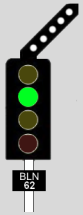
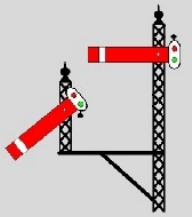
Supplement to e-BLN 1278



BLN Pictorial



1 APR 2017

Our member, Nick Jones, has provided some photographs he took in Cornwall of China Clay freight workings plus other movements and infrastructure in the "China Clay" area. The photos were taken on 19th-20th September 2016. Nick has written "the way things generally work in terms of Cornwall freight is that there are various workings shown in Realtime Trains(RTT) etc. but in practice there is normally only one loco and crew working in the whole of Cornwall. Once the first train of the day has run (and shown in RTT) it's fairly easy to track down where the freight is actually running. Another happy coincidence is that it is (just!) possible to drive from Lostwithiel to Goonbarrow in less time than the train takes (less mileage by road, but lots of narrow Cornish lanes!)"

The photographs were taken (all from legal positions) at

* Lostwithiel Station
* Various public roads in Lostwithiel
* Footpath leading between the public foot crossing at SX028586 and SX024588 (opposite Goonbarrow SB)

Just a quick reminder that you can click on the bottom left hand corner of a picture to return to the current index page.

5. Goonbarrow is the most northerly passing loop on the 20¾ mile single-track Atlantic Coast Line to Newquay. The track diverging to the left by the signal box is the stub of the former line to Carbean and Gunheath, which now provides access to the Rock Dryers. The Newquay branch continues as the single track on the right, while the left hand track straight ahead is the stub of the former Carbis Wharf branch. Until its closure in 1989, this parallelled the Newquay branch for a mile before diverging to the west.

6. Goonbarrow is still controlled from this c. 1909 Great Western signal box. The line to the south (from St Blazey) is worked is by key token, while the 15 miles of unbroken single line NW to Newquay are worked by a staff. This severely limits the frequency of Newquay trains as only one train can operate north of Goonbarrow at any one time.

7. Goonbarrow taken from Molinnis Level Crossing by Bugle station and gives a much better view of the former Carbis branch (now a trap/siding). It makes a counterpoint to photos 5 and 36. (This photo was taken in March 2017 in case anyone is puzzled by a difference in the greenery etc.).

8. St Blazey Middleway Bridge. St Blazey retains a fine collection of GW lower-quadrant semaphores as viewed from Middleway Crossing to the north of the box.

9. Burngullow to Fowey train at St Blazey. 66023 leads a train of loaded CDA China Clay Hoppers approaching the 180-degree bend into Par Station. The dried china clay powder is en route to Fowey docks for export.

10. St Blazey including the ballast siding. In this shot can be glimpsed part of the complex layout of sidings in the St Blazey area. Sadly little of this layout sees any regular use and is mainly used for storing disused wagons. Par harbour closed as a port in 2007, but the branch still sees occasional use serving the plant and warehouses at the former docks.

11. The 1908 St Blazey signal box stands at the end of the down platform at the former St Blazey station. The platforms are surprisingly intact given that the station closed before the second world war!

12. 153305 passes with the Par-Newquay shuttle service. The branch is served by a passenger service of 6 trains each way on weekdays, 7 on Saturdays. Through inter-city services run on summer Saturdays only.

13. This shot shows the overgrown sidings at the north end of the St Blazey complex. These are believed to be 6 sidings (roads 6-11), with the disused china clay wagons stored on road 10, but is hard to be 100% certain what exists under the extensive vegetation. A further observation on 13th March 2017 found that all but one of the redundant wagons had been cut up on site for scrap. Nick Jones believes that the last wagon is being retained for preservation—presumably at one of the local preserved railways.

14. Lostwithiel - Fowey Branch Home. Authority for train movements on the Fowey Branch is given by possession of a staff, and there are no signals at the Fowey end. Trains arriving at Lostwithiel from the branch give a traditional blast on the horn to request the signaller to clear this signal, permitting the train to join the main line.

15. The Great Western signal box next to the level crossing at Lostwithiel dates back as far as 1893. Its 63-lever frame operates the points and semaphore signals in the immediate area. At one end of the box there is also a modern eNtrance-eXit panel controlling the main line east as far as St Pinnock.

16. Lostwithiel station retains a traditional running-in board. The station opened with the Cornwall Railway on 4 May 1859.

17. This shot gives an overview of the track layout at the east end of Lostwithiel. The Cattle Pen Roads can be seen on the right behind the signal, very rusty.

18. A Paddington to Penzance HST enters Lostwithiel station. Signal LL58 is lowered, and retains a sighting board (the white board behind the signal arm) to make it more visible to drivers.

19. The far east end of Lostwithiel's goods loops. Both the up and down goods loops show the shininess of regular use. The sign on the right of the DGL reminds drivers to check the ground disc signal before attempting to rejoin the Down Main.

20. It is relatively rare to see run-back catch points on the National Network nowadays since virtually all trains are fully-fitted. Nevertheless this single-tongue catch point remains in use protecting the main line from any errant vehicles running back out of the Up Goods Loop. A mechanical detector ensures that the ground disc cannot be cleared unless the catch points are fully closed.

21. The Down Main through Lostwithiel station is bi-directional, to accommodate trains coming off the Fowey branch (there is no crossover at Fowey Branch Jn). The ground signal between the tracks has been cleared for a Fowey-Goonbarrow freight running 'Up' the Down Main to enter the Down Goods Loop.

22. As the empty CDA wagons from Fowey roll into Lostwithiel station, the extent of vegetation covering the disused Down Sidings can be seen.

23. The fleet of CDA wagons was introduced from 1987. These feature canvas roofs to protect the dried china clay powder from the elements.

24. The driver of 66023 pauses to returns the Fowey branch staff to the Lostwithiel signaller as the train heads towards the level crossing.

25. The empties enter the Down Goods Loop, clearing the Main Line as passengers gather for a down HST service.

26. 66023 uses the Down Main to run round its train of empties which are secured in the DGL.

27. Most trains to or from Fowey require the Lostwithiel crossing barriers to be raised and lowered four times. Fortunately the road is not busy having been largely superseded by the Lostwithiel bypass some years ago. 66023 crosses for the third time to re-enter the DGL and back onto its train.

28. The shunter exits the cab of 66023 to couple up to the Down End of the empty CDAs.

29. Although still connected, the Lostwithiel Down Sidings are officially out of use and vanishing into the undergrowth.

30. With 66023 and its train of CDAs safely clear of the Down Main, a GWR liveried HST enters Lostwithiel station with a Penzance service.

31. Once the Down HST is safely on its way, 66023 eases its train out of the DGL. As can be clearly seen, the lowered exit signal from the Down goods loop is much shorter than the corresponding Down Main signal, signifying that it (and the loop) are only for use by goods trains.

32. The CDAs head back to Goonbarrow to collect another load of china clay. On a typical weekday, Fowey may be served by two trainloads from Goonbarrow or one from Parkandillack.

33. The empty CDAs leave the Newquay Branch at Goonbarrow. The upper disc signal has been cleared, indicating that the train is taking the left-most signalled route (into the Rock Dries sidings).

34. 66023 undertakes a relatively complex shunt, using the DB Cargo sidings immediately behind the signal box. Most china clay in Cornwall is mined using a wet extraction process and the liquid product is transported to the Rocks Dries complex by underground pipeline. Only after drying (to a fine white powder) is the product loaded into rail wagons for onward transport.

35. 153325 on a Newquay to Par passenger service leaves the Up Loop at Goonbarrow, heading towards St Blazey.

36. The points have been set for a train of loaded CDAs to rejoin the main line from the Rocks Dries sidings. The Staff Section sign applies to Down trains continuing along the main branch to Newquay. The rusty siding just visible continuing straight ahead is the short remaining stub of the former Carbis branch.

37. Token exchanges for passenger trains are normally carried out at ground level. However, the signaller is saved a walk as 66023 passes close enough to the box to receive the Goonbarrow-St Blazey key token through the box window.

38. Having cleared the Rocks Dries sidings, 66023 returns Up the bidirectional Down Loop at Goonbarrow en route back to Fowey.

39. The dried china clay will be exported via Fowey. The short 'headshunt' on the left is merely a trap to protect the single line from unauthorised movements past signal G2. The presence of traps at both ends of the layout allows two trains to enter the Goonbarrow loop simultaneously. However, this facility is rarely needed as trains do not normally cross at Goonbarrow except during the summer holiday season.

40. Map of the area and neighbouring lines. Kindly provided by Dave Cromarty.

This edition of BLN Pictorial was created by Jerry Holmes with valuable assistance and advice from Dave Cromarty and Nick Jones.




GOONBARROW JUNCTION SIGNAL BOX
G






DB
66023




20


153305
20




10


Lostwithiel


LOSTWITHIEL




First




Way out
Way out
Help Point


LL
57
9
CAR
Passengers must not cross the line


4
Car Stop
9
LL
57
tare 15
375016
CDA
EWS


Way
out
Passengers must
not cross the line


Way out
Way out
Help Point


OUTBOARD SERVICES
BOAT SALES
DB
66023
60


DB
66023
BRUNEL TWO


HST
60
EVINRUDE
OUTBOARD SERVICES
DB
66023




7
HST
HST
60


DB
66023
60
EVINRUDE
OUTBOARD SERVICES






15

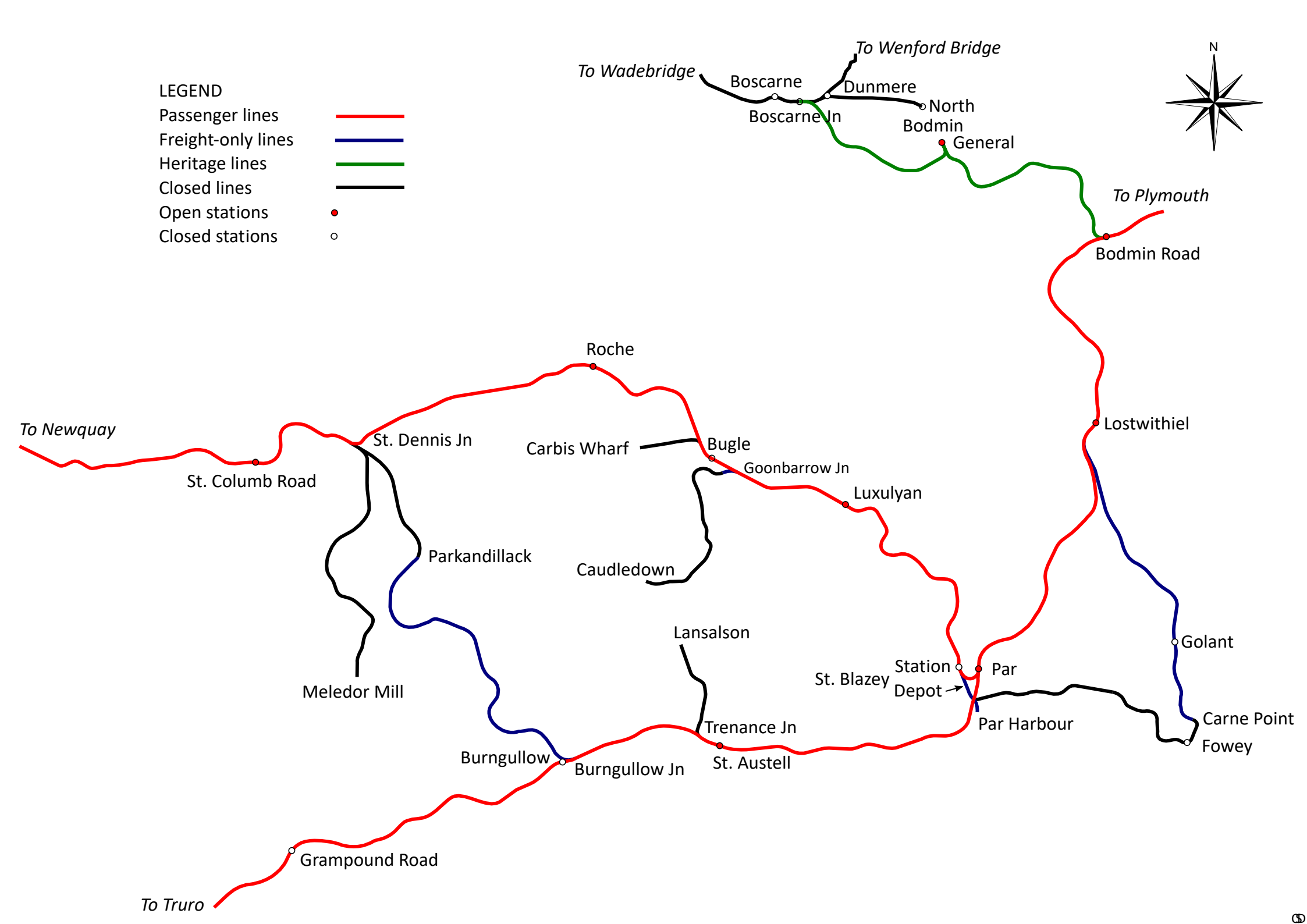

G
2
15
G
12


Commencement
of
Staff section
15


DB


DB
66023


G
2
15
375045
EWS


LEGEND
Passenger lines
Freight-only lines
Heritage lines
Closed lines
Open stations
Closed stations
N
To Wenford Bridge
To Wadebridge
Boscarne
Dunmere
North
Boscarne Jn
Bodmin
General
To Plymouth
Bodmin Road
Roche
To Newquay
St. Dennis Jn
Carbis Wharf
Bugle
Goonbarrow Jn
Lostwithiel
St. Columb Road
Luxulyan
Parkandillack
Caudledown
Lansalson
Golant
Station
St. Blazey
Par
Depot
Meledor Mill
Par Harbour
Carne Point
Trenance Jn
Fowey
Burngullow
Burngullow Jn
St. Austell
Grampound Road
To Truro