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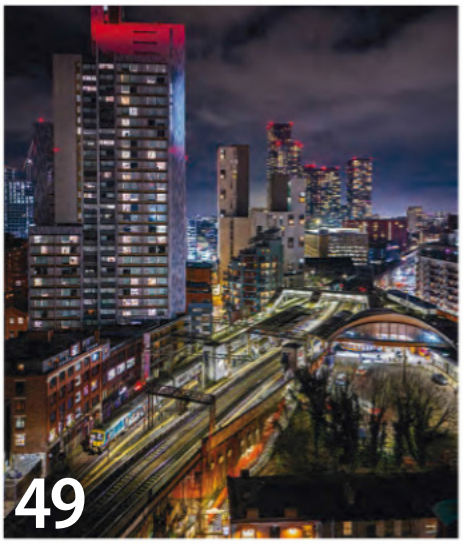
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■ **COVER:** GWR 'Castle Class' HST set, with power cars Nos. 43198/43029, arrives at Par on August 31, 2023 passing the now-closed signalbox. PAUL BICKERDYKE

The RAILWAY Magazine

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Farewell to arms

MANY *Railway Magazine* readers will have a fondness for the railways of Cornwall, whether as residents of the area or as visitors on holiday and other such trips. And what a marvel they are, with the main line threading its way from Plymouth the Penzance through stunning scenery, over impressive viaducts, climbing testing gradients, and having traditional branch line connections of the kind that have long since vanished from other parts of the country.

A large part of the appeal are the county's traditional signalboxes and their associated GWR lower quadrant semaphore signals. What a pleasure to spend a few hours on the platform at say Par, for example, and listen to the sound of bells and levers coming from the 'box, the 'zing' of the signal wires being pulled, the 'thunk' of a signal arm dropping to the 'off' position, and the expectation of what might be coming down the track.

Sadly, however, a large part of that charm has now been swept away as the manual 'boxes at Lostwithiel, Par and Truro have been closed, and their semaphores replaced by colour lights controlled from a panel at Exeter (for more, see the excellent article by Network Rail signaller Craig Munday on page 36).

It is a poignant moment for enthusiasts and historians, and just imagine if you will all the sights and sounds these 'boxes have witnessed over the years since they opened in the late 1800s. But, on the plus side, the changes should mean a boost for passengers and operational flexibility – allowing more trains to run, and being one step towards realising the Mid Cornwall Metro scheme of regular through services between Newquay and Falmouth via Par and Truro.

None of the three 'boxes are to be demolished, those at Lostwithiel and Par in particular being Grade II-listed, so there is always the chance they will find some kind of further use – much like the one on the platform at Bodmin Parkway, which is now run as a coffee shop operated by the Bodmin Railway.

And the upgrade work has not completely done away with traditional signalling in the county either. Four manual 'boxes remain on the main line at Liskeard*, Roskear (near Camborne), St Erth* and Penzance, plus there are two others on the Newquay branch at St Blazey* and Goonbarrow* – the four marked with an asterisk still having semaphore signals and all the atmosphere surrounding them that comes with that.



Paul Bickerdyke, Editor

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92214

The RAILWAY Magazine

'9F' GOING: Great Central Railway-based No. 92214 was withdrawn on February 27, at the end of its 10-year boiler ticket, but not before enjoying one last week in passenger use followed by a photo charter. The '9F' is seen (main photo) on February 24 in fine form, powering past Kinchley Lane with the 15.00 Leicester North-Loughborough Central. GRAHAM NUTTALL



'9F' COMING: Agreement has been reached to restore No. 92219 to main line standards at the Strathspey Railway. The locomotive has not run since withdrawal in 1965 after just five years in service, but over the next few months the boiler will be lifted and sent away for overhaul, while the frame and wheels will be restored in the shed at Aviemore, the work expected to take around five years. A new tender will also be built (the original being separated at Barry Scrapyard, South Wales, and going to No. 92214), for which a set of wheels has already been sourced. No. 92219 is pictured in the sun outside the shed at Aviemore on February 25 (see also page 62). GORDON KIRKBY

Draft Rail Reform Bill published

In a surprise move ahead of the next general election, plans for creating Great British Railways have been published for parliamentary scrutiny.

By 'Industry Update'


BILL

The cover of the 32-page Draft Rail Reform Bill.



The proposed legislation includes responsibility for network enhancements beyond the current maintenance and renewals activity. The photo shows work to upgrade the sliding bridge over the River Trent at Keadby (near Scunthorpe) on February 19. NETWORK RAIL

THE long awaited legislation to implement rail reform was published in draft form on February 20, to allow parliamentary scrutiny, although it is widely expected it will not become law before the next general election.

The proposals do not replace the 1993 Railways Act, which saw nationalised British Rail divided up and Privatised, but instead make amendments to allow the transfer of franchising powers to a new Integrated Rail Body (IRB), into which the activities of Network Rail will also be transferred – including the obligations of the network licence that NR operates under for the public interest.

Although the term 'franchising' remains in use, the current format of contracts – which are in effect concessions where a fee is paid regardless of revenue performance – is likely to remain.

Once established, the IRB will become a corporate body that under current plans will be known as Great British Railways. Crucially, perhaps, the new entity will not be a Crown body, meaning its staff will not be regarded as civil servants.

A number of duties are set out in explanatory notes that accompany the formal document, among which is a requirement for GBR to publish an Integrated Business Plan. This will cover the operations, maintenance and renewals activity undertaken by Network Rail at present, with the addition of an infrastructure enhancement plan. The latter was excluded from recent funding for Control Period 7 that begins in April and covers a five-year period.

Regulatory functions

The infrastructure enhancement plan is a reversion to the previous Route Utilisation Studies published by Network Rail that identified capacity pinch points, the need for gauge enhancement and improved line speed, and the potential for electrification. The opportunity for timetable improvements was also reviewed based on the aspirations of stakeholders for the restoration and upgrade of services.

There is no suggestion that the Office for Rail and Road (ORR), which acts as the industry regulator and includes the safety inspectorate, will have diminished responsibility. This means it will continue to approve track access agreements and ensure there is a level playing field for the allocation of capacity, something that is of crucial importance to the freight operators. It will also allow open access passenger and charter operators to retain access rights.

The regulator will have a role in monitoring strategic decision making, and the future Act will include a requirement to improve private sector involvement – including the approval of open access services, with a caveat similar to now of having regard to their effect on public funds, plus decisions that reflect the best use of the network.

Delegated powers to the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments continue, including franchise responsibilities, but the role of city regions and elected mayors is not specifically listed. In the absence of any intention of change, it must therefore be assumed that current policies will continue.

The GBR transition team has been working on the detailed changes and was provided with a budget of £205 million in 2021 to work up the proposals. The team identified savings of £575 million over a seven-year period following the organisational change by removing duplicated functions – but there will be additional costs of £381 million, presumably to establish the headquarters at Derby.

The big question is that if the legislation does not come into effect before a general election, which the Labour Party is expected to win with a promise of rail nationalisation, will the structure proposed meet the aspirations of an incoming government?

"Season tickets make up just 13% of journeys compared to 31% before the pandemic and more than 50% in the British Rail era"



Responding to passenger demand, Greater Anglia is to install seat bays with tables to its Class 745 EMU fleet. No. 745001 is pictured at Colchester on August 10, 2023, with the 11.30 Liverpool Street to Norwich. PAUL BIGGS

Revenue shortfall

The Government and train operators are at present concentrating on current challenges, not least of which is that revenue is far below pre-Covid levels, despite increasing passenger numbers.

In the latest statistics published by the ORR, 397 million journeys were made in the three-month period between July 1 and September 30, 2023 – which is 14% above the 350 million trips made during the same period of the previous year. For the full year to September 30, total journeys were 1496 million compared to 1238 million a year earlier, which is a rise of 21%. But the revenue trend is below these figures, with fare box income of £2.6 billion in the quarter ended September 30 compared to £2.4 billion the previous year. It is even further below pre-Covid receipts, with the total amounting to 78% of earnings at that time.

The 10% increase in revenue but 14% rise in passenger numbers means there has been a fall in average ticket price from £6.72 to £6.50, despite controlled fares rising by 5.9% in March 2023.

One reason the average fare is falling is the widespread take up of working from home made possible by digital technology that provides convenience and the benefit of reduced travel costs. Employers are seeking to increase office attendance, but this is not reflected in the use of season tickets, which in the latest quarterly period made up just 13% of journeys compared to 31% prior to the pandemic and more than 50% during in the British Rail era.

Discretionary travel

In contrast to commuting journeys, discretionary travel for leisure purposes has largely recovered. But as users often have the choice between using the train or their own car, ticket prices have to be competitive.

An experiment being conducted by LNER, as a Government owned company, began on February 5, to restrict the use of Off-Peak and Super Off-Peak tickets (formerly Savers and Super Savers) on the route

between London, Newcastle, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Edinburgh. This is an attempt to improve the revenue yield by charging more for advance purchase tickets at busy times, such as Friday evenings, where rail has a stronger market position.

Currently there is an £87 Off Peak Single fare available between London and Edinburgh, which can be purchased at ticket offices or ticket vending machine, allows travel on any train, and is refundable. The alternative advance tickets sold at variable prices do offer a degree of flexibility, in that a journey can be made 70 minutes before or after the original booking, but if that is not possible there is no refund available.

This approach to fare levels has been demonstrated by the pricing adopted for football fans supporting Leeds United in an FA Cup fixture at Chelsea on February 28. Because of the 7.30pm kick-off time, there is only one late evening service in the timetable for fans returning the same day. In a reaction to overwhelming demand, LNER has lifted the advance purchase price to £220, declaring that the train cannot accommodate passengers holding valid lower priced 'turn up and go' tickets.

This is market pricing in the extreme and mirrors airline practice, but whether rail users are ready for this approach is a matter of conjecture, which is no doubt why the policy has been described as an experiment, with the backing of the GBR transition team.

On a more formal level, the approach must be in breach of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, which requires the acceptance of universal ticket products issued by other operators. This might, for example, be a GWR-issued Off-Peak ticket from Reading to Edinburgh, which LNER is obliged to honour.

Large scale events

Attendance at large scale events, such as concerts and the big crowds attracted by high calibre sports fixtures, is an ever increasing transport challenge that has led policing authorities to require the retiming of some events in recent months in the interests of public safety.

> "If the legislation does not come into effect before a general election, which the Labour Party is expected to win with a promise of rail nationalisation, will the proposed structure meet the aspirations of an incoming government?"

Crowd dispersal from rugby fixtures at Cardiff is a well-rehearsed drill that involves additional trains making shuttle trips using the South Wales Main Line, but a fixture arranged between Wales and South Africa on June 22 this year has had to be switched to Twickenham because of a date clash with a music concert.

The concentrated demand for return to South Wales will far exceed the train service capacity and is the type of occasion where enhanced ticket prices may be in evidence. This will prove difficult to implement, as crowd control measures mean passengers queue and join the first available service, thus preventing advance booking on specified trains.

However, Great Western Railway does have a well-developed process for enhancing services if required – such as for the annual Glastonbury Festival, where additional trains are provided to Castle Cary.

Premium travel

The current revenue shortfall is also a reflection of reduced demand for premium travel, with fewer passengers purchasing first class tickets. The anecdotal evidence is that the product has been diminished to the point where it is not seen as value for money.

It is good to note that some train operators are beginning to recognise the need to improve the premium travel experience. As a result of service restrictions caused by Covid, on-board catering was severely reduced throughout the network. But TransPennine Express is one of a number of operators that have improved what is offered, with a hot meal service being restored for first class ticket holders on journeys between Manchester/Liverpool and Scotland. A trolley service has also been reinstated in standard class accommodation.

Poor quality of seating layouts provided in newer trains is also under the spotlight, with Greater Anglia taking steps to reconfigure the interior of its relatively new Class 745 EMUs, replacing airline style configurations with seating around a table. This makes for an easier working environment for business travel where passengers use laptops, and a more suitable journey experience for family groups.

The strong levels of growth over the last two decades, which was interrupted by the pandemic, must not allow complacency to set in that it will continue to grow regardless of service shortfalls that fail to meet passenger expectations.

Avanti to axe through Shrewsbury-Euston service

By Chris Milner

THE single direct rail service from Shrewsbury to London Euston is to be axed from June.

According to informed sources, the service has been losing passengers leading to a revenue shortfall of around £1.4 million per year as a result of changing travel patterns.

Other operational overheads are the cost of maintaining route knowledge for 60 Oxley-based drivers, in addition to around 75 miles of empty stock working each day of operation. Cutting the services means passengers will have to change to Avanti trains to Euston at Wolverhampton or Birmingham New Street.

However, *The RM* understands that from June this year, West Midlands Railway plans to introduce a Birmingham to Shrewsbury semi-fast service via Sandwell & Dudley, with the existing service (which calls at most stations) being diverted to run via Tame Bridge Parkway to Wolverhampton. This latter service will call at Darleston and Willenhall when these two new stations open.

Open access returns

It is not all gloomy news for passengers, however, as a new open access operator called Wrexham Shropshire & Midlands Railway is aiming to start operations from June 2025 between Wrexham General to London Euston. An application for train paths has been lodged with the Office of Rail & Road for approval.

The application is for five-trains per day Monday to Saturday (four on Sunday) using Class 221 or 222 units to meet the 125mph requirements of the West Coast Main Line. The service is proposed to call at Gobowen, Shrewsbury, Telford, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Coleshill Parkway, Nuneaton and Milton Keynes Central. An outline timetable suggests an end-to-end journey time of around three hours. The route also opens up new direct journey opportunities avoiding a change at Birmingham New Street.

Consultancy firm SLC Rail is behind the WSMR plan and is unrelated to previous open access operator Wrexham, Shropshire & Marylebone Railway that operated Class 67 and Mk.3 carriages between 2008 and 2011 (later becoming part of the DB Regio/Arriva operation and remains an active company as a legal entity).

SLC has been involved in the delivery of new stations at Kidderminster, Worcestershire Parkway, Kenilworth and the development of the Cowley branch at Oxford.

As part of its access application, the new WSMR has outlined aspirations to refurbish the Class 22x sets and fit them with stop-start engine technology and improved emission control. Longer term, it is looking towards hybrid traction.

There are potential conflicts for paths on the West Coast Main Line, as Avanti wants to increase its service frequency from London to Liverpool to half-hourly, while Grand Union has applied to introduce an open access service between Stirling and Euston.



Once Avanti introduces its new bi-mode Class 805 fleet, the displaced 'Voyager' DMUs could be used by new open access operator WSMR. No. 805009 is seen on a Euston-Crewe mileage accumulation run north of Kilsby Tunnel (Northamptonshire) on February 12. CHRIS MILNER

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Fleet changes at Tyseley

Kolhapur to be sold as Vintage Trains brand becomes GWR focussed.

By Chris Milner

LMS 'Jubilee' No. 5593 *Kolhapur* and GWR 0-6-0PT No. 7760 are to be sold by Tyseley Locomotive Works in order to allow sister company Vintage Trains (VT) to develop its core brand of running Great Western-designed locomotives and Pullman restaurant car trains.

The decision to de-accession and sell *Kolhapur* – which has not steamed since the late 1990s – is because it is considered non-standard where the remainder of the fleet comprises GWR locomotives. A further major factor is that the 'Jubilee' needs a major overhaul which has been estimated to cost £750,000.

VT has said that for around £100,000, its popular GWR 4-6-0 No. 4965 *Rood Ashton Hall* can be returned to traffic relatively quickly and funds are available for a 10-year boiler overhaul which is due to commence in March. There are also plans to modify the cylinders to fit almost anywhere within the Network Rail loading gauge.

Surprise move

However, the biggest surprise with *Rood Ashton Hall* is the decision – at a future point – to convert the loco to burn liquid fuel, based on the GWR oil firing system. There is a precedent as between 1947-1950, 11 'Hall' class locomotives were converted to oil burning.

Reasoning behind this move is that VT says it further improves the operator's environmental footprint but also provides resilience against summer fire risk, which it considers is only likely to increase with warmer summers.

In respect of No. 7760, VT says that since purchase, all three panniers – Nos. 7752, 7760 and 9600 – have only ever been steamed once simultaneously and only two have ever been required to be used together on main line excursions at any one time. A review of requirements deemed No. 7760 (a former London Transport loco) surplus as it is identical to No. 7752.

Furthermore, to get No. 9600 into traffic, the loco needs a retube and stay work, however, No. 7752 needs new tyres which VT has in-house and is seeking donations for this work.

A move to focus the brand on GWR and at the same time augment restaurant car services is market led. 'Shakespeare Express' services are now loading to capacity for both the Pullman Sunday lunch and Tourist Afternoon Tea, and VT says it aims to provide additional capacity with an increased number of trains.

Turning to diesel operations, VT acknowledges a need to increase its operational diesel fleet to handle its 'Explorer' trains, private charters and provide support for steam operations, and plans to put Class 37 No. 37240 in traffic later this year once new wheel bearings have been fitted.

Separately, a plan for fitting Central Door Locking (CDL) has been approved by the Office of Rail & Road, and VT's current exemption which will allow it to run trains without CDL expires on November 29.

Additionally, the fitment of controlled emission toilets to its stock has been completed and VT has publicly thanked Network Rail for its support on the project.

Improved catering

As part of a revised on-board offer, restaurant facilities will be improved, along with a plan to bring catering in-house, for which detailed work is ongoing to comply with food safety regulations.

Other news includes the acquisition of Mk.1 FO No. 3110, fitting a travelling bar in the BFK carriage and the addition of kitchen facilities in the accessible BSO coach.

A decision has also been made to reactivate or add air braking equipment to the core dining train to provide dual-braking options.





ABOVE: A poignant message on the rake of HTAs commemorating the end of an era. BOTH: KIERAN MARSHALL

LEFT: Loading from front to rear, DB Cargo Class 66 No. 66112 receives a load of coal at the disposal point, destined for Port Talbot steelworks on February 23.

The final train of Welsh mined coal

A CHAPTER of South Wales history closed on February 23, when the last train of Welsh mined coal operated on the national rail network.

The final domestic coal flow in the UK was hauled by DB Cargo Class 66 No. 66112 from Cwmbargoed Disposal Point to the Tata steelworks at Port Talbot.

The Ffos-y-Fran opencast mine operated by Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd closed on November 30, 2023 following a direction from the Welsh Government.

Trains have been operating since then to help clear the stockpile.

Poignantly, the last vehicle in the 21-wagon train, HTA bogie No. 310776 carried the message 'End of coal'.

Rochdale to Ribblehead DalesRail service this summer

A PROVISIONAL timetable has been published for a new year-round DalesRail service, which will operate between Rochdale and Ribblehead via Blackburn and Clitheroe from June 8, *writes Graeme Pickering*.

Branded the 'Yorkshire Dales Explorer', it will consist of two services in each direction.

The outward trains will leave Rochdale at 07.52 and 14.52, arriving Ribblehead at 10.19 and 17.26 respectively. Return workings depart Ribblehead at 11.08 and 18.05, arriving at Rochdale at 13.29 and 20.29.

Coordinated by Community Rail Lancashire and operated by Northern, DalesRail trains have usually been diagrammed for Summer Sundays in the past, most recently between Blackpool and Carlisle via Clitheroe and Hellifield, but lack of train crew for Sunday working made it difficult to run a reliable service. Northern took the decision not to run DalesRail at all last year, instead prioritising a dependable timetable on routes used seven days a week.

SIDELINES

New EMU depot proposed at Shipley

PLANS are being developed for the construction of a new electric multiple unit depot at Shipley in West Yorkshire, *writes Graeme Pickering*.

Documents lodged with City of Bradford Council last October, by consulting firm AECOM on behalf of Network Rail, show a proposed location south of Shipley station, in an area between Otley Road and the railway line to Bradford Forster Square.

Envisaged is a steel-framed main building, accommodating a four-road maintenance shed for four-car EMUs, staff facilities, offices, storage space and an area for controlling depot movements.

Also detailed are facilities for carriage washing, cleaning of vehicle underframes and for emptying and servicing of on-board controlled emissions toilets. A train services building would provide a base for train interior cleaning and technical teams, as well as for drivers.

New Bala extension plan submitted

BALA Lake Railway (BLR) has resubmitted its planning application to extend the 2ft-gauge line to a new town centre terminus.

The original application encompassed 1200 metres of new track from the current Pen-y-Bont terminus, a new level crossing and construction of a new station building, loco and carriage shed and signa box in Bala. This was refused by Snowdonia National Park Authority on April 19 last year after seven key points were identified where insufficient information had been provided.

The revised application includes additional information concerning permitted discharges from Bala Wastewater Treatment Works (which will receive and treat effluent arising from the proposed development) which seeks to demonstrate that the proposed development will not adversely affect the condition of the River Dee and Bala Lake/Afon Dyfrdwy a Llyn Tegid Special Area of Conservation, and the Llyn Tegid Ramsar site.

There are also revisions to the location of loco facilities at Bala, a realignment of proposed route at Pen-y-Bont, and revised drainage proposals.

‘Shenfield Shark’ scrapped on site

Legendary brake van broken up after no safe method found to remove it in one piece for preservation.

A BRAKE van abandoned at an Essex main line station for around 35 years has been broken up after attempts to save it failed on safety grounds, *writes Owen Hayward*.

The ‘Shenfield Shark’ will be familiar to many railway enthusiasts. No. DB993733, a ballast plough brake van known as a ‘Shark’ was failed with a hot box during a ballast trip working to Southend Victoria in the late 1980s and shunted into the siding that was to become its home for the next three decades.

Hopes of saving it for preservation over the years had often been set back by concerns of it not being structurally safe to move by rail. Its location between a thick treeline away from a road and overhead power cables on the adjacent Great Eastern Main Line also prevented it from being easily lifted out.

Ample interest

Recognising there was ample interest in the van, DB Cargo advised in November 2021 that the vehicle was officially up for disposal, with the proposed method of extraction being to crane it out while the line was under an engineering possession. However, safety concerns also resulted in this option not being viable.

In February this year, it was finally revealed that with no safe way of removing it, the van was to be cut up on site. During a possession over the weekend of February 17/18, the ‘Shark’ was pinch barred 100 yards up the siding to a headshunt adjacent to the station car park – the first time and furthest distance it had travelled in all its years there.

The following weekend, the van was cut up by contractors before being taken away in its component parts.

DBC statement

In a statement, DB Cargo said: “Our most recent plan was to find a way of lifting the van out whole from Shenfield station, working in collaboration with Network Rail.

“This is something we have looked at several times over the years, but we have never found a way of achieving this which met all the safety requirements.

“We had thought that moving the ‘Shark’ further away from the overhead lines would enable us to finally lift it out. However, Network Rail decided on safety grounds that the use of a crane is not possible, so we are unable to remove the van from site.

“Regrettably, we only have a narrow window to fulfil this operation while a possession is in place, so we have had to proceed with the revised plan to dismantle it on site.”



Shark No. DB993733 is seen on February 19 in a headshunt adjacent to the station car park – the van’s temporary home that it occupied for a week prior to being broken up. SIMON MURDOCH

Fallen tree derails Class 158

By Jon Longman

ONE passenger suffered minor injuries when the 15.51 Liverpool Lime Street to Norwich service was derailed after hitting a fallen tree while passing through Thetford Forest at about 21.15 on February 7.

The injured passenger was treated at the scene between Thetford and Harling Road. The 31 passengers were taken forward by coach to Norwich station, arriving at 01.00.

The windows on the front of East Midlands Railway Class 158 No. 158856 were smashed and there was further damage to the lead vehicle. Services between Ely and Norwich were suspended on February 8 as a result of the incident.

The leading coach was rerailed before the damaged DMU was towed to Crown Point depot.

Rail Accident Investigation Branch staff arrived on site to gather evidence. They carried out a preliminary examination before deciding whether an investigation should be launched.

Crewe home for *Duke of Gloucester*

By Gareth Evans

THE Royal Scot Locomotive & General Trust (RSL&GT) has secured a 10-year partnership with the BR Class 8 Steam Locomotive Trust (BRC8SLT) for the operation of unique BR Standard Pacific No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*.

The loco, which has not worked since its boiler certificate expired in 2012, is in the final stages of an overhaul at Tyseley Locomotive Works. On completion of the work, No. 71000 will move to the Severn Valley Railway for testing and commissioning before relocating to Crewe later this year.

Main line operation

As part of an agreement which is designed to help ensure the mainline future of this iconic loco, the 4-6-2 will be primarily operated by Locomotive Services (TOC) Limited, hauling Saphos Trains’ railtours interspersed with periods of operation on heritage railways.

Trevor Tuckley, chairman of the BRC8SLT, custodians of No. 71000, said: “We are delighted to be part of this stable of very special steam locos. ‘The Duke’ was built in 1954 and was intended to be the first of a class which would see steam continue until the mainlines were electrified. However, BR decided to introduce diesels instead. ‘The Duke’ was then scrapped as the only unfinished prototype.

“Against the odds, Colin Rhodes decided that this machine should be saved for future generations to see in working order – and so started the ‘impossible dream’. He returned it to the mainline in the configuration it was scrapped, plus the addition of a Kylchap exhaust. This latest overhaul has carried out the improvements that we believe Robert Riddles, the designer, would have done if he had been allowed the time. This completes the ‘impossible dream’.”

Project support

Trevor added: “I would like to thank Michael Whitehouse and Alastair Meanley for their help and assistance during the Duke’s overhaul at Tyseley.”

Jeremy Hosking, trustee of the RSL&GT said: “No. 71000 is clearly supported and managed by a professional, dedicated and enthusiastic team, whose outlook is forward-thinking. I look forward to seeing ‘The Duke’ heading our restored Mk.1 carriages for everyone to enjoy.”

■ In the *Railway Magazine*-backed Shap Time Trials in 1995, *Duke of Gloucester* broke the record for the fastest northbound steam ascent, achieving the highest EDHP figures of 2300 average and a peak of 2803.



BR Standard Class 8 Pacific No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* storms up Hatton bank on April 29, 1990 hauling the ‘Midlander II’ tour, the steam section being from Didcot to Derby. FERNDALE MEDIA

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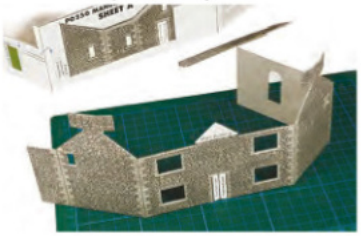
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An East Coast digital milestone

Welwyn to Hitchin section of East Coast route on course to become Britain's inaugural 'no signals' intercity mainline.

By Gareth Evans

THE introduction of in-cab digital signalling on the East Coast Main Line has moved a step closer following commissioning of the Welwyn to Hitchin (W2H) European Train Control System (ETCS) overlay. W2H is Britain's first instance of infrastructure commissioning towards a 'no physical signals' intercity mainline.

The overlay is a critical part of the East Coast Digital Programme's (ECDP) delivery plan. To achieve the end goal of a 'no signals' railway on the southern part of the East Coast Main Line (ECML), it is necessary to create a section of route that can be operated with both conventional and digital signalling. Drivers from all ECML operators will progressively be trained to drive in ETCS through the W2H overlay. Once all train fleets are upgraded and all drivers trained, the progressive rollout of digital signalling throughout ECML (South) can rapidly follow. The W2H overlay will be a key enabler not just for ECDP, but for the wider rollout of ETCS across the whole rail network.

W2H commissioning involved what has been termed a 'lite' resignalling in preparation for system proving of the ETCS system. A new proving desk and Radio Block Centre will be put in place in the York Rail Operating Centre to enable the first overnight proving trains to operate from this spring. It is expected that migration to ETCS operations on passenger and freight services through the overlay section will begin in 2025.

The W2H lite resignalling has included moving existing assets to Westrace Trackside System equipment; introducing three new Trackguard Westlock interlockings and associated infrastructure; trackside fringe alterations at Hatfield, Biggleswade, Hertford and Letchworth; and renewing the existing train detection with axle counters. Power works saw three new principal supply point feeders introduced, replacing seven existing 650V feeders.

Pathfinder project

This also involves an overlay between Finsbury Park and Moorgate, on which Great Northern drivers are progressively being trained to drive using ETCS.

After a series of proving runs and regulatory approvals, the first digitally signalled passenger train operated in November 2023. Currently around a quarter of NCL trains are being operated in ETCS and it is expected that the NCL will be a 'no signals' railway from early 2025.

The NCL pathfinder is enabling the ECDP to 'learn by doing', and the experience gained by the cross-industry collaboration will be invaluable to the effective delivery of digital signalling on the mainline, starting with W2H.



Work being done inside Welwyn tunnels to deliver the East Coast Digital Programme. NETWORK RAIL



HIGHLAND WHISTLING

A Class 40 returned to Inverness via the Highland Main Line on February 24, for the first time since No. 40145 in April 2010. No. D213 (40013) *Andania* hauled Inter-City's 'Whistling Highlander' tour from Crewe to Inverness on February 24 (top-and-tail with Class 47 No. D1935/47805 *Roger Hosking MA 1925-2013*), returning south again on the following day. The outbound trip is seen at Kingussie passing ScotRail HST Nos. 43181/031 with 1T88, the 14.50 Inverness to Glasgow. GORDON KIRKBY

Full service returns to Marston Vale Line using Class 150 DMUs

A FULL hourly-timetabled service returned to the Marston Vale line between Bedford and Bletchley from February 19.

The 16-mile line, which connects the West Coast Main Line with the Midland Main Line, had been running with a limited peak hour service since November 2023. This began after a break of 11 months using rail replacement buses after Vivarail and its maintenance company went into administration, grounding the Class 230 DMUs that were introduced in 2019.

Due to the very short platforms on the route, only certain types of train can be used on the line. Operator London NorthWestern took on three Class 150/0 units from Northern which have been refurbished and rebranded, have a universally accessible toilet, feature an upgraded passenger information system and have USB charging points. A period of driver training was also needed before the limited service could commence.

Under the full timetable there are 17 daily departures in each direction between Bedford and Bletchley on Monday-Saturday. There is no Sunday service.

An event to mark the return of the hourly timetable took place at Bletchley station attended by rail users, members of the Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership and local MPs. To encourage passengers to return to the route, for the next three months a single journey between any two stations on the Marston Vale Line will cost just £1 for adults and 50p for children.

To celebrate the reopening, LNR launched a competition to name one of the Class 150 DMUs used on the Marston Vale Line. Suggestions included people and places associated with the line between Bedford and Bletchley, with entries closing on March 4 as this issue went to press.

New 'Clayton' trialled by British Steel

Tests seek to establish if a Class 18 hybrid shunter is the 'correct solution' for rail movements at Scunthorpe Works.

By Graeme Pickering

BRITISH STEEL has taken delivery by road of a Class 18 hybrid shunter for a trial expected to last at least four weeks at its Scunthorpe Works.

No. 18003 is one of the 15-strong class, all owned by Beacon Rail, which have a Stage V emissions-compliant diesel engine, but can also operate solely on battery power, recharged via regenerative braking or by plugging into an energy supply. They have the capability to haul loads of up to 2500 tonnes.

It is the first time British Steel has carried out on-site tests of a hybrid locomotive.

No. 18003 is being evaluated on internal rail movements for reliability, efficiency and potential to reduce maintenance costs.

Trev Charlton, site operations manager for internal logistics, said that the company was searching worldwide for a new type of shunter as it looked to reduce its carbon footprint.



The cab end of Class 18 diesel-battery hybrid locomotive No. 18003 at British Steel's Scunthorpe Works, where it is being trialled on internal rail movements. BRITISH STEEL



A 'nose' end view of No. 18003 at Scunthorpe Works. BRITISH STEEL

"From the specifications, the loco has sufficient power for our operations and we are keen to establish how long it can be operated without being plugged in," he added. "This will help us establish how many we will potentially need to purchase – if they are the correct solution for the business."

Battery efficiency in colder weather is another aspect of performance which British Steel is keen to scrutinise.

Hybrid family

Ordered in 2020, the Class 18s were produced by Burton-on-Trent-based Clayton Equipment Ltd to its CBD90 specification.

The wider family of related hybrid locos are already used at Tata Steel's Port Talbot works and at the Sellafield nuclear site in West Cumbria.

No. 18001 underwent a three-month trial with GB Railfreight at Whitemoor Yard in Cambridgeshire during 2022. Since then, Beacon has been working on the approvals process for the fleet as well as assessing the needs of lessees, including bespoke modifications.

The RM understands that further Class 18s are due to be delivered to customers during March, April and May.

Railways in Parliament Compiled by **Jon Longman**

Why no tilt?

JACK Brereton, the Stoke-on-Trent South MP, wanted to know what information the Department of Transport (DfT) holds on any issues identified during the testing of new Hitachi AT300 rolling stock to replace 'Voyagers' on Avanti West Coast services, and whether an assessment was made of the potential effect of the lack of tilt mechanism for those trains on maintaining safe operation around bends at speed, journey times and rail timetables. The MP asked why the tender for the rolling stock replacement for 'Voyagers' on Avanti West Coast services did not specify the inclusion of a tilt mechanism.

Transport Minister Huw Merriman said: "The procurement, safety risk assessment, and safe operation of Hitachi AT300 rolling stock is the responsibility of the operator. When running rolling stock procurements, operators take account of factors such as what products are available to the market, reliability, operating cost, passenger capacity, comfort and environmental performance.

"Network Rail is upgrading infrastructure on parts of the West Coast Main Line to allow higher speed running with non-tilting trains. The Office of Rail and Road is responsible for ensuring the new trains meet rail safety regulatory requirements before they can operate on the main line.

"The DfT is looking forward to the introduction of Avanti West Coast's new Hitachi rolling stock later this year to replace the current diesel fleet in line with the Department's goal to run a more sustainable railway, resulting in a 61% cut in carbon emissions, as well as offering more space and a quieter journey for passengers."

Translink wires study

SOUTH Antrim MP Paul Girvan asked what the DfT's timescale is for the delivery of a feasibility study on electrifying sections of the Northern Ireland Railway.

Mr Merriman replied: "Transport is a 'transferred matter', devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive and thus the responsibility of the Executive. However, as outlined by the Secretary of State for Transport in his written ministerial statement of December 7, the UK Government is funding a feasibility study on the electrification of the railway line from Belfast to the border with the Republic of Ireland.

"The study is being conducted by Translink on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure, with a projected completion date of spring 2025."

Morecambe alternatives

LANCASTER and Fleetwood MP Cat Smith asked the Government to assess the economic impact of electrifying the Lancaster to Morecambe line.

Mr Merriman said: "Electrification, alongside alternative technologies such as hydrogen, battery and bi-modes, will play an important role in meeting our Net Zero targets.

"We are working with Great British Rail's Transition Team to bring forward options to decarbonise the whole network, including Lancaster to Morecambe, for the Government to carefully consider in terms of overall deliverability and affordability."

St Clears delayed

CARDIFF Central MP Jo Stevens asked what progress the DfT has made on St Clears station via the Restoring Your Railway Fund.

Mr Merriman replied: "We have previously made £4.7m available to the Welsh Government towards reopening a station at St Clears. The Welsh Government has requested that this project is paused, pending a decision on a new hospital's location."

Tracking the budget

PORTSMOUTH South MP Stephen Morgan wanted to know how much of the DfT's budget has been allocated for track renewals in England and Wales in the next five years.

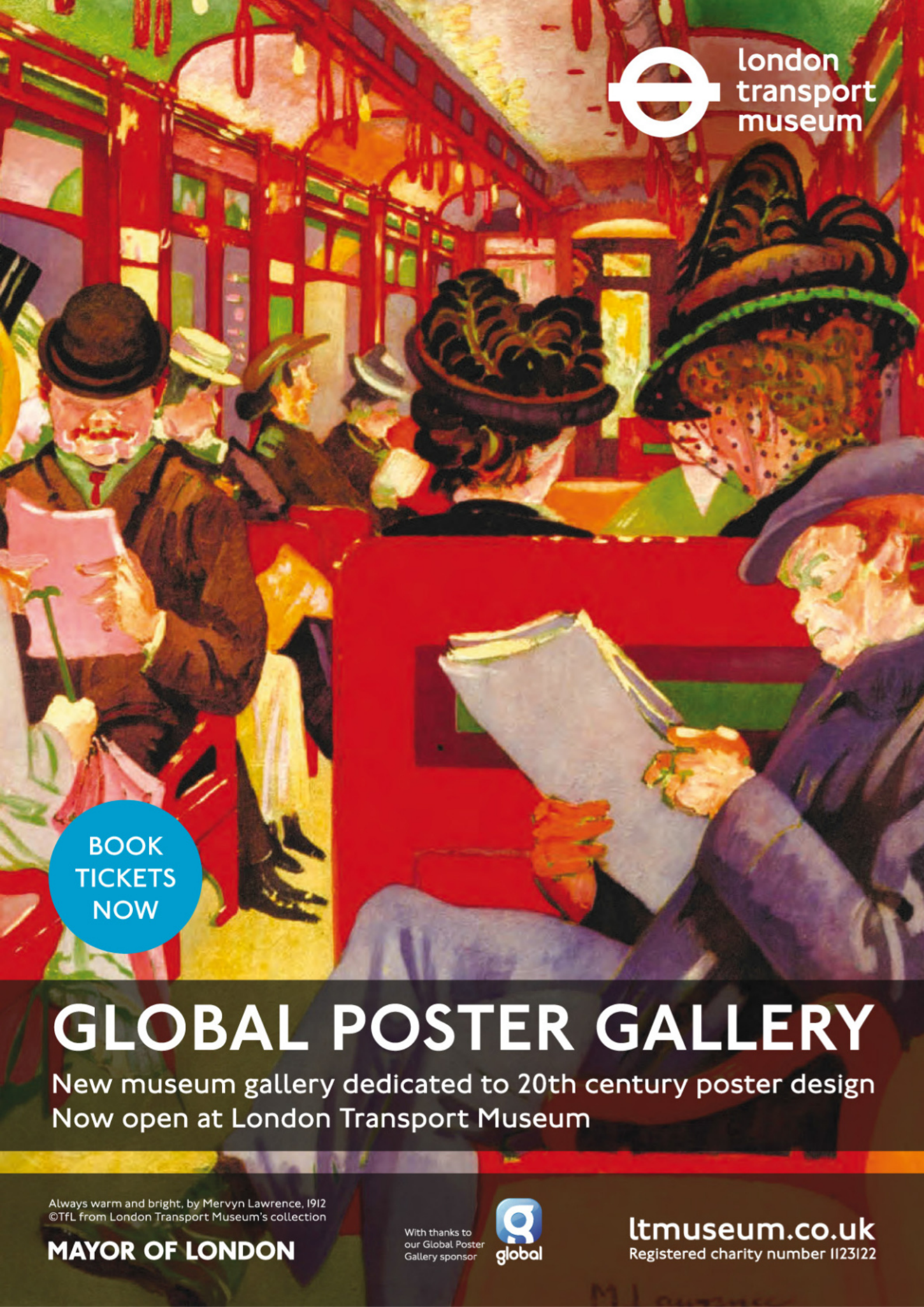
Mr Merriman replied: "Track renewals are funded by Network Rail from the £44.1 billion provided by the Government to fund Network Rail's operations, maintenance and renewal activity in Control Period 7 (April 2024 to March 2029). Network Rail plans expenditure of roughly £3.5 billion on track renewals in this Control Period."

Rising ticket prices

LIVERPOOL Walton MP Dan Carden asked whether an assessment had been made of the potential impact of fare increases on passenger numbers.

Mr Merriman said: "The DfT considers a range of factors when determining rail fare changes, including the impact on passenger demand. The Government intervened to cap regulated fares increases at 4.9%, 4.1 percentage points lower than the July RPI figure on which fare changes are usually based.

"This strikes a balance between offering lower fares to encourage passengers to use our rail network and supporting the industry while it gets back on good financial footing as it continues to deal with a revenue shortfall after the pandemic."


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SIDELINES

APM suppliers shortlisted

TWO bidders will be invited to tender to deliver, operate and maintain the automated people mover (APM) system, which will provide a link between HS2's Interchange station (north east of Solihull), the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham International station and Birmingham Airport.

The UK subsidiary of Doppelmayr Cable Car (whose 'Cable Liner' technology is already used in Birmingham Airport's 'Air-Rail Link' and Luton Airport's DART transit systems) and POMA (whose recent work includes the Les Arcs Funicular Railway in France) have been shortlisted. The winning company will be awarded contracts covering the design, supply, testing and commissioning of the system and its operation (including asset management and maintenance) for a 25-year period. The total value of the contracts is expected to be up to £269 million. Tenders for the infrastructure are expected to be invited next year.

Motorway bridge removed

A BRIDGE weighing 4000 tonnes which crossed the M42 close to the site of HS2's Interchange station was demolished during a 52-hour operation.

The motorway was closed between junctions 6 and 7 from late evening on February 9, until 01.30 on February 12.

It is the second of two such bridges in the vicinity to be demolished to make way for a twin box structure which will carry the high speed route.

Leena leads PPE improvements

CIVIL engineering apprentice Leena Begum, who works for HS2's London joint venture contractor Skanska Costain STRABAG has been leading research into a wider range of personal protective equipment (PPE) for women.

As a wearer of a hijab, she investigated how a PPE version of the headscarf could be produced and also addressed a need for improved PPE maternity wear.

Leena's work was recognised at HS2 Ltd's Inspiration Awards.

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Breakthrough with London logistics tunnel

Tunnel boring machine *Lydia* completes its drive into the Old Oak Common station box.



A 100-strong team worked around the clock, above and below ground, for nine months to complete the excavation of Atlas Road Logistics Tunnel. HS2

THE bore for the 853 metre-long (0.5 miles) Atlas Road Logistics Tunnel in West London, which will be used to move materials during the construction of the HS2 route eastwards towards Euston, was completed on January 23 after nine months of excavation.

Having begun its journey from Atlas Road in North Acton in spring 2023, prior to its breakthrough into the station box at Old Oak Common, tunnel boring machine (TBM) *Lydia* removed 62,000 tonnes of London Clay and installed 535 concrete rings to line the tunnel.

Although revised plans for the funding of HS2's Euston station are still under Department for Transport consideration, work on the design and preparation of the route to the terminus from Old Oak Common is continuing.

Parts for two other TBMs will be lowered into the station box later this year and assembled in preparation for creating the twin-bore, 4.5 mile-long Euston Tunnel. It will be 160 feet below ground at its deepest point and form the HS2 route between the stations at Old Oak Common and Euston.

The Atlas Road Tunnel will be used to supply over 56,000 concrete segments for the Euston Tunnel and to transport the material extracted during its excavation for reuse via HS2's Willesden Logistics Hub, from where it is transported to construction industry customers by rail. It will be filled-in once HS2 has been completed.

Curzon Street station

January 24 saw the beginning of major earthworks at the other end of the high-speed route. Mace Dragados Joint Venture, which, in collaboration with HS2 Ltd, has been developing a detailed programme for the new Birmingham Curzon Street station since 2021, is preparing the site for piling and foundations work this spring.

Construction of the main building for the seven-platform terminus, which has an arched roof influenced by those of Victorian stations, is due to start in the summer.

HS2 Ltd says that hundreds of jobs will be created during the construction phase. Work on the station façade is scheduled to begin in summer 2025, with concourse steelwork and the roof following that autumn. Completion of the internal fit-out is expected at the end of 2028. A two-year period of testing and commissioning is due to get underway in mid-2026.

■ In February, Rail Minister Huw Merriman attended a ceremony marking the official opening of Euston Skills Centre. Part-funded by HS2 Ltd (which has made £4.1 million available to the centre) and constructed on the site of Maria Fidelis School close to HS2's Euston terminus, it will offer training to local people, giving them the skills to work on construction projects in Camden, as well as national infrastructure programmes such as HS2.



SHARING THE SPOILS:

It is estimated that five million tonnes of material, extracted during the building of the HS2 tunnels in London, will have passed through its Logistics Hub at Willesden Euroterminal by the end of the construction project. The million-tonne mark was passed last summer. Having been transported via a conveyor system to Willesden, the spoil is moved by train for reuse in the construction industry. On February 12, passing the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal, Freightliner Class 66 No. 66532 *P&O Nedlloyd Atlas* is seen heading one such loaded train from Willesden to the Cemex cement plant at New Bilton, Rugby. CHRIS MILNER

Report says Phase 2 cancellation makes HS2 'poor value'

THE House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has published a report calling on the Government to answer questions raised by its decision to cancel the construction of Phase 2 of HS2 between the West Midlands and Manchester.

The report concludes that only building Phase 1 from Euston to Birmingham (HS2 trains originating or terminating north of Birmingham will use a connection at Handsacre in Staffordshire to leave or join the West Coast Main Line for the rest of their journey) represents "very poor value for money to the taxpayer".

It adds that neither the Department for Transport nor HS2 Ltd knows what the final benefits will be, or what impact Phase 2 cancellation will have on the rest of the programme.

In addition to addressing these factors and giving an updated cost for the project, the committee recommends that the DfT develops a range of private investment scenarios, including varying levels of public finance, as part of its considerations regarding progress with HS2's Euston terminus. To protect best value for the taxpayer, it says the department should also "decide soon" how it will proceed with tunnelling between Old Oak Common and Euston.

The committee has requested that the DfT and HS2 Ltd report to it regarding details of their plan for the disposal of land and property acquired for the construction of Phase 2. On the subject of 'Network North' transport projects (which the DfT has said will receive money that had been earmarked for the cancelled leg of HS2), the committee has asked for an updated list of projects, delivery timescales and value for money assurances.

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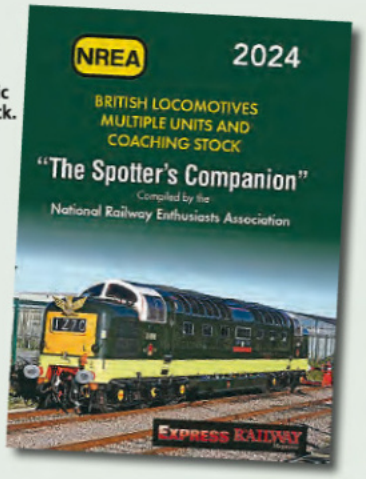
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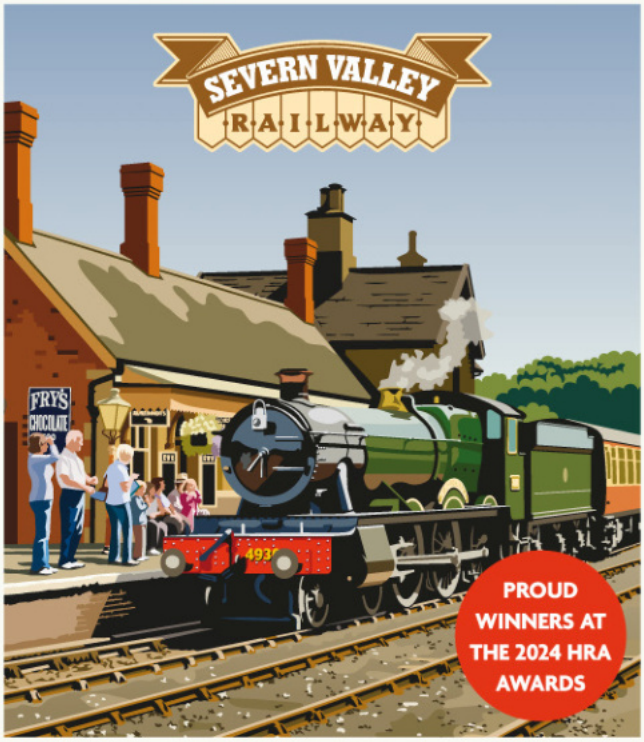
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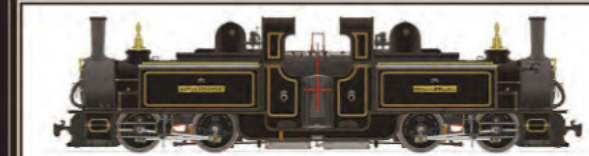
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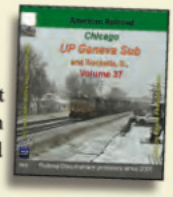
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Brighton's peers

It was a bumper night in Brighton for narrow gauge railways and Severn Valley Railway diesels as the HRA announced its 2024 award winners, reports Paul Bickerdyke.



SIX out of 15 prizes went to narrow gauge lines in this year's Heritage Railway Association Awards, while the Severn Valley Railway picked up three others – including two of those sponsored by the railway press.

This year's ceremony was held at the Metropole Hotel in Brighton on February 10, making it a home win for the **Volk's Electric Railway** as it picked up the prestigious Railway of the Year award. HRA chief executive Steve Oates said: "To see unique railways like the Volks Electric triumph over far bigger and more famous lines is proof that the heritage rail world is flourishing in all manner of different ways, despite the adversity we so often face." (See also the following pages for more on the VER.)

The **Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway** came out top in the Award for Marketing and Communications for the depth and thoughtfulness of its activities, while the **Seaton Tramway** won the Environmental Innovation Award for a festival designed to celebrate the natural and cultural heritage that surrounds the Devon line.

The **Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways** collected the Coiley Award for Steam Locomotive Engineering for its new-build reinterpretation of long-lost 'Double Fairlie' 0-4-4-0T No. 8 *James Spooner*. The judges felt the technical challenges faced in constructing such a complicated locomotive from scratch, and almost exclusively in-house, merited winning this engineering-focused honour.

Above: The 563 Locomotive Group received two awards for their work to restore LSWR 'T3' No. 563 to steam after 75 years.

Below: Guest speaker at the awards was social media star Francis Bourgeois.

Other prizes with a narrow-gauge connection went to **Osian Hughes** of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, in the Rising Star category, for his work in marketing and the development of the experiences at the line; while the Talyllyn Railway's **Tracksiders** group, formed in 1997, scooped the Team of the Year for the opportunities it gives to young people to do hands-on tasks at the railway.

The first of three prizes with a Severn Valley Railway connection was *The Railway Magazine*-sponsored Preservationist of the Year, a de facto lifetime achievement award, which went to **Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster**. Mr Dunster was a co-founder of the Fifty Fund in the late 1980s with the aim of saving one Class 50, but now as the fundraising arm of the Class 50 Alliance, it looks after no less than six 'Hoovers' and has notched up an incredible 100 main line tours using its own locos. The award also recognised Mr Dunster's role as managing director of the Severn Valley Railway and the positive changes he has made there in just his first year in charge.

The achievements of the SVR-based **Fifty Fund/Class 50 Alliance** also saw it pick up the *Rail Express*-sponsored Modern Traction Award, while the **Severn Valley Railway** itself won the HRA's Award for Diesel and Electric Locomotion, for a special programme of events celebrating 50 years of mainline diesel locomotive preservation.





Left: SVR managing director and co-founder of the Fifty Fund Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster (right) receives his Lifetime Achievement Award from *Railway Magazine* editor Paul Bickerdyke. PHOTOS BY JACK BOSKETT/HRA

Wagons and whisky

The Infrastructure Award was won by the **Llangollen Railway** for its Corwen station project, which saw passenger trains return to the town on a permanent basis for the first time since 1964. The **National Wagon Preservation Group**, based at the Chasewater Railway, took home the Morgan Award for Rolling Stock Preservation for its work preserving a rake of former 'Merry Go Round' coal hoppers, the once 12,000-strong fleet having now been almost all scrapped.

An Award for Innovation in Business and Customer Experience went to the **Keith and Dufftown Railway** for the conversion of a redundant DMU trailer car into a whisky bar known as the 'Dram Tram', which has opened up a range of business opportunities. And the Lord Faulkner Young Volunteer of the Year was given to **Jonathan King** of the Downpatrick and County Down Railway, a director of the line at just 23 and said to be the youngest steam loco fireman in Ireland.

Heritage Railway magazine's Interpretation Award went to the **Great Central Railway** for its 'Railways at Work' gala, in particular the re-creation of the 1960s protests against the Beeching cuts. And lastly the **563 Locomotive Group** won both the Chair's Special Award and Steam Railway magazine's readers' prize for its work returning LSWR 'T3' No. 563 to steam after 75 years. ■



A view of the western end of the VER depot at Halfway, with the two maintenance roads on the left, the running line in the middle, and two stabling roads on the far side. The Motor Rail 40S diesel shunter and car No. 9 can be seen. ALL PHOTOS TAKEN ON FEBRUARY 10 BY PAUL BICKERDYKE UNLESS STATED

Railway of the Year!

Ahead of becoming the HRA's 'Railway of the Year', the Volk's Electric Railway offered awards attendees a behind-the-scenes tour of its workshop and offices, as Paul Bickerdyke reports.

THERE was a home win for the Volk's Electric Railway (VER) on February 10, as it scooped the top Railway of the Year prize at the Heritage Railway Association's annual awards ceremony in Brighton.

The VER is a fascinating operation, the oldest operational electric railway in the world, and still uses a fleet of cars dating back to the 1890s. The single-track 2ft 8½in gauge line, powered by third-rail at 110V DC, runs along Brighton seafront for just over a mile from Aquarium station (near the Palace Pier) in the west to Black Rock station (near the marina) in the east.

There is a third station at Halfway with a passing loop, and there are two other passing loops on each section either side of Halfway. Halfway is also where the maintenance and stabling depot is located, as well as the railway's central offices and control.

The VER was the brainchild of inventor and engineer Magnus Volk, opening in 1883 as a ¼-mile, 2ft gauge line from the Aquarium (which had opened in 1872) and site of the future Palace Pier (opened 1899) to the Chain Pier (which was destroyed by storm in 1896). Success saw the railway regauged to 2ft 8½in and extended by ½-mile to Paston Place (now called Halfway) in 1884, then by a further ½-mile to Black Rock in 1901.

Brighton Corporation took over control of the line in 1940, and today it is managed and operated by a mixture of paid staff and volunteers from the Volk's Electric Railway Association. Normal train operation sees two trains in service, crossing at Halfway and regulated by possession of track tokens – although drivers, station staff and control also stay in touch by radio.

Depot and fleet

In the mid-2010s, the railway was awarded £1.6 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (now renamed the National Lottery Heritage Fund) to rebuild both Aquarium station and the ageing depot at Halfway. The wooden depot of 1884 had become unfit for purpose, being leaky and draughty while not having sufficient headroom to lift cars for work such as wheel changes, which therefore had to be done outside.

The replacement depot is a modern five-road engineering facility with an inspection pit, raised roof, and a public viewing gallery. The middle road doubles up as the main running line, which has been a feature of the railway since it was extended from Paston Place/Halfway to Black Rock in 1901, Magnus Volk simply deciding to go through the shed rather than around it. The two roads on the



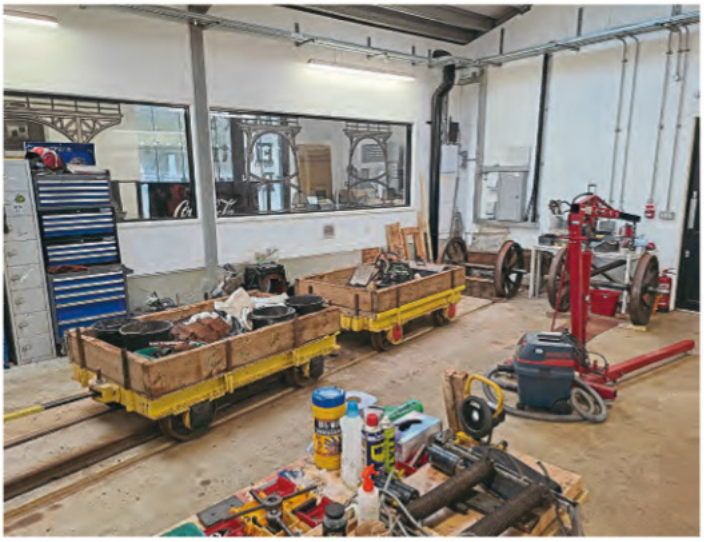
A view of the former wooden depot building on April 6, 2015, with car No. 4 on shed. This was leaky, draughty and had no headroom to lift vehicles. CHRIS J WOOD (CC BY-SA 4.0)



A close-up of Motor Rail 40S (40SD530) diesel shunter and car No. 9 in the maintenance roads at the Halfway depot.



Looking west from the back of the maintenance roads, with car No. 9 over the inspection pit and the maintenance train on the right, including non-powered person rider car 'Toby'.



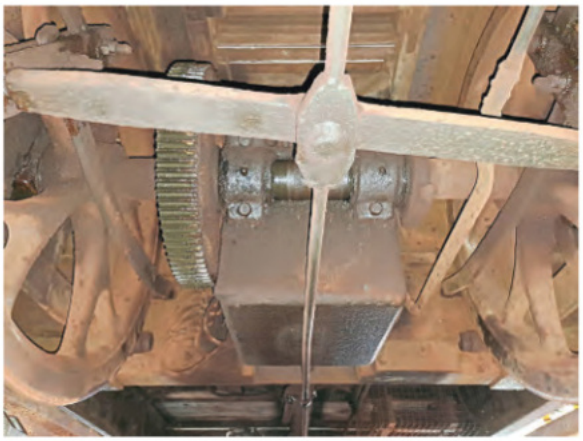
Two maintenance wagons at the rear of the maintenance roads. Behind the glass is the depot's public viewing gallery



Left: Car No. 9 over the inspection pit.

Right: The motor and gear underneath car No. 9. These are located at the eastern end of every car.

Below: The off-centre pick-up shoe under car No. 9. These are located at the western end of every car.





northern (landward) side are for repair and maintenance work; the two on the southern (seaward) side are for stabling; and the through road is also used for stabling when services are not running.

The depot has sufficient space to house the railway's current fleet of seven cars (six operational and one awaiting restoration, see table), diesel shunter, and a maintenance train. Some of car numbers have changed over the years, but all of the survivors reverted to their original identities in 2000 – although this does mean there are now two No. 9s, one being an original VER car (operational) and one being ex-Southend Pier (currently awaiting restoration).

The diesel shunter is a 40S Motor Rail type (40SD530) built by Alan Keef Ltd in 1988 for the Butterley Brick Co. It was bought by the VER in 2004 and is the railway's first non-electric vehicle. This makes it very useful not only for shunting or hauling the maintenance train, but also for rescuing cars should there be a power outage or rare failure.



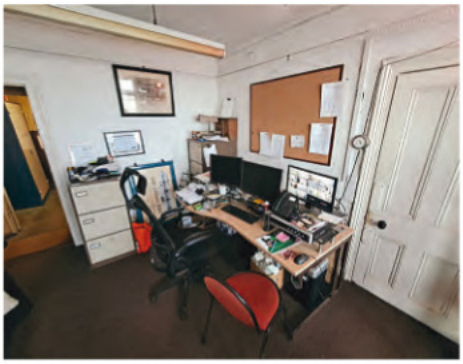
The former Southend Pier 'Toastrack' car No. 9 awaiting its turn for restoration in one of the depot's stabling roads.



A view inside former Southend Pier car No. 9.



Over the road from the depot, and formerly connected by a now-lifted siding into the double-doors, are the VER's main offices, control centre and stores. The solid-state rectifying equipment is also housed here converting mains 240V AC supply to the line's 110V DC traction voltage.



A view of the control desk upstairs in the main office.



Left: The extensive basement of the office building is used for stores.

THE VER FLEET

4	40 seat semi-open	1892
6	40 seat semi-open	1901
7	40 seat semi-open	1901
8	40 seat semi-open	1901
9	40 seat open	1910
9*	40 seat open	1898
10	40 seat open	1926

Note: * Ex-Southend Pier car, currently awaiting restoration.



Halfway station and passing loop pictured looking west from the depot with car No. 4 waiting to leave for Aquarium.



A view looking west at Black Rock station with car No. 4 ready to leave.

Just across Madeira Drive from the depot are the main offices of the railway, built into a space hollowed out from the cliff face. This was originally meant to house seawater pumps for the nearby hospital, but a change of plan saw it taken over by Magnus Volk for offices and a small workshop for the VER cars, for which there used to be a long-gone branch from the main depot. Today, the upstairs of the building is still used as offices by the railway, with the ground and basement levels as stores. The building also houses the solid-state rectifiers that convert the mains 240V AC supply to the railway's 110V DC traction voltage.

In winning the HRA award, the VER faced stiff competition from two other narrow gauge railways, the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway and Seaton Tramway, and notably it is the first time a railway with no steam traction at all has won the honour. The railway celebrated its 140th anniversary last year, and the judges were impressed by the authenticity, attention to detail and dedication to the unique history of Brighton's seafront line.

Moreover, with its long history of electric traction, the VER can be described as environmental pioneers. ■



Aquarium station which now also houses a small museum and cafe.



On board car No. 6 as it leaves Aquarium station and approaches the passing loop on the way to Halfway.



Representatives of the VER celebrate after being awarded Railway of the Year at the HRA ceremony in Brighton on February 10. JACK BOSKETT/HRA

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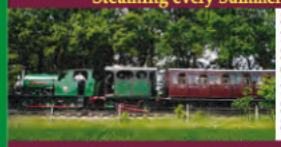
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We're sure you will have your favourite heritage line, museum or attraction to visit, but if you are looking for somewhere a bit special, a part of the country you may not have been to for a while, or an attraction on your doorstep you'd forgotten all about, then take a look at our map and the adverts on these pages to gain some inspiration.

All the venues and businesses here provide a memorable day out or help with that essential short break that often combines inspiration, entertainment and education... you really can't beat a super day out with the family at one of the fabulous attractions highlighted on these pages... and maybe some lovely locally-sourced food and hospitality too!

Even better, you can always find some interesting byways and highways to and from any museum, heritage line or attraction, so it's a great opportunity to get off those motorways and explore the great British countryside.

As you can see from the map here, there are venues to visit around Britain, so go on, support these great British attractions... you will not be disappointed!



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Mainly 'B1s'

John Heaton FCILT looks at some examples of everyday performance in the 1950s, away from the glamour of the era's high-profile expresses.

BURIED well below heroic tales of epic runs in the age of steam, lies a soft under-belly of sometimes indifferent workmanship and ineffective management. We looked closely at such an example in *The RM's* September 2021 edition, with the 8.12am Leeds-York/Scarborough of 1958/59 showing its deplorable punctuality record; a situation that was allowed to exist despite it being the regular commuter train of many North Eastern Region HQ operating staff.

Noel Proudlock was the one who kept count of those events, but the train was by no means an isolated example.

During the motive power section of his management training, Noel was assigned to the Wakefield District, based in an office at Westgate station. His main train to reach work was the 8.25am Leeds Central to Doncaster local, booked to call at Ardsley and Lofthouse; a train that promised a wealth of interest being a lightweight four-coach formation booked for Doncaster enginemen with a home-based Class 5 'B1' but likely to produce a Class 7 'V2' and even the odd Pacific.

From the vantage point of 2024, we can sit back and imagine the fireworks of flying up the three-mile, 1-in-100 climb from Beeston to Ardsley at speeds far exceeding those achieved by heavier London expresses, rousing acceleration from the intermediate station stops, and a final fling down the matching descent before masterly braking for entry to Wakefield Westgate.

This was far from being the case, however. There is certainly no merit in blasting away to arrive at every station



before time, but the drivers rostered to this diagram seemed to vie for the least effort possible regardless of time loss. Is this too critical of people performing a hard, manual and responsible job? Judge for yourself.

Doncaster stopper

Noel used the 8.25am departure 26 times between October 27 and December 19, 1958, and arrived on time not even once. Admittedly, 'B1' No. 61121 (Table 2) was only 12 sec late on November 13, but this was one of only six that were fewer than 2 min late on a schedule that could not be termed taxing on any of its sections.

What were the excuses? The only significant acceptable cause of delay was fog, from which British industrial areas of the 1950s in general, and the West Riding in particular, suffered in the extreme. On the five foggy days, the 8.25am stopper arrived at Wakefield an average of 14 min late, but most of that time could be ascribed to adverse signals (usually from other trains affected by the conditions) and late starts 'waiting loco'.

The loco for the 8.25am worked in from Doncaster, waited on the buffers for 'engine release' and repaired to Copley Hill for turning. Significantly, the only two occasions of late starts awaiting the return of the locomotive were on foggy days and averaged 12 min each to No. 61107 on October 28 and No. 61121 on November 27.

The stress of working late-running passenger trains with steam locos suffering a series of semaphore signal checks on foggy days must never be underestimated. One of the foggy day 'B1' runs has been included in Table 2. No. 61124 took 45 sec to ease up to the platform starting signal and waited for fellow fog-casualty, the 15min late inbound Castleford local DMU (Nos. 79004+79504), to cross its path. Modern operators would rightly blanche at this practice, but the driver was undeterred. He made a bolder climb to Ardsley than many of his counterparts before, inevitably succumbing to three signal checks approaching Westgate.

The reasons for late running on days not afflicted with fog are harder to understand. In general, dispatch discipline was good, considering the accuracy of the timepieces in use. Only three of the 21 'clear days' ('non-foggy' would be a better description of a 1950s Northern November) saw the train incur a late start of more than 30 sec, and all were fewer than 2 min late, but every single one lost time to Ardsley. Only one of the 21 'clear day' trains suffered noticeable signal checks.

In terms of average time lost by the loco (therefore excluding signals), the figures were: three Pacifics 73 sec, 15 'B1s' 102 sec, with the eight 'V2s' forming the worst category at 132 sec. See Table 1 for the full list of locomotives in this survey.

By generously classing 12 sec late as on time, the clear day arrivals at Wakefield Westgate were: one On Time; four ½L-2L, fifteen 2½L-5L, and one that was 11½L. The foggy day trains averaged 18½L within a 10-21½min range.

Presumably a discussion with the Doncaster crews would have elicited the opinion that it was not worth straining their firemen uphill when the second half of the journey ▶

"No. 61035 *Pronghorn* is arguably one of the less attractive antelope names, but reputedly faster than a Thomson's Gazelle, as opposed to Thompson's gazelles"

TABLE 1: ARTICLE SURVEY LOCOS WORKING LEEDS-DONCASTER

Class	Number/Name
A3	60067 *Ladas*, 60085 (DC) *Manna*
A1	60125 *Scottish Union*
A2/3	60523 *Sun Castle*
V2	60841, 60857, 60905, 60917, 60921, 60928, 60935, 60952
B1	61036 *Ralph Assheton*, 61107, 61114 (x2), 61121 (x3), 61124, 61127, 61128, 61145, 61155, 61250 *A. Harold Bibby*, 61365 (x2)
Notes:	DC=Double Chimney newly fitted. Power Classification (P=Passenger, F=Freight, MT=Mixed Traffic): A3 7P6F; A1 8P6F; A2/3 8P7F; V2 7P6F; B1 5MT.



Left: 'B1' No. 61129 leaves Leeds Central on Sunday, July 1, 1962 with the 2.54pm to Doncaster. J S WHITELEY

TABLE 2: 8.25AM LEEDS CENTRAL TO WAKEFIELD WESTGATE: B1 PERFORMANCE

Loco			61250		61036		61124		61121	
Vehicles/tare tonnes			4/105		4/104		4/108		4/105	
Train			8.25am Leeds Central-Doncaster		8.25am Leeds Central-Doncaster		8.25am Leeds Central-Doncaster		8.25am Leeds Central-Doncaster	
Date			November 12, 1958		December 18, 1958		November 26, 1958		November 13, 1958	
Recorder			J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock	
Miles	Timing Point	WTT	MS	MPH	MS	MPH	MS	MPH	MS	MPH
0 00	LEEDS CENTRAL d	0	0 00	T	0 00	T	0 00	3L	0 00	½E
							sig stop 0.45-3.10/ slips			
0.59	Holbeck Jct	2	2 30	24	2 47	21	5 10	22	2 35	25
1.05	Wortley South		3 40	24/42	4 07	19/44	6 15	31/48	3 43	24/44
3.16	Beeston Jct		7 10	39/41	7 48	36	9 20	39	7 03	38
5.50	Ardsley a	11	11 12		13 20		13 20		11 35	
5.50	d	12	12 20		14 50		14 40		12 15	
6.28	Spring Lane		2 00	38	1 55	47	1 50	38	1 48	38
7.36	Lofthouse & Outwood a	4	4 00		3 55		4 15		3 45	
7.36	d	5	4 30		4 55		5 05	-/41	4 20	
8.69	Wrenthorpe North		3 10	40/sigs	2 50	48/sigs	2 45	35/sigs	2 30	48
9.80	WAKEFIELD W a	4	5 48		5 35		8 05		4 52	

"As for the 'V2' – saw it, surpassed it, sorted"

would be almost completely downhill. In keeping with modern standards, the low level of most 'clear day' lost time fell below what would now be called the 'threshold' where a reason should be produced. However, the figures also expose the modern fallacy of measuring local trains by a 'Within 5 min' Public Performance Measure of punctuality (PPM), as even this 1958 motley bunch achieved '75% PPM' or 95% on 'clear days'.

Power comparisons

Noel Proudlock attempted to quantify the effort being applied on the three-mile, 1-in-100 climb to Ardsley with a scarcely taxing normal trailing load of 105 tons, rising to as high as 110 tons in the week commencing November 24 when an articulated twin was replaced by two conventional coaches.

Of the 15 'B1s', the highest indicated horsepower (ihp) produced was by No. 61250 *A. Harold Bibby* with 827 at 41mph; the lowest was by No. 61036 *Ralph Assheton* (found amongst the antelopes instead of his aristocratic colleagues) with 507 at 27mph (see Table 2). The 'B1' average of 711 ihp was better than the 694 of the eight 'V2s', but the highest and lowest 'V2' outputs were better than the 'B1' equivalents, with 860 (No. 60841) and 542 (No 60917). See Table 3.

The three Pacifics used were 'A1' No. 60125 *Scottish Union* plus 'A3s' Nos. 60085 *Manna* and 60067 *Ladas*. No. 60085 was ex-works with a new Kylchap exhaust (Table 3). The respective power outputs of 941 ihp, 909 and 821 probably comply with the expected order, although all are lower than reasonably predictable.

All the rostered locomotives bar No. 60085 from Heaton and 'V2' No. 60952 of Gateshead were selected from the Doncaster allocation, showing remarkable discipline in that respect. Of course, Doncaster benefited from having a large allocation from which to choose. I realise those numbers reflect the high workload but, generally speaking, the larger the allocation the greater the flexibility. At the time, Doncaster had around 25 'B1s' alone.

By way of comparison, Noel quotes a run with the similar 2.5pm from Leeds hauled by 'A2/3' No. 60523 *Sun Castle* (Table 3), which produced a higher output than those on the 8.25am, reaching 958 ihp, but the overall performance was in accordance with the 8.25's routine – a 20 sec late start followed by 68 sec lost to Ardsley, a further 137 sec dropped to Wakefield Westgate and a 3 min 45 sec late arrival.

The good runs selected for Tables 2 and 3 show a reliance on those in week commencing November 10, 1958, which seems to reflect a full week's work by arguably the keenest driver in the survey.

In the analyses provided by Noel Proudlock of the 'slow train to Ardsley' and *The RM* September 2021's 8.12am Leeds to York (winter) and Scarborough (summer), it could charitably be said that the overall standard of operating left a lot to be desired. Was this the general situation in this part of Yorkshire in the 1950s?

TABLE 3: 8.25AM LEEDS CENTRAL TO WAKEFIELD WESTGATE: A2/3, A3 AND V2 PERFORMANCE

Loco			V2 60841		V2 60917		A3 60085		A2/3 60523	
Load			4/105		4/105		4/105		3/97	
Train			8.25am Leeds Central-Doncaster		8.25am Leeds Central-Doncaster		8.25am Leeds Central-Doncaster		2.05pm Leeds Central-Doncaster	
Date			November 10, 1958		November 6, 1958		November 11, 1958		July 8, 1960	
Rec/Position			J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock	
Miles	**Timing Point**	**WTT**	**M S**	**M P H**	**M S**	**M P H**	**M S**	**M P H**	**M S**	**M P H**
0 00	LEEDS CENTRAL d	0	0 00	1L	0 00	T	0 00	T	0 00	½L
0.59	Holbeck Jct	2	3 10	22	3 05	22/16	2 40	20	2 30	16
1.05	Wortley South		4 35	19/41	4 45	20/42	4 00	21/45	4 22	14/38
3.16	Beeston Jct		8 15	37	8 50	26	7 38	36/38	8 00	37/42
5.50	Ardsley a	11	12 18		15 20		11 55		12 08	
5.50	d	12	13 23		16 05		12 45		13 10	
6.28	Spring Lane		2 02	28/44	1 45	42	1 40	50	-	
7.36	Lofthouse & Outwood a	4	4 14		3 45		3 30		stn closed	
7.36	d/p	5	4 44		4 15		4 15		3 27	42
8.69	Wrenthorpe North		2 30	41	2 35	45	2 25	48	5 20	42
9.80	WAKEFIELD W a	4	4 40		4 57		4 40		7 15	

No. 60523 run schedule Ardsley-Wakefield Westgate was 5min



Below: 'A2' No. 60523 *Sun Castle* passes Doncaster with a Newcastle-King's Cross train in the 1950s. ERIC OLDHAM

York local

To some extent the antidote is provided by Noel's statistics for his regular weekend return from training in Newcastle to his home in Leeds during 20 months from October 1956 to May 1958. Having caught a King's Cross or Liverpool express to York, he changed onto the 7.10pm York-Leeds local, which started at 5.55pm from Scarborough in summer before picking up the 7.10pm's path. Noel took detailed logs on all 48 occasions and another instance, from November 1955, has been added to the list.

Neville Hill enginemen that featured in the North Briton feature (*RM* January 2015) and 'Queen of Pullmans' Practice & Performance (*RM* December 2022) also worked the Scarborough/York local duty consistently using their depot's own locomotives.

In the winter 1956/7 timetable it featured a Neville Hill 'B1' on nine of the 15 journeys and a 'B16' on five other occasions. Four of these were the common or garden Neville Hill 'B16/1s' (unrebuilt Raven 4-6-0s with Stephenson valve gear, introduced in 1920 and still going strong nearly 40 years later), the remaining one being a Gresley 1937 rebuild 'B16/2' shedded at York. Being the lead depot of the group, York occasionally lent Pacifics to Leeds during shortages of the West Riding 'A3s' and this could have applied to the 'B16/2'. However, Neville Hill had such an abundant allocation of '5MT' 4-6-0s (like Doncaster, around 25 in 1959), this was probably unnecessary.

The remaining duty that winter season was performed by



4P 'D49/2' 4-4-0 No. 62773 *The South Durham*. Although the 'D49s' such as No. 62773 (originally LNER No. 375) were still being built in 1935, this then youthful future *RM* writer – on many 1950s summer holidays in Filey – considered them to be ancient and would have been surprised to hear the first 'B16s' were 15 years older than the most recently constructed 'D49s'.

Summer 1957 saw the train being hauled by Neville Hill 'B1s' on nine of the 10 occasions, with the tenth being guest celebrity No. 61306 looking to all intents and purposes like an ordinary Hull Botanic Gardens 'B1' but destined to be the last surviving example in normal service and one of only two 'B1s' to be preserved (the other being No. 61264). The winter tare load averaged around 200 tons, but this was nearer 300 tons in summer due to the returning bucket & spade brigade, its hardier recruits having experienced an outward journey on the 8.12am Leeds-Scarborough.

The winter of 1957/8 saw an unexpected development with the 7.10pm from York apparently diagrammed for a Neville Hill 'D49/2', regularly provided until mid-February 1958. During this time there were just two exceptions, 'B1' No. 61035 *Pronghorn* (arguably one of the less attractive antelope names, but reputedly faster than a Thomson's Gazelle, as opposed to Thompson's gazelles) and a stellar appearance by 'A3' No. 60074 *Harvester*, possibly 'running in' after attention. The locomotive had been released from a general overhaul, including boiler replacement, a month earlier.

On the final 11 further winter occasions, a 'D49' appeared only three times with 'B16/1s' covering the remainder. Although the 'D49' 'Hunts', with their vulpine emblem nameplates, were in danger of becoming a threatened species (from natural causes, rather than packs of blood-thirsty beagles), the process was insufficiently advanced by February 1958 to provide an explanation for their reduced presence, and train weights had not been increased. See Table 4 for the full list of locomotives used.

Timetable effects

The winter 1956/7 timetable included stops at Church Fenton and Cross Gates. Starting from an up side bay platform No. 2, the train was allowed 14 min for the almost 11 miles to Church Fenton, where there was a 1 min stop. The five miles at 1-in-133 to 150 to pass Micklefield was booked in 9 min, climbing from the Vale of York through the Pennine foothills, with a further 8 min to the 1 min Cross Gates stop. The final 4½ miles into Leeds, four track to Marsh Lane Junction in those days, was scheduled for 9 min plus 1 min recovery time. Overall, the 25½ miles from York to Leeds should have taken 43min.

Above: Seven Raven-designed 'B16s' were rebuilt by Gresley and designated 'B16/2', one of which was No. 61438, which is pictured leaving York with a train from Scarborough to Leeds in the 1950s.

A Garforth stop was added in May 1957 with the Micklefield (pass) to Cross Gates (arrive) timing increased by just 2 min to cater for a 1 min station call. To cap that, the 1 min recovery time approaching Leeds was removed, thereby increasing the York-Leeds schedule by just 1 min with an



'V2' No. 60837 passes Copley Hill shed on the outskirts of Leeds with the 12.10pm Leeds Central to King's Cross in the 1950s. ERIC TREACY

TABLE 4: ARTICLE SURVEY LOCOS WORKING SCARBOROUGH/YORK-LEEDS

Class	Number/Name
A3	60074 *Harvester*
B1	61016 *Inyala* (x2), 61035 *Pronghorn* (x3), 61038 *Blacktail*, 61062 (x2), 61065, 61069, 61216, 61218, 61237 *Geoffrey H. Kitson* (x4), 61240 *Harry Hinchliffe* (x2), 61256, 61257, 61306
B16/1	61412, 61415 (x2), 61421, 61425 (x2), 61427 (x2), 61428, 61429, 61432, 61442 (x3), 61447 (x2)
D49/2	62740 *The Bedale* (x3), 62748 *The Southwold*, 62749 *The Cottesmore* (x5), 62773 *The South Durham*, 62774 *The Staintondale*
Notes:	All Neville Hill locos except York's No. 61421.
	Percentages of appearances: B1 (43), B16 (33), D49 (22), A3 (2).

TABLE 5: YORK TO LEEDS

Loco			B1 No. 61038		B1 No. 61016		D49/2 No. 62749		B16/1 No. 61425		B16/1 No. 61442		
Vehicles/tare tons			9/319		9/292		6/162		7/189		7/185		
Train			5.55pm Scar-Leeds		5.55pm Scar-Leeds		7.10pm York-Leeds		7.10pm York-Leeds		7.10pm York-Leeds		
Date			August 9, 1957		June 21, 1957		April 11, 1958		May 9, 1958		May 3, 1957		
Neville Hill driver			Walker		Newberry		Unknown		Hardman		Hardman		
Recorder			J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock		J N D Proudlock		
Miles	**Timing Point**	**WTT**	**M S**	**M P H**	**M S**	**M P H**	**M S**	**M P H**	**M S**	**M P H**	**WTT**	**M S**	**M P H**
0.00	YORK d	0	0 00	T	0 00	½L	0 00	½E	0 00	3L	0	0 00	
3.74	Copmanthorpe		5 45	63	5 37	64	6 14	58	6 30	62		5 54	60
7.63	Bolton Percy		9 15	72	9 03	71	10 02	62	10 07	71		9 30	71
8.88	Ulleskelf		10 16	75	10 03	76	11 14	63	11 10	72		10 32	73
10.74	Church Fenton a	14	12 40		12 35		14 05		13 25		14	13 05	
0.00	d	15	14 35	-/slip	13 10		15 20		14 10		15	13 45	
5.04	Micklefield Jct	9	9 30	36/45	8 25	41	7 40	48/51	7 40	49/55	9	7 30	45
7.49	Garforth a	13	13 37		12 20		11 17		10 55				
0.00	p/d	14	14 10	-/45	13 05	-/52	14 00	-/50	11 55	-/47		10 40	54/55
2.92	Cross Gates a	5	5 40		5 40		5 30		5 15		17	15 00	
0.00	d	6	6 20	-/35	7 40	-/35	6 45	36	5 50		18	16 25	
1.07	Killingbeck		2 25	34SL/FL	2 40	25SL/FL	2 22	25SL/FL	2 40	37SL/FL38	[1]	2 25	41/45
2.19	Neville Hill E Jct		4 03	49/50	4 36	41/47	4 15	36	4 30	35/sigs		4 00	SL/FL35
3.63	Marsh Lane Stn		5 53	48	6 35	39	6 33	41	7 10	30		6 05	46/sigs
4.43	LEEDS a	9	8 10		8 50		9 00		9 15		10	8 45	

All Trains were destinations Leeds City. Scar=Scarborough

overall 44 min schedule. On just four occasions were trains stopped approaching Leeds, all of which arrived within 50 sec of right time.

Was such apparent optimism based on the performance of the train the previous winter? Omitting a day of dense pre-Christmas fog, when 'B16/1' No. 61446 made a 46 min late start and reached Leeds 79 min late, the following averages applied. Departure from York was 159 sec late, Micklefield was passed 178 sec late and the Leeds arrivals were 114 sec late. Allowing for roundings, time was kept to Micklefield, but the 60 sec recovery time was still needed. York appeared to be guilty of not starting the train on time, but Noel points out that the scheduled crossing move from the up-side bay to the up Leeds Line was fraught, crossing up and down expresses and freights leaving the up York avoiding line. Notable culprits were the Newcastle-Liverpool train, from which Noel had sometimes just alighted, and the down afternoon 'Talisman'. Elimination of the late starts and the single extra timetabled minute would still have left the new Garforth-stop trains late at Leeds.

The Scarborough summer variation mainly used platform 14 (today's platform 9), which could be reached by an extensive (probably expensive) diamond crossing that has since eliminated from the modern 'improved' layout, often causing delay during out of course running.

Despite still having had to cross main line traffic at the north end of York station and merge with up avoiding line freight, the use of platform 14 reduced the late starts, albeit by a 36 sec average. The 11 sec lost to Micklefield was similar to the up bay departures' 19 sec, as one would expect, but 19 secs were lost to Leeds on a schedule now devoid of recovery time. Average lateness had increased by 39 sec to 153 sec, the combination of 100 tons extra load and the extra stop having defeated the regular modern 'B1' provision and the meagre one extra minute.

Expectations were not high therefore when the 7.10pm returned to the up side bay for the forthcoming winter. They would probably have been even lower had it been known that prewar power would prevail over the 'B1s'. Two exclusions have been made from this group of 23 runs. The first was another foggy day when the only 'B1' of this group, No. 61035 *Pronghorn*, started 14 min late and reached Leeds 24 min late; the second being 'B16/1' No. 61415 starting 10 min late and losing 7 min fighting hard against binding brakes on a 253 ton load. These two instances have been omitted from the figures because we are assessing the schedule in this part of the article, and it cannot be contended that a schedule should cater for either of these two eventualities.

The result is the York departure figures showing an average late start of 55 sec. This had increased by 95 sec to 150 sec passing Micklefield and a further 62 sec to 212 sec (3 min 32 sec) late at Leeds. Modern apologists might even excuse the figures as being 'within the Public Performance Measure', but there is no escaping the train's punctuality deteriorated by 98 sec from 114 sec late the previous winter after the addition of the inadequately timed Garforth stop.

It is statistically dangerous to split up a relatively small sample even further, but the three 'D49s' appearing after mid-February 1958 averaged only 44 sec late at Leeds (looking no further than raw arrival times) whereas the seven winter 1957/8 times averaged 248 sec late. Perhaps it was this latter figure that had triggered more regular Class 5 provision? How then did two of the three 'D49s' after the February change actually arrive early? Drivers being aware of the issue and accepting the challenge? The quirks of a small sample?



Below: 'A3' No. 60044 *Melton* passes Beeston Junction in South Leeds and attacks the three-mile, 1-in-100 climb to Ardsley with a Leeds to Doncaster train in the 1950s. ERIC TREACY

Efficient dispatch

Station overtime is an important factor in securing a punctual arrival, particularly so on this 25-mile run with two calls to be made, increasing to three. The ratio of



instances where station time was gained compared to lost was 2:1, but the total minutes lost were higher than the gains, as incidents tended to outscore routine efficiencies. It is estimated the average gain per station call was 13 sec at Church Fenton, with losses of 2 sec and 4 sec at Garforth and Cross Gates respectively. Considering all the variables of slam-door stock, different train lengths, a high proportion of occasional/young passengers and all stops booked for 60 sec, these figures are remarkable, demonstrating how running times had more effect on timekeeping than platform management.

Looking at power outputs, using indicated horsepower (ihp), the average for 'B1s' on the York starters on the level to Church Fenton was 719, surprisingly bettered by the Raven 'B16/1s' with 739 and almost equalled by the 680 of the 'D49/2s'. The ranges were 540-1009, 503-1058 and 571-798 respectively. Although it might seem surprising, the marginal superiority of the 'B16/1s' over the 'B1s' reflects the tractive effort figures, which are in turn derived from locomotive dimensions. The ratio of maximum ihp to tractive effort is as expected for the 4P 'D49/2s' and around 70% of the Class 5MTs.

At Micklefield, the 'B1' average ihp rose to 848, with 'B16/1s' (760) and 'D49/2s' (678) being similar to their figures on the level. 'A3' *Harvester* registered an effortless 1228 ihp on the level, where the single 'B16/2' showed 706. At Micklefield, ▶

Above: On August 22, 1959, 'D49/2' 'Hunt' No. 62738 *The Zetland* heads the 12.30pm Harrogate to Leeds through Collingham Bridge on the former Wetherby to Cross Gates line, which closed in 1964. M MITCHELL

TABLE 6: YORK TO LEEDS

Loco		61240			62749			61257			61429			60074		
Vehicles/tare tons		7/196			6/170			10/305			9/242			8/210		
Train		7.10pm York-Leeds			7.10pm York-Leeds			5.55pm Scar-Leeds			7.10pm York-Leeds			7.10pm York-Leeds		
Date		January 25, 1957			January 17, 1958			August 16, 1957			April 26, 1957			November 22, 1957		
Recorder		J N D Proudlock			J N D Proudlock			J N D Proudlock			J N D Proudlock			J N D Proudlock		
Miles	Timing Point	WTT	M S	M P H	WTT	M S	M P H	WTT	M S	M P H	WTT	M S	M P H	WTT	M S	M P H
0.00	YORK d	0	0 00	5L	0	0 00	1½L -/40	0	0 0	3½L	0	0 00	3½L	0	0 00	T
						sig stop 4.55-5.35 LL/NL										
3.74	Copmanthorpe		7 50	45		9 19	45		5 55	55		6 48	55		6 25	60
7.63	Bolton Percy		12 35	51		13 49	60		9 51	63		10 43	63		10 07	74
8.88	Ulleskelf		14 05	50		15 04	60/NL/LL		11 01	65		11 53	65		11 09	72
10.74	Church Fenton a	14	17 30		14	17 35		14	13 55		14	14 25		14	13 48	
0.00	d	15	18 20		15	18 15	-/43/ sigs17	15	14 30		15	14 55		15	14 25	
5.04	Micklefield Jct	9	11 05	33	9	10 20	25/48	9	9 45	38/43	9	8 50	41/37	9	7 55	44/50
7.49	Garforth a				13	14 45		13	14 00					13	12 00	
0.00	p/d		15 05	49	14	15 10	-/48	14	14 45	-/44		12 42	41/54	14	13 35	-/44
2.92	Cross Gates a	17	19 45		5	5 20		5	5 48		17	16 40		5	6 10	
0.00	d	18	22 30	-/41	6	5 55	-/44	6	6 25	-/35	18	17 55		6	6 55	-/34
1.07	Killingbeck	[1]		38/42		2 20	SL/FL25		2 35	SL/FL25	[1]	2 16	50/52		2 25	25SL/FL
2.19	Neville Hill E Jct		4 15	40SL/FL		3 55	45		4 35	39/45		4 00	SL/ FL30/48		4 22	44
3.63	Marsh Lane Stn		6 25	40		6 03	40		6 40	37/38		6 05	38		6 25	42
4.43	LEEDS a	10	8 35		9	8 15		9	9 10		10	8 10		9	8 45	

Notes: LL=Leeds Line, NL=Normanton Line, [1]=1min recovery time, No. 61257 Driver Rowett

the 'B16/2' registered 831 ihp, a 10% advantage over its 'B16/1' cousins.

The ten 'B1' ihp calculations undertaken with the through Scarborough trains show higher figures than the York starters, at 972 on the level and 938 at Micklefield, reflecting greater effort with the 50% heavier trailing loads. No arbitrary roundings have taken place in the calculations, so the equally unrounded results are not absolute, but the comparisons are made from an identical basis.

Parallel departure

The summer platforming arrangements occasionally resulted in the 'B1' on the 5.55pm Scarborough-Leeds running parallel to a 'V2' on the 5.10pm Newcastle-Liverpool via Normanton as far as Church Fenton. It was as near to a race on rails as you could devise. Neither driver wanted to observe the tail-lamp of a train out-performing his own.

Typical speeds on the level with the 300 tons or so of the Leeds train were around 65mph, but the three highest speeds were on 'race days'. No. 61237 *Geoffrey H. Kitson* ran at 70mph on July 26, 1957. A fortnight later driver Walker took No. 61038 *Blacktail* up to 75mph hauling 319 tons tare, marginally failing to have beaten driver Newberry's 76mph on June 21, 1957 with another antelope, *Inyala*, No. 61016. As for the 'V2' – saw it, surpassed it, sorted. See Table 5. The ihp figures of 1450-1490 for these two runs were outstanding.

Also included is a good, punctual run with 'D49/2' No. 62749 *The Cottesmore*, which climbed to Micklefield at a minimum speed of 48mph, equalling all but the single highest 4-6-0 speed there, and producing 901 ihp, as well as a slightly early Leeds arrival.

The last two examples show runs by driver Hardman, the first with 'B16/1' No. 61442 achieving 1058 ihp and 73mph on the level, followed by an early arrival and the second with No. 61425, reaching ihps in excess of a thousand and the highest Micklefield speed of all examples, including the 'A3'. It is probably incidental, but No. 61425 was the only loco to arrive on time at York with the 8.12am from Leeds in our September 2021 article.

Driver Hardman was also the only one to refrain from giving his name when Noel asked for it: 'I don't give my name to anybody' being his response to the request, but Noel made a call from 'Divisional Office' to the running foreman to find out. *RM* reader Neil Wilson, who was an engineman at both Neville Hill and Normanton, remembers driver Hardman well. 'He came from Stourton to Neville Hill did Charlie', Neil recalls. 'His nickname was 'road runner' and as a passed man he would do anything to get a driver's turn.'

Below: 'B1' No. 61084 heads a Scarborough to Leeds train at Chaloners Whin Junction, south of York, on July 31, 1954. J S PHILLIPS

> "Mostly unspectacular, often disappointing, but occasionally rousing"

'A3' shows the way

Finally we have Table 6, which includes two runs from the other end of the spectrum. The January 25, 1957 run by 'B1' No. 61240 *Harry Hinchliffe* fails to reach the standard even of perfunctory, with ihp figures on the level and at Micklefield of just 487 and 516 respectively, sustaining a loss of almost 6 min 'against the engine'. There is also a poor run by *The Cottesmore* three months prior to the run shown in Table 5, perhaps contributing to the retirement of the 'D49/2s' from this turn.

The run in Table 6 with No. 61257 is shown as it is typical of a sound, if unspectacular run: 3 min late start, 65mph on the level at 1051 ihp, an average 37mph at Micklefield but 985 ihp, the Garforth stop and a 5 min late arrival. The fourth run in Table 6 shows an equivalent 'B16/1' effort: 65mph on the level with 63 tons fewer than No. 61257, a good 41mph at Micklefield with ihps of 940 and 981, making up 2 min of the 3 min late start but in the days before the Garforth stop.

Finally, can we ever resist a Gresley Pacific? The *Harvester* run shows how an 'A3' could simply play with a train like this: 74mph, not racing, 44 mph at Micklefield running 2 min early, ihps of 1228 and an easy 1063, on time from Cross Gates despite the Garforth stop, and a slightly blemished ½ min late arrival. If it was on test, it probably passed.

Taken together, the Wakefield Westgate local and the Scarborough/York-Leeds details show the many facets of ordinary train working at the end of the 1950s. It was mostly unspectacular, often disappointing, but occasionally rousing. It could produce a race between a 'B1' and a 'V2' one day, a gentle time-losing amble the next and, if you were expecting a Class 5 4-6-0 to be hauling your train, you could easily find a Class 7 4-6-2 or a Class 4 4-4-0. ■





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STATFOLD COUNTRY PARK

Signalling change in Cornwall

Three iconic manual signalboxes have closed in Mid-Cornwall as part of an upgrade that will allow more services to run, as Network Rail's Craig Munday reports.

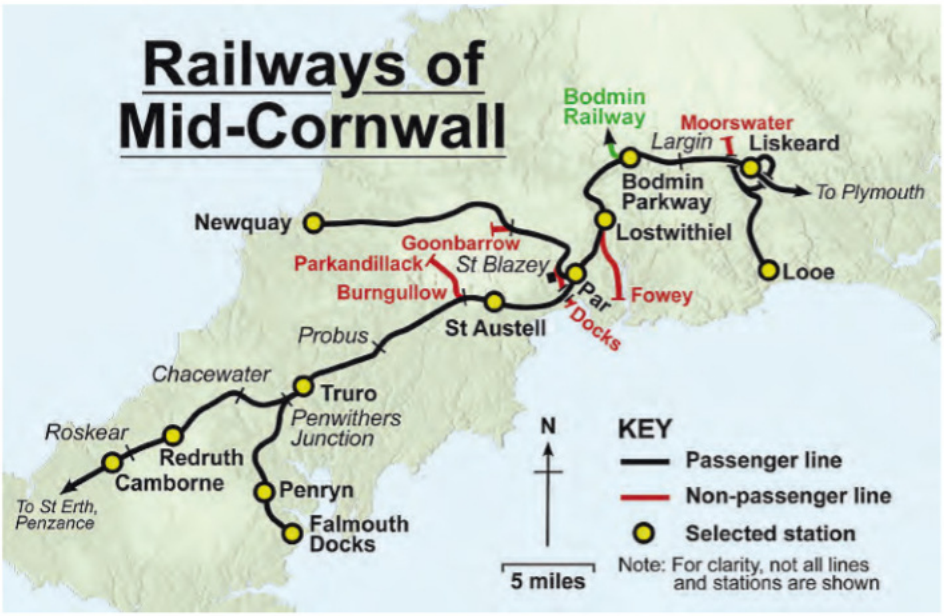


FOLLOWING a two-week engineering blockade of the Cornish Main Line at the end of February and start of March, signalling control at three signalboxes dating back to the 1890s will pass to a workstation at Exeter Panel.

Truro, Par and Lostwithiel 'boxes will all close, but there are at least no plans to demolish any of the structures, while those at Lostwithiel and Par are Grade II-listed and so few alterations may take place.

The changes mean that the Cornish Main Line is now signalled by Plymouth Panel (Plymouth to Liskeard); Liskeard; Exeter Panel (Liskeard to Roskear); Roskear; St Erth; and Penzance. Of these, the 'boxes at Liskeard and St Erth still have traditional lower quadrant semaphore signals, as do two further 'boxes on the Newquay branch at St Blazey and Goonbarrow.

I have always had an interest in signalling and, as a Network Rail employee based in Cornwall, have had the privilege of covering many shifts in the country's signalboxes. But here I will take a fond look at Truro, Par and Lostwithiel, covering the many facets of each, some of their quirks, and a history of operations from the early 1970s to the present day.



Truro 'box 1899-2024

Truro is a 51-lever, type GW7a 'box with a brick base to the windows. It sits at the London end of the station on the up side of the main line and beside a level crossing that today provides access to the station car park and industrial buildings on the site of the former engine shed at the west end of the station. The 'box was called Truro East until November 7, 1971, when a programme of track rationalisation took place and consolidated all of the city's signalling into one.

The original 45-lever frame was insufficient to accommodate the new consolidated layout, and so a frame from Bristol East Depot 'box was installed directly behind it, to make 51 levers in all. Stories abound of the duty signalman walking up and down the centre portion of the former floor on scaffold boards working the original frame whilst the alterations were taking place. There are faded pictures on the wall of this, but sadly too poor quality now to reproduce here.

The famous starting signals at the west end of Truro station are no more. DMU No. 150234 arrives in the bay platform with a Falmouth branch train on August 31, 2023. PAUL BICKERDYKE



Truro 'box and level crossing at the east end of the station on August 31, 2023 as a GWR Class 800 arrives with a Penzance working. PAUL BICKERDYKE

The 1971 rationalisation saw Penwithers Junction and Truro West 'boxes close, with the East 'box becoming simply Truro Signalbox – the word 'East' being hastily painted out in black and leaving a substantial gap between the two remaining words on the nameboard. Many of the former through lines between East and West 'boxes were taken out of use or converted to sidings, leaving just the up and down main and two lines behind the 'box into the yard.

The crossover at Penwithers Junction was removed, making the Falmouth branch a single line leading to and from the down main line, which resulted in a 300-yard bi-directional working between the junction and Truro station. Truro then worked Absolute Block to Burngullow in the east (up direction) and Chacewater in the west (down direction).

The 'box on the Falmouth branch at Penryn was also closed, with the line then signalled throughout by train staff released from a remote machine on the bay platform at Truro. An Intermediate Block Signalling home and distant on the down main at Baldhu (between Penwithers and Chacewater) was retained to prevent congestion at Penwithers.

Truro 'box saw little change through the 1980s and 1990s, apart from removal of the through connection from the yard behind the 'box to and from the Burngullow direction. This resulted in the yard only being accessible from the connection at the west end, and the upside level crossing barrier was then positioned beside the signalbox. However, the 'boxes and Chacewater and Drump Lane (Redruth) were closed by 1986, resulting in a long block section between Baldhu and Roskear Junction (just east of Camborne).

The next significant event to affect Truro 'box was in 2009, when the Falmouth branch saw the introduction of a novel passing loop at Penryn. This allowed a half-hourly service to be introduced using two trains on the branch. The train staff was withdrawn and axle counters installed throughout. The line from Penwithers Junction to Penryn loops was signalled by Track Circuit Block regulations, with One Train Working beyond Penryn to the buffer stops at Falmouth Docks. At the time, two ground frames were still available to access the docks and run round loop at Falmouth, but these were removed some years later.



A fine view of Truro looking down from Highertown tunnel towards Truro West 'box on June 24, 1970. NBL Class 22 No. D6315 is set for the up main, which until 1971 ran behind the current up main platform. It was then possible to signal trains into occupied platforms as the posts also include calling on signals, essential for shunting. The former Truro steam shed is just visible to the far left. Truro west 'box also stood to the far left. BERNARD MILLS



Truro lever frame faced away from the main windows, and caught the sun at either end of the day, with morning sunshine shining in from the London end. The 2009 Penryn scheme saw the signalling for the area consolidated into the existing lever spaces, with extra levers being brought in and installed. Lostwithiel and Par were fitted with separate panels to control remote areas, but this practice was not allowed in more recent years. ALL PHOTOS BY CRAIG MUNDAY UNLESS STATED.

In 2018, a final signalling project saw further mainline signals installed between Baldhu and Redruth to accommodate a 30-minute service frequency. These were operated from a new panel at Roskear Junction 'box, and the lines between there and Penwithers Junction became Track Circuit Block controlled with axle counters. The block bell was retained as a train describer between Truro and Roskear Junction.

Wonderful views

In the present day, Truro controlled the busy level crossing and the 'box was continuously manned with two 12-hour shifts working 06.00-18.00 and 18.00-06.00. It was definitely the busiest in Cornwall, with clockface mainline workings passing roughly on the hour and half-hour. The branch trains occupied the down bay platform at ten past and quarter to the hour, departing three minutes later. This entailed many lever movements and, with the loops at Penryn being included in the lever frame, this meant a visit to the frame every eight to ten minutes. There was no time to focus on anything else when working Truro, although to be fair the mainline trains were only physically signalled through the station area – unlike at Par and Lostwithiel, which had additional panels.



A view from the 'box at Truro (East) in the spring of 1993 as Parcels-livered No. 47543 departs from the down main platform in the up direction. The train had crossed from the up main platform and recessed in the down platform to allow the 13.30 from Penzance to pass. The up main signal T6 (visible) was not fitted with a backing board then. This was attached after the red brick townhouses were built in its background, raising concerns the signal would be difficult to see against these.

The branch trains ran to such a tight schedule that they had priority over mainline services. There was the opportunity to run a late-running down mainline train into the platform, but this could result in connecting passengers running for the waiting branch, which was obviously hazardous.

The 'box once had a wonderful view across to the city's cathedral, but house building on the downside of the line hindered the view. There were few finer experiences at Truro than on a summer Sunday morning with bacon cooking in the Baby Belling, the windows wide open to let in the warm breeze, and the sounds of the cathedral bells drifting up from the city below, accompanying the block bells on the shelf. The sun shone into the front windows all day and set behind the 'box in high summer. However, Truro station is also like a wind tunnel, and the main 'box door had to be kept closed to prevent the blinds dancing and paperwork being sent flying by the predominantly south-west winds.

Up trains were belled onto Truro when passing Roskear, while on the down the Par signaller normally asked line clear and gave train entering section when the train passed Burngullow. If all was on time, the rather ingenious timetable cleverly avoided the branch train, but any late running on the down caused further delay into Truro if it meant there would be a clash with the Falmouth train.

Audible annunciators on the up main informed the signaller to get the crossing barriers lowered and signals cleared as the train passed Chacewater. Conversely on the down, an audible alarm prompted the signaller into action as the train passed Probus. With other annunciators on the Falmouth branch, Truro could be a cacophony of squeaks, bells and buzzers to occasional visitors. The team at Truro took it all in their stride, however.

Par 'box 1879-2024

Par 'box had the distinction of being the oldest still operational in the Duchy (that honour now falling to the one at St Erth, which opened in September 1899) and it signalled broad gauge trains until the switchover to 4ft 8½in standard gauge was completed in May 1892.

The wooden GW2-style 'box sits at the western end of the up platform. It contains 56 levers, most of which were in use at the time of closure. The 'box also contained a One Control Switch-type panel, which took over from Burngullow in 1986 and controlled trains between Carlyon Bay (about halfway between Par and St Austell) and Probus.

Par has not seen many alterations since the early 1970s. There were some track changes, including the west end crossover and points to the up platform line, which was a single flat crossing to alleviate the need for Facing Point Locks (FPLs). The east end mechanical points were changed to point motors in the 2000s. Unusually, the mechanical FPL levers were still used to maintain locking in the frame (painted white and blue), the only 'box in the Duchy to feature this. The small loco spur at the east end of the up through siding was also removed.

Prior to 1986, the main lines to Burngullow and Lostwithiel, and the branch to St Blazey, were signalled fully by the Absolute Block system. A block switch was also provided that allowed Par to be switched out of section. On winter Sundays in the 1970s, it was then possible for Lostwithiel 'box to be switched through all the way to Truro. This would be unimaginable nowadays, with the Sunday service being as busy as it is.

Burngullow 'box was given multi-aspect signals to replace its semaphores when St Austell 'box closed in 1980. The crossover and points at St Austell Ground Frame, leading to the former Motorail siding and extensive goods yard, were operated by a ground frame released from Burngullow. The block switch was then removed from Burngullow and the 'box manned continuously every day.

In 1986, there was an ambitious plan to single the 7½ miles of mainline between Burngullow and Probus, as one line was deemed too expensive to relay and there was a forecasted downturn in train usage. Burngullow 'box was closed and a small panel was installed at the Penzance end of Par 'box to control the signalling. This included St Austell Ground Frame and the entrance to the then busy Burngullow Yard. A mixture of Track Circuits and basic axle counters was used. ▶



Par 'box seen from the station footbridge on August 31, 2023 as Nos. 43198/43029 approach with a Penzance to Cardiff working. PAUL BICKERDYKE



With the sun setting behind the 'box, Par was a superb 'box to photograph, especially in the longer days. The condition of all the equipment was testament to the staff who worked there, and Sundays was traditionally cleaning day. The brass was polished and the lino clad floor washed. Par was the only 'box in Cornwall to keep its lino, the others now have carpet tiles.



A view looking east from Par 'box as Nos. 66097/66113 are given the bracket signal lever number PR8 around to St Blazey with an RHTT working on October 23, 2023. The addition of the galvanised platforms to the signal were vital for safety, but altered the appearance greatly.



Burngullow 'box pictured on September 13, 1971 as 'Warship' No. D811 *Daring* passes with the afternoon milk train. The semaphores lasted at Burngullow until St Austell 'box was closed in 1980 and were replaced by colourlights. The 'box was left intact after closure in 1986 and was used as an office, but was damaged by a fire and demolished some years later. BERNARD MILLS

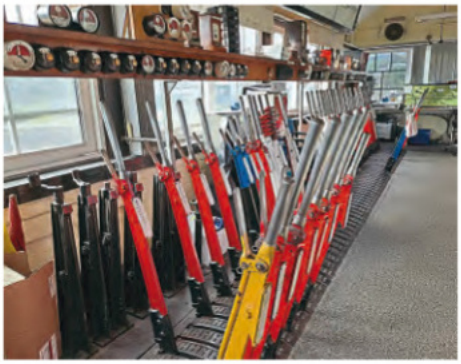
Although up trains could be considered complete at Probus (thanks to the axle counters between Truro's section signal T7 and signal PR112 at Probus), unusually Absolute Block signalling remained on both lines. The down was 'proper' Absolute Block between PR113 at Probus and Truro's down main home signal T50.

The single line section (and note others were also considered in the Duchy) always proved troublesome, with late running causing obvious congestion at either end. Working by pilotman was often needed during failures or electrical storms, as these had a profound effect on the axle counters in the area.

The reinstatement of the double line in 2004 was greatly heralded, with special arrangements made for a steam special organised by the Strategic Rail Authority to be the first along the new section. This ran from Plymouth to Truro on November 30, 2004 and was hauled – appropriately – by ex-GWR 3700 Class No. 3440 *City of Truro*.

Operational options

Par 'box sits on the up main platform away from the glare of most of the travelling public. During quieter moments, such as weekends, it is truly like going back in time with just the ambient sounds from the 'box's equipment, the children playing opposite in the park, and noisy honking geese flying in formation to and from the various lakes in the area.



The lever frame at Lostwithiel is resplendent in this image showing the lever tops shining and the up main signals in the off position. It was a huge effort to clear all these signals up to 30 times in a day shift, particularly if heat affected the signal wires.



A panel in Lostwithiel 'box originally took over the signalling for the Largin single line section when that 'box closed in 1991. This photo shows the 2018 replacement panel, which included welcome extra signals at Bodmin Parkway and also featured axle counter protection devices. The old panel was gifted to the Bodmin Railway.



Lostwithiel 'box and crossing at the eastern end of the station on August 31, 2023. PAUL BICKERDYKE

As with Truro, the 30-minute timetable made Par a very busy location to work – arguably busier even than when the freight scene was in its heyday. Back then, Burngullow alone could see seven or eight movements in a day, as compared to the two a week nowadays, while there were local trips to Parkandillack, Drinnick, Crugwallins (on the Parkandillack branch); Goonbarrow and Carbis Wharf (on the Newquay line); and Carne Point (Fowey). The longer distance Speedlink freights brought Type 4 locos on trip workings too. The contract for the long-distance slurry workings from Burngullow, with the 'Silver Bullet' wagons, also added to the local workload in the 1990s and used Class 37/5s in pairs right through to Scotland.

The flow of passenger trains, and the nearly 30 miles of route that Par controlled, saw multiple trains lighting the Track Circuit boards at any one time. This equated to many visits to the block shelf and lever frame. Add to that line blockages (to allow track workers to work safely with signal protection), then it could be a very challenging 12-hour shift.

Up trains actually turn due north through the station, and the sun rises in a quite different way to other 'boxes in the Duchy, crossing the line mid-morning to the south, and later setting behind the 'box. This makes it very much like a greenhouse with windows on all aspects, and could be sweltering on a hot day. The evenings were even hotter as the sun dropped below the peaked gable, allowing the sun to beat directly through the windows to the rear. How our ancestors coped without air conditioning is a marvel.

Par boasted three Absolute Block machines from Lostwithiel, Truro and St Blazey up until closure. It also had some of the stiffest semaphore pulls in the Duchy. The down home was 1027 yards (940 metres) away, fully mechanical, and could be a struggle as the temperature in the signal wires rose, meaning that frantic winding of the tensioners was required.

However, I must admit that Par was my favourite of the three that have just closed. As my dear colleague Paul Hicks used to say, it is the best by miles, no level crossings, and the ability to manage the train service using a host of operational options to terminate and restart trains if required. Summer brought the added challenge of long-distance through services from the mainline to Newquay. Care had to be taken with any late running, as it compounded the single line sections on the Newquay line. Events like the annual Boardmasters Festival could also be full-on in Par, with a myriad of extra trains to thread between the normal service.



Largin controlled the area of single line across two viaducts in the Glynn Valley. The 'box closed in 1991, and the area was then controlled from Lostwithiel by a small panel. It was a lonely spot, especially on a dark stormy night. Water was delivered in containers and the loo was a chemical one. One Sunday in 1989, Class 50s Nos. 50044 *Exeter* and 50045 *Achillies* were run on test from Laira depot (Plymouth) to Lostwithiel and back. I arranged a photo stop with the driver on the return and was glad I did, as both the locos and 'box were withdrawn within the next three years.





A group of Network Rail staff came to see signaller Paul Hicks at Par on his final shift on December 19, 2018. Paul came to Par in 1986 from the London Midland Region, having worked 'boxes around Northampton and at the southern end of the Midland Main Line. The picture features staff who have played a part in running the 'boxes featured in this article (from left, standing): Craig Munday, John Kelly, Paul Hicks, Jon Tipler, Derek Buist and John Stocks; (seated) David Baker and Jamie Dyne (blue T-shirt).

Lostwithiel 'box 1893-2024

Lostwithiel Crossing 'box, to give its full name, oversaw the level crossing at the London end of the station on the down main side. It is of red brick construction and has seen the most rationalisation over recent years. It is a GW5+ design, and is the narrowest of all the closing 'boxes in this article.

From the 1970s, the 'box worked Absolute Block to Par in the west and to Bodmin Road 'box in the east (Bodmin Road station being renamed Bodmin Parkway in 1983). By that time, Bodmin was not always switched in, so the section was extended to Largin. This caused a build-up of down trains, particularly in the evening, and thus late running. The milk sidings on the up side, behind the Up Goods Loop, was in daily use and a ground frame was provided to access the loop from the Bodmin end.

During the 1980s, many of the sidings at Lostwithiel were taken out of service and the wonderful upside wooden goods shed was demolished. Bodmin Road 'box closed in 1985 with the end of Wenford clay trains, and a ground frame with access at the west end of the Parkway station was all that was left, as the points straight onto the up main line at the London end were removed. The up main section signals in those days were the semaphores LL8 and LL49 at the London end of the up goods loops. A clay train locomotive running around its wagons officially needed the section clear to Largin prior to entering the up main to reverse. To alleviate this delay, a two-aspect new colour light section signal was installed way beyond the goods loop towards Bodmin.

Largin 'box was swept away in 1991, and a small NX (entry/exit) panel was installed at the level crossing end of Lostwithiel 'box controlling the single line at Largin and ground frame release for Bodmin. The lines between Lostwithiel and Liskeard were operated by Track Circuit Block, with trains described by traditional block bell. Because Lostwithiel 'box is a narrow structure with little room at either end, this panel and a table for the Train Register took up a great deal of room, and a large Solid State Interlocking electronics cupboard was also included. The crossing barrier lock lever (number 62) was generally in the reverse position (unlocked), which made manoeuvring even more tricky at the London end of the 'box.

An enhancement to install further signals between Lostwithiel and Largin in 2018 saw the panel replaced with a new one featuring axle counters and engineering mode protection. Both panels were robust, but failures certainly caused extra work for the Lostwithiel signaller when the single line was affected, and working by pilotman was often required. Great care had to be taken to ensure points were correctly set and locked prior to any movements against signals.

As at Par, Lostwithiel was a heavy frame to work. The manual points in the crossover and the Down and Up Goods loops were hard work, despite being close to the 'box. Adjustments made to the rodding under the level crossing in the mid-2000s seemed to affect the ease that they could be operated. The mainline signals were a challenge too – the Up Main being a test of strength with seven levers in total, five being manual semaphores. Warm weather could see you struggling to get a good 'off' in the dials to achieve a green in the distant.

An annunciator sounded when a down train departed Bodmin Parkway to spur the signaller into lowering the barriers and clearing the signals. This needed to be done quickly, as modern trains could be approaching the Down Distant signal within 90 seconds. In the up direction, the barriers were normally lowered two minutes after 'train entering section' was received from Par. This was extended for any freights slogging up Treverrin bank.

Trains bound for the Fowey branch were gifted a large metal train staff as authority to proceed down the picturesque branch. A small user-worked gate crossing at Pill Farm could often be busy with sewage tankers bound for the water plant at Shirehall Moor.

In the public eye

The 'box, unlike the others mentioned, was very much in the public eye. Sat at the entrance to the down platform, the travelling public always made a beeline for the steps in the case of delays and disruption. Despite the 'private' signs on the door, people persisted with banging on it demanding information, taxis or loo breaks.

Help points provided on the platform in recent years helped to a degree, but it was often pitiful to hear a disembowelled voice coming from these trying to provide information to an impatient passenger. I usually endeavoured to be helpful, but this could be counter-productive at times, particularly if a failure involved the equipment at the 'box, while some people just cannot be helped. The window blinds did keep the 'box private, but I always enjoyed as much natural light as I could obtain, particularly in the winter months. The level crossing in the centre of the town saw lots of local people and holidaymakers walking by.

The 12-hour day shifts meant you could often see people going to work or school and then later going home again. We also had our regulars who might wave or shout up if the window was open. In my time there, I got to know families and watched youngsters being walked to school by hand, grow up and head off to college and university, many of them sadly leaving Cornwall after gaining their degrees.

Many older folk bemoaned the removal of the original footbridge at Lostwithiel, and plans are in place for a replacement – albeit after the 'box ceases to control the area of course. One often felt guilty, particularly in bad weather, of having the barriers down for three consecutive moves: up, down and clay. The barriers were cycled where possible, but the 30 minute service frequency often kept the barriers down for a while to ensure approaching train drivers got a green in the distant signal.

The 62-lever frame faced the down main line, and signallers were treated to a fine view of trains approaching from Bodmin on the generous curve before sweeping over the level crossing and passing the 'box. There was a beguiling view of up trains too, appearing from the river bridge, negotiating a gentle reverse curve before entering the platform.

Sadly, Lostwithiel's frame had seen many levers painted white (spare) or removed, leaving it looking rather barren under the block bells and instruments. Many of the sidings and the west end crossover controlled from the 'box were removed from the 1970s onwards, including the Up Goods Shed connections and Down Loop siding. Latterly in 2020, the Down Sidings were disconnected permanently. The Up Cattle Pens siding was also permanently taken out of service too. This had been a handy bolt hole to run round the loco from a loaded clay train in the Up Loop, without the need for the barriers. Locals at the barriers were often nonplussed by the additional delay from these movements.

The Downside sidings behind the 'box were extremely busy in the heyday of the vacuum-braked china clay hood wagons. The 'box had a blackboard on the rear wall with rake numbers and destinations for the various lines of trucks serving Devon and Cornwall back then.

As air-braked CDA wagons were introduced from 1988, these sidings were used less and less, and engineers traffic tended to reside here. A rake of 16 CDAs could still be run round in the yard, and Class 37s were still regular visitors with empty wagons bound for destinations west of Lostwithiel.

The 'box had always been manned continuously, apart from a brief spell in the early 1990s when night shifts in Cornwall were removed in a cost-cutting exercise. The 9hr 45min shifts (starting at 04.50 in many cases) were unpopular, and fortunately the trend ended with 24-hour cover resuming a couple of years later.

Many benefits

This year's resignalling programme will see many benefits, with better signal spacing to allow improved train regulation, especially at times of disruption. This will be welcome once the additional services promised by the Mid-Cornwall Metro scheme begin between Newquay and Falmouth. This scheme will see three services per hour each way between Par and Penwithers Junction.

Projects in the near future will see attention focused on Plymouth Panel, which dates from 1960. For the time being, the improvements on the Newquay line in connection with the Mid-Cornwall Metro will see the two traditional 'boxes at St Blazey and Goonbarrow survive, even if working by token gets replaced by axle counters as expected.

So, as Exeter gets settled into controlling the area, the former 'boxes will fall silent for ever. The cathedral bells will be the sole ones ringing out at Truro; the geese with still fly in formation over Par; and future generations of families will continue to walk over the level crossing at Lostwithiel, maybe glancing at the fine listed building still nearby. But there will be no one stood at the signalbox window. ■

■ *Thanks go to the following for their assistance in writing this article: The Cornwall Railway Society, the late Cyril Hitchens, Julian Hanwell, Roger Matthews, Peter Adds, The Signalling Records Society, Bernard Mills and the Network Rail media team, especially Emily Maiden.*

CORNWALL'S REMAINING OPERATIONAL BOXES

THERE are four signalboxes still controlling parts of the Cornish Main Line at Penzance, St Erth, Roskear and Liskeard, of which those at St Erth and Liskeard retain semaphore signals. There are also two working 'boxes on the Newquay branch at St Blazey and Goonbarrow, both of which have semaphores.



Roskear Junction 'box is located to the east of Camborne and pictured here on November 25, 2013. GEOF SHEPPARD (CC BY-SA 4.0)



St Blazey 'box seen on April 19, 2018. ROGER CORNFOOT (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Penzance 'box pictured on August 8, 2002 with No. 67006 shunting long-gone TPO vans. HAWTHORNE COLLECTION



St Erth 'box can be seen under the up main signal in this view on July 11, 1987 as power car No. 43016 leads a Penzance-bound working into the station. HAWTHORNE COLLECTION



Liskeard 'box on August 31, 2023 as No. 43009 *Nunney Castle* arrives at the station with a Penzance service. PAUL BICKERDYKE



Goonbarrow 'box on July 15, 2006 as power car No. 43048 leads a Paddington to Newquay service. HAWTHORNE COLLECTION

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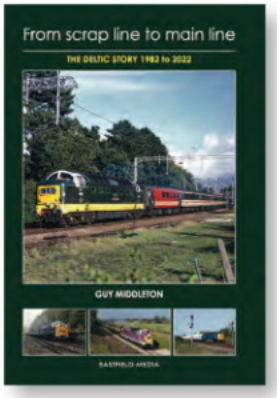
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PAUL BICKERDYKE, EDITOR



Hunslet-built 0-4-2ST *'Howard No. 2'* in action at the Statfold Barn Railway on October 7, 2023. PAUL BICKERDYKE

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Above: The incredible sight of 'Crompton' No. 33116 and NSE-liveried inspection coach No. 975025 at Dowlow Quarry on March 3, 1994. Today's freight-only line from Buxton to here was formerly a through route to Uttoxeter via Ashbourne, with a connection to the Cromford and High Peak Railway at Parlsey Hay.
Below: Nos. 33116 and 975025 stabled overnight at Buxton on March 2/3, 1994.

A Buxton 'Crompton'



Thirty years ago, No. 33116 made the only known visit by the class to Buxton in the British Rail era.

LONG associated with the South of England, the first half of the 1980s saw Class 33s spread their wings a little, eventually reaching the likes of North Wales and Manchester on regular booked passenger diagrams.

But nobody ever expected to see one in the quarries of the Peak District – that is until the beginning of March 1994, just a month before Privatisation of the rail industry began, when 'Crompton' No. 33116 *Hertfordshire Rail Tours* popped up in Buxton with inspection saloon No. 975025 (now named *Caroline*), which at that time carried Network SouthEast livery.

The duo arrived on March 2, 1994 filming the local area for the Infrastructure Support Group, including the Peak Forest and Stockport lines. They stabled overnight in Buxton station, and then left the area the following day after visiting Hindlow and Dowlow quarries.

To date there has been just one other known visit by the class to the Derbyshire spa town, and that was on May 1, 2004 when Nos. 33103+33202 (then both part of the Fragonset fleet) powered the 'Buxton Rotator' railtour all the way from Yeovil Junction and back.

While saloon No. 975025 is still active on the main line (see November 2023 issue for a view on board), No. 33116 is unlikely ever to return to Buxton. It worked on into the Privatisation era for a few years with freight company EWS, but was withdrawn in August 1998 at Old Oak Common. However, it survives in preservation after being acquired for the National Collection in June 2003 and then loaned to the Great Central Railway in 2005, where it can still be found today and available for traffic. ■

PANORAMA

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1 3
2

1
SMOKE AND STEAM: An open access weekend at the Swanage Railway, for local residents, on February 17/18 saw recently restored – and now prize-winning (see page 20) – LSWR 'T3' No. 563 in steam, here seen approaching Harman's Cross with the 14.00 from Swanage. The loco had a five-coach train resulting in this impressive plume from the chimney. PAUL COOPER/WRL ARCHIVE

2
TWO '66s': A view looking south along the former Metropolitan and Great Central Joint Railway towards Aylesbury at Quainton Road on February 14 as, in the distance, GBRf Class 66 No. 66711 *Sence* has just arrived at the HS2 aggregates railhead while Quainton's Hunslet 'Austerity' No. 66 (works No. 3890) is in action on the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre's line. PHIL MARSH

3
NIGHT FALLS: A terrific view looking west over Manchester Oxford Road station on January 5, as a TransPennine Express Class 185 DMU calls with 1B85, the 15.24 Cleethorpes to Liverpool. TOM MCATEE.




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3
4

1
EASTERLY ARRIVAL: Type 4 No. 47712 *Lady Diana Spencer* is neatly framed at Lowestoft – Britain's most easterly station – on January 28, after arriving from Norwich on the second day of Inter-City's two-day 'East Anglian Push-Pull' charter. MICHAEL WARRENDER

2
THE 'SPAM CAN' CAN: No. 34067 *Tangmere* blasts away west from Manchester Oxford Road on February 10, with the 08.16 Piccadilly to Carlisle 'Cumbrian Mountain Express' via Wigan, Preston and Penrith. JOHN STIRZAKER

3
CHANGE OF FOCUS: A different take on a bridge shot as Nos. 20107 and 20096 approach an occupational bridge near Eynsford (Kent) on February 5, forming the 12.42 Canterbury West to Southall route learning run ahead of Locomotive Services Limited's steam excursions to Canterbury later this year (see also photo on page 91). DAVID STAINES

4
TREE-PANNING: Better than a hole in the head, Standard '2MT' No. 78018 is the subject of this impressive panning shot through the trees on the Battlefield Line as it runs towards Market Bosworth on February 3, the first of the line's two-day 'Winter Warmer' event. MIKE SPENCER

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A rolling stock crisis



CHRIS Milner's article in the February issue discussed a number of seemingly unsettling issues regarding current and future rolling stock issues on Britain's railways. However, I would suggest that there are at least seven further issues which may contribute further to the current problems.

1. The incredible varieties of different trains, often built in relatively small numbers, supplied by various manufacturers and sometimes tied into maintenance contracts and/or requiring specially configured depots. This, particularly where leased fleets are concerned, may severely restrict the ability to transfer trains to different areas or operators, especially at short notice.

The worst case must be TransPennine Express with three small, completely different and incompatible fleets obtained from a mixture of suppliers. No wonder they got into trouble. I am sure that most operators and engineers would have predicted the problems long before they occurred. Also look at the recent (Government run) LNER order for ten new tri-mode train sets. No doubt these will be fine trains, but also probably incompatible with any existing trains in the fleet, and requiring another long and extensive accreditation, commissioning and driver training programme. Was this considered?

2. The trend to tailor trains to specific routes or areas, such as in the number of cars, luggage space and seating layouts (think TPE again). This often reduces the attractiveness of displaced fleets for use elsewhere. While a 'one size fits all' approach is not necessarily ideal, it would undoubtedly assist in this case. As an example, just consider how many different types and sub-types of trains have been built to replace the basically standard HST fleet.

3. Small specialist fleets usually come with higher spare parts costs and often with longer term issues with crew knowledge and parts availability, reducing their attractiveness elsewhere.

4. Most trains today have a very limited ability to interwork with other fleets. In the 'bad old days' (were they?), virtually every Southern EMU could couple in multiple with any other set, and even some locomotives; most first generation DMUs were Blue Square and so similarly compatible; and even the Class 15x DMUs can, and do, interwork amongst the various types plus Class 170s (and in the past with Class 14x railbuses too). Not today's trains, and there isn't even a standard mechanical coupling anymore.

5. Almost every time a fleet is transferred, a massive crew and maintenance staff training programme is required, sometimes involving depot rebuilds or re-equipment too, taking a long time and costing a lot of money. And more often than not resulting in cancellations due to train crew being on training duties. As a result, short term 'fixes' are often not practical.

6. Older rolling stock usually has grandfather rights to operate over almost the entire network. My understanding is that many modern fleets are restricted to particular lines or areas for software, power supply, signalling, clearance and other reasons, and cannot always be readily or quickly transferred elsewhere. Look at the ability of ex-BR fleets to be transferred around the network – think HST and Classes 150, 313, 317 and 507, for example, and compare it with the present.

7. Modern signalling developments are not going to help. The rollout of ETCS will severely restrict the use of train types over ETCS-equipped lines to those equipped for the system, as has already been proved in Europe. Also, as the Europeans have discovered, ETCS is in fact a mix of many versions and far from being standardised, and many trains cannot operate on all versions. Careful attention will be required to ensure the compatibility of progressively updated versions as they are rolled out across the network. And ETCS will require extensive driver training programmes too.

Similarly, various ATO systems, such as on the Elizabeth Line, or tram-train operations again impose further restrictions on suitable rolling stock.

In a free market, it is difficult to impose standards, but perhaps a little more thought could be given in the future to interoperability and compatibility, both with other trains and with the infrastructure and signalling systems, to ensure that in future as contracts, franchises or conditions change, trains can be more readily transferred around the network. Examples such as the Class 165 and 166 DMUs, which are too wide to operate over much of the network, should be avoided at all costs.

Basil Hancock,
Faulconbridge, Australia

I READ with great interest the article in February's *Railway Magazine* about the rolling stock crises on our railways, and found it quite a joke that all of a sudden after 50 years there is a problem with the InterCity 125 trains that have not long been refurbished and totally modernised inside the coaches.

Just because the Government blows its whistle on the cost of running these trains – but there are not enough new trains to replace them and then they are sold for use in Mexico and Nigeria. It only seems like five minutes ago that CrossCountry named two of its HST power cars on the Severn Valley Railway, only to find the new Hitachi IET trains are now having problems with their bodywork and elsewhere.

Peter Allen,
Birmingham

IN addition to the various schemes mentioned, the article overlooked other issues with South Western Railway. When the previous South West Trains held the franchise, the four-car Class 458s were upgraded to five-cars using redundant vehicles from the Gatwick Express Class 460s. In addition, new cabs were provided. Along comes FirstGroup (SWR) with a plan to turn them back to four car sets after only a few years of service between Waterloo and Reading. There were also the Class 442s, some of which were given an upgrade only to be scrapped without entering passenger service. It begs the question, will the '458s' follow them?

British Rail was much maligned, but it did have a cascade programme. For example, when the HSTs replaced the Class 50s, some of those locos then took over on Waterloo to Exeter workings.

It seems the Government is quick to lay blame on the railway operators, but this overlooks decisions the DfT has made. In 2020, proposals were made to improve West of Salisbury and yet here in 2024 we are still waiting for these to come along. It is now a regular event that when a down Waterloo to Exeter service reaches Honiton anything over 10 minutes late, it is held until the xx.25 hours from Exeter clears the single line. The result is the down Waterloo is terminated at Exeter Central 40 minutes late in order to return on time as the next xx.25 to Waterloo.

Dave Tozer,
by email

THANK you for the rolling stock summary in the February issue. What an indictment of the whole railway industry, but especially the Rail Minister and the Department for Transport, who have sat idly by and allowed this to happen.

N Bailey,
Swindon

Saving England's oldest Peckett

FURTHER to the article in the February issue (page 65), readers may be unaware that 0-4-0ST locomotive *Bear* (No. 614 of 1896) was originally donated to the Locomotive Club of Great Britain by Colvilles Ltd in early 1967.

After the handover, the locomotive was hauled from Mossend to the then SRPS depot at Falkirk on February 2, 1967, with myself and the late Malcolm Burton travelling on the engine as 'caretakers'. (Colour slides of the move to Falkirk are held by the Online Transport Archive.)

In 1969, when Bowaters decided to close its railway, much of the rolling stock and infrastructure was leased to the LCGB and what became the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway commenced operation in 1970. The Peckett remained at Falkirk until August 21, 1971 when it was placed on a low-loader for the journey to Kemsley Down, being safely off-loaded there three days later. It is interesting to note that this move cost £250.

The loco remained at Kemsley after the S&KLR became a limited company and registered charity independent of the LCGB, and ownership was transferred to the S&KLR Ltd on July 21, 1996. I signed as a witness on the official documents both when the locomotive was passed to the S&KLR and the latest transfer of ownership on December 12, 2023.

Charles Firminger,
President of the LCGB


INDUSTRIAL

New future in store for England's oldest Peckett

Sittingbourne donates standard gauge steam locomotive to Quainton

Beamish catching up after Covid-19



Glasgow Subway progress?

REGARDING the new trains on Glasgow's Subway (page 83, February), why on earth are we buying new trains at a cost of many millions of pounds only to have the Project Director state that "it would take time to achieve full reliability" and then have to have two trains following each other in case one breaks down.

How much lower can we sink in accepting such rubbish from the train makers and those responsible for the running of the fleet? It reminds me of a previous Scottish fiasco that was the production of the Hillman Imp in the 1960s: 'Buy an Imp – the walk will do you good!'

Jim Baker, Highcliffe, Dorset

Worse trains but better service years ago

I WAS interested in the letter from your correspondent Martin Stoolman (page 53, February issue) despairing the fact that today's railways are vastly inferior in many ways to yesteryear. This struck a chord with me, and I wholeheartedly agree with him.

I was a mechanical engineering student at Salford University from 1967 to 1970, and commuted on a daily basis from my home town of Southport. I would catch the 8.00am from Meols Cop (the last station stop in Southport) and the six-car first generation DMU got me to Salford (now called Salford Central) at 8.50 without fail to enable me to walk to lectures.

This train was nonstop to Salford, there being avoiding lines on the up and down directions at Wigan Wallgate in those days, now lifted of course. I do not recall ever being late for lectures over the four years I used the service (I still have my season tickets). Yes the trains were a bit smelly and vibrated a lot, but were always packed with mostly businessmen and, to the best of my knowledge, was never demoted to a three-car set. The added bonus was of course if you could get a seat behind the driving compartment.

We have indeed regressed tremendously in the intervening years, sadly.

Paul Smith, Southport

Putting the record straight

■ THE owner of Class 50 No. 50021 *Rodney* (page 77, February) is Paul Spracklen, not as we stated – apologies to Mr Spracklen and the team doing such fine work looking after this loco and classmate No. 50026 *Indomitable*.

■ I WOULD like to advise that Broughty Ferry (page 25, February) is not in Fife but on the other side of the River Tay, east of Dundee.

Karol Gorny and John Yellowlees

■ THE photo of the 'Peak' at Highley (page 48, February) does not show it leading a service south, as the signal is set for a northbound train and so must be tailing the train.

Howard Robinson

■ THE article on fitting central door locking to heritage rolling stock (page 18, February) states that an air system would require an air-braked loco. This is not so, as a diesel-driven air compressor could be mounted in the guard's van or in a sound-proof box underneath.

Alan Barnes

Should Penrhyn loco go to Ireland?

FOR about 60 years there has been an industrial railway museum at Penrhyn Castle in North Wales. The National Trust has decided to dispose of all items that have no connection with Penrhyn Slate Quarry and hence the castle, which was built for the quarry owners.

Thus, for example, the 1848 loco *Fire Queen* is currently on display at the Vale of Rheidol Railway's museum at Aberystwyth (page 12, February) and the 1871 Neilson locomotive from Beckton gasworks has gone to the Scottish RPS at Bo'ness (see page 65 this month).

However, one locomotive is not going to an accredited museum to ensure its continued preservation, as 3ft-gauge *Kettering Furnaces No .3* (built by Black, Hawthorn & Co in 1885) is going to the Waterford & Suir Valley Railway in the Irish Republic, which intends to spend 250,000 euros rebuilding it (see Irish news this month).

The locomotive was donated by its then owners to ensure its preservation; so what right has the National Trust to casually give it away to a commercial organisation in another country? The Waterford line would be better off ordering a repeat of the replica Southwold Railway 2-4-0T built for the Southwold Railway Trust, a much more suitable design and likely to cost little more than the cost of rebuilding an historic locomotive.

Hugh Smith, by email

Elizabeth Line potential

REGARDING 'A high speed Elizabeth Line' (page 53, February) – what an excellent letter, but will the Government listen?

It would at least make HS2 worthy of all that money spent on it, which we must always remember is our money, not the Government's. And who thought of unnecessarily upgrading HS2 to such an unaffordable grade, which in the end finished it off as the cost spiralled out of control, meaning it will only go from nowhere to nowhere and always be uncompleted.

Stephen Bennett, Ramsgate

FOLLOWING Peter Middleton's comment regarding the Elizabeth Line running from Old Oak Common to Stratford (page 53, February) why does the Great Western Railway completely ignore the existence of this fine cross-London service? All the on-train announcements seem to totally avoid any reference to this excellent train service. What does GWR have to say for this omission?

Peter Millett, Dawlish

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Publication of a letter does not imply that the editor or staff of *The Railway Magazine* necessarily agree with its contents.





Where is it? Our pictorial quiz, for fun only

THE railway crane pictured last month (and again top) can be found next to Conwy Castle, North Wales, and is the only remains of the former goods yard there. The yard was always a cramped location, sandwiched between the (still open) main line and the castle, as this August 1962 view (above, by Alan Murray-Rust CC BY-SA 2.0) shows, and in which the surviving crane can just be made out.

For this month's quiz, where can these narrow gauge lines beside a canal (right, by Vic Smith) be found?



MEETINGS

Compiled by **Jon Longman**

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

GCR Society. Farm Road Sports & Social Club, Sheffield S2 2TP. 19.30. 'Great Central Railway Carriages': John Quick.
Lutterworth Railway Society. Lutterworth Bowls Club LE15 4RB. 19.30. 'London & Birmingham Railway Construction': Roger Cragg.
Norfolk Railway Society. United Reformed Church Hall, Norwich NR4 6QR. 19.30. 'Thirty years with British Rail': Bob Reeves.
RCTS. Library Leatherhead, Station Approach. 11.00-16.00. Open day.
South East Essex Railway Society. Friends' Meeting House, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 1NB. 19.30.

FRIDAY, MARCH 8

SLS. Conference Room, 1st floor (access via Black Swan Courtyard), Newcastle Arts Centre NE1 1SG. 19.00. 'East Riding Trains and Buses in the 1960s': Martin Green.
SWRS. The Manor, Slough station. 19.30. 'Turkey': Peter Robins.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

SLS. Kidderminster Railway Museum DY10 1QX. 14.00. Members' presentations.

MONDAY, MARCH 11

Lincoln Railway Society. St Hugh's Church, North Hykeham LN6 8JG. 19.30. 'Irish Surprises': Colin Boocock.
Oxfordshire Railway Society. Kidlington Baptist Church OX5 2DS. 19.00. 'Banbury to Didcot': Laurence Waters.
RCTS. Greenfinch Church Hall, Ipswich IP2 0SQ. 19.15. 'Swindon Works – the Golden Years – Part V: Hawksworth to the Closure of the Works': Rev Canon Brian Arman.
SEG. Deall Room, Southwick Community Centre BN42 4TE. 19.30. 'Sussex's wonderful narrow gauge railways': Peter Williams.

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

GWS. Room 4, BAWA, 589 Southmead Rd, Filton, Bristol BS34 7RF. 19.30. 'Western Locomotive Association': Peter Bamber.
LCGB. Parish Room, St Michael's Church, Bounds Green Rd N22 8HE. 19.30. 'That Was The Year That Was: 1964': Geoff Plumb.
RCTS. The Swifts, Haggis Gap, Fulbourn, Cambridge CB21 5HD. 19.30. 'Cambridge Area Railways Yesterday and Today – Part 3': David Scudamore.
RCTS. Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, Hitchin SG5 2EE. 19.30. Branch annual meeting and 'The Son of a Rail Enthusiast': Richard Cole.
RCTS. East Croydon United Reformed Church, Croydon CR0 5LP. 19.30. 'A Lifetime of Railway Photography': John Barrance.
RCTS. The New Mechanics, Nottingham NG1 4EZ. 19.30. 'San Francisco cable cars': Tom Ingall.
Pewsey Vale Railway Society. Woodborough Social Club SN9 5PL. 14.45. 'Railways Home and Abroad': Michael Porter.
The 8E Railway Association. The Gladstone Club, Station Road, Northwich CW9 5RB. 19.30. 'From Northwich to Wolverton – a railway engineering story': Mike Corbett. www.8erailwayassociation.org.uk

WEDS, MARCH 13

LCGB. Friends Meeting House, Butter Hill, Dorking RH4 2LE. 19.30. 'The Welshman': Ken Owen.
NYMR. St Lawrence's Church Hall, York YO10 3WP. 12.00. 'Fit for the Future - 2024 and Beyond': Tim Bruce.
RCTS. Library Leatherhead, Station Approach, Leatherhead. 11.00-16.00. Open day.
RCTS. Old Church Rooms, Park Road, Radyr CF15 8DF. 19.00. 'The Great Train Robbery 1963': Ian Boskett.
SLS. Abbott Hall Social Centre, Kendal LA9 4DN. 19.15. 'Modern Traction in Cumbria': Ian Clemment.
Sutton Coldfield Railway Society. St James' Church Centre, Sutton Coldfield B75 5BW. 19.30. 'Europe's Biggest Bus Route': Colin Cooksey.
Talking of Trains. Library Hall, Ewell Rd, Surbiton KT6 6AG. 19.00. 'Travels and employment on British Rail in the 1950s': Brian Lewis.

THURSDAY, MARCH 14

Aln Valley Railway. Barter Books, Alnwick Station. 19.30. 'Alnwick to Cornhill and the Wilds of Wanney': Very Rev Steve Platten.
Continental Railway Circle. St Paul's Church Centre, Marylebone, London NW1 6NJ. 18.30. 'Poland, East & West Germany 1974': Geoff Plumb.
LCGB. St Bartholomew's Church, St Albans AL1 2PE. 19.30. 'The Peter Bland Collection – The Story Continues, Part Two': Bryan Cross.
Marlow & District Railway Society. Bourne End Community Centre SL8 5SX. 19.30. 'Broad Gauge Journey - 3", Rev Canon Brian Arman.
Monmouthshire Railway Society. Lysaght Institute, Newport NP19 0RA. 19.00. 'The Last Wheeltapper': Andrew Cope.
Nuneaton Railway Circle. Chilvers Coton Conservative Club, Nuneaton CV11 5UD. 19.45. 'Travels with a camera': Brian Holland.
Shropshire Railway Society. Gateway Education and Arts Centre, Shrewsbury SY1 1NB. 19.00. 'Charters': Barrie Hawkin and Nick Burden.
South East Essex Railway Society. Friends' Meeting House, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 1NB. 19.30. Track night.

FRIDAY, MARCH 15

GWS. Village Hall, Stoke St Mary, Taunton TA3 5DE. 19.30. 'Where or What Is It?': Ian Bennett.
LCGB. Keen House, London NW1 9DA. 18.30. 'The grime and glory days. 1960s steam in colour from the collections of Trevor Polding and Roy Miller': Simon Colbeck.
SWRS. The Manor, Slough station. 19.30. 'Trolley Buses': Graham Bilbe.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

SLS. Friends' Meeting House, Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS. 14.00. 'Railways between Relief and Rebuilding: Rail Operators Initiatives and Refugee Evacuations from Ukraine': Dr Simone Gigliotti.

MONDAY, MARCH 18

Peak Rail Association. Farm Road Sports & Social Club, Sheffield S2 2TP. 19.30. 'Irish Surprises': Colin Boocock.
RCTS. Shenfield Parish Hall CM15 8LB. 19.30. Branch annual meeting and members' slides.

TUESDAY, MARCH 19

Leicester Railway Society. Braunstone Civic Centre, Leicester LE3 2PP. 19.30. 'Images from the 1960s to the 1980s': Richard Binding.
RCTS. Redhill Methodist Church RH1 1BP. 14.00. Croydon & South London branch members' meeting.
RCTS. Black Beauty, Scunthorpe DN17 2QU. 19.30. Humberside branch annual meeting followed by 'Steam and Steel': John Foreman and Steve Stubbins.
RCTS. Didcot Civic Hall OX11 7JN. 19.00. 'Over the Mendips': Mike Beale.
SLS. Langdon Square Community Centre, Coulby Newham TS8 0TF. 14.00. 'BR in Transition 1957-1975 Part 1': John Clayson.

WEDS, MARCH 20

Grimsby & Cleethorpes Railway Group. The No.1, Station Approach, Cleethorpes DN35 8AX. 19.30. 'A Journey from Hull to Whitby': Mike Fish.
Pennine Railway Society. Doncaster Town Fields Sports Club, Doncaster DN2 6AA. 19.30. 'Flying Scotsman – The Locomotive': Chris Nettleton.
RCTS. Saltaire Methodist Chapel, Shipley BD18 3HJ. 19.30. West Riding branch annual meeting and members' presentations.
Sutton Coldfield Railway Society. St James' Church Centre, Sutton Coldfield B75 5BW. 19.30. 'Images from the David Palmer and Fred Adams collections': Malcolm Gibbins.
Talking of Trains. Library Hall, Ewell Rd, Surbiton KT6 6AG. 19.00. 'Scottish Miscellany': Michael Clemens, B&R Videos.

THURSDAY, MARCH 21

Gravesend Railway Enthusiasts' Society. Emmanuel Baptist Church, Gravesend DA12 1BB. 19.30. 'Railway Video': Henry Harryman.
Lutterworth Railway Society. Lutterworth Bowls Club LE15 4RB. 19.30. Annual meeting.
Norfolk Railway Society. United Reformed Church Hall, Norwich NR4 6QR. 19.30. 'Through a Spotter's Lens – 50 years in pictures': Ian Bloomfield.
RCTS. Victory Club, Burlington House, Cheltenham GL50 2SY. 19.00. 'A Tribute to John Benson': Dave Hill.
RCTS. Saltaire Methodist Chapel, Shipley BD18 3HJ. 19.30. Branch annual meeting and members' presentations.

FRIDAY, MARCH 22

Railway Club of the New Forest. Village Hall, Highwood Road, Brockenhurst. 19.30. '50 years of Continental Steam': Ian Foot.
SWRS. The Manor, Slough station. 19.30. 'Train Ferries of WW1 and WW2': Gordon Adams.

MONDAY, MARCH 25

Eastwood Vintage Trains. St Laurence Church Hall, Eastwood SS2 6UH. 19.00.

TUESDAY, MARCH 26

RCTS. The New Mechanics, Nottingham NG1 4EZ. 14.00. 'An A to Z guide to GCR locomotives': Bob Gellatly.
RCTS. Digswell Village Church Hall, Welwyn AL6 0DH. 14.00. 'Tunnel Vision: The History of the Metropolitan Railway': Colin Brading.

WEDS, MARCH 27

Giggleswick Railway Circle. Settle Victoria Hall BD24 9DZ. 19.30. 'D W Castle Show No.3 - From Manchester Victoria on L & Y Lines': Mike Taylor.
RCTS. Bassil Shipham Centre, Chichester PO19 7LG. Meeting on Zoom. 19.15. 'Eastleigh from Railway Junction to Railway Centre': Gordon Adams.
Sutton Coldfield Railway Society. St James' Church Centre, Sutton Coldfield B75 5BW. 19.30. Annual meeting.
Talking of Trains. Library Hall, Ewell Road, Surbiton KT6 6AG. 19.00. 'On the route of the Brighton Belle': Dick Crane.

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

Nuneaton Railway Circle. Chilvers Coton Conservative Club, Nuneaton CV11 5UD. 19.45. 'From Spotter to Driver': Chris Haley.
Shropshire Railway Society. Gateway Education and Arts Centre, Shrewsbury SY1 1NB. 19.00. 'South Africa in the 1970s: The Golden Years': Ron Davies.
South East Essex Railway Society. Friends' Meeting House, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 1NB. 19.30. 'The Unknown Photographer'.
SLS. Community Arts Centre, Roaring Meg Retail Park, Stevenage. 19.30. An evening with Jack Boskett and his favourite railway photographs.

FRIDAY, MARCH 29

SWRS. The Manor, Slough station. 19.30. Chris Zaremba's Super Quiz.

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

RCTS. Library Leatherhead, Station Approach, Leatherhead. 11.00-16.00. Open day.

MONDAY, APRIL 1

Peak Rail Association. Farm Road Sports & Social Club, Sheffield S2 2TP. 19.30. 'A Decade Ago': Rob Morrey.

TUESDAY, APRIL 2

Gravesend Railway Enthusiasts' Society. Emmanuel Baptist Church, Gravesend DA12 1BB. 19.30. 'Too Tall for the tube': Lester Hilman.
LCGB. St John's Church Hall, Bedford MK42 0DL. 19.30. 'Relevant Relics' & 'Re-Creations': Alastair Cameron.
SEG & LRTA. Eastleigh Railway Institute, Eastleigh. 19.30. 'Selection of slides': Martyn Davies.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3

Bradford Railway Circle. Bradford Mechanics' Institute Library BD1 1SZ. 14.00. '1960s Railway Scene as seen by Leslie Metcalfe': Chris Taylor.
Pennine Railway Society. Doncaster Town Fields Sports Club, Doncaster DN2 6AA. 19.30. 'Travels on a Swiss Rail Pass 2023 Part One': Bryan Johnson.
RCTS. Royal Station Hotel, Carnforth. 19.30. 'LMS Patriot project': Colin Hall.
Sutton Coldfield Railway Society. St James' Church Centre, Sutton Coldfield B75 5BW. 19.30. Exhibition briefing.

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100 YEARS AGO MARCH 1924

Decline of the Rail Motor

AT the end of 1922, the total number of steam rail motors owned by British railway companies was only 115; 13 years earlier it had been 185.

This decrease, which year by year becomes more marked, shows that such combinations are not altogether successful. Yet theoretically, a self-contained unit for railway working is ideal for branches and sections where traffic is light, and also for providing frequent services.

The chief drawback to the success of the rail motor is that when the engine requires repair or attention the whole car is put out of service. This defect has in a measure been met by making the locomotive detachable from the passenger car. But the separation of the two parts is not a simple matter that can be performed in a short time. Duplicate engines must be available if the passenger unit is to be kept in traffic, and the parts of both units that are connected must be standardised to enable exchanges to be made.

Of the 115 railmotors surviving with five companies – GWR, LNWR, North Staffordshire, Knott End, and Nidd Valley – only 37 trains were in actual use, 23 with the GWR and 11 with the LNWR.

50 YEARS AGO MARCH 1974

'Picc-Vic' proceeding

DEVELOPMENT design work on the 'Picc-Vic' tunnel under Manchester has been resumed by the SELNEC Passenger Executive now that Mr Peyton, Minister for Transport, has agreed the scheme can proceed subject to certain qualifications. These include seeing whether the project falls in line with Greater Manchester Council's transport policy and programme as a whole, so as to qualify for a grant when resources permit.



An artist's impression showing how the 'Picc-Vic' link underneath central Manchester could look, with one of the proposed 'PEP'-based Class 316 EMUs in the platform.

Drivers' overtime ban continued

THE ban on overtime and rest-day working imposed on December 12, by members of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen (ASLEF), was still in force at the beginning of February, and February 3 was the eighth successive Sunday on which no passenger trains ran on BR.

Emergency steam in Sweden

PRESS reports from Sweden indicate that should the Swedish State Railways (SJ) become starved of diesel oil for locomotives, it has about 200 steam engines in reserve which could be put into service.

The steam locomotives would be used to replace diesel railcars on lightly-trafficked passenger routes, on freight traffic, and on harbour lines replacing diesel locomotives.

20 YEARS AGO MARCH 2004

Billion passenger journeys

IN 2003, more than a billion journeys were made, the highest total since 1961.

The figures were issued by the Association of Train Operating Companies, which also revealed that last year saw the highest number of passenger kilometres travelled since 1947: 40.1 billion between October 2002 and September 2003.

Reflecting the fact that a record number of passenger services are now running (18,805 trains a day on average), consumer growth has risen 30% over the past seven years. In 1961, a total of 1025 billion journeys were made, but that was at a time when only 30% of British families had access to a car, compared with more than 70% now.

Anger over recovery time

MANY of the gains made as a result of new and faster trains are set to be lost if Network Rail is allowed to go ahead with plans to add as much as five minutes to public timetables.

The rail industry's own working timetables – which can differ considerably from the public ones – already have up to 10 minutes recovery time in them, particularly on long-distance journeys to London.

Now NR is bidding to make the railways more punctual by extending the leeway to public times. But the proposal has been slammed as "cynical" and "unworkable" by train operators and passenger watchdogs.

Despite the introduction of faster trains over the past 20 years, the number of minutes shaved from schedules has been relatively small.

RCTS

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The RCTS: then and now



'Terrier' No. 32640 at Hayling Island with the 1.35pm to Havant on September 6, 1960. This loco is now preserved at the Isle of Wight Steam Railway. R L PICTON

THE heavily-used former holiday line from Havant to Hayling Island had its origins with the Independent Hayling Railway Company, which was incorporated in 1860 to build four-and-a-half miles of single line with passing loops.

The line opened in two stages, the first between Havant and Langstone in 1865 and then from Langstone to Hayling in 1867. The line served four stations along the route: Langstone, Langstone Bridge, North Hayling and Hayling Island. Interesting to note that the 'e' in Langstone was eventually removed from the spelling.

The completion of the route only came about after quite fierce exchanges had taken place between employees of the London Brighton and South Coast and the London and South Western Railway companies. The exchanges took place at the trackside in the Havant area and were usually between the two sets of navvies, and was all about the rivalry between the two companies as both the LB&SCR and L&SWR came together at Havant.

The rivalry started when the race was on to construct a line to Portsmouth. The LB&SCR won by a few years when it opened a line to Portsmouth via Chichester in 1847. The L&SWR followed in 1858 when the 'Portsmouth Direct' was opened between Farncombe and Havant. An agreement in running powers over the junction just to the east of Havant, where the two companies lines converged, was not reached until 1859.

A section of the Hayling branch was constructed over the sea and trains travelled over the famous Langstone Viaduct. Weight restrictions over the viaduct limited motive power to the 0-6-0 'Terrier' tank locomotives. There was hardly any freight traffic, and the freight that did operate was attached to the rear of passenger trains.

The timetable consisted of a 30-minute service frequency and operated daily. The distance from Havant to Hayling Island was just over four miles with the journey time taking approximately 16 minutes.

For a short period, a train ferry was operated between Langstone Harbour and Brading Harbour on the Isle of Wight. This was owned and operated by the Isle of Wight Marine Transit Company. This service started in 1884 after purchasing a second-hand vessel called *Carrier* from the North British Railway. Unfortunately, the service did not last very long.

In 1885, the Isle of Wight Marine Transit Company was brought by the London Brighton and South Coast Railway as it was experiencing financial difficulties. The LB&SCR too encountered similar problems. The last sailing from Langstone Harbour to Brading Harbour took place in March 1888.

The demise of the Hayling Island branch was caused by the increasing popularity in the use of the motor car. By 1960, the closure of the level crossings along the route for the passage of trains on summer Saturdays was causing long queues to build up, with motorists becoming frustrated. By that time, the majority of the line's holiday traffic had unfortunately been lost to the road.

So many branch lines were affected by the line closures and Beeching cuts in the late 1950s and 1960s, as previously reported in the Railway Observer. This one was no different and unfortunately closure occurred on November 4, 1963.

For information on the Society visit www.rcts.org.uk

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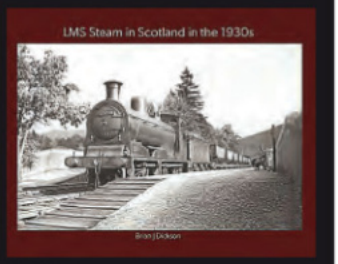
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The Railway Magazine news digest



SPARKLING 'SPARKY'
The always smartly turned out No. 86259 (E3137) *Les Ross / Peter Pan* calls at Preston on January 27, with the outbound leg of the 'Winter Cumbrian Mountain Express' from Euston to Carlisle. 'Battle of Britain' Class No. 34067 *Tangmere* took over at Carnforth and then back to Preston. CHRIS GEE

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Compiled by **Gareth Evans**

SIDELINES

Membership change

THE requirement for East Lancashire Railway (ELR) volunteers to be members of the ELR Preservation Society has been dropped as of January 1, 2024. The ELR company board felt that this membership requirement could be seen as acting as a barrier to a more inclusive and diverse volunteer workforce and is contrary to guidance from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. The latter states: "Making volunteering more flexible is likely not just to remove practical barriers to participation for potential volunteers, but also provide a better experience for those already participating, reducing the feeling of their volunteering being formalised, bureaucratic and work-like."

'56XX' overhaul

THE 10-year overhaul of the Furness Railway Trust's GWR 0-6-2T No. 5643 continues to progress at the Ribble Steam Railway. Cleaning and painting of the frames, wheels and smokebox saddle is ongoing. A coded welder made the first of three visits on February 7, to begin work on the boiler, focussing on some wastage at the bottom of the front tubeplate. Volunteers have started drilling out the firebox backplate stays. In all, 300 stays are in need of renewal.

Restaurant renovation

RESTORATION of Maunsell Restaurant Car No. 7864 took a major step forward on February 5, when it was moved inside the Bluebell Railway's Horsted Keynes carriage works. Although No. 7864 arrived at the railway in 1962, it has yet to turn a wheel in service. Instead, it was used as a static buffet at Sheffield Park from its arrival until 1981, since when it has been in store awaiting restoration. Built in 1932 as a Restaurant Kitchen First, the carriage was rebuilt in 1947 to an unclassified Kitchen Buffet, in the process losing 16 of its 24 seats. Under the leadership of the SR Coach Group, it is planned to restore No. 7864 to its original condition, providing for full-meal catering.

Hires confirmed

DARTMOUTH Steam Railway GWR 2-6-2T No. 4555 is on hire to the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway this year. The '45XX' is due to haul its first public train at Chinnor on March 10. Meanwhile, South Devon Railway's GWR 0-6-0PT No. 6430 is to spend a second season at the Gwili Railway.

Auto tank for the 'Wizzer'

'64XX' Pannier to join Minehead's roster – and agreement in place for 'Hall' to operate on the West Somerset Railway.

A GWR '64XX' 0-6-0PT is due to take up residence once again on the West Somerset Railway (WSR), after a member of the class was acquired by one of the line's leading lights.

Auto-fitted 1937-built No. 6435, and 1951-built WR auto-trailer No. 232 have been bought from the Bodmin Railway by WSR plc chairman Jonathan Jones-Pratt's JJP Holdings company for use on the WSR.

The loco and carriage were among several items of rolling stock offered for sale by the Cornish line early in the New Year. On January 2, David Nelson-Brown, Bodmin Railway chairman said: "It is with a heavy heart that the Bodmin Railway is considering the sale of locomotive No. 6435. It is a loco much loved by crews and very capable on our steeply graded line, but financial pressures require us to release this capital. The loco last ran in 2022 when its boiler ticket expired. It had new tyres fitted in 2021. It is of course complete and has been dry stored since expiry of its ticket.

"It does require a full overhaul. It had a lot of work carried out in 2020 including a lot of Crown stays. We are looking for a speedy sale if possible.

"We are also considering the future of our matching auto coach, Class 121 bubble car, a Mk.1 BSK, a GWR Toplight coach and an SR PMV. We will not sell all of these vehicles but will consider sensible offers on any."

Explaining the background, David said: "We have traded our way for as long as we can, turned around the business and made it viable going forward.

"We just need to clear the accumulated debt now to carry on being viable. We also need to be realistic about what assets a railway with our resources and our size can look after and house."

Next steps

No. 6435 is due to move to Minehead by mid-March. "We are going to examine it and work out a programme of work to overhaul it. There seems to be momentum behind 6435 to get it in traffic," Jonathan told *The RM*.

"WSR people are very pleased to have a '64XX' back on the line. No. 6435 will be overhauled at the WSR. While the exact location remains to be confirmed, it is expected to be dismantled at Minehead. A rapid turnaround is expected – the loco is a key part of WSR's 10-year plan."

The WSR plc sold sister loco No. 6412 to the South Devon Railway in 2009. While that sale was to an extent controversial, it was felt the loco was too small for regular WSR use and needed to be replaced with a larger engine. The WSR now has a full roster of larger locos for regular main use, but the arrival of No. 6435 will make various additional commercial opportunities possible.

Jonathan added: "Records show No. 6412 did a lot of mileage on the WSR – it hauled five carriages – so, it will be a great addition to the WSR fleet, especially in the shoulder months when we want to keep coal consumption down. No 6412 was also popular for driver experience courses owing to its spacious cab. We will consider hire requests from other heritage lines too."

Relocation of the auto-coach will follow and it may see WSR service this year.

Meanwhile, Jonathan's other steam loco, GWR 'Hall' No. 4936 *Kinlet Hall*, remains under overhaul at Tyseley Locomotive Works (TLW).

"A meeting is due to take place with TLW to decide the next step," said Jonathan. "A long-term agreement is in place for *Kinlet Hall* to operate at the WSR. We want the 'Hall' back at the WSR to haul heavier trains such as incoming charter trains, which would save double-heading. The loco has not run for seven years, but we hope to have it operational in 2025."

He said the plan for No. 4936 to work on the main line "remains on the table."

"We will discuss options for the loco's use with train operating companies. It would be great to run some excursions originating from the WSR," he added.

Fleet update

Having had its crown stays replaced, Jonathan's WR 0-6-0PT No. 9466 is on course to be on the WSR roster this season. The Hawksworth Pannier is expected to be in WSR service until its boiler certificate expires in November 2025.

"No. 9466 is ideal for the WSR. We have found it uses two-thirds less coal than a tender engine," commented Jonathan. "We are formulating a resident loco plan, which will also provide some spare capacity."

Meanwhile, the new-build 3500 gallon Churchward tender No. T2061 is nearing completion at Minehead workshop ready for use with WSR flagship 'Manor' 4-6-0 No. 7828 *Odney Manor*. The mammoth project has been undertaken by a dedicated band of volunteer engineers on two or three days a week for several years.

Other performers due to be on the WSR roster this coming season include WSR Mogul 2-6-0 No. 9351 and from May, No. 7812 *Erlestoke Manor*.



STANDARD IN STAFFORDSHIRE: Dartmouth Steam Railway's BR '4MT' No. 75014 *Braveheart* hauled its first revenue-earning train at the Churnet Valley Railway on Saturday, February 3 – the 10.30 from Kingsley and Froghall. The 4-6-0 is seen climbing Brandop Bank. The 'Standard' is due to operate scheduled passenger services in March and April, as well as starring in the line's May 4-6 steam gala (*RM* February).
KEVIN WHITEHURST

Poppy Line to mark anniversary

DARTMOUTH Steam Railway-based GWR 2-8-0T No. 4277 *Hercules* is making its inaugural visit to the North Norfolk Railway (NNR) this season – a year in which a milestone in the line's history will be commemorated.

Following arrival at Sheringham on February 6, the '42XX' hauled public trains during the February 17-25 half-term school holiday.

No. 4277 is booked to be in operation during the March 29-April 1 Steam Into Spring event alongside GER 'Y14' 0-6-0 No. 564 and Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST *Wissington* (1700/1938).

Wissington returned to the NNR on January 25 from the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, where it has been on hire for the last two seasons. The loco is due to be in NNR service over the Easter weekend hauling a train of vintage four and six-wheeled carriages.



No. 4277 *Hercules* begins the climb towards Kelling Heath after departing Weybourne on February 17, with a train from Sheringham to Weybourne. JAMES KINDRED

Anniversary

With the line from Sheringham to Melton Constable having been closed by BR on April 6, 1964, the NNR is to mark the 60th anniversary of that event on April 6/7 this year. When the majority of the former Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway network was closed in 1959, the section from Melton Constable to Sheringham survived with DMUs providing the service.

Appropriately therefore, the special timetable will feature a railcar made up of Class 104 and 101 DMU cars. Norwich veteran Class 31 diesel No. D5631 (31207) is also rostered. Two steam locos are booked to be in action – No. 564 is due to haul the Quad-Art train of teak bodied carriages, and No. 4277.

Meanwhile, BR '4MT' No. 76084 was withdrawn on December 23 following the expiry of its boiler certificate. BR '9F' No. 92203 *Black Prince* is currently stopped awaiting assessment.

Gresley 'N2' 0-6-2T No. 1744 is expected to return to action before the summer following the completion of its overhaul.

'WD' No. 90775 *The Royal Norfolk Regiment* is anticipated to be back in traffic for the summer. The 2-10-0 is having major boiler surgery following the discovery of a small crack where the barrel joins the firebox wrapper.

No. 564 goes out of ticket in late August and an extension is currently envisaged.

'Sussex Downsman' railtour remembered at Spa Valley

MEMORIES of a railtour which ran 60 years ago were rekindled at the Spa Valley Railway's February 9-11 Winter Steam Gala.

On March 22, 1964, the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society (RCTS) and Locomotive Club of Great Britain jointly organised the 'Sussex Downsman' tour.

SR 'Battle of Britain' 4-6-2 No. 34066 *Spitfire* took charge of the excursion from Tunbridge Wells West – which today is preserved as part of the Spa Valley line.

Throughout the gala weekend Southern Locomotives Limited-owned No. 34072 *257 Squadron* ran in the identity of No. 34066, complete with an appropriate headboard.

Other performers included Great Central Railway-based BR Standard '2MT' No. 78019 alongside Stuart Robinson's BR '4MT' No. 80078 Caledonian Railway Class 812 0-6-0 No. 828. Also in action was privately-owned Andrew Barclay 0-4-0ST No. 2315 *Lady Ingrid*, which recently returned to action following the completion of its overhaul. Now for sale as it is too small for regular service on the line, the Barclay worked brake van rides from Tunbridge Wells West.

No. 78019 was due to return to the Great Central by late February.





ABOVE: Nos. 828 and 78019 accelerate towards Poke Crossing on February 10. JAMES DAVIES

LEFT: No. 34072 running as No. 34066 *Spitfire* passes Cold Bath bridge with the 11.50 from Eridge on February 10. NICK GILLIAM

Landslip repair appeal firmly on track

WELL-WISHERS have responded generously to a £30,000 appeal to pay for repairs which will allow Ecclesbourne Valley Railway (EVR) trains to resume operating over the full-length of the line following a landslip.

As previously reported (*RM* July 2023), on April 2 it was found that a landslip had occurred in the cutting north of Duffield close to the footbridge. Interlocking concrete 'Lego' blocks weighing about one ton each were installed to hold back the slope. EVR trains began running through to Duffield on June 10 – services having been curtailed since April.

However, heavy rain on October 20 (*RM* December 2023) caused the landslip to slump further, resulting in the 'Lego blocks' moving by a few inches. Since then, trains have run only from Wirksworth to Shottle rather than the full route to Duffield.

Response

A plan has been developed to realign the track away from the landslide. Within two weeks of the EVR launching its appeal to pay for the work on February 1, donations had crossed the half-way mark. This allowed work to begin on February 12 with the marking-out of the track diversion.

"This work involves surveying the site and using wooden pegs to mark the new centreline of the track," said Neil Ferguson-Lee, chairman of WyvernRail plc, which runs the EVR.

"From there, the next stage will be to upgrade the drainage in the cutting. There is already a drainage ditch on the west side of the cutting, and this will be redug and, where necessary, piping installed. Fortunately, we upgraded the drainage in the cutting about 20 years ago, so we don't have 'downstream' issues to contend with.

"Meanwhile, we are marshalling materials and equipment – and that includes approaching local quarries to see if they might be able to donate some ballast. We will need about 300 tonnes of crushed stone and as the retail cost could amount to as much as £40,000 you will understand why we are seeking donations from quarries. Fortunately, we do live in limestone country, so we're ever hopeful."

Donations can be made at www.gofundme.com/f/operation-duffield

SIDELINES

SVR fares frozen

SEVERN Valley Railway (SVR) has frozen most of its regular fares at 2023 levels. Freedom-of-the-Line and Short-Journey tickets also remain available. Short-Journey tickets are lower priced and allow a return trip along part of the line. SVR said these proved popular last year with those travelling with younger children, or those with limited time. Cyclists and walkers are also accommodated with single or return journeys which can be bought at booking offices on the day of travel. In a new move, the SVR's Unlimited Passes, for visitors who want to make repeat visits on normal operating days, will now be valid for a full 12 months from the date of purchase, not just for the current season.

'Spaceship' move

THE restoration to working order of BR '9F' No. 92219 moved a step closer at the Strathspey Railway on January 31. The 2-10-0 was hauled by Class 08 diesel No. D3605 (08490) from storage at Boat of Garten and taken to Aviemore shed for work to begin. As reported in *RM* July 2023, No. 92219, the penultimate steam locomotive built by BR in 1960, now owned by Graham Harris, arrived at the Starthspey Railway on May 31, having previously been stored at Tebay, Cumbria.

'8F' recruitment drive

DISCOUNTED membership is being offered to would-be supporters of the Stanier 8F Locomotive Society at two forthcoming Severn Valley Railway events. Volunteers from the group, which owns '8F' No. 48773 will be on hand at the Meet the Engine events in the Engine House at Highley on April 6, 7, 20 and 21 – plus May 4/5 – during which time the footplate will be open to visitors. The society is seeking members to take an active part as it is intended to return the 2-8-0 to working order. To do that, the society needs to increase the active membership, especially in the younger adult age group. Visit www.8fsociety.co.uk for details.

Leander to see out current boiler certificate in style

LMS 'Jubilee' booked to visit heritage lines in last few weeks of operation.

THE boiler certificate for LMS 'Jubilee' No. 45690 *Leander* expires in May – and the 4-6-0 is set to enjoy something of a farewell tour at four heritage lines in its last few weeks in action.

First up, the loco is due to perform in the East Lancashire Railway's March 15-17 Legends of Steam gala alongside LNER 'A4' No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* and BR Standard Class 7 No. 70000 *Britannia*.

After the event, *Leander* will head north to Cumbria to the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway (LHR) where it will provide the rare chance to see both Beet family-owned locos together – the other engine being BR '2MT' No. 46441. Fresh from overhaul, final commissioning of the Ivatt for service is expected to be completed before *Leander's* visit.

Daily running on the LHR is scheduled to start from March 23 and *Leander* is scheduled to haul the service trains over that weekend.

At the time of writing, details of public steamings with the Ivatt and *Leander* remained to be finalised.

Hampshire and Essex

Leander is then booked to operate during the Watercress Line's April 26-28 Spring Steam Gala – after which the 'Jubilee' is due to head to Essex.

In a change to its previously advertised steam gala, the Epping Ongar Railway (EOR) is now offering three consecutive weekends featuring visiting and resident locomotives between April 27 and May 12, billed as the Festival of Steam.

Previously advertised guest GWR 'Saint' No. 2999 *Lady of Legend* is booked to operate with resident No. 4953 *Pitchford Hall* during the April 27/28 Saint and Hall Weekend. As well as the locomotives operating on their own, visitors can expect to see top and tailed workings, plus some double-headed trains.

The May 4-6 Bank Holiday weekend will feature a three-day feast of steam activity, when *Lady of Legend* and *Pitchford Hall* are joined by *Leander*. They are due to be joined by other members of the EOR's homefleet – namely GWR Prairie No. 5521 (operating in London Transport livery as No. L150) and Hawthorn Leslie 0-6-0ST *Isabel*. An intensive service is expected to feature additional brake van rides and a non-stop express train.

The festival concludes with a Farewell to *Leander* event on May 11/12, with the loco operating alongside either *Pitchford Hall* or No. L150.

Last trip

While the Saturday is expected to mainly feature the opportunity for members of the public to take to the controls of the powerful locomotive, with a series of popular driver experience trains, *Leander* will bow out of traffic on the Sunday, working its final passenger trains before expiry of its current boiler certificate.

A fleet of vintage London buses will also be running throughout the three weekends of the event, providing connections with all the EOR's train services to Epping Underground station. Some buses will also provide connections with Shenfield station.



BULLEID MAKES THE GRADE

Resplendent in its weathered condition, SR 'Battle of Britain' No. 34070 *Manston* climbs up the final few hundred yards of Medstead bank at the Mid-Hants Railway, with the last train of the day on February 12. Visiting from the Swanage Railway, the Bulleid Pacific is due to remain on the Watercress Line until late May.

JAMES CORBEN

Vintage carriage fleet to be housed at Washford shed

THE future of the covered rolling stock accommodation at Washford on the West Somerset Railway (WSR) has been secured after agreement was reached between the parties involved.

The site was formerly the home of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust (S&DRT), which operated a museum and restoration base there.

Now the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust (WSRHT) and S&DRT have confirmed that they have finalised the agreement to buy the three-road shed and track at Washford. In addition, the WSRHT has signed an agreement for a 10-year lease of the site from WSR PLC, both contracts being effective from February 1.

The agreement will help secure proper covered facilities for the WSRHT Carriage Restoration team who until now have had to work largely in the open at Williton, where the WSRHT will now cease restoration activities.

On February 14, Collett carriage No. 6705 became the first WSRHT coach to be placed inside Washford shed. No. 6075 previously resided at Bishops Lydeard museum. In the coming weeks, work will begin on applying a new coat of paint, fixing a small leak in the roof and renovating the seals on the vacuum brake cylinders.

There is enough room at Washford to house all nine of the WSRHT's Toplight and Collett carriages and it is hoped to bring them all together from their existing sites at Williton and Dunster in due course.

From a previous engineering study however, the WSRHT is aware that some of these carriages are unlikely to be fit for restoration and may have to be dismantled to be used as parts for the remaining coaches. If any of the carriages are deemed unfit to be moved, either by rail or road, they may need to be dismantled on site.

Meanwhile, Washford station is being transformed from its previous BR Southern Region guise to become a GWR/WR branch line station.

Steam gala round-up

■ FOUR guest locomotives have been confirmed for the West Somerset Railway's (WSR) May 3-6 Spring Steam Spectacular. Visitors include 'B1' No. 61306 *Mayflower*, Swindon & Cricklade Railway-based GWR 0-6-2T No. 6695, Bahamas Locomotive Society-owned LNWR Coal Tank No. 1054 and Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway-based GWR '28XX' 2-8-0 No. 2807.

Resident performers due be in action include Nos. 9351, 9466 and 7828 *Odney Manor*.

The gala is set to include local trains between Bishops Lydeard and Williton, demonstration goods workings, double-heading, semi-fast expresses and trips to Norton Fitzwarren. Some evening running is planned to take place on the Saturday, plus some evening photoshoots at Minehead.

■ GLOUCESTERSHIRE Warwickshire Steam Railway (GWSR) has announced the first visiting locomotive for the line's May 25-27 Cotswold Festival of Steam – No. 6880 *Betton Grange*. The GWSR said No. 6880 perfectly fits the event's theme, 'Western Workhorses'.

■ SWANAGE Railway plans to hold a Strictly Bulleid 2 gala on June 7-9, building on the success of Strictly Bulleid in 2017. Powered exclusively by Bulleid Pacifics, trains will run the full length of the line to the Network Rail boundary at the River Frome. While the full roster remained to be confirmed at the time of writing, it is due to include No. 34070 *Manston*, No. 34028 *Eddystone* and No. 34072 *257 Squadron* – the latter making a brief return to the railway.

■ THE WSR's July 16-21 150 event is due to include a visit from Furness Railway No. 20 – Britain's oldest operational standard gauge steam loco. The occasion will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the opening of the extension of the WSR from Watchet to Minehead in 1874. In addition to railway focussed events, the Quantock Brewery has promised to brew a special WSR birthday beer.



WESTERN DUET: GWR Prairies Nos. 4144 and 5199 double-head at the Battlefield Line gala on February 3. The hoped-for presence of No. 6880 *Betton Grange* (*RM* January) did not materialise as the loco was not ready. Also in action was Great Central Railway-based BR '2MT' No. 78018 (see picture on Steam Portfolio page 70). MARTYN TATTAM

Winter work at Bridgnorth

THE latest stage of civil engineering work to upgrade the Severn Valley Railway's Bridgnorth yard has resulted in all roads outside the loco shed being on the same level.

Phase 2A of the Bridgnorth MPD yard re-lay project, which started on January 9, has seen roads 1 and 2 – the sidings nearest to the station – lifted for replacement.

After the rails were removed and surrounding concrete cut back, the surface was prepared to receive an additional 270mm of concrete – the height gain needed to raise road 2 to the same level as the rest of the yard.

Some of the old track is thought to have survived from BR days, and in places, the rails in the section used only to store locos and wagons was very wasted below the surface.

Replacement trackwork has included components recovered from Brownhills (*RM* December 2023). Completion of Phase 2A was expected by mid-March.

Life-expired signalling and track circuit wiring dating back to the 1970s, has been replaced in the signalbox.

On the loco front, Stanier Mogul No. 2968 has been receiving attention to finish off several tasks and complete some fettling following its operation during the Festive period. The 2-6-0 has had a number of deep cleans with soapy water, ahead of it being shunted into the paint shop for its transformation into No. 13268.

'S160' No. 2253 *Omaha* returned to its Dartmouth Steam Railway home in early February.

Repairs to GWR 0-6-0ST No. 813 continue to progress. The large drag box casting has been returned from the external contract-machinists with all of the casting's mounting holes drilled in the correct places. The bunker/cab assembly and buffer beam have been moved back inside from their storage area. It is hoped that reassembly of the loco will progress shortly.

BACK IN TRAFFIC



Danish F Class 0-6-0T No. 656 returned to the Nene Valley Railway roster on February 10 after a 38-year absence following the completion of its overhaul. The 1949-built loco is seen approaching Overton level crossing with the second trip of the day. JAMES KINDRED

Groundworks underway at Lydney yard

VOLUNTEERS at the Dean Forest Railway (DFR) have kicked off the year by preparing the ground for a new carriage shed as part of the Lydney Junction Yard development project.

Members of the DFR Society have cleared vegetation, surplus materials and scrap to make way for the construction of new storage and workshop facilities, which will also assist with the delivery of educational programs and community events. The clearance efforts are a precursor to site surveys.

Securing grant funding is a pivotal aspect of the project, which cannot be progressed without accurate, detailed surveys and costings – all of which needs to be complete before the railway engages with fundraising experts in the coming months to assist with applications.

Among the items stored on the site was the superstructure of the ex-Walnut Tree Junction Taff Vale Railway signalbox. In 2022, the 'box was offered for sale, before being offered free to a good home. While the latter piqued some interest, in early January the last of the three interested parties pulled out. With all channels exhausted, on February 3 the 'box was broken up. The ground has since been cleaned up, and the spoil adjacent to it moved ready to infill other low spots in the site.

DIARY

MARCH

10 Bodmin Railway: Mother's Day special tickets
10 East Anglian Railway Museum: Mother's Day Steam
15-16 Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway: A Taste of Faulty Towers!
15-17 East Lancashire Railway: Legends of Steam
16-17 East Somerset Railway: Steam Gala and Driver For A Tenner
16-17 Severn Valley Railway: Gin Trains
16-18 Great Central Railway: GCR 125 anniversary weekend
21-24 Keighley & Worth Valley Railway: The Steam Gala
23-24 Ribble Steam Railway: Spring Steam Gala
26 Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway: GWSR Behind Closed Doors
27-28 Great Central Railway: Ruffle the Rail Dog Family Adventures
28-31 Mid-Norfolk Railway: Alice on the Wondertrain
29-30 Churnet Valley Railway: Mad Hatter's Tea Party
29-APR 1 East Anglian Railway Museum: Days Out With Thomas
29-APR 1 Epping Ongar Railway: Easter Egg Hunt
29-APR 7 Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway: Children's Craft Activities
29-APR 1 North Norfolk Railway: Steam Into Spring
29-APR 1 Spa Valley Railway: Little Red Riding Hood's Easter Train Ride
29-APR 12 Isle of Wight Steam Railway: The Great Railway Easter Hunt
29-APR 1 Watercress Line: Easter Bunny Trains
30-31 Great Central Railway: Easter On The Rails
30-31 South Devon Railway: Easter event TBC
30-APR 1 Middleton Railway: Easter Opening Weekend
31-APR 1 Mid-Suffolk Light Railway: Easter Steam Up and Easter Bunny Hunt
31 Plym Valley Railway: Easter Sunday steam

APRIL

2-4 Great Central Railway: Ruffle the Rail Dog Family Adventures
4 Bodmin Railway: Steam Shanty Evening
5-6 Churnet Valley Railway: Mad Hatter's Tea Party
6 Middleton Railway: Community Day
6-7 North Norfolk Railway: Sixtieth Anniversary of Closure
6-7 South Devon Railway: Mad Hatter's Travelling Tea Party
7 Kent & East Sussex Railway: Spring Fun Day
13, 24, 30 Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway: GWSR Behind Closed Doors

Standard boiler appeal launched

£150k needed to help Toddington-based '4MT' steam.

TODDINGTON Standard Locomotive Ltd (TSLL), the owner of BR '4MT' No. 76077 has launched an appeal to raise the estimated £150,000 cost to overhaul the 2-6-0's boiler.

While the engine is at Locomotive Maintenance Services' (LMS) Loughborough workshops, the boiler, No. 1052 built at Darlington in 1952, is currently at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway's Toddington depot. Following a professional boiler inspection, a tender document, detailing the work required, is being sent to selected boiler workshops.

The boiler is generally in good condition, having been overhauled at Eastleigh in 1964 with the engine being withdrawn just three years later, both the parallel front section of the boiler barrel and the front tubeplate will be replaced.

Other work required includes the repair of some corrosion pitting at the bottom of the tapered barrel section; new studs for the dome cover; cutting out and replacing corroded platework at the front corners of the firebox throat plate; building up wasted metal on the backhead; refinishing the pads and fit new studs for manifold, backhead fittings and other boiler mountings; replacing rivets and patch screws within the copper firebox, and renewing Monel stays and stay nuts as necessary; replacing crown stay nuts and repairing copper stay heads; replacing foundation ring rivets and obtaining and fitting the 156 smoke tubes and 24 flue tubes.

TSLL has set December 2026, the locomotive's 70th birthday, as a target for seeing the locomotive steamed for the first time since 1967.

"We are on target to meet that date despite delays during Covid-19," said Andrew Meredith, TSLL's engineering director. "However, in order to meet our deadline it is vital that we raise the necessary money for the boiler overhaul as quickly as we can, so that we can press on with the overhaul without interruption due to lack of funds."

The boiler overhaul project has got off to a good start with almost £18,000 banked by mid-February.

Visit standard76077.com for details of how you can help.



'ROYAL SCOT' ON THE MOORS

No. 46100 *Royal Scot* was in action on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway on February 10-18. The LMS 4-6-0 is seen passing Beck Hole on February 13. Daily services will operate from March 23 to November 3 – and the line's annual steam gala is to be held on September 26-29. KENNY FELSTEAD



Departure from Slabberts at sunrise ... Connoisseurs know what I mean. We try it again: three big locos on the lines

South Africa: Big Steam and Sandstone's Garratts Jul 17th – Jul 28th
South Africa: The Big Five: Kruger National Park Jul 27th – Aug 2nd

Kimberley – Bloemfontein, Bloemfontein – Marseilles – Modderport and Bethlehem – Ficksburg, the latter two lines are scenically outstanding, the first one dedicated for glint shots. More than 30 already booked their seat.

FarRail Tours

www.FarRail.com, mail@FarRail.com, +49 177 56 13 999
FarRail Tours, Sonnenburger Str. 68, D-10437 Berlin

Penrhyn Castle locos rehomed

Industrial steam locomotives deaccessioned by National Trust after change of focus at castle railway museum.

THE railway museum at Penrhyn Castle will look very different this year, following the departure of several standard and narrow gauge exhibits to new homes in other corners of the British Isles.

This follows a decision by the National Trust, which runs the North Wales venue, to revamp the site. While rolling stock relating to the nearby Penrhyn Quarries has been retained, other items, including four industrial steam locos were relocated in late January and early February.

First to move, on January 24, was Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0T *Vesta*, works number 1223 built in 1916, being delivered to the Bury Transport Museum. This locomotive worked at Shotton Steelworks before being preserved by the Industrial Locomotive Society. It was then gifted to the National Trust, and after being displayed at Shugborough Hall in Staffordshire was displayed at Penrhyn Castle where it remained until this year. After being displayed in Bury Transport Museum for three years, ownership of the steam locomotive will be handed over to the East Lancashire Railway.

The locomotive is similar in appearance to the famous Manchester Ship Canal 0-6-0T locos built by Hudswell Clarke, and makes an interesting comparison with resident MSC No. 32 *Gothenburg*, works number 680 built in 1903.

Vesta is the latest addition to the standard gauge locomotive exhibits on site, joining the 2-6-4 'Tilbury Tank' No. 2500, which recently relocated from the National Railway Museum in York.

The second locomotive to move from Penrhyn Castle was another Hudswell Clarke, 0-4-0ST *Hawarden,* works number 526, built in 1899 which moved to the Middleton Railway Trust at Moor Road, Leeds on January 26. This is very much a Victorian steam locomotive and provides a contrast with two later 0-4-0STs on display at Moor Road – *Henry De Lacy II,* works number 1309 built in 1917 and *Mirvale,* works number 1882 built in 1955.

Hawarden spent its working life at the John Summers Globe Ironworks in Stalybridge, Lancashire. It was saved from scrapping through the generosity of the Summers family and after restoration transferred to Penrhyn Castle.

Both *Vesta* and *Hawarden* were actually transferred to the ownership of the Bahamas Locomotive Society (BLS), although ownership will be transferred to the East Lancs and Middleton Railways respectively in three years' time, a generous gesture appreciated by both lines.

As part of the refocus, the National Trust has also formally gifted LNWR 0-6-2T No. 1054 to the BLS. The Coal Tank has been in BLS custodianship since 1973 and is now based at Ingrow on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway.

The third standard gauge loco to move, on February 1, was Robert Stephenson 0-6-0T *Haydock,* works number 2309, built in 1879. Identical in design to *Freshwater,* works number 2383, which was used in the construction of the Freshwater, Newport & Yarmouth Railway, *Haydock* is now housed at Havenstreet on the Isle of Wight Steam Railway. It is regarded as filling an important part of the history of the Isle of Wight railway system.



***Hawarden* is pictured awaiting unloading from the low-loader at the Middleton Railway's Moor Road headquarters on January 26. Note that the loco's name is only carried on one side.** IAN SMITH



***Haydock* is seen being unloaded at Havenstreet on the Isle of Wight Steam Railway on February 1.** IOWSR



MSC No. 32 *Gothenburg* shunts new arrival *Vesta* into the Bury Transport Museum on January 24. KEITH WHITMORE/ELR



***Hawarden* is seen inside the Engine House at Moor Road on the Middleton Railway following the loco's arrival on January 26.** IAN SMITH

Haydock is known to have been utilised on a North Eastern Railway construction contract near Bolton Percy around 1903. It was later acquired by Richard Evans & Co, owners of the Haydock collieries, and for many years was employed shunting the company's timber wharf on the Manchester Ship canal at Acton Grange, as well as in the collieries at St Helens. Acton Grange wharf was several miles from the Haydock site, and it is understood the loco would work under its own steam over main line metals between the two sites when required – it still carries its Railway Executive registration plate. It passed to the National Coal Board in 1947, where it is likely it encountered and indeed worked alongside the famous Haydock 0-6-0WTs, of which *Bellerophon* (currently under overhaul at Foxfield) is a survivor.

From 1952, *Haydock* worked at Acton Grange until rail operations ceased in 1963. It was then stored at the NCB Central Workshops from 1963 until 1966 when presented to the National Trust and taken to Penrhyn Castle.

The fourth and final standard gauge departure was Beckton No 1, an 0-4-0WT built by Neilson & Co as works number 1561 in 1870 and the oldest standard gauge loco at Penrhyn.

This cut down locomotive worked all its life at the famous Beckton Gas works near London, which at one time was the largest such facility in Europe. The retort houses were particularly low, which meant all locomotives working there had to be no more than 8ft high.

No. 1 arrived at Beckton in 1870 painted in the standard green livery and named *Alderman,* a name it later lost. It was rebuilt by the company at its own workshops in 1929, before continuing to work until 1963 when it was finally retired and donated to the National Trust for display at Penrhyn Castle.

The locomotive has now been donated to the Scottish Railway Preservation Society at Bo'ness for its Museum of Scottish Railways, a most appropriate location, arriving in early February.

Compiled by **Josh Brinsford**

Swanley charity trains success

Intensive steam service benefits British Heart Foundation.

THE Swanley New Barn Railway kicked off the new year by supporting a good cause, raising valuable funds for a national charity.

The Kent line's annual charity event was held on January 1, in aid of the British Heart Foundation.

All operable home-based steam locomotives were in action. These included 2-4-0 'Tinkerbell' *Sir Goss* built by J Goss and J Haylock in 1981; 0-4-2T 'Tinkerbell' *Mrs Darling* built by P Jackson in 2017; 2-6-2T 'Tinkerbell' *Owd Rosie* built by J Stubbs in 1993; and 0-4-4-0T Single Fairlie *Y Sgwar* built by P Beevers in 2021.

The resident fleet was joined by 2-4-0 No.14 *Horton* built by Narogauge Ltd in 1991, from the Moors Valley Railway and the privately-owned 'General Gordon' 0-6-0T *Edward Watkin* built by Station Road Steam in 2020, plus 0-4-0T *Furbero No.1* built by J Drury in 1980 as *Lady Sara*, rebuilt by A Robelou in 2001.

The seven locos worked an intensive service of nearly 100 trains, with an excellent public turnout raising around £980. No fares were charged – but passengers were encouraged to donate either via a justgiving page online or in collection tins on site on the day.

Opened in 1986 as a private venture, the 7¼in gauge line has been operated since 1987 by volunteers from the Swanley New Barn Society.

Having been closed for maintenance over the winter, the railway is due to reopen on Good Friday (March 29).

Visit steamdriver.wixsite.com/snbr for details.



A loco line-up is seen at the sheds on January 1. Displayed from left to right are: *Owd Rosie*, *Edward Watkin*, *Furbero*, *Horton*, *Mrs Darling* and *Y Sgwar*. PETER JACKSON



***Princess Swee' Pea* is seen in operation on the Poole Park Railway on August 6, 2017.** JOSH BRINSFORD

Miniature pioneer locomotive for sale

THE inaugural miniature locomotive built by Alan Keef is on the market.

Constructed in 1990 as works No.31, the 10¼in gauge No. 1201 *Princess Swee' Pea* was originally built as an 0-6-0DH steam-outline loco for the Hastings Miniature Railway (HMR).

It was rebuilt into its current form as a steam-outline tender loco with a Kubota engine and drive in the new tender by Radcliffe and Valentine model engineering in 2012. All that remains of the original loco is the now-unpowered 0-6-0 chassis and dummy smokebox.

By then an 0-6-0+4wDH, it became the resident loco for the Poole Park Railway in 2017 on loan from the HMR, before being purchased by the Friends of Poole Park Railway for use on the railway.

Sold in July 2018, the loco was spotted at the Bickington Steam Railway at Trago Mills in 2022. In mid-February the loco was for sale for £8500 with Heckmondwike-based The Steam Workshop.

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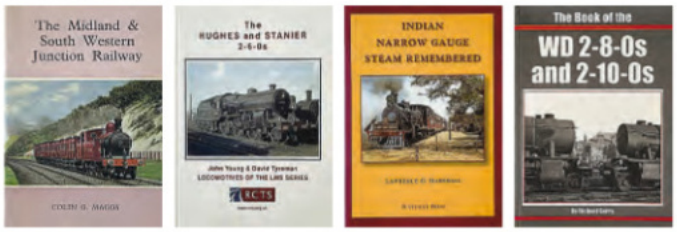
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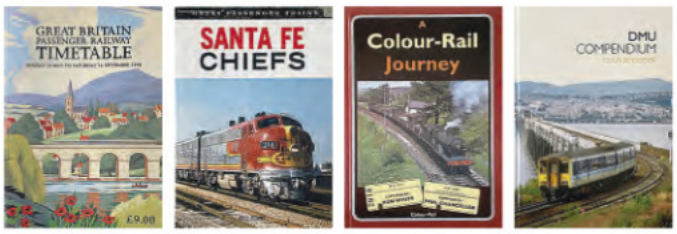
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SINGLE LINES

■ RECONSTRUCTION of the Ffestiniog Railway's platform at Blaenau Ffestiniog was progressed in January with the paving blocks (recovered for relaying) and edging removed to reveal the underlying ground surface. Following installation of new drainage and edging the platform will be reinstated. The project at Blaenau Ffestiniog will resume next winter when the canopy roof and gutters will be dealt with.

■ PHIL Robinson's ex-Derbyshire Silica Firebrick Co Ltd, of Friden, near Hartington, Ruston & Hornsby 4wDM RH237914/1946 is approaching the final stages of restoration. The project has been undertaken in a garage at Phil's home over the last 16 years. A number of small tasks remain, including some painting and fitting the radiator grille over the fan before the loco is moved to Moseley Railway Trust's Apedale Valley Light Railway.

■ THE new boiler for James Evans' ex-Dinorwic Hunslet 0-4-0ST *Velinheli*, fitted with insulation and cladding sheets, was mounted in the frames by early February.

DIARY

MARCH
10 Leighton Buzzard Mother's Day
10 Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch (RHDR) Mother's Day
16-17 Statfold Spectacle of Steam
17 RHDR Winston Churchill returns
29-APR 1 Bala Lake Easter Egg Hunt
29-APR 1 Statfold Easter Eggspress
30 Apedale East Egg Hunt
30-APR 1 Llanberis Lake Easter Egg Hunt
30-APR 1 Welshpool & Llanfair Railway (W&LLR) Carrot Express
31 West Lancs Easter Egg Hunt
31-APR 1 Groudle Glen Easter Bunny Trains

APRIL
3-12 Bredgar and Wormshill Light Railway Easter Diesel Days
6 Apedale New Members' Day
10-14 Isle of Man Steam Railway Dino Express
13-14 Statfold Model Railway Show
14 Amberley Spring industrial trains
19-20 Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways 'Snowdonian'
20-21 W&LLR Vintage Weekend
21 Apedale Classic Vehicles
28 West Lancs Friendly Engines Day

New plans for expansion

L&BR to seek planning permission to extend to edge of Parracombe.



A working party on January 20/21 cleared a significant volume of overgrown trees and vegetation from the boundaries on the Killington Lane – Parracombe trackbed. Looking towards Killington Lane from the Parracombe direction, the accommodation crossing on the left is Bridge 64 (numbering from Barnstaple). JULIA SNASHALL/L&BR

EFFORTS to expand the restored section of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway at Woody Bay are now being focussed on a shorter extension to a location just north of Parracombe.

It follows the expiry of Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust's (L&BRT) planning permission to rebuild the line between its present Killington Lane terminus and Blackmoor (*RM* Headline News, April 2023).

Now a planning application to Exmoor National Park Authority is being prepared which L&BRT hopes will be submitted later this year. If approved, this would enable construction of a half-mile extension to its current Woody Bay to Killington Lane running line onwards to a terminus at Cricket Field Lane on the edge of Parracombe. Meanwhile, a working party on January 20/21 cleared a significant volume of overgrown trees and vegetation from the trackbed boundaries along this section and undertook spot fencing repairs.

During previous planning consultations Parracombe residents expressed concern over the use of Parracombe Churchtown Halt as a temporary run-round facility, not least expressing unease that such a facility could become permanent, bringing noise and smoke nuisance to nearby dwellings. There were also concerns over additional traffic using Churchtown Lane and the proximity of the site to Parracombe school and listed buildings.

Locating a terminus at Cricket Field Lane aims to address these issues. It is outside the Parracombe conservation zone and is more than 150 metres from the nearest dwelling, Heddon Hall, and 400 metres from Churchtown Bridge. The proposed run-round loop and platform would be within the original L&B cutting to the south of Parracombe Lane Bridge, thus being largely hidden from sight. Cricket Field Lane itself is a narrow unsurfaced track, not connected to the A39 road and inaccessible to cars. The new terminus would operate in the same manner as Killington Lane Halt currently does with passengers buying tickets and joining the train at Woody Bay station.

The original L&BR gradient from Bridge 65 to Cricket Field Lane was 1-in-50, too steep for a terminus run-round facility. By maintaining a gradient of 1-in-500 after the line passes under Bridge 63, an additional width of track bed would be created higher in the original cutting to accommodate a second track forming the run-round loop, which would be approximately 2.5 metres higher than the original line. A headshunt would then descend to a buffer stop at the end of the small triangular enclosure beside Cricket Field Lane.

At some future time when the railway can be extended on through Parracombe towards Blackmoor Gate, the running line would be reinstated to its original 1-in-50 gradient with the headshunt becoming a siding. Parracombe Halt would be reinstated in its original single-track form with a water tank, platform shelter and no run-round loop. A decision as to whether trains would stop at Parracombe Halt, either regularly or by request, would be put to the parish council and local residents.

Palmerston to be exhibit at VoR museum followed by a return to steam for Rheidol event



Ffestiniog Railway's George England 0-4-0STT *Palmerston* pictured at Aberffrwd on September 21, 2014 during its last visit to the Vale of Rheidol Railway. PETER JOHNSON

THE Ffestiniog Railway's (FR) George England 0-4-0STT No.4 *Palmerston* will be overhauled at the Vale of Rheidol Railway (VoR) and return to steam as the star visiting attraction during the VoR's August 24-26 Rheidol Steam Festival event.

Out of ticket since November 2022, *Palmerston* was moved to Aberystwyth in late February. It will initially be displayed in VoR's new museum, display and events building which opens on March 23.

In July the loco will be moved into VoR's workshops and overhauled in time for it to return to steam for the VoR's August event. It will return to Porthmadog in late September and participate in the FR's October 4-6 'Bygones Weekend'.

No. 4 has historic connections with the VoR, having been hired by the railway on several occasions during the years between 1912 and 1922. In the modern era it visited the VoR in 2014 when it hauled several special trains to Devil's Bridge.

Dating from 1864, *Palmerston* is also the oldest surviving locomotive to have worked on the Vale of Rheidol Railway, easily pre-dating the VoR's current operating fleet.

Lining added to Corris 'Falcon'

THE lining has now been applied to Corris Railway's (CR) new-build Falcon 0-4-2ST No. 10, which was launched into service last September in a plain red livery.

Winter work has also included adjustments to the buffer fittings.

Although the Corris Railway should have two steam locomotives available for service during the 2024 season, normally only one will be steamed on each operating day.

The line's 2005-built near-replica Kerr, Stuart 'Tattoo' 0-4-2ST No. 7 is due for withdrawal for its second 10-year overhaul next winter.

SINGLE LINES

■ HAVING been moved to John Fowler Engineering at Old Hall Farm in Bouth, Cumbria, last year, the overhaul of Groudle Glen Railway's replica Bagnall 0-4-2T *Annie* commenced in earnest in January when the loco was dismantled. The rebuild will include fitting a new boiler built by Bennett Boilers. The work will also include new castings and machined parts in the motion, a new pony truck and stainless steel water tanks.

■ THE structure of a new Ffestiniog Railway Lineside Tool Van was completed and mounted on its bogies at Boston Lodge in late January. The vehicle incorporates a platform which will help solve working at height issues. An operative working within the platform will be six feet from the ground and, using a pole saw, able to safely cut tree branches 15ft above rail level.

■ The Telford Steam Railway (TSR) has purchased a second-hand, but probably unused, vertical boiler for use in its c1977 2ft gauge steam tram. It will be steam tested then adapted for fitting in the tram. Work continues on renovating the bodywork of the vehicle.

■ THE Lappa Valley Railway in Cornwall will celebrate its 50th anniversary over June 15/16.

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Manx Heritage Railway's external review published

Network 'well run' and no shock recommendations.



Pictured a few years ago, Beyer Peacock 2-4-0T No. 8 *Fenella* (now out of ticket) pulls a train away from Port Erin station, a sight which hopefully will continue for many decades to come. The Systra consultants' report looked at the Douglas to Port Erin steam line and concluded there was no case for withdrawing services between Castletown and Port Erin. CLIFF THOMAS

THE Independent Review of Isle of Man Heritage Railways commissioned by the Manx Government last year (see *RM*, August 2023) was published on January 17.

Prepared by consultants Systra, the comprehensive 96-page report found that the Manx heritage rail network (Isle of Man Steam Railway, Manx Electric Railway, Snaefell Mountain Railway and Douglas Bay Horse Tramway) was well run, has received effective investment and makes a significant contribution to the local economy.

The report concludes with 13 recommendations. These include the view that the railways should remain in public ownership, but that a board of directors is formed, providing the basis to operate as an arm's length company. Describing the Department of Infrastructure as "essentially an asset management organisation", the report points out that is "less well placed to manage and develop a visitor attraction".

Although there was widespread concern that the report may recommend truncation of some of the lines, this has not proven to be the case. The review found there was no case for withdrawal of services on the steam line between Castletown and Port Erin and while conversion of the MER between Laxey and Ramsey to single track operation with passing loops to provide space for a parallel cycle track was examined, this is not considered to represent value for money.

The report is more ambiguous in relation to reinstatement of the Douglas Bay Horse Tramway between its current (supposedly temporary) terminus and the Sea Terminal. Modelling work showed that the financial case for reinstatement would require a very large increase in passenger numbers but does confirm there is a strategic case for returning the tramway to its original length, suggesting that a change in emphasis around capital spending could produce benefits, with the Sea Terminal being utilised as part of the railway's visitor facilities, possibly prior to investment in facilities at Derby Castle.

The report and its recommendations will now be considered by the Department of Infrastructure and other Isle of Man Government elements in order to establish the next steps to take.

Fairbourne's *Sherpa* and Ruislip's *Mad Bess* to make reciprocal visits this coming May

FAIRBOURNE Railway's Milner 0-4-0STT *Sherpa* will be visiting the Ruislip Lido Railway's May 4-6 Steam Gala.

This will be the first time *Sherpa* has visited the Middlesex line and only the second time a steam loco has visited the Ruislip Lido Railway, the previous occasion being in May 2023 when rebuilt Exmoor 2-6-2T *Christopher* visited from the Littlehampton Miniature Railway.

Ruislip's resident oil-fired steam loco 2-4-0STT *Mad Bess* will then make a reciprocal visit to North Wales to appear at Fairbourne Railway's May 25-27 annual steam gala.

Sherpa is based on a Darjeeling Himalayan Railway class B tank locomotive. Built by Milner Engineering in 1978 it initially ran on the Réseau Guerlédan Railway in Brittany, before being transferred to Fairbourne in 1986.

Mad Bess was built between 1986-1998 by The Ruislip Lido Railway Society to run on the 12in gauge Ruislip Lido line to a design based on the outline of Ffestiniog Railway's 2-4-0STTs *Blanche* and *Linda*. The loco was constructed with the capability of being regauged to 15in gauge, but it will appear, subject to test runs, on Fairbourne's 12.25in gauge main line and not the shorter 15in gauge dual gauge section.

Stuart Williams returning to Wales as new Brecon Mountain Railway GM

THE Vale of Rheidol Railway (VoR) has appointed Stuart Williams as the new General Manager of the Brecon Mountain Railway (BMR).

He is expected to be in post managing the BMR around early summer and will work with VoR managing director Llŷr ap Iolo and his team on developing plans to expand the visitor experience of the Brecon line.

This appointment follows the announcement that the VoR was in the process of acquiring the BMR (*RM*, December 2023).

Stuart Williams was general manager of the Talyllyn Railway from September 2017 until February 2023 when he left to take up a development trust post in Orkney.

He was previously a volunteer and director of the Dean Forest Railway (2010-2017) and a director of the Heritage Railway Association (2020-2023). He remains a stakeholder in County Marquees, a company which he co-founded in the 1990s of which he was managing director until 2017.



Newly appointed Brecon Mountain Railway general manager Stuart Williams, pictured while still general manager of the Talyllyn Railway. VOR

New-style sleeper development at Launceston

WINTER work at the Launceston Steam Railway (LSR) has included re-laying 100 yards of track in the damp cutting under the aqueduct just to the west of Launceston.

The 35lb rail first laid 42 years ago, on wood sleepers, has been replaced by 50lb rail on sleepers which have been recycled, Launceston-style.

In typically innovative fashion, LSR's Nigel Bowman and Jonathan Mann have constructed 'new' sleepers from two parallel lengths of redundant 90-year old rail, welded together at each end with Pandrol plates. They are manoeuvred into position with the aid of a specially-shaped piece of metal rod which engages in the Pandrol plates – the device being described by the LSR as a prongulator!

DHR B-Class overhaul in progress – no significant issues yet revealed

THE anticipated overhaul of Darjeeling Tank Locomotive Trust's 1889-built Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Sharp Stewart B-Class 0-4-0ST (3518/1888) No. 19B at Statfold Barn Railway (*RM*, February) commenced on January 8.

Progress has been rapid. The boiler was lifted, the tubes removed and the barrel descaled by the end of January ready for examination by the boiler inspector. Fortunately, no significant issues with the boiler have been revealed so far.

The locomotive still has its original 1889 boiler; when lifted the remains of the studs for the original boiler maker's plate were visible. The only non-original parts are the front tubeplate, tubes, a patch behind the front tubeplate, some stays, the washout bosses and some patches in the firebox. The barrel, dome, throatplate, outer firebox, foundation ring, firehole ring, many of the stays, and almost all the inner firebox are original Low Moor iron or arsenical copper.

Some plates on the lower sides of the outer firebox require replacement. Routine shotblasting and Non-Destructive Testing to check for any cracks followed by a metal thickness survey will now be undertaken.



The 135-year old boiler from Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Sharp Stewart B-Class 0-4-0ST No. 19B pictured in the Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum Trust's workshops following removal of the tubes. DARJEELING TANK LOCOMOTIVE TRUST



Couillet 0-4-0T *Chuquitanta* pictured at Harbour station on May 1, 2017 when it visited the Ffestiniog Railway's Quirks & Curiosities event. Behind *Chuquitanta* are Statfold Barn Railway's Davenport 0-4-0 Ryam Sugar Company No. 1 and 'Goose' railcar. CLIFF THOMAS

Oldest and youngest surviving Decauville locos to visit FR

THE oldest and youngest surviving operational Decauville steam locomotives will visit the Ffestiniog Railway (FR) from Jeremy Martin's Richmond Light Railway over May 4/5, for the 'Friends of the Ffestiniog' event, which is held to coincide with the FR Society annual general meeting.

The locos are Couillet 0-4-0T *Chuquitanta* (Decauville works No. 36 of 1885) and Decauville 'Type 3' 0-4-0T 648/1912 *Lily*. *Chuquitanta* last appeared at the FR during the railway's April 2017 Quirks & Curiosities event, whereas this will be the first time *Lily* has travelled to North Wales.

Dolby South African stock collection starts arriving in Britain

SOUTH African Railways (SAR) Class 91 diesel No. 91-016 purchased from Sandstone last year by Maddie Dolby (*RM*, March 2023) is now en route to Britain.

The destination of the loco, now known as *Ralph*, has not yet been confirmed.

The chassis and bogies from Natal Government Railway/ South African Railways Cravens-designed carriage No. NG29 has been delivered to Maddie's private facility in Sheffield, a body for which is expected to be built at Boston Lodge in due time. A two-axle 'riding car' she owns is presently undergoing restoration at Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge works.

The water tanks from ex-Matheran Light Railway 0-6-0T No. 740 (OK2343/1907) purchased by Maddie last year have been sent to Boston Lodge to be measured and drawn.

An NGDZ drop side wagon and an NGY Ballast hopper she purchased from the Sandstone Railway in South Africa were delivered to the Bala Lake Railway in January.

Pixie to steam again after 12 years

FOLLOWING major overhaul, Richmond Light Railway's (RLR) Bagnall 0-4-0ST *Pixie* (2090/1919) is to be unveiled in steam, during a July 6 Relaunch Day at the railway.

Pixie was saved for preservation by the late Rev Teddy Boston and ran at his, now closed, Cadeby Light Railway. Following his death, it was sold to a new owner in March 2006 and dismantled for overhaul. The project was not finished and the components were purchased by Jeremy Martin mid-2019 and subsequently sent to Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge where the overhaul has been progressed to completion.

RLR's annual Charity Steam Fair will follow on August 10. The steam fleet in action is expected to include Hunslet 0-4-0STs *Elin* and *Sybil*, Decauvilles *Chuquitanta* and *Lily,* in addition to the newly overhauled *Pixie*.

De Winton-style new build 0-4-0VBT *Leary* is also expected to be in operation, offering 'Driver for a Fiver' opportunities. The event will also feature internal combustion locos, road steam vehicles, classic cars and Portable steam engines.

Admittance to both events is by pre-booked tickets only.



'KALAHARI' TAKES SHAPE AT DINAS': With the painted boiler cladding added to Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's (Ff&WHR) ex-South African Railways Société Anglo-Franco-Belge (works No. 2684) NG15 2-8-2 No. 134, and work in progress on the cab, the 'Kalahari' is starting to look very impressive. The valve gear is now being set up and extensive other work on pipes etc is in progress at Dinas. The tender will shortly be put behind the loco for work on connections to be completed. ANDREW COLE/ NG15 NO 134 RESTORATION PROJECT TEAM

SINGLE LINES

■ THE extensive overhaul of Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway's Fairbourne-built 2-6-2 No. 24, which went to John Fowler Engineering in Bouth, Cumbria, in January 2022, continues to progress. Work recently completed includes a boiler hydraulic test, fitting a new ashpan, shotblasting of the tender bogie frames, fitting new tender bogie wheelsets and bearings, and work on the cab and frame mountings.

■ THE Vale of Rheidol Railway is restoring carriage No. 16, which has never run in the preservation era. The underframe has been rebuilt and the body will replicate a 1920s VoR wooden-bodied compartment coach.

■ LEIGHTON Buzzard Railway has constructed a new welfare van for its permanent way team, which includes a partitioned Portaloo base unit. Based on an older vehicle which utilises a Motor Rail Simplex chassis, the van has been designated as 'Motel', i.e. Mobile Toilet Ex-Locomotive!

■ FOLLOWING overhaul, the Teifi Valley Railway (TVR) hopes its Hunslet 0-4-0ST *Alan George* will return to operation by the coming summer. The overhaul is being undertaken for the railway off-site. The TVR has been without steam since *Alan George's* last boiler certificate expired at the end of November 2017.

■ THE team aiming to build a replica Hampton & Kempton Waterworks Railway (H&KWR) Kerr Stuart 0-4-2T has had castings made for the four driving axle boxes which are now away for machining. The ambition is to marry them up with finished wheelsets later this year. The project is in its early stages, although the 87 drawings required to build the loco have been purchased from the Statfold Barn Railway. The original H&KWR locos were named *Hampton*, *Kempton* and *Sunbury*, the respective works numbers being 2366, 2367 and 2368.

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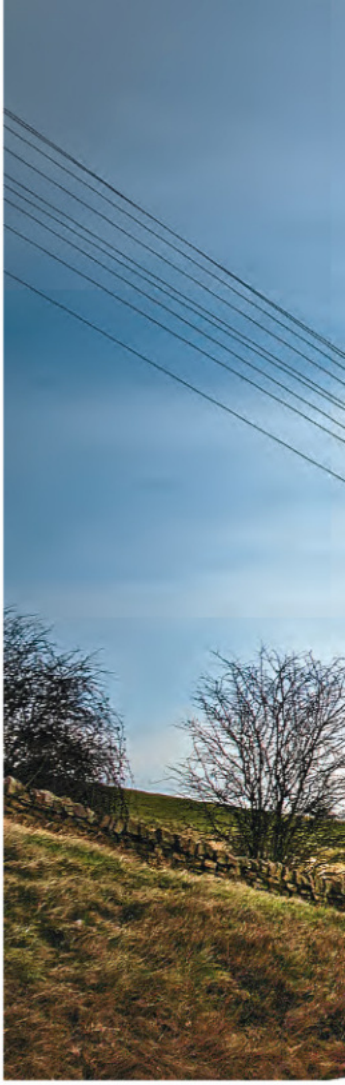
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STEAM PORTFOLIO









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1
PRAIRIES IN FOCUS: Four GWR Prairies were on site at Didcot Railway Centre on two weekends in February. The 5199 Project's No. 5199 visited and was in action alongside resident No. 4144, while Nos. 5572 and 6106 were on static display on February 10, 11, 14, 17 and 18. This provided the rare sight of a line-up of '41XX', '45XX', '51XX' and '61XX' 2-6-2Ts together. Pictured from left to right during a Timeline Events charter on February 10 are Nos. 5572, 5199, 6106 and 4144. MARTYN TATTAM

2
EVENING TURN: BR '2MT' No. 78018 makes an atmospheric sight as it arrives at Shenton with the 17.00 service from Shackerstone on February 4. The Great Central Railway-based 2-6-0 was visiting for the Battlefield Line's gala. MIKE SPENCER

3
IN TRIBUTE TO A TEAM MEMBER: LMS 'Black Five' No. 45212 heads up the bank towards Oakworth on Sunday, January 28, carrying a wreath to mark the passing of Keighley & Worth Valley Railway volunteer Richard Griffin. A long-standing active member, Richard carried out duties on the footplate as well as in the signalbox. He will be sadly missed by many at the railway. ROBERT BATTY

4
LAST TRIP: Andrew Barclay 0-4-0ST *Rosyth No 1* (works number 1385 built in 1914) worked a demonstration coal train on the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway on Sunday, February 11. This event was organised by 30742 Charters to commemorate the last day of the boiler certificate for this locomotive, before withdrawal from service. MIKE DODD


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Beamish Museum welcomes Lisbon 730

Tram expected to enter service in its current livery to bolster the operational fleet, following arrival from Birkenhead.



Lisbon No. 730 following arrival at its new home, Beamish Museum on January 22. PAUL JARMAN

DESPITE travelling through the tail of Storm Isha, Lisbon No. 730 arrived at Beamish Museum in County Durham unscathed, apart from some damage to one of its platform doors.

Having previously visited Beamish in 2013, No. 730 returned on January 22, to take up permanent residence.

Its transfer from the Wirral Transport Museum, where it had been part of the fleet used to run services on the tramway, was agreed late last year with Merseyside Tramway Preservation Society (MTPS).

As part of changes being made by Big Heritage (BH), which took over the custodianship of the Birkenhead visitor attraction from Wirral Council in November, MTPS had been asked to find a new home for No. 730. BH said it required more space for visitors and that, due to a lack of local significance, No. 730 did not fit within the new museum narrative.

Announcing its arrival, Beamish director of development for transport, industry and design Paul Jarman said: "I'd like to place on record again our thanks to the MTPS for offering 730 to us when they had to find it a new home, and for making the arrangements for it to move to the museum. This was a generous and much appreciated gesture and I hope that their members can enjoy seeing No. 730 at work, at Beamish."

Livery

Having had its windows refitted by MTPS before its move to the North East, Beamish Museum expects to put No. 730 into service in its current livery, but plans eventually for it to carry the blue and cream of Darlington Corporation Light Railways. These colours are seen as a nod to the tram's origins as, although converted to standard gauge following its arrival in the UK, it was built as a 900 millimetre gauge (2ft 11 7/16in) vehicle and the Darlington system was also narrow gauge, albeit 3ft 6 ins. Application of the new colours will, however, be dependent on when arrangements can be made with contractors to do it.

With former Oporto tram No. 196 (used in the guise of a South Shields car) due for overhaul soon, the arrival of No. 730, a similar style of single deck tram, is expected to tie-in well to needs at Beamish. With potential to board and disembark quicker than bigger vehicles, as part of balanced heritage tram and bus operation, smaller cars are seen as useful in reducing headways and waiting times for visitors.

Work continues on the overhaul of Gateshead No. 10, which had been hoped to return to action last year, with attention turning to its interior. Brake ratchets on Newcastle No. 114 are being restored to profile.

EATM prepares for the new season

EAST Anglia Transport Museum (EATM) says that it has been cleared to continue its operations following a routine inspection by the Office of Rail & Road.

The industry's safety regulator inspected tramway and narrow gauge infrastructure at the museum site at Carlton Colville, near Lowestoft in January.

EATM thanked its members for "an enormous amount of preparation work" to deal with the inspection process.

Early February saw the first round of training completed on the site's recently-purchased scissor lift and cherry picker mobile elevated work platforms, which are expected to be a big help for site and vehicle maintenance.

EATM's 2024 visitor season will begin on March 29.



Lowestoft No. 14 is seen outside during a reshuffle of vehicles at East Anglia Transport Museum at Carlton Colville in January. The body of No. 14, which had been reused as a summerhouse, was rescued for preservation in 1962, becoming the first acquisition for what would later be the EATM. GARY EDWARDS

SIDELINES

More talks expected on home for No. 53

FURTHER discussions are expected regarding a future operational home for sole surviving Brighton Corporation Tramways passenger car No. 53.

No. 53, an F-Class tram, built in 1937, is being restored by the Brighton Tram 53 Society near Steyning in West Sussex. It operated for just two years before the system closed and was preserved in 2010 after spending decades on a farm.

The Society is restoring No. 53 to operational condition and is keen to secure a base for it which will be easy for visitors to reach and can accommodate a shed and a short running line.

At its current base, work has continued on the lower saloon seats and the team is awaiting advice regarding the vehicle's air braking system.

Family pass for Shipley Glen

SHIPLEY Glen Tramway has launched a pass which will allow families unlimited travel for a whole year.

Priced at £25.00, it covers use of the tramway by the holder and up to three other people.

Individual fares are priced at 50p for children and £1.50 for adults. Day rovers are £1.00 for children and £2.50 for adults.

Currently open on Sundays only, the tramway is also expected to be open on Saturdays from March 30.

Crich clean-up

STREET cleaning and removal of moss from walls and pavements has been taking place as part of preparations for the new season at Crich Tramway Village in Derbyshire.

The site's outside works team has been carrying out overhead line work on the tramway.

Crich, which is the home of the National Tramway Museum, will reopen to visitors on March 9.

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Compiled by **Jack Boskett and Josh Brinsford**

SIDELINES

Saving a '507' is music to their ears!

A GROUP has been formed intent on purchasing Merseyrail's No. 507001 for preservation. North-West musician Tim Blackburn is hoping to help the fledgling Class 507 Society by donating profits from sales of his latest song, which is entitled 'Yellow and Grey' and inspired by travelling on one of the units on the Wirral Line. The CD version of the song is available to purchase in a yellow and grey cover to reflect the Merseyrail livery, but the song is also available to buy and download online. See www.mistrust.bandcamp.com for more on the song and www.class507.org.uk for more on the society.

Margate 'tug'

PRESERVED Class 60 No. 60081 *Isambard Kingdom Brunel* is ready to be displayed at Margate's One:One collection. DB Cargo has repainted the loco at Toton into a new coat of Great Western Railway green ready for its first public appearance as an exhibit. The locomotive suffered a serious engine failure in 2005 and was withdrawn in April that year. Now bearing a new set of number and nameplates, it is highly unlikely that this locomotive will work another train again.

Cab experiences

THE North Yorkshire Moors Railway is offering the opportunity to ride in the cab of a diesel locomotive this season, for £250 per person. The experience includes travel on a 36-mile return trip on the core Pickering to Grosmont section, with a souvenir certificate signed by the driver. It is available on various dates through the year, with journeys starting at either termini, depending on the timetable.

'Peak' fundraiser day

THE Peak Locomotive Company has announced a special running day at the Severn Valley Railway on March 16, raising funds for the group's four 'Peak' locos. Class 46 No. 182 (46045) will be in operation, with money raised helping to support this loco plus Class 44 No. D4 (44004) *Great Gable* and Class 45s Nos. 45041 *Royal Tank Regiment* and 45108. Tickets will be priced at £25 for three round trips starting from Kidderminster at 09.30.

End of the line for two historic LMS EMU cars

One car from Class 503 unit currently stored at Margate to be retained.

THE Heritage Electric Trains Trust (HETT) has announced that two of its three surviving Wirral Class 503 EMU cars are set to be scrapped.

All three cars were built for the LMS and formerly resided at the now-closed Electric Railway Museum on the edge of Coventry. The unit comprises: driving trailer second open (DTSO) No. 29289, built in 1937 by BRCW; trailer second open (TSO) centre car No. 29720, constructed by Metro Cammell in 1938; and driving motor brake second open (DMBSO) No. 28690 built by Metro Cammell in 1938.

Both the driving trailer and centre trailer cars will be sent for scrap after useful components have been recovered in the next couple of months. They are in very poor condition and would require extensive renovation to be brought up to display standard.

It is estimated that each vehicle will cost in the region of £60-80k to cosmetically restore – although the figure for the DMBSO could be slightly less as it is more complete. These are costs for professional work which includes bodywork and manufacturing replacement parts from scratch as no spare or replacement components exist.

Citing an example of the costs and scale of the work required on the driving trailer, HETT chairman Graeme Gleaves said: "The window frames are completely rotten through years of rainwater exposure. We were quoted about £400 for a new one. It's a bespoke item – it cannot be bought off the shelf. There are 12 windows – that's before you do anything else."

No option

A HETT statement added: "This decision by the Trustees has not been taken lightly and is based on sound reasoning of the realistic position this unit now finds itself in, and what prospects present themselves for the vehicles' future.

"Firstly, there is no prospect of the unit ever running again under its own power. The infrastructure that would permit this does not exist and the unit will never be of the standard required for main line running. The absence of any spare parts makes this prohibitively expensive.

"Secondly, the support needed to fund the continued existence of the unit has failed to materialise to a significant level and current support will only fund the monthly cost of very basic storage of one coach.

"Thirdly, there is no alternative site for the complete unit and the opening of Margate as the One:One Collection Museum means that a poor condition unit cannot remain in store there."

HETT feels the display of a single Class 503 vehicle in the future will offer the same interpretation value as a full unit and the considerable reduction in associated costs will make that a more viable option over the next decade. The DMBSO is due to move to an as yet undisclosed storage site. The vehicle is complete and not missing windows and other fittings.

The Class 503 vehicles are currently stored undercover in the former Hornby goods outward building in Margate alongside HETT's 4-SUB unit No. 4732. The latter has been offered a permanent place on display in the One:One Museum, which is planned to open to the public in due course. The proviso is that No. 4732 undergoes a full cosmetic restoration to display standard.

Funds are being raised to send driving motor brake No. 12796 for restoration by a contractor. In mid-2023, it was estimated this work would cost £50,000.

■ Meanwhile, a Class 503 cousin unit, a Southport/Ormskirk Class 502, is being actively restored by the Class 502 Preservation Trust undercover at the Burscough premises of the Merseyside Transport Trust. This unit comprises driving trailer composite (DTC) No. 29896 and driving brake motor second (DBMS) No. 28361. Visit www.class502.org.uk for details.



The Class 503 EMU is currently stored in a former Hornby warehouse in Margate, pictured there on August 17, 2019. The two cars nearest the camera are due to be scrapped, while the third is planned to be cosmetically restored. GARETH EVANS



LEISTON WORKS PROGRESS: **Following its arrival at the Leiston Works Railway in Suffolk in December (see last issue), former Puriton Royal Ordnance Factory Andrew Barclay No. 349 is pictured there on February 2. The reborn railway formed in 2010 when an opportunity arose to acquire a substantial section of the trackbed in the town. The group of volunteers have made good progress laying track between the local public house and the main street with the help of the 507 Specialist Team Royal Engineers (Railways), using bullhead rail acquired from dismantled railway lines at Ipswich Docks. It is hoped that in the not too distant future train rides can commence along the newly relaid line.** IAIN SCOTCHMAN

DIARY

March
15-17 Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway Diesel Gala
23 Great Central Railway Deltic Preservation Society AGM

April
3 Midsomer Norton Railway Wickham Wednesday
4-7 Avon Valley Railway 50th Anniversary Weekend
10 Midsomer Norton Railway Wickham Wednesday
11-13 Ecclesbourne Valley Railway and Peak Rail Twin Peaks Diesel Gala
12-14 Kent and East Sussex Railway Diesel Gala
13-14 East Lancashire Railway Western Region Mixed Traction Weekend
20-21 Lavender Railway Double Thumper weekend
26-28 Great Central Railway Spring Diesel Gala

May
5 Midsomer Norton Railway Diesel Brake Van Rides

IDRS considers fast track to rolling chassis option

THE Ivatt Diesel Re-creation Society is considering using a contractor to adapt and restore the Class 58 frame that will be used as the basis of its new-build Class 16/1 (LMS 'Twin') loco. This would significantly accelerate progress towards having a rolling chassis, but also add to the cost of the original plan.

The frame is ready to be profiled from that of a Class 58 to the less angular shape of a 'D16/1'. It also needs new bogie mounts to accept EM2 (Class 77)-type bogie pivots and to transfer body weight and traction loads via traditional bogie bolster pads.

The Co-Co EM2 bogie design was derived from those of the original LMS 'Twins'. Work on these has focused on removing the braking system and traction motors. The axles have been ultrasonically tested, and next the wheelsets need to be removed to be reprofiled from that of their former use in the Netherlands. A revised braking system will be fitted on the finished locomotive based on the Westinghouse system.

The bogies were stored unprotected for many years and the traction motor in the poorest visual condition has been taken apart for evaluation. This will enable the Society to better estimate the cost to refurbish all of the traction motors. This motor is currently being dried out in a bespoke traction motor oven prior to electrical testing.



The Society is based at the Centenary Works, Wirksworth, adjacent to the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway station. To donate towards the cause, visit lms10000.co.uk for more details.

ABOVE: Bogie 139 undergoing brake tests at Centenary Works in July 2023. ANDREW HOSEASON



TRUST GETS THREE TROLLEY FLATS: **Three unpowered flat trolley steel frames have been donated to the Rail Trolley Trust (RTT) by the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust (SDRT) as part of the removal of all items from the SDRT's former Washford home on the West Somerset Railway. All three trolleys (pictured on February 14, 2017) were collected from Washford on January 30 and relocated to the Tanat Valley Light Railway at Nantmawr the following day. The RTT is seeking volunteers to help on both the Tanat Valley Light Railway and Chasewater Railway, where the trust has most of the collection based – see www.railtrolleytrust.co.uk for more information.**

SIDELINES

Second Class 153 arrives at Great Central

EARLY January saw former East Midlands Railway Class 153 No. 153308 move to the Great Central Railway to join ex-West Midlands Railway unit No. 153371. The pair will be used to support testing and training activities, such as crew training, and are not considered to be preserved but may see some use at gala events in the future.

North Yorks Moors Class 08 changes

FORMER North Yorkshire Moors-based Class 08 No. 08495 left for Nemesis Rail at Burton-on-Trent in December, after being sold. The loco arrived on the NYMR in December 2016. Meanwhile, No. 08238 departed the Dean Forest Railway in January bound for Grosmont.

'Clayton' to make gala visit to Kent line

CLASS 17 No. D8568 will make its first visit to the Kent & East Sussex Railway on April 12-14. The sole surviving 'Clayton' will journey from the Severn Valley Railway and appear alongside resident Class 20 No. 20087 and Class 14 No. D9504.

Class 58 locomotive restoration restarts

THE Class 58 Locomotive Group has restarted the restoration of Class 58 No. 58016 following several years of inactivity for a number of reasons, with the main job being to locate spare parts for the locomotive.

Severn Valley Railway DMU Car Returns

CLASS 108 TBSL No. NE59250 owned by the DMU Group (West-Midlands) returned to service on February 2 for the first time since 2020, joining Nos. M51941 and E52064 in the operational DMU set for the 2024 operating season.

'03' shunter rewheeled

LLANGOLLEN Railway-based Class 03 shunter No. 03162 was rewheeled on January 27, as part of its ongoing restoration, which it is hoped will be completed in 2025.

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Guest announcements begin for 2024 galas

Highlights include six 'Teddy Bears' meeting up at the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway.

THE first visiting locomotive has been announced for the Severn Valley Railway's May 13-16 Spring Diesel Festival, this being ScotRail-liveried Class 37 No. 37409 *Loch Awe* from Locomotive Services Ltd at Crewe.

The SVR gala will feature up to 10 guest locos plus home-based engines. Managing director Gus Dunster said: "We are really hoping for a Class 70 to join us this year because we have never hosted one on the SVR before".

Freightliner's Class 47 No. 47830 (D1645) *Beeching's Legacy* has been confirmed as the first visiting locomotive for the East Lancashire Railway's June 27-29 Summer Diesel Festival. The locomotive will join other guest locos to be announced plus locos and units from the home fleet.

The first guest announced for the West Somerset Railway's June 6-8 Summer Diesel Festival is Class 50 No. 50033 *Glorious* courtesy of the Class 50 Alliance. The loco is planned to return to service at the SVR Spring Diesel Festival following several years of work in the diesel depot at Kidderminster, including a full cab rebuild.

Four Class 14s will visit the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway for the July 25-28 'Class 14s @ 60 Birthday Bash'. These are Nos. D9504 from the Kent & East Sussex Railway, D9529 from the Nene Valley Railway, D9551 from the Severn Valley Railway, and D9553 from the Caledonian Railway. With EVR residents Nos. D9525 and D9537, this will make six 'Teddy Bears' in all.

Avon Valley shunters depart and arrive

RUSTON & Hornsby Class 07 No. 07010 departed Bitton on the Avon Valley Railway (AVR) on January 24, the fourth to leave in recent years. It was collected by Peter and Andrew Briddon for movement to Darley Dale (Derbyshire), arriving there on January 28.

The '07' last worked on the AVR during its 2014 diesel gala following an overhaul and repaint into BR Blue livery, but was withdrawn shortly afterwards needing repairs.

The other three to have left the AVR are: the Longmoor 'Sentinel' No. 10143/Army 610 (which left on March 9, 2023 also bound for the Briddon's works); Andrew Barclay No. 446 *Kingswood* (July 2022 for the Helston Railway in Cornwall); and Ruston & Hornsby No. 466618/429 *River Annan* (November 2019 for the Elsecar Railway, moving on to the Plym Valley Railway in August 2021).

'Gronks' return

Meanwhile, Class 08 No. D4118 (08888) has returned to the AVR following an engine failure whilst on hire to the Gwili Railway. Class 09 No. D3668 (09004) has also come back to Bitton after failing while on industrial hire at Hams Hall.

Work continues on Class 08 No. D4157 (08927), with the second set of coupling rods refitted after bearing works, and No. 08202 (D3272) has had a B3 exam undertaken with a new set of brake blocks fitted.



Class 07 No. 07010 and Sentinel No. 10143/Army 610 seen at Bitton on March 20, 2020. JOSH BRINSFORD

DPS 'Deltic' *Alycidon* to visit Great Central Railway

THE Deltic Preservation Society (DPS) has confirmed that one of its Class 55s will star in the Great Central Railway's diesel gala in April.

No. 55009 *Alycidon* arrived at Quorn & Woodhouse station by road on February, 26 and it is due to haul the DPS AGM train on March 23.

Then on April 26-28, *Alycidon* is rostered to take part in the line's diesel gala weekend.

In the summer, the plan is to see all three DPS 'Deltics' in operation at the GCR, the first time in the society's history that its fleet will work together on the same heritage railway.







1
2
3

1
MAD FOR IT: A Chris Gee-organised photo charter took place on February 9 at the East Lancashire Railway's Buckley Wells depot, Bury, re-creating the sight of Manchester depots such as Newton Heath and Longsight in the BR blue era of the late-1970s/early-1980s. Forty photographers took part raising money for the ELR and Martin House Hospice. This view shows 'Rat' No. 25279 facing (from left) Nos. 40135, 40012 and 45108. CHRIS GEE

2
A broadside view of Nos. 08164 and 25279 plus Class 104 DMU (so typical of the Manchester area at the time) Nos. M50517+ M50455. CHRIS GEE

3
A mirror-like puddle reflects (from left) Class 104 DMU Nos. M50455+M50517, and locos Nos. 25279 and 08164. ROBERT FALCONER

HST heading for the Highlands

Short HST Pullman set for three-day tours around the West Highlands.

LOCOMOTIVE Services Group has announced it will launch a series of three-day weekend excursions to Scotland this summer, under the title of the 'West Highland Pullman'.

The Pullman will run on eight weekends (Friday-Monday) and use a shortened version of the 'Blue Pullman' HST, formed of two dining cars, two first class carriages and a kitchen car, hauled by Class 43 power cars.

None of the 'West Highland Pullman' trains include hotel accommodation, allowing passengers to select their own hotels in Fort William at a budget which suits them.

The first train is on the weekend of August 16-18, starting at Romford and picking up at Shenfield, Chelmsford, Colchester, Ipswich, Stowmarket, Bury St Edmunds, Ely, March and Peterborough, with an approximate arrival at Fort William around 20.30.

On the Saturday, the train makes an 84-mile round trip from Fort William to Mallaig and back, with time in the afternoon to explore Fort William at leisure. A departure at approx. 09.00 Sunday will take the train back over Rannoch Moor and to the starting points.

There are two fare options. Pullman dining costs £700 per person, which includes Full English breakfast and four course dinner on Friday; morning tea/coffee and light lunch on Saturday with a seven course 'Taste of Scotland' luncheon on the Sunday. There is a £100 per person supplement for a guaranteed table for two.

First class non-dining seats cost £350 and will include complimentary tea/coffee and light snacks. A buffet bar will be open for the purchase of light refreshments, and customers may bring their own picnic hamper and drinks for consumption during the journey. For both classes, an exclusive table for three with the fourth seat being unoccupied for your added privacy is also available for a further supplement.

Operation

Other planned departures are August 23-25 from Cardiff Central and calling at Newport, Cwmbran, Abergavenny, Hereford, Leominster, Ludlow, Craven Arms, Church Stretton and Shrewsbury. Then September 13-15 starting at Slough, calling at Maidenhead, Reading, Didcot Parkway, Oxford, Banbury, Leamington Spa, Warwick Parkway, Dorridge and Solihull; and September 20-22 from Watford Junction picking up at Hemel Hempstead, Leighton Buzzard, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Long Buckby, Rugby, Nuneaton, Tamworth and Lichfield Trent Valley.

In the last quarter of the year, departures include: October 11-13 starting at St Albans, calling at Luton, Bedford, Wellingborough, Kettering, Leicester, Loughborough, East Midlands Parkway, Derby and Chesterfield; October 18-20 from Stoke-On-Trent and calling at Congleton, Macclesfield, Poynton, Stockport, Stalybridge, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Leeds and York; October 25-27 starting at Exeter St David's then calling at Tiverton Parkway, Taunton, Bristol Temple Meads, Bristol Parkway, Cheltenham Spa, Worcestershire Parkway and Brant Green, and the final train is from November 1-3 from Potters Bar picking up at Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage, Huntingdon, Peterborough, Grantham, Newark Northgate and Doncaster.

Seats can be booked online at midlandpullman.com or by calling 0800 038 5360.

LS Group points out that this series of tours is not suitable for guests requiring the use of a wheelchair or with severe mobility issues, as the platforms at some remote stations in the Highlands are much shorter than the train, have a big step between the carriage and platform, or are accessible only by a footbridge or steps.

As well as the weekend tours, the Midland Pullman HST will also be running a number of day trips to a variety of destinations including Whitby, Torbay, Cornwall, North Wales, Blackpool and Oban. Full details on the website.

UK Railtours to operate 'Jolly Fisherman' HST day excursion

SKEGNESS is always a popular destination for a rail excursion, and on June 22, UK Railtours (UKR) will be taking an HST back to the resort, along a route that is still semaphore signalled and has several manually operated level crossings.

Using rolling stock from the 125 Group and power cars from RailAdventure, the 'Jolly Fisherman 125 Special' will take the Midland Main Line route from London St Pancras (08.00), picking up at Luton Airport Parkway, Kettering and Leicester before heading via Nottingham and Sleaford to Skegness.

UKR's association with HST125 tours goes back to the days of its predecessor Hertfordshire Railtours with a first special in January 1988, then running 196 HST tours until its final tour in September 2017 – or that's what was thought. Repurposing of power cars and the preservation of HST trailers in main line condition has made further trains possible.

The tour also offers some great fares too, with standard class adult seats at £99, standard junior fares at £49 and first class seats at £139. There is no dining on board, but there will be a buffet car.

Visit www.ukrailtours.com for further details.

Retro teams up with RailAdventure and 125 Group

AN interesting alliance of Retro Railtours, the 125 Group and Rail Adventure have teamed up with Chiltern Railways to run a special train to London Marylebone to mark the station's 125th anniversary.

Using rolling stock owned by the 125 Group, and a pair of power cars provided by RailAdventure, 'The Master Cutler' tour will run on Friday, March 15, from Sheffield to Marylebone.

While large sections of the original Great Central route are no longer available, this special will use the Midland Main Line and Chiltern route.

With an approximate departure from Sheffield at 06.47, the 'Cutler' will pick up at Chesterfield, Derby and Leicester with a planned arrival in the capital just before 11.00.

Passengers will have around four hours to enjoy London before a homeward departure at around 15.00. There will be festivities taking place at the station as part of the 125th anniversary celebrations.

Fares are £95 adult standard class (£75 child), or £143 first class (£133 child), with a guaranteed table for two at a supplement of £50.

As well as the main tour, the HST will work a mini-tour from Marylebone to Banbury and back.

Departing at around 11.15, this tour will have a quick turnaround in Banbury before an arrival back at Marylebone at 14.51. Fares are £30 adult (standard class) and £50 in first class.

Retro Railtours will donate 10% of the proceeds from the train to The Marylebone Project, a charity based in Central London which provides a life-changing service for women to overcome homelessness There will also be a raffle raising funds for the charity on board the train.

Booking is online at retrorailtours.co.uk



BULLEID AT SPEED: With a ban in place on the use of Mk. 1 carriages without Central Door Locking (CDL), tours operated on behalf of the Railway Touring Company are, for the time being, using CDL-fitted Mk.2 air-braked carriages. However, air braking does limit the steam locomotive options, so SR 'Battle of Britain' No. 34067 *Tangmere* was used for a 'Winter Cumbrian Mountain' express on February 10, seen passing Grayrigg on the way from Manchester Piccadilly to Carlisle. Class 57 No. 57315 was on the rear. BARRIE C WOODS

BLS PLANNING CLASS 507 FAREWELL: The Branch Line Society (BLS) has pencilled in Sunday, May 12, for a farewell railtour around the Merseyrail network for the Class 507 EMUs. No further details are available at the time of writing, but the tour hopes to use units Nos. 507001/003. The train will start and end at Birkenhead North. No. 507001 is pictured at Southport on January 27, after arriving with the 2S23/11.36 from Hunts Cross. CHRIS GEE





ON THE RIGHT ROAD: With the backdrop of Ely Cathedral, Class 47 No. 47712 *Lady Diana Spencer* takes the single line towards Soham at Ely Dock Junction on January 24, with the 'East Anglian Push-Pull' railtour from Crewe to Norwich, Ipswich and Felixstowe. DR IAIN C SCOTCHMAN

Vintage DEMU and bus to uninhabited village of Imber

ONCE a year there is an extensive vintage bus service to the lost village of Imber on Salisbury Plain, and this year passengers will be combining the bus with a vintage train – the Hastings DEMU.

The annual 'Imberbus Day' is on August 17 and UK Railtours has chartered the Hastings unit No. 1001, which will start its journey at Tonbridge (07.30), calling at East Croydon, London Waterloo (reverse), Woking and Basingstoke running via Salisbury to Warminster.

Here passengers will transfer to a fleet of around 25 Routemasters and other vintage buses for the journey to Imber.

The event has become so successful, services now extend beyond Imber to the villages of Market Lavington, Tilshead and Chitterne, plus other remote locations on Salisbury Plain, including New Zealand Farm Camp and Brazen Bottom.

On the return, the Hastings unit will head to Waterloo and Tonbridge via Romsey and Southampton. Fares are £129 standard class adult (£107 junior), with first class non-dining fares at £159.

The fare includes an Imberbus rover ticket permitting travel to a variety of destinations on the day. More information will appear at imberbus.org in due course.

Online booking is open at www.ukrailtours.com or book by calling 01438 715050.

■ Imberbus started in 2009 when a group of bus industry professionals achieved an ambition to run a vintage bus service from Warminster, Wiltshire, to the village of Imber which was abandoned in 1943 for D-Day training and has since remained under MoD control.

The annual event raises money for the British Legion and towards the upkeep of Imber Church, one of the few buildings to survive intact.

STEAM TOURS: MARCH

Date	Name	Section	Locos	Promoter
2	Cathedrals Express	Birmingham Snow Hill-Oxford-Salisbury	5043 or 7029	VT
9	Stratford Flyer	Stockport-Wolverhampton-Stratford upon Avon	WCRC Pool	RTC
13	Golden Arrow	W London-Ashford-Canterbury W-Dover-W London	LSL Pool	ST
16	Shap Mountaineer	Crewe-Shap-Carlisle-Crewe	5043	VT
16	Winter Cumbrian Mountain	Carnforth-Shap-Carlisle-Settle-Preston	WCRC Pool	RTC
16	Cotswold Explorer	W London-Evesham-Worcester-Stroud-W London	LSL Pool	ST
20	Whitby Flyer	York-Battersby Jct-Whitby-York	WCRC Pool	RTC
23	Edinburgh Flyer	York-Newcastle-Edinburgh-York	WCRC Pool	RTC
26	Golden Arrow	W London-Ashford-Canterbury W-Dover-W London	LSL Pool	ST
30	Golden Arrow	W London-Ashford-Canterbury W-Dover-W London	LSL Pool	ST

Notes: **WCRC Pool:** Locos from 45596/45680/45699/46115/35018/34067 **LSL Pool:** Locos from 70000/4498/34046/61306/46100

DIESEL AND ELECTRIC TOURS: MARCH

Date	Name	Section	Locos	Promoter
2	Statesman	Whitchurch-Hereford-Abergavenny-Portsmouth Harbour	LSL 47s	SR
5	Whitby Jet	Shrewsbury-Derby-York-Whitby-Shrewsbury	LSL Blue Pullman	MP
7	Thunderbirds Are Go!	Derby-York-Edinburgh-Linlithgow	GBRf Class 57/3	BLS
8-10	BWC Two	Bo'ness-Linlithgow-Edinburgh-Fort William-Oban-Mallaig-Bo'ness	37403 + GBRf 66 assist	BLS
9	Whitby Jet	Barrow in Furness-Hebden Bridge-York-Whitby-Barrow	LSL Blue Pullman	MP
9	Cwm & Glo	Burton-Bristol Parkway-Margam-Cwmbargoed-Burton	DB Class 66	PT
11	International Rescue	Linlithgow-Edinburgh-Carlisle-Hexham-Doncaster-Derby	GBRf Class 57/3	BLS
15	Master Cutler	Sheffield-Leicester-Banbury-Marylebone & return	HST	RET
21	Royal Windsor Statesman	Chester-Telford-B'ham Int-Windsor & Eton Riverside	LSL 47s	SR
23	Gateway Explorer	King's Cross-Grantham-East Mids Gateway-Derby-King's Cross	GBRf Class 66s	UKR
28	Portsmouth Hbr Statesman	Chesterfield-Leicester-Bedford-Portsmouth Harbour	LSL 47s	SR
29-31	West of Scotland Push-Pull	Crewe-Carlisle-Oban-Wemyss Bay-Largs-Crewe	47712 + push pull set	IC
29-Apr 1	The Easter Chieftain	Eastleigh-Dorridge-Aviemore-Kyle-Aberdeen-Eastleigh	DB Class 67	PT

All tours listed above may be subject to cancellation due to industrial action – check with tour promoter.

Key: **BLS** Branch Line Society www.branchline.org.uk **IC** InterCity 0800 038 5364 **MP** Midland Pullman 0800 038 5360 **PT** Pathfinder Tours 01453 835414 **RET** Retro Railtours 0161 3309055 **RTC** Railway Touring Company 01553 661500 **SR** Statesman Rail 0345 3102458 **ST** Saphos Trains saphostrains.com **UKR** UK Railtours 01438 715050 **VT** Vintage Trains 0121 708 4960





FOOTBALL SPECIALS: Two Class 86-hauled 'Footex' trains ran on February 25, taking Liverpool fans to Wembley Central for the final of the EFL Carabao Cup against Chelsea (which Liverpool won 1-0). First to pass Atherstone was No. 86101 *Sir William A Stanier FRS* (above) with 1Z90, the 09.38 from Liverpool Lime Street operated by LSL, followed by No. 86259 *Les Ross/Peter Pan* (left, seen just south of Atherstone) with 1Z86, the 09.24 from Liverpool South Parkway operated by West Coast Railway. Both trains were diverted via Earlestown due to overhead line problems near Runcorn, and the return departures left Wembley Central at 19.56 to South Parkway (1Z87) and 20.11 to Lime Street (1Z91).
BOTH PHOTOS: CHRIS MILNER

Summer completion for £10m rail facility

BRITISH Steel's new £10 million storage facility for finished rail at its Scunthorpe site is scheduled to be completed this summer.

The purpose-built complex will provide a single, dedicated storage location for rail, which at present is stored at various sites. Designed to supply 56E1 and 60E2 section rail as and when required for Network Rail, when finished, it is expected to be the biggest such facility in the United Kingdom.

Civil engineering work was completed before Christmas, with towers and gantry sections the next to be completed. Hoist and permanent magnet systems, along with other equipment which will be used to lift and load the rails for onward movement by train, is also still to be installed. A total of 11 multi-gantry hoists will be available for train loading.

British Steel says testing and quality assurance checks will be carried out on all rail prior to it being moved into the building so that it can be dispatched immediately or welded into 216 metre lengths for the customer.



GB Railfreight Class 66 No. 66754 *Northampton Saints* prepares to leave London Gateway, bound for iPort Doncaster with the first train of the new five times per week service on January 29. GBRF

High density trains could 'unlock' freight opportunities

GBRf launches five trains per week between London Gateway and iPort Doncaster, using FEA-G twin intermodal wagons.

USING vehicles from its fleet of 100 new FEA-G high density twin intermodal wagons, delivery of which was completed summer, GB Railfreight has launched a five trains per week service linking the DP World-operated port at London Gateway, on the north bank of the River Thames near Corringham in Essex, with iPort Doncaster.

Each wagon can carry six 20ft equivalent units, significantly increasing the volume of cargo which can be moved on every journey.

"We always aim to innovate our services to best meet the needs of a changing and demanding market," said GB Railfreight head of intermodal Julie Garn.

'Closer to net zero'

"We believe this new service will unlock a further opportunity for existing and new customers to support their efforts and reduce their carbon emissions," she added. "Every time one of our trains runs, we remove up to 129 HGVs from our congested roads and help move us closer to net zero."

Strategic site

As reported in *The RM* last month, a project is underway to double the size and storage capacity of iPort Doncaster, accommodating a greater number of daily services and a total of six million square feet of space for logistics and light industry.

Managing director of iPort Rail Steve Freeman described the new service as "further proof" of the strategic positioning of the site, which is connected to the East Coast Main Line and to junction 3 of the M18.

John Trenchard, UK commercial and supply chain director for DP World added that the service would complement its growing range of port-to-port capabilities and focus on low carbon solutions.

MATERIALS ON THE MOVE: Deliveries of biomass pellets from the Port of Liverpool to Drax Power Station in North Yorkshire and the return (empty) workings were diverted via the Hope Valley line on December 30 and January 1. GB Railfreight Class 66 No. 66725 *Sunderland* passes Earles Sidings near Hope with a loaded Drax-bound train on January 1. MICHAEL ANDERSON





On a frosty January 19, DB Cargo No. 66028 runs around its train of loaded coal wagons at Cwmbargoed, South Wales, bound for Margam Yard, their ultimate destination being the adjacent Tata steelworks at Port Talbot. Although opencast operations at Ffos-y-Fran ceased at the end of last November, trains have continued to run to Cwmbargoed to move the last of the coal mined there. However, the last train is now thought to have run (see page 11) while the two Port Talbot blast furnaces could also close if plans proceed as proposed. GARETH JAMES/CC BY-SA 2.0

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TfL begins tendering process for new London Trams fleet

Base order proposal provides a replacement for the system's 24 Bombardier CR4000 vehicles, which have been in service for 24 years.

THE first phase of the process which should ultimately lead to an order being placed for new vehicles on the London Trams network was drawing to a close as this issue of *The RM* went to press.

Transport for London's tender notice, which had a closing date of February 27, seeks the fulfilment of two contracts by the same supplier. One relates to the manufacture and delivery of a base order of 24 new trams (which it will use to replace the existing London Trams fleet of Bombardier CR4000 vehicles) and the other the provision of technical support and spares for them for a 30-year period.

The valuation placed on the deal is £385 million. It contains an option for up to 16 further trams to be built.

Existing fleet

As with the existing fleet (also including 12 Stadler Variobahn trams introduced between 2012 and 2016, which will remain in use following the replacement of the CR4000s), the new vehicles will be maintained at Therapia Lane depot in Croydon.

With the exception of No. 2551, withdrawn following the fatal derailment at Sandilands Junction in November 2016, 23 of 24 CR4000s remain in service.

TfL says the new trams will support improved safety on the system and feature improvements in crashworthiness, passenger and driver experience. They are expected to bring improved reliability and lower operating costs and carbon emissions.



London Trams Bombardier CR4000 No. 2544 is seen at the East Croydon station stop with a New Addington-bound service on April 19, 2022. TONY WINWARD

Options for on board energy storage and automatic infrastructure monitoring equipment could also be explored as part of the deal.

Beyond the base order, the proposal stipulates that, with no break in production, up to 12 additional trams could be ordered or, alternatively, eight to16 with a pause in manufacturing.

Public consultations on network expansions

PROPOSALS to extend London's Docklands Light Railway from Gallions Reach to Thamesmead via Beckton Riverside are the subject of an online public consultation exercise.

The extension, designed to support regeneration and the building of new homes in the area, would include new stations at Beckton Riverside and Thamesmead, connected via a new tunnel under the River Thames.

No funding has yet been secured, but the consultation, which will continue until March 18, is expected to influence the development of the plans which will be turned into an outline business case. Information can be found at: tfl.gov.uk/dlr-extension

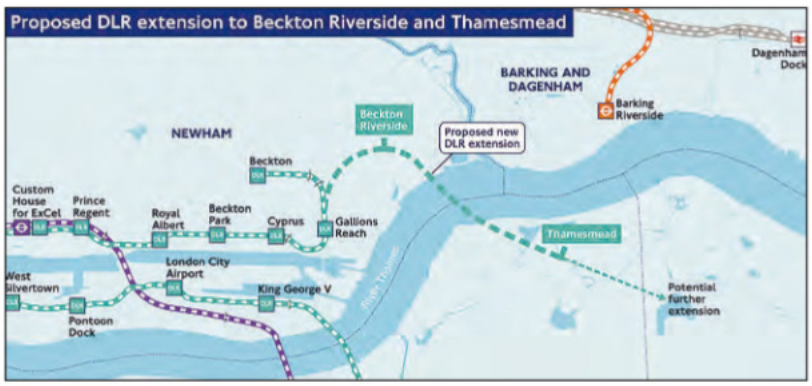
Meanwhile, 12 weeks of public consultation will take place this spring regarding plans for a new Edinburgh Trams route, linking Granton with the city's BioQuarter.

A February meeting of City of Edinburgh Council's Transport & Environment Committee agreed that opinions would be sought on two routes.

The 'preferred option', proposed by council officials, would use an old railway alignment through the 'Roseburn Corridor' to allow segregated tram running, but it would lead to its partial loss as an active travel route.

An alternative on-street option, known as the 'Orchard Brae Corridor' will also be put forward for views after councillors argued for its inclusion.

A council report says this would allow a dedicated active travel route to be retained at Roseburn but would be subject to longer journey times and traffic congestion.



The proposed DLR extension would curve eastwards to Beckton Riverside and run under the River Thames to Thamesmead. TFL

Traction problem with new Metro fleet

TYNE & Wear Metro operator Nexus has revealed that traction problems have occurred during testing on the system of the new Stadler-built Class 555 units.

These were said to have "unexpectedly come to light" when rail head conditions were poor. Nexus told *The RM* that further specific testing and investigation would be needed to ensure that the trains perform as expected.

"This is quite typical during the roll-out of a new bespoke fleet and Stadler and Nexus are working closely to minimise delays to the project timescales as much as possible," it added.

Although Nexus still aims to introduce the first Class 555 into passenger service this year, it has admitted that the impact on the programme will not be known until additional testing has been completed.

In the autumn, a target of late 2023 for public launch was revised to the first quarter of 2024, but this is now expected to be considerably later, potentially leading to longer reliance than expected on the current, life-expired Class 599s. Nexus says further investment has been made in their maintenance at South Gosforth depot, where a £70 million redevelopment has now been completed.

Metrolink cracked rail repairs

EXCHANGE Square Metrolink stop in Manchester reopened to trams during February, after almost a month of not being served.

Services have been suspended between Exchange Square and Victoria since January 17, following the discovery of a defect in a crossing, which was subsequently removed for off-site repairs.

Until reinstated, trams remained unable to run between the two stops, but East Didsbury-Shaw and Crompton services were diverted to run to Exchange Square instead at peak times from February 12, at 12 minute intervals.

By also running the same frequency of service between East Didsbury and Rochdale Town Centre via Market Street and Shudehill and increasing the number of trams running in pairs, Transport for Greater Manchester said it hoped to provide a more balanced and reliable temporary service.

Troon rebuild underway

NETWORK Rail has taken another significant step forward in rebuilding the Grade B station building on platform one at Troon station, which along with the canopies was destroyed by a fire in July 2021.

Engineers have installed the steel girders which form the framework of the structure and creates the footprint for the new building. The framework has 127 pieces of pre-fabricated steel, and weighs approximately nine tonnes in total. As part of the next phase engineers will pour the concrete slab that will become the floor of the building.

Following a public consultation, the new building is being rebuilt to modern standards and will include a ticket office and waiting area, as well as a 'changing places' facility for people with disabilities. Lead-contractor AMCOGiffen, is working towards completing the construction ahead of The Open golf tournament which is being held in Troon in July.

Shrewsbury could get a Parkway station

PLANS to build a new station on the outskirts of Shrewsbury in a bid to reduce traffic in the town centre has emerged.

The idea for 'Shrewsbury Parkway' station has been put forward as part of a new transport strategy for the town centre. The proposal will be the subject of a public consultation which runs until March 22.

The new station, if built, would be east of the town, possibly near where the A5 and A49 intersect at Battlefield roundabout where there is land for a two-platform station with extensive car parking.

The current station would have a new pick-up and drop-off area created on Howard Street, with the existing frontage redeveloped to provide a new public transport interchange.



An overall view of the new University station which features two similarly designed buildings on each side of the line. This view is looking towards Birmingham New Street.

University station's new buildings open

£56 million project to boost capacity at key Birmingham station completed.

THE extensive rebuild of Birmingham's busy University station has been completed, and the new buildings – ready to cater for an estimated 3.5 million passengers a year – opened on January 28.

The original station dates from 1978 and was designed for around 500,000 passengers per year, but expansion and growth of both the University of Birmingham and nearby Queen Elizabeth Hospital overwhelmed the existing facilities.

The new station – the first and only built to specifically serve a university – will also be able handle up to 7.2 million passengers annually.

As the seventh busiest in the West Midlands, the station has gone through a three-year reconstruction while remaining open and operational.

The first stage of the development saw longer and wider platforms, complete with new canopies, completed ahead of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. This was followed by the construction of two buildings, one of which is based on an island between the railway line and the adjacent Birmingham to Worcester canal, for which materials had to be craned over.

New bridges have been built over both the railway and canal, and the buildings feature wider entrances. Lifts provide access to both platforms from the footbridge. The original building has been retained but now designated as exit only.

The project was led by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), together with the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, the NHS University Hospitals Birmingham Trust, Birmingham City Council, the Department for Transport, Network Rail, West Midlands Trains and CrossCountry Trains. Delivery partner was SLC-AECOM Joint Venture and VolkerFitzpatrick who worked on the design and construction of the station.



This wayfinding sign for the station features both Braille and raised lettering to assist passengers. BOTH: CHRIS MILNER

The cost of the rebuilding is £56 million, of which £12m was provided by central Government and the remainder by a consortium comprising the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, Network Rail, West Midlands Trains and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership.

Later this year, new Class 730 EMUs will start to replace the Class 323s on the Cross-City line, serving the new University station. CrossCountry services between Nottingham and Cardiff also serve the station (see Traction & Stock News page 86).

Treherbert line reopens following enhancements

AFTER extensive work to upgrade the track, install a new signalling system as well as overhead line equipment ahead of an electrification switch on, the line between Pontypridd and Treherbert was due to reopen from February 17, with two trains per hour. Driver refresher training was underway in January and February.

As part of the track upgrades, three new loops have been installed that will permit greater flexibility and more frequent services. There have been various station works including the extension of platforms and new footbridges.

The changes are all part of the South Wales Metro project that will deliver more frequent, greener and improved rail services, and lead to the introduction of Class 398 tram-trains which will be based at a new depot at Taff's Well. The Metro will connect Merthyr, Treherbert and the Rhondda with Cardiff Central and Cardiff Bay.

The 36 three-car trains have been constructed by Stadler and these will be equipped with traction battery packages, allowing them to operate over non-electrified sections of track as well as 25kV overhead sections.

Testing of a Class 398 as part of the approval and certification process has been taking place at the Old Dalby test track, and the units are expected to enter service sometime in the summer, Transport for Wales indicates.

PAYG ticketing schemes set for Midlands and Manchester

THE Department for Transport (DfT) has announced it is to run a pilot scheme using Pay As You Go (PAYG) technology in the Manchester and Birmingham areas.

The scheme will cover more than 90 stations and these will be fitted with technology allowing passengers to tap-in and tap-out, knowing they will pay the best fare. There will be no need to plan ahead or search for the right ticket.

The DfT says these trials will also pave the way for the future rollout of similar technology to more stations across the North and Midlands.

The West Midlands pilot will cover 75 stations across the Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) area (including five currently under construction), and use existing 'Swift' smartcards, meaning passengers can travel seamlessly on local bus and tram services as well.

Greater Manchester's pilot scheme will cover 17 stations on the Glossop-Manchester Piccadilly and Stalybridge-Manchester Victoria lines, but rather than smartcards it will use contactless bank cards and smart devices. This will help support a wider ambition to deliver full multi-modal fares and ticketing integration across bus, Metrolink, rail and cycle hire as part of the conurbation's Bee Network by 2030.

Work will continue to finalise plans for the pilots ahead of launch in 2025.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, said: "Thanks to this pilot scheme, we will now add rail to our offering – making Swift truly multi-modal and bringing us much closer to a London 'Oyster card' style system."

There are plans already in motion to expand 'pay as you go' in the South East later this year, which will see the total number of tap-in-tap-out stations in England grow to around 500 by 2025.

Separately, a project to roll out barcode technology – which allows passengers to scan digital tickets at the gate – has completed its final phase, supported by £16.4 million DfT funding.

New footbridge installed at Dore & Totley station

THE project to return Dore & Totley station to twin-platform has taken a big step forward, with the installation of a new accessible footbridge as part of the Hope Valley Railway Upgrade work.

Six staircase units, each weighing 11.2tons, were lifted into place using a 200t road mobile crane, before the main bridge span, 15m in length and weighing 14.5 tons, was installed.

Work at the station, which started in the spring of 2021, has involved the reinstatement of twin tracks and rebuilding the second platform for Manchester-bound trains which was demolished in the mid-1980s.

Included in the Hope Valley Upgrade have been platform extensions to accommodate longer trains, a new loop between Bamford and Hathersage, a new footbridge at Hathersage West, and signalling improvements.

The project is due to be completed at the end of a nine-day closure of the Hope Valley line between March 16-24.



Progress at Dore & Totley station showing the new platform and footbridge with lifts, along with the new track for trains going West towards the Hope Valley. NETWORK RAIL



Ardlui station which is one of eight to get platform extensions for longer trains. NETWORK RAIL

West Highland Line platforms to be extended

EIGHT stations on the West Highland line are to have their platforms extended to accommodate longer trains.

ScotRail is planning that more trains will include 'Highland Explorer' carriages, the converted Class 153 DMUs which can accommodate up to 20 bikes and bulky sports gear which will serve both Oban and Fort William.

As part of a £1.7m project funded by the Scottish Government, stations at Helensburgh Upper, Ardlui, Roy Bridge, Gare Lochhead, Arrochar and Tarbet, Crianlarich, Bridge of Orchy and Tulloch will undergo the improvements which will be completed by the summer. Work has already begun at Arrochar & Tarbet.

Proposals will see either a single extension of up to 15m at one end of the platform or extensions of up to 7.5m at each end – depending on land availability or physical constraints. As four of the stations are designated as Listed Buildings, care has been taken to ensure materials will integrate with the existing structures.

Between April to December 2023, passenger demand on the line saw almost 500k journeys made, a growth of around 29% compared to the same period in 2022.

Scott Prentice, ScotRail strategy and planning director, said: "We are currently looking at all of the available options to add extra carriages throughout the day and we will confirm those changes as soon as possible."

More stations to get accessibility upgrades

NETWORK Rail has announced three more stations which will receive accessibility upgrades under the Department for Transport's 'Access for All' scheme.

On January 29, work started at Leatherhead on a £6.2 million project to install two new eight-person capacity lifts and a new footbridge. The footbridge will have staggered staircases ('Z' shaped) to avoid station equipment on the platform. Other improvements include refreshing the lighting, adding CCTV and minor alterations to the existing ramp and installing new handrails. This project is due for completion by spring 2025.

At Beeston, near Nottingham, two new lifts are being installed and as part of the work, the existing platform 1 staircase will be removed and replaced with a new set of stairs which will be incorporated into the Meadow Road flyover above the station. These upgrades are scheduled to be completed by autumn 2024.

Another station in the Midlands to get lifts is Alfreton. Reopening in 1973, the station's staggered footbridge has remained unaltered, but now two new lifts will be attached to the existing footbridge. The footbridge will be refurbished, and minor improvements will also be made to the station's platforms and lighting. There will also be a new ramp and stairs from the car park to the station entrance. The station will remain open throughout the work, although some temporary alterations will be made to car parking. This project is due for completion early in 2025.

SINGLE LINES

Ratho rockfall prevention

FOUR days of working around the clock at the end of January has seen the completion of a £1m rockfall prevention scheme at Ratho on the main Edinburgh-Glasgow line. Engineers have installed special netting and metal rock anchors at the site above the railway to reduce the risk of rocks falling during freezing temperatures. The work meant disruption of services between Edinburgh and Glasgow via both Falkirk High and Bathgate, as well as Stirling and Inverness.

Signal switch-on deferred

FOLLOWING an internal project review, the switch-on of a new signalling system in South London, which was due to close large parts of the National Rail and London Overground networks from February 10 to 18, is being replanned to later in 2024.

The signalling upgrades taking place between Crystal Palace, Tulse Hill and Peckham Rye are part of a £400 million programme which will see the 1980s signalling replaced with the latest technology.

Impressive first year for Inverness Airport station

SCOTRAIL has revealed that the number of passengers using Inverness Airport station in its first year has exceeded 50,000. The £14 million station, constructed by Network Rail was officially opened on February 2, 2023.

Wortley Curve bought

DISUSED since 1985, the Wortley Curve has been bought at auction by Network Rail for £47,000. The seller was Railway Paths Ltd, a charity which owns and manages former railway land. The purchase opens up the possibility of future track reinstatement along with direct services from Bradford Interchange to Wakefield Westgate and beyond, avoiding a reversal at Leeds.

Investment at Dunblane

COMPLETION of the final phase of a track enhancement project at Dunblane has seen a new crossover commissioned south of the station. The crossover will alleviate the need for trains arriving at platform 3 to continue north to use an existing crossover before returning south into platform 1 – a process that took 13 minutes. Another benefit of the new crossover is that trains will be able to arrive and depart from platform 3 towards Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Compiled by **Graeme Pickering**

Class 730 EMU fleet enters service in West Midlands

Three-car 'Aventra' trains introduced on Wolverhampton-Walsall route.



Class 730 No. 730018 prepares to leave Wolverhampton with a press special to Walsall on February 8, ahead of the introduction of the class between Wolverhampton and Walsall the following week. CHRIS MILNER

WEST Midlands Railway (WMR) launched its 'Aventra' Class 730/0 trains in the West Midlands on February 8, ahead of their introduction into service from February 12.

The 48 three-car trains represent part of an overall £700 million investment for the operator in new rolling stock, which over the next 12 months will replace the 30-year-old Class 323s on the Cross-City line as well as the Class 350/2s on its other routes. All of the three-car sets have been accepted by WMR.

The first route to see the Class 730s will be Wolverhampton to Walsall, with a single diagram initially replacing a Class 350. Introduction of the class on this first diagram will be a step towards introducing the sets on Birmingham's busy Cross-City line between Lichfield Trent Valley and Redditch or Bromsgrove. Other Wolverhampton to Walsall diagrams will soon switch to Class 730s. The Alstom-built units were first launched at Milton Keynes on June 30, 2023, and four pairs currently work suburban services at peak hours out of London Euston.

WMR engineering director John Doughty explained how introduction of the new trains on the Cross-City route was complex because of the sheer number of crews to train, a situation not helped by being disrupted by strike action. Crews will familiarise themselves with the trains on the Wolverhampton-Walsall route, before introduction on the Cross-City line over a few weeks, probably in the late spring. This will also ensure competencies do not lapse before the wider rollout.

Capacity

On the Cross-City line, like most Class 323 diagrams at present, the sets will work in pairs. In this formation with their 2+2 seating, wider gangways and more standing space by the doors, passenger capacity is 546 passengers per set with 201 seated. This represents a substantial increase versus Class 323 capacity and as a result the line will have another 1200 seats per hour on the four-trains per hour service. Mr Doughty said it would like to return to six trains per hour in the future. It will also introduce Class 730s on Birmingham International-Rugeley Trent Valley services.

Seventeen Class 323s will be transferred to Northern. Three sets have already moved.

Production of five-car London NorthWestern-branded versions of the Class 730 is nearing conclusion at Alstom in Derby and units have been out on test, but none have been accepted yet. With 36 units being built, this Class 730/2 sub-class will work on the half-hourly Liverpool Lime Street-Birmingham New Street services and eventually Trent Valley local services from Euston to Crewe, as well as suburban services at the Euston end of the West Coast Main Line, allowing the 730/0 sets to transfer to the West Midlands.

While the Class 350/2s will be returned to the leasing company by the end of the year, some existing Class 350 diagrams will be strengthened to match demand. Recently at weekends, a number of Trent Valley services have been running as 12-car formations to cater for the upsurge in leisure travel.



Aside from the seven IPEMUs, the other 46 new Merseyrail trains belong to the Class 777/0 subclass and are conventional electric multiple units. On January 30, at Lower Moor in Worcestershire, No. 777029 is pictured between barrier vehicles being moved by RailAdventure Class 43 Nos. 43465 and 43484 (with Nos. 43480 and 43468 trailing) between Walton Old Junction and Long Marston for storage. Due to limited stabling space available on Merseyside, it is expected that further use will be made of facilities at Long Marston as the introduction of Class 777s and withdrawal of Class 507s and 508s reaches its final phases. STEVE WIDDOWSON

'Significant improvement' in Class 777/1 reliability

LIVERPOOL City Region Combined Authority (LCRA), which owns Merseyrail's new Stadler-built Class 777 fleet of four-car trains, has reported a "significant improvement" in recent weeks regarding the performance of the IPEMU (Class 777/1) variant of the class, after a "key software issue" was resolved.

The problem had affected automatic changeover between third rail and battery power on the seven independently-powered electric multiple units, which operate services to and from Liverpool Central incorporating the non-electrified extension of the network between Kirkby and Headbolt Lane, opened last October.

Their reliability became a cause for concern within weeks of the extension's inauguration. City Region Mayor Steve Rotheram said he had demanded immediate improvements from Stadler and, in January, announced that passengers who bought weekly, monthly, term-time or annual tickets at Fazakerley, Kirkby or Headbolt Lane would receive information on how to claim refunds. LCRCA added that ways to compensate other ticket holders were also planned.

According to Mr Rotheram, by February the situation was one of "month on month" progress, supported by engineers on board IPEMUs in service.

A return to a four trains per hour 15-minute frequency service was anticipated, availability having improved sufficiently to step-up to three per hour during January.

May handback for TPE Class 68 locomotives

DIRECT Rail Services has told *The RM* that the Class 68s which were subleased from it by TransPennine Express to operate its 'Nova 3' Mk. 5a rakes of coaching stock will be handed back to owner Beacon Rail in May.

A spokesman said: "There are currently no plans to retain any of the former TPE 68s within the DRS fleet."

Fourteen locomotives, Nos. 68019-032, had been hired by TPE. Four (Nos. 68019/020/022/031) were used by DRS between October and January to temporarily augment its fleet. The most recent work for TPE-allocated Class 68s has included moving 'Nova 3' sets for storage.



Class 68 No. 68026 *Enterprise* is seen at Wolverhampton on February 8, while moving TransPennine Express Mk. 5a 'Nova 3' stock from Longsight depot to Long Marston for storage. This locomotive is one of 14 subleased to TPE which will be handed back to owner Beacon Rail in May. CHRIS MILNER

'FastCharge' unit on course to begin network trials

GREAT Western Railway 'FastCharge' battery-electric Class 230 unit No. 230001 arrived at the company's Reading depot on February 16, in preparation for a 12-month trial on the Greenford branch, beginning this spring.

Charging rails (activated in the presence of the train, charging it in 3.5 minutes) and lineside battery banks (trickle-charged from the national grid) have been installed at West Ealing for the operations, in between public passenger services.

Engineers say it used just 45% of its battery capacity on the 70-mile journey to Reading from Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre. On February 14, as part of a fortnight of 'shakedown' runs, No. 230001 covered 86 miles without recharging, believed to be the greatest distance so far travelled by a UK battery train.

It ran at up to 60mph from Long Marston to Honeybourne Staff Hut via Evesham West Junction, Moreton-in-Marsh and Honeybourne North Junction, repeating the middle leg of its journey in both directions before returning to Long Marston via Honeybourne North Junction.



GWR No. 230001 is pictured at Honeybourne station on February 5 on the first day of 'shakedown' workings from Long Marston. It has since moved to Reading depot in preparation for a 12-month testing programme on the branch between West Ealing and Greenford. GWR

SIDELINES

Tables for 'Stansted Express' trains

GREATER Anglia's Class 745/1 'Stansted Express' units are to have tables fitted for bays of four seats.

The units are more heavily utilised on the Great Eastern Main Line than had been expected when they were ordered from Stadler, and GA says feedback has shown that whether operating on this route or airport services, passengers appreciate the availability of tables where seats are grouped together. The trains, which have fold down tables for other seats, will be fitted-out in phases between autumn 2024 and the end of 2025.

'Aurora' depot preparations

THE recently-extended North Shed at East Midlands Railway's Derby Etches Park depot has had a depot personnel protection system installed as part of preparations for it to become the base for the 33-strong fleet of Class 810 'Aurora' trains, currently under construction at Hitachi's Newton Aycliffe plant.

Rail equipment specialist Zonegreen worked with contractor Kier Transportation to install the system, which uses powered derailers to prevent vehicle movements in areas where staff are working.



NOT TYPICAL 'TURBO' TERRITORY: On January 22, Great Western Railway Class 166 DMU No. 166221 is seen leaving Plymouth on its return journey, having arrived 20 minutes earlier with a service from Nailsea. Its appearance here was due to changes to services during track renewal work at Bristol West Junction on January 20-28. An unidentified connecting 'Castle Class' HST set is seen at platform 7. CRAIG MUNDAY

Compiled by **Graeme Pickering**

SIDELINES

RMS to leave Weardale base

RAIL Management Services (RMS) announced towards the end of January that plans to centralise its Locotec shunter hire and maintenance business in the Midlands will lead to it leaving premises at the Weardale Railway.

The County Durham line's Wolsingham shed had been the base for the RMS shunter fleet. Until 2020, both the railway and RMS were owned by the same company, British American Railway Services.

RMS, which has been involved in Positive Traction's Class '08e' project to rebuild No. 08308 as a battery-electric locomotive, says most of its hire contracts and workforce are in central and southern England.

In order to fulfil new contracts and overhauls, the company expects to take on more engineering staff.

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GB Railfreight confirms Class 99 testing set for September

The 30 bi-mode locomotives will succeed Class 66s, bringing improved tractive effort and environmental performance.

GB RAILFREIGHT has told *The RM* it expects the first of its 30 bi-mode Class 99 locomotives to be in service before the end of next year.

The company also confirmed that a nine-month period of testing and commissioning is due to take place from September 2024. It was reluctant to elaborate on progress with the order for the locomotives, but it is understood that the bodyshell of No. 99001 had been completed by late January at Stadler's Valencia factory. It and No. 99002 are expected to be completed in May, with No. 99003 being finished shortly afterwards.

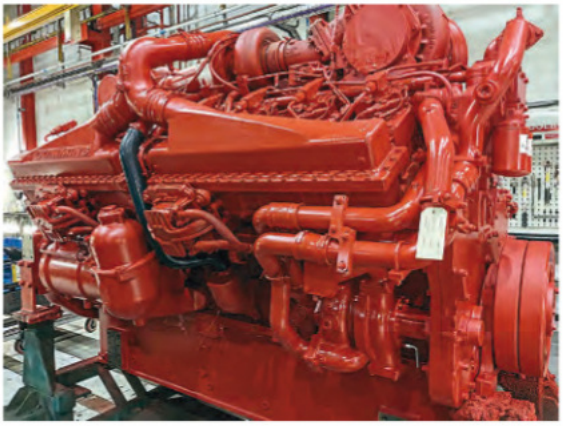
The predicted time frame for testing fits with suggestions that the first of the locomotives, which will be leased from Beacon Rail, could arrive in the UK in April 2025 for main line trials.

'Eurodual' variant

Stadler will maintain the Class 99s at UK Rail Leasing's new £1.5 million Leicester depot.

Weighing 113 tonnes and with a top speed of 75 miles per hour, they are part of the 'Eurodual' family, originally developed by Vossloh, which was taken over by Stadler at the beginning of 2016. Other UK variants of this six-axle brand of locomotives are the Class 93s currently being produced for Rail Operations Group and the Direct Rail Services Class 88s.

Able to take power from 25kV overhead electric lines as well as a Cummins QSK50 Stage V emissions compliant diesel engine, they are designed as a successor to the Class 66. As well as delivering superior tractive effort (up to 500 kilonewtons and opposed to 409 for the Class 66), GBRf expects the Class 99s to make a major difference to its environmental credentials.



One of the Cummins QSK50 Stage V emissions compliant diesel engines being used in the GB Railfreight Class 99 fleet. GBRF

Figures previously quoted by the company suggest that, based on working intermodal trains on partially-electrified routes, the fleet could reduce its carbon footprint by 428 tonnes each working day. They are expected to run on hydro-treated vegetable oil rather than conventional diesel.

Wagon Report

Compiled by **Steven Fredrick Lappage**

WH DAVIS has completed construction of 46 JNA-U 'Jumbo' open box wagons for Beacon Rail Leasing, Nos. 81 70 5932 105-6 to 150-2. Capacity is 75.0 cubic metres, which is 25% more than the standard JNA-T type. Overall length is 16.6 metres and tare 24 tonnes. Operated by GB Railfreight, terminals served include Small Heath yard, Birmingham.

Other JNAs to be seen at Small Heath are the 'Black Adder' type from the series Nos. GERS 4401-424. Dating from 2002, these are also a product of WH Davis, mating new bodies with refurbished bogies and other below-solebar equipment. Originally owned by GE Rail Services, they are now part of the Touax fleet.

However, cancellation of the HS2 project north of Birmingham has not reduced demand for new rolling stock. Now underway at the Langwith Junction workshops is construction of a further 25 open box wagons, type JNA-V. Direct Rail Services is leasing the stock from owner VTG Rail UK. A modified braking system supplied by Knorr-Bremse is being fitted. Maximum payload will be 79.6 tonnes and tare 24 tonnes. Capacity will be 60 cubic metres. Identities are Nos. 81 70 5932 812-7 to 836-6.



JNA-T standard box open No. 81 70 5932 793-9 in Small Heath Yard on December 29, 2023.

Wagony-Swidnica in Poland continues to dispatch new FEA-G intermodal flats through the Channel Tunnel. Destined for GB Railfreight at Peterborough, the latest batch has comprised Nos. 81 70 4663 241-8 to 280-5. Still to be delivered are Nos. 81 70 4663 281-3 to 440-5, including a further batch for Wascosa/Network Rail.

■ NETWORK Rail IFA tilt-table flats given overhauls at Arlington Fleet Services have been Nos. 37 70 9378 017-1/018-9/019-7/020-5/023-9/024-7/025-4, together with YRA Lifting beam carriers Nos. DB 979055/106. Also visiting Eastleigh works for general repairs were Direct Rail Services PFA flats Nos. DRSL 92723/731.

■ CELSA Steel UK's works at Tremorfa, Cardiff produces steel billet by the electric arc process. This method requires inputs of scrap steel rather than the raw iron ore, coke and lime mixes needed by blast furnaces. Changes proposed by British Steel at Scunthorpe and Tata Steel at Port Talbot involving the use of electric arc furnaces will result in a major downsizing of the mainline and internal wagon fleets that service these sites at present.



New GBRf JNA-U 'Jumbo' open box wagon No. 81 70 5932 123-9 in Small Heath Yard on December 29, 2023.

However, Celsa still uses a sizeable internal fleet of approximately 150 wagons for a variety of tasks, including box opens for baled and fragmented scrap, bogie billet carriers and flats for the movement of steel rod coil (see also photo on page 92). A similar fleet of wagons is employed by Liberty Steels at sites in South Yorkshire.

■ FURTHER BYA 'Stegosaurus' conversions carried out at Stoke Wagon Works have been Nos. 966029/043/044/046/082/125/138/154/158/160/176/239, making a total of 70.

■ DB Cargo UK disposals to European Metals Recycling scrapyards at Cardiff, Kingsbury and Sheffield have been: OAA 'Squid' dropside opens Nos. 100006/096; OCA opens Nos. 112018/021/041/060/127/131/163/181/219/279/374; ZCA 'Sea Urchin' spoil and ballast open No. DC 200388; VGA 'Speedlink' sliding wall van No. 210610; HTA bogie coal hopper No. 311074; MEA box opens Nos. 391140/153/214/231/232/234/307/317/327/352/363/423/425/516/585/688; MHA 'Coalfish' opens Nos. 394141/163/207/255/318/362/647/896/897/937; MTA spoil and ballast open No. 395152; SPA steel coil wire flats Nos. 460019/209/340/383/824, No. 461048; SSA scrap carriers Nos. 470072/098; YVA cable drum flats Nos. KDC 950048/056/064/093/098/113/221/369/444/807/849; YWA 'Salmon' railflat No. DB 996474.

LOCOMOTIVES

Allocations
37407 XHSO-XSDP
37419 XHSO-XSDP
37422 XHSO-XSDP
37425 XHSO-XSDP
37716 XHSO-XSDP
56032 GBGS-GBRG
60017 WQAA-WQBA
66001 WBAE-WBAT
66005 WBAE-WBAT
66009 WBAE-WBAT
66011 WBAE-WBAT
66012 WBAE-WBAT
66024 WBAE-WBAT
66027 WBAE-WBAT
66032 WBAE-WBAT
66035 WBAE-WBAT
66047 WBAE-WBAT
66061 WBAE-WBAT
66076 WBAE-WBAT
66094 WBAE-WBAT
66095 WBAE-WBAT
66117 WBAE-WBAT
66118 WBAE-WBAT
66119 WBAE-WBAT
66120 WBAE-WBAT
66121 WBAE-WBAT
66127 WBAE-WBAT
66158 WBAE-WBAT
66175 WBAE-WBAT
66177 WBAE-WBAT
66179 WBAE-WBAT
66190 WBAE-WBAT
66205 WBAE-WBAT
66311 newly registered RR/GBSD
66312 newly registered RR/GBSD
66313 newly registered RR/GBSD
66314 newly registered RR/GBSD
66315 newly registered RR/GBSD
66316 newly registered RR/GBSD
66591 FD/DHLT-LD/DFIN
67028 WQBA-WQDA
70011 FD/DHLT-LD/DFGI

Renumbered
56032 - 69011
66221 - 66651
77506 - 66314
77505 - 66315
91000 - 91105



No. 69011 (the former No. 56032) is the latest conversion to leave EMD Longport, it seen passing through Longport station on February 16 with No. 66765 as a light engine move to Bescot Up Engineers Sidings. STUART J HOOD

Liveries
DB Cargo red: 66221
Maroon: 69009

Named
60085 *Snowdon*
69009 *Western Consort*

Names removed
43027 *Acton Castle*

Stored/stopped locations
Chesterfield (private site): 08423, 08573, 08874, 08936
Crewe Coal Yard: 37407/19/22/25, 37716
Crewe EMD: 66091
Great Yarmouth: 43027, 43206/38, 43312/19
Haymarket: 43129
Kidderminster: 43423/67
Laira: 43029/94, 43122/53/54/55/86/94
Loughborough: 91117

POOL CODES

VRMU
Varamis Rail Class 321 units

MULTIPLE UNITS

Allocations
170208 CF-DY
197120 HQ-CH
319369/79/86 sent for disposal
321334/41 HQ/SAXU-GW/VRMU
321407/19/28/40 HQ/SAXU-GW/VRMU
507004/13/32 sent for disposal
508104 sent for disposal
701002 newly delivered HQ/HYHQ
701028 HQ-WD
701529/30 newly delivered HQ/HYHQ
720101/38/42/43 newly delivered HQ/EBHQ
720502/19 newly delivered HQ/EBHQ
730005/08/09/14/18/44 HQ-BY
730210/11/12/17 newly delivered HQ/EJHQ
777034 HQ-KD
777037/39/41 newly delivered HQ/HEHQ
777150 HQ-KD

Liveries
BR blue: 455868
SWR: 450031, 458416

Named
801225 *Eleanor*
802213 *Unity*

Renumbered
458516-458416

Formations
458416: 67616+74016+74116+67716

Now in passenger traffic
197120
701028
730005/08/09/14/18/44
777034
777150

Back in passenger traffic
334040

Sold
MCL Solutions, Gascoigne Wood: 321443
Varamis Rail: 321440

Stored/stopped locations
Bournemouth: 458416
Brodies, Kilmarnock: 150218
Cockshute Yard, Stoke: 319214
Derby: 720101/02/38, 720502
Eastleigh T&RSMD: 701002/03/57, 701529/30
Ely: 175004/09
Gascoigne Wd: 730023/24/38
Holyhead: 175114
Long Marston: 777029/37/39/41/43/45
Loughborough: 730206
MoD Bicester: 701508/21/26/27
Oxley: 730211/12/17
Reading: 230001
Taffs Well: 398003
Wembley: 701010
Widnes: 458515
Willesden: 710374
Worksop: 720142/43, 720519

Disposals
Sims Metals, Newport: Arrival dates: February 5: 507004, 508104; February 7: 319369; February 14: 319379/86; February 19: 507013/32



Now part of the Varamis fleet, EMU No. 321341 is seen at Crewe on February 7. BRAD JOYCE

HAULED COACHING STOCK

Liveries
Eastern Rail Services blue + branding: 10237
TPE branding removed: TP03

For sale
1252/53, 5815/88, 5925/58/78, 6009/29/45/73, 6134/51/54

Stored/stopped locations
Derby RTC: 10237
Great Yarmouth: 10229, 10413, 11078/95, 12021
Long Marston: TP05/11/13
Longsight: TP03

■ **STOCK CHANGES CORRECT AS OF FEBRUARY 23.**

Compiled by **Ashley Butlin**

The network's notable moves

Avanti West Coast

On Wednesday, January 17, and for the following two days, unbranded plain white Class 805 No. 805002 ran ECS (Empty Coaching Stock) from Oxley Depot as 5Q30/06.40 to Glasgow Central and return at 12.32.

A combination of weekend engineering works and then Storm Isha meant that after AWC's Glasgow Central (1M17) left for London Euston at 16.40 on Saturday, January 20 with Class 390 No. 390155, the next direct service to Euston from there didn't depart until 13.33 on January 22, when No. 390013 worked 1M10/09.34 which departed 79 minutes late.

Weather warnings from the Met Office resulted in AWC telling passengers not to travel north of Preston after 15.30 on January 23. The last scheduled service from London to Glasgow departed at 15.30 (17.41 from Preston) and was expected to be extremely busy. The last trains from Glasgow and Edinburgh left before 17.00. Train services to and from Scotland were not expected to resume earlier than 12.00 on January 24.

On Wednesday, January 24 Storm Jocelyn meant that the first AWC direct service from Glasgow Central to London Euston on that day was 1M12 which departed at 11.54 worked by Class 390 No. 390125. Also, on the same day the first arrival direct from Euston (1S58) at Glasgow Central was at 16.57 formed with No. 390047.

LNER

Observed on Wednesday, January 10, Class 91 No. 91110 *Battle of Britain Memorial Flight*, in Lest We Forget livery, was at platform 1 at King's Cross at the head of the 1D17/14.03 departure to Leeds.

A visit to Leeds by a correspondent on January 25, to sample Class 91 haulage, found No. 91110 on the 11.15 to King's Cross, No. 91111 on the 12.45, and No. 91119 on the 13.15.

Great Western Railway

In mid-January two grey containers, understood to contain the fast charge equipment, were seen on hard standing on the opposite side of the track from platform 5 at West Ealing station. The battery train trials are now understood to be planned for March.

On Wednesday, January 10, a journey was made from West Ealing to South Greenford on the 2G22/11.10 from West Ealing to Greenford, formed of Class 165 No. 165120. A few minutes later, No. 165120 was seen again, approaching South Greenford, now forming the 2G23/11.25 from Greenford to West Ealing. A short hop was made from Drayton Green to West Ealing on Friday, January 26, using the 2G25/12.00 departure from Greenford formed of No. 165125.

ScotRail

All ScotRail services across the country were suspended from 19.00 on Sunday, January 21, and there was no rush hour services on Monday morning, as the extreme weather from Storm Isha arrived. With the safety of passengers and staff of paramount importance, Network Rail had taken the decision to close the railway to public services while the worst of the weather hit the infrastructure.

This followed a further review of the weather forecasts that afternoon, which showed that the conditions would be much worse in many areas than earlier forecasts had predicted. Heavy winds of up to 70/80mph were expected, which could lead to trees and other debris falling onto the tracks, making conditions unsafe to operate trains. This could also lead to trains being trapped on the network. Line closures continued into Monday. Each route then had to undergo a safety inspection, which meant it was later on Monday before any trains could run.

As a result of the storm, the Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) was reported damaged between Motherwell and Cambuslang. Due to damage to the OLE wires between Motherwell and Glasgow Central, the line northbound was blocked. Train services running to and from these stations were cancelled or delayed by up to 60 minutes. Disruption was expected until 12.00 on January 22.

Equally affected was the ECML where, due to damage to the OLE between Dunbar and Edinburgh, all lines were blocked resulting in services running through these stations being cancelled or terminated at/starting back from Dunbar. Disruption was expected until midday on January 22.

This was not the end of travel problems as all services were suspended in Scotland from 19.00 on Tuesday, January 23 following the issue of a weather warning in association with Storm Jocelyn, with services gradually returning the following day.

Caledonian

On Saturday, February 3, the merged 1M16 from Inverness and 1B16 from Aberdeen 'Caledonian Sleeper' to London Euston, pulled by Class 92 No. 92043, passed through Lancaster at 169 minutes late at 06.56, having been delayed at Edinburgh Waverley. Later the service arrived at Euston at 10.44, 144 minutes late.

Northern Rail

Class 323 EMU Nos. 323212 and 323220 arrived at Allerton from West Midlands Railway on January 10.

With the line between Carlisle and Workington blocked by a fallen tree on Wednesday, January 24, Northern's 2C48 to Lancaster started out at Workington at 11.04 rather than Carlisle and was worked by Class156 No. 156486.

Transpennine Express

With their use with Transpennine Express at an end, the Mk.5 coaching sets are being moved to store at Long Marston pending their next deployment. The first arrival from Longsight was set TP03 and Class 68 No. 68032 moved by Class 37 No. 37601 on January 4, followed on January 9 by set TP04 and Class 68 No. 68024 hauled by No. 37884.

A further move on January 11 found No. 68021 deliver set TP12. A week later, on January 18, set TP06 and No. 68029 departed from Longsight only to fail at Stockport, to be rescued by Class 57 No. 57308 which took the consist through to Long Marston. Set TP05 was moved by No. 68026 on January 25 and No. TP13 by No. 68021 on January 29. February 1 saw No. 68027 move TP11, followed by TP07 and 68026 on February 8.

Merseyrail

Class 508 No. 508104 and Class 507 No. 507004 were moved from Birkenhead to Crewe South yard by Class 37 No. 37884 on January 22.

The latest new Class 777 units to arrive at Dollands Moor, Nos. 777029+777043+777045, were moved forward to Wembley by Class 66 No. 66190 on January 24, before being taken north to Walton Old Junc by RailAdventure Class 43 Nos. 43468+43480 and 43484+43465. The Class 43s later took No. 777029 south to Long Marston on January 30 followed by Nos. 777043+777045 on February 1.



Climbing up the HS1 gradient into Stratford International on February 7, is Eurostar Class 373 set Nos. 3211/3212 forming the 9I25/10.56 Bruxelles Midi to St Pancras International. GEOFF GRIFFITHS



Engineering works south of Newcastle on the weekend of February 3/4 saw LNER services diverted via the Durham Coast Line, and on the first day 'Azuma' set No. 800109 is seen heading south past the site of the former Hawthorn Colliery (closed 1991) with the 1E13/11.30 Edinburgh to King's Cross. ALEX AYRE

Transport for Wales

The 06.42 Llandudno to Manchester Airport is scheduled to be formed of a Class 197 unit to Chester, where it couples up to another unit already waiting at platform 4 before opening the doors. On January 25, No. 197006 arrived at Chester and nudged up to No. 197044. This was not a successful coupling, so No. 197006 reversed and tried again, still no luck. A third try was no better, so the doors were released to allow arriving passengers off. It then took two more attempts to achieve a good join, by which time the train was 15 minutes late. Unfortunately, there was a major traction current failure at Manchester Piccadilly, so the 06.42 got no further than Manchester Oxford Road, arriving 20 minutes late.

The 12.49 from Cardiff Central to Manchester Piccadilly is booked for a Class 67 on Mark IV coaches, but on January 25 there was nothing better than Class 153 Nos. 153362+153914 for this service.

West Midlands Railway

Deliveries and movements of Class 730 units reported included Nos. 730003+730048 from Derby to Oxley by Class 37 No. 37800 on January 16. No. 730210 was hauled from Derby to Oxley by Class 37 No. 37510 on January 30.

On Friday, January 19, Class 730 No. 730016 was seen passing Harrow & Wealdstone



station whilst working as empty stock train 5Q85 from Bletchley Carriage Sidings to Bletchley, via Northampton North Junction and Kilburn Up & Down Goods Loop.

Chiltern Railways

In what may prove to be the beginning of the end for trains of loco-hauled stock powered by Class 68 locomotives, Chiltern Railways has invited proposals from established rolling stock owners for the lease and maintenance of between 25 and 70 existing vehicles to operate inter-city and regional services on the Chiltern Main Line between London Marylebone and Birmingham.

The operator is seeking either self-powered multiple units or locomotive-hauled coaches, which can operate at 160kph in fixed formations of five or six passenger vehicles, so perhaps the Class 68 will remain, working different stock.

East Midlands Railways

The final Class 170 to arrive from Transport for Wales at Cardiff Canton depot, No. 170208, made the move on January 29.

London Overground

At Willesden Junction station Low Level, platforms 1 and 3 are normally used by London Overground trains between Euston and Watford Junction on the DC Lines trains, whilst the High Level platforms 4 and 5 are normally used by London Overground trains between Richmond/Clapham Junction and Stratford on the North London Line. Platform 2 is the Low Level Bay, which is seldom used.

Planned engineering work on the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, January 13/14 meant no trains were running between Willesden Junction and London Euston, or between Willesden Junction and Shepherds Bush /Richmond. In consequence a special Stratford to Watford Junction combined train service, with all trains serving the low level platforms at Willesden Junction, was advertised.

A plan to try the service through Willesden Junction Low Level on to the North London Line starting at Harrow & Wealdstone on Saturday, January 13 was thwarted when all London Overground services between Willesden Junction and Watford Junction were cancelled due to a track fault at Harrow & Wealdstone. However, it proved possible to join the 2M81/12.59 Stratford (London) to Watford Junction, at Camden Road, which was formed of Class 710 No. 710379, terminated by Willesden Junction platform 2. A little later the 2L34/14.19 from Willesden Junction to Stratford (London), which should have originated at Watford Junction, formed of Class 378 No. 378220, was taken as far as West Hampstead. Shortly after leaving platform 2 at Willesden Junction, train 2L34 paused just before Kensal Green Junction so the pantograph could be raised.

A visit to Richmond station during the morning of Tuesday, January 16 found all services on London Overground, and the District Line suspended due to a signal failure at Gunnersbury. Stabled by platform 4 was four-car Class 710 No. 710268. Whilst Class 710s are not unknown on the North London Line to Richmond, traffic generally necessitates a five-car train.

The derailment of an engineer's train near Willesden Junction on Sunday, January 21 meant London Overground services could not run between Shepherd's Bush and Willesden Junction. A much-amended service was running the following day with many trains from Stratford terminating at Willesden Junction rather than continuing to Clapham Junction. Services are reported to have been restored between Shepherd's Bush and Willesden Junction during the afternoon of Wednesday, January 24.

A move on February 5 found Class 710 No. 710374 top-and-tailed from Ilford to Willesden ▶



A route learning run for LSL on February 7 saw Type 1s No. D8107 (20107) and D8096 (20096) top-and-tail a Mk.2 coach from Southall to Canterbury East and back, the return leg seen getting underway after a layover. ANDREW GARLAND

by Class 37 Nos. 37884+37510 in readiness for entering passenger traffic.

Crossrail

Sadly, the Elizabeth Line has become notorious for its unreliability. When making the short hop from Ealing Broadway to West Ealing on Wednesday, January 10, this became all too evident. The 9H32/09.36 from Abbey Wood to Heathrow Airport Terminal 4, formed of No. 345013, arrived at Ealing Broadway 38 minutes late.

According to Realtime Trains, the service had only been two minutes late at Paddington and terminated short at Hayes & Harlington.

Southern Railways

Observations on January 10 saw a few variations stock-wise. The 13.58 Brighton Depot to Bognor Regis was formed of 12 carriages instead of the usual eight, the units being Nos. 377432+377103+377406. Of these, No. 377432 was detached at Littlehampton to form part of the 15.43 to London, while Nos. 377406+377103 carried on to Bognor Regis. Unit No. 377303 working the 14.05 ex Bognor to Littlehampton and for the rest of the diagram, only had two coaches working as the third coach was locked out of use due to an electrical fault with the doors.

The 12.16 London Victoria to Littlehampton and 14.13 return was formed of No. 377150 only instead of the diagrammed eight, but No. 377451 was attached at Victoria to make up the shortage.

Signalling issues at Balcombe on January 11 saw the 09.46, formed 377423+377430+377472, London Victoria to Littlehampton terminate at West Worthing due to late running. The 08.43, 12.43, 16.42 and 20.43 Littlehampton to London services were all formed of No. 377139 instead of the booked eight cars. The 13.16 London to Littlehampton formed of Nos. 377125+377431 was terminated at West Worthing due to late running from Haywards Heath.

Class 377/2 No. 377201 was used as a replacement due to a shortage of 377/3 units for the Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and Portsmouth services on January 12.

The 17.54 Victoria to Hastings formed of Class 377 Nos. 377129+377156 came to a halt on Grosvenor Bridge after a 'flash and bang' issue. No damage was done to the units after an inspection at Clapham Junction where 40 minutes were lost. As a result, the service was terminated at Eastbourne.

The 06.23 Bognor Regis to Victoria on January 19 was in trouble at the start of its journey with a driver only operation equipment fault on No. 377114. The unit was detached, and No. 377156 continued on its own to Horsham. Here, more trouble was to come when No. 377423 working the Portsmouth portion should have attached to No. 377156. However, that had faults on the unit and was terminated and sent to the sidings, so No. 377156 continued alone and as Gatwick was reached 20 minutes behind schedule, ran nonstop to Victoria. Errant No. 377423 was later sent to Selhurst Depot for attention.

Class 377 No. 377306 was removed from traffic at Littlehampton on January 23 with a faulty GSMR whilst working the 08.01 ex Portsmouth. It later formed the rear portion of the 09.50 ECS to Brighton Depot.

Services on Southern and Thameslink were disrupted due to a trespasser on the line between Hassocks and Haywards Heath on January 31. The 16.13 Littlehampton to Victoria was delayed at Burgess Hill for around an hour, ending up detraining passengers when door faults occurred, and eventually terminating at Haywards Heath. The formation of Nos. 377138+377417+377474 was sent to Brighton depot and its return working to Littlehampton was cancelled. The 20.13 Littlehampton to Victoria was made up of fresh stock from Littlehampton depot formed of eight carriages instead of the 12.

With the trespass incident ongoing, the following occurred. The 17.13 Littlehampton to London Victoria formed Nos. 377131+377157+377145 was diverted via the Arun Valley line. The 16.16 from Victoria formed Nos. 377117+377212+377447 was diverted to Brighton after an hour's delay at Haywards Heath. The 18.13 from Littlehampton was cancelled but started from Brighton over 50 minutes late. The 17.16 London Victoria to Littlehampton was diverted via the Arun Valley with units Nos. 377146+377150+377206. However, the 19.13 return service ran on its booked route via Worthing and Hove.

South Western Railway

Evil forces were at work late in the evening on Monday, January 8, when a 21-year-old man from the Twickenham area was fatally stabbed at Strawberry Hill railway station. The police launched a murder investigation and the railway through Strawberry Hill was closed. The following morning, Kingston Loop services via Richmond were terminating by platform 3 at Twickenham. Down trains must have been using the crossover to the west of St Margarets station.

The Class 701 units continue to attract much attention from our correspondents. Movements of units have included new No. 701527 being delivered from Derby to Eastleigh by Class 69 No. 69010 on January 9, with the Class 69 taking Nos. 701523+701525 from Eastleigh to store at MoD Bicester the following day.

On Friday, January 25 Class 47 No. 47749 was seen passing Acton Central station at some speed when heading empty stock train 5Q20 from Derby to Eastleigh conveying new Class 701 No. 701528. A further move from Eastleigh to Bicester followed on January 31 when No. 701508 was hauled by Class 69 No. 69008.

After four years of waiting, the first service carrying fare paying passengers, worked by a Class 701 ran on Tuesday, January 9 when No. 701037 entered in traffic on the 2U91 Waterloo to Windsor & Eton Riverside and back. The following day No. 701039 was on the diagram followed by No. 701043 on January 16.

A correspondent was able to travel on the 'soft' launch where it was observed that SWR was not shy about publicising what was happening. At Richmond the automated announcements described the 2U91 as the 'Arterio service', which was followed by the (non-automated) station announcer telling everyone this was the first of South Western Railway's new trains to stop at Richmond. On the train, Claire Mann, SWR managing director, was being interviewed by media. She was no doubt relieved the first Class 701 had actually entered service before her departure to become TfL's chief operating officer.

As for first impressions of the new Class 701 'Arterio' trains, on a very cold day the first observation was the train was pleasantly warm. The 2+2 seating meant the aisle was of an adequate width and not the squeeze encountered on Greater Anglia's Class 720. The seats were firm but were shaped in a way that was more comfortable than the ironing boards encountered elsewhere. Seat alignment was mixed; there are some forward facing seats which are not beside windows at all. After getting used to travelling cross-legged on Class 455 trains, the toilets on the Class 701 are very welcome.

Another chance to try the Class 701 launch service arose on Thursday, January 11, when a journey was made from Feltham to Clapham Junction on the 2U92/11.30 from Windsor & Eton Riverside to London Waterloo, which was again formed of No. 701037.

This time the train was much less crowded although it still included several SWR staff, including Greg Kotecha, its head of engineering, and plenty of railway enthusiasts. Having chosen a forward-facing window seat in a bay of four with a small table, it was again noted the seats are more comfortable than on a lot of modern trains. The window alignment was certainly not perfect, but there was an acceptable forward view. There have been some concerns expressed about the leg room for the window seats, but this seems far less of an issue than on Merseyrail's new trains.

Planned engineering work between London Waterloo and Queenstown Road resulted in some lines being closed on Saturday and Sunday, January 13/14. As part of the amended timetable, the service between Waterloo and Hampton Court



After tripping a load of hot steel billets from Tremorfa Steel Works to Cardiff Rod Mill on February 2, shunter 'Celsa 3' (No. 08630) hauls the empty wagons back to the Melt Shop. The train comprises two former BDA steel carriers with covers to retain the heat and one former YLA 'Mullet' engineers' wagon. MARTIN TURNER

only ran from Surbiton. On the Sunday a correspondent made a journey on the 2J46/15.35 from Hampton Court to Surbiton formed of Nos. 455728+455864.

At Hampton Court station the train was seen to be displaying 'Hampton Court – Shuttle' on the destination blinds. Leaving Hampton Court in the Up direction the train ran along the Down Line, calling at platform 2 at Thames Ditton before going over the viaduct over the South Western Main Lne before terminating by platform 4 at Surbiton station.

By running the Hampton Court branch as a single line, only using the Down Line, it was possible to run the branch almost in isolation from other services and without having to use the crossovers at Surbiton to get from the Up to the Down Line.

Refurbished Class 485/4 No. 458404 was top-and-tailed from Widnes to Wembley by Class 57 Nos. 57306+57305 on January 22, going forward to Bournemouth the following day. The Class 57s then took No. 458520 to Widnes.

A special train was run on Saturday, January 27, to celebrate the birthday of career railwayman, former general manager of the Southern Region of British Rail and present Bluebell Railway Preservation Society president, Gordon Pettitt. Those invited to take part in the festivities arrived at Waterloo on special 1Z90/10.24 from Woking, which was seen at the country end of platform 19 at Waterloo formed of Class 450 No. 450046, which was showing 'Gordon Pettitt Special' on the destination displays.

After a few minutes at Waterloo No. 450046 left as empty stock train 5Y29 to Clapham Yard Sidings. However, rather than running to Clapham Yard as timetabled, it reversed at Waterloo West Crossings and returned into the station to stable by platform 18.

However, the Desiro Class 450 was not the highlight of the occasion, which was the train displayed by platform 19 at Waterloo station; this consisted of 4-VEP No. 3417 *Gordon Pettitt* topped and tailed by Class 73 electro-diesels Nos. 73109 and 73119.

DB Cargo

Class 66 No. 66207 hauled 6E54 Kingsbury to Humber Refinery empty tanks on December 11-13, with No. 66171 hauling them on December 18, No. 66100 on December 19 and 20, No. 66030 on December 22, No. 66128 on December 28, and No. 66074 on January 8.



More than 60 years since the class was introduced, the remaining '37s' are still proving their all-round usefulness, with four examples from two companies visible in this shot at Carlisle on January 30. In the centre are Colas Rail's yellow-liveried Nos. 37219 *Jonty Jarvis* and 37421 stabled with a Network Rail infrastructure inspection train, and these are flanked by West Coast Railway's Nos. 37685 *Loch Arkaig* (left) and 37516 *Loch Laidon*, which later left together light engine for the WCR base at Carnforth. CHRIS SANDERS

Class 60 No. 60074 *Luke* in Puma Energy livery hauled 6E02 Toton to Boston empty steel on December 11 and January 5 and 8, and it hauled 6E01 Wolverhampton to Boston empty steel on January 3, 9 and 10. Class 60 No. 60062 Sonia in 'Steel on Steel' flame livery hauled 6E02 Toton to Boston empty steel on December 20.

Scrap metal trains reported, all hauled by Class 66 locos, included No. 66007 on the regular Cardiff Tidal-Sunderland-Cardiff Tidal diagram on January 11. A Tidal-Saltley-Tidal turn on January 15 was powered by No. 66004. The following day, No. 66068 was on the Tidal-Sunderland-Tidal diagram with No. 66130 on the same diagram on January 18.

A Tidal-Saltley-Tidal diagram on January 22 was powered by No. 66011. The regular Sunderland turn was powered by No. 66068 on January 25 and No. 66131 on February 1. A change on February 1 also found No. 66007 on a Tidal-Kingsbury-Tidal run – the first for many months. No. 66070 worked a Tidal-Saltley-Tidal diagram on February 2 and 5.

Class 66 No. 66129 worked the 6E70 Acton to Belmont loaded spoil train through Leicester on January 5.

The derailment of an engineer's train at Mitre Bridge Junction near Willesden Junction on Sunday, January 20 involved the 6R03 from Bescot Up Engineers Sidings to Willesden West London Junction. It is reported three Auto Ballaster wagons derailed whilst being propelled by Class 66 No. 66080. An overhead line gantry was damaged by the derailment and consequently the line between Shepherds Bush and Willesden Junction was closed until repair work could take place. The impact on London Overground services was recorded above.

Class 66 No. 66182, in DB red livery, was seen on Friday, January 25 at the head of a stone train at Acton Terminal Complex.

Reports of the Cardiff Tidal-Burton-Cardiff Tidal steel trains included Nos. 66004 on January 30 and 66089 on February 5.

The 6K27/14.50 engineer's working from Carlisle to Crewe was, on Tuesday, January 31, made up of just two low sided yellow mineral wagons pulled by original liveried DB Class 66 No. 66092.

Freightliner

The 09.11 Westbury to Crawley New Yard restarted for 2024 with Class 66 No. 66597 *Viridor* on January 8 and Class 5 No. 59203 on January 10. No. 59206 was on the service on January 15, being noted at West Worthing in ex-works condition. The diagram was worked by No. 59103 *Village of Mells* on January 22 and 24.

Light green livery Class 59 ▶



Brightening up a dull February 8 at Llansamlet, north-east of Swansea, is ROG Class 37 No. 37800 *Cassiopeia* hauling Mk.4 DVT No. 82220 and coaches Nos. 12477+12215 from Landore to Crewe. The vehicles were to be used in Transport for Wales set HD08. JOHN AND RHIAN HEADON

No. 59101 *Village of Whatley* powered the service on January 26 when seen passing West Worthing some 85 minutes late due to signalling problems and a possible broken rail in the Porchester area. The train itself was recessed in Eastleigh Yard whilst Network Rail carried out the repairs.

No. 59206 was back on the service on January 31, seen running through West Worthing some 45 minutes late. The 18.31 return from Crawley to Westbury on February 1 with No. 59104, departed 58 minutes early and was re-routed via the Arun Valley Line with Arundel Junction reached some 85 minutes early. After Fareham it was again rerouted via Swanwick and Southampton Central.

On the morning of Sunday, January 15, FL's orange and back liveried Class 66 No. 66413 and green liveried No.66512 top-and-tailed a train of yellow mineral wagons on a 6Y52/11.11 from Oxenholme southwards to Bescot Yard in the West Midlands.

Class 90 Nos. 90013 and 90012, both in orange livery, were seen passing Harrow & Wealdstone station on Friday, January 19 at the head of the 4M63 from Felixstowe North Freightliner Terminal to Trafford Park Freightliner Terminal.

From the December timetable change, Freightliner has made changes to the Mendip Rail trains, with much less use of Acton Terminal Complex and alternative locations used to divide trains from the Somerset quarries for onward to aggregates terminals in the London area.

On Thursday, January 25 the 6A50 from Whatley Quarry to Hanwell Bridge Loop was seen passing platform 13 at Reading station behind Class 66 No. 66615. The following day No. 66570 was seen passing Acton Main Line at the head of the 6M38 from Thorney Mill to Wembley Receptions 1-7.

DRS

The Shap Quarry (6K06) afternoon working to Crewe of yellow mineral wagons, often a Class 66 working but on Tuesday, January 16, and for the next two days, was double headed by consecutively numbered Class 68s Nos. 68004 *Rapid*+68005 *Defiant*.

Class 37 Nos. 37422 + 37425 ran as a light engine duo on Wednesday, January 17, from Crewe Gresty Bridge to Carlisle Kingmoor.

A triple-headed formation on Thursday, January 18 found Class 66 Nos. 66425+66431 coupled in front of TP liveried Class 68 No. 68025 running from Crewe (6Z66/12.38) to Motherwell.

On Friday, January 19, Class 66 No. 66431 was seen passing Harrow & Wealdstone station at the head of Tesco train 4M07 from Tilbury 2 Container Terminal to Daventry (Tesco).

GBRF

Class 66 No. 66784 hauled 6M81 Immingham Humber International Terminal to Ratcliffe coal via Nottingham on December 14, No. 66782 hauled it on December 28, and No. 66750 *Bristol Panel Signal Box* hauled it on January 6.

Class 57 Nos. 57305, 57306 *Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate 175* and 57310 *Pride of Cumbria* were seen at Leicester depot on December 23.

Class 66 No. 66708 *Glory to Ukraine* hauled 4M23 Felixstowe North to Hams Hall containers through Leicester on December 23. Class 66 No. 66781 *Darius Cheskin* worked 4M23 Felixstowe North to Hams Hall containers, No. 66735 *Peterborough United* hauled 4L04 Birch Coppice Felixstowe North containers, and No. 66722 *Sir Edward Watkin* hauled 4M29 Felixstowe North to Birch Coppice containers through Leicester on January 5.

A very grubby Class 69 No. 69004 was seen passing Staines station, on Wednesday, January 3, at the head of the 6Y48 from Eastleigh East Yard to Hoo Junction Up Yard.

On Saturday, January 6 Class 66 No. 66766 *Gail Richardson* was seen passing Clapham Junction on the 6G12 from Hoo Junction Up Yard to Longhedge Junction, formed of JNA bogie wagons well filled with ballast.

MoD traffic reported included on Tuesday, January 9 work-stained Class 66 No. 66304 pulling a train of 20 small blue and olive green unmarked containers from Donnington on a 4S77/12.44 via Shap on the journey to Longtown MoD. A change of power on January 15 had No. 66756 on a Kineton-Bicester-Marchwood diagram. The following day it worked a Marchwood-Bicester-Donnington-London Gateway circuit. Two days later it continued its journeys running from London Gateway to Eastleigh then to Doncaster and Tees Dock before heading back to Kineton.

A further change of power followed on January 22 when No. 66305 worked a Kineton-Donnington trip. On Monday, January 29, No. 66302 pulled a train of over 30 small sized containers, some blue and some grey, from Donnington in Shropshire (4S77/13.10) on the journey via Shap to Longtown MoD depot. Two days later, No. 66741 was in charge of a Kineton-London Gateway-Bescot turn followed by a Bescot-Donnington-Kineton diagram.

On a very cold Wednesday, January 10 Snow & Ice Treatment train 3Y90 from Tonbridge West Yard to Purley Down Siding was seen beside platform 10 at London Bridge station formed of Class 73 Nos. 73201 top-and-tailed with 73213.

The same service was seen again on Monday, January 15, this time seen leaving from platform 15 at London Bridge, formed of Nos. 73107+73136. On January 19 the service was top-and-tailed by Nos. 73119+73109 and was seen arriving at London Bridge.

Scrap metal trains reported included No. 66767 on a Liverpool-Kingsbury-Liverpool diagram on January 12. Three days later, the same loco worked from Small Heath yard to EMR Attercliffe and back to Liverpool. The following day, it took empty wagons from Liverpool to Small Heath yard where it seemed to stay until going forward to Swindon and back to Liverpool on January 19.

It was next reported arriving at EMR Kingsbury on January 22 before taking the loaded wagons back to Liverpool. Out again on January 24 it worked a Liverpool-Saltley-Liverpool diagram and two days later it was again on a Liverpool-EMR Attercliffe-Liverpool diagram. On the last day of January, it was back to Saltley and back. Two trips reported in early February were both Liverpool-Swindon-Liverpool turns on February 2 and 5.

In a ceremony at Ipswich Station on January 12 Class 66 No. 66307 was named *Ipswich Town*. To mark the occasion, GB Railfreight chief executive, John Smith, Mediterranean Shipping Company's (MSC) managing director, Dan Everitt, Ipswich Town's chairman, Mike O'Leary and chief executive, Mark Ashton unveiled the name plate of the locomotive. Also present at the ceremony was current Ipswich club legend and former manager George Burley.

The 6Y48 from Eastleigh East Yard to Hoo Junction Up Yard was seen passing Wandsworth Town station on Monday, January 15, behind Class 66 No. 66795 *Bescot LDC*.

Class 69 No. 69004 was seen on Friday, January 19, coming to a stand at platform 3 at Clapham Junction, whilst working light engine as the 0Y48 from



A first along the West Coastway route on February 17 saw the Colas-allocated 6C02/12.02 Eastleigh East Yard-Preston Park engineering train powered by Freightliner Class 70 No. 70009. The train is seen passing Lancing on its way to the work site, with the signalman leaning out of his 'box to view the rare sight. JOHN VAUGHAN

Eastleigh East Yard to Hoo Junction Up Yard.

Class 69 No. 69010, in green undercoat, was noted from a passing train, in Wembley yard on Friday, January 19, at the head of barrier vehicles Nos. 64707 *Labezerin* and 64664 *Liwet* having worked in as 5Z89 from Leicester LIP to Wembley Holding Sidings.

Freight workings between Carlisle and Castle Cement in Clitheroe normally run via Settle but on Wednesday, January 17 Class 66 No. 66736 pulled 11 empty long bogied VTG Castle Cement wagons from Carlisle (4Z03/11.25) via Shap and Preston on a 15 mile journey to Clitheroe. Later that day it worked back on the same route from Clitheroe as a 6Z03/18.39. On Tuesday, January 30 Class 66 Nos. 66742+66771 double-headed the train and again on February 1 with No. 66765 on the rear.

Class 66 No. 66715 was seen, from Willesden Junction station, as it ran between Kensal Green Junction and Harlesden Junction at the head of container train 4M47 from London Gateway to Hams Hall on Friday, January 26.

Class 66 No. 66755 was observed on Monday January 29 pulling a train of motor vehicles which were mainly white delivery vans, from Dagenham Dock via Crewe to Mossend.

On Tuesday, January 30 Class 66 No. 66751 ran light from Tuebrook in Liverpool to Carlisle.

Colas Rail

Colas Rail tamper No. DR73942 moved on Tuesday, January 9, on a 6J87/06.35 from Guide Bridge to WCR's Steamtown base in Carnforth.

Class 66 No. 66847 *Terry Baker* was noted passing through Clapham Junction station on Saturday, January 13 at the head of the 6C01 from Eastleigh East Yard to Hounslow Junction.

On hire to Colas, Class 56 No. 56098 developed problems on January 12 while running with No. 56049, working a heavily loaded 6J37 Carlisle Yard to Chirk timber train. Notwithstanding late running over the S&C, the train went forward from Hellifield but came to a stand on Whalley Viaduct, where a decidedly steep ascent to the outskirts of Blackburn begins, after No. 56049 failed. Initially a rescue was arranged with WCR, but earmarked locos also failed, and DRS was called on to help. However, in the event No. 56049 was restarted and the train limped into the loop at Blackburn where the service was terminated. A further Class 56 No. 56105 was sent to assist the pair on January 14, resulting in the rare sight of a triple-headed Class 56 combination on the WCML. A further delay followed at Chester and the logs finally got to Chirk some 320 minutes late!

A quiet mid-winter's late afternoon stillness at Lancaster was broken on Thursday, January 18, by Class 56 No. 56049 *Robin of Templecombe* pulling up the south-bound gradient having been held by a signal. This working was the 6J37, the logs from Carlisle bound for Chirk via Chester. On the following day, the same loco operated the same working but had a clear run at the gradient south out of Lancaster. The log train on Monday, January 22 was hauled by Nos. 56049+56105.

Colas Rail Tamper No. DR73942 moved on a 6J87/08.37 on Friday, January 19, from Millom to Preston Dock Street Sidings.

DC Rail

Class 60 No. 60055 *Thomas Barnardo* was seen at Chesterfield hauling 6Z82 Peak Forest to Brandon stone train on January 4. It was held at Mansfield Junction, Nottingham for over two hours due to a signalling fault at Nottingham East. The same loco was observed at Leicester and Narborough hauling 6M89 Middleton Towers to Ravenhead sand train on January 6.

On Wednesday, January 10 Class 60 No. 60029 *Ben Nevis*, in grey livery, was seen passing South Greenford station at the head of train 6Z22 from Aylesbury North Loop to Willesden DC Rail Sidings. No. 60029 was in charge again when train 6Z22 from Aylesbury North Loop to Willesden DC Rail Sidings was seen passing Drayton Green station on Friday, January 26.

West Coast Railway Co

WCR Class 47 No. 47815 and Class 57 No. 57009 double-headed a rake of empty maroon coaches on a 5V42/13.02 from Carnforth to Southall on Thursday, January 25. On the back of this train was a maroon, rear windowed, track inspection coach.

Eastern Rail Services

A short rake of its coaches, Nos. 6173+5919+6046, was moved from Crewe to Great Yarmouth by Class 37 No. 37667 on January 11.

Locomotive Services Ltd

A rake of LSL coaches, Nos. 3122+10416+3140+1203, was moved by Class 20 Nos. 20107+20096 from Crewe to Eastleigh Works on January 11.

Retro ScotRail liveried Class 37 No. 37409 *Loch Awe* ran light on Monday, January 23 from Crewe (0Z37/17.24) to Carlisle High Wapping Sidings. On the following morning it again ran light on a 0Z37/09.52 via Leeds to Chesterfield and back. On Wednesday, January 25 the Class 37 ran light engine, from Carlisle (0Z37/09.10).

Sims Metals, Newport

The yard continues to take the majority of redundant rolling stock for recycling with the following deliveries reported in recent weeks. Class 319 Nos. 319372+319385 arrived behind Class 37 No. 37800 from Allerton on January 9, followed by Nos. 319368+319381 on January 11. These were followed by the Class 37 delivering Class 508 Nos. 508108+508114 on January 15.

A further delivery of Class 319s followed from Northampton on January 24, when Class 37 No. 37884 moved Nos. 319433+319457.

The final Class 508 No. 508104 with Class 507 No. 507004 were brought south from Crewe South Yard by Class 37 No. 37800 on February 5.



Work is progressing to electrify the Bolton to Wigan line, this view at Westhoughton on February 11 showing No. 66572 parked with a rake of spoil wagons being loaded by three rail-road vehicles working on the drainage at the site. BARRIE WOODWARD

Eastleigh Works

Raxstar has ceased scrapping at the Works and returned to South Wales where the company is based. Any future vehicle scrapping will be as required.

Loram

Snow & Ice Treatment trains reported included Nos. DR98921+DR98971 noted passing Barnham on January 6, working a Horsham to Horsham via Littlehampton. Bognor Regis and Havant. Nos. DR98928+DR98978 were noted in Littlehampton on the same duty on January 15.

An NR Inspection train ran on Thursday, January 11 from Tonbridge West Yard to Seaford, being observed arriving alongside platform 2 at Battersea Park station, formed of GBRf No. 73964 *Jeanette*, Ultrasonic test car support 9523, Generator 6260, Track Recording coach 999550, Remote driving car 9702 and at the rear GBRf No. 73965 *Des O'Brien*.

The two Network Rail Class 73s, Nos. 73951+73952, sold to HNRC were moved from store at Kidderminster to Worksop top-and-tailed by Class 37 Nos. 37401+37402 on January 12.

Two at the front and two at the back – the Network Rail Inspection Train (Nos. 9702, 999550, 6260 and 9523) was seen again on Saturday, January 13, now forming the 1Q79 from Tonbridge West Yard to Derby RTC. Having reversed by platform 13 at Victoria, train 1Q79 was headed by Class 73 Nos. 73961 *Alison* and 73965 *Des O'Brien* and with 73964 *Jeanette* and 73962 *Dick Mabbutt* at the rear.

Running back-to-back HST power cars Nos. 43321+43285 ran light from Preston to Derby RTC on January 15.

On Tuesday, January 16 Colas Rail Class 43s Nos. 43272+43277 top-and-tailed a rake of yellow-liveried NR track inspection coaches from Derby (1Q47/11.15) via Stafford (12.27), Whitehaven (17.54) and on to Carlisle (19.19).

The New Measurement Train was seen arriving at King's Cross as the 1Q04 from Darlington Up Sorting Sidings, top-and-tailed by Class 43 Nos. 43321+43013 on Monday, January 22. It then departed to Cambridge Sidings North.

Our thanks

THE Railway Magazine's thanks for information go to: John De Boer, Gene Collins, Mike Cooper, Kevin Driscoll, Barry Knock, Ken Larkins, Sean Morris, Dorian Porter, Mark Reynolds, R.D.Richardson, Craig Wellum and Chris West. ■

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Downpatrick continues to rebuild

Members progress flood damage repairs with the aid of new volunteers and donations from well-wishers.



No. A39R stands at the platform at Downpatrick station on February 10, about to couple up to carriages and undergo another load test run. The Irish Traction Group-owned locomotive has seen extensive work to dry out the traction motors and return it to working order. DCDR

WORK continues at Downpatrick to return the railway and its rolling stock back to operational condition after the severe flooding in November that caused almost £3 million in damage.

One of the success stories has been the recruitment of several new volunteers, signing up to help with the post-flood recovery process.

"It has been heartening to see the situation result in the recruitment of several new volunteers to bolster our small crew. Every cloud indeed has a silver lining," Downpatrick & County Down Railway chairman, Robert Gardiner told *The RM*.

"However, we are still facing massive costs to fully return the railway to its pre-flood condition and we are grateful for all the donations so far."

Work on the locomotive fleet has continued with Nos. G617 and 141 Class No. 146 now available for traffic. Without access to lifting facilities, work has started on A Class No. A39R, which was submerged in water up to the traction motors, and with no funding available, the only option is to dry things out thoroughly and apply heat gradually over a long period to drive out all moisture.

All six traction motors have been drained, cleaned, dried out, brushes have been checked, re-oiled and new wool oil wicks installed.

After heat had been applied using portable heaters, the loco was started up on January 6 and power applied for the first time against its brakes and No. 146 with an air braked carriage to prevent movement for a short period. No. A39R has since been moved into the yard under low power and the load exercise was repeated several times, moving the loco each time to even out the heating process.

The latest stage in this process has seen loaded test runs on the length of the whole railway, working top and tail with 450 class railcar No. 458, providing several hundred tonnes of weight and brake force for No. A39R to pull against in notch 1, putting much heat through the traction motors.

In the opposite direction, No. 458 hauled the consist slowly to do the same to its own traction motors, but it is fair to say that it struggled a bit more with two traction motors and 560hp against No. A39R with its six traction motors and 1350hp.

Efforts to return 80 class vehicles (Nos. 69, 90, and 749) to action are progressing slowly. Power car No. 90's batteries have been removed and returned to an acceptable condition. Work is underway to get everything reassembled and then started up and heated like the other traction.

Visit www.downrail.co.uk for details of how you can help.

New Navan rail link could be open to traffic by 2030

THE Navan rail link will be open by 2030, Iarnród Eireann CEO Jim Meade told the Irish Parliament's joint Transport committee on January 26.

He also said that other projects, if given the go-ahead by Government, such as a heavy rail link to Dublin Airport and the reopening of the Athenry to Claremorris line, could be delivered within five years.

Route

The committee heard that the Navan rail line would be a new 40km line running north from the M3 Parkway to Navan, largely following the former MGWR route closed in 1963. A design team is expected to be appointed in the summer and the final route options agreed by the end of 2025. The committee was told that subject to Government approval, a railway order would be applied for in 2026 and it would take four years to deliver the line.

Asked about the possibility of building a DART line to the airport given that building the Metro North rail line is expected to take 10 years, Mr Meade said it was up to the Government to decide if it wants to do it. He noted the ambition of the European Commission to connect all major city airports with traffic of more than 12 million passengers with the heavy rail network by 2040. He said a heavy rail link to the airport would complement not compete against the proposed Metro North line.

Other schemes

Turning to the subject of reopening the Athenry to Claremorris, Mr Meade said: "We recently started doing some de-vegetation works on it to keep the line clean and open. The Department's view is that it is very viable for a freight corridor. We would probably do it in stages from Athenry to Claremorris. Beyond Claremorris, we would certainly support the ambition to keep it for rail traffic rather than anything else, and in time, if a decision is made to connect to Collooney (near Sligo), so be it."

STEAM SET TO RETURN TO SUIR VALLEY:

The Waterford & Suir Valley Railway (WSVR) has launched an appeal to raise €250,000 to return Black Hawthorn-built 0-4-0ST No. 859 *Kettering Furnaces No. 3* to working order. The loco was formerly part of the National Trust collection at Penrhyn Castle Museum, where it has been displayed after entering preservation. Last used in 1962, it has been donated to the WSVR and is seen waiting to be moved for assessment and overhaul in the North of England for use on the 10km-long 3ft gauge line between Killmeaden and Waterford, which is built on the former Waterford to Ballynacourty line closed in 1982. WSVR



Non-stop tour to celebrate 30 years of 2600s

TO mark the 30th anniversary of the 2600 Class Railcars, the Irish Railway Record Society is due to operate the 'Time's Arrow' railtour on May 18/19.

The Tokyu Car Corporation units entered service on May 16, 1994 and launched the Arrow suburban service between Dublin Heuston & Kildare.

The tour starts in Cork and on arrival in Dublin will explore the suburban system, visiting old haunts and new locations, including Dublin Heuston, Adamstown Bay Platform, Grand Canal Dock Bay Platform, Dundalk, Howth, Dublin Connolly, Maynooth and M3 Parkway.

The next day the charter will finish by re-creating the famous 12.20 Heuston to Cork nonstop 'Arrow' express of the late 1990s, but with the added bonus of extending this to Cobh. The 177-mile journey will be followed by a short break at Cobh, after which the train will retrace its steps as far as Cork, where the tour will conclude.

For bookings see irrstimesarrow.eventbrite.ie

Compiled by **Keith Fender**

Chinese steam comes to an end

Once the final bastion of steam operation worldwide, commercial steam operation in China ended in early 2024.



Just eight days before withdrawal, 2-8-2 No. JS8089 is seen working at the Sandaoling No2 mine on January 7, 2024. LIU XUEJUN

HAVING survived multiple previous deadlines, steam operation at the world's last bastion of steam and the significant working steam depot in Sandaoling's (Three Small Hills) huge open-cast coal mine in Xinjiang province in northwest China came to an end on January 15.

As previously reported, steam operation at the mine, which for some years has been the last major commercial non-heritage steam location in the world, had been temporarily reprieved in May 2018, after the plan to replace it with lorries was deemed uneconomic.

However, the open-cast pit had been expected to be worked out within three years and mine management had announced locally that steam operation would end in September 2021; a year later than an original deadline set by the local government.

In the end, steam operation and the mine itself held on for more than two years, but by the end was on a much smaller scale than in its heyday a decade or more ago when multiple steam locos were used within the open cast pit and on the extensive network serving it.

By the start of the 2020s, three JS Class 2-8-2 locos were used to work the big pit daily, out of a pool of four – Nos. JS8190, JS8195, JS8197 and JS8225 (plus JS8167 undergoing heavy repair), with one of the pool being serviced and cleaned each week. Six more were reportedly used pre-Covid for shunting duties in the South Yard which was then off limits to visitors for several years.

All of this work has now ceased; steam working in the big open cast mine ended when all its tracks were lifted in August 2022. All the former open pit locomotives with their tipping wagons were withdrawn and the washery was closed.

A small fleet of Class DF8B and newer Class HXN5B six-axle diesel locos has replaced the steam fleet; for many years diesel locos were not permitted on some parts of the system due to axle loadings, but the newer Class HXN5B locos are light enough to avoid damage to the track.

The last operational area was the South Yard, and thanks to two readers who visited during the last week in operation, details were recorded for posterity about the last locos ever used. In the last few months, only three locos were in use. Loco No. JS8314 had been in traffic until November 26, 2023, when a large truck hit it on a crossing, seriously damaging the tender but fortunately not harming the crew.

Following approval for use of the new type HXN5B diesels in the fourth week of December, steam loco No. JS8366 dropped its fire for the last time on December 26, leaving loco No. JS8089 as the only steam loco in service. In the last weeks it had run daily return workings to Erjing, sometimes with wagons loaded with open-topped shipping containers full of coal and had also banked some diesel-hauled trains to the coal loader.

Loco No. JS8089 was withdrawn on January 15, reportedly at 14.00, ending steam operation in China – and with the possible exception of shunting work in Bosnia and perhaps also in North Korea, ending worldwide commercial non-heritage steam operation.

Our thanks to Roger Croston and Nick Paton for information in this report.

RARE HAULAGE: **South Korean rail operator Korail has run a sectorised fleet for many years, and dedicated freight locomotives – many, but not all, identifiable by their distinctive red livery – rarely work passenger trains. In December, several freight sector Class 7500 diesel locos (EMD model GT26CW) were in use working passenger trains deputising for more modern passenger diesels. Korail No. 7531 is seen arriving at Cheong-ri with a service to Gimcheon on December 1, 2023. This loco was one of 50 built by EMD in the USA in 1971 – the 16 surviving locos from that order are all due for withdrawal by 2028.** ANTHONY FLYNN





ENDANGERED SPECIES ON AMERICA'S MAIN LINE: **Semaphore signals have almost totally disappeared on main line railways in North America. The only location on the national network also used by Amtrak is between Colmor and Wagon Mound, New Mexico, where less than 11 electrically powered semaphore signals originally installed by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway in 1920s remain in use on the Las Vegas (New Mexico) – La Junta Colorado 'Raton Sub' line. This is owned by freight BNSF but for many years has only been used by Amtrak's Southwest Chief Chicago – Los Angeles service. That train is seen on November 21, 2023 passing the semaphores near Wagon Butte with GE P42 locos Nos. 187+44.** FINBARR O'NEILL



The 'Tranz Alpine' crosses the Crooked River Bridge at Te Kinga on October 25, 2023. Immediately behind the Class DXC locos Nos. 5391 and 5460 are two ex-BR Mk.2s – luggage van No. AKS5868 and kitchen car No. AKL6112. ROBERT SWEET

Ex-BR carriages get further new lease of life

THREE ex-BR Mk.2 air-conditioned coaches have been converted into kitchen cars by New Zealand rail operator Kiwi Rail.

The vehicles, now classified as AKL, were formerly KiwiRail Nos. 5796, 5967 & 6112 (retaining their old BR numbers) used for suburban services around Auckland prior to replacement by EMUs. The conversion to a kitchen car has involved reskinning the carriage, removing the windows plus one set of the side doors that were added when the carriages were converted for suburban use in Auckland in the late 1990s.

Kiwi Rail is using the new kitchen cars to offer a premium service branded 'Scenic Plus' on its three 'Great Railway Journeys of New Zealand' long distance routes which use modern type AK coaches built in 2012. Three luggage vans, also converted from ex-BR Mk. 2 coaches (also retaining their BR numbers 5828, 5868 and 5926 – now designated class AKS) have been in use on these services since 2019/2020.

'Scenic Plus' services were introduced first on the Tranz Alpine (Christchurch to Greymouth) and the Coastal Pacific (Christchurch to Picton) routes on the South Island from December 2023. The Northern Explorer (Wellington to Auckland) is scheduled to commence on May 15, 2024. Scenic plus passengers also have exclusive use of one of the two viewing carriages on the train. *Our thanks to Robert Sweet for some of the information in this item.*

American light rail systems renew fleets

SEVERAL cities in the USA started building light rail systems in the 1980s and 1990s, often in places that previously had tram networks which had been removed in the 1930s-50s. As a result, many of these cities now need to replace their original light rail fleets.

In recent months an order from St Louis operator Metro Transit for up to 55 new high floor Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) has been placed with Siemens. The St Louis 'MetroRail' light rail system opened in stages between 1993 and 2006 and now stretches to 74km in length. Reopened with light rail tracks on the former mainline rail deck in 2003, the route includes crossing the river Mississippi on the oldest bridge over that river – the Eads Bridge which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2024.

The contract includes a firm order for 24 vehicles and options for another 31; if all the vehicles are ordered it will be worth around $390 million. The new LRVs, designated S200 by Siemens and based on those delivered to San Fransico from 2017, will replace much of the original St Louis fleet built by Siemens and Duewag (the first 31 delivered were partly built in Germany in 1991-93), as well as later similar vehicles built by Siemens in the USA. The new LRVs will all be built in the USA and deliveries are scheduled to begin in 2026.

In California, the light rail system in the State Capital, Sacramento, has also ordered new LRVs from Siemens, which will build them at its factory in the city. A fleet of 36 low floor type S700 vehicles were ordered in 2020, followed by a further eight in late 2023.

The first of the new vehicles have been delivered and should enter service in mid-2024, replacing Siemens U2a type vehicles built in the mid-1980s for the opening of the Sacramento system in 1987. Expansion over the next four decades has resulted in a system that is now 69km long.



A pair of the existing St Louis MetroLink Siemens-built LRVs, which will be replaced, is seen in the latest corporate livery seen near the St Louis Amtrak station on June 10, 2022. KEITH FENDER



'QUARRY HUNSLET' IN JAPAN:

A brand-new 0-4-0ST in outline based on the famous 'Quarry Hunslet' design has been built in Japan by the Rasuchijin Tetsudo Kyokai (=Railway Society) known as Rass, which is based near Narita Airport outside Tokyo. New 0-4-0ST No. 2 *Oscar* (Rass, Works number 6, August 2023) is seen on December 17, 2023 at a gala event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of Rass and its 30th year of operating trains at the Narita Dream Dairy Farm site where it has eight steam locos; five of which it built. *Oscar* is destined for a new 0.6km long narrow gauge line being built by model railway manufacturer Kato in Tsurugashima, Saitama Prefecture, 45km northwest from central Tokyo where it will work alongside an older Belgian built steam loco and a diesel. TAKAHIDE YAMAMOTO

DMUs from Poland to Ghana

POLISH train builder PESA is delivering two brand-new DMUs to the African country of Ghana for use on a new standard gauge line – and options for 10 more trains have been agreed.

The first unit, based closely on the Class 847 built for Czech Railways (see *RM* February p99) was undergoing testing on the Polish network in February. Once testing is complete, the trains will be shipped to Tema in Ghana via Hamburg.

The new 96.7km railway being built in Ghana connects the port in Tema, near the Capital Accra, with Mpakadan and is planned as the first phase of the 1000km Ghana-Burkina Faso Railway. Most of the older 1067mm gauge rail network in Ghana has been abandoned in the last few decades.

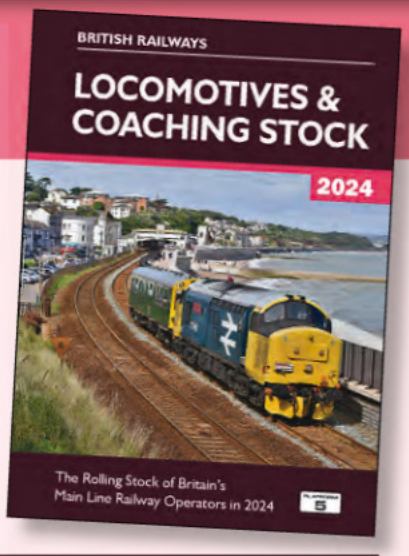
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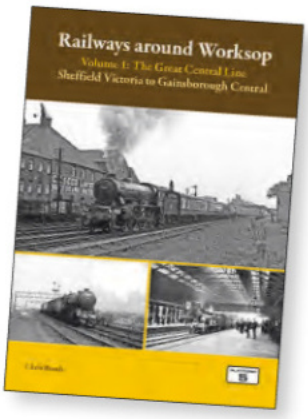
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Images from a Disappearing World

The Leicester & Swannington Railway

By Vic Millington



THIS really is a book with a difference. At first glance, I did not think it would appeal, but within a dozen or so pages I was hooked.

Vic Millington is an artist who decided the best way to convey the essence of a line as old as the Leicester & Swannington was through a series of paintings. In so doing, he has not only brought one of England's earliest railways to life but created a world in which readers who never saw the line in use can somehow feel as though they did… not only in LMS and BR days, but in the Victorian and Edwardian eras too.

He has achieved this by producing more than 100 colour images and presenting them in a semi-chronological, semi-geographical format, starting with the opening of the L&SR in 1832 and coming up to date with Class 66s on the present-day freight-only section. Artistic licence is employed in a couple of the paintings to show trains and people of different eras in the same location at the same time, a curious but effective technique.

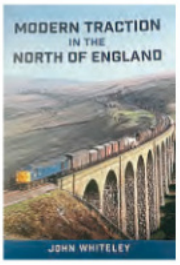
The book will appeal to colliery and quarry enthusiasts as well as railfans as some of the Leicestershire coal and granite sites served by the line over the years are featured in addition to stations and goods yards.

It should be noted that, apart from a few newspaper cuttings and extended captions (most of them handwritten), the book is almost entirely pictorial… but that is one of its strengths for it is not intended to be a detailed history, more a visual 'journey'. **NP**

Published by Leicestershire Industrial History Society
www.lihs.org.uk
130 pages, softback. £25

Modern Traction in the North of England

By John Whiteley



THE author is a well known photographer who here gets to showcase some of his work featuring modern traction from the early 1960s through to the latter years of British Rail in the 1990s.

It is displayed in the standard Amberley format of two pictures per page, adding up to a photographic survey of the changing scene over the years, mostly of the BR Blue era but also covering Sectorisation.

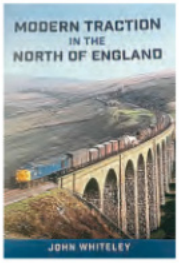
The captions are detailed and provide information on the train in the picture but also in many cases the history of the locomotive featured. The area covered ranges from northern Derbyshire and Cheshire, through Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cumbria, and up to the Scottish border.

Image reproduction is very good, making this recommended reading. **RM**

Published by Amberley
www.amberley-books.com
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Merseyrail Electric: The award-winning network

By Martyn Hilbert



THIS book offers an illustrated history of the Merseyrail network, written by an expert on the subject, covering the history of the third-rail electric railway around the Liverpool area from the late-1970s to the arrival of the latest Class 777 units.

The book is split into six main chapters: In the beginning; Onwards; Operations; The Northern line; The Wirral line; and Merseyrail Miscellany. The text is informative, there are many of high quality and well reproduced photographs, and the captions provide useful additional information.

With the last of the network's Class 508s now withdrawn, and the Class 507s due to follow shortly, this is a useful guide to Merseyrail and especially so for anyone planning to visit the area before the last of the old fleet disappears. **RM**

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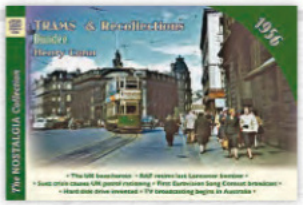


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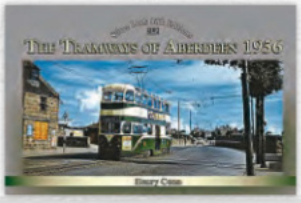
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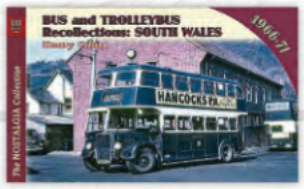
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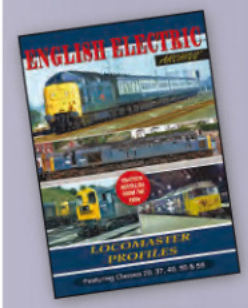
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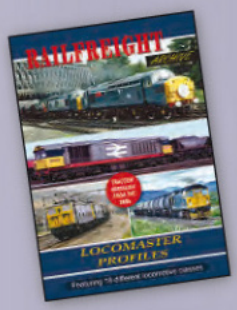
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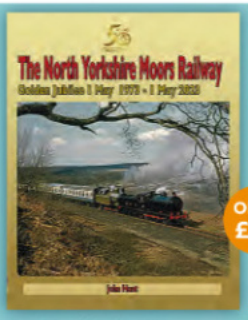


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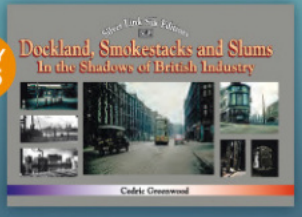
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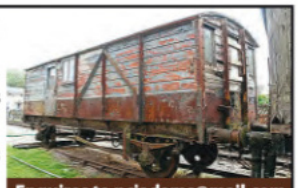


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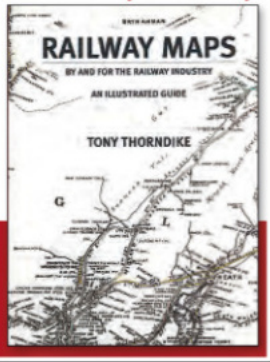
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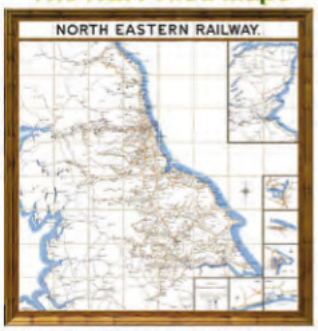
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CROSSWORD & NEXT MONTH

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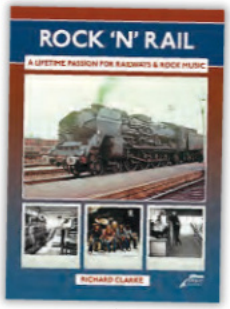
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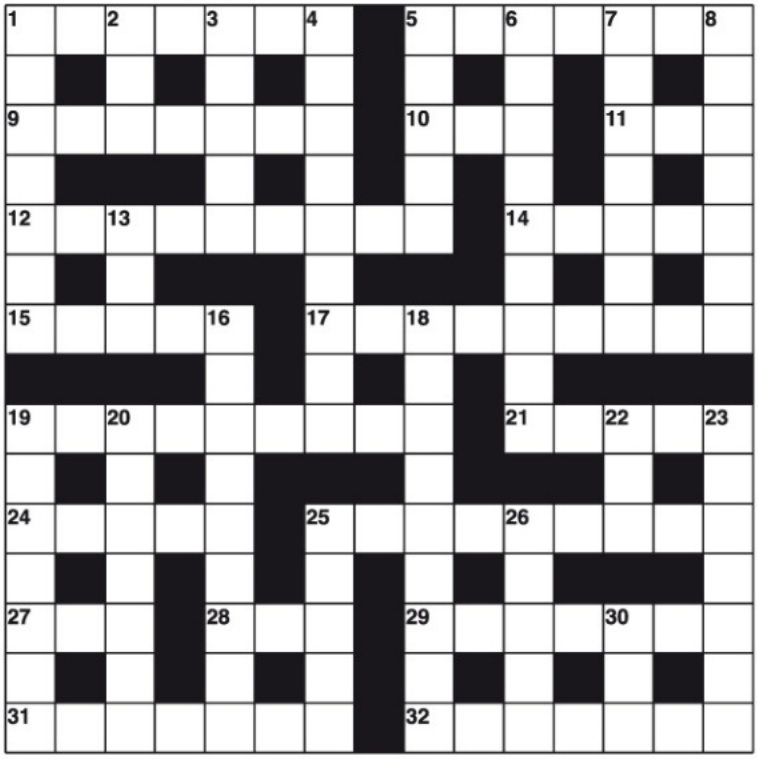
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Across

1 & 5 Junction and former station between Swindon and Chippenham (7,7)
9 Last station before Hawes on the NER branch from Northallerton (7)
10 Gainsborough ___ Road (3)
11 Yeovil ___ Mill (3)
12 & 24 across Name carried by six locos from a GWR 'Iron Duke' to a Class 87 electric (4,2,3,5)
14 Location of Basford Hall yard (5)
15 Nigel Gresley's middle name (5)
17 Scottish town with Harbour, South Beach and Town stations (9)
19 Compagnie internationale des ___, historic 'Orient 7 down' operator (6-3)
21 Number of Kings and Sisters in London stations (5)
24 See 12 across
25 'A2/3' No. 60515 (3,6)
27 US term for a railway sleeper (3)
28 Initials seen on railings outside Marylebone station (1,1,1)
29 ___ Waggonway, East Lothian, of 1722, possibly Scotland's oldest railway (7)
31 Descriptive of a 7 down service? (3-4)
32 Intermediate station on the MR's Higham Ferrers branch, now a museum and short heritage line (7)



Down

1 'A1' No. 60114, named after a Railway Executive member and prominent trade unionist (1,1,5)
2 Selly ___, Birmingham Cross-City Line station (3)
3 'A3' No. 60084 (5)
4 Famous railway documentary film of 1936 (5,4)
5 & 22 down Former Manchester station that once served Zoological Gardens (5,3)
6 Devon station, location of a Brunel atmospheric railway pumping station (9)
7 Type of train operated by 'Jubilee' No. 45706? (7)
8 ___ *Abbey*, GWR 'Castle' No. 5087 (7)
13 Pont ___, former station on the LNWR Llanberis branch (3)
16 Manchester steam shed, 9A (9)
18 Railhead-mounted warning device (9)
19 Station and junction between Twickenham and Felton (7)
20 LNWR station between Abergavenny Junction and Brynmawr (7)
22 See 5 down
23 Bishop's ___ & Molland, GWR Barnstaple line station (7)
25 Type of yard for which Barry Docks was famous (5)
26 Railed vehicles running along roads (5)
30 Word following Audley, Bourne and Hatch in station names (3)

March crossword entry form

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel Email

Send completed form (photocopies are accepted) to: March Crossword Quiz, The Railway Magazine, Mortons Media Group Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle LN9 6JR. Open to UK entrants only. Winners will be announced in the May 2024 issue. **You can email entries to RMcomp@mortons.co.uk Please list the answers to the clues for across, then down.** The winners will be the senders of the first all-correct solutions opened in our office. There are no cash alternatives available. The winners will be the first names drawn at random from the people who answered correctly. Terms and conditions apply. To view the privacy policy of MMG Ltd (publisher of *The Railway Magazine*) please visit www.mortons.co.uk/privacy

Solution to the January issue.

Across: 9 Elizabeth 10 Islip 11 Spean 12 Combe Down 13 Red Star 14 Systems 17 Salop 19 Pen 20 LBSCR 21 Appleby 22 Brocket 24 Brookwood 26 Annie 28 Totem 29 Third rail
Down: 1 Tees 2 Big end 3 Barnstaple 4 Redcar 5 Thompson 6 Line 7 Bloomers 8 Open 13 Risca 15 St Leonards 16 Sprat 18 Lapworth 19 Plymouth 22 Bodmin 23 Kendal 24 Bath 25 Kemp 27 Ella

January winner: Ian Lambourne, Andover, Kent.
Runners-up: Graham Frost, Northampton; Richard Parsey, Bridport.

The closing date for this month's crossword is: Friday, April 5, 2024.

The editor's decision is final and no correspondence can be entered into. No employee (including the immediate families) of Mortons Media Ltd or any subsidiary company, and The Nostalgia Collection or any subsidiary company, or any company associated with the production of *The Railway Magazine*, may enter this competition. No purchase necessary. No cash alternatives are offered and prizes are not transferable. Responsibility cannot be accepted for delayed, lost or damaged entry forms.

Coming up next month...

LIKE many other heritage lines around the country, the Bodmin Railway is still recovering from the effects of the pandemic, forcing changes to be made to adapt to what has become the new norm. We visit this Cornish gem for an update and to see the changes they have made so far, and how they're preparing for the future.



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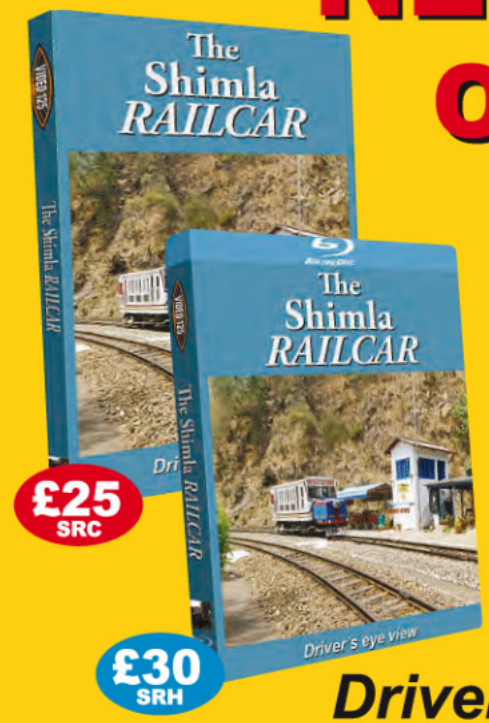
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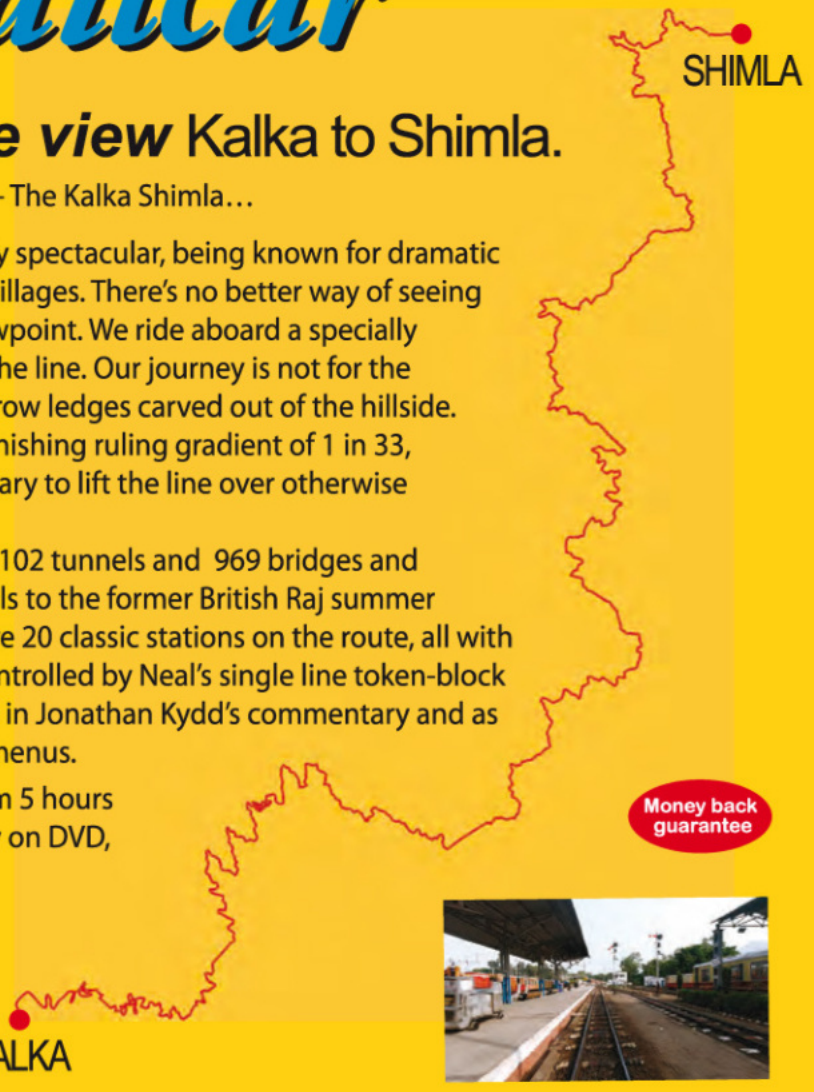
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The 59½ mile or 95.6 km long line has no less than 102 tunnels and 969 bridges and culverts whilst climbing over the Himalayan foothills to the former British Raj summer capital of Simla (as it was originally called). There are 20 classic stations on the route, all with British-built lower-quadrant semaphore signals, controlled by Neal's single line token-block system. The fascinating history of the line is related in Jonathan Kydd's commentary and as usual, there's a commentary off option in the disc menus.

The journey time has been subtly edited down from 5 hours to just over 2 (no features lost) and is available now on DVD, Blu-ray and download.

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