

GWR Diesel Dept Blog

TUESDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2021

Party Time!

The weekend of 6/7 November was our much anticipated, and rearranged, 40th Anniversary Gala. What a weekend it turned out to be!! After the struggles and strains, disappointments and challenges of Covid this was something that we probably needed to show that things are pretty much back to a level of normality on the railway, and to give one final big blow out before our Winter shut down...particularly important this year as the line will be severed over the Winter at Winchcombe as well as having some major P'way upgrades done.



37215 in Dixon on the first rail drop in October.

In line with the P'way work, the diesels (particularly **37215** and **47105**) have been put to use on rail trains in the last few weeks providing a little bit of difference to the normal routine of passenger services for those crew volunteering to complete the turn. Dixon is seeing a lot of the rail replacement work, and with the line being severed at Winchcombe, this is the only available time we have to get the rails to where they need to be.



47105 dwarfs the P'way Landie at Dixon on the 2nd rail drop on 02 Nov. (Courtesy of Matt Pickford)

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37215 out and about again at Gotherington on 09 Nov. (Courtesy Kevin Jarvis)

The work is a little mundane - drive to the site, sit around whilst unloading, move a bit, sit around when unloading and repeat - but, as crew, we have to do things a little differently and there are rules and procedures involved that we don't get much experience in normally. It also gives us a chance to get photos in positions not accessible to the public, or in places we would not normally stop.

It also gives us the chance to challenge the members of the public that like to use our line as a 'recreational space' when timetabled services are not running. They seem to think that we only run on the days that are publicly advertised!

In between all this 'fun' there has been ongoing work in the week getting the preparations for the 40th Anniversary Gala completed. Class 26, **D5343**, has been fitted with a poncho ready for the winter and is now outside in the yard at Toddington. This was, on one hand, to provide space in the David Page shed for the stands and displays for the Gala, but also because the bodywork repairs that needed the loco to be dry have been mostly completed. This will mean attention will turn to the inside work over Winter, with any external work having to wait for days that are of good weather. **37215** was used on the Friday to pick up the wagons from Winchcombe that were making up the freight train. Neil C had the pleasure of this turn along with Mike S from the Steam Department.



*Probably the least photographed of the diesel fleet, Class 03, **D2182**, shunts the second portion of the freight up to **37215** and the first portion at Winchcombe. (Courtesy of the GWSR C&W Blog)*

There was also a shunt undertaken in the Yard at Toddington in order to get locos in the right places for the early starts on the morning of the Saturday - the first train saw **47105** along with **7820 'Dinmore Manor'** and **7903 'Foremarke Hall'** heading to Winchcombe at 0815. The last thing the crews would want at that time of the morning was to shunt the yard!

Rostered on **37215** on the Saturday, I had the much more pleasant sign on of 0900, although myself, Andy T - my Secondman (or, at least he was at the end of the shift! Congrats, Andy! 🍷) - and Tony B - one of the Department's Traction Inspectors, assessing Andy - had a lot of sitting about after prepping the loco before we worked our first service. Just how the timetable fell. With Day 1 of the Gala, **37215** and **47105** were

joined by Class 24, **5081**, and the **DMU**. Day 2 would see **47376 'Freightliner 1995'** and **45149** replace **47105** and **5081**.



*While we waited in the Parlour Road, **47105** propels the maroon rake into Siding 1 before joining up with the '24' to head back south. **37215** would then couple to the maroon rake to await a path to Broadway.*

The car park at Toddington was already full by 0900 and cars were being directed to our overflow field. Cheltenham Race Course was seeing a similar number of arrivals which meant that all the trains throughout the day were full. A great reception considering the ongoing doom and gloom of Covid.

D6948, once again, performed the same duty as it did during the Diesel Gala in September. The loco was placed in the car park and cab visits were offered for a donation. Over the course of two days nearly £300 was received in kind donations. Locos not in use including those that are unserviceable - **20228**, **D8137**, **D5343** and the Toddington Shunters - were all placed in the yard so to allow photographs to be taken. The mezzanine platform of 'The Goods Shed' was also opened up to the public so that they could see the railway from a different view point.

One of the more anticipated parts of the timetable was the running of a Goods service utilising the recently restored (and impressively so!) 'Queen Mary' Brake Van. This would offer those wishing to brave the cold, the opportunity to part with £10 and have a ride on the veranda. Not surprisingly, this was very well patronised but was exclusively steam hauled.



The Goods arrives at Toddington P1 ready to pick up its first customers.



***47105** and **5081** head south following the Goods train.....*



...quickly followed by the Class 117.

Another highlight was the intensive timetable that was devised by the organisers. This allowed for both shuttle services, generally formed of the DMU, as well as full line services to operate without being obstructive or just a procession of trains. It did give a feeling of a main line still in regular, long haul use. In the run up to the event talk had been about whether it was too ambitious a timetable but, other than an issue at the end of the day with the DMU and Diesel 3 having conflicting moves (easily sorted on the Saturday by an 'on the ball' Signaller), everything ran well and any delays were absorbed in the loco changes and run round times at Broadway and CRC. The biggest concern by the end of Saturday was whether RCS would have enough refreshments for the Sunday!!



At Broadway waiting for the 'RA' to CRC.

The one element that I was particularly looking forward to was the opportunity to run in the dark - not something that we do too often on the diesels - yet, it is a great experience. It tests your route knowledge as well as just giving you a different experience. With the clocks going back on the weekend before meant that it was starting to get dark at just after 1600.



Taken at 1629, you can already see the domino lights starting to shine through.

By the time we reached Broadway it was dark!



After running round at Broadway, this was taken at 1715 as we waited to leave for Toddington!

Having only had one previous run in the dark, back in 2017 as a Secondman, this was a great challenge for me as well as for Andy, who had successfully negotiated his Secondman assessment and could relax and enjoy the experience.

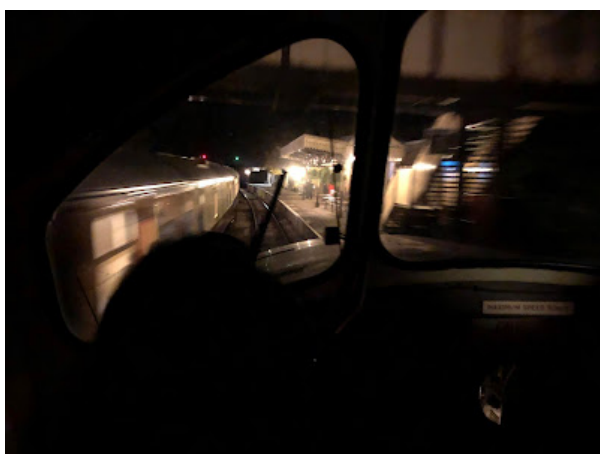


1900 - back on shed after running light engine from Winchcombe. If it wasn't for the shed lights on the David Page shed then the yard would have had a very different feeling.

Alex R joined us on the final run (Alex was crewing on the Sunday) to experience the ride in the dark and took a few pics of the trip.



After arrival at Winchcombe with the ECS. (Courtesy of Alex Raybould)



A view from the cab on run round. (Courtesy of Alex Raybould)

On arrival back on shed, it was time to dispose and lock the loco ready for the crew on the Sunday. Shunting had taken place in order to move **5081** back into the shed and swap **47376** to the front of road 11 with its sister, **47105**, going in behind.



47376 'Freightliner 1995' all prepped ready for the Sunday morning.



5081 is placed back in the shed in front of the near-ready bogies from D8137.



5081 and 47105 slumber in the shed after their exertions during the day. (Courtesy of Alex Raybould)

Anecdotally, Sunday was a little quieter. However, the initial finances appear to show a significant profit has been made that will see the railway through the major works planned through the winter. Alex has very kindly provided some shots from his turn on the Sunday.



*After being on the late finish on Saturday, 37215 was on the early turn on the Sunday. This started with a triple-loco convoy to Winchcombe with **Foremarke Hall** and **Dinmore Manor**. (Courtesy of Alex Raybould)*



During the day, 37215 was paired with 'Peak' 45149. Seen at Cheltenham. (Courtesy of Alex Raybould)



After 'missing a turn', the 'Peak' and 'Tractor' head back north. Seen at Winchcombe. (Courtesy of Alex Raybould).

On the subject of the Winter season, mainline diesels will be utilised on Santa Specials for the first time in a long while - of course, the DMU is utilised a lot on Santa trains normally. However, diesels will be top and tailing with steam as there will be no running round capability at Winchcombe due to long awaited works on the embankment slip on the tunnel side of Greet Road bridge. This will also mean that our Xmas and New Year timetable will also utilise TnT running between Winchcombe and Broadway on a new '**ORANGE**' timetable. Details of this timetable are on the GWSR website.

On the maintenance front, Class 20, **D8137**, progresses further towards its return to service. The wait is on for a window in the diary for the lifting jacks so that the bogies can be replaced back under the loco. This will then allow the reconnection of all the electricals and then a thorough test to take place. Owner, Steve M, is looking to get **D8137** back in service early in the new running season. Focus can then switch to Steve's other Class 20, **20228** which still requires some work to complete its overhaul.

'McRat' **D5343**, as mentioned, is now under tarpaulin and is back outside in the yard. Work on its bodysides continues with sanding and needle gunning continuing when the weather allows. The welding is complete for now and the glass that has been removed from the engine room windows is due to be replaced. Work has also been continuing internally, however the heavy engine work - replacing the liners - is very much on the cards for 2022. All serviceable locos will have some work completed over the winter shutdown that includes routine maintenance tasks, B Exams, as well as some minor repairs on issues that have cropped up during the running season.

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