

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

115

December 2006



Contents:

100 Years of the Joint Line - Part 3

Real Steam is Alive in Africa

Spirited Away

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

COMMITTEE

President:	Sir William McAlpine Bt
Chairman:	Tim Speechley. 11 Rydal Way, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP12 4NS. Tel.: 01494 638090 email: tim.speechley@ntlworld.com
Vice-Chairman	Julian Heard. 58 Chalklands, Bourne End, Bucks., SL8 5TJ. Tel.: 01628 527005 email: julian@jeh.org.uk
Treasurer:	Peter Robins. 95 Broome Hill, Cookham, Berks., SL6 9LJ. Tel.: 01628 527870 email: pd.robins@btopenworld.com
Secretary:	Malcolm Margetts. 4 Lodge Close, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 1RB. Tel.: 01628 486433 email: mandw.margetts@btinternet.com
Webmaster:	Tim Edmonds. 90 Green Hill, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP13 5QE. Tel.: 01494 526346 email: tfedmonds@btopenworld.com
Committee:	Roger Bowen. 10 Cresswell Way, Holmer Green, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP15 6TE Tel.: 01494 713887 email: roger_bowen@hotmail.co.uk
Outings Organiser:	Mike Hyde. 11 Forty Green Drive, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 2JX. Tel.: 01628 485474 email: michael@hyde9907.freemove.co.uk
Donkey Editor:	Mike Walker, Solgarth, Marlow Road, Little Marlow, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 3RS. Tel.: 01628 483899 email: mikewalker@solgarth.eclipse.co.uk

Website: www.mdrs.org.uk

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Top: 45533 'Lord Rathmore' on Bushey troughs May 1960

Photo: Ken Lawrie. (article page 15)

Bottom: 702 'Clun Castle' approaching High Wycombe on 30 April 1988. Photo: Mike Walker (article page 5)

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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

- Thursday 18 January **STEAM ON THE BURMA RAILWAY - From the Kwai to Mandalay** Nick Lera
Nick returns with more of his superb images. The WW2 background gives the subject more resonance and anchors the exotic other-worldly scenes to something members can appreciate even if foreign steam is not your main interest. All the locos featured in Burma are of classic British design.
- Thursday 15 February **AGM and THE MARLOW DONKEY & WYCOMBE RAILWAY** Mike Walker
Following the Annual General Meeting, Mike will give an illustrated presentation on our local lines.
- Thursday 15 March **DEVELOPMENTS AT CHILTERN RAILWAYS** Graham Cross
Graham is Chiltern's Business Development Manager and he takes a look at the background, current operations and future prospects of one of the country's more successful train operators.
- Thursday 19 April **THE WELSHPOOL AND LLANFAIR RAILWAY** Mike Willis
The Welshpool & Llanfair is perhaps one of the less well-known of the Great Little Trains of Wales. Mike Willis tells all.
- Thursday 17 May **LONDON UNDERGROUND** David Wadley

FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Thursday 29 March **WEMBLEY MAINLINE SIGNALLING CENTRE** by car or rail
Wembley Main Line controls the busy approaches to Euston and this provides a rare opportunity to see behind the scenes. This is an evening visit, and there is a limit of 12 so get your name down fast!
- Saturday 12 May **BLETCHLEY TRACTION MAINTENANCE DEPOT** by rail
Bletchley maintains the Silverlink County EMU and DMU fleets. In addition to touring the depot we will also visit Silverlink's control centre. Travel by train via Euston and there's a chance of a cab ride! Both these trips have been organised for us by Mark Hopwood to whom we extend our thanks.

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 for the latest details.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I'm writing this several weeks in advance but by the time you get this Christmas will be upon us again. May I take this opportunity to wish all the membership, those who attend regularly and those who don't, for whatever reason, be it pressing other engagements or simply distance, a very Happy Christmas and steamy New Year.

Although I had been on the committee for many years before I became Chairman I had not really anticipated the extra responsibility and stress this post creates. I do hope I am managing to cope adequately in your eyes, for at times the pressure of a demanding job, family life and other commitments leaves little time to dedicate to the Society. I must thank all the other members of the committee for their hard work and I think our secretary, Malcolm, is to be specially commended for the excellent programme he has drawn together for 2007. He has also, largely single handed, produced the tea and coffee at the interval during 2006's meetings, for which we have all been grateful. He has vowed to stop this in the New Year so he can enjoy some social interaction during the interval and so, as I have requested at several recent meetings, we need some help please from the membership, as there are always too many jobs for the handful of the committee to do unaided. If you feel you can help, please let one of us know. If nobody volunteers we may end up very thirsty. I would also like to thank Mike for doing such a good job on the "Donkey" though

of course it would not exist without all the contributors of articles. Ultimately it's like life in general - Team Work makes things easy.

Of course, as most of you will know, the Society reaches its 30th anniversary in 2007 and we hope to organise some special events, in addition to the normal programme of speakers, to celebrate this milestone. I have recently had confirmation that Adrian Shooter, Chairman of Chiltern Railways, has agreed to come to talk to us, probably in June and we're working on the odd special visit too. More details will follow.

In my opinion our Society is in pretty good shape. I have been to a number of talks at other societies in the last few months and in almost all cases the turnout was considerably less than our norm, despite quite well known speakers. Of course we should never be complacent, so please continue to tell people about our existence and try to encourage them to come along.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our January meeting, when we have a repeat visit from Nick Lera, who we hope will match the superb films he showed last time he came. On this occasion he is concentrating on the Burma Railway.

In the meantime, all my very best wishes for a very Merry Christmas.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The new season got off to a great start in September when Keith Smith took us on a tour of the West Somerset Railway and brought us up to date on the latest developments including the new fully signalled junction at Norton Fitzwarren and the plans for the future.

A well attended meeting in October was addressed by Chief Inspector Andrew Hunt from the British Transport Police, standing in for Chief Inspector Willie Baker who had been promoted. In an interesting presentation, he outlined the history, structure and work of the force and generated a lively debate.

Another full-house in November enjoyed an excellent presentation by Noel Coates on the under estimated Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway. A noted historian of the Lanky, he gave us a brief but informative look at every aspect of this important pre-group railway.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR BREWING

Since we have been meeting at the Liston Hall Malcolm Margetts has been undertaking the vital task of brewing up the interval refreshments. Understandably, he now wishes to be relieved and we are therefore seeking volunteers to assist the committee in this task. The preferred option would be to establish a rota which, provided enough members come forward, should only call upon your services once a year. If you are willing to help, please contact a member of the committee. The alternative is dry meetings!

A NEW FEATURE ON OUR WEBSITE

To mark our 30th anniversary the Webmaster would like to introduce a new gallery page on the society's website. This would feature local railway content (Marlow branch and Maidenhead - Bourne End - High Wycombe). If you have any suitable material that you would be willing to have displayed, please contact Tim Edmonds. Any historical pictures would be welcome, particularly special or unusual workings.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

It's that time again; subscriptions fall due for renewal in January. Once again the Treasurer sees no need to increase the rate for 2007 which means they remain at £12.00 for full members and £7.00 for regular members.

The coming year is special as it marks the Society's 30th birthday and the Committee are putting together an interesting programme of meetings, visits and special events to mark the occasion so we hope we can look forward to your continuing support.

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

ACCIDENT AT COOKHAM

In the early hours of 27th August a man trespassing on the line was struck by the last up Donkey of the night. He sustained serious injuries including losing a leg but was not found for about two hours. A Network Rail spokesman was quoted in the local press as saying that this proves how dangerous the railway can be and that "trains run all night on this line at speeds of 90 mph!"

EVERGREEN 2 COMPLETE

The second of the two new platforms at Marylebone, no. 5, was brought into use on the afternoon 14th September 2006 along with the re-instatement of the now shortened platform 4. This marks the completion of Project Evergreen 2, on-time and on-budget. The enhanced capacity afforded by the additional platforms at Marylebone combined with numerous platform extensions along the line and additional signalling will permit Chiltern to operate more and longer trains from the start of the new timetable in December.



Marylebone platforms 4 & 5 on 13th September.

Tim Edmonds

CHILTERN TO EXPAND?

Chiltern Railways have been asked by the DfT to submit a proposal for operating the local services from Birmingham Snow Hill to Leamington Spa, Stratford-upon-Avon, Stourbridge Junction and Town, Kidderminster and Worcester (currently operated by Central) as a separate entity. The three shortlisted bidders for the new West Midlands franchise have also been asked to do the same for comparison. Depending on the bids these services will either be operated by the incoming West Midlands operator from November 2007 or by Chiltern. This has been an aspiration of Chiltern's for several years.

Chiltern's parent Laing Rail and Renaissance Trains have jointly formed the Wrexham Shrewsbury & Marylebone Railway Company, which proposes to operate an open access service over that route possibly using EWS class 67's and Mk111 vehicles. At test run using such equipment was made on 11th October.

JUST TESTING

With the Marlow Branch now the exclusive province of class 165's plus the occasional 166, the appearance of the Network Rail/Serco class 960 Track Assessment Unit formed of 999600 and 999601 in the very early hours of Wednesday 27th September is noteworthy.

The unit was purpose-built at Derby in 1987 and is basically a modified class 150/1. Its role is just as described and includes ultrasonic rail tests.

On this occasion it also visited the Colnbrook, Windsor and Henley branches. As it was on the Marlow Branch from around an hour from about 01.40 it is regretted that no insomniac members were about to record the visit - unless you know differently!

AUTUMN HIGHLANDER

by Mike Hyde

Recently overhauled class 55 no. 55022 *Royal Scots Grey* (formerly D9000), one of six Deltics saved after BR service, eagerly departed King Cross station Friday 6th Oct 2006 at the head of RTC's 'Autumn Highlander' bound for Edinburgh and Inverness. This all Premium first-class dining train of 6 carriages plus 2 kitchen cars and staff support coach was off on a four day excursion to the far north of Britain.

Pick ups at Stevenage, Huntingdon, Peterborough, Grantham and York filled the train to over 200 travellers keen either to see and hear the heritage locomotives performing, or to experience the highlands of Western and Northern Scotland, or both. Certainly the catering earned full marks for quality and service - any diets were temporarily forgotten! Fair weather followed us north but shortly before York a technical disaster occurred. A piston on in one of the Deltic's two engines burst through its casing - known as 'a leg out of bed'. Nevertheless the owner was confident of reaching Edinburgh on one engine without further mishap. And so it transpired. In fact had we/you not known, few would have been any the wiser as *Royal Scots Grey* performed impeccably and lost no time en route.

Awaiting us at Waverley was class 40 no. 40145. Both this fine diesel loco and the Deltic had their own strong bands of followers on board and at the lineside throughout the voyage. A short break was allowed in the city for a stroll to Princes Street before we set off for the several steep climbs ahead. Our route was over the 2.5km Forth Railway Bridge (55,000 tons of steel) opened in 1890. Incidentally, class 47245 from West Coast Railway accompanied us all the way. However little work was required from it until the reversals at Inverness and from Georgemas Junction to Thurso.

At Inverness we were accommodated in 3 comfortable hotels with coach travel arranged to/from the station. Next morning provided 'free time' in the city with the option of a coach ride to Aviemore for a one and a half hour return trip on the Strathspey Steam Railway to Broomhill (Glenbogle). Traction was provided by an 0-6-0 Austerity saddle tank, masquerading as BR J94 68030, in glorious sunshine.

That afternoon we boarded our charter train at Inverness for a spirited run down the magnificent Highland line to Kyle of Lochalsh. On arrival we were met with wind and rain but this eased after 30 minutes. Visits to the station



55022 at Perth. Inset: the remains of the piston after the 'leg out of bed' incident.

Art Gallery and Railway Museum were made as well as to a few hostels. A few stalwarts even walked over the Skye Bridge (to get to the other side!). Dinner was served on our return leg to Inverness.

Sunday saw us heading North along the coast through Dingwall, Invergordon, Ardgay, Lairg and Rogart. At Dunrobin a 2 hour stop was scheduled in order to visit the castle and gardens, home to the Dukes of Sutherland. Inside the tearooms was found a magnificent horse-drawn steam fire appliance. Opposite on the wall were arranged a dozen shiny brass firemen's helmets. Around the walls were photographs of the Dukes' private locomotives and carriages which, in their time, had been stored at the station. (A loco and carriage are currently located in Canada). All agreed it was an excellent visit.

Another castle visit was offered later as an alternative to the coach trip to John O' Groats. This was to the Castle of Mey, the late Queen Mother's home. For this we disembarked passengers at Georgemas Junction to give them a head start whilst the train prepared to reverse to Thurso. The remaining passengers went off for a brief photo stop at John O' Groats whilst a few took the opportunity to see the sights of Thurso. On return, the castle visitors were ecstatic about their visit.

The return run to Inverness passed without incident but once again with the pleasure of on board dinner. Repacking of suitcases was necessary before taking our last night in Scotland.

Next morning we were soon comfortably seated on our train enjoying breakfast as we headed south. We paused at Perth to pick up our friendly Deltic locomotive which was manoeuvred between the class 40, which led our way home, and the coaching stock. Deltic's working engine was sometimes brought into use to assist. Occasionally we were put in the loop for scheduled trains to pass, but it did not take long for us to catch up on timings. Indeed we often gained time and had we not been sidelined approaching our destination we would have arrived early to Kings Cross rather than a few minutes down. Our engines, drivers and train staff all turned in first class performances to complete a really splendid weekend and excellent tour.



40145 at Kyle of Lochalsh.

photos: Mike Hyde



100 YEARS OF THE JOINT LINE

Part 3 DECLINE AND RECOVERY

Mike Walker



The second half of the sixties saw the Joint Line start a long decline which nearly led to closure. The heart had been ripped out of the old Great Central in September 1966 when the line was closed to passenger traffic north of Aylesbury and all traffic north of the connection to the Oxford - Bletchley line at Calvert. This included the southern half of the link between Grendon Underwood and Ashendon Junction and caused an associated drop in the number of



45077 passing site of High Wycombe Middle Signal Box with up empty GLC containers on 2nd March 1985.

All photos: Mike Walker

trains taking the GW&CG Joint Line. From March 1967 completion of the WCML electrification to Euston saw not only the enhanced service which had operated over the Joint Line whilst that project had been ongoing withdrawn, but also most of the traditional Western services from Paddington to Birmingham and beyond. Trains such as the Cambrian Coast Express and the prestige Birmingham Pullman were no more as BR turned the clock back sixty years and concentrated London to Birmingham traffic onto the LNWR route. To mark the occasion a special train called *The Zulu* ran from Paddington to Birkenhead on 4th March 1967 headed by 7029 *Clun Castle* north of Banbury.

From Monday 6th March 1967 the new era began. Whilst the local services continued to be operated by Class 115 DMUs to and from Marylebone, a semi-fast service was instituted between Paddington and Birmingham calling at High Wycombe, Bicester, Banbury, Leamington Spa and Solihull. With the closure of Birmingham Snow Hill these trains terminated at New Street and ran six or seven times in each direction daily and took around 2½ hours or about 20% longer than the former best timings. Initially these continued to be loco-hauled but eventually Swindon Inter-City DMUs (Class 123) took over. In addition to the reduction in passenger services, most freight traffic was withdrawn from the line in 1966, the main exceptions being oil traffic to Thame and coal for the cement works at Chinnor. A short lived freight flow over the line in 1968-69 was a weekly block timber train from East London to Marlow which ran via the North London Line, Greenford Loop and reversed at High Wycombe. It used Brush Type 2s based at and crewed by Stratford.

With this reduction in services it was decided that the line could be singled between Princes Risborough and Aynho Junction, a distance of 26 miles. This was carried

out during late October and early November 1968 and allowed the closure of the remaining signal boxes at Princes Risborough South, Bicester and Ardley. A passing loop was retained at Bicester controlled from Princes Risborough North 'box' but this facility was intended for emergency use only, services all being scheduled to use the Down platform in normal conditions. Similarly at Princes Risborough, the layout was simplified with all trains using the Up

platform, the Down one being retained for emergencies only. Eventually it fell into disrepair and became unusable after the footbridge was removed.

Even the reduced service was not to last. As the 1970's dawned serious consideration was given to the closure of the Northolt to Neasden line and the running of all Joint Line services to and from Paddington, but this was rejected in May 1972 on the grounds that it would be too costly to implement, although major cost savings would result in the long term. However, with the start of the summer timetable in May 1974 all but one of the semi-fast Paddington to Birmingham trains were rerouted via Reading and Oxford returning the service to that which had existed prior to 1910. The one train that remained was the 07.20 Birmingham to Paddington and the 17.40 return from Paddington in the evening. This was normally a Class 47 turn but Westerns made a brief reappearance in 1975 and later Class 50's were also regular performers. Apart from these, a two-hourly service was instituted between Marylebone and Banbury, running non-stop to High Wycombe and then calling at Princes Risborough and Bicester with the 07.40 Down also stopping at Saunderton. The branch between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury was also reduced to a very sparse service of two Up trains one at 06.50 from Aylesbury to Marylebone and the other at 18.30 to High Wycombe plus another non-stop over the branch at 19.56 to Marylebone. In the Down direction the 06.52, 17.01, 18.08, 20.52 and 21.52 Marylebone to Aylesbury trains ran via High Wycombe. In total this gave High Wycombe a weekday total of 49 Down and 45 Up trains with 40 and 37 on Saturdays and 20 and 19 on Sundays, with the service north of Princes Risborough being proportionately less. This would remain the basic service pattern for the next couple of years although the times varied slightly from year to year.

Branches off the GW&GC Joint suffered from closure. The Denham to Uxbridge branch closed to freight traffic on 7th November 1965, having been closed to passengers many years previously, and the section between Bourne End and High Wycombe was closed to all traffic on 2nd May 1970. The remaining freight services to Chinnor and Thame ended in December 1989 and April 1991.

In March 1974 control of the line from Northolt Junction to Aynho Junction, and the Aylesbury branch, passed from the Western to the London Midland Region. Further

rationalisation took place during the 1970s. Denham lost its signal box in 1975 having lost its through roads in 1965. In 1974 the quadruple section between South and West Ruislip was reduced to 3 tracks with the removal of the Up Relief. At High Wycombe the Middle Signal Box (which was located next to the Priory Avenue footbridge) was closed in November 1972 followed by the North 'box' in 1976. In December 1975 Beaconsfield 'box' closed, the through roads had been taken out of commission in 1973 although it was some time before they were lifted. Only High Wycombe retained its through roads.

The effect of this rationalisation in signalling was to extend the block sections and reduce line capacity. By 1977 the block sections were Northolt Junction to West Ruislip, West Ruislip to Gerrards Cross, Gerrards Cross to High Wycombe South (with Intermediate Block Signals at Wilton Park near Seer Green and Tylers Green), High Wycombe North to Princes Risborough and finally Princes Risborough to Aynho Junction with the



The steam specials of the mid-'80's brought some relief to the gloom. 7029 'Clun Castle' approaching High Wycombe on 30th April 1988.

IBS and emergency passing facility at Bicester. As a result services were reduced further and High Wycombe's weekday train count was now down to just 33 Up and 36 Down.

The 1980's got off to a bad start with two accidents, one of them fatal. The first was a derailment of five bitumen tankers on 13th August 1980 which damaged two miles of track near Ashendon Junction. Because of poor site access, a shortage of materials and flash flooding the line was closed completely between Princess Risborough and Bicester until 11th September during which shuttle services operated from each end.

Snow had been falling overnight on the 11th December 1981 and brought down a tree across the Down line near Seer Green. An empty DMU had stopped short of the obstruction and the crew were attempting to clear the line. Unfortunately it was struck from behind by the 07.31 Marylebone - Banbury whose driver plus three passengers, two schoolboys and a student travelling in the front car, were killed. The cause was judged to be a mistake by the signaller at Gerrards Cross. He failed to warn the 07.31's driver properly before authorising him to enter the already occupied section. It was the only fatal collision to occur in the line's history.



World record holder 4468 'Mallard' made a couple of runs and is seen approaching Bradenham on 2nd November 1986.

In contrast to all the closures and retrenchments, a new freight flow began over the line with the opening of the GLC's Hillingdon Waste Transfer Station at Northolt on 27th February 1981. Designed to handle 4000 tons of compacted domestic refuse a week it was situated between the Up and Down Marylebone lines at Northolt Junction and has two rail sidings. Trains of Freightliner flats carried the waste in ISO containers to a London Brick Company landfill site adjacent to the old Calvert station running via Princes Risborough and Aylesbury. Initially the trains operated at night, weekdays only but later daytime services were added on Saturdays as required. The regular motive power were Class 45 'Peaks', a type not regularly seen on the line previously. These later gave way to Class 56 then 60 and now 66. It is now the only freight service on the line. Another new freight service during the 1980's was an operation between the Guinness brewery at Park Royal and Salford which ran five days a week but ceased in 1995.

The 1980's also saw an upswing in the number of excursion trains over the line both passing through and originating. The originating trains were most commonly operated by the LNER Society and Chinnor-based Chiltern Trains the latter led by the affable John Diffey, who chartered trains from High Wycombe to all kinds of exotic destinations such as the West of England, North Wales, Blackpool, Edinburgh, Oban and the Kyle of Lochalsh to name but a few. In those days when BR's charter costs didn't reflect the whole true cost of operation it enabled us to have some bargain trips which were enthusiastically supported by MDRS members - happy days! Other special moves ran from time to time, one of the most noteworthy in this period being a visit by the ill-fated ATP-P. Set 370007 was hauled from Derby to West Ruislip by 47008 on 8th July 1980 to be displayed at an engineering exhibition at LT's Ruislip depot the next day. It was returned to Derby behind 25320 on 10th July. Does any member have photographs of this?

By late 1983 rumours were spreading that BR wished to close not only the Northolt to Neasden link but also Marylebone itself. This was confirmed in March 1984 by the publication of a consultative closure proposal. This envisaged running all GW&GC line services from Paddington whilst the BR sections from Northolt to Neasden and Harrow-on-the-Hill to Marylebone would be closed. Discussions were under way between BR and LT with a view to the latter taking over and electrifying the Amersham - Aylesbury section whilst it later emerged that the National Bus Company had its eye on converting Marylebone to a coach station and the line to Northolt as an express busway

This was without doubt the worst point in the line's history, a general air of neglect started to descend upon the line and staff morale was at an all-time low. However, there was a bright spot. In January 1985 the Post Office were launching a series of postage stamps featuring paintings of famous trains by Terence Cuneo and wanted to launch them with a high profile event involving a steam hauled train in London. Marylebone with its spare capacity and a working turntable was the ideal candidate so on the evening of 12th January 4498 Sir Nigel Gresley steamed into the station from Birmingham. With the enthusiastic support of the current Area Manager Steve

Hawkes, SLOA arranged to operate a couple of steam hauled excursions from Marylebone to Stratford-upon-Avon and return on 26th January and 3rd February before the locomotive returned north on 16th February.

These trains proved a huge commercial success and further trips were quickly arranged with 35028 Clan Line arriving at the beginning of March. For the next four years steam hauled specials would become a familiar sight along the Joint Line during which virtually every mainline certified locomotive of the period took its turn over the line. Whilst the basic service was the Sunday day trip to Stratford-upon-Avon, there were also an evening trip as far as Princes Risborough, which did not prove a success commercially, and a highly successful series of 'Santa Specials' to High Wycombe. The trains were a great help to raising the line's public profile and the morale of the crews who were all Marylebone, Aylesbury or Banbury men who took great pride in providing some sparkling performances.

By early summer 1986 the threat of closure had been lifted from Marylebone. The official reason was that the success of the London Travel Card scheme had increased traffic on the Metropolitan line to the point where it was said that there was insufficient capacity at Baker Street - surely that was the case anyway? Whilst it was now intended to retain Marylebone as the terminal for the Met & GC Joint services it was still initially intended to divert the GW & GC Joint services to Paddington to enable Marylebone to be reduced to just two platforms and the rest of the station redeveloped. Fortunately this too was soon dropped!

With the threat of closure lifted the staff morale much improved and this was reflected by an upsurge in service standards. Steve Hawkes, who behind the scenes had done much to ensure the line's survival, was behind the branding of the services from Marylebone as the 'Chiltern Line', several of the Class 115 DMUs bearing appropriate logos. On 1st April 1986 BR formed its new and high profile Network SouthEast sector, with Chris Green as Director, and the Chiltern Lines were brought together with the services from Paddington to form the Thames & Chiltern Sub-Sector headed up by Dick Fern (now CEO of Irish Rail) at Reading. The Chiltern lines were also transferred from the London Midland to the Western Region. This made sense as the two operations were the last non-electric London commuter routes.

The line got a new station from 3rd October 1987 when Haddenham & Thame Parkway opened after a 15 year campaign by local residents and councils. Located just north of the old Haddenham station (closed in 1963) and adjacent to the main Thame to Aylesbury road it was a simple single unstaffed platform with a large car park. It nevertheless soon became very popular.

In a complete reversal of fortunes it was decided to use the Chiltern Lines to test a new concept called Total Route Modernisation. It certainly needed it, the track and stations were in a run down condition and the mechanical signalling - what was left of it - was life expired as were the DMUs, which had not even benefited from the refurbishing scheme in the early eighties. Total Route Modernisation was to be just that. Much of the track would be relaid, the stations modernised or refurbished,



and new multiple aspect colour light signalling installed controlled from a state-of-the-art Integrated Electronic Control Centre situated inside the station offices at Marylebone. The train fleet would be replaced by an all-new fleet of DMUs which would be shared with the Thames services.

Work started in 1989 and continued for the next three years. As part of the resignalling, the remaining through lines at High Wycombe were removed and the track layout altered to allow the Down platform to be used bi-directionally to avoid passengers, particularly in the off-peak, having to make the long trek from the booking office to platform 1. In practice this facility soon became rather redundant for the best of reasons, as will be recounted shortly! Whilst a mixture of three and four aspect signals were installed between High Wycombe and London which greatly increased line capacity to an even greater extent than before the old 'boxes started to be closed. The line to the north was controlled by two-aspect signals and the single track was retained north of Princes Risborough, although Bicester became a fully signalled passing place and additional signals were provided in both directions at Saunderton. This was thought to be adequate for the services BR envisaged operating. The Marylebone signalling area covered from the terminus to Harrow-on-the-Hill and from Mantles Wood north of Amersham to Aylesbury (the intervening section is London Underground property), from Neasden South Junction to just short of Aynho Junction, the Princes Risborough to Aylesbury branch and from Northolt Junction down to Greenford. It was also chosen as one of two pilot areas for trials of BR's new and highly advanced Automatic Train Protection system. The other was the GW main line although the two systems, whilst similar in operation, are not compatible. The full resignalling scheme was completed in 1991.

That year saw the arrival of the first of the new trains. Advanced and stylish diesel-hydraulic multiple units they were built by BREL at York and were part of NSE's family of Networker trains. Designated as Class 165/0, or Network Turbos, 39 were built for the Chiltern Line, 28 of them two car units and the remainder three cars. A further 17 three car and 20 two car sets were built for the Thames services along with 21 higher specification units designated Class 165/1 and 166 respectively. They all have 23 metre long bodies of extruded aluminium

The changing of the guard. The long serving class 115 Diesel-mechanical units such as 516600 arriving at High Wycombe [Left] on 12th April 1986 were replaced by the present class 165's in 1991-92. On 7th December 1991 [Right] 165007 and 165012 hurry towards High Wycombe near West Wycombe.

construction and are built to take full advantage of the construction and are built to take full advantage of the more generous clearances on the former GW and GC routes - a feature which largely precludes their use elsewhere! The Chiltern units are geared for 75 mph in deference to the hilly nature of their routes whilst the Thames sets spending most of their time on "Brunel's Billiard Table" are capable of 90 mph. Whilst the old units had been maintained on a daily basis at Marylebone, visiting Bletchley depot for heavier work, a new purpose built depot was opened for the 165's at Aylesbury and the Marylebone depot closed and demolished.

The new units were enthusiastically received as they gradually replaced the 115s through the winter of 1991-92 until the all-Turbo timetable was launched on Sunday 19th January 1992. With this came an end to the loco-hauled peak trains to and from Paddington. However, a single train continued to and from Paddington from High Wycombe to maintain driver route knowledge and still runs today. On the positive side, services were resumed to Birmingham Snow Hill, although on a semi-fast schedule, and the number of services was much enhanced, particularly south of Princes Risborough with all-day services restored on the branch to Aylesbury. A feature of the new trains was that they were Driver Only Operated.

Whilst Total Route Modernisation was a success and attracted a considerable increase in patronage, it would not be repeated as the Government had its eye on privatising BR. In the run up to this the Chiltern Lines was established as a Train Operating Unit (or shadow franchise) in 1994 under the leadership of Adrian Shooter as its Managing Director. He went on to lead a successful management bid, backed by the John Laing construction group and venture capitalists Investors in Industry (3I) for the Chiltern franchise. It was awarded to M40 Trains Ltd from 24th June 1996. Under the banner *Chiltern Railways* a new and dramatic era was about to unfold.

Real Steam is still alive in Africa August 2006

Words and photographs by Dave Theobald

Joining a small party of Brits and Germans I flew overnight to Johannesburg in South Africa. On arrival we were told we had an 8 hour coach journey to Botswana. This transpired to be 16 hours. Little did we know that this initial inconsistency was the hallmark of many things on this trip. However the roads are good in South Africa and Botswana, and what the hell, we were going to see real steam in the shape of ex South African Railways 19Ds.

Our destination was the BCL Mine and Smelter at Selebe Phikwe. The ore is mined then transported using steam haulage to a tippler/conveyor system where smelting takes place to extract copper, nickel and cobalt. The whole operation is very slick and two British built (1947/8) 4-8-2 locos are required daily to haul 20 high capacity hopper wagons, on 10-20 kilometres round trips. We were there for a couple of days and found the locals friendly. Under supervision, we even got close enough to photograph the high energy smelting operation. Finding the works snack bar in the middle of all this activity was a bonus. A cool drink and a chat with the workers uncovered the concern that the whole operation will only last a few more years because the mines are starting to play out. If you visit, stay at the Travel Inn, the food is good, Mashonaland red wine is only \$5 a bottle and attractive local company is in abundance.

To travel to Zimbabwe we had to catch the Zim operated train from Francistown. This meant joining a long queue in the street outside the station, behind hundreds of locals, to get the passports checked. We waited for a very hot couple of hours whilst each passport was scrutinized, before people with their families and vast amounts of luggage were allowed onto the platform. When the Zimbabwe bound train rolled in, all hell was let loose. People were actually climbing over the top of the crush at every carriage door and diving in, to gain access to the windows, where the massive bags, boxes and numerous children were posted through. Our problem with this chaos was that our thirty seats were wedged tight with humanity and half of the group were still on the platform. The train was held as a consequence while this was sorted out. The ironic thing was that there were enough seats for everyone. By the time our Canadian built diesel drew slowly away, heading for Plumtree and Bulawayo, most of the Africans were asleep. Apparently this hassle could have been avoided if our tour organizer had given 24 hours notice to the Customs and Immigration officials.

It is 26 years since I visited the fledgling Zimbabwe. It was a time full of hope where all creeds and colours were going to build on one of the most well run and prosperous economies on the African continent. Well, it's said one should never go back so as not to be disappointed. The fact of the matter is that it is a country that has been run into the ground, with 1000% inflation. The farmers, shop-keepers, and manufacturers have been driven out leaving food and petrol shortages, 70% unemployment, and a population increase out of control.



BCL Mining & Smelting Selebe Phikwe Botswana

I guess a familiar African story. Please read the book *Dark Star Safari* by the famous traveller Paul Theroux, if you don't believe me.

Well that's enough of the politics, because somehow the railway does just about keep working in spite of the copper wire from all the signals being stolen. It makes for much higher incidents of head-on crashes, but we trusted that we could successfully take a steam hauled train from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls and on to Livingstone in Zambia. The 3ft 6ins gauge system has around 20 working diesels and five working Garratts. Although during our visit a 16th class Garratt was spectacularly de-railed in front of the Bulawayo loco shed and over a 24-hour period, more and more damage occurred in the efforts to re-rail it. It was one of their best locos but we never saw it used in anger. In fact much of the promised itinerary was not fulfilled but having spent time on steam in Kenya the previous summer, I had learnt not to be too frustrated by the shortcomings of modern Africa.

Staying at the one time prestigious Selbourne Hotel, Bulawayo, its worn out décor was strangely familiar, reflecting a different era of prosperity and style. The streets outside were almost devoid of traffic, due to lack of petrol because the Zim Dollar is worthless - a real contrast to busy Jo'burg. I only saw one new building in this attractive city where time appears to have stood still for the last 50 years. There were plenty of pedestrians about but no whites, except tourists. We made our way to the Bulawayo Railway Museum to meet the rest of the party arriving from Europe (making the total about 50





15A Class near Lukosi, on Bulawayo/ Vic Falls Line

persons) and enjoy a B-B-Q laid on by the volunteers, mainly ex-pats. We were going to use their coaches on our various trains over the next few days.

On our second day in Zim a mixed train hauled by a 15A class Garratt was shot at sunrise at Figtree, on the line to Botswana that we had previously ridden. The train looked good with cattle wagons, a tank car and numerous passenger coaches and brake vans. When the sun got higher I opted to cab ride, a very enjoyable experience to actually feel the unusual motion of both sets of gear sometimes in harmony and then off beat as a wheel slip took place. It's also cooling to stand by the door viewing across a dry wilderness and see in the distance the strange shaped hills of the Motopas where Cecil Rhodes' grave is to be found. I wonder what he would have made of modern Africa. Soon we were passing the shanties on the edge of Bulawayo where I got some surprised looks by the locals at seeing a white man on the footplate.

We spent the next couple of days around Bulawayo and watched 15th class shunting coaching stock at the station, visiting the scrap lines, posing 14th and 15th classes around coaling plant and turn table. On visiting the town we were faced with the problem of the amount of time it took to change money and the short hours banks were open. It is a Zim Dollar economy, with no credit cards or ATMs. We had dire warnings of changing money on the street, but if you were buddies with the tour organizers magic happened.

On getting money changed at Western Union (1½ hrs for three of us) we found the cost of the biggest Pizza we had for lunch was only £2.00 between 3 of us, so now we worried that we had too much of this useless currency. Going out at night is about as safe as many UK towns and safer than South Africa, it's a case of what restaurants will be open with such a depressed economy.

We had a 14A Class no 525 to Heany Junction on the line out on the east side of Bulawayo. With its rusty smokebox and mixed assortment of wagons and old coaches it really looked the part. I guess that steam rarely ventures on this 2-track line towards the scenic West Nicholson branch, because it certainly brought the locals enthusiastically waving and smiling. With the lack of proper signalling we had to give a good margin of time for diesel hauled service trains so doing run-bys sometimes had to be curtailed. We did get some nice shots at a place called Cement but at 4pm we had to head back to clear the line. I did not mind due to some

stomach problems and general weariness.

Finally the day came to see our 15A class loco marshal our long train for Victoria Falls departure time at 8:00am. In the consist we had sleepers, kitchen car, dining car, crew cars, brake vans, coal wagons, spare water tank and an observation car. Coaching stock was in the old Rhodesian railway livery and looked immaculate (a bit Great Western), however we lost 3½ hours before everything was ready and getting the right of way. Once Bulawayo and its scruffy suburbs were left behind, the dried brown of the bush just seemed to extend forever. We had a couple of run-bys but without a high vantage point it is hard to show the true scale of this train. I am sure my friends with video would have done better than me. The line is mainly flat and uninteresting for two thirds of the journey. In fact this is the location of longest straight section of track in Africa.

Meals were OK but the Brits having second sitting meant that sometimes at a run past it was difficult to find a position around the shoulder to shoulder tactics of the Germans. We stopped at Sawmills (100km) to clear a freight going to Bulawayo. I remembered 26 years ago leaving the comfort of my berth and walking forward (stumbling in the dark) to beg a ride on the footplate at this very spot. The overnight journey to Vic falls was spent talking to the driver, an ex Cornishman, of his exploits during the so called war of independence. All these years later we extended the same journey to 3nights/4days.

Night falls very quickly this close to the equator, but we continued on to Dete (266km) where we stabled overnight. It was thrilling to be sitting in the restaurant



14A Class no.525 heading to Heany Junction



Our train to Victoria Falls near Thomson Junction.



424 emerges from a tunnel near The Baobab Hotel.

car having a few drinks after dark when loud trumpeting could be heard from elephants right next to the line. No lights can be seen for hours on end as we fold out the beds in our 2 berth cabin to settle down to sleep.

The schedule leaves the most scenic part of the line to be traversed in daylight from Lukosi, Hwange (old name Wankie), and onto Thomson Junction (352km) with two nights here. This allowed plenty of time to photograph the most scenic spots and fit in with railway operation on this fairly busy main line. There was also game viewing but whilst the English were at breakfast, guess who filled the available seats! We visited Wankie colliery but unfortunately steam operation with ex RR Pacifics was pretty well non-existent. Years ago I was offered a job in their machine shop. The promised treat of having a shower at the Baobab Hotel, when we returned to Thomson Junction each night, did not materialize because no one had booked the room. The windows of the sleepers had to be shut at night to prevent baboons climbing in; thus the lack of fresh air obviously made for interesting aromas. A real craving for a hot shower started to take over all other thoughts.

It should be a benefit of having a train to command that the best of the scenic shots should be made at the right time of day in conjunction with moving on. It did not work like that with some poor judgments on where to stop and for how long for. The Germans always grabbed the photo line first and an elderly American couple with a 10 year old grandson added much extra time causing delays in completing run-bys. We got some good pictures but lost half a day, thus losing the time to visit Victoria Falls (472km) on our arrival. This made for a real anti-climax after all the days of anticipation leading up to seeing one of the wonders of the world. As darkness fell we only just made it to the pre-booked Sundowner Cruise on the Zambezi some five miles upriver from the falls. By this time, most of us just wanted to get a shower and remove four days of grime.

The last full day in Africa started with a very scraggy route march to walk the mile or so from the Sprayview Hotel to the Station (no bus was organised). We should have stayed at the sumptuous Victoria Falls Hotel, enjoyed the luxury and saved the walk. A 14A Garratt no 512 was on the head of the vintage coaches used for crossing over the famous bridge and into Zambia. At the border surrounded by trucks weighed down with copper

from Zambia we discovered that \$65 are needed for multiple entry visas, ironically the Germans were half this rate. Posters stated "Save Our Bridge" and large 5mph speed limits with 'No Stopping On The Bridge' were everywhere. So this graceful steel product of Loughborough, the famous memorial to "Cecil Rhodes" is under threat. The over-worked and under-maintained railway is the vital link and key to at least two economies and probably more on this crucial trade route. We positioned ourselves by the falls on the Zambian side and snapped away as our train rolled at a gentle pace across the bridge with Zimbabwe in the background. We repeated this in the afternoon as the sun moved round making the falls as a back-drop, but due to more problems the sun had virtually set before we could take our shots. We later learnt that two people got left behind in Zambia (without passports), one of those being the 10 year old American lad - so much for the trip organizers who let this happen. The "refugees" got back alright because the Customs Post guards may have experienced this before from previous excursionists across the bridge.

The last day left time to re-cross the bridge (by bus) to visit the Zambia Railway Museum and then wait in the sun at Livingstone Airport before boarding our SA Airbus to Jo'burg and eventually home. I think we had a hard trip, starting each day at 5am and not stopping until 10/11 pm. I picked up a stomach bug and lost about 8 lbs and got very fatigued.

On the plus side!

We had genuine working steam at Selebe, Phikwe, a BCL Mine and Smelter in Botswana. Class 19Ds 4-8-2 North British 1947/8 ex South African Railways

We had Garratt haulage around Bulawayo and all the way to Vic Falls in Zimbabwe. Class 15A Garratt Beyer-Peacock 1947/52 4-6-4 + 4-6-4 ex Rhodesian Railways

We had a Garratt over the Falls Bridge to Livingstone, Zambia. Class 14A Garratt. Beyer-Peacock 1953/54 2-6-2 + 2-6-2 ex Rhodesian Railways

Derailing a 16th Class Garratt (2-8-2+2-8-2) outside the shed in Bulawayo was a bit of a show-stopper, especially when the re-rail team could not do so without resorting to cutters torch.

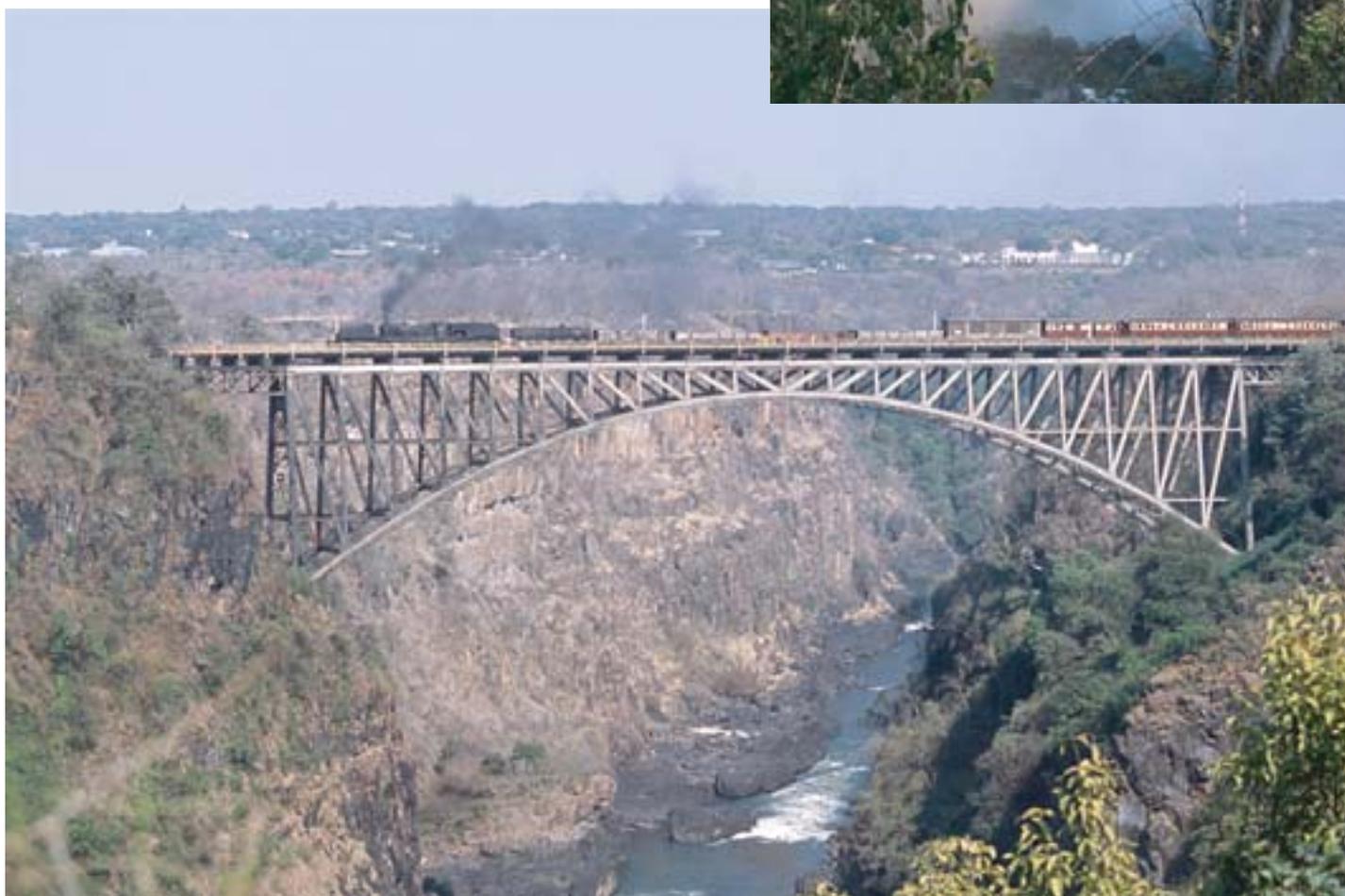
The group was a mix of English and Colonials in one camp and Germans or German speaking in the other. The tour was organised by a German with the assistance of a

Brit, ostensibly a Zimbabwe Railway expert but, although he may have been knowledgeable, showed no inclination to push things along when time and daylight were running out.

This is the first time in years I have travelled in such a big party. It had its problems, but I suppose there was never a dull moment with such a diverse mix of people. I must remember to dig out my old slides and compare how much the last 26 years has changed these beautiful countries. If I return, I must remember to take extra supplies of Imodium!

Dave's special train poses on the famous bridge (below) between Zimbabwe and Zambia just down stream from the spectacular Victoria Falls (right).

The low point of the trip was the derailing of a 16th class Beyer-Garrett outside Bulawayo shed (bottom) which required the attention of the cutter's torch in addition to a crane to rectify.



25 AND 15 YEARS AGO

Tim Edmonds



25 YEARS AGO

The first service run of an Advanced Passenger Train took place on 7th December 1981, when power cars 49002/3 worked the 07.00 Glasgow - Euston. The train arrived a minute early, having achieved a maximum speed of 138 mph and averaging 102.3 mph from Preston, in spite of encountering two 50 mph and two 20 mph slacks on the way. The intention was to make one return trip from Glasgow to London three times a week for two weeks. Alas, problems on 9th and 11th December meant the abandonment of public services and a return to test running.

Everyday working by conventional steam locos in Scotland came to an end on 11th December 1981 when rail operations ceased at Bedlay Colliery with the last train was hauled by 0-4-0ST NCB 17 (AB 2296/1950). Operations should have ceased two days previously, when 0-4-0ST NCB 6 (AB 2043/1937) was the loco in steam, but did not clear the traffic. No 6 was steamed again the next day, but blew a fusible plug and had to be laid aside. No 17 completed the work on the next day, a Friday, before pulling into the stabling siding (there was no shed building) for the last time alongside the third Bedlay loco, 0-6-0T NCB 9 (HC 895/1909).

Two schoolboys, a student and a train driver were killed on 11th December 1981 when the 07.22 Marylebone - Banbury train crashed into the rear of an empty DMU which had stopped near Seer Green & Jordans station. The accident occurred in severe winter weather when a snow-laden tree fell in a 75ft deep cutting. At a public inquiry the signalman at Gerrards Cross admitted that he had been at fault in allowing the Banbury train to run on

Bedlay Colliery in the year before closure, with 0-6-0T 9 (HC 895/1905) taking a loaded train up the bank to the exchange sidings on 30th June 1980.

photos: Tim Edmonds unless noted

the same section in which the empty stock train was standing.

To enable BR 'to respond more effectively to the current and future challenges which face the industry', its business was reorganised into 'business sectors' from 4th January 1982. 'Commercial' operations comprised Freight, Parcels and Inter-City passenger sectors, while the 'Social' railway comprised London & South East and Provincial sectors.

Work on the construction of the ECML Selby diversion continued throughout the winter of 1981/2. Here bridge works are seen from the new trackbed near Bishop Wood on 19th February 1982.



15 YEARS AGO

Author of many books and one of the doyens of railway photography, H.C. Casserley, died shortly before Christmas. Born in 1903, he took his first railway photograph in December 1919 - a shot of the Lickey banker 'Big Bertha' which was published in the Railway Magazine. He travelled extensively throughout Britain and Ireland, building up a collection of over 60,000 negatives including many of infrequently-photographed remote branch lines and minor railways.

At 10.17 on Saturday 7th December the 07.00 Portsmouth - Cardiff 'Super Sprinter' struck the rear of the 08.30 Paddington - Cardiff HST, three miles into the Severn Tunnel. The London train had been stopped at an approach signal and then proceeded 'at caution' in accordance with the rule book. The DMU was running 22 minutes late at Bristol Temple Meads and collided with the back of the HST at 15-20 mph; the driver suffered from severe head injuries. This was the first collision in the Severn Tunnel since its opening and the line remained closed until mid-morning on 9th December, with trains diverted via Gloucester.

Weekends each side of Christmas saw the successful working of steam specials over the Mark's Tey - Sudbury branch, although for operational reasons they were not allowed to use the full length of the line into Sudbury station. Comprising a 3-car DMU hauled by N7 0-6-2T 69621, trains were operated jointly by Network SouthEast and the East Anglian Railway Museum.

On 2nd January 1992 the new Head of the National Railway Museum, Andrew Dow, took up his duties. Son of the railwayman and railway historian, George Dow, Andrew succeeded Dr John Coiley on his retirement at the end of 1991.

The last loco-hauled services over the GW&GC Joint line, a return commuter train between Banbury and Paddington via High Wycombe, ran on 17th January 1992. The up service, 06.54 from Banbury, was hauled by 47441 while the down 17.38 from Paddington was in the charge of 47364 - a loco without provision for train heating!

From 20th January 1992 users of BR's winter timetable had to cope with a supplement of 78 pages to add to the 138 page supplement already issued the previous September. Among the changes were completely revised tables 114 and 115, covering the Chiltern Line services.

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: 31st January 2007



On a dull, grey Sunday 22nd December 1991, footballers play while N7 0-6-2T 69621 hauls a 3-car DMU over the 32 arches of Chappel Viaduct with a Mark's Tey - Sudbury shuttle.



On the cold morning of 2nd February 1992, 6024 'King Edward I' waits at Gerrards Cross during a scheduled stop with the Paddington - Stratford-upon-Avon 'William Shakespeare' special.



The end of an era, 47364 stands at High Wycombe with the 17.38 Paddington - Banbury on 17th January 1992, the last scheduled locomotive-hauled passenger train over the GW & GC Joint Line.

Would any eagle-eyed member care to make an observation here?

photo: Mike Walker

SPIRITED AWAY



Gordon Rippington reports on strange happenings in Dorset

This year marked the 40th anniversary of the Somerset & Dorset closure. A wealth of archive material depicting the line has helped to immortalise it since closure, most notably from the late Ivo Peters. It has been a long held ambition to visit the route made famous by Ivo's photography, so now residing with easy reach I am able to realise this dream. Many parts are accessible by footpath or cycleway on the old trackbed. Starting at Corfe Mullen, crossing gates still exist at one roadside keeper's cottage as do several occupation and road bridges.

Heading north on my trusty cycle brings me to Shillingstone station. Great strides have taken place here in restoring the site (the track panels from Bath Green Park's 7F visit having found their way here). Having joined the weekend working party for a day's toil, we retired to the local pub for a well-earned drink. The local being 'The Dart & Pricker' is a veritable treasure of railwayana where numerous nameplates adorn the walls, the most notable being County of Dorset with both cab and smokebox plates. The collection belongs to the landlord one Sid UGGLEBARNBY who hails from North Yorkshire. Now 89, Syd, a former railwayman transferred from York to Templecombe in 1946 as a fireman.

In the many weeks that followed I got to know him very well, so well in fact that he offered me a room if I helped around the pub. This was a great deal better than pitching my tent between the platforms at Shillingstone. After hours Syd would relate many of his experiences as a driver during the years 1955 to 1966, seeing out his service to the very end. Ivo's name cropped up during conversations on many occasions, when one evening he mentioned his Bentley Mk VI. Now it's not generally known, but he owned two identical cars and would use the same number on both to even out the mileage. In the barn lies the second one which hasn't moved for some twenty years. On opening the barn there it stood, sheeted over. Removing the cover it was immaculate. After several hours work the engine burst into life. Sid's face was a picture, "Now we can retrace Ivo's steps together" he said, "I'm sure that would please him."

During one day's jaunt we headed for Chilcompton, stopping on an overbridge near the tunnel we began walking along the trackbed now heavily overgrown. During the walk Sid related to a journey in the week before Christmas 1962: "Snow had fallen across the Mendips and the special from Manchester arrived at Templecombe late due to a failed injector. The engine changed, we headed south with a 4F and a 2P. On arrival back at Templecombe the return working was handled by a 7F to Bath. By now the errant locomotive had had its fire dropped and was awaiting towing to Bath for repair. Crewe, having received notice of its engine's problem, advised the shedmaster that it was due for withdrawal during January 1963 "so no hurry to return it." Our 2P,



One that got away? 45533 'Lord Rathmore' on Bushey troughs May 1960.

photo: Ken Lawrie

herself now an old lady, was also due for withdrawal come the New Year, so it was decided to run the pair down a disused colliery line not far from Chilcompton. Not having been used for several years the tracks were hidden by vegetation, slowly making our way towards a tunnel some two miles down the line. Once inside we dropped the 2P's fire and left them to be collected at a later date."

Carrying on with our walk there was no mention by Sid of them being collected... A fascinating story, I thought. Passing through a cutting we encountered the tunnel, now boarded up with rails leading into it. Sid then placed both hands on my shoulders: "Now boy, don't breathe a word of what you are about to see." Entering by a side door he lit two oil lamps. Through the gloom stood the two locomotives he had spirited away all those years ago. Standing alongside the larger locomotive, glancing at the cabside number it was *Lady Godiva*. "So a 'Patriot' has survived the cutter's torch" I said, and in front stood the 2P.

Sid then mentioned that a small, dedicated band of volunteers from Midsomer Norton and Shillingstone have been restoring them for some five years in total secrecy with the aim of running them between Midsomer Norton and Shepton Mallet. Plans are in hand for their removal in the spring of next year when they will be put on show at Midsomer Norton's open day on April 1st 2007.

The Society's committee is planning a coach trip for the event when you can see these two locomotives hidden away for some 45 years. So, book early to avoid disappointment. By way of a gift to the Society I have arranged a footplate trip for one lucky member, the first correct answer drawn with the number of *Lady Godiva* during the Christmas social. The date of the footplate trip is to be confirmed.