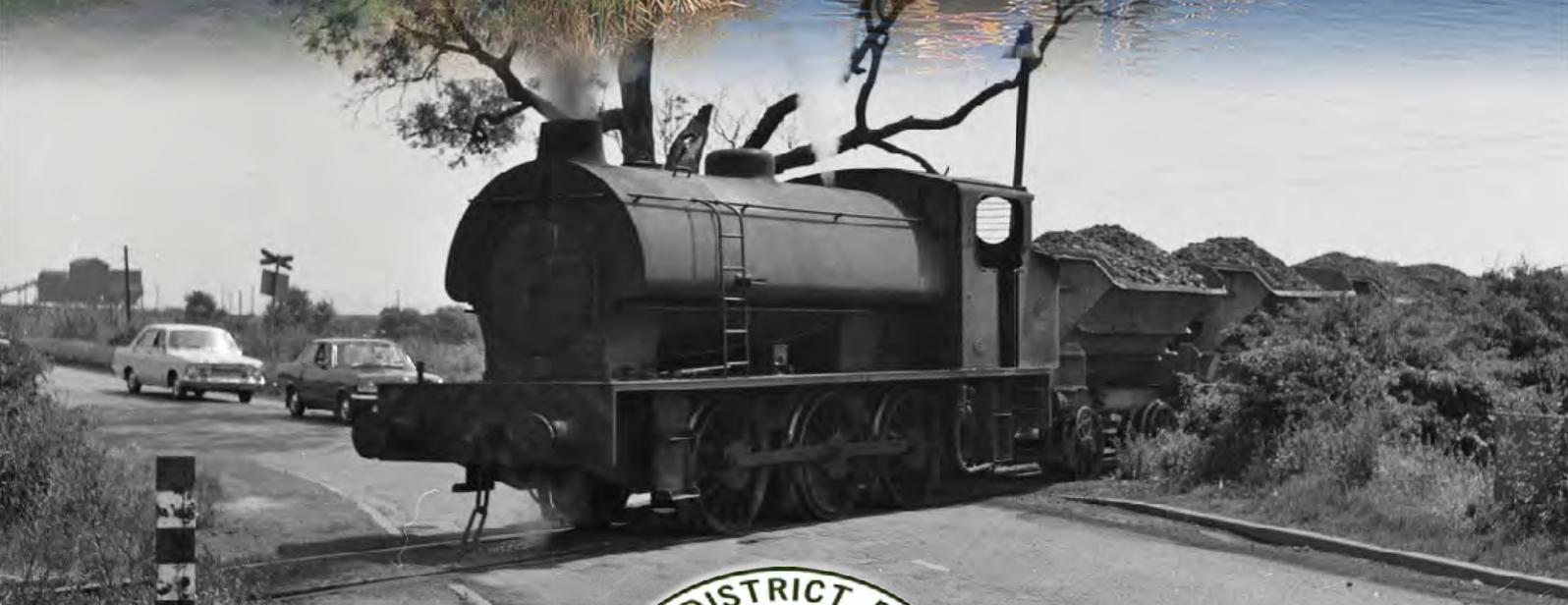


THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

164

June 2019



Contents:
The Last Days of the HSTs
A Final Trip
A Morning at Primrose Hill
Ridin' The Gunnie

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 perfect shot.

The final HST power car built, 43198 at Kintbury on the 15:03 Paddington to Plymouth - 27 February 2019.

Photo: Peter Robins. Article Page 4.

Bottom: NCB Primrose Hill S116 takes loaded hoppers over the level crossing - 15 July 1969.

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Rd, Bourne End at 7.15 for 7.30pm

Thursday 20 June **50 YEARS OF RAILWAY PHOTOGRAPHY Part 2** Dr. Les Nixon

Les returns to complete his reflections on half a century of railway photography both at home and overseas. This is our annual joint meeting with the Windsor & Maidenhead RCTS branch.

Thursday 18 July **TRAVELS WITH THE LCGB IN NORTH KOREA IN 2014 AND 2015** Colin Miell

In 2014 and 2015 The Locomotive Club of Great Britain, in association with Juche Travel, ran two very successful tours to the DPRK (North Korea). This is the illustrated story of those tours, featuring an in depth look at the current railway scene, at everyday life within North Korea, and including trams, trolleybuses, and buses - something for everyone. We were afforded an amazing level of co-operation throughout both tours, especially in respect of photography, and you will see images many people thought would not be possible within that so-called 'Hermit' state.

Thursday 19 September **THE LIFE AND WORK OF TERENCE CUNEO** Carole Cuneo

Carole Cuneo, the daughter of the late Terence Cuneo, is giving a presentation about a well known artist and his works. He was one of the most prolific and most important British artists of the 20th Century his work which include a variety of 15 major subjects. When Cuneo died in 1996 it is estimated that he produced over 9000 pieces throughout his illustrious career, including a number of works commissioned by H M the Queen.

FORTHCOMING VISIT

Saturday 7 September **STATFOLD BARN RAILWAY** by car

We are planning another visit to the Statfold Barn Railway for their Road, Rail and Ale Steam Gala. There has been much development at the site since our last visit so it's worth repeating. See page 3 for details.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

As your new Chairman albeit 'Acting', it falls to me to write a few words on behalf of the committee and myself. I cannot compete with Tim's very interesting reports so until I find my feet and your preferred style I will just do my best. I have an excellent committee working with me since you elected them at the AGM. Some are old hands (no names but in the nicest sense of the phrase) and others fresh to the local scene like Keith Gower. Next year we lose Malcolm Margetts who has ably served the society for many years and do not forget you will be looking for a Chairman as I am only a temp. There is always scope to join the committee if you want to get more involved and have something to offer. The committee meets a few times during the year with our 'Talks' sub committee meeting at other times. So step forward at any time, give me a call for a chat, and remember there will be even more vacancies in the next New Year. That's enough of the plug.

Having been around the world on railways I am not nowadays one for jumping in my car at some unearthly hour and racing off to some obscure footbridge in deepestshire. I leave that to younger, keener members with better cameras who relish the task. That is not to say I have not done it in the past or will not do again. I have a local history museum to look after in Marlow which takes plenty of time. It does mean I get to meet many other museum people including railway sites. I work regularly on the Chinnor Railway and am a subscriber to *Rail Magazine* and *Railway Herald* so try to keep up.

I was one of a party of eight from MDRS plus eight from the RCTS Maidenhead, who took part in an historical event Saturday 18th May. Well that is what the Guard/Train Manager told us at every stop. 'Farewell HST' it said on all the station departure boards. For me it was Paddington to Bristol TM return and

just to get a proper Cornish Pasty! Our President joined our train for the return to Paddington and we accordingly escorted him down Platform One around the mass of photographers. No doubt this edition of *The Donkey* will have several photographic contributions and maybe anecdotes. I still think the HST 125 is an icon for our railways, much as Concorde was to the skies. I am having a break in Scotland in July and hoping to travel up with an East coast HST. Returning by a West Coast Pendolino so no comparison.

I first joined the society years ago – a mistake as it happened, as I thought it was a film show for the Model Railway Society! But no regrets - we often had coach trips out but there is not the demand nowadays and certainly coaches are very costly to hire as I know too well from other groups. Nevertheless every year we do consider visits, such as to Epping/Ongar and to long time favourite Statfold Barn Railway. Using train/tube services or car sharing is the usual way so members can still take part if they wish. For details email Brian Hopkinson.

If you missed our most recent talk, you missed a gem. Dick Fearn in a very easy style related his railway history bringing us up to date with his involvement with the Bluebell Railway. It was his time working in Ireland that surely pleased us all with his humour and obvious enjoyment from working there. Subsequently our very own Peter Robins entertained members of the RTCS Maidenhead Branch, which regularly contains quite a number of MDRS members, with an illustrated talk on Steam in Northern China. Smashing photos but it did look very cold at times. So make a note of our meetings this year and be sure to book a seat for our series of talks starting 7.30pm at Bourne End Community Centre. All Aboard.

Mike Hyde

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

MEMBERSHIP RECORD

Whilst we haven't recruited any new members in the past couple of months the good news is that we had a 100% renewal this year probably for the first time in the Society's 42-year history and total membership is at or near an all-time high. This is even more remarkable when so many groups such as ours are struggling to retain members and survive. It proves we must be doing things right and long may it continue.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

We have enjoyed a varied Spring programme of meetings.

In March Ken Livermore looked at UK Railway Preservation over the last half-century. From its humble beginnings in the 1950's, railway preservation has become one of our national treasures. Hundreds of engines have been restored, dozens of lines have been re-opened and steam specials run on the main line every week. This presentation set out to capture the spirit of the period including main line action, preserved branches and the narrow gauge.

Paul Chancellor of Colour-Rail returned in April for an eighth trawl through his archives. This time the theme was 1959 and was made up not just from images taken that year or locomotives numbered thus but included many other images with an often convoluted or tenuous connection to the number. It was, as always, an entertaining trip back down memory lane.

In May we welcomed Dick Fearn who reviewed his career on the railways which took him from a lowly clerical position at Crewe to becoming Divisional Director for Thames & Chiltern in Network SouthEast days (where he mentored our President who was in attendance) followed by running South Eastern prior to privatisation then two very senior positions with Railtrack before spending a decade running Irish Rail - a period which he covered at length in his presentation. On "retirement" Dick has become chairman of the Bluebell Railway's operating company and now chairs the Western Advisory Board - a panel which brings together Network Rail and the train operators on the Great Western network to discuss and resolve problems and ensure efficient working.

AND OUTINGS

We had two outings during the period. The first, which had to be arranged at short notice, saw eight of us take a trip from Paddington to Bristol and back on the last day of GWR HST operation and is well covered in this issue.

Unfortunately our second, to the Epping Ongar Railway on the occasion of its annual steam gala on 8th June generated only three supporters which is extremely disappointing.

RCTS MEETINGS

The Windsor & Maidenhead branch are currently taking their summer break. Meetings resume in September.

Page 3

JOIN US AT STATFOLD BARN

We are planning another visit to the remarkable Statfold Barn Railway collection near Tamworth on Saturday 7th September when it is staging its Road, Rail and Ale Steam Gala.

Since our last visit in 2017 the railway has continued to evolve and expand so it's well worth attending again this year. If you've never been you've missed a treat. Statfold is the home to an amazing collection of narrow gauge locomotives and equipment from around the world along with (battery) electric tramway. These events also feature traction engines and displays of vintage and classic road vehicles. As the event title suggests, there will also be an opportunity to sample a wide range of craft beers.

As usual we plan to travel by car so Brian Hopkinson will be taking names of those wanting to attend at the June and July meetings. If you can't make either and wish to go please contact him by email at the address shown on page 1.

The ticketing arrangements at Statfold have changed as the event is now a public rather than private one meaning we no longer have to apply in advance. Tickets can now be purchased on the gate for £12.50 or can be pre-booked on line for £10.00. Concessions for children and families are available. For full details go to: <https://statfoldbarnrailway.co.uk/events/road-rail-ale/>.

Also, if you prefer to make your own way there another innovation is a shuttle bus which will run from Tamworth railway station to the site which, as regular attendees will know, is somewhat remote. This will be operated by Arriva with a bargain £1 return fare.



A reminder of our 2017 visit giving an idea of what can be seen at Statfold. Two double-headed trains await departure from the main terminus for a trip around the extensive field railway. *Photo: Mike Walker*

DONKEY CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Once again, this issue has left my "pending" folder somewhat depleted so once again the editor is appealing for material for forthcoming issues.

Any railway related contribution will be most welcome and can be either a photo feature or full article.

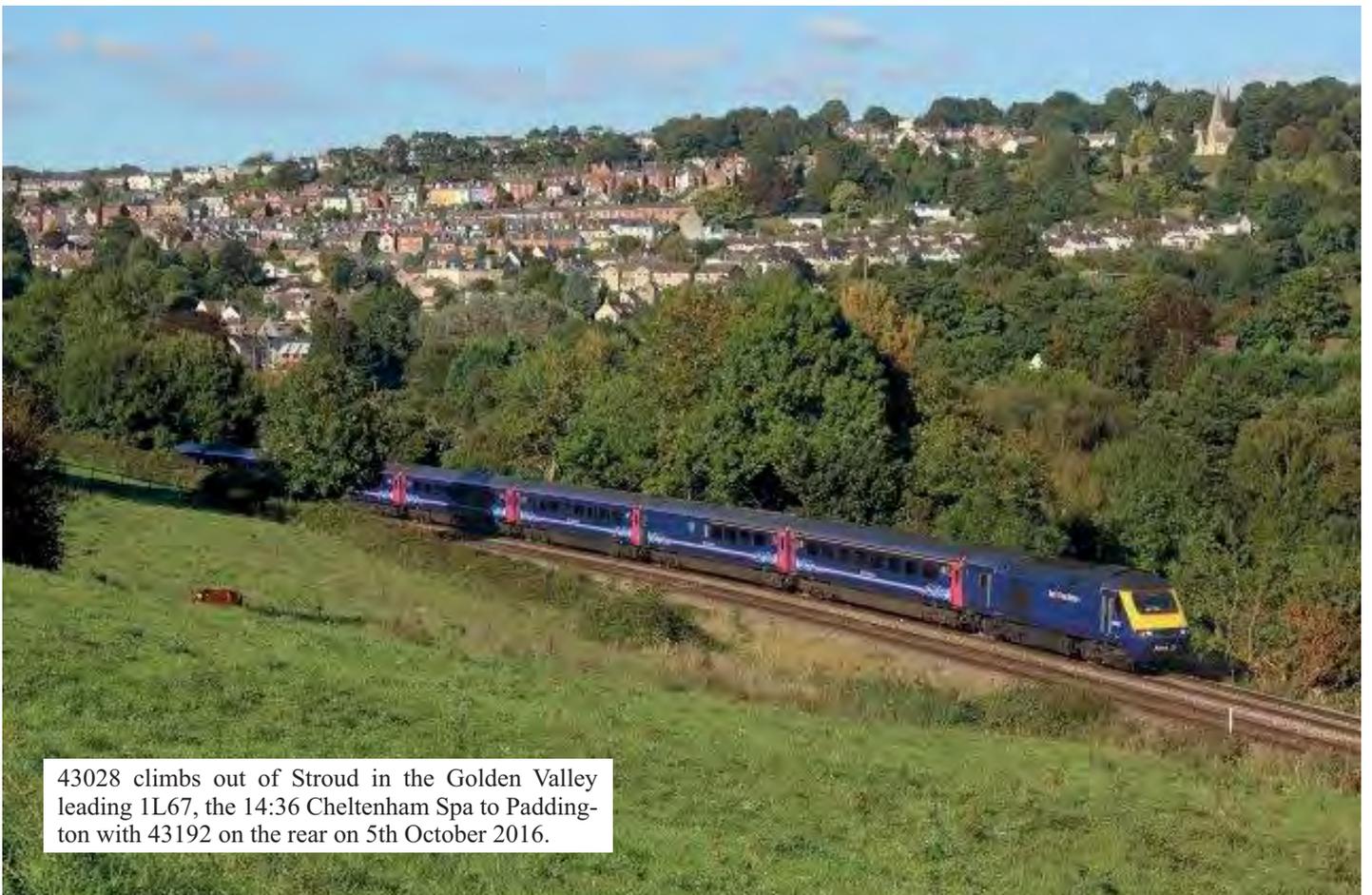
The Marlow Donkey

THE LAST DAYS OF THE HSTs



PETER ROBINS spent most of the spring chasing the final workings of the GWR high speed train fleet up to and including the last day of service, Saturday 18th May when the final four departures from Paddington lined up [Above] with from the left:

43198 on 1C29 the 18:30 to Taunton; 43009 on 1W08 the 18:22 to Hereford; 43162 on 1G60 the 18:15 to Cheltenham Spa and 43188 on 1C92 the 18:03 to Plymouth as seen from the Bishops Road bridge.



43028 climbs out of Stroud in the Golden Valley leading 1L67, the 14:36 Cheltenham Spa to Paddington with 43192 on the rear on 5th October 2016.

Great Western's 'celebrity' power cars survived through to the final day. On Wednesday 27th March the first production power car built, 43002 wearing its original livery once more and named *Sir Kenneth Grange* in honour of the man who styled these iconic units, accelerates 1A17, the 12:30 Bristol Temple Meads to Paddington through Keynsham.

Having been paired with 43198 for both the last train on the last day and to work the farewell charity special on 1st June, retirement beckons as it has been acquired by the NRM and moved to York directly after its last GWR run.



Adorned in the BR InterCity 'Swallow' livery of the late 80's and early 90's, 43185 *Great Western* heads an all blue set forming 1A12, the 07:48 Paignton - Paddington passing Parson Street in the western suburbs of Bristol on 27th March with 43162 *Exeter Panel Signal Box 21st Anniversary 2009* on the rear.

Whilst 43185 also took part in the final day's operations its future is less certain and a couple of days later it was sent to storage at Ely shorn of its nameplates and swallows.

The final power car built, 43198 then still carrying its *Oxfordshire 2007* nameplates, passes a well-positioned boat on the Kennet & Avon Canal at Kintbury as it heads 1C86, the 15:03 Paddington to Plymouth on 27th February 2019. For the last day it was renamed *Driver Stan Martin 25 June 1950 - 6 November 2004* on the left side and *Driver Brian Cooper - 15 June 1947 - 5 October 1999* on the right, who both lost their lives in the Ufton Nervet and Ladbroke Grove accidents respectively and were formerly carried by now off-lease 43139 and 43033. 43198 will be retained by GWR for use on the short "Castle" sets in the West of England.





43172 *Harry Patch* Last survivor of the trenches is captured on Brunel's magnificent bridge at Maidenhead trailing 1C74, the 09:03 Paddington to Plymouth on 2nd May. The stunning vinyl wrap was applied in November 2015 after which it acted as the GWR's war memorial locomotive but it too now faces an uncertain future.

Peter notes that he had to digitally remove graffiti from the bridge!

43185 *Great Western* again catches a pool of sunshine as it enters the curve below Langstone Rock between Dawlish and Dawlish Warren leading 1A81, the 07:41 Penzance to Paddington on 10th May with 43172 on the rear. The green buffet car breaks an otherwise all-blue set and such mis-matches were a common sight in the later days.



Conditions were just about perfect on Tuesday 14th May when 43162 *Exeter Panel Signal Box 21st Anniversary 2009* led 1A79, the 06:47 Penzance to Paddington through the same spot with 43071 bringing up the rear.

43171 passes Sprey Point (no, that is not a typo) as it approaches Teignmouth leading 1C74, the 09:03 Paddington to Plymouth with 43093 on the rear on 14th May. During the last week or two it seemed the power cars were swapped around on an almost daily basis.



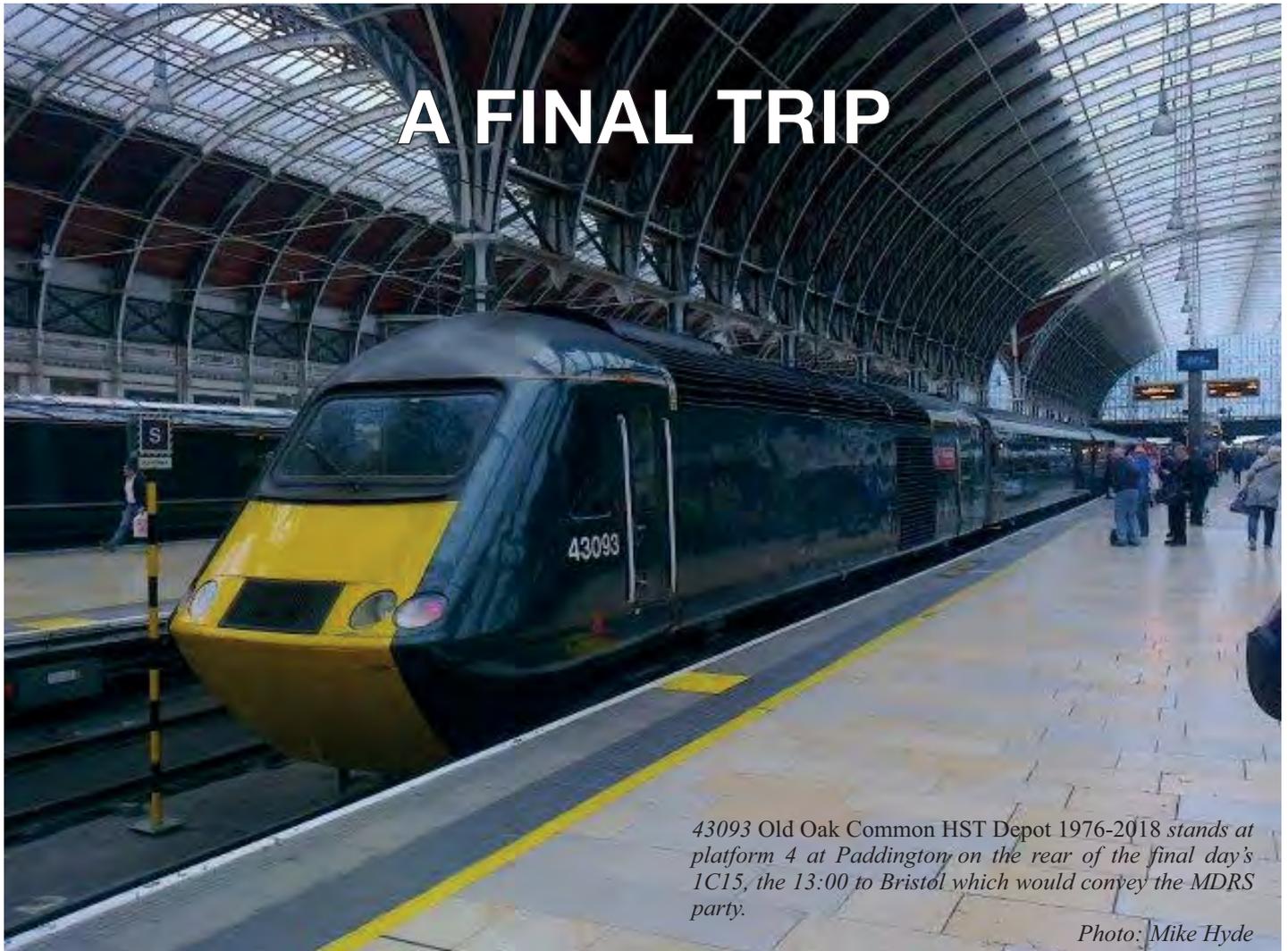
Towards the end of their GWR careers the HSTs found themselves diverted onto the old LSWR main line to Exeter whilst the GW route was closed for three weeks in February to allow works in Whiteball Tunnel on the Devon-Somerset border.

As a result, on 25th February, 43129 found itself passing Whimble as the trailing unit on 1C74, the 09:03 Paddington to Plymouth with 43187 leading.

On the last day 43188 *Geraint Thomas Flying Welshman Winner of the Tour de France 2018* leads 1C15, the 13:00 Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads through Sydney Gardens on the approach to its Bath Spa stop with 43093 *Old Oak Common HST Depot 1976-2018* out of sight on the rear. Also out of sight is the joint MDRS and RCTS party travelling in the third coach - Peter followed on the next train 1C16, also an HST, and joined us for the return trip.



A FINAL TRIP



43093 Old Oak Common HST Depot 1976-2018 stands at platform 4 at Paddington on the rear of the final day's 1C15, the 13:00 to Bristol which would convey the MDRS party.

Photo: Mike Hyde

After 43 years of faithful service during which most of us will have made many journeys, the prospect of an imminent end to HST operation out of Paddington concentrated minds. Thoughts turned to organising a final ride as a Society outing preferably on the last day of service which was set for the final day of the Winter 2018-19 timetable on Saturday 18th May.

First, we had to await the publication of the planned diagrams so we could select a suitable trip. Our President had, some weeks earlier, given us an idea of what was proposed, four sets being deployed on the last day with them all lining up at Paddington for the final departures. Finally we settled on the 13:00 Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads returning on the 15:30 from Bristol. Seven members signed up for the outward trip with an eighth, Peter Robins, joining us for the return - he'd been out and about attempting to photograph all the sets during the morning (including our outbound train at Bath) although some of us managed to do that by venturing no further than Slough! It was also good to see that John Sears had made it all the way from Northern Ireland to join the party. In addition, we were joined by eight members of the Windsor & Maidenhead branch of the RCTS.

The combined party booked as a single entity and Brian Hopkinson was therefore able to negotiate a group rate of £44.50 return which also ensured we all had reserved seats in the same coach with the exception of Dave Woodhead. As the disabled space in Standard class had already been booked on both our selected trains Dave had to slum it in First class both ways!

For the outbound trip we found ourselves in Coach C which was immaculately clean despite its imminent retirement - unlike the dreadful state Virgin allowed its loco-hauled stock to get into in their last days - and we slipped gently out of platform 4 at exactly 13:00 hours.

www.mdrs.org.uk

Over the years changes to the service patterns and infrastructure have actually slowed the HSTs. Speed restrictions between Paddington and Old Oak mean departures and arrivals are slower adding a minute or two to journey times whilst additional stops have also contributed to longer journey times compared with the original Inter-City 125 timetables of 1976. Today, there are two trains per hour between Paddington and Bristol departing from both at xx:00 and xx:30 with the latter calling at Didcot Parkway so our down train sped through there at just a tad below the maximum. Chris Waite timed the trains in both directions and his logs are on the next page.

The opportunity was taken to make a last visit to the buffet car, a facility missing from the successor IETs which offer only a trolley service to both classes although Great Western's renowned silver service Pullman dining is on selected trains on the West of England and South Wales services. In both directions the buffet was doing good service - mostly in beer sales!

On each of the final day's trains a number of unused window destination labels and special 'Last Day' labels were sold for charity. These were eagerly snapped up by passengers as souvenirs with £224.50 being raised on our return train alone. These window labels are also passing into history along with the HSTs as the IETs have electronic bodyside indicators whilst an electronic seat reservation system also puts an end to the card seat-back labels.

Arrival at Bristol Temple Meads, platform 15, was spot on time allowing us to photograph the train and await the arrival of the following 13:30 from Paddington which was also formed of an HST led by 43009 which slipped into platform 13 providing a last chance to see two HSTs side-by-side at Bristol - there is no platform 14 at Bristol.

1C15 13:00 Paddington – Bristol Temple Meads

18 May 2019 43188, 43093 and 8 trailers

Miles	Location	WTT Schedule		Actual	Speed
		Arr	Dep		
0.00	PADDINGTON P4		13:00	0.00	RT
0.60	Royal Oak Sidings	pass	13:01½	1.38	RT
1.73	Ladbroke Grove	pass	13:03½	3.08	RT
3.20	Old Oak Common West	pass	13:05	4.52	69 RT
4.21	Acton Main Line	pass	13:06	5.21	RT
5.56	Ealing Broadway	pass	13:07	6.23	92 RT
7.28	Hanwell	pass	13:07½	7.30	RT
8.00	Hanwell Bridge	pass	13:08		RT
9.06	Southall	pass	13:08½	8.29	92 RT
13.17	West Drayton	pass	13:10%	10.49	117 RT
16.18	Langley	pass	13:12½	12.26	122 RT
18.36	Slough	pass	13:13½	13.28	122 RT
20.77	Burnham	pass	13:15	14.41	121 RT
22.39	Taplow	pass	13:15½	15:25	RT
24.19	Maidenhead	pass	13:16%	16.29	118 RT
31.01	Twyford	pass	13:19½	19.39	123 RT
<u>35.78</u>	<u>READING P9</u>		<u>13:25</u>		
0.00	READING P9		13:28	0.00	RT
2.54	Tilehurst	pass	13:30½	3.19	86 1L
5.45	Pangbourne	pass	13:32½	5.08	103 1L
8.62	Goring & Streatley	pass	13:34½	6.53	123 1L
12.39	Cholsey	pass	13:37	8.43	123 RT
15.39	Moreton Cutting	pass	13:39%	10.10	121 RT
17.12	Didcot Parkway	pass	13:40%	10.59	123 RT
20.43	Steventon	pass	13:42	12:38	125 1E
24.24	Wantage Road	pass	13:44	14.31	122 1E
28.02	Challow	pass	13:46	16.21	123 2E
36.32	Bourton	pass	13:50½	19.47	125 1E
38.50	South Marston Jct	pass	13:52	21.24	122 2E
<u>41.25</u>	<u>SWINDON P4</u>		<u>13:54</u>		<u>1E</u>
0.00	SWINDON P4		13:56	0.00	RT
5.64	Wootton Bassett Jct	pass	14:02	5.01	106 RT
10.36	Dauntsey	pass	14:04½	7.28	124 1E
<u>16.53</u>	<u>CHIPPENHAM P1</u>		<u>14:08½</u>		<u>RT</u>
0.00	CHIPPENHAM P1		14:11	0.00	RT
2.14	Thingley Junction	pass	14:14	3.06	81
11.49	Bathampton Junction	pass	14:21½	8.28	2E
<u>12.75</u>	<u>BATH SPA P1</u>		<u>14:24½</u>		<u>1E</u>
0.00	BATH SPA P1		14:27	0.00	RT
1.01	Oldfield Park	pass	14:28½	1.57	
6.72	Keynsham	pass	14:33½	5.55	91
10.55	North Somerset Jct	pass	14:36½	8.59	RT
11.40	BRISTOL T. MEADS P15		14:39	11:40	RT

1W08 18:22 Paddington – Hereford

18 May 2019 43009, 43172 and 8 trailers

Miles	Location	WTT Schedule		Actual	Speed
		Arr	Dep		
0.00	PADDINGTON P3		18:22	0.00	1L
0.60	Royal Oak Sidings	pass	18:23	1.23	1L
1.20	Westbourne Park	pass	18:23½	2.09	1L
1.73	Ladbroke Grove	pass	18:25½	3.01	1L
2.62	Old Oak Common East	pass	18:26½	4.04	62 1L
3.20	Old Oak Common West	pass	18:27	4.38	69 1L
4.21	Acton Main Line	pass	18:28	5.21	85 1L
5.56	Ealing Broadway	pass	18:29	6.19	93 1L
6.46	West Ealing	pass	18:29%	6.54	1L
7.28	Hanwell	pass	18:29½	7.22	103 1L
9.06	Southall	pass	18:30½	8.19	109 1L
10.71	Hayes & Harlington	pass	18:31½	9.18	1L
13.17	West Drayton	pass	18:33	10.25	124 1L
14.60	Iver	pass	18:33½	11.13	1L
16.18	Langley	pass	18:34½	11.57	123 1L
18.36	SLOUGH P2		18:36½	14:09	1L

1A23 15:30 Bristol Temple Meads - Paddington

18 May 2019 43093, 43188 and 8 trailers

Miles	Location	WTT Schedule		Actual	Speed
		Arr	Dep		
0.00	BRISTOL T. MEADS P15		15:30	0.00	
0.30	Bristol East Junction	pass	15:31	1.40	RT
0.65	North Somerset Jct	pass	15:32	2.22	RT
4.48	Keynsham	pass	15:35	5.38	96
10.39	Oldfield Park	pass	15:39	9.20	
<u>11.40</u>	<u>BATH SPA P2</u>		<u>15:40½</u>	<u>10.57</u>	<u>RT</u>
0.00	BATH SPA P2		15:43	0.00	RT
2.26	Bathampton Junction	pass	15:46	3.04	77 RT
10.61	Thingley Junction	pass	15:51	8.18	108 RT
<u>12.75</u>	<u>CHIPPENHAM P2</u>		<u>15:53½</u>	<u>10.08</u>	<u>RT</u>
0.00	CHIPPENHAM P2		15:56	0.00	RT
11.04	Wootton Bassett Jct	pass	16:04	8.08	93 RT
15.40	Rushey Platt	pass	16:08½	11.06	60 RT
<u>16.53</u>	<u>SWINDON P3</u>		<u>16:10</u>		<u>1E</u>
0.00	SWINDON P3		16:12	0.00	RT
2.55	South Marston Jct	pass	16:14½	3.14	84 RT
10.64	Uffington	pass	16:20	7.34	125 RT
17.01	Wantage Road	pass	16:23	10.33	123 RT
20.71	Steventon	pass	16:25½	12.27	125 1E
<u>24.13</u>	<u>DIDCOT PARKWAY P2</u>		<u>16:28½</u>	<u>15.34</u>	<u>1E</u>
0.00	DIDCOT PARKWAY P2		16:3%	0.00	RT
1.53	Moreton Cutting	pass	16:32½	1.53	57 RT
4.53	Cholsey	pass	16:35½	4.18	106 RT
8.30	Goring & Streatley	pass	16:38	6.18	120 RT
14.38	Tilehurst	pass	16:43	9.18	122 2E
<u>17.12</u>	<u>READING P10</u>		<u>16:45½</u>	<u>12.21</u>	<u>2E</u>
0.00	READING P10		16:48	0.00	RT
4.77	Twyford	pass	16:53	4.36	105 RT
11.59	Maidenhead	pass	16:56½	8.05	124 RT
15.01	Burnham	pass	16:58	9.42	122 RT
17.42	Slough	pass	16:59½	10.55	121 RT
19.60	Langley	pass	17:00½	12.00	123½ RT
21.38	Iver	pass	17:01½	12.44	124 RT
23.61	West Drayton	pass	17:02	13.25	124 RT
26.69	Southall	pass	17:04	15.28	125 RT
29.32	West Ealing	pass	17:05	16.38	119 RT
30.22	Ealing Broadway	pass	17:05½	17.06	RT
31.57	Acton Main Line	pass	17:07	17.55	signs RT
34.07	Ladbroke Grove	pass	17:09½	20.41	RT
35.18	Royal Oak	pass	17:13	23.21	1E
35.78	PADDINGTON P1		17:14	24.52	1E



43188 after arrival at Bristol with the crew for our return working, 1A23 at 15:30. Left to right: Chris Wiseman (Guards Manager Bristol), Paul Irish (Train Manager Bristol), and Brian Hellyer (Driver Bristol). They are holding one of the special Last Day window labels.

Photo: Mike Hyde

The Marlow Donkey

Our return journey on the 15:30 started on time once more and had a clear run leading to slightly early arrivals at Swindon, Didcot and Reading. The final leg was noteworthy as it was almost completely unchecked in the busiest section east of Airport Junction apart from a minor signal check after Acton Main Line. Despite this we rolled into Paddington a minute or two ahead of schedule. Whether there was any connection with our President having boarded during the journey isn't clear.

Paddington was heaving with well-wishers and celebrities from the rail industry. Our train had arrived at platform 1 and in the following 26 minutes the other three sets joined us in platforms 2 to 4 with celebrity power cars 43093, 43172, 43185 and 43002 lined up against the blocks although the crowds were such that it was impossible to get a picture including all four.

Most of our group decided it would be better to retreat to Slough and photograph the final four pass there so we boarded an IET for the 17:52 departure. Chris Waite joined the 18:22 to Hereford which was the last HST to call at Slough - having booked a seat the night before.

So at a little after ten to seven, 43188 raced through Slough at 125mph with 43002 bringing up the rear. In a flash of green, blue and yellow it was all over - HSTs on the Great Western main line had become a memory just like their steam and Diesel-hydraulic predecessors.

43093 and 43185 sit side-by-side at Bristol Temple Meads for the last time on the final day before leading the 15:30 and 16:00 departures for Paddington respectively.

Photo: Mike Walker



The final HST, IC26, the 18:30 Paddington to Taunton races through Slough bracketed by the first and last power cars, 43198 and 43002.



Photo: Tim Speechley



Photo: Mike Walker

A MORNING AT PRIMROSE HILL

Story & photography by Tim Edmonds

In July 1969 I was living in Cambridgeshire and had just finished my A-levels and left school. I had no holidays planned, just a bit of paid casual agricultural work locally while waiting for the exam results, so there was both time and money available for short trips away with railway interest in mind. My father was going to attend the annual conference of the Council for the Care of Churches in York and asked if I would like to come along. I was interested in church architecture, so the idea appealed, but I also had an eye to what railway action might be available in Yorkshire and on the journeys there and back. Going north took in an overnight B&B stop in Shropshire on Sunday 12th July, where my father needed to make a call, while the conference was in St John's College, York, where we were booked to stay three nights, returning home on the Thursday. I can't remember the format of the conference, nor how much of it we attended, but what I do know is that the Tuesday morning was spent photographing steam trains!

At that time there was still a large coal industry in Yorkshire and many collieries had steam locos in regular or standby use, with Austerity IC 0-6-0STs the commonest active steam power. It was an ever-changing picture because, as pits were dieselised or closed, the best places for steam action could change almost week by week. In those days security was relatively relaxed, and at many collieries it was possible just to turn up and ask for access to the loco sheds and yards to take photos. Some pits had only shunting work, but there were several with line working where photography was possible from public roads or fields. With the aid of the recently-published Warwickshire Railway Society booklet on Industrial Steam Locomotives of Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cheshire, which showed the loco situation up to April 1969, I identified some likely targets. One was Primrose



NCB Austerity S115 (HE 3180/1944) heads out of the Primrose Hill Colliery yard with a loaded train on 15th July 1969.



The afternoon sun picks out NCB 0-6-0T No.2 (HC 1857/1952) dumped in the shed at North Gawber Colliery on 14th July 1969.

Hill Colliery, which had three serviceable Hunslet 0-6-0STs, two Austerities and one built in 1935, with two locos used each day. The OS map showed that this was at the end of an industrial railway which included a road level-crossing and a closed mine, with branches serving both main line exchange sidings and staithes on Aire & Calder Navigation. It was also close to the Opencast Executive's Bowers Row Disposal Point, which had its own Austerity in action six days a week. It looked promising.

On the way from Shropshire there was time to drop in at North Gawber Colliery, just north of Barnsley. The WRS showed six steam locos here, three Hunslet Austerities, two Hudswell Clarke OC 0-6-0Ts and a Barclay 0-4-0ST, but only two of the Austerities were serviceable with one working and one spare. The loco shed and yard were close to the road and accessible and there I found the dumped locos and spare engine. In the shed was No 2 (HC 1857/1952) which at the time of writing is under restoration at Williton on the West Somerset Railway and due to be steamed in 2019. The working loco was *Monckton No 1* (HE 3788/1953) but it was nowhere to be seen and presumably active elsewhere on the system. It has survived to be preserved at Embay.

On Tuesday we headed for Primrose Hill which, despite its name, was on the edge of an industrial wasteland just south of the village of Swillington. It turned out to be a good choice because it had recently acquired two additional steam locos and three, rather than the expected two, locos were in steam. Two of these were the new arrivals – Austerity S115 (HE 3180/1944) had recently been transferred from the closed Waterloo Main Colliery and IC 0-6-0ST *Astley* (HE3509/1947) had returned

The Marlow Donkey

S116 on shed at Primrose Hill – note the NCB mineral and tippler wagons in the background. 15th July 1969.

from Allerton Bywater Workshops after overhaul. The other active loco was Austerity S116 (HE 3836/1955). There was no problem gaining access to the colliery yard where S115 was brewing-up at the head of a loaded train. Cold in the shed, but looking steamable, was IC 0-6-0ST *Jubilee* (HE 1725/1935) while Austerity S134 (HE 3168/1944) was out of use in the yard. A notable feature was the fascinating selection of wagons in use, including tipplers and internals as well as the standard BR mineral wagons, presumably because coal could be taken either to the main line exchange sidings or to the staithes.

Shortly S116 arrived with a train of empty tipplers and S115 departed with its loaded mineral wagons. This pair seemed to work the trains along the line as I didn't see *Astley* do anything other than come into the shed yard for coaling (by hand) so it may have been confined to shunting the yard. After watching S116 come on shed while the crew had a break, we took the opportunity to head out to the level crossing, during which time S115 must have returned to the colliery with empties. Before too long we were rewarded with the sight of S116 passing with loaded tipplers, followed shortly by S115 with NCB mineral wagons. In view of the high level of activity at Primrose Hill it is surprising that the colliery closed in March 1970. S115 went to Wheldale Colliery and survived into preservation – it was on the North York Moors Railway for many years and is now on a private site in Kent. S134 is preserved at Embsay.

Before heading back to York for the conference we looked in at the Bowers Row Disposal Point where, once again, access to the site and the loco shed was allowed. Here Austerity No 4 (RSH



7164/1944) was shunting when we arrived, then came on shed to take water before resuming work.

We planned to head straight home on Thursday via the A1 but made a brief stop at Ferrybridge when we saw a steam loco outside the shed at the coal-fired Power Stations (three of them – A, B and C) across the River Aire. The WRS book noted that there were two 0-4-0STs here in full working order, but that they “are now seldom used as the majority of the coal comes in by barge”. The one we could see was clearly a Barclay, so must have been *Ferrybridge No 3* (AB 2360/1954). Presumably RSH 7795/1954 was in the shed. The evidence of water-borne coal was there in the coal barges along the river next to the power station.

Today it is hard to imagine the coal-based industries of this part of the world. From a post-war peak of 137 collieries in Yorkshire the last two closed in 2015, and the following year Ferrybridge C closed, the last of the coal-fired Ferrybridge Power Stations, having been replaced by a multi-fuel plant burning biomass.



Primrose Hill loco shed, with S116 showing evidence of collision damage to the bunker. 15th July 1969.

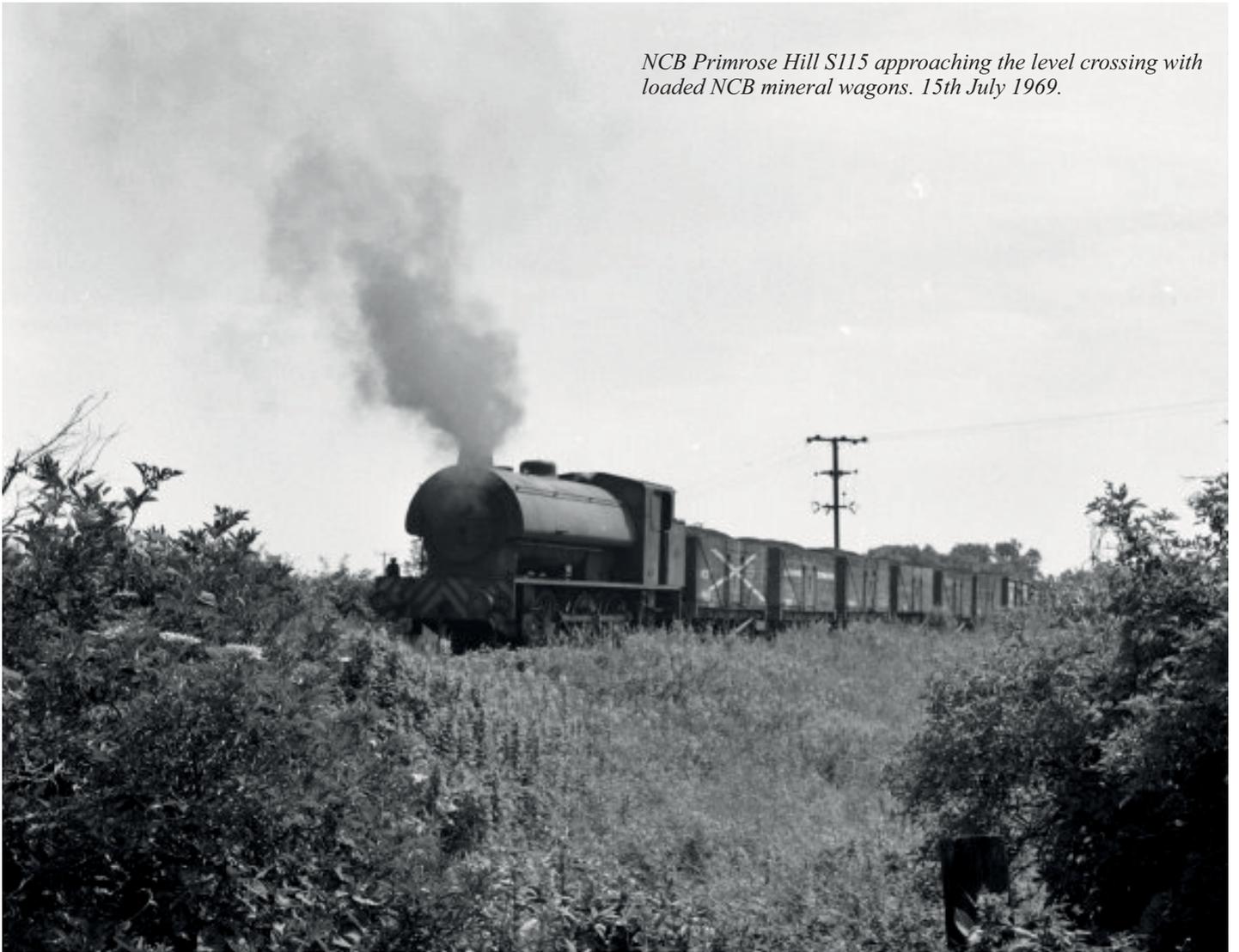


The crew of NCB Astley coaling the hard way – by hand at Primrose Hill Colliery on 15th July 1969.

NCB Primrose Hill S116 takes loaded hoppers over the level crossing, presumably destined for the staithes on the Aire & Calder Navigation on 15th July 1969.



NCB Primrose Hill S115 approaching the level crossing with loaded NCB mineral wagons. 15th July 1969.



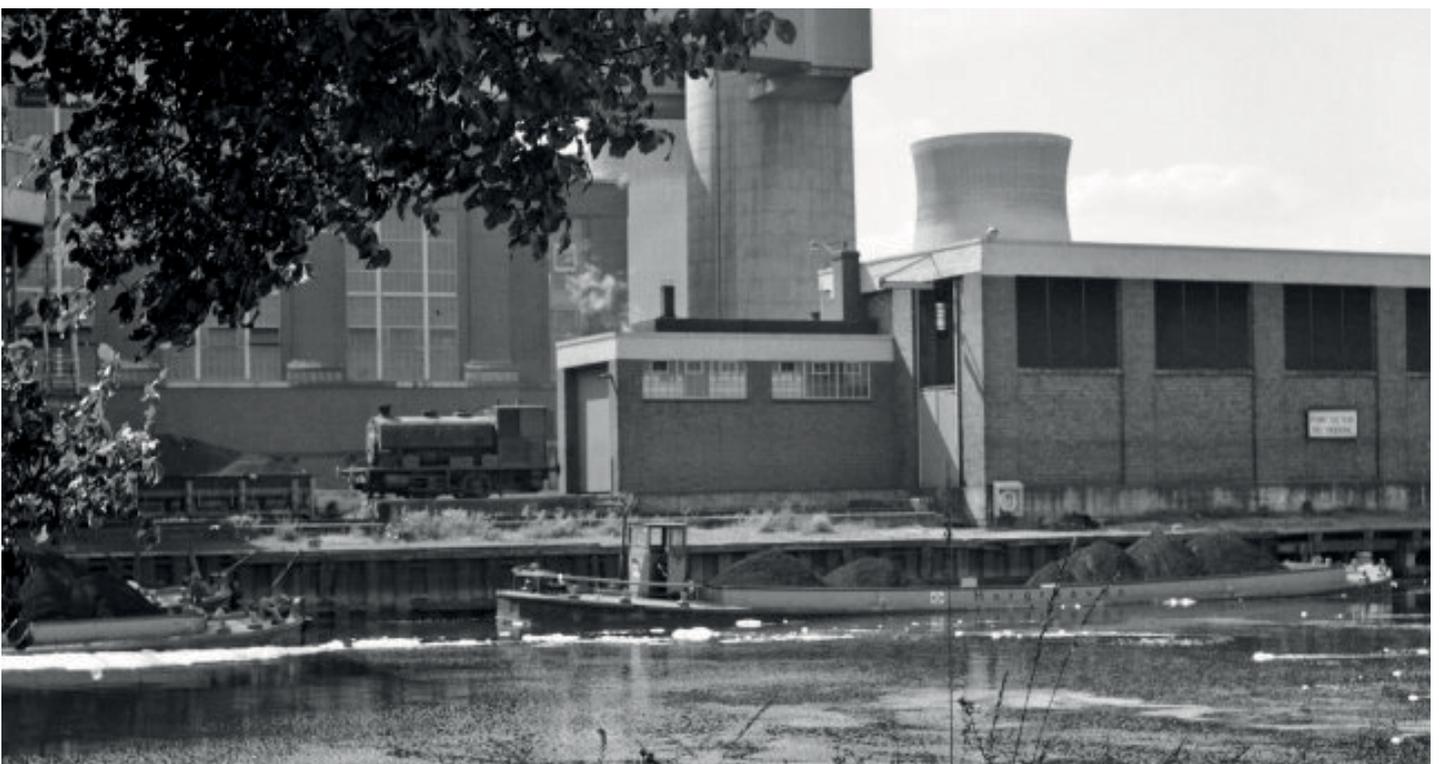
NCB Bowers Row Austerity No.4 shunts BR mineral wagons at Bowers Row Disposal Point on 15th July 1969.





With water coming via a small-bore pipe, the fireman sits on a rail waiting for No.4's tank to replenish at NCB's Bowers Row loco shed. 15th July 1969.

With coal now transported by water, a loaded barge passes the stored Ferrybridge No.3 (AB 2360/1954) outside the loco shed at the CEGB's Ferrybridge Power Station on 17th July 1969.



COMMUTING TO MARLOW - ANOTHER ASPECT

DAVID GARDNER recalls his experiences in the Winter 1988-89



A smartly turned out Metro-Cammell unit, L206, sits at Bourne End ready to head for Maidenhead on 3rd May 1989.

Photo: Mike Walker

When my wife Rosemary and two young daughters moved to Chippenham in Wiltshire on 30th November 1988 I decided to continue my employment at the company I had been working for in Marlow.

However this decision presented a few problems. Firstly, I couldn't travel to and from Chippenham to Marlow on a daily basis even if I could have afforded it. It just wasn't practical to have risen very early each day in order to catch the first train to Reading so I looked round for possible cheap lodgings.

A friend in Bourne End, where we had previously lived, came to my aid and offered me accommodation for four nights each week. I would travel down early on Monday morning, going straight to my work place, then return from work to Chippenham on the Friday evening. The house was in Godington Road so not too far from Bourne End station. On 5th December, the first Monday after our move, I caught the 06:15 train from Chippenham to Reading. This was the first service to London on weekdays in 1988-9. These days it's at 05:56.

My train got into Reading at 07:00 and I caught a local service to Maidenhead then the branch train to Marlow which got me to work by 08:30. However, I noticed that as my HST drew into Reading, a loco-hauled train of Mk1 stock pulled out of the adjoining platform a few seconds later also heading for Paddington.

I purchased a weekly season ticket from Bourne End to Marlow which saved me a few pence and allowed me to make additional journeys to Marlow and back, useful when there were MDRS meetings. Having discovered the loco-hauled service ran from Oxford to Paddington, I was determined to catch it the following Monday as it ran non-stop to Maidenhead which would allow me to get an earlier branch train and be at work by 8am, my official starting time.

HSTs did not have central locking in those days, they were slam doors only so as my 06:15 from Chippenham drew into the platform at Reading I jumped off the still moving train, ran across the platform and just got onto the fast train to Maidenhead. The locomotive was a Class 50 and the Mk1s were separate compartments so it was pure nostalgia as well as luxury.

I had a couple of days off from work the following week travel-
www.mdrs.org.uk

ling down to Reading later on the Tuesday and, having some free time, popped into EAMES model shop in Reading which was shortly to close down. I remember buying a couple of wagon kits and recently discovered one of them, an oil tank wagon which I am currently building.

The next Monday, 16th January, all went well after I'd made the dash to catch the loco-hauled train but on arrival at Maidenhead the branch train was allowed to leave before I was able to catch it. I was not too pleased but was informed that the branch service only connected with the London train not the other way round. On Monday 23rd January the 06:15 was late so I had no chance of catching the 07:00 loco-hauled train. In fact, for one reason or another I never travelled on it again which I much regretted.

While staying in Bourne End I was able to attend the monthly MDRS meetings which were held then in the Marlow British Legion hall but when I returned to Godington Road after the AGM on 19th January 1989 I discovered I'd been locked out and was unable to wake anyone. I spent a sleepless cold and miserable night generally wandering around until 5.55am when I was able to gain access to the house.

After that I was given a front door key though I'm not sure I made much use of it as I decided to leave my Marlow employment with my final day on Friday 10th February. My notes say I caught the 15:55 train from Marlow and was back in Chippenham by six, my commuting days over but never to be forgotten.



Ridin' the Gunnie

Mike Walker

Finding myself with a couple of hours to spare in Plymouth recently I decided to revisit somewhere I'd not been to since 1972 and thus boarded GWR's 12:54 train to Gunnislake formed of Sprinter 150265.

The service to Gunnislake is in many ways a remarkable survivor in the 21st century owing its existence to the geography of the Tamar valley which means road connections with Plymouth are poor with the railway providing the most effective and shortest connection even if, as we shall see, not the quickest link to the city.

Today's line is really in two parts, first using some seven miles of the old LSWR mainline, accessed after running through Devonport on the GWR main, and then after a reversal at Bere Alston it follows the winding course of what was once a light railway; part of Colonel Stephens' empire.

It was a bright, sunny Wednesday 27th March and 150265 was slightly delayed in its departure by having to wait for a late running Cross Country service in case anyone wanted to make a connection. As it happened they didn't. The first 2½ miles are on the GW main line making calls at Devonport, Dockyard and Keyham to pick up a handful of passengers then after crossing Weston Mill Viaduct (which affords a good view of the naval dockyard) we cross to the up line then take a connection onto the former LSWR line opened in 1941, one of several connections between the SR and GWR added during World War II. The SR line south of St. Budeaux through Devonport closed in 1964.

We quickly arrive at St. Budeaux Victoria Road, now a simple unstaffed halt where the driver gets out to obtain the single line staff stored in a cabinet - the old LSWR main line having been singled in 1970. The line now twists under the GWR main line and then beneath the approach spans to the Royal Albert Bridge and the Tamar suspension bridge before coming alongside the broad estuary of the Tamar. Prominent is the naval jetty extending out into the estuary which once had its own narrow gauge railway and the associated sidings serving the Ernsettle Naval Depot - long disused.

Then come two viaducts, Tamerton (117yds) and River Tavy (497yds) across tributaries of the Tamar. Tamerton Foliat, closed in 1962, was at the north end of the former and can still be seen as it is now a house. The second viaduct consists of 8 bow-string girder spans, half of which were repainted some years ago but the remainder were left to rust - a 40mph speed restriction applies across it, the rest of the line allowing 55mph.

Having left the river behind the line climbs at around 1 in 75 to reach Bere Ferrers station around 4 miles from St. Budeaux. Beautifully maintained and painted in SR green, including the now disused signal box, the buildings now house a heritage centre, a small museum and a bed & breakfast business.

Leaving Bere Ferrers the permitted speed drops to 40mph as the line continues to climb and becomes slightly more sinuous but nothing like what is to come! This brings us to Bere Alston where the train reverses, the conductor takes the staff and works the ground frame. But before we continue a little history may be in order.

The line we have been on may have been the SR(LSWR) main line but it was actually built by an independent company, the Plymouth Devonport & South Western Junction Railway in 1890 to provide the LSWR with its own route into Plymouth. Previously it operated over the GWR Launceston branch south of Lydford. From the start the LSWR operated the PDSWJR.



GWR 150265 waits at the replacement Gunnislake station ready to return to Plymouth.

Photo: Mike Walker

What is today's Gunnislake branch has its origins in the East Cornwall Minerals Railway, a 3'6" gauge line which opened in 1872 running from Kelly Bray, a mine near Callington, to the Tamar at Calstock, the quay being reached by a rope-worked incline.

In 1891 the PDSWJR purchased the ECMR with a view to rebuilding it to standard gauge and connecting it to its main line at Bere Alston. Colonel Stephens was hired as engineer and then manager when the line reopened in 1908 although he was fired soon after for not devoting enough time to the railway which the PDSWJR operated in its own right until it was taken over completely by the LSWR in 1922 just ahead of grouping.

Bere Alston station today remains largely intact. Trains use the former down platform where the building remains well cared for by the local community rail group. The former island up platform remains albeit trackless but still with its shelter together with both the disused signal box and goods shed. If current plans to reopen the line to Tavistock come to fruition some of these facilities may see a new life.

Leaving Bere Alston the line takes on a completely different character dropping at 1 in 40 and passing through a series of tight curves - maximum speed is just 20mph reducing to 15mph as we approach the line's most impressive feature: the Calstock Viaduct. This structure of concrete blocks is 290yards long and comprises eight arches carrying the line 120' above the Tamar. Until 1934 it had a wagon lift at the west end down to the quay. The view is spectacular with the village of Calstock clinging limpet-like to the valley side. The river marks the boundary between Devon and Cornwall (or Kernow as it's known locally) and on spotting a row of buoys down the middle I asked the conductor if they marked the 'international boundary'. "Yes" she replied "and there will be a passport check at Calstock"!

That station lies at the west end of the viaduct on the inside of a very sharp right hand curve. Today it has a simple but attractive shelter but back in 1972 it still had a typical Colonel Stephens building. I also recall a pair of SR utility vans on a piece of isolated track opposite the platform - they have also gone.

Leaving Calstock the line starts to climb again at 1 in 38-40 and enters a horseshoe curve. At its apex is Okeltor Level Crossing, one of two open crossings on this section requiring the train to stop and whistle before proceeding. As the curve becomes even tighter the allowed speed drops to 10mph. Eventually the line straightens somewhat and the speed reverts to 20mph until we have to stop for Sandways LC. This may be 1½ rail miles from Calstock station but it is slightly less than ½ mile by road!



Gunnislake station as it was in July 1972 with a GRCW cross-country unit from Plymouth.

Photo: Mike Walker



With the ruin of Wheal Edward as a backdrop, a Swindon cross-country unit is seen near Gunnislake in September 1974.

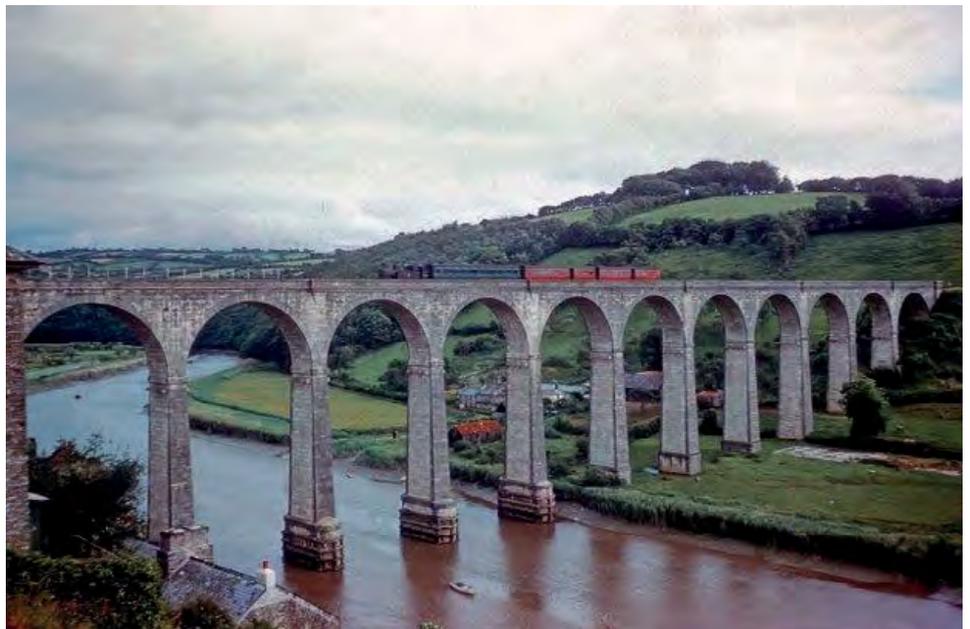
Photo: Don Woodworth

The line now meanders through meadows passing the ruin of Wheal Edward Mine and about 4 miles from Bere Alston picks up the route of the old ECMR. From here it is only another ½ mile until the terminus is reached. Up until 1966 trains continued on another sinuous 5 miles to Callington.

On my 1972 visit trains still used the original PDSWJR station which was a few hundred yards further on but beyond a very low bridge over the A390. In 1994 BR decided to relocate the station to the south side of the bridge allowing that to be removed and the old site redeveloped for housing. The new station is a simple platform with a basic shelter and ornate lamps. It is immaculate. I'm told there are some good pubs in the village but I returned on the same train in order to catch my planned HST home.

Despite being in the middle of the day, the train did brisk business both ways and really comes alive with school traffic and commuters to Plymouth. As mentioned at the start, the line does provide the most practical access to the city from the area, a point highlighted a couple of weeks after my visit when a car damaged the bridge carrying the A390 over the Tamar resulting in its closure for three weeks and a 46 mile diversion!

It's a wonderful line so if you get the chance, explore it yourself.



The impressive Calstock Viaduct seen from the Cornish side with O2 30192 crossing in June 1958.

Photo: Colour-Rail BRS401

Then and now at Bere Alston. Class N 31845 had charge of an up local in August 1962. The signal box survives albeit out of use.

Photo: Colour-Rail BRS1368

A contemporary view from a slightly closer position showing the up platform shelter hidden in the previous view.

Photo: Mike Walker



THEN AND NOW: BEACONSFIELD



Photo: Colour-Rail BRW783

Beaconsfield has changed almost out of recognition in the past half century. Back in September 1962 6990 *Witherslack Hall* (now preserved at the GCR) departed from the up loop with a modest freight leaving behind a still busy goods yard.

The through lines vanished with the route modernisation of the early nineties whilst the goods yard has been replaced with a multi-storey car park and the trees have grown. 56081 passes with the Calvert to Willesden empties on 9th July 2015.

Photo: Mike walker

