

CALIFORNIA BASH JUNE 2013.

Another visit to the States, this time just taking in California using a 7 day in 21 Amtrak California Pass as the main validity (cost \$159), plus some commuter rail where tickets were purchased as and when required (day rovers on Coaster & Caltrain, also on Metrolink but Sat & Sun only). This time I was joined by Anthony Flynn. Train numbers are in brackets, winners are underlined. More info on California Pass at end of write up.

Thursday 20th June 2013.

After a quick getaway from work I met Anthony in time for us to take the 0639 train from Newport to Reading where we joined a stopping train to Hayes and then Heathrow Connect to the airport. As we were both taking different routes and airlines to LA we split up and met again in departures before going our separate ways, but not before having a chat with fellow crank Jez Darr who was also waiting for a flight.

The flight was slightly late departing and as usual a bit of endurance test. Once on the ground at LA it took just under an hour to get through immigration and from the airport I took the LAX flyaway bus. The roads were busy and the trip seemed to take forever. I had a quick look at what was about in Union station, a couple of winners were in but with no time to obtain tickets I gave up and checked into the hotel. After freshening up I then went round the corner to Spring Street Smokehouse for some food and beers before heading back to the room where Anthony turned up shortly afterwards. (Anthony flights C-GHLT to Toronto and then C-GUIB onwards to LAX).

MOVES:

Virgin G-VATL (VS007) 1130 LHR to LAX

Today's link, Spring Street Smokehouse - <http://sssmokehouse.com/>

Friday 21st June 2013.

First day of the bash started with breakfast in Phillippe's traditional diner near our hotel. Our first move was a trip to Oceanside where we unexpectedly made train 769. We asked the conductor if we could break our journey en route (we had an Oceanside to Fullerton ticket) and he said yes, we just needed to get a new ticket from the next station. We bailed out at San Juan Capistrano and paid a visit to the Amtrak office where we were told that because our ticket for this journey had been scanned it was not possible to issue a new one from here. Luckily the agent, a lady with many years service who was about to retire, got hold of the conductor of the following train and explained the situation to him so we could get on. After this was sorted out we had a quick beer before carrying on northbound. From Fullerton we did some Metrolink moves so Anthony could mop up some new track, spending an hour or so at Riverside where we were entertained by some passing freights, and then we went back to Fullerton in order to use up our last piece of Amtrak validity for the day on the return journey, having a beer or two on the station and watching trains while we waited. When we got back to LA we took a 20 minute ride on the gold line to Memorial Park where we visited Haven Gastro Pub about 10 mins walk away, before returning to the hotel. Also at Memorial Park was Stone Brewing store and brewery tap outside the metro station, but by the time we had left Haven it was closed.

Today's links, Haven Gastro Pub - <http://www.havengastropub.com/index.html>
Philippe's - <http://www.philippes.com/>

MOVES:

Amtrak 455 (566) 0830 LA Union to Oceanside
Amtrak 451 (769) 1017 Oceanside to San Juan Capistrano
Amtrak 461 (573) 1217 San Juan Capistrano to Fullerton
M.link 866 (704) 1319 Fullerton to Riverside Downtown
M.link 879 (411) 1507 Riverside Downtown to LA Union
M.link 890 (604) 1630 LA Union to Norwalk/SF Springs
M.link 881 (688) 1711 Norwalk/SF Springs to Fullerton
Amtrak 454 (785) 1816 (+35) Fullerton to LA Union

Saturday 22nd June 2013.

Today was a day that we allocated to concentrate on Metrolink as they do a weekend rover for \$10, very good value although with a limited amount of train sets in use (also valid on some metro and bus services, plus Amtrak between LA to Burbank Airport only). The weekend rover would also be used the following day, but since this visit it has now become a one-day weekend rover so is now \$10 per day and not for two days. The day progressed well as I was happy to get two out of my last 9 Metrolink locos. All was going to plan until we passed an Amtrak train while we were on train 263, I thought it had a pair of locos on the back but as we were in stock with advertising on the outside I couldn't see clearly. Once back at LA we found UP loco 2452 sitting in the centre road and a quick word with the crew confirmed they had come down with the morning train from San Luis Obispo and would be going back north on train 777. Tickets were soon purchased (not possible to use rail pass as already had all 7 days allocated to that) and after a quick beer or two in the station bar we went back to the platform to watch the UP unit back onto our train before getting on for a run to Oxnard. Our train back from Oxnard was an odd consist with 507 leading some private cars, then a former F40 now used as a cab/baggage car, then the usual rolling stock with loco 183 powering on the rear. We bailed out at Glendale so we could visit Eagle Rock Brewing, which was about a 20 minute walk from the station, in a bit of an anonymous building and we only knew it was the brewery because one of their delivery trucks was parked outside. Following this we took the short hop back to LA and then a one stop ride on the gold line metro took us to Wieland Brewing where we spent a couple of hours before calling it a night at about midnight, although we were a little let down by how many of the beers were not available.

MOVES:

M.link 871 (660) 0850 LA Union to Buena Park
M.link 869 (661) 0936 Buena Park to LA Union
M.link 894 (358) 1035 LA Union to El Monte
M.link 854 (357) 1109 El Monte to LA Union
M.link 864 (263) 1155 LA Union to Sylmar/San Fernando
M.link 861 (264) 1250 Sylmar/San Fernando to LA Union
UP/Amtrak 2452 & 462 (777) 1500 LA Union to Oxnard
Amtrak 507 & 183 (1790) 1730 Oxnard to Glendale (T&T)
Amtrak 456 (796) 2123 Glendale to LA Union

Today's link, Eagle Rock Brewery - <http://eaglerockbrewery.com/main>



Amtrak train 777 departs Oxnard with UP 2452 leading Amtrak loco 462.

Sunday 23rd June 2013.

Today was another day planned for Metrolink, we decided to spend the first part of the day covering the four turns on the San Bernardino line including a long break at San Bernardino, where we were lucky enough to see a couple of freights passing through. I was pleased enough to score another two locos while covering these turns especially as I'd let 895 go yesterday while doing the UP move. Once we had finished with the San Bernardino line we had a spin out to Anaheim where we had time for a quick beer in JT Schmid's brewpub once we eventually found it. We finished off fairly early in LA where we ended the day by having a couple of beers and food in the Spring Street place and then a couple in Phillipines.

MOVES:

M.link 898 (354) 0900 LA Union to Rancho Cucamonga
M.link 854 (357) 1016 Rancho Cucamonga to Pomona (North)
M.link 880 (356) 1059 Pomona (North) to San Bernardino
M.link 895 (367) 1407 San Bernardino to LA Union
M.link 869 (664) 1640 LA Union to Anaheim
M.link 871 (667) 1845 Anaheim to LA Union

Today's link, JT Schmid's - <http://jtschmidrestaurants.com/Home.html>

Monday 24th June 2013.

Our day started with an Amtrak pair, which we took as far as Fullerton where we had breakfast on the station before heading on further south. Once in San Diego we paid a quick

visit to The Beer Company before heading back to the station to cover the four Coaster diagrams. Off our first Coaster loco we stopped off at Solana Beach where we spent a while in Pizza Port Brewing Company, unsurprisingly they specialise in pizza and beer. After covering the next 3 diagrams we then had a quick beer in Breakwater Brewing at Oceanside before finally heading to LA, with another Amtrak pair (T&T) out on the circuit. Once back at LA we made another visit to Wieland and found that even more beers were off than on our previous visit, however we established that the place was due to shut down at the end of the week (for development of the Metro) and so that explained why the stocks were being run down, a shame as it wasn't a bad place. The owner said he hopes to reopen at Long Beach in the future.

MOVES:

Amtrak 455 & 464 (564) 0725 LA Union to Fullerton
Amtrak 457 (566) 0859 Fullerton to San Diego
Coaster 2105 (645) 1238 San Diego to Solana Beach
Coaster 2104 (651) 1452 Solana Beach to Oceanside
Coaster 2104 (651) 1534 Oceanside to Encinitas
Coaster 2101 (656) 1629 Encinitas to Oceanside
Coaster 2101 (660) 1704 Oceanside to Encinitas
Coaster 3002 (657) 1734 Encinitas to Oceanside
Amtrak 450 & 451 (591) 1909 Oceanside to LA Union (T&T)

Today's links, The Beer Company, San Diego - <http://thebeerco.net/>
Pizza Port Brewing Company - <http://www.pizzaport.com/locations/pizza-port-solana-beach/>
Breakwater Brewing - <http://breakwaterbrewing.com/>



Amtrak 450 heads south on the rear of a train with 451 leading, while Coaster 2101 lays over at Oceanside having arrived with train 653 prior to forming train 660.

Tuesday 25th June 2013.

A fairly simple itinerary for today was to head north to Oakland. We set off on a Surfliner which we took as far as Santa Barbara, where we took a break in Union Ale near to the station. From Santa Barbara we carried on north on the Coast Starlight, arriving in Oakland slightly late, having a good and informative chat with a travelling fitter who was looking after the private cars on the rear. We checked into the Jack London Inn, last time I stayed here I found it to be OK, but this time we had to wait the guy at reception to finish a phone call which was obviously a social call (fairly rude), the lift smelt of weed, and once we got to our floor there was a smell of urine, yuk! The room was just about OK so we left our bags and headed to Pacific Coast Brewing before calling it a night. While we were at Pacific Coast a guy told us about a place called Beer Revolution, and as we'd be back in Oakland in a couple of days' time we decided that we would check it out then. Back at the hotel we firstly couldn't get back in the room and had to have the keycard reactivated and then once in the room found we had no towels. What a dump!

MOVES:

Amtrak 464 (763) 0905 LA Union to Santa Barbara

Amtrak 147 & 505 (14) 1240 Santa Barbara to Oakland JLS

Today's links, Union Ale - <http://unionale.com/>

Pacific Coast Brewing - <http://www.pacificcoastbrewing.com/>

Wednesday 26th June 2013.

Another simple day with just two trains planned. Firstly we set off from Oakland heading towards Bakersfield as far as Modesto, here we had a relatively short wait for a northbound service which we did to Sacramento, a couple of southbound freights passed through while we were waiting. Once at baking hot Sacramento we checked into our hotel and then paid a visit to the railway museum, followed up by a visit to Fanny Ann's bar nearby, which has some old BR station signs amongst tonnes of other piffle hanging from the walls and ceilings. After this we made our way to River city Brewing where we were eventually joined by our friend Mike Tisdale who lives locally. After a few beers and a meal we made our way to Coyote Tap House where some rather strong brews were sampled, needless to say I didn't remember getting back to the hotel and gather I needed a little assistance to get there from the guys.

MOVES:

Amtrak 41 (712) 0730 Oakland JLS to Modesto

Amtrak 2009 (1049) Modesto to Sacramento

Today's links, River City Brewing - <http://www.rivercitybrewing.net/>

Coyote tap House - <http://coyotetaphouse.com/>

Thursday 27th June 2013.

After a bit of an oversleep and waking with a bad head there was just time to have a rushed breakfast and make our planned train, Anthony not happy with me clawing back one of the few US engines he has had but I hadn't. Today we headed to San Jose using a selection of trains as we broke our journey a few times. In Oakland we checked out Beer Revolution, or so we thought, we went into the adjacent building, the Olde depot as we thought they were

combined. The Olde Depot (note – vegan food only) had a large selection of beers on tap and we didn't have time to check out Beer Revolution next door, although we established that they both have the same owners. After our break in Oakland we then carried on to San Jose where we left our big bags at the Amtrak left luggage room and then we took ACE to Pleasanton. Our aim in Pleasanton was to visit Main Street Brewing before carrying on with ACE to Stockton. At Pleasanton a guy who had sussed us out as foreign interlopers quizzed us as to what we were up to and when we explained he kindly gave us a lift to where we were going. Once at Main Street we got speaking to some of the locals who recommended Handles Gastropub over the road to us and so we ended up trying that out as well, although they gave Stockton a pretty bad review during the time we were chatting to them. Eventually it was time to walk back to the station in the searing heat and carry on to Stockton. Stockton appeared to be a bit of a ghost town, many boarded up shops and not an attractive place at all from what we could see on the 15 minute walk we took to where we were staying. We had worked out that there was a place called Valley Brew in town and we paid a visit, it took us about half an hour to walk there through some dodgy neighbourhoods and we both decided that we'd have a taxi back to the hotel later on. The pub was hard to find and after all the effort wasn't really that good. (Note for ACE – separate tickets need per leg, not allowed to break journey, buy from Amtrak desk at San Jose).

MOVES:

Amtrak 13 (531) 0820 Sacramento to Martinez
Amtrak 2015 (711) 1003 Martinez to Richmond
Amtrak 2006 (533) 1045 Richmond to Emeryville
Amtrak 2008 (535) 1150 Emeryville to Oakland JLS
Amtrak 133 (537) 1403 Oakland JLS to San Jose
ACE 3101 (4) 1535 San Jose to Pleasanton
ACE 3103 (8) 1829 Pleasanton to Stockton

Today's links, Beer Revolution - <http://www.beer-revolution.com/>

The Olde Depot - <http://oldedepot.com/beer.html>

Main Street Brewery - <http://www.mainstreetbrewery.com/>

Valley Brew - <http://www.valleybrew.com/>

Friday 28th June 2013.

We got up early enough to cover the third of the four trains from Stockton as the two previous were far too early, it turned out to be a loco we had had yesterday. The train crew confirmed the next would be winner 3106 so we held on half an hour for that. We got off at Santa Clara to spend the rest of the day on Caltrain, I was looking for my last two locos but upon passing the depot at San Jose it was noticed both were laid up (911 & 918). So basically we just decided to cover as many turns as possible, taking a break at Steelhead Brewing in Burlingame for food and beer at about midday, before revisiting San Jose to see if the winner loco situation had changed, but it hadn't. Anthony scored a bag load of engines during the day and has almost caught me up on just his second Caltrain bash, now needing just 5 of the fleet. At the end of the day we retrieved our bags from the Amtrak left luggage office and checked into the hotel before a visit to the Britannia Arms.

MOVES:

ACE 3106 (7) 0705 Stockton to Santa Clara
Caltrain 909 (135) 0915 Santa Clara to Mountain View
Caltrain 907 (332) 0944 Mountain View to San Jose

Caltrain 921 (139) 1010 San Jose to Sunnyvale
Caltrain 903 (134) 1020 Sunnyvale to Santa Clara
Caltrain 902 (236) 1051 Santa Clara to San Jose
Caltrain 912 (141) 1110 San Jose to Burlingame
Caltrain 914 (150) 1335 Burlingame to San Jose
Caltrain 900 (159) 1505 San Jose to Lawrence
Caltrain 920 (152) 1524 Lawrence to San Jose
Caltrain 915 (261) 1544 San Jose to San Antonio
Caltrain 921 (156) 1611 San Antonio to Tamien
Caltrain 928 (273) 1658 Tamien to Palo Alto
Caltrain 919 (375) 1743 Palo Alto to Redwood City
Caltrain 917 (376) 1806 Redwood City to Palo Alto
Caltrain 901 (279) 1816 Palo Alto to Redwood City
Caltrain 903 (278) 1828 Redwood City to Palo Alto
Caltrain 905 (380) 1849 Palo Alto to Mountain View
Caltrain 927 (282) 1912 Mountain View to Sunnyvale
Caltrain 922 (386) 1921 Sunnyvale to San Jose

Today's link, Steelhead Brewing - <http://www.steelheadbrewery.com/burlingame.htm>



ACE 3106 with train 7 seen at Santa Clara heading from Stockton to San Jose.

Saturday 29th June 2013.

A nice lie in today, our move was to do the southbound Coast Starlight to Paso Robles and then back north after a three hour layover. At a very hot Paso Robles we visited the very pleasant Paso Robles Brewing just to the south of the station then took a walk in the immense heat to Downtown Brewing just north of the station. We got back to the station with a few minutes to spare for our train back north but after a while there was no sign of it, in fact a

freight showed up and did a bit of shunting in the siding before the Amtrak train appeared about an hour late. Once at San Jose it was time to bid goodbye to Anthony as he was heading further north and ultimately onto Vancouver BC. By the time I got back to the hotel I was feeling a bit weary and I couldn't be bothered to head out tonight, I think that being in the hot sun during the day, in particular while waiting at Paso Robles station, had taken its toll on me.

MOVES:

Amtrak 17 & 39 (11) 1007 San Jose to Paso Robles

Amtrak 147 & 505 (14) 1637 Paso Robles to San Jose

Today's links, Paso Robles Brewing - <http://pasobrewing.com/>

Downtown Brewing - <http://downtownbrew.com/home.html>



Amtrak 147 & 505 arrive at Paso Robles with the northbound Coast starlight.

Sunday 30th June 2013.

Another late start again, and once again heading south on the Coast Starlight, this time all the way into LA. I felt just as lethargic as I had done the previous evening and spent most of the trip trying to doze in my seat so there isn't really much more else to say. Arrival into LA was about 15' early and so I had a bit of a wait before the connecting train to Oceanside where I was staying, room rates in LA for tonight were sky high and a bed in Oceanside was much cheaper. Arriving at Oceanside at about midnight I took a walk that seemed to take forever to my hotel a mile away from the station.

MOVES:

Amtrak 197 & 78 (11) 1007 San Jose to LA Union

Amtrak 464 (796) 2210 LA Union to Oceanside

Monday 1st June 2013.

I felt a lot better today and decided to spend a while on Coaster before going back to LA and my flight home. I hit a spell where just one loco is out working and so I racked up a bit of mileage behind loco 2104, however I later managed a winner before heading north, leaving me with just one more Coaster loco to get (and it was on the shed today, cheers!). I took the cheaper option of Metrolink from Oceanside into LA, cheaper than Amtrak and that was with the airport bus fare added on. At the airport I offered myself as a volunteer to fly back to the UK on the flight that was two hours after mine with the lure of an upgrade to upper class being the dangling carrot, but in the end there were enough seats in cattle class on my booked flight and that was what I got. At least the lady sat next to me was cheerful and friendly and when not asleep we passed the time chatting to each other.

MOVES:

Coaster 3002 (644) 0939 Oceanside to Solana Beach

Coaster 2104 (639) 1023 Solana Beach to Oceanside

Coaster 2104 (648) 1105 Oceanside to San Diego

Coaster 2104 (645) 1238 San Diego to Oceanside

Coaster 2104 (654) 1432 Oceanside to Encinitas

Coaster 3001 (651) 1501 Encinitas to Oceanside

M.link 883 (609) 1526 Oceanside to LA Union

Virgin G-VRED (VS024) 2200 LAX to LHR

Follow up for Anthony heading north – after I left him on the Coast Starlight he stayed in Tacoma on Sunday night then took Sounder to Seattle the next day. Here he was bowled out for his Cascades train to Vancouver BC as he hadn't booked in advance and it was sold out, so he flew that leg instead.

Amtrak California Pass – T&Cs can be found on the Amtrak website, but basically it is valid for travel on 7 days within a 21 day period within California, long distance trains apart from the Coast Starlight are out of bounds. Travel over any stretch of track is only permitted four times in total. While we had all our tickets in hand to start with we made a couple of on spec alterations along the way, but once a ticket has been scanned on board a train no alterations may take place (such as splitting the journey which we found out on day 1). Also you must use all tickets you have, if you have a ticket that doesn't get scanned then it “blocks” any future tickets you might have.

Railway Links:

Metrolink – <http://www.metrolinktrains.com/>

Amtrak – <http://www.amtrak.com/home>

Coaster – <http://www.gonctd.com/coaster>

ACE – <http://www.acerail.com/>

Caltrain - <http://www.caltrain.com/>

CONCLUSION:

Another enjoyable trip and it was nice to have no overnight journeys for a change. Many thanks to Anthony for his company and also to Mike for coming out to meet us. Apart from

feeling a bit weary at the end of the trip I felt the whole thing was a great success, especially as I scored more engines than I thought I would. One thing both Anthony and I agreed on is that if we did ACE again we would stay in Pleasanton rather than Stockton, and we will not use Jack London Inn again – ever! Hopefully a similar visit can be planned in the future to try and mop up what is left of what I need on Surfliner, Amtrak California, Coaster, Metrolink and Caltrain. There are also a few more breweries for us to try which we didn't visit this time.

Pete Callaghan
August 2013.