

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

174

December 2021



Contents:
Ghost Mystery at Stanley
Vintage Railfan Recollections
Memories of Furze Platt in the 1960s
Tickets Please!

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

COMMITTEE

President:	Mark Hopwood CBE
Chairman:	Mike Hyde. 11 Forty Green Drive, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 2JX Tel.: 01628 485474 email: michaelahyde@uwclub.net
Treasurer:	Peter Robins. 1 Chalklands, Bourne End, Bucks., SL8 5TQ. Tel.: 01628 527870 email: pd.robins@btopenworld.com
Secretary:	Vincent Caldwell. email: vincent@mosesplat.uk.
Webmaster:	Dave Woodhead. email: dave.woodhead@uwclub.net
Outings Organiser:	Brian Hopkinson. email: hopkinson005@gmail.com
Publicity:	Keith Gower email: gowerstowers@btinternet.com
Donkey Editor:	Mike Walker, Solgarth, Marlow Road, Little Marlow, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 3RS. Tel.: 07791 544426 email: mikewalker@solgarth.eclipse.co.uk

Website: www.mdrs.org.uk

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
GHOST MYSTERY AT STANLEY David Gardner	4
VINTAGE RAILFAN RECOLLECTIONS - Part 2 Don Woodworth	7
MEMORIES OF FURZE PLATT IN THE 1960s Allan Machon	11
RETURN TO STEAM Tim Edmonds	13
TICKETS PLEASE! - Part 1 Martin Stoolman	17
THEN AND NOW: WILDERSWIL Tim Edmonds	19

Front Cover Photographs

Top: 6000 King George V on the down main with a Swindon train. 7 October 2021.

Tim Speechley (Article page: 13)

Bottom: 6000 KGV on a Birmingham to Kensington Olympia special passes High Wycombe. 4 October 1971.

Dave Theobald (Article page: 13)

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held in the Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Rd, Bourne End at 7.15 for 7.30pm or can be attended on-line on Zoom (see page 3).

- Thursday 2 December **THREE DECADES OF CHANGE ON THE FOOTPLATE** Lee Davis
Lee's presentation will cover his career on the railway, From his early age interest in trains; via a Youth Training Scheme to starting on the footplate in the mid-80s up to the present day. The changes in the locos, and work from his perspective.
This programme will be presented by Zoom ONLY and please note the earlier than usual date.
- Thursday 20 January **1970 - THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS FOR EUROPE** Geoff Plumb
Geoff's Presentation is a photographic retrospective of his travels during 1970. These include shots around the Whitby area and early days on the NYMR, London Transport, WCML in London and the remains of Tadcaster station. His first trip to Germany follows, chasing steam around the Black Forest area, then a short section on North Wales Narrow Gauge and Barry Scrapyard. A few shots on the ECML and MML in London follow that and a short trip to the Severn Valley, then also in its infancy. A selection of pictures from his second trip to Spain and Portugal follows and the show winds up with a bit of French steam in Paris.
- Thursday 17 February **A LATE CHRISTMAS TURKEY** Peter Robins
Turkey was a steam enthusiast's paradise between 1978 and 1983 as locos from more than twenty different classes were used over much of the country. The presentation covers many of the steam operations including the intense suburban services around Izmir in the west, heavy freights in the spectacular Euphrates gorge in the east and American built locos on both passenger and freight workings along the Black Sea coast in the north. A few working 8F's are also included.
- Thursday 17 March **HERITAGE RAILWAYS OF THE ISLE OF MAN** Colin Miell
A detailed look at the Isle of Man, and its wonderful heritage railways, covering many decades from the late sixties, right through to September 2021. The later years will be digital originals, and the 'golden oldies' will be mainly scans of Kodachrome slides.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

As we rapidly approach the end of the calendar year (please do not remind me of the shopping days to Christmas) we hope we have turned the corner on Covid 19, at least as far as we can so far. No doubt it will be with us in some form for ages so we must work around or through it. Your committee have been battling with what to do, when to do it and how. We have plan A and a plan B which should be enough for a while. Please be patient with us as we master the black art of Zoom IT.

I do not want to tempt fate but it always seems to me that one or another disaster happens about now. Unfortunately they happen all the time but we notice them more at Christmas and New Year. We have recently had a few railway accidents, all well reported, and thankfully with little or no serious injuries. Invariably it is the front man, i.e., the driver, who cops the worst so our thoughts should be with those whose job it is to get us where we want to be, safely. And do not forget, as if we would, the Signallers who often carry most of the responsibility. Nor should we forget the trackside PW workers who have to go out in all weathers to check or repair possible faults. So to all our big railway and heritage railway friends we wish them a Happy Christmas with their families and friends and being safe.

Naturally similar wishes go to all our society members and those far and wide who listen in to our Zoom talks or who read this periodical. Get out there please, keep the shutter clicking and

when it is cold and dark outside, pen a few lines on your photographic experiences, railway stories or train travels. Post them to the Editor and await seeing your works of art in print.

I frequently mention the many programmes on TV. I was especially pleased to see my former company RTC with a consist behind *Tornado* on a run to Edinburgh guided by Bill Nighy. Even 'Salvage Hunters' often end up at a heritage railway centre and having paid a pittance walk off with artefacts to sell at a profit. Toilet signs seem very popular – is it a flush in the pan thing? I am surprised what the railways gets rid of rather than offer around but they all need money. May be Drew Pritchard will one day buy an HST cab for his shop window display in Wales.

No social event this year again but I am sure it will not stop you enjoying the festive season. By the way, the AGM will be with us in February so it is YOUR chance to get involved in YOUR club. Why not think about putting YOUR name forward to join the committee. It is not an onerous role and you get to learn what is happening first. You also get to buy the biscuits for committee meetings (when we have them) and most of all help put the chairs out at club meetings!

See you all in the New Year.

Cheers to Santa.

Mike Hyde

SOCIETY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

Once again we welcome several new members, Allan Machon from Maidenhead, Edward (Ted) Micklam from Ashford in Kent and Peter Rodgers from Sheffield (and previously Marlow in the late 1960s).

FUTURE MEETINGS

Please note the December Zoom meeting is TWO WEEKS earlier than usual on Thursday 2nd December.

Going forward, it is our intention to resume live meetings at the Bourne End Community Centre from January, subject to any new Government imposed restrictions of course.

However, mindful that many of our associate members have enjoyed being able to take part in our meetings by Zoom and that there may be those who could get to Bourne End but are still cautious about mixing for whatever reason, it is our intention to live stream the meetings using Zoom.

The programme for the first part of 2022 has now been finalised and is shown on page 2. We have been cautious in arranging speakers for these first meetings in case things have to be changed, each can switch to Zoom only should it be necessary.

If you wish to take part in any meetings via Zoom the procedure will be exactly the same as for Zoom only meetings – we will send out invitations to register a week or so in advance. The only change will be that it won't be possible to accept registrations up to 18:30 on the day as Peter will, of course, be fully occupied setting up (and no doubt troubleshooting!) at the Community Centre.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

After last year's pause, subscriptions become due for renewal in January. The good news is that Peter Robins has once again decided to keep the rate unchanged for the coming year, that is £16.00. The reduced rate for those of you who live some distance away and therefore attend meetings only on rare occasions remains at £8.00 with a meeting attendance fee of £2.00.

Remember, the Society now has a bank account with Lloyds which has a number of advantages over the previous account for both members and the treasurer. If you have on-line banking, you may make bank transfers to the Society.

The sort code is 30-95-36

The account no. is 62236160

If you wish to pay your subs by this method, please put "SUBS" and your name (including initial) - e.g. "SUBS-J.BLOGGS" - in the reference, and MDRS in the "Pay" box if required.. You could also set up a Standing Order to pay MDRS every 1st January which would be most convenient for both parties.

If you wish to pay for anything else by this method, please reference accordingly - e.g. "XMAS-J.BLOGGS" (Xmas) or "DON-J.BLOGGS" (Donation) or as advised. If you have any issues with the reference, please drop an e-mail to pd.robins@btopenworld.com advising of the payment.

Of course you may still pay by cash or cheque. Please note that ONLY cheques made out to "MDRS" or "Marlow & District Railway Society" will be accepted by the bank.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As usual the Society's AGM will be held at the beginning of the February meeting and as in previous years, the relevant documentation will be distributed in advance to all members. Please take a look at these on receipt to allow business to be conducted swiftly on the night.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Our meetings have continued on Zoom this autumn and have been well attended.

In September Simon Colbeck took us on a trip across Europe visiting Sweden and Bosnia for steam, among other things.

Colin Brading's presentation Tracks in the Mist in October was a fascinating look at two long lost light railways, the Brill Tramway and the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead.

Geoff Warren's presentation in November covered over 6000 km of railway of gauges at or less than 2ft 6in that were built in the Indian subcontinent.

DERRICK BURNHAM

Sadly we have to report that Derrick Burnham passed away earlier this year. A member of the Society for many years, he was a former railwayman and worked at Gerrards Cross, Beaconsfield and High Wycombe stations. He always seemed to find out when something unusual was expected to pass and took a camera to work. Unfortunately he was also "old school" and never digitised his large slide collection. We are attempting to discover what has happened to it.

RCTS MEETINGS

Our friends in the RCTS have the following meetings planned for the coming months.

Monday 24th January

Railways of New Zealand Colin Brading

Monday 28th February

That Was The Year That Was - 1968 Geoff Plumb

Monday 28th March

Rail Operations Group Karl Watts, CEO ROG

Meetings are held at the Cox Green Community Centre, Highfield Lane, Cox Green, SL6 3AX starting at 19:30 and like ours by Zoom. MDRS members always welcome. To register to attend by Zoom visit <https://rcets.org.uk/windsor-maidenhead/events/> and follow the link there.

MAIDENHEAD MODEL EXHIBITION

After being cancelled last year, the Marlow, Maidenhead & District Model Railway Club will once again be holding their annual exhibition in the new year subject to any restrictions. It is on Saturday 8th January from 10:00 to 17:00 and the location is the Cox Green Community Centre, details as above.

DONKEY CONTRIBUTIONS

There has been a good response to recent appeals and the Editor's "pending folder" is now well-filled for the next few issues. Thanks to all who have contributed and they will be used but you might have to wait to see them!

GHOST MYSTERY AT STANLEY

David Gardner



In 1151, the Cistercian Abbey of Stanley just over 2 miles from Chippenham in Wiltshire was founded and continued to be occupied by the white-habited monks until the suppression of the abbey in 1538.

The buildings and land were then sold, lead removed from the roof and stones used to build an impressive mansion at Bromham, near Devizes. This building itself was destroyed in the Civil War so apart from extensive earthworks nothing remained of the existence of the abbey, or so it seemed.

In 1863 a railway was built from Chippenham to Calne to the 7' 0¼" broad gauge. It opened to goods traffic on 29th October 1863 and passenger use on Tuesday 3rd November of the same year. In August 1874 the line was converted to standard 4' 8½" gauge and for nearly 102 years trains trundled along the line until closure on 23rd September 1965.

For much of its history the branch had a fairly healthy service for goods as well as passengers. Trains of cattle wagons would take live pigs to Calne before being herded through the streets to the C&T Harris Ltd meat factory. Specially branded Siphon C's and Siphon F's even had roof boards taking Harris's bacon and sausages to all parts of the country.

So things continued with few mishaps for much of the line's history, that is until one evening in October 1958. As well as being dark, fog had been descending for some hours so the journey from Calne to Chippenham was going to be strain for Driver Bill Dixon and Fireman Walter Lovelock. Their engine was a 57xx class pannier 4612 with one coach and four Harris branded Siphon C's. They were due to depart at 7.05pm but were a few minutes down on leaving. No stop was made at Black Dog Halt then after passing over the A4 London to Bath road the railway skirted Searchers Wood. After going under Hazeland Bridge, the train entered a thick wooded area. Due to the dense fog and darkness of the night and trees it was nigh on impossible to see anything. Then suddenly they were in the

Calne station with 1406 and a two-coach auto arriving from Chippenham in the 1950s.

Lens of Sutton

open. Driver Dixon had been gradually winding down the speed of the loco so that as they came out of the wood both driver and fireman were amazed to see hooded figures dressed in white robes crossing the railway line in front of them.

As the train was barely moving Bill Dixon brought it to a stop, then both men jumped down from the loco. Despite the fog the white-gowned and hooded figures reached the post and wire fence on the north side of the line and passed through it.

"They're the ghosts of monks" shouted Walter, "and heading to where the abbey once was". Both men looked into the field and there before them was a large church-like building, cruciform in shape. "It's the Abbey" said Walter, "but it can't be real, it disappeared hundreds of years ago". Just then the Guard Frank Tursley came up. "What are you two doing stopping in the middle of nowhere? Stanley Halt is ½ a mile away". "We had to stop", said Bill, "there were monks crossing the line, eight of them and they were walking towards the Abbey over there". But when they looked again the image had gone and there was only darkness and fog. Frank started laughing, "you're both mad", get back on that engine and get us moving again, at least we can blame the delay on the fog".

"But we both saw it all", said Walter, who had turned pale with fright. "Ha!" said the guard, "I bet you've both been drinking". "Alright", Bill responded, "we're not going to hang about here now", and both men climbed up into the cab and within moments the train was on its way. Not unusually for this time of the evening no one made use of the Stanley Bridge Halt then it was a more or less gradual climb as far as Cocklebury where a steep in 60 gradient was approached. Once the summit was reached it was an easy drop into the fish dock at Chippenham station.



Black Dog Halt with 5406 heading towards Calne with a two-coach auto in the early 1950s.

M J Deane

Stanley Bridge Halt looking towards Calne in the 1950s .

Lens of Sutton

Walter got down from the footplate to uncouple the Siphons so that the yard shunter could move them to be attached to a Swindon-bound train. Then they had some time to spare before moving their loco. "Fancy a pint in The Railway?" Bill asked Walter. But his mate was hesitant and replied "I don't know, we had a drink in the King George earlier, and I was thinking what Frank said. Maybe it did affect our reasoning about seeing those images." "Poppycock", said Bill, "but if that's how you feel, we'll have some tea instead. But let's forget about ghostly monks and abbeys shall we". They both laughed and headed off to the shunters' cabin for some well-earned tea.





Chippenham Cocklebury with the Calne Branch veering off to the right. Four cattle wagons of BR, LMS, SR and GWR origin await their next load of pigs for Harris Bacon Factory at Calne. 27th July 1960.

Chippenham station, London end with the Fish Dock Bay just out of picture and behind to the right. 1950s.

Lens of Sutton



Footnotes

Pannier tank 4612 was allocated to Swindon for many years, sub-shedded at Chippenham, so would have worked on the Calne branch now and again. It was a complete surprise to the author that it had been preserved and has been on hire to the Cholsey & Wallingford Railway, from the Bodmin & Wenford Railway during 2021.

The King George public house was located on the corner of New Road and Church Street Calne and was probably the nearest of the many inns in those two roads. It was closed by 2010 and is currently awaiting conversion to flats.

The Railway Inn, Old Road Chippenham was rebuilt with a new frontage in the 1930s and renamed George's Railway but was always known as The Railway. It closed in the 1990s and was converted into flats but still looks like the pub it was.

Vintage Railfan Recollections

Colonel Don Woodworth, USAF (Retired)



Last time we left Don, now a second lieutenant in the US Air Force, about to be posted to Vietnam. Naturally, he didn't allow this to curtail his railfanning!

My year in Vietnam was most interesting, with my time roughly divided with 20% in Saigon; 35% in Qui Nhon, and 45% in Da Nang. Following my safe return to the United States in the fall of 1967, I concluded that God must protect fools and second lieutenants and I had at least four serious occasions to have gotten myself killed during my time of service in the war zone.

In Saigon, I found my way to the main railway station and did some photography there. Qui Nhon on the central coast was more interesting. By chance, I met a US Army sergeant assigned as a liaison officer to the Vietnamese National Railway, which had a line from the port of Qui Nhon running west to the connection with the north-south Saigon-Hanoi main line at Dieu Tri. This segment of line was used to move construction material to Phu Cat AB, then under construction to host US Air Force F-100 fighter bombers. I had already explored the small freight yard in Qui Nhon and made notes regarding all of the dumped steam locomotives there – plus several still active 4-6-2s which I was hoping to actually see in service. Alas, that was not to be, but I did see a reasonable amount of activity supplied by a vintage French Alsthom diesel-electric shunter and a General Electric export-model U8B export model shunter.

The sergeant arranged for me to ride the trains between Qui Nhon and Phu Cat on a number of occasions. I should have become suspicious (and worried) when the train stopped en route at a small marshalling yard in Dieu Tri to add an armored car with radio equipment to our consist – plus a flatcar ahead of the locomotive to detonate mines before proceeding on to Phu Cat. I later learned that we were operating in Viet Cong territory and that this was the reason for the precautions. On about my third or fourth journey, I finally gave up these excursions as a bad idea when machine gun fire interrupted the peaceful clickety-clack of the rails. I carried a side-arm with me but, truth be told, I'd have probably been more comfortable with a bucket of

Freight (goods) trains regularly operated over the meter gauge tracks of the Vietnam National Ry. between Qui Nhon and Phu Cat. In this photo, a 900 hp General Electric (series #907-954 built for Vietnam in 1963) U8B export locomotive BB-916 is propelling/pulling a train of cars along the Hu'ng Vuong highway on the western outskirts of Qui Nhon on 27th December 1966. Ahead of the locomotive is an armored platform car and two flat cars loaded with stone intended to detonate any pressure mines before the engine might strike them. Some of these locomotives still remain in service in Vietnam today.

All photographs by the author.

grenades that I could have pitched. At any rate and to my considerable relief, the gun-fire turned out to be a Vietnamese soldier firing into a stream to stun some fish for lunch. Even so, I immediately decided there were better ways to do fish & chips than this and made this my last trip on Vietnamese National Railways.

All was not lost however. I had accumulated sufficient notes on my travels between Qui Nhon and Phu Cat to write an article for submission to Trains Magazine, the premier magazine for gricers in the United States. While working on the article one evening, my squadron commander, who had traveled south from Da Nang for a visit to my detachment, chanced to pass by where I was writing – a little bit merry from a visit to the officer's mess bar – and casually asked what I was doing. I replied that I was writing a magazine article, to which he immediately responded that he wanted me to come up to squadron headquarters in Da Nang and put together a squadron yearbook. What does a second lieutenant say to a lieutenant colonel but "Yes sir!" and I then continued what I had been doing after the colonel disappeared.

I forgot about the incident, putting it down to the boss being a tad tipsy, until the phone rang about a week later and the colonel asked why I hadn't yet come up to Da Nang. Oops!!! The old man was serious! I was soon on a flight to Da Nang, where I



took up new duties as passenger service officer by day and yearbook editor by night. No problem there as we were not allowed off-base at DaNang and the new additional duty kept me from being bored.

As it turned out, the base photo lab was located quite close to the air passenger terminal so, in exchange for quickly expediting photo specialists to wherever they might need to go, I had use of their facilities during off-peak periods to produce photos for the year book. Soldiers and airmen serving in Vietnam were allowed one trip out of country for Rest & Relaxation (R&R) during their tour of duty. I chose Singapore because a neighbor's daughter from near home in Connecticut had married an Australian chap who taught mathematics in a British Army school in Singapore – so I had a wonderful opportunity to visit; sight-see; grice a little bit; and enjoy my evenings free of incoming rocket fire. In addition to this, I had three additional out of country trips associated with finding a printer for the book, getting it printed, and picking it up for shipment back to Vietnam. These trips took me to Taiwan, the Philippine Islands, and Japan. I of course took care of government and squadron business first – BUT – there was still steam in Taipei and Tokyo – and a diesel-powered passenger train to ride from Manila to Clark AB.

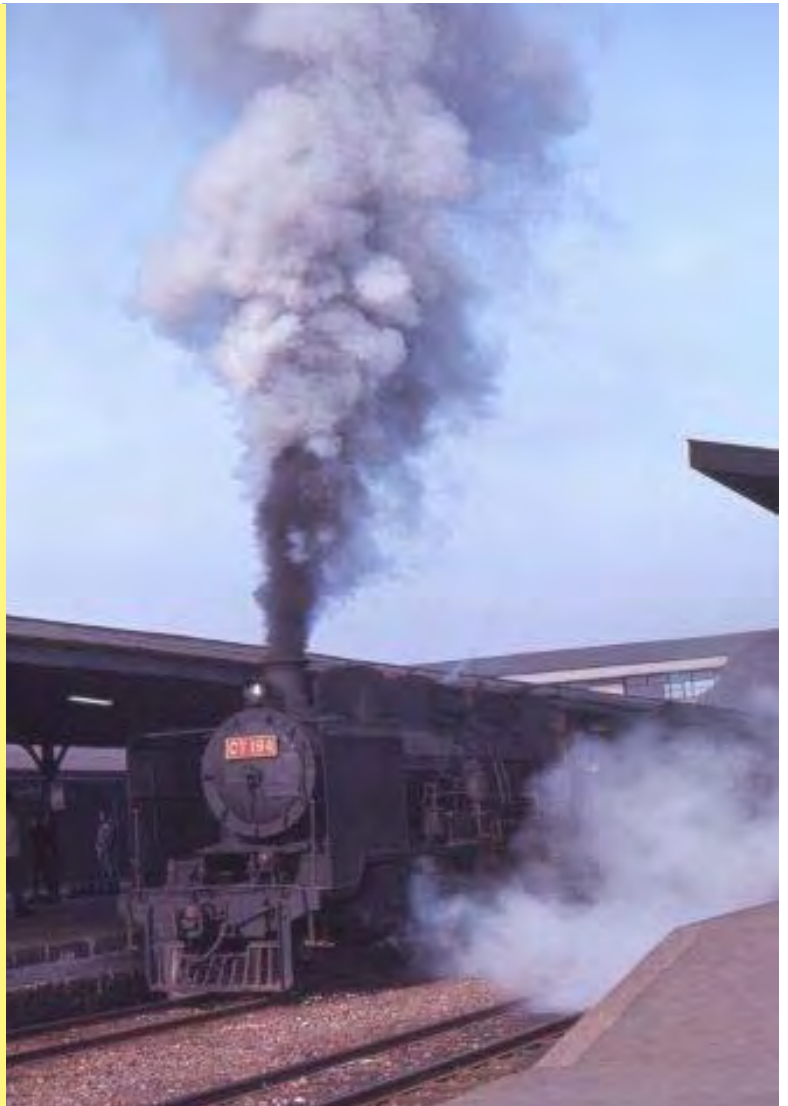
Japan was especially fun, as I got to make three trips there. On one of them, I had opportunity to visit the National Railway Museum where I chanced to meet a young Japanese railway enthusiast of about my own age. This led to a pleasant visit to his home and all kinds of information on where to find the remnants of steam still serving Tokyo and other areas to the north. Ryogoku, less than two miles north of Central Station in downtown Tokyo, was one of the few remaining outposts where steam still served during the Tokyo rush hour. Needless to say, I went there at first opportunity – where, on a sunny afternoon, I encountered a surprised television crew from a local Tokyo station doing a documentary on the last of steam in the metro-

On 17th February 1967, I rode a goods train from Qui Nhon to Phu Cat behind French-built 850 hp Alsthom diesel BB901 (BB-901-906 provided to Vietnam National Rys. under a French Assistance program in 1959). From Qui Nhon to Dieu Tri, the arrangement of protective cars was as shown in Fig. 6 but at the Dieu Tri marshalling yard, two extra armored cars were added as shown in this photo for the onward trip to Phu Cat – one primarily for the use of Vietnamese soldiers and another armored communications car equipped with a gun turret. Behind these cars one can see flat cars loaded with perforated steel planking being used by the USAF to lay out a temporary runway at Phu Cat prior to the construction of a concrete air strip.

polis. Next morning at the publishing house where I was having the book printed, a pleasantly surprised Mr. Hoyano greeted me with a “Donald, what were you doing in Ryogoku yesterday?” and it was then I realized that my ugly mug had been broadcast with the likes of a JNR C57 Pacific the previous evening – my first experience with international fame!

Tokyo still had a fairly extensive tram system as well and I also managed to explore a good bit of it too. I grew up not terribly far from the electrified four-track main line of the NY, NH & H RR linking New Haven, CT with New York City. Hence I was an early believer in the theory that there can never be enough wire in the sky. I am barely old enough to remember the operation of trams in New Haven, CT, the last city in which they ran in my home state in 1948, so I have always relished the opportunity to observe their operation in other places. Tokyo was an absolute treat, with 41 lines and 128 miles of line still operating at near the peak of surface line operation with abandonments just starting to take place following the construction of new tube lines and other alternatives as a result of the 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics.

The railways in Taiwan, like many other places, were in the transition from steam to diesel traction in the mid-1960s. In pre-internet days, arriving in Taiwan from Vietnam was like landing on the moon – I had no idea what to expect. Hence, I was delighted to discover that amidst all of the export diesels that I saw on trains in the area around the capital city of Taipei, steam was still alive on freight trains and on a number of commuter trains. This photo shows Taiwan Railway Administration 2-6-0 CT194 (derived from Japanese National Railways Class 8620) departing the main railway station in Taipei with a short commuter train on 18th April 1967. My experience with steam locomotives in the States was that smoke deflectors were usually applied only to high-speed express engines (4-6-4s, 4-8-4s and the like) so it was interesting to note their application to a small mixed-traffic engine. These locomotives were built by Kisha Seizo in Japan between 1919-1928 with 1400 mm (56") drivers, 470 x 610 mm (18.8 x 24.4") cylinders, a boiler pressure of 13 atmospheres (191#), and a weight of 84 tons. CT152 survives in preservation.



Much of Tokyo had been heavily bombed during WW II and the rebuilt areas tended to be of fairly bland, utilitarian concrete construction. Being somewhat of a traditionalist, I tended to prowl around to try and find older neighborhoods with a bit of character. Thus, I was delighted to get this shot of Tokyo Toden #1056 on Line 4 on 14th May 1967 near the Akebanebashi tube station serving Shiba Park and the Tokyo Tower area. The Class 1000 cars (1000-1129) were built from the components of older (1906-07) cars between 1932-1936 and 62 of them survived WW II. Scrapping began in 1964 and all were gone by 1967 save for two that survived in preservation until unfortunately being scrapped in the 1990s. All were built to the Tokyo gauge of 4' 6" save for a small group modified for the system's sole 3' 6" gauge line.





JNR Pacific C57.33 and Prairie C58.3 staged for afternoon commuter train departures from Ryogoku. Relatively nearby Ueno was the other location still served by steam. Particularly at Ryogoku, photography was a gricer's nightmare. Because of the departure times, back-lit dark engines were the norm! Overcast, rather than sunny, days would likely have been a better photographic situation.

Japanese National Railway had 201 3'6" gauge C57 Class Pacifics built between 1937 and 1947 by four builders: Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Kisha Seizo, Hitachi, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. The locomotives were withdrawn from passenger service in December 1975, though an amazing total of 32 have been preserved, two serviceable. With 5'9" drivers, 20x24" cylinders, 227.5 lb. psi boiler pressure, and 28,204 lb. of tractive effort, the engines were capable of a maximum speed of 62 mph. If they had a fault, it was being terribly homely with Swiss-cheese-like main drivers, wide skirting around the tops of their stacks, and smoke deflectors that over-dominated their front ends. Still, steam was steam in the 1960s and it was a delight to see these engines in service.

JNR had 427 C58 Prairies built between 1938-1947 by Kawasaki Heavy Industries and Kisha Seizo. The last of the type were retired in 1973 with over 50 preserved - two in working order. The locomotive shown in this photo, C58.3, is preserved in the small town of Kiyosato on far northern Hokkaido. The C58s were designed to combine the speed of earlier 8620 class engines and the power of earlier 9600 class engines. Engine and tender weighed 100.2 tons in working order, with 5' drivers, 19.5 x 24" cylinders, 227.5 psi boiler pressure; and 27,654 lb. of tractive effort giving them a maximum speed of about that of the C57s. These engines were as homely as the C57s but still a treat to see in operation.



The young woman posed in front of the pilot of C57.33 was a member of staff of the television company that was doing a local color documentary on the disappearing steam scene in Tokyo on the afternoon I happened to materialize in Ryogoku. I think the photographic team was as surprised to see me, a foreign visitor, as I was to see them but we quickly established a rapport and had a friendly laugh about it - ultimately resulting in my appearance on Tokyo TV that evening. Health & Safety would have had a tiz about how the young woman was posed atop the rail.

Memories of Furze Platt in the 1960s

Allan Machon



Furze Platt Halt in its original condition looking towards Maidenhead probably around the time Allan moved to the area.

I moved to Furze Platt in 1963. Sadly, this was the year after the auto trains stopped working and the branch was then worked by 117 heritage units and sometimes a bubble car. It was still open to High Wycombe in those days which meant there through trains and a limited amount of freight. Furze Platt was manned round the clock in three shifts – 6am to 2pm; 2pm to 10pm and 10pm to 6am. The three guys involved were Edgar, Arthur, and Bert. I quickly made friends with all three and spent many happy evenings at the station.

In those days, the ticket office (North Town signal box) was on the opposite side from now i.e., with its back to the railway. Between the box and the road was a five-lever frame. One levers locked the huge gates, two levers controlled each wicket gate, and two levers controlled the distant signals which could only be operated when the gates were closed and locked. The seventh lever, if I recall, was a spare. The distant signal lever in the 'up' direction was hard work as it was a 1,000 yard 'pull', the signal being located on the Cookham side of Spencer's Bridge. Poor Edgar had a double hernia and seldom bothered with this signal unless I was there to help! Edgar was probably the most interesting to talk to as he had been at the station since it opened in July 1937. In those days, he said, he hardly ever had to open the gates to road traffic as very little ever came down Harrow Lane. Bit different now!

Every weekday evening, two 'down' freights came through in quick succession. At around 8pm, there was a Slough to

Wolverhampton freight which always had a 'Hall' followed around 8.15pm by a Southall to Birkenhead freight which invariably had a 'Castle'. Shortly after this, the local passenger followed. With two freights so close together, I assume something must have been 'looped' – in those days, trains could pass at both Cookham and Bourne End. Somehow, I never bothered to find out! Later in the evening, occasionally there would be a 'tanner -one' wandering up from the Wycombe direction with a couple of wagons and a brake van and make its way slowly towards Slough.

Various excursion traffic used this route. One evening I saw a 'Jubilee' with 8 on, which I later found out was a Windsor to Derby excursion. BIs were quite common also with excursions from Windsor to various places on the Eastern Region. I was told (but never witnessed it) that *Evening Star* ran the branch with a special. I bet that made the flanges squeal coming out of Maidenhead! Access to the branch from Maidenhead was easy from platforms 3,4 and 5. What a change – only platform 5 has access now.

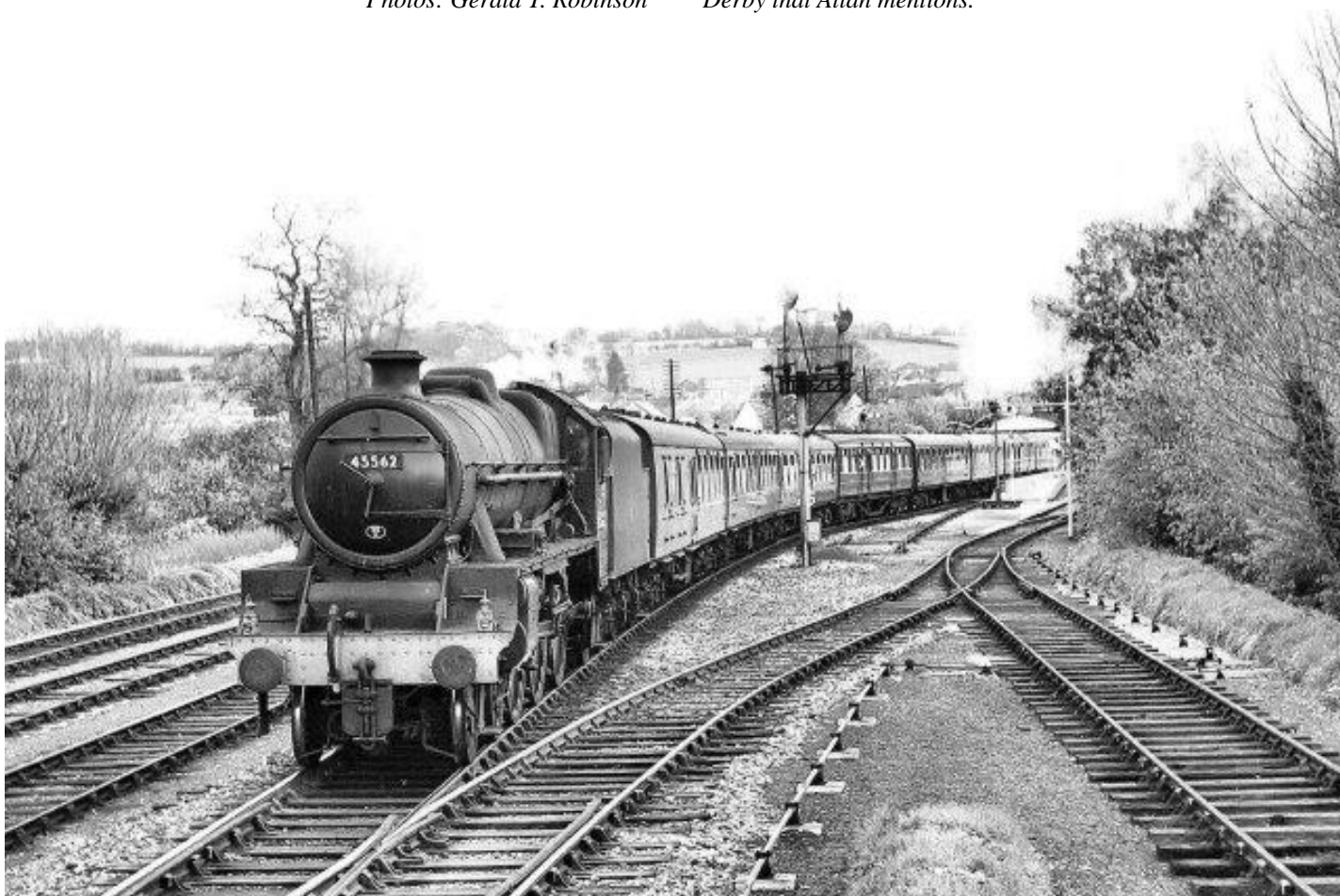
Those were both interesting and happy days. Sadly, today's railway has very little of interest compared with those days. Not much fun getting old, but along with many of my friends, I am glad I lived and enjoyed that era.



6979 Helperly Hall comes off the Down Relief and takes the Wycombe Branch out of Maidenhead with a down freight - possibly the evening Slough to Oxley Sidings (Wolverhampton) working Allan describes.

Photos: Gerald T. Robinson

Jubilee 45562 Alberta leaving Bourne End with an excursion. Where it originated from is not known but other pictures taken on the same day show it went to Windsor & Eton Central and returned by the same route. It might well be the train from Derby that Allan mentions.



RETURN TO STEAM

Tim Edmonds



6000 King George V heading north at Culham with the Hereford to Birmingham special on 2nd October 1971.
Tim Speechley

In these days of regular main line steam workings over significant parts of the network, it is easy to forget the years of the infamous BR main line steam ban. Apart from 4472 *Flying Scotsman*, for which a running agreement was already in place, no steam loco was permitted to run on BR after the last-day special of 11th August 1968 (with the obvious exception of the narrow-gauge Vale of Rheidol line). In practice there were a few cases of the rule being broken, with various light-engine movements to heritage lines, but it was not possible to travel behind steam on the main line other than on a 4472-worked special. Even these outings were not to last for long because after working an RCTS special at the end of October 1968, 4472 went into the Hunslet Engine Works for overhaul prior to departure for its ill-fated tour of the USA. Delays to the original schedule meant that, in addition to a few running-in trips in February and March 1969, the loco was used on several main line tours before its eventual departure in September. That seemed to be the end for British main line steam operations, but remarkably a new dawn came in 1971. This was when, at the instigation of Bulmer's Cider, 6000 *King George V* (KGV) hauled a rake of privately-owned Pullman carriages, the Bulmer's 'Cider Train', on a series of main line excursions.

Only a few years before this main line outing, KGV had been languishing at the back of what was left of Swindon running shed. The person to thank for its restoration to running order and eventual return to the main line was Peter Prior, Managing Director of H P Bulmer, cider makers of Hereford. He was a railway enthusiast who had already acquired five Pullman carriages as an exhibition train to promote the company's products and he then negotiated a deal to restore KGV to running order in return for being allowed to exhibit it at Hereford for at least two years. The loco was moved to Newport in August 1968 for restoration and in November 1968 arrived at Hereford where for the next few years the steam open days were a popular attraction, with KGV running over about a mile of track by the

cider factory. Two years later Prior pulled off a deal to put the loco and Bulmer's train together on the main line, thereby breaking the BR steam ban. A 'Return to Steam' tour was arranged comprising four 'experimental excursions' in October 1971, preceded by a proving test run from Hereford to Newport on 15th September. Between the excursions loco and train were on display to the public at various locations, with admission by a 10p souvenir ticket. The itinerary was:

2nd October: Hereford – Birmingham via Severn Tunnel Junction, Didcot, Oxford and Leamington Spa.

3rd October: On display at Tyseley.

4th October: Birmingham – Kensington Olympia via Banbury and High Wycombe.

5th and 6th October: On display at Kensington Olympia.

7th October: Kensington Olympia – Swindon.

8th October: On display at Swindon.

9th October: Swindon – Hereford.

In addition to the author, at least two present and one past member of MDRS witnessed some of these events and have contributed to this feature – Tim Speechley, Mike Walker and the late Dave Theobald. Mike supplied scans of some of Dave's colour photos and Tim contributed some of his own colour shots, while mine are in black-and-white. Tim Speechley was at Culham on 2nd October for the first special and was out again on 4th October at Saunderton and then at the foot crossing near White House Tunnel. On the same day Dave and Mike were among the crowds at High Wycombe. On 5th October I went to Kensington Olympia to see KGV on display and then on the 7th chose North Pole Junction on the West London line to photograph the departing special, which was soon to pass a waiting Tim Speechley at Old Oak Common. One thing clear from the experience of all contributors is that lineside trespass was widespread. I was guilty in this respect. My photo at North Pole



Junction was taken by the down running line and shows others, including a friend that I was with, similarly positioned. This was in plain view of the signalman and was tolerated, but I can't remember if he said anything. We knew that it would not be possible for another train to run on either line while the special was diverging here but it all looks alarmingly dangerous by today's standards, and I don't recall attempting anything like this again. The *Railway Magazine* editorial for November 1971 commented "No one who was at Severn Tunnel Junction last October 2 will easily forget the way the worshippers of steam swarmed all over the tracks to get a better view of *King George V*, oblivious of the trains which thundered by on all sides, mercifully missing them all. If scenes such as this are repeated too often, tragedy will be the inevitable result, with the re-imposition of the ban swiftly following."

On 4th October 1971 the Birmingham to Kensington Olympia special passes High Wycombe Middle Signal Box under the footbridge crowded with onlookers as was Priory Road and the Amersham Hill bridge.

Both: Dave Theobald

Fortunately, such scenes did not prevent the long-term return of main line steam and the success of the Return to Steam specials resulted in a decision by BR the following year to relax its ban. Steam running was to be permitted over five stretches of secondary main lines, chosen because of available line capacity, the location of triangles to allow locos to be turned, and the proximity of steam preservation sites.





They were:

Birmingham Moor Street – Didcot (77 miles)
 Shrewsbury – Newport (94 miles)
 York – Scarborough (42 miles)
 Newcastle – Carlisle (60 miles)
 Carnforth – Barrow (28 miles)

BR approved no fewer than 23 locos to run on the main line and in retrospect it is a rather strange selection, with some becoming 'regulars' and others seeing little or no main line use. This list shows the loco numbers as they appeared on the published list.

GWR classes (ten locos)

4-6-0: 6000 *King George V*, 4079 *Pendennis Castle*, 7029 *Clun Castle*, 6998 *Burton Agnes Hall*.

2-6-0: 5322.

2-6-2T: 6106.

0-6-2T: 6697.

0-6-0PT: 7752, 7760.

0-4-2T: 1466.

LMS classes (seven locos)

4-6-0: 5593 *Kolhapur*, 5596 *Bahamas*, 4871, 4932, 5231, 5407, 5428 *Eric Treacy*.

LNER classes (three locos)

4-6-2: 532 *Blue Peter*, 4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley*, 60019 *Bittern*.

SR classes (one loco)

4-6-2: 35028 *Clan Line*.

BR standard classes (two locos)

4-6-0: 75029 *The Green Knight*.

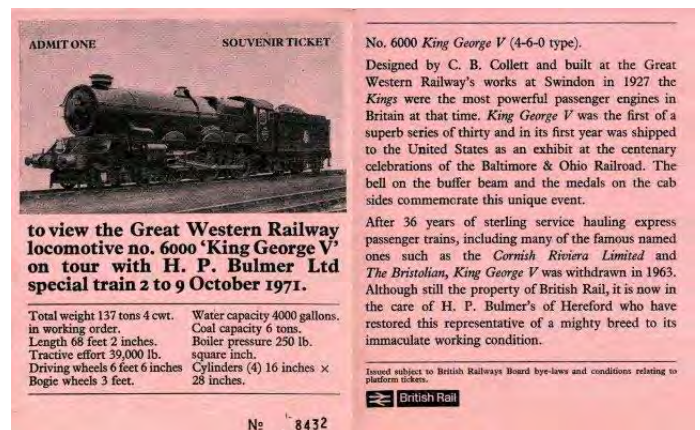
2-10-0: 92203 *Black Prince*.

The first of the specials ran on 10th June 1972, when 7029 *Clun Castle* headed the 'Birmingham Post' tour from Moor Street to Didcot, with diesel haulage on to Hereford (where *KGV* was in steam) and back to New Street. The following day 7029 worked back to Tyseley on a Great Western Society special. On 17th

KGV and the Bulmer's Cider Train on display in Platform C at Kensington Olympia station on 5th October.

Tim Edmonds

Both sides of the souvenir ticket issued at the locations where KGV and its train were on public display. This was issued to Tim Edmonds at Kensington Olympia on 5th October 1971.



June two 'Steam Safari' specials ran from St Pancras, routed so that one went from Carlisle to Newcastle and the other in the reverse direction, both being hauled over that section by 4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley*. The first trains over the other routes were on 16th September (York – Scarborough with 60019 *Bittern*), 23rd September (two return trips Carnforth – Barrow behind Black Fives, one with 44871 the other with 44932) and 14th October (trains in both directions Shrewsbury – Hereford with 5596 *Bahamas* and Hereford – Newport with *KGV*).

I don't think that any of us really believed at that time that fifty years later we now would still be witnessing main line steam operations, and that they would be over much more of the network than those pioneering runs. Long may they continue – we have been, and continue to be, greatly privileged.

The Marlow Donkey



KGV emerges from the mist to leave the West London Line at North Pole Junction with the Kensington Olympia – Swindon special. The train is taking the connection to the GW main line at Old Oak Common East Junction.
Tim Edmonds

The mist was starting to clear at Old Oak Common as KGV passed on the down main with the Swindon train on 7th October.
Tim Speechley



TICKETS PLEASE!

Recollections of a Great Western Train Guard 1999 to 2018 (Part One)

Martin Stoolman

For nearly twenty years I had the pleasure (and most of the time it was a pleasure) of looking after passengers travelling between the West of England and Paddington on board the trains of the time, which for the most part were the excellent BR-built HSTs. For myself I never worked for BR, and nor indeed for Great Western Trains, which was the management buy-out company run by Brian Scott. By 1999 the franchise had been taken over by First Group, and it was for them that I worked throughout my career. Guards on the main line from Kings Cross ended up working for four different organisations during that time: Sea Containers (GNER), National Express, the publicly owned East Coast, and finally the now also defunct Stagecoach/Virgin collaboration! I was happy that my employment was rather more stable.

The reason I have titled this series of recollections "Tickets Please" is because that phrase is the one that nicely sums up the job description of Guards in the mind of the average passenger. He or she can (understandably) get frustrated when having paid good money for their fare their ticket goes unchecked. But in fact ticket checking comes some way down the list of priorities for the Guard, behind the safety of the train, the welfare of the passengers and other members of staff on board, answering passenger queries, and dealing with other "out of course" incidents. On a typically busy Paddington to Penzance service you might get the first class tickets checked before you get to Reading, and perhaps one Standard class coach (totalling maybe 150 or so tickets in total). On leaving Reading you are likely to have disputes about seat reservations, problems with people on the wrong train, worries about connections if running late, issues with the air con etc etc to deal with before you can even think about checking tickets. Oh, and Train Planning liked to have regular passenger counts made too. Then with 70 passengers per coach and perhaps only 40 minutes left before arrival at Taunton, you only had to have a few with no ticket or the wrong ticket for that time to quickly evaporate – and you might even have only checked a couple more coaches! So my apologies to those of you on my trains (and there will be many hundreds of thousands, if not millions) who didn't have their tickets checked; it was not intentional. Another of our non-ticket checking duties was to look after disabled and elderly customers with refreshments from the buffet. Of course this involved walking past hundreds of passengers who might be holding their tickets out for me to inspect, while I simply marched on with a bag containing a cup of tea and biscuits. I suppose I can't blame them for just assuming that I was heading for the shelter of my nice Guard's compartment for the remainder of the journey, but, honestly, this was rarely the truth!

From the point of view of this article it is fortunate that us Guards were encouraged to keep a logbook of all journeys on which we were in charge of a train. It is also fortunate that when I retired at the end of April 2018 I did not put them all on a celebratory bonfire, but instead found space in my small Exeter apartment to store them - just in case one day I was asked to write my memoirs. I of course had the idea that some publisher might reward me financially for these, but I have a suspicion that in the case of the Editor of the *Marlow Donkey* this is not something that is on his list of intentions!



Martin at Bristol Parkway around 2010.

Rev David Hardy

The log books contained space to record the stopping places, the timings and formation of the train, the name of the driver, plus a column for "general remarks as to cause of delay including alteration to load during the journey". This reference to alteration of the load is of course a throwback to the days before fixed formation trains when (shock horror) the number of coaches could actually be adjusted to match the expected customer demand! In the days of privatisation, the records became useful in case you were rung to find out if you knew why you incurred station overtime on a certain journey, or lost a few minutes say between Newbury and Reading. The department wanting to know was "Delay Attribution". This had nothing to do with improving train performance of course, but existed purely to see if the financial cost of the delay could be passed on to Railtrack or another Train Operat-

ing Company. With delay minutes potentially costing the TOC anything from £100 per minute this was worth doing. Old school ex-BR staff found these phone calls particularly irritating. One mischievous Plymouth-based Guard delighted in telling the story of being rung by Delay Attribution who said "You lost 3 minutes at Thatcham." "O dear," he replied. "I've got to go back that way later. Would you like me to stop and see if I can find them?"

Of course mess room chat like this was legion. But before I go on with more stories, let's rewind to the very beginning. Just how did I end up as a Guard working for First Great Western? Well, it resulted from something of a midlife crisis; at the age of 43 I had decided I had got as far as I was going to get in the licensed trade, and I could see the writing was on the wall for many pubs and breweries. I was a committee member of the South Devon branch of the Campaign for Real Ale, as was an Exeter based HST driver, the legendary John Moreton. I can still vividly remember the conversation we had over a pint after one of our Branch meetings. I was bemoaning the state of the licensed trade and expressing a desire to do something different. "O why don't you come and join the railways?" said John. "But you can't join the railways unless your father worked for them and his father before him," I replied. "No, not nowadays," said John, "they're taking anybody straight off the streets. In fact I think the local paper is advertising vacancies for Exeter based Guards in tonight's edition." So next morning I scrounged a copy of the previous evening's *Herald Express* and, lo and behold, there was the advertisement. I applied and, after a little bit of persuasion, I got an interview and landed the job!

So it was that in early October 1999 I travelled up to Paddington for my week-long induction course. There we all were, about 20 of us of differing ages and diverse backgrounds, explaining how we came to be there. "Right," said the tutor, "the first thing I want you to do is watch this video." It was of a depot booking on point, with several male Guards and Drivers standing around chatting, and a male clerk sitting behind a desk. Shortly an attractive female entered the room to discuss something with the Clerk. After she had gone one of the train crew members started off. "Cor, she was a bit of alright." "Cracking," said another, "I certainly wouldn't mind getting together with her," and so it went on in raucous fashion. The clerk remained silent. Eventually one of the train crew turned to him and said, "O come on



Here's the "dreaded emergency coupling bar" attached to 43148 at Bristol St. Philips Marsh depot on 14th May 1994. This is the shorter version used when coupling a power car to a conventional locomotive. The weight can be imagined.

Mike Walker

Ray, stop being so stuffy, why don't you join in?" "Because she happens to be my wife," he replied.

And with that the tutor switched the video off, turned to us and said, "Right, that is your first lesson about life on the Railway. Never talk in those sort of terms because you never know who is listening, who is related to who, and who will be offended by your idle remarks." It wasn't what any of us newbies were expecting on our very first morning, but it certainly stayed with me for the whole of my career.

Four weeks of classroom teaching in Newton Abbot followed, with trips to view the delights of the Exeter Panel Box and Laira depot thrown in. At the latter location we were introduced to the dreaded coupling bars, which we needed to know how to use in the event of our HST failing out on the main line. There are two such bars, and you had to remember that the short one was to be used when being rescued by a loco, and the long one when being rescued by another HST. Welcome to a world of heavy lifting, grease and dirt! There is no doubt that my interest in railways helped me when it came to the mysteries of token-less block working, working with pilot men etc etc; however I remember really struggling to understand train braking systems, with HSTs and loco and coach trains being quite different.

Weeks of route learning followed, at the end of which we were expected to know every station, junction, gradient, level crossing, tunnel and major viaduct in an area bordered by Penzance/Plymouth/Paignton/Exeter/Bristol and Paddington. Many struggled with the complicated but crucial section between Paddington and Reading, but my Bourne End upbringing to the age of 21 gave me a distinct advantage!

Eventually the time came for me to work my first train as an Exeter based Senior Conductor (as we were called then) on Monday 21st February 2000. The roster board had told me the previous week that this was the 05:55 Exeter St Davids to London Paddington, returning with the 09:33 Plymouth as far as Exeter. But while I was in the booking on point studying the job, I was approached by a "top link" guard called Mick who told me that the commuter train turn I had been given, arriving as it did into Paddington at 08:32, was a very demanding job and something that would be very hard as a first train. He offered to swap his job, considered the easiest turn on the depot, a simple afternoon trip from Exeter to Plymouth and back. I thought he

was so kind, and immediately accepted his offer. Later another Exeter Guard roared with laughter as he pointed out the truth. At that time we were on 5% commission for all revenue on tickets sold, and the 05:55 was the most lucrative on the depot, especially on a Monday morning with the prospect of full Open fares and weekly season tickets. And it just so happened that Mick had a reputation for being the most money-grabbing Guard at the depot! But actually I didn't mind; at that time getting an easy introduction into life as a Guard on FGW's High Speed services was more important to me than a lot of commission, so it was a sensible mutual arrangement and one I remain grateful to him for.

And so I had worked my first trains. But they say the only way to learn is "on the job", gaining experience through incidents and accidents. Little did I know that I was only weeks away from my first major incident, one that remains one of my worst in my whole 18 plus years on the railway...

To be continued.



Martin (left) is seen at Goodrington Yard, Paignton, on Saturday 14th September 2002 with Exeter colleague Dale Williams. Dale is getting in a bit of overtime as the Acting Summer Saturday Yard Shunter for the day!

Rev David Hardy

THEN AND NOW: WILDERSWIL

Tim Edmonds

My visits to Switzerland in 1999 and 2019 were both based around railway travel, but covered different parts of the country and the railway network. The only lines traversed on both occasions were the metre gauge Bernese Oberland Bahnen (BOB) from Interlaken to Wilderswil and the 800mm gauge Shynige Platte Bahn (SPB), which was run as part of the BOB group and connected with it at Wilderswil. These pictures of BOB trains at Wilderswil show the considerable modernisation of both trains and infrastructure that have taken place over twenty years.

The 1999 photo was taken on 30th July and shows a train bound for Interlaken Ost arriving. It comprises seven-coach sections from Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen, each powered by a class ABeh4/4 electric railcar. The Lauterbrunnen portion is leading, powered by No 312 'Interlaken', one of three built by SLM/BBC in 1986, based on earlier builds dating from 1965, with another railcar in the middle of the train from the Grindelwald portion. The powered railcars ran round their trains at the termini. On the left is the SPB island platform, with some 800mm stock beyond it.



The 2019 photo was taken on 10th October and shows a train from Interlaken departing bang on time at 16:40 for Zweilütschinen. The leading Grindelwald portion, out of sight, was a pair of Stadler Rail ABDeh 8/8 three-car EMU sets, from a batch delivered in 2017. In the picture another of these units leads the Lauterbrunnen portion, with Abt articulated three-car set 422 at the back. Of course, with EMU operation round is no longer necessary at the termini. Striking in the photo is the refurbishment of the station platform and signs, plus the large extension to the SPB depot on the left. Common to both old and new was the spotless nature of station and track.