

# THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

# 111

December 2005



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A Gem Not to be Missed

George Gilbert & Grays

Up the Junction

# The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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### FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

*Top: A King at Maidenhead 4 January 1955 by Ken Lawrie*

*Bottom: During the cold snap that caused so much chaos throughout the country, a Bedford - Bletchley DMU enters a snowbound station at Woburn Sands on 13th February 1991. Tim Edmonds*

# TIMETABLE

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the Garden Room, Liston Hall, Liston Road, Marlow, at 7.45 for 8.00pm.

- Thursday 19 January                    **TRAVELS WITH A MAMIYA AND STEPLADDER**                    Malcolm Ranieri  
Malcolm's photographic byline is familiar to readers of all the magazines.
- Thursday 16 February                    **AGM & MEMBERS PHOTOGRAPHIC EVENING**  
All members are encouraged to attend the AGM, which will be followed by a show of photographs by members. Please bring a *few* slides along (about 10-15), or a selection of prints for a table display.
- Thursday 16 March                    **35 YEARS WITH A CAMERA**                    Mike Timms  
Mike Timms looks back on his railway travels since 1970 and will also present a brief update on the GWS Railmotor project.
- Thursday 20 April                    **RAILWAY ODDITIES – YOU CANNOT BE SERIOUS!**                    Tim Edmonds  
Tim delves deep into his photographic collection to bring a selection of pictures showing the stranger side of railways and railway operations, including unusual lines, strange formations, special locos and rolling stock - expect the unexpected.
- Thursday 18 May                    **YET MORE FROM COLOUR RAIL**                    Ron White  
Stand by for more pithy tongue-in-cheek observations from one of our most popular regulars.
- Thursday 15 June                    **GAS TURBINES AND DIESELS OF THE UNION PACIFIC**                    Tom Watson  
Tom follows up his coverage of the world's largest steam locos with a look at the world's largest diesels and the amazing Big Blow gas-turbines.
- Thursday 20 July                    **THE WELSH HIGHLAND RAILWAY**                    Ivan Ball  
Ivan reviews the work to date and what still has to be done on this remarkable project.
- Thursday 21 September                    **THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY**                    Keith Smith
- Thursday 19 October                    **BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE**                    Chief Inspector Willie Baker
- Thursday 16 November                    **THE LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY**                    Noel Coates
- Thursday 21 December                    **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**

## FORTHCOMING VISITS

The following are being planned:

- 7-9 May                    **RPSI ANNUAL IRISH RAILTOUR**                    by air
- 25-28 May                    **BAIE DE SOMME WEEKEND**                    by car and ferry
- 2 or 9 July                    **BLUEBELL RAILWAY**                    by coach

*Please note: The above programme is correct at press time but subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Please check the Society's website [www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk) for the latest details.*

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

It is with some sadness that we report the passing of one time Secretary and Chairman Eddie Lewcock. The funeral was held at Milton Ernest, near Bedford on 21st October where he and Mary moved to in June this year. Tim Speechley, Julian and myself represented the Society. A donation has been forwarded to the Bedford NHS Trust (Critical Care Unit).

The recent auction of books from Peter Bond's collection has been a great success; over half of the titles having been sold to members raising in excess of £350. Thank you all for your generous support. I offer my sincere

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thanks to Tim Edmonds for acting as list compiler and auctioneer for the sale.

The ballot result, following the questionnaire at the October meeting regarding future visits, has the Bluebell as clear favourite for a visit in July 2006, (2nd or 9th) date to be confirmed.

With the festive season almost upon us may I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

*Gordon Rippington.*

# SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Kim Fullbrook provided an excellent overview of Irish railways over the past twenty years at our September gathering. He covered the subject comprehensively with an overview of the loco and carriage fleets after which he took us on a photographic tour of just about every line in the Emerald Isle showing what a superb place it is (or was!) to watch trains. Strangely, only the steam specials organised by the RPSI failed to get a mention.

Frank Banfield returned in October for another rummage through his remarkable archive of old railway films (fast becoming a rival to the late John Huntley?). After an opening film on the Industrial Revolution in general, we were treated to the BTF's classic *Giants of Steam* and after the break some real gems including a visit to New York State's Catskill Mountains and the remarkable Otis Elevating Railway shot in 1906, two Southern films, one showing the movement of South African fruit from Southampton to London, including some wonderfully inefficient and labour intensive multiple handling, the other the working of Waterloo during the Second World War. The evening wrapped up with a look back at LT trolleybuses in north London c.1961 (for Mike Hyde, who was AWOL!), trams at Fulwell in south west London and an incredible ride along the Metropolitan from Baker Street to Uxbridge and Moor Park shot in 1910 and unrecognisable today! More please!

The railways of Britain in the 21st Century were the subject of Ian Francis' fascinating talk in November. We were taken all round the country during 2000 to 2003 and it is frightening to see how much has already passed into history.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

It's that time again, subscriptions fall due for renewal in January. The good news is that the Treasurer sees no need to increase them for 2006, that's £12.00 for full members and £7.00 for regular members.

A glance at the forthcoming programme on page 2 will show that Malcolm has put together an impressive and varied programme to entertain us, so we hope we can look forward to your continued support in the coming year.

Please use the form enclosed with this edition and make cheques payable to MDRS, alternatively, you can give cash to Peter at the meetings.

From January, there will be a modest charge of 20p for the refreshments during meetings.

## PETER BOND'S BOOKS

A total of 128 books were sold in the auction, raising a total of £397.31. Of the remainder, some items have been auctioned online through eBay (raising a further £40) and the rest are being sold via a second-hand book dealer. Thanks to members for their enthusiastic and generous participation, which puts us well on the way to our objective of purchasing a digital projector.

## MARY DOVE

As some members may already know, Mary, widow of Ernie Dove, had a stroke and fall in August whilst

performing her volunteer duties on Marlow station.

Although she did not sustain any serious physical injuries, the stroke has affected her memory and she can recall nothing since her twenties. She is now being cared for in a nursing home. Our best wishes go to her.

Members will recall that Mary was awarded the MBE some years ago for her untiring work to keep Marlow station neat and tidy and the travelling public informed when things go wrong.

## MIKE'S LAST JOURNEY



As mentioned in the last issue, Mike Norris' ashes were scattered at Fawley before the annual barbeque on 4th September. With Colin Gooding at the regulator and Julian Heard on the shovel, no. 31 made a rare full throttle assault on Fawley's 1 in 13 bank. With the whistle crowing, the noise was deafening as Mike was sent to the heavens on a glorious late summer morning.

Thanks to Sir William for making his railway available to allow Mike to go out in such spectacular fashion.

*Photo: David Johncock*

## FIRE AT HIGH WYCOMBE

Chiltern Railways' run of bad luck continues. A serious fire broke out at High Wycombe station during the afternoon of Sunday 27th November causing extensive damage to the down side buildings and adjacent canopy on platform 2. It is thought that it was caused by a deep fryer in the staff mess and took two hours to extinguish.

As a result down trains formed of more than 4 cars were unable to call at the station and therefore additional stops were made by northbound services at Beaconsfield with a bus connection been there and High Wycombe. Up trains and those terminating in the bay platform were unaffected although there was considerable disruption to passenger flows.

At the time of writing, there was no indication how long repairs to the station will take.

# EDGAR "EDDIE" LEWCOCK

1925 - 2005

Very sadly the Society has lost another stalwart member this year with the death of Eddie on October 10th at Bedford Hospital. He had not been well for some time and he and Mary had moved to a lovely bungalow in Milton Ernest, a few miles north of Bedford, only in June, to be close to their daughter Christine.

Edgar William Lewcock was born in London and early years were spent at Manor Park and later Thames Ditton in Surrey. He studied at Kingston Grammar School where he rowed for the school and became an Army Cadet, later joining the Home Guard. At Imperial College, London, he studied Mechanical Engineering and then joined the Royal Navy on the day peace in Europe was declared! It was whilst in the Navy he met Mary, who had been nursing during the war.

Upon leaving the Navy he became a pupil apprentice at Derby Locomotive Works (I am not sure if this was under the auspices of the LMS or the newly formed BR) but in 1951 moved to be an engineer at Beckton Gas Works. Later that year he married Mary and in 1952 they moved to Chippenham where Eddie had joined the Railway Division of Westinghouse. When Mary's father died they moved to Bristol to be close to her mother and in 1954 Andrew was born. Then in 1955 the family moved to a larger house in Keynsham, where Christine was born in 1959.

It was in 1968 that the family moved to High Wycombe, when Eddie was offered a senior position with Hale Hamilton Valves designing high-pressure valves for submarines. He was obviously well thought of and within two years was promoted to be the company's Sales Director giving the opportunity for travel all over the world. He retired in 1992 and was then able to indulge fully in his hobbies.

He was always very involved in various societies, such as the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, High Wycombe Model Engineers, Gauge O Guild, Fawley and of course our own M&DRS, often becoming a member of their committees. In our case he joined the Committee in early 1989 and by 1990 was both Secretary and Vice-Chairman, positions he retained until becoming Chairman in March 1996, a post he held until ill health forced him to give up that role in December 2000. Nevertheless, he continued to serve on the committee until early 2004 when increasingly poor health forced him to stop. Throughout his earlier years in the Society he was a regular contributor of articles for the *Donkey*, many reflecting his fascination for all aspects of steam loco technology and often following visits abroad, usually accompanied by Mary, who would be dragged off to the station, frequently in the less salubrious part of town. She told me that even on their honeymoon to the South of



*Eddie in his element aboard the foot-plate of 80080 at Butterley in 1991.*

France she saw parts of Nice no tourist had ever seen, just so Edgar (Mary never called him Eddie) could see some unusual locomotives!

Whilst living in Keynsham Eddie had built his first 5" gauge passenger carrying railway in the garden and both Andrew and Christine learnt to drive a steam locomotive long before a car. Years later, the arrival of grandchildren was a good excuse for putting down a track at Rupert Avenue.

More impressive still was the huge 0 gauge layout Eddie created in the garden there. The Butcombe Railway was very much based on the Somerset and Dorset but with some unlikely other locomotives thrown in for good measure. It offered continuous running when necessary, or alternatively end to end with a choice of termini, outside or

inside. Running was invariably masterminded by Eddie in the main shed with other visiting operators generally allocated to the two branch terminals. Whenever I went I seemed to always end up in the "Butcombe" shed with a constant battle of getting too much stock re-marshalled and locos away from the buffer stops, turned and ready for their return, whilst Eddie was hell bent on sending yet more trains for which I had no space. What fun! Often my son Richard would come with me, and Tim Edmonds and his Matthew would also be there and I well remember how exceedingly patient Eddie was when explaining to the youngsters how some complicated manoeuvre could best be achieved. I think Richard went mainly for the refreshments Mary put on for us - a trip to Eddie's always meant cans of coke and Kit-Kats for the boys! It was a very sad day when operating sessions finally had to come to an end because the extent of maintenance the ageing layout demanded just became too much.

I am sure that having to dismantle the line was a pretty bitter experience for Eddie but even in his last days he was very positive about setting up some form of layout at Milton Ernest. What a shame he did not have the time left to achieve this.

The funeral service was held on October 21st at the picturesque All Saints Church in Milton Ernest, just a stone's throw from the bungalow, and the Society was well represented by Gordon Rippington, Julian Heard and me. Afterwards the coffin was interred in the church grounds within earshot of trains on the Midland main line. Eddie was buried wearing his MDRS tie and accompanying him was an S&D signalling token from Evercreech Junction to help with his onward journey.

Our sincere condolences go to Mary, and to Andrew and Christine and their families.

Goodbye old friend. Thanks for all the fun we had together. Rest in peace.

*Tim Speechley*

# A GEM NOT TO BE MISSED - BUT SOME PEOPLE DID!

DAVID GARNER reports on the trip that wasn't!



*7822 Foxcote Manor leaving Llangollen for Carrog on 3rd July 2005.*

*All photos: David Gardner*

When I first saw the proposed MDRS trip to the Llangollen Railway announced in the Marlow Donkey newsletter I made a mental note not to forget about going up there for the weekend of 2nd and 3rd of July. However other things got in the way and it wasn't until the middle of June that I remembered that I had to contact the Llangollen TIC and this I did on the 17th June. The lady on the other end of the phone said, "I hope you are not coming while the Eisteddfod is on." "No, no," I said, "We are coming the week after." When all the details of events and places to stay arrived a few days later it began to dawn on me that if the International Musical Eisteddfod started on Tuesday 5th July we might be hard pushed to find somewhere to stay in the town over the weekend. Luck was on our side, though, as we managed to book a B & B with the first phone call we made.

On Friday 24th June I rang Mike Walker to say we would meet up on the Sunday. "The trip's been cancelled due to lack of support," came the reply. "Here we go again," I thought, "A repeat of the Dean Forest trip of 2003". Not wishing to travel via Birmingham New Street we planned to go via Newport, Hereford and Craven Arms, a much more scenic and less crowded route. At 7.45 am on Saturday morning my wife, Rosemary, and I left home to catch the 8.11 train to Swindon, changing there at 8.25 for the 8.40 to take us to Newport. When we arrived at Bristol Parkway at 9.07 we were told there had been a signal failure in the Severn Tunnel area. After 10 minutes I asked one of the platform staff if we were likely to get our 9.54 connection from Newport. His reply was that, "An instruction to proceed was expected within 10 minutes." Otherwise he would return. True to his word he came back, telling us to catch the 9.38 Virgin service to Birmingham, then the 11.33 Arriva Trains to Holyhead which called at Ruabon. As we left to cross

the footbridge messages were being given that all passengers on the First G.W. service were to be taken to Newport by coaches.

Not unusually, the Scottish bound Virgin train was running a bit late and was also crowded. We did manage to get seats, though, and, despite the usual slow and dreary approach through the suburbs of Birmingham, we arrived on time. The enduring 30 minutes wait in the noisy hell-hole that is New Street was not pleasant, added to which our Arriva service to Ruabon was only a two-car set and was quickly filled, yet still managed to depart several minutes late. By this time both Rosemary and I needed to use the toilet. We had not bothered at New Street as there was a charge, but despite there being two toilets on the train both were locked and out of use. Now this was a Holyhead-bound train and it would be several hours before it reached its destination and we were not the only ones who were desperate. To add insult to injury, a refreshment trolley was busy going up and down the aisle selling drinks. Rosemary said that perhaps there would be a toilet at Ruabon station. But I told her not to bank on it and I was right.

Our arrival was about 5 minutes down and then we had a short walk along the station approach to catch the bus. Like the train, I think the bus must have been running behind time because it arrived as we got to the bus stop, when, in fact, we should have had a 10 minute wait. The journey time through Plas Madoc and Trevor to Llangollen took less than 15 minutes. Here there were toilets but, again, they were pay ones. "We'll wait until we get to the B&B," said Rosemary and that was a 10 minute walk away with our luggage to carry.

*Berwyn station is one of the most picturesque on any British heritage line. 6430 calls on 3rd July 2005 on its way to Carrog.*

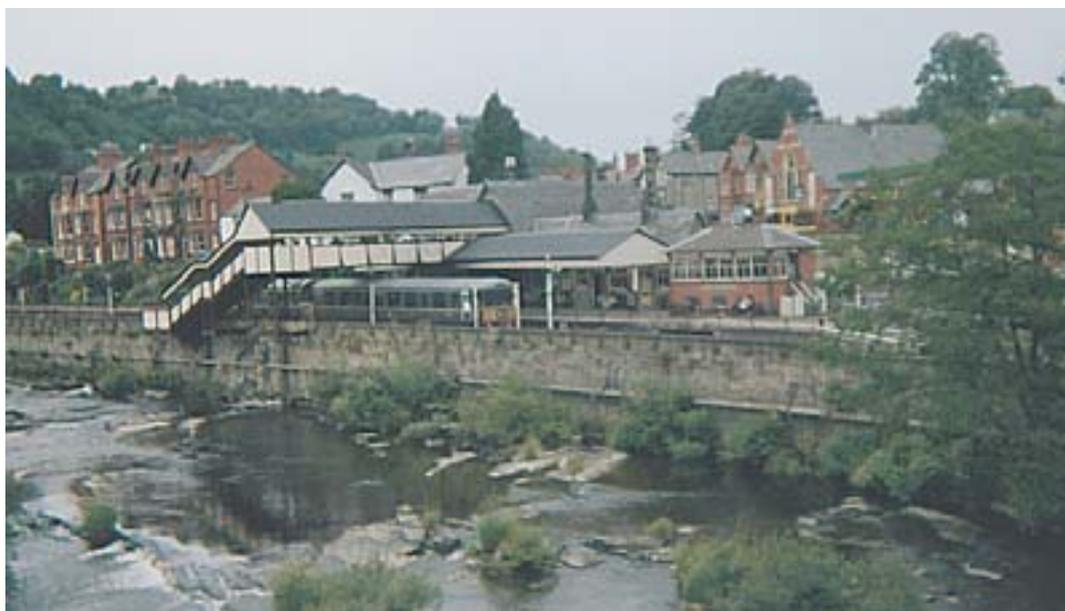
On arrival at our boarding house we could get no answer from our persistent ringing of the door bell. We were just about to beg mercy from the Somerfield store, more or less next door to the B&B, when the landlady arrived, having been to the dry cleaners to collect some bedding. It was a relief to get into the house in more ways than one! The rest of Saturday was spent going round the town and riverside, visiting Plas Newydd, famous for its 'Ladies of Llangollen', then a meal in one of the delightful inns in the town.

After a good night's sleep and a hearty breakfast we set out for Llangollen station which is an impressive structure as well as being in a pleasant spot alongside the River Dee. We caught the first steam-hauled train out, at the head of which was 0-6-0 pannier tank 6430. Drawing out of the station we passed the former Goods Yard high up on the embankment, now used for storage and repair of locos and coaches, then trundled over the Dee Bridge. Our first station stop was Berwyn which has to be one of the most attractive railway buildings in preservation. It was built in Mock Tudor style to complement the original Chain Bridge Hotel on the opposite bank of the river. Unfortunately the effect has been ruined by the modern extensions to the hotel. Whilst not unique, Berwyn is interesting as part of the platform is built over the viaduct. The next structure of note is Berwyn Tunnel and at 689 yards long possibly ranks as the longest in railway preservation. We stopped at Deeside Halt - built in typical GWR style, but which has only been in existence since the 1990s. Glyndyfrdwy, our next stop, has been mainly reconstructed as a LNWR station, as the original building is in private use. At this point we passed a Heritage diesel railcar heading for Llangollen. And so on to Carrog - the present end of the line, though the society is hoping its extension to Corwen will soon be open.

We had just under 25 minutes to look round the book shop and various stalls in the yard, then got back on the train which took us to Berwyn, where we left the train.



We had hoped to cross the chain bridge but it was closed until restoration work is carried out. Instead we walked round the road to the hotel which gave us a chance to look at the railway viaduct and station from below. After lunch we walked about a mile to the fairly extensive ruins of the Valle Crucis Abbey, part of which was used as a farm dwelling until 1951. We decided to return to Berwyn station where we had some tea before catching the 15 minutes late-running 15.25 which was hauled by 7822 *Foxcote Manor* (a proper engine according to Rosemary). On arriving at Llangollen we made for the canal wharf as I dearly wanted to take a canal boat-ride over the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, but as we arrived the last motor boat was just leaving, so we took a horse-drawn trip in the opposite direction. About half way we met a horse and boat on its return journey. The cross-over went without incident, but as one of the ropes was let out it caught under the returning boat's rudder, cutting through it and disabling the craft. Had the steer man not cut the rope things might have been even worse. Our boat was then able to continue, while the steer man of the second boat used a mobile phone to contact the Wharf for a replacement rope and rudder. Never let it be said that the trips I make are not exciting! Until you have experienced



*A class 104 DMU waits to leave Llangollen on 3rd July 2005.*

a horse-drawn canal boat ride it is not possible to realise how quiet such journeys must have been when canal butty boats were plying their trade. Before going back into the town proper we watched the last train of the day, a two car DMU, leave Llangollen station. Then, after a bite to eat, we walked along part of the old track bed towards Ruabon, now a riverside path.

Unlike the previous two days Monday morning was rather wet so we dived into the local museum while awaiting our bus to Ruabon, which should have left at 11.15 but was 5 minutes late. This would not have been a problem but the driver overshot the Ruabon station stop. However, we still had a 15 minute wait on the platform in the teeming rain before our train, the 11.52 to Birmingham, arrived. One of the highlights of this part of the journey is emerging from the Chirk tunnel then running alongside a canal aqueduct. After a change at Shrewsbury we had a 15 minute wait before boarding a Wales and Borders train to Newport, passing through some delightful countryside on the former GW/LNWR joint line as far as Hereford and GWR thereafter. We

arrived in Newport with less than 10 minutes to wait for our Wessex service to Portsmouth Harbour, which departed at 14.43. All went well as we first passed through the Severn and Patchway tunnels before coming to a halt in the cutting with pouring rain and thunder and lightning all around us. It turned out there had been a lightning strike in the Bristol area, knocking out all the approach signals. Luckily, after 20 minutes, we got going again with an arrival in Bath 17 minutes down. By this time we had missed our connection to Chippenham by 10 minutes. The next First GW service for Paddington was due out at 16.12 but was 5 minutes late! We finally arrived in Chippenham at 16.30. Despite some of our travel difficulties the trip was worth the effort and I cannot understand MDRS members not being so keen. You missed a gem, the scenery was truly magnificent. The town of Llangollen and railway are in a class of their own and for anyone staying a couple of days or more there are plenty of interesting things to see and do, and you won't break the bank to do it either.

Next time don't dither - just get up and go!

## A BUCKS QUIZ FOR CHRISTMAS

How well do you know the railways of Buckinghamshire? This quiz is for fun only to tease your brain after over-indulging during the festive season. The answers will be given in the next issue or if you can't wait, on the website from the New Year.

For the purposes of this quiz, the historical questions refer to the old Bucks, that is before the major boundary changes of 1974 which saw Slough and Leighton Buzzard sent to other counties whilst the current questions refer to the present day county.

- 1 Which was the first railway to be opened in the county?
- 2 Which was the first railway to be closed in the county?
- 3 Which was the most recently closed passenger railway in the county?
- 4 In 1900 how many different railway companies offered passenger services in the county and which were they?
- 5 How many passenger Train Operating Companies currently operate services passing through the county and which are they?
- 6 What was the maximum number of public passenger stations in the county, excluding those that have been relocated to an adjacent site such as Marlow or High Wycombe?
- 7 How many stations are open to the public today?
- 8 Excluding Gerrards Cross! What was the maximum number of tunnels built in the county?
- 9 How many tunnels remain in the county today and what happened to the others?
- 10 The viaduct over Rayners Avenue opposite Kings Mead between High Wycombe and Loudwater is named in honour of Sir Phillip Rose, but who was he?
- 11 What was the connection between the Great Marlow Railway and a well known Marlow brewer?

12 What did Taplow and the old Marlow stations have in common?

13 What was significant about January 1914 on the Marlow branch?

14 In GW days what was the Route Availability rating of the Marlow branch?

15 Which preserved 14xx tank was a regular performer on the 'Donkey in the 1950's?

16 Marlow once had a working 2 foot gauge railway. Where was it and who owned it?

17 When did the old Marlow station close?

18 Why are Chiltern Railways Clubman units known as class 168 and not part of the similar Turbostar class 170 series?

19 FGWL class 165/1 units are prohibited from working between Amersham and Harrow-on-the-Hill or Princes Risborough and Aylesbury. Why?

20 Chiltern Railways services between Amersham and Harrow-on-the-Hill are unique in one respect. What is it?

21 What is notorious about Underbridge 128 on the WCML at the north end of the infamous Ledburn Junction - apart from it being called Sears Crossing?

22 What "White Elephant" was built between Winslow and Bletchley during the 1950's?

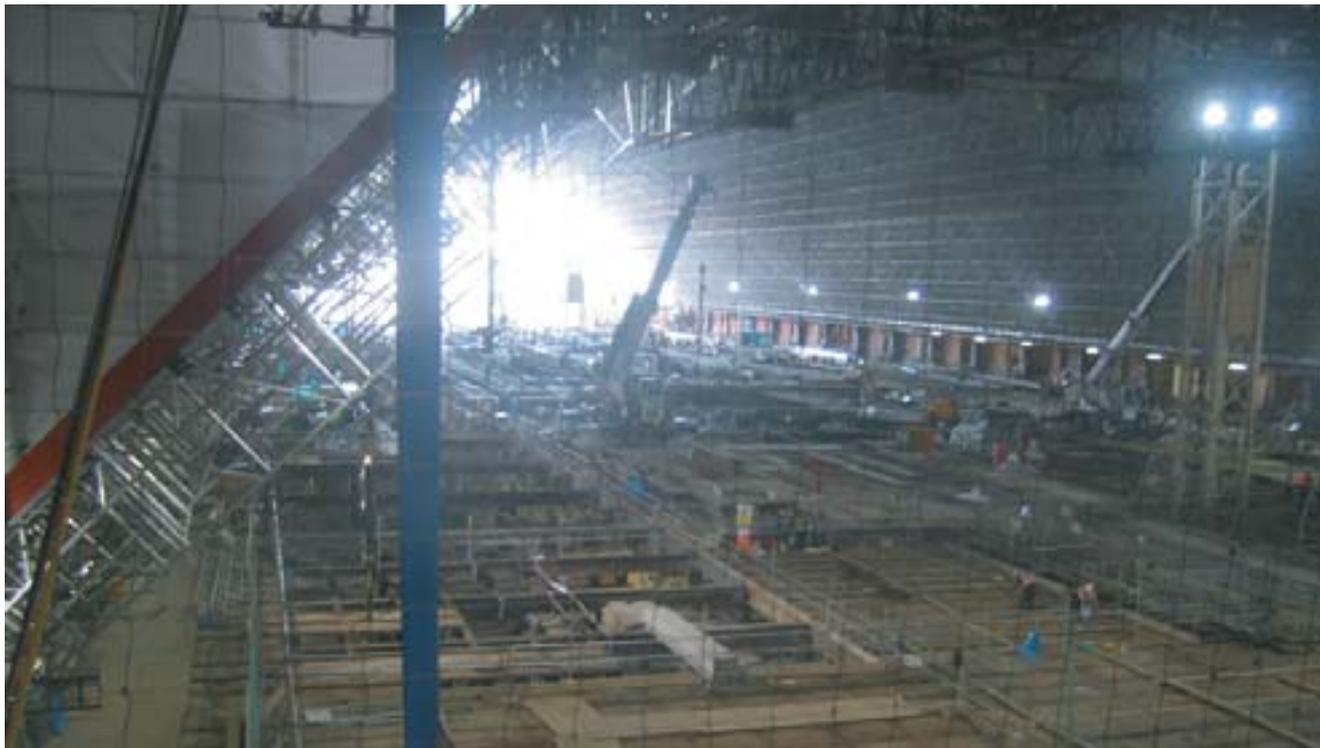
23 Where is either 25m 40c from Euston or 28m 50c from Paddington?

24 What was unique about Aylesbury Town station before 1948?

25 What of significance occurred between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury in 1868?

# GEORGE GILBERT AND GRAYS - MDRS AT LARGE IN LONDON

Tim Edmonds



*The society's members got a rare chance to look at the work going on inside the great train shed at St. Pancras. The large hole in the left foreground will form an atrium to allow natural light to penetrate into the Eurostar booking office in the undercroft.*

*photo: Dave Theobald*

The society's outing on 13th August included nineteenth century opulence and twenty-first century engineering, linked by a sample of what London's current public transport system can offer. Members of our party travelled independently to meet at St Pancras, but your scribe's early start turned into a late arrival thanks to a series of glitches. Because of the Tesco tunnel collapse at Gerrards Cross I decided to travel from Amersham, but the Chiltern 165 unit that I boarded there was taken out of service at Chalfont with brake problems. The following fast Birmingham train, diverted via Aylesbury, made an untimetabled stop at Amersham, but alas failed to do so at Chalfont, leaving me to pick up the next Metropolitan train - which also got into difficulties and was terminated at Harrow. As expected, there were no trains on the direct sub-surface line from Baker Street to Kings Cross, so that meant going via the tube with another change. After that things could only get better, and so it proved...

We began with a tour of the former Midland Grand Hotel, the great gothic masterpiece of Sir George Gilbert Scott, built between 1868 and 1876 at the front of St Pancras station. Closed as a hotel since 1935 it was used as offices until the 1980s, since when it has remained disused in spite of various proposals for returning it to use as a hotel. However, the development of St Pancras as the terminus for the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL2) has given impetus to a scheme by Manhattan Loft and London Continental Railways to convert the original building into a 244 room hotel and 68 apartments. Until work started it was possible to join public tours round selected parts of the building, but in view of the expected size of the MDRS party we opted to

[www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

have our own exclusive tour at an earlier time. This proved to be an excellent decision since our friendly and knowledgeable guide gave us a significantly longer tour, visiting several rooms that were not on the regular itinerary.

A few parts of the building remain substantially as they must have been when built, if rather grubbier and often with layers of paint covering most of the original decoration. In several places we were shown small areas



*The Grand Staircase was a centre piece of the Midland Grand Hotel which will be restored to its former glory.*

*photo: Dave Theobald*



*The splendour of the Midland Grand Hotel seen from the Grand Staircase, with some of the original wallpaper still in place. Note the corbel carved in the design of the Wyvern from the Midland Railway's coat of arms.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*

*The colonnade in the Ladies' Drawing Room of the Midland Grand Hotel. Through the glass doors on the left was a covered terrace overlooking the Euston Road.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*



*This alcove at the head of the Grand Staircase is one of the outstanding decorative features of the Midland Grand Hotel. Once again it will be restored.*

*photo: Dave Theobald*

of wall or ceiling where careful removal of the later layers revealed the original decoration still in place, and the refurbishment will attempt to reproduce the original designs wherever possible, while leaving the original preserved. Alas, some rooms had been severely damaged by clumsy, even vandalous, conversion to offices and will be more difficult to restore.

Among the highlights of our tour was the Grand Staircase, dark and gloomy in disuse but still magnificent with its dome at the top, and the Ladies' Drawing Room, which originally had a covered terrace overlooking the Euston Road and which in the 1890s shocked London by becoming its first Ladies' Smoking Room! We also had glimpses through the back of the building into the station concourse, in the process of being completed gutted for CTRL2. The tour finished with an inspection of the Gents, complete with an 'aquarium' cistern above the urinals.

The second part of the day's proceedings were led by our member Mark Hopwood, Operations Director for Londonlines, who showed us work in progress along the route of CTRL2. We began by taking the bus north past Kings Cross for a grandstand view of the various flying junctions under construction at the end of the long tunnel section from Stratford. Another short bus ride brought us to Camden Road station, from where we were going to take a Silverlink Metro train (one of Mark's) eastwards on the North London line. However, engineering works on the line west to Willesden Junction via Gospel Oak and Hampstead Heath meant that westbound trains were using the direct line to Willesden via Primrose Hill. Because this does not normally carry passenger trains we



*While the MDRS group were waiting at Camden Road for a diverted westbound Silverlink Metro train to South Hampstead via Primrose Hill, 66099 passed with a train of eastbound hoppers.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*

opted to traverse it by going west to South Hampstead before heading east back through Camden Road to pick up CTRL2 where it surfaces again at Stratford. The old Stratford is changing completely, with most of the old railway infrastructure being swept away by CTRL2. Soon, of course, the Olympic stadium will erase even more.

On reaching West Ham we changed to another of Mark's trains, boarding a c2c service to reach Barking. The next leg of the journey would take us outside the Travelcard zone so we needed to get tickets, and Mark ably negotiated a discount for our onward route to Grays (Even Mark was surprised it was as much as 50%: "Must have been something I agreed to in a board meeting when I wasn't concentrating!" - Ed.). The CTRL2 line is on the surface from the end of the London tunnel at Dagenham Dock until the Thames tunnel at Thurrock, and we had views of several sections of line including the viaducts at Rainham, Aveley and Thurrock. There was also a glimpse of some unusual motive power, including an ex-BR class 14.

Our train terminated in the bay at Grays and that was the end of the 'guided tour'. From then on the party split into smaller groups, at least one of which embarked on a fruitless search for a pub in Grays serving a decent pint! Using our Travelcards these smaller groups chose different routes home depending on the time available and their own interests. The lines they traversed ranged far and wide - a subject which is deserving of an article in its own right in the Donkey in due course.

Thanks to Gordon Rippington and Tim Speechley for organising a fascinating day out, and to Mark for guiding us through north and east London on the trail of CTRL2.



*At the furthest extremity of our trip c2c 357 228 rests at Grays having brought the MDRS party.*

*photo: Mike Walker*



*A group of MDRS members waiting for the Romford shuttle service at Upminster, while a terminating District Line train arrives.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*

# UP THE JUNCTION!

Mike Walker

In his excellent talk in September, Kim Fullbrook briefly mentioned the strange arrangements at Limerick Junction. Perhaps a fuller explanation of the workings of this most eccentric of stations, even by Irish standards, might be of interest. Limerick Junction station first came into being in July 1848 when the Great Southern & Western's Dublin to Cork main line met the Waterford & Limerick Railway which had opened three months earlier. Although it was in the middle of nowhere, an interchange station was established just west of the diamond crossing and a small community of the same name soon grew up around it.

The remarkable thing about the station is that until 1967 all trains calling at the station, irrespective of the line they were on or the direction of travel, had to REVERSE into the platforms and some still do! Using the diagram let's explain what happened.

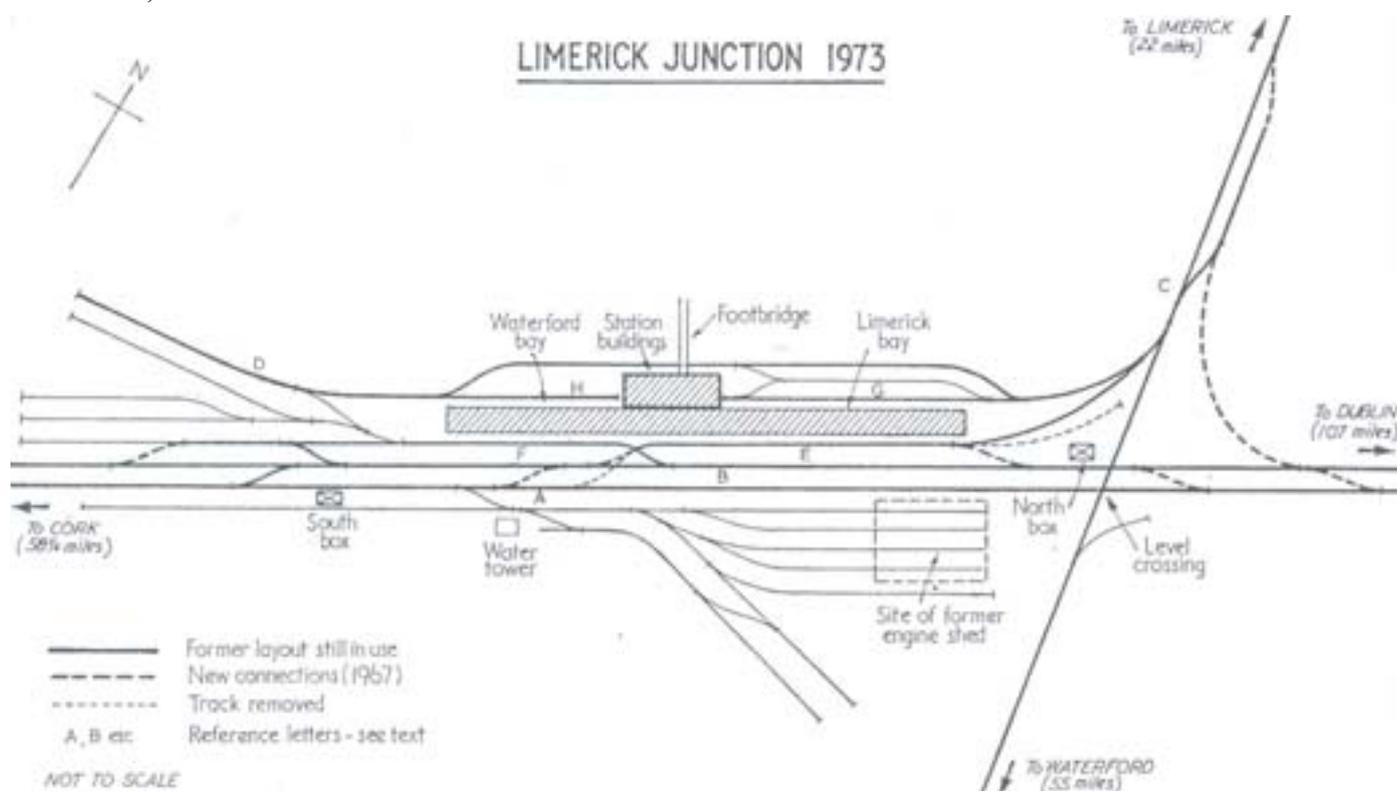
**Dublin to Cork** trains having crossed the diamond would come to a stand on the Down Main between point 'A' and the South 'Box'. They would then reverse into the Dublin end of the platform 'E'. Having done their business they would pull forward back onto the Down Main and continue to Cork. **Cork to Dublin** trains would do a similar move, stopping on the Up Main between 'B' and the North 'Box' then reversing into the Cork end of the main platform 'F' before continuing.

Trains from **Waterford to Limerick** came across the diamond and stopped beyond point 'C' then reversed back into the Limerick Bay platform 'G'. The prize though, went to the **Limerick to Waterford** trains. These turned off the W&L line at 'C' and passed behind the station coming to a stand in the headshunt 'D' before reversing into the Waterford Bay platform 'H'. Having completed its business, the train would draw forward into the



*Looking east from the former Dublin platform (F) showing the half-scissors crossing at mid platform. A Dublin to Cork train does business at the far end (E) whilst an Engineer's train waits in the foreground.*

*All photos: Mike Walker*



into the headshunt then reverse back past the station to 'C' before resuming its journey!

The reason for all this seems to have been a desire to keep a separate platform for each direction of travel to avoid confusing the passengers. It might seem complex, but all concerned had had plenty of practice and the operation was generally very slick. However in 1967 CIE did some small changes to the layout which enabled most trains to call without reversing. New crossovers (shown as heavy dotted lines) were added at each end on the main lines to enable trains in either direction to simply swing off the main line to call at the platform. In practice all main line services both Up and Down usually now use the Dublin end 'E' as this is longer than 'F' and better suited to the increasingly long trains on this line. All trains on the W&L now use the Limerick Bay; those to



*Limerick Junction North Signal Box and the flat crossing seen from a train departing towards Dublin.*



*A Limerick bound DMU stands in the Limerick Bay platform (G) whilst a freight headed by now retired 124 waits on the back road leading to the Waterford Bay platform.*

Waterford run straight in and back out. The Waterford Bay is seldom used today.

Also as part of the 1967 improvements, a direct curve was added in the north east quadrant of the crossing to allow through services between Dublin and Limerick to avoid the station altogether. Previously they were involved in a complex shunt and required a change of locomotive.

The magnificent arrays of semaphores seen in Kim's photographs are on borrowed time. They are due to be replaced by colour lights controlled from Dublin this winter whilst DMUs now rule the Limerick to Waterford line and new push-pull trains are replacing the traditional loco hauled expresses on the Cork main line. As Kim pointed out, the sugar beet trains reverse here during the season and some cement traffic is to be seen on the W&L.

As always, nothing is forever.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ON PORTLAND**      **Alan Costello**



As a postscript to his feature in the June edition of the *Marlow Donkey*, Alan has submitted these views of recent arrivals. As can be seen the site is now somewhat



crowded. The boiler of M7 30053 is surrounded by parts from various industrials (*left*) whilst the boiler of US S160 3278, with a gaping hole in the lower smokebox keeps a Sentinel diesel company (*right*).

# 25 AND 15 YEARS AGO

Tim Edmonds

## 25 YEARS AGO

The last steam locomotive in industrial service in the USA ceased operations on 3 December at Northwestern Steel & Wire, Sterling, Illinois. The loco was oil-fired 0-8-0 No 73, built by Baldwin in 1929 and formerly class P5g 8373 of the Grand Trunk Western. Survival of steam was due to the interest of the former President of the corporation, who had died in 1979.

Early in December, the tracks leading onto Carlisle Pier at Dun Laoghaire were lifted, bringing to an end 121 years of direct passenger access from ship to train. Closure of the sharply-curved quarter mile long branch from the Dublin - Wexford main line was brought about by the impending electrification of the Dublin - Bray suburban services and had originally been scheduled for early in 1981. However, the date was brought forward because of progress with the preparatory engineering work.

O.S. Nock retired from writing the 'Locomotive Practice and Performance' column in *Railway Magazine* after 22 years. His last contribution was published in the December 1980 issue and P.W.B. Semmens took over with effect from January 1981.

Closed to passenger traffic at the beginning of 1967, Dronfield station, between Sheffield and Chesterfield, was reopened on 5 January by Sir Peter Parker, Chairman of BR. The trains serving the station were supported financially by Derbyshire County Council and North East Derbyshire District Council and included connections and through tickets on local buses.



*Northwest Steel & Wire 15 in front of the electric furnace building at the Sterling, Illinois, mill in September 1965. The 0-8-0 was built by ALCo in 1923 for the Grand Trunk Western as its 8315 and later got a tender from a Chicago Burlington & Quincy 2-8-2.*

*photo: Jim Boyd*

On 27 February Sir Horace Cutler, Leader of the Greater London Council, formally opened London's third rail-connected refuse transfer station. Located in a plot between the former Great Western and Great Central lines just east of Northolt Junction, the station replaced two road-connected stations at Greenford and Harefield. Up to five trains a week were being operated via Aylesbury to the tipping site at Calvert.



*Happier days at Dun Laoghaire Pier station, with closure over four years in the future. Here the daytime Holyhead ferry has just arrived and class 141 Bo-Bo B159 waits to depart at the head of the connecting boat-train to Dublin Connolly on 4th August 1976.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*



*6201 'Princess Elizabeth' emerges from the south portal of Dinmore Tunnel with the Welsh Marches Express on 14th February 1981. This was a return tour from Crewe to Newport, with steam working by two different locos from Shrewsbury to Hereford, then Hereford - Newport - Hereford.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*



35028 'Clan Line' approaches Sudbury & Harrow Road station with outbound 'Shakespeare Limited' special from Marylebone to Stratford-upon-Avon, while a DMU heads past towards Marylebone on 22nd December 1990.

## 15 YEARS AGO

Another milestone in the modernisation of the Chiltern line was reached on 10 December when the fully-refurbished station at Bicester North was officially opened, including a car park with 160 spaces.

Roger Freeman, Minister for Public Transport, announced on 11 December that the Government had made the resources available for the Sheffield 'Supertram' light rail system. The project was the largest local scheme to be approved outside London for nearly 20 years, and contributions to the cost would also be made by the Meadowhall retail development, Sheffield Development Corporation and Sheffield City Council.

35028 *Clan Line* worked a return 'Shakespeare Limited' special from Marylebone to Stratford-upon-Avon on 22 December 1990, but similar workings planned for 9 and 23 February had to be abandoned because of line closures due to engineering works in connection with the Chiltern line resignalling. They were replaced by trains on the 'Welsh Marches' route originating from Euston.

Much of the BR network was thrown into chaos for about ten days in February by severe winter weather conditions. There was a combination of very low temperatures with falls of powdery snow on 6 and 7 February, which affected most stock but particularly modern electric locos and multiple units where the snow penetrated the axle-hung traction motor ventilators.

Barrow Hill roundhouse was granted grade 2 listed building status after pressure from the Barrow Hill Engine Shed Action Group, which wanted to prevent its demolition after BR abandoned the site on 11 February.



During the cold snap that caused so much chaos throughout the country, a Bedford - Bletchley DMU enters a snowbound station at Woburn Sands on 13th February 1991.

two photos: Tim Edmonds

### CONTRIBUTING TO THE DONKEY

The *Marlow Donkey* is your Society's magazine and needs your contributions. The Editor welcomes articles of all sorts so if you have a pet subject or have been on a trip recently share it with your fellow members. Articles typed and submitted on disk or by email are preferred but hand written contributions can be accepted (They may take a little longer to appear!) Pictures can be prints, slides or digital images.

Please contact the Editor, address on page 1, for further advice.

Deadline for next issue: 31 January 2006

# MATTERS ARISING

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

I read in the September *Marlow Donkey* that David Gardner missed seeing Barnstaple Town station. To show what he missed, here are three pictures I took in August 1993. The first one shows the river side of the station which was, or maybe still is, an Indian restaurant (but included a small railway museum). The second one shows the road side which includes the Barnstaple Town Station sign on the side of the building

The third photo taken at same time as the others of a place mentioned in David's article. This time the L&B terminus at Lynton.

Being a slow reader, a comment about Malcolm Margetts piece about Crewe. Looking through *Trains Illustrated* magazines for 1952, I can find no mention of a Crewe Open day but the June edition states that on 9th April 1952 (the day after the photo) 46200 worked the 1.45pm Birmingham to Manchester - a Crewe running in turn. It was fresh from plant where it had received modified front end frames.

Alan Costello

**KEN LAURIE** writes that his cover shot of 44710 in the September *Donkey* was taken on the outskirts of Chester in the mid-1950's. - *Editor*

## THE FLÅM RAILWAY

Keith Brown

A holiday cruise to Iceland, Faroe Islands and Norway in July 2005 found me at the fishing village of Flåm which is situated at the head of Aurlandsfjorden which is an arm of the Sognefjord the longest and deepest fjord in the world cutting more than 204km inland. Flåm has a population of some 450 souls but is renowned for its trout and salmon fishing and over the last six decades has built up a flourishing tourist industry. Like other small communities along the banks of the fjords it depended on water transport in the past but this all changed when in 1940 The Flåm Railway was opened. Tunnels and roads now link the villages of Gudvangen, Undredal, Stalheim and Aurland to Flåm and the Flåm Railway links them to the Oslo-Bergen railway line at Myrdal some 866m high up the Flåmsdalen Valley.

The building of The Flåm Railway was first proposed in 1871 but construction only commenced in the spring of 1923. Each of the twenty tunnels had to be excavated by hand and for the longest one at Blomheller, 1029m long, it took eleven years to complete equating to 163 man hours per metre. In addition to the tunnels one bridge and four-water tunnels were constructed as well as avalanche shelters. In all 5.7km of the 20.2km line is in a tunnel. The gradient for 80% of the route is 1 in 18. The minimum curve radius is 130m and one tunnel nearly completes a 180-degree turn. The tunnels criss-cross the river and the bottom of the valley three times. Remarkably only two workers lost their lives in the construction over the 17 years it took to build with between 80 and 280 men working on the line at any one time. The track is standard gauge and took from the summer of 1936 to the spring of 1940 to lay in time for the opening to freight traffic on 1st August 1940 and to passengers on 10th February 1941. Due to the war there was



no grand opening ceremony as German occupation was in existence but the Germans were keen to have the line completed.

There are eleven stations on the line, eight of which are request stops and one passing point at Berekvam about half distance. On opening the line was steam operated but once the hydroelectric power station at Kjosfossen was commissioned in 1944 electric traction took over powering the 15Kv overhead system. The last steam hauled train ran in 1947. Currently class EL17s Bo-Bo locomotives built in 1987 by Henschel, Brown Boveri top and tail the six coach trains all of which are painted bottle green as are the locomotives; 172228-31 were working on the day of my visit with 172232 spare. The coaches were most airy and comfortable and a p.a. system informed passengers of approaching highlights in the scenery. Due to the steepness of the line it was pleasing to know that five independent braking systems are in use.

This is an all year round service with up to ten trains each way in summer and five in the winter for the one-hour journey. 400,000 passengers per year are carried and a railway museum has been built alongside the station at Flåm and is well worth a visit. The memory of having seen and travelled on what is considered as the world's most attractive and spectacular railway line running through some of the wildest and most striking examples of Norwegian mountain landscapes will remain with me for ever..