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Piccadilly and Oxford Road Stations Capacity Upgrades for Northern Hub

by Tony Williams

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In their July 2013 consultation, Network Rail said:- *“Britain’s railway is busier than any time since the 1920s. Commuter passenger numbers are increasing, with forecasts showing demand for peak time rail services into Manchester growing almost 40 per cent by 2019.”*

The present capacity of the *Manchester South Junction* line from Piccadilly to Ordsall Lane Junction constrains traffic on many routes.

A new island platform 15/16 is proposed at Piccadilly. Oxford Road platforms 1 to 4 will be extended and re-aligned. These upgrades will increase capacity to 16 trains per hour per direction including two freight paths. A consistent 30 mph speed across the whole corridor will also be possible.

They will also allow one train to arrive from the south/east at either platform 15 or 16, complete its station duties and then proceed to Oxford Road; meanwhile another train can have an unrestricted arrival at the other platform. The whole process repeating as required. A similar operation taking place in the reverse direction from Oxford Road to Piccadilly.

Piccadilly Station

Some of the existing viaducts will be widened and new sections constructed. A brief east to west description follows.

At Temperance Street, starting 37 metres north west of Hoyle Street, the existing viaduct will be progressively widened enabling a new single track towards P15/16. The western end of Temperance Street will close to vehicular traffic, however there will be a pedestrian link on the southern footway.

Then a new structure across Fairfield Street, adjacent to the existing bridge carrying tracks from the terminal platforms, will rejoin and widen the existing viaduct, as far as the junction of Fairfield Street and Travis Street. This passes over the site of the former London Road Power Signal Box and has the single to double line junction.

“Opinions expressed in this journal are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the Society”

To allow this widening and the next new viaduct section, Fairfield Street alignment and the junction with Travis Street will be altered. These changes leave the listed *Star and Garter* public house intact, although the new line will be closer to it than the present line.

A new viaduct will then span Travis Street, Fairfield Street again, Wyre Street and London Road before joining the widened MSJ&AR Viaduct at Altrincham Street. This viaduct incorporates two new platforms 15 and 16, as an island, adjacent to the existing platforms 13 and 14.

The Electric Substation (which has a corten steel cladding) will be reconfigured to allow these works and have a new cladding.

Platforms 13 and 14 are connected to the main station via a satellite lounge and footbridge; which will be extended to serve platforms 15 and 16. The new platforms will also have a full length canopy.

The new viaduct, including its piers, will be constructed in reinforced concrete and have piled foundations. Where these are alongside brick arches; they will have an arched form, complementing the existing structure.

Positions of the structures are designed to minimise their impact on the highway network and urban realm. They are also placed to support new load bearing elements of the station (such as lift shafts, staircases and footbridge supports).

Oxford Road Station

Principal works here are the lengthening (to 200 metres) and re-aligning of Platforms 1 to 4 so that they can accommodate 8 car trains and permit an increased line speed on all tracks through the station. To achieve this bay platform 5 will be decommissioned. As far as possible these platforms will be within the existing MSJ&AR Viaduct but some widening is required to the north and south face of the viaduct.

The existing footbridge will be replaced by a new one about 40 metres to the west. This wider footbridge will have stairs and step free lift access to all platforms.

Other changes and the new footbridge will improve passenger circulation moving the station centre of gravity to the west.

During the late 1950s / early 1960s Oxford Road Station was modernised. This enabled it cope with both the 1931 MSJ&AR electric trains and the new suburban electric trains to Crewe etc. Part of this was provision of the distinctive station buildings and roof which were subsequently listed.

To improve user comfort and encourage passengers to distribute themselves evenly, canopies are required along the full length of the platforms. Any proposals for canopy and roof designs for the station need to take into consideration the historic value, and listed status, of the existing 1960s structures. The new station buildings and canopies have been the subject of a bespoke architectural design.

As a consequence of the revised platform layout, the existing canopy structures on Platforms 2 and 3 will be removed; however, the canopy on Platform 4 adjoining the existing listed ticket hall will be retained.

A new roof will be provided for the footbridge and platforms; this will be to the west of the existing roof which is retained. Its design will be modern but sympathetic to the geometry of the existing roof.

The viaduct will be widened, on its north side, for a 240 metre length along Whitworth Street West.

This widening will be constructed from reinforced concrete which is proposed to be sculpted and of a texture and finish closer to sandstone than typical grey concrete. In part it will be a colonnade through which the pavement runs.

At Gloucester Street the original viaduct construction from 1849 will be retained, but the 1950s post-tensioned concrete bridge-deck extension will be replaced with a wider bridge deck extension.

BRANCH LINE TALES

By David Latimer

This article first appeared in Live Wires 38, Xmas 1985, when the author was Editor

The Editor recounts a recent West country interlude where he travelled on a former mineral tramway, still used by BR DMUs – journeyed on a switchback branch to a Cornish Fishing village, visited the remains of a long forgotten line to Dartmoor Prison and used BR's first 'colortrain' on a line kept open by motorists!

My impromptu holiday began uneventfully enough with a colleague on Crewe platform early on a September Saturday morning waiting for the overnight Piccadilly – Paignton train. A few hours later we woke up in an overcast Torbay. Being too early to check into a hotel, we decided to waste a few hours on the preserved Torbay & Dartmouth line which connects with main line services at Paignton.

The Paignton terminus of this railway is modern, highly commercialised and a bit like a better class Kwik Save supermarket with a steam train in a track outside. Still, the railway offers BR staff 'priv' rate fares, so we couldn't really complain as we were only paying a quarter of what the public were paying.

Things soon improved as we left the urban areas and entered delightful coastal countryside and some 30 minutes later arrived at the unspoilt terminus at Kingswear. Kingswear Station is essentially a place where people detrain to catch the ferry across the River Dart to Dartmouth, but we decided to grice the station instead and were interested to find that the ever commercial management of the T & D railway intended to bulldoze half this historic station to gain the lucrative revenue of the affluent 'boating types' who wanted the land for maritime ventures.

The station staff, however, had got up a petition which passengers were invited to sign – and did.

The following day saw us on a guided bus tour of Dartmoor, with an inevitable visit to Princetown, comprising one prison, three pubs, a few prison officers houses and precious little else, save the thick mist that hangs over this barren area, almost every day of the year.

Serious study of the OS map, however, revealed that once upon a time, there was a railway (of sorts) that struggled and twisted its way up the moors to this sinister place. A bit of 'legging it' found us in wasteland behind a smallholding, where we found a GWR 'Tresspassers will be Prosecuted' notice and a few rotting sleepers in the overgrowth. This must have been all that was left of the tiny station at Princetown.

Two days later we were in Liskeard – an ideal base for those touring Cornwall by train. Liskeard Station is in fact two stations with no direct connection, although a goods loop links the Looe branch with the main line.

The Looe branch is a 'must' for anyone who loves the unspoilt countryside and equally so for railway historians. To get to Looe, one leaves the main line station and walks over to the branch line station by a footpath to find a waiting two car DMU.

On leaving Liskeard, our train took an unbelievable tight and twisting course down into the valley to the deceptively named Coombe Junction. Coombe Junction is the sort of place that charmingly makes even Clifton Junction look like Euston!

This station is one of those little unvandalised halts in the middle of a forest with a two car length platform and

immaculate little waiting hut that I thought had been wiped out by Beeching. Technically, it really is a junction in the sense that Looe trains have to reverse here, the line straight ahead being used purely by infrequent goods traffic to Moorswater a mile up the line.

Our guard having switched the points, we continued (in opposite direction) through enchanting woodland and past halts that had never been staffed. Indeed we stopped at one – St Keyne – and around fifty invalid passengers on a bus tour were forced to take the train, because the bus was unable to get close enough to the mill they had just visited without straining them.

A few minutes later we pulled into Looe's tiny, but immaculately floral platform. This was another refreshingly unvandalised halt. The fact that the local police station was next door probably had something to do with it!

Having sampled the preserved Torbay & Dartmouth steam line, we felt that we should see if the owning company's other line, that between Totnes and Buckfastleigh, was worth a visit. We took a 125 to Totnes Station, into which the preserved line also has running rights, with a view to catching a steam train to Buckfastleigh.

We stood around, looked for other passengers, looked at the Train Departure Sheet, waited for tannoy announcements – but nothing happened. Eventually we asked a railman where the steam train was, only to be referred to the timetable which clearly stated that Buckfastleigh trains only ran on Market Days and Sundays 'out of Season'.

Feeling somewhat silly, we went on to Plymouth with a vague idea that 'something might be happening there'. Having looked around the shopping centre we both came to the conclusion that not much was happening there, so we arrived back at Plymouth Station, just in time for the DMU to Gunnislake, which we took (as it was about three hours before the pubs opened).

How pleased we were that we took this train! We picked up commuters at an array of unmanned dockyard stations, such that by the time we branched off at St Budeaux along

the former SR main line, the train was full and standing, At this point of course – although now a single track branch – it was once a main through route, and apart from Berre Ferres Halt which was, we guess, lived in by some rail buff, who had bedecked the platform in vintage signs (all from the wrong region), the journey was pretty uninteresting;

But at Bere Alston, now a reversing point, but once a junction between the Gunnislake branch and the LSW main line, things got more interesting. Bere Alston's remaining single platform, despite being unstaffed, was in good repair and busy with detraining commuters and mailbags being unloaded. The disused platforms were also seemingly still in use of some kind, as S & T stores or similar.

Like on the Looe branch, we reversed here with the guard acting as switchman. And the fun was about to begin! Our train crawled its way along gradients and curvatures only ever designed for a mineral tramway and with a maximum speed of 10 mph. Neither of us had ever imagined that such a line could have survived into the twentieth century, let alone into the post Beeching era. But survive it does and it's well patronised too, largely thanks to the inaccessibility of Gunnislake by road.

One vision that stays in my mind as I looked out of my DMU window, is of a SWEB electricity maintenance crew, who obviously had never worked out of Plymouth previously, staring in disbelief as they saw our little train weave and struggle its way at 10 mph, through fields, crags and peoples back yards towards Gunnislake.

And so on the final day of our leave we took the train to St Erth, junction for St Ives. This is yet another line that Dr. Beeching wanted to close and has gone on to do very well.

We waited in St Erth's bay platform for the St Ives shuttle and were greeted by a three car DMU bedecked in British Telecom livery. Very striking it was too. It was liveried on the exterior in BT colours with telecom type cartoon and inside bore roof panel

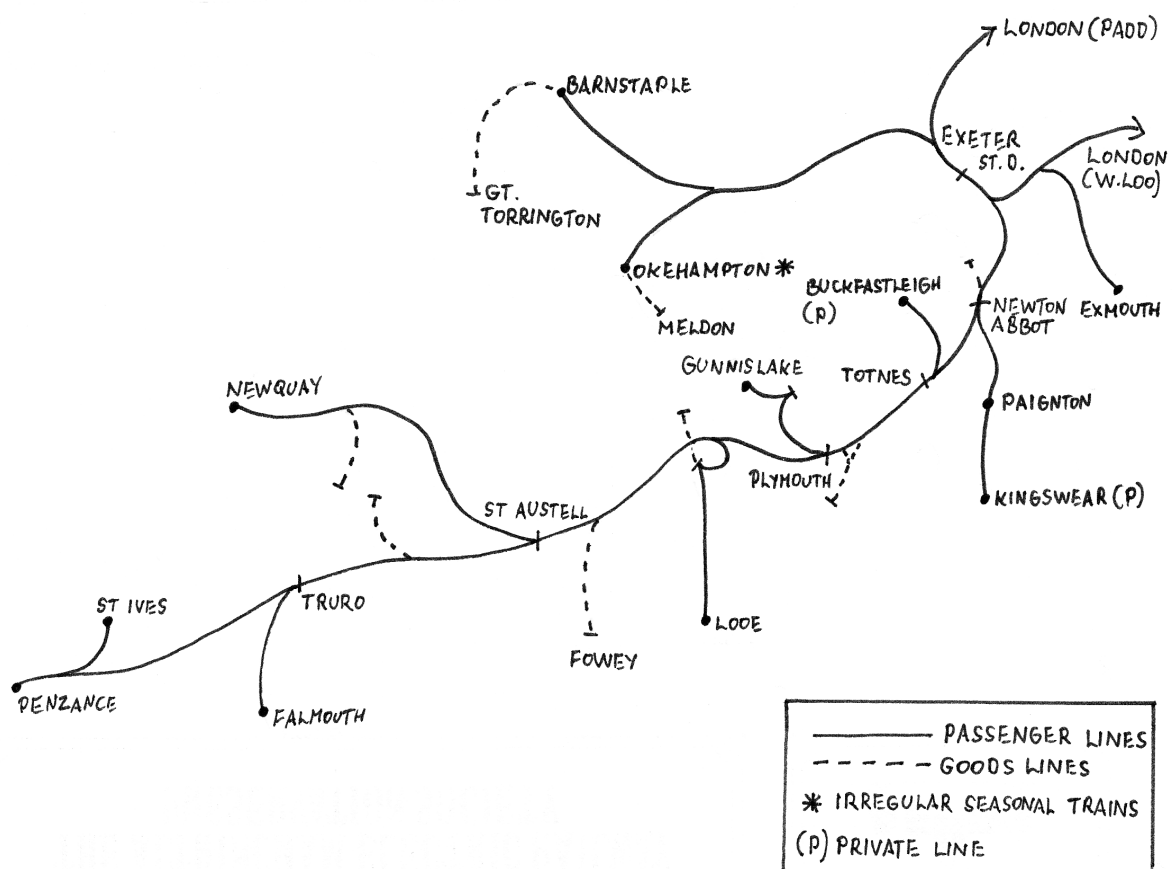
advertisements similar to those on buses and tube trains, advertising the telephone company. Thanks to BR's advertising subsidiary, British Transport Advertising, this train is bringing in media attention for BR and helping finance local branch lines. Unfortunately this is likely to be the last colortrain for a while. The British Rail Board have taken a dislike to them and so like their inventors BTA, their days are numbered.

However, we took this unique train along the scenic branch, stopping at the newish Lelant Saltings Station. St Ives is so overcrowded with tourists in the season that the local council and BR got together in a

mutually advantageous pact to keep cars out of the place. They built a new station near the main road, put a giant car park in, trebled the frequency of trains and persuaded the car bound to take the train. It's worked too. Passenger figures on the St Ives branch are now higher than they have ever been in the season.

It is very difficult to summarise the West Country's amazing branch lines – they exist still, partly due to the tourist trade, partly due to co-operation between local BR management and the authorities, but perhaps most of all due to the sense of pride that Western men take in their work

Devon & Cornwall's Railways (Disused lines not shown and not to scale)



Winter Lecture Series 2015-2016

9 October 2015

13 November 2015

11 December 2015

8 January 2016

12 February 2016

11 March 2016

8 April 2016

Please note the dates for lectures.

Presentations are on the second Friday of the month, commence at 7.30pm, and held at Altrincham Methodist Church Hall, Barrington Road, Altrincham WA14 1HF.

The Altrincham Electric Railway Preservation Society

The group for the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway and your local railway society. Most members have renewed their Annual membership for 2014-2015. We hope remaining members will also renew. Annual membership is £13.00 renewals take place on 1st April. Life membership is £130.00. New members are welcome.

Members receive Live Wires, free admission to the Winter Lecture Series and the opportunity to take part in Society activities.

Live Wires is produced in full colour but printed in black and white due to the high cost of colour printing

For more information; including If you would like to receive a full colour electronic copy of Live Wires as a pdf; please contact Roger Morris, Membership and Social Secretary.

AERPS Web Site

www.altrinchamelectric.org.uk

Maintained by Web Master and Live Wires editor, Tony Williams.

Our Home page has a brief introduction to the Society and update alerts. Other pages are Coaches, Excursions, Lectures, Membership, MSJ&AR (the line and its history), Photo Gallery (pictures of the line).

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