

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition
190

December 2025

Contents:
Riding the Cambrian Coast Express in 1966
Tickets Please - Part 15
Three Score Years and Ten

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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The contents of the *Marlow Donkey* represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Society

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Front Cover Photographs

Top: Signal gantry at the north end of Shrewsbury Station. 8 October 1966. Photo: Mike Page. Article page 5.

Main photo bottom: Virgin's 47806 passing Langstone Rock with the 06:13 Preston to Paignton. 10 July 1999. Photo: Peter Robins. Article page 9.

Inset bottom left: Stanier 'Black Five' 44775 passing through Shrewsbury. 8 October 1966. Photo: Mike Page. Article page 5.

Inset bottom right: ex-GWR 2-6-0 6368 at Welshpool. 17 August 1963. Photo: Mike Page. Article page 5.

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.

Thursday 18 December

INDIA Part 2

Peter Robins

Peter will follow on from his earlier presentation, reciting further adventures in India, always a wonderful but slightly frustrating country that was full of surprises - some good some not so. From five visits made between 1981 and 1996, both presentations include a variety of steam classes at work on broad and metre gauge and on a number of the charming narrow gauge lines at various locations. Industrial lines also feature as does steam over the border in Pakistan.

Thursday 15 January

RAILWAYS & ROYALTY

Jack Boskett

Multi-award winning photographer Jack Boskett is set to captivate audiences with his upcoming presentation, "From Railways to Royalty." His extensive portfolio includes his experiences as an official photographer during the solemn occasion of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral and the grandeur of King Charles III's Coronation. Surprisingly, Jack attributes his remarkable journey to his initial passion for railways. This seemingly unrelated interest served as the catalyst for his eventual career trajectory. And showcasing his extraordinary talent and unique perspective. Plus - Expect a lot of humour and bad jokes!

Thursday 19 February

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and WHITE GOLD

Mike Walker

Following formal business of the Annual General Meeting, Mike will examine the story of the Cornish china clay industry and the role the railways have historically and continue to have in its transportation both to ports in the county for export and to other parts of the country.

Thursday 19 March

THE CENTRAL WALES LINE

Christopher Jones

Part 1 SHREWSBURY to LLANDOVEY

Although today reduced to a secondary route through the beautiful scenery of mid-Wales, the Central Wales line has a long and fascinating history as a once busy part of the LNWR giving it access to the South Wales heartland of the GWR. In tis, the first of a two-part presentation, Christopher Jones follows the northern half of the line. Part 2 is scheduled for July 2026.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Well, here we are almost at the end of another year. It seems the old adage of time passing quicker the older one becomes is true. It only seems like yesterday that we were celebrating last Christmas.

It has been another successful year for the Society. Membership has remained just below the 100 mark which is very encouraging and attendance at meetings continues to be good although it remains frustrating that many who live close to, or even in Bourne End, choose to attend on Zoom rather than attend the community centre in person.

Once again we have had an excellent and varied programme of speakers this year. Peter Robins has been busy taking us to both China and India during the year and other subjects have included the history of the Great Western Society and the National Tramway Museum at Crich whilst photographic archives were explored taking us back in time both at home, in Ireland and North America, the last being presented by Don Woodworth live from his home in the USA.

Sadly, a visit to Pendon fell flat. Despite several members indicating they would come only a couple did. Therefore we do not intend organising any future visits.

Looking ahead to next year, John Tuck has put together another superb and varied programme of meetings. Whilst it's not possible to please everyone every month, hopefully you will find something of interest on ore than one occasion in 2026 - we do try and make the programme as varied as possible.

Coming up in 2027 is the Society's 50th anniversary which is something of a landmark by any standards. We would like to mark it with some kind of special event. Any suggestions?

My thanks to my colleagues on the committee who ensure the Society runs smoothly and successfully. Particular thanks to Vincent Caldwell who will be retiring at the AGM in February after doing a superb job as Secretary over the past twelve years. This does of course create a vacancy on the committee which we have to fill to ensure the continued smooth running of the Society.

I appreciate that whenever this subject comes u there is a collective sitting on hands whilst staring at the floor or ceiling hoping that someone else will volunteer. The task is not onerous, we meet around 5-6 times a year and meetings, which last around an hour, are conducted on Zoom so you don't even have to live locally. So please do give it some serious thought, it is essential that someone steps forward.

My thanks too to all of you who have provided photographs and material for both the *'Donkey'* and the newsletters. Please keep them coming. At the present time I'm quite short of articles for the *'Donkey'* so contributions would be much appreciated.

All that remains is to wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year and we hope we can look forward to your continuing support in 2026.

Mike Walker

SOCIETY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to be able to welcome two new members who have joined the Society in recent weeks; Tony Dormer from Bourne End and John Parkinson who lives in Well End. Good to have you both aboard and we look forward to seeing you at future meetings

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

In September we welcomed back our President, Mark Hopwood, for another of his regular updates on what is going on both within GWR (where he is, of course, Managing Director) and the rail industry as a whole. Mark was on good form and, among many other things, shared thoughts on how the emerging battery technology will be incorporated into new trains, the latest ideas for altering the layout at Bourne End and the prospects of life under Great British Railways.

October was something different as we welcomed Leslie McCallister who entertained us with the superb colour photography of the late Lance King featuring the former Great Northern Railway of Ireland as it transitioned into CIE and the UTA, from steam (and horse!) to Diesel power and saw much of its network closed with stroke of a pen. We have asked Leslie to return to share more of Lance's Irish collection.

November saw more high class vintage photography as Jeremy Harrison showed more of the black & white images of Ken Nunn now in the care of the LCGB. This time, the emphasis was on the early post-grouping years up to 1929 and included, appropriately given this year's events, the celebrations for the centenary of the Stockton & Darlington.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions become due for renewal in January. The good news is that Peter Robins has decided that once again a revision is not required. The rate will therefore be 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.

COMMITTEE VACANCY

As has already been announced, Vincent Caldwell is retiring from the committee after the AGM after a long period of loyal service to the Society for which we are grateful. This does however leave us with a vacancy which we must fill, the Society simply can't function without a full committee.

Therefore we are appealing for at least one volunteer to step forward. Please give some thought. Can you help?

RCTS MEETINGS

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

Monday 26th January

The future of UK Locomotive Operations - Karl Watts

Monday 23rd February

Toil and Triumph – an appreciation of the Settle and Carlisle - Colin Brading

Monday 23rd March

The Deltics – Worthy successors to the A4s - Michael Smyth

Monday 27th April

The Monochrome Model Railway - Nigel Bowdidge

Monday 18th May

The Seaton Tramway - Clement Fallows

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://rcts.org.uk/windsor-maidenhead/events/> and follow the link there.

MAIDENHEAD MODEL EXHIBITION

The Marlow, Maidenhead & District Model Railway Club will once again be holding their annual exhibition which is on Saturday 10th January from 10:00 to 17:00. Adults £6 Children 5-14 £3 (under 5's free) Family 2 adults+2 or more Children £15 and the location is the Cox Green Community Centre, details as above.

Your Chairman's Helland Wharf layout based on the location on Cornwall's Wenford branch will be one of those on display.

DONKEY CONTRIBUTIONS

Your Editor currently has few articles sitting in the 'Pending' folder awaiting publication in the next couple of issues but, as always, I'm open to offers of additional material. Articles can be on anything rail related and cover any period. If you don't have suitable illustrations we can probably come up with something.

If you feel you can help please get in touch - detail on page 1 - and we can discuss ideas.

C&PRR STEAM GALA

The Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway held an extremely successful three-day steam gala over the weekend of 31st October to 2nd November. As one of the smaller heritage lines, it certainly punches above its weight.

Friday was marred by poor weather but Saturday dawned with sunny, almost cloudless skies which greeted USATC S160 6046 approaching Horsenden Crossing with the 12:15 Princes Risborough to Chinnor and persuaded **Mike Walker** to pay a visit.

The locomotive has been at Chinnor since May and is expected to remain until the end of the year to work the Santa specials.



There were two guest locomotives; GWR Collett 'South Wales' tank 6695 which is normally resident at the Swindon & Cricklade Railway is seen approaching Horsenden Crossing from the opposite direction with the 11:50 Chinnor to Princes Risborough.

Sadly it was declared a failure overnight and did not take part in Sunday's events.

The other visitor was a real celebrity, Didcot's 4079 *Pendennis Castle* which is probably the largest steam locomotive ever to work over the line. Here it arrives at Chinnor with the 14:38 from Princes Risborough.

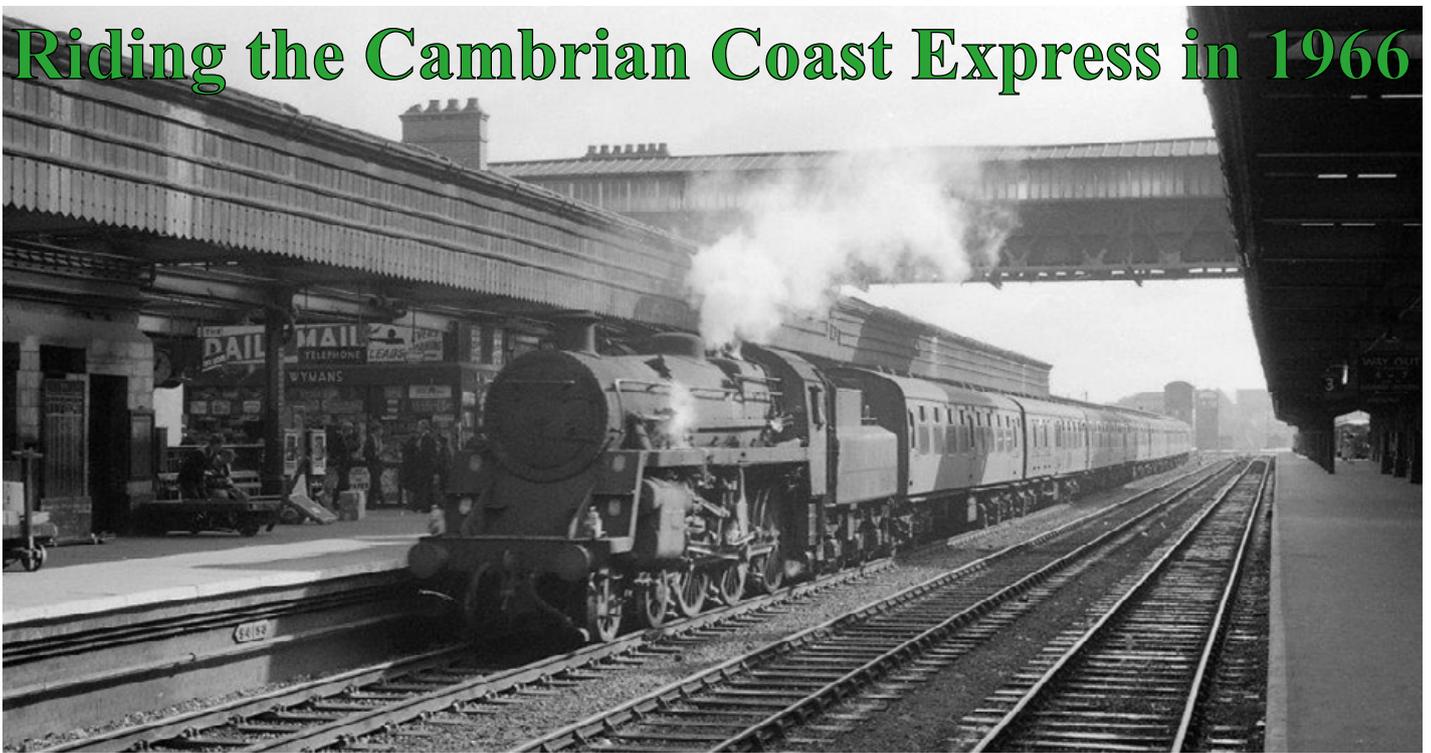
The Watlington Branch was classed as Yellow under the GWR's route availability system so 'Red' locos such as this (and 6695) would have been barred from the line but the C&PRR have undertaken bridge strengthening works which allows them to accommodate such heavyweight visitors for short periods.



The fourth locomotive in action over the weekend was *Joyce* which was running brake van trips within Princes Risborough station limits between the trains to and from Chinnor. Mike didn't make to Princes Risborough during his gala visit but **Geoff Warren** recorded it on the same duty on 1st August 2025.

The locomotive was built at the Sentinel Waggon Works at Shrewsbury in 1927 (works no.7109) for Croydon Gas Works. In preservation it has been cosmetically altered to resemble the pair the S&DJR used at Radstock and carries BR livery as 47109. It moved from Midsomer Norton to Chinnor earlier this year for what is expected to be an extended stay.

Riding the Cambrian Coast Express in 1966



While working as a volunteer for a short while on the Welshpool & Llanfair Railway in 1966 it occurred to me that I had never travelled on the nearby Cambrian line. So, writes MIKE PAGE, I took a day trip to Aberystwyth that October before the diesels invaded!

Not only were the new diesels threatening the end of steam in the Midlands, but also under threat in 1966 were the Wolverhampton and Walsall Corporations' wonderful (to me anyway!) trolleybus fleets. It was one of the fairly recently rebodied Wolverhampton Corporation's green and cream Sunbeam trolleybuses, on the No.2 route, that took me from Moxley along the old A41 to Victoria Square in Wolverhampton on a dullish Saturday morning on 8th October 1966.

Victoria Square was still overshadowed by the 1850s gateway building to the former London & North Western Railway's Queen Street Terminus (as it still does today). The terminus was replaced in the 1880s by the Wolverhampton (High Level) through station. One walked from Victoria Square down a blue-grey brick-walled approach road to High Level's forecourt, but turned left to a far corner to descend wide steps into a tiled subway under High Level's platforms and on to a wide, covered, tiled and columned cloistered walkway down to the ex-GWR Low Level station.

I looked down on the north end of the station as Oxley (2B) shed's Stanier 'Black Five' 44944 went through light engine, probably heading for Oxley shed, which lay about two miles west of the station. In the booking hall, I paid 12s/6d (about 63p) for a day return to Shrewsbury. As I went through the iron latticed ticket gates, where a ticket inspector waited, Standard 4 2-6-0, 76087 (2B) went northwards light engine. My train, the 08:30 Paddington to Birkenhead, arrived with Brush 'Type 4' D1711 (47 122).

On the way to Shrewsbury we passed 48705 (2B) on an up mixed freight in Oxley yards and later, 76088 (2B) shunting in Hollinswood Yards (just south of Oakengates) where we overtook Chester's (6A) 45064 waiting to follow us with a down mixed freight. All seemed quiet in Wellington (Salop) where passengers left and joined the train. Then off again to later approach Shrewsbury around the sharp eastern curve of a triangle where the large Severn Bridge Junction signal box sits even today. We crawled past Shrewsbury's (6D) 44800 on station pilot duty.

By October, 1966, it had been nearly a year since the last ex-GWR 'Manor' 4-6-0s had handled the Cambrian Coast Express forward from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and Pwllheli on the west coast of Wales. Now, Standard 'Class 4' 4-6-0s had taken over and Shrewsbury shed's 75014 is seen bringing in the Up CCE from Aberystwyth on 8th October 1966. The CCE headboard was no longer carried by the locomotives.

All photos by the author.

Shrewsbury Station lost its overall roof a few years ago, but still retained its semaphore signals. We halted in Platform 1 opposite an up parcels train headed by Tyseley's (2A) 44776. Waiting in the centre road was Chester's (6A) 45250 to replace D1711 for the run to Chester General where the train would reverse to be taken on to Birkenhead.

I planned to spend some time at Shrewsbury before catching the *Cambrian Coast Express* (CCE) to Aberystwyth at 14:36. The Day Return ticket from Shrewsbury was 27s (£1.35p). 45250 departed for Chester followed by 44775 (6D) on a down freight. Then Standard 4 4-6-0 75014 (6D) arrived with the up CCE to be taken over by a 'Brush 4'. Time for a quick lunch snack in the buffet on the centre island platform and watch Standard Class 2 2-6-0 78058 (6D) go by with a short down local freight into the sidings on the Chester line at 13:10.

After the quick snack, I watched 44776 depart with the 13:25 to Wolverhampton (the loco had left the parcels train) and then in the next five minutes, 78058 returned to shed followed by 78018 (6D). Two freights went through, up and down, on the Crewe and South Wales lines, hauled by D1714 (47 124 - Western Lines - WL) and D1757 (47 163 - 86A - Cardiff Canton) respectively. Almost immediately, 44762 (2A) arrived and handed over its Birkenhead-Paddington train at 13:40 to D1711.

Meanwhile, having strolled in with a freight along an avoiding line on the east side, D1755 (86A) departs for South Wales as D1589 (87E - Landore) arrives with a Cardiff to Liverpool express at 14:13. I missed the number of the Brush 'Type 4', which arrived on the west side of the island platform with the CCE. The train was quite well-filled as 75012 (6D) coupled up and we were ready to depart at 14:36.

We eased slowly away from the station on the west curve of the triangle past the massive Severn Bridge Junction signal box. We were soon passing Shrewsbury loco shed and in the yard were



45069 (8A – Edge Hill, Liverpool), 44777 (6D), 75062 (5D – Stoke) and 45279 (6D) – not an ex-GWR loco in sight! We then negotiated Sutton Bridge Junction turning westwards towards Welshpool. The South Wales line went straight ahead while the Severn Valley Line to Bridgnorth and Kidderminster branched off south-eastwards.

As 75012 picked up speed along the single track we passed the bridge abutments where the former Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway had passed over. Next came the site of the former Hanwood Station after which we passed the sight of the junction for the closed branch to Minsterley. Our eight coaches were being moved along at around 60MPH as we neared the former Buttington Junction where there was once a trailing connection onto the former line for Gobowen. Then the brakes came on for a brief stop at Welshpool where we passed a few derelict narrow gauge wagons in the Welshpool & Llanfair yards.

We departed briskly away from Welshpool to pass the still operational stations of Forden, Montgomery and Abermule where there was once a branch line to Kerry. We approached Moat Lane Junction where there once was another branch going through the hills into South Wales. The climb to Talerddig began at Caersws.

Looking back to 1st June 1963, it would have been one of Shrewsbury shed's well-turned out, ex-GWR 'Manor' 4-6-0s, like 7819 Hinton Manor seen here at Shrewsbury waiting to depart with the Down Cambrian Coast Express to Aberystwyth with through coaches to Pwllheli.

The line climbed out of the Severn Valley onto a watershed, which separated the Severn and the Dovey valleys. The train had followed the Severn from Welshpool, crossing the river a few times and, lastly, at Caersws. The line was now some 250ft (say 80m) above sea level and had to rise some 273ft (say 90m) over the next eight miles (say 13km) culminating in 1km at 1in80 to Talerddig summit at 693ft (say some 200m) above sea level. So now the fireman and 75012 had to really work for their living!

From Talerddig summit, the line dropped steeply for 14 miles (say 23km) down gradients of 1 in 56 and 1 in 52 for the first three miles (5km) before easing and then levelling off at some 50ft (say 16m) above sea level at Machynlleth. We passed the shed yard (6F) where 75002 and 75047 stood (both based at 6F) and then came our next stop at Dovey Junction.

Continued on page 9



Beneath the signal gantry at the north end of Shrewsbury Station, on 8th October 1966, Brush 'Type 4' D1711 has left the 08:30 Paddington to Birkenhead and escaped onto the Crewe line on the right. Chester shed's 'Black Five' 45250, waiting on the left on the Chester line is about to back down to take the train onwards to Chester.

The covered bridgeways coming from the right and then crossing all lines to lift towers were for handling the intensive parcels traffic that the station once handled. It's long gone but the gantry remains albeit with a couple of replacement colour-lights.



There used to be much more freight to be seen passing through Shrewsbury to and from all routes. Parcels traffic was also busy as can be seen on both platforms. Stanier 'Black Five' 44775 has come off the Central Wales line with a mixed freight and is creeping along the Down centre road towards the north end signal gantry.

The Down Cambrian Coast Express has arrived on platform 4 at Shrewsbury on 8th October 1966. While the 'Brush 4', which has brought the train from Paddington, uncouples at the north end, Shrewsbury shed's 'Standard Class 4' 4-6-0 75012 is coupling up on the back of the train to go onwards to Aberystwyth. A Cardiff to Liverpool train stands on the left overshadowed by the walls of Shrewsbury Castle above.





Three years earlier, on 17th August 1963, ex-GW 2-6-0 6368 from Machynlleth shed waits at Welshpool with a train for Pwllheli. The signboard on the opposite platform reads: 'Welshpool junction for Shrewsbury, Stafford, Birmingham, London'. The Welshpool & Llanfair Railway terminated in exchange sidings at the far end of the station on the left hand side.

Today, whilst the station building still stands, there's road where the train is standing with the tracks to the right with a platform beyond the water tower.

75012 had got us safely over Talerddig summit and we now have Cardigan Bay on our right hand side. The engine crew obligingly waited at Borth for this picture. Aberystwyth is now not far away on 8th October 1966. Note the water tower!





Continued from page 6

If memory serves correct, there was a connecting train. It was a rather dreary late afternoon when we arrived at Aberystwyth. Nothing was happening on the Vale of Rheidol and the line northwards to Carmarthen had closed a few years ago. The only 'action' was 75012 running around and leaving its train.

The loco ran out into the station throat then backed into Platform 4 to pick up four parcels vans. 75012 pulled the vans clear of the station and then backed down onto four corridor coaches in Platform 3 to form the return train to Shrewsbury.

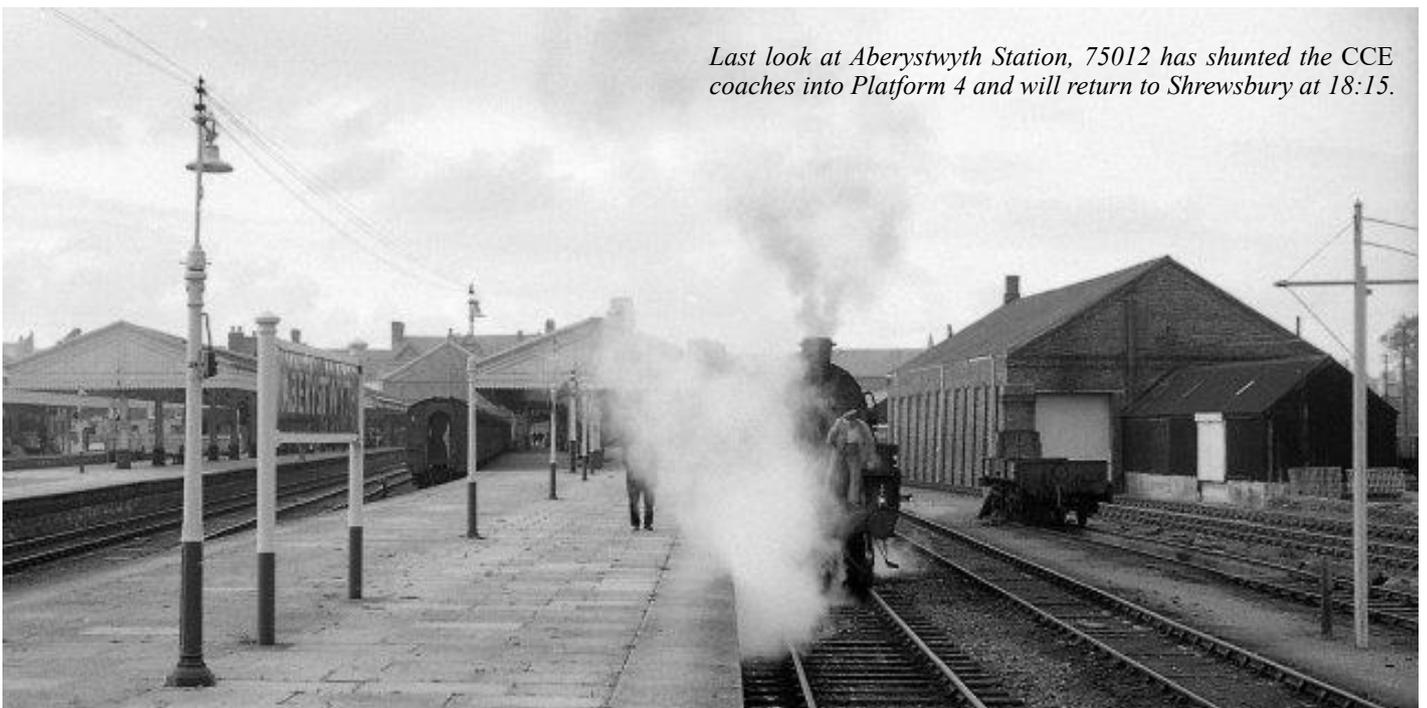
Our return was in the late afternoon. After Machynlleth you could hear 75012 barking up the incline to Talerddig. The train was about half full of passengers. It was dark when the train reached Shrewsbury. I watched D1699 (47 111 - WL) hand over a Paddington to Birkenhead train to 45250 (6A) while 75024 (6F) passed through light engine. A Brush Type 4 hauled the train to Wolverhampton and halted at Wellington (Salop) where 'Britannia' 70011, formerly *Hotspur* (12A - Carlisle Kingmoor), steamed through northwards with a fitted freight. Last steam

Arrival at Aberystwyth was on time. 75012 has stopped short of the engine release points at Platform 3 and will leave the train to visit the loco shed turntable.

sighting of the day as we neared Wolverhampton was 9F 92135 (56A – Wakefield) with a down freight at Oxley.

On 4th March 1967, 75021 (6D) headed the last steam-hauled *CCE* from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and next day 45116 (6J – Holyhead) headed the 20.50 departure to Chester. Steam at 6D finished on that day.

The *CCE* had begun operation in 1927, ceased operation during World War II and then came back into service in 1946. I used to see the *CCE* and reliefs in the summers during the 1950s and early 1960s passing through Bilston usually with a 'King' in charge as far as Wolverhampton, and for a couple of years, Shrewsbury, after weight restrictions had been lifted on Shifnal viaduct (between Wolverhampton and Wellington). 'Western' diesel-hydraulics (Class 52) took over in 1962 to be replaced by Brush Type 4s (lass 47) from 1963/4. So that was it! I'm glad I made the trip on the *CCE* in 1966!



Last look at Aberystwyth Station, 75012 has shunted the CCE coaches into Platform 4 and will return to Shrewsbury at 18:15.

TICKETS PLEASE!

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

Martin Stoolman



My piece in the August 2024 'Donkey' (Issue 185) highlighted the importance of the Sleeper train in the rosters of us First Great Western Guards based at Exeter. Indeed four of our regular diagrams involved the Sleeper so it will probably not surprise readers that there was no shortage of incidents while working these shifts!

Of course problems with the locos was often the cause of delay, but there were many other reasons why the Sleeper ran late. One such was that the diagrammers (no doubt with accountants standing over their shoulders) didn't allow us traincrew enough turnaround time at Paddington and Penzance from our inbound workings. In the week commencing Sunday 4th March 2001 I was booked with an Exeter Driver on 1C00, the 23:50 Down Sleeper between Paddington and Exeter on five consecutive nights (the Sunday night to the Thursday night inclusive). Departure from Paddington was delayed on every occasion (by 9 minutes, 4 minutes, 13 minutes, 12 minutes and 4 minutes respectively). This was due to our inbound service from Exeter being diverted from Westbury via Melksham and Chippenham due to planned engineering work, and us being allowed minimal time at Paddington. The driver needed to have his statutory break and we both needed to prepare the train, and that included starting the engine and conducting a brake test. Our inbound train was late on its revised schedule on all five evenings, and so the Sleeper left correspondingly late as a result.

My log for the Wednesday of that week (7th March) is especially interesting. The Exeter Driver (John Moreton) and I worked up as usual on the 18:40 Plymouth to Paddington HST, delayed following a slower train into Swindon and then being held there for a late running connection from Cheltenham. Our consequent 12 minute late departure with the Sleeper became a 33 minute late departure from Reading as a result of losing our allocated path and having to follow a Thames stopper all the way from Southall to Reading due to the main lines being closed for overnight engineering work. Ordinarily we would have picked up at least half a dozen passengers at Reading but on this particular

First Great Western 57602 Restormel Castle stands at platform 1 at Paddington having worked the empty stock for the Night Riviera sleeper service from Old Oak Common on 28th July 2009.

Photo: Mike Walker

night I was surprised to see nobody on the platform. The dispatcher gave me the tip and off we went. Our route from there was a direct one (that wasn't always so with the Sleeper) via Swindon and Bath to Bristol, which meant we had plenty of recovery time. However we were held in Chippenham station waiting behind a freight train (probably an empty stone working diverted from the Berks & Hants), which in turn was being held at Thingley Junction for another freight coming off the single line via Melksham from Westbury. It didn't matter because our generous time allowance saw us arrive at Bristol Temple Meads at 02:32, a full 19 minutes before our booked departure time of 02:51 - in spite of all the delays! However we were not to leave at 02:51. Word reached me that five passengers had been waiting on the wrong platform for us at Reading (due to the recently installed automated Customer Information System giving out incorrect information). Somehow or other a 2-car turbo had been scrambled at Reading to convey these five unfortunate travellers all the way from Reading to Bristol so they could catch us up! And we were to await their arrival at Bristol. Looking back now, bearing in mind the owners of this 2-car Turbo would at the time have been Thames Trains (a separate train operating company to First Great Western), coupled with the fact that a driver and a guard would have had to have been supplied to operate the train, I find this quite amazing. I can only think that it had something to do with the Oxford to Bristol service which had been operating since 1998 as a collaboration between FGW and Thames. Perhaps an ECS working was due to take place from Reading to Bristol in order to provide a train and crew for the start of the service next morning, and they converted it into a passenger working - but surely it was a bit too early in the morning for that. The more predictable action would have been to stick the left behind passengers in a taxi from Reading

Name of Driver		Stationed at		Engine		From		To			
JOHN MORETON		EXETER		4 COACHES 4 SLEEPERS 47830							
Head lbs.	Stations, Junctions, or Division Boundaries	Timekeeping		Minutes lost				General remarks as to cause of delay and location. Formation of train, including alterations to load during journey.	Weather		
		Booked	Actual	Misc. Lm Dep	At Sign	By Eng	By Sign			By P.W. checks	By other causes
	PADDINGTON	23.50	00.02	12					12	DRIVER HAVING HIS BEER, THEN HAD TO DO BRAKE TEST. FOLLOWED A LOCAL TRAIN ON THE RELIEF LINE THROUGH FROM SOUTHALL TO READING. HELD IN CHILPENHAM STATION BEHIND A FREIGHT WAITING TO CROSS THE MICKENHAM LINE, WHICH IN TURN WAS WAITING FOR ANOTHER TO COME OFF THE SINGLE LINE. HAD TO WAIT AT BRISTOL FOR TWO EX-READING TO ABOVE WITH 5 CUSTOMERS LEFT BEHIND AT READING DUE TO POOR PLATFORM ANNOUNCING. STOPPED BY SIGS APPROACHING EXETER.	DRY. MILD.
	READING	00.35	01.05	39					19		
	(CHILPENHAM)		02.09								
	BRISTOL M A		02.32								
		d. 02.51	03.03	12							
	TAUNTON	03.30	03.42	12							
	EXETER S D	04.02	04.16	14					2		

An extract from Martin's log for the Down Sleeper on 7th/8th March 2001.

so they could meet us at Taunton. Whatever the circumstances, the solution used surely represents an outstanding piece of customer service on the part of whoever organised it. Anyway my log for that Sleeper working is included with this article so make of it what you will. Answers on a postcard!

Just over a month later, on the night of 17th/18th April 2001, I found myself on the same working, the Down Sleeper out of Paddington. I have already said how huge the time allowance was for this train, partly due to allowing for lots of diversions due to overnight engineering works, but also the fact that for the operators the priority was giving the passengers a good night's sleep - not whisking them from London to Penzance in the shortest possible time. So it was that on this night (as on most nights) the service was scheduled to leave London at 23:50 and arrive at Penzance at 08:20 the following morning, a journey time of eight and a half hours when some HST services were doing the run in little over five hours! Most nights the service was, and probably still is, scheduled to run via Bristol, and back in 2001 there was still a scheduled stop at Temple Meads to pick up passengers only. We very rarely did pick anybody up, and really this booked stop was a throwback to the days when the train changed over traincrew and conveyed parcels and mail. On this particular night in April 2001, my driver and I had already been informed that (for whatever reason) the Bristol stop was being omitted and we were being routed direct from Reading to Taunton via the Berks & Hants. This meant that we were being allowed just over four hours from Paddington to Taunton, a journey that in practice was likely to take less than three hours. My driver, the very experienced Brian Hayden, would have known that, and was therefore in no hurry at all as 47811 bumbled down the Relief line with the usual two Motorail vans, three mark 2 coaches and four mark 3 sleepers. The fact that we had departed Paddington 11 minutes late was of no consequence to Brian as he knew he had a huge amount of time to dissipate somehow. Around about Slough we were stopped by signals so I peered out of the droplight window and saw Brian speaking to the signaller on the signal post telephone. Before he had even

replaced the receiver the signal changed to green (*it's called TCB in the trade: Track Circuited Ballast! - Ed.*), so I assumed that he had been stopped and cautioned about some problem or other. At Reading Brian walked back, clearly keen to get something off his chest. Apparently the Slough signaller had stopped him and challenged him as to why he was going so slowly! Brian was fuming. He had been reprimanded for speeding once or twice in his long career but never this. We ended up leaving Reading 38 minutes late, but still had to sit around at Taunton for no less than 84 minutes awaiting our scheduled departure time, so his action seemed justified. However I'm afraid I couldn't resist telling the story in the messroom, so of course poor Brian suffered for a little while afterwards!

Ten days later on Saturday 28th April 2001, it fell to me to book on at 03:35 in the morning and take over the Down Sleeper at Exeter, working it through to Penzance. Now in those days and for several years afterwards, the rear sleeping car was detached at Plymouth so that Plymouth bound passengers did not have to get up at 05:00 in the morning, but could instead stay asleep until around 08:00. A Sleeper Host was even allocated to stay with the coach and give the ten or so passengers a wake up call and breakfast. A class 08 pilot from Laira plus a Driver and a Shunter were booked to detach the coach from the rear upon arrival, and park it in one of the east end bay platforms. The Shunter would previously have been employed performing the coupling and uncoupling when the Up Sleeper had arrived around midnight, as the corresponding sleeping car, which had been parked in the adjacent platform to allow passengers to join from around 22:00, needed to be attached to that train. However, because the coach had to go on the front of the Up service, the train engine rather than the 08 pilot was used. Anyway, back to my Down working of 28th April 2001, and our arrival at Plymouth was greeted with the news that there was to be no detachment of the Plymouth car that night as the shunter had been suspended "due to a shunting mishap on the Up Sleepers earlier". Oops. Now it was often felt that the personnel at Swindon Control had very little knowledge of how things operated on

the Sleepers, and this was borne out that morning. They miserably failed to inform me of the situation in advance of our arrival, not even thinking about asking me to perform the uncoupling given the unusual circumstances. By now it was too late anyway as they had allowed the 08's Driver to go off home! So they simply instructed us to detrain the passengers and take the coach through to Penzance. What Control had also forgotten is that an action like this is not like detraining passengers from a daytime train. Here we have a situation where the passengers are in their nightclothes fast asleep in bed, fully expecting not to be woken for another three hours. Control would have known about this upcoming problem well before I even booked on for duty, but silence. The net result was that the Sleeper Hosts had to go through the coach knocking on all the cabin doors, asking the unfortunate passengers to get dressed and get packed up immediately, so as to leave the train. No time to give them their breakfasts either of course. Not only did this lead to a 10 minute late departure from Plymouth (even though no shunting had taken place) but it would also no doubt have lead to all those passengers questioning whether they would bother using the service ever again. Not clever.

Fast forward a month or so, to Monday 4th June 2001, and I once again found myself on the 03:35 book on. Arrival at Plymouth that night found a slightly different problem to before: there was a shunter alright plus an 08 pilot loco - but nobody to drive it! After a while my driver (one of the famous Harris brothers from Plymouth) lost patience. He had class 08 knowledge, and so simply climbed down from the train engine, 47815, jumped into the 08's cab, started it up, and performed the shunt himself! After that he shut it down where it was, returned to 47815, and off we headed to Penzance 13 minutes late. Despite all that, arrival at our destination was several minutes early - Steve didn't mess about! Then the following night I was on the same job with one of his brothers, and this time there was not only no class 08 driver but no class 08! Consideration was given to using our train loco, this time 47832, but eventually the 08 was seen emerging from Mutley Tunnel and the shunt was completed. Our 9 minute late departure was again converted into an early arrival at Penzance.

Later that same month, in the early hours of Friday 29th June 2001, I found myself on the 00:50 book on to work 1A99, the Up Sleeper from Exeter through to Paddington. The privatised railway was still establishing relations between the various companies and, while First Great Western had absolutely nothing to do with the freight companies, it did at least have a business relationship with Virgin who at the time operated the Cross Country service. My train coming up from Penzance was already 52 minutes late hauled by 47830, as a result of knocking out one of the sleeper cars at Penzance due to a defect. Despite this Control asked me nicely if I wouldn't mind donning my overalls and gloves at Bristol so that I could attach a Virgin class 47, 47806, onto the rear of my train. Clearly Virgin had identified that paying FGW to "transport" their loco dead on the rear of the Up Sleeper was a cost effective way of getting it from Bristol to London. Some of FGW's fee found its way into my pocket as a sweetener to get me to do it as, if the Union learned about it (unlikely in the dead of night), my action would have earned their displeasure. As they saw it, my shunting competence was there for cases of emergency, and this was not one. Don't forget that just a few years earlier British Rail would have had multiple shunters available at Bristol to perform such a task... but not anymore.

All the above clearly illustrates how so many ex-BR personnel were at that time on a steep learning curve, having to keep the railway running but without the staff and the flexibility post privatisation. Shunters and spare locos were still around, but generally they belonged to the freight sector and could not be used by the passenger operators. Much of that frustration was however balanced by the greatly enhanced rates of pay that the private sector companies had decided to pay their staff. This was primarily led by Sir Richard Branson who, it is said, believed that paying his drivers "properly" would lead to them being incentivised to drive his trains quicker, thereby cutting delays and giving his company greater profits. So next time you query the amount that train drivers get paid these days, please do remember how that all started!

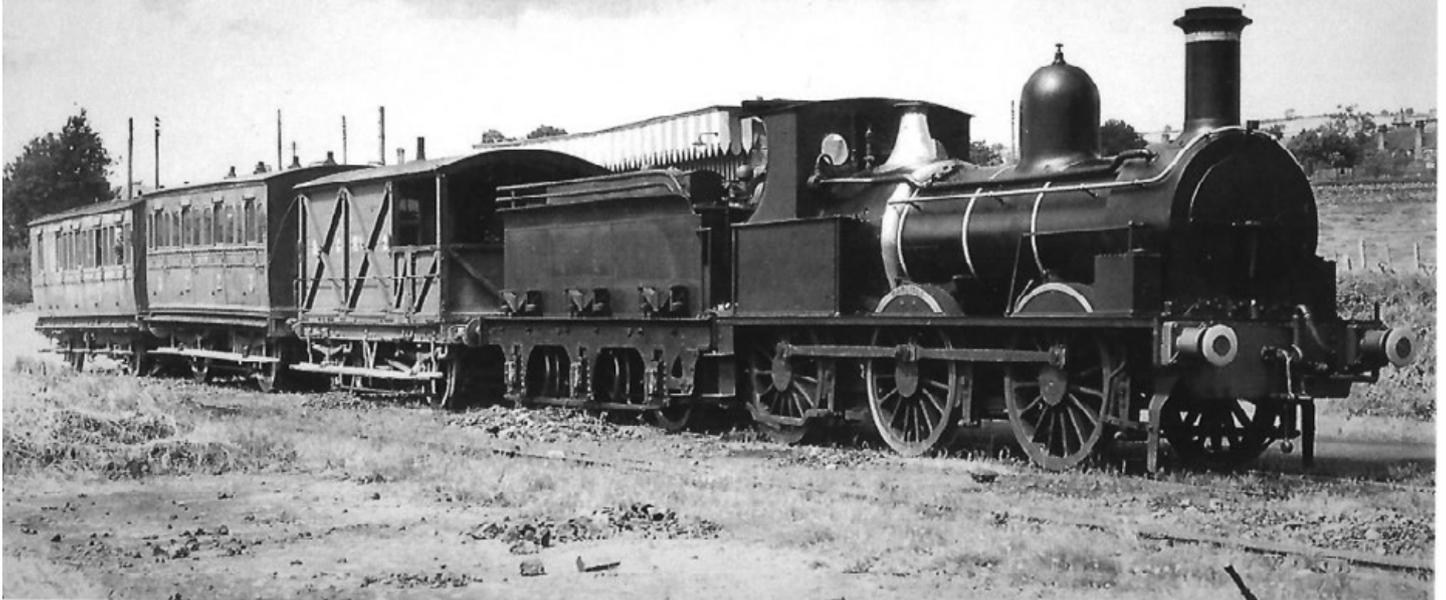


Virgin's 47806 passing Langstone Rock at Dawlish Warren on with the 06:13 Preston to Paignton formed of a spare WCML set on 10 July 1999.

Photo: Peter Robins

THREE-SCORE YEARS AND TEN

JOHN SEARS looks at the fabled Bishop's Castle Railway



Carlisle with ex-Brecon & Merthyr and ex-Cardiff Railway coaches and a former GWR 'Toad' in April-1935.

BCRS Collection

My first inkling that the Bishop's Castle Railway had existed came in my salad days when a second edition copy, published in 1944, of Malcolm Saville's "Mystery at Witchend" arrived. Its opening sentence is: "They changed trains at Shrewsbury." and further down the first page comes: "...the long chocolate and cream train slid out on its way to Chester and Birkenhead." Saville started writing the story in Church Stretton, so obviously knew the local railways first hand. The story tells of the adventures had by a family who remove to a farmhouse at the south end of the Long Mynd to avoid the perils of London during the war. The Bishop's Castle Railway had closed just eight years before Saville took up his pen, and is mentioned in the story. The Lone Pine series of Books included maps as endplates, and the railway is shown on some.

It took me a very long time to actually visit Bishop's Castle; I finally arrived there on a Monday in September, 2024, twenty minutes early on Minsterley Motors's no. 745 from Ludlow, which had passed through Craven Arms and Clun, using the valley of that river rather than the Onny, the route of the BCR. The 745 runs twice a week - Mondays and Fridays - the only bus link to the south of Bishop's Castle. Eight passengers had joined the bus at its origin by the Assembly Rooms in Ludlow. No other business until seven minutes west of Craven Arms when someone got off; by the time we'd passed through Clun, twelve minutes later, there were just two passengers left on board, and we both got off in Bishop's Castle. I wandered off up the town's steep High Street, eventually settling into a seat in the Three Tuns, next to the eponymous brewery, for a pint of its eponymous beer. I'd found the railway museum, at the bottom end of Station Street, housed in the sole remaining BCR building, the weigh-bridge house - open two Tuesdays each month.

Bishop's Castle's population was recorded in the 2021 census as 1,847. The town lies on the southern edge of the highland tracts that lie south-west of Shrewsbury. In the wedge between the railway from Shrewsbury to Hereford and the railway from Shrewsbury to Newtown is some very hilly countryside. The road from Shrewsbury rises to just over 1,000 feet asl on its way from Minsterley to Bishop's Castle. The area does feel very

much a "world apart", and in Medieval times the border with Wales - which is every bit as convoluted as that between Northern Ireland and the Republic - must have influenced the area's life as its isolation does today. There is, for example, no mains gas in Bishop's Castle, however, other vital supplies are available from local sources. The Three Tuns Brewery was granted its licence in 1642, the oldest in United Kingdom; the building itself dates from 1888.

The remnants of the Wycombe and Great Marlow Railways that survive as the Maidenhead to Marlow branch - a "main line" linked to a branch line - had a precursor in the Bishop's Castle Railway. It ran from Stretford Bridge Junction, three-quarters of a mile north of Craven Arms station on the one-time Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway, which opened through Craven Arms in 1852. Despite considerable local opposition, enough of "the great and the good" in that part of Shropshire and across the



Looking up Salop Street past the Three Tuns Brewery and pub to the Castle Hotel, just visible, right of the pub.

John Sears

Horderley station, view towards Craven Arms: note separation of its building and the platform. Ticket hut on platform, the signal post is now on its way to Bishop's Castle for restoration after "release" from storage at Swindon by the NRM. Post closure.

BCRS Collection



border in Montgomeryshire were persuaded of the value of Railways to promote a Bill for the "Bishop's Castle Railway" between Craven Arms and Montgomery with a branch from Lydham Heath to Bishop's Castle. Given Royal Assent in 1861, the Bill that gave permission for the construction of those railways had a clause added that the branch to Bishop's Castle must be opened at the same time as the line between Craven Arms and Montgomery. Some of the local opposition had petitioned Parliament that the through line should be built first, hoping that might delay the arrival of the branch.

Authority to construct a line was never a guarantee that it would be (cf. HS2), and so it was with the Bishop's Castle Railway. Its contractor, Savin, was taken to court in 1864 to get the return of £20,500 advanced to him. Savin had become over-extended building railways in Wales and went bankrupt in 1866. Construction finally started with a new locally-based contractor in the latter part of 1864, and progressed quickly. The full extent of the BCR had been built by October the next year. At first planned to be nearer Wistanstow (site of that curvaceous footbridge) [1], the line's junction with the North & West was moved south to a site $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of Craven Arms. It was a double junction, the two tracks quickly became one. The original junction signal box was a small wooden one, elevated on a framework high enough to provide a view over the adjacent road which crossed over the line by a bridge. Early in the 1900s a new brick box was built slightly further north. Although authorised, no work to build an independent line to a separate station at Craven Arms ever happened.

The line curved away past Stretford Bridge Halt, which was a timber and earth platform less than two hundred yards from the junction. Colonel Cobb has its opening date as 1890; the halt had no official access – at one point intending passengers would have had to pass a sign warning that "trespassers will be prosecuted". It was about seventy yards short of the place where the two tracks from the junction had converged until 1892, when the layout was revised, moving the convergence much closer to the junction box so it was within the regulated distance. Previously the convergence point had been hand-operated. At the same time the interlocking was updated. Interlocking was one of those newfangled ideas that never caught on at the BCR. Another one that didn't was the use of telephones or even the telegraph. BCR trains off the branch approaching the junction whistled to "alert" the signalman. In 1888 the BCR told the Board of Trade, in a response about their required works, that, when 1,400 yards from the junction with the main line, "the engine shuts off steam and whistles twice for the Distance Signal which is placed 650 yards from and is worked by the joint Signalman". One presumes the

writer was not describing some sort of automatic train control, but rather conflated his words in his impatience with the BoT!

Thereafter the line climbed steadily, but not steeply, in close company with the River Onny [2] all the way from the main line, 422 feet asl, through Horderley, 475 feet asl, Plowden, 542 feet asl, Eaton, 561 feet asl, to Lydham Heath, 594 feet asl.; Bishop's Castle station was four feet higher. The Onny was bridged six times and caused some wash-outs for the BCR to repair. One, in May, 1886, caused damage that cost the railway over £800 to repair and closed the line until the second of June. Damage to make good included four yards of single brick coping to a wing wall (4/-), and the replacing of at least two hundred yards of ballast (1/- per yard!). A very cursory search suggests that ballast nowadays is around £4 per yard.

Horderley station, three miles from Craven Arms, had a ninety-foot platform with a small wooden hut, the booking office, located on the down side, with the brick station building separate from it on the up. The station building is extant, and has been extended at each end. Plowden had a two-storey station house, the only one at a station; the reason for it is unclear – possibly it was intended to be the home of the railway's manager, or to acknowledge Lord Plowden, the local landowner. Both it and the station offices still stand. They were sited, with the platform, on the down side. Beyond Plowden the railway's construction had resulted in the diversion of a short stretch of the River Onny. Unlike the two previous stations, Eaton station didn't have a loop, just a short siding on the up side, which trailed into the running line towards Lydham Heath. Its small station building [3] was sited some distance from its short platform on the up side of the railway and, like Horderley, was single-storey with a small waiting shelter attached to its down end. Eaton and Horderley both had a woman in charge. Here, again, the station building remains, in use as a house, its bricks now rendered.

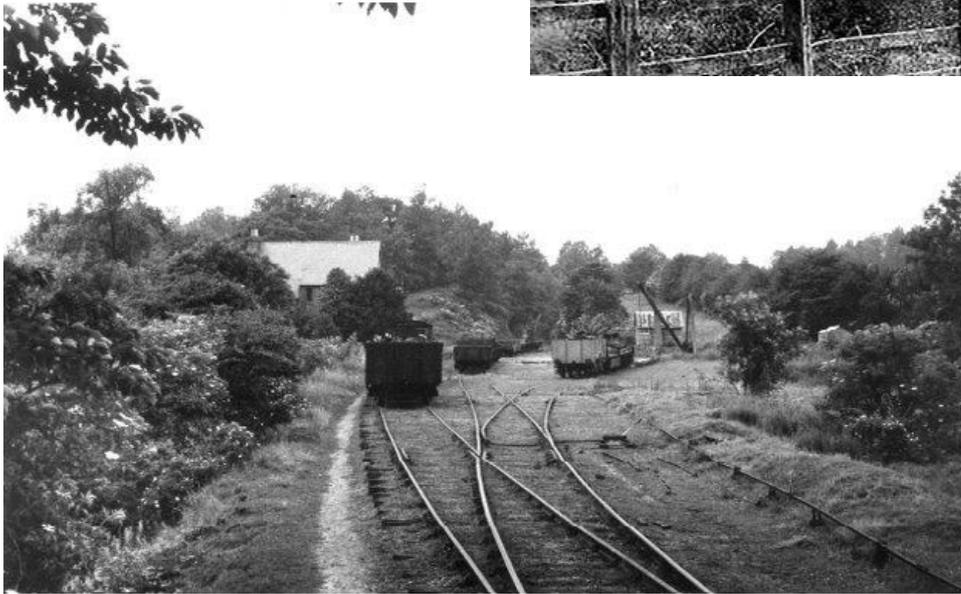
The next station was Lydham Heath, the "junction" for Bishop's Castle, and over half a mile from anywhere, specifically from Lydham and the intriguingly named More [4]. Lydham Heath is a good exemplar for builders of "small exhibition layouts" – one platform, one loop, one siding, but two converging routes, a total of six points and one signal. The signal was sited facing arriving trains – but at the buffer stop end of the platform. Running-round involved plenty of fly-shunting. Apparently, sometimes the loco propelled the train to Bishop's Castle. An unofficial helper once uncoupled the loco after arrival at Lydham Heath from Craven Arms, ready for the run-round. He was unaware that the train would be propelled that day, and so the

Plowden station: note the house, station building to the right. Lydham Heath is to the right.
BCRS Collection



Plowden: looking towards Lydham Heath, showing the station yard, note point rodding which appears to be what controlled a catch point noted by David Morgan to be located on the middle road beyond the second point, but not visible here. 28th. June, 1936, post closure.

BCRS Collection



driver, when he braked before Bishop's Castle, saw his train continue on its way, separate from the loco. Luckily he was able to whistle the guard into action, who managed to apply the brakes before the buffer stop arrested the train.

The final two and a quarter miles to Bishop's Castle took the line through fields, under one road, over a second, finally, under a third. The station had all the features of a small branch terminus – a goods shed straddling a siding, a loco shed at the end of the platform road, a long siding with a five-ton crane and cattle dock, between it and the platform road was a loop, from which a head-shunt extended into a carriage shed contiguous with the engine shed. There was no station house, simply a small brick station building with a timber front and a curious, very shallow, canopy with alternating light and dark paint on the valance barge boarding. The site of the station is now completely covered by the yard and buildings of Charles Ransford & Son [5] "Timber Specialists since 1876", so established eleven years after the railway. The BCR had carried a lot of timber traffic, especially in the First World War. All the railway buildings at the station have gone, the goods shed lingered until the 1980s. As at Lydham Heath a signal guarded the remaining few yards of running line, here just before the engine shed. It has been suggested the signals were provided as reminders to drivers that they really should bring their trains to a dead stop. The only reminders of the railway today are the weighbridge and its office and the fact that Station Street is still the name for the road that led to the station. The weighbridge office has been restored by the Bishop's Castle Railway Society and houses relics and photographs of the railway, as well as a model of the station [6]

Eager to begin using the route just briefly described, the line's officials held the formal opening on the 24th October, 1865. However, in a hint of what was to be its way of life, the line had not had its official inspection. Someone obviously got round to notifying the Board of Trade, and Colonel Yolland arrived on the 13th December. The Colonel reported that the line's chairs were spiked to sleepers that were "half turned" timbers (?) and laid on what was "stated to be" (didn't he check?) 14 inches of gravel ballast. The formation was wide enough for double track, as were the overbridges. The railway had two level crossings, neither of which, recollected the Colonel, might have been actually authorised;

surely the Inspector should have done a little research into such matters? Some of his requirements were: a second platform and double junction at Lydham Heath, signals to protect the level crossings (provided but eventually just a "token" gesture), and two between Craven Arms station and the junction, turntables at Lydham Heath and Craven Arms, a couple of curves needed easing, platforms required raising, including one at Craven Arms, lifting and packing the track at places such as underbridges. The Colonel also had something to say on the proposed independent line that was to be built from the junction to Craven Arms station. He finished his report by recommending that mineral traffic should begin as soon as practicable to help consolidate the formation, but that the incomplete works meant that opening the line "for traffic cannot be sanctioned without danger to the public".

The good Colonel's opinion was obviously acted on as the line had a second opening, on the 1st February, 1866, after enough of his recommendations had been complied with. Lydham Heath never received a second platform, or a double junction, or a turntable. Even before the first opening, and with no sign of construction on the route west from Lydham Heath to Montgomery, a line was proposed from Chirbury on the missing line, to Minsterley, the terminus of what became a branch off the Shrewsbury and Welshpool line. It had opened in 1861 to serve an important mining district. But the Banking Fates had decided that Overend & Gurney Bank should collapse in 1866, and with it went any further - at least for the time being - talk of building to Montgomery and getting permission for the line from Chirbury. As mentioned above, neither was the independent line



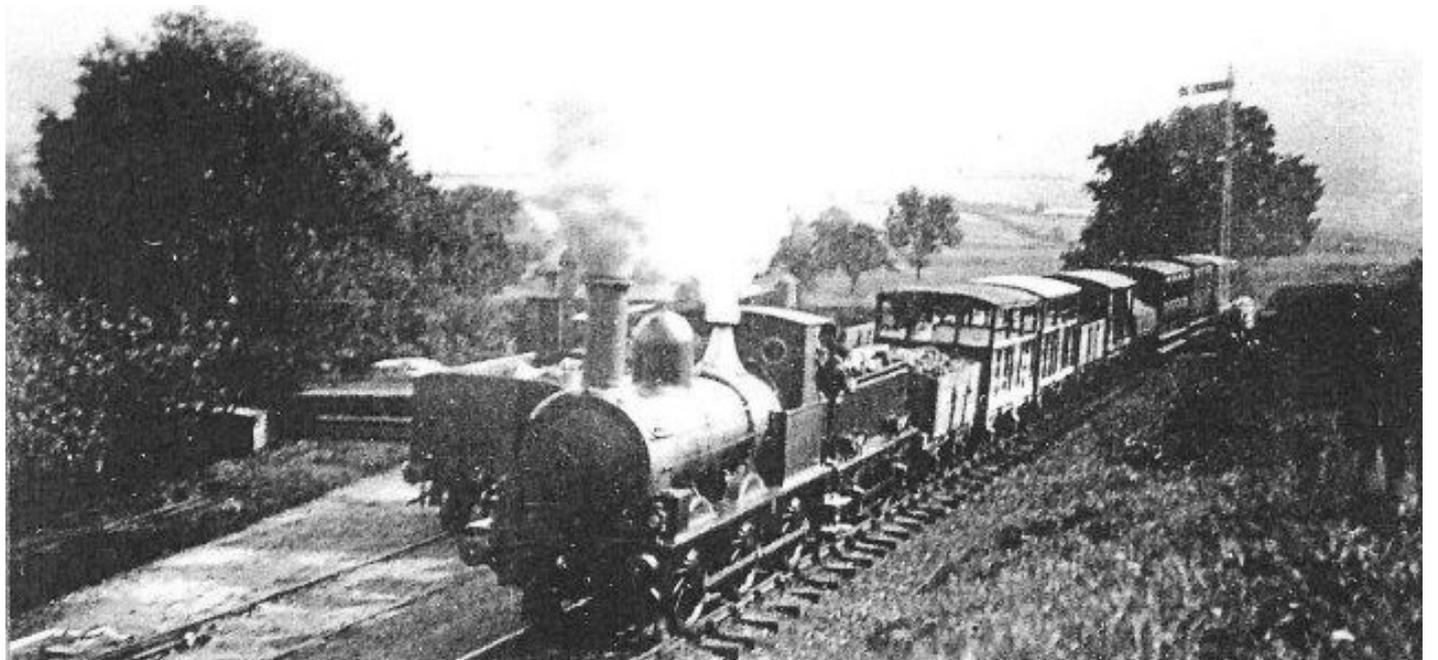
Eaton station and visitor, from the level crossing; view towards Lydham Heath. Note the apparent relative positions of the building and the platform edge.

A picture of Eaton station building in "Bishop's Castle Portrait of a Country Railway" taken before closure shows, as this, what looks like a platform face close to the front of the building, another taken after the track was lifted shows a platform much further from what is definitely the same building!

BCRS Collection

Carlisle (built by Kitson 1508/1868 as a 0-6-0ST) on a Bishop's Castle-bound train at Eaton, pre-1909 as she has her original boiler and four-wheel tender. The mixed consist is typical, with, on this stage of the journey, the three ex-LNWR four-wheel coaches without any braking controlled by the driver.

BCRS Collection





Lydham Heath station from the buffer stops: divergence, right, of the line to Bishop's Castle just visible at the far end of the platform. Note the stop signal within feet of the buffer stop, on a typical BCR lattice post. 8th. October, 1931.

BCRS Collection

line's Receiver. Debts continued to pile up, including £621 4s 9d owed in 1869 to the Railway Clearing House, not surprisingly mostly in regard to traffic with the GWR and LNWR. At the time the Sheriff "could find no property to seize", solicitors advised letting "the matter rest", and the railway companies didn't respond to the RCH's request for them to "bring pressure" on the BCR. In 1872 an issue of new debentures allowed liabilities to be paid, including the Midland Waggon Company.

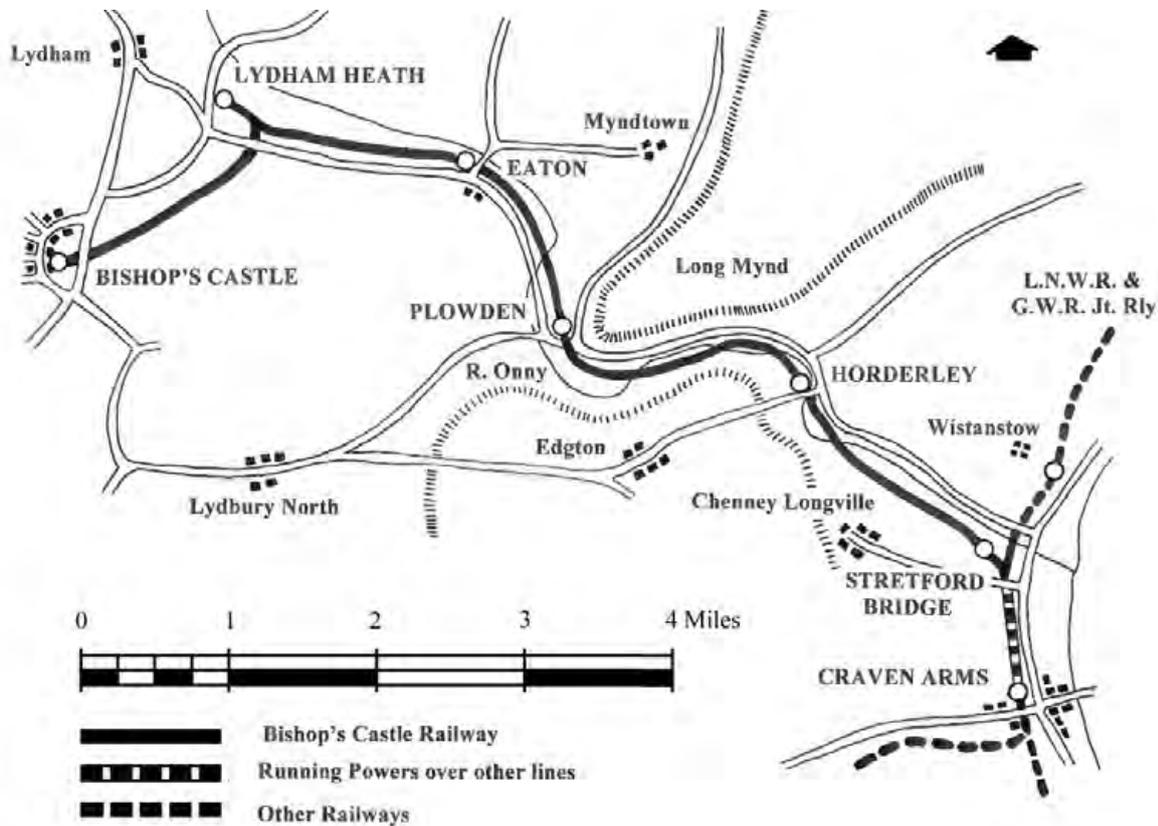
But by 1886 the debt to the RCH was £1,258 11s. The BCR itself wasn't a member of the RCH, and had told the Board of Trade in 1875 that it wasn't, in response to what must have been an approach regarding the carriage of explosives. In an early example of leaving a traffic to road transport [7] the BCR's secretary wrote "...with a good Turnpike Road running the entire length of it, ...the Carriage of explosives by Railway may be wholly dispensed with."

In February, 1877, a meeting in Westminster of various people with financial interests in the BCR set up a committee tasked with finding funds to complete the railway and "consider existing liabilities". Within a fortnight another financial crisis arrived. Doctor Beddoes, who owned land that the BCR had taken to build its railway, had died. He had never pressed for payment, holding the railway to be a public benefit, and the land of no real consequence to his wider estate. He lived in Longville, on the Craven Arms to Much Wenlock railway. His inheriting relatives wanted payment, and got a judgement for "payment or possession". Clearly no money, so bailiffs removed some rail near Horderley and closed the railway. After a week, a local coal merchant gathered a group in a hostelry in Craven Arms and a plan was devised. A group went to Horderley and treated the bailiffs to a "gallon or two of mulled beer tempered with a drop of gin". Combined with comfortable seats in the Red Lion the



Bishop's Castle station: No. 1 on the loop, Bishop's Castle Transport Company's Chevrolet bus on the platform. 8th. October, 1931.

BCRS Collection



bailiffs failed to realise the missing rail was being replaced. A loco brought the empties from Bishop's Castle to Craven Arms and then returned with the loads. Apparently the bailiffs by now had realised what was happening, but were unable to stop it. A deal was reached over the land by way of a rental agreement, and another "opening" resulted on the 2nd July, 1877. A report on the re-opening in the Railway Fly Sheet and Official Gazette included the comment that "The permanent way for miles had grown into what appears a long level grass field".

The BCR creaked on through the years. On the 11th April, 1883, the GWR's Secretary received a letter from the BCR telling him that, from the 7th April, Mr. T. Cartwright of the Wrexham, Mold & Connah's Quay Railway had been the Receiver and Manager of the BCR, and had arranged for a loco to be sent to them from Wales. The loco was "blocked at Craven Arms" and could he please ensure the block is "speedily removed". The LNWR also had a letter.

Another year gone, and another problem. In September the Board of Trade sent an Inspector to check on the BCR's "fitness for public traffic". His reports lists more than a few serious issues: 1,100 fishbolts were deficient, a third to a half of the keys were deficient or broken, at least a third of the sleepers were estimated to be decaying, as were bridges; unsurprisingly, the line "requires lifting and relaying to a great part of its length". The Inspector considered "that the public are exposed to constant danger in travelling on the line." It is unclear whether the line was completely closed, the implication is that a severe speed restriction was imposed and no passengers carried. On 3rd October, 1878, the BCR asked permission to resume passenger services, stating that they were operating one goods train each way per day. Passenger trains resumed four days later. In January, 1879, the BCR asked if the speed limit could be raised to 20 mph, or even to 15 mph to reduce the complaints from passengers, but the BoT refused, even though they had been told the whole line had been cleared of weeds and undergrowth. The Inspector returned in June, 1879 and found that: a third of the line's sleepers had been replaced, as had the decayed bridge timbers, new keys had been fitted, ballast cleaned, track levelled and repacked.

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The Bishop's Castle Railway Society's web site.
[www.https://bcrailway.co.uk/](https://bcrailway.co.uk/)

I must offer my grateful thanks to directors of the society, and Peter Broxholme, the editor of the Society's Journal, for their help.

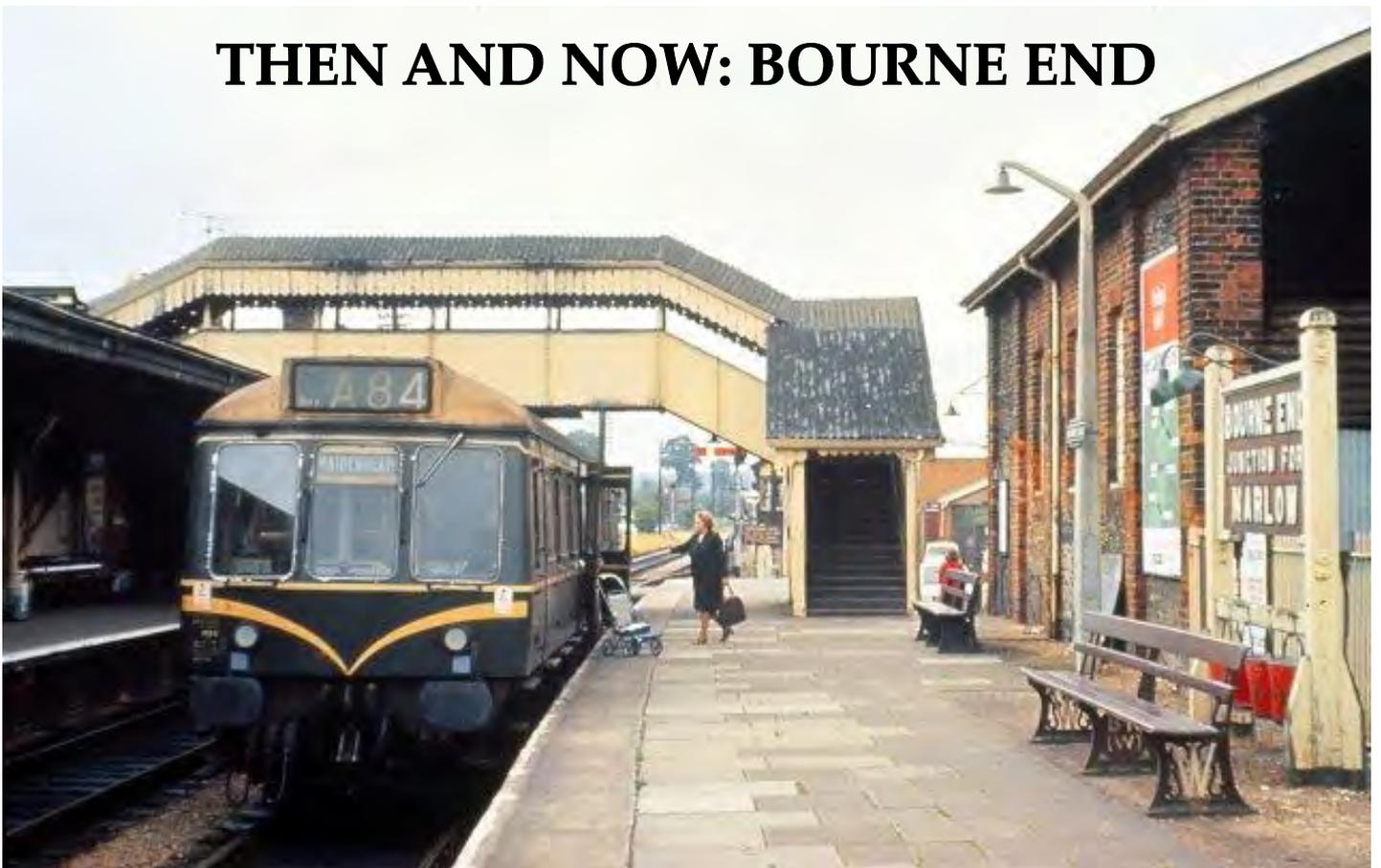
Footnotes

- [1] That footbridge is, actually, south of the site of Stretford Bridge Junction.
- [2] "River on whose banks ash trees grew"
- [3] Photos of this station appear to show different distances between platform and station building, a puzzle.
- [4] Meaning "moor", what else?!
- [5] Ransford's web site has a story on its latest news page with a picture showing timber from the Isle of Man being unloaded.
- [6] Built by the BCRS' Modellers Group, the model is a 4mm to the foot replica of Bishop's Castle station. Six feet long, it is only half the actual scale length of the station. It powerfully evokes the atmosphere that the prototype must have generated.
- [7] The BCR lost its Royal Mail business to road in the 1920s.



To be continued.

THEN AND NOW: BOURNE END



Our local station has seen many changes over the last 171 years but at least it's still open with the original Wycombe Railway building in use along with the goods shed, now an auction house. Back in August 1966 a Class 121 single unit, thought to be W55029, calls at Bourne End on the 11:24 High Wycombe to Maidenhead.

Colour-Rail DE1100

Since the closure of the section to High Wycombe in 1970 it's been a 'terminal junction' stripped of its canopies and footbridge. On 12th February 2020 Great Western 165124 was working 2B30, the 11:34 Maidenhead to Marlow. The unit still carried the "Just Married" branding from the Royal Wedding on the opposite side - a little unfortunate as things have turned out.

Photo: Mike Walker

