2013 Railway Annual

Hungerford Chain Mail
diesel selection

Tony Bartlett



This slideshow complements my article in the December 2013 edition of Chain Mail and provides a number of images illustrating the types of trains recently seen travelling through Hungerford - in the absence of the steam-hauled excursions which I was originally asked to cover.

The captioned images are selected from my 2013 Album and cover a mixture of passenger and freight workings, as well as some of the engineering trains needed to keep the railway network running smoothly. Long distance and local passengers services are mostly operated by First Great Western, although excursion trains can be run by other independent concerns (as is the case with the steam trains which we no longer see, but are still running elsewhere avoiding Reading).

The commercial freight sector is much more complicated, more so than can be covered here but a flavour of the ownerships and relationships can be gained from the colourful liveries adorning the rolling stock. In steam days freight traffic was always the poor relation (in spite of generating most of the profits!) and little effort was invested in making and keeping the engines and trucks looking attractive. Since privatisation, marketing departments again recognise the value of the company image being displayed boldly around the countryside, although liveries have not necessarily kept up with changes in ownership.

The captions follow my usual style, dealing with the railway context plus notes on photographic considerations and topical references where appropriate.

I hope you find this illuminating and enjoyable. Tony Bartlett

Starting the new year on familiar territory with DBS Class 59 no. 59203 passing over the rather inconvenient level crossing approaching Hungerford Station with the regular midday stone train from the Somerset quarries to Acton terminal. As usual, traffic is slow getting going again after Christmas as the Class 59 is over-powered for this lightweight working. Now nearing three years in constant use, the Nikon D90 has managed to capture a colourful image in the modest early January light, helped by the quality of the Pro-Series zoom lens, here working at its maximum reach. Fri 11Jan 11:59 D90 f4 1/800 iso320 180mm



The winter snow still lies thick on Hungerford Common in the background some days after the first fall. By now the platforms have been cleared, for local services at least, although HST travellers need to beware. The light has remained obstinately flat since the snow arrived, making right-side/wrong-side decisions irrelevant for rail photographer. Interestingly this westbound HST express appears to have both a lady driver and a lady inspector in the cab - progress indeed!

Mon 21Jan 11:57 D90 f5 1/640 iso250 142mm



Because the Berks & Hants line runs right through the middle of town, you get to know the pattern of railway workings as you go about your business round Hungerford (assuming you are interested in railways and observant). This is one which I had missed for the couple of months since it started up - because it runs during the lunchtime 'dead zone' occupied by stopper HSTs. This Class 66-hauled train of Ferrywagons running as 6V48 returns empty from Tilbury Docks to S Wales, unusually not taking the direct route through Swindon. Mon 21Jan 13:26 D90 f6.3 1/640 iso250 60mm



Continuing my quest to capture the Freightliner loaded working of stone from S Wales, and again only finding the empty return (well at least it is still running) - 66511 is doing the honours on another sunny day. One year after their repaint, the railings by the footpath running alongside the embankment have retained their smart appearance, which is more than can be said for the grafitti-ridden stone wagons!

Tue 05Feb 12:06 D90 f5.6 1/1000 iso250 75mm



A sight not often seen at Hungerford - 2 diesel units passing. A revised service is in operation during the major re-engineering works at Reading station which started over the Easter break. The 15:16 service to Bedwyn is just departing 5 minutes late from Platform 1 on the left, just as the 15:22 for Reading arrives from the other direction. Currently daytime HST through-services are suspended, and the local hourly service from London operates only out of Reading, being extended to Westbury for westward connections every other hour. The re-timed services have caught out a number of the regulars! Thu 04Apr 15:21 D800 f6.3 1/1000 iso900 62mm

Normality is returning to the B&H line after a week of revised services and disruption caused by the work at Reading Station, with a backlog of stone train movements which are starting to work through again. My knowledge of what trains are expected has recently been improved considerably having been introduced to the Realtime Trains data feed on the internet, from which I have gleaned that there will be 2 loaded and 2 empty trains around 4 o'clock today. The second empties from the Grain terminal is seen clearing Hungerford Station on the way back to Merehead Quarry behind 59201, and bell ..... Wed 10Apr 15:43 D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso500 78mm

Ind	Plan Arr	Act Arr	Origin	Pfm	ID	TOC	Destination	Plan Dep	Act Dep
WTT	pass		Machen Quarry		FRGT	ZZ	West Drayton A.R.C.	1606	N/R

..... and classmate 59203 is in charge of the second loaded train in the sequence - a working from Machen Quarry in South Wales to the ARC stone terminal at West Drayton. Armed with information about the origin and destination of these trains, I'm beginning to make sense of the sometimes bewildering variety of freight stock used - from modern and clean block trains of Hanson or Yeoman hoppers to various assorted mixes of old and rusting third(and more)-hand wagons of varying sizes and shapes. Likewise, the 'jumbo' workings of part-loads to different destinations can be readily identified. Wed 10Apr 16:01 D800 f7.1 1/1250 iso720 75mm









To Bedwyn on the DMU after finding that 2 loaded trains and 3 empties are due in a 2 hour period this afternoon - to explore the reliability of the Realtime Trains data feed. At 14:14 the Acton - Merehead 'jumbo' passed Hungerford in pouring rain before setting out. These views show - at 14:56 an HST for Penzance; at 15:12 the Hither Green to Whatley empties; at 15:44 the Whatley to Dagenham ARC terminal, preceding at 15:49 the Machen to West Drayton (not shown); and at 16:12 an unusual Acton to Whatley empty! Part of the exercise was to find different viewpoints in the Bedwyn neighbourhood. Fri 12Apr D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso400-640





A very frustrating session on Hungerford Common, missing two empties and a loaded, all running out of their revised paths which I'd checked just before setting out. A very early Theale-Whatley (due 16:36) passed en route to my position in the far corner of the common. The HST was 8 mins late - nice to see the jubilee livery again - followed by 59101 with the Acton-Merehead. The Hither Green-Whatley crept by as I walked back across the common, and the Whatley-Dagenham loaded did likewise a few minutes later, a half hour ahead of schedule. You really need mobile access to the RTT data! Mon 29Apr 15:03 D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso360 75mm



The Acton-Merehead empties due through at 14:01 has been held in the Racecourse loop at Newbury to allow the on-time stopping DMU service an unimpeded path. It first comes into sight under the station footbridge a few minutes after the DMU gets under way again, but even so eases to a halt at the signal - just long enough for a grabbed shot before I get in back position for 59102's vigorous departure with a long 'jumbo' train of empty wagons, on its way again westwards. The fresh cream paint on the awnings gleams in the sunshine, while the recently arrived sand martins fly excitedly overhead. Tue 30Apr 14:29 D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso320 75mm

Four stone trains, 2 loaded and 2 empties, passing through Hungerford Common in 40 mins - now that's worth stepping out for! 15:51 - I arrive at Denford Bridge in time to catch the Whatley Quarry to Dagenham, just as the Paddington-Penzance HST emerges from the cutting; 16:05 - seen from down in the dip, 59103 has the Acton - Whatley empties; 16:11 - 59201 is bringing the Machen Quarry - West Drayton under Denford Bridge; 16:31 looking in the other direction under threatening skies, 59204 has a mixed rake of wagons returning to Whatley from Hither Green in Kent

Wed 15May D800 f6.3 1/1000 iso320-1600



An addition to the camera bag which is getting its second outing today with the lighting still subdued and an amount of mist fogging the atmosphere. The 80-400mm Nikkor AF-D lens has its lens collar fitted and this is bedded down on the bean bag on a fencepost ready to give a different view of 59202 hauling the regular Whatley Quarry to Dagenham stone train across Hungerford Common. It is clear that I shall not be able to get long raking shots along the length of a train at usable aperture values with this lens, since depth of focus is going to be very limited at the longer end of the 80 - 400mm scale. Tue 21May 15:58 D800 f8 1/640 iso1400 210mm

On to Denford Bridge for a shot of a loaded train set against the Port Down with its distinctive 'strip lynchets' and the old houses and workhouse chapel beyond. 59201 is in charge of the Merehead Quarry to Theale train which is already slowing for the goods loop on Hungerford Common. Unexpectedly and confusingly, another loaded stone train appears a few minutes later and proceeds non-stop, without time for me to retrieve the by-now stowed-away camera. The situation is explained later on consulting RTT, which it seems does NOT show looped trains in response to a query on 'Hungerford'. Wed 29May 11:56 D800 f10 1/500 iso1000 400mm



An infrequent loaded train in the 11 o'clock slot is just timely in June to get the best angle of illumination for the front and side of the train. This Merehead Quarry to Theale extra arrives as scheduled, but the planned 1hr:11min wait in the Goods Loop on the Hungerford Common seems to have been discounted as no. 59004 sweeps through the station at an improbably high speed to make the 15mph turn-out less than a mile ahead. 59004 was one of the original batch of GM locomotives ordered by Foster Yeoman, and still carries a Yeoman livery in spite of the takeover by Aggregate Logistics. Thu 06Jun 10:57 D800 f6.3 1/1000 iso250 145mm



The telephoto lens is getting a lot of use on my railway shots while I get used to its different handling and shooting characteristics - but it's back to the mid-range zoom for a shot of a First Great Western HST speeding over the recently repainted and appropriately-liveried bridge over Hungerford High St. My note about the irony of the situation - with 'First' GW juxtaposed with the first and real Great Western - was picked up by the Newbury Weekly News, and turned into a front page item for the local edition. For the record, this was a carefully timed shot of the rear power car of a 'down' express. Mon 17Jun 10:33 D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso450 86mm



The view of the refurbished bridge across Hungerford High St is perhaps more interesting looking south, with the Town Hall clock tower dominating the scene. Whilst taking a number of general views, perhaps for next year's Hungerford calendar, my attention was grabbed by the sound of a hard working diesel rapidly approaching from the left. Just in time I was able to frame a shot and focus as no. 66019 came into view. The position of the loco was about the best I could manage but of course there is no sign of the further Class 59/1 and multiple stone wagons of this Acton-Merehead trailing behind it. Tue 18Jun 16:12 D800 f9 1/500 iso800 180mm



The yellow NR track-recording HST always looks eye-catching, especially when foreshortened by the use of the telephoto lens. However the detailed scrutiny of the front end revealed in this way shows what an ugly compromise is required to accommodate the conventional buffering and connecting arrangements, and to house the forward-looking cameras. When it is due to run on the Paddington - Penzance route, it can usually be relied upon to be spot on time, as is the case today. Perhaps it is recording something of interest while travelling over the turnout for the loop line on Hungerford Common. Fri 21Jun 12:29 D800 f6.3 1/1000 iso400 195mm

The hot summer is in full swing now, strangely since the Glastonbury Festival has been held this weekend just finished - traditionally a time of downpours and mud-baths. FGW has supported the festival by running numerous additional services from London Paddington to a rail head at Castle Cary for transfers to the festival site. All good things come to an end and this HST is operating the extra 1Z37, one of many bringing festival-goers back to the capital - in this case after a leisurely start to Monday morning. Hungerford certainly looks a leafy place to live in this view looking towards the Croft. Mon 01Jul 16:24 D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso450 175mm



Had picked up from RTT that there was a light engine movement from Laira to Old Oak Common depot expected today. Thought this might involve one of the camera-shy FGW Class 57 diesel locos, so on the platform at the appointed time. In the event it turned out to be one of the comical HST power-car pairings of no. 43127 (with the Sir Peter Parker memorial plate) and no. 43086, both looking clean - perhaps after servicing and on their way back to London for reforming into passenger sets. Evidently a good year for Buddleia bushes (and their butterflies too) which have taken over the platform space. Fri 16Aug 13:03 D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso500 58mm



Much appreciated on the Berks & Hants line in the absence of steam-hauled specials, Statesman Rail have put on a trip to Downton Abbey (Highclere Castle) or Bath/Bristol, tapping in to the hype in the run up to the new series on TV. Starting at 05:15 from Lancaster (!) the smartly turned out train, including named Pullman cars, arrives promptly at Newbury some 7 hours later behind WCR no. 57315 where Downton visitors will transfer by road to Highclere. With no reason to wait the powerful loco departs, running easily with its 11 coach train and sister loco no. 57314 bringing up the rear. Wed 11Sep 12:23 D800 f8 1/800 iso560 86mm

The weather has not lived up to this year's high standards for the Statesman Rail excursion to Downton Abbey, Bath and Bristol, but conditions are even worse for the return journey back to the North West. I'm at the end of the platform on Hungerford Station with the D800 tripod-mounted under a large umbrella as WCR no. 57314 roars it way round the curve with the impressive looking chocolate and cream coaching stock, sounding nothing like the original Sulzer-engined Class 47s it is based on. (Inset) No. 57315 at the rear behind Pullman Cars 'Cader Idris' and 'Ben Cruachan' and a passenger brake. Wed 11Sep 16:47 D800 f5.6 1/1000 iso1250 66mm



Another image that responds well to widescreen treatment - in practice the large number of pixels recorded by the D800 allows me to crop to a panoramic format if required - only limited by the minimum 24mm focal length of lenses currently in the camera bag. The Robeston-Theale oil tank train usually comes up early in the morning via the Berks & Hants line, and carries on through Reading to take the GW mainline back to S Wales. Engineering work beyond Theale today means that Class 60/0 No. 60092 has had to run round the empties, giving me a rare daytime Hungerford shot of a Class 60. Sat 21Sep 12:36 D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso560 75mm



Weekends are traditionally when the engineers are let loose on the track to carry out planned maintenance of the hard-worked railway network. Trouble is that they mostly use the network itself to get men and materials to where they are needed to work, and so have to suffer themselves the consequences of not being able to use certain sections. Here no. 66125 is passing eastwards through Hungerford on a trip from Hinksey yard south of Oxford with ballast boxes for work at Reading, taking the 'scenic route' via Swindon and Westbury! The low-sided wagons make for easier access with road-railer JCBs. Sat 05Oct 11:13 D800 f6.3 1/1000 iso800 58mm

A mysterious entry has started to appear on the timetable - Didcot Fuelling Point to same via Westbury - must be the autumnal leaf-clearance train (RHTT). Today's is the first actual run, although the trees barely look capable yet of causing problems. Nevertheless nos. 66085 and 66154 have been detailed for the job this year (was hoping for some hired-in DRS heritage haulage) and are tackling the job enthusiastically as the RHTT sweeps through Hungerford station on the outbound run, the top-and-tail configuration allowing the train to reverse easily to clear the other side of the dual track route. Fri 11Oct 16:06 D90 f4.8 1/640 iso1250 63mm









A carefully planned walk along by the track on Hungerford Common yields 3 stone trains and the RHTT in about a half hour, featuring 3 different viewpoints.
15:39 - no. 59201 with the empties from the Grain terminal, 15:59 - no. 59001 has the loaded Whatley Quarry to Dagenham Docks, 16:06 - it's touch and go which will come first but no. 59004 with the Machen Quarry to West Drayton beats the RHTT (seen with it for effect) by two minutes, and 16:08 - the stone train disappeared from sight! I believe it is valid to conjure up such situations as long as you don't represent them as something which they are not! Fri 18Oct D800 f7.1 1/640 iso360-640

Autumn hues at the recently refurbished Little Bedwyn lock - Class 59/1 no. 59103 is in charge of the Hither Green to Whatley Quarry empties in failing light, in the last week of the year for late afternoon photography before the clocks go back to GMT this weekend. This is the best shot possible with the track masked by beech hedging - the loco is nicely framed by the distinctive footbridge although only a few of the 35 wagons of its train are visible. Hopefully the hedge will get its annual trim before too long, but the view will never again be the same as it was when the lock side was unfenced. Thu 24Oct 15:18 D90 f6.3 1/1000 iso1000 75mm

For the second time recently the Saturday Theale-Robeston discharged tanks is diverted to use its outbound route via the Berks & Hants line. In the picturesque setting of The Cuttings, Hungerford (strange name with the train on an embankment!) DBS Class 60 no. 60079 hurries through town as quickly as the curvature will allow, trying to make up the hour lost overnight skirting round engineering work in the Bristol area. This new view looking up from the footpath works remarkably well, proving that it is generally possibly to find new angles on old situations if you are prepared to experiment. Sat 26Oct 14:05 D800 f7.1 1/1250 iso500 62mm



The morning after the night before … well, the forecast cataclysmic storm had a relatively modest effect in Hungerford. Nevertheless rail services were severely disrupted by planned cancellations ahead of the storm, and operational incidents - mostly trees falling across the line and uncompleted overnight engineering work. This Penzance-Paddington HST is running 37 minutes late through a torrential squall, a parting shot of the St. Jude's Day storm as it heads off to the Continent. Some hopeful travellers waiting for a local DMU service are cowering under the footbridge steps. Mon 28Oct 12:06 D800 f7.1 1/1000 iso1000 38mm

The End



A young observer is clearly impressed by the sight and sound of the RHTT as it roars past on the embankment at Hungerford with steam belching from its cleaning jets, heading west into the setting sun. The haulage combo for the train is different this week, led by an unidentified Class 66/0 and tailed by no. 66112. The image requires careful editing to balance the warm bright light of the sunlit area with the cold blue of the shaded footpath and spectators - a level of contrast which the naked eye can deal with comfortably but which is difficult to reproduce with electronic displays or printed output. Tue 29Oct 16:09 D800 f7.1 1/1250 iso2000 120mm