

Pathfinder TOURS

11th - 13th June, 1993

The Skirl Revisited



Dear Passenger & Railtourer,

We're off ! After a break of some five years since the last 'Skirl' type weekend bash (and thirteen years since the first) we head north for an expedition to wilder parts. Saturday sees the spectacular run over the West-Highland line to Fort William & the 'extension' onto Mallaig whilst Sunday morning will see our train hauled over the graded G.& S.W. route to Stranraer, a line steeped in railway lore. Locomotives of six classes (26/31/35/37/56/58) haul the heavy twelve coach train at various stages to add even more variety to this fascinating weekend.

POINTS TO NOTE

On arrival at Fort William Saturday morning (1010) there is a requirement to change trains as we must use the 'steam set' for the trip to Mallaig & back (departing 1030). Your seat allocation for this journey was given in the ticket letter. Please allow 10 minutes before boarding this set of coaches to allow Pathfinder stewards to label it.

There is a break at Mallaig (1225-1330) and back at Fort William (1515-1655). An optional set down will be made at Glasgow Queen St. Low Level in the evening (2104) before the tour runs via the Hamilton circle to Glasgow Central (arrive 2225). Departure for Ayr will be at 2320 for an 0010 arrival Sunday. Arrangements have been made for the station toilets to remain open overnight (please do not use the train loo's in the platform !). Contacts have also been made with various 'eateries' in the platform !. Food can be obtained in the early hours. We depart from Ayr to ensure that the trip onto Stranraer and there will be another break on our return to Ayr early lunchtime (1135-1240) before the return homeward.

We must apologise for any disappointment caused by the changes in routing. Although no mention had previously been made by ScotRail of any problems with our booked outward route via Glasgow Central Low Level, the full timings once received earlier this week showed we were routed via Springburn, with an explanation that 'politics' with Strathclyde PTE precluded the passage of non local trains through the station. On the Saturday night we are unable to travel to Edinburgh as there is no route back to the Glasgow area open until after 0800 Sunday morning, about 3 hours later than we require.

ON THE TRAIN

C.A.T.S. Catering will provide a refreshment service, offering a selection of hot/cold drinks, sandwiches, crisps, etc, from the buffet coach 'G'.

There will be a book sales stand, ably run by the C1119 Bus Preservation Group, also situated in coach 'G', offering a selection of railway books, badges, postcards, photo, etc, for sale.

The on-train charity raffle this weekend will be organised by the 'Guild of Disabled Homeworkers'. Tickets will be sold after departure from Fort William on the Saturday afternoon and the result of the draw will be announced when we leave Ayr for the homeward journey on Sunday.

Rubbish bags will be provided in the end vestibules of each coach and we ask that you use these and not the floor. Would you also please not remove the Pathfinder carriage labels; identical ones can be obtained from the book sales stand at the modest charge of 10p each.

The smoking area on board this weekend is coach 'F', with the rest of the train designated as NON-SMOKING, irrespective of any labels shown on the carriage windows. Also, please note that the Fort William to Mallaig train is entirely made up of NON-SMOKING accommodation.

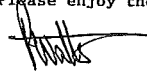
The tables in the compartments are easily removable and can be safely stored in the luggage racks when not required for use. However, when not in place, please be wary of the floor mounted holder for the leg of the table.

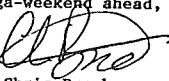
One last request - PLEASE carry your tour ticket with you AT ALL TIMES as this makes any ticket checks easier for you and for ourselves. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the following for their grateful assistance with the running of this tour ; InterCity Special Trains Unit, the West Somerset Railway, Train Tours, ScotRail, Trainload Coal and the Civil Engineers (InterCity West Coast & ScotRail).

Please enjoy the mega-weekend ahead,


Peter Watts.
Managing Director.


Chris Brooks.
Operations Manager.

.....and all at PATHFINDER.

Miles and Chains	Location	TIMINGS		Miles and Chains	Location	TIMINGS	
		Schedule	Actual			Schedule	Actual
0.00	MINEHEAD	PU	1750	<u>196.06</u>			
1.50	Dunster		1755	0.00	CREWE	LC/PU	0040
3.37	Blue Anchor		1801	7.41			0051
5.60	WASHFORD	PU	1809 1810	17.20	Winsford		0104
8.07	Watchet		1818	24.11	Weaver Jct.		0110½
9.65	Williton		1826	35.71	Warrington Bank Quay		0118
13.07	STOGUMBER	PU	1835 1836	45.41	Wigan North Western		0131
15.61	Crowcombe Heathfield		1844	51.01	Euxton Jct.		0142½
<u>19.51</u>	BISHOPS LYDEARD	LC/PU	1855	71.79	PRESTON	PU	0148 0150
0.00			1920	78.07	Lancaster		0216
3.12	Norton Fitzwarren		1935	91.07	Carnforth North Jct.		0222
5.08	TAUNTON	PU	1938 1943	103.56	Oxenholme		0232½
10.11	Cogload Jct.		1949	123.19	Tebay		0247
16.53	Bridgwater		1956	141.08	Penrith		0306½
30.16	Uphill Jct.		2009	149.65	Carlisle	CC	0329 0331
33.09	Worle Jct.		2012	166.74	Gretna Jct.		0343
49.74	BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS	PU	2035 2040	180.48	Lockerbie		0401
51.37	Stapleton Road		2045	190.72	Beattock		0415
55.56	BRISTOL PARKWAY	PU	2052 2057	198.78	Beattock Summit	*	0431 0436
60.26	Westerleigh Jct.		2103	214.61	Abington		0447
68.39	Charfield		2113	217.18	Carstairs		0508
81.64	Standish Jct.		2128	217.18	Lanark Jct.		0511
87.74	Gloucester Yard Jct.		2134	225.17	Law Jct.		0520
94.24	CHELTENHAM SPA	PU	2147 2152	234.56	Holytown Jct.		0529
112.22	Abbotswood Jct.		2212	236.08	Mossend North Jct.		0532
116.09	WORCESTER SHRUB HILL	PU	2218 2220	<u>236.41</u>			0534
121.68	Droitwich Spa		2228	0.00	MOSSEND YARD	LC	0545
126.03	Stoke Works Jct.		2237	2.54	Coatbridge Jct.		0549
128.16	Bromsgrove		2239	5.14	Gartcosh Jct.		0555
131.59	Barnt Green		2245½	11.46	Sighthill Jct.		0605
136.67	Kings Norton		2251	12.28	Cowlairs West Jct.		0610
139.01	Selly Oak		2300	16.37	Westerton		0618
142.32	BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET	*/PU	2308 2318	20.22	Dalmuir		0624
145.08	Aston		2325½	26.35	Dumbarton Central		0632
147.30	Perry Barr North Jct.		2330½	33.27	Craigendoran Jct.		0642
151.67	Bescot Stadium		2335½	35.35	Helensburgh Upper		0647
156.04	Portobello Jct.		2343	42.23	Garelochhead		0700
158.52	Bushbury Jct.		2349	48.48	Glen Douglas		0712
172.29	STAFFORD	PU	0003 0005	52.72	Arrochar & Tarbet		0722
188.60	Madeley Jct.		0023½	60.75	Ardlui		0735
				69.52	Crianlarich		0756

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Miles and Chains	Location	TIMINGS		Miles and Chains	Location	TIMINGS	
		Schedule	Actual			Schedule	Actual
74.48	Tyndrum Upper		0807	121.67	GLASGOW QUEEN ST.LOW LEVEL	SD	2104 2106
82.15	Bridge of Orchy		0823	122.77	Bellgrove		2110
97.63	RANNOCH	PS/X	0848 0907	125.47	Shettleston		2113
105.01	Corroul		0919	130.70	Sunnyside Jct.		2125
115.06	Tulloch		0939	132.12	Whifflet South Jct.		2144
124.03	Spean Bridge		0957	134.36	Mossend North Jct.		2149
132.64	FORT WILLIAM	SD	1010 <i>1105</i>	136.40	Motherwell	CC	2154 2156
	- Change Trains -			139.42	Hamilton Central		2203
0.00	FORT WILLIAM	PU	<i>1235</i> 1030	144.65	Newton		2212
2.19	Banavie		1038	147.40	Rutherglen East Jct.		2216
6.14	Loch Eil Outward Bound		1051	<u>151.35</u>			2225
16.47	GLENFINNAN	PS/X	1110 1130	0.00	GLASGOW CENTRAL	Break/LC/Rev	2320
33.76	Arisaig		1206	1.51	Shields Jct.		2325
<u>41.39</u>	MALLAIG	RR/Break/Rev	1225 <i>1400</i>	7.18	Paisley Gilmour Street		2332
0.00			<i>1500</i> 1330	16.28	Lochwinnoch		2341
7.43	Arisaig		1352	23.13	Dalry		2348
24.72	Glenfinnan		1434	26.51	Kilwinning		2352
35.25	Loch Eil Outward Bound		1452	29.79	Irvine		2356
39.20	Banavie		1509	33.60	Barassie Jct.		2359
<u>41.39</u>	FORT WILLIAM	SD	1515 <i>1630</i>	38.23	Prestwick		0003
	- Change Trains -			41.38	AYR	Break	0010 0725
0.00	FORT WILLIAM	PU	1655	44.42	Dalrymple Jct.		0729
8.61	Spean Bridge		1711	50.35	Maybole		0740
17.58	Tulloch		1730	54.65	Kilkerran		0746
27.63	Corroul		1750	62.64	Girvan		0756
35.01	Rannoch		1803	75.04	Barrhill		0825
50.49	Bridge of Orchy		1827	83.39	Glenwhilly		0841
58.16	Tyndrum Upper		1843	94.54	Dunragit		0855
63.12	Crianlarich		1854	<u>101.01</u>			0907
71.69	Ardlui		1915	0.00	STRANRAER HARBOUR	LC/Rev	0952
79.72	ARROCHAR & TARBET	PS/X	1929 1940	6.27	Dunragit		1003
84.16	Glen Douglas		1950	17.42	Glenwhilly		1023
90.41	Garelochhead		2003	25.77	Barrhill		1037
97.29	Helensburgh Upper		2016	38.17	Girvan		1100
99.37	Craigendoran Jct.		2020	46.16	Kilkerran		1112
106.29	Dumbarton Central		2029	50.46	Maybole		1120
112.42	Dalmuir		2037	56.39	Dalrymple Jct.		1131
116.27	Westerton		2045	<u>59.43</u>			1135
117.57	Anniesland		2048	0.00	AYR	Break/LC	1240
119.28	Partick		2053	3.15	Prestwick		1246

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Miles and Chains	Location	TIMINGS		Miles and Chains	Location	TIMINGS	
		Schedule	Actual			Schedule	Actual
7.57	Barassie	1251		216.06	Droitwich Spa		1908
15.49	Kilmarnock	1303		221.65	WORCESTER SHRUB HILL	SD	1915 1917
24.72	Mauchline Jct.	1317		225.52	Abbotswood Jct.		1923
36.65	New Cumnock	1330		243.50	CHELTENHAM SPA	SD	1937 1939
44.21	Kirkconnel	1337		250.00	Gloucester Yard Jct.		1946
59.48	Thornhill	1352		256.10	Standish Jct.		1951
70.21	Holywood	1401		269.35	Charfield		2000
73.53	Dumfries	1405		277.48	Westerleigh Jct.		2009
89.02	Annan	1421		282.18	BRISTOL PARKWAY	SD	2014 2016
98.03	Gretna Jct.	1430		286.37	Stapleton Road		2027
106.60				288.00	BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS	SD	2035
0.00	CARLISLE	1446	717 +7				
17.69	Penrith	1515½					
36.68	Tebay	1531½	-29				
50.01	Oxenholme	1541					
63.01	Carnforth North Jct.	1549½					
69.09	Lancaster	1554½	-68				
90.07	PRESTON	1617 1619	-67				
95.43	Euxton Jct.	1626					
105.17	Wigan North Western	1635					
113.41	Winwick Jct.	1641½					
116.77	Warrington Bank Quay	1644					
124.66	Weaver Jct.	1653					
133.47	Winsford	1659½					
141.08	CREWE	1713 1715					
149.14	Madeley Jct.	1730½					
160.16	Norton Bridge	1744					
165.45	STAFFORD	1750 1752					
179.22	Bushbury Jct.	1810					
181.70	Portobello Jct.	1815					
186.07	Bescot Stadium	1820					
190.44	Perry Barr North Jct.	1826½					
192.66	Aston	1831½					
194.66	Proof House Jct.	1835½					
195.42	BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET	1838 1842					
198.73	Selly Oak	1850					
201.07	Kings Norton	1853					
206.15	Barnt Green	1858					
209.58	Bromsgrove	1902					
211.71	Stoke Works Jct.	1903					

CODES USED;-

PU Passenger Pick Up Station SD Passenger Set Down Station
 LC Locomotive Change Rev Train Reversal Point
 * Pathing Requirement Stop CC Train Crew Change ONLY
 PS Photographic Stop RR Loco Run Round Train
 X Pass Train on Single Line Loop

TRAIN HEADCODES;-

1Z47 Minehead - Fort William
 1Z70 Fort William - Mallaig
 1Z71 Mallaig - Fort William
 1Z72 Fort William - Ayr
 1Z47 Ayr - Stranraer - Bristol.T.Meads

MAIN TRAIN FORMATION;-

A B C D E F G H J K L M = Load 12 DB/EH
 SK SK SK SK CK BSK RMB CK SK SK SK SK

FORT WILLIAM - MALLAIG TRAIN FORMATION;-

A B C D E F = Load 6 DB/EH
 TSO TSO TSO BSK TSO TSO

These mileages have been collated from the book 'MILE BY MILE', which is available from the book sales stand in coach 'G'. This publication gives a comprehensive listing of all acknowledged distance points and their mileages in the U.K.

ROUTE ITINERARY

Compiled by Richard Szwejkowski

Today's train from Minehead to Mallaig and Stranraer is booked to run outward and return to Carlisle via the West Coast Main Line. As the route between Crewe and Carlisle will be covered in the dark northbound, that section will be described on the return journey. Details of the route from Bristol to Crewe can be found in the booklet 'Route Descriptions for the Midlands & Mid-West' (available from the sales stand), so this itinerary will describe the line from Minehead to Bristol and then resume from Carlisle.

MINEHEAD: - The route from Taunton to Watchet was opened by the West Somerset Railway on March 31st, 1862, but the section from Watchet to Minehead was constructed by the separate Minehead Railway and public services did not commence until July 16th, 1874. Oddly enough, although the Minehead Railway was absorbed by the GWR in 1897, the West Somerset retained its independence until 1922. Both companies were, however, from the start worked by the Bristol & Exeter Railway, itself amalgamated with the GWR in 1876.

Minehead station facilities reached their greatest extent in 1934 when the section from Dunster was doubled, and these two tracks lasted to the end on January 4th, 1971, although for the last four years they had been worked independently from Dunster, with no connections in the Minehead area.

After the departure of British Rail, the line lay dormant for nearly four years, until November 28th, 1974 when the West Somerset Railway Company Ltd Light Railway Order came into force. Much work was still required before the first public train could run, an event which took place on March 28th, 1976. For many years the railway ran 'on a shoe string', so to speak, with Bagnall industrial shunters from the Austin plant at Longbridge providing the only steam motive power, but the faith and hard work of the loyal staff and volunteers has resulted in a line which goes from strength to strength. Now well filled trains of up to 11 coaches work the service trains, hauled by a variety of WSR based and visiting engines.

Departure leads past the signal box (R) and across the new level crossing, installed when a new road to the sea front avoiding the town centre was opened. This crossing did cause some amusement to passengers as the controlling lights and gates operated for some months before the road was even built. Somerwest World, one of the earliest Butlins holiday camps extends for some distance (L) before the line passes into open ground and heads for DUNSTER. Up to closure in 1971 the two lines into Minehead were controlled by a signal box (R) but this has since been demolished. The goods shed (L) is being restored. Prominent on Conygar Hill (R) is a folly tower, built around 1770 by Henry Fownes Luttrell, probably solely as an eyecatcher, although it also affords good views outward.

Just east of the station there is another level crossing over a minor road, requiring a speed restriction, but after this the engine should be opened up to cross further low lying ground. As the line comes alongside the Bristol Channel, subject to visibility it should be possible to see the coast of South Wales in the distance (L). A brief climb at 1 in 91 leads to the box controlled level crossing at :

BLUE ANCHOR: - As with most intermediate stations, this exudes the charm of a crossing point on a GWR branch, with the buildings and platform areas restored to a very high standard. After an exchange of single line tokens, the engine will need to be opened out to some purpose in order to surmount the climb to come. Easy grades past a caravan park (L) gives way to 1 in 75 and then to 1 in 65 for over a mile, mostly on an embankment, but then leading into one of the most difficult stretches on the line, the curve through a cutting leading to the summit at WASHFORD. This is the home of the Somerset & Dorset Trust, with a museum and shop in the station building (R) and an extensive collection of vehicles in and around the new(ish) shed (L).

East of the station, the line starts to fall, easily at first but then at

1 in 74. A house amid a clump of trees (R) marks the site of another WASHFORD station, that of the West Somerset Mineral Railway line from Watchet to Comberow, Brendon Hill and Gupworthy. That was, in fact, the first railway in the area, having been opened from Watchet to Roadwater in April 1857, to carry iron ore from mines on the Brendon Hills (R). By the December of that year, the line had reached Comberow, at the foot of the hills, but the hardest piece of construction lay ahead, the building of a 1 in 4 incline to reach the summit 800ft higher. Completion of the incline was in 1861, and although it was nominally for the use of goods only, passengers were permitted to ride in a truck at their own risk. Passengers were also carried on the extension along the ridge of the hills to Gupworthy on the same terms.

By 1879 cheaper imported Spanish ore resulted in closure of the mines, although some reopened in the same year and lasted to 1883. Passenger services from Watchet to Comberow struggled on until November 7th, 1898 when all traffic ceased and that appeared to be that. Resurrection came in 1907 when two of the mines restarted production, but it was not to last and the venture collapsed early in 1910, with all possessions offered for auction that summer.

Still the line would not die and the lower sections were taken over for experiments with the Angus automatic train control. This culminated in a public demonstration on July 5th, 1912 when over a thousand people, many of whom had come from as far away as London, picnicked on the hillside (L) as two driverless engines were sent from opposite ends of the line. The test worked and the two engines stopped about 200 yards apart, to the evident chagrin of many of the spectators.

Although the rails were removed between 1917 and 1919, much remains to explore, with the trackbed walkable almost throughout and the winding house at the top of the incline still standing, albeit in a ruinous state. Some of the stations are virtually intact (and lived in), two of them still having the words 'The Old Mineral Line' as part of their postal address.

The parallel bed of the WSMR can be seen (R) as the line passes the site of Kentsford Loop (removed May 1964). A curve carries the line over the route of WSMR and past Wansborough paper mill (R), before a reverse curve leads into

WATCHET: - As mentioned above, this was the terminus from 1862 to 1874 and has never had more than one platform, although there was a goods loop (L). Beyond the station, Watchet Harbour is close by (L), still used by commercial traffic, such as waste paper for Wansborough. A steady climb leads the line onto the cliffs, the sea being a great deal nearer than at the time the line was built, such has been the rate of erosion. During the 1980's, it appeared that the WSR might be doomed as the sea threatened to undermine the track, but the Local Authorities agreed to carry out defence work, particularly as it was clear that with the line gone, the houses (R) would be next to fall.

There are views across the Bristol Channel again (L), with the two islands of Steep Holm and Flat Holme and the headland at Weston-super-Mare visible. **DONIFORD BEACH HALT** is at the point where the line turns inland, curving to reach the crossing station at :

WILLITON: - Of particular interest here is the D&EG base (R) where the two 'Hymeks' and the 'Western' are usually to be found, along with a variety of other ex BR and industrial locos. One feature visible over the fence (L) at the south end of the station is a miniature maze in the adjacent garden.

Nearly six miles of climbing follows, mostly at 1 in 91/100, following the Doniford Stream. The scenery here is very attractive, with the Quantock Hills (L) and the Brendon Hills (R), with intermittent views (R) of Willett Hill tower, a folly built in 1820 by a Mr. Belmerton, and like Conygar Hill tower (see above), probably simply as an eyecatcher.

Climbing continues to **STOGUMBER**, with its single wooden platform (R). An easing of the grade from 1 in 98 to 1 in 176 through the station is paid for by a restart at 1 in 66, very awkward with a heavy train in wet weather. Half a mile later is the site of the crossing loop at Leigh Bridge, closed in May 1964. There are two automatic open crossings, at Leigh Wood and Roebuck Lane, on the twisting track through the woods to the summit of the line at :

CROWCOMBE HEATHFIELD: - There is a display of various types of track and lineside furniture at the north end (R). A new signal box is nearing completion on the 'down' side (R) and this will allow reconnection of the passing loop and thus restore the ability to 'cross' trains here, with the resultant capacity to run an enhanced service.

Almost off the platform end the line starts to descend, with gradients of 1 in 101 or steeper over most of the next four miles. Attractive scenery is very much a feature as the Minehead to Taunton road is crossed twice near the village of Combe Florey (R). A long embankment gives way to a cutting as the line approaches the terminus for regular WSR services at :

BISHOPS LYDEARD: - There are two platforms here, but service trains always use the 'up' platform (L), and this will remain the case until the signal box at the south end is brought into use.

Here our WSR engine will be detached and replaced by the engines to take us through to Norton Fitzwarren and BR metals. Although the WSR owns the line as far as the Taunton Cider plant adjacent to the main line, trains only run beyond Bishops Lydeard on special occasions.

Still descending, the line heads south, past Norton army training camp (L) with its defence perimeter and then curves left to approach the main line (R). In the fork of the two lines is the bed of the Barnstaple line, closed to all traffic when the sparse passenger service was withdrawn on 3.10.66. A footbridge across all tracks alongside the Taunton Cider Works (L) marks the site of NORTON FITZWARREN (cl 30.10.61). At the far end of the works, we will leave the siding connection and pass out onto the main line, crossing the Taunton Western Bypass on Silk Mills Crossing, since the abolition of the signal box notorious for the long delays sometimes caused to road traffic. A few sidings remain in place (R), now used for the storage of wagons, engineers use having been reduced some years ago and the traffic from Taunton Cider having been forced back onto the roads last year.

Entry is now into :

TAUNTON: - The present station layout dates from reconstruction in 1930-32 when the section from Cogload Junction to Norton Fitzwarren was quadrupled. The centre island platform is only used in emergency and all the bays at the west end are disused for passenger purposes. A large corrugated iron shed (R) has been built on the site of the former MPD, closed in October 1964. On the far side of the MPD are the disused tracks of the station avoiding line, seldom used by passenger services except on Summer Saturdays in the past when trains destined for Barnstaple and Minehead would sometimes change engines there to avoid blocking platforms for lengthy periods. East of the station, the avoiding line rejoined (R) in front of Taunton East Yard until disconnection during the installation of the m.a.s scheme in 1986, when the line east of here was reduced from four tracks to two.

Taunton BR Concrete Works can be seen (L) as the line heads east with the River Tone nearby (R). After the M5 passes overhead, the Taunton & Bridgwater Canal can be seen (L) at the site of :

Creech Junction: - Diverging (R) was the Chard line, closed to passengers on 10.9.62 and completely from 6.7.64. There is a paper mill (R) and the abutments of the bridge which carried a link overhead from the Chard Canal (R) to the Taunton & Bridgwater Canal (L). CREECH ST. MICHAEL HALT (cl 5.10.64) was at the road overbridge and only had platforms on the outer lines. Alongside the canal (L) is the remains of a pumping station, used to supply water from the canal to Creech watertroughs. A long curve through open country leads to :

Cogload Junction: - Named after a nearby farm (R) and the divergence of the Westbury line (R) from the Bristol line. The 'down' Bristol line is carried across the Westbury route on a lattice girder bridge, installed as part of the 1930's improvement scheme for the Taunton area.

DURSTON (cl 5.10.64): - The trackbed diverging (R) formed part of the 1853 Yeovil route, some of which was used in 1906 for the Castle Cary to Taunton line. Passenger services to Yeovil were withdrawn from 15.6.64 and closure came three weeks later on 6.7.64.

Several miles of open ground lead the line roughly parallel to the Taunton & Bridgwater Canal (L) until the M5 passes overhead shortly before we cross the River Parrett. Until 1958 there was a narrow gauge line connecting clay pits (R) with brickworks (L), now mostly demolished. Commercial premises (L) occupy the site of former carriage workshops which included a small loco depot, a sub-shed of Taunton up to closure in 1960.

BRIDGWATER: - Station signs include the suffix SEDGEMOOR although this does not appear in any BR publications. North of the station there is a nuclear flask transshipment facility (L) where waste products from Hinkley Point power station are loaded for despatch to Sellafield (formerly known as Windscale). This facility is on the truncated remains of the docks branch which closed from 2.1.67.

After the Bath Road bridge, the British Cellophane plant is (R), home to D2133 since July 1969. At the far end of the works, traces remain (L) of the former Bridgwater branch from the SDJR near where it passed overhead. Passenger services ceased from 1.12.52 and the line closed east of here from 5.10.54 when a new trailing connection was installed (L), this lasting until 2.1.67.

About two miles north was :

DUNBALL HALT (cl 5.10.64): - An unusual station in that the 'up' platform was south of the river (King's Sedgemoor Drain) and the 'down' platform on the north bank. A short branch trailed in (L) from Dunball Docks until closure sometime in the mid to late 1960's.

A short cutting is followed by flat ground to :

Huntspill Junction: - Interchange sidings (R) were used for traffic to and from Puriton Ordnance factory which can be seen (R). An extensive network of standard and narrow gauge lines within the works were served by a short branch until all traffic ceased in the week before Christmas 1990.

The M5 is running parallel (R) as we cross the Huntspill River before :

HIGHBRIDGE: - Only the main line platforms, partly built over the River Brue, survive at this formerly important station. Traces remain (R) of the adjoining SDJR platforms but the former MPD and Works have been razed to the ground since closure of most of the SDJR system on 7.3.66. There was no direct connection between the SDJR and the main lines, but the former company's line crossed the GWR on the level on its way to Burnham-on-Sea. Regular passenger trains over that line ceased from 29.10.51 but excursions ran until 8.9.62 and goods until 20.5.63. Bason Bridge milk factory provided the last traffic over the Evercrech Junction line, this finishing from 2.10.72.

On straight and level track the line heads north to BRENT KNOLL (cl 4.1.71), probably the last wayside halt on a British main line. The River Axe is crossed before BLEADON & UPHILL (cl 5.10.64), where we enter a cutting leading to :

Uphill Junction: - Trains calling at Weston-Super-Mare use the line diverging (L) as we continue north past Weston Airfield (R) at :

WESTON JUNCTION (cl 1.3.1884): - Until the opening of the Weston Loop in 184, the town was served by a branch which trailed in (L), apparently horse-worked all its life. The Weston Loop converges again (L) at :

Worle Junction: - Shortly after the junction is WORLE PARKWAY, opened on 24.9.90 to serve new commercial developments (L) and to provide a park-and-ride station for Bristol bound commuters. Just north of here, a signal box

survives (R) to control the level crossing at the site of PUXTON & WORLE (cl 6.4.64). This station started out as BANWELL, became WORLE in 1869, PUXTON in 1884 before assuming its final name on 2.1.22.

After the M5 passes overhead there were at one time four tracks, part of which survives as loops south of :

YATTON: - Lines trailed in on either side, from Clevedon (L) and from Witham, Wells and Cheddar (R). The former closed upon withdrawal of passenger services from 3.10.66, the latter to passengers from 9.9.63 and to goods from 1.10.64.

A gentle climb leads to NAILSEA & BACKWELL and on to FLAX BOURTON (cl 2.12.63) where sidings (L) have been long disused. After Flax Bourton Tunnel (110yds) was LONG ASHTON (cl 6.10.41), situated somewhere in the long cutting from which we emerge to extensive views (L) including Clifton Suspension Bridge, designed by the legendary Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

South Liberty Junction: - A curve to the Portishead line was obliterated by the Freightliner Terminal (L), now itself closed following yet another reduction in freight facilities. On the opposite side of the main line was Bristol West Depot, long closed and now lifted.

Parson Street Junction: - Converging (L) is the remaining section of the Portishead line, now only open to Ashton Gate CE depot. Passenger trains were withdrawn from Portishead on 7.9.64 but the rails may see re-use as part of a proposed Metro system.

After PARSON STREET were Malago Vale carriage sidings (R), now lifted. Four tracks extend through BEDMINSTER and past Bedminster Park (R) to :

Bristol East (was Pylle Hill) Junction: - Pylle Hill Goods depot was (L), opposite the junction for the St. Philip's Marsh Avoiding line, mainly used to reach the HST depot. Bath Road TMD is (R) as we enter :

BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS: - A station was first opened here on August 31st, 1840 to the design of Brunel, but all tracks in the original train shed have now been removed. For the first four years after the opening of the line to the south, trains heading that way had to reverse in and out until completion of independent platforms at near right angles to the Brunel terminus. A connection between the London and Exeter routes was provided by tracks roughly following the curve of the present platforms. Further changes and expansion culminated in completion of the impressive overall roof in 1878 covering five platforms. Traffic continued to grow, particularly after the First World War, and substantial work was undertaken after 1929 to create the present layout, opened fully in December 1935. These changes were accompanied by the installation of colour light signals, in their turn superseded by the m.a.s scheme of 1970. After the 1878 changes, the original Brunel terminus was used almost exclusively by MR trains to Bath and Gloucester and somewhat ironically, considering that it was the western terminus of the original GWR line, these terminal lines were known as the 'Midland Platforms'. Part of the old train shed is used for 'The Exploratory', a hands-on scientific exhibition, with the rest employed as a car park.

Details now resume from :

CARLISLE (was CITADEL): - Even with the much reduced traffic of today, the lack of more than three through platforms can cause considerable problems, but the congestion resulting from its position as the meeting place of seven separate companies must have made it a nightmare to operate at peak times.

The strategic position of Carlisle led to its importance from Roman times onwards and it has been subject to invasions at frequent intervals. Between 1136 and 1157 it was held by the Scots and it is possible that the castle (R) was raised during this period, although it may have been during the following twenty years after recapture by Henry II. There had been a castle here since 1092 when William (Rufus) II erected a wooden palisade on a bluff overlooking

the Eden, but no structural trace remains.

From 1877 onwards most goods trains passing through Carlisle used the independent goods lines to the west of the station and continued to do so until a derailment on 15.1.86 led to abandonment as the repair costs were not economically viable. All lines converged at :

Caldew Junction: - A bridge over the River Caldew leads to :

Port Carlisle Branch Junction: - The Port Carlisle and Silloth branch diverged (L), the latter closing on 6.9.64 amid unprecedented scenes of protest. The line had been one of the first in Britain to receive the first generation of DMU's (in 1954) and was busy right to the end. Such was BR's haste to lift the line that coaches and wagons were left stranded and had to be cut up on the spot. The first part of the line was also part of the 'Waverley' route to Edinburgh via Hawick, this too closing against bitter opposition, on 6.1.69, leaving only a stump to serve the naval munitions factory at Brunthill. The River Eden is crossed before we pass the much reduced Kingmoor Yard (L).

Wasteland (R) marks the site of the former Kingmoor steam depot which closed in December 1967, whilst the later diesel depot (L), (cl 12.7.88) is now derelict. The yard was completed in 1965 but now sees very little revenue earning traffic. The southbound access to the yard passes overhead before all lines converge near the site of ROCKCLIFFE (cl 17.7.50). The track is level through FLORISTON (cl 17.7.50) and across the Esk Viaduct. Beyond here there are two connections (R) into the extensive munitions plant, although the first of these is for emergency use only, the main access being at :

Mossband Junction: - During and shortly after World War I there were two stations between the junctions, MOSSBAND OFFICE HALT and MOSSBAND PLATFORM, the latter being an interchange for internal workings within the plant. Known as the Gretna complex, the bases and factories occupied some forty square miles and were served by numerous lines of a variety of gauges, one of which passed below the WCML.

A side effect of the existence of these factories was the 1915 takeover by the state of all breweries and pubs in Carlisle, a situation only found elsewhere at nearby Annan and at Invergordon where there was a naval base. The reason was simple, the government wanted control of the drinking habits of the population on the grounds that having inebriated workers in an explosives factory was not a good idea! Perhaps surprisingly this state ownership lasted until the 1980's, producing prize-winning ales at a very good price.

The northern boundary of the plant was the former NBR line from Longtown which converged (R) to reach that company's own station (R) at GREтна, closed with the end of passenger services from Longtown on 9.8.15; closure of the adjacent CR station on the main line was on 10.9.51.

Scotland is entered as we cross the River Sark and just to the west is Gretna Green, famous still among the romantically inclined as the place where the village blacksmith performed weddings, a practice outlawed in 1940. In 1754 a law had been passed in England requiring that all persons under the age of 21 should have the consent of their parents before marriage but this writ did not apply in Scotland where all that was necessary was that the couple should declare their wish to marry in front of witnesses.

Gretna Junction: - The ex GSWR line to Glasgow via Dumfries and Kilmarnock diverges (L), now very much a secondary route. A short distance leads to the goods loops at Quintinshill, never a station, but the site of Britain's worst rail disaster when 227 died in a multiple collision involving five trains. Variable grades lead through KIRKPATRICK (cl 13.6.60) to :

KIRTLEBRIDGE (cl 13.6.60): - The former Annan line trailed in (L), constructed to give the Caledonian Railway access to the mineral wealth of Cumbria via the Solway Viaduct, becoming largely redundant with closure of the bridge in 1921. Passenger services were cut back to Annan (Shawhill) from 20.5.21 and ceased

from 27.4.31, but infrequent goods trains ran until 1939. The Water of Milk is crossed after ECCLEFECHAN (cl 13.6.60) and we approach :

LOCKERBIE: - Now the only station in the 73 miles between Carlisle and Carstairs. Unfortunately the town is known to most people in Britain only for the disaster in December 1988 when a flight from London to the United States crashed onto the town following a bomb explosion.

North of the station, the Dumfries branch diverged (L), closed to passengers on 19.5.52 and entirely on 18.4.66.

Easy grades lead the line through NETHERCLOUGH and DINWOODIE (both cl 13.6.60) before a descent through WAMPHRAY (cl 13.6.60). After crossing the River Annan, we start the long climb to Beattock Summit, starting with five miles at 1 in 200 to :

BEATTOCK (cl 3.1.72): - The MPD was (L), principally providing assistant engines for the climb ahead, but formerly also for the short branch to Moffat (R) which closed to passengers on 6.12.54 and to goods on 6.4.64.

Climbing now starts in earnest, with two miles of 1 in 88 steepening steadily to a maximum of 1 in 69 just north of the site of the signal box and loops at Greskine. The Evan Water is (R) with the A74 beyond until both pass below. The gradients ease as we forge on up through the Harthope Hills to reach the 1015ft Beattock Summit.

There are very few breaks in the long descent to Glasgow, starting with two miles of 1 in 99 down to :

ELVANFOOT (cl 4.1.65): - Until 2.1.39, this remote station was the junction for the Wanlockhead line which trailed in (L) from high up in the Lowther Hills. The descent eases before CRAWFORD (cl 4.1.65), after which we cross the Clyde and head for ABINGTON (cl 4.1.65). The hills recede a little, with Tinto Hill (2335ft) dominating (L) as we approach :

SYMINGTON (cl 4.1.65): - The CR Peebles branch trailed in (R), cut back to Broughton from 7.6.54 and closed on 4.4.66; passenger services were withdrawn from 5.6.50. For many years Symington was the point at which Anglo-Scottish trains were divided into Glasgow and Edinburgh portions, the latter then using the south to east curve at Carstairs. A descent at 1 in 100 leads to THANKERTON (cl 4.1.65), easing before the bridge over the Clyde near :

Carstairs South (was Strawfrank) Junction: - The spur to the Edinburgh line (R) has only been used in recent years by regular service trains since the completion of electrification to Edinburgh in 1990, prior to which most trains for that line reversed and re-engined at :

CARSTAIRS: - One of the last interchange stations not directly serving a large population. Since Anglo-Scottish trains ceased 'splitting' here the service has been very limited, although services from both Euston and Kings Cross pass through without stopping.

After the station the line starts the last climb, to Craigenhill Summit. Ravenstruther coal disposal point is (L) before the site of :

Silvermuir South Junction: - A spur to the Lanark line diverged (L) until 20.10.68, completing a triangle with the Lanark line trailing in (L) at :

Lanark (was Silvermuir North) Junction: - A second triangle outside Lanark led to an end-on junction with the GSWR at Muirkirk. Passenger services beyond Lanark ceased on 5.10.64, but collieries around Douglas kept the line open for coal traffic until 15.1.68. CLEGHORN (cl 4.1.65) was just beyond the junction. A further two miles leads to Craigenhill Summit and an almost unbroken descent to the Clyde bridge at Uddingston, some 16 miles away. Near the summit, a short branch from a lime mine trailed in (R). After BRAIDWOOD (cl 2.7.62) is CARLUKE and the bed of a short branch (R) to Castlehill Iron Works.

Hallcraig Junction: - A line from Hallcraig brickworks trailed in (L) until 4.9.51. Further north, another line to industrial locations diverged (L) at :

LAW JUNCTION (cl 4.1.65): - Expresses to Glasgow use the line straight ahead to Motherwell, but we diverge (R) and use the route taken by local trains. Almost immediately we cross the former CR Morningside branch, closed to passengers on 1.12.30 and now only open to the Costain works at Coltness. OVERTOWN (cl 5.10.42) was just after the bridge.

WISHAW (was - CENTRAL): - Trailing in (R) was the Newmains branch, closed completely with the end of passenger services on 1.1.17. Beyond the station is

Wishaw Central Junction: - Local passenger services on the line diverge (L) and take the connection back to the main line, but we continue north on the freight only route, past the closed Ravenscraig Steel Works (L). That works was one of the largest customers for Railfreight on Scotland and its closure in June 1992 had serious effects on rail traffic, although not as serious as its effects on the local economy.

The ex CR line from Edinburgh via Shotts (R) is joined at :

Holytown Junction: - Shortly followed by HOLYTOWN and :

Mossend East Junction: - One passenger service a day diverges (L) and heads for Motherwell whilst the rest continue straight ahead to Uddingston and Glasgow. We diverge (R) on the freight spur to Mossend, trailing into the main line from Motherwell to Coatbridge (L) at :

Mossend North Junction: - Links between the lines were completed by another spur trailing in (L) but that has been lifted, the closure date not having been traced. MOSSEND (cl 5.11.62) was just by the junctions and before the start of Mossend Yards, still an important traffic centre and likely to become more so in connection with the Channel Tunnel. A triangular junction (R) gave access to the Monkland Iron Works near Chapelhall, the first part of the branch being the last to survive, serving a colliery. Near the A8 bridge we pass under the route of the NBR Bothwell and Hamilton line, closed to passengers on 10.9.51 and little used from then until lifting took place in 1958. A connection to the NBR route diverges (R) at :

Whifflet South Junction: - That spur was part of the 1834 Wishaw & Coltness line and it is still in use to reach the Gunnie cement terminal. Alongside the junction (R) is the Tennant's works, well-known for its use of Sentinel steam locos until a few years ago. A hundred yards further is :

Whifflet North Junction: - A spur to the Rutherglen line goes out (L) and quickly joins the bed of the former CR Airdrie East branch, last used to serve the BSC Imperial Tube Works, but disused since 1989 and now lifted. At the bridge carrying this branch overhead was WHIFFLET LOWER (cl 5.11.62), close to WHIFFLET UPPER (cl 5.10.64) on the high level. Passenger services to Airdrie were cut back to Whifflet on 3.5.43 and ceased on 5.10.64. A third station, WHIFFLET EAST (cl 22.9.30) was provided by the NBR (R).

A footpath now runs along the bed of the former NBR Sauterhouse branch (below), that having started life as part of the 1826 Monkland & Kirkintilloch Railway network of 4ft 6in gauge lines, whose conversion to standard gauge was carried out on July 26/27th 1847.

Coatbridge Junction: - Trailing in (L) is the Rutherglen line, last used by regular passenger services on 7.11.66. After the junction is COATBRIDGE CENTRAL, which acquired its suffix upon closure of the NBR station on the parallel line (R). A short distance beyond, the ex NBR Airdrie line passes below and Coatbridge FLT is (L). GARTSHERRIE (cl 28.10.40) precedes :

Gartsherrie South Junction: - Trains for the north continue ahead as we

diverge (L) and take the curve to the former Buchanan Street line, curving left to join that line at :

Gartcosh Junction: - GARTCOSH (cl 5.11.62) was after the junction. The remains of tracks into Gartcosh Strip Mill can be seen (R) and after the bridge over the M73, the rail served Gartcosh Distribution Centre is (L). Open country leads to GARNKIRK (cl 7.1.60) and on to STEPPS. Two further miles mainly through open country, leads past ROBROYSTON (cl 11.6.56), where a branch to Robroyston Hospital diverged (R) until 20.7.63.

Robroyston West Junction: - Here the goods lines (L) separated from the passenger tracks, the former running parallel (L) on a different alignment. The goods lines at one time ran to Port Dundas but were cut back to St. Rollox on 24.7.68. The goods lines also gave access to the line across the Clyde to Rutherglen up to closure on 7.9.64.

Balornock Junction: - Diverging (R) was the CR route around the north side of Glasgow to Partick, closed as far as Possil on 18.10.65. There were further connections between the various lines in the area before :

Sighthill East Junction: - Carrying on straight ahead was the line into the CR Buchanan Street terminus, closed beyond here when the last services were diverted to Queen Street on 7.11.66. Visible (L) is the MC Metals scrapyard and St. Rollox Works. At this point, the line from Springburn to Bellgrove passes below and we curve right past the platforms of BARNHILL to join that line (R) at :

Sighthill Junction: - Immediately beyond is SPRINGBURN, formerly serving a large industrial area, including four major locomotive builders. Just after the station, the new curve allowing through running to Queen Street High Level goes out (L) across the end of the former carriage sidings, the nearer group rejoicing in the name of 'Turkey Yard'.

Cowlairs West Junction: - As we join the line from Queen Street, the closed Eastfield MPD/TMD can be seen (R). Edinburgh and Stirling trains continue ahead where we diverge (L) and curve round to :

Cowlairs North Junction: - A triangle is completed by the spur (R), the only passenger usage on that side being the Fort William sleeper. All other West Highland line trains, apart from the summer Fort William to Glasgow Central service, use this line, a current candidate for reopening to local services. There may be a new station at ASHFIELD, about half a mile before POSSIL PARK (cl 1.1.17), likely to reopen. Just beyond here, the Ruchill Hospital branch diverged (L), closed on 20.7.63. Traces remain of the route of the CR line from Balornock Junction (see above) to Partick where it passed overhead. Only yards beyond, the Forth & Clyde Canal also passes overhead and it is somewhere near here that the proposed LAMBHILL will be sited. A further station is proposed at SUMMERSTON, close to the site of LOCHBURN (cl 1.1.17).

Maryhill East Junction: - Trailing in (R) was the line from Kilsyth, closed to passengers on 2.4.51 and abandoned on 31.7.61. After the bridge over the River Kelvin and Dawsholm Park was MARYHILL PARK and :

Maryhill Central Junction: - Diverging (L) is the bed of the curve to Anniesland, which would be rebuilt for the proposed new service. The canal is close by (L) as we cross the line from Partick, both routes converging at :

WESTERTON: - Almost immediately after the station, the Milngavie (pronounced Milguy) branch goes out (R) as we bear left to DRUMCHAPEL and DRUMRY. To the left is the vast complex of the Singer Works, at one time occupying 110 acres and the focus for an intensive service of workmen's trains. Beyond is Clydebank, home of John Browns shipyard amongst an array of marine servicing

industries. The riverside route via Yoker passes below before converging (R) through its own platforms at :

DALMUIR: - Keeping fairly close company (L) is the ex CR route to Dumbarton (see below) as we head west past a large oil 'tank farm' (R) and under the access road to the Erskine Bridge before KILPATRICK. Just beyond here we cross the route of the Antonine Wall, which ended at a fort on the Clyde (L), most of the site being covered by the industrial sites (L). For a while, the line is dominated by the A82 (R), until the point where the CR route passed overhead. The old main road then keeps close by through BOWLING, beyond which the two roads combine for about a mile. Shortly after the station was :

Bowling (Dunglass) Junction: - The CR line west of here was abandoned on 25.4.60 when a new connection between the two routes was put in. Passenger services ran over the other line from Rutherglen to Dumbarton until 5.10.64, the line being closed west of Old Kilpatrick on that date.

Industrial estates are a feature (R) as the line runs close to the Clyde (L), the CR route passing overhead as we bear right to cross the A814 at DUMBARTON EAST. The two routes finally joined just west of the station and the line beyond here was jointly owned to :

DUMBARTON CENTRAL. Prominent (L) is Dumbarton Rock, the basalt plug of a former volcano, and on which rests Dumbarton Castle. Records suggest that the first fortification was built on the rock in the fifth century, presumably by the Romans. After the Romans had withdrawn from Britain, by the end of the fifth century, Dumbarton became the capital of the kingdom of Strathclyde, remaining so until the creation of a united Scotland around 1018. A substantial castle was constructed in medieval times, but most of that structure has since disappeared, the oldest probably being the Portcullis Gate, tentatively dated to the fourteenth century. Most of the structure on view now is of seventeenth century origin or later.

Typical Scottish tenement buildings can be seen (L) before the bridge over the River Leven leading to :

DALREOCH: - This is the junction station for the CR/NBR branch up the Vale of Leven to Balloch, services beyond the present terminus to Balloch Pier at the foot of Loch Lomond having been withdrawn from 29.9.86. A curve to the left leads to Dalreoch Tunnels (550yds), bored through a mass of sandstone. Once clear of the tunnel, the line soon starts its long run close to the edge of the Clyde (L), leaving behind all trace of the industries which have lined the route so far, on this side of the river anyway. On the south bank, the open ground since the Paisley area has given way to the former shipbuilding industries around Port Glasgow and Greenock. On this bank, only isolated houses exist on either side of CARDROSS and for the further three miles or so to where we diverge (R) onto the West Highland line at :

Craigendoran Junction: - Visible on the Helensburgh line (L) are the platforms at CRAIGENDORAN, those on the West Highland line having been demolished, redundant following the end of the shuttle service to Arrochar & Tarbet on 14.6.64. Also to be seen (L) are the Craigendoran piers, from whence there were at one time regular sailings to other Clydeside piers, to Rothesay and to Loch Long.

Opening of the West Highland Railway throughout from Craigendoran to Fort William on August 12th, 1889 has no real parallel in British railway history, for on that day one hundred miles of line across the mountains saw its first public train. In between the extremities of the route there were very few centres of habitation, nothing at all which could even be called a village. For mile after mile, the first train pounded up fearsome gradients, to eventually reach the vast wilderness of Rannoch Moor, still one of the most desolate places in Europe. A century later and little has changed on the route, although it is clear that the railway has been a lifeline to the communities in the mountains and, indeed, at Fort William, for without it and

the access to the wider world it gave, the inhabitants could never have survived. Without a reasonable means to take its products to market, and to bring tourists in, the local economy would have died and the peoples of the area would have had to move away to the growing industrial centres. Now, of course, most of the goods and passengers travel by road, but for many the railway is still a lifeline and in summer at least, the trains are full.

From the junction, the line starts to climb, within a few hundred yards at 1 in 58, this gradient lasting for two miles as the view across the Firth of Clyde (L) opens out. A level section through HELENSBURGH UPPER soon gives way to 1 in 67/88, high above Gare Loch (L) to a summit just before the site of RHU (was ROW, cl 14.6.64), a station previously closed from 9.1.56 to reopening on 4.4.60. Along this section the line is fairly straight, but with many changes of grade, mainly downhill.

Faslane Junction: - Diverging (L) to drop away down the hillside was the War Department line to the port of Faslane, constructed between 1940 and 1942 to serve as a safe haven for shipping, far from the heavily bombed docks of Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Southampton. After the war, the military gradually withdrew and most of the port area was taken over by a firm of shipbreakers. In the 1970's, the military returned as Faslane was to become the base for the new generation of nuclear powered, nuclear armed submarines. Traffic levels increased for a while, but the line was temporarily closed on 5.1.81 due to the state of the track and never reopened. The exchange sidings were still visible among the trees (L) for some years and may still be there.

Just over a mile later was SHANDON (cl 14.6.64) and a heavily curved section, still mainly on falling grades, until climbing starts again at 1 in 60 to GARELOCHHEAD. After the station the line curves to the left, with excellent views down the loch (L), but the panorama is abruptly cut off by a rock wall as the main road passes overhead.

At the end of the cutting, the view (L) opens out again, but now the terrain is completely different, with true Highland scenery towering above Loch Long. After WHISTLEFIELD (cl 14.6.64) the grade steepens to 1 in 54, but eases as the line enters Glenn Culanach with tree clad mountains on both sides. A first major summit (560ft) is reached just before GLEN DOUGLAS (cl 14.6.64), still a crossing place. Ordnance Survey maps show a wilderness here, but the area (R) is dotted with the entrances to underground caverns, blasted out of the rock for the storage of ammunition and other military supplies.

A 1 in 57 descent through a rock cutting leads the line back to Loch Long (L), with the line clinging to the mountainside, nearly 500ft above the water. Little can be seen from the right hand side of the train as the slopes of Tullich Hill rise almost vertically. At the head of the loch is Arrochar (below L), dominated by the rugged Ben Arthur, Beinn Narnain and A'Chrois, the middle peak being over 3000ft high. Descent steepens slightly for over a mile before the short climb into ARROCHAR & TARBET, high above Loch Lomond. Prominent on the other side of the loch and a little to the right is Ben Lomond (974m/3185ft).

For the next eight miles, the line winds along the loch side, mostly at around 200t above the waters edge. For the first three miles the slopes of the mountain are well wooded, with the loch often hidden by the trees. Just after the bridge over the Inveruglas Water, a hydro-electric power station can be seen (R). An unadvertised station, INVERUGLAS, was opened here on 29.10.45 for workmen building the power station and the dam at Loch Sloy, high amongst the mountains (L). Many of the workmen were prisoners of war who were housed in a camp in Glen Falloch (see below) and who travelled to and from work by train.

Creag an Arnain Viaduct is the only conventional masonry viaduct on the West Highland line and has battlemented parapets throughout its length.

A final descent leads into ARDLUI, at one time serving the pier at the head of the loch, although steamers ceased to call here in 1964. Off the platform end starts the eight mile climb of Glen Falloch, almost entirely at grades of 1 in 60/80. About three miles on was the site of GLEN FALLOCH, an unadvertised station opened 10.4.46 (closure date unknown) to take P.O.W's from their camp to the Loch Sloy hydro-electric scheme (see above). Ben Glas

waterfall can be seen on the hillside (R), a 120ft sheer drop. The sound of the water crashing onto the rocks, together with the rush of the River Falloch, resounds through Glen Falloch to the extent that the poet William Wordsworth referred to it as 'the vale of the awful sound'. A rock cutting and a short tunnel leads to Dubh Eas Viaduct, the central span over the river being 118ft long at a maximum height of 144ft.

Gradually the glen narrows, with the view (R) dominated by the triangular peak of Cruach Ardtrain (1045m/3417ft) until a mini-summit is reached before the half mile of 1 in 66 down to :

CRIANLARICH (was _ UPPER): - This small village became the half-way staging post for the West Highland Railway, with a large refreshment room on the platform. The West Highland was not the first railway here, having been beaten by the Callander & Oban, completed to Tyndrum in August 1873 and to Oban in 1880. A curve between the two lines was opened in 1897 and this route (L) has been used by all trains to Oban since closure of the Callander line east of here on 28.9.65. All services were due to cease on 1.11.65, but the line was blocked by a landslide near Glenoglehead on the earlier date.

Departure leads across a typical West Highland Viaduct, with steel truss girders on masonry piers. Visible (R) is CRIANLARICH LOWER (cl 28.8.65), the station site later being used for the loading of timber destined for pulping at the Corpach mill near Fort William. The bed of the Callander and Dunblane line can be seen disappearing down Glen Dochart (R) as the West Highland line climbs again, mainly at 1 in 60, on the north side of Strathfillan. A short distance up the other side (L), the Oban line has far easier grades near the River Fillan, both lines running nearly parallel as far as UPPER TYNDRUM. A change of name from TYNDRUM UPPER was made at the start of the new timetable last month, mainly for the benefit of the RETB signalling system to make for a better distinction from TYNDRUM LOWER on the Oban line. Given the sizable towns in Britain without any railway service, it is quite astonishing that the few hundred local residences here should have two stations, but such are the accidents of railway history.

The Oban line is quickly lost from view as the West Highland climbs at 1 in 60 to the County March summit at 1024ft. Although the broad valley ahead is fairly straight, with the almost symmetrical cone of Beinn Dorain (1069m/3523ft) prominent on the right hand side, the railway follows a side valley, falling at 1 in 55 around a horse-shoe curve, with a curved viaduct at the point where the side valley is crossed. Easier grades lead the line along the flanks of Beinn Dorain to :

BRIDGE OF ORCHY: - An inn, a cluster of houses and cottages, and a bridge over the river. Although there are now a few buildings clustered around the railway stations at Rannoch and Corroun, when the line was built, the few cottages in the mile or so north of here were the last signs of habitation for thirty miles of the most desolate landscape in Europe. Few details remain of the reasons for the establishment of AUCHALLEDER PLATFORM, an unadvertised station open for a period in the 1920's and 30's. The road to Glencoe climbs away over the hillside (L) as the line hauls its way up the valley of the Tulla Water, with the scenery quickly growing bleaker, a forest of skeleton trees standing stark on the moors (R). GORTON (formerly GORTAN) was a private station at a summit crossing place, opened with the line in 1894 and still used up to about 1970. For reasons not clear, the public were strongly discouraged against alighting here, the only 'civilian' welcome being the teacher who took classes in a grounded coach body mounted on the platform.

Variable grades lead across the expanse of peat bogs and rocky outcrops, part of the line being laid on rafts of brushwood and turf, much as Stephenson had done in laying the Liverpool & Manchester Railway across Chat Moss. After some six miles of emptiness, a crossing of the sluggish waters of the Garbh Ghaoir presages arrival at RANNOCH. A notable feature of the station is a boulder at the north end bearing a carving of the head of J.H. Renton, a director of the West Highland Railway who gave a substantial part of his personal wealth to enable the line to be completed at a time of financial

crisis. From the station, there is barely a sign of habitation, but anything up to fifty people might alight from a single train here in summer.

Climbing resumes from the station at 1 in 53 across Rannoch Viaduct, the longest on the line and again constructed of trussed steel girders on masonry piers, to Cruach Rock, where Britain's only snow shelter (220yds) protects the line at one of its most vulnerable points. Mountains ring the horizon as the train forges across the moor, winding its way as best it can through the peat bogs to the north-west corner at CORROUR. This was the third of the three railway settlements on the moor and probably the most remote. A few hundred yards beyond the station is the summit of the line, 1350ft.

It has taken 72 miles to reach this height from sea-level at Craigendoran but the line will return to that level at Fort William, just 28 miles away. Descent commences immediately, with eight miles at 1 in 59/67, mostly along the mountainside flanking Loch Treig (L). This loch was increased in size in the 1920's when the water level was raised by 33ft, as part of the scheme for producing hydro-electric power at the new British Aluminium Company's plant at Fort William. From the loch, water was piped round the mountainside to emerge on the hillside overlooking the plant, there to power the generators. As a result of the raised water level, the line had to be diverted, through the 140yd Fersit Tunnel, the old bed being visible (L), including the formerly submerged part, once again above the water line as the level has again been lowered. The deviation was opened on 7.8.32, construction workers being served by FERSIT, an unadvertised station open from 1.8.31 to 1.1.35. Little water now trickles down the River Treig.

A road is seen for the first time in nearly thirty miles as the line curves left to cross the River Spean and reach TULLOCH. Road, railway and river keep close company, the latter flowing almost directly below the line in the Monessie Gorge. On occasions it has been known for the water to rise 15ft in just one hour and to flood the line. A severe speed restriction applies round the sharp curve. At the far end of the gorge, the Spean flows over a large waterfall, but after this the river becomes much more gentle. At ROY BRIDGE the line crosses the River Roy, and beyond here, the gradients ease gradually before a brief climb into :

SPEAN BRIDGE: - This was formerly the junction station for the branch to Fort Augustus, a 24 mile line from nowhere to nowhere and serving nothing in between. Undoubtedly this was a classic example of a railway which should never have been built, at least not in the form it eventually took. From the moment the West Highland Railway was proposed, the North British Railway, who were to work the West Highland, and the Inverness based Highland Railway, spent years of arguments and litigation in an effort to stop each other building a line through the Great Glen, that phenomenal divide which runs across Scotland from Fort William to Inverness. In the end it was the independent Invergarry & Fort Augustus Railway which was left to promote the line from Spean Bridge to Fort Augustus. After spending £322,000 on building the line, the I&FA had no money left to buy rolling stock or operate trains and approached the NBR, who refused. Seeing the opportunity to keep the NBR out of the Great Glen forever, the HR agreed a price and on 27.7.1903 a train first ran, whistled away in ceremonial style.

Reality soon caught up with the company for after six months it was found that the total revenue was less than half the amount to be paid to the HR for operating the line. A third of the construction costs of the line had gone into the section from Fort Augustus town to the pier, but at the end of the summer service in 1906 this was abandoned. After five more years of struggle, during which the HR withdrew in favour of the NBR, closure came on 31.10.1911. An attempt to sell the line for scrap failed on legal grounds and the NBR were persuaded to restart services on 1.8.1913, taking over completely on 28.8.1914. An infrequent passenger service lasted until 30.11.33 and, after a burst of additional freight traffic during the Second World War, a thrice weekly coal train ran up to 31.12.46, dismantling soon following.

For the remaining nine miles to Fort William, the main road from Inverness is always fairly close (R), the grades being fairly easy, apart from

a mile or so of 1 in 59 facing southbound trains. The access line from the Lochaber aluminium plant trails in (L), whilst on the flanks of Ben Nevis (L) are the pipes carrying water from Loch Treig.

Fort William Junction: - Trailing in (R) is the Mallaig line which will form our onward route. There is an oil terminal (R) before :

FORT WILLIAM: - This station was opened on 2.6.75 to replace the original terminus at the far end of the town (referred to locally simply as 'The Fort'). Allowing the line to run to the old site had been a serious mistake on the part of the town council as it cut off the townspeople from the shores of Loch Linnhe. No real advantage appears to have accrued from the earlier position so it is difficult to see why the extra stretch of line should ever have been favoured.

In some ways it is a surprise that Fort William should have retained its name as it was a calculated insult to the Highlanders of Lochaber, who opposed the reign of King William of Orange. The origins of the town go back to 1690 when William established a chain of military posts in the Great Glen, the one here having been based on an earlier fortified site. When the railway came in 1894, entry to the station could only be gained through the main archway. In later years the fort was demolished, although part was preserved within the locomotive depot until LNER days. That loco depot was just north of the line near the old station, closing to steam on 18.6.62, but used by diesels until replaced by a new depot a short distance along the Mallaig line.

Departure will be the way we came in, as far as :

Fort William Junction: - Our inward route continues ahead as we diverge (L) onto the Mallaig Extension. It was not until construction of the West Highland was well under way that attention turned to the Mallaig line, in order to reach the important fishing grounds in Mallaig Bay. At an early stage, the opposition of the HR was withdrawn and the West Highland Railway (Mallaig Extension) Act was passed on 31.7.1894, just days before the main line reached Fort William. Despite the difficulties of construction, the line opened with little ceremony on 1.4.1901.

The new loco depot can be seen (R) amongst a group of sidings, shortly before the bridge over the River Lochy. Flat grasslands lead to the site of :

Banavie Junction: - Diverging (R) was the line to Banavie Pier, opened on June 1st, 1895 to convey passengers intent on embarking on cruises on the Caledonian Canal. Excursions to the pier were usually popular until the last ran on 2.9.39, ending then only with the outbreak of war. Nearly twelve years were to elapse before the line was officially closed, on 6.8.51, but it is not thought that a train ever ran over the line in that period. BANAVIE is the centre for the RETB signalling over the whole of the West Highland lines (except Fort William Junction to Fort William), the system having been introduced in 1986.

At the far end of the station, the train will slow for the swing bridge over the Caledonian Canal, with the flight of locks known as 'Neptune's Staircase' (R). Corpach paper mill (L) has since the 1960's been a major provider of traffic on the West Highland line, with inbound timber and china clay and outbound paper products. Shunting is undertaken by ex BR Class 08 no. 08.077, withdrawn by BR in November 1977.

For almost ten miles the line is almost level, running alongside Loch Eil (L) through LOCH EIL OUTWARD BOUND, serving the Outward Bound School (R). Further along is LOCHEILSIDE, a small cluster of cottages. At the head of the loch, the line starts to climb, mainly at grades from 1 in 45 to 1 in 60, winding its way through rocky outcrops until emerging at the great amphitheatre of Glen Finnan. A short descent at 1 in 80/100 leads to one of the most spectacular features of the line, the concrete Glenfinnan viaduct. This 416yd long viaduct has 21 spans of 50ft, the standard used on the line.

The Mallaig Extension was one of the first construction projects in the world where concrete was used on a large scale. This came about partly because

mass concrete was anything up to 30% cheaper than masonry in general, partly because the local stone was unsuitable for construction purposes, and partly due to the enthusiasm of Robert McAlpine, head of the contracting company of the same name. Although he had already used concrete elsewhere, it was his work on the Mallaig line that did much to earn him the nickname 'Concrete Bob'. Actually, his greatest feat in engineering terms is to be seen further up the line, although the scale is not easily appreciated from the train.

Below the viaduct (L) and at the head of Loch Shiel is the Glenfinnan Monument, erected to commemorate the place where Bonnie Prince Charlie raised his standard after returning from France to lead the Second Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, like the first, doomed to failure.

A climb at 1 in 50/45 leads off the viaduct and through a rock cutting to GLENFINNAN. There are two tunnels (123yds and 164yds) as the line winds its way through a rocky landscape past LECH-A-VUTE, a private station with unknown opening and closure dates, to a summit high above Loch Eilt (R). A 1 in 46 descent eases slightly before the line reaches the level of the loch at the far end, there being over a mile of level track at the head of the ensuing run alongside the River Ailort to LOCHAILORT, at the head of the sea loch (L).

There are three short tunnels on the short but fierce gradients leading up and down to Arnabol Viaduct, with further tunnels before and after the viaduct at the head of Loch nan Uamh. One of the hardest stretches of line follows, the two miles of 1 in 46, curving through the trees, with panoramic views across the loch (L) to the mountains behind. The hard work northbound for our loco is now over and the next two miles lead gently to a summit. Borrodale Bridge takes the line across a deep tree lined gorge on a 127ft span, at the time of construction being the biggest mass concrete bridge to be built anywhere in the world by a substantial margin. It was, in fact, only the fourth concrete bridge to be completed worldwide, the other three being road bridges to the design of the engineer Leibbrand.

Easier grades intersperse the 1 in 50/40 downgrades leading to ARISAIG, beyond which point the Isles of Rhum, Eigg and Skye fill the horizon out to sea. Coarse grassland is broken by rocky outcrops as the line heads for MORAR, where a 90ft span carries the line across the River Morar, linking Loch Morar (R) with the sea. There are good views of wide sandy beaches (L), known as 'the silver sands of Morar'.

More open ground leads the line down towards the terminus at :

MALLAIG: - The harbour here serves both as a fishing port and for ferries to the Small Isles (Canna, Eigg, Muck and Rhum) and to Armadale on Skye. The days of the vast shoals of herring are long gone, victims of over fishing, and the white fish which formed the mainstay of the fleets can now only be sought under restricted conditions, the main catch nowadays being prawns. So prized are these shellfish that much of the catch is exported, particularly to Spain, where almost any shellfish dish is likely to contain Mallaig prawns.

There should be a reasonable break here, time for a stroll round the harbour or find something to eat or drink. On returning to 'The Fort', there will be a further break before the long journey back over the mountains to Craigendoran Junction and Dumbarton. We will part company with our outward route again at :

WESTERTON: - East of the station is :

Knightswood North Junction: - Trains heading for Glasgow Queen Street High Level fork right here, climbing to pass overhead. We curve round to :

Knightswood South Junction: - A curve from Maryhill trailed in (L) near ANNIESLAND. For a time during the 1980's there were proposals to reinstate passenger services over the curve, diverging (R) at :

Hyndland North Junction: - We bear right and rejoin our outward route at :

Hyndland East Junction: - This route is followed to :

Finnieston East Junction: - Here we take the centre lines and head for the tunnels leading through CHARING CROSS to :

GLASGOW QUEEN STREET LOW LEVEL: - Our arrival here on a Saturday evening should cause some consternation as the station is normally the preserve of suburban EMU's. Immediately after the tunnels is HIGH STREET and :

High Street Junction: - Converging from the right is the City of Glasgow Union Railway (GSR/NBR) which allowed northbound exit from Glasgow St. Enoch. Bellgrove Tunnel lead to BELLGROVE and :

Bellgrove Junction: - Diverging (L) is the line to Springburn and Cowlairs. A short distance on, the CR line from south of the Clyde passed overhead on its way to join the lines from Buchanan Street, always goods only and closed on 7.9.64. East of here was PARKHEAD (cl 19.9.58) and the site of :

Parkhead North Junction: - Trailing in (L) was a short link from Haghill Junction, closed on 10.8.81. We continue eastwards to CARNTYNE and :

SHETTLESTON: - Diverging (R) was the Bothwell and Hamilton line, closed to passengers on 4.7.55 and completely on 6.6.61. The Glasgow suburbs stretch out on either side as we head for GARROWHILL and EASTERHOUSE and on to the site of BARGEDDIE (cl 24.9.27). The M8 and the M73 pass overhead as the Forth & Clyde Canal comes alongside (L) and passes below. After BLAIRHILL the main line from Motherwell to Coatbridge and the north passes overhead is :

Sunnyside Junction: - Trailing in (L) is the short branch from Gunnie cement works, although it was at one time the NBR link to the CR route to the north. Actually it used the formation of one of the earliest lines in the area, the Monklands & Kirkintilloch Railway of 1826, continuing to Kirkintilloch. When the CR routed its main line this way, it gained running powers over the NBR line and there was thus the unusual situation of expresses from Euston to Perth and beyond having to use a short of what was in effect, a branch line owned by companies in opposition for the same traffic.

The Airdrie and Drungelloch line continues ahead as we diverge (R) and climb past COATBRIDGE CENTRAL (R) to join the CR main line (R) at :

Whifflet South Junction: - Alongside (L) is Tennants foundry, employers of a fleet of Sentinel steam locos until the late 1970's. Our earlier route has been rejoined and we will follow this to :

Mossend North Junction: - Our earlier route climbs away (L) before the ex CR Glasgow to Edinburgh line passes overhead.

Mossend South Junction: - Trailing in (L) is another curve from the ex CR Edinburgh line. Lines going out (L) formerly served the Ravenscraig steel works, but became redundant when the plant closed in June 1992. Motherwell MPD/TMD is (R) before the WCML is joined and crossed at :

MOTHERWELL: - We pass through the Hamilton line platforms and curve right, within a mile crossing the Clyde. The M74 passes below just after the site of

Ross Junction: - A spur to the complex of lines leading to Stonehouse, Strathaven, Coalburn and points beyond diverged (L), closed on 21.9.64. After that date, all trains used the other line trailing in (L) at :

Haghhead Junction: - Withdrawal of passenger trains to Strathaven and Coalburn reduced the line to freight only, the last traffic being from Larkhall Central up to closure on 4.11.68. A single line section through Barncluith Tunnel (375yds) and over the Avon Water leads to resumption of double track at HAMILTON CENTRAL. Just before HAMILTON WEST, the bed of the

NBR Hamilton branch passed below, the final mile or so abandoned when passenger services were cut back to Bothwell on 15.9.52. After HAMILTON WEST, the NBR line again passed below, the section across the river to Bothwell having been closed with the end of passenger services. On the same day, a new connection with the remaining part of the line to Peacock Cross was opened at

Blantyre Junction: - Final closure came on 11.2.63. Almost immediately after the new junction with the NBR line was :

Strathaven Junction: - Diverging (L) was a spur to the East Kilbride line and to Strathaven via Glassford. Passenger services to East Kilbride finished on 14.7.24 and the line thus far was abandoned. On the Strathaven line, passenger services ceased on 30.9.45 and closure beyond High Blantyre followed on 21.9.53, the final section lasting to 1.6.60.

At BLANTYRE, the Clyde is nearby (R), with the Livingstone Memorial, dedicated to the famous explorer born in Blantyre, on the near bank and Bothwell Castle a little further on across the river. The ruins of this castle are among the most impressive in Scotland, with a great tower dating from around 1270, although much was added later.

A long left hand curve leads across the Rotten Calder to a junction with the WCML at the recently infamous :

NEWTON: - Shortly after the layout here was remodelled in the late 1980's, an accident occurred which threw into doubt BR's strategy for junction layouts of the single lead type. Although most of the blame was thrown onto the driver of one of the trains involved, the subsequent inquiry strongly questioned the safety of the layout, installed on the grounds of economy.

Immediately after the station, the Cathcart line diverges (L) and the bed of the Carmyle line goes out (R). Passenger services to Carmyle ceased on 5.10.64, but freight ran until closure of the Clyde Iron Works in 1983. An odd feature was that even after the track had been lifted, the signal controlling the exit from the branch remained lit, appropriately showing a red aspect. A connection between the two lines passed overhead up to closure on 1.8.66.

Rutherglen East Junction: - Converging (R) is the line from Coatbridge, devoid of regular passenger services since 7.1.66. There are firm proposals now to restore local services to this line, these trains, then running to Whifflet Upper, having ceased on 5.10.64.

Rutherglen Central Junction: - RUTHERGLEN (R) only has platforms on the line to Glasgow Central Low Level (the Argyle line). That line had closed to passengers on 5.10.64 but was electrified and reopened on 5.11.79. A spur from the Argyle line comes in (R) at :

Rutherglen West Junction: - Regular passenger services over this spur ceased from 12.3.60, but for a period the Fort William sleeper train was routed via the curve after reversal in Glasgow Central. Polmadie MPD/TMD is (R) before the short branch to the now disused Gushetfaulds FLT goes out (R). GUSHETFAULDS (cl 1.5.1907) was near the junction.

Larkfield Junction: - The connection (far L) gives access to the Kilmarnock line, whilst nearer is the link to Shields Junction on the Paisley line. Just before traversal of the 200yd Eglinton Street Tunnel, the route of the GB&K line from St. Enoch passes overhead, closed to passengers since 27.6.66 and completely from 23.6.73. EGLINTON STREET (cl 1.2.65) was a seven platform station, sited just before the Cathcart Circle and Kilmarnock line converges (L) at :

Eglinton Street Junction: - Passing overhead is the former line from Paisley to St. Enoch, whose last passenger services were diverted to Central from 27.6.66, using the line converging (L) at :

Bridge Street Junction: - Followed shortly by the site of BRIDGE STREET (cl 1.3.1905). This was the terminus from the south until construction of the Clyde bridge allowed the opening of Central on 1.8.1878. There are two separate viaducts, the second (L) being opened in 1906 when Central was expanded to its current size. Upstream (R) is a pedestrian suspension bridge, Glasgow Bridge and the bridge carrying the former St. Enoch line, whilst (L) is the King George V Bridge and a motorway bridge.

GLASGOW CENTRAL: - Until reopening of the low level platforms on 5.11.79, this terminus had more train movements per platform than any other station in Britain, but was highly unusual in that until the last few years there were no station nameboards. The concourse lost another unusual feature in 1985 when the wooden famous departure boards were replaced by an electronic screen.

Glasgow itself has a long history, generally thought to have been founded around the church of St. Mungo in the 6th century, and becoming a City upon receipt of a Royal Charter in 1175. In the 19th century it became an industrial centre and was the largest locomotive building city in the world, a status also accorded to Clydeside shipbuilding.

After a break here, we will return across the river to :

Bridge Street Junction: - Here we diverge (L) and climb to the complex of connections which converge on :

Shields Junction: - Converging (L) are links from the former St. Enoch line) (now running to Bellgrove, from the WCML near Polmadie and from the Kilmarnock line and the Cathcart Circle. Diverging (R) is the now lifted line to General Terminus whilst (L) is the Paisley Canal line, formerly a through route to Kilmacolm and Greenock Princes Pier. Passenger services were withdrawn to Kilmacolm on 3.1.83 but restored as far as Paisley Canal on 30.7.90. A short distance west was the triangular junction at :

IBROX (cl 6.2.67) - Passenger services to Govan ceased from 9.5.21, the line being cut back in stages until complete closure on 1.5.72. After CARDONALD is

Cardonald Junction: - Diverging (R) is the line to Deanside Transit, the truncated remains of the former Porterfield branch. Passenger services over that line were withdrawn from 19.7.26, but most of the line remained open for freight until cut back to Kings Inch on 6.7.64. HILLINGTON EAST is followed by HILLINGTON WEST and :

Arkleston Junction: - Here the Renfrew Wharf line diverged (R), closed to passengers on 5.6.67. There are loops on either side before :

PAISLEY GILMOUR STREET: - Gourock and Wemyss Bay trains use their own platforms (R) before bearing away. A short distance west, the bed of the CR line from Paisley St. James to Barrhead Central passed below, always goods only and closed at an unknown date.

Elderslie No. 1 Junction: - Converging (L) was the line from Shields Junction via Paisley Canal, originally part of the through route to Princes Pier via Kilmacolm. Passenger trains to Kilmacolm ceased on 3.1.83, but the line remained available for goods up to 10.11.84, although no traffic may have passed for a while as retention was mainly in connection with the Ayrshire electrification project. There was a car terminal (R) serving the Linwood car plant until its precipitate closure in 1984, the access lines closing on 21.10.84. ELDERSLIE (cl 14.2.66) was before :

Elderslie No. 2 Junction: - The Kilmacolm line diverged (R) and there was a diveunder for down trains, formerly also used by trains to Dalry via Kilbirnie, a route known as 'the back of the loch'. Passenger services ceased to use the line on a regular basis from 27.6.66 but diversions were not unknown up to closure on 3.7.72. There was also a curve, closed 9.11.64

trailing in (R) just before JOHNSTONE. From here the line closely follows the Black Cart Water (R), past MILLIKEN PARK to HOWWOOD (cl 7.3.55). Southwards, the river opens out into Castle Semple Loch to the neck of land separating it from Barr Loch. LOCHWINNOCK was previously LOCHSIDE, acquiring its new name after closure of the station in the town on the far side of the loch.

There is further open ground before the line runs alongside Kilbirnie Loch (R), where BEITH (cl 4.6.51) was at the road bridge. At the far end of the loch, Glengarnock steelworks was (R), mostly demolished. There was an access line (R), closed on 19.12.77 and just before GLENGARNOCK the CR line from Giffen to Kilbirnie passed overhead. After withdrawal of passenger trains on 1.12.30, freight traffic appears to have run for a period, but closure may have soon followed. The River Garnock is very close by (R) at :

Brownhill Junction: - Down trains from the 'back of the loch' used a flying junction to avoid conflicting movements. The flyover was out of use before final closure from Kilbirnie on 19.12.77. A short branch (R) gives access to the new Roche plant (R) before :

DALRY: - Diverging (L) was the Kilmarnock line, closed completely on 22.10.73 when the remaining through services were diverted to other routes. Two miles or so further is the junction station of :

KILWINNING: - Diverging (R) is the Ardrossan and Largs line, like the main line, electrified. A triangle is completed by the spur trailing in (R) at :

Byrehill Junction: - Passing below and almost bisecting the triangle was the CR line to Ardrossan Pier. Never really able to compete with the more direct and easier GSWR route, local passenger services were withdrawn from 4.7.32, but boat trains ran for some years, ceasing before closure on 30.3.53. An earlier casualty was the parallel CR Irvine branch (L), closed to passengers on 28.7.30 and completely from 30.12.39.

A disused line from Snodgrass Nobel Explosives plant comes in (R) at the site of BOGSIDE (cl 2.1.67).

IRVINE: - A few sidings remain (L) at the start of the former line to Crosshouse (on the Dalry to Kilmarnock line), closed on 11.10.65, passenger services having ceased on 6.4.64. A long stretch close to the sea (R) leads past the site of GAILES (cl 2.1.67) to :

BARASSIE: - Converging (L) is the Kilmarnock line, more details of which will be given when we return to Carlisle.

Barassie Middle Junction: - Carrying on straight ahead past the former Barassie carriage works (L) is the Troon avoiding line, occasionally used by passenger services up to closure on 15.11.82.

Barassie South Junction: - Diverging (R) is the bed of the line to Troon Docks, closed on 3.12.73. Until 27.6.66 access to the docks was also afforded by the line passing behind the 'up' platform (R) at TROON and joining (R) at :

Troon Junction: - The avoiding line (L) is rejoined at :

Lochgreen Junction: - After MONKTON (cl 28.10.40), Prestwick Airport can be seen (L), extending past the site of :

Monkton Junction: - Little trace now remains of the former line to Mossblown Junction (L), cut back from Auchincruive Colliery to an oil depot on 26.11.73, even that short section having gone, to be replaced by another oil depot (R). A short distance on was :

Prestwick Junction: - A new spur was opened on 15.11.49 to replace the link to Monkton Junction, but this is also closed. After PRESTWICK, a golf course

extends (R) almost as far as :

NEWTON-ON-AYR: - Sidings (R) serve as a yard for the docks branch (R) and for the rounding of coal trains from the Benbane branch to Killoch Washery. Beyond the station, the Mauchline line goes out (L) at :

Newton Junction: - The north curve has never been used by regular passenger services, all such trains having used the south curve on the other side of Ayr MPD/TMD and joining (L) at :

Hawkhill Junction: - Trains from Carlisle to Stranraer, already diverted from the 'Port Line' via Newton Stewart, were further diverted to run via Kilmarnock on 5.5.75, this curve then becoming redundant, although in practice all that is missing is the connection at the far end as the tracks now form part of the loco depot. The River Ayr is crossed before :

AYR: - Two bay platforms (R) are used by electric services to Glasgow, whilst Stranraer trains and freights use the through platforms. At the far end, and clear of the overall roof, were the platforms used by Dalmellington trains up to their withdrawal on 6.4.64. A short distance to the south (R) are the sidings used to stable electric units.

Ayr is a well known seaside resort, popular with day-trippers from Glasgow, and is also a port. The town is also famous for its connections with one of Scotland's heroes, the poet Robert Burns, who was born at nearby Alloway. A statue of Burns stands in the town square, and the Tam o'Shanter Inn he frequented is now a museum dedicated to his memory. In good weather, the views across the sweep of the bay to Arran are superb.

The line south of here was opened on 18.3.1854, mainly to serve the ironworks at Dalmellington. Opening of the current main line (to Stranraer) was in stages, to Maybole in 1856, Girvan in 1860 and finally throughout in 1870, although at that time the objective was Portpatrick as the harbour at Stranraer had not then been built.

The first mile out of Ayr to Belmont level crossing is at 1 in 170, steepening then to 1 in 88 to the site of :

Alloway Junction: - Diverging (R) is the bed of the Maidens & Dunure Light Railway, which ran round the coast to Girvan. Opened on 3.1.1905, traffic levels at the intermediate villages never gave much of a return on investment and passenger services as far as Turnberry ceased from 1.12.30, resumed from July 1932 and finally ceased in June 1933. The section from Turnberry to Girvan retained its services until 2.3.42, mainly on account of the large hotel and golf course established at Turnberry by the GSWR. Services were restarted on the northern section on 17.5.47 to serve the new Butlins holiday camp at Heads of Ayr, and these trains ran until 16.9.68. All goods traffic had ceased from 28.2.55, resulting in complete closure beyond the camp. An ambitious plan in recent years envisages reconstruction of part or all of the line, but little progress has so far been made.

The gradient steepens to 1 in 70 to the site of :

Glengall Junction: - A short branch (L) served Ailsa (or Glengall) Hospital, a mental institution. At one time a passenger service ventured down the branch on visiting days, but in later years, the local trip, still known as 'The Squib', ran once or twice a week with boiler house coal until conversion to oil firing in 1965. Further 1 in 70 leads to :

Dalrymple Junction: - A station known as MAYBOLE JUNCTION existed here until 1859. Here the line becomes single, with the Waterside (Benbane) branch climbing away (L). Not long after the junction was DALRYMPLE (cl 6.12.54), on the 1 in 90 down to the Doon Viaduct. Climbing resumes, at 1 in 75 after CASSILIS (cl 6.12.54) to a level section before the 1 in 80 into MAYBOLE. From here it is mainly downhill, although there is a brief climb before the descent to KILKERRAN (cl 6.9.65). Another climb leads to the drop through

DAILY (cl 6.9.65) to the bottom of the dip at the site of Bargany Colliery (L). Anyone who knows this line, or is familiar with the writings of the late Derek Cross, will remember the titanic struggles of a pair of 'Black 5's' trying to remove rakes of wagons from 'the hole', as the sidings were known. Most trains had only one engine supplied, but if the load on a Saturday afternoon was heavy, a second engine would be sent out from Ayr, a process known as 'coupling the Bargany'. More wily drivers of assistant engines on their way from Ayr were known to come to a stand just out of sight until the sounds of the struggle was over and the train was safely made up on the main line. Although opening and closure dates do not appear to be recorded, the mine was served for a period, at least during the 1920's, by BARGANY COLLIERY PLATFORM.

After another climb, the line falls through KILLOCHAN (cl 1.1.51) at 1 in 72, the gradient persisting to GRANGESTON HALT, an unadvertised station serving an ordnance factory. Descent eases before :

Girvan Junction: - Converging (R) was the line from Ayr via Turnberry (see above). Continuing more or less straight ahead is the bed of the Girvan Goods line, on which was situated the first Girvan station up to its closure on 1.4.1893. A short stretch of 1 in 50 after Girvan Viaduct leads to GIRVAN, the curving platforms being immediately before the first severe climb.

Many a train has come unstuck, so to speak, on the curving 3.5 mile climb to Pinmore Tunnel, almost all the grade being at 1 in 54/58. One train which went down in legend in these parts was a special from Heysham Moss to Stranraer, loaded with fertiliser bound for Northern Ireland in September 1965. The train had been loaded with bags thought to contain 56lbs each, but unfortunately they were 112lb bags. The result was that the load was around 500 tons over the limit for a pair of Black 5's. The crews of 44724 and 44727 made a valiant effort, but failed at the waterworks near Glendoune Viaduct. After dividing the train, the engines took the first half on to Pinwherry and came back for the rest. Considerable delay was later experienced by a diesel unit on a Stranraer to Glasgow working, the passengers standing on the platform at Barrhill as the special blasted its way through at walking pace, a speed it maintained to the summit three miles beyond.

Lest it be thought that only steam engines had problems, the DMU's on this line were known to take banking assistance on the worst climbs and, more recently, on a clear night, 26.027 took 17 minutes to reach the tunnel with eight coaches. Not that a Class 56 should have much trouble, but even this machine will have some work to do.

The summit is reached just before the portal of Pinmore Tunnel (440yds) and there is then a descent to PINMORE (cl 6.9.65). The gradient steepens to 1 in 69/65 for much of the way down to PINWHERRY (cl 6.9.65). The fame of this station has spread far, celebrated in 'The Ballad of Pinwherry Dip'. This recalls an event that occurred on more than one occasion, when a freight train without continuous brakes became divided and ran back through the station. On the ensuing upgrade the train came to a stand, then ran back through the station, the highest recorded number of 'run-pasts' being eleven. One of these breakaways occurred when the District Inspector stayed overnight at the station. In the morning he awarded the stationmaster a pay rise on the grounds of the frequency with which trains disturbed his sleep, not realising that this was not quite an everyday event.

In the next seven miles, only a few hundred yards of level track interrupts the climb, mainly at 1 in 67/79, over the moors to BARRHILL. The isolation of the bare moorland top here is the equal of almost anything we will have seen so far on the tour, train crews recognising the approach to the summit by the lonely Chirmorie cottage (L).

In good visibility there are views of Ailsa Craig, jutting straight out of the sea. Descent is now almost continuous, down to GLENWHILLY (cl 6.9.65), where there is a crossing loop and almost intact platforms. A brief climb for half a mile and then its downhill at 1 in 57, round the 'Swan's Neck' and over the Main Water of Luce Viaduct to NEW LUCE (cl 6.9.65). From here the gradients are much easier, apart from the 1 in 78 down to :

Challoch Junction: - Here we join the bed of the 'Port Line' from Dumfries, closed to all traffic on 14.6.65. Although that line was grandly scenic, it is probable that the majority of passengers would never have seen any of it as they would have been asleep on the overnight boat trains. From here the line runs through farmland, to DUNRAGIT (cl 14.6.65), where there is a crossing loop and a platform (L). An easy rise takes the line to CASTLE KENNEDY (cl 14.6.65) before a level section at the site of :

Cairn Ryan Junction: - Trailing in (L) was the line from Cairn Ryan, built during the Second World War to serve a safe haven for shipping. After the war the military base was used for a variety of marine industries, the line being closed on 30.4.59. A 1 in 86 descent leads to :

Stranraer Harbour Junction: - Diverging (L) is the short line to Stranraer Town, closed on 7.3.66 to passengers. A few sidings remain here, two serving the Stockton Haulage terminal. The railway first reached here from Dumfries on 12.3.1861 and just over a year later was extended to Portpatrick, the site of a new harbour for ferries to Ireland. Undoubtedly this was a colossal blunder as it was most unsuitable for vessels of any size, and very difficult to reach by rail, with appalling gradients, including 1 in 35 down to the harbour. It could not last and in 1874 the harbour and its installations were abandoned, including the rail access. Portpatrick returned to a minor village, but retained its passenger service until the line was closed on 6.2.50.

We continue for the short distance to :

STRANRAER (was _ HARBOUR): - Without the Larne ferries (R), there would be little to see here, the town itself depending almost entirely on servicing the requirements of the ferries. Down Loch Ryan (R), ferries also dock at the former Cairnryan Military Port.

After a short break we will return to AYR, and thence to :

BARASSIE: - The main line to Paisley and Glasgow continues ahead as we diverge (R) onto the Kilmarnock line. Local passenger services were withdrawn from 3.3.69 and only goods traffic used the line until diversion of Carlisle to Ayr and Stranraer trains this way from 5.5.75. The history of the line goes back to July 6th, 1812 with the opening of the Kilmarnock and Troon plateway.

Meadowhead Junction: - Diverging (L) is the line opened in January 1989 to serve the Irvine plant of Caledonian Paper. Timber is brought in from the Scottish Highlands via trip workings from Falkland Yard, and china clay arrives from Cornwall twice weekly, the Burngullow trains being the longest through freight workings in Britain. Further along the Kilmarnock line, there is a CE tip (L) and quarry (R).

As far as DRYBRIDGE (cl 3.3.69), the line is almost straight and level, but beyond here we enter the valley of the River Irvine, along which we wind to GATEHEAD (cl 3.3.69).

Fairlie Junction: - A line diverged (R), known as the Fairlie branch, and closed in April 1951. A short distance on was :

Moorfield Junction: - Diverging (R) was an alternative route into Kilmarnock, via Riccarton & Craigie, which also gave access to the Darvel line; closure is thought to have been in 1939. After a straight stretch past the site of St. Marnock's Goods Depot, the line curves first left, and then sharply (R) to trail into the Glasgow line (L) at :

Kilmarnock Central Junction: - Hunslet Barclay's works are (R) before :

KILMARNOCK: - As elsewhere, the station serves a fraction of its former traffic, but two through and two terminal platforms remain in use, in addition to the reversible through road. Departure eastwards leads the line across

Fenwick Water and past the Burns Monument (L) to :

Kay Park Junction: - The former loop to Moorfield Junction now ends at the BP oil depot at Riccarton. Hurlford MPD was in the fork between the two lines.

Turning southwards, we pass the site of HURLFORD (cl 7.3.55) and cross the River Irvine before :

Galston Junction: - Sidings in the Johnny Walker distillery (L) are on the bed of the former line to Galston, Darvel and Strathaven. Passenger services were cut back to Darvel from 25.9.39 and ceased from 6.4.64, goods traffic ceasing from 6.7.64 apart from the section to Mayfield which lasted until 20.9.65. There was also a connection from the Darvel line which passed below en route to Riccarton & Craigie, closure date unknown.

There is a five mile climb from Hurlford, mainly at 1 in 100/99, past the abandoned MOD plant at Bowhouse (R) and across the Cessnock Water. The grade eases near the site of Garrochburn Goods (cl May 65), where a colliery branch diverged (L) until the late 1960's. Passage of the 680yd Mossgiel Tunnel is followed by a gentle descent to :

Mauchline Junction: - Converging (R) is the line from Ayr via Annbank Junction, previously closed from 1.4.85 to 17.3.88. Local passenger services were withdrawn from 4.1.43, but for the last three weeks of the Ayr to Edinburgh via Muirkirk service, these trains were diverted that way, up to withdrawal on 1.10.51. Passenger trains returned to the line on 14.6.65 upon closure of the 'Port Line' from Dumfries to Stranraer, but these trains were diverted via Kilmarnock from 5.5.75.

Beyond the junction was MAUCHLINE (cl 6.12.65) and the resumption of the climb to Polquap Summit. Just over a mile east is Ballochmyle Viaduct, crossing the River Ayr with a central arch of 181ft span, 163ft above the river. Another mile east was :

Brackenhill Junction: - Diverging (L) was the Catrine branch, closed to passengers on 3.5.43 and completely from 6.7.64.

Barony Junction: - Traces remain of Barony Colliery (R), served by a short branch until closure on 25.5.86. Towards the end, all coal was wound at Killoch Colliery, whose pit waste heaps are visible about three miles away (R). A short distance leads to

AUCKINLECK: - After the station, a spur to the Cronberry line diverged (L), closed to passengers on 1.10.51. Only in the last three weeks of the service did the trains run by this route (see above), as up to 10.9.51 they used the route passing below just after OLD CUMNOCK (cl 6.12.65). Complete closure was not until 6.12.76. Much of the line north of here may be rebuilt if the proposals for an opencast site near Cronberry are realised.

Climbing continues, across the Lugar Water Viaduct, to Polquap Summit and mostly level track as far as :

Bank Junction: - A branch diverges (R) and runs for nearly two miles to Knockshinnoch Washery. Opened by the GSWR, that line served a network of colliery lines until the last closed on 18.8.69. Reopening came in mid-1985 and it was traffic from here that eventually resulted in the reopening of the Mauchline to Ayr line. Less than a mile further is NEW CUMNOCK (cl 6.12.65, reopened 27.5.91).

By now the River Nith can be seen (R) and we will follow its course fairly closely all the way to Dumfries, hence the general term for this line, the 'Nith Valley' route. Open moorland is a feature on the seven miles or so to KIRKCONNEL, for many years the only station between Kilmarnock and Dumfries.

Just after the Crawick Water Viaduct was SANQUHAR (cl 6.12.65), where the 15th century castle east of the station is now in ruins. Three miles down at 1 in 180 leads to the Mennoch Water Viaduct and a climb along a ledge high above

the Nith (R) to Drumlanrig Tunnel (1410yds). There are bridges over the River Carron and the Gill Water at CARRONBRIDGE (cl 7.12.53). The Nith can be seen (R) emerge from the Drumlanrig Gorge as the line descends to THORNHILL (cl 6.12.65) and the Cample Water Viaduct. The valley begins to open out on the continuing descent to CLOSEBURN (cl 11.9.61) and over Balloch Linn Viaduct to AULDGIRTH (cl 3.11.52). The two Portrack Viaducts are followed by the level crossing at HOLYWOOD (cl 26.9.49) and by :

Cairn Valley Junction: - Converging (R) is the bed of the Cairn Valley Light Railway line from Moniaive, opened in 1905 to serve a very sparse population., a factor which led to the withdrawal of passenger trains on 3.5.43 and closure on 16.5.49. By now the views are extensive on both sides as we cross Martinton Viaduct to soon reach the former :

Castle Douglas Junction: - Trailing in (R) is the heavily truncated remains of the Stranraer line, closed beyond Maxwelltown from 14.6.65. Just beyond the junction is :

DUMFRIES: - Referred to by Sir Walter Scott as 'The Queen of the South', hence the name of the town's football team. Elaborate glazed awnings cover the bays (R) formerly used by local trains on the main line west of here, the Castle Douglas line and the Cairn Valley Light Railway. Curving sharply in (L) there was a CR branch from Lockerbie, closed completely from 18.4.66, passenger services having been withdrawn from 19.5.52.

New developments now cover the site of the MPD (L), closed on 2.5.66. After RACKS (cl 6.12.65) was RUTHWELL (cl 6.12.65) and a curve to an easterly direction towards CUMMERTREES (cl 19.9.55). Chapelcross nuclear plant can be seen (L) and an ICI plant (R), the latter served from the mid-1920's until the late 1940's by POWFOOT HALT. Across the Solway Firth (R) is the Lake District.

ANNAN: - Now the only station open between Carlisle and Dumfries. Built in 1848, the sandstone ashlar construction is well complemented by the later Victorian glazed awnings. East of the station, a connection diverged (R) to reach the line over the Solway Viaduct. The viaduct was opened in 1869 (1870 passengers), mainly to allow the CR to tap the mineral wealth of Cumbria. That company's line ran from Kirtlebridge to its own station (above L) at ANNAN SHAWHILL (cl 27.4.31). The collapse of West Cumbrian mining and industry by the turn of the century meant that traffic levels became uneconomic. Closure of the viaduct on 1.9.21 became permanent, although dismantling only took place in 1933. Passenger trains ran to Kirtlebridge up to 27.4.31, the line eking out an existence with an infrequent goods service until 1939.

M.O.D installations are still to be seen (R), although much reduced from their heyday during the two world wars. EASTRIGGS (cl 6.12.65) is followed by GREYNA GREEN (cl 6.12.65), a possible candidate for reopening. Our outward route is rejoined as we trail in to the WCML (L) at :

Gretna Junction: - The earlier route will be followed to :

CARLISLE (was CITADEL): - After a change of motive power, departure is on the WCML, the former LNWR main line to London. The remaining 'Goods Lines' are crossed as the Maryport line diverges (R) to pass Currock yards. The connections from Bog Junction and London Road can be seen (L) between the main lines and Upperby depot (L).

The line follows the River Petteril, a tributary of the Eden, almost to Penrith. After the winding section past WREAY (cl 16.8.43), the line is devoid of any major feature. The Pennines can be seen in the distance (L) on the climb past SOUTHWAITHE and CALTHWAITE (both cl 7.4.52) on a long, almost straight section. Shortly after PLUMPTON (cl 31.5.48), the Petteril passes below, before the reverse curves which precede :

PENRITH: - The castle (L), raised in the fourteenth century, was largely demolished in 1648 and the station is in fact built in part of the grounds.

Penrith at one time served two other routes, to Darlington via Stainmore, and to Workington via Keswick. The former line lost its passenger services from 22.1.62. Services on the Workington line were cut back to Keswick from 18.4.66 before closure to passengers from 6.3.72, leaving a short section to Blencow quarry surviving to 19.6.72. After the bridge over the M6 is Eamont Viaduct, until local government reorganisation in 1974, this marking the boundary between Cumberland and Westmorland. About a mile further on, Lowther Viaduct crosses the river of that name.

It is just possible to discern the route of the Stainmore line where it went out (L), the last section having closed on 6.7.64. Just north of the junction was CLIFTON & LOWTHER (cl 4.7.38), originally built as a private station for the Earls of Lowther who lived at Lowther Castle (R). The 'castle' was one of the most grandiose stately homes in Britain, brought to ruin mainly by the profligacy of the Fifth Earl Lowther, known as the 'Yellow Earl' on account of his fleet of yellow Rolls-Royces.

A rather attractive stretch leads through Strickland Woods, from which the line emerges into more open ground past Thrimby Grange. The M6 and the A6 pass overhead before the rail served Harrison's Shap Quarry (R).

SHAP (cl 1.7.68): - For such a small village, its fame is widespread. Even before the coming of the railway, the village was on the only practicable alternative to a sea passage round the Cumbrian coast. Rail served quarries are on both sides as the line climbs the final two miles to Shap Summit (918ft). On emerging from the rock cutting, the hotel at Shap Wells can be seen in a hollow (R) and it might just be possible to glimpse the statue of Queen Victoria as a young girl. Four miles at 1 in 75 takes the line down past the site of the lonely Scout Green signal box, the grade then easing to 1 in 146 as the line passes under the M6 on the approach to :

TEBAY (cl 1.7.68): - The bed of the NER line from Kirkby Stephen converges (L), closed to all traffic with the rest of the Stainmore lines on 22.1.62. We now enter the Lune Gorge, with the Howgills towering (L) beyond the river, an area little known to tourists, sandwiched as they are between the Pennines away to the east, and the Lake District (R).

As the valley opens out, the bed of the Ingleton branch drops away (L) to cross Low Gill Viaduct, featured on the opening sequence of the BBC TV series 'The train now departing'. The main line curves (R) to pass under the M6 and reach the site of GRAYRIGG (cl 1.2.54). Beyond the station is the summit of the long climb from Carnforth, and there now commences 20 miles of almost unbroken descent. Dockray Viaduct takes us to Lambrigg Crossing, after which Hay Fell is (L), and the River Mint can be seen in the valley below (R). Kendal can be seen spread out below (R) on the approach to :

OXENHOLME: - Suffixed 'The Lake District' for the benefit of the tourist industry. Just north of the station, the Windermere branch climbs to join (R), now only served by a shuttle service from Oxenholme.

Descent continues through increasingly open country to :

Hincaster Junction: - The former Furness Railway line to Arnside diverged (R), closed to regular passenger services from 1.3.53, but used by special traffic almost up to complete closure from 9.9.63. Just north of the junction, a tunnel under the railway carries the overgrown Lancaster Canal, derelict after a useful life of only thirty years, a victim of the railway. The gradients are easier past MILNTHORPE (cl 1.7.68), terminus of a horse drawn narrow gauge railway which brought gunpowder from Gatebeck Mills until the 1940's. The River Beela is crossed before BURTON & HOLME (cl 27.3.50), some distance from both the villages it purported to serve. The ex MR loco depot, closed in 1936 and now in industrial use, can be seen (L) alongside the line from Hellifield which passes overhead at :

CARNFORTH: - Platforms no longer exist on the main line, the station being served only by Leeds and Barrow line trains. The station buildings are now

little used, but the buffet featured in the well known film 'Brief Encounter'. The former MPD is now part of the Steamtown complex (R), which also occupies the once extensive yards (R). Closure of the MPD came on 4.8.68, the day after regular steam working on BR ceased. At weekends a number of BR locomotives are usually to be found stabled in the remaining sidings.

After passing through a long cutting, the line reaches BOLTON-LE-SANDS (cl 3.2.69), from which point the wide expanse of Morecambe Bay can be seen (R), as far as HEST BANK (cl 3.2.69). Although this route between Glasgow and London has from the start been known as the West Coast Main Line, this is the only real glimpse of sea to be seen from the line. Until completion of the line from Carnforth to Ulverston in September 1857, this was the starting point for the cross-bay coach service to Kents Bank, near Grange-over-Sands, on the Furness coast visible (hopefully) across the bay.

Beyond Hest Bank there is a triangular junction with the Morecambe line, although the north spur is little used. A short cutting leads to the Lune Bridge, the present structure dating from 1963. The road which is crossed before the river, was partly built on the bed of the MR Morecambe and Heysham line, closed to all traffic from 5.6.67. Passenger services were withdrawn from 3.1.66, thus ending a fascinating chapter in railway history. The line from Lancaster Castle to Green Ayre, and thence to Morecambe and Heysham, was electrified by the MR, commencing on 1.7.1908 using an overhead supply at 6,600 volts a.c. The original units were life expired by 1940, but the war prevented any action and they soldiered on until 11.2.51, being then replaced by a steam push-pull service. This train service lasted until 17.8.53 when a rebuilt electric service was introduced with trains previously used on the Willesden Junction to Earls Court service by the LNWR. The difference now was that the supply was at the standard national grid frequency of 50cycles, in place of the former 25cycles, and was thus the forerunner of all subsequent a.c. electrification in Britain.

On the hill (L) is the Ashton Memorial, Lancaster's equivalent to the Taj Mahal. Lord Ashton made his fortune in linoleum and, on the death of his wife in 1906, erected this mausoleum in her memory at the then fantastic cost of over £80,000, the equivalent sum today being perhaps £10 million.

LANCASTER (was CASTLE): - The station is dominated by the castle (L). Some form of castle was recorded as being here before the beginning of the twelfth century when a great tower was erected, but the major part of the structure surviving now, dates from work authorised in 1399 by Henry IV.

Lines trailed in north of the station on either side, that on the left being the MR branch from Green Ayre, Morecambe and Wennington Junction, closed to passengers from 3.1.66 and finally from 17.3.76. The Glasson Dock line trailed in (R), closed to passengers from 7.7.30 and to goods from 5.10.64, other than a short section to a timber yard which lasted to 30.6.69.

The line climbs across the Lancaster Canal to join the bed of the line from the original Lancaster station (L), closed to passengers upon opening of Castle station in 1846, but remaining open to goods until 14.8.67. The white topped buildings of Lancaster University are (L) before the site of GALGATE (cl 1.5.39), a possible candidate for reopening, mainly for the use of students and staff at the University.

BAY HORSE (cl 13.6.60) was the rather unlikely terminus of a shuttle service from Lancaster, there being little habitation here other than the inn (R) from which the station gained its name.

SCORTON (cl 1.5.39) is pleasantly situated overlooking a wide bend on the River Wyre, with a popular caravan and camping site established at least forty years ago. The M6 comes alongside (L) before the bed of the Knott End branch converges (R), closed to passengers from 31.3.30, cut back to Pilling on 13.11.50, to Garstang Town from 1.7.63 abandoned from 19.7.65. After GARSTANG & CATTERALL (cl 3.2.69) were BROCK and BARTON & BROUGHTON (both cl 1.5.39), the latter followed by OXHEYS (cl 28.2.25).

Fylde Junction: - The Blackpool line trails in (R) alongside the DMU sidings (R) occupying the site of Preston MPD. In the fork between the two lines is

St. Walburge's church, said to have the second highest spire of any British church. The base was constructed in the 1850's from limestone sleeper blocks recovered from the Lancaster line.

The loco depot burned down in June 1960 but was not closed until September the following year. Given the propensity of steam locomotives to emit sparks and drop red-hot cinders, it is perhaps surprising that this fate did not befall more depots.

Trailing in (L) is the erstwhile Longridge line, truncated at Deepdale since 16.10.67, over which passenger services were withdrawn from 2.6.30. A strange feature of the Longridge line resulting from the inter-company rivalries in the area was that the only access was from the Blackpool line via a flat crossing of the main line. Lack of communication or cooperation between the competing companies led to several serious accidents.

There are loco holding sidings (L) and (R) as the line enters :

PRESTON: - Until the mid-eighteenth century, Preston was a fashionable resort for the well-to-do, but with the expansion of the cotton industry quickly burgeoned into a major industrial centre. Railway development was rapid after arrival of the North Union Railway in 1838 but by the early 1840's there were five separate stations resulting in poor interchange facilities. After 1844 all trains except those from Longridge used the NU station but the inadequate size caused long delays to services, especially as all long distance trains stopped for twenty minutes to allow all passengers to partake of a full meal if desired. Things improved after completion of the maximum layout in 1879, but even then chaos could still result at peak times, particularly during the infrequent Preston Guild weeks when more than half a million visitors might arrive, half of them on the Saturday alone.

An oddity of working in the Preston area was the running of through trains from Blackpool to the north without reversal. These trains would pass through the East Lancashire platforms heading south and reappear some fifteen minutes later heading north on the main line, to the obvious consternation of some of the passengers and the puzzlement of observers on the station unaware of the possibilities offered by a series of spurs two miles south.

There are six tracks as the line crosses the River Ribble and heads south. The bed of the Southport line, closed to all traffic from 7.9.64. In the following cutting, the Ormskirk and Blackburn lines diverge (R), the latter then passing overhead before a further connection trails in (L) at :

Farington Junction: - A climb takes the WCML past the DAF/Leyland truck plant (R) before LEYLAND, continuing under the M6 to :

Euxton Junction: - A maroon board indicates the diverging route (L) to be for Chorley and Manchester. Just south of the junction, the slow lines bear away (R) on an alignment formerly serving BALSHAW LANE & EUXTON (cl 5.10.69), converging again shortly before the site of COPPULL (cl 5.10.69), although at one time the four track section continued through STANDISH (cl 23.5.49) to where the Whelley Loop dropped away (L). That route provided a Wigan avoiding line for goods traffic and diversions until its role ended after electrification of the main line in 1972. There were links to almost all of the other lines in the Wigan area but it is not known when closure came, although the line was demolished in 1976. Only two tracks have existed through the cutting to BOARS HEAD (cl 31.1.49) where the Chorley line came in (L), well established trees now growing in the trackbed. Regular passenger trains ceased from 4.1.60, but the line was used by diverted trains up to complete closure in December 1971. A fairly steep descent leads across the lines from Southport and Kirkby (Liverpool) (R), immediately before they pass below to reach WIGAN WALLGATE (L), the platforms of which can be seen from the north end of :

WIGAN NORTH WESTERN: - Rebuilding was completed here in 1972, not long before electric working to Preston was inaugurated. At the south end there are connections in both directions to and from the ex LYR line from Wallgate to Bolton which climbs from the station before bearing away (L). A curve leads the WCML into a cutting where the LYR Pemberton (or Westwood Park) Loop passed

overhead until 14.7.69, this link allowing the LYR to provide the same forty minute timings between Liverpool and Manchester as the competing LNWR line via Earlestown and the CLC via Warrington Central, somewhat faster than the best timing available today.

At the end of the cutting there was yet another maze of lines, two of which survive, although one only tenuously as it solely serves the now closed Bickershaw Colliery via the route diverging (L), until 1969 a through route to Manchester via Leigh. The other line still in use is the route to Liverpool via St. Helens (R). Springs Branch TMD (L) is built on the site of the former MPD, closed to steam in December 1967.

Bamfurlong Junction: - South of the junction, the WCML crosses the Leigh branch of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal before BAMFURLONG (cl 27.11.50), sited on the south side of the road bridge. Just over a mile further, a line diverges (R), the first part only opened in 1968 to provide continued access to the St. Helens branch, formerly served by the route from Glazebrook. Passenger services ceased from 3.3.52 except for Haydock Park race trains which ran to Ashton-in-Makerfield, at least for a period in the 1970's.

The headstocks of the closed Golborne Colliery, previously served from the GCR St. Helens line, were close to the line (R), shortly before the site of GOLBORNE (cl 6.2.61). A mile or so on is :

Golborne Junction: - Prior to opening of the direct line to the south in 1864, all WCML trains used the line diverging (L) to run via a section of the Liverpool to Manchester line through Newton-le-Willows, this earlier link still providing access to the L&MR line in either direction. We keep to the 1864 line, passing under the L&MR line in a cutting and onto a long curve leading past Vulcan Foundry (R) to :

Winwick Junction: - Converging (R) is the link from Earlestown, part of the 1831 line from Newton-le-Willows to Warrington, used by all WCML trains before 1864; WINWICK (cl 28.11.1840) was somewhere near here. Close by (R) was the St. Helens (or Sankey) Canal with the Sankey Brook beyond. The canal opened in 1757 to provide the growing industries around St. Helens with an alternative route to Liverpool other than the rather poor turnpike roads. Despite becoming railway owned in 1854, traffic continued to flourish up to the turn of the century, after which the northern section became progressively disused. The last traffic on the lower part was from the Sankey sugar factory and this was carried up to 1959, closure of the canal then following in 1963.

Open ground leads to the increasingly industrial area around :

WARRINGTON BANK QUAY: - Two island platforms allow interchange between WCML and Manchester to Chester services. Below (R) were the Low Level platforms serving the Ditton Junction to Manchester/Stockport line. These closed on 9.9.63 although a solitary overnight train had been the only service since withdrawal of other trains from 10.9.62, this survivor ceasing from 4.1.65.

South of the station there is a connection (L) which now provides access to Warrington Yard and via two reversals, to the Ditton Junction line. Seasonal passenger trains from North Wales to Manchester ran via the latter link and Lymm until the 1970's and the line east of Latchford closed on 8.7.85. Sole usage now is for coal trains to Fiddlers Ferry power station, visible (R) as we climb parallel to an alternative route (L) across the River Mersey to the viaduct over the Manchester Ship Canal at :

Acton Grange Junction: - Both the alignments from Warrington date from 1893/4 during construction of the canal, the earlier low-level routes having been cut by the canal. After the Chester line diverges (L), the original route can be seen in a cutting (L) before the new and old alignments converge. Beyond the site of MOORE (cl 1.2.43) the Chester line passes overhead on its way to Daresbury Tunnel (R) where an old water tower on the hill is in marked contrast to the modern structure at Daresbury nuclear research establishment (L). Almost parallel (L) is the Duke of Bridgewater's Canal which joins the Trent & Mersey Canal after the latter passes overhead near the M56 bridge.

PRESTON BROOK (cl 2.3.40) was by the A56 bridge, after which the WCML enters a cutting leading to Preston Brook Tunnel (78yds) and the bridge carrying the 'up' Liverpool line flyover at :

Weaver Junction: - High speed turnouts were provided during electrification in 1961, although the flyover long predates this. This junction is sometimes referred to as 'whisky and soda' junction following a collision on 6.8.75 between a caustic soda train and a freightliner carrying whisky.

Dutton Viaduct carries the line over the River Weaver before a straight stretch to ACTON BRIDGE. South of here there is a connection diverging (L) to reach the ex CLC line from Manchester to Chester which shortly passes overhead. After HARTFORD, situated in a deep cutting, the line crosses the River Weaver on Vale Royal Viaduct heading for WINSFORD. From just south of here there are four tracks all the way to Crewe. About half way along this section was MINSHULL VERNON (cl 2.3.42). Entry to an urban area marks the approach to the famous railway town of :

CREWE: - North of the station, the Manchester line trails in (L) and the Chester line (R), the latter between the Heritage Centre and the site of Crewe North MPD. The loco depot closed in May 1965 and the site is partly derelict, partly occupied by a car park and the new Crewe signal box (R). This rather unusually designed box dates from 1985 when the station closed for six weeks to enable extensive remodelling work to take place.

GLOSSARY

MPD Motive Power Depot / Traction Maintenance Depot
PSB Power Signal Box
WCML West Coast Main Line

CLC Cheshire Lines Committee
CR Caledonian Railway
GB&K Glasgow, Barrhead & Kilmarnock
GSWR Glasgow & South Western Railway
GWR Great Western Railway
GNR Great Northern Railway
HR Highland Railway
I&FA Invergarry & Fort Augustus (Railway)
L&MR Liverpool & Manchester Railway
LMSR London, Midland & Scottish Railway
LNER London & North Eastern Railway
LNWR London & North Western Railway
LYR Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway
MR Midland Railway
NBR North British Railway
NSR North Staffordshire Railway
SDJR Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway
WSMR West Somerset Mineral Railway

Front Cover Photo: On a visit to Mallaig on May 12th, 1984, 37.022 is seen waiting to depart with the anti-clockwise portion of the 'Skirl O' The Pipes 4'. This tour train had split at Mossend Yard, with one portion going to Kyle of Lochalsh and the other to Mallaig. Passengers transferred between these two points by boat and returned to Glasgow by the opposite route. (C.J. Tuffs).

Back Cover Photo: Almost nothing in this view of Stranraer Harbour on 20.9.81 remains, the station having been rebuilt and the locos scrapped. 40.024 (withdrawn June 1984) had brought the 'Ayr-Aberdonian' in from Carlisle and had been shunt released by 27.012 (withdrawn May 1986). (Steve Turner).

