

## **On Holiday the Proper way - by GWR to Brixham, August 1959**

Midway through the long, hot and glorious Indian summer of 1959, we embarked on our first West Country holiday, a fortnight in a wooden chalet at Brixham, South Devon. This was a fortuitous choice involving travel on a peak holiday Saturday by Western Region from Paddington, in what is now recognized as the heyday of the railways' contribution to such traffic movement, before serious erosion by private car ownership, foreign holidays and air travel. I am grateful to have been able to experience the phenomenon first-hand, though of course at the time it seemed normal and commonplace.

The summer of 1959 was also the last before the main onslaught of diesel-hydraulic locomotives took over the principal express workings from steam - only the five D6xx and about twenty D8xx "Warships" had entered service by August - and the last year of the through WR services from London to Weymouth.

Our original intention was to travel to the penultimate stop on the Kingswear line, Churston, and then take the branch train from there to our destination. The summer Saturday through service to Kingswear comprised a 10.15am from Paddington, the 12.00 noon "Torbay Express" and the famous 1.25pm, often hauled by a 47xx class 2-8-0 heavy freight locomotive. However despite early application we found the 10.15am to be fully booked; the 12.00 had an appallingly bad connection at Churston and the 1.25 was really too late for us. Thus we aimed instead for Paignton, which had a much better service, booking on the 9.40am ex Paddington, with continuation to Brixham by bus.

By dint of some advance planning it was possible to travel without the encumbrance of vast quantities of luggage, which would in any case have been an embarrassment on the very crowded main line train. A large old wooden trunk was packed up several days before departure, secured and fully labeled with our destination and then collected from home by a British Railways parcels lorry one morning, as "PLA" or Passenger's luggage in advance. This would join up with hundreds of others and consigned directly to our holiday address hopefully to await our arrival, on payment of a small fee, five shillings I think.

Thus on the great day itself - eagerly anticipated throughout the school holidays - when we set off on foot for the branch train at Staines West it was with hand luggage only, perhaps a couple of small cases or bags plus plentiful sustenance and reading matter for the journey.

After the usual change onto the ex Reading stopping service at West Drayton, we arrived at Paddington in plenty of time for our main-line train. This was just as well, since despite the early hour, the terminal concourse was a seething mass of humanity, either trying to cross purposefully from one side to the other, wandering aimlessly in search of information, or queuing in straggling lines, sitting on piles of luggage. In the midst of all this, the sullen faced driver of a motor trolley peeped his horn repeatedly as he attempted to negotiate the throng with a seemingly endless trailing load of luggage carts piled high with cases, some of which toppled off as he snaked around the corner leading to platform one.

The purpose of each queue was not immediately apparent, and we were parked in a quieter spot while my father went to examine the array of wooden easels set up at their head, near the platform barriers, which carried a montage of printed and hand-written information. Although we had seat regulation tickets ensuring our places on the train (compulsory on all the major main-line departures from Paddington on summer Saturdays) we still had to queue up in the appropriate line. Everyone seemed cheerful and excited however, due to the reality of the long awaited holiday now clearly in prospect. Despite the generally acknowledged progress of civilization these last thirty years or so, very similar sights may still be witnessed today, but only in international airport concourses or at motorway services fast food counters; the participants more likely to be surly and fractious due to the delays.

This then was Paddington on an August Saturday morning, in yet another of its varied moods, contrasting with those of the Monday morning commuter rush, the off peak shoppers and trippers, the spotter's Saturday afternoon watching the returning holidaymakers quickly dispersing, and the peace and tranquility of Sunday mornings.

In due course an army of staff arrived and the barrier gates were clanged open at the head of our queue, which duly shuffled into life. Unfortunately I failed to record details of the train by which we were to travel, but it was a relief to the normal scheduled working, providing extra seating capacity; the regular weekday trains would be run in perhaps 2 or even 3 parts on peak Saturdays departing at five-minute intervals, and

we were assigned to designated seats in a particular carriage of one such, as clearly specified on our reservation counterfoils, "facing engine" or "back to engine".

We filed past the grubby but lined out black class 15xx pannier tank which had brought in the empty carriages bunker first. The young fireman surveys the scene with a bemused smile, and shouts a cheeky quip in the direction of two pretty teenage girls who blush and quickly scuttle away squealing with laughter. The driver with his pipe leans back in his seat, immersed in a newspaper. We found our carriage, with paper label stuck in the window, about two thirds of the way along the platform, a dowdy GWR 1920s Collett bow ended side corridor third still in early BR red and cream colours, in an assemblage of somewhat assorted shapes and vintages. The windows were disconcertingly grimy but it had comfortable if dusty seats and plenty of room for our belongings up on the overhead net racks. After gaining permission for a quick sprint up to the front of the train to inspect our engine - nothing more than a nondescript and quite grubby Hall class - I claimed a window seat facing south-west in the sun with the droplight let right down on its leather strap for plenty of air, and settled down to the long journey, most definitely a part of the holiday experience. The now discredited old style compartment layout with corridor side sliding door kept closed enabled a very civilized journey, uninterrupted by the constant draughty and noisy two way procession of all the world's folk and their children which is a feature of present day train travel.

There was some hopeful whistling and last minute slamming of doors nearby, but it was the train in the adjacent platform that started moving, not ours, giving a welcome wider view of the station at last. After a few minutes further our turn came, with similar frenzied activity from the platform staff, and our train duly shuffled off on its way out of Paddington without ceremony a few minutes after the appointed time, just before ten o'clock. We seemed to make good progress through the London suburbs, retracing our steps of only an hour or so previously and glimpsing mostly the same engines and carriage stock again, now somewhat rearranged - everything seemed to be on the move that morning.

Beyond Slough, things became less familiar, thus more exciting, and since our speed had not risen much above a steady 40mph, there was time to take it all in! Outside Reading, we came to a complete stand for about 10 minutes directly opposite the Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory, with its distinctive aroma and funny looking fireless shunting engines. Eventually clearing this busy junction, our train forked left past the loco sheds, where I was surprised to note a 2-8-0 tank, no. 4297 standing prominently in view.

Our route through Reading West and down the Berks & Hants route bound for Newbury and Taunton was accompanied for miles and miles by a very decrepit- looking Kennet & Avon Canal, with its numerous locks.

In pleasant green open country now, we dozed fitfully in the hot sun as our coach rolled along sometimes briskly but more often gently at around 40-50 mph, lulled by the rhythmic clacking of wheels on rail joints and the soporific rise and fall of the lineside telegraph wires. After an hour or so, nearer Taunton, the general pace slowed noticeably and was punctuated once or twice by squealing to a complete stand right out in the middle of nowhere. A few minutes passed, bemused faces would pop out of windows down the length of the train; the only sounds would be a gentle hissing of steam carrying back from the engine and birdsong from the bushes. The signal arm remained stubbornly horizontal; the loco crew climbed down from their steed and poked around dejectedly in the grass of the embankment for a few moments before sitting down in the sun with their backs to the front bogie wheels.

In the carriage compartments, out came the carefully packed sandwiches and Thermos flasks full of tea - no buffet car or trolley service available on this "relief" train set! The glorious peace and silence of the English countryside in summer was punctuated only by the sudden "whoosh" as an up train roared past, our carriage trembling slightly on its springs, followed by another just a few minutes later. My somewhat dangerous attempts to ascertain the numbers of their locos by peering cautiously round the frame of an open corridor side droplight window were thwarted by the large train- reporting numbers carried on smokebox doors, completely obscuring the front number plates. One was however unmistakable, the large brass bell giving away the identity of none other than No. 6000, "King George V", which I had not seen previously. Suitably elated, this activity became much more exciting than sitting quietly eating my lunch, to my parents' obvious displeasure!

Eventually there came a clanging and rumbling of brake rods beneath our feet followed by a toot from the engine; with a sudden forward lurch we were projected into renewed motion at last, only to crawl dejectedly

along for a few miles, thence past extensive sidings and into Taunton station itself for a further long wait. We could at least stretch our legs here, mingling with the occupants of a similar train which had clanked into the platform just across from ours headed by grimy Worcester based mogul 7319 and apparently bound for Minehead. It got the road before us, provoking a hasty scramble back to their seats. Almost as soon as it had gone, another motley rake of carriages rolled in behind no. 3840, a work stained and leaky Newton Abbot based 2-8-0 freight loco, one of those drafted in from their normal weekday duties to help shift the huge volume of holidaymakers. The usual polished and groomed contingent of Kings and Castles dominant at West Drayton and Slough seemed conspicuously absent down Somerset way that day.

Around Taunton shed and yards, as well as the usual 57xx panniers and a couple of 51xx prairie tanks, were two quite unexpected sights; another 2-8-0 tank 4298, nominally based at Tondy in South Wales, and an LMR 8F 2-8-0 no. 48760 from Llanelly.

Once clear of the Taunton bottleneck, progress to Exeter was good, and our spirits rose as the reality of our destination hove a little nearer. A lengthy unscheduled stop in St. David's station enabled a good look at the activity here with the loco yard conveniently adjoining the platforms, some of its contents arrayed in the sun for our perusal. These included the mighty Churchward 2-8-0 no. 4706 from Bristol, Castle 5075 "Gladiator", several Halls (both home based and visiting), mogul 7311 and 4575 class 2-6-2 tank 5524, a distinctive west country engine type I had not previously encountered. 0-4-2 tank 1471 was on the Exe Valley motor train. Southern Region representatives seen around the station were M7 tank 30023 shunting vans, and two of the ugly Z class 0-8-0 tanks, 30950 & 3, which came coasting down the steep incline from Exeter Central together ready for further banking duties. A couple of Ivatt "Mickey Mouse" tanks 41295 & 41309 were resting between duties, and Bristol 8F 2-8-0 no. 48410 trundled through on a van train - belated luggage in advance? All in all, quite a cosmopolitan variety to be seen in the space of just a few minutes!

Back aboard once more for the final stage, along the famous sea-wall stretch we felt we already knew so well from posters and published photographs, the unrelenting afternoon sun blazed in through the window making our by now well lived in compartment uncomfortably hot. The promenade was thronged with happy holidaymakers, and not a few regarded the passage of our train with interest. At Dawlish Warren the camping coaches were all occupied and had copious quantities of washing strung out on makeshift lines close to where we passed - an amusing sight in view of the quantity of soot now accumulated on my face and in my hair. This was about the stage of the journey I would be sent to the toilet cubicle for a good wash and brush up!

By now we were all definitely in the holiday mood, but had reckoned without the possibility of further delays at Newton Abbot - a near repeat of the Taunton performance earlier. The approach past Hackney sidings and the station itself revealed another frenzy of activity, with more engines moving around and more confusing signals than I could easily take in. Again the shed environs were conveniently in view, and I quickly logged several unfamiliar Halls and Castles, 51xx tanks, modern pannier tank no.1608, ancient 2-8-0 2807, some boring 84xx panniers just the same as those at Paddington, and Granges 6813 & 29. Our tired "Hall" was taken off here and replaced, surprisingly, by one of the "Castles", but facing tender first! This was presumably for a quick turn round on arrival at Paignton, onto an up train. What a marvelous smoky, noisy place this was - necessitating yet another wash afterwards.

So finally onward to a brief stop at Torquay and then Paignton; our train reached its appointed destination some three-quarters of an hour late and we decanted wearily with luggage through a convenient gate out into the station yard. Here we boarded a brand new Devon General "Atlantean" bus - the first production rear engine modern type double-decker, and positively enormous to our eyes - along with a sizeable contingent of our fellow train travelers, the remainder of whom seemed to have quickly and magically dispersed from the station environs. The bus carried us very smoothly and quickly round the bay to Brixham.

Once ensconced in our holiday chalet accommodation up at Furzeham, the trunk identified and claimed from the camp office, suitably refreshed and changed into clean clothes, a pleasant evening stroll across a wide expanse of green headland and a recreation ground brought us to the delightful little one platform stone and timber built Brixham branch terminus. Despite the late hour resident 0-4-2 tank no. 1470 was still banging about in the yard, organizing fish vans ready for the following morning's catch. The signalman was

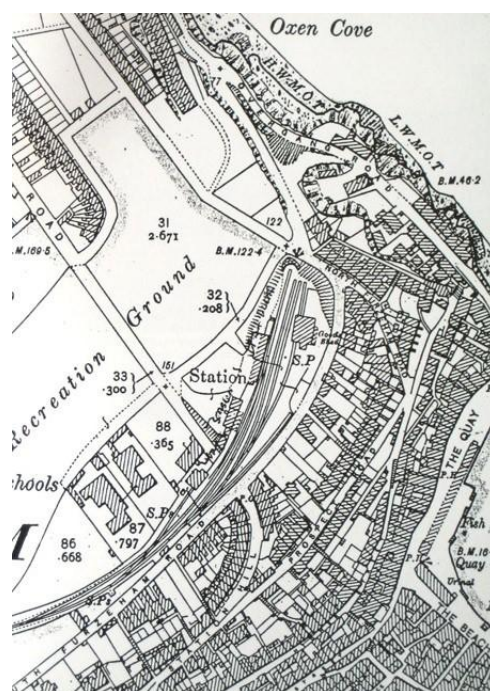
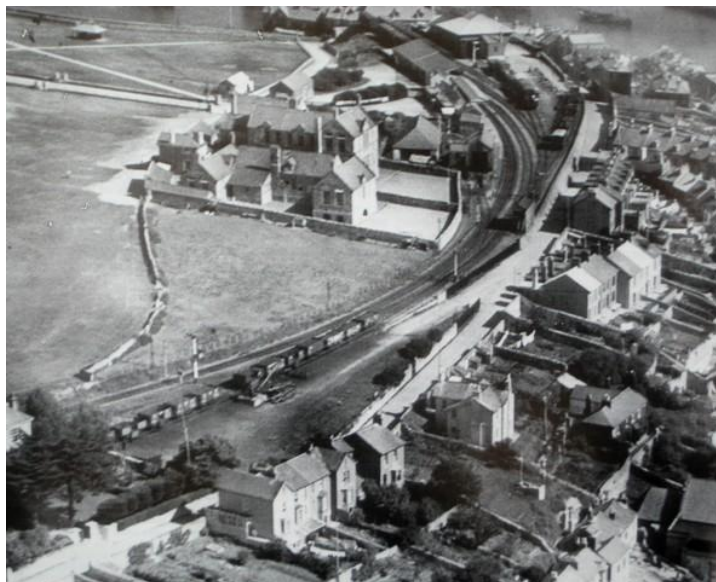
obviously a keen gardener, as the interior of his box was festooned with heavily laden tomato plants, in addition to the more usual accoutrements of his job!

This characterful branch with its friendly staff just had to be explored fully, and so I took the opportunity on the afternoon of the middle Saturday of our fortnight to travel on the auto train to the junction with the Kingswear - Torquay line at Churston, to spend a few hours watching the expected procession of holiday trains at more leisure than had been possible on our trip down. This short ride had a special significance for me, as it was the first time I had been allowed out on my own on an unfamiliar journey, to buy my own ticket - cost sixpence - and plan the time of my return; this being preparatory to starting at Grammar School in the autumn which entailed a daily three mile bus ride from home. My father even entrusted me to borrow his old folding bellows Kodak roll film camera to try my hand at photographing the branch train, after suitable tuition. I still have the results, the first of many railway photos, of passable standard in the circumstances but not of publishable quality by any means. That day I set off across the common feeling very proud and happy, aged eleven and three quarters!

Although I was in good time, the little train had already arrived, with loco 1470 again (in fact it served here more or less continuously from 1958, when it had become redundant due to closure of the Ashburton branch, to 1962 when it was displaced by a diesel railcar and sent for scrap) and the crew the same smiling familiar faces that we had previously encountered. More shunting around in the yard was in progress, carried out with the passenger coaches still attached to the engine. Departure time came and went; I was the only passenger waiting, and after a few minutes the guard came across to the platform to enquire whether I wished to travel beyond Churston. He then ushered me across the lines and up the steps into the auto coach, "so that the driver need not waste time bringing the train back to the platform".

The whole amazing ensemble then took off for the junction; two BR design steel auto cars arranged one in front of and one behind the engine, the latter followed up by a whole string of loaded and somewhat malodorous fish vans. Naturally I was invited to ride with the driver in the front cab and we were joined by the guard; only the fireman remained in his rightful place on the engine. Compared to my frequent experiences on the similar but late lamented Staines West auto train, one further bit of bending the rules quickly became apparent - the regulator linkage between the coach and the engine was disconnected, "I can't be bothered with it, never works properly anyway", so the fireman was doing the driving as well!

After only a few minutes we rattled and rolled round the final curve and ground to a halt by the branch home signal just outside Churston station, within sight of the main line. Here we waited as a long train of dirty carriages double headed by a "Hall" and a "Grange" struggled up the last few yards of the gradient under the road bridge into the station. This was apparently the 8.05 am Cardiff - Kingswear running somewhat late, with which we should have connected had there been any passengers requiring it. After it had departed, I was surprised that we ran straight into the down main platform which it had occupied rather than the short branch bay siding at the east end.



The significance of events at Brixham now became fully apparent, as we waited the arrival of an up train from Kingswear, just two or three empty passenger carriages behind a grimy “Hall”, but trailed by an assortment of bogie and four wheeled vans off all four regions, no doubt intended to collect return passengers’ luggage further up the line. As he passed by, the fireman of the “Hall” tossed the single line token across to the auto train driver standing on the down platform just in front of his train, who in turn passed it up to the signalman through the open window of the very conveniently situated signal box. A few deft movements followed within, and the route was now set for 1470 and stock to venture out a short way towards Kingswear, then reverse to buffer up the Brixham van contingent to the rear of the Hall’s train for onward transmission. One got the impression they had carried out this sequence of operations in such an efficient manner many times before! The engine watered, vans duly coupled and uncoupled and the brakes tested, the Hall then shuffled off smokily under the road bridge and down the curving gradient towards Paignton.

After a decent interval, 1470 and its two auto coaches were bidden forward by the signalman brandishing a green flag, to pass by chirpily, disappear momentarily from view around the corner, then set back into its normal home in the bay platform. The little engine then sat simmering quietly for a few minutes in the sunshine while its crew settled on a nearby platform seat with brew can, mugs and newspapers before scuttling off to Brixham and back in time for the next down main-line arrival.

In due course, a vertical pall of black smoke and steam moving along the line of the cutting heralded the arrival of a Bristol based “Grange” pounding noisily up the gradient at the head of another dowdy rake of ex-GWR carriages comprising the 6.35 am from Wolverhampton, by now almost totally empty on the last leg of its run to Kingswear. Only one or two passengers got down here and made their way along the platform to the Brixham shuttle. I ran up to the other end just in time to see a clean “Castle” gliding into the up loop with the 1.40 pm express to Paddington, a uniform rake of BR mark 1 carriages in chocolate and cream livery, also quite empty. 1470 was quickly aroused from its slumbers and all three trains departed virtually simultaneously. Before long it was back again, to meet the 10.15 am Paddington with another “Castle”, collecting a few more passengers this time, and off again with scarcely a break.

An unexpected quiet descended upon this now deserted country station, and it gradually dawned on me that despite being a peak summer Saturday this was certainly no Newton Abbot or Taunton! Now at a loose end, I tapped timidly on the closed wooden booking office window, which shot up almost immediately. Proffering a penny at arm’s length and trying to pretend I had not arrived by train (though I had probably been observed discreetly throughout), I asked boldly for a Platform Ticket. This was required, you will understand, merely as a memento for my collection, and I naturally assumed such would be readily available since they were commonplace back home and indeed an absolute necessity there should one wish to set foot legally on most station platforms. The ticket office inmate at Churston however must have thought he had a proper town bred head case here, and patiently tried to explain that I didn’t need one, and could feel free to explore everywhere at will, for as long as I wanted. I persisted, trying hard to explain my ulterior motive but this appeared to achieve no further comprehension, so I gave up, somewhat ungrateful and disappointed. Only with hindsight did I come to realize that such things as platform tickets were quite unheard of in this neck of the woods and he probably did not have any to sell to me even if he wanted to!

In due course the branch train quietly reappeared from Brixham, this time with no vans in tow, and I photographed it from the road bridge.....

A massive train rolled in from Kingswear double headed by Grange 6833 and Newton Abbot based Manor 7806, the first of that type I had ever seen, but almost completely empty being probably two down trains combined into one up one for ease of



working. From the other direction to cross it on the single line came a real surprise - a clean, black 9F 2-10-0 on a rake of mark-1s whose roof boards confirmed it to be the 9.5am from Swansea. This was one of very few BR standard locomotives I encountered on this holiday, and looking quite out of place on this single track route, but which apparently worked this train quite regularly.

Another gap while the main-line sections cleared, then filthy mogul 5332, apparently Llanelly based, appeared with another long rake of mainly maroon painted coaches, again little patronized. It seemed that these trains were running up and down merely to keep them out of the way of the much busier stations further east for a few hours.

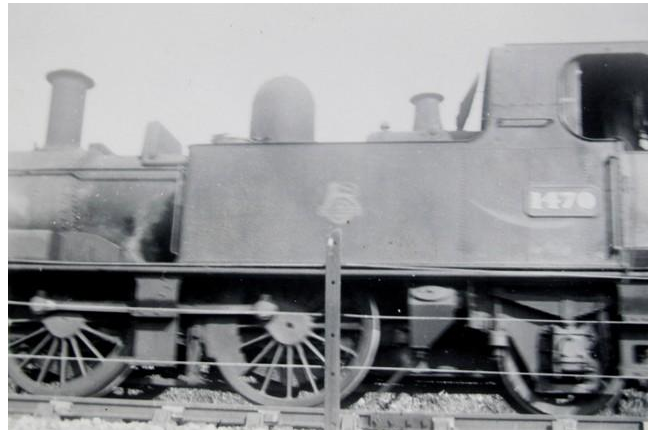
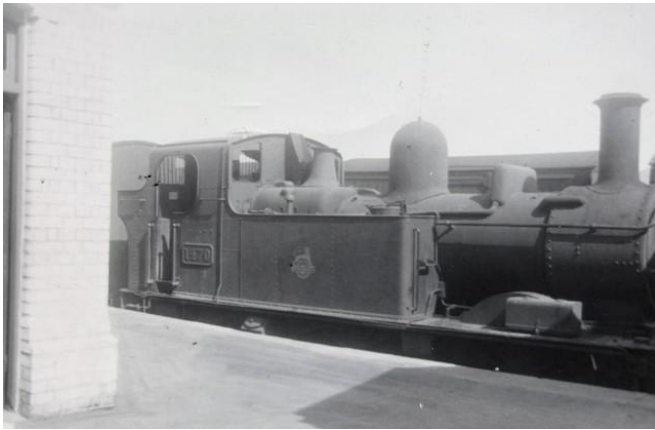
One more period of activity remained to complete my afternoon entertainment. The down "Torbay Express", a smart chocolate & cream mk1 set behind another gleaming Castle topped the grade effortlessly and stopped briefly, barely behind the scheduled time, but no one alighted. The branch train remained empty and simmering in the bay for a further half hour or so awaiting the following down train, Hall 6926 on the 8.00 am Sheffield Midland comprised of Stanier LMS stock. This crossed the 4.35 pm Kingswear - Paddington, with spotless "County" no. 1005 on a mixed GW and mk1 formation. It was now time for me to board the Brixham auto reluctantly and return to base.

Here are some colour images of Churston station taken in the early 1970s; the place had not changed a great deal in the intervening years.....



Back at the terminus, I attempted one or two more not very successful photos of faithful old 1470 as it embarked on its first evening spell of van shunting in the yard (this time having shed its coaches, one in a siding for storage until the following Saturday, the other in the platform for continuation of the normal passenger service).....





In the course of this I was rounded upon by a couple of local urchins of about my age, scruffy and dirty, who seemed to take great exception to the appearance of one obviously spoilt suburban kid - toting a camera of all things - on their territory. Now terrified that I would betray my father's trust at the end of this so far very satisfactory afternoon, I must have been visibly trembling with fear before my aggressors, who were demanding that I hand over the camera. Fortunately they backed off sufficiently after a short while for me to make my escape, in tears after their coarse verbal tirade; I returned running all the way to the parental fold, unharmed physically at least, and with the precious camera and film intact.

During the course of the rest of our holiday, we spent one afternoon cruising across the bay to Torquay on a very rough old admiralty cutter converted for tripping use but totally unsuited to same. The regular ferries across the bay, the "Western Ladies" took half an hour from Brixham to Torquay, the same as the bus, but were much more expensive and not a lot of fun in rough weather either. At Torquay we saw a procession of 51xx tanks forging westwards with local passenger and goods trains past the colourful formal municipal gardens.....



Hereabouts also was seen a goodly selection of Devon General buses, both ancient and modern; the expected "Nationals" seemed completely banished from this area!

Another day took us on foot from Churston station along delightful woodland paths above the Dart near Dittisham with tantalizing glimpses of the Kingswear railway far below, on either side of Greenway Tunnel. At the eastern portal, I was amazed to see Plymouth based "King" 6027 forging uphill, a most incongruous sight on this single track branch line, but probably commonplace then. At the other end the line led straight out of the tunnel onto a high stone viaduct shrouded in thick woodland, an incredible bit of railway engineering to my young eyes.

We also visited Dartmouth, with its peculiar and distinctive ex-GWR "station" (as it was proclaimed to



be by a large wooden hoarding on the roof), surely the only one where no railway tracks were to be found, and whose service across the River Dart from Kingswear seemed to be provided solely by a small BR-owned diesel launch, the "Humphrey Gilbert". We took a short afternoon cruise on the river; the British Navy seemed to be massed both downstream of Dartmouth and inland as far as the broad sweeping curve at Noss Mayo; numerous grey hulks, some gleaming, some rusty and others of all shades in between were moored sometimes two, three or four abreast. I was surprised that we should be able to encounter these vessels at such close quarters, awed by their might but also somewhat scared when calling to mind their intended purpose.

A few notes about the **bus services** around Brixham in 1959:

The Devon General bus terminus in the centre of the town was new, opened in October 1957. It was built on sloping ground between Middle Street and Fore Street and housed nine vehicles. By day it served as the area bus station but at night the outer doors were closed up to form a secure garage (it was demolished in 1995). The central car park adjacent was used as a coach park in the summer months.

Devon General service 12 operated all year round, every 10 to 12 minutes. The route was Brixham to Newton Abbot via Churston Ferrers, Waterside, Broadsands, Goodrington, Paignton, Torquay, Newton Road Garage and Kingskerswell, to Newton Abbot bus station. The new Leyland "Atlantean" double-deckers had arrived in early 1959; they had Metro-Cammell bodies seating 76, and were registered in the series 872-888 ATA. These were supplemented on the prestigious service 12 by occasional AEC Regent V vehicles from the ROD 760-769 and TTT 780-789 batches.



Devon General service 700 operated only in July and August, running hourly with Regent V vehicles. The route was same as the 12 from Brixham to Paignton, then Marlton, Shiphay Lanes Bridge, Kingskerswell and Newton Abbot, limited stop.

Service 12d ran in summer only, using open-top buses: 1930's AEC Regent 1 in OD74xx series whose Short Bros bodies had been converted by Longwell Green. The route was Babbacombe – Paignton seafront – Churston – Brixham. The AEC Regents were replaced by the "Sea-Dog" Atlanteans in 1961.

Service 37 was a local route within Brixham: Bus Station – Bolton Road – Astley Park – Berry Head Road – Quay – Overgang Road – Fishcombe (terminus near the railway station). It ran ½ hourly in summer with 2 AEC Reliance single-deckers from the 1957 VDV796-800 batch.

Service 12b ran half-hourly in summer (shared between Devon General and Burton's Coaches) but only hourly in winter (Burton's alone). Route Brixham Bus Station – Burton Garage (Bolton St.) – Milton St. – Higher Brixham – Brixham Cross – Hillhead – Boohay – Kingswear (Banjo turning place, above the station). Burton's used their 1955 Leyland PD2 double-decker POD100 in 1959. Devon General used mainly AEC Regent V's.



Burton also operated a holiday camp service, a 10 minute run from Sharkham Point to Brixham Bus Station. Duple-bodied Bedford single-deck buses 982MPT and 242WNT were being used in 1959. Devon General provided



the service from the holiday camps to Churston station on Saturdays – usually a Regent V double-decker.

Many coach operators came to Brixham during the week with tours in the summer months. These included Greenslades from Exeter, Embankment from Plymouth, Wallace Arnold from Torquay, Grey Cars, and the Royal Blue express coach service. Burton's were primarily a coach operator, indeed the only one offering tours starting from Brixham: "Moorland & Coastal"..... "From Burtons Garage, Central Coach Stand (at rear of Woolworths & International Stores) and most Holiday Camps". Burton's coaches was the trading name of J. Geddes & Sons. The regular tours ran to Powderham Castle, Exmoor, Dartmoor, Dartmeet, Hexworthy Falls and Plymouth. The coaches were green and grey, with white window surrounds.

So eventually came the time to pack up and return home; certainly with considerable reluctance, as the weather had been so perfect throughout we had not needed to wear coats or jackets at any time, even in the evenings and I felt as though the holiday could last forever. The trunk was taken, along with many others, by British Railways lorry down for the branch train on the Friday evening, with us following early the next morning, this time the proper way throughout by train. There was in fact a very convenient 9.45 am main-line service which started at Churston; it was already at the platform when we arrived off the branch train, having presumably worked up from Kingswear as empty stock. The station was busier than at any time I had seen it the previous week, as several buses and coaches of assorted vintages also discharged their home going throng in the yard in front of the railway hotel. We installed ourselves comfortably in a quiet compartment of an ex-GWR third, but this was soon assailed by the congregated masses at Paignton (leaving many more still behind on the platform, presumably waiting for a following, Midlands bound train). Our loco was Newton Abbot Castle 5029 as far as Exeter, reached without undue fuss or delay. My spotting log was further enhanced by several more Castles, Halls and Granges en route, including no. 7000 which had long eluded me, also Manor 7813 from Plymouth. Prairie tanks 5521, 32 and 43 were massed at Taunton on branch line connections as we passed slowly through, and I photographed 5075 "Gladiator" waiting light engine in an adjacent goods loop from the carriage window, framed by a nice GWR wooden bracket signal somewhere near Wellington.....



We proceeded uneventfully back to familiar territory, our holiday now clearly at an end, typified by our first sight of a green London Transport RT near Slough, looking strange somehow after our fortnights' exposure to the very different buses of Devon General. We were running just under half an hour late as old friend prairie tank 6143 paced us exactly on the relief line over the last few miles from Acton into the terminus with the 1.55 pm up Slough suburban train, which we soon enough boarded to return to West Drayton and home. A few days later came the trunk, and the long awaited black and white prints of my photographic efforts from the chemists, then it was off into a new term and a new school!

