

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

167

March 2020



Contents:

All Change at Calvert
A Taste of France
Freedom of Scotland - Fifty Years Ago
Coast Starlight & Other Railroad Encounters

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

CONTENTS

TIMETABLE - Forthcoming meetings	Page 2
CHAIRMAN'S NOTES Mike Hyde	2
SOCIETY NEWS	3
ALL CHANGE AT CALVERT Mike Walker	4
A TASTE OF FRANCE Chris Waite	5
HIGH SPEED WESTERN - SIXTIES STYLE	8
FREEDOM OF SCOTLAND - FIFTY YEARS AGO Tim Edmonds	9
THE COAST STARLIGHT AND OTHER RAILROAD ENCOUNTERS John Tuck	15
THEN AND NOW: BOURNE END	19

Front Cover Photographs

Top: Alstom Coradia Liner 6-car bi-modes B85071/2 at Gare de l'Est, Paris - 30 May 2019.

Photo: Chris Waite. Article Page 5.

Bottom: Southern Pacific AC-12 4294, built Baldwin 1944 at California State Railroad Museum - 23 Oct 2018.

Photo: John Tuck. Article Page 15.

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

It is with pleasure we welcome two new members to the Society both who joined in February: Martin Ellwood who comes from Halton near Wendover and Brian Muschamp from Marlow.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Following our annual social evening in December, the new year opened with a collection of vintage film clips on a variety of subjects presented by Frank Banfield.

Bob Sweet followed February's typically brief and efficient AGM with a look at recent events on the British railway network, both on the main line and heritage lines intermixed with some archive shots - often reflecting the 'then and now' theme to produce a most enjoyable evening.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - FINAL REMINDER

Once again we have had an excellent renewal rate - thanks to all for your continued support - but as always there are a few stragglers who have yet to renew. In line with the Society's rules, those who have not done so by the 31st March are deemed to have lapsed and will not

receive future copies of the *Marlow Donkey* or e-newsletters. Full renewal details were included in the last issue.

DONKEY CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Once again left my "pending" folder is somewhat depleted so I am once more appealing for contributions. They can be on any subject vaguely connected to railways and be anything from a photo feature to an in-depth thesis! All are welcome but please, make a contribution and not leave to the usual few - our wells are running dry!

RCTS MEETINGS

Our friends in the RCTS have only one meeting plus our joint meeting before they take their annual extended summer break.

Monday 18th May

The famous Artist Terence Cuneo and his Mouse Carole Cuneo

Meetings are held at the Cox Green Community Centre, Highfield Lane, Cox Green, SL6 3AX starting at 19:30. MDRS members always welcome.

Two steam-hauled specials have operated in our area in recent weeks both in far from ideal conditions for photography.

On Saturday 15th February 35028 Clan Line worked UK Railtours' Valentine Day Pullman formed of the Belmond British Pullman on a circular tour from Victoria along the Chiltern Line to Oxford and thence to Reading, Guildford and the Surrey Hills back to Victoria.

In the teeth of 'Storm Dennis' it is seen arriving for a planned pathing stop at Princes Risborough.

Photo: Ron North



Exactly a week later, it was barely getting light when 60009 Union of South Africa passed through Taplow at 07:51 on an overcast morning with the Railway Touring Company's Cotswold Venturer from Paddington to Worcester.

John Cameron's A4 was making what is probably its last run on the Great Western Main Line before its planned permanent retirement later this year.

Photo: Tony Allerton

ALL CHANGE AT CALVERT

Mike Walker

The single line north of Aylesbury to Calvert which has been an almost forgotten part of the Bucks railway system for many years has seen many changes to accommodate works for East-West Rail and HS2 in recent weeks.

Originally built by the Aylesbury & Buckingham Railway it was opened between Aylesbury and Verney Junction on the Buckinghamshire Railway's Bletchley to Oxford line on 23rd September 1868. The A&B was acquired by the Metropolitan Railway in 1891 but remained a country backwater until the arrival of the Great Central's London extension just north of Quainton Road in 1898 which saw the line upgraded and start hosting express services.

Quainton Road to Verney Junction was closed to passengers in 1936 but remained open for goods until 1947 providing a connection off the Metropolitan & GC line onto the Bletchley - Oxford line towards Oxford. To provide a connection towards Bletchley a new chord was constructed in 1940 between Calvert on the GC and what became known as Claydon L&NE Junction on the Bletchley - Oxford line. This was one of numerous connections built during WWII principally for military traffic.

The Great Central route north of Aylesbury was famously closed in September 1966 but the section between Aylesbury and Claydon L&NE Junction was retained, singled, primarily for the movement of the Chiltern line Class 115 DMUs to and from Bletchley depot where they were maintained and limited freight traffic.

The latter was bolstered in the late 1970s by the establishment of waste transfer sidings at the former Calvert station site. Household refuse was brought in containers from Northolt and used to backfill the former clay pits originally excavated for brickmaking. In addition to Northolt, waste was also brought in by train from Hendon, Brentford and even Bristol. With the pits filling up the attention changed to trains of spoil from construction works in London which was used to cap off the pits to enable them to return to agricultural use. A number of trains also ran from Didcot conveying fly-ash from the power station when it closed. Like the trains from Bristol, these reached Calvert from Claydon L&NE Junction rather than through Aylesbury.

In conjunction with the singling of the Bletchley - Oxford line in 1985, the signal box provided by the LNER at the junction in 1940 was replaced by a Portacabin type structure containing a NX panel which controlled the newly installed colourlight signals and housed the token machine for the single line to Aylesbury. With the replacement of the Class 115 DMUs by Turbos there was no longer any regular traffic between Bletchley and Claydon L&NE Junction and this section was mothballed in 1993.

Scheduled passenger services resumed operation north of Aylesbury in December 2008 when Chiltern Railways opened a new station called Aylesbury Vale Parkway just south of the A41 bridge. Somewhat unusually, this is a terminal platform on a siding alongside the main line. The 2¼ miles from Aylesbury was upgraded to Track Circuit Block operation with the token section shortened to commence north of Aylesbury Vale although the instrument remained in the offices at Aylesbury station with the token released by the signaller at Marylebone.

The start of 2020 has brought many changes to this obscure piece of railway. Following the completion of Chiltern's Bicester to Oxford upgrade in 2015 the rebuilding and reopening of the Bletchley to Bicester section has been eagerly awaited and has now finally begun.



The Portacabin that is Claydon L&NE Junction Signal Box (New) at the old Waddesdon Manor station site looking north from Blackgrove Bridge. This is where the 30mph Aylesbury Single line becomes the 15mph Aylesbury Siding. The footbridge at Quainton Road is just visible in the distance.

Photo: Network Rail.

The first stage has been to lift the track between Bicester and the Bletchley flyover which was completed in February. This included removal of all the infrastructure at Claydon L&NE Junction including the signalling and signal box. A temporary stop block comprising a sleeper and red light was chained to the track at 11 chains into the ½ mile wartime connecting chord.

To replace the former 'box, a new one has been installed at the site of the former Waddesdon Manor station which closed in 1936. Like its predecessor, this is a Portacabin and carries the name Claydon L&NE Junction Signal Box (New) even though it is 7 miles from its former location.

The new signal box is unusual in that it does not control any working signals. Instead there are Stop boards in each direction at the 'box. The line to the south remains designated as the Up & Down Aylesbury Single with a permitted speed of 30mph from Aylesbury Vale. The token section has been shortened and now ends at the new 'box. The line beyond, through Quainton Road, to Calvert is now downgraded and designated as the Aylesbury Siding with a permitted speed of 15mph.

At Calvert itself the token release of the two ground frames has been removed and the points they control are now regarded as hand points. At the Steeple Claydon Foot Crossing at the south end of the Calvert complex there are more Stop boards and from there to the end of track the permissible speed on all lines is just 5mph. The former "main line" is now Calvert Siding No.3 and becomes Calvert Siding No.4 beyond the road bridge. The existing two unloading sidings are now designated as Nos.1 and 2 whilst the north Shunt Neck is now a Cripple Siding. The south end headshunt becomes the Calvert Reception Siding with a new crossover provided at the south end.

The junction with the East-West Line will be reinstated and the line through to Aylesbury Vale will be upgraded as it is intended to run an hourly Aylesbury to Milton Keynes service. Presumably Aylesbury Vale's platform will be relocated as part of this.

Looking further ahead, HS2 will run alongside the line north of Quainton Road before continuing north along the old GCR alignment. As it will be on the down side of the existing line, the Calvert transfer complex will need to be relocated onto the up side. That assumes the landfill hasn't been completely reclaimed by the time HS2 becomes a reality!

A taste of France

CHRIS WAITE visited Paris last year

These photos are nearly all from my trip to Chambéry at the end of May/early June 2019, but I've included a small number from my June 2018 trip to Toulouse. Both trips were made by train and started with a Eurostar to Paris, so I'll start there.

At Gare du Nord on 30th May 2019, Regional services seem to be shared between:

TER 2N NG 4,250kW double-deck EMUs - built jointly by Alstom and Bombardier between 2004 and 2011. 5-car set shown, No.521, dates from 2005.



Alstom Coradia Régiolis, seen here is 6-car bi-mode, 2,028kW diesel, 1,800kW dual voltage (1.5kVdc or 25kV ac) electric, set B84519/20, new in 2015 and ...

Régio 2N 2,400kW double-deck units. The first of these Bombardier-built units arrived in 2011 and they are still being delivered. They come in 6, 7, 8 and 10-car versions. One of the 10-car units 022XL, new in June 2017, is pictured.





By way of contrast, until the December 2019 timetable change, many of the TGV services from Gare du Nord are formed by some of the earliest TGV sets. Here's the oldest of them all - set 01, built in 1977, entering service the following year. Apparently this set has the nickname 'Patrick' and on 6 Feb 2020 made a colourful farewell tour - while most of the carriages remained in

the livery shown here, two were repainted into the silver and blue livery introduced in the 1980s and both power cars reverted to the original orange and grey livery. I've not read whether there are any plans for this set, but, having travelled on it from Lille to Bordeaux in 2014, I rather hope that, after 41 years' service, it's not going to follow its classmates to the scrapyards.



At nearby Gare de l'Est:

Until a year or two ago, SNCF used CC72100 Co-Co diesels on Intercité services from Gare de l'Est, but now it's Alstom Coradia Liner 6-car bi-modes, such as Nos.B85071/2, delivered in February 2019 and seen here on 30th May 2019.

Also at Gare de l'Est the same day is Bombardier TRAXX F140 AC 1 5,600kW Bo-Bo No.185 552, built in 2005 and owned by MRCE (Mitsui Rail Capital Europe), but leased to Captrain Deutschland. It has just arrived (on time!) with the weekly train from Moscow, a journey of 2,164 miles.

The train is formed mainly of Russian stock such as the Siemens (Austria) - built car shown. Interesting that the wording on the side of the coach is not in Russian, French or any language of the countries the train passes through, but - English!





From Gare de l'Est, I took a walk to the Parc des Buttes Chaumont and noticed disused railway tracks in the park. It seems this is part of La Petite Ceinture, the 'Inner Circle' route around Paris, which closed to passengers as long ago as 1934.

A dwindling amount of freight was carried until the late 1970s and the line closed completely in 1993, but the track is still down! In view of the bridge support, though, it would be difficult to re-open both tracks.



Gare de Lyon

In the new Île de France blue livery, is a (then) brand new 8-car Régio 2N set No.041R

In 2006 Alstom delivered new double-deck sets for the Paris to Switzerland 'Lyria' services. At the time it was thought that this would lead to over-capacity on these routes, whereas the single-deck sets on the Paris-Lyon-Marseille route were often overloaded. It was decided therefore to marry the new 4400-series tri-voltage power cars to existing single-deck coaches on the

Swiss services and use the new double-deck 'Duplex' coaches with existing dual-voltage 'Réseau' power cars (renumbered 600 - 619) on internal services. In this photo we have on the left 'Lyria' power car 4413 with single deck coaching stock and on the right ex-'Réseau' power car No.609 on double-deck stock with a 'standard' Duplex set - No.244 in between.





Local stopping services in Paris are increasingly formed of the Bombardier 2,950kW 7 or 8 car 'Francilien' EMUs such as set 227L, which is in the new livery, while a similar unit in the old pink livery is in the background at Gare St Lazare.

HIGH SPEED WESTERN - SIXTIES STYLE



As GWR launch their new high speed services between Paddington and Bristol it's worth remembering a short-lived earlier attempt by BR's Western Region to speed up services on the Paddington to Bristol and South Wales routes.

The genesis of this idea came whilst the legendary Gerry Fiennes was General Manager of the Western Region (1963-65) and some test runs were made in 1964. However it was to be from the 18th April 1966 that a speeded up timetable was launched allowing certain trains to run at 100mph when the general maximum limit on the WR was 90mph.

Two trainsets were provided, one of them formed from the experimental XP64 set the other a set of freshly overhauled Mk1s riding on 'Commonwealth' bogies. Both carried the then newly introduced blue and grey livery. The former worked the 08:20 Swansea-Paddington, the 12:45 Paddington-Bristol Temple Meads and 16:15 Bristol TM to Paddington whilst the other covered the 08:45 Paddington-Bristol TM, the 11:15 Bristol TM to Paddington, 14:45 Paddington-Bristol TM and 18:15 Bristol TM-Paddington.

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The 08:45 Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads passes Ranelagh Bridge servicing yard at the start of its high speed run behind D6892 and an unidentified sister.

Bristol TM to Paddington, 14:45 Paddington-Bristol TM and 18:15 Bristol TM-Paddington.

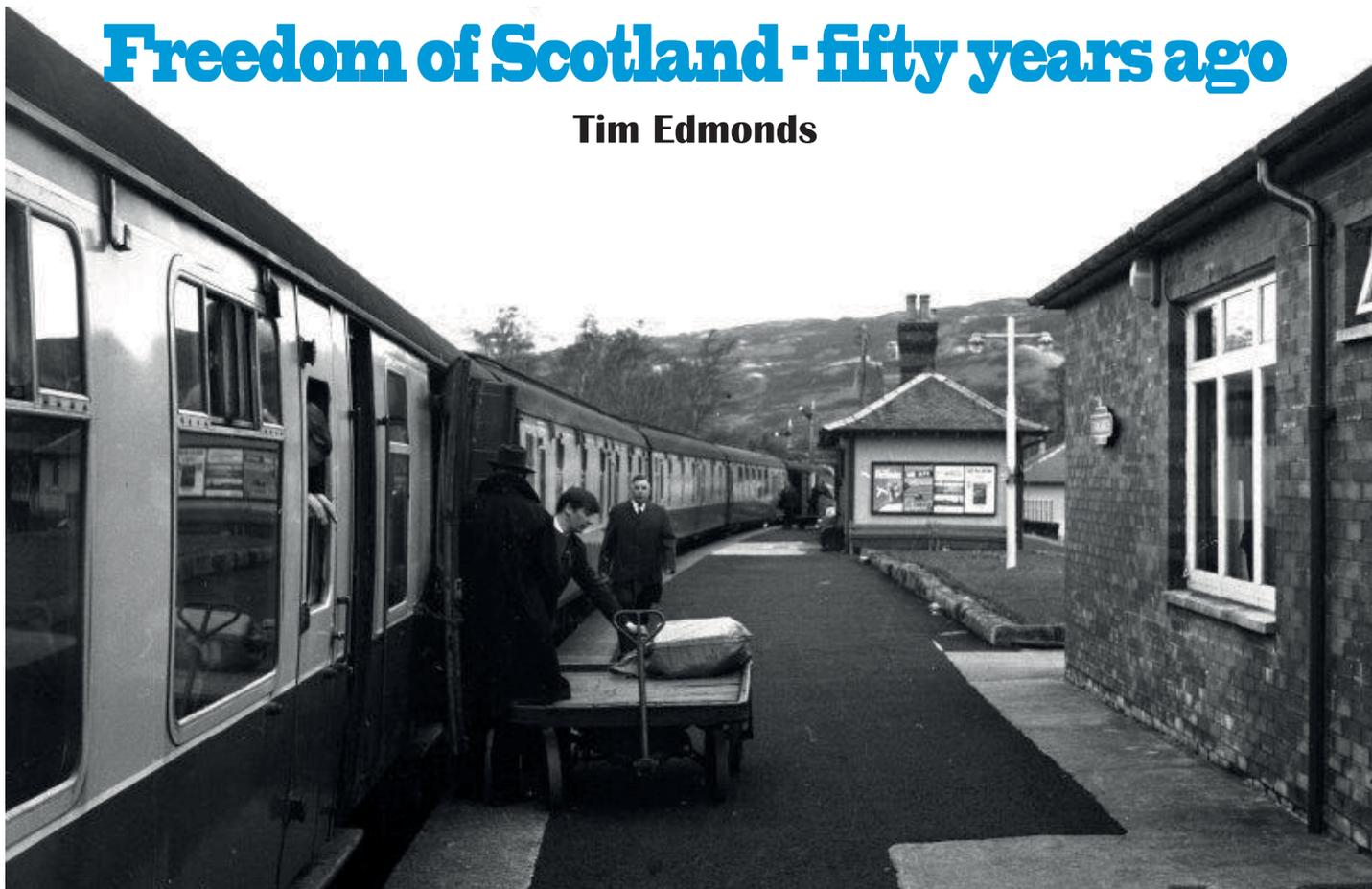
Motive power was a complete break for the WR which allocated eighteen of its then recently acquired English Electric Type 3s, D6875-D6892 to the trains operating in pairs. Normally, these were limited to 90mph but this group received additional maintenance and were specially authorised to operate up to 100mph.

The 100mph running was allowed on two sections in each direction. On the Down Main it was permitted from MP 11 (Hayes & Harlington) to MP 29½ (Ruscombe) and from MP 43 (Lower Basildon) to MP 63¾ (Challow). In the Up direction it applied from MP 63¾ to MP 43¾ and from MP 43¼ to MP 10.

The experiment didn't last long. Timings were tight, for example Paddington to Chippenham in 72 minutes but time was often lost and by January 1967 single Brush Type 4s were mostly in charge.

Freedom of Scotland - fifty years ago

Tim Edmonds



In March 1970 I was a first year student in London, living in a rented bedsit on the top floor of a terraced house in West Hampstead. Brian, my neighbour on the floor below, was a postgraduate from Adelaide, South Australia, with whom I became good friends. He was always looking for opportunities to travel and sight-see during his stay in the UK and proposed that we made a trip to Scotland in the Easter vacation. I had not previously ventured north of the border and it seemed a good opportunity to explore using the railway network, particularly the scenic West Highland and Kyle of Lochalsh lines.

The Scottish Region timetable formed the basis of our travel plans, but this soon showed that services on much of the network were sparse - particularly so in the off-season. We were fortunate that my mother had a cousin at Findhorn, near Forres, and a friend in Edinburgh, both of whom offered to put us up for a couple of nights. For the remaining overnight stays we decided to risk finding B&B accommodation on arrival. The plan was to travel north via the West Coast main line to Glasgow, then take the West Highland line to Fort William and Mallaig. From there we needed the ferry connection to Kyle of Lochalsh where we could pick up the railway to Inverness and Forres. Brian was keen to get to John O'Groats, so from Forres we would return to Inverness and take the Far North line to Wick, from where there was a bus. The service and the operator, Highland Omnibuses, were mentioned in the timetable but not the times, which turned out to be twice-daily and connecting well-enough with our trains. From there it was a long journey south to Edinburgh via Inverness, Perth and Stirling. We would use the East Coast route to return to London.

This was the days before student railcard discounts, but I was aware of the various rover tickets that were available which might offer us savings. Our trip would span nine days and a 'Freedom of Scotland Silver Rover' ticket would cover the whole of the BR network north from Carlisle and Berwick-upon-Tweed for seven of them at a cost of £8 each. We purchased them in advance for the seven days from the 18th to the 24th March, opting to use them for the Carlisle - Glasgow section on

Loading mailbags onto our train at Crianlarich, the 06:00 from Glasgow Queen Street on 19th March 1970. The second and third carriages are the sleeping cars from King's Cross.

the outward trip and pay separately for Euston to Carlisle, at a cost of about £5 each. We would also need to pay for the return from Edinburgh to King's Cross after their expiry.

Wednesday, 18th March

We left from Euston on the first through train of the day at 10:05 - none other than *The Royal Scot* - behind Class 86 No. E3158 and arrived at Glasgow Central at 16:50. There were stops at Crewe and Carlisle, the former being necessary to change from electric to diesel power since the Weaver Junction - Glasgow electrification was four years away from completion. Although this was a late afternoon arrival, there was still a bit of daylight left to explore because this was during a three-year experiment when British Summer Time was in operation all year. Brian was used to my interest in railways and their history, so was not surprised that our sightseeing comprised visits to the closed stations at St Enoch (disused) and Buchanan Street (already demolished) as well as exploring Central and Queen Street. At the latter was No. 6116, one of the dwindling number of North British Class 29 diesel-electrics, which had recently brought in a train. For our overnight stay we found a rather seedy hotel close to Queen Street, from where we had to catch the first train to Fort William the following morning.

Thursday 19th March

It was far too early for breakfast at the hotel, but we had already made up our minds to take advantage of the full restaurant car facilities on the train and have a proper breakfast on the move. The 06:00 train comprised two sections. The carriages at the back originated at Glasgow and went through to Mallaig, while at the front were added through carriages from King's Cross to Fort William, including two sleeping cars. It was dark when Class 27 No. 5395 took the train out, but the dawn broke as we joined the West Highland line at Craigendoran so that we could appreciate the snow on the mountains above Loch Long and

The Marlow Donkey



Class 27 No. 5379 rests in what's left of Fort William shed on 19th March 1970.



On the same day Class 27 No. 5394 approaching Banavie on the swing bridge over the Caledonian Canal. This goods train probably originated at the nearby Corpach paper mill.

Loch Lomond as we tucked into our kippers. The weather was cloudy with patches of sunshine, and there was plenty of railway interest along the way, with fully-staffed and signalled stations and spectacular engineering, such as the horseshoe curve between Tyndrum and Bridge of Orchy. A notable feature at several of the stations was loading and unloading of mail and parcels traffic that was carried in the train. We alighted at Fort William, reached at 10:14, and the rear carriages left for Mallaig at 10:25.

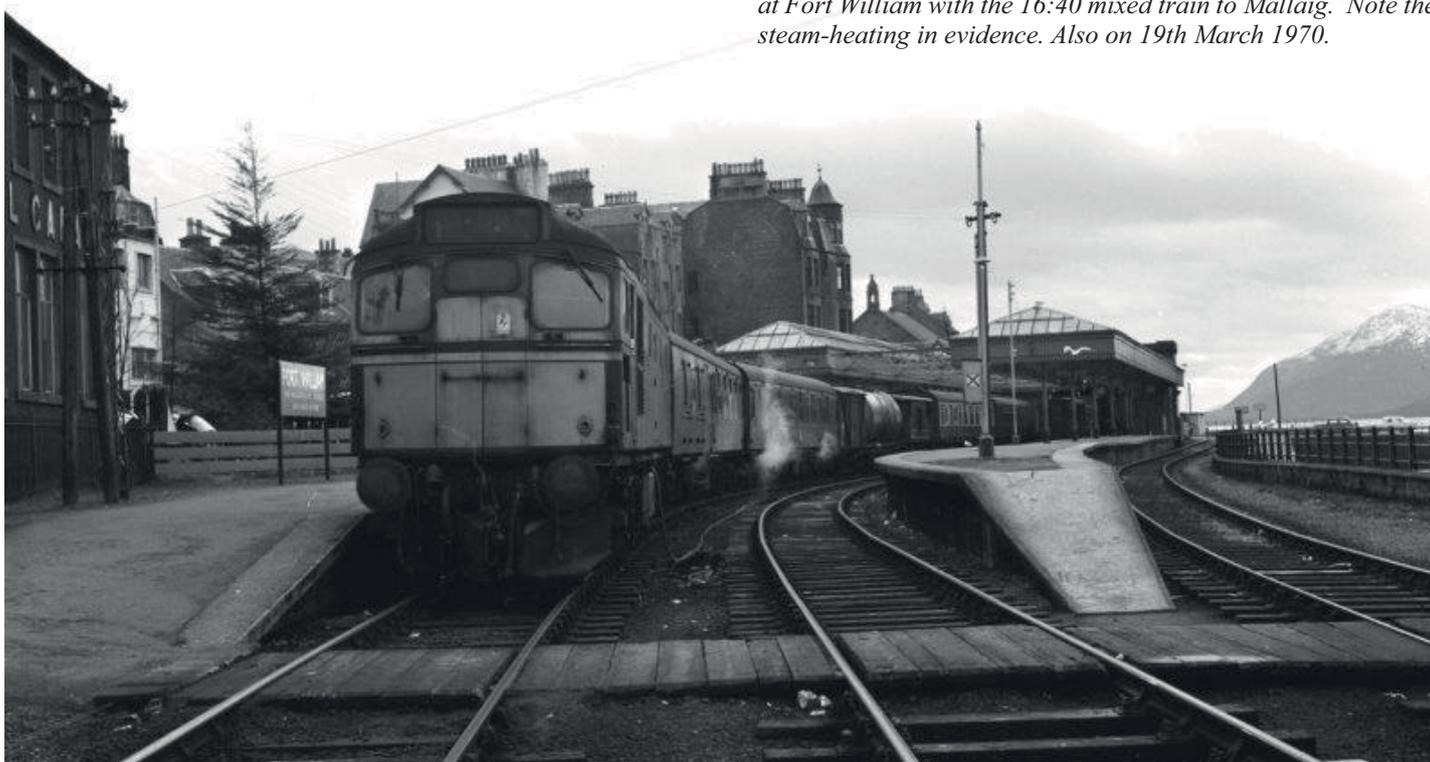
The next Mallaig train was not for over six hours, so we started by exploring two railway landmarks long since gone – Fort William station, the old one by the loch where the A88 road now goes, and the former steam loco shed, now a car park near the present station. The shed still had its turntable but was roofless and in use as a diesel depot with Class 27 No. 5379 the sole occupant. We then took a local bus to Corpach and walked to the railway swing bridge over the Caledonian Canal at Banavie, timing it perfectly to photograph Class 27 No. 5294 crossing with a loaded goods train, presumably from the nearby paper mill. The walk back to Fort William took us past Inverlochy Castle, with views of Ben Nevis, reaching the station in good

time to catch the 16:40 to Mallaig – a local with no connection from the south which turned out to be a mixed train with two passenger coaches, a box van, tank wagon and a goods brake van. Class 27 No. 5367 was not challenged by a light load and reached the terminus at 18:21. Loco and coaches were stabled there overnight and were to form the 07:25 departure the following morning. Although it was late to do so, we found a welcoming Guest House for a meal and overnight stay.

Friday 20th March

Our destination today was Kyle of Lochalsh, using the Stornoway mailboat service operated by David MacBrayne with MV Loch Seaforth. This was a weekday sailing via Armadale (Skye) and Kyle, outward from Mallaig by day at 12:15 and returning from Stornoway overnight with arrival at 06:55. Connections were made with trains to and from Glasgow and shipping services were shown in Table 38 of the Scottish Region Timetable. However, MacBrayne services were excluded from our 'Freedom of Scotland' rovers, so we bought singles from Mallaig to Kyle at 10s6d each (52½p). The ship did a return ferry crossing to Armadale at 10:00, which we watched departing before

Class 27 No. 5367 waits to depart from the old lochside station at Fort William with the 16:40 mixed train to Mallaig. Note the steam-heating in evidence. Also on 19th March 1970.





With the snowy hills of Skye in the background, Class 26/2 No. D5342 waits at a wet Kyle of Lochalsh station with the 10:57 to Inverness. Class 24/2 No. 5130 is alongside. 21st March 1970.

heading for the station. The main buildings appeared intact and there were a few sidings, a handful of wagons and a trackless stone-built loco shed next to an empty turntable pit. The first of the three trains a day was the 06:00 from Glasgow that we had used to get to Fort William, which arrived at 12:00. This provided a connection with the Stornoway sailing, so there was time to watch its arrival before heading for the harbour. The 2¼ hour voyage to Kyle through the Sound of Sleat was into a strong headwind, but we wrapped up and braved the deck to take in the views of snow-capped mountains on Skye to the west and the mainland to the east. The ferry from Kyle to Kyleakin was included in our rover tickets, so we did a trip to Skye and walked to the viewpoint at Castle Moil before returning to find overnight accommodation in Kyle at the Lochalsh Hotel (formerly the Station Hotel). Using the remaining daylight, we then went to see the 17:50 train to Inverness set off behind Class 26/2 No. 5331.

Saturday 21st March

It had rained heavily overnight but was showing signs of brightening up, so we made another trip on the Kyleakin ferry before heading for the station, where Class 24/2 No. 5130 was shunting vans while the 10:57 train for Inverness awaited us with Class 26/2 No. D5342 at the front. The trains to Kyle had recently been affected by landslips near Attadale, where the new A890 road was being built beside the railway, avoiding the ferry across Loch Carron at Stromeferry. Fortunately, trains seemed to be running normally again and we could see construction work in progress as we passed, with the new roadway being cut into the rocks on the land side of the railway.

The journey included an interesting incident when, a few miles after leaving Achnashelach, the train slowed down unexpectedly. I looked out of the window to see that a man at

Inverness Diesel Depot slumbering on a Saturday afternoon, with the residents including Class 08 No. D3551, Class 26/2 Nos. D5343 and D5341, and Class 24/2 No D5125. 21st March 1970.

the lineside had flagged it down. We stopped and he climbed aboard to join us in our compartment. He explained that he ran a hostel for ramblers and climbers at Craig, which was an unadvertised stopping place on the railway that he used when making shopping trips to Inverness. Subsequently I have been able to verify that Craig Houses was a stopping place originally intended for the families of railwaymen living at this remote spot and that its last recorded use was in May 1972. Arrival in Inverness was at 13:53 and we 'bunked' the diesel depot next to the station in the former Lochgorm Works of the Highland Railway, where the occupants included examples of Classes 06, 08, 24/2 and 26/1. After exploring the town we returned to the station for our first DMU of the trip, one of the 6-car Swindon Cross-Country sets which included buffet facilities, to take us as far as Forres on the 17:47 to Aberdeen, the last of the five return trains a day on this route. There we were met by our hosts for the next two nights, my mother's cousin Phyllis Ross and her husband Archie. The next day they took us to the winter sports centre at Aviemore, where Archie introduced us to his sport of Curling, then up into the Cairngorm mountains where many skiers were enjoying the snow.





A Swindon Cross-Country 6-car DMU arriving at Forres with the 07:47 Aberdeen to Inverness service on 23rd March 1970.

Monday 23rd March

We were safely delivered to Forres station to catch another Cross-Country DMU at 09:45, connecting at Inverness with the 10:50 departure on the Far North line. The train was hauled by Class 24/2 No. D5125 and comprised sections for both Wick and Thurso, the latter including a buffet car. With a roundabout route, the journey was a slow but interesting one and included numerous stops, again with mail and parcels being loaded and unloaded at several stations. We looked out for the former

private station serving Dunrobin Castle, which has since reopened for excursion traffic and as a seasonal public stopping place. At Georgemas Junction the Thurso line trailed in from the west and the train was divided, with another loco coming on the back to take the Thurso portion while we continued east to Wick, reached at 15:40. Class 24/2 No. 5124 was shunting wagons in the yard and there was time to explore the shell of the former steam shed before taking a quick look at the harbour then catching the bus. A spectacular sunset was brewing as we arrived at a very quiet off-season John O'Groats, but the hotel was open for B&B and rustled up some sandwiches for us in the evening.

Class 24/2 hauled trains passing at Brora, with No. D5125 bound for Wick/Thurso and No. D5114 arriving with the Inverness train. Note the loaded platform trolley. 23rd March 1970.





Class 24/2 No D5129 awaits departure from Wick with the 11:25 to Inverness on 24th March 1970. Note the bus in the forecourt on the left.



Tuesday 24th March

This was the last day that our Freedom tickets were valid, and we made the most of them with the long journey to Edinburgh. There was time to stroll down to the pier at John O'Groats and enjoy the morning sunshine before catching the bus back to Wick for the 11:25 train to Inverness, hauled by Class 24/2 No. D5129. This was the second of three daily services – the first had left at 05:13! On arrival at Georgemas Junction Class 24/2 No. 5130 was already waiting with the Thurso portion, and I left the train to watch the manoeuvres to combine the trains. A 16:08 arrival at Inverness connected with the 16:35 service on the Highland main line, double-headed by Class 24/2 Nos D5121 and 5126 and comprising through portions to Glasgow (with buffet car) and Edinburgh. The latter used to go via Kinross Junction and the Forth Bridge, but this line had been closed in January 1970 and so the train was re-routed via Stirling. It was well after 21:00 when we arrived at Waverley station to be met by my mother's friend Ruth Mary Young.

Wednesday 25th March

In the morning Ruth Mary drove us into the border country for a visit to the abbey ruins at Melrose and Dryburgh but ensuring that we returned in time to see something of Edinburgh. There was also another important railway journey to make since the closure of the Kinross line had deprived us of a crossing of the Forth Bridge – albeit one that would have been in darkness. Our Freedom tickets had expired, so we bought returns to North Queensferry on a local DMU and were rewarded with prime window seats behind the driver on the way back.



The driver of Class 24/2 No D5129 on the 11:25 from Wick takes the token from the signalman on arrival at Georgemas Junction. Classmate 5130 has already arrived with the Thurso portion and the two will be combined for the onward journey to Inverness. 24th March 1970.



Combining trains at Georgemas Junction - Class 24/2 No D5129 has collected the two coaches from Thurso and is adding them to the front of the Wick train. Note the parcels and the old horse-drawn cart on the platform.

Thursday 26th March

Before saying farewell to Scotland and heading back to London, there was just time for one more railway visit in Edinburgh. The former Caledonian Railway terminus at Princes Street was closed in 1965 and we found demolition imminent – a sad sight with the building gaunt and trackless and the overall roof minus its glass. Then it was back to Waverley for a 10:00 departure on *The Flying Scotsman*. Having noted the warning in the timetable that ‘the number of passengers carried is limited to the seating capacity of the train – all seats reservable’, we had made reservations the day before. I have the reservation label from coach A10 seat 1, but not the ticket. I think the fare was between £6 and £7 each. Motive power was Class 47 No. 1518 and with just a Newcastle stop on the way, arrival at King’s Cross was 15:50. A rough calculation showed that we had covered about 1,554 miles by train in nine days, with some 840 miles of this included on the Freedom of Scotland tickets. The total cost of the railway travel was about £20.

Looking back on this tour fifty years later, although steam locomotives had gone from the network the 1970 railway was still steam-age, with much of the old infrastructure still in place. Most of the trains we used were loco-hauled, with mail and parcels still carried and elderly platform trolleys still in use. Wagon-load goods traffic was also much in evidence – even a mixed train. Signalling was predominantly semaphore, most stations were staffed and buffet cars – sometimes restaurant cars – were included on many trains. The island shipping was still railway-orientated, but this was soon to change. In 1973 the Stornoway service switched from Mallaig and Kyle of Lochalsh to Ullapool and the direct connection with the railway was lost – hence the early train from Glasgow is now just the through sleeper to Fort William and carries no Mallaig portion. Trains on the Far North line no longer divide and join at Georgemas Junction but run to and from Wick via Thurso. Services on this line are no faster than they were in 1970 and the buses to John O’Groats do not connect as well with the trains. Looking at buses from John O’Groats to Wick in the Winter 2019/20 timetable showed that getting the bus meant a wait of over two-and-a-half hours at Wick before the first available train to Inverness, with an additional change at Perth for Edinburgh.



The joys of a ‘heritage’ DMU – our front-seat view returning from North Queensferry to Edinburgh over the Forth Bridge. on 25th March 1970.

However, the Scottish railways are growing, some lines and stations have reopened and the speed and frequency of most services have increased. The biggest improvements are probably on the electrified Anglo-Scottish services, particularly on the West Coast route with hourly Euston – Glasgow trains through the day, most taking just under 4½ hours. Today’s traveller is presented with a somewhat confusing set of rover ticket choices. There is no direct equivalent to the 1970 Freedom of Scotland ticket, although the Spirit of Scotland Travelpass can be used on eight days in a fifteen-day period (price £189 in 2019) and some ferry and bus travel is included or discounted.



The shell of Edinburgh Princes Street station as it awaits demolition on 26th March 1970.

The Coast Starlight and other railroad encounters

John Tuck Heads west



Kelso UP Depot in the centre of the Mojave National Preserve. The depot is now the Visitor Center.

Last time we left John and Sue on the Verde Canyon Railroad in Arizona. John now completes his exploration of the American West.

The next day we travelled through the Mojave Desert, in the centre of the National Preserve (1.6 million acres) there's a visitor centre based in the original, architecturally very striking Union Pacific Kelso Depot building, the line is still active, is the Salt Lake – Los Angeles line. The depot building was transferred to the National Park Service in 1994, since 2005 it has been the main visitor centre for the Mojave National Preserve. <https://www.nps.gov/moja/learn/historyculture/kelso-depot.htm>

Stop for the night was a small town called Shoshone, a town it appears owned by one woman, that is she owned the Inn, the restaurant, the gas station and store and the camp ground, yes that is the town! The most unusual sight was the continuous queue out of the small store. These were people from Nevada that had come to the closest Californian town to buy lottery tickets as their sale is banned in Nevada to protect the vast casino businesses.

No rail interest for a few days but the next day was Death Valley followed by Yosemite again both awesome, no images moving or still could do them justice. Then Sacramento, time to hand the rental car back, with no checks other than fuel in the tank! The highlight of a visit to Sacramento has to be the California State Railroad Museum set within the Old Sacramento Waterfront District with old wooden buildings and sidewalks. The museum itself is a modern building (1981), very well laid out, well presented exhibits and information.

I had not checked to see if it was a running day but we were very blessed as there was to be a corporate fundraising event that evening. We were fortunate to see Granite Rock No. 10 a USATC S100 Class 0-6-0T built by Porter in 1942 manoeuvring around the yard along with Southern Sacramento 2030 an Ex-Army GM-EMD switcher. Built 1951, it was arranging passenger cars for the evening event. The undoubted highlight had to be pulling exhibits from the museum onto the turntable and arranging them in the yard for the evening. This was all done by California State Railroad Museum's No.2 a diminutive

TRAIN BULLETIN			
WESTBOUND			
NO	TRAIN	DUE	REMARKS
19	CONTINENTAL LIMITED	10:15 A.M.	
21	GOLD COAST LIMITED	12:20 P.M.	
7	LOS ANGELES LIMITED	1:27 P.M.	
EASTBOUND			
8	LOS ANGELES LIMITED	12:58 P.M.	
22	GOLD COAST LIMITED	3:25 P.M.	
20	CONTINENTAL LIMITED	5:00 P.M.	

UP Passenger train schedule from Kelso Depot.

dragged out was Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe 347C a GM-EMD F7A built 1949 and looking magnificent in Santa Fe “warbonnet” livery. Next out was Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe 1010 a Baldwin 2-6-2 built 1901. There are videos at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8BjH_e5xGrMPR8SpXU7I9Q

Warning sign in Death Valley. Not too hot on 20th October - only 42°C!



The Marlow Donkey

Exhibits at California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento.

North Pacific Coast, No 12 Sonoma a 36" gauge 4-4-0 built by Baldwin in 1876. The NPC ran through the coastal area north of San Francisco.



Southern Pacific AC-12 4294 a 4-8-8-2 built by Baldwin 1944. The only surviving cab forward, which were developed in response to the problem generated by fumes in the tunnels in the high Sierras. Evidently quite successful, a cool and clean ride for the crews but they hated them as they felt very exposed with no great boiler in front of them. Would you believe this is image No. 4294 on John's camera!

An EMD F7A built 1949 for the Santa Fe and dressed in the classic "Warbonnet" livery introduced in 1936 for all ATSF passenger locomotives which I think epitomises an age of travel. It is maintained in operational condition as is its matching B unit which is also in the museum's collection..



0-6-0T Granite Rock Co. No.10 ex-US Army built by Porter in 1942, in steam in the yard at the California State Railroad Museum on 23rd October 2019.

It is, of course, to the S100 design the same as the fourteen locomotives purchased by the Southern Railway in 1946 to work in Southampton Docks.



Moving on

This time moving on by train to San Francisco, we travelled on the Capitol Corridor 8:45 departure to Oakland, the 8:45 was not a well patronised service but a good service with bicycle racks and a café. This service is listed as the 4th busiest Amtrak operated route, so maybe we had missed the rush hour. A smooth, on time and relatively fast service we changed for the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) at Richmond as this was a direct transfer, we had read this was easier and safer than negotiating Oakland!

The BART system is a heavy rail over ground and subway system consisting of 9 lines, running as far as 10 miles from the centre of SF with stations at both international airports. The rolling stock we travelled in was rather worn, quite a rough ride being built in the 1970s-80s however speeds of 70mph are common, 80mph is allowed to make up time in the tube section! The system unusually is broad gauge 5' 6", third rail DC at 1,000 volts. No photos from me as I was concentrating on getting from A to B.

San Francisco has no direct Amtrak service however a Caltrain service operated by Amtrak does run from San Jose in the south into San Francisco. Worth a look at the Caltrain website as it explains how to use and pay for travel by train. You might find it quite amusing: <http://www.caltrain.com/main.html>

San Francisco is the city of trolleys and cable cars. The organisation of public transport seems complex to the visitor (maybe it's just my age!). San Francisco Municipal Railway 'MUNI' is the main public transport provider in the city: Operating budget of approx. \$1.2 billion! 54 Bus lines, 17 Trolley bus lines, 7 Light rail lines operating above and below ground, 3 Cable car lines and 2 Heritage street car lines. MUNI deserves an article on its own: 500 diesel buses, 300 trolley buses, 200 streetcars and 40 cable cars. [Source Wikipedia]

Travelling on most of the system was a pleasure, especially the light rail and the heritage cars. As for the cable cars if you enjoy queuing you'll love it, we were out early one morning to avoid the queues. Now one of the city's most famous landmarks the first line was opened in 1873, by 1883 there were five lines and a car left the Ferry Building every 15 seconds during the rush hour!

Now the pace is more leisurely, a few of the cars used today date from 1880 though extensively rebuilt, many of the cars in use today were actually built in the 1990s.

We enjoyed riding the heritage trolleys (streetcars) on the 'F line' most of all, not only did they take you to some of the best

tourist spots but every car had its history detailed on a panel inside the car, and surprisingly the cars came from various locations across the World, also other American systems. Cars from other systems includes; 11 from Milan and 2 'Boat' cars from Blackpool, both operational. MUNI has 30 unrestored streetcars in storage!

Take a look at the streetcars on Wikipedia. It's quite amazing you just scroll and scroll the list: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Municipal_Railway_fleet#Active_PCC_fleet

The MUNI light rail system (METRO) consists of 7 lines, rolling stock consists of Breda (Italy) Built 1996-2003 units and Siemens S200 Built 2016, entered service 2017, the later are the most numerous.

Whilst researching facts for this article I came across a statement relating to Boeing's failed attempt at producing LRVs. In 2002 when Manchester hosted the Commonwealth games they were looking to increase the capacity on Metrolink, they purchased two units from MUNI. However investigations concluded the units were not in line with British safety standards regarding tram to tram collisions. [Wikipedia]

Seattle again

We flew back to family near Seattle before ending our holiday. As with many prosperous cities around the World Seattle is going through many changes including upgrading and extending its 'Sound Transit' light rail system. I was able to see various construction sites on the 'East Link Extension' when we travelled to and from Seattle. This extension will run for 14 miles from China Town out to exclusive Bellevue and on to Redmond Technology (Microsoft), the service frequency is expected to be every 6 minutes at peak times. This section will include the World's first light rail on a floating bridge, there's some interesting technology being used in terms of weight reduction and having tracks move from fixed land to a bridge that moves up and down and left and right!

There are many videos on this extension, here's one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHpVREKbOzE>

The new rolling stock will be Siemens S70 light rail units, delivery of these units has been taking place since June 2019.

If you ever get the chance do go to America, they're friendly on the West Coast, and the rail scene? Well I've just scratched the surface.

On the Streets of San Francisco

One of the infamous San Francisco Cable cars waiting its turn at Powell/Mason cable car turnaround on 24th October 2019.

They were first introduced into the city in 1873 and proved to be the ideal solution to coping with the city's steep hills; the cars being attached to a continuously moving cable. By 1890 there were 23 such lines in operation but today only three survive.

Whilst a popular tourist attraction, they are synonymous with the city as red double deck buses are to London and, like them, are an integral part of the transport system.



Some of San Francisco's streetcars, old and new.

Top Left: A 'Peter Witt' Historic Streetcar 1814 (built 1911-1915) at Pier 23 San Francisco.

Top right: A PCC type streetcar 1055 waits at Fisherman's Wharf. This car is one of 32 from Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA).

Above left: Another PCC car, 1050 is in the livery of St. Louis Public Service Company, built 1948 for Philadelphia Transportation Company.

Above right: The latest Siemens Light Rail 'S200' units street running near the Duboce Park stop on San Francisco's F Line. These units were introduced from 2017.

The SS Jeremiah O'Brian, one of the Liberty ships that brought much needed supplies to the UK in WWII pictured through the State Belt Railroad Ferry Terminal, Pier 43 San Francisco.



THEN AND NOW: BOURNE END



Photo: Colour Rail DE1100

We stay close to home for this selection with two views of Bourne End. In the photograph above we have a Pressed Steel single unit calling on its way from High Wycombe to Maidenhead sometime in the early 1960s.

Moving on to the present day the only obvious common point in the photograph of GWR 165124 taken on 12th February this

year is the goods shed on the right which is now an auction house. Further changes are coming, the boarding on the left hides the construction of a new block of flats whilst, hopefully, remodelling the junction is not too far in the future.

Photo: Mike Walker

