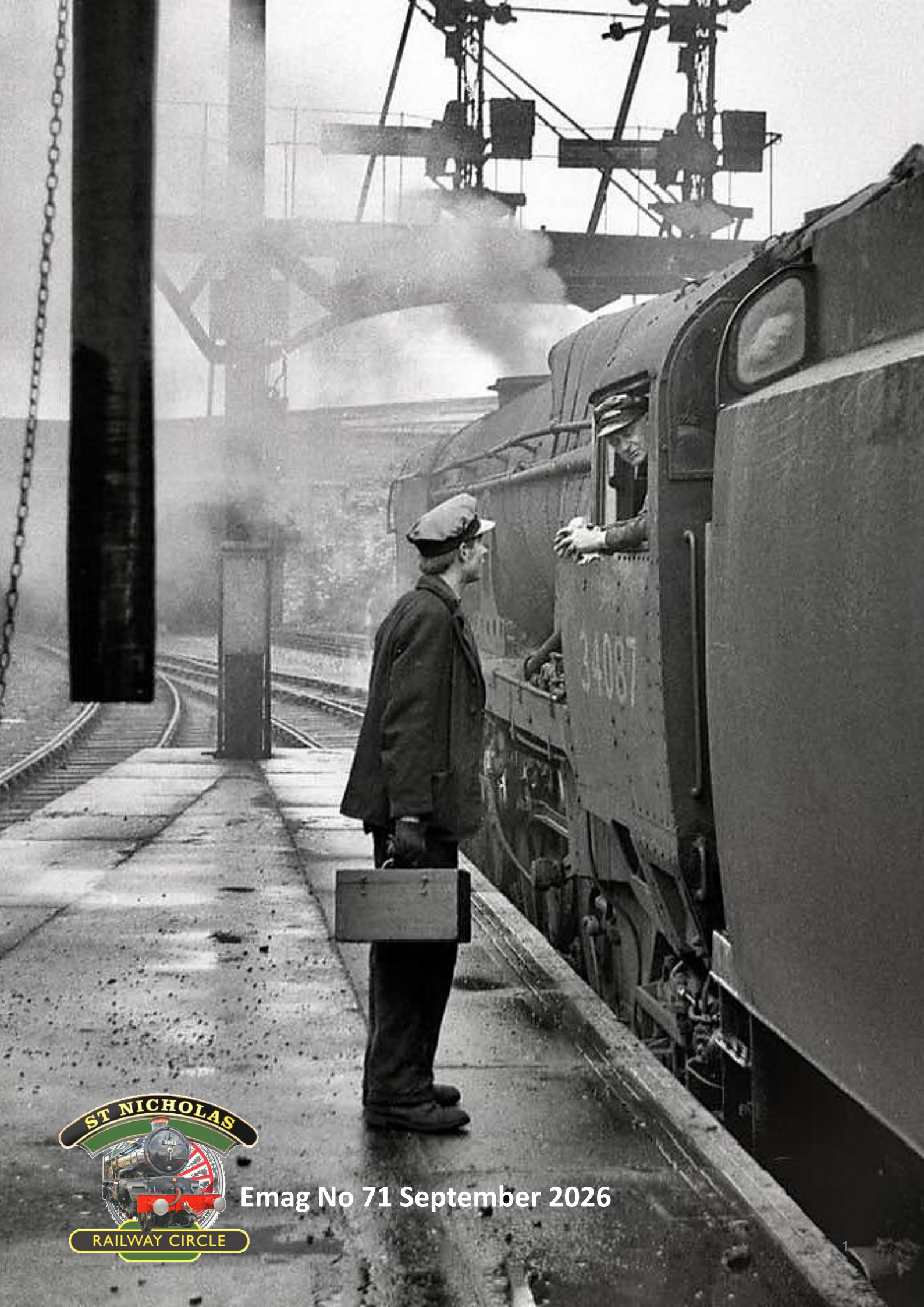




Emag No 71 September 2026



Platform End

Castle class No **7026 Tenby Castle** which went new to Stafford Road in 1949, prepares to come off the 08.02 Wolverhampton to Minehead service at Bristol Temple Meads on 13th July 1963. Perhaps the poor external condition is putting the lads off looking at the loco with its home-made front number plate?



No 7026 would later return to Wolverhampton at 6 pm on a Penzance to Wolverhampton train, replacing D804, Avenger. **Photo: David Nicholas/Patrick O'Brien collection.**



This year the St Nicholas Railway Circle celebrates its 20th anniversary, ten years on from when this picture of the four founders was taken. These four, Roger Fletcher, Tony Yates, Mike Morgans and Ray Jeff with the permission of the then vicar, Alan Harper started the club in 2006. Sadly, we have lost Tony but the other three have successfully guided the club all these years and Alan is on the mailing list.
A BIG THANK YOU to you all!

Three lamps across the bufferbeam... that can only mean one thing: The Royal Train.

Multi award-winning photographer Jack Boskett recently purchased this original Royal Train headboard at auction. It was carried on the Royal Train during the Coronation year of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, making it a remarkable piece of railway and Royal history.

GWR 2884 Class No. **3850** and Royal headboard at Broadway station.

Photo: Jack Boskett



Front cover

A very wet afternoon at Bournemouth Central and Fireman Ronald Whittaker chats to Nine Elms Driver Charlie 'Happy' Gordon. The loco is Bullied pacific No **34087 '145 Squadron'** heading the Waterloo-bound Bournemouth Belle.

Photo: Nigel Kendall

QuizTime

Not strictly a railway photo but I suspect shed 'bashers' travelling from South to North would have used this back in the day and there are lot of BR 21-ton hopper wagons in the background!

The description in my 1958 edition British Locomotive Shed Directory reads there is no passenger service to here.

Cross the river on the steam ferry and turn right at the north end of the ferry and follow the road round to the left (under a railway bridge). The shed entrance is on the left hand side, a few yards further on.

Photo: Bob Mitchell



August quiz answer: Chesterfield Tube Works, on the truncated Brampton branch.

Taken from a new article by David J Hayes on page 13



Thursday 9th October 1975: A gritty industrial scene, taken on what appears to be a murky ol' day, showing Class 24/1 No. **24 060** (ex-D5060) standing in Wednesbury Exchange Sidings with a trip freight for either Bescot Yard or perhaps to Norton Junction (Bescot Down Empty Sidings). The "Skinhead" Type 2, which "on paper" was officially documented as being withdrawn with effect Saturday 4th October 1975, may have been temporarily reprieved and allocated to Trip T29, which during the course of the day worked Class 8 duties to and/or from Bescot Yard, Langley Green, Norton Junction (Bescot Down Empty Sidings), Oldbury Bromford Lane, Perry Barr (SPD), Walsall Downside and Walsall Goods. The loco assigned to T29 also worked trips "as instructed by Control" from 10:30am until 2pm, which is possibly when this image was recorded. Visible in the background is the Patent Shaft Steelworks.

Photo: Rob Selvey.

News item

It was officially confirmed in August 2026 that Deutsche Bahn Cargo UK (DBC-UK) was up for sale. DBC-UK first appeared in March 2016, the company having previously traded, from April 1996, as English, Welsh & Scottish Railways (EWS) before being acquired by German train operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) in November 2007 and officially re-branded as DB Schenker (DBS) in January 2009. Up until quite recently, DBC-UK were the largest rail freight operator in Britain, but fierce competition from road hauliers and within the rail freight industry itself has seen this position switch to GB Railfreight (GBRf). The accompanying image, dated Monday 10th August 2026, shows DBC-UK Class 66 No **66118** passing through Tame Bridge Parkway, at 13:46 (6-min early), with 6V06, the 11:59 Burton (Maurice Hill) to Acton, where it arrived at 5:21pm (4-min early). **David J. Hayes.**



A Stranger Down Bilston Way

A Collett 57xx tank No **3692** takes the Dudley line with a single carriage train at Priestfield station. Allocated to Duffryn Yard shed, Port Talbot, we know, thanks to Simon Dewey's Stafford Road Works register, the loco was in the Works for Heavy/Casual repair between 17th November 1961 and 4th January 1962.

This line was built by the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway, immortalised as the 'Old Worse and Worse' having taken nine years to complete the 89½ miles from Oxford. To the right are the lines to Birmingham Snow Hill, now part of the Midland Metro.



Despite being surrounded by industry that gave the Black Country its name, this is the delightfully named Daisy Bank and Bradly station. Local lad Brian Allan remembers it was 1954 and Mr Greenaway, a leading industrialist who also built a park for the children of Bradley, paid for all the children of Bradley & part of Moxley to go on a Trip from Daisy Bank Station to Llandudno.

Just visible in the photo are the children wearing tags with their names and school on - shades of WW11!

The loco is recorded as GWR Grange class No **6862 "Derwent Grange"**
Photos: Geoff Lambert

The other station before Tipton on the OWW to Dudley was Priestfield and here we see GWR 5101 Class 2-6-2T No. **4175** approaching the station from Dudley with a Stourbridge - Oxley pick-up goods train on 24th July 1965.

There are a couple of modern tank wagons in the photo for **David J. Hayes** to identify. The long-gone gasholders of Bilston gas works can be seen in the left background.

Photo: David Rostance



Back in the day, British Railways were keen to advertise their new diesel services usually with an emphasis on speed and comfort. Arno Brooks gives us a drivers view from back then on **page 26**.



Left, Doncaster Rovers striker, Alfie May models their new away kit for the 2026-27 campaign.

The all-blue strip, with a gold and black trim, takes inspiration from the Doncaster-built locomotive Mallard which set the world speed record for a steam locomotive. A club statement said "Doncaster Rovers have today launched their 2026/27 away kit, timed to mark 88 years to the day since Doncaster-built locomotive Mallard set the world speed record for a steam locomotive, a record that still stands.

The kit is finished in Mallard's rich locomotive blue, the same Garter blue livery the locomotive wore on 3 July 1938 when it reached 126mph on Stoke Bank, south of Grantham. It features fine black and gold detailing throughout and the design carries 36A, the historic British Railways shed code for Doncaster, on the hem. The code identified locomotives, including Mallard, as based at and maintained in Doncaster. This season it will identify Rovers on every away day. On the inner neck tape, stitched close to the badge, the kit also carries Mallard's own engine number, marking the four identities the locomotive held across its working life."



Meldon Viaduct, once part of the Southern Railway main line from London to Plymouth via Exeter. Slightly shorter than the GWR route, at one time it was a major competitor for the Plymouth traffic.

Right, Western Region Warship Class No **D808 Centaur** heads across with the 10.40 Plymouth-Brighton service on 19th April 1966. Note that by then, only one line was being used across the viaduct and that restricted to a sedate 15m.p.h.

An extremely useful cross-country train, it ran daily from Brighton to Plymouth Friary via Southampton, Salisbury, Exeter, and Tavistock. Brighton crews had Bullied pacifics for the service, the last regular steam hauled trains to Brighton, working out and back to Salisbury where the loco was changed.

Photo: Robert M.E. Thomas



Although the line from Coleford Junction to Okehampton has been very successfully reopened, the rails extend only as far as Meldon Quarry, the viaduct now being a footpath. Beyond are some twenty, empty, miles through Lydford, Brentor and Tavistock until Bere Alston which is the junction for the Gunnislake branch.

Nostalgia!

Right, the Fireman of Machynlleth allocated Dukedog No 9014 seems lost in thought at Porthmadog back in 1957.

Photo: Unknown, shared by Martin Spong



From a similar era, time for tea at Kings Cross during the filming of that wonderful Ealing Comedy "The Ladykillers". Alec Guinness, who played the sinister 'Professor' Marcus and Katie Johnson, who played the indefatigable Mrs Wilberforce, enjoy a chat with the footplate crew.

Weymouth of course with Class 33 No **33113** propelling an unpowered 4-TC set No **8024** along the Weymouth Tramway during the Summer of 1987.

The Class 33/1 variant was created for push-pull working of Waterloo trains beyond the early limit of electrification at Bournemouth which included Weymouth and the harbour tramway. Note the Southern Region style high level brake pipes. 33113 was converted to push-pull in 1967 and withdrawn in 1992 although some twenty-nine of the class have been preserved.

Photo: Ian Charles



Barnstaple Junction, once the junction between lines to Ilfracombe, Bideford, Taunton and Exeter. GWR Churchward 43xx Class mogul No **7333** is probably heading for its home shed at Taunton in this early 1960s photo.

The first coach is notable being a Hawksworth BCK slip, the last diagram built with some examples painted in the post-1956 BR version of chocolate/cream used on WR named expresses. Later, as here, they were in use on more secondary passenger duties, whilst an unknown Bulleid pacific waits to back down on its train.

Photo: Dave Hewitt



Photo: Unknown but shared by Tony Atkinson

Ireland was known for the, err, slightly unusual and this is a good example taken at Ennis on the West Clare Railway, surrounded by turntable parts, in 1961. In 1922, the Tralee and Dingle Light Railway built this 3ft gauge inspection saloon in their workshops, utilising a Ford Model T on a Baguley chassis.

When the Great Southern Railway was formed in 1924 it assumed control of all the railways wholly within the Irish Free State and the saloon was sent to the West Clare Railway being re-engined in 1938. In 1953 it returned to the T&DLR to assess the railways suitability for railcars but nothing came of it, and it was returned to the West Clare and scrapped in 1962 after the line closed the previous year.

The Tralee and Dingle had been built as cheaply as possible, largely following adjacent roads, resulting in some very tight curves and severe gradients. It opened on 31 March 1891, but right from the start income failed to cover operating expenses. The road between Tralee and Dingle was improved in the 1930s, allowing buses and lorries to effectively compete with the railway and on Monday 17 April 1939, all passenger services were withdrawn.

A single daily goods train continued to run until 1947, when coal shortages forced its temporary withdrawal and thereafter just a special cattle train was operated once per month in connection with the fair at Dingle. These trains finally ended in June 1953.

An extraordinary event occurred at Dingle station on 13 June 1940, after the line's closure to passengers. A German spy named Walter Simon arrived at the station and asked when the next train would depart (not realising that only freight services were still operating).



Simon had been landed by a German submarine, U-38, during the previous night. He then made his way by bus to Tralee and thence by train to Dublin. Following his enquiry at Dingle station the Garda Síochána were informed, and he was trailed by detectives. He was arrested on arrival in Dublin and interned for the duration of the War.

Left, the remains of Dingle station in 1960.

Photo: Roger Joanes

Following last month's piece on the floods in Thanet, this photo has come to light showing the narrow gauge line being laid at Reculver Towers and Roman Fort for rebuilding the sea wall.

The King Ethelbert pub in the distance undoubtedly benefited from all the thirsty workers - it's an ill wind! King Ethelbert was King of Kent from about 589 until his death in 642 and is regarded as a saint for his leading role in establishing Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons.

Photo: Alamy



Commuter land!

The Severn Valley Railway has announced a trial train service that will enable passengers from Bewdley to connect onto services to and from Birmingham or Worcester.

The trial will run for eight weeks on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1 September. A heritage DMU will leave Bewdley at 0640 and 0740 for Kidderminster Town station to enable passengers to transfer to Kidderminster station for onward travel on the main line. In the evening, the heritage DMU will leave Kidderminster Town at 1745 and 1850 for Bewdley.

If this is successful, a submission will be made to the DfTO to operate a regular service to and from Bewdley. West Midlands Safari Park has expressed an interest in providing links from these services to the Safari Park if the trial proves successful.



Regarding ticketing, through tickets will be available. As an example, a peak return ticket between Bewdley and Birmingham will cost £16, a £3.50 add-on compared with the price from Kidderminster. This is significantly discounted, so hopefully will be attractive, as it beats the return bus fare Bewdley-Kidderminster which is 2 x £2. Online booking should become available from mid-August and through tickets will also be available from ticket offices.

Thanks to Stourbridge Line User Group



In other news, the steel work reclaimed from the former Wolverhampton Low Level Station will get a new lease of life at the Severn Valley Railway as part of a project to upgrade its Kidderminster station. The ornate metal work salvaged from Low Level station, which closed to passengers in 1972, will be incorporated into a planned new canopy over the platforms at the heritage railway.

The 'Bubble' car will have a long wait before its next departure for Snow Hill at 16.25, unless this is a Saturday when an additional service left at 13.50. **Photo: Unknown, Shropshire Star.**

I wonder who had the clock?

The master and apprentice on the footplate of Britannia Class pacific No **70021, Morning star**, which went new to the Western Region at Laira, 83D, in 1951.

Leaving Laira for Cardiff Canton in 1957, thereafter it led a nomadic life being allocated to Trafford Park, Crewe, Newton Heath, Willesden, Aston and Stockport before final withdrawal from Carlisle Kingmoor in 1967. Did you see it?

Its last journey was to T W Ward's scrapyards at Inverkeithing, one of only twelve steam locos scrapped there.

Photo shared by Martin Spong:



Variety at Leeds

Gresley A3 pacific No **60110 Robert the Devil** is in Leeds Central Station seemingly assembling "The Harrogate Sunday Pullman" according to the headboard 23rd June 1957. The rather elegant lady on the right who would not look out of place in the Pullman contrasts with the becoated 'spotter' on the left. I can hear the conversation now; "a little big but he will grow into it"! I remember seeing 'Robert' tearing south through Finsbury Park when I was with my very religious uncle who 'tutted' at the name!



Ostensively named after the racehorse who won the 1880 St Ledger, some of the lads at the works joked it was actually named after Robert A. Thom, head of the Doncaster drawing office, who apparently was a 'bit of a devil'.

Photo: Peter Shoesmith, Copyright Geoff Dowling & John Whitehouse



Professor W A Tuplin, the engineering academic and author once commented that all controls on a steam locomotive should be designed to withstand being hit with a coal hammer. Long time Holbeck resident Black Five No **44662**. **Left**, seems to be passing the test at Leeds Central!

Right, Crew change time at Leeds City as the Eastern Region's answer to the Black Five, Thopson B1 No **61303** waits patiently. A York 50a loco, it would be withdrawn shortly after.



Left, problem solved, No **44662** waits to back down and work the final steam hauled train prior to the station closure on 29th April 1967, the 16.26 to Bradford Exchange.

After Holbeck, this loco was transferred to Low Moor, Bradford, 56F, in July at which time the Eastern Region (North Eastern Section) had 124 steam locos remaining.

Withdrawal would come two months later in October 1967.

Photos: Paul Milner



British Railways Road Toll

Bus
Stop
Spot



Above, Alan Lander collecting the toll. Bembridge station is back, right.

Southern Vectis Bristol Lodekka/ECW number No 527 at the Bembridge Toll Road gatehouse, Isle of Wight in July 1970. Given the company was purchased by the Southern Railway in 1929 and had its head office at Waterloo station, I wonder if they charged themselves?

Photo: Pete Newman



A ticket will be issued in respect of each toll charged and persons are requested to take care that they do not pay any toll without receiving a ticket in exchange for such payment



From 1882 tolls were charged for the use of the present Embankment Road, first by the railway companies and later British Railways. The tollgate was situated across the road from Bembridge Station, and tolls were collected from persons (1d), vehicles (6d) and animals using the road.

In 1947, as a result of a Ministry of Transport circular offering grants, the Isle of Wight County Council initiated enquiries with Southern Railway regarding the possible purchase of the toll road and embankment in order to free it from the Toll and with the intention of having it classified as a Class 2 road. Negotiations were protracted, with delays caused by rail nationalisation and the closure of the Branch Line.

Some of the difficulties encountered later were concerned with the methods and costs of discharging the Railway's obligations to the River Board to defend the embankment against the sea and permanently to ensure an adequate discharge of fresh water from behind the embankment out to the open sea. Further problems were encountered when urgent repairs were found to be needed to the embankment and to the reinforced concrete bridge constructed in 1923-4 to replace an earlier timber structure.

The IWCC finally assumed responsibility for the toll road and embankment in October 1971 and immediately abolished the collection of tolls.

One of several road toll huts on the Isle of Wight, this one at Newport was repurposed as the entrance to Havenstreet station on the Isle of Whight Steam Railway.

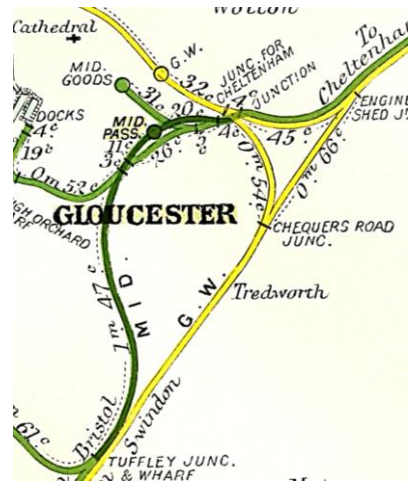


Gloucester memories

This Railway Clearing House map shows the GWR station in yellow and the Midland Railway passenger station, known as Eastgate, in green. If asked the question which was the very last steam loco to use Eastgate Station, what would you say? The picture below gives the unlikely answer, a Merchant Navy Class pacific No **35028, *Clan Line***. Photo: Pete Berry



Clan Line was returning from the 1975 Shildon Cavalcade and was extremely low on water by the time it arrived on Gloucester Loop. It was diverted into Eastgate and filled up by means of a fire hydrant before continuing its journey to Southall. Accompanying Clan Line south was No 46201, Princess Elizabeth, which turned on the Gloucester triangle before heading back up to its then base at the Dowty Railway Preservation Society in Ashchurch, Gloucestershire.



Pete Berry is pictured in Gloucester Horton Road shed yard in 1970. The reason for the photo seems to be the fact that the 'Peak' is numbered plain **77, *Royal Irish Fusilier***, rather than D 77.



Right, appropriately for the Midland station, this is Derby built 2P 0-4-4T No **41900** on Eastgate station pilot duties carrying a 22B Gloucester (Barnwood) shedplate. The loco would be withdrawn in 1962, the last man standing as the other nine members of this class were withdrawn en masse during November 1959.

Photo: Peter J Sharpe shared by Pete Berry



Left, large parts of Gloucester suffered flooding after the 1962/63 big freeze including near the Over causeway on the GWR line to South Wales.

A work stained 9F drags a lengthy westbound freight over the Westgate Arches in April 1963.

Photo: Pete Berry



Cambrian Trio

In May 1886, three 2-4-0 tanks were delivered to the Cambrian Railways by Sharp Stewart and here is the third of the trio, No **59**, **Seaham**, in near original condition .

Photo: MLS



The three went on to have an interesting life as **Andrew Dyke** describes...



Below is an eight-seven-year-old negative photographed by Ifor Higgon on October 22nd, 1938, showing the delightful ex Cambrian Railways class 2-4-0T No **1196**. With an Interesting array of stock too. On the left a very grubby GWR Collett corridor (probably a 3rd), on the right a high-roof LNWR corridor Bk 3rd.

After the grouping, the three Sharp Stewarts were rebuilt at Swindon Works and subsequently 'Westernised', with new inner fireboxes and tubes. Top feed apparatus was fitted along with GW pattern safety valves, new smokeboxes and chimneys, as well as two 8mm injectors. They were also given Great Western-style bunkers and cabs. They were also renumbered: Number 57 becoming 1192, Number 58 becoming 1196 and Number 59 becoming 1197. The reason the three engines didn't have consecutive numbers was that, in registering the absorbed engines, the Great Western were just filling in gaps left in the lower numbers left by the scrapings of older engines. The sitting tenant of the number in the gap, namely No 1195, was at the time held by an elderly Armstrong Goods



On their return to Oswestry in July 1923, April 1924 and September 1924 respectively, they resumed working on the Tanat Valley line. Weighing in at just 33 tons, the 'Small Side Tanks', as they became known, were ideal to work the lightly laid lines on the Tanat Valley Light Railway, giving 24 tons 16 cwt of available adhesion. They were modest in their dimensions. Boiler pressure was set at 150 psi, and this, allied to 4ft 6 in driving wheels and inside cylinders lined up to 14" x 20", gave a nominal tractive effort of 9,255 lbs. Water capacity was 600 gallons and coal capacity depended on how much could be stacked in the bunker.

In March 1927, No 1192 was sent to work on the Culm Valley Branch in Devon and was withdrawn from Exeter shed in 1929. After the departure of No 1192, Nos 1196 and 1197 remained at work at Oswestry and the TVLR. With a combined age of 163 years, they were withdrawn from service in April 1948, having both run in excess of one million miles.

Right, 1196 again at Llangynog station, the terminus of the TVR. Photo: Unknown



A WEDNESBURY WINTER'S NIGHT-

Part One

With the aid of information contained in the Train Register (and a little imagination!), **David J. Hayes** describes what a winter's night at Wednesbury No. 1 Signal Box may well have been like some 50-years ago.

(Images As Credited)



Saturday 4th April 1970: Taken from the GWR alignment, this image shows to good effect Wednesbury No. 1 Signal Box in its railway setting and general surroundings. Local landmarks include (from left to right) the churches of St. Mary's, St. Bartholemew's and St. John's, and the tower block of Russell House. Note, also, the period cars to the left of the box, which at this time was potentially manned until circa 7pm on a Saturday evening. An unidentified Brush Type 4 (Class 47) passes through with what is believed to be 8E74, the very late running 02:25 MSuX Brierley Hill to Scunthorpe, which was booked to make a call at Norton Junction Bescot Down Empty Sidings (03:15-03:40). The headcode at this end reads 8M75, therefore implying that the inbound working was the 17:29 SSuX Scunthorpe to Brierley Hill (arr. 00:58 MSuX), which was booked to call at Wednesbury (23:30-00:08). David Wilson.

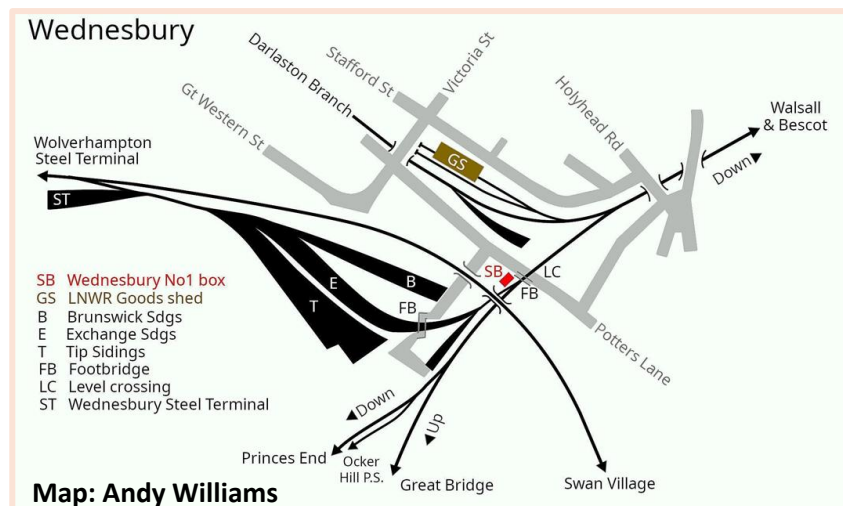
Pour yourself a hot beverage - or perhaps something a little stronger! – and then relax in your favourite comfy chair, with the lights down low, and picture the scene if you will... Snow is delicately falling and covering the grounds of the local church yard, surrounding cottages and fields. Children and adults alike are wrapped up all nice and warm in their winter attire enjoying the seasonal experience, some of whom are skating on a frozen duck pond whilst others are being pulled along on sledges. It could almost be a Christmas card scene depicting a quaint village somewhere in the English countryside. Yes, we're definitely in the "country", except that this is the Black Country, the gritty industrial town of Wednesbury to be precise, and quaint it most certainly ain't!

It's actually a bitterly cold and dark winters evening. The snow is falling quite heavily and is becoming rather treacherous underfoot. The time has just gone 5pm and we're in Potters Lane, where people from local factories and other nearby businesses are eagerly making their way home from work, both on foot and by road. The main roads themselves aren't too bad at the moment but the side streets, including Potters Lane, are completely snowed over. Three young men from a nearby motor vehicle repairs garage, wearing greasy oil smeared overalls, are laughing aloud and larking around whilst having a snowball fight; it's all good fun!

Through the mottled veil of falling flakes of snow, the unmistakable silhouetted monolithic structures of Ocker Hill Power Station's three landmark 263-foot-tall cooling towers can just be discerned looming in the distant gloom, each venting plumes of white steam into the atmosphere. Two of these behemoths date from 1946, the other, built to a larger diameter, being added in 1956. Replacing three older wooden towers, their construction coincided with a period of expansion and modernization at the power station, the original structure of which dated from the early 1900s. Also, just about visible adjacent to the coal-burning station, but separated from it by the Walsall canal, a brand-new modern-looking structure is beginning to take shape and is at an advanced stage of construction. This would eventually become the new peak-load, gas turbine power station (GTPS) at Ocker Hill, a kerosene-fuelled beast that was commissioned following the March 1977 closure of the older coal-fired power plant.

Looking in another direction, the partially obscured large buildings of the Patent Shaft Steelworks are also just visible. The works, at this time, had less than four more years of production life left before its eventual demise, its June 1980 closure both post-dating and pre-dating the closures of the region's two other major steel-making plants: Bilston's Spring Vale Steelworks in April 1979 and that of Round Oak Steelworks, near Brierley Hill, in December 1982.

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On the chill wind of this winter's evening can be heard the unmistakeable audible clanking of wagons being shunted in the nearby Wednesbury Exchange Sidings, which, although not visible, are but a mere stone's throw away and shrouded in darkness. The sound of shunting activity is punctuated by the occasional "toot" from one of Wednesbury's two Class 08 pilot engines as it goes about its mundane duties. A quarter-of-an-hour has now passed, and Potters Lane is almost deserted and relatively quiet again, but from within the dimly lit cosy confines of Wednesbury No. 1 Signal Box can be heard the banging of levers and the dinging of bells. We occasionally catch a glimpse of the "Bobby" going about his business in a dutiful manner.

Suddenly, without warning, the quartet of wooden level crossing gates swing shut with a clatter. At the same time, the headlights of an approaching car, a maroon Morris Marina, appear in the distance having turned into Potters Lane from Great Western Street. The slowly approaching twin beams of light pick out the large flakes of heavily falling snow as the vehicle gingerly negotiates the slight downward gradient of a very slippery, snow-covered, Potters Lane before coming to a gentle halt just a few feet from the crossing gates. Its lone occupant is no doubt looking forward to getting back to a nice warm home and cooked meal with the family after a long day at work, and then perhaps settling down in front of the TV for an evening's entertainment of Crossroads, Coronation Street, This is Your Life and The Sweeney, followed by News At Ten and then, maybe, a hot beverage before bedtime. From within the stationary vehicle, it is just possible to hear the car radio playing a former Christmas number one hit single released earlier that decade by a well-known band from Wolverhampton, the driver keeping beat with the music with a noticeable slight nodding of the head and tapping of the fingertips on the steering wheel.



Saturday 16th May 1970: Another general view of Wednesbury, this time as seen from the Holyhead Road bridge. Clearly visible are the remnants of Wednesbury Town station (closed with the end of passenger services in July 1964). The suffix "Town" was added by BR in July 1950 to differentiate it from its neighboring and former rival GWR station also serving the Black Country town, which was given the suffix "Central" (today the Great Western Street metro stop). Curving off to the right is the Darlaston Loop, which opened in September 1863 (as did the Princes End line). It once connected with the Grand Junction Railway at James Bridge, although by the date of this image it only served the Patent Shaft Steelworks (also connected to the ex-GWR formation). The Up loop on the left often contained wagons, as seen here, which were either for final delivery to Wednesbury Steel Terminal or elsewhere in the region. The middle through track was re-configured in October 1974 as a facing cross-over from the Up to the Down running line. Also visible is the bridge carrying the former GWR alignment with Ocker Hill Power Station standing dominant on the skyline. **Mike A. King (DJH Collection).**

After about a minute, there's the unmistakable two-tone blast of a horn and the sound of a train passing beneath the bridge carrying what was once the former Great Western Railway (GWR) main line from Birmingham Snow Hill to Wolverhampton Low level. A "Skinhead" Class 24 splutters into view on the former South Staffordshire Railway route with a local Class 8 trip freight, which is emerging from the darkness of Wednesbury Exchange Sidings. The train is formed of a mixed consist of 16-ton mineral wagons, mostly empties although some are laden with scrap metal, followed by a variety of empty steel carrying wagons with a brake-van tagged on the rear. It is no doubt heading for Bescot Marshalling Yard, the guard giving a friendly wave to the Wednesbury "Bobby" before making a hasty retreat to the warmth of his brake-van, which has a visible trace of smoke emanating from its stove pipe.

In a surreal moment of perfect timing, two other trains appear on the wintry scene. A rather shabby-looking Class 52 diesel-hydraulic approaches from the opposite direction, its headcode panel obscured by a thick accumulation of snow. The "Western" is hauling a heavily delayed, Class 6, empty vacuum-braked "Clayliner" train from the Potteries back to the West Country, its late running no doubt attributed to the dire weather conditions. As the empty two-axle wooden-bodied clay carrying wagons clatter over Potters Lane crossing, Wednesbury's other Class 08 pilot engine rumbles across the GWR overbridge with a short Class 8 turn formed of a rake of half-a-dozen empty 16-ton mineral wagons (plus brake-van) whilst returning from the coal depot at Swan Village.

Monday 28th July 1975: Photographed from the pedestrian footbridge in Potters Lane, Class 52 diesel-hydraulic No. D1011 Western Thunderer approaches from the Bescot/Walsall direction with 6V53, the 04:27 SuX VAC COY "Clayliner" empties from Stoke-on-Trent to St. Blazey. The service was often "Western"-hauled but was booked for electric-haulage to Bescot Down Yard (E-D 06:02-06:45 MSuX / 06:02-08:52 MO) and was due through Wednesbury at 9:01am on a Monday (6:54am MSuX). Note the re-configured middle line, as seen in the previous image. **Rob Selvey**



As the flickering paraffin lamp on the last wagon of the "Clayliner" passes beneath the old GWR alignment and gradually recedes and eventually fades into the snowy darkness toward Dudley and beyond, on its marathon trek back to the Duchy, the crossing gates are re-opened. Our patient motorist cautiously eases away accompanied by both the crunching of freshly fallen snow being compacted beneath its wheels and the muffled, but unmistakable, vocal outro "IT'S CHRIIIISTMAAAAAS!" screaming out from the car radio by the lead singer of that aforementioned well-known local band (those of you of a certain age will know who I'm talkin' about!), and Potters Lane is quiet and deserted once more. Okay, admittedly, in case you haven't guessed already, I'm using some imaginative "journalistic license", so to speak, in describing and setting the scene here, and will continue to do so throughout the remaining five parts of this article. However, all the train and locomotive details mentioned from this point onwards will be factual, being based on the entries contained in the Wednesbury No. 1 Signal Box Train Register. These were made by the late David Jennings, a onetime, well-known, regular signalmen at Wednesbury No. 1 box, and they document the movements of a winter's night some 50-years ago back in December 1976, of which more about next month.



Monday 28th July 1975: With the train Guard visible in the rear cab second-man's seat, as per the rule book, the "going away" view of 6V53 shows Western Thunderer about to pass beneath the ex-GWR main line. Having lost its main line status in March 1967 and its remaining token passenger shuttles from Birmingham Snow Hill to Wolverhampton Low level in March 1972, the old GWR formation was only operational eastwards from Wednesbury to serve the coal depot at Black Lake (aka Swan Village); this section was later officially closed in December 1981. The line on the far-right leads to/from Wednesbury Exchange Sidings and also gave access to/from Wednesbury and Wolverhampton steel terminals, the latter via the former GWR alignment. **Rob Selvey.**

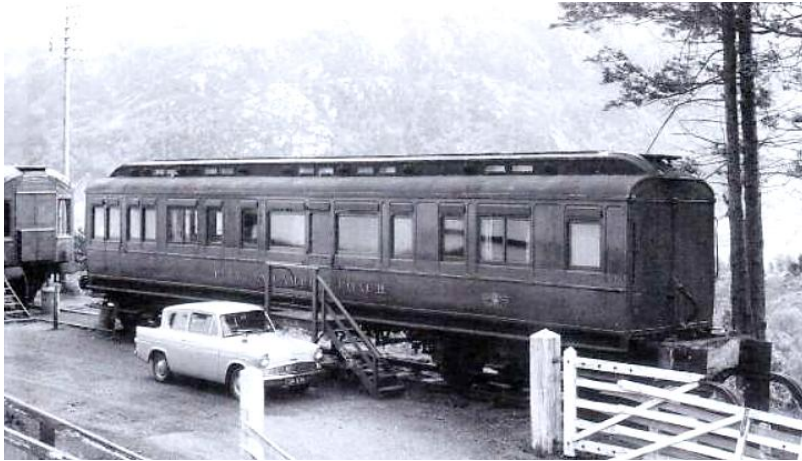
Carry on Camping!

Remembering Barbara Windsor!



In 1933, the LNER hit on the idea of converting ten elderly railway coaches, due for retirement, into holiday homes and siting them in quiet, country stations.

The scheme took off and was quickly followed in 1934 by the London, Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS) and Great Western Railway (GWR). Finally, in 1935, the Southern Railway (SR) followed suit. By the end of the year, there were 215 railway camping coaches, as they became known, in 162 stations up and down the country, providing reasonably priced self-catering accommodation in rural locations.

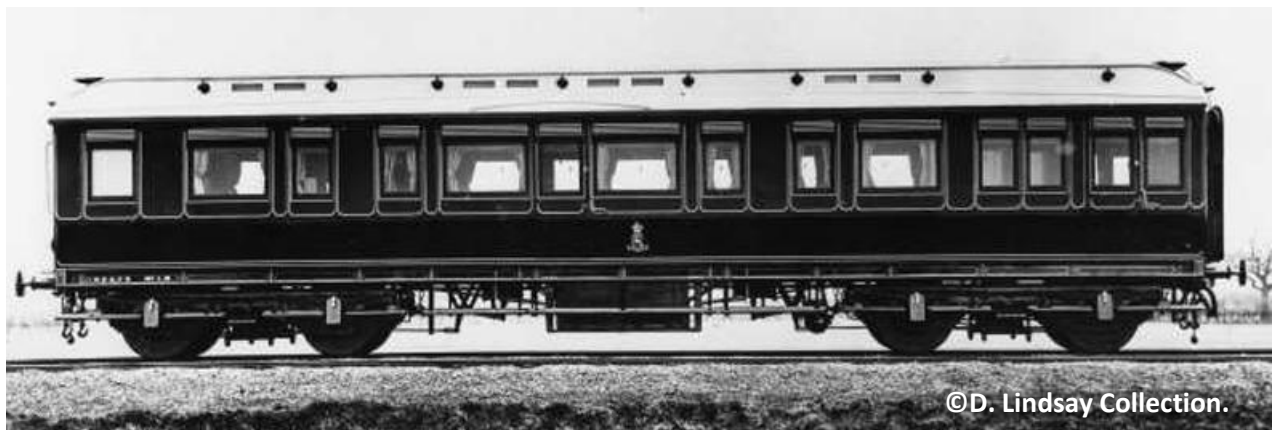


Pullman Camping Coach No **SC51** in blue livery with gold lining at Glenfinnan on the Fort William to Mallaig line before Harry Potter made the location famous! I wonder if the campers between 1963-8 had any idea of the coach origins which are explained below.

Photo: ©Hamish Stevenson

Perhaps the most distinguished of all conversions was the former South Eastern and Chatham Railway Royal Saloon No 1R, which had been ordered in 1903 at a cost of £3,670 from the Lancaster Railway Carriage & Wagon Company which quickly became part of the Metropolitan Amalgamated Railway Carriage & Wagon Company. Renumbered 7930 in 1925. Its final duties were in May 1937 in the Royal Train from London Victoria station to Cosham conveying King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and Princess Elizabeth for the Spithead Review and two months later conveying King George VI from Portsmouth to London after which it was stored until withdrawal in 1947.

In February 1948 the Royal saloon was seen at Littlehampton, still sporting SR olive green paint dating from its last repaint in 1937 and on 21st July that year it was observed at the Pullman Car Company works at Preston Park, Brighton undergoing its initial conversion into holiday accommodation, having been purchased privately by the Southern Region's Chief Operating Officer, Mr Sidney Smart. There is some evidence which suggests that it was formally numbered 29 in the Southern's camping coach series at this time, despite not being available for lettings to the public. Mr Smart had the coach relocated to Newhaven Harbour East Quay, Sussex as a private beach house where in 1958 it was noted in white livery with black ends and in cream livery by 1961.



©D. Lindsay Collection.

PULLMAN CAR SERVICES

The Quality of Service is Remembered Long after the Price is Forgotten



In late 1962 the coach arrived at BR Lancing Carriage & Wagon Works for conversion to a Pullman Camping Coach. The description as a Pullman Camping Coach must be regarded as something of a misnomer, given that other than having been responsible for its re-conditioning, first at Preston Park and then at Lancing, the Pullman Car Company had no interest in the vehicle. Following service at Glenfinnan, it was sent to Cowlaers for scrapping in 1970, not a bad innings!

With many of the older camping coaches needing replacement, in the early 1960s fifty-seven redundant Pullman cars were converted to Pullman Holiday Coaches and distributed to the London Midland Region 3; Scottish region 12; Eastern Region 11; Southern Region 25 and Western Region 6.

Left, the former Parlour car 'Emerald' was one, seen at Betws-Y-Coed in September 1968. This coach was originally withdrawn as a result of fire damage in 1959 and used as a Pullman staff training car in south London before a conversion order was raised in 1963, arriving in Wales in 1964.

Photo: The KDH archive.



In 1970, Birmingham schoolmaster Allan Pratt leased the coach to be the centrepiece of his fledgling Conway Valley Railway Museum, purchasing it outright in 1973 by which time it had been joined by an assortment of other items of rolling stock. The coach, in very poor condition, museum and miniature railway are still at Betws-Y-Coed but currently subject to some poor reviews by visitors.



An undated view of the Down Kentish Belle, Victoria-Ramsgate, in the charge of Maunsell N15 'King Arthur' class 4-6-0 no. **30776 Sir Galagars** on the approach to Shortland Junction.

Many of these superb Pullman cars would be converted to holiday coaches later.

Photo: Ken Wightman/Mike Morant collection



Avocet Flys South

Andrew Watts found a nice spot at Rugeley to record the AC Locomotive Group's No **89001 Avocet** on LSL "the chairman's train", the 1Z34 Kilmarnock - London Euston which it worked from Carlisle on Tuesday 14th July..



The British Rail Class 89 is a one-off Brush prototype electric locomotive, which was built in 1986 by British Rail Engineering Limited's Crewe Works. It was used on test trains on both the West Coast and East Coast Main Lines. The locomotive was fitted with advanced power control systems and developed more than 6,000 bhp. After being withdrawn in 1992, it was returned to service in 1997 by the newly formed Great North Eastern Railway before being withdrawn again in 2000. Purchased by The AC Locomotive Group in 2006, in 2021 the group formed a new partnership with Locomotive Services Limited (LSL) and after overhaul, it completed a series of main line test runs in October 2025.

The AC Locomotive Group is a dedicated preservation society for AC electric locomotives in England. It has five locomotives in its ownership: 81002, 82008, 83012, 85006 and 89001.

All photos: Andrew J Watts

In complete contrast, Andrew was at Chasewater station on the the Chasewater Light Railway & Museum Company on Sunday 12th July. They have just under 2 miles of operational passenger line between the station at Brownhills West and a terminal station at Chasetown (Church Street), with intermediate stations at Norton Lakeside and Chasewater Heaths. The railway is set within Chasewater Country Park which boasts a 90-hectare reservoir opened in 1797 as Norton Pool, a canal feeder reservoir, and plenty of green open space, an ideal venue for nature trails, bird watching, walking, cycling, picnics and barbeques or enjoying a trip on the heritage steam railway



The privately owned Ruston 165DS Works No.313394 0-4-0 "**Jammo**" at Brownhills West Station replacing the usual Pacer set.



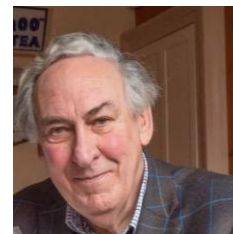
A sizzling hot 🔥 day as the Class 50 Alliance celebrates its 20th anniversary on the Severn Valley Railway. Class 50 No **50049 Defiance** at Bridgnorth, Saturday 11th July in classic British Rail large logo livery . **50033 Glorious** and **50007 Hercules** were also in action on a day to remember.



Photo: Mike Morgans

SRUBLUK and NIGLERS

Ned Williams explains these early railway organisations.



One problem facing the teenage railway enthusiast at the end of the 1950s and into the early 1960s was that adult railway enthusiasts often seemed to not take us very seriously. There seemed to be little desire to nurture the rising generation of enthusiasts by taking younger people on board. The younger enthusiast was dismissed as nothing more than a “train spotter” whose knowledge and literacy barely advanced anywhere beyond Ian Allan’s books of engine numbers. I remember Jack Ray writing in *Model Railway News* about building his large O gauge garden railway. He told us that he needed to enroll a workforce of teenage boys who would give up their time to help operate this railway. Boys had to face an interview before being “selected”. He expressed surprise at the depth of knowledge and understanding these boys had, admitting, for example that one lad had an immense knowledge of the Claud Hamilton class of GER locomotives – far surpassing his own! Perhaps we young teenagers weren’t so dumb as everybody thought.



Members of the Ilford Junior Railway Club about 1958 - led by distinguished LNWR HO scale modeller, Jack Nelson seen on the left of the picture. Ned Williams (in his school blazer!) is back row right, Dave Newman and Peter Berry are taking a close look at a model of a LNWR carriage. These three were founder members of the Narrow Gauge & Light Railway Society. Jack Nelson was one of those people who took teenagers seriously when it came to sharing an interest in railways and modelling.

As I entered my teens, I was lucky enough to join the Ilford Junior Railway Club, led by Jack Nelson who had devoted his life to the study of the London & North Western Railway, and was building an ambitious HO scale LNWR layout in the flat which became our club room every Friday night between 7.30.pm and 9.00.pm. Jack may have been a little eccentric, but he never treated us with anything less than respect – despite the fact that many of us had hardly moved on from sending our Tri-ang or Hornby Dublo trains round in circles.

With his encouragement we all became “serious modellers” - with varying degrees of skill, and every Friday there was lots of “serious” discussion about the latest K’s white metal kit or the latest developments on BR (Eastern Region of course). Once a year we were able to participate in the exhibition organised by the Ilford & West Essex Model Railway Club, but we were never treated as likely future members – maybe Jack has been asked to set up the Junior Club to keep us out of their hair!

The response to all this was that we set up our own “alternative” organisations ignoring the fact that adults had already set up clubs etc with the same kind of interests. That’s where **SHRUBLUK** and **Niglers** come into the story. The link between them is the friendship that existed between myself and a classmate from mid Primary school days: Adrian Smith. We joined forces in the third and fourth form at our local school – united in our enthusiasm for “loco-spotting”. It began with after-school trips to an observation point on the Great Eastern main line from Liverpool Street to various destinations in East Anglia.

During holidays we expanded our interest by having day-long excursions to Liverpool Street station, and later, more ambitiously to other London termini. We planned further excursions, but finances made them impossible and parents seemed to discourage too much exploring. For example, on Saturdays we could explore with a Red Rover ticket which gave us the freedom of the London Transport system for half a crown, but parents discouraged travel north of Rickmansworth thus denying us the chance to travel behind steam on the Chesham branch! Some things would have to wait until secondary education and the real freedom gained by the use of bikes!

As it happened Adrian announced that following the 11+ he would be leaving Ilford to go and live in far off Saffron Walden – about fifty miles away – so that he could attend a Quaker school in that town. We resolved to maintain our friendship and are still in touch today in our eighties. One immediate effect of all this was to concentrate our minds not on the latest “Britannia”, but to focus on the world of rural branch-lines – so well represented by the branch line which served Saffron Walden. Exploring Essex by bike, we focused even more intensely on light railways and industrial lines. After about one year at the Saffron Walden school Adrian wrote to tell me that senior pupils at the school had set up an organisation called “SRUBLUK”. He explained that the initials stood for “Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the United Kingdom.” It was started by sixth-formers at the school with the intention of organising the exploration of branch lines threatened with closure, and to join the fight for their “reinvigoration”.

A “railbus” pauses at Ashdon Halt on the Saffron Walden Branch in north Essex. The ex-railway carriage waiting room on the left was the location used for an early “conference & AGM” of SRUBLUK.



The society was led by Adam Kendon and Nigel Watt, and they launched an ambitious tour of an amazing collection of lines which could be visited in one day. The trip began, in heavy rain, early one morning at Bartlow station – where the Saffron Walden branch met the Cambridge – Colchester line. Why they began there rather than Audley End or Saffron Walden is not clear, but it seems they had worked out a timetable in which they managed to visit Allhallows on Sea, Hawkhurst, Tenterden, Hayling Island and Lambourn. It sounds impossible but they claimed to have achieved it. I wonder what it cost?

Having then established meetings at the school they then began a range of more modest visits to “local” places like Thaxted (where the branch had already closed) and Castle Hedingham on the Colne Valley line and now the scene of railway preservation. Vaguely self-conscious about still being at school they decided to pretend to be adults and immediately wrote to British Railways asking if they could rent a length of track on the Mid Suffolk line which was about to close. Aware that the Mid Suffolk line was about to close, Nigel Watt approached the school’s headmaster – Gerald Littleboy – and asked for an official “day-off” to travel over the line. The headmaster was dubious about it, but when Nigel read out the names of the stations on the Mid Suffolk, he was so impressed by their poetic quality he gave in and granted permission. All this happened before my friend Adrian arrived at the school, but he was in time to join excursions to places like the Mildenhall Branch.

To give **Srubluk** greater authority it was decided to hold a conference in which its constitution could be agreed and it could be launched on the wider world. For some reason it was not possible to hold this at the school, so it was decided to meet at Ashdon Halt – on the Saffron Walden branch. The un-staffed halt provided a waiting room made from an old coach body so that is where the “conference” took place – presumably without the railway authorities being asked or informed. Thus, Srubluk was launched on the big wide world. Letters were written to the national newspapers about the society’s opposition to branch-line closures. The letter about the threatened closure of the Kent & East Sussex line was printed in the Daily Telegraph and The Spectator. It did not manage to immediately save the railway – but ironically when attempts were made to preserve line began, the first steps were made by sixth-formers the same age as the founding members of Srubluk.

The next step was to create a President of the organisation, and to set up a “London office”. The latter was provided by Nigel Watt’s parents who conveniently lived in London. The search for a President led to a correspondence with the poet John Betjeman. The latter was helpful and supportive but, in the end, suggested someone else who might be happy and honored as Srubluk’s President. He also suggested a slight change of name and the society eventually became The Branch Line Reinvigoration Society – but, by then, its founder had already left school and had headed into the adult world. After several years the society merged with the Railway Development Association, and in that form it has survived.

The organisation is now called Railfuture and has played a major part in campaigning for the survival and improvement of the rail network. Nigel Watt, the Saffron Walden schoolboy who helped start the movement is still involved in it!



A G5 0-4-4T stands at Audley End (branch-line platform) with the push-pull two coach set used on the Saffron Walden branch. This was the sight that greeted me around Easter 1956 as I alighted at Audley End on the way to Saffron Walden to spend time with my primary school-mate, Adrian Smith, who had left Ilford at the age of 11 to move to Saffron Walden. It was my first real introduction to a real ex GER branch-line and laid the foundations of my life-long interest in them.

Right, A year later the G5 0-4-4Ts were taken off the Saffron Walden branch and were replaced with N7 0-6-2Ts like No 69690. It was on such a loco that we had our first footplate ride - a reward for the hours taken trying to absorb the daily life of a branchline.



Adrian, up in Saffron Walden from 1955 onwards, and myself down in Ilford on the London/Essex border used to communicate by post – not only were emails and the internet barely imagined, let alone invented, we were not wealthy enough to enjoy access to technology like telephones. Later I contacted other chaps of my own age who also shared an interest in branch lines and light railways and once again contact had to be maintained by good old-fashioned letter-writing. This eventually led to the idea of turning this correspondence into a magazine, and the need to unite in some kind of society.... Something under our own control rather than part of the adult world so well served by the likes of the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society (RCTS) and the Stephenson Locomotive Society (SLS).

Below, after the Stribluk founders left Friends School, Saffron Walden, a school railway society continued the traditions they had established but made greater steps towards including pupils of all ages. This photograph was taken at Mildenhall at the end of the long ex GER branch from Cambridge. In its final years it was operated by railbuses - as seen in this photo, taken in 1958. This led to the formation of **the Narrow Gauge & Light Railway Society**. My parents looked at the initials of the society which seemed to have its national HQ in a corner of my bedroom and immediately called us **"The Niglers"**.

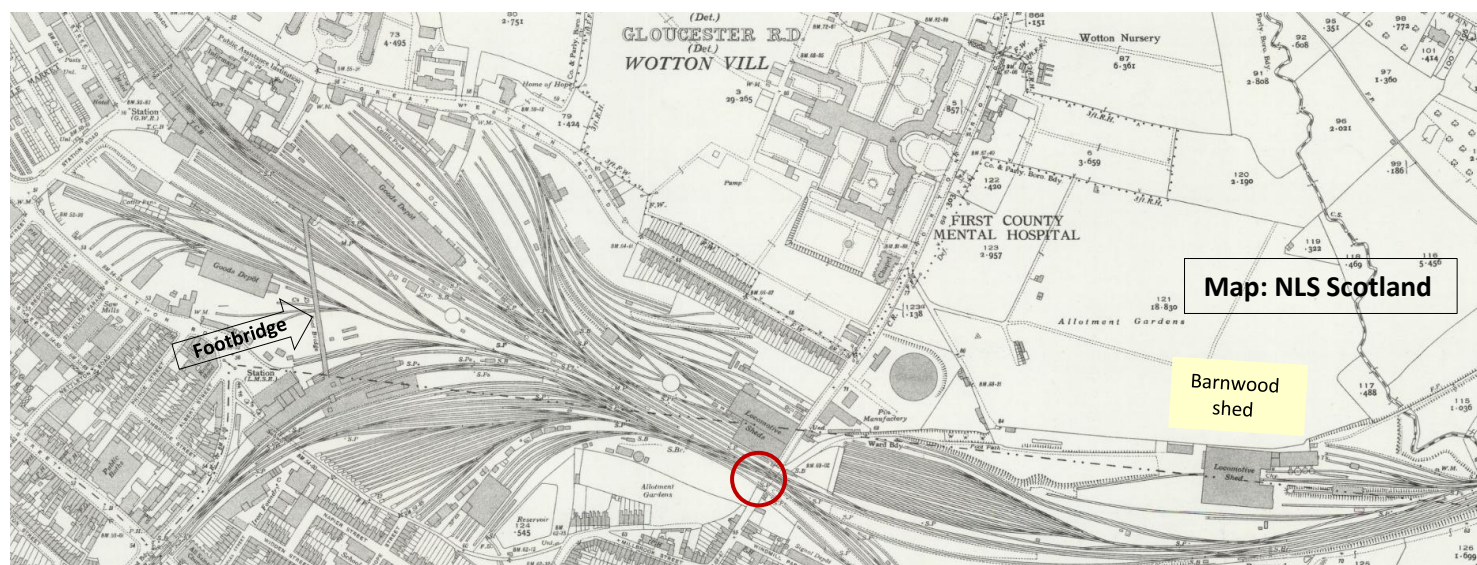


Above, four founder members of the Narrow Gauge & Light Railway Society - L-R: Ned Williams, Roger Crombleholme, Peter Berry and Dave Newman pose for a photograph in 1959 in the back garden of Ned's Ilford family home.

To be concluded

Spotters Spot

Tramway Junction, Gloucester



Tramway Junction, officially Horton Road Crossing, was a mecca for Gloucester train spotters. The level crossing was surrounded by a forest of railway lines that served both passenger stations, goods depots and engine sheds of the Western and Midland region stations. Note also the lengthy footbridge that connected the Midland Eastgate and the GWR Stations.

In the 1968 picture **Right**, the crossing keepers hut sits in front of the GWR loco shed building. So busy was the crossing, that another crossing hut and keeper stood the other side of the lines. A large signalbox stands on the right and behind the signalman wearily climbing the steps was the road to the LMS Barnwood shed where once trams of the Gloucester and Cheltenham Tramroad ran and gave their name to the crossing.

Pictures like this usually provoke plenty of memories....

Terry Kendrick: Wow What memories this brings. I used to go on the raised bit behind the signal box sometimes until dark. Particularly when the signalmen warned us of "scraps" coming up from, I think, Westbury. I didn't even know where Westbury was then! Mystical!

Malcolm Mitchell: I used to sit on the bottom steps of the signal box for as long as I could before getting yelled at!! Funny how I remember the gates as being much bigger than that - mind you, I was only little!

Paul Weeks: What a fantastic photo Pete ! I started spotting around 1975 by which time nearly everything in your photo had been swept away ! Only the gasometer and the Irish club in the background were still in situ. How I wish that I could have stood where you were taking this shot and just enjoyed everything in your photo ! The signal box, the semaphores, the gas lamps, the crossing keepers hut etc., etc. A moment you captured in time that so many like me never had the chance to enjoy

John Wells: Many happy memories when I was a teenager in the 60s spending time here either on the buffer stops hump to the right of the signal box or sheltering from the rain behind the signal box. Sometimes followed by an (underage) pint in the Windmill pub! Sadly, this was towards the end of steam here. Remember dashes on our push bikes when smoke from a steam engine was spotted on the loop.

Derek Jones: In the summer holidays I well remember shouting up to the signalman to ask how many parts of The Cornishman were running that day, I think the most I ever saw was six!



Past and Present (ish) with Dave Slack



Hi Folks,

To introduce you to the photos of my late friend Malcolm Whittaker, I have chosen for this first sample of his work to concentrate on local pics from the 1950s and 60s in the Midlands, alternating with a few of my pics from my local heritage line, the Severn Valley Railway.....plus some main line outings.



Malcolm was on hand to photograph the last train at Cleobury Mortimer in 1962, hauled by (84G) Kidderminster's 0-6-0PT no. **3619**.



Visiting from the Didcot Railway Centre, preserved classmate no. **3650** works off the shed at Bridgnorth on 1.8.2012.



Oxley (84B) allocated no. **4903 "Astley Hall"** calls at Brettell Lane station on a Wolverhampton to Worcester stopping service in 1961. The station closed just one year later.



Tyseley's preserved **4965 "Rood Ashton Hall"** and **4953 "Pitchford Hall"** race through Stoke Prior near Bromsgrove heading the Birmingham to Cardiff "Red Dragon" on 9.9.2006.



Right, with Malcolm's old school friend, Ray Churchill on the regulator, famously preserved 4-4-0 no. **3440 "City of Truro"** calls at Nuneaton heading a Midlands railtour on 29.12.2004



Left, Plymouth (Laira) 83D allocated no. **1003 "County of Wilts"** is seen in Wolverhampton Stafford Road works in 1962 shortly before withdrawal.



Shortly before it was withdrawn in 1962 Stafford Road's no. **6002 "King William IV"** is seen heading the down "Inter-City" through Bilston



Visiting the SVR spring steam gala, preserved **6023 "King Edward II"** departs from Bewdley for Bridgnorth on 16.3.2018.



Blowers Green station served Netherton until closed in July, 1962. Stafford Road (84A) allocated BR "Standard" 2-6-0 no. **78008** calls with a local stopping service in 1961.



Preserved classmate no. 78018 calls at Bewdley during the SVR Spring steam gala on 15.4.2023. (37308 is under the canvas in the background).

How it all started for Dave and Malcolm.

I met my friend Malcolm Whittaker in 1998, and we got on very well together from the start. We were both keen photographers, but whereas nearly all my photos from the 1950s and 60s were lost, Malcolm had kept all his, of all sorts of sizes, loosely scattered about in drawers. None of his photos were placed or dated, unlike my more recent photos which I always labelled with loco number, place and date. We travelled together all over the country following heritage steam, and with Malcolm's extensive knowledge of prime locations, and my transport and route knowledge, we accumulated a vast collection of pictures. We used to meet a group of friends at Stafford station every Tuesday, and knowing of our huge combined collection of photos, they urged us to write a book.

I said that I could do it on my computer, and my wife., Liz coached me into how to use Microsoft "Publisher". We called our first book "The Magic of Steam". It contained 140 pages with over 300 photographs, and when I collected it from the printers, we sold 70 copies within a month. We were urged to do a "Magic of Steam Volume 2" which we did with equal success. I spent many hours going through Malcolm's photos, scanning them and editing them where necessary.

Having got the appetite for it, I then continued to write my own books, fourteen in all.

It's Coming Home!

No, sadly not the football but rather ex-London, Brighton & South Coast Railway 0-6-0 Terrier tank No **32670**, seen running light loco on the up fast through Crowhurst carrying a **"Returning Home To The Kent & East Sussex Railway"** Headboard. Photograph taken at 12:45pm on the 11/04/1964.

32670 emerged from Brighton works in December 1872 and spent much of the first 30 years of its life working the suburban London lines as L&BSCR No. 70. When the L&BSCR decided to reduce its numbers of 'Terrier' locomotives, No. 70 was sold to the Rother Valley Railway (later the Kent & East Sussex Railway) in May 1901.



Now painted blue and numbered No. 3 'Bodiam', the locomotive was temporarily withdrawn from service in 1931 but returned to the line in 1933. After nationalisation, Bodiam was re-numbered No. 32670 but continued to work from Rolvenden shed, now a sub-shed of Ashford, on the K&ESR. In October 1949, no less than three 'Terriers' were noted in Ashford Works, including No. 32670 in green and unlettered; No. 32678 (the ex-Brighton Works shunter) in lined black with no crest and No. 2659 in Southern black with shaded lettering.

In July 1951, 32678, by then nearly eighty years old, was noted running as a light engine from Headcorn to Ashford, then St. Leonards (Hastings) and so in stages along the coast to Brighton Works to be a temporary replacement for the works Terrier which was under repair in its own works! The diminutive side tanks were green but plain, the semi-circular lettering 'K&ESR No. 3' having been painted out when a B.R. number was provided.

Following closure of the KESR to passengers and the complete closure of the line from Tenterden to Headcorn along with Rolvenden shed, 32670 moved to St Leonards shed at Hastings although continuing to work the daily Robertsbridge to Tenterden freight. This was shed duty No 413 where the crew signed on at 6.15am, leaving at 6.30 for the run up to Robertsbridge. After any necessary shunting, the train departed at 7.55 with a generous ninety minutes allowed to reach Tenterden. With another hour allowed for shunting at Tenterden, the train returned, pausing at Battle for ten minutes. The loco was due back at St Leonards depot at 1.45pm, a nice little number for the crew. Running light engine to and from Robertsbridge, It gained some fame along the way when young children, including my wife, would wave at the 'little engine'. Later, she moved westwards to work the Hayling Island branch, being withdrawn after that branch closed in 1963 and sent to Eastleigh for scrapping.

A little earlier in the nascent KESR preservation movement, Ron Wheele, a Brighton businessman, and his brother Vic had offered to purchase a terrier tank for the line and so when 32670 became available they went to Eastleigh for an official inspection, where she was driven up and down the yard. When BR asked £750 for her, it was pointed out that the society had previously purchased Charwelton, a broadly comparable industrial loco, from the Park Gate Company for half that price. Although BR did not offer a reduction in the price, they did agree to deliver 32670 free of charge and supply a bunker full of coal!

Departing Eastleigh on April 10th, 32670 travelled via Havant and along the coast to overnight at Brighton shed before continuing her journey at 25 mph via Polegate, Hastings and Crowhurst, as seen above. A large crowd had gathered at Robertsbridge to welcome her home although she could not work up the line at that stage and had to remain in Robertsbridge yard. She was not to remain idle for very long as the P class tank Pride of Sussex which shunted a little way along the line to the flour mill was due for repair and 32670 replaced her with her BR decals obliterated and all numbers except 3 painted out.

Arno Brooks describes Working on the DMUs

Now retired, my career started at Cricklewood depot on the London Midland Region in 1972. Cricklewood was a large maintenance and train crew depot five miles out of St Pancras on the old Midland Railway mainline to the north. Before electrification and the eventual development of Thameslink, everything was diesel. We had large numbers of class 25s, 45s, 47s and later 56s and lots of DMUs.



As with most things, variety is the key to quality of work. I personally never regarded DMU work as the best type of driving work. Having a mixture of passenger, freight, loco and unit work was probably the best mixture to prevent you from getting bored with your lot. Enthusiasts tend to fall in love with various types of traction and regard their favorites as heaven sent. As a driver you spend a large part of your life in the cab of these things and your perspective is somewhat different. Some drivers have said that the cab is their second home. Sometimes I reckoned my house was my second home; the cab is where I actually lived!

So then, to DMUs. At Cricklewood we had 2 types. Most were the Class 127. These were in my opinion the best of BR's DMUs. Technically they were very different from other DMUs although they looked like many other suburban units. The best thing about them was that they had hydraulic transmission. No need for the endless and eternal gear changing. Just select "forward", open the throttle and go. 127s had an eight-cylinder Rolls Royce engine as opposed to the more usual six-cylinder job that other units had. The 127s ran in 4-car formations. Driving Motor Brakes at both ends and non-corridor trailers in the middle. One trailer had a first class section and a pair of lavatories, the other trailer didn't.



Class 127 sets stabled at Cricklewood Carriage Sidings.



A Class 116 returning to Cricklewood depot after a morning rush hour run From Luton to Moorgate. Taken from the picture from the cab of a class 25 on the goods line. About 9.00am, January 1975. **Photos: Arno Brooks**

In addition to the class 127 DMUs we had several Derby Suburban units. These things were normal, gear change type DMUs. Later they were classified as class 116 (I think). We called them B.U.T.s because their engines were made by British United Traction. These sets were used for the St Albans-Moorgate and Kentish Town-Barking services. These units were not very reliable. Each night all serviceable vehicles were assembled to make working sets and sent into traffic for the following day. These 116s were never really assembled into proper sets. Vehicles were cobbled together into 3, 4 or 5 cars sets. Sometimes a set was made of nothing but power cars.

The 127s were meant for suburban and rush hour work between St Pancras and Bedford. They actually went as far north as Kettering at times. By the mid 1970s the Midland line was a throwback.

Most main lines out of London had been electrified and resigalled with more modern Track Circuit Block power box signalling. The Midland was all diesel and semaphore signalling controlled by wooden Victorian signalboxes. Some places such as Wellingborough were still in LMS condition with a bit of Rail blue to "modernise" it.

For intensive suburban rush hour work EMUs do the job best. However, 10 times each week Cricklewood's fleet of DMUs transported huge quantities of grumpy commuters to and from places like St Albans, Luton and Bedford. I won't say that the job was always done superbly but we did get the grumbling Evening Standard-carrying masses to their destinations eventually with great clouds of blue smoke, steaming radiators and the crashing sound of scores of doors being repeatedly slammed shut.

A problem that BR had in London in the 1970s and probably still has, is that there were never enough fitters to properly maintain all the rolling stock. Fitters would be trained and shortly after they would leave to better paid work with less night shift. Although they were not meant to be, DMUs needed a lot of looking after. Night after night the same band of loyal fitters got stuck in and patched things up so that each unit could get through another morning rush hour without losing too much coolant or hydraulic oil. The things weren't meant to leak but they did. Frequently you would bring an eight-car unit into service early in the morning. You would start out with eight working engines but after a run to Bedford – St Pancras – Luton - St Pancras and then empty back to Cricklewood the same set may only be left with five working engines. Water leaks and overheating would have shut down three of the engines.

During the day the sets would be patched up and topped up and the evening rush hour would produce similar results. One of the biggest problems was the hydraulic transmission. From 0- 44mph the torque converter powered the unit. At 44mph there was a change over to "direct drive" This meant then the engines drove directly from the engine's crankshaft to the driven axles on each bogie. Torque converters are good bits of technology, but they do produce a lot of heat, and the Midland mainline has a lot of hills. Combined with frequent station and signal stops and units filled to crush conditions the poor old 127s really had to be flogged to keep going. Eventually one engine and torque converter would boil over and shut down. This loss then placed even more of a burden on the rest. Quickly another engine would shut down. Luckily St Pancras and Bedford were only 50 miles apart. Had the run been 60 or 70 miles I think many units would not have coped.

As a driver I frequently felt very uneasy driving an eight-car unit that had already lost 2 engines and I could see at least another 2 steaming away merrily. On occasions we would make an extended stop at Luton or St Albans and use the platform watering cans to add water to several engines. We were not supposed to do this as there was a very real danger of scalding, but we did it, nonetheless. It was funny how local management ensured that there were always watering cans left at just the right spot on the platforms, although topping up cooling systems was forbidden. Often, whilst using the watering can you were watched by some pompous stuffed-shirt passenger who clearly thought that we were doing this to personally delay them. In reality it was dedicated railwaymen who allowed these people to have their highly paid city jobs and comfortable suburban lifestyles. Outside the rush hours when passenger loadings were much lighter the 127s sailed along very nicely and were pleasant to drive. Every month or so one four car 127 unit would go to Derby for an overhaul. On return to Cricklewood they looked superb. All the paintwork was fresh and shiny. All the equipment had been reconditioned and usually these units, for a time at least, went like the clappers. A 127 in top condition was far and away the best type of DMU on the entire British rail system. Their acceleration was more like an EMU than a diesel. Also, there was none of that awful, window loosening rattling just before you changed to a higher gear. If only there had been enough fitters to keep these units in top condition.

One aspect of DMUs that caused annoyance was the glass partition between the cab and the passenger compartments. These partitions were fitted with blinds to keep the cabs dark at night to enable the driver to see ahead without reflections in the windscreen. During the day the blinds were supposed to be up so that the passengers could enjoy the view ahead. I, in common with most drivers felt very ill at ease with strangers sitting directly behind me, able to watch every move I made. How would you like to have complete strangers sitting behind you all day long watching you while you work? School children could be the worst, knocking on the glass and pulling stupid faces. The usual compromise was to have the blinds behind us and the centre cab door down and the right hand blind up. This gave us a decent level of privacy and still allowed the nosey sods to have a view of the route ahead. The blinds also allowed us an unforeseen source of amusement, especially on our class 127s. On a 127 the passenger seats had very high backs so that the seats behind the cabs gave a high degree of privacy, or so the occupants thought. On late night trains these seats were sought after by courting couples. Once underway some couples indulged in all sorts of romantic activities. Of course, we drivers had made small holes at eye level to keep ourselves amused. Sometimes a driver would get so engrossed with the front seat athletics that they forgot to stop at a station. Luckily, I never fell into that trap.

DMUs finally disappeared from the national system at the end of 2003. I saw the last few 101s run out of Manchester Piccadilly to Marple and New Mills whilst I was driving my Transpennine Class 158s from York to Manchester Airport and Liverpool. For most people however DMUs are long gone. Some people get misty eyed about the wonderful old days when the sun always shone, Blondie was No1 and the marvellous old DMUs happily rattled along Britain's railways. I feel slightly different about them.

During cold winter weather DMUs could be miserable to drive. Many leaked in rain. The worst place for leaks was the top headcode panel box. Water would dribble down on to the desk for hour after hour. We would gather up discarded newspapers and put them on the desk to absorb the water in an attempt to keep dry. All around the lower part of the desk miles of sticky tape were stuck over seams and panel edges in a vain attempt to keep out the howling draughts. On a preserved line the units only run at 25 or 30 mph but when running fast from Bedford to London or Darlington to York a DMU cab could soon become bitterly cold.

Another miserable thing about the DMUs was their inefficient oil-burning heaters. Most did not work properly. They were underneath the coach floor, exposed to the elements. You needed them most when it was really cold. This was when they were at their most useless. They would fill up the coaches and cabs with acrid fumes of partially burned fuel. My eyes would smart and my clothes would stink of rancid oil. Frequently during winter after breathing in all those fumes I would get bad bronchitis. I still have a grotty chest because of the damn things.

The DMUs had their own type of braking system. It was a two pipe vacuum system. Although old it worked very efficiently, most of the time. A major problem was when a unit was loaded to crush conditions, as they often were, the coaches would bottom out on their bogie leaf springs. Then the brake rigging would loosen up and create a lot of slack. When this happened the power of the brakes was diminished. To still ensure safety you had to drive more slowly and brake earlier. This, of course lost time. Management would never concede that overloading caused a loss of braking efficiency, but it did.

Another problem was that the twin pipe vacuum brake system was a slow brake to apply and release. With long eight car DMUs you needed to develop skills to use it efficiently. On the Midland there were a few scheduled services that ran to twelve vehicles. With these you really had to plan in advance when and how you were going to apply the brake. The brake took ages to both apply and release. If you had a twelve-car train loaded to crush conditions you had to be very, very careful. Especially when approaching the buffers at St Pancras. If you miss-planned you either stopped short, well before the station or sailed through it without stopping or crashed into buffer stops. Twelve car DMUs were bad news, I do not miss them.

I do get nostalgic about the lovely old class 45 Peaks and class 86 AC electric locos; they were a pleasure to drive, but not DMUs, not yet anyway.



The new trains are fitted with anti-sway dampers, and the smoothness of the riding will almost certainly make it seem as if the trains are travelling at lower speeds than they actually are. The effect will be noticed most of all by passengers sitting in those seats immediately behind the driver and with a view of the track ahead: but do not be deceived for there will be many times when it will seem as if the train is travelling about 40 m.p.h. when a glance over the driver's shoulder at the speedometer will show that the train is travelling at its maximum speed of 70 m.p.h.



COMFORTABLE NEW STYLE SEATS AND FLUORESCENT LIGHTING ARE FEATURES OF THE DIESEL TRAIN

From the BR 1960 new diesel service brochure

Michael Johnson is a seasoned traveller on the Transport for Wales Heart of Wales line commuting from London and regularly reports on his travels.

TfW had a nightmare day on Friday, 10th May, when a Class 67 loco on one of the Mk 4 sets heading to Cardiff conked out somewhere near Leominster (I heard a rumour that it happened inside Dinmore Tunnel, but that might just be platform-end wibble). This meant lots of cancellations all day.

The train I was on - another Mk 4 set, heading north - sat at Hereford for almost 2 hours, waiting for a Thunderbird loco to rescue the dead train somewhere ahead. In a way I didn't mind, because I originally had a 93 min wait at Craven Arms for a Heart of Wales line train, and I thought I might as well wait at Hereford. But as the delays ate up all the connection time and more, I thought I would end up stuck at Craven Arms for yet more hours. Fortunately, the Heart of Wales Line was also running late



Here's the late-running train, originally booked to pass Craven Arms at 14:31, pulling away from its unscheduled stop (all trains were doing all stations to try and get some sort of service running) at 16:36. The train was over 2 hours late at this point and was terminated at Crewe rather than working through to Manchester Piccadilly.

I thought I'd missed the Heart of Wales connection at 16:28, but...

....it turned out that the Heart of Wales train was running 8 mins late, departing at 1646, which gave me a handy 10 min connection.

I've never been so pleased to see a late-running train



Here we are at Builth Road, and a photo I don't often get to take - the train usually pulls out of the station so quickly it's gone by the time I get down to the road.

On this occasion there were several passengers boarding and alighting, and this increased the dwell time just enough for me to capture this shot of the Swansea-bound train passing over the old low level station.

The return journey, on Tuesday July 14, wasn't entirely free of fun and games. The first southbound train of the day was running 20 mins late, so the first northbound train had to wait at Llandrindod for it to pass. This meant the booked 20 min stop (which you'd think would introduce enough slack into the timetable to cover most disruption) became a 36 min stop. Still, the extended wait meant everyone (including the train crew!) could pop up the road to the café.

Right, this is the morning rush hour in Llandrindod, getting on for 8 o'clock here. I didn't wait for a gap in the traffic to take this photo - there was no traffic. Hardly any people about, in what would be peak travel time anywhere else.

It's possible to see why the Heart of Wales Line has traditionally only had four or five trains a day for most of its existence. Even the largest town along the line is such a small, quiet, place that there's never been any demand for more. The shop on the left acts as a ticket office for the station, seen at the bottom of the hill. Note shoes hanging from lamp post, as is traditional.



The Nidd Valley Light Railway

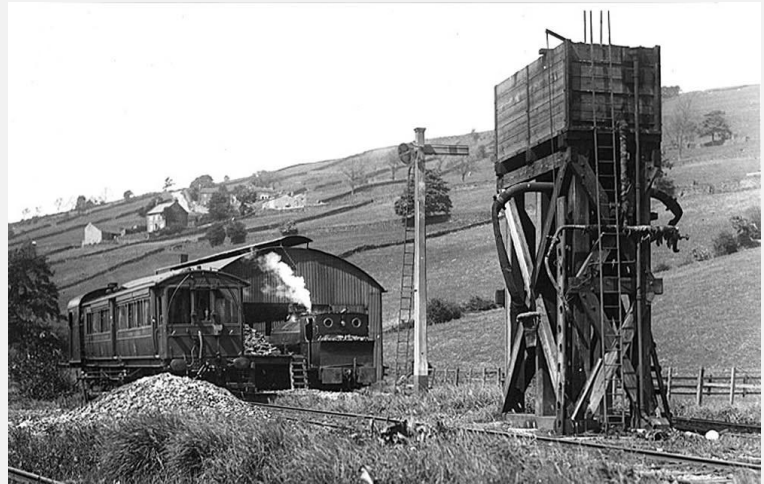
The Nidd Valley Light Railway was originally built in the early 1900s for Bradford Corporation Waterworks Department to carry materials and workers to the construction sites for reservoirs in the remote Upper Nidd Valley. Public passenger services ran between Pateley Bridge and Lofthouse-in-Nidderdale with intermediate stations at Wath-in-Nidderdale and Ramsgill. The Nidd Valley Light Railway had its own station in Pateley Bridge, separate from the terminus of the North Eastern Railway branch from Harrogate, the two stations connected by a goods line across Pateley High Street.

A steep contractors' railway extended beyond Lofthouse for the construction of Angram Reservoir in 1903, which was completed in 1919. It was upgraded after Bradford Corporation decided in 1920 to build Scar House reservoir. Scar House Reservoir was then built below Angram between 1921 and 1936. The construction of Scar House reservoir was a major engineering project, and included a purpose-built village for the workers, numbering over 1000 at the peak.

The timetable of four return passenger trains each way, ceased on 1st January 1930 with closure of the railway following in 1936.



0-6-0 side tank locomotive '**Milner**' with a carriage and van at Lofthouse-in-Nidderdale station, ready to leave for Scar House. **Photo: National Railway Museum**



Pateley Bridge locomotive shed and water tower in 1928, showing former No 15 GWR steam railmotor '**Hill**' which ran the passenger services beside the shed and 0-6-0 steam locomotive '**Blythe**' at the entrance.

Photo: H.C. Casserley



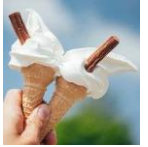
There was a network of railway tracks linking the site in the valley with the quarries and stoneyard on the hillside to the north.

Left, the masons' yard above the Scar House dam construction site, with 0-4-0 tank '**Craven**' and a steam crane lifting blocks of stone.

Photo: National Railway Museum

Thanks to Nick Ansell who sourced some images from the National Railway Museum's large collection of images by Humphrey Household (1906-1986)

Summer “99s”, but without the chocolate flakes



My good friend, Andy Williams, has been busy with his camera of late, getting out and about in late July and early August 2026 to record the new GBRf Class 99 bi-modal locomotives (or electro-diesels to those of us of a certain age!) at work in the Bescot area. With the aid of Andy’s notes and some of my own historical research, the first image, dated Monday 27th July 2026, shows **99002** rounding the corner at Bescot Stadium, at 3:15pm (four minutes early), with 4L72, the 12:56 intermodal from East Midlands Gateway to London Gateway (arr. 21:24). This was the first use of a Class 99 on this circuit.

Close inspection reveals that the pantograph is raised, thus making this a very rare capture of an electric-hauled freight coming off the Walsall line at Bescot. Even back in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, when electric-hauled freights were to be seen in abundance at Bescot, there were, to the best of my knowledge, no such workings operating in either direction on the Bescot to Walsall axis, although several north-bound freights were booked to swap from diesel to electric-haulage at Walsall station and travel via the Pleck Junction to Darlaston Junction chord, their corresponding return counterparts changing from electric to diesel traction at Pleck Junction (to be the subject of a future article).



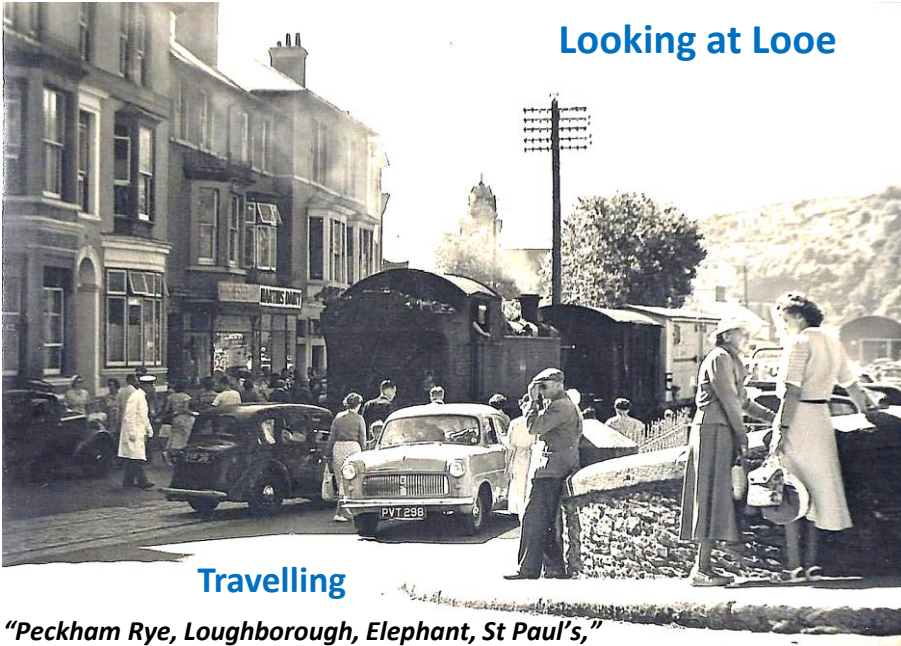
The second image of Andy’s, dated Friday 7th August 2026, shows **99004** about a mile south of Bescot, crossing the River Tame at 3:32pm, with a lightly loaded 4L68, the 13:15 Birch Coppice to London Gateway (arr. 21:24). Unlike 4L72, this intermodal service is booked a 62-minute recess in the Up Loop at Bescot (14:33-15:35), thus giving the avid railway photographer ample opportunity of two bites of the cherry, so to speak; a shot at Bescot Stadium and another to the south of the yard complex. The astute observer will notice that the locomotive is working on diesel power, despite the lengthy recess at Bescot allowing plenty of time for the “pan” to be raised.



Back at Bescot Stadium, my shot, taken at 5:11pm on Monday 10th August 2026, shows **99003** atop 4M01, the 10:57 London Gateway to East Midlands Gateway, where it was booked to arrive at 6:58pm. The loco is working on diesel power, having lowered its “pan” during its booked pathing stop (16:11-16:14) at Aston Junction.

Andy’s excellent BescotPlus website is highly recommended and well worth a visit.

Looking at Looe



Travelling

"Peckham Rye, Loughborough, Elephant, St Paul's,"

Every morning the porter bawls.

The train grinds out...and I gaze on lots

Of sad back gardens and chimney pots,

Factory stacks and smoky haze

Showering smuts on the close-packed ways.

And the train jolts on and twists and crawls

"Peckham Rye, Loughborough, Elephant, St Paul's."

But, trapped and prisoned I may be,

I lift a latch and my thoughts go free,

And once again I am running down

On a winding track from a Cornish town,

And I dream of the names of the station through

"Moorswater, Causeland, Sandplace, Looe."

An ancient engine with puff nigh gone

Drags a couple of coaches on

Close where a stream runs all the way

Muttering music night and day;

There isn't a porter about at all

To spoil the peace with a raucous bawl,

But a kind old guard to see me through,

Give me a ticket and take it, too.

The line twists down through patches sweet

Of soft green pasture and waving wheat,

And the stream spreads out to a river wide

Where ships creep up at the turn of tide,

Till a tangle of spars on a blue sky spun

Gives me the sign of the journey done,

And I stand contented on the quay

And hear the surging song of the sea.

So runs the dreamlike journey through,

"Moorswater, Causeland, Sandplace, Looe"

But every morning the porter bawls,

"Peckham Rye, Loughborough, Elephant, St Paul's."



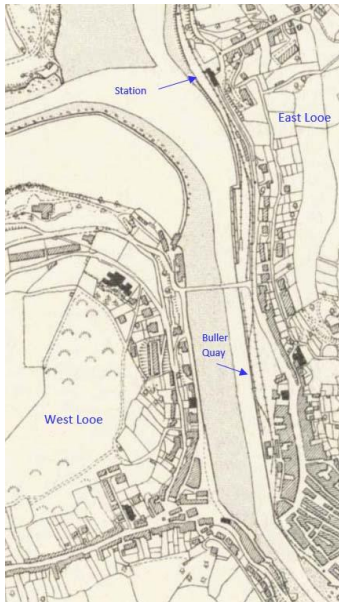
Looe, terminus of the line from Liskeard.

Rails first reached Looe in 1860 when the Liskeard and Looe Union Canal Company opened its eight and three-quarter mile, single track, mineral line between Moorswater and Looe Harbour, making a direct connection with the Liskeard and Caradon mineral railway north of Moorswater. The line ran more or less parallel to the old canal which it replaced and, in some places, built directly on its route. At Looe it used the bank separating the river and canal to terminate at Buller Quay.

Although people travelled the line unofficially, as with the line up to the moors, there was considerable demand for a formal passenger service which began in 1879. Moorswater station was not the most convenient location for passengers to and from Liskeard and in 1896, a Halt was built a short way down the line – Coombe Halt (later Coombe Junction Halt). From there, passengers could make their way on foot to Liskeard, albeit it was a steep climb. In 1901 the famous loop line was opened from Liskeard and Moorswater closed.

In the main picture above, a tank on its way to the quay with vans, has passed the station and is making its way over the unguarded road crossing at the end of the Terras bridge which separates East and West Looe. A tight squeeze past the Ford Consul! The other two pictures show just how close to the edge the track was!

Bernard Moore, toiling in London but dreaming of his native Cornwall penned this emotive poem called Travelling in 1919. In 2012 the railway author Michael Williams called it "one of the most evocative, I reckon, ever written about a country branch line". Moorswater had closed to passengers in 1901 when a connection to Liskeard was opened.



Looe harbour branch

The St Germans & Looe Railway was a proposed new railway in Cornwall by the Great Western Railway, providing a direct connection between St Germans and Looe. The railway was proposed in 1935 and authorised in 1936, and work commenced in 1937. By the time that war began in 1939 only a small amount of work had been completed, and it was abandoned. Had the railway been completed, it would have involved the construction of four stations, three tunnels and two viaducts.

There was an associated scheme for extensive residential, leisure and resort development along the coastline by the GWR's development partner, Western Enterprises Limited including an 18-hole championship golf course which was completed but then abandoned at the outbreak of war.



In 1963, goods services were withdrawn from the Looe branch and the fate of the line seemed sealed when Robert Beeching, chairman of British Railways, and pro-road transport minister Ernest Marples, announced its closure. The Western Region of British Railways hereby give notice in accordance with Section 56(7) of the Transport Act 1962, that they propose to discontinue on and from Monday, 3rd October 1966, all railway passenger services between Liskeard and Looe and from the following stations and halts: Coombe Junction Halt, St Keyne Halt, Causeland Halt, Sandplace Halt and Looe

There was some hope that it could be saved however, and the 'Cornish Guardian' of the 12th March 1964 outlined some economies which could influence the decision. "New economy moves under the Beeching Plan put into operation on the Looe branch line on Monday are expected to result in a saving of over £2,000 a year. The branch signal box has been closed resulting in a staff saving. New signalling arrangements, which have been substituted, will also mean lower running costs. The post of Station Master Looe has been done away with and in future the station will be supervised from Liskeard. The closure of the line to passenger traffic is now thought unlikely, especially as it is intended to serve a holiday centre for South Wales miners and their families planned for the Millendreath Valley, near Looe."

Whether or not these factors influenced those at the top we do not know but a concerted effort to retain the line was mounted by local authorities and other interested people. The clamor for a reprieve was suddenly, and perhaps unexpectedly, helped by the democratic system however, as a change of government saw Barbara Castle appointed Transport Minister. She reprieved the line just two weeks before it was due to close, so it is thanks to her that the wonderful Liskeard to Looe Railway line still operates.

There seems to have been some disappointment in the British Railways boardroom at the reprieve and before long, the attractive Looe Station was demolished and replaced by a rather mundane shelter with a short platform. The goods yard beyond the station was then dismantled and the site sold to be used as a car park, a filling station and a police station. The line was shortened to finish at the station, and the signal box was removed and the line controlled by a token system.



With thanks to Tony Mansell and cornishstory.com

Right, the Looe of old, with longer platform and goods yard beyond. A line once went beyond the bridge to the quayside.

Photo: Sid Sponheimer



Peter Hand was on holiday recently and sent this station picture. Can you guess where these tiled panels are? Ned will know!



What, A Hymek on the Cornishman?



Andrew Watts spent the day photographing the Hymek Type 3 diesel hydraulic loco No **D7108** at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway organised by Jack Boskett on 27 July 2026

Bob Lane kindly emailed to say I am sure that the photo on page 4 of the Jubilee is of Willenhall Bilston Street station.(Emag No 70) The track layout fits, the next bridge in the distance towards Darlaston Green is William Harper Road. I used to live between that Bridge and the next ,which is Bilston Lane. I wasn't expecting to see a photo of Willenhall in your mag. It was just reopened the other side of the bridge.

Conversely, our signalling expert **Mike Shaw** emailed; Thanks for August magazine an excellent read, you have certainly gathered some excellent correspondents with varied tales to relate. Regarding the photo 'A Bushbury Jubilee' I can see a reason for believing it to be Willenhall Bilston Street, certainly by the position of the signalbox against the overbridge. Having regularly worked at this SB in the 60s unless there had been major remodeling since the date of the photo, I very much doubt it, the lead out of the Up loop was further back from the SB which was in fact closer to the Up Main Line. I am hoping that in can be recognised by someone or in fact whether I am right or not.

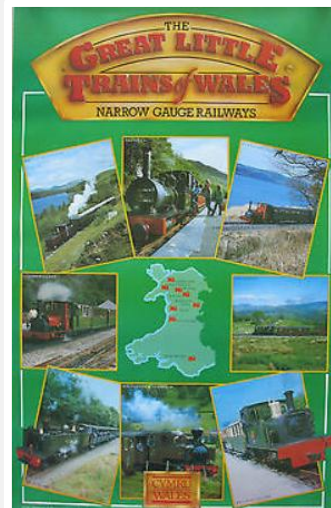


EMAIL:
lenandpam@hotmail.com

And from Phil Bartlett of Great Wyrley; I am embarrassed to admit this is the first time I have contacted you since receiving the wonderful Emags. Why? Well, I have just read Jeremy Nicholls' 50 years of the mails, and it has inspired my memories.

I was born in Coventry in 1962, but my father was drawn to Wales - probably by the GLTW (Great little trains of Wales). We didn't have a car so mostly used buses in Coventry, but my father found out about an excursion train which ran on Summer Sundays from Birmingham to Aberystwyth or Barmouth. This was formed of a pair of three car Met Camm DMUs - presumably spare on Sundays. So, my first ride down the Cambrian was in 1969 or 1970.

Within a year my father have sold our house and bought a huge old property in Upper Corris where we moved in in January 1971. I had two years at Corris Primary school then five years at Tywyn Secondary school. Leaving school, I started work ten days later at Machynlleth on 24th July. I spent two years at Machynlleth but wanted to leave home and move "back" to England, so after my eighteenth birthday I applied for three jobs on the BR vacancy list, interviewed for all three and took the job at Bescot Area Freight Centre as a TOPS clerk. Extensive use of my BR travel facilities was made and particularly enjoyed travelling on the odd overnight train on the network. Such as **the "York Mails" !!!**



For completeness I got promoted from a CO2 clerk to CO3 clerk then to an R/S E Supervisor all in Bescot AFC before privatisation was prepared for and I swapped my redundancy with a TCS next door. We migrated from Trainload Freight to TLF-W, then to Transrail, then to EWS. Then in May 2001 there was consultation to desupervise Bescot in August Bank Holiday that year. I went looking for another job and ended up at Cross Country Trains in Birmingham, which at that time was owned by the Virgin Group. I started work on 6th August 2001, exactly 25 years tomorrow as I write this! Fortunately, a colleague agreed to job- share so we went part time in September 2024 and here I am after 48 years still in the railway industry. **So thanks very much to Jeremy Nicholls - is he on this group ?**

Yes, I'm pleased to say he is! Ed

Our chief East Midlands Correspondent, Tony Beresford emailed to say; The mystery location is of course Betws-y-Coed. I'm sure you'll have received dozens of positive answers already but here is my effort along with a photo of the 'Y Cracyr Nadolig' railtour at forsaken Blaenau Ffestiniog, **Right**. D213 and **45118** double headed the tour up from Llandudno Junction. D213 was detached and ran round the train before heading back towards civilisation.

Shortly after arrival at Betws-y-Coed, we were informed the train could not continue further and that a dreaded rail replacement bus had been summoned. As far as I was concerned, the unit had behaved itself thus far and appeared to be happily throbbing away in the background. Thirty years later, I can't recall the reason for bustitution, but it wasn't flooding, so often the Achilles Heel of this route. Whilst awaiting said bus there was ample time for a wander around the station and although a modern 'bus shelter' had been provided for passengers, together with other modest changes associated with new uses of the original slate-built station buildings, the area presented a pleasant scene. Likewise, the railway museum opposite the station, which appeared to be popular. In both cases track maintenance looked excellent but as the recent picture shows, standards have slipped both sides of the fence during intervening years.



In recent times the railway museum seems to have become almost moribund and on my last journey along the branch on 14th December 2024 aboard the 'Y Cracyr Nadolig' (The Christmas Cracker) rail tour the site looked very sad. However, having checked out current museum info whilst writing these notes, it appears that positive changes are taking place with a new website being launched soon. I'm sure we all wish them well, it's a lovely location. Fortunately, and to my surprise, I didn't have wait too long for the replacement bus and reasonable connections at Llandudno Junction and Crewe ensured I made it back home, albeit a tad later than anticipated. Incidentally, the last scheduled service by a CI.101 unit was on 24 December 2003 between Rose Hill and Manchester Piccadilly. Further evidence that time accelerates as we get older!

Peter Hassall emailed to say my friend Trevor Binnersley has sent me your August Emag which I found most interesting, thank you. Here is a copy of a feature in the Express and Star of Trev 'in the old days' (although they spelt his name incorrectly!)

Visiting Stafford Road shed, Wolverhampton, was Grange Class No **6834 Dummer Grange**. The Grange is now a Grade II listed building in Dummer, Hampshire. GWR Hall class 4-6-0 No **6906, Chicheley Hall** was a long-time Banbury resident. Chicheley Hall, in Buckinghamshire, now a four-star hotel, is a stunning Grade I listed mansion dating back to the early 18th century.

Both locos ended their days at Cashmore's Great Bridge.

Peter, who has been campaigning for some time to re-open the 'mothballed' railway line between Madeley Junction and the former Ironbridge power station also sent this from the BBC Shropshire news.

A new light railway service could be set up in Telford to connect with the town's central rail station. Telford and Wrekin Council has allocated £150,000 for a feasibility study and said a Very Light Rail line could potentially be up and running by 2030. The project could use four miles of disused heavy railway line, with the council looking to identify and develop suitable station locations along the route. The authority said: "This early-stage feasibility study project presents an exciting opportunity to design a potential new rail link between the Shrewsbury–Wolverhampton rail line and the Ironbridge line, to allow Very Light Rail services to reach Telford Central railway station."

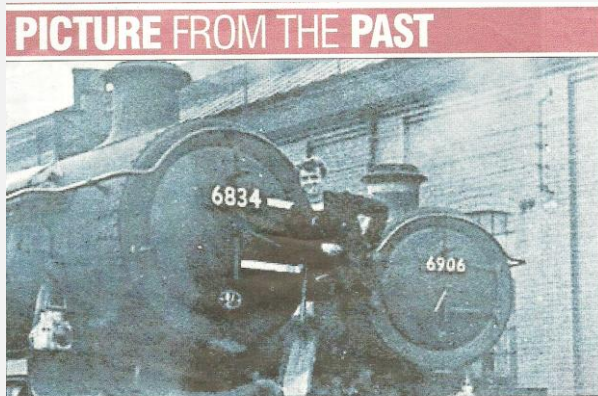
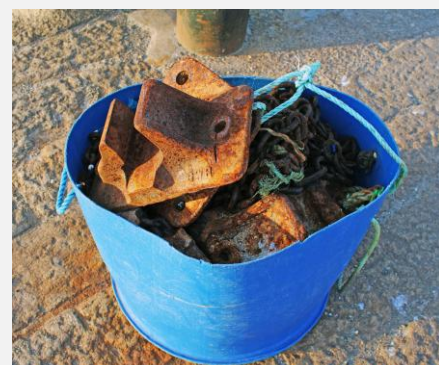
Ironbridge-based Revolution VLR currently holds a lease agreement with Network Rail to operate services. The council is consulting on a wider transport policy for the area and said it was supportive of the light railway scheme. Consultation is open until 27 September, and a draft version of the plan, external and a survey are available on the council website.

David Morgans emailed to say; I went on the 125 Group's Summer Riviera from Stafford to Paignton, which started at Manchester Victoria, and saw firsthand the damage caused by the recent fire at Paignton station. Three boys were arrested on suspicion of arson.

The badly damaged footbridge and temporary ticket office. Meanwhile, nothing stopped the cricket watched by 5101 Class 2-6-2T No **4110**, currently 90 Not Out!



Right, **Roger Fletcher** spotted a new use for chairs on St Ives Harbour Jetty recently. Now, fishplates for fishermen I could understand.....



A hark back to the days of steam for fireman
Trevor Billingsley, formerly of Al. Trevor, then a fireman at Stafford mar Grange'. Alongside is a GWR brighton, sent in this photograph. Road shed, at the front of a GWR 4900 Class locomotive 6906 'Chiche- was taken around 1962 and shows 6800 Class locomotive 6834 'Dum- ley Hall'



Revolution Very Light Rail (RVLR) is an innovative, lightweight, cost-effective rail vehicle alternative to operating traditional heavy rail vehicles on branch lines.

