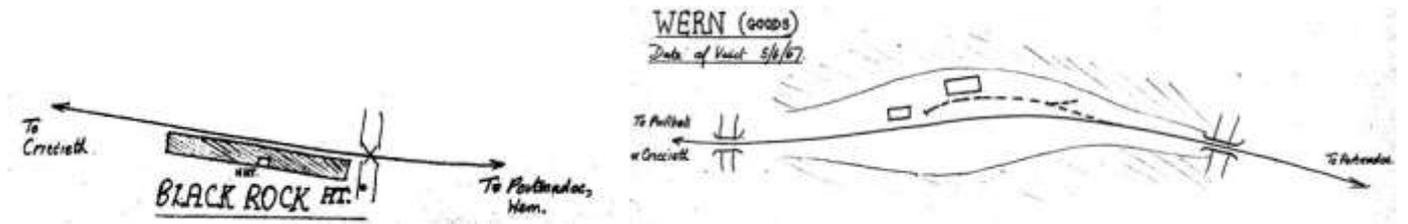


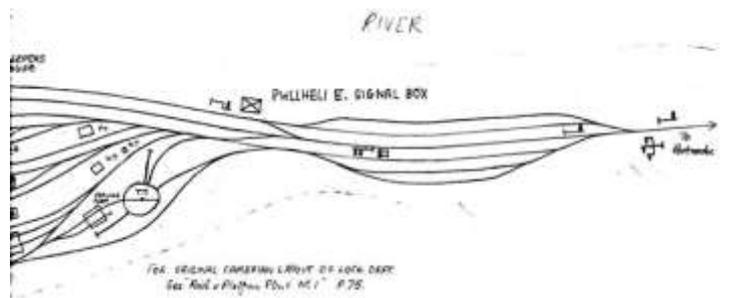
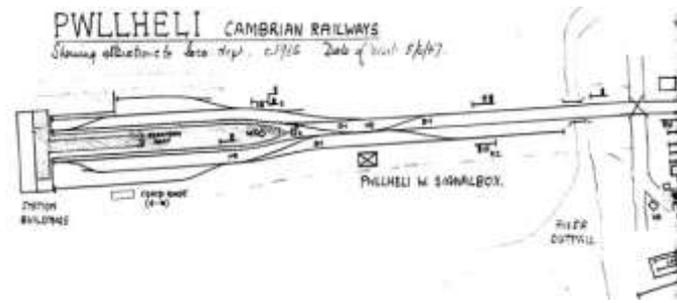
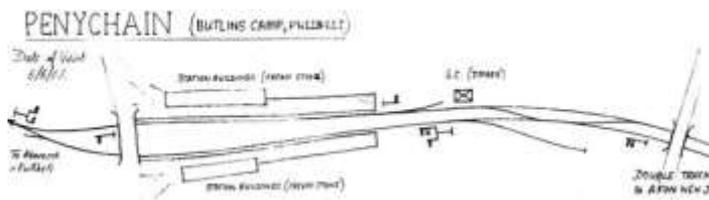
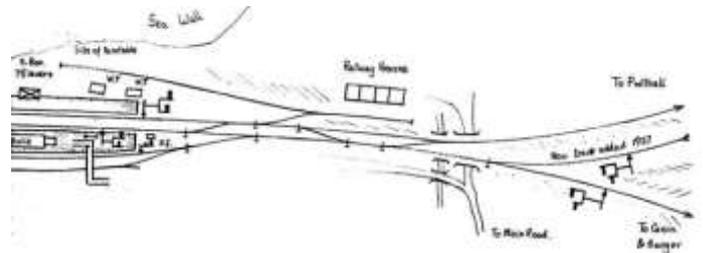
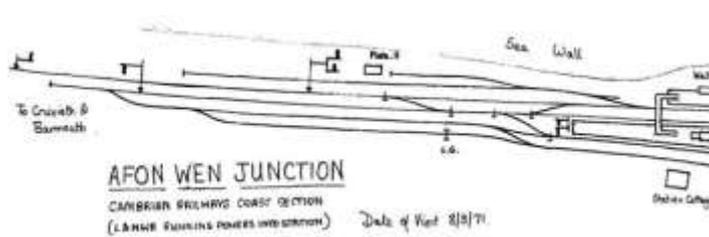
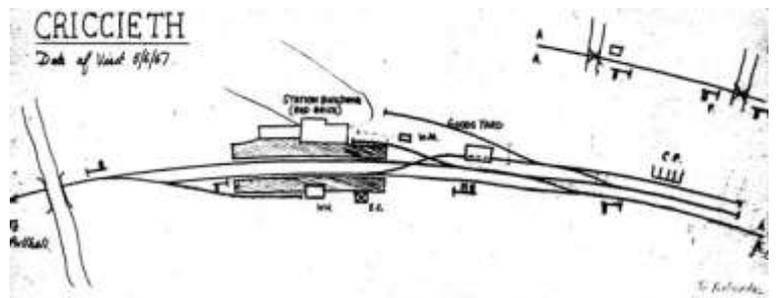
Part 2: 1967 – 1971

Monday 5th June 1967

A straightforward solo afternoon trip, after the end of college exams:
 Train from Bangor to Caernarvon, bus to Portmadoc, train along the
 Cambrian Coast section from Portmadoc to Pwllheli, bus to Caernarvon and
 train to Bangor.



As usual, the excellent forward view from the diesel unit allowed me to sketch the layout at each station and halt, with the exception of Afon Wen Junction which had closed with the line to Caernarvon in 1965, and was passed at speed. This plan was drawn on another visit some time later, but it had not changed much.....



The planning for our summer holiday tour this year was of course much easier with the experience of 1966 behind us; the route and dates were set as early as March, and as I planned to be in Bangor on 24th June, we would start from there, Chris and Paul having travelled up on that day from Staines. Then we were to travel down the eastern border of Wales, over the Severn Bridge and into the West Country. Several lines then threatened with closure were included as train journeys, and as one of these was the Cambrian route from Pwllheli to Dovey Junction, we would see the west coast of Wales again also.

Nearer the day, we had to change the date of starting to Sunday 2nd July, so I travelled back from Bangor to Staines with my parents after their holiday in Snowdonia, on 24th June. On the Saturday evening we loaded maps, sleeping bags, blankets and food into the boot of Chris's blue 1600cc Hillman Minx saloon.

Sunday 2nd July 1967

Starting out from Staines at 10.15 on Sunday morning, we took the M4 motorway and A road via Marlow, turning onto a minor road for Stokenchurch and then Chinnor, our first stop and formerly the main intermediate station on the Watlington branch line. The track was intact as far as here to serve a cement works, and the small station building was in use as an office. We then looked at wayside stations on the Birmingham main line that we had not previously visited by car; firstly Haddenham, then Brill & Ludgershall. Both of these used to have four tracks between the platforms, with loops off the running lines used by stopping trains, but since closure the track on these had recently been removed. The platforms and buildings were intact but derelict and boarded up.

Passing the GCR route at Wotton, we noted the ground-level red-brick building of the station here, at the foot of the embankment of this now closed line. At Bicester, the army camp had extensive sidings still, one containing two "Austerity" type 0-6-0 saddle tank locos, apparently out of use. We passed by Bicester Town (L&NWR) station, on the Oxford – Cambridge line, at the adjacent level crossing, then Blackthorn was our next stop, back on the GW main line. The closed stations at Blackthorn, Ardley and Cropredy all had red-brick main buildings, part demolished, and as at Brill containing little of interest.

Fenny Compton, where the former Stratford-on-Avon & Midland Junction Railway crossed over the GW route, had been largely demolished. The SMJ tracks lay rusting in the grass between remains of timber platforms. The signalbox here, which controlled level crossings over both lines, was a modern one built in anticipation of re-opening of the SMJ line to Stratford as an important freight link, which never materialised.

The first station out of Fenny Compton on the SMJ line was Kineton, which we visited next.....

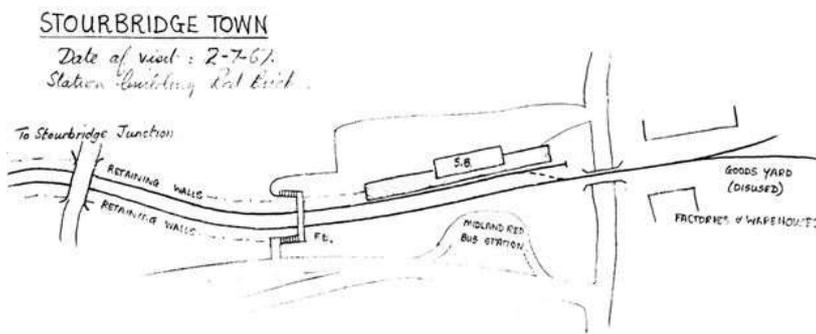
This was a small yellow-brick building with decorative barge-boards, looking somewhat squat with its low-angle roof. The track had all gone from here, but signs and other artefacts remained. Paul is sitting in the sun, and Chris lurks with his camera in the long grass (former platform) to the left.



As a lunch-time interlude we visited the Elizabethan manor house at Compton Wynyates, a large privately-owned red-brick building open to the public on summer weekends. The church is also 16th-century, built of stone and situated in the extensive, well maintained grounds and gardens. As a change from railway stations, two pictures below!.....



We continued along the former SMJ route, with brief visits to the stations at Binton and the Midland-Railway style one at Wixford, before heading into the southern outskirts of Birmingham where Chris was to deliver a parcel. Our next GWR station stop was at Stourbridge Town.....



This was a branch terminus with a frequent single-unit diesel railcar service from Stourbridge Junction on weekdays, but deserted on this Sunday afternoon. The location was cramped, on an embankment between two bus terminals. Two single tracks ran into the station, one continuing over the main road on a plate-girder bridge and terminating in the goods yard beyond, by now disused. The station buildings and platform canopy here were Edwardian-era standard GWR structures.

Hagley station, on the Stourbridge – Kidderminster line, had been repainted into British Railways “modern-image” style, with a delicate picking-out job on the footbridge ironwork of the cast GWR monogram and date, in white on black (right). Both this and Churchhill & Blakedown, which we saw next, were typical GW country stations with small red-brick platform buildings, the latter also having a level crossing on a lane giving access to some houses. We called in at Bridgnorth station, where the Severn Railway Society volunteers had done much fine restoration work since our last visit. On this occasion they were having a welcome break, seated at tables on the platform in the hot sun, drinking beer! Our evening meal on this first day of our holiday was cooked up by Paul in a farm gateway on a country lane at Tardebigge, near Bromsgrove, with an interested audience.....

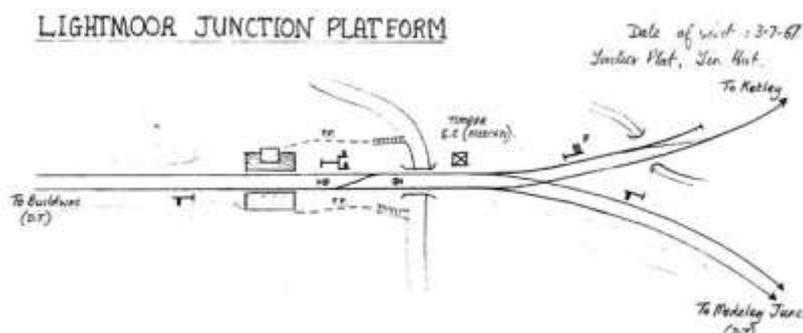


Chris meanwhile enjoyed a nice cream tea in the local vicarage – a perk of being friendly with the Vicar’s daughter! Our final call of the day was once more to Much Wenlock, where we were to rediscover the difficulties of finding bed & breakfast accommodation. The only one we found advertising in the locality was an inn in the town, at the extortionate rate of 25 shillings (£1.25p) each! That being the case, only Chris checked in, Paul and I elected to sleep in the car, which we parked on the trackbed at the derelict station, no doubt arousing the suspicions of local residents as darkness fell. We made ourselves as comfortable as possible on this fine evening, Paul outside on the ballast with sleeping bag (ouch!) and myself on the back bench seat of the car.

Monday 3rd July

Unsurprisingly I woke early, and wiping the dew from the car windows revealed the sinister and uninviting prospect of the old station house through the mist at 5.30am. We were up and tidy by about 7 and walked into the town hoping to buy milk for our breakfast cereal. We were directed back to the dairy, right by the station, which was of course shut, and would have had to resort to our standby “Marvel” powdered variety had not a milk float appeared making its morning deliveries! Chris arrived by 8.30, and we made our way first to Buildwas Junction, where the new power station was nearing completion, but still vast piles of junk cluttered the railway scene as previously. At Ironbridge the station had been demolished since our previous visit. On a hitherto deserted road here, no fewer than six Midland Red buses converged on a small turning area by the Iron Bridge to make their interconnections, and departed amidst clouds of diesel fumes. We could not find the site of the former Coalbrookdale Halt, though the viaduct and ironworks here were prominent.

We arrived at Lightmoor Junction at the same time as a permanent-way train, headed by Sulzer diesel loco D5000; this was heading for Wellington via the Madeley loop line. The tin hut of the halt here looked rather forlorn as its surrounding timber platform had been dismantled.....



We passed the site of Doseley Platform by the adjacent level crossing – all buildings had disappeared here; at Lawley Bank however the waiting hut, signalbox and nameboard were all intact. New Dale Halt, thought to be down a muddy track, was not identified. Out onto the main A% road, we made a brief stop at Ketley station, by the level crossing, then on to Cressage and Berrington, places which we had passed through several times previously though never stopping to find the stations. Cressage had a level crossing, and a fierce guard dog in the station house. That at Berrington was inhabited, and was viewed from the road bridge (right) - both were typical Severn Valley line structures. Cound Halt, presumably near the Cound Inn, seemed to have been obliterated.



Turning off the A5 near Shrawardine we made a diversion to visit the erstwhile Shropshire & Montgomeryshire light

railway. Following instructions given by a college friend we turned onto the railway trackbed, now a military road, at Shrawardine Castle station. Sending up a dust cloud behind us and expecting to be shelled by tanks at the next turn, we proceeded past Pentre Platform (no buildings, as at Shrawardine) to Nesscliff, which had red-brick buildings and an old S&M coach body in the yard. Our exit was blocked by men digging a trench across the road, who waved us back, so we left the track at Pentre and got lost several times on the country lanes trying to find Kinnerley Junction, former hub of the S&MR. In two army Nissen huts, locomotives of the Welsh Highland Railway preservation society were being restored, some 2ft gauge track and an old lorry being in evidence. "Russell" the 2-6-2 tank was in aluminium primer, and looked almost as if it was operational.

Stopping at a pub for lunch in Whittington, we paused at the GW main line station here, with a large, elegant main building now in use as a private residence. The Cambrian Railways station had long since been demolished. Brief stops were also made at Gobowen (level crossing, mainly timber buildings and signalbox), and Chirk, both on the main line to Chester. Chirk had a stone building, and the former Glyn Valley Tramway station next door also survived, with other tangible remains.

To avoid Llangollen with its Eisteddfod crowds, we followed the Rhos branch line up to Wrexham, stopping first at Wynne Hall Halt, where the only clue to the site was a GWR "Private Road" cast sign in a field, and a raised platform mound. This line had been closed for many years. Rhostyllen station had been swallowed up into a new housing development, and although we saw the famous Legacy Arch and Hall, the site of Legacy station could not be located. Bypassing Wrexham by the ring road over Croes Newydd level crossing, we paused at Coed Poeth on the Minera branch, which still had a signalbox, platform and track serving the quarry at Minera. The general freight service to Brymbo had been withdrawn a few weeks earlier. Then we made a rapid run across the moors to Corwen, on to Betws-y-Coed then via the Pass of Llanberis to Menai Bridge, pausing beside Padarn Lake for tea and biscuits while admiring the view. We cooked up our evening meal in a farm entrance along the Llanfairpwll to Pentraeth road on Anglesey, then it was back through Bangor and a quick call in at the Penrhyn Castle railway museum, which was just closing for the day. At Tregarth we found B&B accommodation easily, just past the Penrhyn level crossing, backing on to the old railway line. Rain had come on during the afternoon and continued into the evening, as we explored the Penrhyn Quarry workshops complex at Coed-y-Parc, then drove to a pub in Bethesda town for refreshment. One of the locals, a retired quarry worker, insisted on buying us beers, which I did not really want, resulting in Paul downing around 2 pints in just a few minutes while the old fellow's back was turned ordering his umpteenth double rum of the evening. His return walk to the car afterwards was hilariously unsteady! Due to limited space at our digs, Chris was accommodated at a neighbouring cottage along the road in Tregarth, and we left the car in their garage yard.

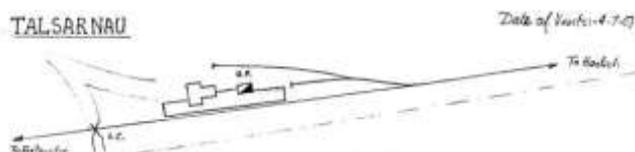
Tuesday 4th July

In the morning we drove over the mountain road from Bethesda to Deiniolen, and so to the lay-by at the end of the track leading into the top end of Dinorwic Quarry. Climbing over the gate, we walked round to the winding-house at the top of the cable inclines, and after asking permission of the men drinking tea in their "caban", descended the slate steps to Twll-dwndwr level, where the quarry steam loco "Holy War" was found to be still at work,

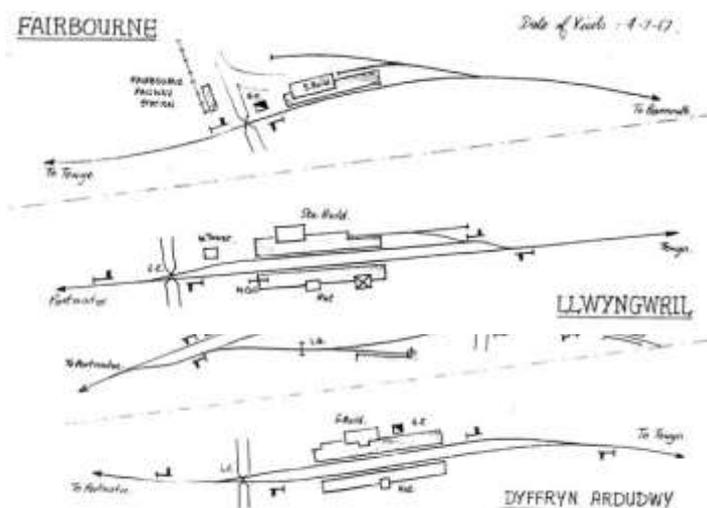


the very last one here. About half an hour was spent watching the unorthodox shunting methods and talking to the driver, Iorwerth Williams, whom I knew quite well by now, this being my third visit in as many months.

Returning to Bangor, we did our shopping at the Tesco supermarket and cooked up a lunch of steak & kidney pies and sausage rolls in a quiet corner of the car park. We then headed south, to Llanrug, over the top of the hills to Waenfawr and along the main road to Portmadoc, noting the remains of several Welsh Highland Railway stations at the roadside. We were just in time to catch the 1.49pm train from Portmadoc to Towyn, a DMU set, for a run down the threatened Cambrian Coast line.....



We had about an hour's wait at Barmouth (above right) to look around the town, as most trains from both directions terminated there, before boarding another diesel unit heading southwards. The weather was beautiful, which made the coastal scenery very enjoyable, especially the section near Fairbourne right along the cliffs, with its avalanche shelters.....



At Towyn we walked down to the Talylyn Railway's Wharf station just in time to see "Douglas" departing with its train, and looked around the newly-extended Narrow Gauge museum, containing many

relics including rare Penrhyn and Dinorwic Quarry items and signs. Locomotives “George Henry”, a De Winton vertical-boiler 0-4-0T and “Jubilee 1897” were the Penrhyn representatives, and a transporter wagon carrying a slate tub and brake van were from the Dinorwic system.....



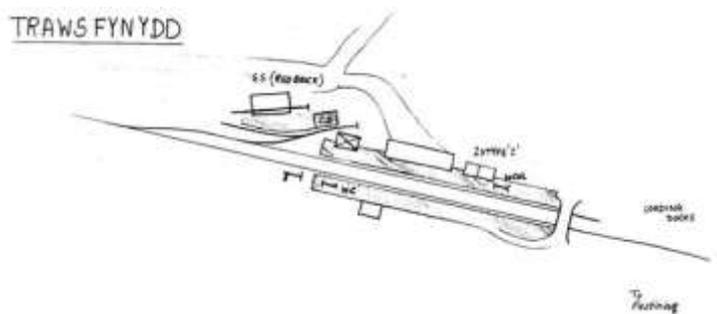
Returning to Portmadoc, we drove over the Cob toll road to the Festiniog Railway’s Boston Lodge works, where we found “Prince” in the yard, newly re-assembled after an overhaul. The locos “Linda”, “Blanche” “Moelwyn” and “Earl of Merioneth” were in the workshops buildings, but “Merddyn Emrys” was nowhere to be seen; we found this one eventually in the old loco shed across the running line and down near Boston Lodge Halt, out of use awaiting repairs. The rusting remains of “Palmerston” and “Welsh Pony” were also noted.



Heading south, we called next at Ffestiniog station, on the former Bala line now just serving the Trawsfynydd power station, and approached down an overgrown path after climbing over a gate from the road. The corrugated iron “Pagoda” shelter on the up platform was painted a fetching shade of bright green! The main station building on the down side still survived, complete with canopy (right), but there was little else of interest to be seen here now.



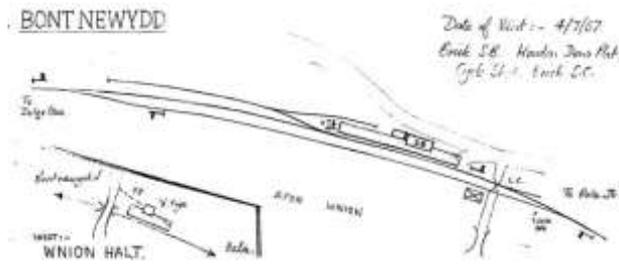
We had brief pauses at Maentwrog Road and Trawsfynydd stations; at the latter the track had all been dismantled, but there was clear evidence of a former array of sidings and loading docks in the military yard on the opposite side of the road bridge to the passenger station.....



Heading south along the straight stretch of main road past the corrugated iron “wild west shanty town” of Bronaber, we cooked our evening meal



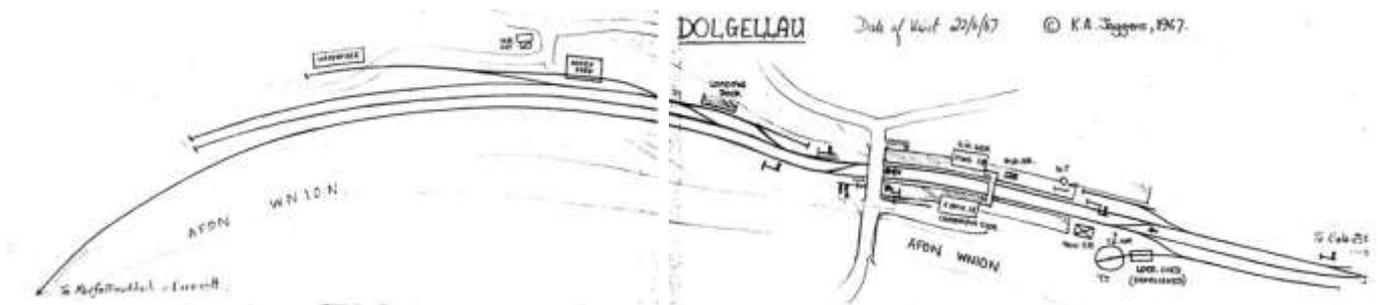
at a Forestry Commission picnic site by Pont Dwygyfylchi, Coed-y-Brenin, remembered for the vast swarms of midges that attacked us from all angles wherever we went. It was getting dark by the time we had completed the washing up, in the rushing waters of the stream. Through Dolgellau, we stopped at derelict Bontnewydd station, on the Ruabon line,



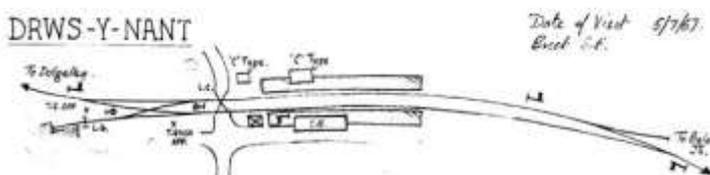
where Paul proposed to spend the night in the signalbox. With this in mind, Chris and I enquired about bed & breakfast at a nearby farm, of some people who were staying there; they said the owner had probably gone to bed! After much searching in the Wnion valley villages, where all accommodation was taken, we returned in low spirits to Dolgellau at around 11pm and immediately found room on the 3rd floor of a guest house in the town, much to our surprise.

Wednesday 5th July

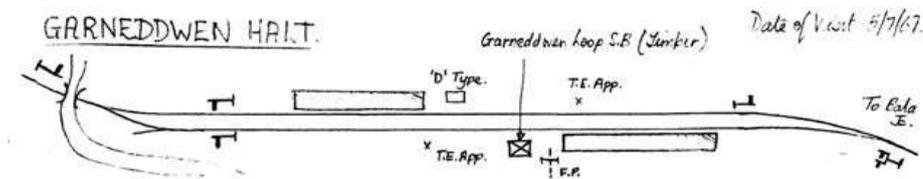
The morning was brilliantly sunny as we set out to explore the stations and halts on the Ruabon to Barmouth line. Despite over two years since closure, Dolgellau station was almost completely intact, and a most interesting place, being the meeting point of the former GW and Cambrian Railways lines. The Cambrian building is on the down platform, to the left in our picture, taken looking westwards from the signalbox. The GW building is opposite, with an older signalbox on the platform, behind the bracket signal.....



Wnion Halt was located in its delightful wooded setting just off the main road, then we came to Drws-y-Nant, a crossing-point with a very small goods yard unusually accessed off a scissors crossover at the end of the passing loop.....

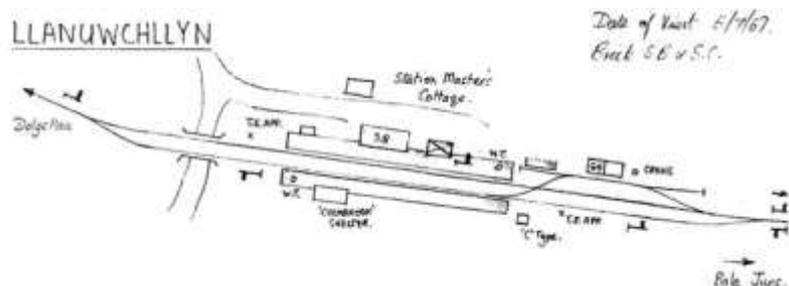


Garneddwen was also a block post and crossing-place, though only a halt, with staggered wooden platforms and wooden signalbox, reached by a footpath across a muddy field. The lever frame was intact in the box, controlling a long passing loop the up side of which was signalled in both directions.....



The former Rhosdylluan Halt was barely identifiable as a mud mound near some farm buildings just off the main road. The next full station, Llanuwchllyn was a

passing place and watering point for locomotives, which had faced a stiff climb when heading eastwards to here. It was in the centre of its small village.....



The waiting hut at Glanllyn Halt, beside Bala Lake, was a peculiar “stockade” log construction with which we were already familiar from a recent article in “Railway Modeller” magazine – an unusual subject for an interesting model. It was served by a decrepit wooden landing stage out in the lake, an optimistic source of potential passengers! The railway then ran right alongside the lake shore, heading towards Bala Junction.....



We could not find Llangower Halt, but the next one, Bala Lake Halt still survived near the old stone road bridge and a new waterworks where the River Dee exited from the lake. A railway worker’s cottage stood by the path to it, beside the road, where we stopped for a mid-morning drink and biscuits.....



Suitably fortified we set off across a field of fortunately docile young bulls, our only known means of access to the remote station at Bala Junction, where the Blaenau Ffestiniog branch left the main Ruabon – Barmouth line. This was purely an interchange station between the two routes, and due to its isolation was largely intact, with mainly standard GWR structures. We found a discarded ladder and were thus able to get up into the large signalbox, whose steps had been removed. Remarkably, all signals and points were still connected to the lever frame, and some of the nearby signals were still easily operable.



After visiting Llandderfel station, which we had seen the previous year, it was on over the hills to Llangynog, stopping to admire the view as we rounded the end of a remote wooded valley. Down nearer to



the village we encountered an old Montgomeryshire County Council steam road roller busily at work on a new section of tarmac.....



At Llangynog we stopped for petrol and oil at a new garage on the site of the former Tanat Valley branch terminus, of which a few traces still remained. The same could not be said for the small halts Pedair-Ffordd and Penybontfawr on the same line, though what we thought may have been the former station house still existed at the former, as a private residence. Llanrhaidr-ym-Mochnant, the main intermediate station on the branch which had only lost its freight service a couple of years previously, was still largely intact, though without track by now. At Llanfyllin, terminus of another branch line near by, we stopped for lunch at a pub and visited the station, with its large red-brick main building and distinctive signalbox; the track had gone here also.....



We then visited the Welshpool & Llanfair light railway at Llanfair Caereinion, where loco "Earl" was in steam and in excellent condition. We boarded the train it was hauling, the 2.15pm to Castle Caereinion, consisting of an assortment of somewhat decrepit carriages. The line was very overgrown in places, with brambles brushing the carriage sides, which probably explains their condition. We travelled in a "toast rack" style vehicle with no windows as such, and we could sit on the floor with feet on the footboards, though had the train been more crowded, seeing the line at such close quarters would have been difficult. Stock of assorted types was stored at the intermediate stations of Heniarth and Cyffronydd.





After leaving the train we drove past the overgrown Sylfaen station and across Raven Square, where the track had by now been lifted, to the GW station in Welshpool, where the former W&LLR interchange yard was now occupied by a new car park. We then visited Cambrian main-line stations: firstly Forden with its neat though now disused signalbox and inhabited station house.....



We arrived at Montgomery at the same time as an Aberystwyth-bound diesel-unit train. Abermule had an attractive stone building by the level crossing, and an unusual arrangement of signals. We purchased our provisions for the evening in the village here, then went on to Newtown, Caersws (photo right), Pontdolgoch (viewed from a field opposite) and Carno, before stopping at Talerddig for our evening meal, cooked up in a farm entrance. The station here was being demolished, at least in part. Our last call on this line was at Llanbryn-mair, with a small stone station house, then we cut across country to Llanidloes, a small market town with a station (right) in grandiose style similar to that at Oswestry, and no less than four platforms. The track was mostly lifted in the station itself, but was intact in the goods yard beyond, used by cement trains for the new dam construction project nearby.



We passed over bridges by the Mid-Wales line stops at Tylwch Halt and Pantydwr, where the track had been removed. The station houses at both were in good repair and still inhabited. That at St Harmon's was a delightful small cottage, with the platform-level signalbox now in use as a greenhouse; this carried a small wooden nameboard.....



Rhayader station, approached off the Elan Valley road out of the village, had a large stone building and stone goods shed, but all was very derelict. The site of Doldowlod was marked by a clearing at the roadside, but everything had been razed to the ground here. Newbridge-on-Wye was our final stop of the day, a large brick-built and rather plain station building.



Just outside Newbridge we found B&B easily at the first place we tried, Rhosfelin Farm, in marked contrast with the previous night. Paul elected to sleep in the car; Chris and I sought the comfort of the farmhouse.

Thursday 6th July

In the morning we drove in to Builth Wells to purchase petrol and films, then on to Llandrindod Wells station on the ex-L&NWR Central Wales line, on which we were to spend most of this day. Pen-y-Bont was a typical L&NW wayside station, now reduced to an un-manned halt with only a single track running through. We found our way down to Knucklas Halt down a narrow lane, having first stopped to see the impressive nearby viaduct. A good photographic vantage point was found by clambering through the undergrowth on the steep hillside (above). Paul is seen further down the slope. Just as I clicked the shutter there was a rustling by my feet, which may or may not have been an adder; I didn't stop to look! Paul bravely poked around in the grass with a stick trying to find whatever it was, but without success. The blue tinge in these pictures is due to use of "Kodachrome" slide film as we could not find our preferred Ektachrome locally; this always gave more of a yellow bias to grass and vegetation, looking much more natural.



We drove quickly back to Builth Road high level station (right), and had a few minutes to look around before boarding the Central Wales DMU down to Llanelly. The high spots of this journey were the long ascent of the bank up to Sugar Loaf summit, surrounded by bleak moorland.....



and shortly afterwards on the descent crossing the tall stone structure of Cyngordy viaduct, which we had not previously been aware of.....

Passing the stations at Llandoverly, Llanwrda and Llandeilo that we had seen by road the previous year, we entered the former GWR section of the line. Tokens were exchanged at Ffairfach Halt, marking an abrupt scenic transition into the South Wales industrial area.



Ammanford & Tirydail was the junction for the old Cross Hands branch, long since dismantled but with its route still clearly visible. At Pantyffynon the freight line to Brynamman diverged, the station here presenting a busy sight with its colliery sidings and wagons being shunted on the branch. That at Pontardulais had lost a lot of its former major junction character through demolition and the large nameboards now just bore the single name in the extreme top left corner, all the other wording of places once served having been removed. The L&NWR route down to its terminus at Swansea Victoria was still intact here.

The halts at Llangennech and Bynea had deserted, overgrown platforms, seemingly closed for years but still shown in the timetable. We then joined the GWR South Wales main line and ran into Llanelly station (right).....



We just had time for a quick pie and cider in the “Railway Arms” before boarding the same Cross-Country unit in the bay platform and leaving on the return journey. Back at Builth Road, we drove south to visit the West Herefordshire branches, by now all dismantled. New Radnor station was down the end of a lane, and most of its brick buildings were intact. Stanner had a small brick waiting room adjacent to the main road, but the site at Dolyhir appeared to have been swallowed up by a cement works operation, the course of the line being clear over the road level crossing. The terminus station at Presteigne was visited next; this had a stone main building with an old violet-coloured enamel nameboard still in situ. In the village, diversions were in operation due to major road works, and despite the fact that it was early-closing day we were able to buy our groceries as a shop opened its doors to us very obligingly. We were told we could buy milk at the *electrical shop* across the road, which also happened to be open. Two policemen down the street eyed us suspiciously as we passed them with bagfuls of provisions!



Titley Junction station had become a private residence, at the top of an embankment near the road bridge; we viewed it by clambering through the trees on the opposite side of the line....

Kington, the most recently closed of the West Hereford stations, had a brick main building now in private ownership, and an unusual goods shed still with its awning and a GWR blue enamel nameplate. Eardisley, the former Midland Railway station, had largely been demolished; the station building was intact but the distinctive wooden waiting hut was now doing duty in an adjacent field as a stable for several grazing ponies, one of which escorted us around the former station yard.

Whitney-on-Wye station had been fully dismantled, as had the elegant bridge over the river here, which we crossed by the nearby road toll bridge into Wales once more. That at Hay had also gone, and we headed down the Golden Valley road, passing the site of Westbrook station by the first bridge. Dorstone and Bacton also just had some platform remains by their level crossings, but at Abbeydore the main building remained complete as a private dwelling. Between here and the junction station with the main line at Pontrilas we

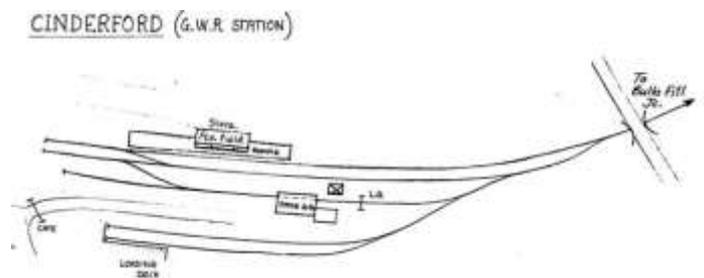
noted the Golden Valley branch road bridge being rebuilt, with track still intact at this point. Pontrilas retained its range of wooden buildings, out of use. We had our evening meal by the roadside here, then looked at the stations of St Devereux and Tram Inn, on the main line. Both of these were now dwellings with the platforms removed, and we stopped at the latter to watch an express pass over the level crossing. Into the fair city of Hereford, we travelled around for some 30 miles looking for Bed & Breakfast accommodation without success, as the few we saw were all full. We eventually found one charging the extortionate sum of 27/6d (£1.37p!) and begrudgingly settled in quite late in the evening. We were at least given tea and biscuits for supper, but the breakfast was nothing like as wholesome as we had been used to, considering the price.

Friday 7th July

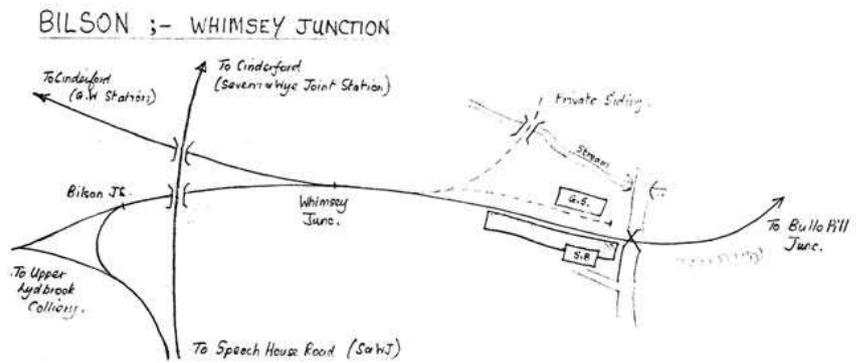
Starting rather late, we were glad to get out of Hereford, calling first at the red-brick stations of Holme Lacy, Ballingham and Fawley on the former line to Ross, all now with track gone and somewhat derelict....



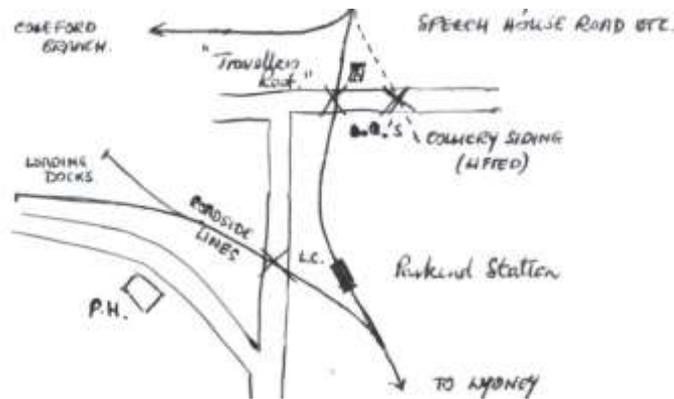
Venturing down into the Forest of Dean, we had seen Kerne Bridge station, with its coach body on the platform, the previous year. The site of Lydbrook Junction had been incorporated into a large works site and the viaduct nearby had long since disappeared. The GWR branch terminus at Cinderford provided a pleasant contrast, as this stone station and goods shed was completely intact; a loaded coal train had been left in the sidings early that morning.....



Driving on to the next stop at Bilson, we noted the remains of the line serving the ex-Severn & Wye Junction Railway station. The GW Bilson establishment was a small stone main building and goods shed by a level crossing in the forest; we explored the network of former tracks and old colliery tramways around here.....



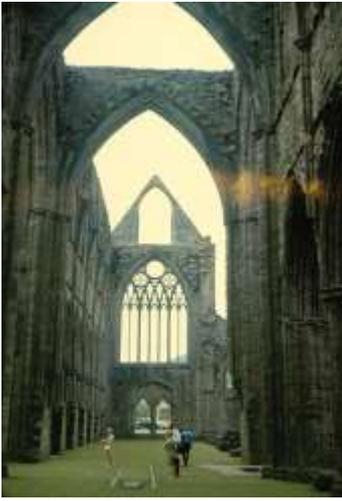
Speech House Road station on the old S&WJ line was a derelict house in the midst of the forest, the track having been lifted here. The present terminus of the line from Lydney Junction was by now at Parkend, our next stop. Here we first noted the quaintly named Traveller's Rest Crossing signalbox.....



Although we could hear sounds of shunting in the vicinity, we searched the various lines for the branch loco without success; sidings crossed and ran alongside the roads where several rakes of wagons were being loaded with coal at the wharves.

We stopped for lunch in the pub across the road, then went on to Coleford, where we found the GWR station (right) but not the S&WJ one; the two routes here were connected by a siding. We walked under the bridge and a short distance along the track of the former GW Monmouth branch, by now running only as far as Newland Quarry. Redbrook station on the Monmouth to Chepstow branch still retained its main building and an attractive ivy-covered signalbox; we parked on the approach road, across which a private garage had been built. We crossed over the route of this line again at St Briavels & Llandogo station, which also still had its signalbox, then stopped for a look around the ruins of Tintern Abbey.....





The route of the old railway was crossed yet again at Brockweir Halt; and the line was still intact and in use as far as Tintern Quarry, noted as we drove down into Chepstow. Here we left the car in the municipal car park, bought provisions and wrote postcards home, then walked down to the riverside station on the main South Wales line, with its extensive and still-busy goods sidings.....



From Chepstow we drove across the new Severn Bridge crossing on the M4 motorway, which from road level we found quite unimpressive; the automatic toll gates at the far end were a novelty to us but the fee was considered quite extortionate.....



Thornbury, terminus of the Midland Railway branch from Yate, had a beautiful cream-coloured stone building; the extensive yard here was now in use by a coal merchant and inaccessible. The junction station buildings at Yate were of brick in a typical Midland design. Bitton, also on the Midland main line, had another fine and neat stone building.....



We passed by Keynsham on the GW main line, and just as the previous year almost ended up in Bristol again, this time looking for Brislington station, on the Bristol to Frome line in the city outskirts. Passing Whitchurch Halt on the same line, we paused briefly at Pensford station, a neat brick building with stone quoins and intact canopy, on an embankment near the main road bridge. Trying to get an extra shot on the end of my film here, resulted in the slide being torn, but fortunately limited to the sky area only.....



The next station, Clutton, had a stone building in very similar style to that at Pensford. It was very derelict, but still had the track running through towards Radstock. We prepared our evening meal at Hallatrow, junction for the long-defunct Limpley Stoke branch. The derelict main station building had all windows broken and a large pile of discarded tin cans on the booking office floor indicated that many others had no doubt also picnicked here recently; we took great delight in aiming our contributions through the window opening to land with a resounding clang on the pile! Driving into Radstock we found B&B easily for just 15/- (75p) in a small suburban terrace house on the Fosseyway road. On a fine evening we went for a quick look round the two railway station sites and the Marcroft wagon repair works before retiring for a drink and bed – we even had our own front door key here.

Saturday 8th July

We had a thorough look around the former Somerset & Joint Railway station at Radstock first.....

The GWR passenger station had been demolished and a new shopping centre built on the site; but its tracks in the goods yard were intact. Numerous rakes of wagons, both condemned and awaiting repair, filled the sidings at both stations, and a small diesel shunting loco occupied the former S&DJR engine shed. We next paused



these for our museum collection, before someone else inevitably took them; they have been on public display ever since.....

at the GW station of Midsomer Norton & Welton, with stone road bridge and buildings. At the S&D establishment, Midsomer Norton South, local children were using the van body on the platform as a playhouse. The very derelict signalbox still retained its lever frame, and just five of the plain painted alloy Southern Railway pattern lever plates remained; with the help of the locals we acquired



Chilcompton station yard was used by a coal merchant, and all the buildings here had been demolished. Binegar (right) had another intact signalbox, but this one was securely locked and no doubt kept under the watchful eye of the occupant of the former stationmaster's house nearby.

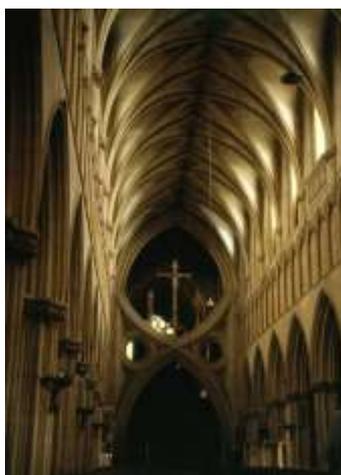


Our next stop was at Shepton Mallet (Charlton Road), with its all timber main buildings and signalbox. Here again just a few lever plates remained; these were of the distinctive L&SWR heavy brass type, and we were given five of them, to nicely compliment our S.R. alloy set.....



Shepton Mallet High Street station, on the GWR Central Somerset “strawberry” line from Witham to Yatton by now in use only as far as Cheddar, had stone buildings very similar to those at the GW Midsomer Norton site. Cranmore had a very plain brick building, and we returned to the S&D line again at Evercreech New station, finding a large spanner marked “LMS” discarded in the undergrowth. There was an S&DJR cast “trespass” sign here, well rusted onto its post. The main buildings were of brick, as also at our next stop, Evercreech Junction. The nearby inn here had recently been renamed “The Silent Whistle”, with an appropriate sign depicting the derelict station. Pylle and West Pennard were typical S&D wayside halts, but the track here, on the branch to Highbridge, had recently been lifted.

Entering the city of Wells, we noted that the former GW Tucker Street station on the line to Cheddar was demolished down to platform level, although the single through running line was still in use. Buying postcards and visiting the beautiful cathedral occupied us for the next hour or so; we also purchased food for the evening.



Driving westwards we found that the station at Wookey was largely demolished, but that at Draycott, a Bristol & Exeter Railway stone building with a large gable and decorative barge boards, was well cared for and still inhabited.....



As well as the usual wooden nameboard, the station name was also incised into the stonework above the platform-side windows in the gable-end. We drove up a minor road into the Cheddar Gorge, at the lower end mingling with coaches, tourists and the commercialised cave attractions, amid a minor traffic jam. This cleared and we stopped to admire the view in the upper part of the gorge; our cameras hardly able to do justice to the magnificent scenery.....



Returning to the S&D Highbridge branch line at Bason Bridge station (below), we found the rails here intact from the Highbridge end and serving a milk depot, the reason for the activity we had seen at the junction station a year previously.



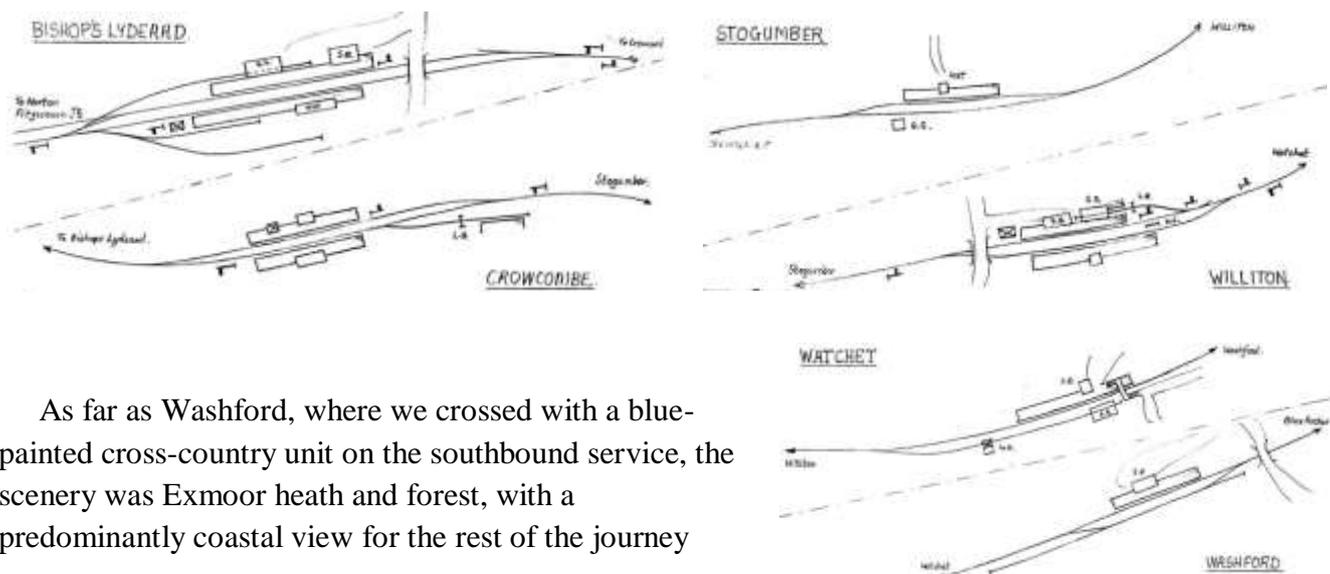
The platform building was in cement-rendered brick and timber, looking rather austere. The road crossed the line on the level and then the River Bure which runs alongside the railway opposite the platform. Proceeding up the line we found the track at Edington Junction lifted; the station building was of Southern Railway design with a large awning. Avoiding Taunton on this summer Saturday, we turned south on the main roads to reach Ilminster on the GW branch line down to Chard. The track had gone here, but the large decorated-brick platform building and the goods shed remained. We had our evening meal in a camping lay-by near the village. For the next two nights we had a long-standing invitation to stay with a college friend, Keith Aplin and his family at Furzehill, Chard; on arrival we were given another large meal! We all went for an evening walk around the town, calling in at both local stations; the former L&SWR one used latterly as a goods depot, and the joint SR & GW Chard Central premises with its fine overall roof now converted into a factory. Walking back in the gathering dusk along a very overgrown footpath, Paul noticed two glow-worms in the bushes, which he duly committed to a jam-jar with some suitable vegetation, where they spent the rest of our holiday either on the car parcel shelf or on a table in our overnight accommodation – I don't recall if they survived!

Sunday 9th July

A whole restful day spent away from the undoubted attractions of the GWR, at Lyme Regis, which was rather crowded, and at peaceful Charmouth, lazing on the beach in the summer sunshine. In the evening we planned the rest of our trip.....

Monday 10th July

Rising somewhat late, after a hearty breakfast we bade our farewells and set off from Chard for Taunton, stopping at the branch stations of Hatch and Thornfalcon on the way. That at Hatch was in a deep cutting, and we missed it first time, returning for a proper look around. The main building was brick with stone quoin edge decoration, as were all the others on this line. The yard was in use by a builder's merchant. Thornfalcon, by its road bridge, had been demolished and only the platform remained. At Taunton we parked at the station and boarded a cross-country diesel unit for a return run on the Minehead branch line. This left platform 2, the down bay, and proceeded along the main line until taking the right-hand road at Norton Fitzwarren and crossing over to the Minehead branch proper. This was a three-way junction, the Barnstaple line, by this time somewhat overgrown, being the centre route. The Minehead branch was double-track as far as Bishop's Lydeard, the first station, and single thenceforward as far as Dunster. Once again, the splendid forward-view from the diesel unit allowed us to quickly sketch the layout at each of the station stops.....

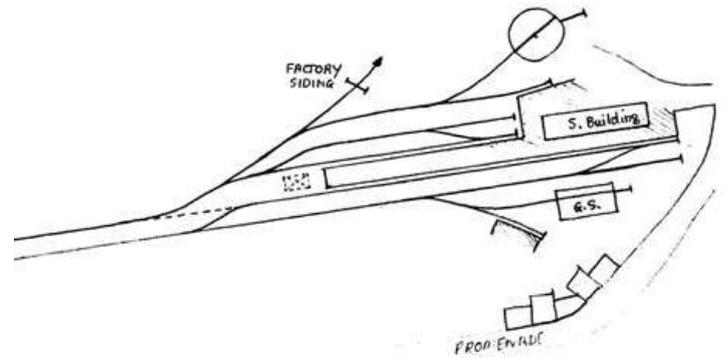
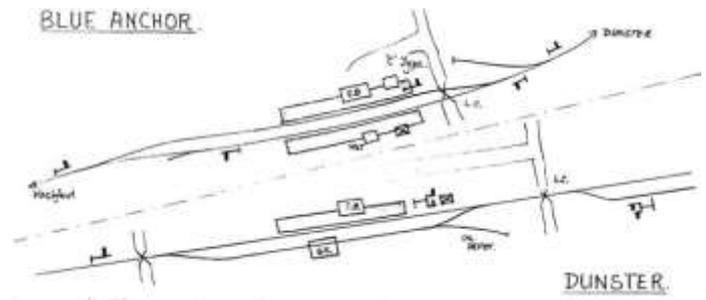


As far as Washford, where we crossed with a blue-painted cross-country unit on the southbound service, the scenery was Exmoor heath and forest, with a predominantly coastal view for the rest of the journey

Three old Churchward camping coaches in fading chocolate & cream livery were stabled by the level crossing at Blue Anchor station.....



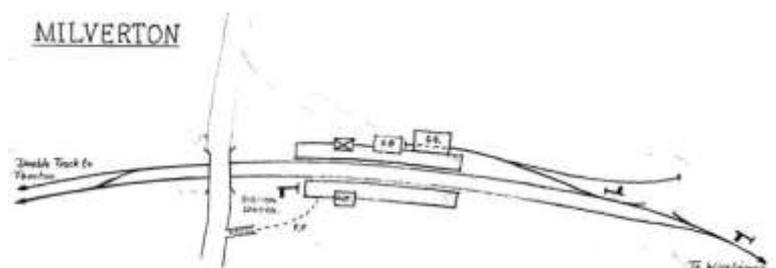
The line from Dunster to Minehead is double track apparently worked as two single lines, there being no longer any connection between them at the terminus end. The left-hand track was used for stabling excursion stock, and ran into a bay platform. Our train used the other, running down the full length of the main platform road.....



Alighted from the train we walked along the seafront in the direction of Butlin's holiday camp, where we saw the monorail system in action but neither of the two "preserved" steam locomotives at this site were visible. Walking back towards town, the paddle steamer from Barry Island pier appeared on the horizon then came in to berth in the harbour.....



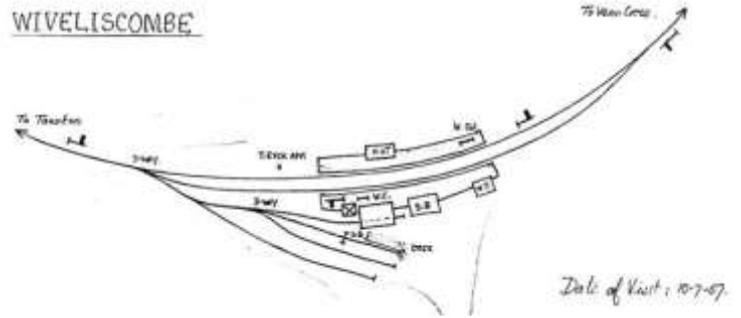
On return to our car at Taunton we set off to explore the section of the Barnstaple branch which we had not seen the previous year, that from Milverton to Dulverton, which had since unfortunately closed to passengers, though still apparently in use for freight of some sort. Like the Minehead branch, this route was also double-tracked as far as the first station, Milverton, to avoid congestion at the Norton Fitzwarren junctions. Milverton was beautifully situated, with a large rose-filled station garden laid out on the embankment slope behind the up platform. The buildings and signalbox were of the usual pattern found along this line.



At Wiveliscombe, the next station, we were able to enter the derelict wooden signalbox, which still retained its lever frame, token machines and instruments.....

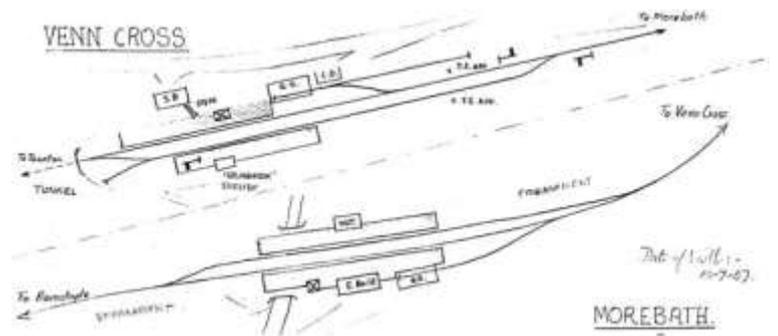


WIVELISCOMBE



Between Wiveliscombe and Venn Cross was the handsome Tone Valley viaduct, of which we had a good view from the road. Venn Cross station was situated in a deep cutting, with its main building at the top of the slope; it was difficult to spot as we drove along, and when we did eventually locate it, the occupied station house precluded much exploration. The end-loading dock between the goods shed and platform had been found a new use as a rabbit-run! The line dives into a tunnel in the direction of Wiveliscombe.

VENN CROSS



MOREBATH

Morebath, reached down a narrow lane, was a simple station, almost a halt, with timber buildings. All along this branch line, one track was still quite well used, indicating recent passage of trains, but possibly by now only those engaged in dismantling operations further westwards?

From Dulverton we turned southwards down the Exe Valley line, calling first at Bampton, where the road overbridge was being filled in and widened, then passing the Cove caravan site, where we had camped the previous year, and so into Tiverton. We inspected the station here with its fine cream stone buildings and covered footbridge thoroughly, and photographed both this and the 14xx 0-4-2 tank loco on its plinth that we had seen the year before. Here Chris (left) and Paul seem to be walking away disinterestedly in opposite directions!....



My colour slide of the station unfortunately appears to be lost now, but it was published later in black & white form, as here.....

The short branch from Tiverton Junction to Tiverton had been closed to freight traffic only a month or so previously, and was used in a television film, "The 5.19" recorded a few days after our visit. The station houses at Cadeleigh, by its level crossing, and Up Exe Halt had been converted into cottages in a neat manner, retaining their previous appearance. On the way to Bramford Speke we encountered road resurfacing work and had to turn round and return to the Exeter main road.

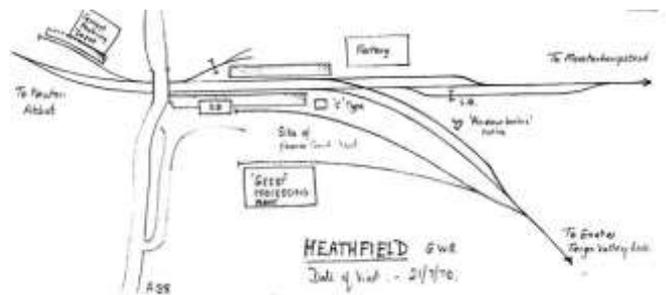


Thorverton was still served by rail, the only station on the Exe valley line so remaining, from the junction. Rounding the Exeter by-pass we found that Ide station on the Teign Valley line had been swallowed up by successive road improvement works, but bridge abutments remained visible. Christow and Ashton on the same line had been converted into neat white-painted bungalows, with gardens where the tracks once ran. Considering the length of time this line had been closed, it was still very easy to trace. At Trusham we did not see the station but the large cement works with its sidings crossing the road was very much in evidence. The track from Newton Abbot was intact as far as here. Chudleigh station was a very plain buff-painted timber affair, and much scrap and rubbish littered the station yard.

The former Moretonhampstead branch line was still in use for freight as far as Bovey station, a neat stone structure, to serve the United Molasses depot with its special tanker wagons....

Heathfield, the junction of this line with the Teign Valley route, was a grass-grown maze of rusting metals, with the same style of wooden buildings as at Chudleigh. Road widening was in progress over the bridge here. On passing through Teigngrace village we could not spot the halt here, probably demolished by now.

Heading south-west, we visited the Dart valley Railway site at Buckfastleigh again, in very much better weather than the previous year. The restoration of locomotives and rolling stock was well advanced and to a high standard....



At Totnes we had our evening meal in a cafe then walked down to the cattle market sidings. We eventually found the preserved "Hall" class loco, together with tank loco 1365 and a "Dreadnought" coach after following the siding to the station and back to the quay. Taking the Torquay road from Totnes, we found B&B accommodation at a cottage in Loncombe Cross, actually a separate chalet to ourselves, and settled in after a short walk on the hills.

Tuesday 11th July

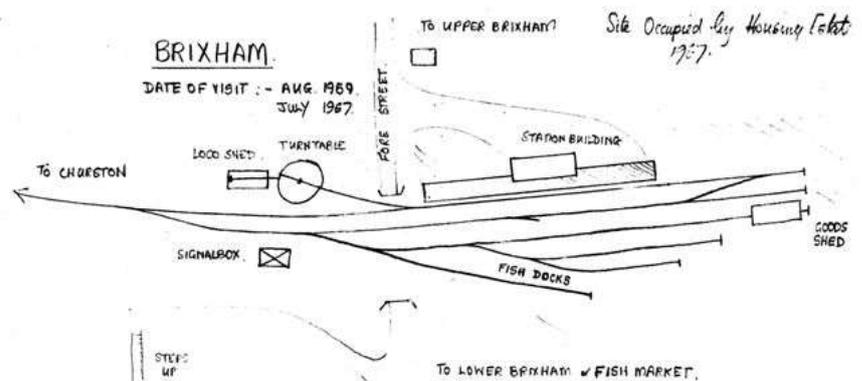
We set out first to Churston station, arriving there at the same time as a blue diesel parcels railcar. It was by now a staffed halt, still with its elegant serif-lettered cast iron nameboard “Churston for Brixham” but slightly rationalised after the closure of its branch line, since my visit eight years previously.....



Some consternation was caused by loose wheel nuts on the car, but this was hastily rectified with our toolkit.

At Brixham however we found things completely changed since my August 1959 visit; the station closed in 1962 had been demolished and a housing estate now occupied its site.

Surprisingly though the very low bridge over the road had not been removed. Here is a reminder of what it used to be like.....



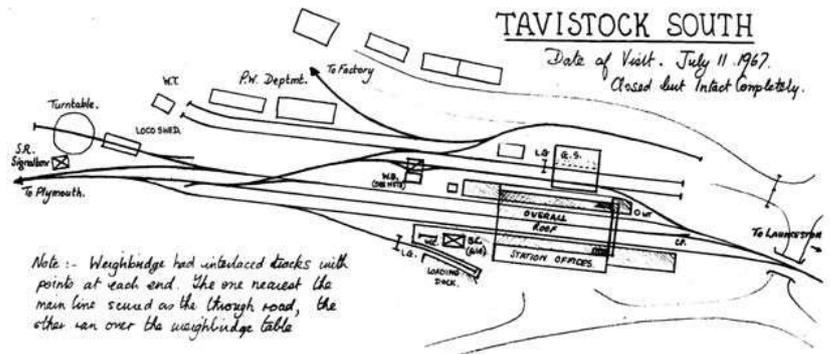
Along the main road, following the GWR main line towards Plymouth, we crossed the latter near the red-brick station buildings at Wrangaton. Bittaford Platform had completely disappeared, and Plympton was an isolated stone main building, the four platforms on the main line having been levelled off.

We next set out to explore the Plymouth to Tavistock and Launceston branch thoroughly, and in fact found every station and halt on the line. Plym Bridge Platform was a concrete halt with small shelter, in wooded surroundings, easily located. Bickleigh was identified from just two platform mounds, the buildings having been demolished. Shaugh Bridge Platform, in beautiful Devon woodland scenery, was approached down a narrow lane and had a “pagoda” type corrugated metal shelter which now lay in a heap of parts on the platform. Clearbrook Halt was just another platform mound.

This year we had an old Ordnance Survey map showing the location of Yelverton station, but nonetheless ended up first on top of the steep cutting in which it was sited, having clambered over fences and gates from the lane where we were parked. On coming up to the major road junction we noticed a GWR “Private Road” sign on an overgrown track leading off the back of a lay-by, and found this very elusive station at last; unfortunately once again only the platforms remained, the line disappearing into a tunnel under Yelverton village itself and the main road.



We diverged onto the Princetown branch to see Dousland station, now a private bungalow with the yard in use by a coal merchant. Although we had not realised the previous year, this station could best be seen from the main road. Entering Tavistock, we had a good look round the GWR & SR joint South station, a most interesting place with overall roof and a third track between the platform lines. There were two signalboxes, a GWR one and an SR one, together with a GWR loco shed and turntable..... (unfortunately my photograph here has gone missing)



Mary Tavy & Blackdown Halt was a platform mound only, the rusting metals of the GW line lay dormant here as the SR main line adjacent had taken all traffic between Lydford and Tavistock.

After lunch we headed south towards Liskeard, stopping in the town for our shopping and visiting the Moorswater site again to photograph the “firebox” engineman’s loo, by now quite well known in enthusiast circles.....



We then enjoyed another run up and down the Looe branch in brilliant sunshine, seen (left) during the token exchange at Coombe Junction Halt.

For some reason our detailed account of this holiday tour stops abruptly at this point, it seems we never got around to writing up the last couple of days. However, a summary and the photographs show that we next visited Lostwithiel, on the main line, where we saw this D600 class “Warship” diesel passing with a westbound parcels train....



I am told that this is quite a rare colour view of one of this small class of locomotives painted in the new blue livery, before their demise. Downriver next to Fowey, where the passenger station (below) still looked neat and tidy some time after its closure; the lines here were still in use for china clay traffic to the shipping point nearby by.



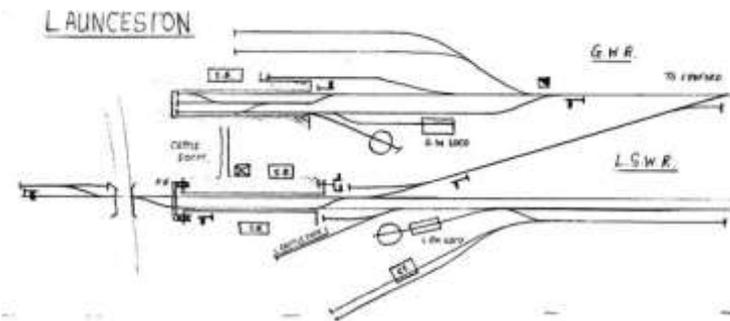
We stayed overnight in the Par area, having visited the station there and the loco shed and sidings complex at St Blazey.

Wednesday 12th July

We started the final day of our holiday with a return trip on the line from Par to Newquay, past china clay “moonscapes” and over spindly viaducts.....



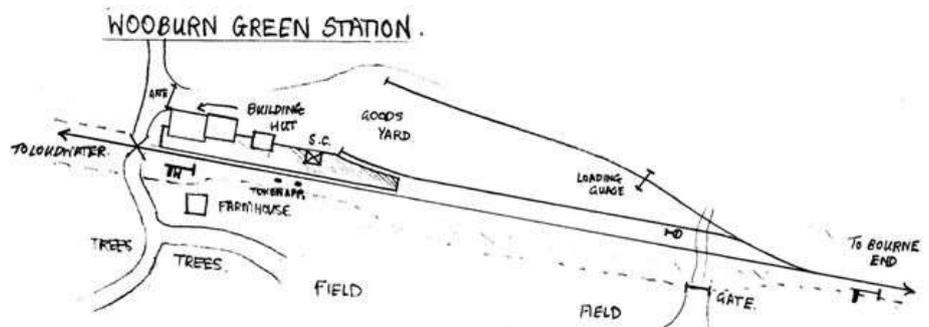
Turning towards home we visited the adjoining GWR and SR premises at Launceston, where we found the signalbox on the SR side in course of being dismantled.....



After visiting other stations on the GWR branch at Lifton, Coryton and Lydford we started on the long journey home after lunch, calling in just at Henstridge and Stockbridge stations and arriving back at Staines in mid-evening.

Saturday 29th July 1967

This was an ambitious RCTS-organised day out by diesel multiple unit – about a ten coach rake I think – the “Ten Counties Scenic Railtour”. From Paddington the route out was via Greenford, Ealing, Maidenhead and Bourne End to High Wycombe, and I finally managed to sketch the layout at Wooburn Green, with its flint-stone station building as we passed through very slowly.....



From Princes Risborough we diverged onto the Oxford line, passing through the closed station at Thame, now devoid of its former timber overall roof.....

Through Oxford and onto the Worcester main line, a short stop was made at Honeybourne Junction to inspect the lavish facilities there.....



Running up to Stratford on Avon and reversing there, we proceeded via Toddington and Winchcombe to Cheltenham and Gloucester, long before the wonderful preservation activity on this line was dreamed of! During another break to stretch our legs at Gloucester Central, we found this GWR auto-coach of the mid-1930s W18xW series in departmental use, lurking in one of the bay platforms.....

Next stop was at Ashchurch, where there was ample time to look around the Great Western Society preservation centre.....





Our homeward journey was back through Gloucester then down to Chepstow, passing the stricken Severn Railway Bridge near Lydney, awaiting dismantling after it had been struck by barges in fog some time previously.....



Reversing again at Chepstow, it was then through the Severn Tunnel and a quick run through Bristol, Bath, Lavington and Hawkeridge Junction back to Paddington.

Saturday 2nd September 1967

Working for a few weeks as a vacation student at the London Transport signalling offices, Acton, I availed myself of the ¼ rate privilege ticket on BR lines to visit the South Wales valley lines for the day, after a quick run down to Cardiff from Paddington in the morning. My first local run was from Cardiff Queen Street to Treherbert by the former Taff Vale Railway main line, surprisingly scenic alongside the river near Radyr.....



here is the smart timber station at Treorchy (left), and running past terraces of miner's houses into Treherbert (below).....





On the return journey I alighted at Pontypridd to look around the still extensive and busy junction station there.....



After a run up the branch to Merthyr, the southbound return train gave a good view of the former Barry Railway viaduct crossing the valley at Taff's Well.....



Then it was down to Barry Docks via Penarth, for a first visit to the steam locomotive "graveyard" there, containing well over 200 machines all still in relatively good condition at that time....



Returning directly to Cardiff via Dinas Powis, another quick run up to Paddington concluded this interesting day out.

Saturday & Sunday 5 – 6th January 1968

Having suitably inspired Chris and Paul as to the delights of this place, we made a weekend car trip to Barry on this bright but very cold winter weekend, stopping overnight in a rather dubious B&B in one of the terraced houses overlooking the scrapyard; several of these were just now beginning to cater for the hoards of strange camera-toting people coming to visit.....



lines, but was perhaps understandably discontinued soon afterwards! Here are some shots of that day's workings, using locos 3205 and 46443, with two of the basic-comfort "City" stock carriages included in the train.....



Saturday 17th August 1968

Once again with London Transport privilege ticket, my day trip to South Wales this summer started from Paddington through to Bridgend, thence up the branch by single unit railcar to Cymmer Afan....

From here I had hoped to travel through the long tunnel to Treherbert, but this was already "temporarily" closed, with the advertised service replaced by buses running over the top of the hill via Abergwynfi; in the event it was never to be re-opened. The railway was rejoined at Treorchy, thence down to Cardiff Queen Street. My colour-slide photo here later got damaged in the centre, but splits quite nicely into two halves (right).....

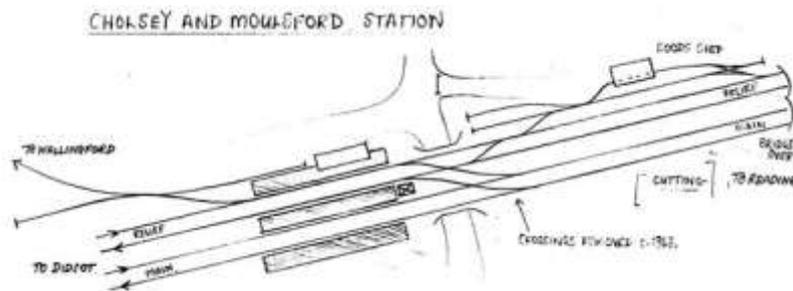
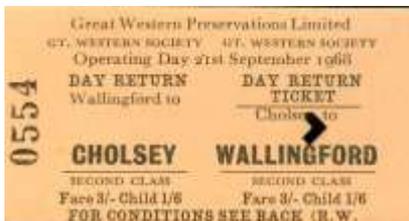


The it was down to Barry and back, and to Penarth (right) before returning once more to Cardiff General, then a quick return to Paddington in the evening.



Saturday 21st September 1968

In a year of many quite momentous railway events, this one capped them all for me; the Great Western Society was allowed to run its auto-train with loco 1466 on the branch line from Cholsey & Moulsoford to Wallingford, back and forth several times during the day. The sun shone, the lineside was easily accessible, and the crowds seemed remarkably absent at least away from the stations, allowing an almost-perfect recreation of the classic GWR branch-line atmosphere. Another point occurs to me at this distance in time; surely it was this occasion, rather than with loco no. 6000 in 1971, which “broke the BR steam ban”?





Saturday 5th – Sunday 6th April 1969

Paul Chamberlain joined me for this college Easter vacation weekend trip to South Wales, with my Morris van XXD341. For some reason, no pictures were taken on this outing. Our diary records that on the Saturday we visited stations at Rhiwderin, Church Road, Machen, Trethomas, Bedwas, Penyrheol, Abertridwr, Senghenydd, Bargoed, Darren & Deri and Fochriw to Dowlais Cae Harris, then Merthyr High Street, Cefn Coed, Llwydcoed and Aberdare HL & LL. We then went via Maerdy, Ferndale, Tylorstown, Treorchy, Ystrad, Blaengwynfi and Cymmer Afan to Bridgend, where we found cheap accommodation for the night in a rather tatty town-centre pub/hotel.

On Sunday morning we ventured around the coast to Southerndown Road, Llantwit Major, Gileston, St Athan Road, Aberthaw Central and East and Rhose followed by another sad session in the Barry Docks scrapyards. Then from there to Sully, Lavernock, Swanbridge Halt, Lower Penarth, Alberta Place Halt, Wenvoe, Llandaff, Birchgrove Halt, Rhiwbina Halt, Whitchurch, Coryton, Cefn-On Halt and Church Road once more. A fine collection of station names, some quite obscure, but we also failed to record what we found, if anything, at each one. So the above list is included here just for the record!

Saturday 2nd August 1969

Chris and I set out from Staines in his Hillman Minx 117CXC visiting stations in Warwickshire, firstly Henley-in-Arden (left) then Danzey for Tanworth with its wonderful saggy wooden nameboard.....



then Earlswood Lakes and Grimes Hill & Wythall.....



before inevitably ending up for the afternoon at Bridgnorth again, to see what was going on there, not a great deal as it happened, just a bit of shunting....



Tuesday 31st March 1970

During the college Easter vacation, my parents were moving house from Staines down to Bournemouth, so on 21st March I left my van at fellow student Bill Chown's house in Betws-y-Coed, then travelled with him and Pete Hiron as far as Bath in his Austin A40 2419LG, thence by train to Staines via Reading and Ascot. The big move to Bournemouth was on 25th March. My return journey to Betws-y-Coed from there on 31st March was contrived to cover several lines I had not previously travelled on, and involved no fewer than ten changes of train, occupying some 12 hours! The first was at Dorchester, walking from the South to the West station; whilst waiting there I photographed this standard GWR sign in a very unusual location; presumably passengers had been tending to cross the tracks here by means of the staff board crossing rather than going round by the bridge.....



Further changes, some with long waits, were at Westbury, Bath, Bristol Temple Meads, Newport, Abergavenny and Hereford, and I was obviously economising on film as my next image was of the impressive station building at Shrewsbury.....

At my next stop, Chester General, there was still a fine array of ex-L&NWR lower quadrant signals in constant main-line use (below).....



and of course one further change was necessary from the North Wales coast line to the Blaenau branch at Llandudno Junction, to complete my long and varied journey!



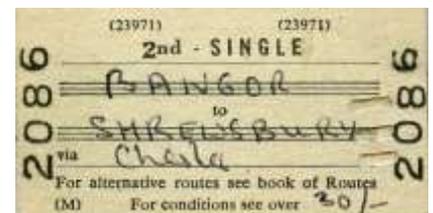
Sunday 12th April 1970

The GW line from Ruabon to Barmouth never failed to fascinate, but we were disappointed to find that by now all of the track had been removed, after more than five years of disuse. In the company of Eddie Calvert-Harrison in my old Morris van, we re-visited all stations westward from Corwen to Dolgellau inclusive, plus lonely Arthog all in timber, one of the few I had not previously photographed....



Saturday 20th June 1970

As fully described in another article, on this fine summer day Eddie, Keith Walter and myself headed over to Ireland from Bangor, via the overnight ferry from Fishguard to Rosslare, to begin a week's holiday there. We travelled via Chester, Shrewsbury and Llanelli, and filled in time during the afternoon by travelling on the surviving Pembrokeshire branch lines, firstly down to Milford Haven. From the terminus there we caught a local bus to Neyland, then across the Cleddau River on the ferry to Pembroke. At Pembroke Dock station we had a considerable wait before boarding the train along this branch, and photographed this interesting terminus....





One unusual and unexpected feature of our leisurely journey to Whitland Junction was the hand-operation of several sets of crossing gates by the guard of the train, as here near Manorbier.....



At Tenby station (left) many more passengers boarded the train, which then proceeded northwards at a more normal pace. At Whitland we changed again for the Fishguard harbour train, arriving in good time for our ferry departure.

Tuesday 14th July 1970

A day trip out from Bournemouth to the Dart Valley Railway, with college colleague Pete Hirons, who was staying with his parents in Wareham for the summer break. On the way we called at the stations in Bridport (right)



then Exeter, Chudleigh, Heathfield and Ashburton, where we found loco 4555 at rest (left).

We enjoyed a first return trip by auto-train on the newly-reopened line before photographing it from the lineside and calling in at Staverton station.....





Saturday 1st August 1970

Returning from Bournemouth to Bangor in the trusty Morris van, the first of many such journeys where the Severn Valley Railway provided a very welcoming half-way break on this long trip.....



Saturday 15th May 1971

And finally in this section, during a weekend break in London, with Tony Parkins in his Ford Capri CME457H to the (first?) Great Western Society open day at Didcot, again with apparent economy of slide film!.....



(for continuation, see the final, part 3 of this article, covering mid-1971 to 1974, to follow)

Keith A. Jagers

Compiled in July 2011 from our contemporary notebooks etc.