

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

100

June 2002



Contents:

The MDRS Story - So Far

Cruising the Rhine

Where to get your kicks!

The Marlow Donkey - The Magazine of the Marlow and District Railway Society

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CONTENTS	page
WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN	2
FROM OUR PRESIDENT	2
25 YEARS AGO PICTURE SPECIAL	3
EDITOR'S NOTES	4
TIMETABLE	4
25 GLORIOUS YEARS - THE MDRS STORY, SO FAR	5
CRUISING THE RHINE	13
WHERE TO GET YOUR KICKS	14
WHAT DO YOU DO NOW? - THE ANSWER	16

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS.

Top: 0-4-2T No. 1421 at Marlow Station in the 1950's Photo: Barrie Lea

Bottom Left: 25 years ago Hybrid two-car unit, with 'bubblecar' W55020 nearest camera, at Marlow. 25 July 1977, Tim Edmonds

Bottom Right: A 'present day' print from 2001 of unit 165003 at Bourne End, Tim Edmonds

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Welcome to this the
100TH ISSUE OF 'THE DONKEY'
compiled to mark the
25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOCIETY.



I do not propose to reflect on the foundation of the society, this I feel, is best left to those founder members' contributions which will give a better insight to those early years. The overall aim of the society is to provide like minded rail enthusiasts with a monthly meeting encompassing a talk/slide show/films on various rail connected themes, with the added attraction of a rail or coach outings to preserved lines/museums etc. From time to time, small raiding parties venture to France, Germany, I.O.M and I.O.W.

To the question of speakers. Spare a thought for our current secretary Julian Heard (PC49). He has the unenviable task of finding speakers for the monthly meetings. Not at all easy as many of the contacts do not wish to venture far afield, coupled with the fact that some are too prohibitive to contemplate in terms of cost. You will recall the survey carried out some two years ago asking members to nominate their preferences for meetings. The result was not unexpected – that of standard gauge steam. On the basis of this survey the decision was made to adhere to this formula in the main so as not to disappoint the majority of members.

In recent times the variety of speakers has been maintained, if not surpassed, with subjects ranging from audio/visual, specialised talks through to slide shows from such notable figures as Dick Hardy,

Andrew Bell, Ron White (Mr Colour Rail - due again later this year). And not forgetting our members who globe trot in the fulfilment of their hobby.

Your reigning committee is more than aware of the issues relating to membership numbers. To promote the society, various ideas and suggestions have been implemented. Namely, details placed on local web sites, press insertions, leaflets to libraries, tourist centres and other Groups/Societies plus monthly periodicals. On a humorous note, we have not as yet sanctioned a PRESS GANG ! as per one suggestion. Whilst our efforts have produced results, we must face facts that it is difficult to replace members – those that move away and those that are no longer with us, so it is important to remain upbeat over this issue. Could I therefore count on the support of all members to promote the society within their circle of acquaintances in the hope that your efforts will increase our numbers, thus ensuring the future of the club. It is my belief that the personal approach is often the most rewarding.

Lastly, with your support. What finer way to celebrate the Society's 25th Anniversary than the planned journey over the Severn Valley Railway on board the Luncheon train on Sunday 21st July 2002.

Hope to see you there.

Gordon Rippington, Chairman

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

A letter from our President

I am proud to be able to congratulate the Marlow and District Railway Society on achieving its 25th Anniversary.

As your President and an avid railway enthusiast it is encouraging to see the Society endure in times when so much else can call on our time.

Congratulations again to all the members, may the MDRS continue to flourish and see another 25 years of railway enthusiasm.

Yours sincerely

Sir William McAlpine Bt

25 YEARS AGO 'SPECIAL'

Right

*Hybrid two-car unit, with 'bubblecar'
W55020 behind, leaves Bourne End for
Marlow.*

25 July 1977

Tim Edmonds



Left

*The same hybrid two-car at
Marlow.*

25 July 1977

Tim Edmonds



...and a 'present day' print from 2001 taken of the same view as in top picture

Tim Edmonds

EDITOR'S NOTES

Well the 100th Edition of The Donkey is here. I am privileged to be involved in what for a club of our size is a prestigious publication. Without the commitment of many contributors over the years The Donkey would never have continued with such quality content to reach its 100th Edition and in the club's 25th year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all past and present that have made The Donkey possible over the years.

I would like to thank Roger Bowen, Stan Verrinder and Mike Walker for producing 'The MDRS Story - So Far' article which fills most of this issue. It would be nice to think we may reach a 200th Edition, but where our club will be in another 25 years it is very hard to imagine.

Who would have thought 25 years ago that in 2002 we would see a vast number of new trains and an array of operating companies, with bright colourful liveries, yet we also still have main line steam and plenty of it. As I type this up, the following day will see four main line steam specials (13 April 2002) one of which on reaching London

will be hauled to Westbury and return by double headed Class 50s 50031/49, and so we have heritage diesels as well. For some of us these are the glory years, we must make the most of 'today' as nothing lasts forever, so let us enjoy what we have for I believe we are very privileged to have all this happening at present.

In the course of my work I receive a publication called 'Graphics International', two recent issues have carried articles that may be of interest to some members. One is on the passing of the Solari indicator boards; the article goes back to pre indicator days when police constables were responsible for chalking departure times on large pieces of slate!

The other is actually titled 'Alphabets for Anoraks' it is based on the fact that many of today's most popular typefaces were originally designed for railway companies.

If you would like a copy of these articles please contact John Tuck, details in the front of The Donkey.



TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held at: Royal British Legion, Station Approach, Marlow at 7.45 for 8.00 pm.

2002

Thursday 18 July	MERCHANT NAVY CLASS/CPRR	Eric Samuel
August	No Meeting	
Thursday 19 September	COLOUR RAIL SLIDES	Ron White
Thursday 17 October	THROUGH THE LENS Part 2	Andrew Bell
Thursday 21 November	PRE WAR SLIDES Part 2	Chris Youett
Thursday 19 December	CHRISTMAS GATHERING	

DAY TRIPS

***** To Celebrate 25 Years of the MDRS *****

Sunday 21 July Three course meal on Severn Valley Railway Dining Train

Inclusive cost: £22, child £19. Rail only (no meal) £8, child £5

Coach to Kidderminster £10 per person

Saturday 17 August

7-25" Garden Railway in Thame

Contact Tim Edmonds

Please: NO TALKING DURING PRESENTATIONS

Please note: The above programme is subject to change



TWENTY FIVE GLORIOUS YEARS

THE MDRS STORY, SO FAR....



**Three of the Society's four remaining founder members,
Roger Bowen, Stan Verrinder and Mike Walker
recall the highs and lows of the past quarter century.**

For any organisation such as ours to have reached its Silver Jubilee is quite an achievement and it presents an ideal opportunity to reflect on the history of the Society, its origins, characters, highlights and perhaps ponder on where we go from here. As many of you have joined in recent years it is perhaps worth taking this opportunity to record the story so you can appreciate the heritage of your Society.

The seed that was to germinate and grow into the MDRS was sown in the autumn of 1975 when the Workers' Education Association (WEA) hosted a series of lectures on railways at the Great Marlow School in Bobmore Lane. These were repeated for the next three years but with a change of lecturer in 1976, Roger Bowen who had been a "student" on the 1975 course taking over as he puts it, "Because he'd probably said too much the first year".

Towards the end of the 1976 season the WEA announced it was closing its Marlow operation so there would be no more railway classes. This caused great sadness. Most of the participants had attended each year and close friendships had been established. Each lecture was usually followed up by a session in "The Marlow Donkey" pub and at one of these gatherings, Les Spicer suggested they explore what support there was for a railway interest club in the town.

Consequently, a meeting was called for Thursday 24th February 1977 at 'The Marlow Donkey' public house which at that time had a dining room for hire at the very modest rate, even by then current standards, of £2. Word was spread among and by the WEA class members and spread by word of mouth around the town and district. There was no formal advertising except perhaps a dozen A5 posters made by Stan Verrinder and displayed in shops and the library, yet when the appointed evening arrived an encouraging number turned up.

At the meeting Les Spicer outlined his idea which was quickly approved and the Marlow & District Railway Society was born there and then with an initial membership of around sixteen. Les Spicer was appointed Chairman with Roger Bowen as the Secretary and Stan Verrinder, another WEA stalwart, completing the initial line up of officers as Treasurer. Roy Mee, Mike Norris and Bas Woodward also joined the first committee to have ideas! All present were encouraged to part with a subscription on the

spot by Stan, the first time we saw his remarkable powers of persuasion in action. As the years went by we found it was impossible to say "no" to Stan! There was only one voice of dissent, a member of the Marlow Maidenhead & District Model Railway Club claimed there was no need for a club such as ours as the model club already existed. He could not understand that the two were mutually complementary and for some years the MMDMRC remained hostile towards us. (The WEA course continued at other venues with Roger Bowen as lecturer which helped him with material and make useful contacts).

From the outset it was decided to hold monthly meetings on the third Thursday at "The Marlow Donkey". There was to be no meeting in August as this was the peak holiday season in those days, but it soon became a tradition for some years to organise an evening visit in August. The first year's programme consisted largely of in house speakers such as Roger Bowen who reprised some of his WEA material and Roy and Bas who fascinated us with memories of their younger days. As the year went on membership started to grow and once it was clear that the MDRS was a going concern, Roger started to book outside speakers and put announcements in the railway press attracting more members still. Meanwhile, Stan Verrinder, in addition to presiding over our finances, had edited the first edition of The Marlow Donkey.

THE MEMBERS

The Society is its members and many have been associated with the Society for many years. Regrettably only four of those who attended that inaugural meeting still remain members, Roger Bowen, Mike Norris, who is sadly non-active since his terrible stroke last year, Stan Verrinder who now lives in Seaford and Mike Walker. Another of those at the first meeting who became a member for life was Ernie Dove who tragically passed away in January this year, giving a sad start to the Silver Jubilee.

From its humble beginning the membership roll quickly expanded to around fifty and ultimately peaked at just over sixty for a short while. Attendances at monthly meetings were routinely in the mid-thirties, possibly exceeding forty if a particularly interesting programme was on offer. Some became members only for a short time but

many who joined in the first decade are still with us, Terry Dearling, Peter Robins, Eddie Lewcock, Ron North, Martin Sherwood and Wilf Long to name but a few. Several who have left the area because of moving have retained their membership to the present day such as David Gardner and John Sears. When Stan's employers (the Inland Revenue) moved him to Eastbourne he reluctantly left us but was made our first Honorary Life Member as a thank you for his role in starting and building the Society.

Whilst some of our members joined in their twenties, we never seemed to attract any really young blood. There was one notable exception. A fanatical teenage rail enthusiast called Mark Hopwood. He wanted to join which caused the committee of the day some head scratching as we met on licensed premises and Mark was under age. We also did not have provision for "Junior Members". These matters were swiftly resolved and Mark became our first and to date only Junior Member. He joined BR from school and went to university as a management trainee. Having worked his way up the ladder at Thames Trains and then at Railtrack, he now holds the post of Operations Director at First North Western Trains based in Manchester at a mere thirty years of age, whilst remaining a member. We have also had two lady members at various times during the last quarter century, Dee Medway, wife of Steve Medway, and Jenny Young who married another member, Andy McMillan. Both later left the area.

The Committee is essential in the running of any club or society and can make or break it. At the end of the first year, Les Spicer surprised us all by standing down from the Chair. Although remaining a member until 1981 he took very little further active participation in our activities Les was replaced by the genial headmaster, Bas Woodward, who was to be our figurehead for more than a decade. Upon his standing down he was made Vice-President, Bill McAlpine having been invited to be our President early in the Society's life. Bas was followed by Mike Walker for several years, then Eddie Lewcock who, due to ill-health, handed the reigns to the present

incumbent, Gordon Rippington.

Several secretaries followed Roger Bowen, the most well known of which was Pete Greatorex. Pete had actually been on the last WEA course whilst he was working at RAF Medmenham but had moved to Cambridge by the time the Society was formed. In 1982 he moved back to the Thames Valley and the private sector and has been a member ever since. Following Stan's departure his iron grip on our finances was continued by among others, John Sears, Mike Walker and currently Peter Robins.

We all owe a great deal of thanks to all those past and present who have given considerable time to serve the committee.

Regrettably, membership has been in decline, but has stabilised at about the 40 members mark. How nice it would be to get back to 60 members. Our profile is rapidly ageing and several members have already passed away. In addition to Ernie Dove, one thinks of Roy Mee who had a fatal heart attack on East Croydon Station (a terrible fate for a LMS man) and Bas Woodward who passed away a couple of years ago. One member who died in our first year was Norman Aston-Smith. Norman was a bachelor and avid rail enthusiast well known in the district. As the Society was being formed he was retiring and had a programme of trips he wanted to do that would have been unfulfilled if he were still with us today. Sadly, Norman collapsed and died within weeks of

Five of the six founder members of the M&DRS who attended the inaugural meeting in January 1977

From left to right Ernie Dove, Stan Verrinder, Mike Norris, Bas Woodward and Mike Walker. At Northiam on the K&ESR - 18 July 1999



retiring leaving a house full of one of the most remarkable private libraries and collections around. Alan Wheeler spent weeks cataloguing and disposing of it for his family. A centre pivoted GW signal arm from Bourne End which Norman had liberated was bequeathed to the Society the Society as the Norman Aston-Smith Trophy awarded to the writer of the best article in 'The Donkey'. Some years later when it was decided that such an unwieldy trophy actually deterred contributors, Alan Wheeler and Terry Dearling fabricated a more manageable replica and the original was retired to Fawley. Our friends in the Marlow Maidenhead Passengers' Association also commemorated Norman with a GWR platform seat on Bourne End station. It's still there despite a close shave. When the Network SouthEast bum-grater seats were installed, the old ones were carted off for disposal. A rescue party of MDRS and MMPA members set off in hot pursuit and caught up with it in a pile at Maidenhead. It was swiftly loaded into the brake compartment of a class 121 for transport back to Bourne End. It's now kept in the booking hall and locked away safely when not under the watchful eye of Bernie Wheeler.

MEETINGS

By June 2002 we shall have clocked up some 280 monthly meetings, leaving aside the AGM, members' photo sessions and Christmas socials that still leaves more than 200 formal meetings. The list of subjects covered in that time has been as broadly based as the vast subject of railways itself. Steam, electric or diesel; narrow, standard or broad gauge, home or overseas, past present and even future, all have featured at some time in the past quarter century. Successive secretaries have tried to build a balanced annual programme that hopefully, will appeal to as wide a section of the members as possible.

In such a long time span there are many evenings that stand out in the memory. The vintage steam images and accompanying witty comments from Ron 'Colour Rail' White – it's in my catalogue price £5. Two visits by Colin Garrett with his unique, controversial, arty approach to world steam photography. Mike Handscomb, signalling expert extraordinaire who would turn our meeting room into a replica of a signal box complete with sound effects for the evening. Several very entertaining evenings were had with footplate memories from the days of steam including Wally Richards who worked most of our local lines before driving a desk as Area Manager at Slough and the wonderful career memories of that doyen of BR steam, Dick Hardy. Less successful was the talk by veteran Southern driver Bert Hooker, although we found out later he was quite ill and died soon after. Another well known speaker was international film director Harry Watt who related how the classic film Night Mail

was made. The film was shown the same evening of course.

Some meetings on paper looked like they would be dull but turned out to be a revelation. One early example was a talk on track by a friend of Roy Mee's. Far from it, it turned out to be a fascinating and educational evening where we all found that there's a lot more to track than a couple of rails, sleepers and a pile of stones. Perhaps if the accountants who were to run the future Railtrack had attended they would not have neglected the track as they so disastrously did.

A speaker who made several appearances was Tony Hall-Patch, Assistant Keeper of the Science Museum's transport collection. Tony was the brother of a colleague of Roger's who one day said to him, "My brother gives talks on railways".

For many years it was the practice to invite a speaker from the railway we were intending to visit to address a meeting, usually in March. Stan Verrinder would mingle at the break and gently persuade all present they really did want to join the trip and extract a non-refundable deposit on the spot, preferably as close to 100% as possible. "No" was not an acceptable response and little short of a death certificate was taken as a "please excuse me" note!

After Stan's departure, one year we decided to visit the East Somerset Railway. At the time Peter Greatorex was Secretary and Mike Walker was Treasurer whilst committee meetings were held in the bar. In a beer lubricated session it was suggested that if we were going to the ESR then David Shepherd was the man to get along. A week or two later Peter arrived with bad and good news. David couldn't come in March. Murmurs around the table along the lines of, "We didn't expect him". "But," continued Peter, "he'll come in April". Mike nearly choked on his beer. "What the hell is he going to charge us?", like all MDRS Treasurers, Mike didn't like exceeding the budget and had visions of several years speakers' allowance going in one night. Peter said he'd come for nothing provided he could bring his ESR/WWF sales stand. Knowing that most MDRS members seem to suffer from deep pockets and short arms, we decided to avoid mutual embarrassment by at least buying a couple of items from Society funds that could be used for the Christmas raffle.

Come the big day, David arrived with a couple of helpers and set up an enormous stand in the ante-room at "The Chequers". Fortunately, many members brought their wives along and a brisk trade in books, prints, videos etc. followed. David had a great time, he said he'd forgotten how good it was to talk to a small intimate audience rather than a big hall. The only problem was that the sales stand



Left

Members disembark Heyfordian coach on a grey day at The East Somerset Railway

26 September 1992

Tim Speechley

Brakespear's but as Whitbread's were closing the Marlow brewery anyway this was no great loss. It should be recorded that beer and the Society have long gone hand in hand.

Stan once offered to award a prize to anyone who could do an article for The Marlow Donkey without mentioning beer. It went unclaimed!

The curse struck again when "The Chequers", with even less warning, decided to turn their first floor into bedrooms so we once again sought new quarters, the Royal British Legion coming to our rescue and making us most welcome. Only once since our move to the Legion did we come unstuck due to an unfortunate double booking forcing us to climb onto the quarter-deck at HMS Vernon – the local sea cadets' hall. Well, it was, er, different!

TRIPS

Right from the start we've had trips. An annual fixture has been the summer charabanc trip to a preserved railway. These started in the first year and, with hindsight, it's a wonder that we got anyone to go again! The venue was the Romney Hythe & Dymchurch and Stan was anxious that costs should be kept low. So through "contacts" (to avoid embarrassment the identity of those responsible will be hidden) arrangements were made for a driver from Alder Valley, as it then was, to bring along his mate's "preserved" London Transport RT double decker. All went well until our first hiccup in west London resulting to a change to 1952 Green Line

stock was so depleted at the end of the evening that they had to return to Cranmore next day to restock, before going to a big presentation at the Fairfield Hall in Croydon. As a result the MDRS and David Shepherd became great friends. He escorted our subsequent visit and has been to two subsequent meetings.

Several meetings over the years were addressed by BR managers and usually resulted in a visit being arranged for members later. This seems to have died with privatisation but hopefully will be restored in the future, other clubs seem to have no problems getting senior men from the TOCs to address them, why not ours?

Initially committee meetings were held weekly and were informal. Club business, if any, was dispatched in short order then we got down to the serious matter of sorting out the world and having a few beers in the process. These were attended by many members and were often hilarious and heated. Stan was (and still is) an old school socialist and great debater so everyone else, irrespective of their own private views would promptly become right wing Tories to get Stan into full swing. Things became ever more entertaining after Margaret Thatcher came to power! Such debates would drag on and on. One night, well after last orders, landlord Terry Cole wandered over to our table and put a bunch of keys between us. "Barbara and I are going to bed, lock up when you leave". We took the hint.

Unfortunately redevelopment of 'The Marlow Donkey', which occurred with little prior warning – even for Barbara and Terry – left us briefly homeless so we moved our venue to 'The Chequers' in the High Street. This had a bigger, albeit costlier, room on the first floor and they did some excellent Christmas dinners for us. It meant changing from Wethered to

Right

75029 with a 'The Marlow Special' headboard at The East Somerset Railway

26 September 1992

Tim Speechley





Left

*45593 'Kolbapur' in disguise as
5552 'Silver Jubilee' on a Society
trip to The Great Central Railway*

10 July 1994

Tim Speechley

froing Gavin got it round unscathed. He still recalls that with horror!

As well as day trips we've had evening visits to the likes of Pendon Museum, the Post Office Underground Railway in London, Amersham box, the

power signal box at Slough, the first solid state signalling centre at Willesden just after it opened and to Old Oak Common and Bounds Green Traction Maintenance Depots. The Old Oak visit was through the good offices of member Steve Medway who worked at the Common. Among the visiting members was Steve's wife Dee who was aghast to see her loved one diving under a class 47 supported on jacks whilst he demonstrated connecting the traction motors and lowering the body onto the bogies. Unfortunately we lost Steve and Dee when he transferred to Laira.

Following a talk by GWT's John Cronin we had a day trip to the HST depot at Bristol, by train of course! Further days out, other than the annual summer one, were arranged from time to time including a trip around Swindon Works and the old museum. Another venue, closer to home, was the former Aylesbury South 'Box. This was led by Mike Handscomb who proceeded to demonstrate how sensitive facing point locks are to the surprise of the signalman and Mike's obvious relief!

Back in the glory days before privatisation, John Diffy's Chiltern Trains ran charters to all parts of the country including

Right

*The Society
Chairman,
Gordon
Ripington at
the IOW Steam
Railway.*

5 July 1998

Tim Speechley



single decker at Richmond Goods Yard, which at that time was an enthusiasts' bus centre. Further running repairs were made during our trip on the RH&D then another problem on the way home saw our driver pull into the East Kent garage at Ashford for assistance. The duty inspector, thinking ours was a genuine Green Line, was on the point of giving us one of theirs until our driver pointed out the real situation. After more repairs we limped to almost in sight of home when the old banger finally curled up its toes in Bobmore Lane around midnight. The party then got out and pushed it the last few hundred yards into the car park of "The Britannia" pub!

Further trips ensued using some equally disreputable double deck buses gleaned from Dickson's of Stoke Mandeville but eventually we became more organised. Roger Bowen who had good relations at that time with a driver named Les with United Counties, at Aylesbury got us reliable transportation for several years then when Mike Walker's old school chum Gavin Francis got his PSV license he arranged hire of coaches from Heyfordian. Curiously as the vehicles have become more upmarket and the trips predictably smooth running so it's become harder to fill them. Is there a message here?

Early trips were much more family affairs all though not always appreciated by all. One one occasion, during a visit to an "industrial museum" at Brockham, the daughter of a senior member was heard to cry out in a bored voice, "Daddy, why have we come to a scrap yard?"

Over the years our summer day trips have visited every preserved railway in reach in a day from Marlow, some more than once. Our first visit to the Isle of Wight saw the coach cross with us so we could do an Island Tour in the afternoon. This tested Gavin's skill to the utmost. Climbing out of Ventnor we encountered a hairpin bend complete with a traffic island at its apex. This was not designed for negotiation by a 40 footer but with much toing and

Left

*Society Members take a ride
behind 'Rocket' at The K&ESR*

18 July 1999

Tim Speechley

Verrinder was the first editor and put out Issue 1 in April 1977 when the Society was barely three months old. Since then it has appeared regularly every three months, although the eagle eyed will note we've missed a couple of issues along the way or this 100th issue should have come along in December 2001! Stan's efforts were a labour of love, typed with two fingers

on a 1937 machine with ribbons and the copying courtesy of Roy Mee, or more accurately, his secretary.

A noteworthy series was the history of the Wycombe and Great Marlow Railways by Mike Walker which took several years in the early 1980s to complete. It finished just prior to the publication of the book *The Marlow Branch* by Paul Karau and Chris Turner in 1987 (Wild Swan Publications). Mike had known Paul for some years as they'd both had Saturday jobs in Eames at Reading in the early seventies and many MDRS members contributed to both the series and book. Indeed, study of the "acknowledgements" page looks like a roll call of the membership at the time.

Following Stan's departure Mike Walker took over as editor and gradually the newsletter became more professional looking with the introduction of photographs. This was thanks to the wife of a then member, Dave Little, who was able to make copies of photos in a form which photocopiers could handle. Mike was succeeded by John Tuck who has taken production standards to even greater heights thanks in no small part to the use of computerised desk top publishing and it helps that he's a graphic designer by profession!

THE FAWLEY CONNECTION – OR GETTING OUR HANDS DIRTY!

Quite early on, we decided to invite Sir William McAlpine to be our Honorary President. He readily accepted and asked if the Society's members would be willing to assist in the upkeep and operation of his private railway on his estate at Fawley. A group went along and were overwhelmed at what we found. Several members at various times have had garden railways of gauge 1 or even 5" gauge but our

weekend trips to far away places like the north of Scotland which usually carried a respectable number of members. In the tradition set by our first charabanc outing, one of these was memorable when one of our class 26s bringing us back from the Kyle of Lochalsh to Inverness caught fire! After pausing to investigate the crew decided that as rescue or attendance by the local Brigade in such a remote spot was impossible we should continue. We must have made a fine sight arriving in the capital of the Highlands with flame and black smoke erupting from our loco and a totally black first coach. Our friends in the Marlow Maidenhead Passengers' Association also chartered trains back then which attracted our custom.

Club organised "long weekends" were also once a regular feature. We sent a sizeable contingent to Rocket 150 at Rainhill and made three trips to France in the early years of the Baie de Somme organised and driven by Roger Bowen. The usual mayhem ensued on these trips, derailed trains, etc. One time we nearly didn't get home when Stan decided to try and "chat up" an immigration officer at Dover. She was not amused and as a result we all, and our minibus, got a right going-over by immigration and customs! On another there was much frantic reallocation of booze when Mike Norris discovered he was way over the limit. Other trips were to safer venues like North Wales, Yorkshire and the Isle of Man.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Right from the start, the Society's newsletter, *The Marlow Donkey*, has been a vital part of our activities, announcing forthcoming events, reporting on those past and giving a platform for members to write about trips they'd done or pet interests. Stan

Right

Society Members celebrating 20 years of the MDRS ride behind the resident loco at Fawley with 'The Marlow Donkey' headboard.

4 May 1997

Tim Speechley

President has a complete standard gauge railway in his garden! For some time working parties from the Society did a lot of work but eventually it was mutually decided to set up a separate Fawley Museum Society, allegedly for insurance reasons. This did cause some division within the Society. Many common members remained, particularly active MDRS members at Fawley included Ron Brooks, Ernie Dove, Eddie Lewcock, Julian Heard, Mike Norris and Alan Wheeler but others like Bob Hatfield became Fawley only members or MDRS only members like Steve Medway.

However the Society has had several highly enjoyable social visits to Fawley over the years and it is perhaps slightly regrettable that one was not arranged to celebrate our Silver Jubilee.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The tenth anniversary of the Society was marked by an exhibition held in Court Garden, Marlow in July 1987. This was a resounding success thanks in no small part to the efforts of practically every member at the time and their partners who helped with the catering. Although several well known model railway layouts were on display, it was a layout depicting the old Marlow station in its heyday built by a small group of members that attracted most interest from visitors, many of whom never realised the town once boasted much more than a bus shelter for a station.



Wild Swan had a stand where the afore mentioned book was formally launched with great timing. The event was a great success and we were left with a healthy profit. Some of this was used to buy the Society's projector and accessories whilst the rest was banked for a rainy day. It is this heritage which forms the Society's current financial reserve.

The twentieth anniversary was marked with a public meeting again at Court Garden where our old friend David Shepherd was the star turn entertaining a full house in his own unique style. It's a pity that no big public event seems to be proposed for this significant 25th milestone in our history, but we do have the SVR Dinner Train on Sunday 21st July.

We took every opportunity to attend other exhibitions with a stand and sometimes the Marlow layout. This got the Society's existence more widely known and helped attract new members.

In June 1998 we helped the MMPA mark the 125th anniversary of the Marlow Branch. Although the great celebration of the centenary in 1973, which saw steam trains running, could not be repeated we did put on a historical display at Bourne End and John

Tuck created a stylish headboard which was carried by the Turbo unit all day. It was a pity that Thames assigned a particularly scruffy unit to the branch that day but that's what we expect from them.



Left:

165 unit at Bourne End with special commemorative headboard on the occasion of the 125th Anniversary of the Marlow Branch

27 June 1998

Tim Speechley

THE FUTURE

So what does the next quarter century hold? Hopefully the Society will continue to offer its programme of meetings and visits. To attract the widest possible audiences we must offer programmes that fully reflect the diversity of the railway world, not simply recall the days of steam and preservation but look to the modern scene as well.

The decline in numbers in the mid 90s was potentially the biggest threat to the continued success of the Society. For the Society to flourish we must grow the membership. Announcements in the railway and general press along with libraries etc., are all very well and are vital but cannot do the job

alone. We all need to spread the word, it is our Society and if we want it to thrive we all have a duty to contribute. We all know of others with an interest in railways who are potential members.

Let each of us make it our mission to attempt to introduce a new member to the Society. Even if only half of us are successful we would once again approach our largest ever membership. And, when we do get new faces, all of you, please make them welcome, introduce yourselves and take an interest in them.

That brings the story up-to-date, let's hope this Silver Jubilee serves as the spring board we need and here's to the next twenty five years!

Norman Aston-Smith Trophy Winners

1981	Mike Walker
1982	Bas Woodward
1983	Stan Verrinder
1984	Ron Brooks
1985	John Sears
1986	Les Stroud
1987	Les Stroud
1988	Mark Hopwood
1989	Bob Young and P Searle
1990	Martin Pink
1991	John Sears
1992*	[not recorded] * New trophy made (see Walker/Bowen/Verrinder article)
1993	[not recorded]
1994	Stan Verrinder
1995	[not recorded]
1996	[not recorded]
1997	[not recorded]
1998	Tim Speechley and Gordon Rippington
1999	Mike Walker
2000	Gordon Rippington
2001	David Gardner
2002	Mike Hyde

MDRS Membership

Year	Members
1986	58
1987	56
1988	46
1989	56
1990	56
1991	55
1992	54
1993	55
1994	55
1995	52
1996	42
1997	41
1998	43
1999	40
2000	39
2001	40
2002	40



CRUISING THE RHINE

Mike Hyde

In July I had the pleasure of a brief train ride through Northern Europe to join a Rhine River Cruise at Cologne (Koln). As usual these days, a ride on Eurostar was called for, which was interesting but uneventful. On arrival at Brussels Midi/Zuid one has to negotiate the rather narrow platform and pass through an Immigration checkpoint before descending to the main passageway of the station. A frantic search for the correct platform showed a fast Thalys due to depart. But that was not for us and we had 30 minutes to await the inter-city scheduled train from Ostend to Koln.

Koln hbf is one of the busiest stations I have seen anywhere. On our return I had the opportunity to observe activity from a public square alongside the Cathedral with an excellent view of all platforms. Mainly

the former 0-4-2 tank rack locomotives is mounted outside the lower station – alongside are the donkeys which you can hire if you want to avoid the railway and do not fancy walking up. Is it therefore a donkey engine? The train ride is worth it for itself plus the wonderful views from the ruined castle at the top out over the vineyards of the Rhine.



Koln hbf (Main Station) Mike Hyde 07/01

overhead Electrics but a few diesel locomotives were in operation. The station runs out immediately over the Rhine rather like Charing Cross but is a through station with services far and wide as well as commuter trains. The whole area was flattened in WWII but has been rebuilt and is a hub of activity. Exit from platforms is downstairs into the through passageway that runs in the direction of the river (or reverse to the Cathedral). Soon we were aboard MPS Erasmus and journeying upstream to Bonn, the former capital of West Germany. Police were everywhere so I thought they had heard we were coming but it was due to a European Summit meeting or the like. I was more interested in the street running tramway system.

A bus tour took us to the Drachenfels Rack Railway, the oldest in Germany, at Konigswinter. Here a single car or pair of cars will haul you 1.5km up 220 metres at an incline, in parts, of 22 percent. It was built in 1883 and was originally steam. One of



Former 0-4-2 Drachenfels Rack Railway, Konigswinter, Germany Mike Hyde 07/01

Down in the town, DB freight and passenger trains race through the level crossing. Freight was usually behind a Class 151 and passenger trains were push/pull with a Class 143 leading, both overhead Electrics. From our ship we later saw the remaining towers of the former Remagen railway bridge destroyed by the allies in WW11. The blackened towers stand like sentinels each side of the river and at the right angle you can see the tunnel beyond the bridge on the east bank (remember the film?).

On to Koblenz with Kaiser Wilhelm sitting proudly on his bronze horse at the junction with the river Mosel. We took the Mosel as far as Cochem. A very picturesque town dominated by the Reichsburg Castle and with a marvellous riverfront. A motorcycle rally was going on in the town and a medieval party at the castle. What was interesting here from a railway point of view was the Kaiser Wilhelm Tunnel which runs right under the town before bridging the river from the west bank to the east.

Passenger trains were frequent and often comprised double-deck coaches. Classes 141 and 110 were observed with Class 140 on freight. One loco hauling tank cars was in overall green and marked 'Rail4 Chem'

Drachenfels Rack Railway and donkeys, Konigswinter, Germany

Mike Hyde 07/01



Remains of Remagen Bridge over the Rhine Mike Hyde 07/01

whereas a passenger loco was pale blue and marked 'Bayer'.



ICE train at Boppard, Germany Mike Hyde 07/01



DB 215.114-0 Push-Pull on a Boppard - Emmelhausen service Mike Hyde 07/01

WHERE TO GET YOUR KICKS!

By Mike Hyde

In the inky darkness we descended from Train No 3, the South West Chief, at Williams Junction, Arizona. A stop it is. A station it is not, unless you count a small area of concrete between two tracks and one light standard. Our bus awaited and consumed our luggage. With a shout of "Put the light out Luke" we departed. No.3 had disappeared as we drove off into the pine trees along a dirt road at one in the morning. 2 hours late was nothing unusual, as we were to find out the next morning when we rejoined No.3 even later. We hit a short length of abandoned metalled road at which point our driver announced "Once Route 66, you know".

Practically everyone of a certain age knows that the former 'Mother Road', Route 66, ran 2,448 miles from the Windy City to LA, ie, Chicago to Los Angeles, actually to Santa Monica. Since its official designation in 1926, which was the first time routes were uniformly signed from state to state, it has been replaced for the most part by

Interstate I-40, at a cost of \$355 Million. But it was not until 1938 that it became the first completely paved cross-country highway in the US. Williams holds the proud distinction of being the last community to be by-passed by the Interstate highway in 1984, with many stretches of the original 2-lane road (a 165 mile stretch exists west of Seligman) listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

However, here and in many other places such as Flagstaff and Winslow, old 66 is very much alive. Signs proclaim 'Historic Route 66' rather like we hold the A38 or the A40 in awe !?. In Mountain man Bill Williams' adopted town, Marshall John B Goodmore keeps the law. At the twice-weekly shoot out on 66 (true) he always wins the day, or rather night. He must be very good because he not only always wins the morning shoot out at the railway depot (also true) but he never fails to beat the daily train holdup (yes, true) by dastardly Two Feathers and the Cataract

Creek Gang. Dawgonit! Won't they ever learn that the baddies have gotta lose everytime?

But you thought this was a train story. So it is. The BNSF line, also used under licence by the long suffering Amtrak passenger service, and Route 66 seem to have a kindred spirit arising from their almost similar routes across the mid-west to the Pacific Coast. They frequently cross or run parallel and in the '50s both must have been very active. Today 'King Freight' reigns on the iron road and since much is single track, with eastbound UP or BNSF perishables having priority, paying passengers have to bide their time. A real pity because with necessary investment and a more positive will this service could almost be good.

At Williams, some years ago, the ATSF Railroad decided to divert the mainline past the town leaving the station high and dry. True the meandering freight line to Drake, Clarkdale or Matthie and Phoenix is still in operation through the station area but the buildings now serve the Grand Canyon Railway with its many tourists. Nevertheless the local population are striving to get a new facility erected at the Junction (a former building was removed after a short life and nothing remains) to serve Amtrak users rather than rely on clients being bussed in from Amtrak's preferred stop of Flagstaff. Incidentally, since Williams is unmanned it does not appear to have an official baggage destination code (WMJ was used on our rail tickets) so it can be a problem to have luggage shipped there, but yours-truly succeeded on this occasion.

We were a party of 20 travelling across America by rail. That concept surprised many fellow travellers and train crew. But the trains were busy even if they are only a once-a-day service and usually subject to delay. Perhaps it was a new adventure for many, or revisiting the past for some, or that people were fed up with airlines and waits at airports (we had these too). More positively it must surely be the scenery: Plains, mountains, forests, towns, wildlife, etc that attracts paying passengers. To me it is worth every penny even sleeping nights in the train's Superliners and with daytimes spent in the swivelled-chaired Viewliner loungers. Food was generally good but service was often poor.

P42B 'Genesis' units were order of the day on all our Amtrak trains. Our 'South West Chief' sported four throughout. Nos. 24,167,128,53 started us from Chicago. Nos 7,77,1,78 took us over from Lamy to Williams. Nos 24,167,128,53 caught us again for the last leg from Williams to LA. In the meantime they had gone forward to LA, returned to Chicago and then back to Williams; nearly 5,000 miles in 6 days!

There was no consistency in livery with lower numbers (including you will note No.1) in the earliest Amtrak style, up to the century plus numbers carrying the fancy new logo. After a hesitant start at Chicago, the units performed well with a slow easy take-up each time. Rarely were they flat out but this might have depended on the state of the track that frequently varied in quality.

After leaving the wonderful sights of Chicago (magical at night) we headed west along the 'racetrack' to Mendota

where we saw our first of many plinthed locomotives. Burlington 4978 (2-6-2) outside the BN Museum. Along the line at Galesburg, where the main divides for San Francisco or LA, there was Burlington 3006 (4-6-4). Outside of Kingsley near Hutichison stood Burlington 3424 and at Dodge City was SF 1139 (2-6-2). Lamar gave us SF 1819 (2-6-2) and La Junta SF 1024 (2-6-2). Thereafter they seemed not to appear as we drifted through Trinidad and climbed over the Raton Pass towards Las Vegas and eventually Lamy.

We took a break at Lamy to travel overland for a few nights in Pagosa Springs. This enabled visits to be paid to the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad (probably the finest NG, certainly in the US), the Durango & Silverton NG Railroad, and the Mesa Verde National Park. A further break at Williams brought with it a return trip on the Grand Canyon Railway and a glimpse of that 'big hole'. Days later we were moving ever westwards. The SW Chief finally took us over Cajon Pass with views from the summit of climbing freights, and lower down a trackside monument (grave?) dedicated to Kevin Williams and Gill Ortiz by the bridge under highway I-15. What was off-putting and rather sinister was the approach to San Bernadino and the bank of pinkish/grey smog getting ever closer until we were in it. Such is the daily fate of LA and its environs to suffer this obnoxious cloud. It is also clearly visible as you fly into LA and descend to land.

Because we were by now well over three hours late, Amtrak had laid on a bus to take my party to meet the Coast Starlight somewhere north of LA. Talking to the driver, it seemed to be a regular plan. Unfortunately it meant that we missed seeing the splendour of the magnificent Union Station terminal and we missed probably the most scenic part of the coast route. Initially our aim was Santa Barbara but we were still 30 minutes behind. The road, US101, takes an inland shortcut through the Santa Ynez and San Rafael Mountains, to Santa Maria and Pismo Beach. This put us at the next stop for the 'Starlight', San Luis Obispo, with ten minutes to spare. Had we not made it on our 5-hour bus journey then the next stop would have been San Jose or SF itself! Two Genesis locos with an Amtrak California Dash 8-P32BWH unit leading took us on to San Francisco, past Monterey's pelicans, nodding donkeys and a wonderful sunset under the haze.

Quite a tiring journey overall but very enjoyable. At times one felt like a pioneer as we headed west. Certainly the scenery often put you in mind of those intrepid wagon trains struggling over the deserts and mountains. The skills of the railroad surveyors, builders and engineers have to be marvelled at considering the limited technology available to them only 150 years ago. One day the required investment might catch up with the efforts of the early pioneers and thus be able to develop the potential of this excellent mode of transport for this vast country. Highly recommended if you are in no hurry or have no connection to make!

Mike Hyde. August 2001

WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

Imagine you are the Duty Manager in the Control Office at Thames Trains in Reading when, mid-morning, a report comes in that the two car Turbo unit working the Marlow branch is a total failure at Marlow station, unable to move under its own power. So what do you do to keep some kind of service operating for the passengers and recover the unit?

'THE ANSWER'

First, it soon becomes obvious that normal rail service will not be restored within the hour so arrangements are made to operate a replacement bus service for the passengers. That's the easy bit.

Fitters are first dispatched by road from Reading Depot to Marlow to assess the exact cause of the problem and, hopefully effect enough of a repair for the unit to be able to make its own way back to Reading. Usually that would be possible but today you've no such luck. The fitters report the problem can only be resolved in the depot over a pit or by lifting. The unit will have to be removed dead.

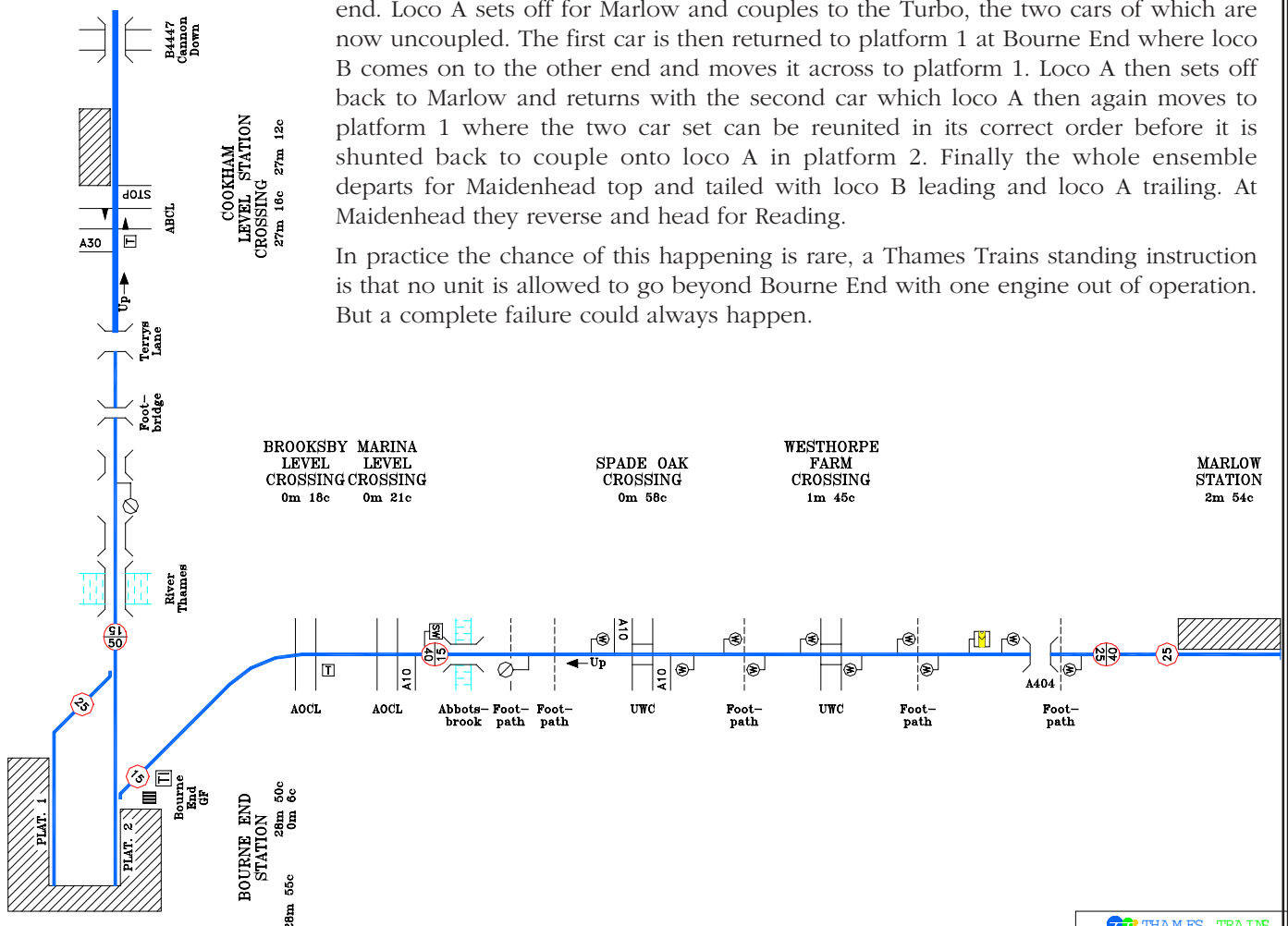
The problem is the layout at Bourne End, there is only about 200 feet between the toe of the branch junction point and the buffer stop on platform 2. In the days of the Heritage DMU's this was not a problem, two car sets generally ran to Marlow and there was just room for a "Bubble Car" to drag a failed set out to Bourne End then push it to Maidenhead, with the driver in front of the dead unit. Turbo's being 75' long rather than 63' prohibit this simple approach, there simply isn't room to send in a rescue unit.

So it is necessary to seek the assistance of not one but two locomotives! Special coupling adapters which allow a locomotive to couple to a Turbo are taken to Bourne End and, crucially, the Bourne End – Marlow train staff which is in possession of the driver of the failed unit, is taken by road to Bourne End. Without it, the ground frame there cannot be unlocked.

By now it is approaching the evening peak when normally a two train service operates on the branch so it is decided to run the normal rail service between Maidenhead and Bourne End keeping the bus to link Bourne End and Marlow. Recovery can wait until later in the evening.

Eventually two locomotives arrive at Maidenhead and run to Bourne End when they uncouple. Loco A runs into platform 2 and has the adapter fitted at the Maidenhead end whilst loco B goes into platform 1 and has the adapter fitted on the buffer stop end. Loco A sets off for Marlow and couples to the Turbo, the two cars of which are now uncoupled. The first car is then returned to platform 1 at Bourne End where loco B comes on to the other end and moves it across to platform 1. Loco A then sets off back to Marlow and returns with the second car which loco A then again moves to platform 1 where the two car set can be reunited in its correct order before it is shunted back to couple onto loco A in platform 2. Finally the whole ensemble departs for Maidenhead top and tailed with loco B leading and loco A trailing. At Maidenhead they reverse and head for Reading.

In practice the chance of this happening is rare, a Thames Trains standing instruction is that no unit is allowed to go beyond Bourne End with one engine out of operation. But a complete failure could always happen.



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Bogie Side Discharge Hopper Wagon for Sierra Leone Railway, 2' 6" gauge.



Bogie Oil Tank Wagon for East African Railways (Kenya Section), Metro gauge.

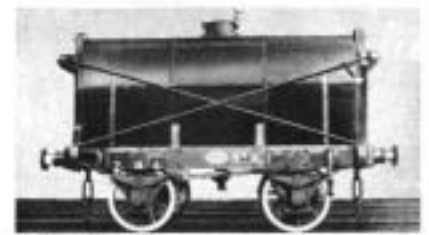
Above and below: Adverts reproduced in a 'Sunday Dispatch' publication 'A Pictorial History of Railways' possibly in the 1950s

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10-ton Steel Frame Wagon (1898)

25-ton Bogie Wagon (one of the earliest built in Scotland)



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16-ton Steel Coal Wagon

40-ton Bogie Tank Wagon for liquids



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