is final, even if he is an idiot". I escaped that evening and have been back since without facing a lynch mob, so my choices could not have been too bad. Like in most groups there were a small number of members who obviously make a lot of visits, go abroad, do charters and are also consummate photographers and a lot of other people who take quite competent shots but don't get such a lot of practice. Our own MDRS experience in the past was that our photographic competition was generally dominated by a handful of really enthusiastic people who always won and that put off the others from entering. That's why we made the decision years ago to abandon a competition and have a members' photographic evening instead, which certainly tended to get a better response. We don't seem to have had one for some time and with the almost universal adoption of digital imagery it may be time to revive it and see what the new HD digital projector can do.

Our trip to Wolverton Works in January went very well and got the year off to a good start. There's an excellent programme of events planned for the rest of the year, so I look forward to seeing you all at evening meetings and on the visits. Meeting nights never seem long enough and although I do try to move around and talk to as many of you as I can, I feel I never speak to enough of you. Please don't feel neglected.

My very best wishes.

Tim Speechley
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SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

Once again we are pleased to welcome further new members to the Society. Robin Holdway and Nigel Hunt both of whom come from Maidenhead (Nigel is a former chairman of the MMPA) and Roger Woodham from Reading who re-joins the Society after a gap of around two decades - welcome back!

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Once again our Christmas social was an enjoyable gathering which this year was not in danger of being cut short by the weather. John Fowler was given the task of creating the quiz and a fiendish one it turned out to be! Thanks to John and all who helped on the night.

Geoff Warren gave us an excellent evening on the railways of Kenya in January which prompted Tony Keen to dig out his memories of a trip - see page 8.

The AGM was conducted with record speed in February which gave plenty of time for Mark Hopwood to entertain us with his passion for railways and many stories of his meteoric career to date. The audience of forty members and nine guests was the largest ever for a regular meeting.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription renewals have been rolling in at a brisk rate and thank you for your continuing support. For those of you who haven't got around to it so far hopefully this is only an oversight and you won't let your membership lapse.

MARK HOPWOOD BECOMES VP

Mark Hopwood was made a Vice-President of the Society ahead of his talk at the February meeting. Mark has been a member since his teens and was our first junior member and is still the third youngest.

Making the railways his career he has risen to the top and is currently Managing Director of First Great Western. Despite his busy schedule he's always found time to organise special behind-the-scenes visits for the Society for which we are most grateful.

The presentation was made by Chairman Tim Speechley and Mark revealed that he'd recently been made a Fellow of the Institute of Railway Operators who then asked for an additional £50 - what would Mr Robins ask for?!



NORMAN ASTON-SMITH TROPHY

The winner this year by a considerable margin was Mike Page for his story recounting the last days of GW steam at Oxford during his student days in the 1960's. Mike couldn't get to the February meeting so we hope to make the presentation in March.

The Eddie Lewcock cup was once again awarded to Mike Walker for services to the Society with the presentation being made by Mark Hopwood in his new capacity of Vice-President.

UPCOMING VISITS

Following on from the very successful visit to Wolverton and the MK Museum, we plan to have a number of other interesting outings for members this year.

Whilst no dates are yet confirmed we are working on a return visit to the new FGW Simulator at Reading, when invited, plus trying another simulator at Basingstoke.

A change of topic for the summer is when we call on a private Steam Traction Collection at Horsham including a steam bus!. A chance to drive an engine could arise so a date is eagerly awaited for this.

Then, subject to progress at Fifield, we plan to make a return evening visit here later in the year. It may be the Finnish but its not the end!

A favourite trip for members, almost becoming an annual event, is to the Statfold Barn Railway near Tamworth. We hope to get an invite to the September meeting. Details to come later.

Something that has been suggested before is a weekend visit to North Wales particularly to ride and photograph the Welsh Highland Railway. There are several other railways one can include both in the area and en route. This will involve car sharing, booking accommodation and probably pre-booking train tickets. Some planning to be done for this – anyone like to take it on?

RCTS MAIDENHEAD

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

Monday 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 on page 2.

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

Mark Hopwood receives his Vice-Presidential certificate from Tim Speechley.

*Photo: Tim Edmonds
The Marlow Donkey*

LOCAL STEAM

There are only two steam specials booked on the GWML out of London for the next few months.

Sunday 29th April sees the last leg of this year's *Great Britain* run into Paddington.

Sunday 3rd June 6201 Solihull - Kensington Olympia return.

A number of other trips via Reading and to Windsor (SR) will be listed in the e-newsletters as times are available.

PROGRESS AT READING



The rebuilding work at Reading is proceeding at an impressive pace with the scene changing almost daily. By mid-January work was well advanced [Above] on the site for the new island platforms where the Panel once stood.

The old platform 9, now 10, was widened [Right] over the Christmas break to allow work to continue.

In the coming months the new transfer deck will be constructed at the west end and pushed out across the tracks and existing platforms.

The new station is now due for completion at Easter 2013 - a full year ahead of schedule!

Two photos: Mike Walker



BOURNE END STALWART TO RETIRE

Bernie Wheeler the long-serving and much respected booking clerk at Bourne End is to retire during the summer. It will be hard to imagine Bourne End station without Bernie's towering presence and cheery greeting for all. He always makes sure his passengers know what's going on and is always willing to go the extra mile to help.

FGW and the MMPA are planning a suitable send-off but that might be hard to arrange as Bernie is notoriously shy of accepting any form of recognition for just doing his job.

SOCIETY VISIT TO WOLVERTON AND MILTON KEYNES

Tim Speechley



Saturday 21 January saw 23 MDRS and RCTS members and a few guests assemble at the main entrance to Wolverton Railway works just north of Milton Keynes. We squeezed into the entrance lobby to have a quick briefing from David Hilliard, our guide today, and for the issue of hi-visibility vests. Within the lobby is a large plaque that serves well to give the varied history of the works.

Opened in 1838 by the London and Birmingham Railway it is probably the oldest railway works in the world still in use for its original purpose. Apparently the L&B wanted to have its works at Northampton but Northampton did not want the L&B and so it was established here and has had a long history of service to a lengthy list of operators. The LNWR took over in 1846, the LMS in 1923 with the Grouping, BR in 1948 upon Nationalisation, BREL (BR Engineering Ltd) in 1969, BRML (M for Maintenance) in 1987, Wolverton Rail Maintenance Ltd in 1994 and finally Railcare, the current owners in 1995. As noted on the plaque, Her Majesty the Queen has been there three times, in 1948 before her accession (intriguingly described as the Duchess of Edinburgh), in 1966 and lastly in 1976 to inspect newly built vehicles for the Royal Train, with which Wolverton has been associated for as long as there has been such a thing.

In the past the works grew to employ several thousand people but today there are only 250 full time employees and a further 150 contractors. The work nowadays is principally upgrading of existing stock, refurbishment and accident repairs. A lot of the works is no longer in railway use but what is left still covers 37 acres. It is a long linear site, running east-west, with buildings either side of central access lines which have perpendicular traversers to give access to the various buildings, several of which date from the 1850's, 60's and 70's. Rolling stock reaches the works from the current main line by using a section of the original L&B main line that acts as a headshunt from which stock can be reversed in.

In the first building we visited there was a very badly damaged South West Trains unit that had had a cement mixer crash through a bridge and land on it. Unfortunately we were not allowed to photograph "customer's" vehicles due to the sensitivity surrounding damaged ones and a desire for secrecy in relation to new liveries etc. It was a shame but we understood fully. In the next building was an Arriva Trains Wales 175 unit with the front end stoved in. This had hit a lorry or tractor trailer loaded with hay bales on a crossing. Quite a lot of hay was still stuck in the dam-

A general view of part of the works looking west [Above] with Railcare's own 08629 Bradwell.

The party gathers for a group photograph [Right] before starting the tour.

Both photos: Tim Speechley



aged roof area but overall we were impressed by the crash resistance of the vehicle.

Alongside was something we could photograph – the replica 2-2-2 “Bloomer” type locomotive, numbered 1009 and named, aptly “Wolverton”. This had been built here and spent some years on display at Milton Keynes Central station. It had come back to the works for repainting and looked very smart in its gloss black, though will be even more impressive once lined out. Ultimately it will be going on display in Wolverton itself, possibly close to the works entrance.

From this largely storage building we moved to the main repair shop. Inside were a variety of vehicles being worked on, including classes 465, 313, 323 and 153. Some areas of the works are very busy indeed and are working 24/7. There is a sophisticated system to track personnel and the jobs they are doing, resulting in excellent efficiency. The 465 units come in principally for a repaint but the doors are also removed and they get new jumper cables and the turnround time is just 15 days. The First Capital Connect 313 units are the oldest now on the system, dating from 1976-7, whilst the London Midland 323 units are the first vehicles sent to Wolverton for refurbishment without them having to submit a tender, because the customer had been so pleased with their previous repainting work, all of which had been on time. The works is proud of its paint quality and personnel from Mercedes Benz, who are based in nearby MK, said it was the equal of that on their cars.

Elsewhere we saw a 350/2 unit that had been extensively damaged by fire, a 365/5, a 150/2 and an Anglia DVT. I also took the opportunity to take a picture of Railcare’s own minute shunter, very suitably named *Titchie*. Outside was one of their 08’s – 08629 *Bradwell* but I did not see the other 08 that I believe is based here.

Whilst in the open David pointed out that during the Second World War all the buildings had been painted to resemble terraced housing and had never been bombed. Practically all trace of this camouflage has disappeared. The works had done war work in both conflicts, building the stock for the ambulance trains and also making ammunition in the Great War and then gliders in WWII.

Moving on to a largely empty building on the north side, we were impressed by its size, around 700 feet long. This will be used for the upgrade of Heathrow Express stock in



The superb non-working replica of a LNWR ‘Bloomer’ built by the works apprentices.

Photo: Tim Speechley

readiness for the Olympics. They are to get particularly plush interiors so that, it is hoped, visitors will not notice a real difference when they move from plane to train.

From there we passed a building used to house what is left of the Royal Train, nine vehicles from the 70’s and 80’s, all built here at Wolverton. We were told that security is very tight and even the Works Managing Director is not allowed in. I was rather disappointed at not being able to see this stock but I fully understand why. As it happens, we discovered later that it was “up north” with Prince Charles being steam hauled by 70000 “*Britannia*” which the Prince renamed.

On the way to the last major building we passed unit 365526 that had been involved in the Potters Bar accident and has been at Wolverton for many years, during which time it has been cannibalised for spare parts and is unlikely ever to return to service.

Railcare’s diminutive shunter Titchie [Below Left] and the interior of the 700’ long building [Below] awaiting the arrival of the first Heathrow Express unit for refurbishment.

Both photos: Tim Speechley



The last part of the visit was to the wheel shop where they can take wheels off axles and put them back on again. Sadly we were just too late to see some wheels being removed. This involves pumping oil at 25000 psi to lubricate the interface and then pulling the wheel off. It was disappointing to hear that all the wheels and axles are now supplied from China and the wheel discs, which are referred to as “pans”, an expression I had never heard before, come in boxes of four. Another of Wolverton’s specialities is the overhaul of Voith final drive units and we were told they are one of the only places that can do this properly. They test finished units for four hours to ensure all is well with them before reuse in vehicles but the lament was that they do not get proper maintenance when in service.

Moving on, we saw an area dedicated to the overhaul of bogies and then to a storage area that is also used for training apprentices. The works collaborates with YES (Youth Employment Service) and also with local schools. In this area we also saw a number of extruded aluminium coach sides. These are very rigid and enable accident damage to be repaired very quickly.

All too soon our visit was complete and we returned to the entrance lobby where we handed over the hi-vis vests and thanked David for his time acting as a most informative guide.

Most people then travelled the relatively short distance to Milton Keynes Museum, where some much needed lunch was taken. With the inner man replete we took a tour of the exhibits, most interesting of which is one of the enormous double decker trailer coaches built for the Wolverton to Stony Stratford Tramway. This 100 seater was steam hauled and used principally for the movement of workers to and from the railway works. The tramway was the last in Britain using steam power and after many years leading a precarious existence, closed in 1926 when the staff went on strike as part of the General Strike. A very interesting video presentation of the line’s history was being shown. Elsewhere the museum has recreations of old fashioned shops and period houses along with agricultural displays. There is also quite a large exhibition of telephone equipment. Many of us spent a considerable time looking at these and the thing that struck me most was that everything was made in Great Britain, much of it quite locally. What a contrast to today. Our group of four climbed back into Julian’s Czechoslovakian car and headed home.



Voith final drives [Top], a box of wheels, or ‘pans’ as they are called locally, made in China [Above] and spare coach side extrusions [Bottom Left] were among the components awaiting use. Three photos: Tim Speechley

The only surviving item of rolling stock from the Wolverton & Stony Stratford Tramway is this 100-seat car, no.2, at the Milton Keynes Museum.

Photo: Mike Walker



Kenyan Safari 1984

Tony Keen

Following our talk at January's meeting it prompted these jottings.

It is Monday 23rd April 1984 here we are in Nairobi feeling exhausted after a tiring journey, we are now relaxing by the pool at the Panafric Hotel. This is situated at the top of the hill which leads down to the City Centre.

On our first evening we, that is Sue the children (13 and 11 years old) and me decided to walk the mile into the city centre but we're met outside the main door by a security guard with arms waving in alarm, you can't walk otherwise you may be robbed or worse, so a taxi was the order of the day. We stayed 4 days in Nairobi and took trips to Lakes Nakuru and Naivasha the former being a soda lake of moderate size in which we must have seen a hundred thousand pink flamingoes feeding on the algae which must be there in abundance to sustain the huge numbers of birds. The drive to the lakes after leaving the suburbs passing several coffee plantations was on very rough tarmac roads and indeed further into the countryside dirt tracks

only. Kenyans drive on the left as we do but driving standards then were well below ours, most of the populace rely on public transport as the vast majority could not afford to run a car.

The City Centre itself at this time appears to be quite modern but lacks Oxford Street type shops, most of them being small and tatty with much haggling accompanying any purchases.

On my visit to the Railway Museum I was approached by a well dressed local claiming to be a student after a short chat about England we were joined by three of his friends who were most insistent we went for a coffee by this time the museum was close by and I left them on the pretext I would join them after my visit (this of course I would not do). On to the museum visit which at this time appeared to be completely in the open. I believe now it has been extended with some covered sections.

Here are a selection of the locos on view at the time of my visit.



Garratt No 5918 *Mount Gelai* [Above] which was in service 1955 - 1980 and was one of a class of 34 locos built by Beyer Peacock of Manchester. These Garratts were the largest heaviest and most powerful to run on the metre gauge weighing in at 252 tons.

Above the builder's plate over the firehole is a plate showing the crew to whom the loco was allocated.

Garratt No 5505 [Right] was one of 11 in its class and saw service extensively throughout East Africa, two came into service in 1945 from Beyer Peacock and the remainder were purchased from Burma Railways in 1946-52.



Classes 29, 30 and 31 were the last steam tender engines ordered for East African Railways all 3 Classes were named after tribes of East Africa and were built by the North British Loco Works, Glasgow. The locos were used in Tanzania for long water-less stretches of line had a very large water capacity of 7,000 gallons.



No. 2921 *Masai of Kenya* [Above] is a 2-8-2 built by North British in 1955. Note that both 2921 and 3020 (left) have Giesl ejectors.



No. 3020 *Nyaturu* [Left] is a 2-8-4 built by North British in 1955 for the East African Railways (EAR) mainly for the Dodoma - Tabora line (today in Tanzania). It has since been returned to steam.

No. 301 was one a class of six 4-8-0s built by Beyer Peacock for the Tanganyika Railways and in service 1923-73. It was withdrawn from service in Western Uganda. In 1985 it appeared in the film *Out of Africa*.





No 2401 was built by the Vulcan Foundry at Newton-le-Willows, one of 62 mixed traffic locos in the class being finally all withdrawn by 1980.

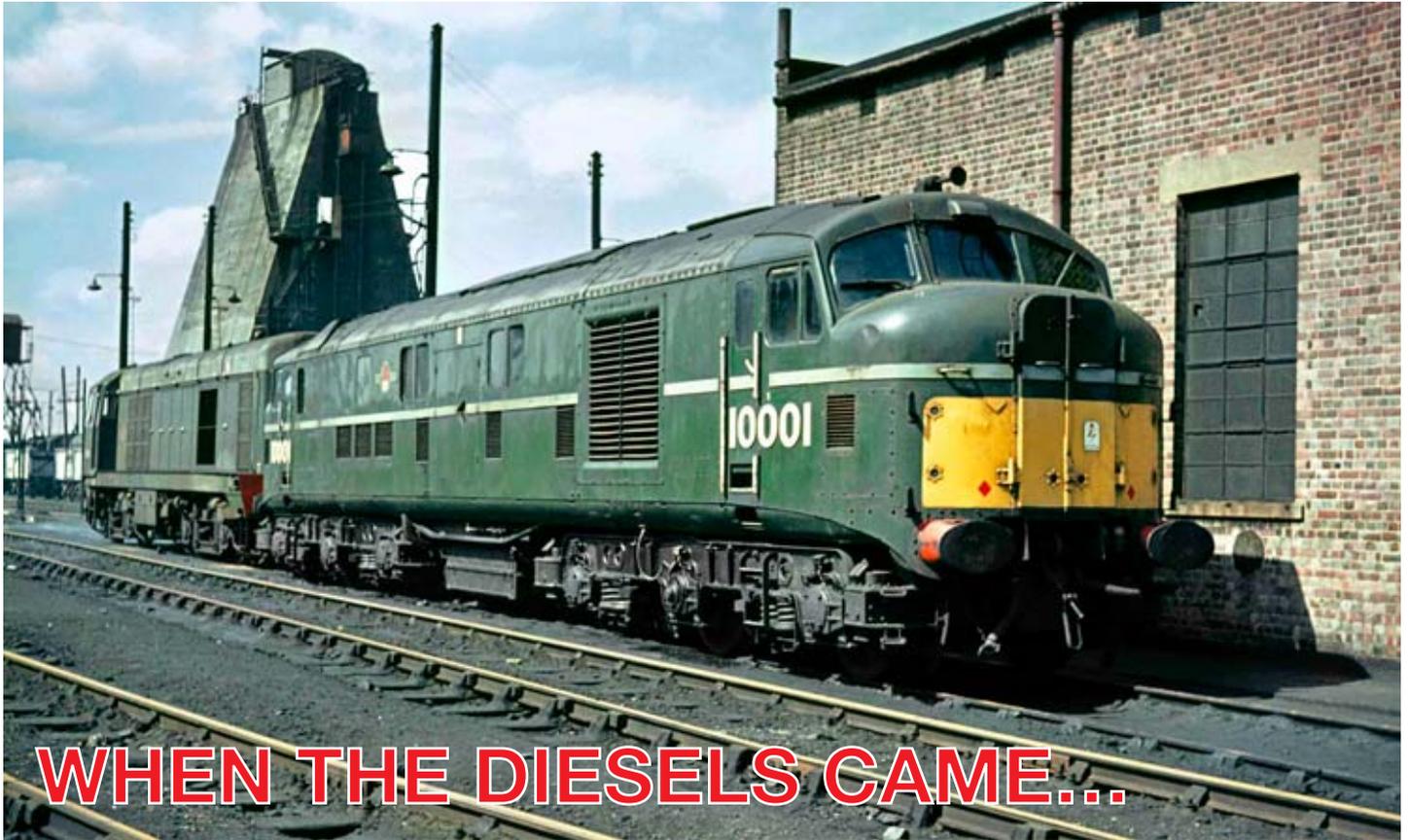
No.1315 was a North British-built 4-8-4T which was rebuilt from a 4-8-2 tender loco. Unfortunately it was scrapped in 1992 to provide a stationary boiler for tankcar cleaning!



After a most enjoyable hour or so inspecting and photographing loco and rolling stock etc. I left the museum to walk back to our hotel, unfortunately took a wrong turn and lost my way, after about a mile I finally twigged and did an about turn. On arriving back at my starting point was asked for assistance by locals to push start their broken down truck even ten of us couldn't budge it and so I bade them farewell. In the group was my first sighting of a Masai tribe member complete with bones through his

ears. After staying in Nairobi a couple of more days we then departed from the city on into the countryside and started our safari proper. Seeing large numbers of wild animals and also more Masai people in their natural environment.

Since my visit Garratt No 5918 and Class 30 No 3020 have been renovated and returned to steam with I believe No 3020 still active.



WHEN THE DIESELS CAME...

It was with a very mixed reaction that I watched the first main line diesels and DMUs arrive in the West Midlands. I must confess that I grew to hate them as they ousted our beloved steam locomotives, writes MIKE PAGE.

At school in the West Midlands, in 1955, we had read in *Trains Illustrated* that the two 'pioneer' LMS diesels, 10000 and 10001, had been transferred from the Southern Region to the West Coast Main Line (WCML). Most of us 'spotters' at the '12+/13+' County Commercial Secondary School (CCSS), Wood Green, Wednesbury, were curious to see them. I guess that the 'twins' were not regarded by most as presenting any real threat to our beloved 'Duchess' Pacifics on the WCML. Nor had the West Midlands yet seen any of the new British Railways (BR) 'light-weight' diesel railcars.

Indeed as far as diesels were concerned, most West Midlands 'spotters', like me, had only seen the likes of 12091 and 12092 shunting in Bescot yards, 13004/25-29 around Tyseley and Bordesley yards or 12039-44 at

The second of the two LMS prototype Co-Co Diesel Electrics built in 1947-48 by English Electric, No. 10001, sits on shed at Willesden Junction MPD (1A), together with an English Electric Type 1 Bo-Bo (later Class 20) on Sunday 3rd May 1964.

Photo: Geoff Plumb

Saltley. There was a sprinkling of ex-GWR diesel railcars working off-peak services between Birmingham (Snow Hill), Dudley and Stourbridge, such as Worcester's W5-7, 27 and 32W or Stourbridge Junction's W8,14 and 29W.

Watching the procession of ex-GWR steam power on the Birmingham (SH) to Wolverhampton (Low Level) line at Bradley Lane, Bilston (about a quarter of a mile from my home at Moxley) in 1952/53, often in the hope of seeing a new 'Britannia' (such as 70017 *Arrow*, 70018 *Flying Dutchman*, 70020 *Mercury* or 70023 *Venus* from 81A Old Oak Common) one of the ex-GWR parcels railcars, usually Southall (81C)'s W17W, would regularly come shuffling by often towing a GUV or a 'Siphon'.

The CCSS' spotters had introduced me to the wonders of

Recently transferred to the Midland Region WCML from the Southern Region, 10203 heads the 9am London (Euston) – Wolverhampton away from Bescot along the old Grand Junction Railway route past Pleck Park in mid-July, 1956. The photographer is standing where the M6 viaduct is today. The buildings in the left background are near the site of Walsall's and Wednesbury's first railway station, the GJR's Bescot Bridge, which was opened in 1837 and closed 1850 following the building of Bescot station in 1847.

Photo: Mr. Simpson, CCSS, Mike Page collection.



Bescot by joining the cross-country runs instead of punishing oneself in the Gymnasium or on the football field. The morning run took us down to the old cast-iron bridges at Bescot crossing the former Grand Junction line to Wolverhampton and the South Staffordshire Railway lines to Dudley and Walsall, which became part of the London & North Western Railway in 1847 and the London Midland & Scottish Railway in 1923.

At the bridges, we would wait for the morning Birmingham-Glasgow (often a Crewe 'running in' turn for repaired or new express engines so had great 'cop' potential), a Birmingham – Liverpool/Manchester (often a Liverpool Edge Hill 'Black Five' with a Manchester Longsight 'Compound' 4-4-0 or Fowler 2-6-4T as pilot) and a Euston – Wolverhampton, with a Camden 'Jubilee' or '7P', which unusually stopped at Bescot.

One morning in early 1955, the Euston-Wolverhampton (we called it the 'London') produced 10001! This machine made an impressive noise starting up, somewhat similar to, but a bit louder than a '37'. There is an Argo EP record D for Diesels on which you can hear both LMS diesels working the northbound 'Royal Scot' on the climb to Shap Summit.

Not many weeks later, 10000 appeared on the 'London'. And, from our 'maths room' one could hear it or its sister starting up from Bescot even though we were about half-mile away from the station!

Well, it wasn't long before an afternoon at Stafford or Lichfield Trent Valley saw the 'Twins' roar by on the 'Royal Scot'. Yes, these locos were certainly different to look at and did not offer any immediate threat. Nor did another curiosity, the British-Thompson-Houston 800HP B-B 10800 shedded at Rugby (2A). I first saw it poking its nose out of the carriage shed at Monument Lane while travelling behind a 'Royal Scot' on my first train spotting trip to Birmingham (New Street) from Wolverhampton (High level) in late 1954.

The 10800 eventually sidled into Platform 4 at New Street with about seven or eight coaches forming an afternoon departure to Norwich via Rugby and Peterborough East where, I believed, it handed the train over to a B1, B12 or B17.



12004 was an outcast from Crewe South sent to Bescot to finish her days. The loco was built by the LMS using English Electric equipment back in 1939 and is seen in the down yards on June 2, 1962.

photo: Mike Page

In the 1950s, there used to be a very successful 'British Industries Fair' (BIF) held every year on a former airfield at Castle Bromwich on the west side of the Birmingham – Derby main line. It was in May (I think) 1956 that a set of early Metro-Cammell '101' diesel units (three sets of two-car units coupled) formed a regular shuttle service from New Street to Castle Bromwich during the event. These were, if my old notebook is correct: E79063/79279+E79061/79277+E79062/79278. Apart from showing BIF visitors a 'new era' of train travel the shuttles were also a good advertisement for Metropolitan-Cammell's Saltley/Washwood Heath works, which we passed on the way to Castle Bromwich. We as youngsters had to try out these things and the good old CCSS had got us tickets to visit the BIF as well.

The Derby 'lightweights' began to appear on the locals running between New Street and Walsall, Lichfield and Leicester in early 1956. BR then announced the dieselisation of services between Lichfield and Birmingham. One of my 'non-spotter' friends said he wanted to sample the new diesel service so on Saturday March 17, 1956 I met John on Walsall station to go to new Street.

Creeping towards us from the carriage sheds was a spotless B1 carrying white headcode discs. It was Parkston's (30F)

Metro-Cammell Type 101 DMU heads away from Darlaston James Bridge on May 28, 1961 towards Wolverhampton (High Level) with a shuttle service from Walsall.

photo: Mike Page





Two Park Royal (103) two-car units approach Bescot running past the local sewage works on April 14, 1962 on a Rugeley Trent Valley – Walsall – Bescot service.

photo: Mike Page

a Derby-built three-car unit (later 116) on crew-training trials running past Bradley Lane, Bilston in May. Suddenly, that summer, practically all the local trains between Wellington, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Leamington Spa became 116 DMUs! Equally horrifying was the appearance of 'Cross Country' DMUs (Type 120) on the Birmingham (Snow Hill) to Cardiff and Swansea services. These DMUs lost us the chance of seeing Cardiff 'Britannias' and Landore 'Castles'! I'm afraid the 'diesel hate' was growing!

By 1959, most of the local passenger and commuter services in the West Midlands were in the hands of DMUs, but virtually all freight and long-distance passenger trains were still steam-hauled. More diesel locomotives had been slipping onto the scene as by then, all three ex-Southern Bulleid/English Electric 1C-C1s, 10201/2/3, were appearing on the 'London' at Bescot as well as operating on some WCML trains.

To me, a 'bad day' for the 'Royal Scot' at Stafford was 10000+10001 on the up train and 10201+10202 or just 10203 on the down. I did see too the English Electric prototype 'Deltic' at Stafford in 1957: now that locomotive looked racy, very American and sounded impressive. You could not fail to feel somewhat awed as it accelerated the 16-coach "The Merseyside Express" northbound on the through tracks. Some of us were sad that the production 'Deltics' had lost the flashiness of the prototype.

It was with some dismay in mid-1959 that the D200ers (Type 40) began 'moving in' on the WCML scene. Also the first batch of 20 D5000s (Type 24), which had begun life at 73C Hither Green, were suddenly in charge of Birmingham-Manchester/Liverpool trains. The first batch of D8000ers (Type 20) had also made their debut at 1D Devons Road. My first sight of them was at Tamworth. On a return Monday trip from Grantham to watch A4s during the Summer holidays in 1958, I found that I had misread the timetable concerning the last connection from Derby to Burton-on-Trent to connect with a train to Walsall. The 8.50pm was 'MX' (Mondays Excepted)! The next train to

61227! I looked at John in disbelief. We joined our train headed by a Stanier 2-6-4T and there in the carriage sidings stood another spotless 30F B1, 61384, just being uncoupled from a rake of Gresley coaches!

We arrived in New Street and joined the first 'Derby Lightweight' set heading for Lichfield. Yes, it rode smoothly, acceleration was impressive and sitting behind the driver was certainly good for train spotting! On our return and chatting to a few New Street spotters at the south end of Platform 6 I found them all excited about having seen 'the B17'. The B17??

It appeared that 30A Stratford's 61663 *Everton* had appeared shortly after we had left for Lichfield. She had hauled the third of three excursions (two of which we had seen at Walsall) bringing Tottenham Hotspur supporters from Tottenham via Victoria Park and Willesden for the F.A. Cup semi-final to be played against Birmingham City. My first DMU ride had cost me the sight of seeing a B17! Maybe that engendered an early mild hate of DMUs!

By March 1957, the ex-GWR Birmingham-Wolverhampton line had still not seen any regular DMU services. An oddity though had been the appearance of a prototype three-car DMU of two-axle stock by BUT in August 1953. It appeared on the 7.10pm from Snow Hill and returned on the 8.00pm back from Wolverhampton. Three of us 11-year-olds rode on the blue/grey BUT interloper from Priestfield Inc. To Wolverhampton and back one evening. It was a novel, if rather a bouncy experience!

In mid-1957, the real 'writing on the wall' for our local ex-GW 41XX and 51XX 2-6-2Ts appeared in the form of

During engineering work on the Trent Valley section of the WCML, trains were diverted via Coventry, Stechford, Bescot and Bushbury to Stafford. On Sunday January 15, 1961, D5 Cross Fell passes Bescot station with a Euston – Blackpool train

photo: Mike Page





The prototype 'Deltic' rounds the Queensville Curve onto the WCML Trent Valley route south of Stafford with a Liverpool-Euston train some time in 1956.

Photographer unknown; Mike Page collection.

Birmingham wasn't until 2 in the morning, but I found a local to Tamworth, so spent some four hours there watching a wide range of WCML power on night freights, including D8000+D8001.

In retrospect, the dieselisation of West Midlands lines was quite gradual. The arrival of the 'Western' diesel hydraulics caused very real mixed feelings for me in 1962. I was taking a girlfriend into Birmingham from Wolverhampton (Low Level) to find not a 'King' waiting on the 11.35am to Paddington but maroon D1001 Western Pathfinder. She was very impressed (we had no more dates, particularly when I discovered she was only fifteen!).

Monday September 10 1962 found all the Paddington expresses dieselised leaving freight, Oxford semi-fasts, the re-routed 'Pines Express', parcels and holiday 'extras' in charge of the remaining ex-GWR power.

The situation on the ex-LMS lines at the start of 1963 was similar, except there was no wholesale dieselisation of the expresses. The Type 40s had control of the Birmingham-Glasgow-Edinburghs, and some of the Liverpool and Manchester trains, along with Class 24s. Gloucester Carriage & Wagon, Birmingham Carriage & Wagon and Park Royal DMUs operated the Birmingham-Manchester trains via Stoke-on-Trent.

The Derby/Sulzer Class 45s had begun to appear on Midland lines in 1961. I got my first ride with a Type 45 'Peak' on my return from the Derby Open Day to new Street on August 26, 1961 when D87 appeared on a Newcastle-Bristol. Acceleration was very impressive when compared with a 'Jubilee'. The Bristol trains were about 40% diesel by that time.

As the frosts of the 1962/1963 winter begin to bite, the crew of D1048 Western Lady are cosy in their cab as the 'Western' accelerates past Whitnash, Leamington Spa towards Harbury with the 11.35am Wolverhampton - Paddington on December 24, 1962

photo: Mike Page



I would say it was 1964 before the diesels began to make real inroads on freight and parcels. Even so, the transition still appeared to be gradual. Before the time some of the 25kVAC WCML routes were 'switched on' in the Midlands in 1966/67, Bescot (3A) had been reduced to a dozen or so steam locos for local freight work, Oxley (2B), Tyseley (84E) and Banbury (84C) had closed and Saltley was only accepting steam 'visitors' from 'up north'. One could say that full dieselisation/electrification was in place in the West Midlands before the end of 1967.

In the same way that in the 1970s and 80s we looked back nostalgically at steam operation it's odd now to think fondly of the roaring 37s and 20s and even the very stylish 'Westerns'. Even the hard-working 24s and 25s had some character, particularly when they idled offbeat, often sounding like a tired old tractor or canal barge!

I never thought the 47s were particularly attractive. I remember being almost shocked when I went with my landlady in October 1963 to see her daughter off at Wellington (Salop) station when she actually and openly admired an incoming 47 (a green-liveried D1715) and said "what a beautiful thing!" Some women have no taste!

Do I still hate diesels? Hard to say. A '66' is always welcome to see on freight in Cambridge as these days freight trains are very few and far between here. Would I like to see a preserved 10000? I'm not so sure, it would not be quite the same as seeing the original and would it compare with Tornado? It's all a question of individual taste!

45 Years Ago...

Tim Edmonds



As a schoolboy back in 1967, my primary mode of personal transport was the bicycle. Living in a village in rural west Cambridgeshire, my trusty bike enabled me to have a social life as well as providing a means of exploring the countryside and following my interests in church architecture, archaeology and, of course, railways. The previous year, on a trip westward to see what steam was left on the Midland main line, I had discovered several steam-worked ironstone railways in the Corby, Wellingborough and Kettering areas of Northamptonshire. Information was not as easy to come by in those days, but the publication of the Warwickshire Railway Society's booklet *Industrial Steam Locomotives of Central England* in 1966 gave me vital details on what there was in the area, although month by month the situation changed as systems were closed down or dieselised. Since some lines were beyond a comfortable day's ride from home, I decided to use a short cycling tour during the Easter holidays to look farther afield. Taking in a variety of railway and non-railway places of interest, I followed a route through Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire before heading north through the ironstone belt of Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Rutland, and then home. I planned overnight stops at the Youth Hostels at Ivinghoe, Greens Norton (near Towcester) and Loddington (east of Leicester). Looking back 45 years later at the railways that I visited, I have found some interesting links with the modern preservation scene, in both locos and locations.

Easter was early in 1967, and it was on Wednesday 29th March that I set off on the first leg of my journey. The route took me through the brickfields of south Bedfordshire with their internal railway systems, including the interesting 2ft 6in gauge cable-worked line of the Marston Valley Brick Company near Lidlington. Heading towards Leighton Buzzard I passed the busy 2ft gauge systems

Motor Rail 4wPM No 7 with a loaded sand train from the pits to Leighton Buzzard on 29th March 1967.

serving the sand pits of Joseph Arnold & Sons and George Garside, parts of which are now preserved as the Leighton Buzzard Railway (initiated later in 1967). Here I photographed one of the Bedford-built Motor Rail 4wPM locos that formed the bulk of the motive power. It carried the running number 7. Intriguingly, reference to the IRS book *Industrial Locomotives of Buckinghamshire Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire* shows that all three locos known to have carried the number 7 on the Leighton Buzzard systems had been scrapped by 1961. Still, we are talking about over 100 locos here and doubtless some unrecorded renumbering and part-sharing would have occurred.

On leaving Ivinghoe the following morning I passed the nearby Castle Cement Works at Pitstone. Although its railway system had been dieselised, there were rumoured

Marston Valley Brick Company 2ft 6in cable worked railway near Lidlington also on 29th March 1967





Everything but the trains – Quainton Road station slumbers in the sunshine on 30th March 1967 [Top Left] and an interesting array of upper and lower quadrant signals at Quainton Road [Above] where the deserted box is switched out. Note the wagons in the yard.

On the same day a derelict but intact Calvert station, [Left] with plenty of brick wagons in the sidings.

to be two steam locos still on site, one of them a Sentinel. However, nothing was visible from the road and I decided not to investigate further. Passenger services had ceased on the former Great Central main line between Aylesbury and Rugby in 1966 and I was curious to see the state of this section on the next bit of my journey. Heading first for Aylesbury I followed the section of line still open to freight traffic to reach Quainton Road, where I found the station more or less intact and signalled with, surprisingly, even a few wagons in the yard. Two years later the London Railway Preservation Society chose this as their base, rebranded themselves as the Quainton Railway Society and the rest, as they say, is history.

These days we are familiar with the old clay pits at Calvert as a landfill site, destination of the ‘binliner’ trains, but in 1967 the brickworks was still operational. Looking from the road bridge the evidence of the wagons in the sidings told me that it was generating substantial rail traffic, as it was to continue to do for another ten

The loco shed at Blisworth Quarry, with Austerity 0-6-0ST No 49 and 0-4-0ST Blisworth No 1 stabled outside on 31st March 1967.



The passenger station was a typical GC London extension island platform, reached from a road overbridge. Like Quainton Road it was closed in 1963 but had survived remarkably intact. Later I passed the derelict GC stations at Fimmere and Helmdon, but unfortunately the latter part of the day was marred by steady rain.

I had chosen Greens Norton for an overnight stop because it lay just five miles from the Richard Thomas & Baldwins ironstone quarries at Blisworth. My WRS guide said that “two locos are normally in steam daily, one working from the quarry to the weighbridge and the other between the weighbridge and BR with a brake van”. The sun was years

0-4-0ST Siemens oozes steam in the cold morning air before taking a loaded ore train down to the exchange sidings at Blisworth on 31st March 1967.

trying to break through as I arrived on a cold grey Friday morning to find 0-4-0ST *Siemens* in steam with a train of loaded iron-ore tippers. The presence of a brake van in front of the loco told me that it was heading to the exchange sidings. Dating from 1909, this was one of the few locos built at Ebbw Vale and carried works number 3. It had worked at the RT&B Ebbw Vale works until 1962 when it was transferred to the company's Irthlingborough Mines, near Wellingborough; when that site was approaching closure in 1966 it was moved to Blisworth. Standing cold outside the loco shed was more modern motive power in the form of *Austerity* 0-6-0ST No 49 (HE 2032/1940) and 0-4-0ST *Blisworth No 1* (AB 2365/1955), with the fourth loco 0-4-0ST *Ettrick* (HL 3721/1928) at work in the quarry. I took only two photos on that visit and wish now that I had stayed longer and taken more, but in those days I had limited film, processing was expensive, and I had 60 more miles to cycle. Alas the quarry closed at the end of September 1967 and none of the locos has survived, although I did return to the site in 1993 to find that the loco shed and weighbridge were still intact; they have subsequently been demolished.



Peddalling north towards Leicester took me through an area containing several defunct ironstone lines. One was Pitsford, where the WRS booklet reported "the quarry system has been lifted and loco is stored out of use". In fact 0-6-0ST *Pitsford* (AE 1917/1923) had been removed for preservation as the book was being published. Sold to the Hon William McAlpine, it arrived at Fawley towards the end of 1966 and stayed until 1973. Now named *Earl Fitzwilliam* it is based at the Elsecar Heritage Railway. The WRS also noted that the three locos at nearby Lamp-ort were "stored in the shed" but they were securely locked away. The back lanes then took me past the site of the Battle of Naseby and across countryside west of Market Harborough. I passed the derelict LNWR Peterborough –

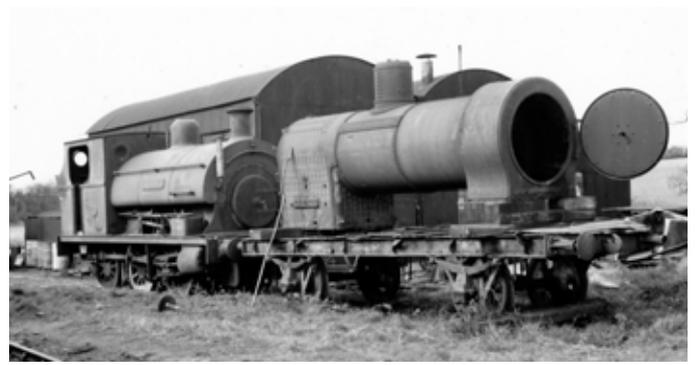
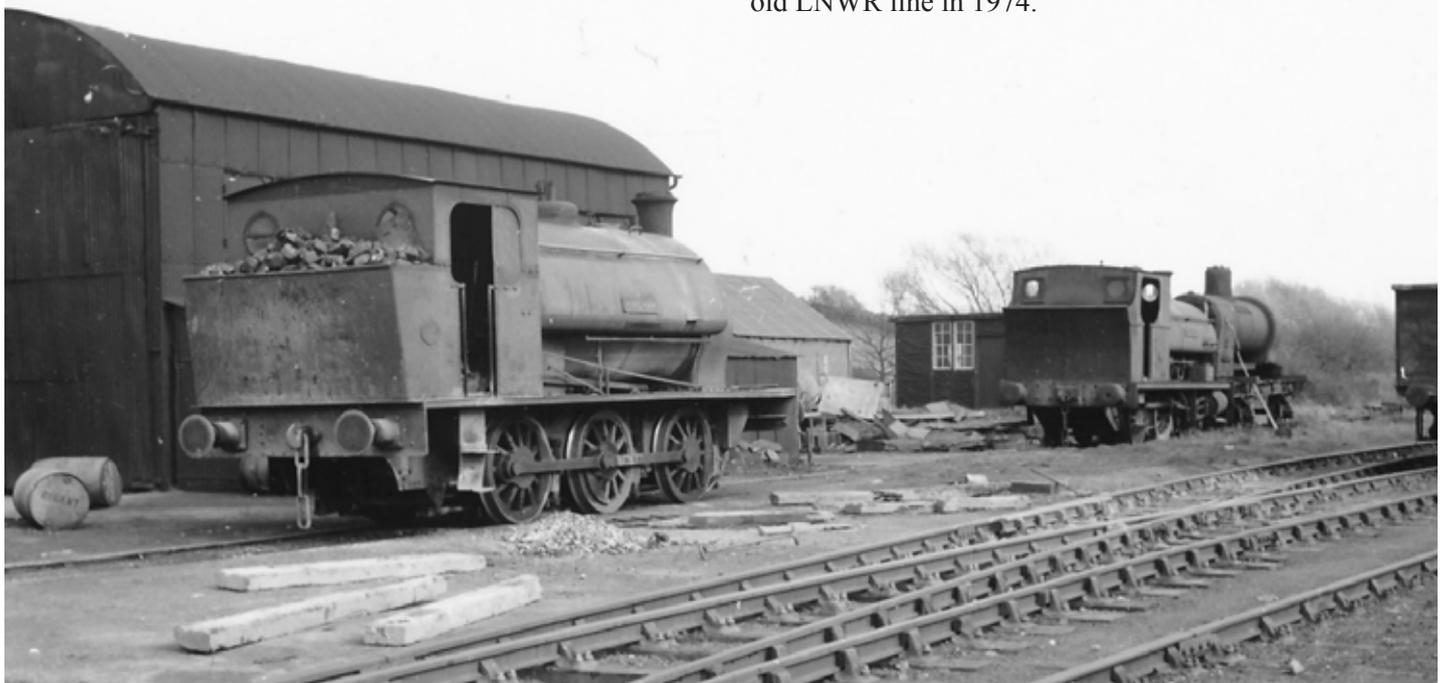
Ring Haw in the loco siding at Nassington on 1st April 1967.



Rugby line at Theddingworth, where the station and signal box survived (as they still do – now converted for residential use). With the journey punctuated by snow showers I then turned east on the outskirts of Leicester and was relieved to reach my overnight stop for warmth and food. The weather was better on the Saturday, but the downside was that it was the weekend and there would be no work at the quarries. Nevertheless, I had planned to visit three systems where the WRS booklet said there was steam at work on weekdays to see what I could find. First I headed north to the Stewarts & Lloyds system at Market Overton in Rutland, where both the locos were locked away inside the brick shed. After the quarries were closed in the early 1970s, Market Overton was the focus of an ambitious leisure centre, of which a railway preservation scheme was an integral part. In addition to being a museum for the ironstone quarries and their railways, it was to be the home for two main line locos – none other than Sir William McAlpine's *Flying Scotsman* and *Pendennis Castle* – and a shed was built to house them. The scheme fell through and was abandoned in 1975, although the new shed did provide winter quarters for the 4472 and 4079 for a couple of years. Both the brick steam shed and the new one still survive, incorporated into an industrial estate, and some of the intended exhibits can be seen in the Rutland Railway Museum that was later established in the disused quarry at nearby Colsterworth. Both the S&L locos that I failed to see at Market Overton are preserved – one of them being 0-6-0ST *Juno* (HE 3850/1958) at Quainton Road.

Pedalling south, I had my picnic lunch at another S&L steam-worked quarry – Pilton, also in Rutland – but again there were no locos visible on this attractive little system. One of its two Avonside saddle tanks was preserved and is now at Colsterworth. I was more certain of seeing something at my last quarry, that of the Nassington Barrowden Mining Company at Nassington, of which the WRS guide said that the locos “are normally left outside at weekends”. There were three locos based here, alongside the former LNWR Peterborough East – Rugby line between Kings

The loco siding at Nassington Quarry on 1st April 1967.



Buckleuch and the spare boiler at Nassington, with the workshop in the background.

Cliffe and Wansford, which had closed to passengers in 1966. I was not disappointed, and found two of the three 0-6-0STs in a siding outside the large corrugated iron workshop; there was no running shed. *Ring Haw* (HE 1982/1940) was one of two similar working locos, while outside-cylindered *Buckleuch* (P 1232/1910) was stored out of use. There was also a flat wagon carrying a spare boiler. The other working loco *Jacks Green* (HE 1953/1939) was presumably locked in the workshop. By now it was 16:30 and I still had about forty miles to cycle, but I made it home in just over four hours, including a very welcome refreshment stop for a six penn'orth bag of chips at a convenient mobile chippie I passed in the little village of Leighton Bromswold.

Postscript - 1970

Nassington has its place in history because, at its closure at the end of 1970, it was the last ironstone quarry in Britain to be worked exclusively by steam locos. I was fortunate to be able to return there on my bike in August of that year with written permission to photograph both the Hunslets in action (the Peckett had been scrapped in 1969). I was made most welcome and had a memorable day. Both the surviving locos were purchased for preservation in 1971. *Ring Haw* is on the North Norfolk Railway, while *Jacks Green* moved to Peterborough under its own steam and is now resident only a couple of miles away on the Nene Valley Railway, which took over the remaining stub of the old LNWR line in 1974.

SCOTTISH SLEEPER PASSES HIGH WYCOMBE



Following the derailment of Freightliner's 90046 at Bletchley in the early hours of Friday 3rd February the up *Caledonian Sleeper* was terminated at Crewe and later in the day the stock was moved as 5M11 to Wembley by way of the Chiltern Line behind 67017 *Arrow*.

Comprising 16 coaches and almost a 1/4 mile long it was one of the longest passenger trains to run on the line. By the time the rear was passing the station the loco had almost reached the Gordon Road Viaduct!

two photos: Mike Walker

