

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

116

March 2007



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The Gauge Problem

Cumbrian Mountain Express

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

*Top: VORR No. 9 'Prince of Wales' at the head of an 80th anniversary special. 10 April 1982.
Photo Tim Edmonds. (Article page 14)*

*Bottom: 50007 'Sir Edward Elgar' leads D400 (50050) past St. Margarets station on 11 April 1992.
Photo Tim Edmonds. (Article page 15)*

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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

- 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 **A SHORT HISTORY OF LONDON'S UNDERGROUND** David Wadley
David's emphasis tonight will be on the Metropolitan and associated lines north west of London.
- Thursday 21 June **30th ANNIVERSARY EVENT** Adrian Shooter
This is the major celebration of the Society's birthday. Details of the location are still being finalised but Adrian Shooter, Chairman of Laing Rail, will give a key-note address reflecting on his personal passion for railways. There will also be a buffet and party atmosphere. Note this is MEMBERS ONLY.
- Thursday 19 July **BRITISH TRANSPORT STEAM CLASSICS** Alan Willmott
The presenter will be Alan Willmott of Windjammer Films, who worked for over 30 years to 1985 with British Transport Films, the BR in-house film unit. This will be in the THAMES room at Liston Hall.
- Thursday 20 September **6024 KING EDWARD I** David Fuszard
David is a member of the support team and will give us an insight into the work needed to keep this high-profile locomotive active on the main line in the 21st Century.
- Thursday 18 October **A RAILWAY TOUR OF NORTHERN FRANCE** Michael Bunn
A look at the railways of our nearest continental neighbour. The coverage will be from the Channel coast as far south as, and including, Paris.
- Thursday 15 November **MORE FROM COLOUR-RAIL** Ron White
Such a special year would simply not be complete without a visit - the 8th - from our most popular speaker. What this selection will be is unknown, but you are guaranteed a hilarious and enjoyable show!
- Thursday 20 December **CHRISTMAS PARTY**
The year wraps up with the usual celebrations, fun and games.

FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Thursday 29 March **WEMBLEY SIGNALLING CENTRES** by car or rail
See the note in Society News on page 3.
- 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.
- Sunday 26 August **AN AFTERNOON AT THE BEECHES LIGHT RAILWAY** by car
As part of our anniversary, Adrian Shooter has invited the Society to visit his private railway at his home in Steeple Aston, Oxon. His Darjeeling & Himalaya 2-4-0ST+T no.19 should be in steam.

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 in the middle of the dull, damp, dark, depressing winter but by the time you read these words let's hope we will have seen a little of the Spring and the weather will have improved. I always intend to spend time during the winter months doing something useful like cataloguing photographs or sorting out some of the thousands of slides I have, but it just doesn't seem to happen.

I can't remember when I last had the old camcorder out in action and I'm really looking forward to a year of visits to

railways far and wide.

As you know, this year is our thirtieth anniversary and there are several visits to go on and we have a very interesting programme of talks. Do please continue to support all our activities and if you can persuade or cajole somebody else to come along, so well and good.

In the meantime, enjoy yourselves wherever you end up during the next few months. Maybe we'll bump into each other on a bridge somewhere.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Christmas social was well attended and enjoyed by all, the larger room making it far more comfortable. Mike Hyde took on the role of MC and as usual set the quiz which was won this year by Mike Walker (thanks in no small part to some inspired guesswork!). Special thanks to Mike and the other members who did the hard work.

In January another full house welcomed back renowned film maker Nick Lera. The main feature of the evening was his programme on the notorious Burma - Siam Railway which was supported by a film on the railways of Java. As always with Nick's work, the quality was excellent.

The formal business of the AGM in February was dispatched promptly after which Mike Walker presented a look at the Maidenhead to High Wycombe and Marlow branches taking a journey down each line and looking at how the stations, structures and trains developed over more than 150 years. Thanks to John Tuck who provided the digital projection kit for this.

VISITS

Bookings are going well for the visits to the Wembley Signalling Centres on March 29th and to Silverlink County at Bletchley in May. Network Rail have understandably placed a limit of 12 on the Wembley visit so as it was oversubscribed we had a draw at the February meeting to select the lucky members. Please meet at the entrance to Stonebridge Park station (Bakerloo and Silverlink Metro) at 19.00 for the short walk to the signalling centres. There is no limit on numbers for the Bletchley visit.

In August Adrian Shooter has kindly agreed to host a visit to his Beeches Light Railway in the grounds of his home at Steeple Aston in Oxfordshire. Hopefully his Darjeeling & Himalaya 2-4-0 will be in operation for us. Transport from Marlow or High Wycombe can be arranged if required.

We are not organising a day trip to a heritage railway this year. Support for these has been declining in recent years and it is becoming difficult to get enough members to sign up to make such trips viable. However, we realise that some of you do not have personal transport and enjoyed these trips so it might be possible to arrange smaller groups - members often go to heritage railways and have spare capacity in their cars. So if you are planning a trip, have a spare seat or two and are prepared to take other members with you please let the membership know at the preceding meeting.

NORMAN ASTON-SMITH TROPHY

The winner this year by a clear majority at the AGM was Tim Edmonds for his long running and often overlooked series '15 and 25 Years Ago'. Although it hasn't been running quite that long it actually predates Tim as Roger Bowen originally compiled the column in the Society's early days.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thanks to the large proportion of the membership who have already renewed for this year, however there are a few who have not. Hopefully this is just an oversight and we look forward to your continuing support in this very special year. Remember members who have not renewed by 31st March are deemed to have lapsed.

REFRESHMENTS

Mike Hyde has had several volunteers to do the half-time refreshments for the first half of the year but still seeks helpers for later in the year. If you are able and willing please let him know and avoid a dry meeting! Many thanks from us all to those who've helped out to date.

DONKEY FENCED IN

During December Network Rail erected a high steel palisade security fence along a large part of the Marlow branch. The reason why this line was selected for such treatment is unclear as there is no record of vandal attacks or serious trespass on the line - the number of foot crossings still provides the opportunity to access the line in any case. It does however create an eyesore from Winter Hill and obscures passengers' view of the scenic section along the riverbank.

DRS DEPOT FOR BICESTER?

Freight operator DRS has recently been advertising for experienced drivers at a new depot it proposes to set up at Bicester. The company is bidding to take over the MoD contract there and at Kineton from EWS. If successful it would take away a large part of EWS's business at Didcot depot throwing doubt upon its future.

IS OUR CHAIRMAN MOONLIGHTING?



Gordon Rippington got this shot of his successor at the end of the Christmas party and suggests he doesn't give up the day job!

FGW WOES INCREASE

Unless you've been out of the country, you'll know this has been a winter of discontent for FGW's beleaguered passengers. The Marlow Donkey has suffered from ongoing short notice cancellations on most days because of a shortage of train crews and rolling stock. This particularly affects the Bourne End - Marlow section because it is the Guard's job to operate the ground frame at Bourne End and these employees seem to be particularly thin among FGW's ranks at Reading. By cancelling only one or two journeys with little notice FGW do not have to provide alternative transport and, it appears, are not disclosing these partial cancellations to the DfT.

The 2006-7 timetable introduced on December 12th saw a much reduced service along the Thames Valley offering 9% fewer seats with resulting over-crowding and have proved as operationally unreliable if not more so than last year's. Even revisions introduced in mid-January have failed to make any improvement; in fact Oxford's gain has been Didcot's loss.

Add to this has been a spate of equipment failures including three turbocharger fires in the re-engined HST power cars - the latest at Didcot on February 3rd - which have caused much disruption. Earlier that day the down Night Riviera had failed at Dolphin Junction, Slough and sat there for over 7 hours whilst a replacement loco was summoned.

Not a week seems to go by without the poor FGW service being featured on Radio 4's *You And Yours*, 97 MP's from FGW's area have signed an early day motion condemning the company and the poor performance has been debated in the House of Lords. FGW's Managing Director meanwhile issues press releases expressing her concern at the campaign being waged against her company which she considers is doing a fine job!

Some of us found a glossy insert in our daily papers recently promoting the fast, punctual, frequent, air-conditioned services with plenty of seats and parking of Chiltern as an alternative to the unpunctual, unreliable, expensive and overcrowded trains of FGW. When competing Train Operators start to slag you off, you should know you are in trouble!

F F FETCH YER CLOTH...

Gordon Rippington reports that down in SWT-land the class 444 Desiro units are nicknamed *Arkwrights* in honour of a much-loved purveyor of comestibles!



Firefighters damp down FGW 43176 at Didcot after a fire broke out in the turbocharger whilst on a Swansea - Paddington service on 3rd February 2007. It was the third fire on the re-engined power cars, the second involving 43176.

photo: Brian Daniels

APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE

A STATION THAT NEVER WAS

Over the years I have come across several references, implicit and explicit, to a station on the GW&GC Joint line between Beaconsfield and High Wycombe. This station has been referred to by three names: Loudwater, North Loudwater and Penn Halt. All the evidence that I have found suggests that such a station has never existed. However, I am keen to track down the source of these spurious references and to trace how such myths develop. I have a hypothesis, but I need some more evidence from published references to prove this.

So, if you have any books or maps that cover local railways or local history in the first half of the 20th century, or any relevant magazine articles, I would be most grateful if you would take a look and let me know if you find any reference to a Penn Halt, or a (North) Loudwater station. No source, however trivial, should be excluded (I have one from an estate agent's blurb!). To clarify, this concerns the main line, not the Loudwater station on the Wycombe - Maidenhead line which was, of course, very real.

Tim Edmonds

PUZZLE CORNER

With apologies to television's *Have I Got News For You*, which of these four visitors to Chinnor is the odd-one-out

in not having been a GWR locomotive? The answer can be found on page 14.



1369



1466



Isebrook No.2



9682



100 YEARS OF THE JOINT LINE

Part 4 RISE OF THE PHOENIX

Mike Walker



On 24th June 1996 a new era opened in the story of the Joint Line with the awarding of a seven-year operating franchise to M40 Trains Ltd who would operate the services from Marylebone to Aylesbury via Amersham and Birmingham via High Wycombe under the trading title of Chiltern Railways. The new company was a management buy-out led by Adrian Shooter who had already been the Managing Director of BR's Train Operating Unit (or shadow franchise) and was backed by the John Laing construction group and venture capitalists Investors in Industry (3I).



One of Chiltern's superbly refurbished Turbos, 165004 stands at Princes Risborough on 17th April 2006.

photos: Mike Walker

It is fair to say that the privatisation of Britain's railways has had its share of successes and failures but without doubt Chiltern has been one of the success stories. The company ethos is that "every day and in every way we aim to be the best train operator in the country" and it has largely succeeded, within its first year passenger numbers were up by 17% and growth has continued strongly since and has now grown by over 120% since start-up whereas the figure for the network generally over the same period is around 40% growth.

Once the new company became established 3I sought to sell their shareholding. It was picked up by the Laing Group, which also purchased the management's holding to give it total control of the company. However, as Laing is a primarily a construction company, Chiltern's management is left to make its own decisions - a commonly heard comment within the company is that "our success is down to us not being owned by a bus company!"

Early on it started to enhance the service levels and from the start had the intention of building the Birmingham business to provide a credible alternative to the WCML operators. To this end it persuaded Railtrack to reinstate double track between Princes Risborough and Bicester. The 18 mile project was carried out in late 1997 and the first half of 1998. As well as relaying the second line (in practice the Up line) Haddenham & Thame Parkway station had to be completely rebuilt as BR had built it on the former trackbed - well it seemed like a good idea at the time! Also constructed at the same time was a new platform and footbridge (including lifts) at Princes Risborough - the original down platform had degenerated

so much that to build new using a modular system developed by Laing was the more cost effective solution.

It was the first of the privatised Train Operating Companies to order new trains, placing an order with ADtranz for 5 four car DMUs which were designated Class 168 and marketed by Chiltern as the Clubman fleet. A development of the 165/166 family but with a narrower body profile which would be acceptable over nearly all the network, they

had a more luxurious interior than their predecessors and were primarily used on the Birmingham route which was upgraded to hourly. Unfortunately this batch suffered from a number of design and manufacturing defects which caused ADtranz and its successor, Bombardier, to redesign certain components, most notably the cab - the original 168 front end generates considerable wind noise and draughts in the cab. Chiltern eventually took delivery of two more batches of these modified *Turbostar* family units. Perhaps the most unexpected development was the restoration to passenger service of Class 121 'Bubble Car' 550020 which is used in peak-hour shuttle service between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury. These additions plus the return of five class 165/0s from FGWL has increased Chiltern's fleet from 79 vehicles in 1996 to 152 vehicles today!

Chiltern took advantage of a unique window of opportunity early in the new century when the Strategic Rail Authority was formed under the chairmanship of Sir Alistair Morton who was a great believer in long-term franchises. Chiltern entered into negotiations with the SRA with a view to securing a second franchise. These were successful and in 2002 it was announced the company had been awarded a new 20 year franchise - the longest ever awarded and it was widely seen as recognition for the remarkable job the company had done. The agreement was just in time, within months Sir Alistair had gone and the SRA made it plain there would be no more long-term franchises awarded and that in future applicants would be bidding on detailed specifications.

Chiltern however are reaping many benefits from their unique second franchise. They have far more control over the infrastructure than other TOCs and are able to specify what they require. This was demonstrated by the

recent Evergreen 1 and Evergreen 2 projects which were specified and managed by Chiltern's own Major Projects Division - something you won't find elsewhere. Project Evergreen 1 entailed the redoubling of the remaining 9 mile single line section from Bicester North to Aynho Junction and was completed in August 2003 at a cost of £60 million which, when compared to the £13 million bill for the first section four years earlier and twice as long, is a sobering reflection on how costs in the privatised industry have spiralled out of control. Evergreen 2 was a unique DBFT or Design Build Fund and Transfer deal whereby Chiltern designed the upgrade, employed the contractors, obtained the funding and when completed (which was on-time and on-budget) transfer ownership to NR at a pre-agreed price. Chiltern now pays a higher track access charge to use the enhanced infrastructure. This type of deal is only possible because of Chiltern's long-term franchise. The programme included signalling enhancements to increase capacity, particularly north of High Wycombe, lengthening of platforms as necessary to accommodate 8 car trains (again using modular units) and to provide two extra platforms at Marylebone at a total cost of £80 million. Running parallel to this was the construction of a new £20 million depot at Wembley and a £17 million refurbishment of the 165 fleet. Full details of these projects can be found in the spring 2005 issue of the *Marlow Donkey*.

A near disaster was narrowly averted on the evening of 30th June 2005 when an artificial tunnel, being constructed in the cutting east of Gerrards Cross to carry a Tesco supermarket, collapsed blocking the line in front of the 17.50 Stratford-upon-Avon to Marylebone train which was standing at the station. A quick response by its driver in sending an emergency message over the radio was sufficient to stop a Down train before it reached the obstruction. As a result the line was closed to traffic for nine weeks causing considerable disruption to commuters in particular. Whilst Chiltern did their best to handle the situation the result on the company was to lead them to record the first operating loss. At the time of writing the project remains at a standstill. Tesco's are known to be keen to recommence construction but civil engineers suggest it will be necessary to remove the part-built structure entirely and start from scratch which would cost more than double the original projections. Are Tesco prepared to spend this much to get a presence in Gerrards Cross and will Network Rail be willing to allow construction to resume? There are rumours of an announcement in the spring, but in the meantime several legal actions are pending.

Although no projects are currently in the pipeline, several smaller projects are being planned. At Denham the down platform, which is in poor state of repair and is starting to slide down the embankment, will be replaced by a new platform on the right hand side of the down line and connected to the up side by a footbridge. Sufficient space will be left to allow a reversible through road to



Pride of the fleet, the refurbished 'Bubble Car' 55020 arrives at Princes Risborough on 18th July 2003. This vehicle is owned by Chiltern not a leasing company.

be added at some future date if required. At Beaconsfield it is proposed to add a second floor to the modular multi-storey car park to bring much needed additional capacity. However, relief will be short-lived if growth continues as it has in recent times. The second storey will be the last as local ground conditions and planning regulations preclude a third. At High Wycombe it is hoped that the stalled rebuilding of the main station building, badly damaged by fire on 27th November 2005, will commence by early summer. The delay has been caused by a planning dispute with Wycombe District Council. Chiltern wanted to rebuild the station more-or-less as it was but the council is pressing for an expanded inter-modal interchange with a bus terminal. Part of this scheme calls for the demolition of the old goods shed (now the ATS Tyre Centre), the last remaining WRC structure on the site. Chiltern have also applied for permission to build a multi-storey car park at the station but this too has been denied by WDC.

Today the line is enjoying record passenger numbers and an unprecedented level of service which offers more than twice the number of trains that the best GW&GC or BR timetables allowed. The 2005-2006 timetables gives High Wycombe a staggering 82 Up and 83 Down services Monday to Friday, 70 each way on Saturdays and even 3 trains per hour each way on Sundays. On weekdays there is now a half-hourly service to Birmingham for much of the day and through trains operate to Stratford-upon-Avon and Kidderminster. Even more trains have been added now the upgrade is complete, there is even the prospect of a return to some loco-hauled services, and the company has ambitions to take on the local services currently operated by Central out of Birmingham Snow Hill, see Local News in the last issue.

And so the story is brought up to date. It has been a remarkable 100 year journey from the optimism of the Edwardian private railways through the retrenchment and despair of the nationalised era followed by the almost unimaginable rebirth under privatisation. What does the next century hold? Who knows but it can't be such a roller-coaster ride as the last, can it?

THE GAUGE PROBLEM - After 1892

Malcolm Margetts

When the Great Western Railway finally abandoned the broad gauge in May 1892, and the United Kingdom's multitude of railway companies had at last achieved a common gauge, a more complex gauge problem was developing in many parts of the country. It appeared to be almost a matter of municipal pride for some towns to adopt a different tramway gauge from their neighbours, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the West Riding of Yorkshire where four gauges operated in Leeds, Huddersfield, Bradford, and Halifax.

The Railway network had become almost fully developed by 1900 but electric tramways were largely an affair of the 20th century, designed to move people to and from the town and city centres to the suburbs, as towns rapidly expanded in the final years of the 19th century. This expansion added the logistical problem of getting to and from work at a cost and in a time scale that allowed the economy, and particularly employment, to grow, and was most serious in the major industrial cities of the Midlands the North and Scotland.

Sadly, the electric tram network moved from birth to almost extinction in the sixty years from the late 1890's, whereas in Europe, and particularly Central and Eastern Europe, the original systems still flourish today.

Now the situation is slowly reversing, and there is a growing recognition that modern city street tramways, on reserved track, provide the ideal people moving system, albeit at high initial installation and set-up cost. Today, in the UK, Ireland and particularly France, all countries that had fully abandoned street tram systems (Blackpool excepted), there is a resurgence in tram operation.

The tram systems within the United Kingdom were generally laid to one of three gauges - 3' 6", 4' 0", and 4' 8 1/2". However there were several major derivatives, some by as little as 1 inch or even less, and this led to operational difficulties as each town grew in size and in particular in the industrial North where adjoining towns grew to the extent of being continuous urban areas.

The gauge chosen was often selected some 20 or so years earlier, before the arrival of the electric tramcar, as towns installed horse drawn tramways. The nature of the street layout and gradient profile in mid Victorian Britain encouraged the choice of narrow gauges, but this imposed a narrow seating plan and there was much to be gained by utilising the railway gauge with the concept of a wide larger car, if street layout would allow it. Steam traction followed the horse, and by the time electrical traction was possible many systems already existed, and gauge standardisation was not a priority.

The concept of a separate track or central reservation only came along in the 1920/30's, by which time the trolley bus and later the motor bus was gaining ground, capturing the imagination of the fare paying passenger. Sadly the street tramcars were increasingly seen as slow and disruptive to other traffic, and as the track and overhead system became due for renewal, it became easier to sweep the old system aside and replace it with motor buses.

While most towns had abandoned their tramway system by the outbreak of the second World War, many large cities with fleets of several hundred tramcars soldiered on well into the 1950's, with London and Birmingham abandoning their systems in 1952 and 1953, followed by Edinburgh Dundee and Aberdeen in the mid 50's. Leeds, Liverpool and Sheffield lasted until the late 50's with Glasgow following in 1962. Blackpool alone remained faithful, until joined by the new generation of tram systems that have developed in several cities in the past decade.

As each successive system closed down, an attempt was made to sell off the surplus tramcars, but minor gauge differences made the refurbishment and transfer cost expensive, so most systems were worthless on closure. London Transport managed to sell 90 modern trams to Leeds, and Liverpool sold 46 to Glasgow, thereby prolonging the life of the two acquiring systems, although all the Liverpool trams had to be re-gauged by 3/4" to 4' 7 3/4" on arrival in Glasgow.

How could a gauge difference of 3/4 inch from standard be chosen, not only in Glasgow, but also in Huddersfield and Portsmouth?

Well, there is a technical explanation of interest to railway historians. The original intention in the three cities was to run railway wagons on the tramway, not through the city centres, but to shipyards or railway interchange sidings away from the centres. Whereas the profile of a railway wagon incorporates a large flange, the corresponding dimension of a tram wheel flange was far less. Furthermore the rail track is proud of the surrounding surface but the tram rail is flush with the roadway and incorporates a return projection or flange to which the road surface can be in filled between the tracks. For a railway wagon to move on tram track it runs on the wheel flange rim with the normal wheel load carrying surface separated from the track. This required a reduction of gauge of 3/8 inch per wheel, or 3/4 inch per axle. This arrangement to operate wagons on their wheel rims works satisfactorily providing the tram track is sound and the speed is walking pace. Conversely the tram with a gauge 3/4 inch too narrow could operate on railway track, but realistically only at manoeuvring speed, and not carrying passengers

The problem of differing gauges mentioned earlier is best illustrated when comparing the three of the largest conurbations in the UK. In the South Lancashire area (pre 1974), which included present day Merseyside, Greater Manchester and parts of Cheshire, it was possible, to travel over 50 miles on a single network of standard gauge trams. Similarly in the West Midlands long journeys could be made on the narrow gauge 3' 6" systems. In West Yorkshire things were quite different with four systems at variance with each other Leeds had standardised on 4' 8 1/2", Huddersfield 4' 7 3/4", Bradford 4' 0" and Halifax 3' 6".

To try and reduce the inconvenience to passengers heralded by the familiar "all change" call, from the



These two photographs show the complications of mixed standard and metre gauge tracks on the C F Baie de Somme. Note that here there are separate rails for each gauge.

conductor at the cross over point at Stanningley between Bradford and Leeds, some dual gauge cars were built which were able to negotiate a short tapered section of track with their spring loaded wheel realignment system, enabling the tram to continue on its journey after a change of gauge. It is believed that the system was unsuccessful as it was abandoned at the outbreak of the First World War, although the short tapered length of track survived as a monument to Victorian inventiveness until the late 30's.

Elsewhere at Darlington the 3' 6" gauge was chosen in line with a similar choice at Stockton on Tees. However after the systems had been operating for several years, plans were under consideration to link the two towns. Later it was discovered that differing measuring criterion had been used and the two systems were incompatible (by less than 1 inch), by which time trolley buses had become the order of the day. The two towns were never linked and Darlington became the last town to adopt motor buses in the UK as late as 1952.

In Ireland prior to its partition, some interesting but divergent solution was taken to the gauge question in the capital Dublin and Belfast. In the South, Dublin chose 5' 3" although the system could not have linked to the national rail system, as this would have to be 5' 2³/₄" to maintain compatibility. In Belfast the UK gauge was chosen, but increased by 1/2 inch to 4' 9", presumably to ease transit of tight corners.

Several decades later when Dublin introduced their modern generation of trams, 4' 8 1/2" was the gauge chosen, clearly to benefit from a lower rolling stock purchase price, and of course some of the tight 90degree turns on the system could be better achieved with standard gauge. Interestingly when the Society made a tour of the system in April 2006, one passenger realising that the party was from 'across the water' was overheard complaining that these narrow trams did not compare with their broad gauge predecessors of 60 years earlier because they were so narrow.

www.mdrs.org.uk



SECR 753, visiting from the KESR, running on the dual gauge track near St. Valery.

three photos: Malcolm Margetts

Just over a hundred miles to the north in Belfast, where there were three city termini for much of the last century, there was a passenger interchange at York Road and Queens Quay, unique within the British Isles. Here the trams entered the station buildings, providing an under-cover interchange facility on the station forecourt for the traveller. Possibly the proud aldermen of Preston could have learnt from their colleagues, for twice in the past 50 years a new bus station and car park has been constructed at a point 3/4 mile from the railway station, on the opposite side of the town.

The real gauge problem for the tram network was of course the loading gauge, overall height; tram width and particularly swing clearance were all serious restraints. Most systems operated cars to a maximum width in the region of 7' 0", and this became a serious restriction in seat layout and passenger capacity. Several towns chose to increase the clearance between adjacent tracks, but this became a mammoth task with no benefit until completion. Dundee adopted this plan, but closure came before the



task was complete, and the fleet contained two width of tram cars with all the attendant operational problems.

Comments on unusual gauge situations, leads naturally to consider dual gauge locations within or close to the British Isles where two different gauges operate together either with a common rail, or as individual tracks. More common are the sharing of stations on the rail network, such as Aberystwyth and Blaenau Ffestiniog. A very short example of a two gauge systems sharing a common rail can be seen on the Isle of Man. On the continent possibly the closest point to the UK is the Baie de Somme system, where the narrow gauge track is completely within the external standard gauge lines. Both sites regularly feature on Society visits.

On the Isle of Man at Laxey the 3' 0" gauge Isle of Man Railway shares an interchange siding with the Mountain Railway, the track of which is constructed to the wider gauge of 3' 6" to accommodate the fell system. The siding is probably less than 30 feet long

On the Continent the Baie de Somme line incorporates 6 km section where the metre gauge is sandwiched between the standard gauge. The illustration shows the approach to St Valery Canal, from the direction of Noyelles, with standard gauge bearing to left and right, and the narrow gauge following the right track until after a few meters it separates to take its own route. Less than a kilometre further west, the tracks rejoin to cross the canal and enter

*At La Tour-de-Carolain on the French-Spanish border three gauges share the same station. Left: A 5' 6" gauge EMU of the Spanish State Railways (RENFE) stands alongside the standard gauge tracks of the French SNCF. On the left is a metre gauge EMU of the Petit Train Jaune de le Cerdagne (Little Yellow Train) that makes a spectacular 63km journey through the the mountains from Villefrance de Conflent via France's highest station at 1593m. it is electrified at 850VDC with a slightly raised 3rd rail. Right: SNCF 8833 stands at the left hand platform with the RENFE train visible in the background.
two photos: Tim Speechley*

St Valery station as a mixed gauge.

There is also a dual-gauge flat crossing of the Welsh Highland 1' 11½" gauge line and the standard gauge Cambrian coastal route at Porthmadog. This was installed in November 2006, in anticipation of the WHR reopening throughout in 2009, replacing the original crossing which was abandoned in the mid 1930's.

Further afield, there are large numbers of dual and even three gauge meeting points, two gauge tramways being quite common in Europe, and in the French town of Latour-de-Carolain, adjacent to the Spanish border in Eastern Pyrenees near Andora, there is a three gauge railway station interchange, with a standard gauge line from Toulouse, broad gauge from Barcelona, and narrow gauge from Villefranche Vernet les Bains.



*Standard gauge wagons being carried piggy-back style on metre gauge transporter wagons on the Swiss Federal's Lucerne to Interlaken line at Brienz.
photo: Mike Walker*

Another solution to the track gauge compatibility problem which is found in many parts of the world, is the piggy back solution, where converter wagons carry the other gauge stock to eliminate transshipment. The example illustrated is the most common where standard gauge vehicles are conveyed over narrow gauge tracks, metre in this case. Note how the standard gauge track overlaps the wheel flanges from the metre gauge, thereby reducing the overall height of the laden transporter wagon, and achieving greater stability. However the Great Western used standard gauge transporter wagons to convey narrow gauge slate wagons between isolated quarries at Manod and Blaenau Ffestiniog on its branch from Bala.

Society members who have a particular interest in the tramways systems of the first half of the 20th Century

should look out for a second hand copy of "Great British Tramway Networks" by Bett and Gillham, published in 1962. This is an authoritative work on the subject, and from which some of this information has been taken. Another book that could be of even greater interest is "British and Irish Tramways since 1945" (Waller & Waller) which charts the rapid decline of the 40 or so remaining systems, a decline that was equalled a decade later with steam on the railway network

The steam rail enthusiast would argue that this is an unfair comparison, whereas the tram fleets and tracks were in serious decline and a rapid demise was inevitable, the UK steam fleet was far from a state of terminal decline, and should have been withdrawn over a much longer period

AN IRISH SOLUTION. . .



three photos: Tim Edmonds

The Guinness brewery in Dublin had its own railway system that employed both Irish broad gauge of 5' 3" and narrow 1' 10" gauge tracks. In a uniquely Irish solution to the gauge compatibility problem, Guinness had a fleet on convertible steam locomotives.

Nominally they were narrow gauge locomotives but they could be mounted in special adaptors to work on the broad gauge. One of these is seen (*above left*) together with the electric hoist used to lift the loco in and out at the old Brockham Museum in Surrey, whilst un-restored engine units are seen at Winn Technology, Kilbriain, Co Cork on 18th September 1978, thought to be no.22 (*above right*) and no.23 at Brockham on 19th July 1981 (*right*). Both the Brockham exhibits have since been moved to Amberley.



The narrow gauge section was contained within the confines of the brewery site and was opened in 1874. It was on two levels which were originally connected by a hydraulic lift but this was later replaced by a spiral tunnel 865 ft long with 2.65 turns. The broad gauge section took the form of a street tramway 31 chains long connecting www.mdrs.org.uk

the brewery with the Great Southern & Western's Kingsbridge (now Heuston) station. Opened in 1875 it closed in May 1965 but the narrow gauge survived a further ten years.

TRACK GAUGE OF BRITISH ISLES TRAM FLEETS EXTANT AT END OF WORLD WAR II

Location	Gauge	Max Route Mileage	Trams Operated Maximum	1945	Abandoned	Remarks
Aberdeen	4' 8½"	21	141	134	3 May 58	
Belfast	4' 9"	48	441	329	28 Feb 54	
Birmingham	3' 6"	88	843	485	4 Jul 53	Before WWII joined several WM towns.
Blackburn	4' 0"	15	75	47	3 Sep 49	Joined to Darwen.
Blackpool	4' 8½"	20	200	200	operating	
Bolton	4' 8½"	32	162	91	29 Mar 47	Before WWII joined to Manchester conurbation.
Bradford	4' 0"	55	258	99	6 May 50	Abutted Leeds.
Bury	4' 8½"	22	60	20	13 Feb 49	
Cardiff	4' 8½"	18	243	88	19 Feb 50	
Darwen	4' 0"	4	24	6	5 Oct 46	Joined to Blackburn.
Dublin	5' 3"	60	315	113	3 Jul 49	
Dundee	4' 8½"	15	99	60	20 Oct 56	
Edinburgh	4' 8½"	44	400	363	16 Nov 56	
Fintona	5' 3"	0.75	1	1	30 Sep 57	
Gateshead	4' 8½"	12	77	64	4 Aug 51	Joined to Newcastle.
Giants Causeway	3' 0"	8.5	6	6	30 Sep 49	
Glasgow	4' 7¾"	132	1200	1100	4 Sep 62	Peak fleet size occurred in 1951.
Great Orme	3' 6"	1.1	4	4	operating	Two abutting sections, cable worked.
Grimsby & Imingham	4' 8½"	6	34	35	1 Jul 61	Operated by BR(E).
Hill of Howth	5' 3"	5.5	11	11	31 May 59	
Hull	4' 8½"	21	76	18	30 Jun 45	
IoM Douglas	3' 0"	1.75	49	46	operating	Horse drawn, summer only.
IoM Manx Electric Rly	3' 0"	18	24	24	operating	
IoM Snaefell Mountain Rly	3' 6"	4.6	6	6	operating	Fell system.
Leeds	4' 8½"	72	580 §	460	7 Nov 59	560 cars in 1951, abutted Bradford.
Leicester	4' 8½"	23	181	163	9 Nov 49	
Liverpool	4' 8½"	94	1000	784	14 Sep 57	Before WWII joined to Manchester conurbation.
Llandudno & Colwyn Bay	3' 6"	8	24	25	24 Mar 56	
London	4' 8½"	360	3573	1578	5 Jul 52	2630 cars absorbed by LPTB in 1933.
Manchester	4' 8½"	117	1100	364	10 Jan 49	Joined to Salford, Stockport, SHMD, Oldham, Bury and Bolton.
Newcastle	4' 8½"	51	312	235	4 Mar 50	
Newry	3' 0"	3	4	4	10 Jan 48	3rd rail with 150yd o/h collection section.
Oldham	4' 8½"	24	50	24	3 Aug 46	Joined to Manchester
Plymouth	3' 6"	17	184	11	29 Sep 45	
Rotherham	4' 8½"	12	14	14	13 Nov 49	
Salford	4' 8½"	67	230	64	31 Mar 47	Joined to Manchester Bolton and Bury.
Sheffield	4' 8½"	52	503	467	8 Oct 60	
SHMD Manchester	4' 8½"	21	68	6	21 May 45	Joined to Manchester and Stockport.
Southampton	4' 8½"	14	110	104	31 Dec 39	
South Shields	4' 8½"	7.5	55	13	1 Apr 46	
Stockport	4' 8½"	21	85	69	25 Aug 51	Joined to Manchester and SMHD
Sunderland	4' 8½"	14	94	75	1 Oct 54	
Swansea & Mumbles	4' 8½"	5.5	13	13	5 Jan 60	

NOTES:

Maximum route mileage and greatest number of trams operated usually occurred in the early 1930's.

Fleet totals exclude trailers. Round quantities are close approximations.

Some trams operated were subsequently sold to other operators, and may appear twice in this table.

Portsmouth and Huddersfield, the other two systems using 4' 7¾", ceased operations prior to World War II.

§ Leeds aquired 158 second hand trams from 1938, mostly in the post war period.

WHILST IN NORTH AMERICA . . .

In North America although standard gauge today is 4' 8½" as here it wasn't always so. In the early days a variety of gauges up to 6' 0" were used whilst 3' 0" gauge became popular for lightly used lines and could be found in almost every state although Maine went for 2' 0" gauge. Three foot is most widely associated with Colorado where the former Denver & Rio Grande Western had an extensive network and up until the 1960's had some mixed gauge track which saw the unlikely spectacle of mixed gauge trains - narrow gauge locos hauling standard gauge cars or vice-versa. As the DRGW mixed gauge track followed GW practice, i.e. three rails, this caused an alignment problem between couplers! Originally this was overcome by operating a fleet of adaptor wagons, short flatcars with moveable couplers at each end but as late as 1952 they acquired a small fleet of standard gauge Baldwin-built diesels with moveable couplers.

Pennsylvania like many states particularly in the east developed an extensive network of electric "interurban" lines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to serve small communities but unusually adopted a gauge of 5' 2½" rather than standard for these. This prevented them from interchanging freight cars with the "steam" railroads for local delivery as happened elsewhere. Even more bizarre was the decision of the city of Philadelphia to adopt a gauge of 5' 2¼" for its city streetcars to prevent the interurban cars from running through to the city centre and requiring passengers to change cars (and re-book!) at the city limit. Naturally as America's love-affair with the motor-car took hold these carriers became early victims.

However, one example of this gauge-break remains in the city. Because it originally had pretensions of becoming an interstate carrier, the Philadelphia & Western was built to standard gauge but ultimately got no further than Norristown and survives to this day as division of SEPTA, the South Eastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority. Because of the gauge problem its city terminal is at 69th Street on the western side of the city. Here passengers have to change to the Market-Frankford

Elevated, another electric railway, which takes them downtown. Because this operation was one of the few parts of Philly's transport system that was integrated with interurbans (east to Morrisville) it was built to 5' 2½" gauge. As if that isn't bad enough, two streetcar (tram) lines which still serve the city's south western suburbs terminate in the 69th Street station forecourt but these are of 5' 2¼" gauge! This oddity survives because although SEPTA offers an alternative "one seat" ride from Norristown to the city centre via the old Reading Railroad route this is a longer and hence slower journey and therefore the interurban is a better option for many Norristonians as well as picking up business along the way. As the Market-Frankford Elevated heads down town it enters a subway which becomes quadruple track for some of its length only the outer tracks are for another suburban streetcar line which is also 5' 2¼" gauge!

The New Jersey state capital, Trenton could go one better by hosting tracks of no less than four gauges in its streets although there were only short sections actually laid to dual gauge. Standard gauge was used by the Trenton-Princeton Traction Co. and New Jersey Public Service for its interurban line north to Newark. But the latter chose 5' 0" gauge for its line south to Camden. The Trenton & Mercer County Traction Co. went for 5' 2" whilst the Bucks County Interurban crossing the Delaware River from Pennsylvania used that state's 5' 2½" gauge.

Down the Ohio River the grandly named Cincinnati Georgetown & Portsmouth Railroad was an obscure 3' gauge shortline which wandered into a sparsely populated area east of the "Queen City" (Cincinnati) yet it managed to acquire the probably unique characteristic of having parts of its route also featuring standard gauge and an electrified 5' 2½" branch to allow city streetcars to access an amusement park. This led to some of its route and its Carrall Street terminal in Cincinnati being laid with TRIPLE gauge track - surely a PW Department's worst nightmare! Eventually the entire narrow gauge line was re-laid to standard gauge and electrified but there still remained dual gauge track.

Mike Walker



One of the DRGW coupling converter cars (stabled on top of a standard gauge flat car) note the narrow gauge coupler pocket below and left of the standard gauge one.

photo: Mike Walker



Triple gauge pointwork on the Cincinnati Georgetown & Portsmouth. The interurban car is 5' 2½" gauge.

Ed Bond Collection Stanford University

25 AND 15 YEARS AGO

Tim Edmonds

25 YEARS AGO

As part of the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the Vale of Rheidol Railway, Davies & Metcalfe (builder of the line's original locomotives) and the VORR Supporters Association jointly funded the repainting of no 9 *Prince of Wales* into its original yellow-ochre livery with the appropriate company crest. Its first public outing in this guise was to haul a birthday special on 10th April.

Also on 10th April, passengers aboard a return High Wycombe - Altrincham football special had a wearisome homeward journey. First the train was rerouted via Oxford and Greenford due to signal failure affecting the Aynho Junction - Bicester single line section. Then it was held up by the failure at Heyford of 31209 on the preceding train, a returning Ealing - York special, and eventually reached its destination 3 hours 20 minutes late.

An exhibition train chartered by the Development Board for Rural Wales toured parts of England during April, starting at Salisbury on 1st April, including a visit to London Marylebone on 6th-8th April, and finishing at Birmingham Moor Street on 19th April. Among the exhibits in the eight-vehicle train was a restaurant coach serving Welsh cuisine and a 'Flatrol' wagon carrying Talyllyn Railway 0-4-0WT 2 *Dolgoch*, which was helping to publicise tourism. The loco subsequently went on show at the National Railway Museum before returning to Tywyn on 21st June.

Milton Keynes Central station was formally opened on 14th May by the Prince of Wales. Served by Inter-City trains between Euston and Manchester, Liverpool, North Wales and Glasgow as well as semi-fast Birmingham and suburban trains, it was the first new Inter-City station to have been built by BR since Birmingham International in 1976.

In a report prepared for the Secretary of State for Transport, the Oxford University Transport Studies Unit claimed that a Channel Tunnel would be a financial disaster, with losses ranging from £144m to £319m in its first 25 years of operation.



Above: The Cumbrian Mountain Pullman was a regular fixture in the steam special timetable in the spring of 1982. Here 777 'Sir Lamiel' and 'Black Five' 5407 draw the stock of a southbound working into Appleby station on 3rd April 1982.

Bottom left: Talyllyn Railway 0-4-0WT 3 'Dolgoch' displayed at Marylebone station on 7th April 1982 during its tour as part of the exhibition train chartered by the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Below: Although rebuilt by the GWR after the grouping, 2-6-2T 9 'Prince of Wales' is the last surviving loco from the original Vale of Rheidol Railway. The loco is seen in its newly-applied VORR livery at the head of the 80th anniversary special at Aberystwyth on 10th April 1982.

Inset: Close-up of the Vale of Rheidol Railway crest on no 9.

photos: Tim Edmonds



15 YEARS AGO

On 22nd March 6024 *King Edward I* hit the underside of a bridge at Ladbroke Grove, an incident which resulted in the loco losing its brass safety valve cover and safety valves. The 'King' was working a returning *William Shakespeare* excursion to Paddington, and had been switched from the up relief to the up main line because of engineering work. Due to prompt action by the crew neither injuries nor major boiler damage had resulted, but all services were suspended out of Paddington for about an hour. The loco was soon back in action, being given a clean bill of health by BR boiler inspector Sam Foster on 7th April.

Regular freight traffic on the Wensleydale branch ceased at the end of March when the British Steel stone traffic from Redmire was transferred to road. The line was 'mothballed' while a decision was taken on its long-term future.

Following its controversial and much-publicised £6million renovation, the National Railway Museum's Great Hall was officially opened on 16th April by the Duke of Kent.

The class 50s made their farewell from regular main line service on Sunday 24th May when 50007 *Sir Edward Elgar* (in green livery) and D400 (50050 *Fearless* in early BR blue livery) provided double-headed power. These two members of the class had become celebrities following their repainting in special livery and had been the stars of a series of specials over the preceding few months.

London Underground ran a series of highly successful 'Steam on the Met' specials between Harrow-on-the-Hill and Amersham on 16th/17th and 23rd/24th/25th May, using N7 0-6-2T 69621 and 'Black Five' 4-6-0 44932 top-and-tail on a set of former Network SouthEast coaches. Six 95-minute round trips ran each day with tickets priced at £8 adults and £4 children, with a family ticket for two adults and two children available at £18.

After a spell in the 1980s when class 142 'Skippers' were used on the Exeter - Barnstaple services, these were not a success and 'heritage' units returned to the line. They were still at work in 1992. Here an Exeter-bound train waits at the passing station of Eggesford on 22nd April 1992 while the driver operates the level crossing gates.

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: 30th April 2007



A week after its roll-out in GW green livery, 50007 'Sir Edward Elgar' leads D400 (50050) past St Margaret's station with a special train on 11th April 1992.



N7 69621 crosses the Grand Union Canal near Rickmansworth with one of the popular 'Steam on the Met' services on 23rd May 1992.



PUZZLE CORNER

The Answer

9682 was the odd-one-out because it was built by BR in May 1949, the last of the 8750 class.

Incredibly, *Isebrook No.2* was a GWR locomotive, no.12, from October until December 1926 when it was returned to Sentinel's as "unsuitable" - it had been tried on the Fowey branch.

CUMBRIAN MOUNTAIN EXPRESS

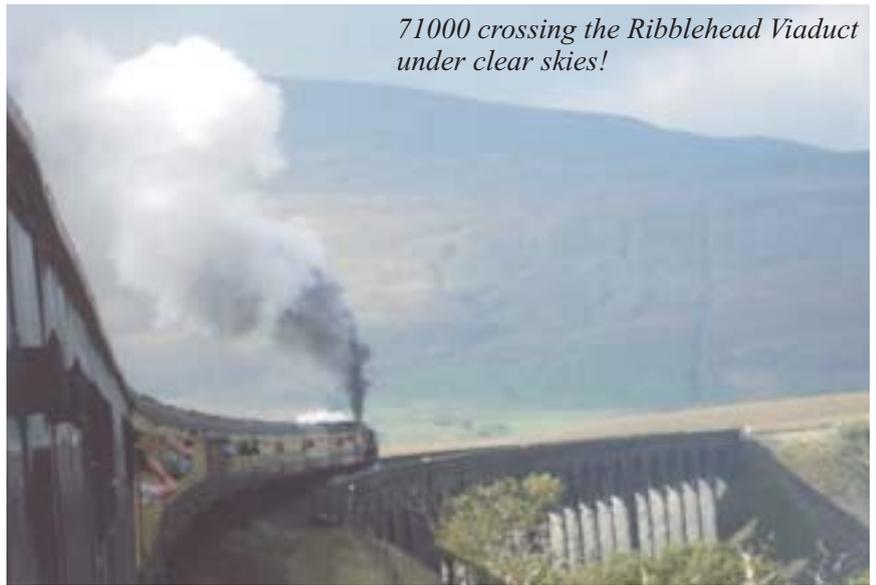
14 OCTOBER 2006

Mike Hyde

Our steam loco today was ex-BR Standard Class 8 Pacific 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*. Designed by R A Riddles and built at Crewe in 1954, it was intended to be the forerunner of a class of steam engine to work heavy express passenger trains over the West Coast Main Line until electrification in the 1960's. However, dieselisation plans in the 1950's left 71000 as the sole prototype for a class of Standard 8 Pacifics. After regularly working the 'Mid Day Scot' she was withdrawn in 1962 and initially listed to be saved for the National Collection but went to Barry for scrap, that is, until saved by a group of enthusiasts in the 1970's - 'mission impossible' had begun!

There were early teething problems some of which still had to be sorted out during and after restoration but in 1995 it was hailed as the most advanced steam passenger locomotive in the world. It went on to win the 'Shap Trials' against such formidable and majestic engines as *Duchess of Hamilton* and *Sir Nigel Gresley*. In 2005 it set a record for the climb over this demanding route.

Based at the East Lancs Railway at Bury, she joined the



71000 crossing the Ribblehead Viaduct under clear skies!

photos: Mike Hyde

Railway Touring Company's *Cumbrian Mountain Express* at York for the run to Carlisle over the Settle & Carlisle line. Early morning mist cleared just as we left York so the run through the Aire Valley, Keighley and Hellifield were perfect. The S&C presented no problems for our loco and photographers were out in their hundreds for that perfect shot as we headed over the Ribblehead Viaduct towards a water stop at Appleby.

The day had started rather dramatically at Kings Cross with an official announcement that we were to take any First Capital Connect service to Potters Bar to pick up our train. The rear diesel, due to haul the train out of Kings Cross had failed. It had been stopped at Potters Bar so as not to jam up the terminus. Eventually 20 minutes down we set out for York behind West Coast Railway 47245. After four more pickups we were full and well into the day. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were served to Premium Class passengers en route during the day.

Over an hour at Carlisle allowed stretching of legs, light shopping, and some alternative refreshment. The return behind 47245 was via the Hexham and Wylam route to the outskirts of Newcastle, following much of the line of Hadrian's Wall. (He must have been a rail fan to build the wall so near a railway!). Soon we were passing the 'Angel of the North' and on the East Coast Main Line keeping pace with GNER 125's (what do we see next year?). After the dropping off stations we eventually reached Kings Cross just a minute or two behind schedule.

A great day's touring, utilising a wonderful unique steam locomotive, and enjoying the sights of the S&C plus the cross country Carlisle to Newcastle line. It all ended too quickly.

71000 at York (above left) and taking water at Appleby (left).

