Marlow & District Railway Society

Please reply to:

THE MARLOW DONKEY NO. 11 JUNE 1979

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

During the past two and a half years our Society has enjoyed talks and slide/film shows given by a variety of speakers. While the standard has been remarkably high I personally was most impressed by the sheer professionalism of Colin Garrett. While many of us felt his descriptions of engines and locations to be somewhat poetic we envied his freedom to roam the five continents in search of the last remains of steam traction. With memories of our early black and white snaps taken by the railside or outside grimy loco sheds we were fascinated by his explanation of how he combines colour, composition and form. Certainly our more ebullient members were for once reduced to (comparative) silence.

I recently revisited the Great Western Society's centre at Didcot. Since my last afternoon at this depot I discovered the admission price had crept up to 80 pence. Muttering to myself "Inflation I suppose, but never mind" I walked under the BR station and entered the site. What an improvement! The loco shed was never as spick and span in GWR or BR days. All the locomotives were clean and attractive and bravely sported "Great Western" on their sides. The Southern Region Pacific "Winston Churchill" looked very neglected by comparison. The turntable from Southampton is now in use and a demonstration "rotation" was promised for later in the afternoon. The reconstructed signal-box from Radstock was ready for inspection by the public. Very sensibly much of the carriage stock is kept in a new shed at the end of the site. A beautifully maintained "Hinderton Hall" was pulling well-filled carriages back and forth on the exhibition line. Full marks, Didcot!

I have been in correspondence with Francis B Blake, Secretary of the Barry Steam Locomotive Action Group. The aim of this society is to try and save any locomotive at Barry still worth saving. I have not visited the Sidings at Barry Island for several years and I should imagine that those that remain are in a sorry state. However, he assures me that there are still salvageable engines and many would-be customers. Most of Mr. Blake's correspondents have shown an interest in the GWR King Class loco No. 6023, King Edward II. It is in poor condition, I gather, but even as a static exhibit in a depot such as Didcot it would be an additional attraction to the public.

He tells me that Barry still has one restorable pannier - eminently suitable for restoration by the Marlow and District Railway Society!

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME FOR 1979-80 at 2000 HRS

19 Jul 1979	The First Twenty Years - LNER Footplates. Talk by D Fendley Divisional Traction Inspector, London Division Western Region.
16 Aug 1979	Pendon Museum of Landscape and Transport in Miniature. Visit by coach depart Marlow Donkey at 1830 hrs. Cost £1.50. Please contact Mike Walker on Marlow 3899 for details as soon as possible as the coach is for 25 and there are 14 booked already. For those who do not know, the dedicated band at Pendon are trying to recreate in model form the GW in the '30s. There are two scenes under construction, one depicting Dartmoor, the other the Vale of the White Horse. All the models are to the highest possible standards and are hand built. Two MDRS members Andy McMillan and Mike Hanscomb have helped in the construction of the exhibits which also includes a selection of full size relics.
20 Sep 1979	Films of the Steam Age. Another collection of films from the archives of British Transport Films.
18 Oct 1979	Railroads of the United States. Illustrated talk by George Herrman.
15 Nov 1979	Festiniog Railway. Illustrated talk by Rob Holton of the Festiniog Railway Company.
13 Dec 1979	Christmas Film Show "Oh Mr. Porter". Full length feature film.
Jan 1980	Third Annual General Meeting.
Feb 1980	To be arranged.
Mar 1980	To be arranged.
17 Apr 1980	Adventures in Latin America. Colin Garratt returns for a second visit sponsored by Praktica Cameras.

ANNUAL SUNDAY EXCURSION

Many of you have already booked for this. The date is Sunday 15 July 1979. We leave Marlow at 0900 hrs. for the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway where we will travel from Pages Park to Vandyke Junction. Our train is scheduled for steam haulage. We travel on to Whipsnade Zoo for the Whipsnade and Umfolozi Railway and the family to see the animals. Our return to Marlow is scheduled for 1930 hrs. The fare which is inclusive of railfare at Leighton Buzzard and admission only to Whipsnade is £3 adults and £2 children. Pick-ups are possible along the route via High Wycombe and Wendover. Over 40 seats have been booked already so please send your £1 per person deposit now to Stan Verrinder or Mike Norris if you haven't done so already.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Mike Hanscomb returned on 15 March 1979 to give us the benefit of his box of knowledge and love of signalling. He covered many aspects and kept everybody entertained right up to the bell.

The slides used by Colin Garratt made everyone green with envy with their quality and variety when he took us on a tour around the world to show steam in action. This replaced the original "Adventure in Latin America" for 26 April 1979, which he will now give on 17 April 1980.

The annual river trip organised by Ted Gregory took place on 6 June 1979. 22 members and friends were very appreciative of Ted's efforts in giving them a fine evenings entertainment.

TED'S TRIP

Ted Gregory is making a 630 mile cycle trip from Inverness to Marlow starting on Saturday 9 June 1979. You are invited to sponsor him in aid of the children's arthritic unit at Taplow Canadian Red Cross Hospital. There is a list in the Marlow Donkey so please give generously to this very worthy cause.

MARLOW DONKEY WINDOW

Alan Wheeler has again changed the display in the Marlow Donkey Window. This time the main exhibit is a map of the railway stations in the area each illustrated with the appropriate luggage label for each. Do stop and have a look at the charming result.

MARLOW MAIDENHEAD PASSENGERS' ASSOCIATION

Unfortunately only 12 people expressed a desire to visit both the Dart Valley Railways on 5 August 1979. This made the hiring of a coach uneconomic and therefore the proposal had to be adandoned. If those who were interested still wish to travel on the exursion from Mrlow to Paignton and thence to Kingswear please contact Mike Walker on Marlow 3899.

Sunday 2 September 1979 provides a rare chance to visit the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. The MMPS is operating a special excursion from Marlow to York and Scarborough. This will make an additional stop at Malton where a coach connection will be provided to the NYMR. As with the Dart Valley your support is urgently required.

25 YEARS AGO - FROM THE RAILWAY MAGAZINE OF JUNE 1954

"Twenty class 3 2-6-0 tender locomotives Nos. 77000-77019 are included in the British Railways building programme for this year. The first engines of this latest standard design have been completed at Swindon Works Western Region. They were designed under the direction of Mr. RA Riddles. The parent office for design was Swindon but certain details were undertaken at Brighton,Derby and Doncaster.

Western Region locomotives withdrawn from service recently were ex MSWJR 2-4-0 No. 1336; 0-6-0 No. 873 (Cambrian Railways No. 42); 0-6-2 tank No. 335 (Taff Vale Railway No. 7); and 0-6-0 tank Nos 5 and 90 (Weston Clevedon and Portishead No. 2 and Rhymney Railway No. 32 respectively). No. 1336 was the last surviving engine of its class. No. 5 was one of the Stroudley Terriers and was built for the LBSCR in 1877 and numbered and named 43 Gypsyhill. It was sold to the WCPR by the Southern Railway in 1926 and became No. 2 Portishead on the books of that company".

NEW MEMBERS

Since the last list was published we welcome the following new members: R S Wickenden, T B Dearling, A Costello, P Costello and M R Lane.

WHY THE DONKEY RAN BACKWARDS FOR CHRISTMAS — ALAN WHEELER

You may have noticed that the model formerly the the Marlow Donkey window ran backwards. We have asked various informed sources as to why this was so and here are the answers.

"Revolution" by Prof HAD Littlebrain. You will know that if ice is heated it turns to water and if water is cooled it turns to ice. The model shows my latest form of power. It sucks smoke out of the air, burns it and produces coal. The steam condenses and turns to water. As the whole process is the reverse of normal naturally the engine runs backwards. It also produces 1 cwt of coal per 10 miles (in sacks).

"The Gay Approach" (you work it out). This model is a very confused engine; being a Donkey it likes carrots. All Donkeys enjoy carrots. Railway engines are fed from behind....

"Model Consultant" (BH - Big Head). The model is driven by an ex-record player motor via gearing. The motor was placed in a convenient position consistent with reliable running. When switched on it was found to run backwards - damn - still not many will notice, will they?

"A Berk"(British Electric Railway Krank-Steam Division). The entire country's power supply is running backwards. If the ac (alternating current) is reversed so will the motor. To be phased out?

We regret there is no truth in the rumour that it was running backwards because it passed a signalman waving his arms (upper quad) and is running back to see if it can get him at the second attempt.

A ZUMMERZET ZORTIE

TED GREGORY

Do you ever get the feeling you've been lumbered? I did when the conversation switched to the subject of the 'write up' as we sped on our way to the West Somerset Railway on Saturday 11 March 1979. Four members and two guests made the journey in not the pleasantest of weather in a rather chilly carriage. For the buffs, the loco hauling us was 47.076 'City of Truro' - unfortunately the diesel tin can version. Fair do's it did get us to Taunton ahead of time where we joined our coaches for the journey to Minehead. On the insistence of two of our party we boarded the only AEC there. Biased? Even before we got to Minehead station Hawkeyes Walker had spotted that the two-car Park Royal DMU there had seen service on our 'Donkey' line. This now appears to be running a passenger service to Williton and Stogumber.

Our train was hauled by 0-6-0 Bagnall Saddle tank 'Victor'. If smoke was needed for effect we had plenty.

On leaving Minehead, the line runs along the back of Stalag Luft III. We were concerned about the moat which runs around three sides of it. The murkey water might well be the home of alligators.

On the dock at Watchet we saw stacks of Leyland and Ford vehicle parts and tractors awaiting shipment.

Returning from Williton we were treated to some excellent steam noises as we climbed Washford Bank. I regret not having my tape recorder. On our return we discovered that a cafe recommended by our coach driver had been closed since last summer! - so we walked down the main street until we found one. It seems the cook had switched off his machines only to have to switch on again as there were quite few meals served after ours. Back on the coach we were taken for a drive out towards Exmoor National Park, still very beautiful in spite of the low cloud, mist and rain. Half way up a winding lane climbing a hill the two National coaches in front of us stopped. One of our members unkindly said 'the Nationals can't take it' when it was seen that there was a third coach ahead of us - going backwards! He had to reverse for nearly a quarter of a mile until he found room to let us pass. I am not sure if the other four coaches were following us. For his sake I hope not.

Back in Taunton our 'Duff Gen' driver was wrong again about eateries and we trudged the half a mile into town before we found a Wimpy house. Time did not permit us to have a jar anywhere but two pubs in Taunton deserve a mention. 'The Wheeltapper' has a fine cartoon-like sign of a popeye character belting a wheel with a sledgehammer. Across the road above the door of another pub was a passable replica of a GWR loco 'Lorna Doone' (?).

Back on the train we were pleased to find it was much warmer than in the morning.

At Reading we were slowing down for our Hanscomb stop but managed to keep up enough momentum to get into the station.

An so back to Slough in good time. In spite of the weather an enjoyable day out.

HISTORY OF RAILWAYS - PART 1 - Contributed by Roger Bowen

These notes are intended to outline the most important points relating to the history of railways from the earliest times to the present day. Except where needed to illustrate British conditions or practice the history is confined to Great Britain.

Before the Railways

Before the railways the only means of transport were roads and rivers.

The Romans developed roads to their highest standards until the advent of the industrial revolution. After the Romans left roads deteriorated with lack of maintenance and use. The latter is significant, the Romans needed roads to move

troops. The Saxons and later periods did not need to move as extensively as Britain was essentially agrarian. Persons travelled on horses or on foot. Loads moved at a snail's pace behind teams of horses.

Large loads moved by water. Rivers were used wherever possible. Originally unimproved rivers were used, later by the use of weirs. Pound locks were later used, believed to be the invention of the Chinese in AD 983, the first application was in Holland in 1373. The first canal to by-pass part of a river was in 1564-1566 with the construction of the Exeter Canal. One and three quarter's mile long, 16 feet wide it had Britain's first pound locks.

One factor however was the thread throughput the entire pre-railway era. This was that civilisation was restricted to the speed of a horse. The man on horseback was the symbol of power from the days of Alexander the Great to that of Napolean. Equally it took as long to ride from Manchester to London in King George III's day as it did from Mancunium to Londinium in the days of Emperor Hadrian. The world was waiting for a new and more efficient horse. When it came the "Iron Horse" began a new epoch in the history of the world. This epoch began in the English North East and heralded "The Railway Age". Railways were man's first conquest of physical distance by mechanical power. One thing is certain, railways were needed to move the products of the Industrial Revolution. For example in the 1750's most of the trade of the Potteries went by packhorse because of the state of the roads. In October 1729 a coach took 4 days to travel 64 miles from Altrop to Bath. As well as being slow travel was expensive. In the 18th century a horse costs from £20 to £50, say one to three year's wages for a labourer. Fast mail coaches were introduced in the 1780's. London to Manchester for example in three days for £3, say three months wages for a labourer.

Thus the time was ripe for the introduction of a cheap, efficient means of travel for both freight and passengers.

Early Railways

Although railways in their mechanised form evolved in England in the first quarter of the 19th century their history goes back much earlier.

If one takes as a basic definition a railway to be a prepared track which so guides the vehicles running upon it that they can not leave the track one can go back to an extensive set of railways dating from around 2000 BC in Malta. There is some debate as to whether these were just made by traffic or deliberately cut, but those across the Isthmus of Corinth begun in 600 BC were deliberately cut for wheeled cradles carrying ships. The interesting part of the Mediterranean rutways is that the gauge was always between 4ft 5ins and 4ft 9ins, the later ones constant at 4ft 8ins to 4ft 9ins.

The first record of railed vehicles appears to go back to about 1350 AD in what is now Southern Germany. Here, in the Black Forest miners pushed box like vehicles along wooden rails. This development spread through the mining areas of Central and Eastern Europe and finally reached Great Britain. The first record dates to between October 1603 and October 1604. Between these dates a wanonway was constructed at Wollaton, near Nottingham, to take coal from pits a distance of two miles. Shortly afterwards lines were built in Northumberland, all leading down to the River Blyth. The first was probably at Bedlington in 1605.

The wagonways spread extensively throughout Tyneside, Teeside, Shropshire and South Wales by the dawn of the Steam Age. These were all specialised lines linked either to pits or canals. By 1807 the first public railway had been opened. In 1801 the Surrey Iron Railway from Croydon to Wandsworth was incorporated and was opened in 1803. In 1804 the Swansea and Mumbles Railway was incorporated and carried its first goods traffic in 1806. The first record of passenger traffic was 25 March 1807, and this became the first public railway in the world to carry passengers.

All the lines mentioned used horses as their motive power, or in some colliery lines, gravity, or men pushing trucks.

THE WYCOMBE RAILWAY AND THE MARLOW DONKEY — MIKE WALKER

Part 4 Railwaymania

After many years of plans and talking Maindenhead finally received its new station on 1st November 1871, when the present structure at the junction of the main line and Wycombe branch was opened. Situated on the south side of the shopping area it initially had only three platform faces as the main line was still only double track. The branch line served the northern face of the up platform which was an island. This track was provided with an overall roof. Both platforms had extensive offices and canopies. As the station is located on an embankment the entrance hall and booking office were at ground level and a subway led to the platforms. All buildings were in an attractive cream/yellow brick with stone and red brick trimmings. The roofing was in blue slate, the booking office being topped off by an ornate turret.

The opening of the new station coincided with the closure of the original station east of the river and the WRC station. This left the village of Taplow remote from a railway so the present Taplow station was opened in late 1872. This station was very similar in its architecture to Marlow and these two present the only example of this style.

Princes Risborough became a more important junction when the Watlington and Princes Risborough was opened on 15th August 1872. This single track branch paralleled the Wycombe Railway line towards Thame for the first three quarters of a mile and then turned south west and followed the foot of

of the Chilterns to Watlington. The W and PRR was completely independent and owned its own locomotives, a Sharp Stewart 2-2-2 WT and a 2-4-OT by the same builder. Interestingly the first proposal to build a railway to Watlington was in 1864 from Cholsey on the GW main line via Wallingford and Benson. Only the Cholsey-Wallingford section was opened on 2nd July 1866, the remaining section was never built probably due to the fearsome gradients which would have been required.

The last 40 years of the last century saw a rash of abortive lines proposed in the district and it is worth studying these in some detail. In 1861 the Oxford Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway projected its own Oxford to London line, separate from the GW. This would have gone via Thame - Princes Risborough - Amersham - Beaconsfield and Uxbridge, two years later the O.W. & W was absorbed by the GW and no more was heard.

Another rival of the GW, the Midland, put forward a proposal in 1864 for a direct line from London to South Wales. This would have left the MR at Hendon thence through Amersham, Princes Risborough and Thame to Yarnton, where it would have been absorbed by the branch to Witney en route for Cheltenham. Not surprisingly the GW got together a strong lobby and the bill was thrown out of Parliament.

In 1878 the secretary of the Aylesbury and Buckingham approached the GWR regarding a proposal he had for a Maidenhead to Guildford line via Winkfield, Warfield, Binfield, Ascot, Bagshot, Woking and Cobham. The GW were unable to support the idea and in any case there was insufficient time left to introduce a bill that year. A second attempt in 1879 met a similar reaction from the GW for this scheme is hard to understand as it would have taken the company into Surrey and the heart of South Western territory.

In November 1881 a bill was presented for a High Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Uxbridge and London Railway, this would have passed via Gerrards Cross, north of Denham, Ruislip and Eastcote. Junctions would have been provided with GW at High Wycombe, the Uxbridge and Rickmansworth proposal north east of Denham, the Metropolitan at Harrow and the LNWR at Harrow and Wealdstone. All except the LNWR connection were approved by Parliament in 1882, but the powers lapsed in 1887 and were not renewed.

The District Railway surveyed an extension from Ealing through Uxbridge, Gerrards Cross and Beaconsfield to High Wycombe in 1891-2. However the District's finances were none to healthy and after careful consideration of the Surveyor's report the Board decided not to promote a bill.

The abortive MR South Wales line of 1864 was recalled by the London and South Wales project of 1895. This had the support of the MR, LNWR and the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire and proposed a line by way of the upper Thames Valley to Oxford and thence by Thame to Bledlow. Here there would be

a junction, the northern line would have joined the Met at Missenden whilst the other would run via High Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Denham, Ruislip and Harrow, joining the Midland at Welsh Harp. This plan came at a bad time for the GW who were at that time at the bottom of the post-broad-gauge depression. The threat to the GW's lucrative coal traffic caused a state of near panic at Paddington. However, the GW managed to split the opposition by 'buying off' the MS and L with the promise of certain facilities, including the connection at Banbury, and the London & South Wales plan died.

The District's attentions were turned to High Wycombe in 1896 when a bill was placed through a nominally independent company for an extension of its proposed Ealing & South Harrow line through Ruislip, Ickenham, Uxbridge, Denham, Gerrards Cross and Beaconsfield to High Wycombe. The terminus would have been further up Amersham Hill from the GW station and would have involved much demolition. There was to be no connection with the GW at High Wycombe. Despite strong support from Uxbridge, where businessmen subscribed £1,200 towards the cost of the bill, the scheme never received the Royal Assent.

In reply to the District's ambititions the GW promoted its own bill in 1897 for a direct Acton to High Wycombe and the Greenford loop. This of course was to form part of the GW/GC Joint Line and that forms the next part of this series.

In 1898 a plan called the Windsor & Ascot railway appeared. This would have passed through Clewer and Bray, or by a direct route with a branch to Bray. This would have become a part of the LSWR but nothing became of the project.

As recounted in Part 3, the GWR has assumed total control of the Great Marlow Railway in 1897 and plans were drawn up to connect Marlow with Henley, which had been reached from Twyford as early as 1st June 1857. In preparation for the scheme the Henley branch was doubled in 1897. Three routes are suggested in various publications. In the MMRPA publication '100 Years of the Marlow Donkey' the route suggested is from Henley station on the west bank to just upstream of Temple Island, where it would cross the river and then through Remenham, Medmenham, Hurley and Bisham on the south bank and then re-cross the river to run into Marlow. The September 1957 'Railway Magazine' shows the line crossing the river adjacent to Henley station and running on the east bank to a point downstream of Temple Island and then follow the north bank all the way to Marlow, thus avoiding reversal at either Henley or Marlow. Both schemes would have had the effect of causing much demolition, in the former case at Henley (possibly including the church!), and in the latter most of Marlow including Institute Road and the High Street would have gone. The third and most likely route would be to cross the river near Henley station and follow the south bank to Bisham, where it would run into Marlow by a bridge near where the present by-pass crosses the river.

In the event despite the approval of the residents of Marlow, the Bill which was presented to Parliament in 1897/8 received opposition from the Leander Rowing Club at Henley and Cookham RDC. The Council formed a special committee to consider the proposal. Its Surveyor was concerned that there was no provision for traffic over or under bridges or level crossings during construction. There was also concern that the embankments would cause flooding of property near the river because the natural flood plains would be upset. Earl Russell was concerned at the high number of level crossings which would be required. He claimed the GW had recently been found guilty of manslaughter, following a fatal accident on a crossing near Maidenhead. Further concern over level crossings came from the County Council.

Faced with this opposition the GW lost interest in this double track link and turned its attention to building its main line cut-offs in the early 1900's.

Meanwhile traffic had been building up on the GW main line and this led to the widening of four tracks in 1891-2. At Maidenhead the new lines were located on the South side of the existing track and involved much reconstruction. Spoil to widen the ambankments was removed from the Waltham cutting which was also widened. Generally speaking the under bridges were merely extended and it is still possible to see the join in the brick-work. Originally it was intended to demolish Brunel's bridge over the river but this met with much opposition and so finally the bridge was enlarged to the original design.

The last broad gauge train left Paddington for Plymouth on 20th May 1892 and within a few months the remains of the old broad gauge track had been removed from the Maidenhead area. Incidentally, a third rail had been laid in 1861 to allow the standard gauge trains of the West Midland Railwsy to reach London.

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