

East Coast Main Line

The Class 90 fleet has seen plenty of action on the UK network during their 23 year history. One notable route where 90s have featured on a regular basis (and continue to do so in 2011) is the ECML.

The mix of engines that have worked on the ECML over the years is varied, but more typically have involved those having a fleet number higher than 90015 - these were common place at one time working passenger, charters, mail and freight trains. In addition, it was not uncommon in the early days to see Inter-City class 90s on the East Coast performing passenger duties - examples that have traversed the ECML route between London and Scotland include 90002, 90003, 90009 and 90011.

The class 90 fleet was once deployed to passenger duties for Inter-City East Coast and latterly GNER, following long periods of poor reliability of the Class 91 fleet and during a programme of overhauls. The typical destinations served by the 90s included Doncaster, Bradford, Leeds, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow Central. In the latter days, operations became restricted to the Leeds area with the occasional trip to Newcastle or Edinburgh due to the 110mph restriction on the 90s.

With the regular use of Class 90s on passenger services following privatisation of East Coast operations in 1994, GNER opted to paint 90024 into their own house colours. However, it spent much of its time on the WCML despite being painted in GNER colours without the branding. It is unclear exactly when the first 90 worked its debut passenger run on the ECML as well as the last one under with GNER, but I shall try and find out for you! If anyone knows, then please email me.

In 2011 there are no dedicated passenger services for the class 90s. However, there was a glimmer of hope not too long ago that MK3s + 90s would return to the ECML beyond December 2010. This would have meant a possible resurgence for the fleet and the reinstatement of the many DBS 90s in store (which in fact have nothing seriously wrong with them per say). Unfortunately at the time of writing class 180s and 91s with MK4s are the preferred option (assuming it happens). This brings to an end another potential opportunity.

The main work on the East Coast for 90s nowadays is the occasional charter train and the diversion of sleepers from the West Coast during engineering work possessions. On the odd occasion in the past, freight trains operated by Freightliner and DBS with 90s providing the traction ran over East Coast metals, but not that much (a far cry from today). In addition, during 2010 and the early part of 2011, Freightliner class 90s saw use on the ECML between York and Mossend as part of the ongoing driver training programme.

As well as working mainline services, DBS 90s which perform services on Caledonian sleepers) have been diverted from the West Coast to the East Coast during the 21st Century owing to engineering work as well the Pendolino derailment at Grayrigg in February 2007. The diversion of class 90s over the East Coast Main Line whilst working FSR sleeper services have brought some interesting and rare workings in recent years and more details can be found in the rare workings' section below.

Great Eastern Region

The Class 90 fleet have worked on the Great Eastern route for many years and this practice continues to be the case at the time writing of in 2011. It is unclear exactly when the first 90 started in Anglia, but it does date back to the early days of operations when several members of the fleet travelled the route on either passenger, freight or charter traffic. This included the Inter-City sector pool of engines as well as the Parcel and Freight dedicated engines.

As discussed above, the class 90s were common place on passenger services during the 1990's and the early part of the 21st Century. These were used to supplement the poor reliability of the class 86 fleet operating trains through to Norwich and Harwich from London Liverpool Street in

the early days. Sadly the days of class 90 loco-hauled traffic to Harwich is somewhat a distance memory now, as nowadays all services to/from Harwich are served by Electric Multiple Units - this leaves the 90s only to work between London and Norwich.

The full introduction of Pendolinos and Voyagers to Virgin Trains from 2002 meant that the 15 strong pool of class 90s (90001-90015) became surplus to requirements and so were all transferred to 'One' in Anglia replacing the class 86s. In addition to the dedicated pool, other 90s have continued to be hired for some time which has included those from Freightliner for a spell. However, in early 2011, the only extra 90s to operate on passenger services with NXEA are those that are owned by DBS.

Admittedly, the spot hire from DBS to NXEA has meant that the number of 90s being placed into store has stabilised somewhat, but for how much longer remains to be seen. At the time of writing (May 2011) class 90s are continued to be hired to NXEA from DBS - one to cover major overhauls taking place at Crewe. Other interesting workings on the GEML over the years include:

- Owing to engineering work at Ipswich a few years ago, a number of loco-hauled services with class 90 traction were diverted to Norwich via Cambridge. These services were electric hauled as far as Cambridge, and then diesel traction for the remainder part of the journey to Norwich. Various members of the fleet saw action during the diversions via Cambridge, and were all routed via Tottenham Hale. However, one Sunday 90019 was diverted via Severn Sisters from Hackney Downs - it is not known if this is the only time a 90 has worked over this line (anybody know anything send me a message).
- In August 2009, the final 90 (90026) to work in Anglia performed for NXEA meaning that all 50 class 90s have now worked on the line;
- One known visit to Stansted Airport where 90137 performed a charter train for Pathfinders on 18/04/97;
- In September 2009, following the failure of a class 47 on a London to Gt.Yarmouth service which had 90026 dead inside the 47, the 90 ended up pushing the stricken service from Crown Point Signal box back into Norwich station just yards from where the OLE ended;
- Several freight 90s have rescued either failed 86s or other 90s in years gone by between London and Norwich. This includes both Freightliner and DBS (formerly EWS);
- Class 90s have worked to Southend as well as Shoeburyness in days gone by on charters which featured 90138 and 90018.
- 90026 became the final class 90 to work on the GEML in August 2009 after having its TDM fixed at Crewe.
- During 2010 a couple of the NXEA 90s were named and this included 90008, 90004. And 90013.
- Over the years 90s have been turned on the Manningtree Triangle using the Harwich Branch due to technical issues with the engine. Two notable examples include 90044 back into 2010 and 90046 in the early part of 2011.

On December 24th 2009 (Christmas Eve), 90026 also worked its first passenger service to Harwich after working the 20:00hrs from London (1p64). This train would normally work through to Norwich, and then go ecs to Harwich, but due to the early shutdown, the stock and 90026 went direct to Harwich instead as a service train. In keeping with the theme of 90026, it also worked from Crown Point depot back to Norwich station on the Great Yarmouth line after the 47 failed twice just before the OLE ran out - yet another first for this engine.

For more information concerning the operations of services on the Great Eastern for both freight and passenger, I refer you to take a look at the NXEA and Freightliner forum threads or email us.

North Berwick Branch

One of the most bizarre operating arrangements that have occurred to the class 90 fleet during their 23 year history came in 2004, when Scotrail (then part of National Express) hired in loco-hauled stock for the Edinburgh to North Berwick route as a direct replacement for the class 322s which transferred to London.

The loco-hauled stock was formed into 3 sets of 3 standard class MK3 carriages + 1 DVT and a EWS class 90. There were 2 daytime diagrams, with 3 in the AM + PM Peak periods which extended to/from Haymarket. A number of the then EWS fleet visited North Berwick - this included 90018, 90020, 90024, 90028, 90029, 90031, 90037, 90031, 90036, and 90035 to name but a few.

The 90s only worked Monday-Friday and this practice lasted for approximately 15 months ceasing operations in August 2005 when the class 322's moved back north again. At weekends the stock returned to Polmodie where it was maintained and towards the end of operations in 2005 only 1 diagram only remained operational.

It could be argued that the finishing of loco-hauled operations on the North Berwick route resulted in the then EWS placing a number of the class 90s into store which coincided with the loss of Royal Mail traffic to GBRF. The strange thing is that in August 2009, the Royal Mail contract was awarded back to EWS (now DBS), but no class 90 resurgence has materialised as a result of the contract going to DBS.

Rare & Unusual Workings

As a result of engineering work on the WCML, the Caledonian sleepers have found themselves being diverted via the ECML for the past few years, and this looks set to continue for the not too distant future. Some noticeable samples of 90s on ECML diversions include a tribute movie from the 2010 diversions involving 90036, 90026, 90034 and 90024.

The general practice is that trains leave Wembley yard having travelled from Euston and head towards the North London Line Incline joining the ECML at Copenhagen Junction. Services have generally been routed via either Primrose Hill and on the odd occasion via Gospel Oak although the former is more common than the latter. The routings that the sleeper trains have used in the past and continue to do so today to reach Wembley yard has been mixed. The practice in late 2008 has been to go to Reception 1 in the yard via the 'Up and Down' Willesden relief or the 'Up and Down Goods' In days gone by trains have gone to other parts of the yard to reverse.

Once on the ECML, the trains normally go mainline to Edinburgh via Doncaster, York and Newcastle, although on occasions have been diverted via the Hertford North branch re-joining the ECML at Langley Junction south of Stevenage. The southbound Glasgow Central to Euston sleeper (1M11) does a shunt movement with passengers on board involving a DBS 90 at Edinburgh station in order to couple to the Edinburgh portion of the sleeper when routed via the ECML otherwise this manoeuvre would take place at Carstairs when routed via the WCML. In conjunction with the sleeper diversions via the ECML, there have been two significant rare workings in recent times.

Incident 1:

The 1st incident took place on 13th April 2006 when 90031 (now stored) worked the Northbound Euston to Glasgow Central sleeper (1s26) from Wembley Yard via the ECML. On the approach to York station, 90031 was routed via the 'York Avoider' which I understand was a first for a class 90 in passenger in service albeit charter trains have used it in days gone by.

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sample involving 90041 as well as 90019 during November 2009 on a UKR train. It is unclear why it went via the 'York Avoider' - No one got any breakfast the following morning, because the train usually stopped at York to pick-up breakfast supplies, a practice no longer happening.

Incident 2:

The 2nd incident by random chance occurred the following evening, notably 14th April 2006. The North London Incline had its OLE switched off and so all sleepers should have been diesel hauled with pairs of 67s between Wembley and Peterborough. However, 90017 working the 21:42 Glasgow to Euston sleeper went straight through Peterborough, and headed south to Finsbury Park where the train diverged off the ECML south of Finsbury Park and subsequently routed via Drayton Park, Hackney Downs, and Temple Mills. On arrival at Temple Mills, 90017 ran round to the 'Country end' of the train and headed to Wembley Yard via the NLL and Primrose Hill.

The incident involving 90017 was definitely a 'first' and it was all caused by a lack of communication between EWS, and Network Rail, with FSR up in arms over it. Incidentally, 1M16, the other southbound sleeper did not take the same route as 90017 and was dragged to Wembley from Hornsey via the North London Incline with 66s. In late 2010, the diversion of West Coast sleepers via the ECML still occurs, and this looks set to continue when work blocks on the WCML happen although it is unclear when the next batch will occur.

Miscellaneous Workings

The first significant rare working came in 1990 when 90049 worked its first passenger service with a Network Northwest train to Altrincham on 20th October 1990 vice the normal EMU combo - this was the first and last time a class 90 visited the town. Other significant workings include:

- 90137 worked a charter from Stansted Airport to London Liverpool Street in 1998.
- 90138 performed a charter from Southend to Liverpool Street on 11/10/97.
- 90149 operated an A1A charter from Ayr to Motherwell in 1997. This it was not the first time a class 90 had worked a train to or from Ayr.

90002 took a DVT to Manchester Airport in order to turn the DVT. This is the only known time a 90 has been to the Manchester Airport terminus. In addition, pairs of class 90s have been known to work in multiple on passenger and charters over the years. One notable working occurred on 03/08/06, when 90028 and 90040 operated a charter from Carlisle to Preston.

London St. Pancras (Midland Mainline Diversions)

In the early 1990's owing to engineering work on the West Coast, a number of Inter-City services were diverted from Nuneaton to London St. Pancras during another weekend blockades. These were diesel hauled as far as Bedford from Nuneaton, with electric traction taking the train forward.

On the 12th October 1991, the 1st class 90 visited London St. Pancras, notably involving 90001 whilst working a Liverpool to Euston service (1A27) - It returned north on 1P67. Other examples that also worked to St. Pancras during these engineering work possessions were 90015 in addition to 90022 which was the only freight 90 that worked to the terminus. Other members of the fleet that went to St Pancras were 90008, but this never worked as it was a standby engine.

Finally during the modernisation of what is now known as "St Pancras International", Freightliner class 90s were used to test the OHLE during commissioning trials of the route in readiness for Eurostar services. Known 90s to have visited the new terminus were 90048 and 90050 in August 2004 - if any others went remain to be seen and needs to be confirmed although this page will be updated with any new information. A website giving more details of the trials including pictures can be viewed at:

<http://www.traintesting.com/Loadbank.htm>
<http://www.traintesting.com/images/St-Pancras1.jpg>

London Paddington to Heathrow

During the commissioning and testing period of the Heathrow Express link from London Paddington to Heathrow, the OHLE was tested using class 90 traction hired in from Freightliner in 1997.

Known 90s that worked on the route were 90144, 90147 and 90148, but there could have been others that I am not aware of. One location that saw loadbank testing was Stockley Bridge - 90147 pictured on the "traintesting" website, permission courtesy of 'traintesting' - see link below website for information. <http://www.traintesting.com/Loadbank.htm>

Hamburg IVA 1988

To finish this report, one of the other rare events that have taken place for the class 90 fleet came in the summer of 1988 when a series of locos, coaches and wagons went to Hamburg via Germany as part of the International Transport and Traffic Exhibition.

One of the key highlights was the sending of 90008 fresh out of Crewe Works - this is (at the time of writing), is the only known 90 that has been abroad. It is unclear if 90008 powered itself during the visit despite pictures showing a raised pantograph. Once again for more detailed information on the IVA 1988, please go to the following links:

http://www.traintesting.com/IVA_88.htm

<http://www.traintesting.com/images/89001%20at%20Dover.jpg>

<http://www.traintesting.com/images/90008%20in%20Hamburg.jpg>

http://www.traintesting.com/images/Hamburg_Exhibition_sidings1.jpg