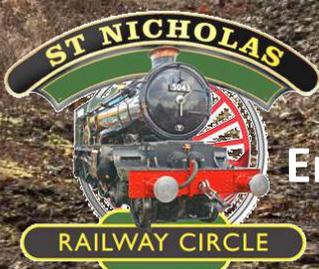




92043



Emag No 65 March 2026

Platform Edge

February, 1967 and almost the end of steam at Shrewsbury station. The lads don't seem very interested in the loco-it's just another Black 5!

Photo: Ralph Ward.



Train spotting, 1965 style. Perth shed with a withdrawn Class A4 pacific No **60026 Miles Beevor** as a background.

School blazers were normal attire back then, this one proudly bearing the badge of Bell Baxter High School of Cupar, motto **Ad Vitam Paror** - I am being prepared for life. The lads certainly seem prepared with notebooks, pencils and a Brownie 127, a popular choice of camera, inexpensive but limited in application. You were usually fine if the subject wasn't moving!



The loco was later moved to Crewe works for removal of parts to aid the restoration of 60007 Sir Nigel Gresley before being cut up at Bolckows, Blyth. **Photo: Matthew Mather.**

Front cover

Preserved BR Std class 9F 2-10-0 No 92134 north of Quorn masquerading as 92043 which worked the Great Central line in BR days.

Photo: Andrew Watts

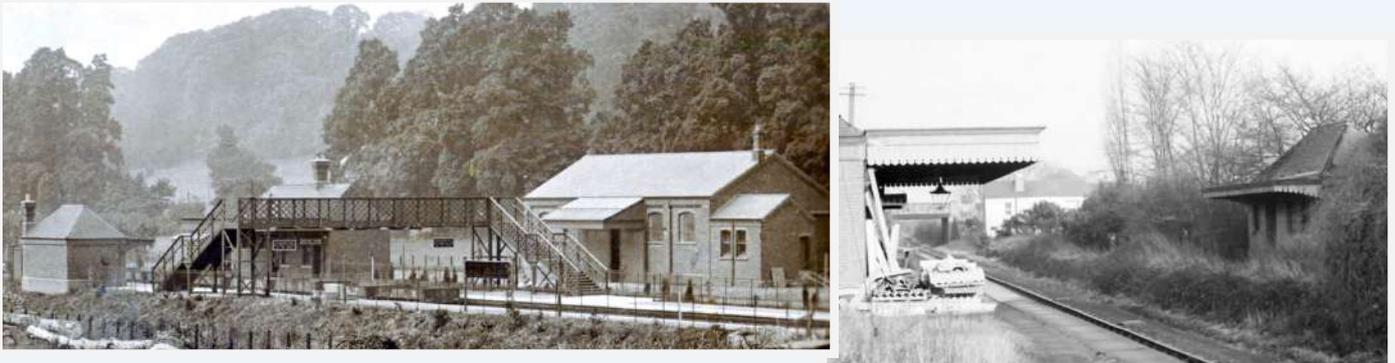
Who would, over 60 years ago, have ever consider photographing the rear of The Caledonian train, even if it did have a rather attractive tailboard. Well photographer extraordinaire **Robert Whitfield** did at Birdswood on the WCML, the loco just passing under Weaver Junction flyover.

Shared by Pete Berry



A nice postcard view of the new Tettenhall station on the Wombourne branch. A late arrival on the GWR empire, this view probably dates near the opening of the branch in May, 1925. The passenger service lasted just seven years!

Below Right, looking the other way in the 1960s. The station building on the left is now Cupcake Lane tearoom, a pleasant stop on the South Staffordshire Railway Walk, whilst the one on the right was demolished.



Photos: Dave Clare collection

Further to last months photos of Platform 17 at Clapham Junction, Class 47 No **47001** is in a spot of bother, its heavy stone train from the Mendips to Ardingly stretched out behind it. The sharp gradient and reverse curves had caused the loco to stall in December 1981.



There are signs of hand sanding by the secondman on the rails ahead of the loco despite the proximity of the 'live' third rail.

All attempts to restart failed and a Class 33 'Crompton' was summoned from nearby Stewarts Lane, reversing at Falcon Junction onto the front of the train.

Photo: John Atkinson

Manned by Willesden (1A) Special Link men, LMS English Electric Prototype No **10000** is seen on the Down Fast at South Kenton hauling a Breakdown Train bound for Roade Northamptonshire. There had been a derailment at Roade and the Breakdown Train was on its way to assist.

No. 10000 was withdrawn in 1963 and scrapped at Cashmores, Great Bridge, in January 1968; between withdrawal and scrapping, 10000 spent some time in storage at Derby. **Photo: Michael Oliver**



A charming undated picture of an unidentified GWR Class 517 0-4-2T locomotive drawing water from the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal carried by the Edstone Aqueduct on the now abandoned Alcester-Bearley line in Warwickshire. Not visible is the filter that caught the fish!

Apparently, there was a coal pot bellied stove that used to be lit in the winter to stop the water from the canal freezing. When the line was shut, it was simply chucked down the embankment. However, one of the old Permanent Way staff from Henley in Arden went and fetched it, took it home, gave it a good clean up, and put it back in use in his shed!

Designed by Joseph Armstrong, a total of 156 of these Class 517 tanks were built at Stafford Road, Wolverhampton in 13 batches between 1868 and 1864.



Built in 1816 to carry the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal, it is 475feet long, the longest cast iron aqueduct in England, crossing as it does, the Stratford line, a minor road, a stream, a field and, as above, what is now only the trackbed of the Alcester branch line which closed in 1951. **Photo: G.M.Perkins shared by Peter Blunn**



Castle Class 4-6-0 No **5080 Defiant** passes under the Edstone Aqueduct in the background, near Bearley, on 16 April 1990 with the 12:59 Tyseley to Stratford-upon-Avon 'Shakespeare Express' railtour. An interesting vintage rake of coaches, including a twelve wheel vehicle. **Photo: Martin Loader**

Wolverhampton Low Level station

Before the last surviving service from the Low Level to Birmingham Snow Hill was suspended in March 1972, never to return, part of the station was converted into a parcel depot. The closure of the line north to Cannock Road Junction allowed the north end of the station to be converted into a hard standing and loading area as seen **below**. Opened in 1970, the area once graced by GWR Kings and Castles was now home to a fleet of 50 parcel vans that covered an area between Lichfield and Kidderminster handling some 8000 parcels a day at its peak. Those in view are the universally disliked Commer Walk-Thru Vans.

A change in parcel policy led to its closure in 1981 although the Engineers Department used the station until 1986. A similar view over Wednesfield Road bridge **below**, looks very different today although the station's original buildings remain hidden behind the hotel in this view but nicely renovated as Grand Station events venue.

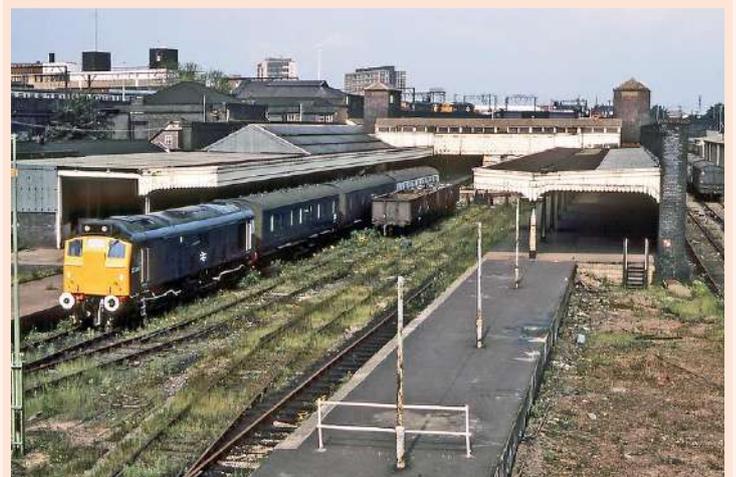


Photo: Nick Catford



Right, a 1984 view of the south end of the station in use by the Engineers Department. Class 25 No **25067** had been condemned in December 1982 but was subsequently used as part of an exhibition train which accounts for its smart appearance. A month after this photograph was taken the locomotive was dispatched

to Swindon for scrapping but a preservation bid was successful, the first of its class, and it moved initially to the Battlefield Line in Leicestershire, but is now with Nemesis Rail at Burton on Trent in BR green livery.



Another Class 25, No **25064** is seen leaving the adjacent former Midland Railway Wednesfield Road Goods Depot yard with a breakdown train in May 1984. The track in the foreground is the former Midland Railway connection from Heath Town Junction which was the only access to Wolverhampton Low Level station by this time.

The Wednesfield Road Goods Depot site is now occupied by a large Royal Mail sorting office.

Photos and text: David Rostance

Our East Midlands correspondent, **Tony Beresford** sent this photo, **Right**, with the question; Where was he and what was the occasion that demanded special ticket holders only? Nice ridge and furrow station canopies. Answer on page 30.



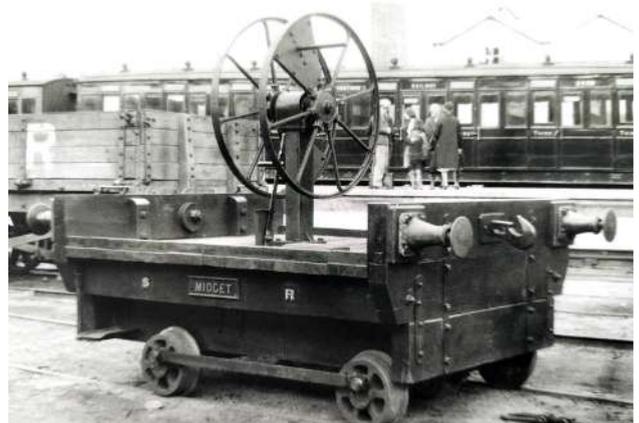
Below, semaphore heaven at Hastings!



And just for me, he sent this nice picture of Hastings station from May 2006 when, with the help of his Freedom of Scotland ticket, he visited amongst other places Wick, Kyle of Lochalsh and Aberdeen. So, what was he doing in Sussex? A very good friend used to buy a two week All Line Rover every three weeks or so and on the days he didn't use it would offer it to Tony. Hence the 26th and 27th of May found him exploring the delights of the southeast network.

Isle of Wight Mighty Midget!

A two man operated "shunter" designed to move rolling stock in and out of the works buildings at Ryde St. Johns Road, on the IOW. It was powered by two men turning the two wheels on the deck, and was fitted with forward/reverse gears. The idea was to save using a locomotive to make these movements, and was built mostly from scrap materials. It was the brainchild of A.B.Macleod, then general manager of the IOW in SR days. It was heavy going to use, and was severely limited in what two men could haul with it. Great idea, but didn't last long.



Thanks to Brian Racher and the Industrial Locomotives Enthusiasts Facebook page

What's this, is the Emag turning into the **SEAMAG?**

Below, Collier **Barra Head** loads coal at the Low Staith's on the Tyne.

Tony Wright visited the area in 1987 and describes the Harton Electric Railway, South Shields, Tyne and Wear on page 21.



Photos: Tony Wright

Above, bottom discharge vessel **David Marley** swings away from Low Staith's with colliery waste for dumping at sea.

What a nice view that has a touch of 'Last of the Summer (or Scottish) Wine' about it I thought.

Four of the crew members enjoying a break near Glenfinnan on the West Highland Railway on the 13th August 1950. The former Great Northern Railway 2-6-0 loco was classified K2 by the LNER and had side cab windows fitted for use in Scotland, some receiving 'Loch' names. They got the nickname "Ragtimers" because of their lively nature when running at speed and their use of Walschaerts valve gear which was uncommon on the GNR at the time.



Photo: Branch Lines of the British Isles's

Station Quiz answers

Leighton Buzzard	Reading	London Kings Cross	Newcastle
Ascott under Wychwood	Henley on Thames	Barking Riverside	Bolton
Nottingham	Taunton	Bellingham	Sheffield
Swansea	Gloucester	Gunnersbury	Barrow in Furness
Hereford	Chippenham	Kew Gardens	Derby
Coventry	Honiton	Tattenham Corner	Blackpool Pleasure Beach
Tenby	Exeter	Hastings	Carlisle
Leamington spa	Penzance	Sevenoaks	Halifax
Kidwelly	Weston super mare	Chatham	Grantham
Leicester	Weymouth		Skegness
			Liverpool Lime Street

Bath Panorama

A splendid view of Broad Quay, Bath although the local, golden-coloured Bath Stone is not quite so obvious in a black and white photo! What at first seems a bus photo, on closer inspection reveals British Rail gas-turbine **No 18100** leaving Bath Spa on the up 'Merchant Venturer', so the time must be 5.47 as trains always ran on time in our youth! The loco was a prototype main line gas turbine–electric locomotive built for British Railways in 1951 by Metropolitan-Vickers, Manchester. Originally ordered by the Great Western Railway in the 1940s, its construction was delayed due to World War II.



For the bus fans, the nearest bus can be identified as **FCJ 752**, a classic Bedford OB, the choice of so many small independent operators just like Irene Baynham of Ross on Wye and new in May 1948. Alongside is a pre-war Midland Red coach, it's a SOS ONC type chassis built in-house in Birmingham and fitted with Duple body.

Next in line is a real gem although the chassis is difficult to identify but perhaps fitted with a relatively rare Gurney Nutting body. They also built bodies for Rolls Royce and Bentley! Last in line looks like a Leyland Tiger PS1 or 2 type with Duple body. The other side of the river Avon, a couple of ECW bodied Bristol L type single deck buses are at the country bus services terminus.

Broad Quay, unrecognisable today, was used as a coach park for visiting coaches when this photo was taken in the 1950s and their passengers are no doubt enjoying a day trip to Bath. St Marks Church, with its distinctive tower, still stands but is a community centre today. **Photo: The Transport Treasury**

Carrying headcode 142, **No 18100** was used regularly on The *Merchant Venturer* express which left Paddington at 11.15am and called at Bath Spa and Bristol Temple Meads before arriving at Weston -super-Mare at 2.06pm. The service began as one of two excursions from London (the other was The William Shakespeare to Stratford which only ran for one summer) as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain intended as a short trip out from the capital, to some of the cultural highlights that were the focuses of the Festival. **Photo: Unknown**



Mystery Solved

I came across this rather nice **David Christie photo** recently of GWR Class 5101 2-6-2T which was allocated to Stafford Road 84A for exactly a year from June 1962. It was described as Wolverhampton goods yard and as I had not heard that description before I and naturally turned to our authority on the Wolverhampton area, **Simon Dewey**.



Simon replied, the photo initially threw me although it was where I thought it was. The location is the Civil Engineer's platform on the Down side of the line opposite Cannock Road Junction . The gable end with the semicircular addition over the ridge visible above the last van in the train is that of the Gas Plant by the turntable of Stafford Road shed and the head of the gable with the circular opening below the apex visible above the bunker of the loco is that of the Stafford Road coal stage building.

The platform still exists, reachable from the canal towpath from which access to the turntable pit can be gained. All other structures in the area are now gone, and in fact I hadn't realised there were so many or that the platform was as deep as it appears in the photo. It's a photo I hadn't seen before but by chance it appears in the book I had from Christine for Christmas " West Midlands Railways from Steam to Modern Traction" and is credited to a **David Christie** of whom I've not heard before. I wondered about the chimney but Simon replied the chimney in question was on the far side of the canal remote from the railway and not related to the railway, near to if not in the site of the present civic incinerator. Naturally Simon could add more information, as follows;

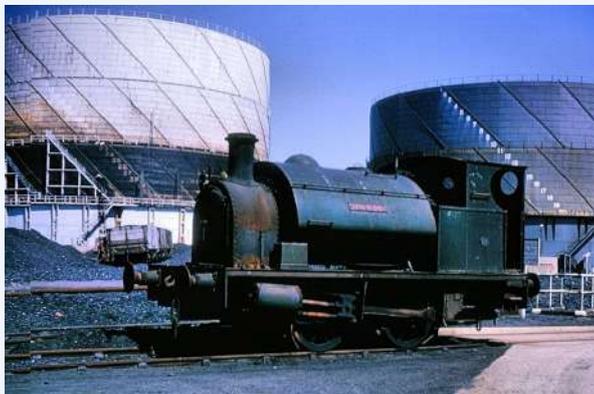
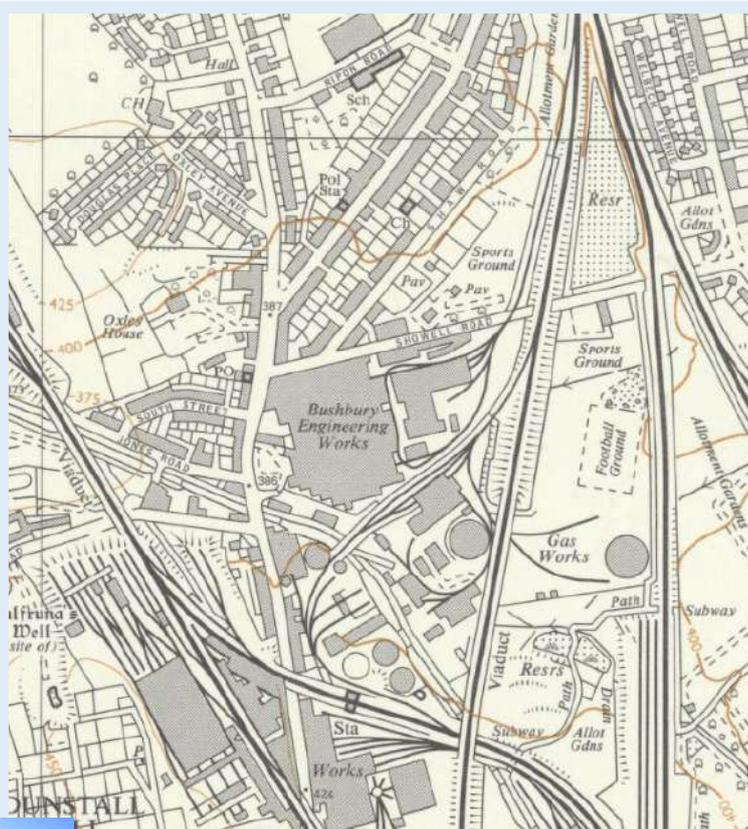
I've found the photo I've been looking for, **Right**, by Eric Hamilton showing the extent of the C. E.'s platform and associated structures . Cannock Road bridge and Butler's brewery are visible in the distance. The Churchward Mogul is heading into the carriage sidings at Cannock Road with the empty stock of a train from the south. The photo I think dates from the mid (?) 1950s.

4165 in the photo is standing on the second line from the right, with the two possibly AWS ramps which should clarify things.



Wolverhampton Gas Works

Once the source much traffic for the railways, gas works often had their own locos. Wolverhampton was no exception on its system which wound round and under the GWR and LMS lines north of the stations.



Bagnall 0-4-0 **'Carbon'** built at Stafford in 1902



Bagnall 0-4-0 **'Victory'** built at Stafford in 1942 Stafford



RSH 0-4-0 **'George Le B Diamond'**

George Diamond was at one time Chairman of the West Midlands Gas Board.

Wallace Sephton took these photos on a sunny Whitsun holiday in 1963.



Adjacent was the ECC works that was also rail served with a line that crossed Showell Road. Although I can't find a picture of the line in use, I did find a picture of a loco manufactured there!

It was used in the construction of the Rivelin tunnel which runs from the Derwent dams to the Rivelin Valley, Sheffield. Commenced in 1903, the tunnel took six years to complete and is 4½ miles long, 6ft 6ins high and 6ft wide on a gradient of 1in 3600 to allow the water to flow by gravity. It is still supplying water to Sheffield today.

LONDON OFFICES—Dunrobin House, 8, New Broad Street, E.C.4. Telegraphic Address—"Concordia, London."
WORKS—WOLVERHAMPTON. Telegraphic Address—"Electric, Wolverhampton."

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FIGURES AND ESTIMATES on APPLICATION.

With part of Wolverhampton Gas Works in the background, Collett 2251 Class 0-6-0 No **2287** removes a rake of carriages from Cannock Road sidings in 1962. No 2287 moved from Machynlleth to Carmarthen in May 1962 but its appearance at Wolverhampton can be explained by the Stafford Road Works ledger rescued by Simon Dewey. This has 2287 in for Heavy/Intermediate repair between 16th January and 28th March 1962 and noted as being a Carmarthen engine in store at Machynlleth before arriving at the Works. Possibly working this stock to Worcester was the start of its long ride home.



Heading the other way, Hall class No **7929 Wyke Hall** and **72008 Clan McCleod**; what would we have given to have been on this railtour? This was the Derbyshire Railway Society 'Clan - King - Hall' Rail Tour postponed from January 1963 due to the severe winter weather. By the time the tour did run on March 23rd, there were no Kings left and the crowd that had expectantly gathered at Leeds City to witness the (very late) arrival of a King class loco on the return leg disappointedly booed the arrival of poor old Clan McCleod! No RealTime Trains in those days!



The Clan travelled from Leeds to Tyesley via Sheffield and Derby where Wyke Hall came on the front for the next leg to Crewe via Wellington and Market Drayton. Enroute, the tour stopped at Oxley to enable visits to Stafford Road loco and works and Oxley shed.

Standard Class 5 No 47482 took the train from Crewe station to the works with Clan McCleod returning alone to Leeds via Derby and Sheffield.

Photos: Wallace Sephton

Not a million miles away in Park Lane was the foot crossing of the Grand Junction Railway line which usually attracted a gaggle of spotters on Sundays when trains that normally ran down the Trent Valley line south of Stafford were diverted this way. The sole unnamed Britannia class locos No **70047** passes with a Euston bound express giving the passengers an unexpected bonus of Black Country views. The long-lifted siding on the right served a Cold Store that is still there, as is the crossing, although well fenced and gated today.



Left, much is written about AI today and this is an example of what it can do to enhance old pictures, in this case the one above from 1961. However, whilst initially appearing a vast improvement, they often don't stand close scrutiny!

Andrew J. Watts was at the Great Central Railway in January this year for a Timeline photoshoot. The session lasted from sunrise to sunset and covered various locations. His lovely cover photo shows 92134, renumbered as 92043 which had worked the line in BR days. BR. No 92134 is the only preserved example of the 9F class to have a single chimney, all of the others have double chimneys. **Photos: Andrew j. Watts**



Above, the train just north of Quorn and right the crew chat on the platform at Quorn and Woodhouse station.

The photoshoot recreated the days of The Annesley - Woodford freight service, the 'Annesley Runners', described by Richard Hardy who was the shedmaster at Woodford from 1949 - 1952, as without a shadow of doubt, the fastest out-and-home loose coupled freight service in the country. The speed was calculated to average 30 mph for loaded southbound trains, and 33 mph with the northbound empty workings, however they would hustle through Nottingham and Leicester in the thirties, storm the banks at fifty, except Ashby and the climb to Catesby tunnel southbound), and hit the long dips such as Shawell, Gotham and Whetstone well into the sixties. The usual motive power then was ex-LNER 2-8-0 Class 01s or 04s and late starts and loss of time by either traffic or engine was viewed very seriously.

Chris Ward started his railway career at Annesley shed and wrote: My first "proper" main line trip came in February 1961. I was booked with driver George Thompson, 13.55 Spare. I was just brewing our first can of tea of the day, when in came Running Foreman Lol Crampton and said, "63886, an ex-L.N.E.R. O1 2-8-0, is on the shed front, she's all ready - Special to Wichnor"



So off we went into the down yard, and backed on to our train of coke for Wichnor Junction, south of Burton (on the despised Midland Railway!). I don't remember a great deal about that trip. Like most of our O1's the engine steamed perfectly, she lifted the safety valves (a sin!) when coasting over the Midland, across Bennerley Viaduct, now a listed structure, and we rolled into Wichnor Junction on time. I remember feeling ten feet tall, waving to the trainspotters on Burton Station. Not many ex - L.N.E.R. engines went through the station, most workings by ourselves and Colwick men terminated in the G.N. goods yard at Hawkin's Lane, north of the station.

Annesley "O1" 2-8-0 no.63886 coasts through Burton station on 7th June 1961. **Photo: Chris Ward**

Annesley "O1" 2-8-0 no.63886 coasts through Burton station on 7th June 1961. **Photo: Chris Ward**

During 1956 and 1957 no less than thirty one of the new "9F" 2-10-0's were sent to Annesley to take over the "runners", although the only brand-new loco's received were 92095 and 92096 in February and April of 1957 respectively. In April 1964 two ex-Crosti boilered "9Fs" nos.92025 & 92027 were transferred to Annesley. However, they weren't a patch on the conventional "9Fs" and were downgraded to "class 8". Rarely used on the Woodford service, these poor tools were transferred away in November of that year.

Another Annesley fireman, Barry Towler, reminisces

One of our Woodford jobs was to sign on at 11.55 for the 12.25 "Runner". After signing on we left the 'loco and went to the outlet board, where I rang Annesley no.4 box. "92073 for the 12.25 Woodford" I told Bill Shaw the "bobby". Off came the board, we backed over the dolly, down the through road to Annesley South and back into the up sidings. After the shunter had coupled up, and our Guard, Bill Gowing had given us our loading, we were off as quick as possible! The downhill run to Nottingham Victoria gave me chance to get my fire in good order (speeds to the "Vic" were in the region of 40 to 45mph) Emerging from the tunnel at Nottingham Victoria North, I would be hanging out of the cab yelling to the signalman "tell 'em to give us the road bobby". Our aim was to keep in front of the York - Bournemouth express all the way to Woodford.

After passing Arkwright Street station and crossing the Trent we got into our rhythm and increased speed. Ruddington and Gotham flashed by at 50mph plus. After Barnston tunnel, just south of East Leake, we coasted down to Loughborough giving me a breather and a well earned fag .We were going that fast if you blinked twice you missed Loughborough, ha ha, then on through the Leicestershire countryside, over Swithland Reservoir, through Belgrave and Birstall, then it was shut off, and coast down to Leicester Central.

We were lucky – all the boards were "off" through the station. Facing us was Ashby bank, seven miles at an unrelenting 1 in 176! Passing Whetstone, Stan was anxiously looking for Ashby's distant! If it was yellow it meant we were going in the loop to wait for the Bournemouth to pass, or not if it was green; not that I had time to notice all this, I was too busy trying to keep steam up! Topping the bank we eased up a bit allowing me and 92073 to get our breath back. From then on it was a relatively easy run to Braunston & Willoughby, averaging speeds from 40 to 50 mph. Over the "birdcage" at Rugby, (not forgetting to whistle a*****es to the LM men underneath) and on to the final six miles at 1 in 176 to Charwelton hoping we wouldn't slip going through Catesby tunnel. This was 3,000 yards long, and so straight you could see a pinprick of light at the other end, visibility permitting. After a "little dip" on the troughs we got the left-hand board at Woodford no.4 and into the up sidings at Woodford. Before we had come to a stop the mainline signals were of and the "Bournemouth" came flying through as he passed us he whistled a*****es to let us know we had checked him at Charwelton.

A quick turnaround at Woodford and then with 55 empties on the return trip began. If our guard had got a rough riding guards brake he used to "sprag" himself in. Now was the time to see what the mighty 9F could really do, if we got the road we would fly along. 45, 50, 55mph and I believe topping 60mph. coming down Ashby bank although if the outer distant, glanced for a few seconds through the trees, was against us, GOD HELP US!

Steam brake on, tender brake on, steam sanders on reverse gear hang on the whistle and pray that you had woke up the guard so he could use his brake! This was a rare occurrence but it did happen at times – the signal, not the guard! Then forging on northbound, slowing down through Leicester Central, picking up speed again flying through Loughborough up the bank by the Brush factory then through the tunnel and "feet up, fag on" for the long run down to Queens Walk and then through the "Vic". After another four uphill miles at 1 in 130 we reached Bulwell Common. We then went up the G.N. Leen Valley line to Newstead, where we were relieved.

We walked over to the shed to sign off followed by a brisk walk up to Newstead Village, two quick pints in "The Institute", and catch the 19.00 bus home.....Happy Days!



38B, Annesley was an ex Great Central Railway shed home to 80 locos when using this code. It was transferred to the LMR becoming 16D and finally 16B, closing in January 1966.

With thanks to Chris Ward and his Annesley website bigkris21.tripod.com

BLACK COUNTRY STEEL TRIPPERS Part Four: Trip T55.

David J. Hayes concludes his look at these local workings. (Images As Credited)

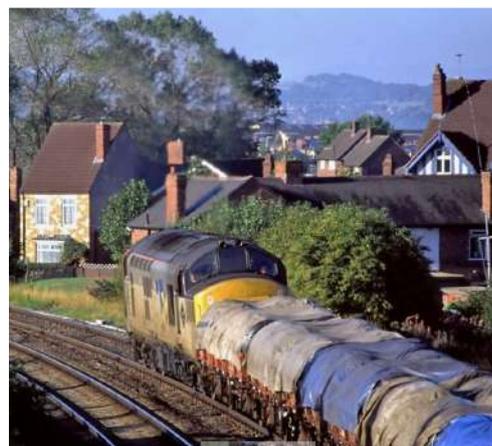
Acknowledgements: Special thanks to both Andy Williams and Paul Dorney for their valuable contributions to the trilogy of features examining Trips T43, T44 & T55.



To conclude this series of case studies primarily looking at three Metals sector trips operating in and around the Black Country region during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the focus of attention now falls on Trip T55. As with Trips T43 and T44 (featured in "Emags" 63 & 64), this diagram also went through various operating permutations, but with the added interest that the assigned Metals sector Class 37 also performed local banking turns in the region together with that of an overnight banking stint on the Lickey incline, of which more about later.

The T55 diagram was actually designated for a while as the Bescot Area Assistant Locomotive (BAAL) and was entrusted to a Class 31. The Brush Type 2 was usually to be found stabled at the south end of Bescot Up Yard from where it would be instructed to bank trains as required from Perry Barr West Junction up Soho Bank on the Soho Road line; from Great Bridge to Dudley; and from Stourbridge Junction to Brierley Hill and/or Dudley. Such banking turns in the Black Country during the 1970s were plentiful, thus requiring assisting engines being stabled at or summoned from Bescot, Great Bridge and Stourbridge Junction to cover the demand, which, in addition to those banking duties just mentioned, also entailed assisting freights from Stourbridge Junction to Rowley Regis and from Wednesbury to Princes End as well. However, the ever-diminishing demand for banking in the Black Country meant that, by the late 1980s, such duties in the region could be covered adequately

Thursday 30th August 1990: Class 37 No. **37 293**, assigned to the Trip T55 duty, banks 6M40, the 01:15 MSSuX COY Cardiff Tidal to Wednesbury (arr. 8:12am), hauled up front by 37 717, away from Brierley Hill, at 8:23am. The sheeted SPA wagons are laden with rod/wire-in-coil from Allied Steel & Wire. **Andy Williams.**



February 1990: With the electrified line from Portobello Junction to Wolverhampton High Level visible in the background, Class 37 No. 37 038 stands on the former Midland Railway route leading to Wolverhampton Low Level as it prepares to run-round its train before berthing it in Wednesfield Road Goods. The Type 3 has arrived with 6T55, the 11:30 SSuX departure from the nearby Wolverhampton ST, which has travelled more than 20 miles via the "Stour", Soho Road and Bescot. **Paul Dorney.**

by just one diagram.

By October 1989, the Class 31 assigned to the BAAL duty actually found itself being further better utilized by having it run Light Engine (OT55) as the 15:50 SSuX from Bescot to Langley Green (arr. 4:15pm) to collect loaded scrap carrying wagons (ex-Coopers Metals, Handsworth) and forwarding them as 6T55, the 16:35 SSuX to Washwood Heath Yard (arr. 6:50pm), which at that time was the Metals sector hub for the West Midlands area, as detailed in Part One ("Emag" 62). The trip also called at Wednesbury (17:15-18:00) to attach loaded scrap carrying wagons (ex-Norton Barrow, Bilston) together with any other available Metals traffic, such as steel empties.

The 1990s

Trip T55 had become a fully established Metals sector Class 37 duty by January 1990. It commenced its day with an 05:00 SSuX Light Engine movement from Bescot Locomotive Holding Sidings (LHS) to bank 6M59, the 01:50 SSuX Scunthorpe to Wolverhampton (arr. 6:16am) up Soho Bank. This was then followed by another Light Engine run (via Rowley Regis) to Stourbridge Junction to assist 6M40, the 02:40 MO / 01:15 MSSuX Cardiff Tidal to Wednesbury as far as Brierley Hill, where the service called for traffic purposes (06:50-07:10) before continuing to Round Oak (07:35-07:55) and Wednesbury (arr. 8:12am).

The Class 37 used for T55 could be assigned to this duty for several days or weeks at a time before being swapped-out for another Class 37 machine. In order to facilitate a rotation of locomotives, the Class 37 allocated to T55 would be swapped for planned maintenance purposes "as necessary" with the Class 37 off 6M40 and return to South Wales atop 6V43, the 09:50 SSuX Wednesbury to Cardiff Tidal calling at Round Oak (10:09-10:34) and Brierley Hill (10:45-11:05). Meanwhile, the South Wales "Syphon" off 6M40 would take up the T55 duties. The loco swap was booked to take place at Brierley Hill, but could easily have taken place at Wednesbury if need be, especially if no traffic stop was required at Brierley Hill.

After assisting 6M40 to Brierley Hill and doing the "as necessary" loco swap described above, the T55 duty would then run "Light" to Washwood Heath Yard (arr. 7:45am) from where it returned to the Black Country as 6T55, the 08:30 SSuX to Wolverhampton Steel Terminal (arr. 10:30). From Wolverhampton Steel Terminal (ST), the trip then made an 11:30 SSuX departure to the nearby Wednesfield Road Goods (arr. 12:30). Despite only being a quarter-mile distant "as the crow flies", the journey between the two required a circuitous routing of the Stour Valley main line, Soho Road and Bescot, equating to a distance of around 22-miles!

After berthing its train at Wednesfield Road, the loco departed "Light" to Bescot LHS where it resided from 1pm until 3:50pm before taking up its afternoon and evening duties. This entailed a Light Engine run to Langley Green (arr. 4:10pm) to work 6T55, the 16:35 SSuX departure to Washwood Heath (arr. 6:50pm) followed by a return 6T55 departure from Washwood Heath at 19:20 SSuX back to Bescot (arr. 8pm) dealing with any available traffic, the loco then being "put to bed" on Bescot LHS at 8:20pm. The run from Langley Green to Washwood Heath pretty much mirrored that covered by the Class 31 BAAL duty detailed earlier and included a call for traffic at Wednesbury (17:15-17:55).



Friday 23 February 1990: With the former Midland Railway's goods building (dating from November 1881) clearly visible, the run-down nature of Wednesfield Road Goods (WRG) is very evident in this view showing Class 37 No. 37 038 at the terminal. The loco had arrived earlier with 6T55, the 11:30 SSuX departure from the nearby Wolverhampton ST. The WRG facility closed in November 1992, together with the steel terminals at Great Bridge and Wednesbury, and the Grade II listed goods building was demolished. The site today is a Royal Mail depot.

Paul Dorney.

Trip T55 had become an even more interesting diagram as of May 1990. Additional duties now included banking 6R06, the 05:51 SSuX steel special from Toton to Brierley Hill (arr. 9:04am), from Great Bridge to Round Oak, where it drew the train back and detached the rear portion in the sidings (08:20-08:35); performing evening and overnight banking assistance on the Lickey incline; and delivering traction gas oil (TGO) to Soho DED (District Electric Depot).

The 6R06 Toton to Brierley Hill service (later coded 6G26 and subsequently becoming 6M06 from Boston to Bescot as detailed in issue 63), catered for a new block train movement of imported strip coil entering the UK through Boston Docks (a location previously served by Speedlink). This was for unloading at the Round Oak Rail Terminal (RORT), which officially opened in September 1986 and offered covered protection from the elements for moisture sensitive steels. The actual RORT building itself was the former Bar Finishing Department (BFD) of Round Oak Steelworks, which closed in December 1982. The BFD survived the demolition of the said steelworks, the site of which was re-developed as the Waterfront complex of bars, restaurants and office accommodation, and also as part of the Merry Hill shopping centre.

Trip T55's morning duties also included visiting Wolverhampton ST with traffic that had reached Bescot earlier on 6T42, the 05:00 MSuX Washwood Heath to Bescot (arr. 5:45am), which was a Speedlink trip diagram operated by Railfreight Distribution (RfD), followed by a circuitous "run around the houses" to Wednesfield Road, as described earlier.

Trip T55 (SuX) May 1990 Schedule

Location	Arr.	Dep.	H'code	Traffic & Other Details
Bescot LHS	-	05:00 SSuX	0T55	Assists 6M59, the 01:50 SSuX Scunthorpe – Wolverhampton, up Soho Bank, then Light Engine to Stourbridge Junction to assist 6M40, the 02:40 MO/01:15 MSSuX Cardiff Tidal – Wednesbury, to Brierley Hill (Driver of T55 to change locos with Driver of 6M40)
Brierley Hill	06:50 SSuX	06:55 SSuX	0T55	Light Engine
Great Bridge	07:20 SSuX	08:00 SSuX	-	Assist 6R06, the 05:51 SSuX Toton – Brierley Hill, to Round Oak; draws train back and detaches rear portion in sidings
Round Oak	08:20 SSuX	08:35 SSuX	0T55	Light Engine
Bescot Yard	08:55 SSuX	09:25 SSuX	6T55	Steel traffic off Trip 6T42, the 05:00 MSuX Washwood Heath to Bescot (arr. 05:45)
Wolverhampton Steel Terminal	10:30 SSuX	11:30 SSuX	6T55	Any available traffic
Wednesfield Road Goods	12:30 SSuX	12:45 SSuX	0T55	Light Engine
Bescot LHS	13:00 SSuX	14:15 SSuX	0T55	Light Engine
Bescot Yard	14:25 SSuX	14:50 SSuX	6T55	Loaded TGO tanks ex-Fawley
Soho DED	15:10 SSuX	15:30 SSuX	6T55	Detach loaded TGO tanks ex-Fawley and attach TGO empties for Fawley
Langley Green	15:40 SSuX	16:15 SSuX	6T55	Attach loaded scrap carrying wagons ex-Handsworth (Coopers Metals)
Bescot Yard	16:45 SSuX	17:00 SSuX	6T55	Detach empty TGO tanks for Fawley
Wednesbury	17:10 SSuX	17:55 SSuX	6T55	Attach loaded scrap carrying wagons ex-Bilston (Norton Barrow) plus any steel empties
Washwood Heath	18:50 SSuX	19:00 SSuX	0T55	Light Engine to Bromsgrove and then Bank trains to Blackwell "as required". Then return Light Engine to Bescot LHS
Bescot LHS	04:40 MSuX	04:45 SO	0T55	Shunt and Bank "as required"
Bescot LHS	08:10 SO	-	-	-

Abbreviations: DED (District Electric Depot). LHS (Locomotive Holding Sidings). TGO (Traction Gas Oil).

6T55 move from Langley Green to Washwood Heath via Wednesbury, as also described earlier. However, it is believed that the TGO empties were actually left at Langley Green for 6T48, the 17:25 SSuX Langley Green to Bescot (arr. 5:55pm) Speedlink trip to deal with.

After reaching Washwood Heath Yard with its consignments of scrap metal and steel empties, the T55 Class 37 then made its way Light Engine to Bromsgrove to take up its evening and overnight banking commitments on the Lickey incline, which itself could be entertaining!

Thursday 4th July 1991: A powerful study of Class 37 No. **37 138**, as it approaches Hamstead station, at 6:16pm, with 6T55, the 16:45 SSuX Langley Green to Washwood Heath (due 6:55pm) via a call at Wednesbury (booked 17:25-18:00), although it may have been running as per the revised arrangements by this date, as detailed in the article. The front portion of the train is formed of five POA "Black Adder" wagons laden with scrap from Coopers Metals for Cardiff (Allied Steel & Wire) followed by three bogie PXA types containing scrap for Sheerness Steelworks. **David J. Hayes.**



The afternoon kicked-off with a 6T55 delivery of TGO from Bescot to Soho DED and the collection of TGO empties (a short-lived arrangement), thus utilizing what would otherwise have been a Light Engine move from Bescot LHS to Langley Green to collect loaded scrap metal (ex-Coopers Metals) brought in by the 6T48 Speedlink trip from Handsworth, which could also include cement empties for Speedlink movement from Bescot to Eastgate (see image accompanying Part One). The aforementioned TGO traffic originated from Fawley and used the Speedlink wagonload network to reach Bescot. The empties from Soho DED were for detachment at Bescot using the

Trouble On The Lickey

As we've thus far seen, the T55 Class 37 performed banking turns in the Black Country region assisting Metals sector block trains. However, its overnight banking stint on the Lickey incline involved assisting freights of various description regardless of their sub-sector designation, which included Speedlink services operated by RfD. One such Speedlink was 6S97, the 01:00 MSSuX Gloucester to Mossend, which was electric-hauled from Bescot (D-E 03:29-04:25). The core traffic on this service was various forms of china clay and clay slurry from the West Country. The service also ran on a Saturday, too, but as 6M81, the 01:00 SO Gloucester to Bescot (arr. 3:29am), where it recessed over the weekend until going forward on the Monday morning as 6S97, the 05:15 MO Bescot to Mossend.

It was whilst banking 6M81 from Bromsgrove to Blackwell summit that the T55 assigned Class 37, No. 37 197, got into a bit of bother! The date was Saturday 17th November 1990 and 6M81 had stalled on the 1-in-37 gradient and rolled back, trap points derailing the assisting Type 3 along with several wagons, including three two-axle clay slurry tankers; these had probably been loaded at Burngullow and were possibly destined for Port Elphinstone. The breakdown crane/train later attended the scene, hauled by Class 50 No. 50 008 Thunderer, whilst Classes 37 No. 37 230 and 47 No. 47 287 turned up on the Sunday morning with replacement sleepers and track.



Friday 8th June 1990: Coal sector branded Class 37 No. **37 278** passes Brunswick Park, near Wednesbury, at 6:01pm, with 6T55, the 16:15 SSuX Langley Green to Washwood Heath (arr. 6:50pm) formed of three loaded SSA wagons (ex-Coopers Metals, Handsworth) for South Yorkshire. The trip attached more scrap carriers at Wednesbury (ex-Norton Barrow, Bilston), which included consignments for steel plants at Sheerness and Clydesdale, the latter loaded in HSA type wagons (former HEA coal hoppers with their bottom discharge doors welded shut). **David J. Hayes.**

Trip T55 Finale

By summer 1991, the days of Trip T55's role as a Metals sector duty were drawing to a close. As of July 1991, the morning part of the diagram had been amended and now entailed the assigned Class 37 starting its day by making an OT55 Light Engine run from Saltley LHS (dep. 06:15 SSuX) to Brierley Hill (arr. 7:20am). From here it departed as 6T55, the 07:55 SSuX to Wolverhampton ST (arr. 10am) conveying steel traffic detached off 6M10, the 00:56 MO / 23:55 FSSuX Margam to Round Oak (arr. 6:41am), which had made a call at Brierley Hill earlier that morning (05:40-06:20). A call was then made by 6T55 at Wednesbury (08:25-09:00) to attach traffic detached the previous day off 6M12, the 12:40 SSuX Cardiff Tidal to Wednesbury (arr. 6:41pm), which had also called at Brierley Hill (17:11-18:11). This now begs the question as to why the Wolverhampton traffic off 6M12 could not have also been collected at Brierley Hill, thus omitting a call then having to be made at Wednesbury?

Having delivered its consignments of South Wales steel, 6T55 departed Wolverhampton ST as the 10:55 SSuX to Wednesfield Road Goods (arr. 12:15), by way of its usual circuitous 20-odd mile meander via Soho Road and Bescot. Mission accomplished, the loco then retired to Bescot LHS (arr. 1:10pm). Amongst the traffic conveyed on the Wolverhampton to Wednesfield Road leg may have been steel loads and/or empties, the empties for forming 6E52, the next day's 08:42 SSuX Wednesfield Road to Scunthorpe service, which was the balance of 6M59, the 00:04 SSuX Scunthorpe to Wolverhampton ST (arr. 6:41am). The afternoon collection of scrap carrying wagons loaded at Coopers Metals, Handsworth, for movement to Washwood Heath was unaltered, except that it now entailed the T55 loco actually visiting Handsworth (arr. 4pm) rather than collecting them from Langley Green, as had been the case before. However, the tripping of loaded TGO tanks from Bescot to Soho DED and the collection of empties, as described earlier, had by this date now ceased and was now entrusted to the aforementioned RfD loco assigned to Trip T48 from Bescot.

The 6T55 scrap loads from Handsworth departed as the 16:30 SSuX to Washwood Heath (arr. 6:35pm) and required a run-round at Langley Green (16:45-17:05). The collection of loaded scrap (ex-Bilston) and of empty steel wagons at Wednesbury was also omitted (now dealt with by RfD Trip T50), but a brief call was made at Bescot (17:35-17:45) before continuing to Washwood Heath. The Bescot call enabled the detachment of loaded bogie scrap carrying wagons destined for Sheerness Steelworks. These were forwarded-on using trip 6T63, the 18:20 SSuX Bescot to Wednesbury (arr. 6:35pm), for connection into 6V69, the 19:33 SSuX Metal Sector service to Cardiff Tidal (calling at Brierley Hill 20:04-20:24) from where the scrap would be forwarded to the Isle of Sheppey by using another Metals Sector train to Sheerness. The said call at Bescot could have also facilitated the detachment of two-axle POA "Black Adder" wagons laden with scrap for Allied Steel & Wire, Cardiff, for inclusion on 6V69 from Wednesbury.

Interestingly, the resources for Trip T63 utilized a Coal sector Class 58 locomotive that had earlier in the day been deployed on Merry-Go-Round coal duties between Littleton and Ironbridge Power Station. The said loco then worked to Bescot Area Operations Control Manager instruction from 2pm until around 6pm, which is known to have included tripping loaded IMA Italian-registered vans from Bescot to Wednesfield Road; dealing with miscellaneous traffic from Wolverhampton ST to Bescot; and returning empty phosphorus tanks from Langley Green (ex-Albright & Wilson) to Bescot for forwarding back to Europe, these movements having been observed by yours truly.



Friday 8th June 1990: Having attached scrap loaded at Bilston, which includes the five HSAs forming the front portion of the consist, Class 37 No. **37 278** now eases out of Wednesbury Exchange Sidings, at 6:22pm, on the Washwood Heath leg of the journey. This view may appeal to modellers wishing to replicate such wagon formations and their loads. Note the abutments (left and right of the loco) that once supported the bridge carrying the GWR main line across that of the South Staffordshire Railway alignment. **David J. Hayes.**

Upon reaching Washwood Heath with 6T55 from Handsworth, the assigned Class 37, again, made its way to Bromsgrove to take up its evening and overnight banking routine on the Lickey, arriving back at Saltley LHS at 4:40am the following morning (MSuX). By May 1992, the diagram was shown as "spare". Its duties previous to this appear to have been confined to just the evening and overnight banking sessions on the Lickey incline. As of late September 1991, the booked traction for this duty had now been entrusted to a Class 58, which departed Light Engine at 19:56 SSuX from Saltley LHS to Bromsgrove (arr. 8:26pm), arriving back at "base" at 3:41am (MSuX) the following morning.

Tuesday 13th August 1991: A summer evening Class 37 freight "meet", at 7:13pm, near Ryecroft Junction, Walsall, as **37 248** takes the Sutton Park line with 6T55, the late running 16:30 SSuX Handsworth (Coopers Metals) to Washwood Heath (booked 6:35pm), consisting of five loaded SSA wagons containing scrap for steel plants in South Yorkshire. The service was booked to call at Bescot (17:35-17:45), but no longer at Wednesbury. Approaching from the opposite direction is 6M79, the early running 14:36 SSuX Eastleigh to Crewe MoD contract train, which will travel over the Pleck Junction-Darlaston Junction chord. This service was introduced when Speedlink was abolished in July 1991. **David J. Hayes.**



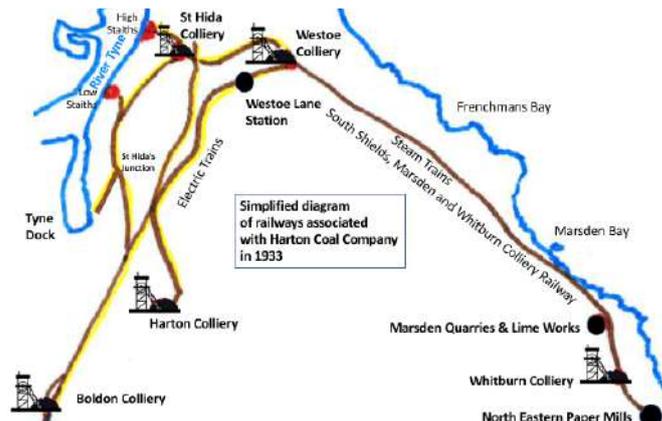
This concludes our detailed account of some of the more interesting tripping duties that once operated in and around the Black Country region, the likes of which we shall never see again. It is sobering to note that many of the terminals and yards once generating traffic handled by these diagrams are themselves now just a memory or are no longer active: Bescot Down Yard, Brierley Hill, Coopers Metals, Langley Green Yard, Norton Barrow, Small Heath Coal Depot, Washwood Heath Yard, Wednesbury and Wednesfield Road being amongst those mentioned.

South Shields Industrials - Fog on the Tyne!

The Harton Electric Railway

The railway was built by the Harton Coal Company to transport coal from their collieries in South Tyneside. The electrified system opened in 1908, and originally employed a fleet of electric locomotives built by Siemens (probably related to there being German shareholders in Harton Coal Company at that time).

The lines radiated outwards from the Low Staiths on the River Tyne, outwards to Westoe colliery, St Hilda's colliery, Harton colliery as well as a line running out towards Boldon pit. The railway connected to the famous Marden Rattler which brought coal up from Whitburn colliery. The railway was absorbed along with its ten electric locos by the National Coal Board in 1947, the electric railway survived until 1989, sharing part of its route with the newly constructed Tyne & Wear Metro.



South Shields, Marsden & Whitburn Colliery Railway

The line was built in the late 1870s without an Act of Parliament to serve the newly constructed Whitburn Colliery and was opened as a private railway in May 1879. Apart from the colliery and those working there, the line served the Lighthouse limestone quarry, a paper manufactory, and local farms. The line opened to the public on 19 March 1888.

The Harton Coal Company, located on the coast south of the River Tyne, operated an industrial railway between Whitburn Colliery and South Shields, a distance of about 3 miles. As most of the colliery workers lived in South Shields, in 1888 the company began a passenger service for the benefit of these employees but also available to the general public. Numbers of trains operated varied over the years but generally ran at about 8 per day with a few more at weekends, journey time of about 10 minutes. The company's industrial tank engines powered the trains made up of about half a dozen 6-wheelers bought at scrap prices from the mainline railways. The services prospered but from 1928 were doomed when a coastal road was opened and buses, later trolleybuses, began to operate. From January 1st, 1947, The SSM&WCR became the first nationalised passenger carrying railway when the NCB was formed but by this time the passenger services were moribund and ceased on November 22nd, 1953.

Below, 22/11/53, the last passenger train prepares to leave Westoe Lane station, originally called South Shields, headed by R. Stephenson & Hawthorn 0-6-OST No. 7749 of 1952. The tickets issued at the station continued to show the name as 'Shields' until closure of the line.



Photo: The late Walter Dendy



The Harton Coal Company Limited
Workman's railway pass, only available
when travelling to and from work.



Tony Wright's reminiscences of the Harton Electric Railway.



In 1987 I was seconded to work in Gateshead for a year; instead of sitting in the hotel on an evening I explored local railways in the area, especially industrial ones and a favourite was the unique Harton Electric Railway in South Shields.

History

With the dawn of the industrial revolution, water had provided the power to drive industry. Its limitations and the increasing demand for more power led to coal becoming the fuel of choice, coals problem was getting it to its market. The River Tyne provided the answer to transporting coal won from its extensive reserves along its banks to markets such as the burgeoning demand in growing London. The Colliery owners built staithe along the banks and used tramways and then later railways to connect them to the pits. Many of these railways developed into extensive private railways serving many collieries. Despite the growth and expansion of the national rail network considerable tonnages of coal were still sent by sea right up to the end of coal mining in the area. One of these private railways was the Harton Electric Railway, unique in being powered by overhead electric traction.

The full history of the Harton Electric Railway is told in the excellent book, The Harton Electric Railway by Bill Hatcher from Oakwood Press. The HER was an extensive system serving several collieries and connecting them to staithe on the River Tyne. At the time of my visit the system had been truncated and connected Westoe Colliery to a single staithe on the Tyne known as Low Staithe. All Westoe output at this time was power station coal and all of it was despatched by the staithe to its markets. After the Second World War much of the countries infrastructure was in poor condition. To satisfy the predicted demand for electricity the Central Electricity Generating Board was formed. A national plan was enacted to produce an electric grid fed by large power stations, many of these coal fired, including a number on the Thames estuary which would be fuelled by coal from the Tyne delivered by sea.

Operation

Westoe Colliery was perched on the coast at South Shields and was one of a number of sea collieries along the Durham coastline. These collieries had their coal faces miles from the shafts under the sea. In the mid-eighties these collieries were progressively closed down and Westoe was the last one coaling during my visit. Westoes production was over one million tonnes a year and employed 1700 men underground and 300 on the surface. Westoe itself finally closed in May 1993 leaving an estimated eleven million tonnes of reserves untapped.



No11 shunts the despatch sidings in front of the washery. The height of the cab precluded it being used elsewhere on the system so was always found by the washery.

The hewn coal was treated in a washery located at the north of the site, treated coal and colliery washery waste was loaded into hopper wagons marshalled into trains of twelve wagons for despatch to the staithe. The line to the staithe departed the colliery via a sharp left turn into a steeply graded cutting called Erskine Bank. As trains left the washery the Banksman applied each wagon brake to prevent runaways down the bank. At the bank foot the wagon brakes were uninned and the train would proceed via a sharp right turn, passing under the Metro line viaduct and into St Hilda's sidings. These sidings contained a fan of sidings accessible from both ends with a through road in the middle. Generally, 'fulls' used the lefthand sidings and empties the righthand. Once the train was in the siding the locomotive would uncouple, run round to collect empties to take back to the colliery.

No13 departs the washery yard for St Hilda's sidings with fulls. The banksman is stepping off to pin down the wagon brakes for the descent down Erskine Bank. Note the trimmed loads in the wagons, this was done to prevent wet coal touching the overhead wire in St Hilda's tunnel.



No11 shunts in the washery yard as the Banksman drops off the change the points. The original mounting brackets for the pantograph are visible on the cab roof. The resistors for the speed control circuit were located in the bonnet and it was common to see the hatches propped open to help cool them.

No13 starts the descent of Erskine Bank. The first wagons brakes have been pinned down but not the second, most of the other will be pinned. The slope of the downgrade can be judged by the steps in the retaining wall.



Full wagons would be worked forward to the staithe only when a collier was berthed there. Leaving St Hilda's the line passed under a steeply graded tunnel with limited head-room. Exiting the tunnel the line passed the wagon repair shop and a sharp turn to the right and spiralled round. Full wagons were parked before the teeming shed on two sidings, the loco would uncouple and via a headhunt work back to the sidings to collect empty wagons to return to St Hilda's. The full wagons were hand worked in pairs by gravity into the teeming shed and unloaded by the bottom discharge doors. The staithe had no bunker capacity so all teemed coal was loaded directly into the collier. The empty wagons rolled forward by gravity out of the teeming shed and into the empties sidings and recoupled into trains.

Once a collier was loaded tugs would assist its departure from the staithe and its place taken immediately by a bottom discharge dump barge. The teeming process would resume but this time with the colliery waste from the washery. The waste was taken out to sea and dumped. What the photos cannot portray is the tempo of the operation. With no bunker storage the railway had to deliver wagons to the staithe at the rate the teeming operated at. This meant trains departed the washery every few minutes or so and the staithe locomotive worked non-stop during teeming.



No14 having descended Erskine Bank and passed under Westoe Road bridge will soon enter St Hilda's siding. Note the double trolley wire to reduce to the current load on trains climbing back up to Westoe.

No15 enters St Hilda's reception siding with twelve full wagons. Notice the reception line has a single trolley wire and the adjacent departure line has two wire for the higher current demand of climbing trains.



The Colliers and Staithes.

There were two staithes on the Harton, High Staithe was further up the Tyne near to the current Tyne Dock. In later years High Staithe was solely used for loading colliery waste for dumping at sea. Modernisation of Low Staithe allowed High Staithe to be dispensed with and it and the lines to it were closed. The Low Staithe water depth limited the size of collier that could use it. During my time coal was exported to the Thames power stations, Scandinavia and to the Isle of Man. Further up the Tyne the old iron ore terminal at Tyne Dock had been re-purposed in 1985 to handle coal exports and could handle colliers up to 30,000 tons. Tyne Dock received coal by road and rail primarily from open cast sites in Northumberland as well as Durham. The CEGB had purchased two large colliers to serve the Thames estuary power stations, these couldn't access the Low Staithe. While I was there it was planned to adapt the rail system at Westoe to accept MGR trains for haulage to Tyne Dock by BR. The Victoria sidings to the south of Westoe colliery were cleared of wagons, (these were mostly wooden and were just burnt and remains scrapped) for the track remodelling. This would spell the end of the Harton Electric Railway. The shunting of the HAA wagons at the washery would be undertaken by diesel shunters and a number of surplus locomotives from nearby collieries had been moved to Westoe. Following the change for a time the railway was retained to handle waste to the staithe, diesel locomotives worked the wagons to St Hilda's. The diesels couldn't negotiate the tunnel so an electric locomotive was stabled in the wagon works to work the staithes. This was a temporary arrangement as a conveyor was installed along the track to deliver the waste to the staithe.

Locomotives.

When the railway was electrified in 1908 the first two locomotives were small four wheel type supplied by Siemens. Later locomotives were of eight wheel bogie types manufactured by several manufacturers such as Siemens, Kerr, Stuart and AEG. At my visit all these had been withdrawn but four of these have survived into preservation. The five electric locomotives in use were all 4w-4w bogie configuration built by Baguley with English Electric equipment. Numbers 11 and 12 were built in 1951/2 and with full height cabs and pantograph on the roof. These locomotives were too high to access Low Staithes at St Hilda's tunnel. Three more locomotives followed, Nos13, 14 and 15 were built in 1957/9 but were constructed to a lower loading gauge with pantographs mounted on the bonnet. These three locomotives could safely pass through the tunnel at St Hilda's and access Low Staithe. The rationalisation of the staithes concentrated teeming at the modernised Low Staithe meaning only locomotives No13, 14 and 15 could access the staithe. With the tonnages involved there wouldn't be enough capacity to handle the number of trains. Therefore it was decided in 1983 to send No12 to Baguley's to be rebuilt to a lower profile returning in 1985 due to delays caused by the miners strike. No12 differed to the rest in having a higher bonnet at the front and sloping only half way along the bonnet before coming flat. The cab was also fitted with aluminium frames to the windows.

The livery of the five electric locomotives was a dark blue but with variations in shade and livery details such as the wasp striping. No12 recently rebuilt had the cleanest livery and painted in a Oxford Blue, the others had a darker shade of blue and were much more work stained. Nos13 and 14 were easily spotted with their cab window surrounds painted yellow and a large yellow inverted V on the cab side. This was a throwback when the locomotives were painted standard mining equipment colliery white. The white livery was difficult to spot in the frequent sea frets and was believed to have led to a child being knocked down on one of the railway level crossings. After the incident rudimentary wasp stripes were applied in black in attempt to make them more visible. No15 was the only one to carry any lining with the bonnet and cab sides picked out with a single yellow line inset from the panel perimeters. Latterly all the locomotives had the buffer beams painted in a bright fluorescent red paint which was incongruous with the rest of the livery. Sadly, at the closure of the line all five locomotives were cut up despite some efforts to have one preserved.



No15 runs into the washery yard with empties in one of the common sea frets. In the background are the elegant colliery buildings.

The Overhead.

The 650 volts direct current power was supplied by a single copper conductor supported on trolley poles with the return current through the rails. The trolley poles came from various sources and the poles were painted in differing colour to indicate their heritage. A large quantity of poles and overhead equipment was acquired from Sunderland and South Shields when they disposed of trolley buses as they used similar equipment. Originally the direct current was supplied by mercury arc rectifiers, a major rebuilding and modernisation of Westoe Colliery in the 1970s saw upgrading of the system and power supply using the surplus trolley bus equipment.



Rolling Stock.

Preserved South Shields Trolley No 204 at Sandtoft museum. **Photo: David Christie**

The operating fleet at the time of my visit was 21ton hoppers built by Charles Roberts of Horbury, these handled all the traffic both coal and waste. A number of old wooden wagons were used to collect spillage from the teeming sheds, these were parked on a siding under the conveyor. A self propelled tower wagon existed but I never saw this, and a number of maintenance wagons existed including a generator. A well equipped wagon shop was provided and all wagons I saw looked well maintained.

My Visits

I made many visits during 1987, especially during the summer months with the light evenings and was fascinated by the operation of the railway. I was unable gain access to the colliery or the staithe so all my photography was from public access sites. I mentioned above the tempo of the operation, so there was no waiting around for a photo so my tactic was to get to a spot and photograph what passed. Low Staithe was adjacent to a public access pier and it was fascinating to watch colliers being berthed and departing the staithe. The sounds of the railway will stay with me, the squeal of the full wagons descending Erskine Bank with their brakes pinned down. The tortured flange squeal as wagons were bullied round the sharp curves of the staithe trackwork. An approaching locomotive would be heralded by the swish, swish noise from the pantograph travelling along the wire. In Shields itself there was a constant background hum coming from the colliery machinery noticeable by its absence during holiday weeks. My last visit was on a chilly later September day, a sea fret swirled around reducing visibility to a few dozen yards. A melancholic shroud for a unique railway soon to pass into history. Barely six months later the last collier left Low Staithe and a couple of months after that a conveyor would replace the waste trains so in July 1988 the Harton ceased to exist along with industry that spawned it.

No14 departs St Hilda's with empties for Westoe. The line up Erskine Bank is to the left the line to the right runs passed Chichester Metro station and access Westoe via Victoria sidings. The runaway siding to the left with its buffer and scotches.



No12 pulls wagons up the teeming sidings. One of the teeming gantries is in the background.

All Photos: Tony Wright



Chris Fox recalls the Bescot Sunday Simmer.



Coded 3A, 21B, and then 2F by BR, Bescot motive power depot, near Walsall, lay adjacent to the Grand Junction main line from Birmingham to the North. It was primarily a freight depot; a fact reflected in the type of locomotives based there. By 1964, the mainstay of its allocation consisted of Stanier '8F' 2-8-0s, supplemented by the inevitable 'Black Fives'. The

shed was also home to a number of smaller engines, often used on local trip workings; these included Ivatt Class 2 and Class 4 2-6-0s, BR Standard Class 4 2-6-0s, Stanier Class 5 2-6-0s, and Fowler Class 4 0-6-0s.

Perhaps the most interesting residents at this time were the few remaining ex-LNWR 'Super D'



Left, The Bescot Sunday Simmer on the 28th March 1965. Ivatt Class 2 No. **46445** facing the camera.

Below, Bescot 'Super D' 0-8-0 No. **49173** resting in the shed yard, May 1964.

0-8-0s, the last survivors of which were withdrawn at the end of 1964. Always known as 'Duck Eights' by the local train spotters, some of the shed's enginemmen referred to them in less complimentary terms. Considering Bescot's importance as a freight hub, it is surprising that no BR Standard '9F' 2-10-0s were based there, although they were occasional visitors to the shed.



Whilst for the most part a freight depot, Bescot did have a limited amount of passenger work, mainly at weekends when engines and train crew were spare. This usually involved working excursion trains, often to a coastal destination, and were popular with many crews as they were able to enjoy a few hours at the seaside, before working the return leg back to the West Midlands. Bescot's 'Black Five,' No. 44766, fitted with a double chimney, was frequently employed on these excursions.

Not 44766 but another 'Black Five' No. **45262** in the yard at Bescot, 9th May 1965.



For an enthusiast, the best time to visit Bescot was a Sunday morning. In the 1960s, only a limited number of freight trains operated on a Sunday, and as such most of the depot's locomotives were to be found on shed. A low embankment ran all along the one side of the shed yard, and this provided an excellent platform for observers and photographers. To reach it, however, it was necessary to leave the nearest road and walk across a large expanse of waste ground. It was well worth the effort, because the shed yard would be crammed full of quietly resting locomotives; this was the famous Bescot Sunday Simmer.

A line of '8F' 2-8-0s at Bescot, No. **48724** nearest the camera. May 1964.



Although there were no glamorous express engines to set the pulse racing, to observe so many locomotives all together was still an impressive sight. I couldn't have imagined that one day I would start my railway career at this very location.

Of course, none of this was going to last. In 1966 Bescot closed to steam, and subsequently a small diesel maintenance facility and fueling point was constructed on part of the shed yard. The waste ground that was crossed to access the shed was developed into a housing estate. The old steam shed remained largely intact but abandoned, eventually being demolished a few years ago. Today, Bescot is a shadow of its former self; much of the marshalling yard is now disused, and the signal box that controlled it – the Down Tower – has been swept away. What remains is used almost exclusively by engineering trains, rather than revenue earning freight traffic. Such is progress.

Right, viewed from the embankment, Bescot '8F' No. **48335** and a Fowler '4F' 0-6-0 simmer in the yard, 9th May 1965.



All B&W photos by Chris's Dad, **Norman Fox**, who took Young Chris trainspotting most weekends, sometimes to areas outside the West Midlands where steam could still be found. Chris said it is all thanks to him that I now have such wonderful memories of those days.



Left, a colorful Sunday Simmer on Sunday 26 March 1961 led by two 'Duck 8s'.

Photo: Andrew G. Forsyth

Colin Churcher's Railway Life

Area Manager Haverfordwest-part 2.

I only had occasion to reprimand Charlie Glogue once. One evening he had the Haverfordwest shunting turn and he was really hitting the wagons around hard. Peace eventually returned to the yard as Charlie took himself and his locomotive down to Milford Haven to see what havoc he could wreak down there. Around 6:00 p.m. I walked along to the signal box to make sure all was well before going home to my dinner. One of the tank wagons in the Oil Siding was up at a strange angle. It had been shunted hard and the impact had caused it to ride up over the buffers and hang buffer-locked. The wagon was wedged in tight and it was evident that the only way to get it down would be with the aid of the Wagon Examiner at Milford Haven. I drove down to Milford where Charlie was predictably away from his locomotive (word travels fast on the railway grapevine). The Examiner and I put a wagon jack in the boot of the railway mini and brought it back to Haverfordwest. This jack was so heavy that it tended to lift the front wheels off the road making steering somewhat erratic and decidedly difficult. Using some old sleepers as packing we began to jack up the wagon. There weren't enough sleepers to pack the wagon properly and because the wagon had to be lifted a long way up it began to sway gently from side to side. We gingerly eased up the last few inches so that we could release the buffers and lower the now buffer-less wagon to the rails. The precarious part was now over but we still had to get the buffers back in and to do this we had to move several wagons back along the siding, against the grade, to give us room to work. By the time we had finished it was 10:00 o'clock and both my evening and my dinner were ruined and so the next day I requested the pleasure of Charlie's company in my office.

He couldn't think how the wagon had become buffer-locked although there was a very deceptive gradient on the Oil Siding. He did agree eventually to be more careful in future and when the interview was over he said to me;

"No hard feelings boss?" "Not so long as it doesn't happen again, Charlie", I replied in my sternest voice.

"Well come and have a drink with me then." "No thank you Charlie, I have some things to do."

I replied in a less stern voice, whereupon Charlie pulled out a half-crown from his pocket and put it on my desk.

"In that case why don't you have one on me?" I politely refused and, thinking I had expensive tastes, he put another half-crown down on my desk. Barely able to contain myself, I propelled Charlie and his money gently but firmly to the door. As he disappeared outside he said; "I know where there are some good rabbits, next time I am in Clarby (Clarbeston Road) I'll snare one for your missus."

I closed the door and collapsed, laughing, over my desk.

Haverfordwest Yard was the scene of quite a bit of action of one sort or another. Around 5:00 p.m. one sunny May evening the peace and quiet of the yard, and the town, was shattered by a burst of gunfire - or so it seemed. This is what really happened. Many of the buildings on the Pembroke Dock line were disused although still intact. On the day in question I had been searching through the old station at Pembroke and had found a tin box under a pile of rubbish. Having pried off the battered and rusty lid, I found the box contained over fifty detonators, all of them equally rusty. All British detonators are colour coded by the year of make but these colours were some that I didn't recognize. Gingerly wiping away the rust from the metal casings the detonators revealed their age - 1932 and 1936!

Pembroke Dock station pictured from the stub of the spur which at one time served the actual docks - c.1959.

Photo: late James S Doubleday courtesy of John Turner, 53A models



My first reaction was one of ecstasy, after all how many people have genuine Great Western Railway detonators — twenty years after nationalization? My joy soon turned to concern when I wondered what to do with these potentially dangerous relics. The instructions are quite specific. All detonators must be returned to Swindon works five years after the date of issue as marked by the date stamp and colour coding. These should have gone back thirty years ago! My mind boggled at the forms and explanations this might require if I followed the rulebook, so I hit upon a simpler plan. I took the tin box back to Haverfordwest and carried it gingerly to the yard. The yard crew were having a tea break but were soon merrily clipping down detonators on the shunting neck. We were about to destroy the evidence. The driver climbed into the cab of the Hymek diesel hydraulic locomotive and having made sure that everybody was well clear, I called him forward. The tone of the engine changed as it was put into first notch and there was a slight pause while the hydraulic transmission filled with oil. The air horn sounded and with a loud hiss the locomotive brake was released. The exhaust deepened as the throttle was advanced. There was a loud bang as the leading wheel hit the first detonator, followed by a succession of explosions, rather like a burst of machine gun fire. We ran the Hymek back over the track just to make sure that we hadn't missed any the first time, then picked up the still warm casings and put them in the garbage. The only sign of our activities was a thick cloud of smoke that hung over the yard in the warm still evening air.

I decided to walk home. There was a beautiful sunset and I began to daydream about the regulations and how to bend them. My walk took me over a road bridge which crosses the yard. My reverie was interrupted by the sight of a member of the local constabulary, his bicycle propped up against the parapet, who was gazing intently over the scene of the crime. This stalwart crime fighter seemed to have a bad cold, he kept trying to clear his nose by sniffing deeply. He said something in Welsh which I didn't understand, shook his head sadly, got on his bike and rode off. As I watched him wobble his way into the golden sunset, my nostrils caught the faint smell of gunpowder wafting in the breeze.



During my own short stay we had two minor derailments in the Haverfordwest yard, one of which I managed to get back on while the other I made even worse and nearly succeeded in tipping a wagon over on top of myself. Putting wagons back on was always complicated by the fact that the locomotive crew, coming from Whitland, spoke Welsh, while the Haverfordwest shunters spoke English. The centre of operations for the yard was the signal box which was the source of all information. There was a very efficient intelligence network that would have shamed MI5.

The box was connected to the omnibus telephone circuit which stretched all the way from Carmarthen to Milford Haven. Every box and railway office was connected to this circuit and it wasn't uncommon to have two or even three different conversations going on at the same time. The procedure for using this apparatus was quite simple, it just didn't work out so well in practice however. All you had to do was to pick up the receiver and ring a code on the buzzer. Everybody bar the one you were trying to get would answer and when you did manage to get the right one the line was normally so bad that communication was impossible anyway. All conversations were interrupted by somebody else trying to get on the line or just listening in and it wasn't surprising that my G.P.O. phone bill was as high as it was. The omnibus circuit did have one advantage in that it was possible to have conference conversations. On one occasion during a bad derailment which required a large number of hand signalmen as well as working by pilotman I was on the phone with the District Inspector and my Movement Supervisor as well as the Chairmen of the two Local Departmental Committees involved and the boxes at Johnston, Haverfordwest, Clarboston Road and Whitland. The omnibus circuit was particularly busy at night when there weren't many trains about and time used to hang heavily on the signalmen. There wasn't much work to do but there was a lot of gossip to catch up on.



Example of a signalbox Telephone with integral handset, mounted on the original backing board with a glazed BR LMR Telephone Circuit Card beneath showing FROGHALL BOX ? LEEK TICKET OFFICE. Shows codes to Consall Station, Cheddleton and Leek Brook Junction .

During my brief stay at Haverfordwest, there was a flaring up of the range war at Crundale Crossing. Crundale was a manned crossing on double track about midway between Haverfordwest and Clarboston Road. The gates are normally across the road and motorists intending to cross ring a bell which brings out the lady crossing keeper. The crossing was not a block post but it did have a set of repeater block instruments and signals which could be placed against trains. If the line was clear the signals would be placed to danger and the gates would be opened for the car. The lady crossing keeper lived with her husband, who was a relief signalman, in an immaculate cottage which was situated extremely close to the tracks. A meal at the cottage was quite an experience. As the soup was being served, there would be an exchange of bell signals. Train Entering Section came just as we were finishing the soup and there was a rush to collect up the plates before the empty Provan tank cars would hurtle by at high speed not more than ten feet from where we were sitting. Having rearranged the cutlery on the table there would be a pause while an impatient motorist was dealt with. This somewhat unusual way to have a meal in no way detracted from Mrs. Willoughby's excellent cooking.

Crundale Crossing was out in the country situated right next to a farm. Life was good with only the occasional motorist to break the monotony until the somewhat ambitious farmer bought a new field. The new field was very good grazing and every day the



cattle were moved from the farm to the field in the morning and back for milking at night. The only problem was that the farm was on one side of the railway while the field was on the other. The animals were docile enough and very nearly took themselves on these regular jaunts frequently accompanied only by the farmer's small son. Although the grass in the new field was lush the grass along the railway right of way was even more lush and the leading beast frequently made a ninety degree turn at the crossing in search of greener pastures. Mrs. Willoughby often had to deal with some twenty cows contentedly wandering along the embankment pursued by a small boy and with a passenger train imminent. The cattle were bad enough but things came to a head one Sunday when the farmer decided to hire a lorry to move some fill from one part of his farm to another which was, of course, on the other side of the railway. This operation required the gates to be opened every twenty minutes or so - right through the day. I was out on some engineering work at Whitland that day and I heard over the omnibus circuit that Sunday dinner at Crundale was being ruined. The phone lines nearly turned red hot in the process. The pilot locomotive which was being used on the Single Line working was due to run light to Milford Haven to work the sleeping car train so I decided to go with it and stop in at Crundale.

The locomotive came to a halt just by the crossing and I descended into an electric atmosphere. The first person to rush up was the farmer who told me, in no uncertain terms, that if I didn't move my locomotive off the crossing he would move it for me with his lorry. I thought that the lorry might come off second-best in such an encounter but mindful that brake hoses were the Achilles heel of a locomotive and thinking of its next working I decided that discretion was the better part of valour and meekly moved the offending locomotive forward a few feet. The next person on the scene, in a flurry of red flags was the crossing keeper's husband and there followed a heated argument. It was some time before both parties had cooled off sufficiently before I deemed it safe to leave without the risk of bloodshed. The sequel to this little episode was that the local National Farmers' Union representative and I brought the two warring factions together to work out a compromise. I must admit feeling somewhat like the local sheriff going out to stop a gunfight. We managed to defuse the situation sufficiently so as to avoid physical injury to either of the combatants, cows, trains or farm equipment but I am not sure that we achieved a permanent peace. Every day when I open the paper I expect to read that the range war has broken out at Crundale once again. **To be concluded**

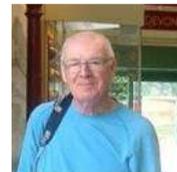
Class 37 No **37223** heads light loco with a brake van towards Haverfordwest at Crundale Crossing in 1987.

Below, the sign to the left read **Please press plunger for 5 seconds.**



Photos: Mike Jones

Tony Beresford is confused of Kettering-or is he?



The accompanying photo shows the mildly confusing information displayed for passengers on Platform 6 at Kettering when I arrived for a rail tour on 27th March 2004; however, all will be explained, or will it? The tour was organised by the Branch Line Society (BLS) and had set off from Ealing Broadway almost three hours earlier and reached the Midland Main line at Brent Curve Junction via Acton Wells and Dudding Hill Junctions, prior to picking up more punters at St Albans. Haulage was provided by 67007 which later in its career found a degree of fame by being painted in purple livery to commemorate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The primary destination of the tour was evidenced by the tour title, namely the 'Birch Coppice Pioneer' and unsurprisingly there was a generous selection of West Midlands accents to be heard on board.

The first stretch of freight line to be encountered was from Knighton to Branston Junctions, the so called Ivanhoe Line, a through journey currently not possible due to Network Rail declaring the line out of use west of Coalville from 12th December 2024, the last working having been an inspection train on 10th June 2024. Despite local pressure to reinstate passenger services between Coalville, Ashby and Derby there appears to be little hope of progress, especially as mothballing of the line has recently been extended. Nevertheless, the Ivanhoe Line campaign group remains active, with local MP Amanda Hack raising the matter at Westminster earlier this year. In the meantime, the route has been subjected to cable theft and considerable vandalism. Even the level crossing barriers at Swannington have disappeared, hopefully removed by Network Rail for safe keeping rather than by opportunist thieves. Sadly, despite the Ivanhoe Line reaching the previous government's 'Restoring Your Railway Fund' short list, the prospects for reopening look increasingly remote.

After the passenger service fell victim to Dr Beeching's infamous axe, the line remained busy serving various collieries and the three power stations at Drakelow near Burton-upon-Trent, the last of which, 'C', ceased production in 2003. Incidentally, the power stations were built on the site of Drakelow Hall, ancestral home of the Gresley family. The direct family line ceased to live there in 1931, the hall being demolished shortly afterwards and the site subsequently purchased by the British Electricity Authority in 1950 for construction of Drakelow 'A'. In the 19th century Sir Nigel Gresley's branch of the family moved to nearby Netherseal where his father eventually became rector of the Parish Church, the fourth Gresley to hold the incumbency. Sir Nigel is buried in the churchyard extension.

The thirty miles from Knighton Junction were undertaken at a steady trundle, not least because of mining subsidence, and following a short delay at Branston Junction the train joined the main line, pausing at Tamworth to collect our final complement of passengers, 32 mins late. To make up a little of the deficit, instead of going via Whitacre Junction the train went direct to Park Lane Junction and resumed the booked route via the Sutton Park line to Ryecroft Junction. Shortly after passing through Walsall station, the train entered what the itinerary variously described as 'Walsall Freight Terminal' or 'Brook Sidings', now the site of the Breedon cement and aggregates terminal. Here 66128 was attached to the rear of the train, its first duty being to ease the tour forward to Tasker Street siding which, quoting the itinerary again, was 'the new parcels terminal'. Not now, it ain't! Google Earth clearly shows the rail facilities not to have been used for many years, with what appears to be a fence or closed gates isolating the site from the operational railway. An internet search reveals the site is now the location of the creatively named Walsall Space Program which is not, as you may have thought, an attempt to put Noddy Holder on the moon, rather a self storage facility sporting the grandiose strap line, 'out of this world'!

Class 67 No **67007** in Platinum Anniversary livery, heading the Belmond Pullman stock at Chesterfield last August. **Photo: Tony Beresford**



Following the briefest of stops, 67007 pulled the train back into the freight terminal siding and a further reversal allowed 66128 to make its main contribution to the day's excitement. We retraced our earlier route back to Water Orton, this time taking the Nuneaton line, deviating via Hams Hall Arrival Line before passing Whitacre Junction. After briefly rejoining the Derby to Birmingham line at Kingsbury Junction the highlight of the day for virtually everyone on board began as we left the main line at Kingsbury Branch Junction and proceeded along the recently reinstated line towards Birch Coppice Business Park. Originally opened by the Midland Railway in 1878 and named the Kingsbury Branch, the line was constructed to serve Birch Coppice and Baddesley Collieries, the latter located a further two miles distant. Baddesley pit was also served by a colliery line from Baddesley Wharf on the Trent Valley Line just north of Atherstone. Here I must declare a personal interest. I had two relatives, a father and son, (Bert and Stan, fine manly names!) who were employed at both collieries at different times as blacksmiths. As I saw in Stan's photos, it was a tough life invariably undertaken in quite primitive and difficult conditions but happily they both lived to ripe old ages, no doubt fortified by their NCB coal allowances. Since the branch had closed beyond Kingsbury Oil Terminal in 1989, a new road serving Kingsbury Link industrial estate had been built across the trackbed, however agreement couldn't be obtained to provide a level crossing at this location. The tour notes advised "the solution was to lower the trackbed for half a mile, with a new bridge, and massive underpinning of nearby Whatley Villas bridge, in a very deep cutting." The item concluded by commenting, "the location and vertical change involved in this major piece of civil engineering.....has created new track, albeit vertically." With maximums of 1 in 75 down and 1 in 67 up for trains going towards Birch Coppice, reinstatement was clearly a gross understatement! Hall End Junction was where the branches to the collieries bifurcated and here the line turns north, although points are provided should reinstatement towards Baddesley ever be contemplated. The end of the line was reached after a further ¾ mile, the total distance being 3m 06c from Kingsbury Junction. Then, in typical BLS style, an added bonus was coverage of a siding outside the VW Group Logistics warehouse. At that time development of the Birch Coppice site was in its early stages and during the intervening years the Birmingham Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT) has been built. It is served daily by intermodal trains from ports such as Felixstowe and London Gateway. It's fair to assume the presence of VW Logistics national distribution centre next door is no coincidence.



DBSchenker Class 66 No. **66079** reverses a loaded intermodal service out of the depot in May 2013. **Photo: John Whitehouse**

Mission accomplished, 67007 led the tour back to Hams Hall Arrival Line where 66128 was detached and the 67 ran round the stock ready to lead the tour back to Ealing Broadway, this time taking the freight only line between Stenson and Sheet Stores Junctions to reach the Midland Main Line. The first set down point was Tamworth (about 30 mins late) where I left the train having decided it was handier to get home from there rather than Kettering, two hours later.

If you've been following this meandering tale, you may be wondering about the accuracy of the information shown on the screens at Kettering. Yes, the tour did call at Tamworth twice, but destination Tamworth? Birch Coppice is located in North Warwickshire as confirmed by the glossy informative literature handed out on the tour courtesy of the developer, IM Properties. Since then Birch Coppice Business Park has grown significantly, with major access from the A5 near Dordon. The site is only separated from Tamworth by the M42 and a few fields but no doubt, and to the chagrin of Staffordshire County and Tamworth Borough Councils when it comes to council tax income, is definitely in a different county. In common with Tamworth and everywhere else for miles, Birch Coppice has a Birmingham postcode but its postal town is Tamworth; all of which gets us precisely nowhere. No wonder the bod responsible for the screens at Kettering was confused, but at least they got the loco numbers correct!



Email letters



Leon, I really enjoyed the piece in the latest Emag by Albert Ahear.

I had an interesting footplate ride over the same road from Worcester to Reading on Castle 7005 "Sir Edward Elgar" on 21 November 1962, accompanied by a footplate inspector with driver Crocker and fireman Dennis, of Worcester. For a variety of reasons we were 12 minutes late leaving Oxford and driver Crocker was trying to regain as much time as he could. Fireman Dennis commenced firing as soon as we left Oxford and fired continuously, without stopping, until we reached Reading.



What has always stayed in my mind was watching the fireman. He had his head down all the way from Oxford, the only time he stood up was to sight the signals at Oxford North. Shouting "Right away" he commenced firing again. This demonstrated to me the intimate way in which the two men were working together and it amazed me that Dennis knew precisely where he was at all times without having to look out. A wonderful feat which would have been repeated every day. **Colin J. Churcher**, Ottawa, Ontario

News last month from the Severn Valley Railway and the Vale of Rheidol Railway was an exciting two-year locomotive exchange that will bring two iconic steam engines to fresh audiences in new locations. From Spring 2026, the SVR's beloved GWR 7819 Hinton Manor, currently on display in the SVR's Engine House, will travel to the Vale of Rheidol Railway in Aberystwyth for static display. In return, GWR 'Dukedog' 9017 Earl of Berkeley will be welcomed to the SVR, where it will go on display and be celebrated by visitors and enthusiasts alike.

The big shunt at the Engine House gave a rare chance to see WD 600 *Gordon* and GWR 7819 *Hinton Manor* outdoors. **Photos: Dave Redbourne**



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



Two HST power cars passed through Bilbrook on 24/02/2026 working the OJ88 Kings Norton to Bury East Lancs Railway via a rather circuitous route. No 43025 *Exeter* is the Inter City one and No 43060 *Heaton* is in GNER livery.

Photo: Mike Morgans

