



**NEWS LETTER**

**No 5 March 2021**



We'll meet again!

Hello Everyone

With the first day of spring on March 20<sup>th</sup>, let's hope scenes like this are behind us now and we can look forward to some warm days in the garden if not further afield.

The Severn Valley Railway have announced their guest loco for the proposed April 15-18<sup>th</sup> Spring Steam-Up gala will be new-build Didcot Saint class 4-6-0 loco NO **2999, Lady of**



**Ledgend.** When George Jackson Churchward succeeded Dean as chief Mechanical Engineer of the GWR in 1902 he dispensed with the conservative Victorian practices of his former chief and instead produced designs that were brashly transatlantic with large driving wheels fully exposed, outside cylinders, and coupling and connecting rods pumping for all to see. His Saint class locos were amongst the first to be designed expressly for fast running and established



design principles for GWR 2- cylinder classes over the next fifty years.

Already on test at the 'Valley' is GB Railfreight's new class 69, the first of ten Class 56s which are being converted into '69s' by Progress Rail at its Longport facility, near Stoke-on-Trent. The engines will be replaced with those fitted to certain Class 66 locomotives along with new motors and electronic cubicles. Originally a class of 135 locos only 12 currently remain in active service. All this is considerably cheaper than buying new locomotives apparently.



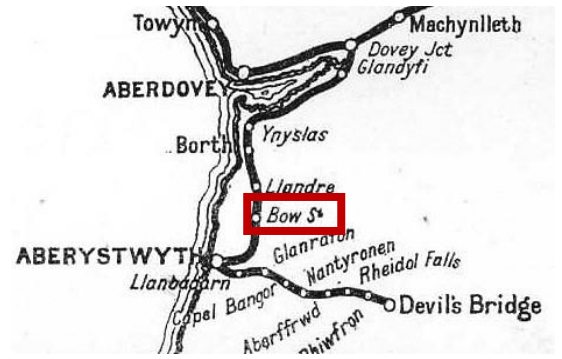
Photo: Jack Boskett

JB

A Churchward loco with more permanent connections to the SVR is 2-6-2T 'Small Prairie' No 4566 which arrived from Barry scrapyard in 1970.  
  
Photo from I Whitehouse



It's not very often you read of a new station in a rural location but Bow Street station opened on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February, at a cost of £7.95 million. With Wales under a strict Covid-19 lockdown, there was little fanfare when the



09:12 TFW service from Machynlleth to Aberystwyth stopped to pick up passengers at the Ceredigion village for the first time since 1965, a precaution in case any overeager railway enthusiasts had been tempted to break the restrictions for that shot of the first diesel multiple-unit train calling at Bow Street. 158 839 did the honours.



The new station is a little utilitarian compared with the original opened by the Aberystwyth and Welsh Coast Railway in 1864. Pre-war the GWR positioned camping coaches here and two continued in BR days until 1959.



## Quiz Question

How many of you recognise this much changed spot today, once graced by Kings and Castles? A modern station of sorts sits the other side of the bridge today.



Photos Brian Allen

Last month's answers were The Great Western pub (bet you all got that!), Worcester loco shed and the rare Western Region loco photo was at Walsall.

## STOP PRESS

It is with great regret the directors of Llangollen Railway PLC have had to take the reluctant step of inviting the bank to appoint a receiver.

## Stafford Virgins-Part 3

The blockade of the West Coast Main line between Colwich Junction and Cheadle Hulme was to commence on the 19th May but the senior Virgins felt that the casual Virgins should get a feel of what was to come by commencing duties in March. I was allocated the Sunday afternoon shift for my first day starting at 2pm and finishing at 10pm. It may come as a surprise to readers that Sunday pm was the busiest time at the station with passengers returning to work for Monday and people having been away for the weekend returning home. There were 39 full time staff at the Station covering different tasks, from ticket office duties, platform staff for dispatching trains safely and train announcers as well as 3 team leaders and a Station Manager plus an Assistant Manager. The people who worked in the cafe and bookstall were employed by outside companies.

I made myself known to the team leader on the day and was instructed to assist him on the afternoon by being 'Puppy Walked' on general platform duties. The time went so quickly with so much happening that when I went home and told my wife of the going's on, she said I should write all this down and then pen a book! Well not quite a book but some very interesting tales for future issues of the Bugle.

The following day I made a note that that I was kept busy and I was having difficulty trying to master the security code system on most doors and no time for a 'ciggy'. After two late shifts I had a rest day and back to the station on Wednesday for a 5.30am start. The day did not start well!!!



A 76-year-old lady was going to catch the 05.56 train to Holyhead which was cancelled. Under normal circumstances this may have caused a little inconvenience having to change trains but this lady was going to see her dentist; in DUBLIN, and on arrival at Holyhead the boat had sailed and she had missed her appointment. She telephoned a friend to tell of her predicament and said she had been told she would be back in Stafford by 12.00 noon and would she pick her up. The friend turned up and spoke to the team leader as she was not on the 12-noon arrival. She eventually turned up at 4.20 and I was told that after catching not 1 but 2 wrong trains taking her to Shrewsbury from Crewe and on return taking a non-stop train through Stafford to Wolverhampton.

The car park at Stafford was always a problem, filling early in the morning and this was before the overspill park had become available. You needed a thick skin at times taking the verbal abuse from passengers.

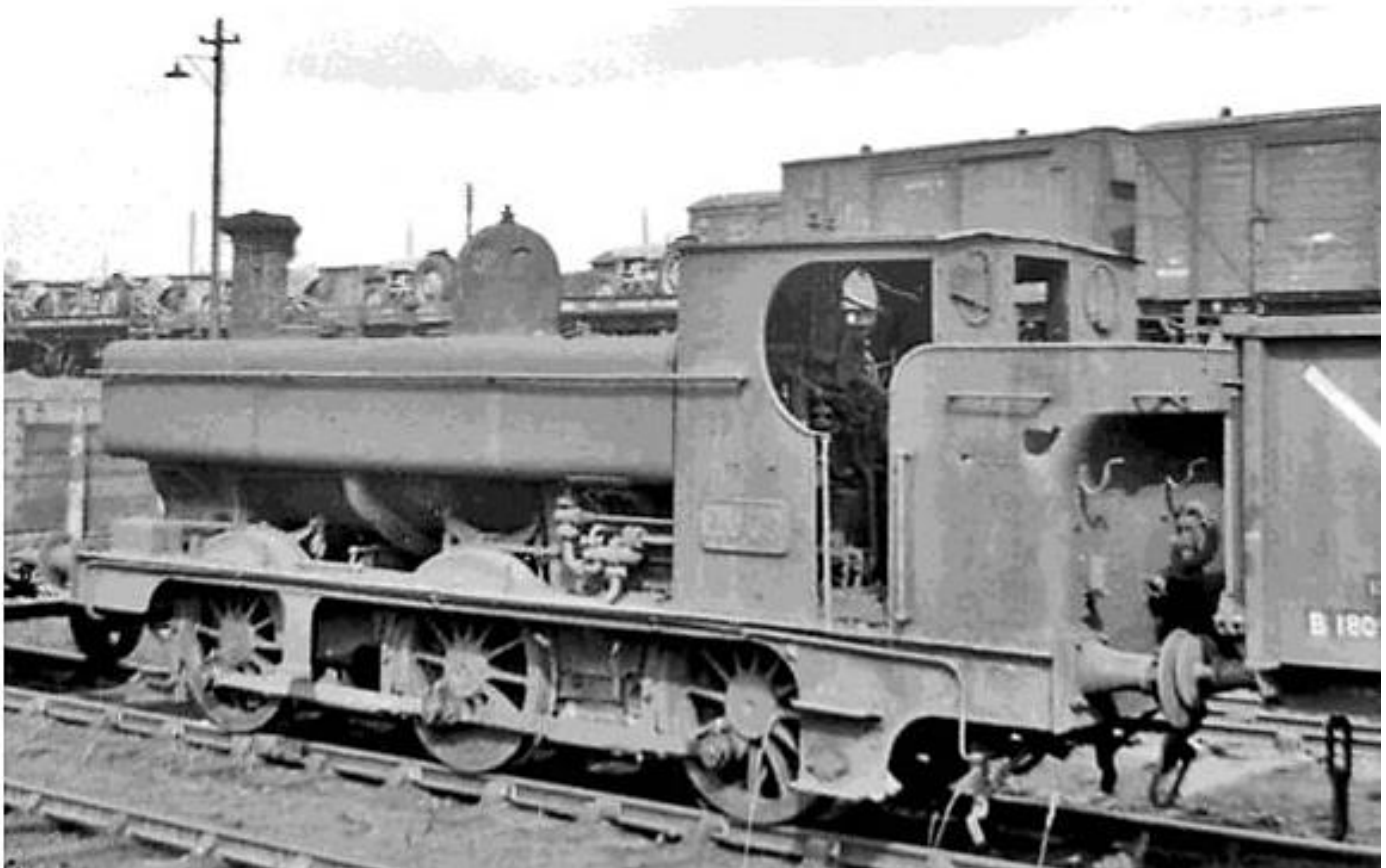
One of the regular occurrences were people being on the wrong trains and on the Thursday, I have a note that four Japanese tourists arrived on a train from Birmingham expecting to find William Shakespeare's birthplace and that was not going to be last occasion this occurred for on Friday a lady and two children somehow managed to catch a train at Euston London, bound for Liverpool wishing to go to Taunton in Somerset. So endeth my first week.

## Guest Photographers Spot

This one, while admittedly a bit mundane, is of some historical importance however since it is of the very last Wolverhampton – built pannier tanks, No 2069 of Birkenhead shed, on its way past its birthplace to Swindon for cutting up. Predominant among the number of locomotives built at Stafford Road were the various classes of 0-6-0 saddle tanks, some 354 in total built between 1867 and 1905, most of which were rebuilt as pannier tanks during their lives.



2069, of the 2021 Class was built in September 1899 and converted to a pannier tank in September 1920. Out of the 140 strong class almost 60 never had enclosed cabs, even those built as late as the early years of the 20th century. 2069 wasn't the last Wolverhampton – built loco in active service. That honour fell to 2-6-2T 4507, one of a batch of 20 such engines, the last products of the Works, built between 1906 and 1908, surprisingly only two of which outlasted 2069, Nos 4507 and 4508 with 4508 withdrawn in October 1959 but 4507 not until October 1963. There were some moves at that time to have 4507 purchased by the then Wolverhampton County Borough Council for preservation in recognition of the then town's past as a "railway town" but sadly to no avail.



No 2028 at Shrewsbury in original saddle tank condition

# A "Ghost Train" At Droitwich

## "Pirate" Engine Heads Express

The hijack of a similar pannier was reported in *The Times* newspaper on 26 January 1961.

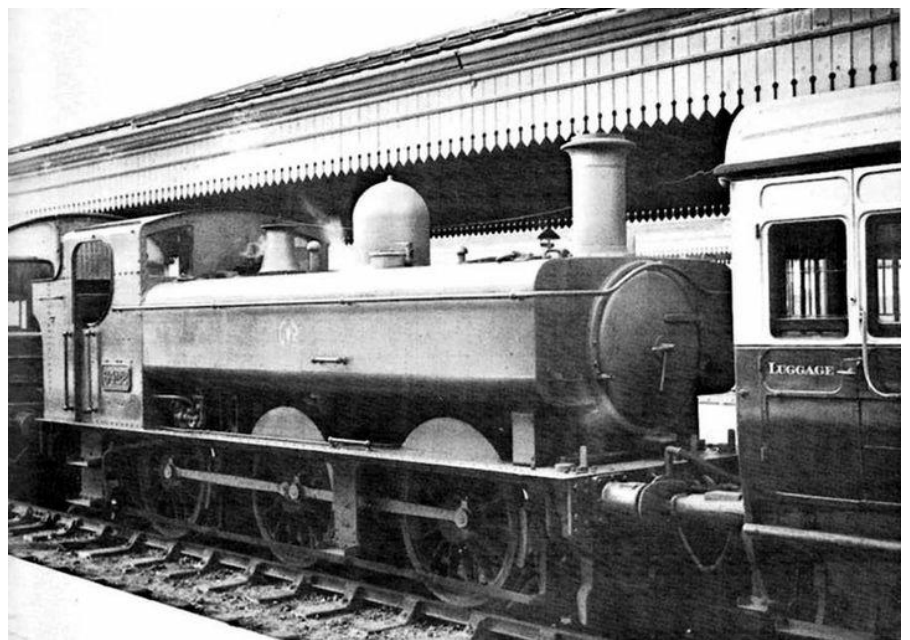
28-MILE RUN IN A BORROWED  
LOCOMOTIVE

Droitwich, Jan 25

Shortly after 2 a.m. today tank engine No 6422 was stopped by Mr Frank Wilkes in front of his signal box at Droitwich in response to a call from up the line. The engine came smartly to a halt and backed smoothly onto a siding. The driver entered the box, exchanged the time of day with Mr Wilkes and telephoned the Worcester traffic control for permission to continue.

Half an hour later the engine was still on the siding, but both the driver and his mate had disappeared. The men, who drove themselves on an unauthorised cheap excursion from Wolverhampton to Droitwich, have been sought throughout the day by railway police.

The 28-mile journey apparently began about midnight when the engine was taken from the Stafford Road sheds, Wolverhampton. The driver rang a local signal box, observed the proper procedure, and announced he was taking a light engine to Worcester, said a British Railways official. He was signalled out on to the main line.



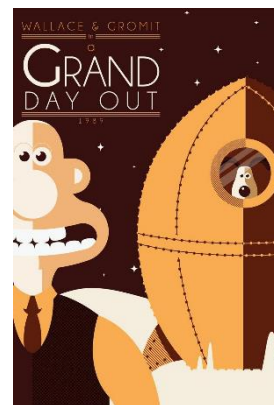
The engine was then skilfully driven through the highly complicated network of lines in the Dudley-Stourbridge-Kidderminster area. Enginemasters were suggesting today that it took on water at Stourbridge, but this was not confirmed by British Railways officials. It seems that the control staff at Worcester may have been the first people to sense that all was not well.

Railway officials believe the driver must have had experience of driving on that line. "There are hundreds of signals in that 28 miles, and the chap also had to watch out for the ground discs which told him if the points were right", said one of them. "Oxford University may not be very far from Droitwich, but I don't think a student could have done it."

What can the man be charged with? "There is trespass, of course", said an official. "And there must be something which stops people taking away rolling stock without permission ..."

On the 19th of July 1961, Phineas Whitehouse, a former railway cleaner and fireman of Wolverhampton pleaded guilty to mounting a railway locomotive causing it to travel from Wolverhampton, endangering the safety of persons on the railway, stealing 4cwt 56lbs of coal and obstructing a diesel train at Stourbridge. Sentencing him to two years' probation, the recorder said that 99% of us would like to 'drive a train'! it appears Whitehouse took the loco 'in a fit of pique' after a girl refused to marry him.

## Away Days - The Day We Went to Bangor



### Dave Rook remembers **A Grand Day Out**

Over the last few years Leon and myself have used the railway network for various days out, but not to go to moon to collect cheese. This is our recollection of one such day.

In the past we have separately used a round robin ticket from Shrewsbury to visit the Ffestiniog Railway returning via the Conwy valley line and the North Wales coast. But in 2018 our thoughts turned to doing a more ambitious circular route taking in the Welsh Highland Railway. At an early stage of the planning, we did establish that it would be possible to complete the circle, anti-clockwise, in a day using the local bus service to travel between Bangor and Caernarfon.

All timings were checked and, on the 19th August 2018, we arrived at Codsall station around 8.15 packed with sandwiches, cameras and of course a pasty from Greggs. The staff in Greggs always ask where we are off to today usually followed by the words '*where's that*'? To complete the circle, we had to catch the 1.00 p.m. train from Caernarfon which meant that we only had a 10-minute connection in Shrewsbury. However, our train from Codsall was running late and getting later. At the scheduled departure time the train was over 15 minutes away due to delays on the New Street-Wolverhampton corridor, so plan B was put



into place. This involved catching the 8.27 train to Wolverhampton which was on time. At Wolverhampton we bought our ticket to Bangor (not mentioning that we started at Codsall) and then boarded a delayed Cross-Country voyager Manchester train to Crewe. A similarly delayed Euston to Holyhead Voyager, utterly dependable and equally uncomfortable, took us along the North Wales coast as far as Bangor. **(left)**

The change of plan was to our advantage as we arrived about 15minutes earlier than we would have done if we had gone via Shrewsbury. Luckily the bus stop outside the station is on the main road to Caernarfon and buses ran every 15 minutes. But not today. We waited, with a growing band of locals, for half an hour with many buses going towards the centre of Bangor but none going in our direction. Like all buses, two eventually arrived together which then leap frogged each other on the 9-mile trip to Caernarfon, via the local hospital. We did remember that our bus passes were not valid in Wales. We eventually arrived with around 30 minutes to spare which gave us time to take a few shots of the castle before heading for the Welsh Highland Railway station. Having bought our tickets at the smart new booking office complex across the road and taken photos of ex South



African Railways NGG 16 Garratt loco number **87**, we settled back in a carriage towards the rear of the train next to the pullman car so that we could take shots of the loco on the tight curves.



The train left on time. This was important as if we had caught the next train there was no Network Rail service to get us back to Shrewsbury that day.

We spent a pleasant two and a quarter hour travelling through the Snowdonia National Park where, despite the visit to Greggs earlier, Leon couldn't resist the temptation of an excellent Welsh Rarebit from the buffet car before crossing a northbound train hauled by sister loco 138 at Rhyd Ddu. At this point we were allowed to exit the coaches so that we could photograph the other train arriving but at the same time keeping an eye on the carriage door which we had left open. The next stop was Beddgelert where many passengers were waiting to join the train having decided to only have a return journey on the Southern half of the line.

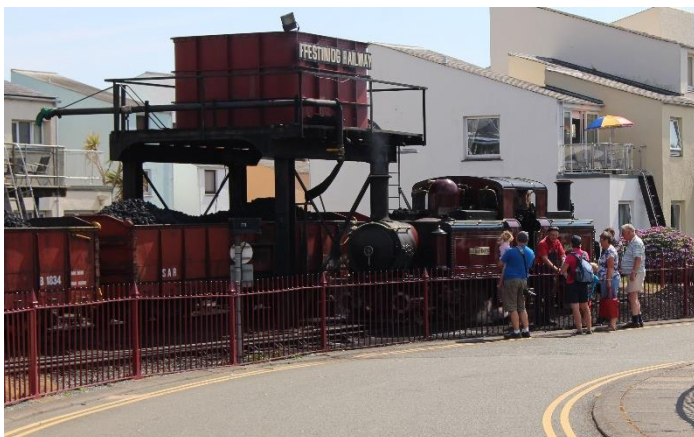


Flat crossing

approach to Porthmadog, the 90-degree flat crossing of the BR line **(left)** and the short section of track which runs along and across one of the main roads into the town. **(right)**



On arrival we took some shots of the loco running round the train and of one of the oldest Ffestiniog Double Fairlie loco, No 10 Merddin Emrys. **(below)** We then watched the departure of the 3.40 train back to Caernarfon before buying an ice cream and making our way down the main street to catch the train to Machynlleth and then on to Shrewsbury. After catching the train back to Codsall we arrived home around 8.30 from the opposite direction from which we had departed 12 hours earlier.



For when we return to normal, a highly recommended day out, but remember to always have a plan B!



## A Day in Berlin

With foreign holidays on hold, Mike Richards recalls a day spent in Berlin



In April, 1992, two years after the infamous wall that had divided east and west Berlin for 28 years was dramatically torn down, I enjoyed an East Germany Shed bash which included a day in Berlin taking in 6 depots and other places of interest. As far as I can recall, all the sheds were fairly adjacent to stations. East Berlin was still rebuilding and rail and road links to the West were being opened up.

First stop was Berlin Hbf depot which was only a road width from the Berlin Wall. Seen **right** is a Russian-built Co-Co diesel, originally DR class 132, then 232 and renumbered class 234, and recently fitted with modified ETH and updated bogies to permit use on passenger work. Initially looked down upon, these locos performed very well and I believe still operate today. I am unsure as to the action of the



mechanic with his back to the camera!



Next stop was Berlin Hbf, now renamed B-Ostbahnhof, the current Hbf sited to allow trains from all over Germany and Europe to come together under one roof. A Berlin S-bahn train, 476 017-9 dating from 1936 is awaiting departure.



Rummelsburg Depot held a surprise, with a derelict Class 175 - 175 005-8 and coaches. This was DR response to DB Class 601 used on Trans-Europe Express, the 175 worked services Berlin to Prague & Vienna. I believe the train was kept to provide spares for preserved 675 014.

On to Schoneweide, a depot with its own station! The Class 476 (476 331, around 1937) is working a service to Schönefelde Airport.



The depot looked as if it was still recovering from WW2 damage! The Class 52 was one of 6000 built around 1943 by Skoda. The loco was in steam and we were allowed to cab it. The supervisor explained that it was the local area emergency stand-by loco!

Battery loco ASF100 (**below right**) shunting a Class 143 (222) electric. These were proving to a very successful unit and were moving out into DB territory to back up the ageing DB locos built after WW2.



As well as 12 withdrawn Class 52, there were withdrawn Class 142/242 locos (**above left**) in the sidings, made redundant by Class 143 and 112 locos.

We also visited Pankow, Lichtenberg & Wustermark to round off the day. I believe several of the depots and stations visited have gone with rebuilding and rationalisation.

The next day, we visited Cottbus Depot where several locomotives belonging to THEDB / DR



museum fleets are looked after.

**03 204** 4-6-2, built 1936;

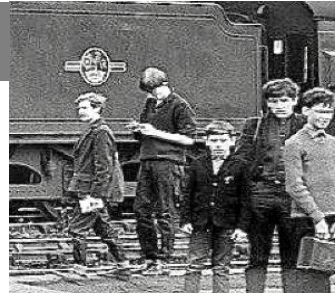
**43 001** 2-10-0, built 1926;

**52 8148-0** 2-10-0, built 1943;

**044 225-1** 2-10-0, built between 1926 and 1944.

**Danke für die  
Erinnerungen Mike!.**

## Platform end



**Trevor Binnersley** recognised the photo of Freddie Griffiths in the last issue and confirmed that some Stafford Road drivers did indeed chalk the number of carriages and weight in the cab after receiving the information from the guard. He also sent a few photos from his days as a Stafford Road fireman in the 1960s. Time has not been kind to the little box Brownie snaps and the negatives are lost in the mists of time but what they lack in quality is compensated by their nostalgic value. Sadly, we can't go back and take them again! Here he is aged 21 on the buffer beam of **6834 Dummer Grange** with an 81C Southall shed plate. Alongside is a GWR Hall class, No **6906 Chicheley Hall**.



Stafford Road's King No **6022 King Edward 111** and Trevor's Queen of 53 years stand amongst the Stafford Road ashes taken when she was his girlfriend.

That's what you call giving a girl a good night out in Wolverhampton!

Your chance to comment on previous items, add a photo or story, correct our mistakes and generally add to our knowledge ....

We would love to hear from you!



**I asked him for a few more memories and 50 plus years later we see him on the footplate again at Tyseley, 5043 Earl of Mount Edgecumbe**

I started on the Railway in 1955 till early 1964 with a short break in between. When I started, I was half an inch too short to pass for the footplate so the first 12 months I worked in the office at Stafford Rd works. This meant I got out of cleaning but I was then passed for cleaner, which only lasted two weeks and then passed out for fireman. The first 6 months I was in the prep link which was very hard work preparing Kings and Castles in the early hours of the morning.



Moving on, I then went on shunting duties, local Passenger and goods trains and goods and parcel train workings. I remember I fired the Pines Express twice to Oxford during a very hot summer. Another memorable trip was on a '50' Castle from Wolverhampton to Chester with only 6 coaches, about 200 tons, with a Top link Driver. When we backed on to the train at Low Level station the Driver asked me if I had ever done the magic ton on the footplate. I said no and he said well you are going to do it today down the 1:100 through Albrighton; and we did, the needle on the speedometer hit the 100 mark, all very exciting!

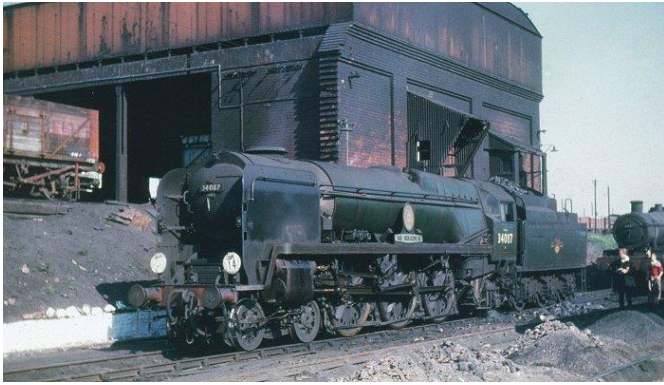


There were so many stories on the footplate but alas a lot of footplate men have now passed away. Trevor included this photo of the recently returned to traffic **3440, City of Truro**, freshly arrived at Stafford Road from Swindon. **Was this to work a 'special' I wondered, Simon or Roger will know?**



**Thanks for sharing your memories Trevor!**

**Derek Horton** also emailed regarding Freddie Griffiths with a tale of visiting his Gran (Derek's, not Freddie's) in the early 50's in New X hospital where one of the nurses had the surname Griffiths. On occasions I would go with my parents visiting and I spoke with the nurse who informed me that her two brothers and she came up to Wolverhampton after the war from South Wales with her brothers working at 84A. Cutting a long story shorter she arranged for brother Mick and me to go to the shed and footplate up to Low level and down the Wednesfield line to reverse on to a London train. Memory is a little vague but the loco was **6005, King George 11**. **This loco is mentioned again by Ray Franklin below.**



**This wonderful image of Battle of Britain class Pacific 34087 145 Squadron, last month, which I am now happy to be able to credit to Doug Nicholson, brought this response from **Simon Dewey**.**

In answer to the question you posed concerning the BoB at Oxley – yes, I did see it. In fact, I was standing alongside Doug Nicholson when he took the photo!

It was a Sunday and for some reason he and I had cycled to town, choosing to return via the BCN towpath. A swift detour up the drive into Oxley shed was naturally called for and we duly happened upon the Bulleid Pacific by the coaler. Photo taken (I didn't have my camera with me) and no one obviously about we of course set about entering to bunk the shed itself. No one about...? How wrong we were! The shed foreman was standing just by the front of the building. "Have you got a permit?" (knowing we and the droves of local spotters beginning to arrive after us certainly didn't). "Then get out ". No arguing with that...

What has always since struck me was how reasonable authority was that day. He could easily have stood at the top of the drive and turned away all comers but knowing there was something special on view he let us see the Bulleid but no more before ejecting us from the premises.

**Roger Fletcher** made contact to question the date of the photo as Simon Dewey's book dated it to 1965. This set Simon checking and he replied 'Thus I have to admit that the 1965 date is wrong (clearly you shouldn't believe everything you see in books!) and 1963, 28th July, would appear to be the correct date'.

**-Ray Franklin** sent me a newspaper cutting concerning former Stafford Road driver Stan Burgess who celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February at his care home in Oakengates. Ray writes "before lockdown I used to visit him most months. His legs were weak but his recall was strong and he'd enjoy talking about steam days. He recalled hitting **105 mph**



on **6005** on the way back from Paddington (firing or driving I'm unsure) but added that **6014** was not such a capable performer. Stan worked with my dad at Stafford Road. and he finished at High Level in 1985. Not many ex B.R. steam loco drivers left now. He had a very good model railway layout which had to go when he moved to Cartlidge house and he obviously found this to be quite upsetting. He has his memories though".

**I noticed Stan got one thousand, eight hundred likes on the Veterans' Foundation Facebook site which must be a record for a Stafford Road man!**

# A Country Stationmaster



**Pete Walker, here he is on the right instructing his gateman, tells us more...**

**L**eon has asked me to write to you about my life and times on the Kent & East Sussex Railway, but before I do, I thought my reason for enlisting in the first place would set the scene.

I now live in Pett, a small village close to Hastings in East Sussex, moving south in 1978 from my birthplace, Darlington, County Durham, quite a well-known railway town! The males in my small family were all railwaymen. My great grandfather was based at Barnard Castle (which has a fine railway history in its own right!) as was my grandfather when he first started. He later moved to Darlington which was where my father joined him, all of them working on the footplate. My father later progressed to Shed Foreman, first at the steam shed, and then to the newly constructed Diesel Depot. So, it's in the blood!!

If it is of interest my family feature in a fifteen-minute film made by Tyne Tees Television made in 1960. Originally called "The Way we Live" but a search on YouTube "A Railwayman's Film Darlington 1960" will find it. Its concept was at the beginning of diesel traction with my grandfather driving the steam locomotives and my father on the diesel multiple units. Darlington Railway Workshops also appear and I am the one greeting my father in the shorts! This is the link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBvd-dr\\_o88](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBvd-dr_o88) (Right click to view)

I managed to pass the 11+ and my first club to join at my grammar school was the Railway Society. We enjoyed many trips away visiting railway centres across the country. Certainly Doncaster, Crewe, Carlisle and Derby were on the list. We had excellent rail connections from Darlington due to its situation on the East Coast Main Line. One I remember well was a trip to visit all the London main sheds. 40+ of us left at midnight on the mail train for Kings Cross arriving in the early hours where a coach was waiting to pick us up. Somehow, we managed the full itinerary with a little time to spare in Piccadilly Circus before getting the down mail train back. Several of us in a compartment fell fast asleep, but luckily one heard the whistle for departure from Darlington!! We just got off as the train was leaving.

I left school to take up a career in electrical wholesaling, so anything railway related was put on hold! It was during this time that I moved from North East to South East to further develop the company. I was fortunate to be able to retire in late 1999 when I was quite young and after a few weeks called at Northiam Station on the K&ESR where I met the Chief Ticket Inspector, so I ended up starting my training as a Travelling Ticket Inspector! The Railway at that time, was short on resource (and cash) following opening to Bodiam which was in April 2000, about the same time as I called at Northiam.



So, after a couple of years as a TTI I was asked to do Station Master, Booking Clerk and Crossing Keeper roles, the three going together in order to become S.M. on the Railway at the time. I thoroughly enjoyed the years in these roles working at all the stations along the line at various times.

Northiam Station was at the end of the line from its opening in 1990 until Bodiam opened in 2000 and its character changed completely after this time. A team of supporters did a fantastic job in looking after the station making it their own, unfortunately this team disbanded over the years culminating with the Station Agent/Manager retiring. That was when I was asked to take over! Refurbishment of the building was the first task, then a new team was required, several people came forward so a series of events were organised. Northiam is the only station with two platforms which makes it ideal for gala events where enthusiast can change trains to make the most of any event. It also has a large car park adjacent to the line and we worked towards getting a footbridge, which eventually was donated, but resources did not extend to erecting it. Unfortunately, this is still the case, so it remains in store until funds permit. The station still prospers to this day. I am no longer SA, I was called back from retirement in electrical wholesaling a few years ago, and had to relinquish my responsibilities at the KESR. Since re-retiring my interest has not dwindled but I have taken on less in the way of responsibility. I have a keen interest in the future of the line in particular its push towards a main line connection at Robertsbridge on the Hastings to Charing Cross line. This has planning permission but is still waiting for the Transport and Works Order to be heard. It has been deferred twice but a new date is set for July this year. Fingers crossed.

Click on the icon below for a gallery of pictures, mostly mine, which show Northiam Station in the days I was SA. There are a couple of photographs of Robertsbridge Junction on the first day of public running since 1954! I was fortunate and proud to be the first SM after all those years.

I hope you enjoy and find this article interesting.

**Double click below to open Pete's photos!**



Northiam Station  
Photographs.docx

Thanks Pete!

Pete didn't mention any sheep in his time at Northiam but livestock trains ran regularly on the old K&ESR. A terrier tank shunts Northiam yard in the distance whilst the sheep decide if they are coming or going!



## Railway Memories of Ashbourne by *Tony Beresford*

That's him with Mum on Rhyl seafront after his first ever DMU ride!



I suppose I was always destined to be interested in railways, after all I was born directly above Ashbourne Tunnel. Our backyard overlooked the north end of the station so even as a baby I would have been aware of the sounds of trains interrupting my gurgles. The regular Uttoxeter-Ashbourne-Buxton service was still operating together with freight and parcel trains, the latter running no further north than Ashbourne. The platform lines converged a few yards before entering the tunnel and locos engaged in station activity usually reversed just inside. This resulted in lots of steam, smoke and frequent whistling which simply couldn't be ignored. I slowly began to realise my mother had a long-standing interest in trains having "cabbed" "Flying Scotsman" at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924 and as a girl living in a flat overlooking the track between the tunnel and station. Her dad, who sadly died fourteen years before I was born, had at one time driven a steam lorry for a local firm of corn merchants. My cousin in Scotland has a photo of him and his comrades standing ankle deep in mud in front of three Foden steam lorries which they drove in France during the First World War. You could say steam was in the blood of our family; even my father's parents lived on the ridge slap bang above the tunnel!

Having set the scene, I'm afraid this is where I probably disappoint you all. I didn't grow up into a spotty teenage train spotter complete with duffle bag and dog-eared notepad. However, fortunately I have a decent memory and with the aid of knowledge acquired later in life I can confidently recall the local railway scene from around the time I started school. The passenger service was usually formed of three non-corridor coaches and invariably in the hands of ex-LMS Fowler and Stanier 2-6-4T's. The service between Uttoxeter and Buxton was only three trains per day supplemented by a couple of short workings to Ashbourne from Uttoxeter. Until the dreaded eleven plus I attended the Methodist School which was very close to the station and I well remember being envious of one of my classmates who was allowed to finish ten minutes early so he could catch the train home to Clifton. With a sense of occasion, my mother took me for a round trip to Uttoxeter on the last day of timetabled services, 30th October 1954. Uttoxeter station was still relatively intact and I clearly remember seeing a newlywed couple being pursued over the covered footbridge to the westbound platform where they were showered in copious amounts of confetti. I wonder if any couples go on honeymoon by train nowadays. I've since found out that our train, the final one from Uttoxeter to Ashbourne was hauled by 2-6-4T No 42665. To commemorate the event, my mother treated me to a Dinky Toy observation coach in a rather uninspiring shade of grey. **Mine had red flashes Tony!** Ashbourne had two major employers in those days. Nestlé, whose factory primarily produced milk products and Richard Cooper and Company who manufactured foundation garments, in other words corsets and allied items of feminine torture. (A personal insight into this trade is available on request – Leon is already in the know!).



Nestlé's factory had purposely opened alongside the railway in 1912 and their traffic was a staple until the line closed.

Ashbourne cemetery is on the edge of town and the bus conductor (remember those?) always cheerily greeted us with "We only issue singles to the cemetery, Mrs Beresford". While my mother was tending family graves, I used to run up to the top of the cemetery from where I could watch Nestlé's siding being shunted by whatever tank engine had brought the daily short working up from Uttoxeter. A regular supply of tins was necessary for the various canned products manufactured there such as evaporated and condensed milk, rice pudding, etc. Until the late fifties local schools would combine to organise an annual day out by train, the first I can remember being to Chester for a walk on the city walls followed by a visit to the zoo and trip on the water buses. The intense train activity at Stoke and Crewe was unbelievable to a country lad. I'd never seen so much smoke and steam in my young life!

There must have been some imaginative teachers organising our itineraries because the following year our day out was to Liverpool where, after visiting the still incomplete Anglican cathedral we enjoyed a return journey on the Overhead Railway from the Pier Head to Seaforth. The docks were still quite busy and we had a brilliant view of the "Empress of Britain" from our elevated position. Back at Pier Head we were shepherded aboard the "Royal Iris" which took us across the Mersey to New Brighton where our train home was waiting. Sadly, I can't remember our return route but it must have included a few lines which subsequently disappeared off the railway map. The next year we again headed to Liverpool via Buxton and Stockport and on arrival at Lime St transferred by tram to Pier Head. This time we boarded the "St Tudno"



sailing to Llandudno where we were taken up the Great Orme by cable car. How exciting! It was sixty-two years before I went up the Great Orme again, this time during a day out behind preserved Class 40 D213. My final train trips with the Methodist School were to and from a three-day break in London. (My, weren't those teachers brave!). Buses took us to Derby Midland Station where we joined the train to St Pancras. I suspect the engines in both directions were either Jubilee's or Black Fives; all I can recall is that they looked pretty big to me.

I have four memories of that mini-break; 1: I'd never seen so many chimney pots (28) on one stack as at our hotel; 2: an exhibition in Trafalgar Square complete with a snowcat celebrating the recent first overland crossing of Antarctica by Sir Vivien Fuchs; 3: a visit to the London Planetarium and 4: our party of schoolchildren being abandoned by our teachers at Paddington for over an hour. Maybe they had gone in search of medication or strong drink after a couple of days with us. A few of us soon noticed two or three shiny green engines complete with gleaming brass and copper work standing nearby. In my limited experience all locomotives were grimy black so this was a real eye opener. All too soon the teachers returned and whisked us away to see the statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens; what a come down!



To be continued.....

**Thanks Tony, look forward to part 2!**

## Tales from the Footplate



### Keith Morgan continues his climb up the links

Although I had carried out a few shunting and relieving turns, the main line still evaded me, but some jobs could be interesting. I remember an unusual shunt job that came my way. The Bushbury hump shunting was normally carried out with a 08 Diesel engine but one morning after it failed, I was told to join a driver and prepare an 0-8-0 Super D as quickly as possible because the two arrival roads were full. Goods trains from the North were split into lengths not longer than the hump shunting neck, which was on an embankment at an elevation of 25/30 foot from ground level, ending with a stop block. The Super D had no problem pulling the first rake of wagons up the incline, but I admit to being a little anxious as we approached the stop block; I was relieved when we stopped with yards to spare! I now watched with interest as the head shunter read the wagon labels and chalked a number on the vehicle end. My driver explained that the number denoted which road and train the wagon was to be placed by the pointsman. There were many railway jobs that were dangerous and shunters were near the top of this list, especially the men who ran alongside moving wagons attempting to slow or stop them with just a braking stick.

One of the first main line jobs that was given to me didn't involve any firing. One morning the foreman instructed myself, another passed cleaner, and a fireman, to walk down to the North end yard to act as riders? When we arrived the driver of a Black 5 explained that we were to act as safety riders on three dead engines which were to be dragged to Crewe behind the Black 5. The dead engines were two 0-6-0 ex-Midland class 2's and a "Bug" (Jinty tank). This unusual train was to travel at no more than 25 mph and we were told to keep a good look out for any signs of overheating, knocks, unusual noises or squeaks, the driver adding that he would be looking back continuously and we were to signal him if we had problems. My chosen

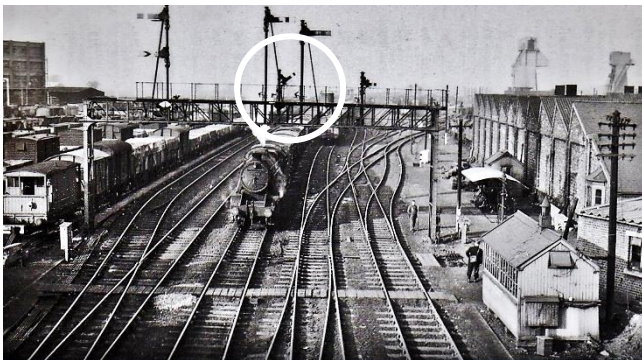


steed was one of the 0-6-0 class 2's, the old girl showing her age with lots of rust, and I did wonder if she would make it although I was reassured when I could see that the piston rods had been removed and were lying in the tender. It was a pleasant morning as we set off and I settled down to enjoy the ride. On reaching Stafford we were signalled into goods loop for examination where the chap on the Jinty said that he could sometimes smell hot metal. The driver was prepared for this

situation, producing a bucket of oil and an old tea can and proceeding to pour the lot over the inner workings of the Jinty; this treatment appeared to be successful! We continued to Crewe without further problems, branching off at Basford Hall and coming to a stop on one of the arrival roads. As I looked back at these three veteran engines, I felt quite sad that they were going to the scrap yard and it struck me that I was probably the last person to crew this old girl on the main line.

A few days later I was at last called to fire on a goods train from Bushbury to Washwood Heath (B-ham). The driver and I looked at the engine board and I could see we were assigned a Black 5. As we approached the engine, she appeared to be ex-works, which was good news for me on my first main line job. The first thing an engineman checks is the water level in the boiler, it was ok, next was to spread the fire around the box and build the fire up, also open the blower to increase steam pressure. Next, I checked the contents of the footplate bucket which held a couple of spanners, two flags, 12 detonators and other bits. I then checked the sand boxes, tightened the smoke box door and finally, the loco lamps. By now the steam pressure had increased and I was able to try the injectors; the exhaust one was fine, but the live steam was not picking up properly and the driver instructed me to ask a fitter to have a look. Within a couple minutes, one of the fitters turned up with just an ancient hammer in his hand; "try it" he said, but the injector still didn't work. He then gave it a blow with the old hammer, and it picked up immediately! Rather surprised, I said "how did you know where to hit it?" "Ah, he replied, this hammer is very experienced, and it knows what to do". He then looked up at me, winked, and said, "it's a magic one" and then walked away.

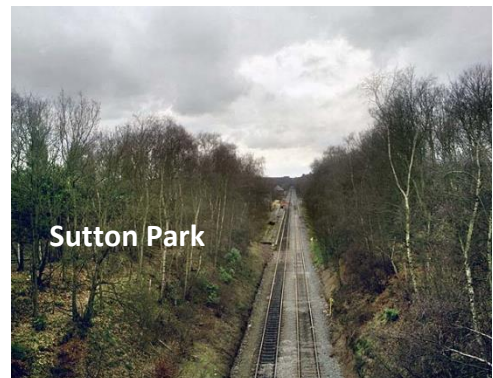
We then proceeded down the yard and backed on our train, I hooked on using the engine



A nice view from Bushbury Lane bridge as this freight train heads south. The rarely pulled small subsidiary signal indicates the route is set for the Western Region via Cannock Road Junction. Photo: P Lycett

shackle. Shortly the guard gave us the loading/weight figures, this information was written down in the classic format- on the back of a fag packet! On receiving the signal, away we went, taking the line towards Bescot, I had a good fire on with the safety valves simmering, just perfect. Everything was going fine as we approached Pleck junction where we had to stop as the signal was against us. When the signal cleared, we crawled towards Walsall, my driver advised me to put a good fire on as it's uphill to Aldridge. To please the driver, I started firing like a madman, not realising the trouble I was letting myself for. As a glanced at the steam pressure

gauge my heart missed a beat because the pressure was falling, the driver said, "what have you done?" Looking in the firebox and said, "you've blocked the brick arch up, get the rake out of the tender and pull the fire back." Needing no prompting and with adrenalin pumping, I found the strength to use the long heavy fire iron, and successfully dragged the fire from under the arch. The pressure increased immediately, my driver giving me the thumbs up sign and even gave me a smile. I had learned a valuable lesson here. The rest of the journey went without incident and I particularly enjoying the ride through Sutton Park.



**Great, thanks Keith. More please!**

## Roger's Train Spot

### This month Roger tells of three visits to Oswestry 1963-1964

My first visit to Oswestry was on 27th April 1963. (My 15<sup>th</sup> Birthday! -Leon) I travelled from Wolverhampton Low Level to Shrewsbury behind **7024 Powis Castle** and changed trains for Gobowen. When I arrived at Gobowen the auto train arrived from Oswestry behind **1458** and one auto coach, a journey of two and half miles. I then walked to 89D Oswestry shed where there were 22 locos on the shed. 10 GWR loco's including 7033 were there after being in the works for attention plus 4 LMS loco's and 8 BR standards. I was thanking the foreman for letting me go round when he told me that 13th of July 1963 would be the last day for the 14xx plus auto coach. I then walked to Oswestry works, here there were 4 locos on, 3630, 7801, 48410 and 80132. After all that I travelled back to Shrewsbury. I then walked to 89A Shrewsbury Shed, 27 loco's there. At the time I needed 2 County's, one was 1027 County of Stafford 87H which was on shed. (Would you believe the next weekend my last one 1024 County of Pembroke 82B came into Wolverhampton Low Level.)

My second visit to Oswestry was on 13th July 1963, when I again travelled behind **1458** + auto coach to Oswestry. I went round 89D Oswestry shed which had 19 loco's on this time, 84004 was on with 1432+1438 now withdrawn last day for them. I then travelled back for the last time to Gobowen behind 1458, then on to Shrewsbury behind **45065**. Whilst at Shrewsbury for a few hours, I saw 45529, 45590, 45602 & 45660 LMS loco's, and GWR loco's 6357, 1008, 5092, 7022 & 7812. 82000 was on the Severn Valley line trains.



20th June 1964 1632 on Oswestry



**7915 Mere Hall** Ex works at 89A shed



20<sup>th</sup> June 1964 **7822 FOXCOTE MANOR** at Oswestry

My third and final visit was on 20th June 1964, again I travelled to Gobowen, this time I was pulled by **46514** on 2 coaches to Oswestry. I did the shed again, 7819 was on shed and 7822 outside the works.

The highlight of the day was a run tender first behind **46512** with 2 coaches on the 12-40 Oswestry to Llanfyllin, 15 miles each way. Once I left the main line at Llanymynech for Llanfyllin it became a real old branch line



**46512** at Llanymynech taking the token (above) and (right) running round at Llanfyllin

The booking office at Llanfyllin still had a GWR ticket which I obtained 16 years after GWR had finished!



After the branch trip, down to Shrewsbury Shed. So that was 3 visits to Oswestry. By the December all had closed. A real gem. **Stay safe everyone Roger**

### February Quiz Answers

- 1-Appleby, 2-Guildford, 3-Durham, 4-Morpeth, 5-Chester, 6-Lincoln, 7-Hertford, 8-Beverley, 9-Warwick, 10-Northallerton, 11-Lancaster, 12-Montgomery, 13-Ruthin, 14-Ipswich, 15-Chelmsford, 16-Wilton, 17-Dorchester, 18-Reading, 19-Oakham, 20-Alloa, 21-Ayr, 22-Aylesbury, 23-Winchester, 24-Douglas IOM, 25-Eniskillen, 26-Lewes, 27-Truro, 28-Brecon

**That's all for this month, we hope you enjoyed the read and feel free to contribute!**