2012 Steam Album

Hungerford & Environs

Tony Bartlett



WELCOME!

..... to this album of steam railway photographs. You probably found your way here by reading the latest copy of Chain Mail on-line. In the previous issue, the Editor asked for a volunteer to act as a correspondent for steam railway matters and I was pleased to oblige. I hope you found my introductory article useful - this slideshow provides examples of steam trains which have travelled through our local area during 2012. I have taken an arbitrary 30 miles radius as a measure of how far you might go to see one of these trains.

The pictures are selected from a collection of my best day-by-day railway shots this year. People have been taking photographs of trains since the very earliest days of photography in the 19th century, when railways were at the height of their importance. I am just one of many who like to carry on this tradition, albeit in a very different world from those early days.

As is customary in this branch of hobby photography, I like to provide captions to support and enlarge on the content of the visual images. In my case, I attempt to cover the immediate railway context but also feed in points of photographic technique and observations on local issues and current affairs wherever relevant. You should be able to identify where the shots were taken from the captions. I also include the technical details of each exposure for those who like to know more about how the photographs were taken.

Please note that any opinions expressed are my own, and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of the magazine.

Tony Bartlett, Hungerford Camera Club

Technical stuff:
Viewing the PDF slide show: if you got to here – well done! The slide show is set to Full Screen mode for best viewing.
'Page turning' is done manually to give you time to read the captions – use the Right Arrow and Left Arrow keys to go forwards and backwards through the show. The Escape key takes you out of Full Screen mode so that you can stop the slide show.
The pictures were taken on a Nikon DSLR camera, processed from RAW data and finally edited with Photoshop Elements 7. The image data were extracted to a text file from the camera-produced JPG files, exported to MS Excel, automatically reformatted and married up with the caption text, the composite output being added back to the resized image file during final editing.

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Regaining speed after a water stop at Challow, 6024 King Edward I and its Cathedrals Express make a colourful sight in the unexpected winter sun approaching Swindon, right to time, on an excursion to Cardiff on St David's Day. The previous weekend's excursion in aid of the 'Help for Heroes' charity had had to be cancelled, and it seems that arrangements had been made for benefits accruing from this operation to be transferred to the charity instead. Although in a good cause, it couldn't be said that the design of the headboard was great artistic success with its multicoloured background and mixed fonts. Thu 01Mar 11:57 f5 1/800 iso250 75mm



A favourite loco - featured in my first Triang train set more than 50 years ago - (4)6201 Princess Elizabeth running along the GW mainline south of Shrivenham with the Double Lickey Banker special. No chance that a pair of 0-6-0 pannier tank banking engines could stand the pace as train races across the Vale of White Horse - they will be needed later on the return to Birmingham on the climb of the notorious Lickey Incline. The steam exhaust looks spectacular in the cold air, as was the gradual crescendo of noise ramping up the expectation in the minutes before the Princess burst into view. Sat 24Mar 09:39 f4.5 1/1000 iso220 57mm



On a grey, unpleasant and showery day, A1 pacific no. 60163 Tornado erupts from underneath the new bridge carrying the Newbury Road north of Whitchurch. The route to Salisbury is being upgraded for diversionary use when the Basingstoke - Southampton section is unavailable, for which purpose the clearance under some of its bridges needs to be increased to accommodate the latest container trains. The 'work in progress' hardly adds charm to the scene. The train is a Peterborough to Salisbury Cathedrals Express and is running over a half hour late following earlier delays in the London area. Wed 04Apr 14:02 f4.5 1/1000 iso1800 60mm



It's now only the second day of public service but 35028 Clan Line is already hauling the second steam train over the new Croft Rd bridge in Hungerford, BR7 no 70000 Britannia having passed by a few minutes earlier in the other direction with its support coach on a positioning movement to West London. The older but somewhat more powerful Bulleid Merchant Navy pacific is in charge of one of the regular VSOE excursions to Bristol. Unfortunately the rather tight view incorporating the new bridge does not allow me to show the train of immaculately restored chocolate and cream Pullman coaches as well. Wed 11Apr 11:39 f5 1/1000 iso400 78mm



After its overnight stopover at Southall, no. 70000 Britannia was clearly prompt at Victoria for an on time departure with a slightly more 'down-market' Cathedrals Express to Bristol, in this case routed via the old London South Western mainline to Salisbury and thence via Westbury and Bath. It is seen here right on time tearing through Andover Jct, a location more traditionally associated with Bulleid Pacifics. On a day of heavy wintry showers, a freak break in the cloud cover has let through enough light to give a fast shutter speed at a reasonably modest ISO setting without having to go to full aperture. 12Apr 12:26 f6.3 1/1000 iso400 78mm



Superior excursions with the VSOE Pullman set hauled by Bulleid Pacific 35028 Clan Line have made fewer appearances on the B&H route this year, possibly a reflection of weaker demand for luxury products. So an opportunity not to be missed on Hungerford Common as the train bursts into view, running fast to make up for lost time. A point of camera technique learnt here. I'd carried out a satisfactory test shot of a previous stone train using SP settings, but then changed to Manual to tinker with the aperture and ISO values. Although metered by the camera the result is over-exposed. Don't tinker! Wed 13Jun 11:39 f5.6 1/1000 iso800 60mm



A Cathedrals Express at speed crossing the Vale of White Horse near Shrivenham outbound from Southend to Gloucester in extremely blustery conditions. Tornado was originally scheduled but later replaced appropriately enough by 71000 Duke of Gloucester - a popular choice of a less often seen locomotive. No chance of the exhaust obscuring the view on a day when standing upright was difficult, and the use of a camera-steady (fencepost) was essential. The Class 8 Duke looks similar to the Class 7 Britannias apart from the valve gear and the front end congestion due to the third cylinder. Sat 16Jun 13:57 f4.5 1/1000 iso320 60mm



This year marks 150 years of the extension of the Hungerford branch line onwards across the High St to Pewsey and Devizes, a move which enabled the later development of the 'direct' main line to the South West via Westbury to Taunton, and gave Hungerford the favourable transport links it still enjoys today. A number of local groups have come together to publicise the anniversary as a way of advertising the economic benefits of being located in the town. Today has been chosen as the day to mark the anniversary with a steam hauled special train, seen arriving behind A4 Pacific 4464 Bittern Thu 21Jun 11:15 f6.3 1/800 iso320 67mm



The crowds and the bunting are out at Hungerford Station as a Cathedrals Express stops here for the first time to pick up nearly a hundred passengers and take on water (whilst of necessity standing on the mainline). During a very sharp turn round, the Mayor of Hungerford unveiled a plaque commemorating 150 years of the Berks & Hants Extension Rly before A4 Pacific 4464 Bittern set off again for Minehead. FGW were supporting the occasion - during the speeches their Director was treated by the Mayor to a description of the inadequacies of the current unmanned station compared with its GWR predecessor. Thu 21Jun 11:16 f5 1/800 iso320 48mm



The weather continues unsettled in this wet summer and in dull, but at least dry, conditions 61063 Tornado is making light work of its 13 coach Cathedrals Express leaving Didcot en route from Westbury to Canterbury, and evidently on a round-about journey via Chippenham and Swindon. The train has taken the main line through the station - giving a closer and better balanced shot on this 4-track section - but is now slowing ready to be switched to the 'relief' line onwards to Reading. I have used the Neutral picture control in RAW processing to produce an image with a genuine 'steam days' look to it. Tue 26Jun 09:47 f4.5 1/800 iso400 87mm



Fortunately the sun has come out for my next sighting of no. 60163, this time working a Salisbury to Worcester Cathedrals Express and negotiating one of the many curves on the Thames Valley section between Reading and Didcot. The bridge I'm standing on serves a minor dead-end road to Westbury Farm on the edge of Purley on Thames. It has just been very expensively rebuilt for the electrification project - a fate which would seem to have been avoided by the next one along the way, now only used as a bridle path. Its twin-tone brickwork still shows evidence of widening the track in the 19th century. Thu 28Jun 10:57 f6.3 1/1000 iso320 66mm



A classic shot of a Bulleid pacific to round off the first half year, with the new lens proving its worth in difficult lighting conditions. Battle of Britain class 34067 Tangmere is in charge of the Royal Wessex, travelling from Brighton to Weymouth - a popular destination in this Olympic year. It appears that the train has been waiting at Reading Station for a path south to Basingstoke, and now clear through the triangular junction west of Reading, the fireman is stoking up and the smoky unburnt coal is mingling with the excess steam blowing off from the boiler to produce an attractive aerial display. Sat 30Jun 11:24 f4 1/640 iso400 60mm



A late substitute on today's Lewes - Oxford Cathedrals Express, A4 Pacific No. 4464 Bittern is running fast, with barely perceptible exhaust, through Goring & Streatley station - having taken over from diesel haulage at Willesden. It is becoming harder to find satisfactory viewpoints for photography on this section of line with previously useable bridges being rebuilt and 'Health & Safety'-treated prior to electrification. This station is still recognisably of GWR origin - as well as adding interest to the view, its buildings divide up the four track route to a give more intimate shot. Thu 05Jul 13:33 f4 1/1000 iso280 45mm



Another steam special heading for the West Somerset Rly and Minehead, this time for the Railway Touring Company, whose uniform set of smart maroon coaching stock presents a more attractive and promising proposition for customers than the non-matching weather-worn carriages of the more usual Cathedrals Expresses. Britannia Pacific no. 70013 Oliver Cromwell is well on time as it speeds purposefully across Hungerford Common. A small jarring note - the WR-style of hand grips on the smoke deflector looks alien on a loco which had the original handrail fitted when I saw it in the 1950s! Sat 18Aug 10:38 f4.5 1/1000 iso200 51mm



Battle of Britain Pacific 34067 *Tangmere* makes an impressive sight in The Cuttings at Hungerford working the Mayflower excursion from London to Plymouth as far as Taunton. This was a badly taken shot in difficult lighting conditions which needed a lot of editing to produce an acceptable image. I have cropped to 4:3 to balance the shot and show the close proximity of the footpath to the speeding express. Sat 15Sep 09:09 f4.5 1/1000 iso200 51mm









Two steam specials on the B&H line this weekend - the first is a Railway Touring Co excursion to Minehead, seen here being hauled by no. 34067 Tangmere approaching Crofton and running easily up the valley. I chose this location to get a clean shot against the clear blue sky and for once opted for burst mode - being uncertain what was the best shooting angle. In the event (and lacking a really interesting sky) I've presented the result as a sequence, panning from landscape to close-up. Here you have to be careful to complete your sequence before the storage buffer in the camera fills up! Sat 29Sep 10:44 f4 1/800 iso220 45mm



Second steam special of the weekend features no. 60163 Tornado in charge of a Cathedrals Express to Kingswear (for Dartmouth), seen here drawing to a stop at Hungerford to pick up a respectable number of passengers. The previous CathEx to stop here - in June for a trip to Minehead - suffered from poor weather and operational delays but there is clearly still a demand for nostalgic trips to the West Country by steam. The brightly shining hi-visibility headlight, masquerading as a steam-days oil lamp, shows how gloomy the day is, but the excursionists are forecast to have dry weather throughout. Sun 30Sep 10:32 f4 1/640 iso360 93mm



At Andover for today's special - The Bath and Bristol - and shooting with the 50mm Nikon prime lens (much less weight in the saddle bag up the steep hills en route). On the 'right side' in case the early sun returns, but I'm a fraction too early with my shot of 34067 Tangmere. I needed the loco a few feet further forward to be clear of the colour light signal. With previous cameras, the timing of such shots has been somewhat 'hit or miss' - the Nikon is so responsive that I've got no excuse. At least the iconic image of the front of the loco is in the clear, and the wooden station building provides visual interest. Sat 13Oct 12:15 f5 1/1000 iso320 75mm



Immaculate in its British Railways livery, GWR Castle Class no. 5043 Earl of Mount Edgcumbe is right on time with Vintage Trains' Cotswolds Explorer passing through Steventon en route to Oxford and the Vale of Evesham. It is interesting to note that, in the 21st century, a mid-20th century steam train is speeding along one of the most famous 19th century railway lines - Brunel's Great Western route to Bristol - which at this point cuts through the 13th century medieval causeway on which I'm standing. Causeway Crossing itself is operated remotely from Swindon, 20 miles away! Sat 20Oct 11:35 f2.8 1/1000 iso200 75mm



‘Merchant Navy’ pacific no. 35028 Clan Line erupts from underneath Denford Bridge with a luxury VSOE excursion to Bath and Bristol on a very gloomy October day. It's almost impossible to capture an eye-catching image under these conditions, but I have employed a number of techniques to make the best of a bad job - 1: fit the neutral grad filter to stop the sky and steam from over-exposing, 2: process the RAW image data with a Vivid picture control, to maximise the contrast in the very flat light available, and 3: increase the colour saturation to counteract the all-pervading greyness of the day. Did it work? Wed 24Oct 11:34 f5 1/640 iso1000 87mm

THE END

Hope you enjoyed the show
and feel inclined to get out and enjoy the spectacle of a steam-hauled express train in full cry.