

Part 3: 1971 - 1974

I was by now spending most of my time in Bangor, North Wales, and with friends and colleagues there becoming more and more interested in the wider aspects of Industrial Archaeology (IA), especially of that area. Having already visited many of the lines and stations of the former Great Western Railway, our day trips and summer tours simply filled in a few odd gaps, and maybe helped introduce others to the undoubted delights of same! Our summer holiday excursions were aimed mainly at exploring IA sites in the rest of Wales and in the West Country, and in the account below we have just included items of GWR interest encountered during these travels.....

22nd June to 2nd July 1971

To mid and south Wales, Devon and Cornwall in the trusty Morris "GWR" van XXD341, with Tony Parkins and Charles Young.....

Wednesday 23rd June

Having travelled from Bangor to Towyn the previous day, we had a trip on the Tallylyn Railway in the morning, then walked along the former Corris railway from Corris station to Maespoeth Junction and beyond. Here is the former engine shed at Maespoeth, sadly empty at this time.....



At Machynlleth we found the former Corris Railway passenger station building, to the north of the main-line platforms, still looking quite smart after many years of disuse.....



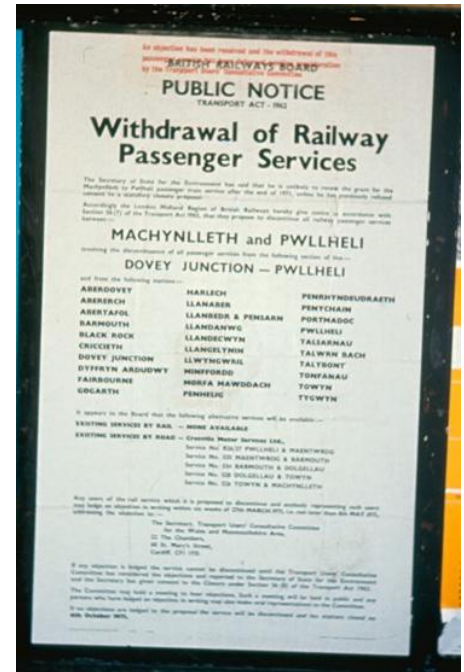
We called in next at the intermediate stations of the Cambrian line down to Aberystwyth, at Glandyfi, Ynys Las, Borth, Llandre and Bow Street, all still in fair order. Here is Borth (below).....



Thursday 24th June

In the morning we made a return trip on the Vale of Rheidol line, and were very surprised to find a closure notice for the whole coast line to Pwllheli posted at the main-line station (which in the event fortunately was not of course implemented).....

We then explored wayside stations on the GW Aberystwyth to Carmarthen line, at Strata Florida, Tregaron, Llangybi, Derry Ormond, Silian Halt and Lampeter. The picture below shows Derry Ormond with Charles posing as a lone passenger; someone (not us!) has removed all the cast-iron letters except the last "D" from the nameboard, revealing the painted name in a much smaller font behind.....



Cutting across country towards the Neath & Brecon line, we called briefly at the former L&NWR stations of Llanwrda and Llangadog, the GW establishment at Brynamman and the Midland one at Cwmllynfell, thence reaching the N&B route at Craig-y-Nos (Penwyllt) station.

Our next stop on this line, Coelbren Junction, had a surprise in store: here in the gathering dusk was the Great Western Society's preserved 0-4-2 tank loco 1466 with a "Toad" brake van and other wagons, awaiting their plywood-based transformation into a Boer War era armoured train, then to star at this remote location and along the line in the well-known film "The Young Winston".....



After visiting Onllwyn station, unlikely as it may seem we must have found some sort of B&B accommodation in the Merthyr area, though exactly where is not recorded!

Friday 25th June

Our day started looking at Merthyr Vale Colliery, Mountain Ash with its surviving steam shunting activity (see separate article on our "Railway Roundabout" webpage for pictures at this NCB site and others). Next we ventured up the Rhondda Fach valley, calling at the Taff Vale Railway branch stations of Penrhiwceiber, Llanwonno and Ferndale, where we encountered this unusual road sign indicating how to make a sharp left turn onto the main valley road.....



Another NCB steam interlude followed at Maerdy Colliery,

beyond the Taff Vale's Maerdy branch terminus, then we headed back down the valley to its junction station at Porth, still very much in use on the Pontypridd–Treherbert line, and still with elegant cast-iron canopy supports incorporating the TVR monogram, as well as unusual black & white BR enamel signage.....



After calling in at Trehafod station, we attempted to capture on film something of the (then) vastness of that at Pontypridd, the major Taff Vale Railway junction, by climbing up a small hillock to the south-west. The Treherbert & Maerdy lines veer leftish, across the distant viaduct then snaking along the valley side, and those to Aberdare & Merthyr turn right, beyond the huge island platform canopy.....



Our next stop was back in pure GWR territory, at Nelson & Llancaiach on their Pontypool Road to Neath cross-country line. Here is Tony waiting patiently for the train that never came, at this somewhat woebegone standard red-brick GW station, with the demolition men's grab crane (extreme left) about to strike again. The remaining single track, still in use for freight traffic, has been slewed away from the platform edge.....



After our third NCB visit of the day, at Penallta Colliery, we enjoyed a bracing stroll across the impressive former Hengoed Viaduct, a very well-used footpath without any of the safety provisions or security fencing that would surely be deemed necessary these days.....

The mining communities of Pengam and Brithdir both had two railway stations, those of the Rhymney Railway main line on the west side of the valley, and of the Brecon & Merthyr Railway on the east side. We made a brief stop opposite Eliot Colliery, with much steam shunting activity visible at a distance from the road but no sign of the ex GW pannier tank loco supposedly here (and where I managed to lose



my watch), we stopped in Bargoed for refreshments and a look at the smart and unusual original Rhymney line station here.....

On the approach path to the site of Aber Junction Halt we found this rather terse non-standard cast warning notice, presumably of Brecon & Merthyr Railway origin?.....



Our last stop of the day was at Caerphilly, then another commodious station, which was still issuing (and insisting upon!)



platform tickets, albeit of the modern, machine-printed variety; we stayed overnight in the Cardiff area.

Saturday 26th June

After brief calls at Cowbridge and Llantwit Major stations, we encountered a freight working at Gileston (left below) on the former Barry railway coastal line to Bridgend, and photographed the fine Barry signalbox at Aberthaw, on the same route



Then it was yet again to the enthusiast's mecca of Barry scrapyard, where some locomotives were by now being separated out and evidently more cared for pending removal for preservation, like no. 5572 seen here; meanwhile the main rusting line-ups were getting rustier in the sea air, as viewed standing on the cab roof (!) of loco 7229.....



The one remaining South Wales branch line I had not yet travelled on was the former Cardiff Railway stub from Heath Junction to Coryton, remedied by an early afternoon return journey in the local diesel unit, as seen here at Rhiwbina Halt (left) and Heath Junction (Low Level) platform....



On our way out of the South Wales area, we found this very fine old Brecon & Merthyr Railway somersault distant signal near the southern end of that company's line at Rhiwderin, outside Newport:

Into Monmouthshire, we called in at the stations of Usk, Llandenny and Raglan before reaching the neat little building, now isolated in a field, at Dingestow on the erstwhile line from Pontypool Road to Monmouth.....



We finished the day visiting Monmouth itself, then Coleford, Parkend, Whitecroft and Lydney Town stations, before retiring for the night near Thornbury.

Sunday 27th June

At the start of a long day which took us through Somerset and into Devon, here is our trusty Morris van at Severn Bridge station, with its unusual overall roof spanning a wide entrance roadway; the platform itself being beyond, off to the left.....



We next visited Avonmouth Dock and Shirehampton stations, on the GW and Midland Railway joint line into Bristol, which seemed to still have an occasional passenger train service (though not of course on a Sunday). The unusual cast iron sign, which was quite unlike either of the two companies' standard patterns, was by the platform end at Shirehampton.

The two following views are at Avonmouth Dock station, showing the somewhat plain main buildings and canopy, again not standard designs from either concern, and the strange little squat ground frame signalbox operating the level crossing gates, which is of obvious Midland Railway origin.....



Negotiating the Bristol suburbs much more successfully on this occasion we paused at Pensford and Clutton stations again, somewhat more derelict now than on my 1967 visit, then Hallatrow, the famed Farrington Gurney Halt and Radstock North. We walked along the old S&D line from here to the Writhlington Colliery sidings, then on the GW route to the Kilmersdon Colliery incline where all was quiet of course on this Sunday afternoon (right; for later pictures at this very interesting site, see our “NCB” article on “Railway Roundabout” page).



Back in the van we made haste via Wells (Priory Road station), Glastonbury, Taunton and Norton Fitzwarren to the stations on the GW Barnstaple line: Milverton, Wiveliscombe, Venn Cross, Morebath and Dulverton, all of which had by now lost their track and unfortunately deteriorated considerably since our 1966 and 1967 visits. The high and spindly Tone Valley viaduct was however still standing.....



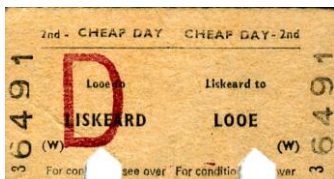
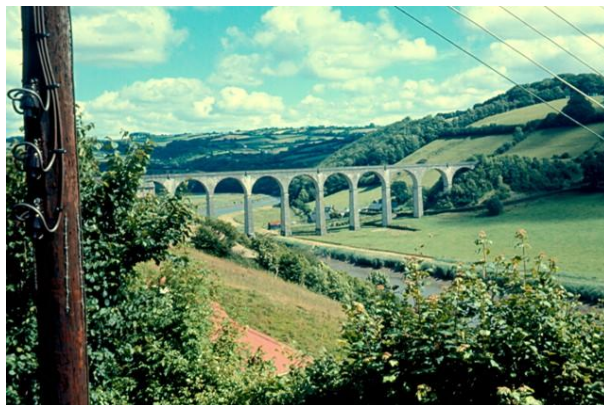
In the evening we looked in again at Bampton, Cove Halt, Tiverton and Cadeleigh stations on the former Exe valley branch line, before retiring for the night in the last-named village.

Monday 28th June

From Cadeleigh we visited Crediton station on the SR main line west of Exeter, then parked up at Yeoford Junction, spending the morning on delightful train journey between there and Okehampton, and back. After lunch in Moretonhampstead and a look at the remains of the branch terminus there, it was on into Tavistock, with its two stations. Here is the SR Tavistock North establishment, still virtually complete except for the track.....



We travelled on into Cornwall via Gunnislake, stopped for a distant view of the SR's Calstock viaduct (right) and their Callington branch station at Chilsworthy nearby, before going on to Liskeard.



I for one never tired of travelling on the delightful Looe branch, and exploring the area around the junction stations here and Moorswater; to Tony and Charles it was an equally interesting novelty; as well as photographing the main line station and the branch train at Coombe Junction, we found this unusual gate sign on the long-defunct route of the Caradon Railway near Moorswater engine sheds.....

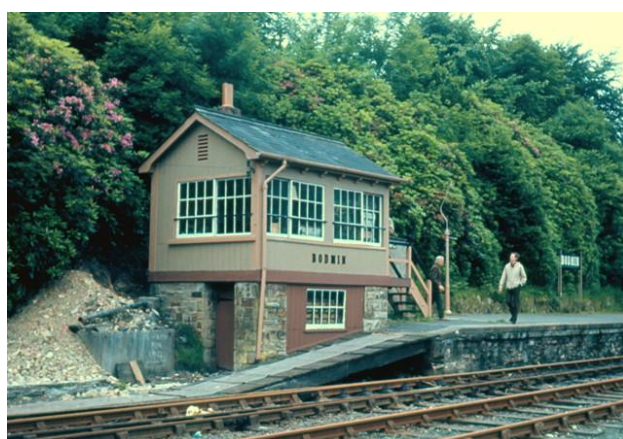


After tea in Liskeard we enjoyed another very pleasant summer's evening walk on the upper stretches of the Caradon Railway trackbed between Minions and The Cheesewring, and finding excellent accommodation nearby.

Tuesday 29th June

After a bracing morning walk, continuing where we left off from minions to Caradon Hill and back, another pleasant and unexpected surprise awaited us on arrival at Bodmin Road station. In the sidings here, a train of empty china clay wagons with several brake vans full of people attached awaited departure for Bodmin General, Boscarne Junction and Wenfordbridge. This was a special working arranged by the Great Western Society, and Tony persuaded the organisers that they could accommodate an extra three passengers, after a suitable amount of cash had changed hands! Headed by diesel shunter D3526, here is the train at Boscarne Junction (right) and at Wenfordbridge terminus (below left).....





As the train paused for reversal at Bodmin General station on the return journey, we were able to inspect the fine restoration work being carried out here by the local GWS group members (above right).

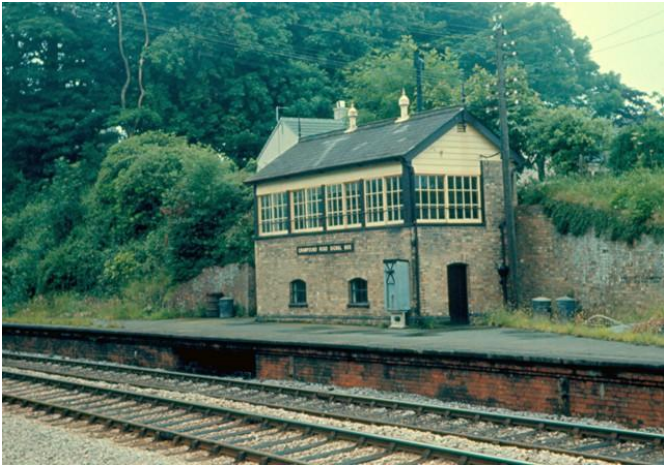
After disembarking from this very interesting trip back at Bodmin Road around mid afternoon, we journeyed via Lostwithiel, Golant, Fowey, Par and St Austell to the tiny village of Portscatho on the Roseland peninsula, where Tony had very kindly made use of his local contacts to arrange in advance a comfortable overnight stay for us all.

Wednesday 30th June

Our morning was spent in Truro, and on a return trip along the Falmouth branch, one of Tony's particular favourites, but which I had never thought to visit on our previous West Country trips. The terminus itself had been demolished and resited as a "basic station" adjacent to the busy naval dockyard, but the journey along the branch as seen from the front of the diesel car set was picturesque, as were the intermediate stations. The pictures show Penryn, where our 3-car unit passed the daily goods hauled by a D63xx diesel-hydraulic locomotive, and crossing the impressive Collegewood viaduct on the return journey to Truro.....



After lunch in Truro we continued via Grampond Road station (photo left below) and along the route of the Melangoose Mill china clay branch to St Dennis Junction, centre of a fascinating network of freight-only lines serving that industry (right below):



After calling briefly at the Newquay line halts of Roche and Bugle, we headed south to Burngullow, the principal junction of the china clay system with the GWR Cornish main line, where the platforms had been levelled but the small station building remained nestling within the divergence of the two routes; a “Warship” diesel passed on a parcels train heading eastwards.....



As time was getting on and we had arranged two nights previously to stay again near Minions, we hastened there via St Austell, Lostwithiel and Doublebois. After tea in Liskeard we walked the remaining section of the Caradon Railway route we had not seen previously, from St Cleer to Crow’s Nest and back on another very fine evening.

Thursday 1st July

In the morning we made our way eastwards following the GW main line, calling at the delightful Brunelian-style station of Menheniot (right), then St Germans and Saltash (below), before crossing the new road suspension bridge back into Devon.



Our next stops were at Ivybridge, Avonwick on the former Kingsbridge branch, and Totnes then into Paignton, where we took a trip on the branch down to Kingswear, then threatened with closure.....

Our picture shows the branch diesel train on arrival at the almost-deserted terminus, with no thoughts whatsoever of the revival in its fortunes to take place over the following few years with preservation....

Returning to Paignton, it was time for yet another look at the flourishing Dart Valley Railway, at Staverton Bridge and Buckfastleigh, where loco 4555 was in action with its train including the former "Devon Belle" observation saloon.....

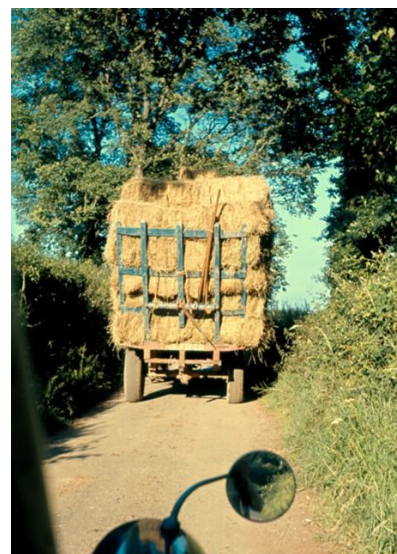


Having been fortunate to find very good overnight accommodation on our way down a few days previously, we had pre-arranged to stay again at Cadeleigh, and proceeded there via the stations at Ashburton, Heathfield, Bovey, then Trusham, Ashton and Christow on the Teign Valley Line, Exeter St Thomas and St David's, and the Exe Valley line halts of Thorverton and Up Exe.

Friday 2nd July

Money, time and ideas were running out by now, so we headed for our intended finish point for this tour at Bournemouth, via Tiverton Junction and the Hemyock branch stations of Uffculme and Culmstock, also the terminus. Along the characteristic narrow and hilly country lanes of this area we encountered a very slow-moving and somewhat overloaded hay cart drawn by a tractor, pursued for what seemed like an eternity until there was room to pass.....

Eventually regaining the main roads, we headed straight through to Bridport, Dorset for an afternoon run on the GW branch line



to Maiden Newton junction and back, also then under threat of closure. Here (left) is the somewhat remote country junction station on the main Yeovil to Weymouth line, with the branch diesel car lurking in the bay platform ready for the return trip; we seem to be the only passengers!.

Saturday 16th October 1971

The University College of North Wales Railway Society had a day out by Purple Motors coach to the Severn Valley Railway, by now fully open for normal public service between Bridgnorth and Hampton Loade, unfortunately in absolutely foul weather. On the way from Bangor we also stopped at Glyndyfrdwy for an hour or so; the coach driver was baffled when we all disappeared into the woods for a look at the old wooden-railed tramway up to the Deeside Slate Quarries.

At Bridgnorth, a service train departed behind loco 46443, while newly-arrived pannier tank 5764 still in London transport guise and livery engaged in a bit of shunting in the yard.....



Someone thought to bring along our society headboard, and we were allowed the privilege of it being carried by the next train, headed by the pannier tank, on which we travelled. Keith Walter and Tony look on, and the weather had not improved as the train waited to leave Hampton Loade for the return journey.....



Returning on the coach, we also called in at Bewdley and Much Wenlock stations before heading back into North Wales.

Sunday 14th November 1971

Using two vehicles, my Morris Minor 300KCG (the old van having finally expired in October after its summer west country exertions) and Tony Parkins' Ford Anglia saloon TEW830, this day out went first to Denbigh and Ruthin L&NWR stations, the Clogau Slate Quarry in Horseshoe Pass, then all the GWR Ruabon to Barmouth line stations and halts from Llangollen to Dolgellau inclusive. At Glanllyn Halt beside Bala Lake the stone platform with its quaint wooden "stockade" waiting shelter still survived, (above)



Nearby Llanuwchllyn station (left below) was in the very early stages of being transformed into the terminus of the new Bala Lake Railway narrow gauge line, with slate wagons in various states of dereliction delivered, but little track laid or building repairs started as yet. And here (right) are the remains of remote Garneddwen Halt and crossing loop, sadly now with track removed, but the wooden signalbox remaining accessible: Keith Walter and Eddie are at the corner windows, while Tony looks on from a safe distance.....



We returned home at the end of this long day via Trawsfynydd, Maentwrog Road and Festiniog stations on the Blaenau Ffestiniog branch line.

20th – 29th June 1972

Our summer holiday tour was in Morris Minor 300KCG, following the usual general plan down through Wales and into Devon and Cornwall, starting from Bangor and finishing in Bournemouth. Originally planned to be four of us, in the event due to other commitments in this year in which many of us were going our separate ways in life, only Ian Jones accompanied me this time....

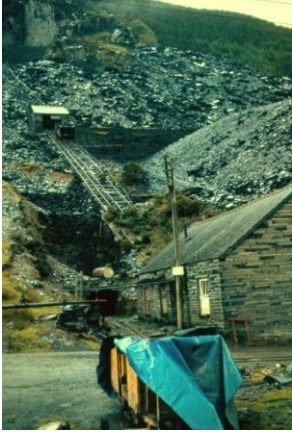
Tuesday 20th June

There was already much visible progress at Llanuwchllyn since our visit seven months previously (left below). After passing through Dolgellau and calling at the Tallylyn Railway at Towyn Wharf and Pendre, we also found narrow-gauge preservation progress at Corris (right), where the faithful green car is seen lurking in the former station yard.....



We were told that the line from Aberllefenni Slate Mine down to a roadside loading wharf not far away was still in use, and so trudged up the valley in the incessant drizzle to find this scene of activity at the quarry as a single heavy slab of rock was brought out of the tunnel from the main workings by a battery

locomotive, manhandled through 90 degrees on a wagon turntable, then hitched up to a farm tractor for the roadside journey down to the lorry loading wharf...



We were very lucky to have witnessed this sequence of somewhat archaic working in a remote location, as it surely did not endure for very much longer.

We looked at the Corris Railway stations and halts of Aberllefenni, Maespoeth Junction, Escairgeilog, Llwngwern and Machynlleth, then travelling via Aberystwyth and along the former GW branch line towards Carmarthen, calling in at Llanrhystyd Road, Llanilar, Trawscoed, Strata Florida, Tregaron, Pont Llanio, Talsarn Halt and on the branch line to Felin Fach, Ciliau Aeron and Aberayron. Here is the corrugated iron establishment at Felin Fach (right), latterly in use as a milk loading point, still in fading GWR colours. We stayed overnight at Tan-yr-Allt Farm, Ciliau Aeron.



Wednesday 21st June

In the morning we continued down the line towards Carmarthen, calling first at the former Manchester & Milford Railway station of Lampeter, with the rain still persisting.....

Our next stops were at Llanybyther, Maesycrugiau, Llandyssil, Bryn Teify, Pencader, Llanpumpaint, Conwil and Bronwydd Arms, all



still with track in situ though apparently “mothballed”. From Carmarthen Town we ventured across to Cwm-Mawr, terminus of the Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley line, now in use solely for coal traffic, with former intermediate stations at Ponthenry, Pontyberem and Pontyates. At the latter, a train of empty wagons passed by, hauled over the level crossing by two small diesel shunters with a third of similar type at the rear end.....

We continued southwards on the line to Glyn Abbey and Trimsaran Road Halts, then into Kidwelly, where we found the ex GWR tank locomotive “Lady Margaret” derelict in a small dark shed at the disused tinplate works. Thence we had another NCB colliery exploration session at Felin Foel, Cynheidre, Portardulais, Grovesend (with locomotive in steam – see our separate NCB article) and their Pontardulais depot, arriving in late afternoon at Neath for tea. Here is the former Neath & Brecon Railway station at Neath Riverside, with its impressive GWR signalbox, “Neath & Brecon Junction Box”.....



We rounded off the day visiting Crynant and Seven Sisters stations on this line, then Port Talbot on the way to Porthcawl, where we found accommodation for the night at Moorland Cottage, Nottage, for the princely sum of 25/- (£1.25p)

Thursday 22nd June

After visiting Porthcawl and Pyle stations, we arrived at Kenfig Hill on the freight line to Tondy just as a D67xx (class 37) diesel loco was slowly passing through on a long loaded coal train. Though several members of BR staff were present, attending to the level crossing gates etc, they did not seem at all bothered by our presence.....

We then went on along this line to Tondy Junction, Brynmenyn, Llangeinor and Lletty Brongu to Maesteg, where we spent another steamy morning on and around the extensive NCB system there. After lunch it was over the hills and valleys to Nantyffyllon, Cwmmwr, Abergwynfi and Blaengwyfi to Treorchy, a quick look at the Maerdy Colliery sidings, and so into Aberdare, where at the High Level station we encountered another Class 37 diesel running through on the freight line with just a brake van in tow.....



Most of the afternoon was spent at the NCB

colliery system around Mountain Ash; we then called in at Abernant and Llwydcoed stations, at Merthyr for tea then Pant, Pontsticill Junction, Dolygaer, Pontsarn for Vaynor and Dowlais, spending the night at Tregenna House B&B in Merthyr, rather expensive we thought at 30/- (£1.50p).

Friday 23rd June

Again a mixture of NCB sites and GWR stations in South Wales: firstly to Merthyr Vale colliery, where we found pannier tank 9600 still at work shunting in the yard, then Quaker's Yard with its viaducts, Pontypridd and Treforest to Nantgarw Colliery. To Caerphilly via Groeswen Halt for lunch, where we also visited the extensive castle, and the preservation activity in the yard of the old Rhymney Railway workshops, with the restoration of 43xx class 2-6-0 loco 5322 coming on well, and the timber former Rhiwderin signalbox also looking smart.....



From here we visited stations at Llanbradach, Maescywmmmer and Pontllanfraith, then Hafodyrynys Colliery, shunted by a pair of "Austerity" 0-6-0 saddle-tanks. Further stations followed at Pontypool Clarence Street, Pontnewnydd and Abersychan & Talywain, to the NCB sites at Blaenavon and Talywain. Then via Hengoed with another impressive viaduct, Penallta Colliery where we found pannier tank 7714 out of use, through Cardiff and Barry to Barry Island station. We spent the night at another of the now several "enthusiast" terraced-house B&Bs in Dock View Road, Barry.

Saturday 24th June

No pictures today; although all this was new to Ian, it was mainly revisiting places I had seen on previous excursions, but pleasant nonetheless and in excellent weather this time. To the Barry Dock scrap lines of course, fairly heaving with people on this weekend morning, including several preservation groups working on their prospective or actual purchases prior to eventual removal. We took the train into Cardiff Queen Street from Heath Junction High Level, then a bus out to the National Museum of Wales open-air site at St Fagans, returning later on the Coryton branch train to Heath Halt Low Level. We then went via Llanishen, Church Road, Risca, Cross Keys, Crumlin, Aberbeeg and Abertillery stations, and finally out of South Wales via Abergavenny to Raglan, Monmouth, Newland, Milkwall, Parkend, Lydney Town and Junction, Whitecroft, Cinderford, Kerne Bridge and Symonds Yat to Ross-on-Wye. We stayed overnight at Rycroft, Weston-under-Penyard, recorded as costing 25/-

Sunday 25th June

On a very quiet Sunday morning we retraced our steps through Ross, Kerne Bridge and Parkend, calling additionally at the site of Speech House Road station in the Forest of Dean on the way. Then via Tidenham and the Severn road bridge to Pilning, skirting Bristol by way of Henbury and Ashton Gate, then along the south-west bank of the Avon estuary to Pill, Portbury and Portishead stations. Down the coast to Clevedon, then inland to Yatton and stopping in Weston-super-Mare for lunch; the former GWR station here was most

impressive (left, below). We then spent ½ hour or so looking round the little railway museum in the yard of the old Bleadon & Uphill station (right)....



In the late afternoon we headed via Brent Knoll, Highbridge, Dunball, Bridgwater and Taunton to Bishop's Lydeard, and stayed overnight at Boyd House, Combe Florey, which charged the rather odd price of £1.38p for Bed & Breakfast.

Monday 26th June

We explored along the Minehead branch, by now closed under BR (but only temporarily, as we now know), then via the Lynton & Barnstaple stations to Barnstaple Town (left, below), also the GW station at Victoria Road and the SR's Junction station there. The on to Ilfracombe for lunch, and a visit to the terminus station there, also now disused and derelict, high above the town (right)....



Returning south via Morteohoe, Braunton and Wrafton stations, we continued on Southern territory during the afternoon, to Instow, Bideford, Torrington (below left; with the view of the river Torridge from the canal aqueduct nearby at right), Winswell, Dunsbear, Petrockstow and Meeth into Tavistock, then Gunnislake and into familiar GW lands at Liskeard and Coombe Junction.



As it was by now well into evening, we were lucky enough to see the Looe branch diesel train finishing its duties for the day, and coming through the connecting spur line between the branch and main line stations at Liskeard, en route to overnight stabling and servicing at St Blazey depot.....

We stayed overnight at Tregay Farm, Liskeard, remarkably good value at only £0.88p!

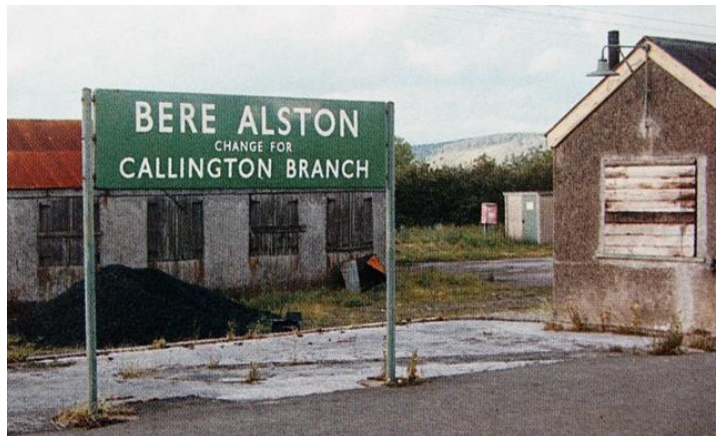
Tuesday 27th June

Driving over the Tamar road Bridge into Plymouth, we took the train firstly from North Road station to Penzance and back, and could not resist the classic view of Brunel's bridge as we re-crossed the river (in those glorious days when it was still possible to hang out of the windows of even main-line trains!). The locomotive is a "Western" class diesel.....

On return to North Road we then transferred to a train on the Gunnislake branch, and this time of course passed *under* the Tamar bridges. As the former SR main line to Tavistock and beyond was by now closed, the nameboard at the junction station of Bere Alston was liable to cause confusion; neither we nor anyone else had to change trains there, it merely reversed direction....

On the return journey we alighted at Calstock and descended to river level for this marvellous view of the huge Tamar viaduct there, before a leisurely stroll back to catch the next service back to Plymouth some considerable time later.

In the later afternoon we visited a mix of very different stations or sites thereof, at Devonport Kings Road, Plymouth Millbay and Friary, Oreston, Elburton Cross, Brixton Road, and Yealmpton, then on to Kingsbridge, where we stayed at nearby West Charlton, B&B for just £1.00.



Wednesday 28th June

After visiting the Kingsbridge branch stations of Loddiswell and Gara Bridge (photo left below), we proceeded via Totnes and Staverton to Buckfastleigh for a ride on the Dart Valley Railway to their new station at Totnes Riverside and back, seen here (right) coming back into Buckfastleigh



Then it was back through Totnes to Paignton for lunch, and a ride on the newly re-opened steam-operated Torbay line to Churston and Kingswear. Returning to Paignton, we went via Torquay, Torre, Aller Junction, Teigngrace and Bovey, to look at a real curiosity, the Haytor Granite Tramway. Due to lack of prior homework, we thought this was merely a tramway serving granite quarries, which it does, without realising that the “rails” themselves were made of granite, and that this “track” being virtually indestructible was still in situ, including pointwork. We walked down from the quarries along the route for a mile or two.....



In the lower right picture Ian is standing by a large milestone (of granite, naturally) where the tramway used to cross the moorland road.

Our travels continued via Lustleigh and Moretonhampstead stations, then via Exeter St Thomas and the SR halts at Topsham and Exton on the Exmouth branch line; we found accommodation at Dunstan House, Exton for £1.25p and on a short evening stroll to the nearest pub saw this beautiful sunset over the estuary of the River Exe from an open footpath crossing on the railway line.....



Thursday 29th June

On this last day of our holiday we drove into Exmouth via Lypstone, then rode on the branch train from the terminus into Exeter Central and back. The picture left below shows a somewhat rationalised and rather shabby Exeter Central station, and at the formerly commodious Exmouth terminus (right) only one platform was by now in use for the shuttle service diesel unit....



Going round the East Devon coast we called in at the closed SR stations of Littleham, Budleigh Salterton and East Budleigh, before spending a couple of hours including lunch at Bicton Gardens and Countryside Museum, with its miniature railway.....



In the afternoon we went along the former Southern branch lines via Newton Poppleford, Sidmouth, Tipton St John's and Ottery St Mary to Seaton station, much changed since my last visit on holiday in 1960, with miniature trams now running on the route of the old BR branch line as far as Colyford (right). The final part of our journey to Bournemouth was via Lyme Regis, Bridport and Dorchester.



Sunday 2nd July 1972

Returning to Bangor after a short break in Bournemouth gave another opportunity to look in on the Severn Valley Railway at Bridgnorth, by now going from strength to strength. Loco 3205 works in from Hampton Loade on this busy and pleasant Sunday afternoon; 46443 is just visible behind the bushes, ready to leave with the next service train.....



Sunday 15th April 1973

A temporary spell of working in London from October 1972 to February 1974 gave little opportunity for exploration further afield in that period, but with the coming of spring, Tony Parkins, Rob Palmer and myself, all based in the area at the time, realised that despite our wide-ranging travels we had never really explored the GWR lines and stations near to the capital. This day trip set out to redress the balance. Firstly here is West Ruislip.....



Then Denham, with its unusual (and outdated) wooden sign in the subway informing the local gentry where to go. Denham Golf Club Halt had a standard GWR corrugated-iron "pagoda" hut as waiting accommodation (right), and a smart pair of signs at the platform end.....



The right-hand cast-iron notice is an unusual version of the standard GWR item, as befitting this formerly jointly owned route, headed "Great Western & Great Central Joint Ry."

Our next stop was at Gerrard's Cross (below), still retaining its loop tracks off the main line,

serving the platforms.....



The halt at Seer Green & Jordans had another Joint Line variation on a standard GWR theme, with the title spelt out in full this time.....

We next visited the stations at Beaconsfield, Bourne End, Wooburn Green and Loudwater, then West Wycombe.



Below are three views at Saunderton, further along the Birmingham main line....



And after calling in at Princes Risborough, here is Little Kimble on the Aylesbury branch, also joint GW & GC territory. The poster board on the extreme right of the middle photo is still headed "Metropolitan Railway"!.....

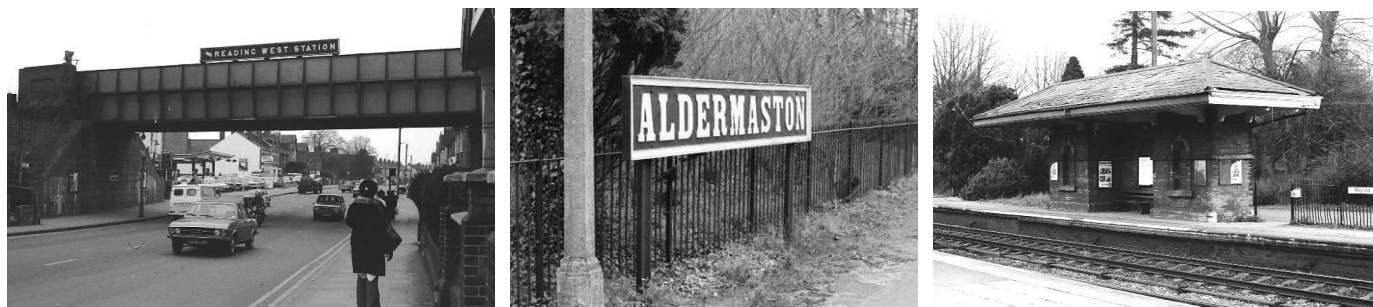


Lastly on this trip we went to Wendover (right), just for a change on the Metropolitan & Great Central Joint line from Marylebone to Aylesbury, followed by great Missenden, the next stop southwards on the same route.



Wednesday 18th April 1973

En route from London to Bournemouth for the Easter break, I took the opportunity to fill in a few more gaps along the way. The bridge at Reading West station still carried its large wooden signboard with pointing finger for guidance of intending passengers (below left). I called in next at Theale, then Aldermaston, on the “Berks & Hants” main line, with its fine “Brunelian” waiting shelter.....



The next station westwards was Midgham for Douai School, also with cast-iron type nameboard with wooden supplement underneath; the signalbox and level crossing are at the platform ends.....



After visiting Thatcham, Newbury was bypassed to head down along the former Didcot, Newbury & Southampton line, first stop Woodhay, then Highclere and Burghclere (photo right). Continuing on the same line to Litchfield and Whitchurch, a small detour was made to look also at the L&SWR main-line station at the latter place, close to where this line passed over the DN&S route. Then via Sutton Scotney to the L&SW country stations of Horsebridge, Mottisfont and Dunbridge before finally heading down to Bournemouth.



Sunday 13th May 1973

Escaping the noise and dirt of London on a hot spring day to glorious Devon, and a closer look at the revived Torbay & Dartmouth steam railway, I travelled by train from Paddington, outward via Reading, Bristol and Exeter, and returning in the evening via Taunton and Newbury. This trip was an excuse to thoroughly test out a new SLR camera purchased in connection with my work at University College, London, which they kindly allowed myself and a few other staff members to “borrow” at weekends. The Paignton to Kingswear train was headed by loco 7827 “Lydham Manor”.....



After arrival back at Paignton I took a Devon General bus out to Churston and walked back from there, to photograph a later afternoon service climbing the last bit of the bank into Churston station, with the track here very much rationalised, and crossing the viaduct on its return journey.....



Thursday 6th – Sunday 16th June 1974

Having returned to Bangor in March 1974, this trip was to be the last holiday excursion around Wales and the West Country with college friends which involved a significant amount of railway interest. Even this one was spent mainly looking at Industrial Archaeology sites, and only the transport items are mentioned here. Due to other commitments, I was accompanied solely by Rob Palmer on this occasion, and we travelled in my shiny “new” dark green Morris Minor (actually Austin-badged) van DYY203J, one of the last to be manufactured....

Thursday 6th June

From Bangor we travelled via Blaenau Ffestiniog, Trawsfynydd and Dolgellau to Dinas Mawddwy branch terminus and Aberangell station, then walked along branches of the old Hendre-Ddu tramway system. On the Cambrian Railways main line, the former branch junction station at Cemmaes Road retained much of its character, including a GW all-timber signalbox complete with token exchange pick-up and set-down posts (picture below left).



We continued eastwards along this line calling in at Commins Coch, Llanbrynmair, Carno, Pontdolgoch and Caersws, the last of which retained its stone-built combined station master's house booking office range in splendid condition, together with a small signalbox. Unfortunately a developer tank fault spoilt my picture of the pretty setting here, of which only part is shown.....



After a visit to the derelict Van Lead Mines complex we headed along the route of the old Mid Wales line to Llanidloes, with its impressive main station building still smart and in use as contractor's offices, pictured here from the road approach, with my van parked in centre foreground, and from the platform side, with its very unusual little projecting round bay window.....



We continued down this line calling at most surviving stations down to Talyllyn Junction, then through Brecon to look at the Monmouth & Breconshire Canal, staying overnight at Aberclydach House in Talybont. With the rampaging inflation of the times, we were not surprised that B&B was now costing us up to £2 per night, almost double that of a couple of years previously. The following day (Friday) we proceeded via Aberdare, the NCB steam-operated system at Mountain Ash, Pontypridd, Raglan, Parkend, Lydney, Chepstow, the Severn road bridge and Keynsham down to Weston-super-Mare, all places en route being familiar from my previous travels and with no new photos added. We stayed overnight at a guest house, Southmead in Bristol Road, Weston, for a very reasonable £1.50p

Saturday 8th June

The GWR Minehead branch was by now sadly moribund, awaiting its revival in preservation as the West Somerset Railway shortly after our visit.

Here is the wooden single platform at Stogumber (right), and below are the stations at Williton (left) and Blue Anchor (right).....





We walked along accessible parts of the old West Somerset Mineral Railway route at Roadwater, Comberow and Raleigh's Cross, with Rob seen here on the trackbed, striding towards the abyss of the former winding engine house at the summit of the long inclined plane up the side of Brendon Hill.....



The afternoon was spent exploring the late lamented Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, with its picturesque surviving station houses seen here at Lynton (left) and Woody Bay (right).....



At Blackmoor Gate, the former railway was commemorated on this modern plastic inn sign, and we could still walk over the impressive, curving viaduct at Chelfham.....



Through Barnstaple and Instow to Bideford, we explored the route of the long-closed Bideford, Westward Ho! & Appledore Railway before going on to Torrington and Watergate Halt, and spending the night at Tor View, Milton Damerel near Holsworthy, B&B at £1.50p

Sunday 9th June

Here are the derelict former L&SWR “withered arm” stations at Holsworthy (left & centre), and Bude (right).....



Our day continued to Tintagel, Trebarwith Quarries and the Delabole Slate Quarry, Port Isaac Road and St Kew Highway stations, Wenfordbridge, the De lank Granite Quarries and Bodmin Road to Bodmin, where we stayed overnight.

Monday 10th June

Once more to Bodmin General GW station, for a thorough look around....



The Wenfordbridge goods was still running, but alas no rides available to us this time.....



Later we went on to St Dennis Junction, Indian Queens, Toldish Tunnel, Quintrell Downs, Newquay including the remains of the harbour tramway, Perranporth, St Agnes and several old tin mine workings, finishing at South Leigh, St Agnes for overnight B&B. Tuesday was spent exploring industrial remains from Portreath down to the Botallack Mines near St Just, with their spectacular cliff-side engine houses at Crowns. We overnighed at Church Road Farm, Pendeen for £1.75p

Wednesday 12th June

More mines and engine houses today, working back along the southern coast of Cornwall. We visited the Zennor Folk Museum and the Holman mining museum at Cambourne, then called in at the terminus and intermediate stations on the Falmouth branch line. The afternoon was spent walking along accessible stretches of the Redruth & Chacewater mineral railway at Twelveheads, Carharrack and from Point through to Devoran Wharves. Near Twelveheads we found this well-preserved stretch of stone-block sleepers in situ.....

Our overnight stop was at Trethewell Farm, Calenik, Truro, at £1.50



Thursday 13th June

A varied day, starting with a return visit to Falmouth Docks to see if there was any steam shunting activity there, alas not, then trying to see something of derelict Enys House, looking decidedly sinister in its overgrown grounds, and where after turning the van around to leave we were pursued down the driveway by what appeared to be a group of very angry and savage-looking natives – we did not stop to find out!

Stopping for a coffee at Truro station, the diesel hydraulic loco “Western Ranger” paused with an express bound for Paddington (right). We then headed to Par Docks to see the famous cut-down little green shunting engine “Alfred” (one of a pair here, the other being “Judy”) at work shunting ferry vans carrying bagged china clay for export. As well as the pictures below, we shot a short piece of cine film of the locomotive, but the very surly (and suitably diminutive!) driver objected most strongly



to our presence for some reason and the exercise was abruptly terminated. The images are contrasty due to the overwhelming whiteness of the clay-powder coated environment, and very bright sunshine...



After looking at the clay pits themselves around Carthew and the delightfully named Greensplat with their waste-heap “moonscapes”, we walked on the Treffry mineral railway from Treffry viaduct to Carmears and Pont’s Mill, thence drove via Fowey, Lostwithiel and Doublebois to St Clears and Liskeard, for another overnight stay at Tregay Farm, which had increased its price dramatically this year, to all of £1.25p!

The last three days of our holiday were spent in familiar territory, and evidently the film money was running out, as this was the only picture taken, of the picturesque old road bridge crossing the River Tamar from Cornwall into Devon at Gunnislake, on Friday 14th June.....



On that day we had looked at the Callington branch line stations, Calstock Quay and Cotehele House. Through Tavistock and Yelverton, we visited the Lee Moor clay works and the Plymouth and Dartmoor Tramroad tunnel at Plympton, thence to Kingsbridge overnight.

Saturday was spent on the Kingswear and the dart valley steam railways, then through Exeter to Cadeleigh overnight at one of the places we had stayed in previous years. Before heading to our final destination of Bournemouth on the Sunday, we had a scenic train trip with excellent views from the ever-popular front seats of the diesel unit trains, on the Southern line from Exeter St David's to Barnstaple Junction and back.

Keith A. Jagers

Compiled in July 2011 from our contemporary notebooks etc.