

In Search of the Great Western Railway

Part 1: 1965 - 1967

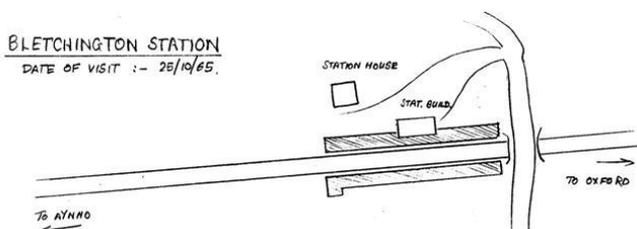
I first met Chris Leigh in the summer of 1965, through his brother Roger (who was also at Strode's School, though a couple of years below me), in connection with the formation of the Staines Model Railway Society, and also with tentative proposals for the preservation of the Staines West branch line, recently closed. We discovered a shared interest in the rural routes of the former Great Western Railway, and together with another school friend, Paul Chamberlain we embarked initially on a series of day trips then planned a longer holiday tour for August 1966. The station sketch plans included here are just that; not to scale, and exactly as we drew them at the time. Where track had been lifted but its location was still clear, we drew it in, but otherwise left blank spaces.

Saturday 23rd October 1965

As Chris was the only one of us who had passed his driving test by then, we ventured forth from Staines early in the morning in his trusty Hillman Minx. Our trip book shows that we headed first towards the Oxford area, calling in at Taplow and Marlow stations, Lewknor Bridge Halt on the Watlington branch, then Thame, Tiddington and Wheatley on the line from Oxford to Princes Risborough. However the Thames Valley fog was slow to clear, and our Ektachrome colour-slide film expensive then, so my first photograph that day was ironically not on the GWR at all, but at Islip, a remote station on the former London & North Western Railway line from Oxford (Rewley Road) to Bicester and Bletchley. Chris parked at the top of the sloping approach road, and we walked down towards the station building. We were surprised on looking round that the car was following right behind us; the handbrake was somewhat suspect! He managed to arrest its progress at around the point where the photo was taken, avoiding any embarrassing collision with either the building, or the fine vehicle AYJ973 (a Wolseley? registered in Dundee 1951) parked outside in the lingering fog.....

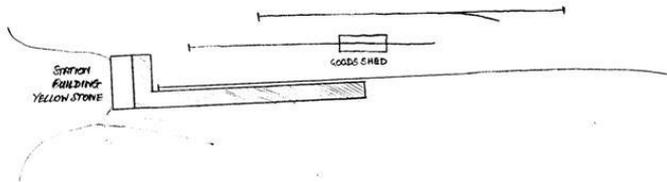


Next stop was Bletchington, on the GWR main line from Oxford northwards towards Banbury. It had closed to passengers in November 1964 as a result of the Beeching plan elimination of many such wayside local stopping places, but was still largely intact a year later. The goods yard, only closed just before our visit, had already been dismantled, with all track lifted. The station furniture has been stripped out and dumped on the platform awaiting collection.....



We then called at Blenheim & Woodstock, former terminus of the short branch line from Kidlington, long closed and with the main building in use as garage offices at the time of our visit. A fine collection of contemporary vehicles is parked outside, with Chris's Hillman just visible at right, in front of a Morris Minor GPO Telephones van, a Morris Minor saloon and a Ford Thames van.....

BLENHEIM & WOODSTOCK STATION
DATE OF VISIT : 25/10/65



Next stop was Handborough for Blenheim, on the Oxford – Worcester main line, descended into rural slumber again after its moment of renown in January 1965 as the arrival station for Winston

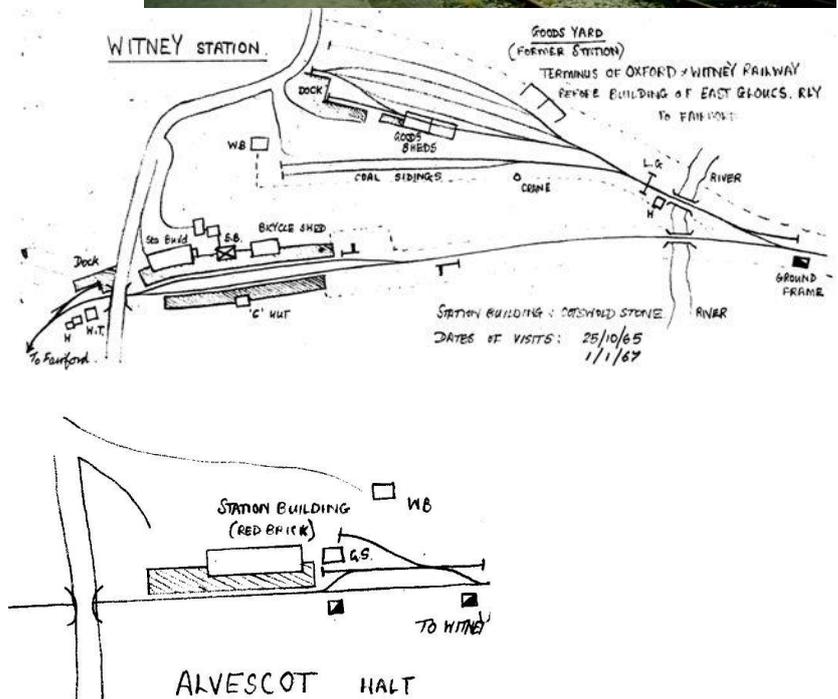


Churchill's funeral train.....

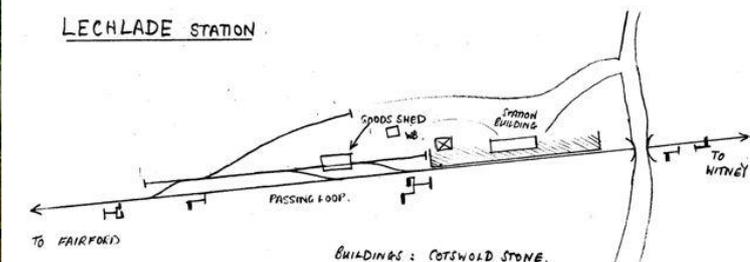
We then looked at some of the stations on the Fairford branch line, closed to passengers in 1962. First to Witney, then still open for freight traffic, which was dealt with at the extensive goods yard on the site of the old terminus station to the north of the passenger station. However the latter retained its track, presumably used for run-around and shunting purposes, and all the former station facilities seemed to be still in good order.....



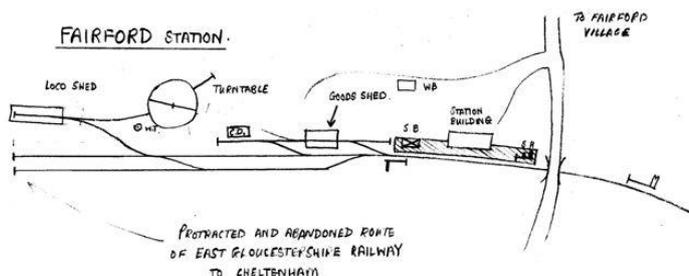
Alvescot (below) was on the section of the branch beyond Witney where all track had by now been removed.



Lechlade was our next stop.....



Then the branch terminus at Fairford, some distance from the village.....

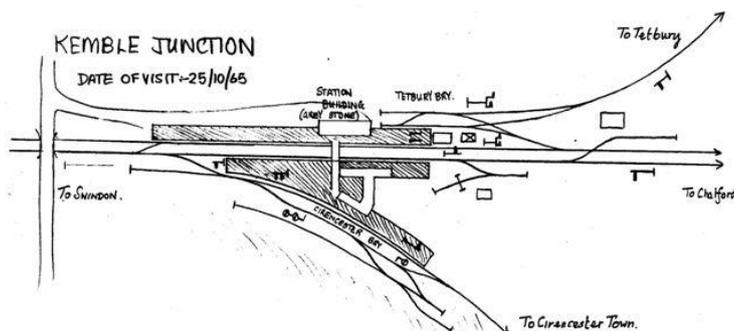


There was not a great deal left to see at Cricklade, a station on the former Midland & South Western Junction Railway line from Andover to Cheltenham, so we continued on to the GWR Swindon – Gloucester line, first stop Minety & Ashton Keynes, with its elegant Brunel-designed buildings.....

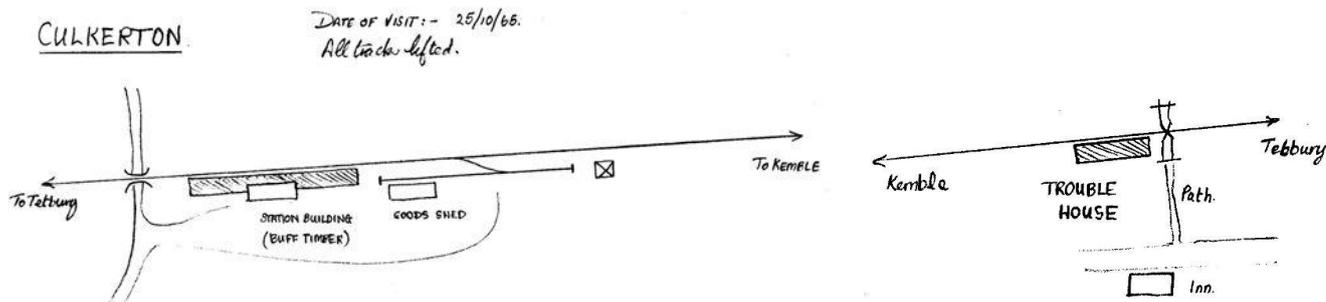


Then via Oaksey Halt to Kemble, former junction for branches to Tetbury and Cirencester. The latter curves off to the right in our first photo, looking northwards.....

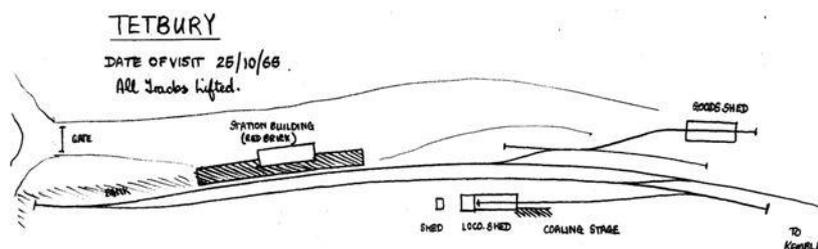
The water tower at Kemble was very distinctive, with its little "header tank". The route of the Tetbury branch, with track now removed, diverges to the left behind the water tower.



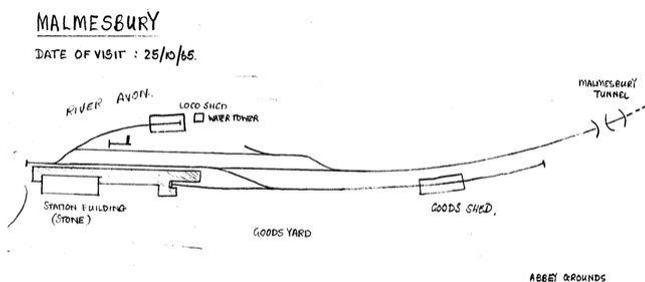
The Tetbury branch stations at Culkerton and Trouble House were simple affairs, the latter a relatively recent halt provided for the diesel railbuses which worked the line, and serving only the nearby inn of the same name.



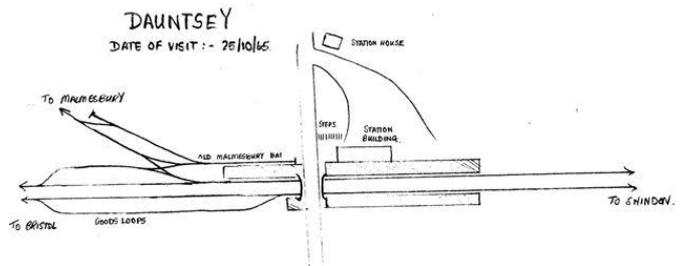
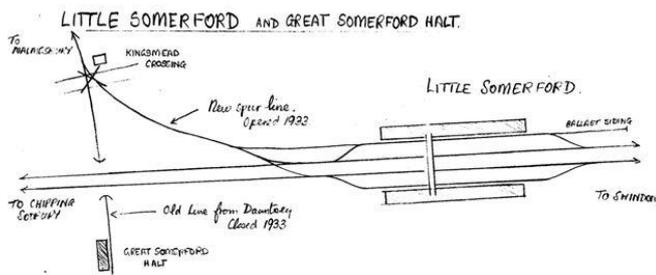
The terminus station at Tetbury retained its neat red-brick main building, complete with canopy, and the small engine shed also survived, with its wooden coal stage.....



From here we made our way over the Gloucester – Wiltshire county boundary the short distance to another country branch terminus, Malmesbury, in the shadow of the ruined abbey. The distinctive stone station house appears to have been a one-off design to suit its august surroundings

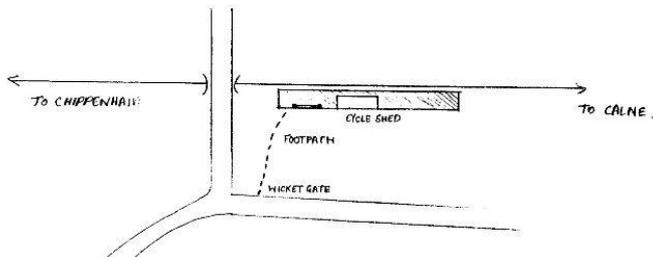


The Malmesbury branch was unusual in having two junctions with the main line system, initially at Dauntsey on the line to Bristol, and later at Little Somerford on the direct line from Swindon to the Severn Tunnel and South Wales was opened.



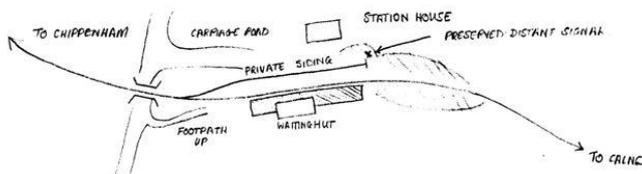
Our last set of stops on this extensive first day's exploration was on the Calne branch line from Chippenham. Here is Stanley Bridge Halt, first stop from the junction, looking westwards into the setting sun.....

STANLEY BRIDGE HALT
DATE OF VISIT - 25/10/65

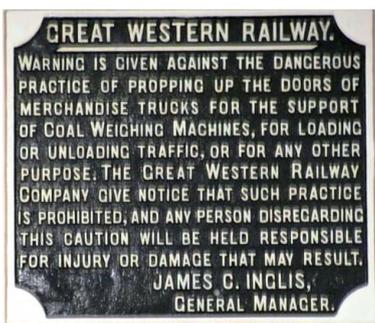


Next came Chris's all-time favourite, Black Dog Halt, originally a private station serving the adjacent estate, and with suitable commodious waiting room.....

BLACK DOG HALT
DATE OF VISIT - 25/10/65



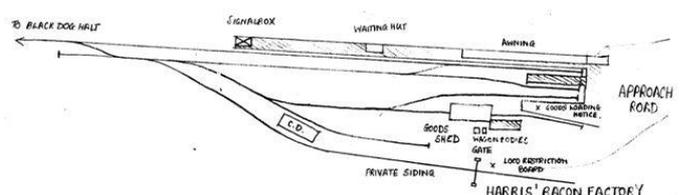
And lastly the terminus at Calne, shorn of most of its trackwork by now....



The famous Thames Valley fog descended again in the evening as we made our way home, and was especially thick by the Bells of Ouseley inn at Old



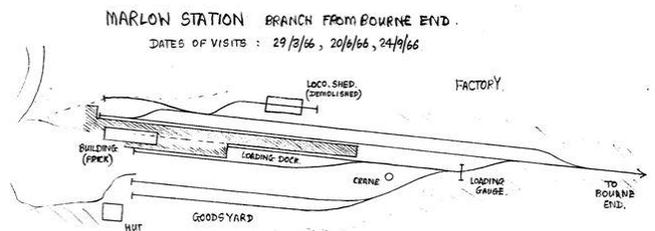
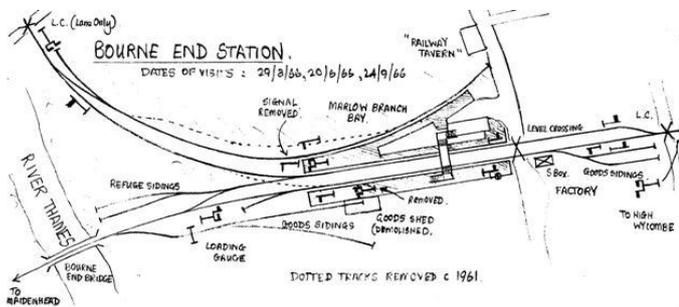
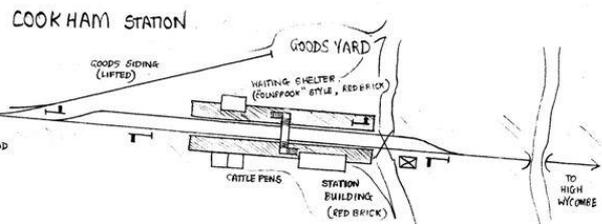
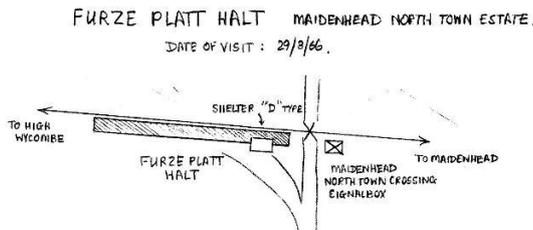
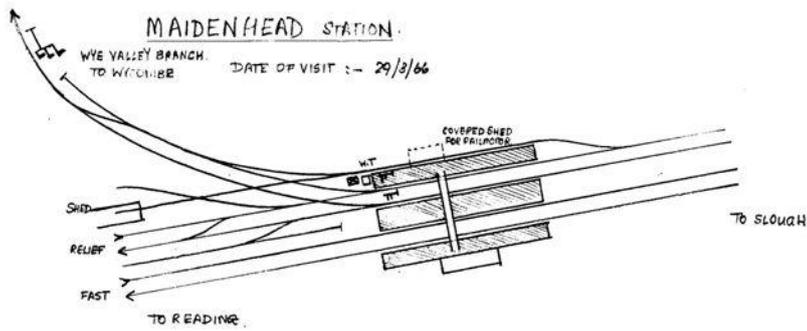
CALNE
DATE OF VISIT - 25-10-65



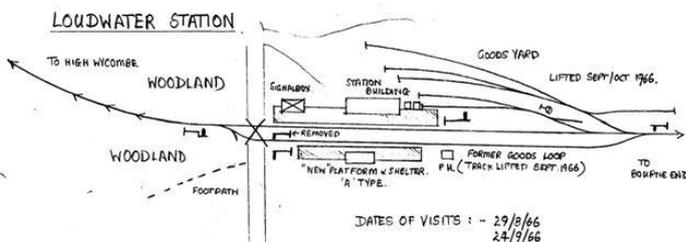
Windsor. So much so that Chris could not even see the line of the kerb, and due to the proximity of the unguarded river bank here it was deemed prudent for me to get out and walk along the edge of the roadway just in front of the car to guide him, for about ½ mile or so. We covered some 220 miles on this day trip, using around 7 gallons of fuel at 4/6d a gallon, total cost 30/-, or around 10/- (50p) each for the three of us!

Saturday 26th February 1966

This was in comparison a much shorter and undemanding trip, centred around the Bourne End – High Wycombe branch line in Buckinghamshire, which was then scheduled for closure but in the event did not do so until 1970. Parking the car at Maidenhead station, we took the WR single-car diesel unit from there (picture right) to Furze Platt Halt, Cookham and Bourne End, then deviating up the short branch to Marlow.....



Back at Bourne End, the railcar then continued northwards on the twisting single line to Wooburn Green and Loudwater, where we broke our journey for an hour or so to explore this delightful country station.....



The next service train took us on to High Wycombe, on the main WR line to Birmingham, and we decided to go on by a 3-car Pressed Steel diesel set on the stopping service to Princes Risborough.....

My ticket, price 4/6d (22.5p) which I liked to keep as a souvenir of our journeys whenever possible, was unceremoniously ripped in half by the ticket collector on arrival, handing me this fragment for the return trip (the High Wycombe to Maidenhead equivalent had to be surrendered completely on our eventual return to our starting point).



Princes Risborough station is on the former GW and Great Central Railway Joint line, and as such, responsibility for the signalling had recently passed from BR (Eastern Region) to the Western Region at the time of our visit. We were surprised to see that the modern ER pattern upper-quadrant structures had all been taken down, and replaced by these brand-new WR *lower-quadrant* arrays.....such is the march of progress! An Aylesbury branch train is entering the station in the background.

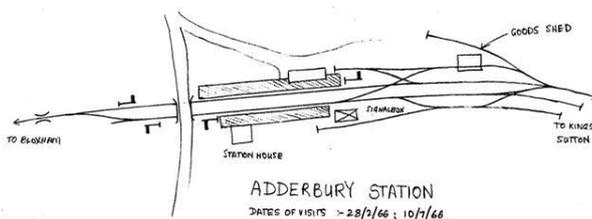
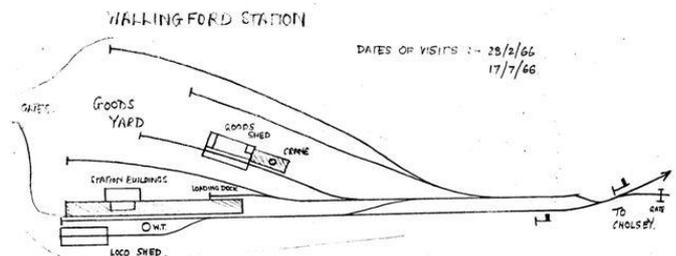
Saturday 2nd April 1966

This was another straightforward trip, looking at some of the more interesting places we had missed in October. First stop was Wallingford, terminus of the short branch from Cholsey & Moulsoford, with its layout then still largely intact.....



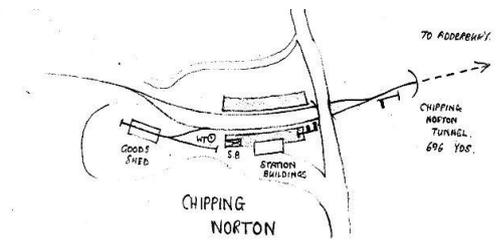
We called in briefly at Appleford Halt, on the main Oxford – Banbury line, then at the Abingdon branch terminus, then still in use for loading new cars from the MG factory nearby.

Bypassing Oxford, we came to Adderbury, first station westwards on the former secondary line from King's Sutton to Kingham and Cheltenham. This was a most interesting place, still in use this far for freight traffic and largely intact, though seemingly just about to be stripped and demolished. Our set of 5 pictures record the scene here, including the abrupt “end of the line” to the west of the station platforms....





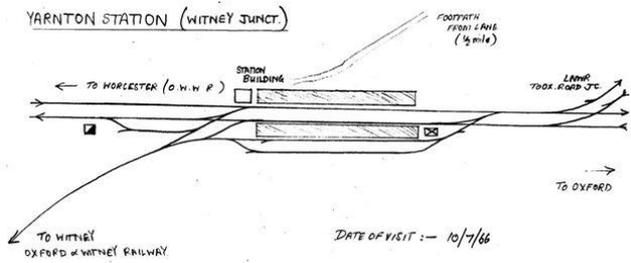
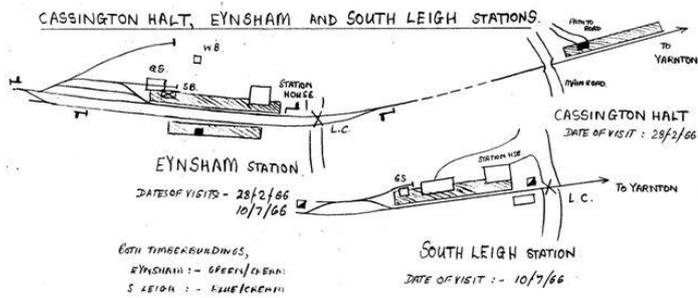
We were disappointed to find that there was not much left of the old station at Chipping Norton, the furthest point of our tour that day. Turning south, we next looked at Ascott-under-Wychwood, on the Oxford – Worcester main line.....



and then called at Charlbury, and Coombe Halt, along the line towards Oxford.....



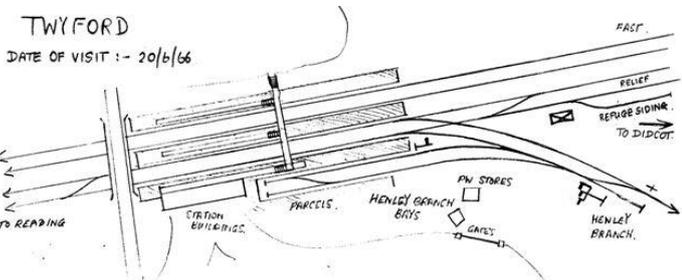
Our final stops of the day were at Eynsham and Cassington Halt on the eastern part of the Fairford branch, the junction station at Yarnton, and Tiddington, on the Oxford-Princes Risborough line.....



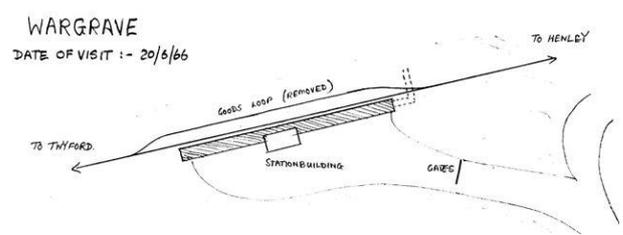
Sunday 20th June 1966

This afternoon trip was with school friend Nigel Walters, who had just passed his driving test, supervising me as a learner, in dad's Morris Minor 300KCG. As a little break from "A"-level revision, no doubt!

Our first call was at Twyford, where the Henley branch railcar waited in its bay platform.....



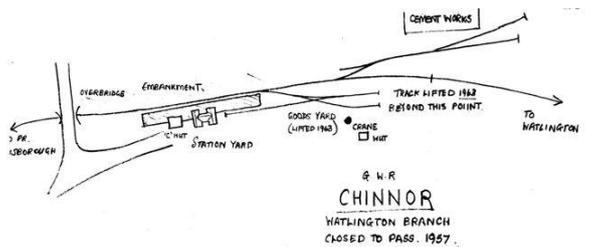
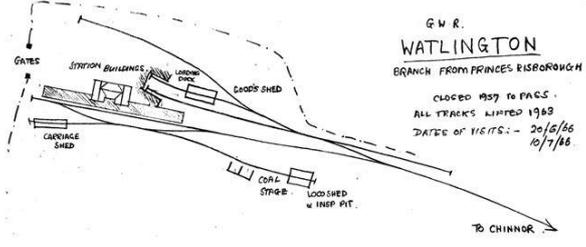
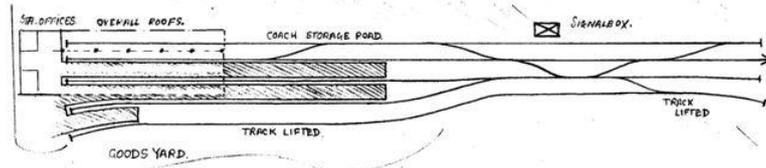
Then on via the Henley branch halt at Wargrave, to the terminus.....



We next came to the former branch terminus of Watlington, and its intermediate station of Chinnor, on the way to princes Risborough....

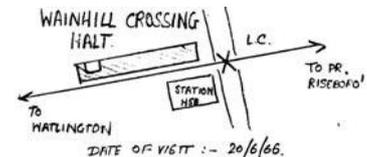
HENLEY - ON - THAMES

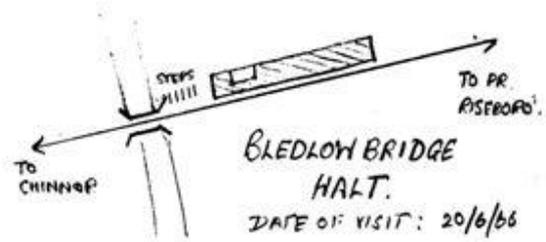
DATES OF VISITS : 20/6/66 and 24/9/66.



A quaint survivor along the branch was the tiny wayside halt at Wainhill Crossing, pictured below.....

.....and the next one at Bledlow Bridge was similar.





On our way home we called in at Marlow, then at Bourne End, where the single unit railcar was about to leave for High Wycombe.....

Lastly to Taplow, where the Great Western Society was establishing itself in the old goods shed, working on their 2-6-2 tank locomotive 6106.....



Our day trips had so far been very successful, so it was not difficult to start thinking about an extended holiday trip around Wales and the West Country in the summer of 1966. Sometime in April then, Chris, Paul and myself had met on a Sunday afternoon at Chris's house in Chandos Road, Staines, to formulate possible routes for a fortnight's tour. After poring over maps and notebooks for about 2 hours, we emerged with an outline plan. As we were all members of the Youth Hostels Association, we proposed to make use of their accommodation for our overnight stays, and the route was adjusted to provide suitable stopping places. For the next 3 months or so nothing more happened, save in several minor details. The route mileage was calculated, and adjusted where necessary to maintain an average of around 100 miles driving per day. The provisional dates were fixed for the last two weeks of August, 1966. We abandoned the idea of booking at the Youth Hostels in advance, as a change of plan, which was in fact to occur, would result in wasted money. Instead we were to risk not being able to find room, and decided to try and find a small tent to be carried in the car, which we could use in the event of this happening.

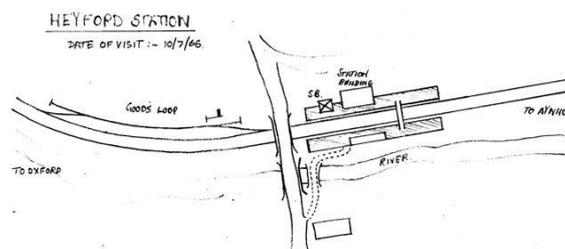
Chris had difficulty fixing his holiday dates at work, so we changed to the first two weeks in August, having just managed to avoid cutting our trip down to one week only. A final route was drafted and checked, and the road numbers inserted where possible from the AA maps.

Meanwhile, we embarked on one more day trip, in Chris's trusty 1955 vintage Hillman Minx.....

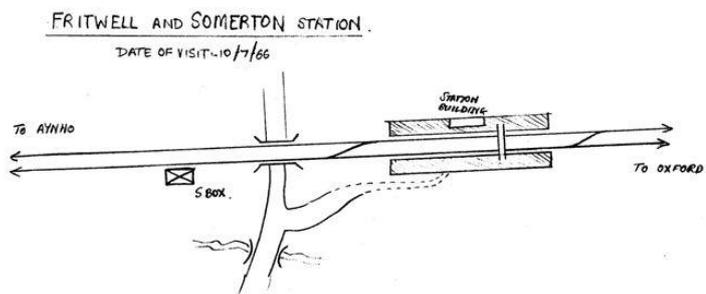
Sunday 10th July 1966

Going out from Staines via Cowley and Uxbridge (Vine Street) stations, we called at Seer Green Halt, Gerrards Cross and Beaconsfield stations on the direct Birmingham main line, then West Wycombe, Aston Rowant and Watlington without finding anything particularly photogenic, especially as we were no doubt

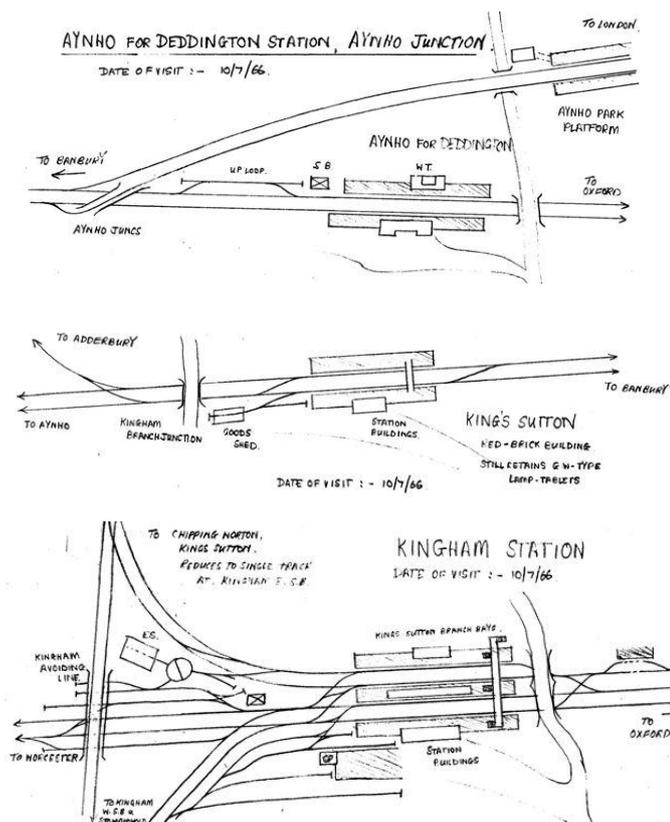
conserving valuable pocket money for film for the main holiday. We also looked in at Wheatley, then Islip again, before our first main stop at Heyford, in its pretty canal-side setting on the Oxford – Banbury main line.....



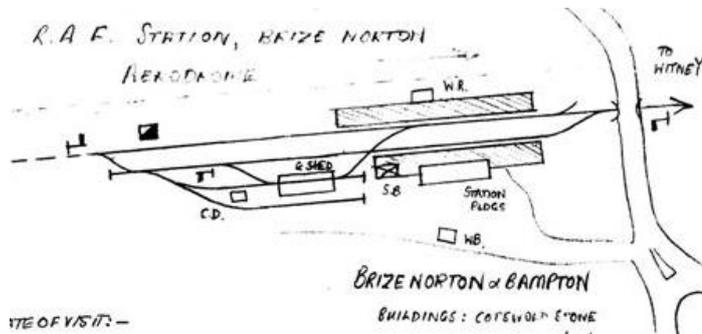
Fritwell & Somerton halt was the next stop going northwards on this line, followed by Aynho for Deddington, then recently closed to passengers.....



After quick calls at Kings Sutton, then Adderbury, Bloxham, Hook Norton and Rollright Halt on the cross-country line from Banbury to Cheltenham, we came to Kingham, formerly a major junction between that route and the Oxford – Worcester main line which crossed it at right angles. Here is Kingham station, with its fine display of roses, and our sketch plan of the layout here.....



We made our way homeward via the stations at Moreton in Marsh, Shipton under Wychwood, then along the part of the Fairford branch we had not seen previously, to Brize Norton & Bampton, South Leigh and Eynsham, thence Yarnton and Culham, all without taking further pictures.



The car then broke down in the vicinity of Abingdon, a very terminal problem concerning the linkage of the steering-column mounted gear-change. After covering a mile or two in second gear, a tow truck was summoned to bring it into a local garage, and we caught a bus back into Oxford, thence train to Slough via Didcot and Reading, and another bus for the final stretch home, reached late in the evening.

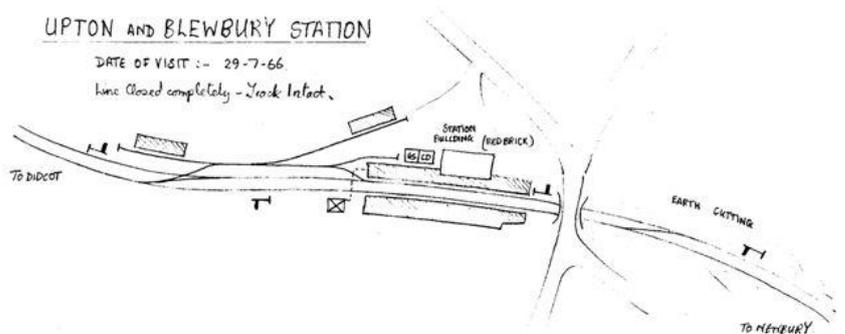
For our main holiday starting just over two weeks later we therefore borrowed my long-suffering father's Morris Minor saloon, with Chris driving most of the time and myself as a practising learner otherwise. The additional insurance cover was arranged, and we went for drives to the Wiltshire Vales and to the Pendon Museum for Chris to familiarise himself with the car, and myself as a first experience of driving on a longer journey.

Our holiday trip was recorded in some detail in a notebook, and the following text is taken verbatim from this (with schoolboy grammar tidied up a little where necessary!).....

We loaded up the car on the Friday evening; included amongst our luggage were the tent, a small but very efficient Primus stove, and a food bin containing around 15 shillings worth of assorted provisions as well as a gallon flask of water. With three of us travelling in this small vehicle, the larger items had to be strapped down to the roof rack with polythene sheet and yards of rope.

Saturday 30th July 1966 *(the dates are one day out on our track sketches!)*

We set off with a full tank of petrol at 7.30am, and having a comparatively large mileage to cover on this first day, kept to the main roads initially – A30 then A4 to Reading, then on the Oxford road for a few miles alongside the River Thames and the GWR main line between Reading and Goring & Streatley stations. A short run along minor roads brought us to Upton & Blewbury station, on the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton line, after passing through the villages of Blewbury and Upton, 2 miles and ½ mile respectively from the station. Here, the main building was still used as a house; all track and signals were intact but obviously out of use – the line presumably awaiting the arrival of the demolition gang.....



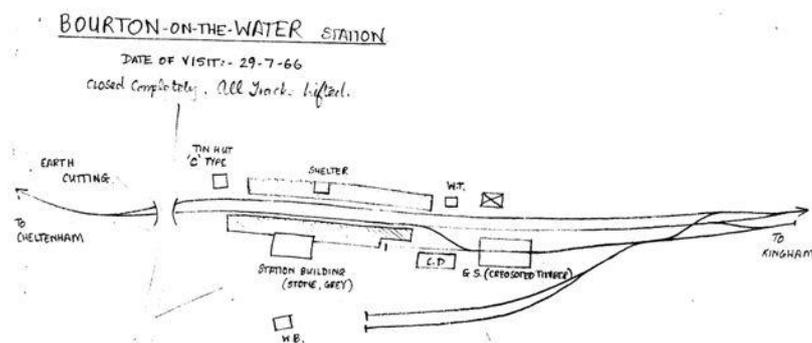
A further few miles along minor roads brought us to the Berkshire market town of Wantage, which we left by the Oxford road after proceeding twice around the Market Square trying to find it. The purpose of this deviation was to follow the course of the Wantage Tramway to Wantage Road station. Its trackbed, but no more, was all that remained clearly visible. Once over the railway bridge at Wantage Road we doubled back to Faringdon, where we found the old station just outside the town after getting hopelessly entangled in the

new one-way street system. The main building of this branch terminus was still intact, and was being converted into a residence. Apart from the single platform, this was the only feature remaining by now.

Kelmscott & Langford was our next stop, the only station we had yet to visit on the Fairford branch line. This was a single platform with a cattle loading dock, and buff-painted corrugated iron buildings. It also had the narrow road overbridge with a waterlogged dip in the trackbed below, characteristic of the civil engineering of this line.



Proceeding northwards, we came to the erstwhile Cheltenham to Kingham railway line at Bourton-on-the-Water, a passing-loop station on this single-track route. The main building here was on the south side of the line, constructed of Cotswold stone with treated oak doors, and now used as a coal merchant's office. The goods shed of creosoted timber still remained, but the brick-based signalbox had been demolished, as had the one at Stow-on-the Wold, where there was just a single platform (photo right).....

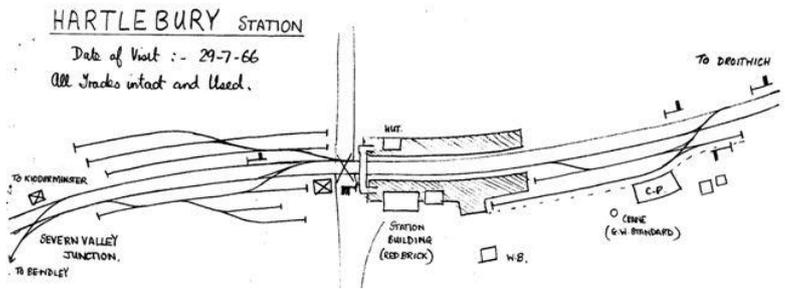


At Blockley, on the Oxford – Worcester main line, we ate lunch in the car beside the signalbox and level-crossing. The station buildings here had been demolished, as they had also at our next stop, Chipping Campden, viewed from the adjacent road bridge. Evesham station was glimpsed from the road bridge, with a suburban diesel unit standing at the platform on an Oxford to Worcester all-stations service.

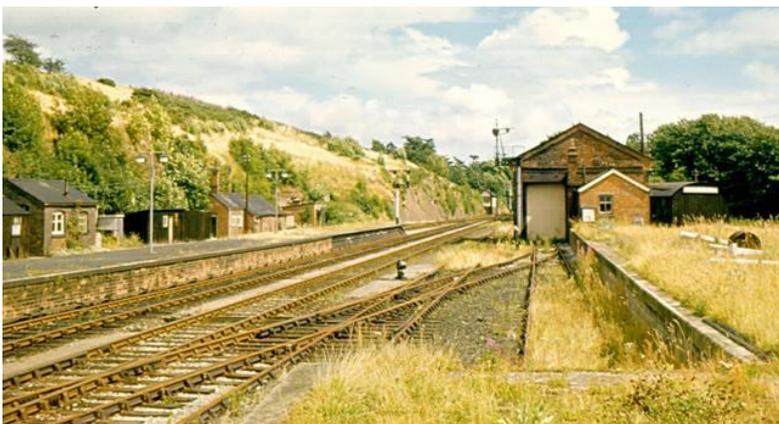
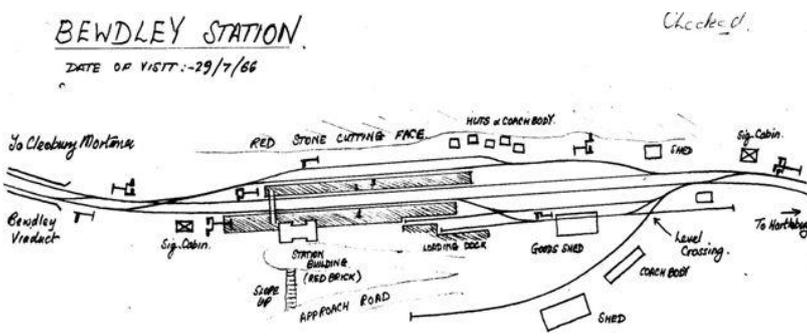
At Droitwich, north of Worcester, we arrived in the station yard just as a diesel unit for Kidderminster was departing. An English Electric diesel loco then appeared in the station on shunting duty. The station itself was quite attractive, though in a predominantly industrial area.....



We could not find Stourport station in the confusion of one-way streets here, so proceeded to Hartlebury, on the Worcester – Kidderminster line and junction for the former Severn Valley line to Buildwas and Shrewsbury. This station was still nominally open, but with few trains calling. A Gloucester single-unit railcar was parked in one of the loops beyond the platform on the westbound side. A notable feature was the original GWR lamp-tablet signage bearing the station name. Extensive sidings, with two signalboxes, stretched away on the other side of the level crossing, towards Severn Valley Junction.....

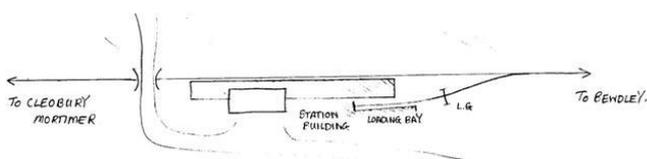


Following the Severn Valley line, we came next to Bewdley, a typical GWR country station which had just been repainted in black and white. There are three platforms, the Severn Valley trains formerly leaving from a bay on the north side of the eastbound island platform. The line approaches the station from the west on a red sandstone viaduct and leaves at the other end in a deep cutting, with the station in between on a ledge, the hillside rising steeply behind it. Goods yard buildings included an old coach body and brick goods shed, from one wall of which sprang an unusual bracket signal controlling the main running line. On the other side of the tracks were some rather dilapidated shacks, including an old 4-wheeled coach body.....

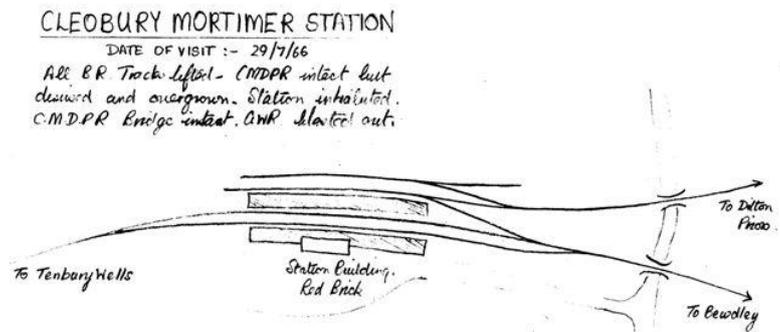


Bewdley station at this time still served as the terminus of an occasional railcar service from Kidderminster, and with coal trains passing through from Alveley Colliery. We could not begin to imagine then how its fortunes would be transformed by the Severn Valley line preservation society in the years following!

Going westwards on the route towards Tenbury Wells, our next stop was at Wyre Forest, a single platform with occupied station house set in a deep clearing and approached by a minor lane leading in a large loop back to the main Cleobury Mortimer road...



At Cleobury Mortimer station, the track on the main route had of course been removed, as at Wyre Forest, and the road bridge blasted out, leaving just the embankment approaches. However the Ditton Priors branch line, latterly operated by the Admiralty, was still intact, with its own bridge, although the tracks were very rusty and overgrown. The station building here also was still inhabited.



We then had a short run nearly to the summit of Clee Hill, about 1100 feet above sea level, past the terminus of the Clee Hill mineral railway then down towards Ludlow. The views from the hill on a clear day such as this extended several miles in all directions. Passing over the level crossing adjacent to Onisbury station, we proceeded on to Craven Arms, a large former L&NWR and GWR joint station, with junctions for Wellington via Much Wenlock, and for the Central Wales line down to Swansea. This was thus a station with a very large nameboard, though by now the Wellington line had closed, and the bottom line had been neatly painted out. A Hereford-bound train passed by, headed by a Brush diesel loco. The former extensive locomotive sheds here, to the west of the main line, lay forlorn and derelict.



We then set out to explore our last line of the day, that from Marsh Farm Junction near Craven Arms, to Much Wenlock. First stop was at Harton Road, the main building of which was by now being used as a stable by a local farmer. It was of stone, standing on the single short platform, and those at the next stations of Rushbury and Longville were very similar. That at Rushbury was inhabited by an architect, who had restored the small wooden signal cabin remaining in situ. At Longville we passed over the bridge by the station but could not see the building, obscured in the trees. After taking the car up to the top of the Wenlock Edge ridge, we parked up and made our way on foot to our accommodation for the night, the Youth Hostel at Wilderhope Manor, in a fine evening drizzle. (At this time it was considered positively undiplomatic to arrive at any Youth Hostel by car, indeed there were no parking facilities and the rules expressly forbade this. If we had done so, we would probably have been refused admission). On arrival we learned from a local farmer that the Warden's car (he apparently being allowed one!) had broken down near Lake Vyrnwy. We set to cooking our meals, accomplished only after exchanging the Calor cylinders in the kitchen to get some gas through!

In the evening we set off down a steep footpath to Longville station, accessed by an overgrown track off the main road. The half-dozen or so buildings were all still intact, though by now very derelict – the site had closed to passengers along with the rest of the line to Much Wenlock in 1951, but remained open for parcels traffic until final abandonment in 1962.

A very comfortable night was spent in the old Manor House, with plenty of room in the large dormitories, which raised our hopes for the rest of the holiday.

Sunday 31st July 1966

Most of the hour or so before breakfast was spent trying to evade our fellow hosteller's questions as to how we were travelling in the area – we must have looked altogether too smartly-dressed! Having regained the car and loaded up, we drove into Much Wenlock and explored the picturesque station area thoroughly, together with the goods yard and locomotive shed.....



The stone abutments of the old bridge over the main road – metal span removed – carried plaques commemorating the building of the railway, including an entreaty: “success to this bridge and to the railway:- may money pass over it heavily, and time lightly, and man smoothly”

At Buildwas Junction we were surprised to find the track on the Severn Valley line towards Berrington intact, as well as several new sidings to serve the power station which had been laid since Chris's visit the previous year. A new section of the power station was under construction, with huge cooling towers, but the former railway station was nowhere to be seen. We took the car up a farm track above the line to Cressage and Berrington, which had for some reason been relaid but we could not fathom the reason for this.

It was a short journey to Ironbridge, where we stopped for a while after manoeuvring the car into the already over-full car park. Over the bridge, we found the derelict station, alongside the River Severn. The track was lifted here, but rails remained set in the level crossing, whose gates were intact. The station building was very dilapidated, and a notice warned that it was unsafe. A good view of the Iron Bridge was had from the old trackbed.....

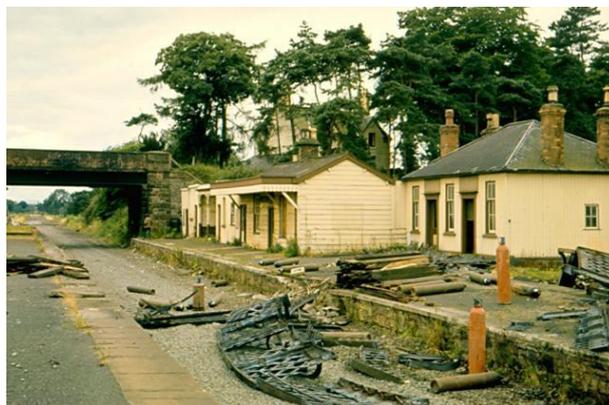


Horsehay & Dawley, on the line which remained intact to serve the Buildwas power station, was a small single-platform station in a cutting by the road overbridge, surrounded by factories and industrial branch sidings. The main building and signalbox were intact, the latter containing a well-maintained token instrument, as well as the lever frame (picture below right).....

We then drove up to the main A5 road outside Wellington, then on around the Shrewsbury bypass. Passing over the Severn Valley line bridge, we noticed that the track was removed from this section, which meant that the line at Buildwas must only have run as far as Cressage or Berrington. We passed over or across the former Shropshire & Montgomeryshire railway several times, including at Maesbrook station, still extant but very derelict.



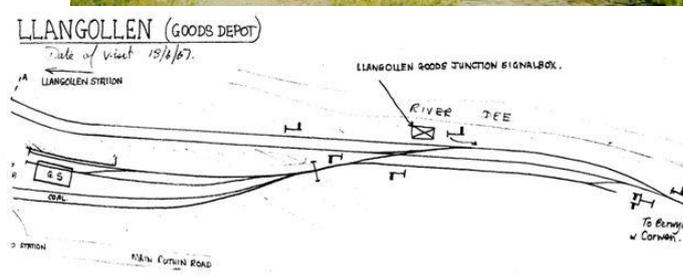
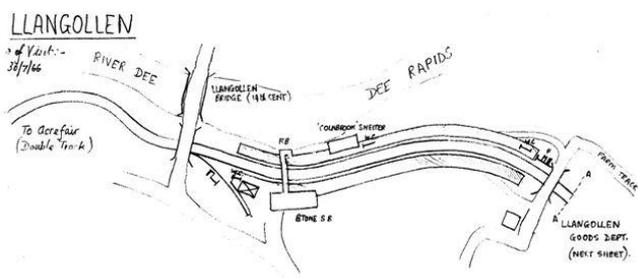
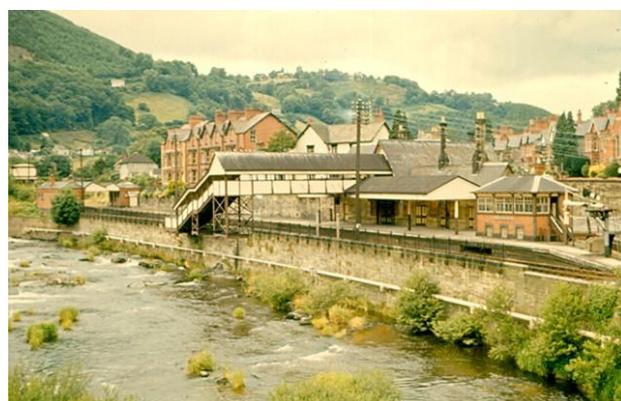
At Llanymynech (former Cambrian Railways) station, the demolition contractors were at work, having just lifted the goods yard tracks and cut up the elegant lattice footbridge into small sections for easy removal. The platform buildings were of timber throughout, and in use as the contractor's mess rooms.....



After searching down several steeply-graded lanes off the main road for Pant station, we assumed it had been razed to the ground. On then to Llyncllys, where the neat station buildings were inhabited, the track lifted in the platforms but intact in the goods yard beyond. The track of the diverging Llanfyllin branch was also intact here, but possibly only for a short distance by now.

At Oswestry we found a fine array of GWR signals on the approach lines, in front of the extensive former Cambrian Railways works buildings. The old GWR terminus station was in use as a goods depot, retaining its original canopy and valencing. The Cambrian station was a huge and impressive building in brick, but being a Sunday all was locked up and inaccessible, although remaining open on weekdays for a short time further. Now that the Cambrian main line from Whitchurch to Welshpool had been closed and mostly removed, the service to Oswestry was from Gobowen along the former GWR branch line. At the latter junction station, we noted the distinctive station buildings beside the level crossing.

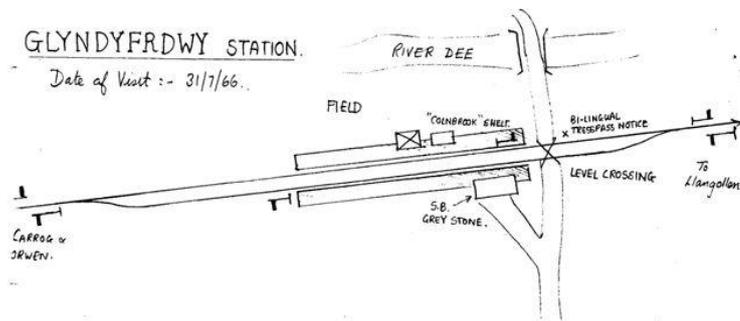
Rejoining the main A5 road, we made a fast run to Llangollen, stopping by the roadside at one point to re-attach a wayward polythene sheet to the roof rack. At Llangollen we refilled with petrol and stocked up with provisions from the local shops. The fine but deserted station was photographed from the famous old river bridge.....



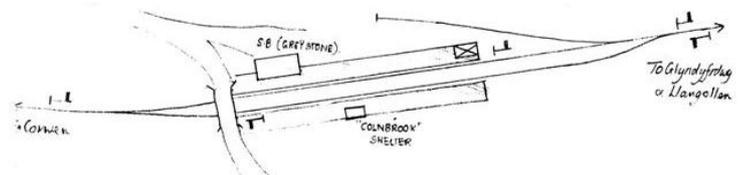
A short run followed to Berwyn Halt, where we pulled off the main road alongside the river rapids and ate lunch. The station building here was a large mock-Tudor design, and inhabited. The track, as at Llangollen, was still intact, but far more overgrown – a freight service was still maintained to Llangollen Goods Yard (until 1968) but beyond had closed down prematurely in late 1964 due to flooding. Near to the station was a frail-looking chain suspension bridge crossing the River Dee rapids to reach a hotel opposite.



Off the main road again, we ventured down a narrow lane to Glyndyfrdwy station, where there was a quaint “trespass” notice in both English and Welsh, by the level crossing. The station buildings and signalbox were best viewed from an adjacent field.....

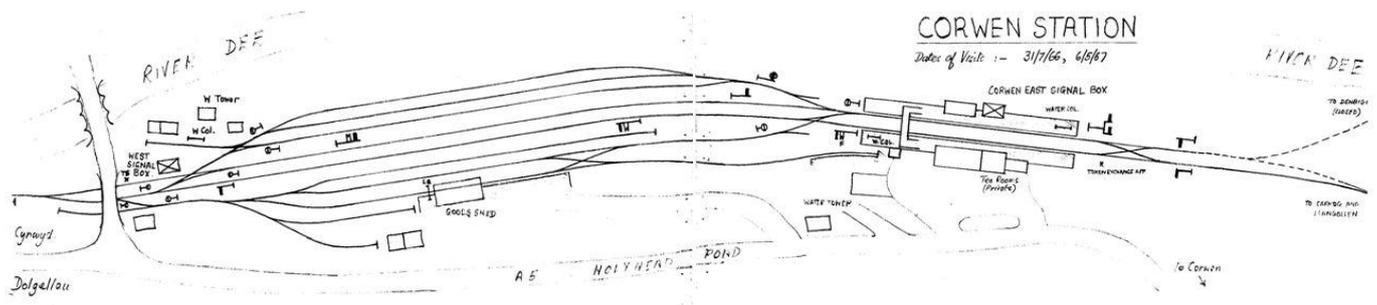


Next stop was at a very derelict-looking Carrog, down another narrow lane, seen here from the road overbridge (left)

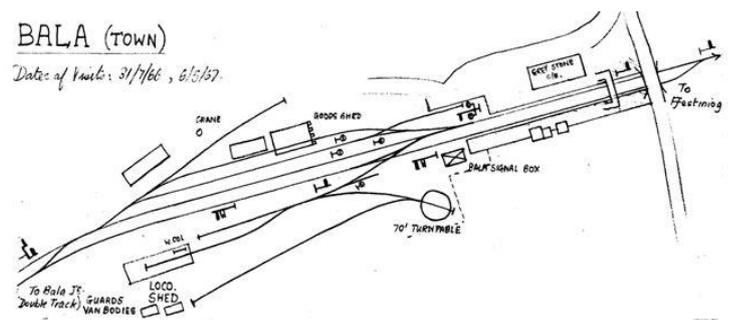


Approaching Corwen, we crossed over the trackbed of the old L&NWR branch from Rhyl, curving round and over the River Dee to meet the GWR line just outside the station. The bridge girders had been removed many years previously, but the stone abutments remained. The main station building at Corwen (right) boasted a Refreshment Room, by now a cafe, and a fine footbridge. There was also an extensive goods yard to the south of the line, with former locomotive facilities on the opposite side.....





Cutting across country, we left the main Ruabon to Barmouth line for the Festiniog branch at Bala. All track was still intact here also, although only for a few hundred yards northwards beyond the station. A very plain brown-brick goods shed had the wall facing the station built to resemble a castle, complete with battlements! Across the running lines was an engine shed, with very ugly corrugated iron coaling stage shelter, and a small turntable. The point rodding to the signal cabin had all been disconnected, although all signals remained in position.....



Time was passing quickly, so we hastened on past the bleak Arenig reservoir, overshadowed by the bulk of Arenig Fawr mountain, and Manod station outside Blaenau Ffestiniog town, then taking the Crimea Pass road northwards to reach our evening destination, Pont-y-Pant station on the L&NWR branch up to Llandudno Junction. We parked the car in the yard there, and walked up the lane to the main valley road, and so to the Lledr Valley Youth Hostel. We just managed to get accommodation here, as it was very full that night, and cooked a meal in the member's kitchen. Being a very fine evening, we sat outside afterwards on the stone wall overlooking the river, and discussed progress so far. The Youth Hostel being cramped, crowded and noisy, and the weather turning hot, we decided to use our little tent as much as possible for the following nights, and going in for Bed & Breakfast if it should be rainy. This would give us much more freedom of timings, and choice of our overnight resting places.

Monday 1st August 1966

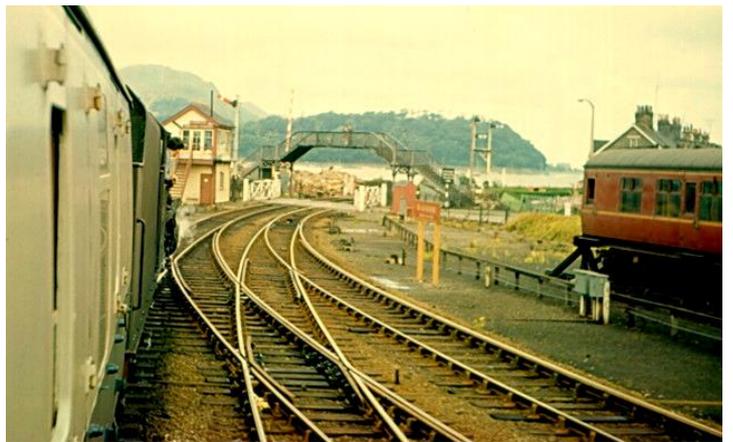
In the morning we set off with our bags back to the station, to catch the 9.00am train to Blaenau Ffestiniog. The diesel train gave us an excellent view of this very scenic line, calling at the wayside halts of Dolwyddelen and Roman Bridge – from where all sidings and loops had recently been removed, before entering the long tunnel through to the terminus. There, the train filled up very quickly and we set off back down towards Llandudno Junction after a short pause. Most of the passengers left the train at Betws-y-Coed, the principal intermediate station, seen above as we were leaving.



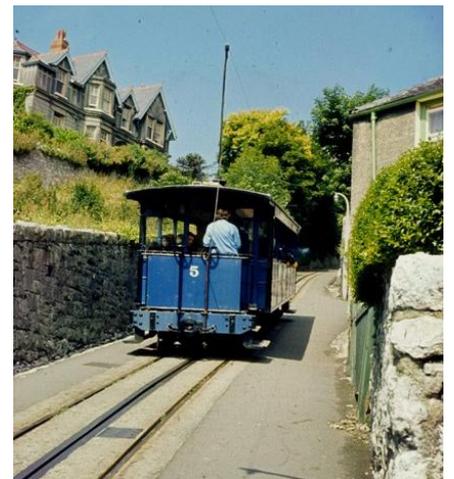
At Llanrwst & Trefriw, the next stop, the morning goods train, headed by “Class 5” 4-6-0 loco. no. 45047, was waiting to pass us on the loop outside the station.....



As we drew to a halt at Llandudno Junction station, a “Jinty” 0-6-0 tank loco (no. 47376) was shunting the goods yard. On alighting from the branch train (a two car Metro-Cammell unit) a class 5 4-6-0 drew into the opposite platform with a train from Euston to Llandudno. An impromptu change of plan saw us take the opportunity to board this, travelling in the coach behind the engine, a newly painted blue-and-grey vehicle contrasting with the grimy engine. The train rounded the sharp curve away from the main line, and over the level crossing which caused such major traffic delays on the A55 coast road in those days.....



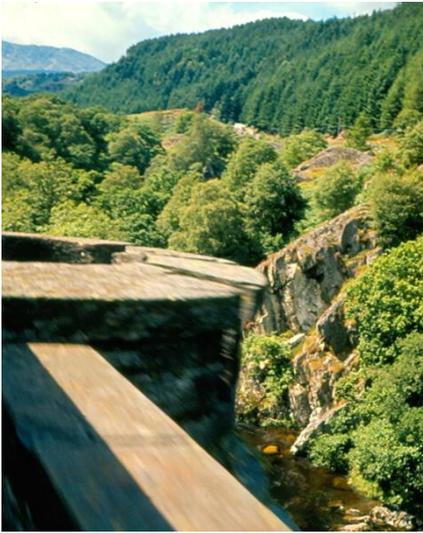
Non-stop through the intermediate station of Deganwy, we drew up at the terminal buffer stops in Llandudno station, under a magnificent overall roof with spacious platforms and a central cab road. Here of course we had no tickets, so were ushered into the Traffic Manager’s office, where a warrant for a return journey for three people from Pont-y-Pant to Llandudno was issued.



We walked through the town to the seafront, then up to the Great Orme Tramway terminus, where we chatted with the platelayer about the line until the tram left, pulled up the hill through the back of town by the cable in conduit down the centre of the track.....

After lunch in town we walked back to the station to board a diesel unit back to the junction station. Here we had a ½-hour wait, and watched the “Jinty” tank shunting in the loco shed yard, where a number of Class 5 and 8F locomotives stood idle. An express from Holyhead arrived behind an EE type 4, the first diesel locomotive we had seen that day. Our diesel unit train back to Pont-y-Pant arrived late, but soon made up some of the time on the journey down this very scenic branch line.....



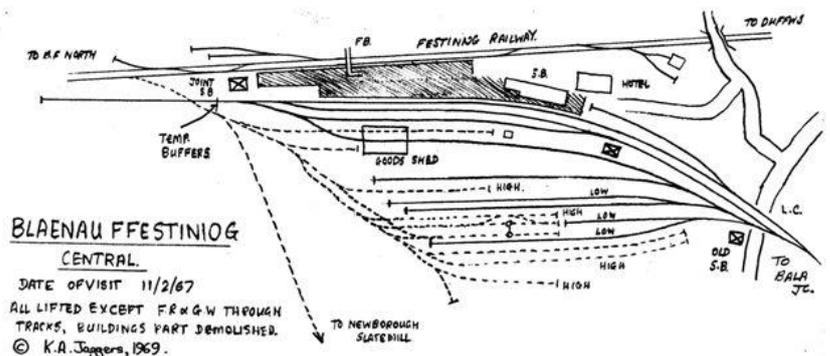


At Pont-y-Pant we walked back to look at the rock-lined tunnel, now with shafts of sunlight penetrating the cutting sides.....

Back to the car, we drove down through Dolwyddelen to Blaenau Ffestiniog, pulling up in the yard of the former L&NWR North station. Following a quick inspection of the old Festiniog Railway station opposite (then still complete with some track and signals), we photographed the class 5 loco we had passed earlier at Llanrwst, now busily shunting in the North station sidings.....



Heading into the town, our sense of direction led us into a car park where an old station building stood, and closer inspection revealed that this was the Duffws terminus of the Festiniog Railway, with the cable inclines to the slate quarries rising beyond. The narrow gauge track was still extant here also. We then turned down a side street on the opposite side of the main road and found the track of the former GWR Bala – Blaenau branch line, by now truncated at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, passing under the road. Further along was all that remained of the GWR's Blaenau Ffestiniog Central station, the spacious, curving overgrown platform and some interesting bracket signals. All of the once-extensive sidings had been recently removed, leaving just the one single track running through.



Passing by Manod station again, we headed down the main road to Penrhyndeudraeth and over the Cob toll embankment to Portmadoc, parking the car in the Festiniog's Harbour station yard, where we found the newly-arrived Tasmanian Garratt locomotive on static display.....



After purchasing provisions for the evening, we hurried back for our train up to Tan-y-Bwlch. Due to some delay up the line this did not arrive, and we drove back across the Cob to see if we could find the cause of the trouble. However the train, headed by the ex-Penrhyn Railway loco "Linda" passed above us near Boston Lodge, so we carried on to Tan-y-Bwlch station, reached by a little lane up from the main road. Here we learned that "Linda" had dropped a firebar up the line, but had caused only a short delay, so we waited until the next train came up, meanwhile looking over the work on the track being carried out, and helping to push a wagon over the high and narrow stone embankment towards the Dduallt extension, which was being prepared for re-opening.



Here is the train arriving, headed by "Blanche" and "Prince", watched by Chris and Paul, sitting on the siding track in the sun, followed by each locomotive running round to the other end separately.....



We boarded the train at 5.45pm for an enjoyable run down to Portmadoc.....



then photographed the two engines outside the old Britannia Foundry buildings.....

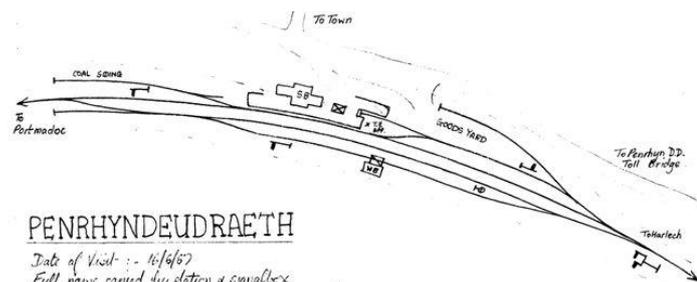


We had time to walk down the High Street and visit the former Cambrian Railways station, on the Pwllheli line, then back via the Croesor Tramway level crossing and the course of the old Welsh Highland line down the side of the road to the bridge by Harbour station. We returned to Tan-y-Bwlch by the 7.30pm train, arriving at ten minutes past eight, then driving back to our proposed camping site near Penrhyndeudraeth. Having erected our simple tent beside the car Paul cooked up an “interesting” meal on the Primus stove – intended to include fried eggs, but at least one ended up scrambled. We reflected on our long but very satisfactory day; as you are also surely wondering by now, not a lot to do with “In Search of the Great Western Railway”, but nonetheless a good opportunity to see the area where I was destined to spend the best part of the following eleven years!

Tuesday 2nd August 1966

After a cramped and rather draughty night we were up and fully alert in bright sunshine at around 6am, the only occasion I can recall finding getting up at this unearthly hour at all easy. Here we are, with the little tent in left foreground.....

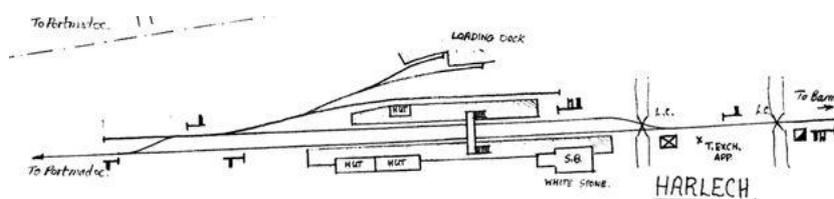
We packed up our goods and chattels to the strains of Dusty Springfield on the transistor radio, and went for a brisk stroll up to the Festiniog Railway station and then the Cambrian one (shown in our plan) before leaving the site at 7.15am.



It was a short run over the railway toll bridge and along the coast to Harlech, where we parked and sat on the cliffs near the castle for an hour and a half, waiting for some sign of activity on the railway line below us, and entertained at this still-early hour by a group of very drunk locals arguing about whether a nearby piece of rock was a tombstone or a milestone.....

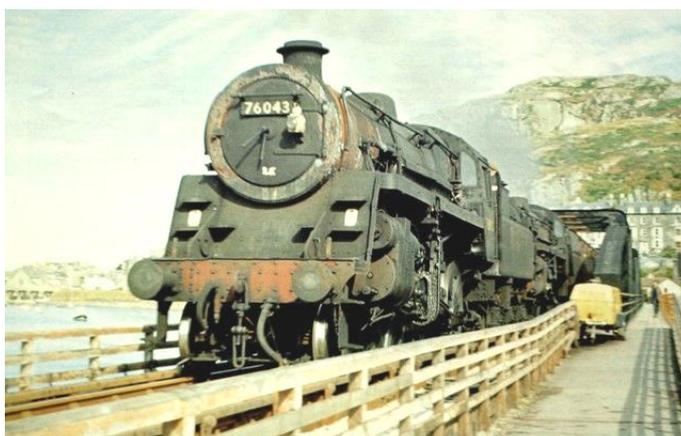


After visiting the station, we returned to the car park to find our exit blocked by a double-decker bus, which was fortunately soon removed.



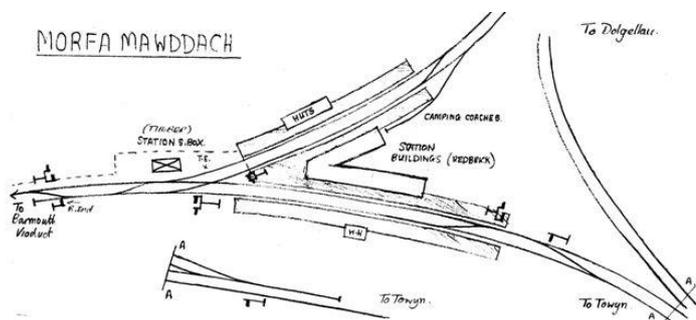
morning goods train, which we saw starting up from Morfa Mawddach on the far side, as it crossed. The motive power was a BR Standard 2-6-0 locomotive, and it was to cross at the

Our next stop was at Barmouth, reached at 10 o'clock, where we parked on the foreshore and raced towards the Mawddach bridge to photograph the

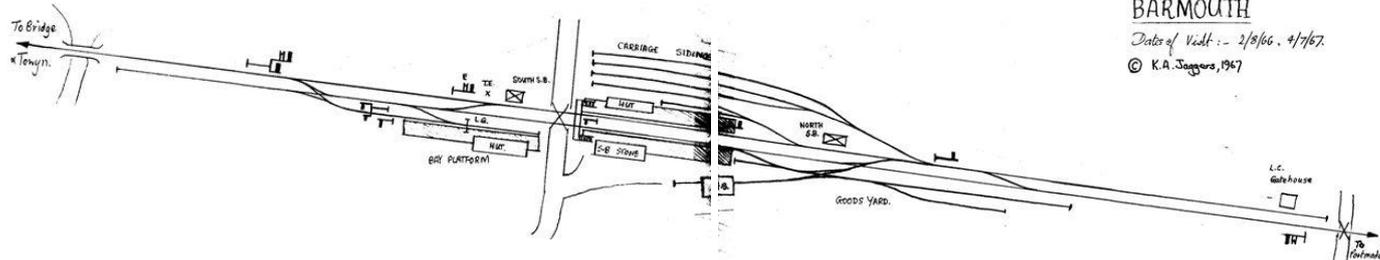


station the “Cambrian Coast Express”, double-headed by standard 4-6-0 and 2-6-0s. We hurried onto the footpath over the bridge itself in time to see this crossing the swinging portion (above)

Continuing across the bridge we reached Morfa Mawddach Junction on the other side, with a beautiful panorama up the river estuary towards Penmaenpool, where sheep grazed on the mudflats all along the shore. At the station, all tracks were intact, even on the Dolgellau branch, but the latter were well-rusted by now. Several old GWR carriages painted light green and cream served as camping coaches in a bay platform behind the station building.....

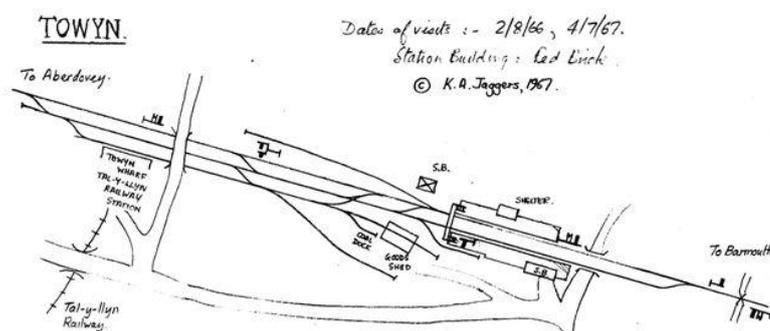


Walking back across the bridge, we noted the method of shutting the footway gates – using chains and pulleys, with an old fishplate as a counterbalance weight.



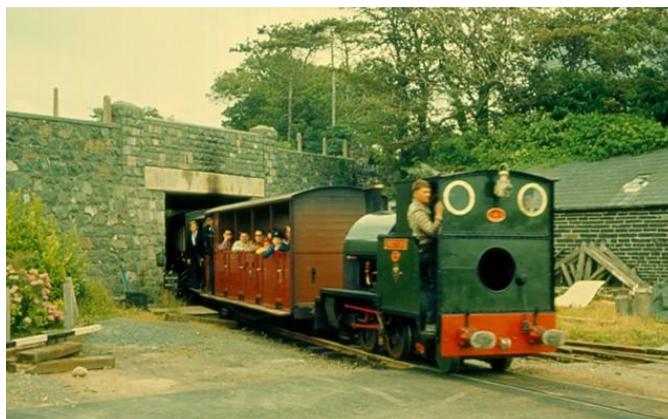
BARMOUTH
 Dates of visit :- 2/8/66, 4/7/67.
 © K.A. Jaggars, 1967

After looking round Barmouth station we drove inland to Penmaenpool, with its quaint wooden road toll-bridge still closed having been the scene of a pleasure-boat accident a few weeks previously. At Dolgellau we crossed over the railway bridge by the old station, then headed west again, now along the south side of the estuary, past Morfa Mawddach and along the coast road through Llwyngwrl into Towyn.



TOWYN
 Dates of visit :- 2/8/66, 4/7/67.
 Station Building: Red Brick.
 © K.A. Jaggars, 1967.

We had lunch at a cafe in the town and headed to the Wharf station of the Tallylyn Railway for the 2.15pm train to Abergynolwyn. This was headed by locos “Edward Thomas” and “Tallylyn”, the latter being detached at Rhydyronen and put onto the return train which crossed us here, arriving with loco no. 6 “Douglas”.





At Abergynolwyn “Edward Thomas” ran around the train and we boarded one of the open-sided, slatted-seat ex Penrhyn Railway workmen’s coaches for a very hard and bumpy ride back to Towyn.....



Here was the loco “Douglas”, the subject of some attention, and perhaps with a problem which had caused the assistance needed down from Rhydyronen that we had witnessed earlier. At Pendre workshops we found the other original locomotive, “Dolgoch” stored out of action at the far end of the somewhat gloomy sheds. Back again to the car, we continued along the coastal road to Aberdovey, a crowded seaport, and on past Penhelig Halt, a simple timber structure with a small waiting hut up on the embankment, then Dovey Junction.

So into Machynlleth, where we refuelled and purchased provisions. We then took the Aberystwyth road out on the south side of the Dovey estuary, past the derelict cream-painted timber buildings of Bow Street station. Just before Aberystwyth we turned inland up the valley, glimpsing a Vale of Rheidol train heading back across the fields in the evening light. The weather was changing, becoming overcast with heavy rain up in the hills. This being so, we decided not to camp, and made our way along a farm track to a delightful grey-stone farmhouse, where we found room for the night. We were able to cook a meal on our stove, under a sheltered area of the farmyard. The landlady was very Welsh – seemed to know little English – and had a lovely house with much Victoriana in the decoration and furnishings. The huge bedroom was full of small ornaments and all the laundry was a crisp starched white; a very restful night was had by all.

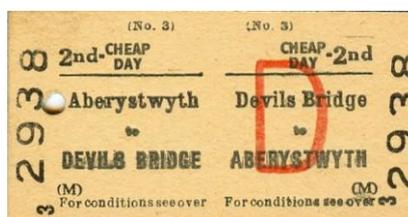


Wednesday 3rd August 1966

We had a hearty breakfast in the dining room, with large table and huge, high-backed chairs; among the ornaments in the room was a case full of stuffed birds. After loading up we had to assist the car by pushing up the slippery slope back to the main road. Driving down into Aberystwyth, we parked in the main car park

by the railway station. The “Cambrian Coast Express” portion starting here was at the platform, headed by 4-6-0 locomotive 75006.....

This departed at 9.50am, and we boarded the Vale of Rheidol train outside in the yard at 10.00. The weather, wet at first, cleared up for the rest of the day, and indeed for the rest of the week.....



Headed by loco no. 8 “Llewellyn”, the train left the company of the main line at Llanbadarn and climbed through Capel Bangor and Nantyrnen into the beautiful wooded Rheidol Valley. We paused at Aberffrd, where the former passing loop had by now been removed, and the loco took on water before continuing the steady climb, winding through the trees, hundreds of feet above the valley bottom, to the terminus at Devil’s Bridge.....



We had a quick look around the famous waterfalls and Devil’s Punchbowl while the loco ran round its train and shunted it back into the platform, amidst clouds of steam....

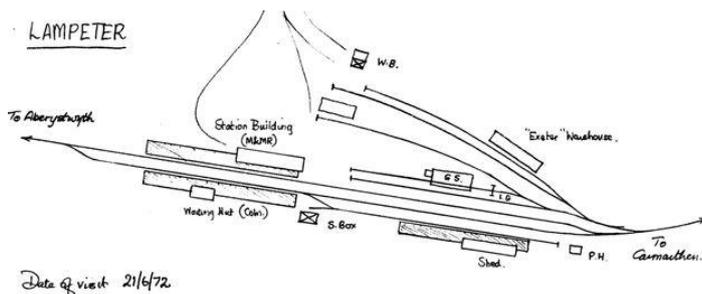
Boarding it again, we descended the valley in the very smooth-running coaches that the GWR had built for the line. Most of these were now quite smartly painted in dark green, with the interior decor mainly of varnished woodwork. Back in Aberystwyth, we had only a Cornish pasty and a drink for lunch, as we had had a very good breakfast at the farm.



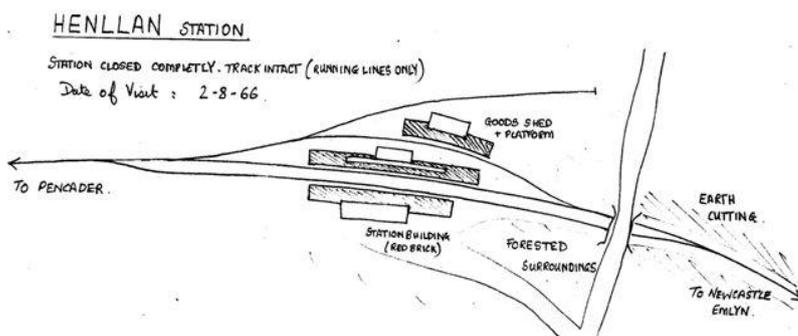
Passing the trackbed of the former GWR branch to Carmarthen at Llanrhystyd Road station, we headed along B-roads to that at Strata Florida, noting track-lifting in progress as we crossed the railway. Strata Florida station was really remote, the nearest habitation being the tiny hamlet of Ystrad Meurig. The name itself is that of the nearby Abbey ruins. The track, signalbox, water tower and wooden nameboard were all still in situ, and on the platform stood a very ornate cast-iron edifice serving as a gent’s urinal.

At Tregaron station we passed over the level crossing and after a further few miles turned off down a lane to find another bleakly-situated station, Derry Ormond – a single platform with demolished signalbox. The station building was knee-deep in papers and luggage labels, but all was securely locked up.

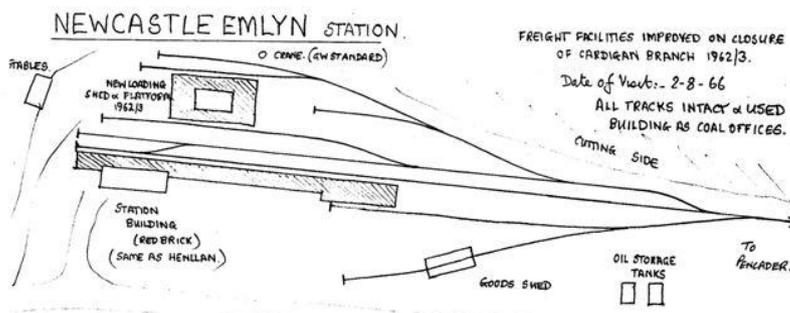
Heading into Lampeter, we crossed the route of the Aberayron branch line at the overgrown platform of Silian Halt. The rusty rails here were still down, but did not appear to have seen a train for some time. Lampeter station appeared to be still intensively used for freight traffic, and the main platform building was serving as a goods office. A fine signalbox stood at the end of the northbound platform.....



A short run along country lanes brought us to the former Newcastle Emlyn branch line at Henllan station. We were very surprised to find the track still down here also, though the goods yard sidings had long been removed. The station building was a spacious red-brick affair, now shorn of its canopy, and part-concealed in undergrowth. The other platform backed onto a loop serving the goods shed, an unusual arrangement.....



Continuing down into Newcastle Emlyn, we found the reason for the branch's continued existence (passenger services having ceased as early as 1952); here was a small oil depot just outside the station, and new-looking concrete warehouses for meat traffic, as this traffic had grown in importance here since the closure of the nearby Cardigan branch line in 1962. The station building was in use as goods offices, and the old original goods shed lay derelict.....



It was a short journey into Cardigan itself, and we parked in the main council car park, very unfortunately situated in close proximity to the municipal slaughter-house. At the far end of the main street we found the old bridge over the picturesque Afon Teifi, on the far side of which a rusty enamel sign still pointed the way: "GWR to Cardigan Station" down a muddy lane. The tracks here were all removed, and looked as though they had been for years, despite final closure only in 1963. The goods yard was still in use as a coal depot, and the stone-built goods shed with two-storey office extension survived, as did the small station building, though looking somewhat shabby.....



Back over the river bridge to the quaint High Street, we purchased provisions for the evening and set off in the car again, firstly to Gwbert-on-Sea, with excellent panoramic views of the Teifi estuary, St. Dogmaels and the wide sweep of Cardigan Bay right round to Pwllheli in the north. Then on along country lanes through Verwig village, back through Cardigan town and over the river bridge to reach the main Carmarthen road. After a few miles we turned off down a lane in the small village of Crymmych Arms to find the station of the same name, a neat stone building rather spoiled by the new owner's recent additions. The road bridge and goods shed were also of stone, but the brick signalbox had been demolished. Another 6 miles of narrow, winding country lanes brought us to Login station, a large stone building beside the former level crossing. We climbed the hillside opposite on a farm track attempting to find a good photographic spot, but recent tree growth obscured the view of the valley below. This station was right at the bottom of our last large-scale map, so we headed approximately south along the lanes to reach the main A40 road at Llanfalteg. After refuelling we made quick progress, skirting the extensive sidings at Whitland Junction and passing near the closed station of Sarnau. After Carmarthen we began to notice many posters portraying Gwynfor Evans, the local MP and the first Welsh Nationalist (Plaid Cymru), recently elected. These appeared on nearly every streetlamp and road sign in the area, supplemented by large painted slogans on walls and bridges.

Crossing the former L&NWR branch line (track removed) from Llandeilo to Carmarthen several times, we started to look out for a camp site, but without luck, and it was beyond just Llandeilo that we asked a farmer for permission to pitch our tent in a corner of his field, through a gate off the A40 road. This was granted, with the proviso that we should be out before 7am. That night I removed the back seat unit from the car (it came out very easily) and slept on this – it was very comfortable! Occasional trains passed close by on the Central Wales line, and the roar of traffic on the main road disturbed us at first, but in the event we all slept very soundly.....

Thursday 4th August 1966

.....until 7.30 in the morning. We then discovered the reason for the farmer's request; the field was now full of cows, some of which showed an unwelcome interest in our breakfast activities! Quickly clearing up, we set off back into Llandeilo, through the back of town to the station. This, of standard GWR design, had a very large modern signalbox carrying a new name sign "Llandeilo Station Ground Frame" which must surely have been one of the largest such anywhere! The station running-in board however still showed the old "anglicised" spelling. The lattice footbridge still retained its cover, and gave a fine view of the adjacent river, crossed by a delicate chain suspension bridge.



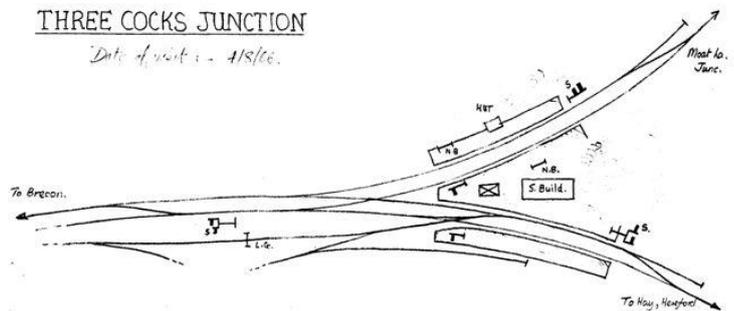
Back along the main road past the farm, we pulled in next at Llanwrda station, on the Central Wales line, with its identical all-timber buildings on staggered platforms, one either side of a level crossing; the passing loop track had however been removed by now. Four miles further on we passed over the level crossing at Llandovery station and parked in the town to purchase film and sustenance. We headed up into the hills past the Sugar Loaf, over the top and through Cynghordy before dropping down into Llangammarch Wells. The station here had a red-brick building devoid of either canopy or signage, but the distinctive L&NWR type nameboard survived – unfortunately my photo suffered a bad attack of camera-shake.....



Builth Road was the most northerly point we reached on this line. The Low Level (former Cambrian Railways) station house was freshly painted in authentic looking chocolate and cream colours prior to re-opening as the “Cambrian Arms” hostelry. At the High level (L&NWR) all tracks except the through running line had been removed, although the second platform and goods shed remained. The main building was all locked up and derelict, the

station now demoted to an unstaffed halt on the Central Wales line. Builth Wells station, back on the former Cambrian line, had a large stone main building and clear evidence of once-extensive sidings and a locomotive shed.

Heading south now, Erwood station had derelict wooden buildings. We turned into the old station yard at Three Cocks Junction, this site having been advertised for re-development for some years now. However only the signalbox had been demolished, the main station house and even the nameboards were still intact.....



All the rooms were accessible and one contained a sizable quantity of paperwork and luggage labels. Upstairs, and down into the cellar, all was somewhat eerie now in this large building.

Our next stop was at Tal-y-Llyn Junction, outside Brecon, which was by now also a public house, but retained its platforms. This one was called the “Tal-y-Llyn Arms”.....



We lunched in Brecon then took the Talybont road into the wild Brecon Beacon hills. Talybont-on-Usk station, a large stone building of the Brecon & Merthyr Railway, was boarded up and dark inside. All other station amenities bar the goods shed and cattle dock, over on the other side of the river, had gone since closure in 1962. We climbed higher past the remote and beautiful Talybont reservoir, the road passing along one side and the old railway line the other, ascending steadily up its 1-in-38 “Seven Mile Bank” to the summit in Torpantau Tunnel. Beyond this, we halted at the bleak Torpantau station, serving just a couple of houses but also as a passing loop and watering point for locomotives.



The remoteness of this site was accentuated by a cold, grey drizzle and the occasional distant bleating of sheep.....



Now skirting the Torpantau reservoir and surrounding forestry we were without detailed maps again, so came across the four-platform station of Pontsticill Junction quite by surprise, above the lake. This, by now completely abandoned, was evidently quite a thriving establishment at one time, the interchange point between the Brecon & Merthyr company's route down to Cardiff with its Merthyr branch line. Down to nearby Dowlais, the change in scenery going into the mining valleys was quite startling after the remoteness of the Beacons. We refuelled and took the Heads of the Valleys road past Ebbw Vale, Brynmawr and Abergavenny, to Monmouth, where we sat in a traffic jam for some while. Passing over the bridge by Monmouth Troy station, we noted that the rails had all been removed here, and the trackbed resembled a river in places. Down a lane through the trees we reached the site of Symond's Yat station, with its magnificent view of the Wye Valley from the former waiting shelter window.....



It was an easy walk along the trackbed from here to the tunnel mouth, which was bricked up, and back in the other direction above the river rapids for a short distance. Back to the car, we returned out of the valley past Kerne Bridge station, with a modern GWR Hawksworth carriage body parked on the platform next to the station house.

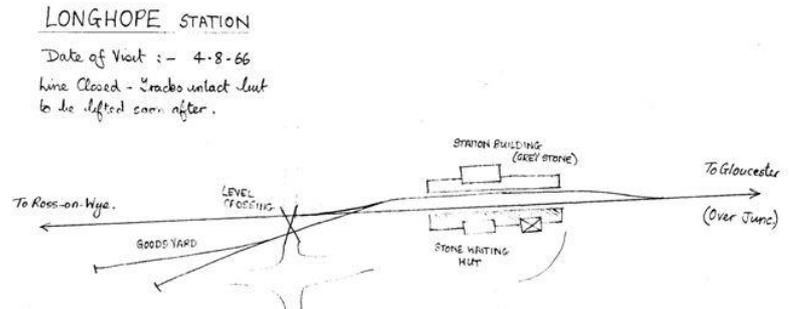
So into Ross-on-Wye, where track removal was in progress at the station; only the Gloucester line and part of that to Monmouth remained, and this had been cut up into short sections ready for lifting. The main station buildings, goods shed and former locomotive shed were all intact here, but derelict.....



We did a quick tour around the locality before booking in for Bed & Breakfast at Weston-under-Penyard, a short way out of Ross. We cooked and ate our evening meal on the primus stove, down a short lane opposite by the railway bridge at the site of Weston-under-Penyard Halt. Before it got dark we then went for a short run up to the next station along the line, Mitcheldean Road, and looked over the building, now in use by the demolition contractors. The track here had deteriorated somewhat, but was evidently still being used by the engineering train. Returning to our accommodation, a traction engine steamed by; we had seen it earlier working in a scrapyard at Ross station. The main feature of an otherwise rather gloomy guest house was the 7 ft x 6ft bed in our room, claimed by Chris as the driver in our party!

Friday 5th August 1966

Setting out in the morning, our first call was at Longhope station, where the goods yard was served by a slip point at the end of the passing loop, beyond the level crossing.....



The station building and shelter opposite were of stone, with a brick signalbox. Like Mitcheldean Road, this station on the Gloucester to Ross line was about to be dismantled.

We approached Gloucester by Over Bridge and the ring road around the north side, then heading south towards Stroud, where the GWR station was discreetly entered through a gap in the railings! An unusual feature was the signalbox, built onto the back of the goods shed, in matching stonework. Our pictures were taken straight into the sun, which produced a very strange response on our colour-slide film.....



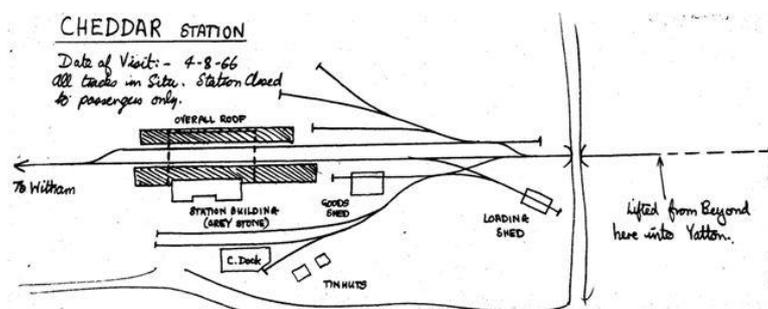
The station had an air of imminence about it, but no train arrived before we left, en route to Nailsworth. We didn't manage to find the former Midland Railway station here, probably demolished by now, but saw the goods yard and remains of buffer stops at the siding ends. Now followed a quick run through pleasant villages and dales, past the main line to south Wales at Chipping Sodbury, and over the Midland line to Bath near Mangotsfield. At Kingswood we had great difficulty finding the Keynsham road, ending up in housing estates and then just missing the centre of Bristol before finding our correct route to the south. We crossed the Bristol – Radstock – Frome branch line near Pensford, then looked out for Blagdon station, terminus of the Wrington Vale light railway, on passing through that village. At Wrington, on the same line, the track had been removed, but the wooden shelter, platform and crossing gates were intact. The Wrington to Congresbury section of line had closed to freight only in 1963.

We arrived at Yatton station to find the Clevedon branch railcar at the bay platform, and duly boarded. This left at 12.51 and we arrived at Clevedon in good time for lunch.



Clevedon station was by now an unstaffed halt, due to close in a couple of months, on 3rd October 1966. The extensive stone main building and the goods shed were both derelict and boarded up. All track had been removed bar a single straight run-in for the railcar. In the town, there was no sign of the long-defunct Weston, Clevedon & Portishead light railway station, possibly by now a car-park. Returning on the 2.21pm train to Yatton, we left the railcar, which connected with a “Warship” headed train to Exeter, and looked around this 3-way junction station. The former branch to Cheddar and Wells was now in use only as an engineer’s siding. A fine Bristol & Exeter Railway signal cabin was situated between the main line and the Clevedon branch track.

Going onto Cheddar next, we found the large stone station building here easily, but sadly its fine wooden overall roof had by now been removed. The goods shed was still standing in the yard; coal traffic from the Witham and Wells direction was still evident, but the track towards Yatton had been removed.....



Highbridge was our next stop, with its two adjacent stations, one on the main GW Bristol – Exeter line and the other on the Somerset & Dorset branch from Edington Burtle to Burnham-on-Sea. A fine S&DJR cast iron “trespass” sign still stood at the entrance to the latter station’s yard. The two lines crossed on the level at the north end of the GW platforms, with a peculiarly-shaped wooden signalbox squeezed in between them and the road overbridge.....



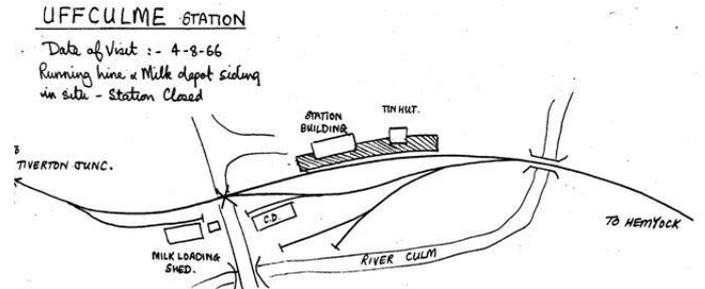
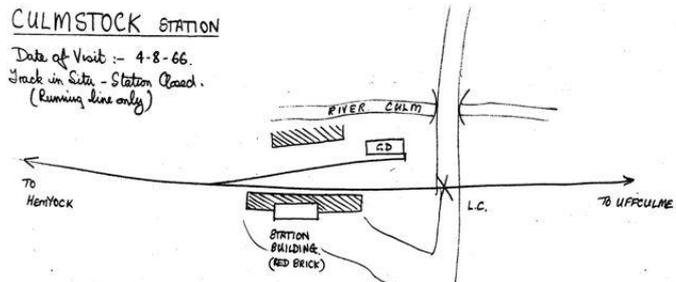
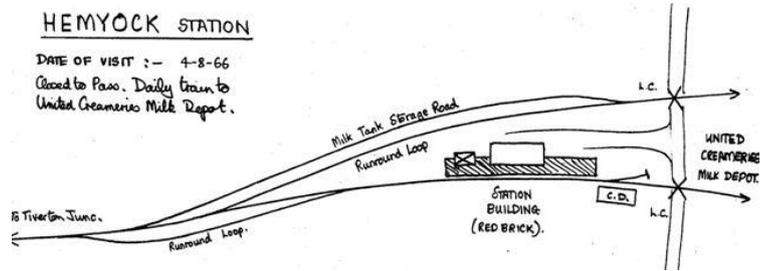
As we were about to leave, the “Hymek” diesel loco seen here set off from the goods yard beyond with a solitary parcels brake van down the S&D branch towards Bason Bridge, to pick up milk tank wagons from there.

Through Bridgwater and Taunton, we stopped next at Wellington to stock up with provisions and had a quick look at the red-brick station on the main line here. We then set off along country lanes to Hemyock, terminus of the quaint little branch line from Tiverton Junction, along the Culm Valley. Opposite the station was



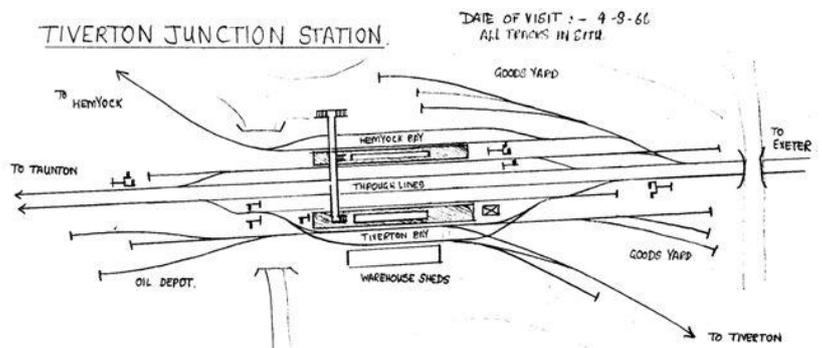
a large and noisy “United Creameries” milk depot, the sole reason for the line’s continued existence. The afternoon milk train had just left when we arrived, having deposited ten empty tank wagons in the yard. The small red-brick station building abutted a tiny wooden signalbox (lever frame removed) and the office boasted a fine and very ornate Victorian brass oil lamp with china globe.

Continuing along the line, the former Whiteball Halt was just a bare platform by the level crossing, and the other two intermediate stations of Culmstock and Uffculme both had brick platform buildings similar to that at Hemyock, a cattle dock, small milk loading shed and level-crossing.....

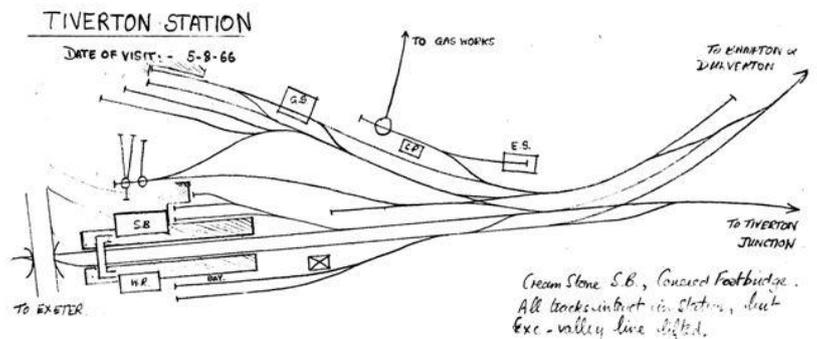


All was very neat and compact, the ideal candidate for an unusual model we thought.

Tiverton Junction had four platforms in the form of two long islands, the central ones being on two loops off the double-track main line, with their opposite faces for the Hemyock and Tiverton branch trains respectively. A milk depot and an oil terminal stood on opposite sides of the station, which appeared to be still thriving for all kinds of freight traffic.....



Coming into Tiverton, on the opposite side of the road to the station we found 14xx class 0-4-2T loco no. 1442, one-time regular on the Exe valley line, now painted in GWR green and mounted on a plinth. We then explored the extensive but disused layout at the station.....



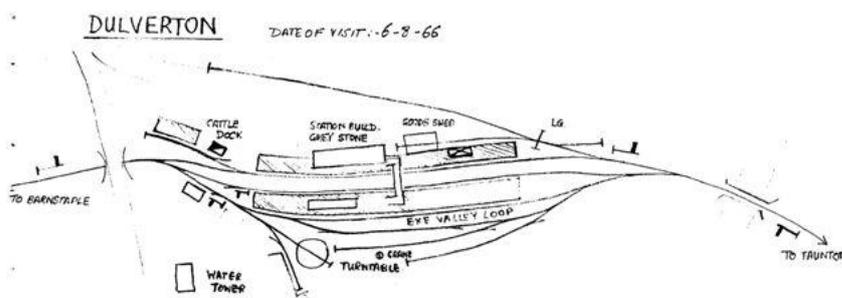
Turning north up the Exe valley line, we next stopped by the railway bridge at the next station, Bampton, where the track had by now been lifted. The neat main platform building here was of stone, with a glazed timber portion in front between two wings. A stone goods shed survived further down the line, seen in the background.....



After a quick look at Dulverton station we returned to a camp site near Cove Halt and set up our tent for the night.

Saturday 6th August 1966

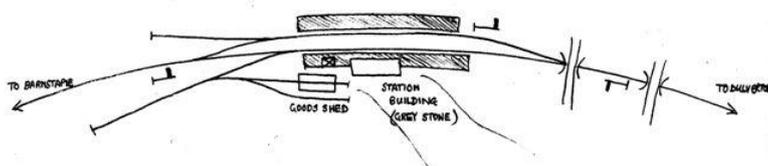
In the morning we were up and about by seven, and away by ten to eight, to catch the 8.20am (Saturdays only) diesel unit train from Dulverton to Barnstaple, along the branch line that was due for closure on October 3rd following. In a fine but soaking drizzle we left the car on the station forecourt and purchased tickets. The island platform, which formerly also served the Exe valley branch line, was out of use, together with the passing loop, and all signals had been dismantled. The fine lattice footbridge was also shut off, by means of a wooden seat placed across the foot of the stairs.....



Our train that morning was a two-car Pressed Steel unit, formerly of 3 cars from the London area. Tokens and morning news were exchanged at East Anstey, South Molton, Bishop's Nympton & Molland, Filleigh, and at Swimbridge where we crossed an eastbound train. Although the weather and short station stops precluded photography, the fine forward view from the railcar allowed us to sketch the layout at these stations....

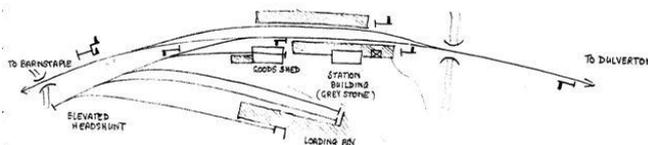
EAST ANSTEY STATION

DATE OF VISIT :- 6-8-66



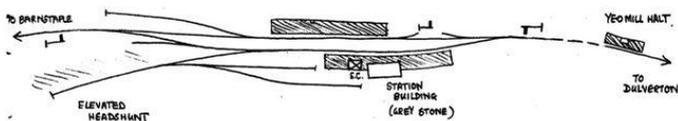
SOUTH MOLTON STATION

DATE OF VISIT :- 6-8-66



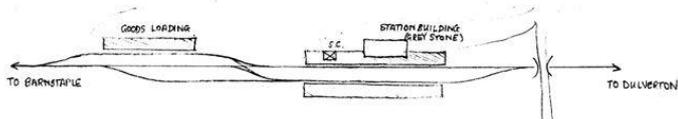
BISHOPS NYMPTON STATION

DATE OF VISIT :- 6-8-66



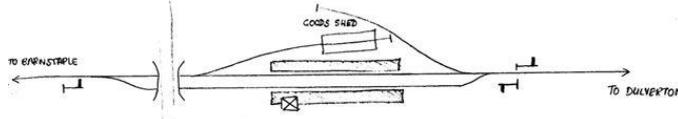
FILLEIGH STATION

DATE OF VISIT :- 6-8-66



SWIMBRIDGE STATION

DATE OF VISIT :- 6-8-66



All were fairly similar, a small stone station building with neat oil lamps, a signalbox nearby on the platform, stone goods shed with sidings off an elevated headshunt. Filleigh was the exception, painted for some reason in Southern green & cream colours, and having an unusual and by now mainly dismantled track layout whereby an intermediate double slip gave a total of three crossing loop options.

Entering Barnstaple, the north side of the triangle into the former GWR station at Victoria Road was lifted, the west side only now giving access with reversal from the GW branch. We went round the south

curve to run alongside the Southern main line until joining with it into the station at Barnstaple Junction, with its fine array of SR lattice bracket signals. We walked over the Taw river bridge into the town as a diesel unit for Ilfracombe crossed the adjacent iron viaduct into Barnstaple Town station.....



After a quick look around here we hurried back to the Junction for the 9.48am return train to Dulverton, which waited in the sidings for the 9.39 to Exeter to clear the platform. The brakes were found to have failed however on the last car of this Cross-Country unit forming the latter, and after some time it was detached and left at the platform, while the truncated unit departed. Our train then ran through the station and reversed into the platform in front of the faulty coach! We started off about ½ hour late, but by some very speedy running and station work along the branch this was very nearly all regained by Dulverton, reached at 10.50. We crossed the westbound service at Swimbridge as normal; this had been kept waiting a long time for us. Yeo Mill Halt, the request stop between Dulverton and Bishop's Nympton, was a short wooden platform with wooden shelter, passed at speed on this occasion.

From Dulverton station we took the minor roads to South Molton, and after seeing the traffic on the main Barnstaple road decided to continue by a different route. Unfortunately so did many other people, and as the road was only wide enough for one vehicle in places more delays were experienced as the traffic in the other direction was also quite heavy; steep hills also proved too much for small cars towing caravans. By now it was raining quite heavily, so we headed instead for Bideford, where we parked and walked down the hill into the main part of the town for lunch in a cafe. Walking along the quay and back to the car, we got thoroughly soaked. Onward to Bude, passing the Southern station at Torrington on the way, the weather showed little improvement, and we did not stop. Down past the little harbour at Boscastle, then round a hairpin bend up out of the valley onto open moorland, we came to remote Camelford station, most bleak in the conditions, and glimpsed Wadebridge station as we passed by. Entering Bodmin by the main A30 we went first to the GWR terminus at Bodmin General, a single platform with stone, end-on building and the usual signalbox and goods shed. This station still had a good train service, as all trains on the Bodmin Road - Wadebridge line must reverse in the platform. We drove out for a quick look around Bodmin Road, the junction station on the main line two miles distant, in a pretty setting with an interesting array of signals.

Back in Bodmin we bought provisions and set off on foot in search of Bodmin North, the ex-L&SWR terminus of a short branch from Boscarne Junction. We found this after some local guidance, out on the Wadebridge road, with a small 4-wheeled railbus waiting at the platform in the gathering dusk.....



The driver returned from the signalbox with the token, signals were pulled off, and the railbus set off on its last run of the day (empty). We took the car down to Boscarne, which we found at the bottom of a steeply graded rough track through woodland. We parked up before the river bridge, constructed of old railway sleepers, which looked somewhat inadequate for the weight of the car, and walked the last few yards up to the level crossing and tiny stone signalbox. The railbus was by now standing

at the exchange platform beyond the china clay sidings; in a short while the old lower-quadrant L&SW signals cleared, and a 3-car Pressed Steel unit from Bodmin Road came to a stand in the loop. Then a similar unit arrived from Wadebridge, exchanged tokens, and ran into the adjacent siding; the other train, bound for Wadebridge, then left. The second set backed out of the siding, reversed by the signalbox and proceeded on its way to Bodmin General. Rush-hour at Boscarne Junction! Finally the railbus came up to the signalbox, the driver then having an argument with the signalman regarding his booking-off arrangements. He then left rapidly towards Bodmin and the main line, for overnight stabling at St Blazey depot. Our resting place on this wet and windy night was a farmhouse B&B on Bodmin Moor, just off the main road.

Sunday 7th August 1966

We started away quite late, back through Bodmin and on to Wadebridge, which had quite a deserted air on this Sunday morning. The entrance to the stone station building was locked, and there was not a train in sight. That at Padstow was also shut up, but lines of carriages were stabled in the extensive sidings. The fish quay was thronged with people and traffic however. The weather was much improved, and we stopped along the winding coastal road just before Newquay to admire the view from the clifftops, with the town visible in the distance. At Newquay station, recently “modernised”, a “Western” class diesel loco waited with a through-train connection to the main line at Par. We passed through the crowded seaside resort to Goonhavern Halt, on the closed and by now dismantled branch heading westwards to Chacewater. This was a small corrugated-iron “pagoda” building serving as a waiting hut on a short platform beside the road overbridge. A fine specimen of a GWR cast “trespass” notice still stood at the halt entrance. At Perranporth, further along the same line, the station was a strange combination of red brick building surrounded by an extensive wooden platform, now disintegrating somewhat, which also supported the wooden signalbox. We could enter the locking-room underneath the stairs. The box still contained a single, decrepit and empty token instrument, and a few items of paperwork.....



The halts at Mithian and the wonderfully-named Goonbell down the line towards Chacewater were both small sheds very similar to Goonhavern, painted in GWR buff and brown colours. St Agnes station had a small brick building. Scorrier, back on the main line, had a wooden main structure in an advanced state of dereliction.

We crossed the abandoned track of a mineral railway before entering Redruth where we searched for an open shop on this quiet Sunday for food and provisions. We asked for hot pasties at the Railway Arms, only to be told they would take at least ½ hour to warm! On then to Cambourne, where we got our pasties, and a glass of cider at the Trevithick Arms, constituting our main meal of the day. We drove on to Gwinear Road station, on the main line and junction for the by now dismantled Helston branch line. The matching wooden platform buildings were locked up, and signs warning train drivers about the newly-erected automatic barriers across the road were prominent nearby. These new-fangled half-barriers were almost complete, and would soon put the signalbox here out of use. The Helston branch route ran straight ahead beyond the level crossing, with the main line veering away sharply to the left.

We next followed the branch down to Praze station, in trees just off the main road. The one platform here carried a large building of very dark grey stone, in which we found a huge quantity of papers, books and luggage labels. We retrieved a representative selection of the latter, “Praze to just about everywhere in the Kingdom”, by climbing through the open wooden frame of the ticket office window!

The next intermediate station was Nancegollan, over which the road passed by two bridges, the original stone one over the running lines, and a newer blue-painted metal one over the goods yard exit track. In the yard was an old clerestory coach body with its former running number, 3025, still visible. The station building here was of grey stone on a gravel-surfaced platform....



The main building at the terminus station, Helston, was also of grey stone, and by now in use as a contractor’s store. It originally boasted a refreshment room, the large wooden sign for which lay on the platform. The goods shed, goods yard crane and small loco shed were all intact, the latter with coaling stage and a remaining section of track set in the concrete floor.

Following the coast road past St Michaels Mount towards Penzance, we came to the main line again at Marazion station – as we crossed the bridge, a Paddington-bound “Western” hauled express passed through. After a quick look around Penzance, trying to find some open shops, we visited the extensive station, where the Royal mail coaches for the night Paddington mails were stabled during the daytime. Driving on towards Land’s End, there was much traffic congestion in the narrow streets of Mousehole, with its little harbour. Land’s End itself was much commercialised, with the “First House in England” serving as a gift shop, but we had a good view of the Longships lighthouse. Returning past St Just aerodrome, a small aircraft made a perfect three-point landing after paralleling the road for some distance. The airport served the Scilly Isles, and also operated pleasure trips around the St Just peninsula. Passing through St Ives we pulled in and stopped outside Lelant station, on the St Erth to St Ives branch line, where the former white-painted timber station building was now a private cottage. As we looked around, a train of two Gloucester single-unit railcars arrived from St Ives, much to our surprise since we had assumed there was no Sunday service – none being advertised. We beat the train into St Erth station by one or two minutes, then boarded for a journey to St Ives and back. Here the train is in the bay platform to the right, connecting with a main line stopping service from Penzance....



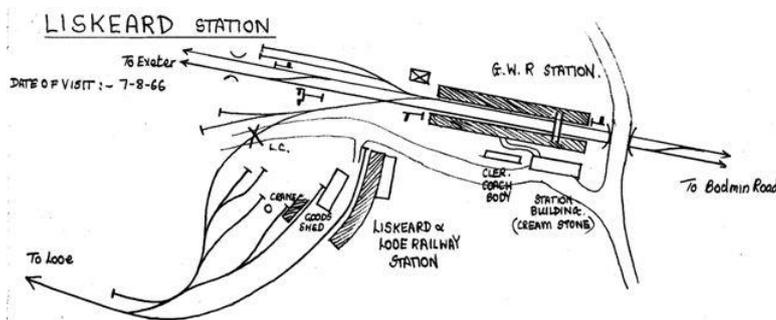
The train set out along the west side of the Hayle estuary, pausing briefly at Lelant, then continued the grind around sharp curves past Carbis Bay, over the viaduct and past the derelict engine shed, to reach the truncated terminus at St Ives. All tracks bar a straight run-in had been removed, and the space used for car parking. The goods shed and signalbox were still in good condition.....

On the train back, warrants were issued for the three of us, as no ticket offices were open on Sundays. Back at St Erth in the gathering dusk we crossed the footbridge and found that the quaint little wooden starter signal at the Penzance end by now had a metal arm, but retained its previous character, standing only about 8ft from the ground. At St Erth Praze, just east of St Erth, we found a modern bungalow offering Bed & Breakfast, and settled in for the night, watching television and being given sandwiches and coffee, all included in the very moderate price of 19 shillings and sixpence (just under £1) each for the night.



Monday 8th August 1966

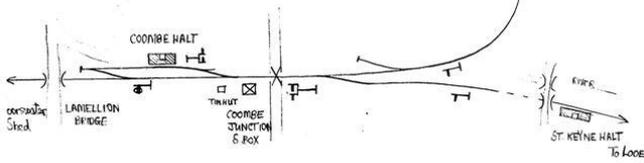
This morning we drove 60 miles or so across Cornwall on the main A30 and A38 roads to our next main stop at Liskeard, passing over the Falmouth branch outside Truro, and pausing at Doublebois station. This, now closed, had buildings similar to those at Gwinear Road. Parking in the side streets at Liskeard as the main car park was full, we treated ourselves to lunch at a restaurant, then walked the ¾ mile or so to the station. The Looe branch train, due to start at 1.40pm, actually left nearer 2.00 in order to make a connection with a delayed main line service. The branch line station was completely separate to the main line one, at right-angles to it and physically connected by a devious spur through the goods yard, over which all stock for the branch must work. Both stations had all-timber buildings, and there was a fine bogie clerestory coach body above the up main line platform. The signal cabin was also timber, on the down side, and the stone goods shed with loading dock and crane in the Looe station area, between the platform and connecting spur.....



The branch station was devoid of signals, worked now by the staff-and-ticket system as there were still freight workings to and from the clay works at Moorswater. Leaving the platform, the 2-car Pressed Steel unit rounded the sharp curve with flanges squealing and descended to pass beneath the main line viaduct, with the station clearly visible at its far end. Still descending and curving sharply, the original Liskeard & Looe Railway route is joined at Coombe Junction level crossing and signalbox, before running into the single-platform of Coombe Halt, nearly under the graceful Moorswater viaduct of the main line. Here, the former passing loop line continued northwards under a small stone bridge, towards the viaduct, Moorswater engine sheds and the clay works. Our train meanwhile reversed and proceeded onto the Looe line at the signalbox, whence it was a straight run of a few miles down the widening East Looe river, past small timber halts at St Keyne, Causeland and Sandplace, to the single platform, single-track station of Looe. This had just a wooden main building and a disused water tower on the platform.

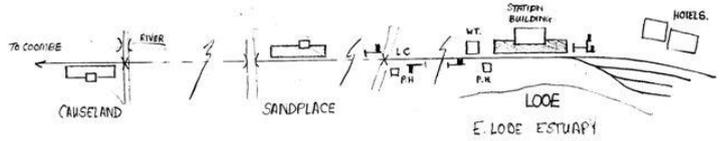
COOMBE HALT, ST. KEYNE HALT

DATE OF VISIT: 7-8-66

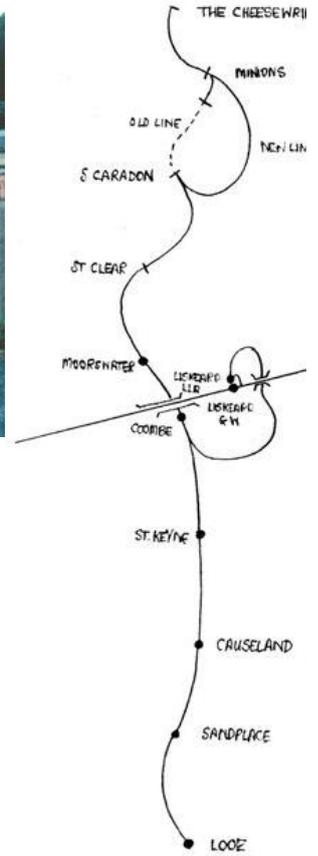


CAUSELAND HALT, SANDPLACE HALT, LOOE STATION. (DIAGRAMMATICAL)

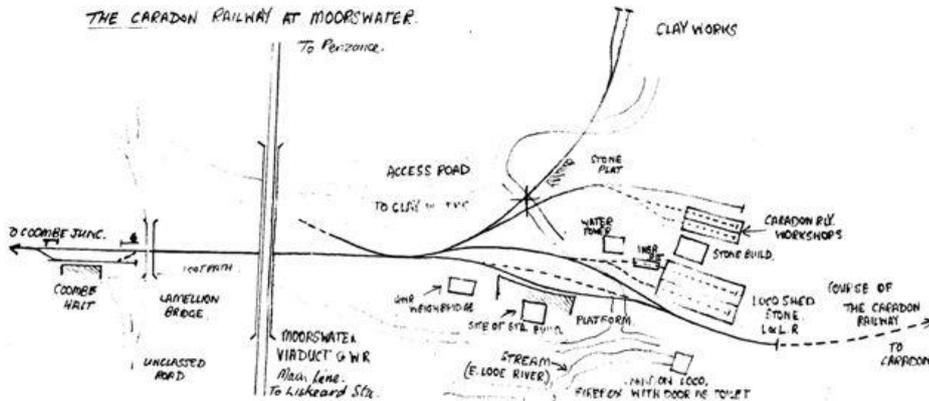
DATE OF VISIT: - 7-8-66



Returning from Looe ten minutes later, we walked back to the car in Liskeard, drove back past the station and down the steep lane to the bridge at Coombe Halt, where we walked along the Moorswater line under the viaduct to the old locomotive

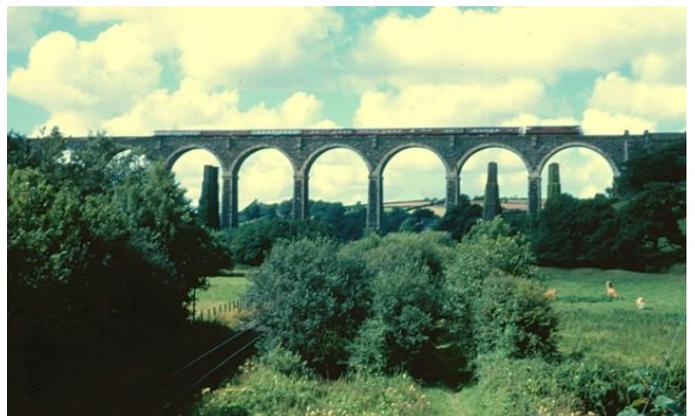


THE CARADON RAILWAY AT MOORSWATER.



sheds, of which two still existed side by side, though the tracks into them had been removed. That of the Liskeard & Looe Railway was of stone, two roads, adjoined by the brick and timber affair of the Liskeard & Caradon Railway, with a small workshop attached. A locomotive firebox, reputedly from a Caradon engine, served as a staff toilet, being fitted with a wooden door and perched over the adjacent stream. The track still in situ was still used by a daily train into the clay works yard. From these lines a single track ran past the stone platform of the Caradon Railway's former Moorswater station and terminated at buffer stops just behind the shed. Beyond, the overgrown route of the Caradon line curved away, entering a cutting.

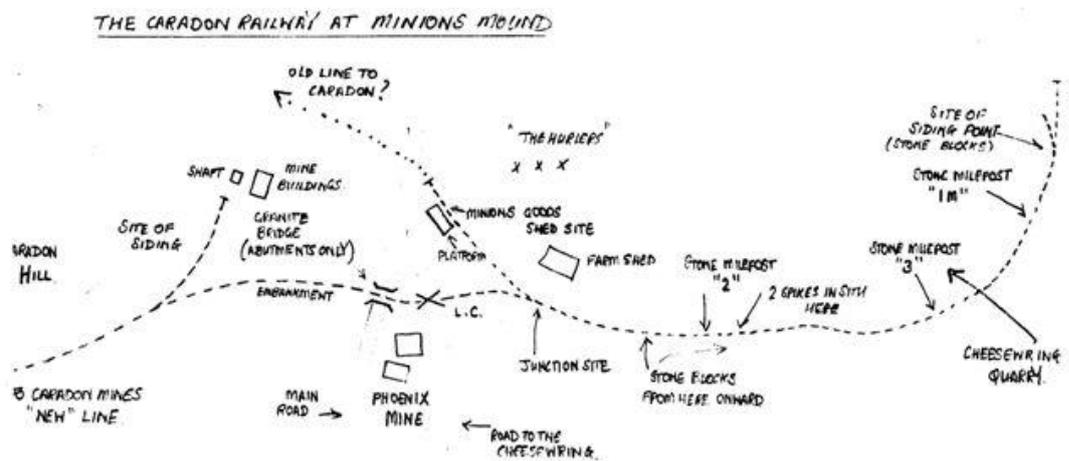
A good view of Moorswater viaduct was had from the yard, with some of the piers of the old timber-trestle structure still standing alongside it, covered in ivy. Our first picture is from inside the engine shed, and the second from the bridge at Coombe Halt.....



Next we tried to trace the course of the Caradon line, lifted for scrap as long ago as 1916-17. We found an intact stone bridge near St Clear, very overgrown on top but in surprisingly good condition considering its half-century of disuse. Our next call was at an isolated row of miner's cottages, "Railway Terrace" out on the moor, which however yielded no obvious trace of the railway. Driving up a steep grassy track, this finally petered out beside a derelict tin mine, from where we had a good overview of the Caradon mining area and the route of the railway clearly climbing the opposite side of the valley, crossing a road by another intact bridge.....



We went down again and around Caradon Hill (1900 ft high, topped by a 100ft radio mast), onto the main road at Minions Mound, where the stone railway arch had been blasted away. The green track of the railway was very



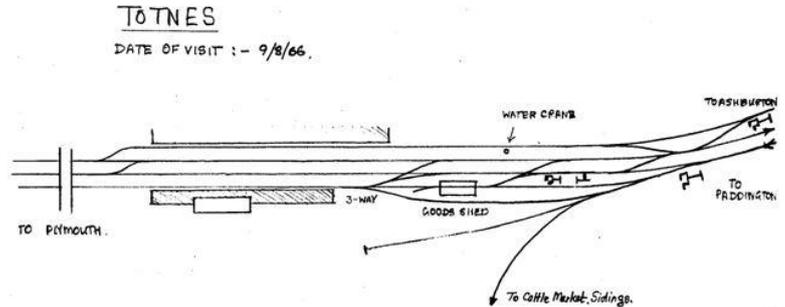
clear curving round the foot of the hill, and a siding ran off to a nearby tin mine, with overgrown pit. On the other side of the bridge, the old line over the hill from Gonamena and Caradon came in past the site of Minions goods shed, marked by a platform and a large pile of stones. We continued walking along the line towards the Cheesewring, soon coming to a fine run of old stone-slab sleepers, bearing holes for rail-spikes, and one or two still had rusty spikes embedded in them. Milestones marked 2, 3 and 1M respectively stood at ¼-mile intervals. Past the heap of rocks marking Cheesewring Quarries, the trackbed continued for a short distance to terminate at the wall of a farmhouse, where there was evidence from the positioning of the stone blocks of a run-round loop points formation.

Driving on from Minions we reached civilization once more at Callington, terminus of the Southern branch line from Bere Alston. When we arrived, the single-platform station was deserted, and we entered through the parcels door. Nameboards were still up but there were no timetables, though the track appeared to be still well-used. Stopping again by the bridge at Luckett station, there was no timetable here either; we pulled off the road and cooked up our evening meal, complete with cheese and biscuits to follow. Soon we heard sounds of a diesel engine, as a 2-coach Pressed Steel unit appeared from the east, paused at the station then went on to Callington. We went back to the station to await its return. This was of timber, in Southern Railway colours, beside the road bridge. The station house, on the opposite side of the line, was undergoing renovation. After a wait of ¾-hour we left without seeing the train return, and found B&B at a large old house in the village of Lamerton, near Tavistock; we spent most of the evening in the local hostelry.

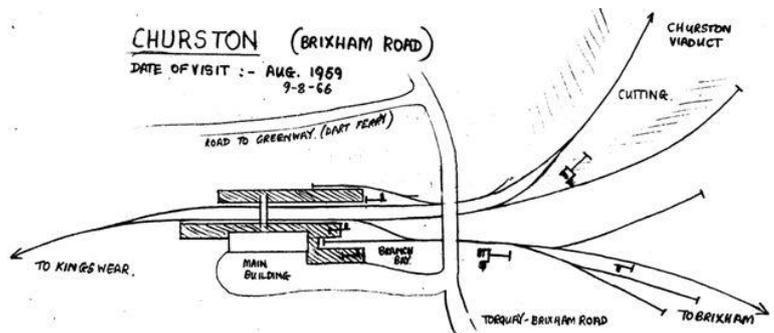
Tuesday 9th August 1966

We set out from Lamerton, through Tavistock and on to the Princetown road, over the moors; the rain came down in sheets and the hills were covered in mist. We were intercepted by two oilskin-clad policemen

who allowed us to pass after a cursory inspection – they were searching for a prisoner escaped from Dartmoor the previous evening. We saw the prison at Princetown and glimpsed the station site, of which little seemed to remain. On the other road out we were stopped again by police, who stepped out from a night watchman’s hut where the railway crossed the road. We were also stopped near the crossroads at Walkhampton, which precluded a visit to the nearby station. Into Yelverton we kept a lookout for the railway, which was nowhere to be seen, and went on to Horrabridge on the former Tavistock to Plymouth line, now lifted and derelict. Passing through Yelverton again, we took the long and winding Ivybridge road across the moor, and the weather got even worse. The railway was high up on an embankment at Ivybridge station, and we saw only the signalbox here. At Totnes we paused on the road bridge near the extensive station area, then turning off the Paignton main road for Churston and Brixham.

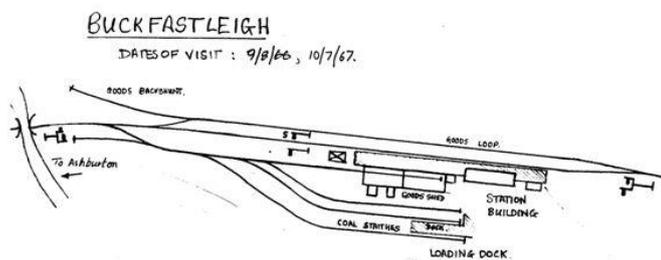
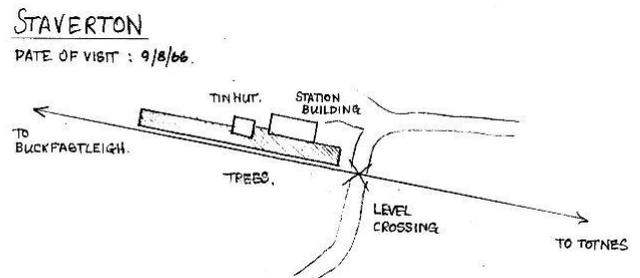


Stopping in the station yard at Churston, we dashed for shelter under the canopy. The booking office and waiting rooms were all closed up, and we thought the station was closed to passengers, though evidently still open for parcels traffic. More likely though it was an unstaffed halt for most of the day at any rate. The Brixham branch line was intact as far as we could see, but overgrown and used just as a siding. The elegant seriffed letters of the cast iron nameboard



“Churston for Brixham” had just been repainted. The fine covered footbridge was intact, but as we crossed it the whole structure tilted a few inches; the supporting towers were no longer secured to the platforms!

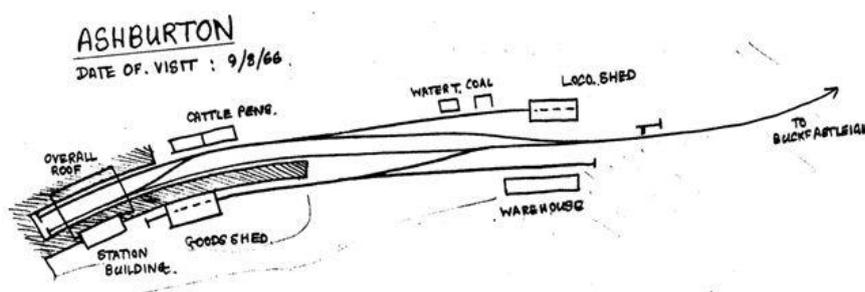
We decided not to visit Brixham due to the weather and heavy traffic, so headed back towards Totnes avoiding the main roads where possible, then turned off through Berry Pomeroy to Staverton, first station on the Ashburton branch, with its single platform, buff-coloured buildings and level crossing. We lunched at Buckfastleigh, then visited the embryo Dart Valley Railway depot at the station there, still in pouring rain....





It was good to see the 0-4-2 tank locos and panniers collected together here, with chocolate & cream-painted coaches of all ages, together with the maroon ex-city suburban stock from the Glynorwrg miner's train. Locomotives 1420 and 4555 were locked safely in the goods shed, with nos 1450 and 6435 at the loading dock outside.

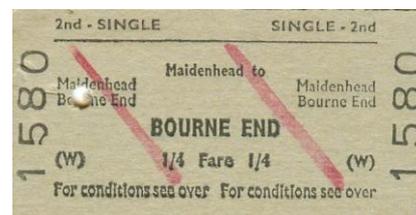
Leaving Buckfastleigh at 1.30pm we called briefly at the branch terminus at Ashburton, as yet un-restored, refuelled the car and decided to start off for home, due to the unrelenting bad weather. We took the minor roads to Tiverton, passing closed stations at Bovey Tracey (track intact) and Moretonhampstead (lifted), then the S.R. station at Crediton.

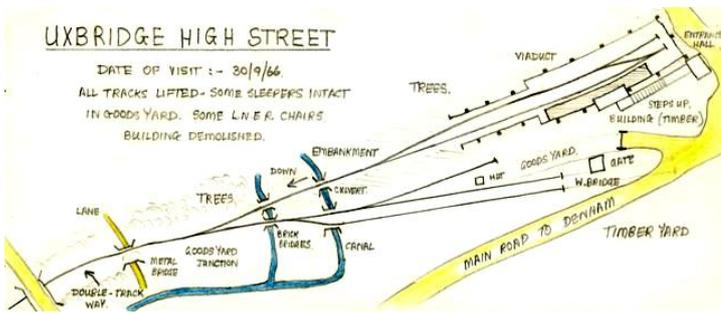
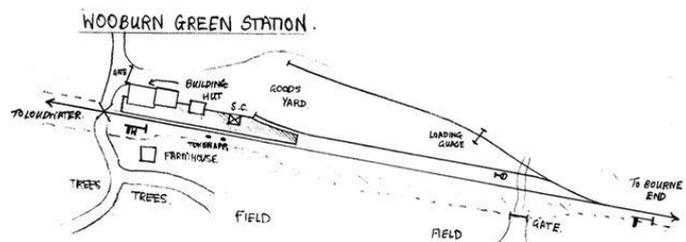
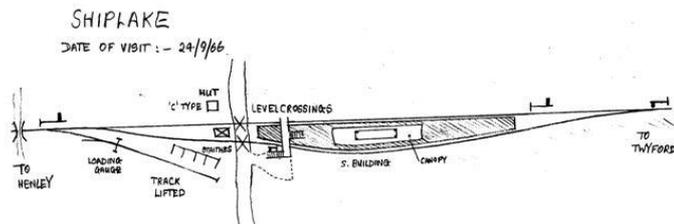


At 4.10pm we started out from Tiverton on the long run back to Staines; progress was slow at first via Langport and Castle Cary, then on the main A303 past Stonehenge and Amesbury. We passed over the former Midland & South Western Junction Railway line near Weyhill station, and the Southern by level-crossing at Andover Town. Along the A30 through Basingstoke and Camberley, we reached Staines at 8.10, having maintained an average speed of about 60mph, with 80 at several places where there were short sections of (then unrestricted) dual carriageway. We arrived slightly late but relatively unruffled at the weekly Tuesday night meeting of the Staines Model Railway Society in the Town Hall, before heading to our respective homes!

September 1966

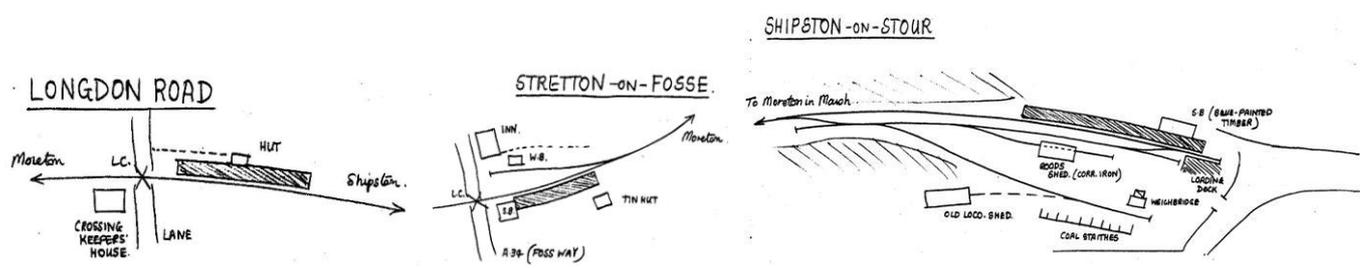
I finally passed my driving test on the afternoon of 23rd September, leaving just a week to explore the area around our Staines home properly by car, and on my own for the first time, before departing for college life at Bangor. Unfortunately, unlike for our holiday tour, I didn't keep a detailed log of the day-trips. However, the station sketch plan and ticket show that I went at least to Shiplake, on the Henley branch, then for a ride up to Bourne End and back on the 24th, and to the very derelict former branch terminus at Uxbridge High Street, and Wooburn Green on the 30th, evidently without camera on both occasions.....





Wednesday 28th December 1966

With all of us benefitting from an extended Christmas - New Year break, unusual then, Chris, Paul and myself set off in Chris's new car, a pale blue Hillman Minx saloon. We called in at the stations on the Shipston-on-Stour branch line, before heading for Stratford.....



At Romsley, Worcestershire we stopped to eat a sandwich lunch and look around the picturesque church, while Chris dined in style with friends at the vicarage.....



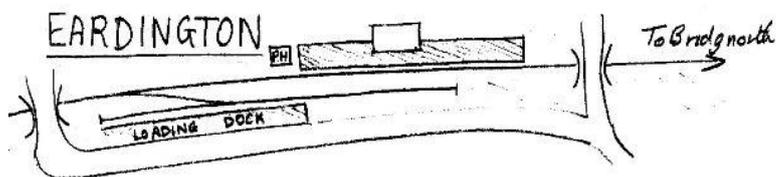
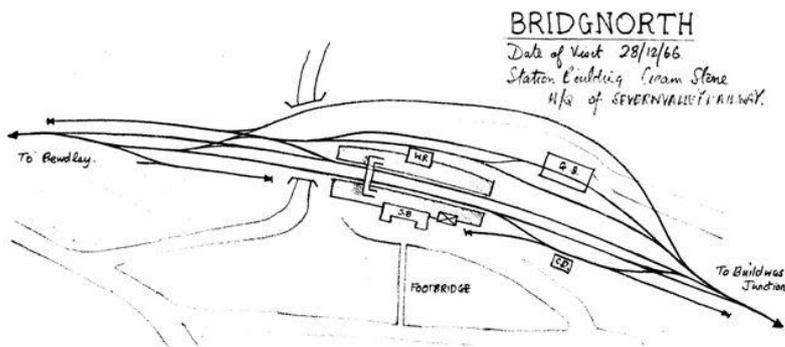
Then it was on to Hunnington, Lye, Stourbridge Junction and Halesowen (right) stations.....

Followed by our first extended visit to the stations of the embryo Severn Valley Railway preservation activity; here is Bridgnorth in these early days.....

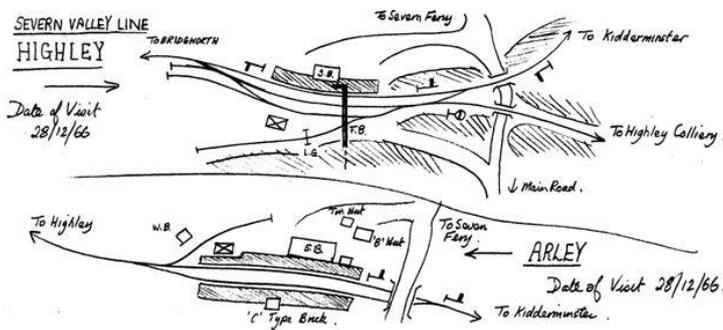
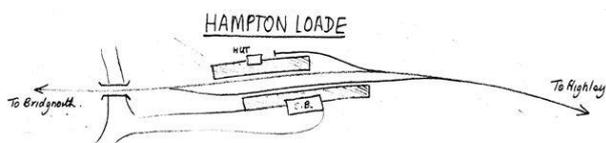




then Eardington Halt.....



and the others, down to Arley.....



.....before ending up at the wonderful mock-Tudor edifice of Kidderminster in the gathering dusk of a bright winter's day.....



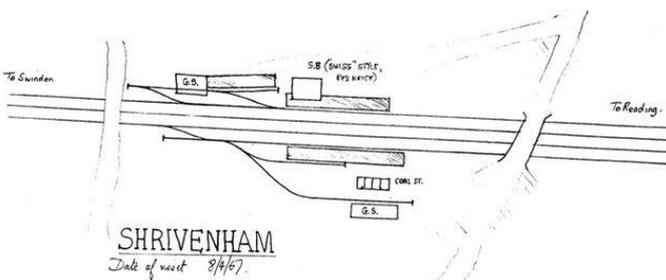
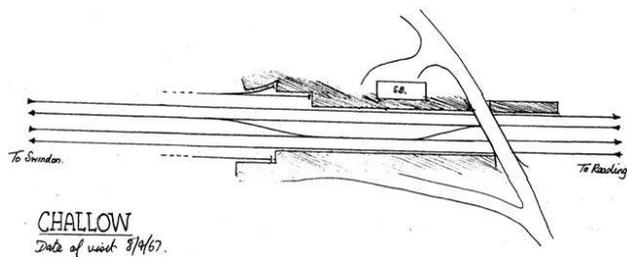
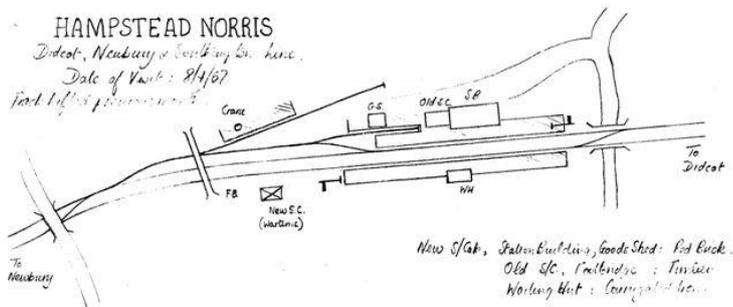
Monday 9th January 1967

Chris being in gainful employment, idle students Paul and myself made a mini-trip around Wiltshire in our extended college vacation, in my father's Morris Minor 300KCG. It was another very bright winter day, and the frost and light snowfall played havoc with my "guessed" camera exposures; the results are presented here just for the record.

Saturday 8th April 1967

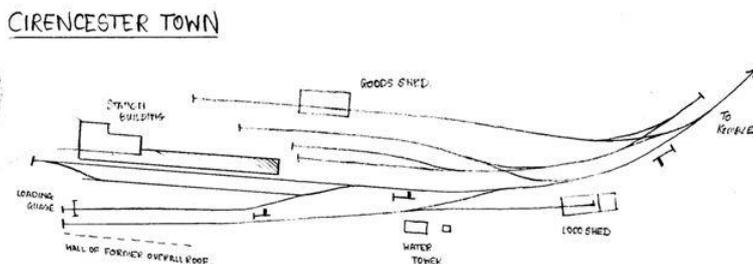
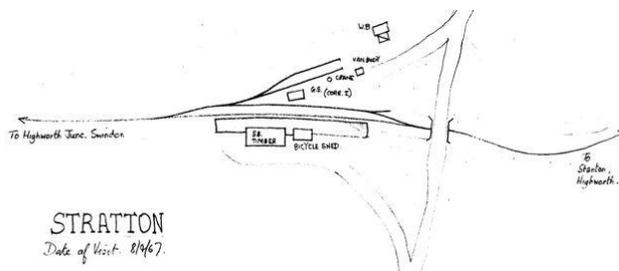
Another vacation excursion, but this time with Chris, in his car to Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. We started off with Hampstead Norris and Compton, two wayside stations on the DN&S line between Newbury and Didcot.

We then looked briefly at Challow, Uffington and Shrivenham, on the main line to Swindon.....

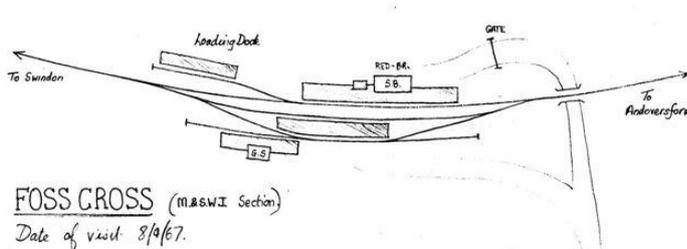


....and the former Highworth branch stops at Stratton Park Halt and Stratton

Next was Cerney & Ashton Keynes on the M&SWJ line, followed by Cirencester Watermoor (below left), the next station north, and to the GW branch line from Kemble at Chesterton Lane Halt and its terminus at Cirencester Town.....



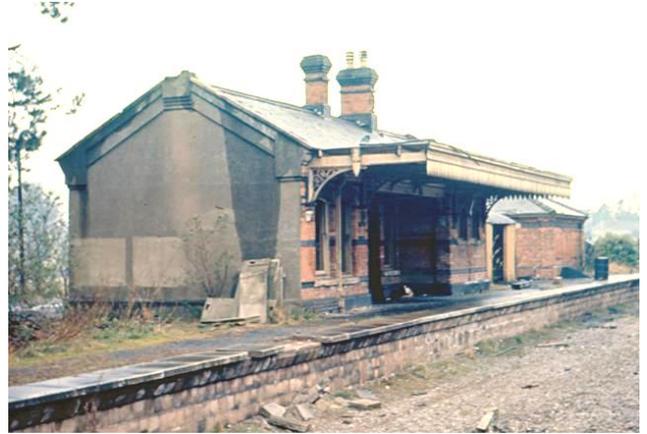
Continuing northwards on the M&SWJ line, we found the remote stations at Foss Cross and Chedworth easily, but that at Withington eluded us until Chris realised he was driving along the old trackbed, arriving between the two platforms, which was just about all that remained.



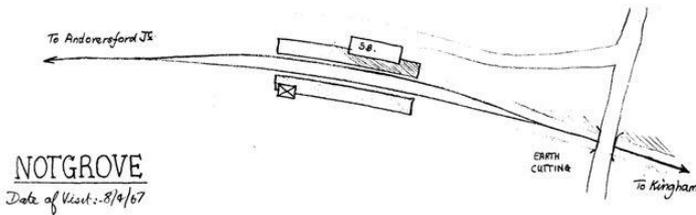
Here he re-enacts the 11.15am arrival from Swindon!.....



This next decrepit-looking establishment is Andoversford & Dowdeswell, last M&SWJ station before Andoversford Junction, on its run into Cheltenham.



Our next stop was Notgrove, on the GW line from Kingham....



then Winchcombe on the Honeybourne line, still then very much in use as a through traffic artery, so that no notion of its subsequent reincarnation on a preserved steam railway would have entered our heads.

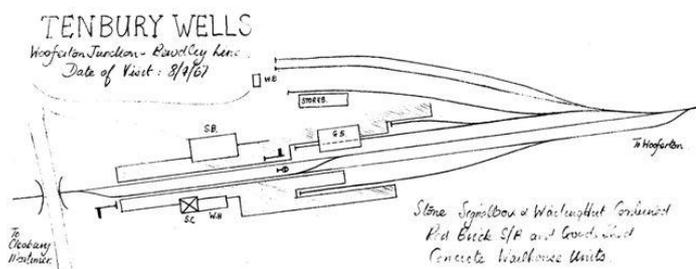
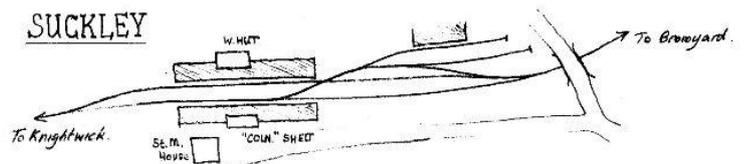
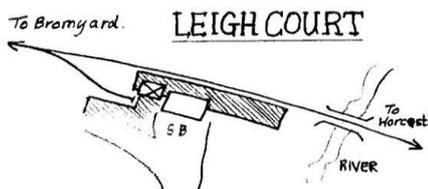


At the Midland Railway junction station of Ashchurch (right), just outside Tewkesbury, the fine buildings still survived, despite closure of both its branch lines, seen here diverging both to the left and the right.

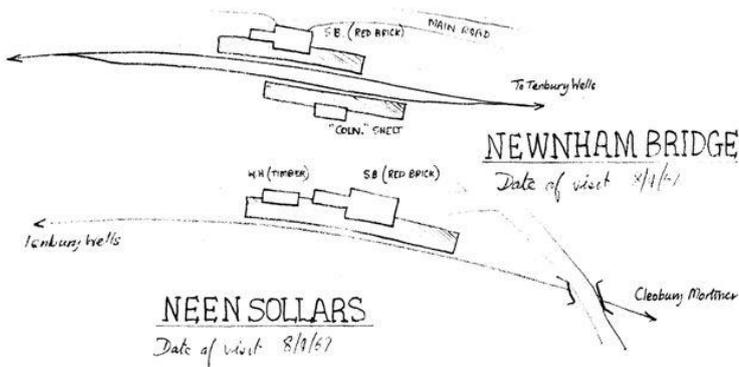


After Upton-on-Severn we returned to the GWR at Great Malvern, another fine station.....

Our last calls on this trip were to the former Bromyard branch stations of Leigh Court, Knightwick, Suckley and Bromyard, then up to Tenbury Wells (lower right)



and along its line to Kidderminster via Newnham Bridge and Neen Sollars (pictured right below).....

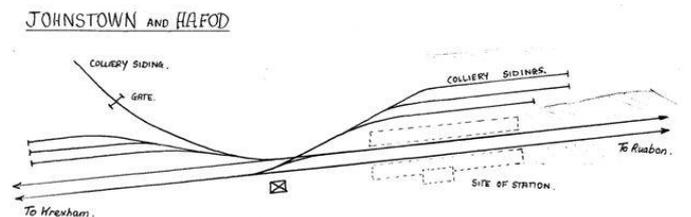


Finally a late afternoon peep at Kidderminster, looking west, before we returned home via Studley & Astwood Bank, Stratford on Avon, Woodstock and Radley – another day trip involving a not-inconsiderable mileage!

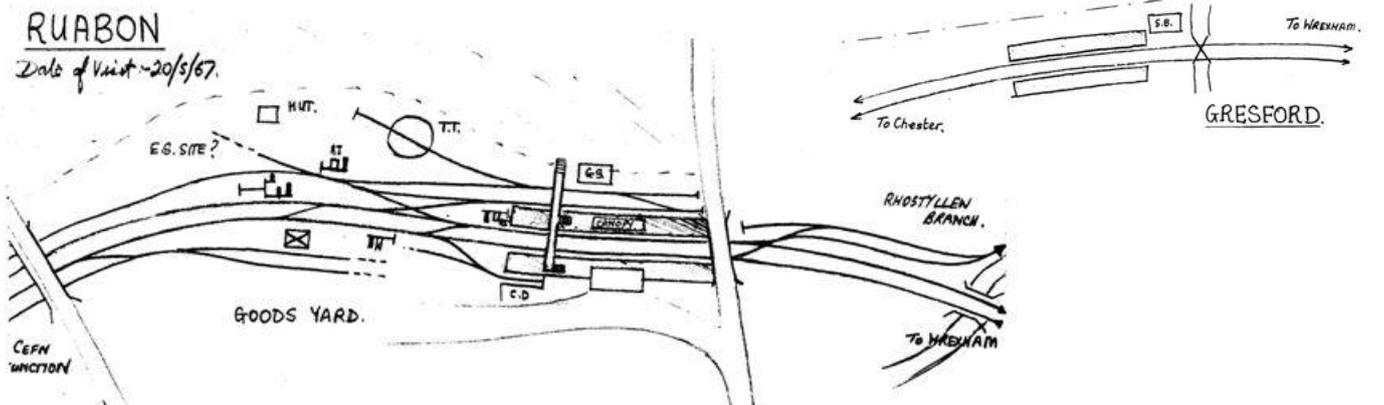
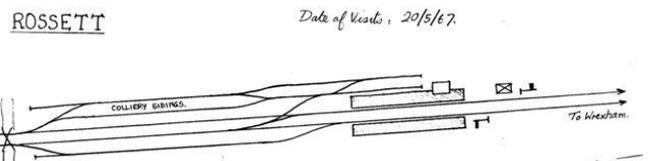


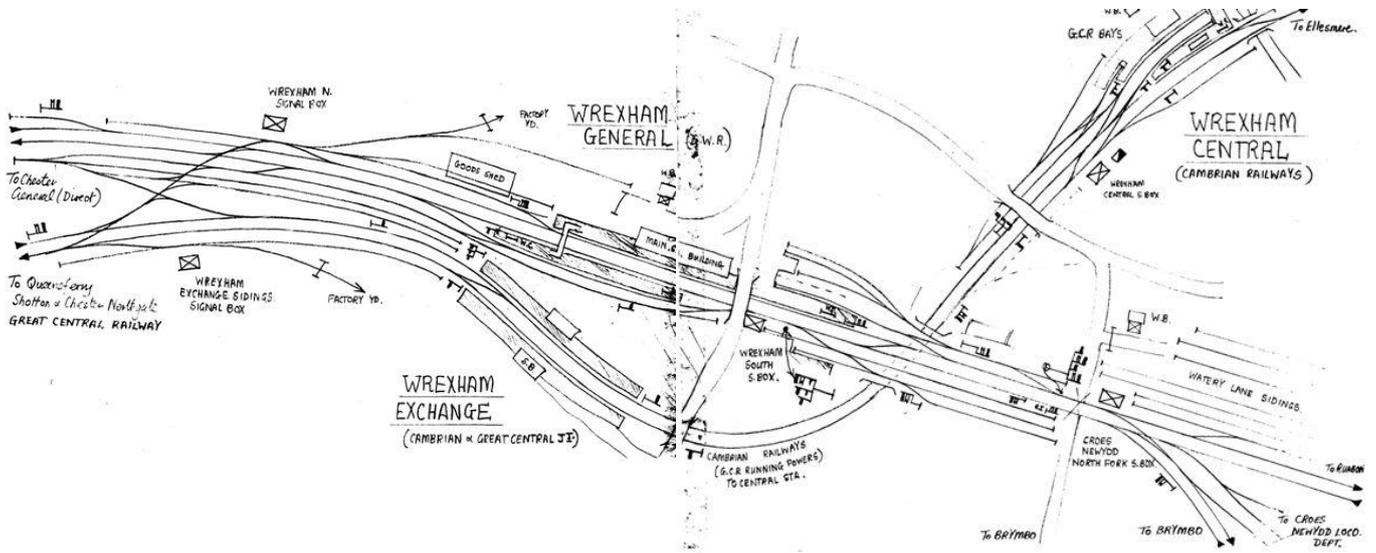
Saturday 20th May 1967

No camera this time, but a break from college revision for me; a day-trip by train from Bangor to Wrexham and Ruabon,



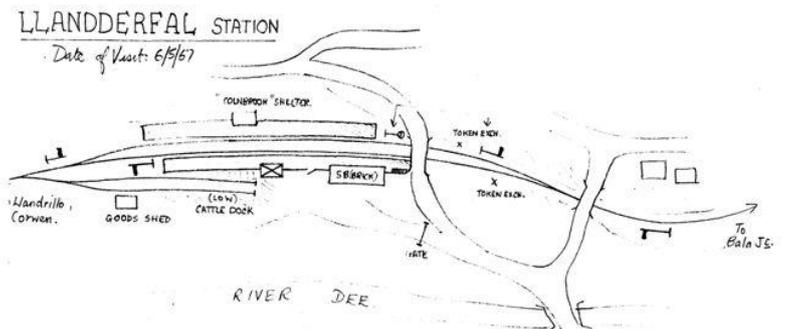
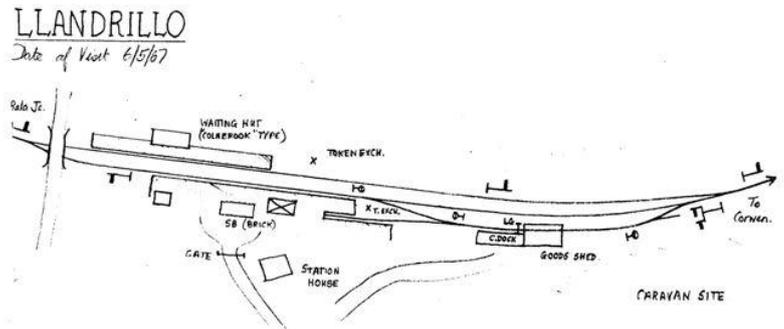
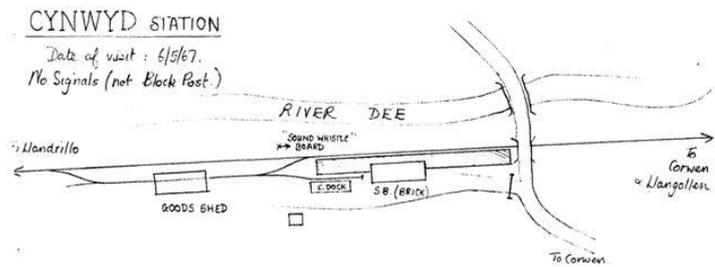
with exploration and sketches of the interesting and still-extensive station layouts.....

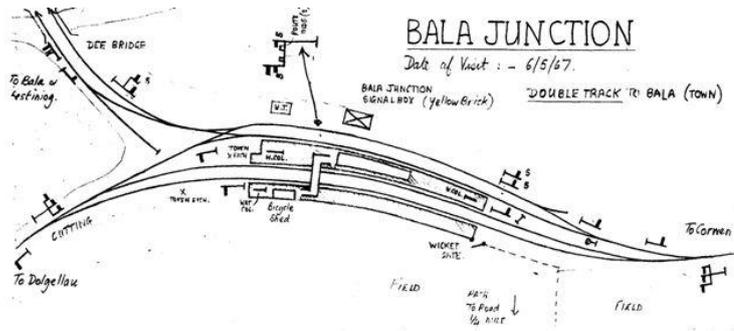




Saturday 3rd June 1967

Another trip out from Bangor, with Nigel Walters in his red ex-GPO mail van 390BLE; we visited the GW line from Corwen to Bala, looking at the intermediate stations in detail.....





BALA JUNCTION SIGNAL BOX

**"PASSENGERS
ARE NOT ALLOWED TO CROSS
THE RAILWAY EXCEPT BY
THE BRIDGE"
"NI ODDEFIR I DEITHWYR I
GROESI'R RHEILFFORDD
OND DROS Y BONT"**

(for continuation, see part 2 of this article, covering mid-1967 to 1971, to follow)

Keith A. Jagers

Compiled in June 2011 from our contemporary notebooks etc.