



# Newsletter

No 10 August 2021



Hello Everybody

Well, Freedom Day arrived along with the **orange** extreme heat weather warnings prompting the cry “*It’s too hot*” as dear old Terry Wogan used to say! With face covering no longer a legal requirement the advice has moved to ‘We expect and recommend that members of the public continue to wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed spaces where you come into contact with people you don’t normally meet. For example, on public transport’. With this in mind, I expect



to retain the mask on **800321** photographed by our Roger at Exeter St Davids on 05-07-2021.

Wolverhampton, England >  
As of 15:28 BST

27 °C  
Mostly sunny

See full forecast

▲ Heatwave Alert  
● No rain for the next 120 minutes.

**Extreme high temperature O...**

From: Mon 19, 16:05 BST  
To: Thu 22, 23:59 BST



Jack Boskett, who has visited Codsall Railway Circle a couple of times with highly entertaining shows, has rapidly made a name for himself as one of the country's top rail photographers but this is perhaps his biggest picture yet! Cheltenham-based bus and coach company Marchants has unveiled a re-liveried double-decker bearing images of steam trains on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway (GWSR). The 70-year-old family firm has vinyl wrapped one

of its double-deck buses with images advertising the GWSR's train services to mark the re-opening of the heritage railway after the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and its expected return to normal operation from 20 July.



The bus wrap features a train crossing Stanway Viaduct on the sides, and an almost life-sized head-on image of a locomotive on the back, and will be seen in and around Cheltenham over the coming months. The bus is an ex-London Volvo B7 **Alexander ALX 400, re-registered V21GWR**. “It’s an excellent and reliable vehicle,” added Roger, who took over management of the 73-year old family business from his father. “We will be using it on a number of school routes as well as special contract work. The railway is at liberty to use the vehicle on special occasions, too.”

The pictures used for the wrap were taken by Jack Boskett, a Tewkesbury-based professional photographer and volunteer on the GWSR. He said: “My images have never been enlarged to this kind of size before – and have certainly never been on a bus! It’s a unique opportunity and I’m honored to have been asked to supply pictures for the project. I can’t wait to see bystanders’ reactions when they see this huge mobile billboard running around the local streets. Richard Johnson, volunteer Chairman of GWSR said “It’s been a difficult time for the railway, for Marchants and for everyone. I’m thrilled that Marchants was so keen to work with us to get this first achieved for both parties.



## Stafford Virgins-Part 8

### The final part of Derek's tale

Working at Stafford Railway Station was never boring and in fact two days never were the same and I found the time went so quickly when I was on duty. Although some of the work was not so pleasant, Jo Public can be awfully rude at times, overall I enjoyed the 21 months experience. My notes tell me that on an August Tuesday we were informed that a train from Glasgow would be arriving on platform 4 with a party of golfers representing Scotland who we learnt later would be competing against England in an annual match to be held at Ingestre golf club in Stafford. Nothing special you would think, the difference was that the competitors were all blind. Each player had a sighted companion who assisted them with lining up the ball etc. The train duly arrived and all available staff assisted in unloading the cases and golf club bags from the luggage carriage and helping the passengers to the lift and on to the awaiting bus outside which was to take them to the 'Garth Hotel' on the Wolverhampton Road; all since gone and now a housing estate. About an hour later a message was received at the team leaders office that the golfers were a bag of clubs short! Enquiries were made and the clubs found on the train bound for Bournemouth. Rules said that the bag had to go to Lost Property at Waterloo London when it would have more sense to return direct to Stafford. I was asked if I would go and pick them up by the Area Manageress, a lovely lady. First class with refreshments and I got paid as well although I felt a little uneasy carrying a golf bag on the tube in Virgin uniform. As an aside, it was an experience to visit this lost property office and see the items left and mostly would be left unclaimed; more umbrella's than days in a decade, phones, cases and numerous item's of clothing and a young tree in a black pot standing at least 10'! How could you forget to take that with you. On my return to Stafford I took the bag to the hotel to finish my day.



I was asked to go to Stoke on Trent with a colleague to assist with a 'Jolly' attending to the needs of the Mayor's and dignitaries of local towns and cities from Stockport to Stafford for a naming ceremony of a Virgin Pendolino 390029 'City of Stoke on Trent' The train set had come from Manchester but with the line closed it came via Wimslow and Crewe. A sparkling new train and the invited guests enjoyed a view on board then were entertained by the senior Virgins. When all was over we tucked into the remains and had a team photo



alongside the train. It was here that I was overheard to say to my colleague that I would enjoy a ride on the new train to which my mate said we should get back to Stafford. The area manager was behind me and asked if I was serious as she said she would arrange the trip back to Crewe. Needless to say I did not refuse the offer and drinks and sandwiches were the order of the day. Back in Stafford two hours late but so what; we got paid the overtime!

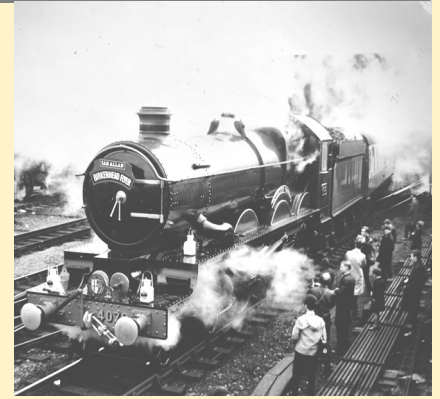
Finally, for any person ,young or getting on like me; if you get the chance to work as a casual on the railway go for it. All casuals were given the chance to apply for full time positions and some fifteen years later many have climbed the Virgin ladder from drivers to train managers and team leaders. Many of the staff I

worked with are still there but if you visit the station and speak with the staff, do not mention my name!!!! Happy travelling. Wishing you well, Derek the Stafford Virgin

Sadly that's all from Stafford...but Derek will be back next month with tales of the unexpected!

## Platform End

Following last month's mention of Royal visits to Wolverhampton I found some film clips on the internet from 1962. Not the best quality but here's a couple of stills. The Royal Train arrives at Low Level station, the Castle class loco displaying the four (very) white lamps Royal Train headcode. Below right is the decorated station fascia.



At my request, Mike Shaw sent a couple of photos to accompany his Bescot Signaling days piece and included the following reminiscence. A couple of photos from 1988 taken of myself in the plush surroundings of Bob McAlpine's GNR Officers saloon. I accompanied many Engineers saloons during my time as Regional Inspector at Crewe and this was a two day trip around the East of Manchester and into what was left of the Peak District railways. Bob was on board in his capacity of Chairman, I believe, of the Railway Heritage Trust along with the LM General Manager at the time, Cyril Bleasdale before he moved to become the Director of Scotrail. The trip, departing from Manchester Victoria, didn't start too well on the first day when we struck the portal of Disley Tunnel and removed some of the guttering from Bob's saloon. Undaunted the damage was assessed and we continued after some delay towards Buxton. On



the second day we were shown to run round at Hebden Bridge which was the LM boundary but it was not possible to do this without causing delays so I made the decision to go through to Halifax where the second photo was taken. I didn't want to start anything political with York (Eastern Region) so made a quick move to head back to where we came from but unfortunately Cyril, in his usual ebullient manner, was already in the down stairs booking office extolling the original interior architecture which I hope has survived. Duly gathered in, Cyril rejoined the saloon (**right**) to proceed via various routes back to Stockport, delayed I think by an underbridge strike by a road vehicle. It was all good fun though.



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!

EMAIL

lenandpam@hotmail.com

**I was pleased former Codsall vicar, The Rev. Alan Harper, made contact to thank us for the newsletter and share his railway interests.**

---

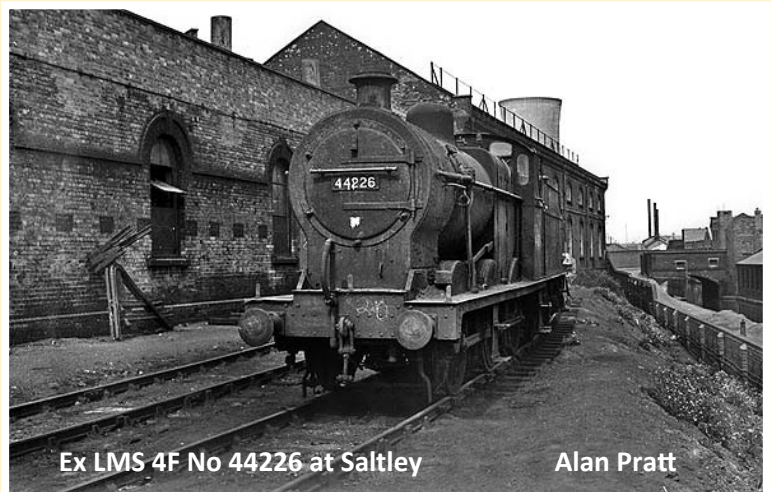
I am grateful to Mike Morgans for adding me to the circulation list and to Roger Fletcher for letting me know about the progress and flourishing of the group upon my return to Codsall. As a founding member of the group, before leaving to work with the Bishop of Derby, it is good to see the development of the group with its focus on the 1.1 scale. As a 1.72 devotee I feel a little like my granddaughter following a visit to the National Railway Museum, who some days later informed us that she was a little shocked by the size of the locomotives. We had been to a couple of model railway exhibitions before and we forgot to tell her this would be the real thing and she assumed the locomotives would be the same size as her previous visits.

My own main area of interest is in the LMS Midland Region, being born within the smell of Saltley Gasworks. My father was one of those old Brummie businessmen who lived within a short distance of his printing works. So as a small child I regularly trespassed at Saltley shed to climb into the cabs of locomotives in the late 1950's; before being chased off by the foreman, but still adding considerably to my Ian Allen notebook of engines of which I had stood in the cab. My real love though were the long line of defunct Midland engines awaiting scrapping at the back of the shed and thus began my interest in the Midland Railway, encouraged further by my twelve years living in Derbyshire following my move from Codsall. The Wirksworth branch, that I had modelled in the early 80's, by one of these freaks of chance actually ran under the garden of the Bishop's House and Offices where I worked in the 2010's.

After a thirty five year break in modelling, my retirement project in my garage here at Codsall is a section of the Peak Main line from Rowsley to Church Lane crossing at Darley Dale in the 1930's; including St Helen's church, where the Bishop and Ros and I ran a summer school each year. My children have even bought me complete miniature wedding and funeral parties (including two suitably dressed vicars for each of the occasions) to add to the layout when completed. Though completion is still a very long way off, my limited efforts are not likely to worry any professional modeller but it provides me with an enormous amount of pleasure, as I attempt to capture the essence of a unique place.

It's good to be retired back in Codsall. I recognize the rule that you try and avoid entering the space of your successors so we try and keep a low profile in the village. I hope though that when things get back to *the new normal* I might attend a few of your meetings. With thanks for all that you are doing.

---



Ex LMS 4F No 44226 at Saltley

Alan Pratt

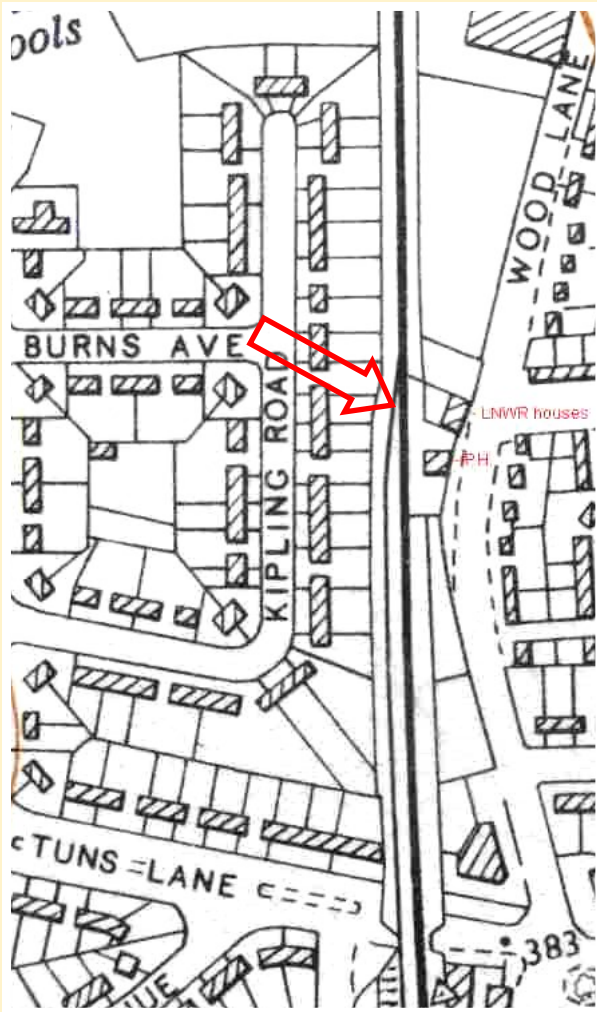


**Brian Shaw accepted the family Album challenge and found this family snap of A4 pacific 60009 "Union of South Africa".**

This photo, taken by my late father, shows my sister and I with family friends on holiday in Fife. How lucky that a day out to a local railway turned out to be something special -the Lochty Private Railway near Anstruther in Fife, Scotland, where the owner, John Cameron then kept No. 9.

**Although of course he hasn't changed a bit in the last 50 years, when I checked he did add "I'm the blond one on the left!"**

I was pleased to receive this from Rex Butler of Gnosall whose newsletter is forwarded by Codsall regular Phil Barnes.



Firstly, my sincere thanks for producing these newsletters Leon, every one of them has been a pleasure to read. They must take a lot of time and hard work, my thanks to you, and everyone involved. There is a minor error in the article about the derailment of 5519 Lady Godiva. It occurred south of Bee Lane, closer to and north of the Three Tuns Lane underbridge. An extract from the 6 inches to 1 mile OS Staffordshire Sheet ST 90 SW, 1955 edition shows the section around the junction of the line from the sidings with the down main line. The junction was adjacent to the LNWR-built pump house that supplied Bushbury Shed with water (**Rex has thoughtfully marked this on the map**) along with the two houses built by the LNWR for the men who stoked the pump house boilers.

I remember the incident well, the engine could be seen from our front bedroom windows. We lived in one of the new council houses in School Lane, where we moved in 1946, when I was 9. Previously, we lived in Jones Road, Bushbury, where my interest in railways began. I have faint memories of the LNER engines which were transferred to Oxley in about 1940. I had to check the date, of course, couldn't remember that, though I recall an older boy, a sophisticate of 6 or 7, explaining to me what they were. Memories of the

USA S160 engines arriving in 1943 are much clearer, they stood out, and I thought them unattractive. A childhood spent looking at Saints, Stars, Castles and Kings probably influenced that opinion.

**I was interested in the pump house and cottages and found them still extant on Google Earth. Before I could add the photo Rex returned to old haunts and sent this.**

I went to Bushbury this morning, and took the attached photo of the LNWR cottages and Pump House. There have been a few changes since 1947, but they still exist. The windows of the Pump House have been bricked up, the



slate roof of the cottages replaced with concrete tiles, a porch added to one of them, and the trees have grown upon both sides of the line completely obscure the houses in Kipling Road, behind the railway line. The now long-gone semaphore bracket signal controlling the junction of the sidings branch with the main line was on the far side of the line, to the left of the Pump House.

**Thanks Rex for correcting our mistake and generally adding to our knowledge....Just what we need in Platform End Any more Photos to share Rex?**



## Who knew the Midland region had a Ronnie Barker doppelganger? Friends of Bilbrook station sign

The unusual if rather sad sight of BR Std class 5 No 73019 being hauled south by D1698 through Hereford, its final resting place crudely daubed on the tender. An Oxley engine for a while, its last move was from Bolton. As Keith Morgan told us in one of his Bushbury pieces, locos towed for scrap required someone on the footplate to alert the train driver of any problems arising on the journey. When Keith asked how he was supposed to do that the train driver replied " i will keep looking back, wave your arms if you have a problem!"



Keith also read the piece in the mag by Mike Shaw regarding Keith Steele. Before I went onto the footplate, I did 15 months as an apprentice in the S&T Dept based at W-ton LL. We looked after signal boxes including Hands-worth Jct. and Queens Head. There was a Bobby who worked these, his name was Keith, he was very young, 22 or 23 which was unusual for class 1 box's, i wondered if this was the same man.?



## A Royal Train Black Country Journey in 1957

On St Georges Day, 1957 the Queen made a visit to the Black Country and this is the story of the complicated train movements made in addition to the day-to-day running of the railway, all of which went off without a hitch, a testament to the hardworking railways crews, both on the locomotives and trains and along the track and at the stations.

At lunch time on April 22, 1957, the empty royal train coaches arrived at Old Oak Common (London) locomotive depot, where they remained for several hours before proceeding to Paddington Station behind Hall Class locomotive **6962 Soughton Hall**, for the various staff to board and prepare it for the trip, which included the provision of two tons of cubed ice for the train's air conditioning system. The train was made up of eleven coaches, which included a first class coach, the royal saloon, the Queen's saloon, the Duke's saloon, royal diner, equerry's saloon, two sleeping cars, railway official saloon, a first class diner and a power car.

"The train left Paddington behind **Soughton Hall** bound for Windsor, where the royal party would board, and in the meantime another locomotive, Castle Class **5040 Stokesay Castle**, had gone forward to Slough as standby engine in case of a locomotive failure. "The royal train left Windsor at 10pm behind two immaculately prepared Castle Class locomotives, **7001 Sir James Milne** and **7027 Thornbury Castle**. In fact, all the locomotives involved had been prepared in a similar manner and special attention given to ensure their mechanical reliability.

Travelling via Slough, Didcot, Oxford and Worcester, the train then proceeded to its overnight stabling point on the Bromyard Branch, arriving at Bransford Road Junction at 12.30am. Here there was yet another engine change, the Castles being detached and Hall Class **5914 Ripon Hall** taking the train to the stabling point up the branch where it stopped opposite a white marker post near Leigh Court Station, and where it would remain all night. These marker posts were vital when knowing where to put the red carpet out at stations and where the train would stop and were measured precisely from the locomotive. At the stabling point several facilities had to be made available, including a GPO telephone link, a police presence, two railway carriages with rugs and pillows for railway staff requiring rest, the delivery of newspapers to the royal train at 6am and the provision of sanitary pans strategically placed under the outlets of the train's lavatories. The train was already waiting for the royal party, the empty stock having arrived at 5pm and the two Castles from Stourbridge were already coupled up waiting to leave. After they had boarded and the doors were secured the train sped away bound for Worcester, and on reaching Droitwich it stopped for some time in sidings there. here was yet another engine change with Halls 5914 Ripon Hall and 4914 Cranmore Hall providing the motive power taking the royal train to Worcester Shrub Hill where the party were to alight and take part in further royal engagements.



Early the following morning, April 23, the two Castles arrived from Worcester, where they had been stabled and serviced overnight. After coupling up they went forward, back through Worcester, Droitwich, Kidderminster and Hagley, arriving there at 10am. Here the royal party alighted and paused a while, waving to the crowds that had gathered before continuing their journey by car for their visit to the Black Country. Meanwhile, the two Castles had uncoupled and gone forward to Stourbridge locomotive shed to be turned on the turntable and serviced, waiting there until they were needed later in the day. The empty stock had also left Hagley behind two Halls, 7920

Coney Hall and 7912 Little Linford Hall, being taken to Worcester for stabling and turning so that the formation of the carriages would remain the same as when they arrived. "After visiting the Black Country the royal party motored to Kidderminster to fulfil engagements there. When these duties were complete they were driven the short distance from the Town Hall to the station, where they were greeted by large crowds and flags and bunting adorning the station building.

The train was already waiting for the royal party, the empty stock having arrived at 5pm and the two Castles from Stourbridge were already coupled up waiting to leave. After they had boarded and the doors were secured the train sped away bound for Worcester, and on reaching Droitwich it stopped for some time in sidings there. here was yet another engine change with Halls 5914 Ripon Hall and 4914 Cranmore Hall providing the motive power taking the royal train to Worcester Shrub Hill where the party were to alight and take part in further royal engagements.

After these were completed the train headed back to the Bromyard Branch for overnight stabling again and Cranmore Hall was taken off at Bransford Road Junction, Ripon Hall taking the train forward up the branch once more. An unusual incident, possibly a Royal first occurred when the driver of the locomotive related that when approaching Leigh Court a horse was reported loose on the line. Detonators had been placed on the track – believed to have been the first time detonators were put in front of a Royal Train. The following morning, April 24, the royal train departed for Worcester for engine changing, following which it departed for London via Ledbury and Hereford. All along the route standby engines had been stationed at several stations as well as breakdown trains, none of which were needed.



Lea Court station as 4680 stops with a service from Worcester to Bromyard in the last year of service on this line 1964

*Reproduced from a 2006 article by Keith Beddoes of Telford*

Of the locomotives involved with the Royal Train in April 1957, only **7027 Thornbury Castle** has survived to the present day and after many false starts is currently being restored at the Great Central Railway.



Castle' class 4-6-0 No. **7027 'THORNBURY CASTLE'** passing Leamington Spa General with the down 'Cambrian Coast Express'. 1957

# A Bobby's Tale

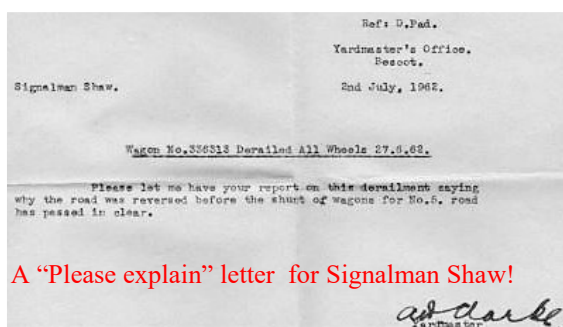
## Mike Shaw shares more memories of his time in Bescot No 5 signal box

The major duties for the staff at 5 end yard was the part make up and departure of trains leaving for the North, North East and West, especially the fitted portions for the night trains. This is a very simplified explanation of course and will be looked at in more depth. There always had to be consideration regarding the amount of traffic for certain trains so that the longest siding was utilised, for instance Wichnor trains were usually made up in siding 6, one of the longest sidings, together with 5, as there was normally enough traffic for a full train of 50 or 60. This didn't always work of course and there was regularly picking up from one siding and backing up in another situation. Usually sidings 1-5 were utilised for trains for the north via the Grand Jct. which would allow them to depart with a straight run 'through the middle, via No.2 SB and out main line by the back of No. 3 SB. This would also allow for shunting to continue on the other side of the yard. None of these were hard and fast rules and the system



remained quite fluid as traffic requirements dictated. The general situation was that '5 end' yard was the departure point for down side trains as well as those that departed from the New Yard North End. During my time at Bescot all shunting was done with 08 shunters including the dreaded 'jack shaft' type, hated by the drivers. Previously the ubiquitous 3F,0-6-0T, 'Jintys' or 7F 0-8-0 Super D were utilised, one being allocated to each yard mainly round the clock 06.00 Mon to 14.00 Saturday manned by 'green carded' drivers except the North End Yard where very often you would still find a Class 2 Ivatt. The shunters would relate that they were glad when the diesel shunt engines arrived because when there were two on the engine, driver and fireman, they were always chatting with each other and inattentive to shunter's instructions. In fact some

shunters would say the first thing they did before shunting commenced was to send one of them to the signal box, out of the way. All the shunting in 5 end yard was performed on the flat, the raft of wagons being signaled towards Edge Sidings (shunt neck) controlled by the two arm shunting signal. In this day and age one cannot but wonder at the expertise of the shunting staff working in all weathers day and especially night when the only aids they had were a couple of gas lamps usually with the mantles blown (Tower flood lights came in the late part of 1962) and a paraffin hand lamp which had to serve the purpose of reading wagon labels, signaling to the driver and signaling to the signalman. When shunting a raft, which could be up to fifty wagons, a good shunter could set off towards you possibly two or three rafts of wagons all for different roads but travelling at just the right speed for the points to be changed between them, all highly irregular but it helped the job along. It didn't always work cleanly though and sometimes you would hold your breath while a raft that hadn't cleared into one road was nudged clear by a raft going into another. At other times you had no option but to allow a raft to follow the one in front into the wrong road eliciting some less than savory words from the shunter. It was also known to have derailments through 'side swipes' but very rarely. These would be followed by a letter from the yardmaster either requesting an incident report or inviting you into his office for a disciplinary talk. He had a way of pointing out the error of your ways without any harsh words and any macho action you had planned to defend yourself just melted away. When he had finished you were suitably admonished and that was the end of the matter, a real gentleman. It may seem unfair of course that it was usually the signalman who took the blame but the general signalman's rules stated 'the signalman should ensure that the points are not reversed for another road until he is assured that the previous movement has passed clear'. You could have always put your foot down and refused to get involved in irregular practices, of which there were many, but it was generally accepted that without a certain amount of leeway on your part the job would have been brought to a standstill at busy times. I had to take a 'hit' once when I was having a food break, when the usual practice was for the under shunter to work the frame. Unfortunately he made a wrong move resulting in a derailment. I had to admit that it was my error of course, such was life, you couldn't have had a decent food break otherwise. It must be said though at this juncture certain Relief Signalmen wouldn't allow the shunting staff to touch the signal box equipment but still usually allowed the messing facilities for shunters .



The method of working in the Old Yard Hump Reception Sidings whereby the rafts of wagons were chalked up for the different roads on the leading wagon could not work in 5 end yard so the method of working here was that, according to the rules, the head shunter who was 'cutting the raft' would shout what road he required. If he was too far away, the under shunter would stand by the box and relay the instructions to the signalman. This was soon recognised as being totally impractical and almost impossible to work because the under shunter would often be otherwise engaged in securing wagons in a siding to prevent them running out. The solution devised was a complicated system of hand signals between the head shunter and the signalman which involved both arms, fists and even touching the head, replaced at night with a lamp using white, red and green lights.

As one can imagine with the use of reds and greens as a shunting practice at night, driver' of trains awaiting departure from their relative roads had to be quite alert that none of the hand signals were relative to them and only departed upon specific instructions from the ground staff, all part of important yard knowledge. Sidings 1-5 had no protecting ground signal and sidings 6 – 9 had only one between them. 2 loop and the 'Down Through', had their own protecting signals as previously described.

One then has to envisage the scene especially at night, with little ambient lighting, perhaps three or four trains awaiting departure from either side of the yard with smoke from the locos, noise from safety valves blowing off, wagons buffering up (what did the instructions say about only hitting wagons up with sufficient force and controlling with the hand brakes to ensure they didn't come together violently?). Container wagons needed extra care though as they were particularly susceptible to damage in a rough shunt with containers shifting and securing chains being broken which meant a 'red card' and serious delay of course. These were some of the problems that were encountered but alleviated by the thorough professionalism of the staff and even now I still marvel at the way shunters' handled themselves often under pressure, especially on the night shift, with only a shunting pole and a paraffin hand lamp to give signals to the driver (not overlooking his professionalism either) AND the signalman and also the additional hazard of poor underfoot conditions



One should also not forget their geographical knowledge of the British railway system when having to decipher from the wagon label the destination and as such the train that the wagon would be travelling on and even what section it would have to be marshalled in on a particular train. There was very often additional information on the label relating to the route of a destination of course, for example the 10.08 (22.08) Leeds had the Healey Mills section next to the engine. Not all Leeds traffic for example would go on the 10.08 which was a fully fitted advertised guaranteed next day delivery service so traffic was selective. Instructions like 'West Lancashire stations, Liverpool L&Y and districts routed via Bootle Jct. should go via Edge Hill others via Wigan, section Bamfurlong Exchange.' is worth pondering upon now. The shunters didn't get away with anything with the routing of wagons because the yard inspectors and the relative guard when inspecting his train before departure were just as knowledgeable and a wrong wagon or one in the wrong section in a train could cause some delay whilst sorting it out. Each turn of duty had its own programme of events and with one or two exceptions the time table of departures was adhered to on a daily basis but not a great reliance could be placed on the WTT with respect to what particular yard trains would be departing from. You soon became used to the working arrangements as any signalman would at his particular location and here of course you had regular updates as necessary from the Yard Inspectors. 6 am – 2pm

On Mondays the shift started at 3.15 am when the trains that had already been made up by the close of work the previous Sunday morning, coupled and piped as necessary, began to depart starting with the 3.30am Carlisle. The engine for this train usually a Class 5' 4-6-0 came LE from Bushbury and was very often waiting on 1 goods when you opened the box followed by the 4.50 Warrington , usually a Bescot Class 5 4-6-0, the 5.0am Wichnor, the 5.30am Bushbury and the 5.57am Washwood Heath. There were no shunters on duty until 6 am only a Yard Inspector, so the firemen would do the coupling up and the Inspector would oversee the departures. For this Monday only shift the plan was usually to catch the last train or bus on the Sunday night to the local hostelry then after closing time, 10.00pm in those days, walk to SB , get a good fire going and get down on the locker until woken up by the Inspector at the required time. Later I was fortunate to obtain the shared use of a car, with my brother, and the simple delight when leaving home at about 2.30am was to listen to the dying hour of 208 Radio Luxembourg on the car radio without the interference of the myriad other channels that plagued it in the earlier evening. The rest of the week at the start of the shift things were usually quite quiet if the night shift had gone according to plan. The first departure was the Stechford-Wolverhampton which usually came along a clear road from the Old Yard Hump and 'picked up and backed up'. The Darlaston Green and Crescent Sidings trip serviced the small but important sidings which were situated on the Grand Jct line between Darlaston Jct and Portobello Jct and handled traffic for several large engineering concerns such as Rubery Owen and Guest Keen & Nettlefolds, all gone now. Crescent sidings were a short distance north of Darlaston Green and handled traffic for Wellman Smith Owen a large Civil Engineering company. Before the next departure there a lot of sorting out to do in the yard and there was always a need to take and fetch wagons from out of the storage sidings (The Frame) so this would require a trip along the 'Down Through'. It is worthy of note that the 5 sidings in the frame were nearly always full of traffic and could take a fair bit of shunting sometimes to gather the required wagons. I remember there was often the need to bring some **Austin Motor Company** wagons into the yard; there was always a road full of these in the 'frame'. This was an odd arrangement whereby this traffic, 16T mineral wagons full of foundry spoil, was attached as required, a maximum of 8, to the 10.5am Spring Vale and deposited in a short siding on the Wednesbury to Princes End branch and unloaded by hand into a disused clay pit. No doubt a perfect example of Dr. Beeching's concern at the futility of 'wagon load' traffic. Target 69 nearly always departed with a full load and was a trip that serviced my old 'stamping ground' Willenhall Stafford Street.



Wichnor trains went with 8F 2-8-0s and always tender first, this to allow for chimney first running with the adverse gradients when returning in the opposite direction to Norton Jct they usually did a trip between there and Wich-

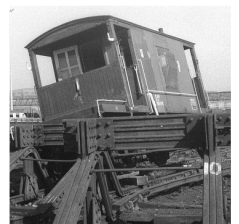
nor before returning to Bescot attaching at Norton Jct if required. These were the sort of trips that were heavily involved in the ill fated guards bonus scheme that was brought in during late 1961 to 'help productivity' when instead of two trips they would do three or four. This would require a great deal of extra attention from shunters and signalmen who weren't involved in the extra payment scheme so a lot of animosity was created which didn't do a great deal for 'industrial relations'.



08177 the Bescot Up Hump pilot

. The 9.20am Dudley usually departed out of 5 and was another full train although a rather sad sight for a steam enthusiast such as myself as this train started to convey large numbers of 'weltrols' loaded with old steam locomotive boilers presumably bound for Cashmore's at Great Bridge. Due to the sort of traffic this train was carrying, Weltrols and double barrier wagons, it very often departed under special out-of-gauge instructions signaled 2-6-1 and invariably needed the 'banker' unless the Driver was one of the well known Bescot men ready to show their prowess and 'have a go' but it was touch and go some times. Surprisingly perhaps, considering the line is closed now, there was another Wednesbury train at 9.30 to cover the many sidings that existed in the area . The 9.35am Birkenhead ran most days under Controls orders with a full train of 50 mainly return empty Port Sunlight stenciled vans received from the former SPD depot at Perry Barr. The 10.05am Spring Vale was usually quite a short train usually scrap for Stewarts and Lloyds and the AMCs as mentioned above and didn't need the banker. There must have been some special attention given to this train because I once received a '*please explain*' when a late departure was put down to me. The departure of trains now quietened down but no rest for the signalman as now the time was now utilised for general shunting 'tidying' up the yard, traffic being fed into all roads all the time from the Old Yard hump end. During this time in the morning once or twice a week there would be a short trip to service Elwell's private siding which was a single road siding situated on the North side of the MPD. This meant a trip 'up the middle' past the rear of No.3 SB with our shunt engine propelling anything up to 8 or 9 wagons usually including a couple of 16T mineral wagons containing foundry coke, I believe, and small plate wagons with steel sheet. A few days later the empties would be gathered and brought back into the yard. .

When shunting into a particular road the shunter always had to be aware of whether it was clear or not, if so the first raft would be accompanied by the under shunter and secured at the furthest end, 'making a stop block'. Brake vans were usually put behind a train, from the hump end, as a final move or when the Hump Foreman was sure there was no more traffic for that particular train or if he wanted to start making another train up in the same road. We also employed a part time brake van cleaner, a 72 year old retired guard, cleaning the brakes in 'brake van siding'. He would sometimes unbeknown to the yard staff move into a brake van already behind a train to do his clean up and perhaps also start the fire going in the stove, all very welcomed by the train guard but the practice was discouraged though after he was discovered badly injured requiring hospitalization after a heavy shunt. He survived but it was the end of his extended railway service. The danger with clear double ended roads was evidenced when I once mis-read the shunter's signals and a raft of about nine or ten 16T mineral wagons loaded with spoil from a demolition site going into 9, a clear road, instead of 7 and despite urgent dialogue with the hump points man and the actions of the hump shunters they collided with a train they were humping, another visit to the Yardmaster for me. Of course there were always agreement between the 5 end shunter and the hump foreman to agree what roads certain trains were being made up in and if there were any specific changes to the plan of allocated roads. Dialogue was also necessary when it was required to 'make room' in a certain road to ensure both ends hadn't got the same idea, all problems with double ended yards. On my shift, breakfast rota started about 8am but there was always a 'mashing' of tea in an enamel jug on the shelf at the back of the stove, When I was on day shift I usually 'got the frying pan on' first and the Head Shunter would send the under shunter to work the lever frame if possible so you could 'dine' in relative peace. The cardinal sin at 'snap' times would be not to have the kettle boiling on the stove and not to have a good clean fire going, you would incur the wrath of the shunters otherwise; remember the coal fired stove was the only facility available and the signalbox was the only decent accommodation available. There was small shunter's cabin but this was hardly fit for human habitation, the rats liked it though. There was never a problem with the supply of coal of course and one usually had the pick of decent stuff spotted in the tenders from the lofty height of the SB. There had been a habit of throwing coal direct through the window from the tender but this practice ceased when a rather large lump damaged the floor and the AYM wasn't best pleased. Breakfast time for the shunters' tended to be a bare thirty minutes and this would often have to be broken in order to get a train moving out of a particular siding and maybe having to break up a domino game in the guards mess room to get the train guard to his train.



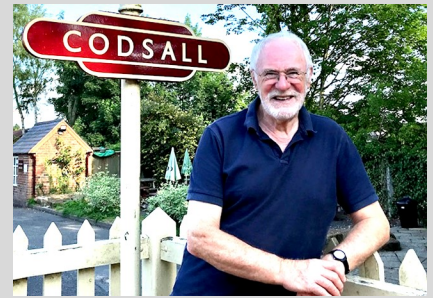
**Mike's article concludes next month!**

## Guest Photographers Spot

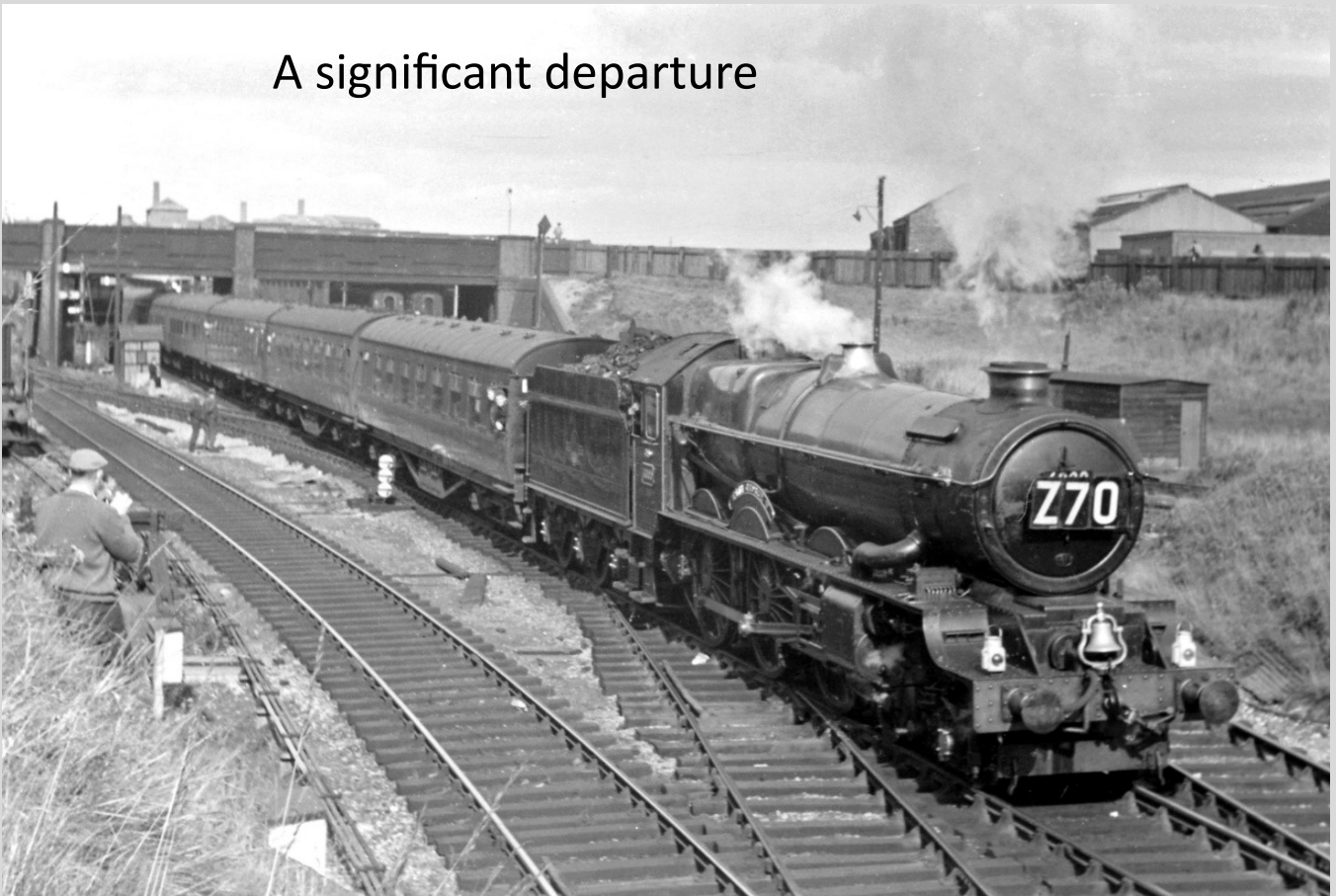
Another right Royal photo from Simon



Presented to  
Locomotive King George V  
by the  
Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company  
in commemoration of its  
centenary celebration  
24 September – 15 October 1927



## A significant departure



Sunday 9th September 1962 saw the British Railways' special train from Wolverhampton to Swindon Works to commemorate the withdrawal of "King" class locomotives from the regular Wolverhampton to Paddington services. The train was hauled by the doyen of the class No 6000 "King George V" and is seen here just departing from the Low Level station, scheduled for 10.17 and about to enter the tunnel south of the station. As befitted the significance of the train 6000 was turned out in spotless condition, a tribute to the cleaners at Stafford Road shed where it had spent much of the previous week being prepared. As could be expected the train was a sell-out. It was not the only "King" working to or from Wolverhampton that day with five other trains hauled by other members of the class.

The following day saw the start of the Autumn timetable with "Western" Diesel hydraulics taking over haulage of the Paddington expresses although steam was still occasionally drawn upon to stand in for failures. Stafford Road's complement of "Kings" was completely culled, however, with the remaining few members of the class all being based at Old Oak Common and these not lasting beyond the end of the year. Sun Street bridge occupies the immediate background with the buildings on the right the old GWR road motor garage.

## How the Railway arrived at the Medway Towns.

The South Eastern Railway was built as part of a highway from London to Paris, and then developed to serve Kent, Surrey, Sussex and even Berkshire. It was a railway whose history is filled with unusual and intriguing personalities, romantic incidents and much corruption. Vast sums of money were expended in a deadly battle with its archenemy, the London, Chatham & Dover Railway, especially in the Medway Towns, all guided by the erratic genius of Sir Edward Watkin whose dream of a Channel Tunnel remained unfulfilled.



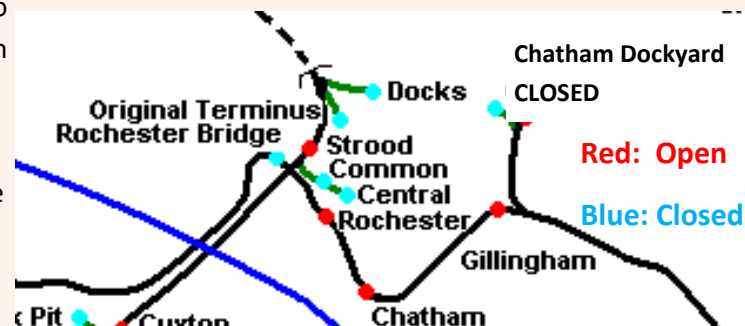
Part 2 of Mike's Tale

So by 1856 the SER considered that it's lines in North Kent were complete and Medway well catered for. The line from London Bridge via Greenwich, Dartford and Gravesend to Strood was complete and by the extension to Maidstone connected to Paddock Wood and Tonbridge. The SER was the only company in Kent having bought the Whitstable - Canterbury Railway in 1853 and it gave the appearance of a solid, secure system. It held the very lucrative foreign mails contract, a profitable cross channel ferry operation and a good system of branches, it had Kent "wrapped up". Well, oh no it hadn't! It was in for a very rude shock. Within a couple of years the SER was fighting, hard, for it's very existence. So how did this come about?

You recall that the SER failed to link Strood with Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and indeed Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Faversham directly. These towns pressed to be connected into the SER and after much discussion and several projected lines, the East Kent Railway was formed. The EKR gained an Act to build a line from Strood to Canterbury and two years later from Canterbury to Dover. The EKR planned to connect at Strood for onward connections to London on the SER. It seems the SER planned to let the line be built, and then snap it up at a bargain price. How wrong can you be! True, the EKR through the Medway Towns was expensive to build. There was the River Bridge to start with which was built parallel to the existing road bridge at the insistence of the Admiralty. Built to double track standards of steel, it's siting required a steep, heavily graded curve to gain access to Strood Station and the SER. From the bridge to the first tunnel the line is carried on an embankment over what was at the time marshland. Cheap land to buy but difficult to work. There are, three tunnels, the Rochester between there and Chatham, the Chatham, part way between the station and to where the line crosses the Dover Road, now the A2 at a combined bridge and viaduct and then into the longest, the Gillingham tunnel. The EKR realised that although Parliament had given them access to the SER at Strood, the SER would not make them welcome nor agree to the running of EKR trains over it's rails. The initial public meetings held prior to setting up the EKR emphasised that the over riding desire was for better communication with the Capital. The EKR therefore started to seek it's own, independent route to London. Now, the history of the many, at one time independent, lines running out of London towards the South is very involved and complicated and without going into this in detail, suffice it to say the EKR agreed to meet the Crystal Palace Railway at Bromley and use its terminus, initially at Battersea which at that time stood where Battersea Power Station was built and later into Victoria. There was one major problem however, Bromley stood on top of the Downs and the EKR stood at the bottom, almost sea level, below the Downs. The SER you recall got over this natural obstacle with it's buy out of the Canal company to use their tunnel at Strood. Two things happened now which really shook the SER out of it's complacency.

First, the EKR proposed to climb up and over the Downs by laying the line at a ruling 1:100 climb out of Strood along the line of the Medway Valley. This climb became infamous as the Sole St. Bank, the Shap of the south, Sole Street being a small hamlet at the top of the climb. To achieve this a connecting line through Strood required a series of tight reverse curves with a limiting 20mph speed limit, just what you need at the start of what became a 1:100 climb.

Secondly, In 1859 the EKR changed it's name to London, Chatham and Dover Railway. Suddenly, through it's own arrogance and dithering, the SER had a fully fledged competitor for it's major route. And it got worse.



Now, just like the railways are complicated to follow, so are the finances and financial liabilities of Railway Companies difficult to follow. So we won't. Suffice to say the SER gradually woke up to the threat the EKR was posing. The SER had had several chances to buy into and take-over the fledgling EKR which was known to be short of funds, so short in fact that it couldn't pay its contractor at one time. Now, the EKR, or LCDR, was not just a penniless irritant but was coming at the SER all guns firing. And it got worse.

And it did get worse. In 1862 the Mail contract passed to the LCDR. So, the upstart had stolen away the very reason the SER had been built in the first place! Well, not quite. For several reasons the SER would not operate out of Dover to Calais as the Government stipulated, the SER preferring the French port of Bolougne. Perhaps the SER thought the Government would agree to Boloungue, but they didn't and so the LCDR said thanks, well do it to Calais, and they did.

But to return to the railways in Medway. The 18 mile line from Strood to Faversham opened in 1858. It was single track only at this stage and had taken almost five years to build, mainly due to lack of funds. The EKR had no locos at the opening and had to borrow six 2-2-0's from the Great Northern and there were just five trains a day in each direction. 1860 was an important year for the LCDR. The extension from Faversham to Canterbury opened as did the extension into London Victoria. The SER publicly refused to handle EKR trains despite the Act of Parliament requiring them to do so. Bad move. So in 1860 the LCDR opened its own Strood station, except it wasn't called Strood but Rochester Bridge. It was very close to the bridge, but the wrong side of the river from Rochester. The opening of Rochester Bridge station virtually killed off London travel by the SER. Rochester got its own station in 1902. Rochester Bridge station was closed in 1917 as a war economy and never re-opened. It was an impressive building and wasn't demolished until 1968 for road widening. Chatham Station was built in a hollow between two hills and although confined in space was always very busy. As originally built it had five platform faces, goods facilities and a small loco shed and turntable. It is today a through station of just two platforms but is still very busy. The station building is the only original left. Gillingham, originally New Brompton, was built on virtually open ground and although altered over the years still stands on the original site.

We've noted that the SER refused to accept LCDR tickets and trains at Strood. The LCDR in response refused to allow SER trains access to Chatham. After legal



The original LCDR Chatham station

intervention these "through" services were introduced in 1877. In 1881 the SER sought more paths into Chatham, the LCDR refused on the grounds of insufficient capacity. The SER seems to have finally awoken to how important Chatham was as a source of revenue. There followed the most ridiculous and expensive fit of bad grace by any Railway, The Chatham Central Branch. The Chatham Central Branch was opened in 1892, it was 1 mile 194 yds long and cost £500000 to build. It required a new river bridge costing £71000, was built to double track standards although Chatham Central itself had only one platform. The line was built on wooden trestles through out and even had one intermediate station, Rochester Common. Chatham Central had two major problems, firstly hardly any one used it, secondly it was not in Chatham and certainly wasn't Central. A folly, it served no purpose, apart from financing the contractors who built it! It closed in 1911. It is interesting to note that the SER never had a station in Chatham.

Sense finally prevailed and in 1899 the warring SER and LCDR "merged" to become the South Eastern and Chatham Railway. Technically however both companies continued as separate entities, the SECR being run by a management committee.



Although not all at the same time, The Medway Towns has had eight separate stations, today just four, Strood, on the site of the SER station, Rochester, a new build of 2015 on a new site but on the original LCDR line, Chatham and Gillingham, as noted both on their respective original sites. With the exception of the Chatham Central line all the lines described here are still very much in use. One final irony. When the Chatham Central branch was closed, trains running between Rochester and Strood continued to use the SER bridge whilst those for London via Bromley used the LCDR bridge. Later in 1927 to ease the LCDR curves through Strood the line was swung onto the SER bridge, the LCDR bridge was kept but unused. Fast forward to 1967 and the old LCDR girder bridge was removed, but not the pillars which now carry a widened A2 road.



**A story of two Railways fighting a war that very nearly bankrupted both of them!**

With news later of Codsall Railway Circle meeting again this year, Mike Morgans sent me an email entitled 'Rogues Gallery' and a couple of screen shots from a BBC TV programme The Golden Age of Steam which featured three of our regulars.



**Stars of Stage and Screen!**



## July Quiz Question Answer

**Transpennine Express have made the world's longest railway bench, at Scarborough train station, their very first 'chatty bench'.**

The company has launched a brand-new initiative, 'chatty benches', in a push to end loneliness and increase conversations amongst customers, following more than a year of reduced interactions amongst the public due to the pandemic.



## August Quiz Question

Which country is this loco from?



An unusual sight on the Severn Valley Railway as Colas Class 37 No **37057** heads away from Bewdley Tunnel bound for Arley with Power car **43277** in tow on Friday 23rd July. The SVR is earning some much needed extra revenue by temporarily storing five HST power cars in the sidings at Arley. Whilst the sight of these ‘modern’ locos stored on the railway is an anathema to some purists, a typical comment being “Such a shame that these things will be allowed to spoil what is a lovely GW country station at Arley “, one only has to look at many of the other preserved railways to see the devastating effect the pandemic has had on heritage railway cash flow.



Steve Tucker

Also heading for the Severn Valley Railway, albeit for just a few hours, was Saphos Trains ‘Severn Valley Enterprise’ railtour from Carnforth to Bridgnorth on Wednesday 21st July . The train was steam hauled from Shrewsbury to Bridgnorth and return and is seen here passing Codsall hauled by ‘Black 5’ 4-6-0 No 45321 “The Sherwood Forrester” with a class 47 tucked inside the steam loco, the train running some 13 minutes late.



Pictured by Mike Morgans at Bilbrook station (below right) is Class 37 No **37611** which was built at the English Electric Vulcan Foundry, Newton le Willows and entered service as British Railways Type 3 D6871 on September 17th 1963. **Fifty eight years** later it is operated by spot-hire company Europhenix and was taking West Midlands Trains new 4-car class 196 DMU No **196103** to Donnington, Telford also for short term storage. Currently the class 170 units so familiar on the Shrewsbury line are waiting to be transferred to East Midlands Railway and there is insufficient space to store the newly delivered class 196 units at Tyesley depot until they depart.



Derek Horton also snapped the returning train at sunny Cosford

Another First Class tale from our East Midland correspondent Tony Beresford

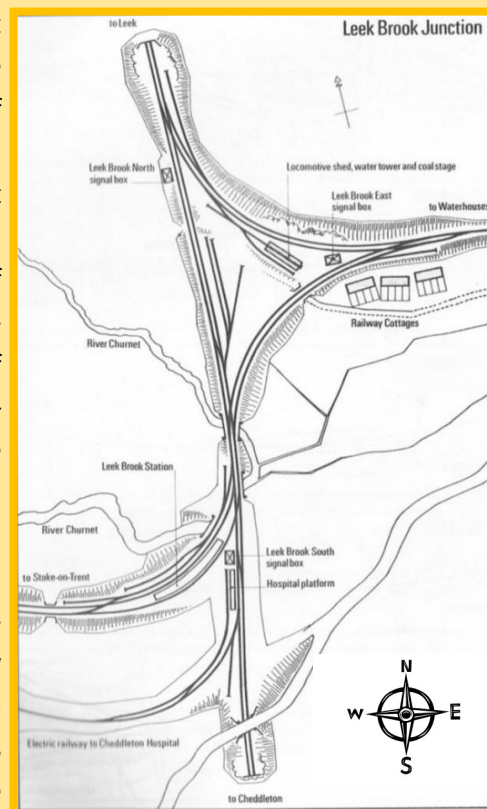
## Four Trips and a Signal Box

In the mid 70's I changed jobs and my new area of work was primarily in the Staffordshire Moorlands. I knew parts of the district, having been born and raised just over the border in Derbyshire, however my work meant I soon got to know it extremely well.

Admittedly it took me a few years but one day I decided to take a proper look at Leekbrook Junction, or more correctly, "Leek Brook Jct" as evidenced by the nameboards on each end of the signal box. I parked on the verge at the side of the A520 and walked along the access track towards the junction. My approach had been observed from the signal box, initially by a vaguely suspicious look but after a brief "interview" I was invited up the steps into the warm interior and offered a mug of tea. Now, I'm not a lover of tea (the inside of teapots put me off at an early age) but my welcome had been so genuine, it would have been churlish to decline. My host was regular signalman Ken Faulkner and we hit it off straight away. In retrospect I shouldn't have been surprised by Ken's attitude because when I was surveying for the OS and working on or near the railway, we were instructed to visit the nearest signal box (there were plenty in the 60's) and inform the bobby accordingly. Without fail they invariably made me welcome and I was usually invited back at lunchtimes to share a brew and eat my sandwiches in convivial surroundings. As an aside, during my time with the OS, local detachments (a term related to the military origins of the OS) were issued with Railway Walking Permits which gave authority for our presence on railway property. In certain locations BR would provide a lookout but I only ever experienced this once during the eighteen months I spent frequently surveying on and around the Leicester-Manton-Corby line. Today's Health and Safety culture would find such goings on impossible to comprehend but as we all know, that's another story.

Returning to Leek Brook Junction, the signal box dates from 1867 when the Stoke to Leek line opened, thereby creating a west to north junction with the NSR's existing Churnet Valley route (Uttoxeter to North Rode) which had opened on 13th July 1849. The signal box and junction were originally called Cheddleton Junction, the box later being renamed Leek Brook South when the Caldon branch and associated triangular junction opened in 1905. The box assumed its present name following closure of Leek Brook North and East boxes in the 1940's and is located on the down side of the former Churnet Valley main line in the angle created by the previously mentioned converging route from Stoke. Almost immediately the line to Caldon branches off on the opposite side and begins its relentless climb towards Ipstones summit. Originally this was the south to east part of the triangular junction, the third side curving to join the down main line at Leek Brook North Junction, 555 yards north of the present box. As previously noted there was also a box at Leek Brook East Junction. When the Caldon branch opened, a small engine shed was built adjacent to the east to north curve. The shed closed in January 1932, closure of the curve following suit in the 1940's.

The impetus for the Caldon line lay in the passing of the Light Railways Act of 1896 and as a consequence it had a dual purpose, not only to serve the NSR worked quarries at Caldon but also to connect with the Leek and Manifold Valley Light Railway at Waterhouses which was reached by a steeply graded line that descended from Caldon Junction, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile short of the quarry sidings. Waterhouses station is especially remembered for the interchange facilities which enabled standard gauge wagons to be transferred on to narrow gauge transporter wagons for onward travel to various locations on the Leek and Manifold Valley Light Railway.



The L&MVLJR closed completely on 12th March 1934, the passenger service from Waterhouses to Leek ending the following year and goods services eight years later. However the old goods shed at Waterhouses remains having eventually found a new life as a cycle hire base for visitors to the Manifold Valley.

In 1899, a basic station known as Leek Brook consisting of a wooden island platform was built close to the signal box but on the Stoke line, primarily to serve the newly completed St Edward's Hospital which stood on a hill overlooking the valley of the River Churnet. The station closed on 7th May 1956. The hospital had been built in the 1890's as the "3rd Staffordshire County Asylum" supplementing those at Stafford and Hammerwich and remained a mental health institution until final closure in the 2002. It was a large foreboding Victorian edifice, typical of its type and era, and in common with many similar establishments a railway was provided to bring in materials during construction of the hospital. A junction with the down Churnet Valley line, together with modest exchange sidings were provided just south of the signal box which was still called Cheddleton Junction at the time.

Upon completion of the hospital in 1899, Staffordshire County Council took over the line and converted it to a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long 200v DC overhead tramway which came into operation in 1903. An interchange platform for visitors was provided at Leek Brook between the tramway sidings and down main line. There was no corresponding platform on the up side. The County Council purchased a small two axle electric loco from Wolverhampton to work the tramway but unfortunately I've been unable to find out any other information about it. (Any details of this loco would be welcomed). An old London horse tram was also purchased and converted into a passenger coach, however passenger services ceased in the 1920's. For the next three decades the main reason for the tramway's continued existence was coal traffic to power the site's four Lancashire steam boilers. The loco propelled a maximum of two loaded wagons per journey up steep gradients, including a section at 1 in 16½, to the hospital. The tramway continued to operate until December 1954 when the line was closed and by May 1957 it had been lifted.



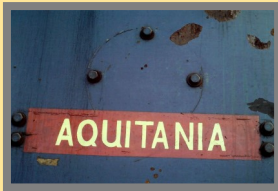
By the time of my first visit, a truncated section of the former main line continued towards the site of the former North Junction to provide loco run round facilities for sand trains. There were also three or four sidings on the up side beyond the facing junction to Caldon. These were used to house "half" trains, it frequently being necessary to work loaded trains from the quarries in two parts, prior to uniting them at Leek Brook for the onward journey over gentler gradients towards Stoke. In later years nearly all this trackwork was removed leaving just a short headshunt north of the junction. With four routes converging at Leek Brook, clearly the signal box had played an essential and important roll throughout most of its existence. However since closure of the Churnet Valley main line north of Leek in 1964 and subsequent ending of goods trains to Leek in 1970, freight traffic had become restricted to stone trains from Caldon quarries plus sand from Moneystone Quarry (owned by BIS), located just north of Oakamoor. The reduced status of Leek Brook Junction was reflected in a number of levers in the box being out of use and painted white, matching Ken's hair perfectly!



A few weeks later I had my first encounter with Eddie Hambleton who covered when Ken was unavailable for whatever reason. Eddie sported a well-worn flat cap which appeared to be permanently attached unless he needed to scratch his head. In earlier times, Eddie had been a relief signalman and reckoned he'd worked every box on the old NSR. Although Eddie lived within sight of the Caldon line, virtually all the surviving ex-NSR boxes must have been at least fifteen miles from his home at Winkhill. Many were the tales he'd tell of fighting through snow, fog and pitch darkness to get to and from work on his trusty, immaculately presented motorbike.

I soon became firm friends with both Ken and Eddie and was always assured of a hearty welcome, not least, I suspect, because of long periods of inactivity at Leek Brook. Eddie in particular was a great talker, vaccinated with a gramophone needle as my dad used to say. It's as well I was on flexitime! The sand traffic from Oakamoor amounted to one well loaded train, occasionally two each day, whilst Caldon Low still generated at least one daily train. St Helens and Worksop were the most frequent destinations for sand traffic and there was a regular flow of stone to Witton. Flexitime enabled me to organise my day so I could sometimes photograph these workings at various places, however their timekeeping could also prove somewhat flexible and disappointed, I'd have to hasten off to my next appointment. If only Real Time Trains had been around back then! Class 25's were the dominant locos on all these trains, frequently working in pairs although Class 24's put in fairly regular appearances before they were finally withdrawn in the late seventies. However when I called at the box on 17th October 1984 for a lunchtime cuppa, Ken excitedly told me there were "namers" on both that day's Caldon and Oakamoor trains, clearly a red letter day for Leek Brook! Within minutes 40015 could be seen gingerly navigating the sharply curving final few yards of

the steep bank down from Ipstones before coming to a halt and setting back to collect the other wagons brought down earlier. On its body-side, almost apologetically, was the painted name "Aquitania", a latter day replacement for the original which incorporated the Cunard flag. At least the thought was there!



In the meantime, 47361 arrived from Oakamoor sporting an altogether more professional nameplate, "Wilton Endeavour" complete with separate small circular crest above, functional but not a patch on 40015's original adornments. "Aquitania" departed towards Stoke first (**right**) with thirty plus wagons of limestone, thereby enabling 47361 to pull forward north of the junction and run round its train of forty wagons prior to also heading for The Potteries.



Although all the train crews I met were invariably pleasant, Ken warned me one day of a driver currently on the way from Stoke with a train of empties. Apparently this chap would creep around the final bend before the junction and if he thought there were any photographers in the vicinity of the box would stop and refuse to go any further until they "b----red off". I valued my friendship with both Ken and Eddie and didn't want to cause problems for them so I duly disappeared.

My first cab ride had been in May 1984. I called to see Ken one lunchtime and he told me an additional sand train was required to run that afternoon from the British Industrial Sand (BIS) sidings at Oakamoor. Within minutes 47266 arrived with the regular loaded sand train, ran round and pulled up by the box awaiting the light engine arriving off the single line from Stoke. A short time later 47313 came into view and stopped alongside the loaded train. After 47266 had departed, Ken asked if I fancied a trip on 47313 to collect the second train. Given that opportunity, I quickly resolved there was nothing I was planning to do that afternoon which couldn't be deferred!

I clambered aboard only to find the driver wasn't in the cab so I sat down and had a good look around. Suddenly a firm but friendly voice enquired if I was driving; without thinking I had sat in the driver's seat! He wore a khaki "slop" coat, a wise precaution which made me think he must be very familiar with weather conditions in the Moorlands. After a good laugh about my error and the usual pleasantries we were soon on our way and it turned out he was the next door neighbour of one of my senior work colleagues, fortunately one of the better ones!

We rumbled through Cheddleton Tunnel before pausing at the level crossing by the station. The gated crossing was opened by the train crew, following which we had a brief look at the activities of volunteers beaver-avering away on behalf of the preservation society based there. (**Right**)



It is another 6¼ miles from there to Oakamoor following what the Wizard of Oz might have called the (pale) yellow sand road. Decades of sand leaking from loaded wagons covered the four foot all the way from the quarry sidings to Leek Brook, not to mention much of line towards Stoke. At Oakamoor approximately twenty five loaded wagons were ready for collection and we were soon heading back towards Leek Brook, the 47 comfortably dealing with the loaded train. All too soon I was saying goodbye to my new friend.

My second trip along the yellow sand road was in April 1986. By now significant inroads had been made into the number of Class 25's remaining in service with the result that Class 47's and Class 20's became increasingly common at Leek Brook. This time 20044/002 (**Right**) arrived on empties bound for Oakamoor and I was invited to join the crew. After disposing of the inbound empties and coupling up to the loaded train, a



short wait was necessary while one of BIS's industrial YEC 0-4-0 DH's (**Left**) passed the final eight wagons beneath the loading bunker before attaching them to the rear. This brought the total load behind the 20's up to about thirty five wagons resulting in quite steady progress on the return journey accompanied by plenty of noise from the two locos.

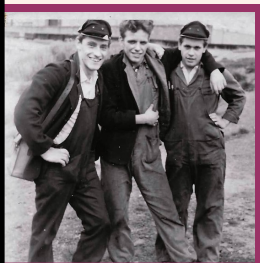
The following December I again found myself in the right place at the right time. A light engine was approaching Leek Brook en route to Caldton to collect an additional stone train. The driver readily agreed to Ken's enquiry and I was soon inside the warm cab of 47318. The steep climb away from Leek Brook Junction begins immediately and varies between 1 in 40 and 1 in 59 with a long stretch at 1 in 45. Beyond Ipstones summit the line falls at 1 in 61 towards the end of the branch. This was very apparent on the return journey when despite having what might normally be considered a modest trailing load, the 47 sounded as though it was really struggling to lift the train up the hill towards Ipstones. At the summit there are three overbridges in fairly quick succession and I remember how dramatically they demonstrated the change in gradients from up to down, the parapet of the third bridge only coming into view as we passed beneath the first. From that point great caution was taken to ensure the train was under full control as we headed down the steep gradient to Leek Brook. The need for utmost care had been shown a few years previously when several wagons derailed and overturned near the foot of the incline. If I remember rightly, on that occasion the loco managed to stay on the rails but it must have been a frightening experience for all concerned. I dropped in to see Ken a couple of months afterwards and he told me the driver I'd been with had received a caution. It wasn't because I'd been in the loco with him but because he had exceeded the number of loaded wagons allowed to be brought down from Caldton. Apparently he didn't wish to make two journeys for the sake of just a single truck. I must admit to being surprised when Ken told me the limit was dictated by the uphill gradient away from the quarry rather than the long downhill gradient from the summit to the junction.

The final sand train from Oakamoor ran on 30th August 1988. I was recovering from an operation but summoned up the strength to witness the crews of 20132/020 and one of BIS's industrial locos shake hands prior to departure. (**Right**) The last stone train from Caldton ran on 8th February 1989 after which Leek Brook Junction signal box was mothballed for possible future use. This was not quite the end because in 1990 and 1991, special trains of redundant coaching stock ran to Oakamoor in connection with SAS exercises. These were hauled by a Class 31, Departmental 31970 doing the honours in early February 1990. The resultant weekend's worth of damage to the coaches would have challenged even the keenest of preservationists!



**Part 2 next month folks!**

## Sadly we come to the end of Keith Morgan's **footplate memories** with a few last tales. Thank you Keith for entertaining us along the line!



I was always aware of the responsibility and anxiety of drivers who, through no fault of their own had to nurse inexperienced 17/18 year old firemen like us Bushbury boys on the left. One winter Sunday i was marked up for a early evening Crewe to Birmingham New Street passenger train, which had originated in Blackpool. The job entailed going passenger to Crewe, then relieving the incoming crew at the station. However, on reporting to the Foreman at Crewe North, he informed us that we were to take a fresh engine from the shed and swop with the Blackpool loco. I was quite excited to find our engine was a "Britannia", she had been prepared and was standing in the yard, but on approaching the Brit it was obvious she looked very run down, with steam escaping from most joints.

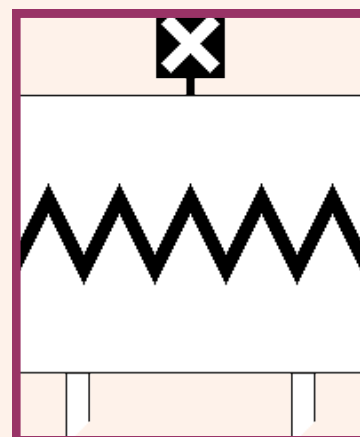
Having checked the boiler water level, i knocked the fire about the big square box, i then noticed my driver Bill Burgess taking his coat off, grabbing the shovel and started baling coal in the box, then i had a go, taking turns to put a massive fire on. As I looked quizzically at Bill, he said " we don't want to fire this run-down thing until we reach Stafford". We made our way to the station and stood in the middle road awaiting our train. The Blackpool, with a Black 5 came in 10 minutes late, the shunter hooked us on, Bill tested the vacuum, and with our colour light showing green and the tip from the guard, we were away!



Nameless Britannia" Class 4-6-2 No. 70035 "Rudyard Kipling" Geoff Plumb

Bill lost no time in getting our run down Brit up to speed, passing Basford Hall we were going at a fair lick, with Bill thrashing the engine, the exhaust reflecting this. Whilst in Crewe station Bill told me to sit on my seat and not move, adding, "just look after the injector". As we gathered speed, i quickly realised why! I found it was almost impossible to stand up for the engine was bucking and swaying and the cab was so loose on it's anchor bolts that i thought that any minute it would come away from the boiler. Undeterred, Bill kept her at it, the one redeeming factor being she was steaming well.

Because we could only communicate by shouting loudly, my driver motioned that he would operate the scoop on Whitmore water troughs. As it was downhill to Stafford, the Brit was eased, but still banging and clattering as our speed increased. Passing over the points at Norton Bridge, it was so rough, i thought we would de-rail. Eventually we came to a stand at Stafford, the silence was beautiful, Bill said "blimey mate, that was rough, but at least we've knocked 5 minute's off our time" Our big fire was still in evidence, so i only had to fire her a couple of times to W-ton, and then the same to B-ham NS, letting the fire run low. We then deposited our train at Vauxhall carriage shed and the engine at Aston MPD where Bill wrote a report explaining that the Brit should not be used for fast running.



The point of this story is that Bill, realising that this was my first passenger express, decided to take the firing out of my hands knowing I wouldn't be able to cope on this run down Britannia. Hence the big fire we built at Crewe. At the time I was very inexperienced but Bill never complained or admonished me. In retrospect, I think Crewe North were pulling a fast one, utilizing the Brit before she went into the shops for overhaul.

Many moons later I was marked to work one Saturday morning with a much older driver bringing a duplicate Irish ferry boat train from Crewe to Birmingham New Street. This train originated from Holyhead and was a frequent occurrence when the scheduled train was full. As before, we were to relieve the engine at Crewe station and as our train came down the platform I thought oh no it's another Britannia! This engine was totally different however and I fired her with ease; there were no knocks or bangs, and even at speed she was smooth running. A most enjoyable trip. Around this time Aston shed received a number of Britannias from Cardiff and we soon got used to them, usually on Bushbury to Crewe night goods trains. I have to say that they were in quite good condition.

On a lighter note, I was marked up with a top link driver, Sammy Stanford, on a Crewe to Bushbury extra goods train one summer Saturday morning, again travelling passenger to Crewe. Sammy was the epitome of a good engine driver, still a handsome man in his middle sixties, always smartly turned out with shirt and tie and a good sense of humor- nothing bothered Sam. We sat in the sunshine, outside the cabin at Basford Hall, sharing a can of tea, when the arranger said, "your train is coming up"; you can imagine my disappointment when the engine arrived, yes, a bloody Super D! I made my mind up that this trip was going to be a struggle.

Relieving the incoming crew, I carried out checks on the boiler level, and checked the fire which at least was clean,

and we had decent coal. "What's up old son" Sam asked? I don't think we'll get far with this old thing I replied. Smiling, Sam said, "don't you worry, I'll put you right".

Sam looked in the firebox, and instructed me to put eight shovel's of coal round the box, "when the smoke has gone off the chimney, put another eight on, and so on". We left Basford Hall taking the up slow towards Stafford, the D got into her stride, with her unusual exhaust (one small one,

one big one, then two small beats) and Sam let her settle to her own pace. At one point he did a round of firing, thoroughly enjoying himself, the old D, was steaming well and we climbed up to Whitmore with ease where we managed to take water from the troughs. After passing Stafford, the D was still going well. Eventually as Bushbury was in sight, Sam looked over at me and said with a grin, "I told you, we'd be ok", - - - thank you Sam for a good trip and a good memory.

I'm not sure of the date, but with dieselisation picking up apace and with work dropping off, it was strongly rumored that Bushbury shed would close. Quite quickly a number of firemen and even some drivers were handing their notice in. As I wanted to continue with the railways, I decided to wait and see although eventually the remaining staff were given a letter saying that the shed would close. I had a short interview with an admin chap from BR who explained that the only vacancy available was at Crewe, which I turned down. I then asked about Oxley and he replied that any jobs there had been taken by men more senior than myself. Although I later found out that this was untrue, BR's ploy worked and I reluctantly joined those who decided to leave.

**Thank you Keith for entertaining us along the line!**



## Roger's Train Spot



The last Saturday of the summer time table at Wolverhampton Low Level on 4th September 1965. This would be the last day of ex-GWR locomotives working regular passenger trains into and out of Low Level. Here is the list of ex-GWR Loco's that worked on that day.

3792, 4147, 4168, 4176, 4178, 4635, 6665, 6667, 6679, 6692, 6849, 6833, 6858, 6934, 6951, 6921 & 7029.

Sadly all of the GWR locos would soon be scrapped, some at nearby Cashmore's at Great Bridge with the exception of Clun Castle. We also had 70045 & 70053, plus Class 5's & 8F's.

That day, I had haulage behind the following: Britannia class **70053, Moray Firth** Low Level to Snow Hill, **6921 Borwick Hall** Snow Hill to Low Level, **6951 Impney Hall** Low Level to Snow Hill, Britannia class **70045 Lord Rowallan** Snow Hill to Low Level, BR Std class 5 **73036** Low Level to Snow Hill. Then DMU to Stratford-on-Avon because the 12-30 from Penzance to Wolverhampton Low Level was hauled by **7029 Clun Castle** from Bristol.

Thanks to the grapevine, the train was nearly a special with everybody I know on board. I travelled from Stratford to Wolverhampton Low Level on the last timetable train behind a GWR castle in normal times, somebody at Tyseley got 7029 turned out for it. Earlier, on the 24th of January 1965 the SLS had a Farewell to the GWR Castles hauled by 7029 via Oxford and Bristol, so you can see why 8 months later it was on the 12-30 from Penzance. Already earmarked for preservation, it was bought for its scrap value of £2,400 by Patrick Whitehouse in 1966,

### **7029 Clun Castle at Gloucester on the S.L.S. special 24/01/1965**



## **STOP PRESS**

Currently, we intend to recommence meetings on **OCTOBER 12TH.**

In future meetings will be the second Tuesday in the month and I look forward to seeing you all again!

**Thanks Roger, a memorable day enjoyed with a weekly Midland runabout ticket.**

