

# THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

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The Great Britain

Behind the Scenes at Wembley

Five go to Llangollen

# The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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### FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

*Top: Pannier 6430 between 2 Auto coaches at Llangollen Railway's Steel, Steam and Stars Gala (Article page 11).*

*Middle: 34081 Battle of Britain class '92 Squadron' at Llangollen Railway's Steel, Steam and Stars Gala.*

*Bottom: Members of the MDRS at Wembley Main Line Signal Control Centre (Article page 7).  
All photos Mike Walker.*

# TIMETABLE

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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

- 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

- Sunday 8 July                      **SWANAGE RAILWAY GALA**                      by car  
This special event on the Swanage Railway is to mark the 40th Anniversary of the end of steam on the Waterloo - Weymouth main line. Several locomotives will be visiting in addition to the home fleet. If you would like to join a small group attending please contact Mike Walker
- Thursday 26 August                      **WILLESDEN TRACTION MAINTENANCE DEPOT**                      by train  
Mark Hopwood has invited us to see the home base of the other half of his Silverlink empire. If you missed the Bletchley trip now's your chance. *(Provisional)*
- 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 0-4-0ST+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](http://www.mdrs.org.uk) for the latest details.*

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike has been chasing me for a few words for quite a time, so I'm writing this the day after our very successful visit to Bletchley Traction Maintenance Depot, courtesy of "our own" Mark Hopwood, who, as most of you know, is MD of National Express's London Lines which include Silverlink County, whose trains are maintained there. As we have come to expect, any Hopwood trip is planned to perfection and this was no exception, with free First Class (!) travel, cab rides and even lunch, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank him and his staff, both personally and on behalf of the Society, for going to such a great deal of effort to make our day so enjoyable. A full report should appear in the next edition.

Coming out of our visit is a realisation that, although I consider myself as a pretty keen enthusiast, I know absolutely nothing about the modern railway and perhaps I should try to take a greater interest. It goes to show that the generic term "railway enthusiast" is used for a group of people with widely varying interests and it is obvious that amongst you, our members, there is a huge range of

providing sufficient variety. We do try to achieve some balance in subject matter but always welcome suggestions for speakers, so please don't be afraid to come forward.

Personally, I take an interest in many forms of transport and it is quite surprising how many fellow members seem to be rather keen on, dare I say it, buses, though to suggest we might have a bus meeting one night is probably heresy.

I understand Adrian Shooter, despite his expected railway credentials, is also quite a car enthusiast and as our special guest speaker at the 30th Anniversary meeting, which will probably have taken place by the time you are reading this, will have let us into other secrets of his own particular transport passions.

Do have a great summer and make the most of the incredible choice of heritage and modern railways we have available to us.

*Tim Speechley*

# SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS & VISITS

Our guest at the March meeting was Graham Cross, Business Development Manager at Chiltern Railways, who gave us a detailed look at Chiltern's progress to date and its plans for the future. He also outlined in depth the full effects of the Gerrards Cross Tunnel collapse both on passengers loadings and the company's bottom line.

The Welshpool & Llanfair Railway was the subject of Mike Willis' presentation at the April meeting. Mike took us on a tour of the line from its earliest days in preservation to the present and included some fascinating shots taken from a hot air balloon.

A Short History of the London Underground was David Wadley's task at the May meeting which he accomplished in fine style, concentrating on the 'surface' lines. Hopefully he will return to look at the deep-level Tube lines.

The first two visits of the year, to the Wembley Signalling Centres on 29th March and to Silverlink Trains and Bletchley Depot of 12th May were extremely interesting and enjoyed by all who took part. A report on the former appears in this issue and a report into the Bletchley trip, which included the chance to explore the entire Silverlink network, will appear next time along with coverage of our 30th Birthday Celebration at Fawley.

On 21st April a small party travelled up to Llangollen for the Steel Steam & Stars gala and had a thoroughly enjoyable day blessed with superb weather. A full report is in this edition.

## FUTURE VISITS

August looks to being busy. On Sunday 26th we have rare invitation to visit Adrian Shooter's Beeches Light Railway at his Oxfordshire home. His Darjeeling & Himalaya 0-4-0STT will be in operation. Bookings are now being taken so please put your name down with Mike Hyde. Transport from Marlow or High Wycombe can be arranged if you require. This is not to be missed!

Mark Hopwood has also offered to host an evening visit to another of his depots, this time Willesden Traction Maintenance Depot which has been provisionally scheduled for Thursday 23rd August. If you are interested, again contact Mike Hyde.

## DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU READ

The May to December FGW timetable for the Marlow Branch includes a classic typo. It shows the 09.03 from Maidenhead which should meet the 08.57 from Marlow head-on somewhere between Cookham and Bourne End! Adding to the mayhem is the 09.18 from Bourne End to run into the wreckage! The 08.57 should be shown as running 20 minutes earlier throughout. So that's why FGW are talking about getting rid of the token system.

Another piece of misinformation is apparently to be found on the reverse of the menu cards at the recently refurbished Marlow Donkey pub. It explains that the train was so called because it used to run between Marlow and Lancashire where 'Donkey engines' were employed in the mills etc.!

As they say, you couldn't make it up!

## BURN 'EM AT BURNHAM

The very day the last Donkey was distributed by e-mail to members, 7th March, another FGW class 43 caught fire! This was 43179 which caught fire passing Maidenhead whilst working 1A91, the 12.55 Plymouth - Paddington. The driver stopped the train at Burnham where the local fire service attended to put out the blaze causing much disruption once again. 43179 had been in service for only TWO DAYS since being fitted with a MTU power unit however on this occasion it is understood that the fire was in the paper air filters caused by a spark and not in the turbocharger and exhaust as in the earlier incidents.

## CHILTERN FOR SALE?

Following the take over of the Laing Group by Canadian private equity group Henderson late last year there is speculation that the new owners may decide to sell the Laing Rail division which includes Chiltern. However, analysts say nothing is likely to happen whilst litigation continues over the Gerrards Cross collapse.

## WREXHAM & SHROPSHIRE LATEST

Laing's plan for an open access service between Wrexham and Marylebone hit a slight snag when Virgin objected to it calling at Wolverhampton. As an alternative WSR are now proposing calling at Tame Bridge Parkway (near Bescot) as its West Midlands stop. The ORR are currently handling the application but it is unlikely the service will start before December this year.

## MARK GETS GATEX

It might not be for long, but Mark Hopwood has added caretaker Managing Director of Gatwick Express to his seemingly ever-increasing list of responsibilities! He will be in charge until the franchise is absorbed into Southern in May 2008. Before that, he loses Silverlink in November 2007 with County going into the new West Midlands franchise and Metro to Transport for London.

## NON-STOP?

It is reported that the automated public address system at Bourne End has developed a habit of warning passengers to "stand back behind the yellow line, fast through train approaching"!

In a similar vein, is this sign spotted by Tim Edmonds at Killarney station in Ireland on 23rd October 2006. If you don't get the joke, turn to page 14!



# A TRIP TO LONDON

Malcolm Stotter

Four of us left Beaconsfield around 1.45pm for Marylebone on our visit to Wembley signal box in the evening. So we made a day of it using our travel card to its limits? Arriving at Marylebone we walked to Baker Street then to Kings Cross by Tube. We had a quick look around and met up with Pete Greateorex and Dave Theobald, then next stop St. Pancras to see the restoration work being done. We couldn't go behind the screens to see the work being carried out unfortunately as the Mayor was due to a private visit, but what we saw was quite impressive. The brick work has been cleaned of years of smoke and grime, with its massive decorated iron work cleaned of its old coatings of paint and recoated in its original powder blue holding up the fantastic glass roof, that lets more light into the concourse due to the special brightened day light glass used and the north gable looks incredible.



*The north end of St Pancras showing the interface between the old and new trainsheds.*

*photos: Mike Walker*

After wandering around for a while we then left and returned to the underground deciding to travel onto the Docklands Light Railway. This is a fascinating line, it twists and turns around snaky bends so that one minutes you look out to your left and see a building then two minutes on it's directly in front of you! To appreciate the ride you want to be in the front seat. We left the Docklands and went to Stratford then onto Wembley had a bite and drink before heading to Stonebridge Park where we met up with the rest of the club members, and guides for the rest of the evening at the Wembley Signalling Centres. What a difference to when I worked as a fireman. When I had to go to a signal box, you opened the door, the floor was buffed to such a shine and you had to stand on a piece of carpet.

All the brass buttons and bells were polished, as were the silver handles of the many levers, for the signals and points etc and a kettle would be simmering on the side of a fire ready for a brew, the signalman in slippers and always had a cloth in his hand waiting it seemed for the next speck of dust to settle then tapping buttons, to various tones of ringing bells.

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*DLR 51 running into Poplar Station bound for Stratford.*

This box was like stepping onto the flight deck of the star ship Enterprise! Running the whole length of the of the facing wall was a plan of the whole rail network from Euston Station to Hatch End about 13 miles away the whole panel lit up with a profusion of green, yellow and red static lights clicking on and some going off as a line of red, or yellow lights indicating trains passing the signals. In front of this panel were six signal men working at their consoles. Each one had their own section, the first man controlled trains leaving or coming into Euston station. As we start from the station the train is coded say 1Z67 which tells the signalman the route it has to take. The signalman gets call to say it's ready to move off and all he has to do is press a couple of buttons on his desk which light up, points are motorised automatically with the signals, and his route is set and he is on his way! We can follow it on the wall and in front of us on our block section, which is then passed onto the man on my left into his block section, and so on. Contact can be made by phone via box and driver. The signal men are still graded they told me and the grades vary in this box from 3 to 7. Many interesting questions were asked by our group, so one signalman told me.

We were warmly welcomed by all the staff, many thanks to Mark Hopwood who set the evening up for the few of us that went along. It was very interesting and we all enjoyed the tour.



*Silverlink 313134 arrives at Stratford. After reversal it would take the party to Willesden Jct.*

# THE GREAT BRITAIN

## THE ULTIMATE RAILTOUR

Mike Hyde



Good Friday, 6th April saw some 300 passengers and crew board their luxury train from London Paddington to Bristol headed by BR Class 8P 4-6-2 No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*. A well turned out locomotive led to a perfect run to start off this unique event. Nine days later the train and its passengers were to complete their mission in Kings Cross having accomplished the first complete run of a train by steam from the South West of England to the North East of Scotland. A remarkable achievement not formerly undertaken as it was full of potential problems and with many opportunities for disaster. However Railway Touring Co. scored this with victory for all concerned.

An overnight stay in Bristol allowed a run to Penzance behind diesel 57601 supported by 47247 in sunshine especially around the Devon coast of Dawlish and Teignmouth. After a short stay in the Cornish terminus town (some even taxied to Lands End and return) we collected our steam locomotives, 5051 *Earl Bathurst* and 6024 *King Edward I* for our return. The send off from local well-wishers in Penzance was terrific and set the scene for every arrival or departure throughout the trip. Through the beautiful Cornish scenery, over Brunel's 1859 Royal Albert Bridge to Plymouth for a water stop. Onward over the banks, up the river valleys and across the Somerset levels to Bristol for a second overnight stop. Some fine turns of speed at the 75mph mark with dining accomplished in style.

The next day provided an opportunity for some sightseeing. SS Great Britain and the Bristol Docks

*On Easter Monday 6233 Duchess of Sutherland makes a fine sight as it heads north along the WCML at Greenbank Farm north of Preston with the Preston to Glasgow leg of the Great Britain.*

*photo: John Sears*

Railway provided the entertainment before we were off to Preston behind 71000 again. We dived through the Severn Tunnel for our brief travel through Wales on to Hereford. The landscape of the Marches was seen at its best and a relaxed atmosphere descended on the train. Preston was reached without incident and we were conveyed to our respective hotels. The logistics of this trip were considerable but at each location luggage was taken from hotel to hotel by road vehicles and a team of



*Looking at home, 6024 King Edward I and 5051 Earl Bathurst simmer at Penzance on Easter Saturday prior to working the third leg of The Great Britain.*

*photo: Mike Hyde*

staff. This allowed passengers a hands free ride to/from hotels and stations. At least three hotels were required for the tour party at each location (four in Thurso) and groups were accompanied by RTC Stewards. Next target was Glasgow Central this time hauled by LMS Pacific 6233 *Duchess of Sutherland*. The challenge today was Shap. A 30 min delay in the loop at Grayrigg whilst we let others through did not help but a fighting attempt got us over the summit and on to our destination.

In the morning Glasgow Central was alive with pipers and young ladies in the briefest of kilts. Some passengers were quite excited by this, the skirl of the pipes, but soon we were under way and heading further North. 60009 *Union of South Africa* led the train to Perth where we were joined by 61994 *The Great Marquess* as far as Aviemore. The two engines put up some spirited running and our arrival was only a few minutes down, due to stoppages. The city was our base for two days whilst we had time to relax. A tour to Kyle of Lochalsh plus coach ride to Portree on Skye was offered and accepted by the majority. Only at the Kyle when we visited Eilean Donan Castle for a brief photo opportunity did it rain - liquid sunshine I prefer to call it. Even Skye produced sunshine en route to Portree and in town. All too soon we were bussed to Kyle for our steam return behind *The Great Marquess* along the beautiful line to Inverness.



60009 *Union of South Africa* and 61994 *The Great Marquess* at Perth on Saturday 14th April.

Now we were about to take our last lap on this epic journey, to Thurso behind Class 8F 48151 *Gauge 0 Guild*. A late start bode unwell for our day and once we lost our slot on this mainly single track line, we went further behind. Typical was an over 2 hour wait at Helmsdale but in the warm air and wonderful scenery no one seemed to mind. A young lad saw the opportunity to show off his skill on the pipes, which was first class even to our southern ears, and he earned himself and friends enough for a few ice creams and a beer for dad! Eventually we arrived at Georgemas Junction for another long wait before reversing into Thurso's terminal train shed. Even many hours late, we were greeted by crowds and the media. In fact the newspapers followed our tracks and Scottish TV even featured us on their evening news programme. For those who wanted, a coach trip to John O' Groats was arranged before settling into our hotels. It might be said that for now on the journey was an anticlimax as we had achieved our objective.

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71000 *Duke of Gloucester* at Hereford during a water stop on Easter Sunday.

three photos: Mike Hyde

But the next day, the 8F was to lead us back to Inverness with support when needed by the diesel. Another brilliant day weather-wise and a relaxing return to our former hotels. Finally we were to join up with the A4 and the K4 through to Perth on Saturday 14th April. Thereafter we hooked up to our class 57 diesel to run back to London. Passengers were dropped off at York, Grantham and Peterborough en route to Kings Cross with a late but satisfying arrival after such a long trip. An excellent brochure of *The Great Britain* had been produced and its subsequent reading will bring back many happy memories to all travellers. The staff on board performed outstandingly with particular congratulations to the Catering teams. Naturally the locomotives, drivers, footplate crews and support staff ensured the success of this tour. Will it be repeated perhaps in a varied form? We will have to wait and see. However nothing can match up to being there first whatever transpires.

*As far north as you can get. 48151 is lost among the onlookers as it stands inside the trainshed at Thurso on Thursday 12th April.*



# BEHIND THE SCENES AT WEMBLEY

Mike Walker



Opportunities to visit signal boxes have never been very common so we were particularly fortunate to be able to visit both the Signalling Control Centres at Wembley on the evening of 29th March through the good offices of Mark Hopwood and Network Rail. Unfortunately Mark was unable to attend in person as he was required at a c2c meeting but he sent along Tom Joyner, Route Director Silverlink Metro, and Darren Ward, Silverlink Operations & Fleet Interface Manager, to accompany us.

The two SCCs on the Wembley site are Wembley Main Line (WM) which controls the West Coast Main Line from Euston to a point between Carpenders Park and Hatch End and Wembley Yard (WY) which as its name suggests controls much of the vast yard complex which extends from Willesden Junction to Wembley Central including the Princess Royal Distribution Centre but not the Brent Sidings or Wembley carriage sidings. Technically we saw three Signalling Centres as Willesden Suburban (WS) which controls the 'DC' lines from South Hampstead to Watford Junction is now located within WM having moved from its former site adjacent to Willesden TMD a couple of years back. Some members may recall we visited WS back in 1989.

The first part of our visit was to Wembley Main Line which was opened in 2000 and was originally intended to be a temporary structure with control being assumed by the West Coast Control Centre at Saltley. After that plan was dropped it was intended that Rugby would assume control of the WCML from Euston to Nuneaton but no date has yet been set for its transfer.

*A general view of the Wembley Main Line SCC as members look on. Clipped to the panel at the right is a Multi-SPAD reminder for signal WM312 on the Up Slow at Camden Jct.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*

WM is what is known as a NX (eNtrance-eXit) Panel with solid state interlocking (SSI). Six signallers work at the control panel which carries the track diagram. This is repeated on a huge illuminated diagram on the rear wall of the room. To set the route for a train the signaller does not set individual signals and points but presses a button at the entrance and exit of each part of the line over which the train is to move from one main signal to the next - hence the name. The system then *"When I push this button, millions of pounds will disappear"*. Luke Ripley prepares to signal a departure from Euston.

*photo: Mike Walker*





automatically selects the required points and signals provided this does not conflict with any previously selected route. The selected route then appears on the wall diagram as a series of white lights which change to red as the train occupies the section. The diagram also carries the train describers which indicate the train headcode, 1A23 etc., as the train progresses. In addition to setting the route signallers can also manually switch points - the protecting signals change accordingly - or reset signals to danger. However this is only done in exceptional circumstances.

Signalling Centres offer trains to each other not by block instruments and bell codes but instead they use train describers which show the signallers the headcode, description, line and order of the trains approaching them. Similarly, details of trains are passed on automatically to the next SCC. Wembley Main Line is a little different in that many of its movements originate from Euston. A train occupying a platform obviously shows on the diagram by red lights and the signaller enters into the system the appropriate headcode, using a keyboard, but does not set up the road until an authorised member of the station staff presses the Train Ready to Start (TRS) button. This causes a yellow light to blink on the appropriate platform on the diagram at which the signaller sets the route. Although this will provide the driver with a "proceed" aspect he or she may not depart until the Right Away is given either by the conductor or platform dispatch staff. A surprising feature of the station working was the number of times which Virgin trainsets were swapped between duties. This occurs for a variety of reasons including a delayed inbound service, a train not cleaned and/or prepared for departure in time or having a technical fault. During our short visit around a dozen changes were made, some quite close to departure time, which we were told was not unusual. One can see why the departure indicators at stations sometimes do not show platform details until quite late.

Anyone who has been in a traditional signal box will be familiar with lever collars, metal "doughnuts" which slipped over a lever preventing its movement and reminding the signaller of the presence of a train. Whilst the track circuits remind the signaller in a SCC that a train is waiting at a signal, there are times when an equivalent of a lever collar is required to remind the signaller that a line cannot be used for some reason. This is done by having caps which slip over the route selection buttons thus preventing them being depressed. During our visit



**ABOVE:** The Euston station end of the WM panel. The panel with the route setting button is at bottom-left. The monitor in the centre shows the line north of Hatch end to Watford Junction station (which has its own SCC) giving the signallers advanced warning of what is approaching.

**BELOW:** A close up of work station 3 showing the CCTV monitor and controls for the Mitre Bridge Level Crossing. The bank of switches to the left of it are to control points individually. The entrance-exit route setting buttons can be seen on the main panel below.

*both photos: Mike Walker*



these were in use on a short section of one of the main lines up Camden Bank which could not be used as a set of points had been damaged and could only be used in the "reverse" position causing considerable inconvenience to the signallers. It seems a point blade had been damaged about a week previously and as a replacement had to be ordered and custom made it was likely to be some time before normal working would be resumed. Other caps are provided to indicate when either the AC or DC traction currents are switched off.



*Tim Speechley takes a look at the Willesden Suburban IECC which is one corner of the Wembley Main Line SCC. Visible on the desk are the five TFT monitors which display the track layout and status to the signaller who sets the route using the trackerball in the centre of the desk to select the route and then presses the adjacent entrance and exit buttons. One signaller controls the whole of the Willesden Suburban control area from South Hampstead to Watford Junction.*

*photo: Tim Edmonds*

In contrast WS, which when in its old building was a similar NX/SSI installation, now consists of a computer work station. Whilst this is similar in appearance to the Integrated Electronic Control Centres (IECC) such as Marylebone or Upminster it is not technically an IECC as it is not equipped with automatic route setting, where the timetable is loaded into the computer which sets the routes, and the signallers intervene only to regulate out of path operations. At WS the single signaller sits at a workstation with three flat screen VDU's which display the route. The actual display on each can be selected by the signaller and the normal choice is to have the whole area displayed on one screen and use another to zoom in on specific areas. Three screens are provided although a minimum of two are required to provide a degree of redundancy in the event of a failure although a VDU can be replaced very swiftly. The actual method of operation is similar to the NX panel in that the route is set by selecting its end points by using a tracker-ball to move the on-screen cursor to the required point and pressing enter on the keypad. The screen display shows the same information as the diagram on the NX panel with the addition that is capable of showing exactly what aspect a signal is displaying, i.e. red, yellow, double yellow or green whereas the signals on the NX panel only show red or green for any proceed aspect. Instead of lever collars or caps to cover the pushbuttons, these computerised stations use locks set using the tracker ball and keyboard which then not only locks the affected signals, points and line but clearly highlights them on the VDU.

SPADs (Signal Passed At Danger) have become a hot topic in recent years and much work has been done by all parts of the industry to reduce their occurrence. Having been personally involved in this, I was interested to see bulletins posted on the WM route diagram to remind signallers of signals with a Multi-SPAD record. The signallers try wherever

possible to avoid bring a train to a stand at these signals in an attempt to reduce SPADs. Incidentally, when he heard we'd been allowed to set the routes up for trains departing Euston, Mark admits he quickly checked the Operations Log to make sure there had been no Category B SPADs - that's ones caused by the signaller rather than the driver. As if...!

One important part of the signaller's work is regulation, which is deciding which trains should have priority if a conflict occurs. In an ideal world this would not be necessary as everything would be on time and in its correct path. But we live in the real world and are seldom that lucky. There are times when the observer, be they passengers, train drivers or the managers of the train operating companies look on with despair at what appears in isolation to be crazy decisions. However when you see it from the signaller's point of view it presents a different and interesting perspective, as we were to see. For example; a Southern Brighton to Watford Jct. service arrived at Willesden North Jct and was held at WM817 signal. These trains are booked to continue on the Down Willesden Relief line and duck under the Fast and Slow lines before joining the Down Slow at Sudbury Jct. However on this occasion a delayed freight train was waiting on the Down Relief at Sudbury Jct. for a fresh driver so the signaller decided to route the train to Watford via the Down Fast when a gap became available between the Pendolinos. However the signaller admitted there might be a problem with this - not all Southern's drivers "sign" the Fast lines - so we all waited with bated breath as WM817 cleared with a position 5 "feather". Will the train start to move or will the driver be in contact? A sigh of relief all round when the former took place! Drivers contact the signaller using the signal post telephone or in the case of Silverlink and Southern trains using the Cab Secure Radio (CSR).

Just before we left another interesting situation came up. A long freight train arrived at Camden Jct. and was to go to the Great Western Main Line via West London and Acton Wells Junctions. Deciding exactly when this would be allowed to enter WM's bailiwick took a lot of consideration. Not just its movement along the Down Slow but the signaller had to take into account it crossing the Fast Lines at West London Jct. and then liaising with the signaller at Acton Wells who in turn had to get Slough New to agree to take it onto the GWML promptly as it was too long to be held on the ramp down to Acton Main Line without delaying the Silverlink Metro Richmond services. With all the considerations to take into account, "It might be we have to hold an up Virgin and let this guy have priority at West London Jct. to cause the least disruption" was the signaller's view but we left with it still sitting on the North London Line at Camden Jct. awaiting its turn.

Wembley Yard is also an NX Panel but of older design and much smaller with only one signaller in charge, on this evening it was Isaac. He admitted that the mid-evening was a quiet time and things only really got buzzing after the passenger services ceased. Having explained the SCC and its functions we got lucky. A freight arrived from the south and was to be stabled in the yard. Isaac radioed the yard controller to see where he wanted to put it and was told the South End C Sidings, a group of sidings on the north east side of the complex. Isaac set the road accordingly and we watched the panel indications as the train entered WY's area and then saw it disappear off the display as it entered the un-signalled part of the yard, shortly afterwards 67027 rumbled past the window with a train of vans - it was our train.

It seemed that in no time the yard controller was on the radio asking for a light engine to move from the north end of C Sidings to the south end of the departure sidings to take up a departing train. This was 67027 again and showed an intensive use of assets by EWS! Interestingly this move involved reversal of the loco in the Shunt Neck at the north end of the complex alongside Wembley Central station. Because of one of those strange quirks of the industry this neck and two loco sidings alongside are controlled by WM so Isaac had to "offer" it to WM. So the signaller at WM would know what the move was and where to put it, Isaac "described" 67027 as 0N00 - N for Neck, if it had been for the loco sidings it would have been described as 0L00 or 0M00. We



*Isaac explains the layout of Wembley Yard to Mike Hyde. The SCC is a smaller and older version of Wembley Main Line.*  
*photo: Mike Walker*

could watch the WM signal clear for the move on the WY diagram and see the 67 make the move. Isaac was then able to give him the road back from the neck down to the south end of the departure sidings where he signalled it back onto its train. We couldn't have wished for a better demonstration of how WY works or how the SCCs work together.

So concluded a fascinating evening during which we all asked a lot of probing technical questions and learnt a great deal. Thanks to Mark for setting it up and to Network Rail and their signallers for hosting us - they seemed to enjoy it as much as we did!

*The evening concluded with a group photo for the Silverlink staff magazine. The party was joined by Tom Joyner and Isaac the WY signaller.*

*photo: Darren Ward/Silverlink Trains*



# FIVE GO TO LLANGOLLEN

Mike Walker



The Llangollen Railway's Steel Steam & Stars gala in April was billed as "the event of 2007" and did not disappoint. On the Saturday, Ron Croxford, Pete Greatorex, Brian Hopkinson and myself drove up from Marlow and were met at Llangollen by Dave Theobald.

The event had a definite BR WR branch line flavour as exemplified by 6430 arriving at Carrog with an "Auto Sandwich" during the afternoon (**Above**). Earlier in the day former *Marlow Donkey* 1450 propelled a single Auto into Berwyn (**Below**).

No fewer than eleven locos were in use, six of them visitors, and all but two of Swindon origin. Of the foreigners, BR Standard 2 78019 (**Right**) represented a class which was no stranger to the line and is seen at Llangollen awaiting departure.



In addition to a roughly half-hourly service on the main line, an additional attraction was the chance to drive a loco between Llangollen shed and Pentrefelin yard for a tenner. 5643 was performing (**Below right**) as we passed.



Freights ran through the day with 4160 leaving Carrog (**Right**). Other visitors included Pete Waterman's 5224 near Carrog (**Below left**) and 34081 92 Squadron (**Below right**) which failed on Friday and for its first run on Saturday leading to some predictable comments from the LR's pro-Swindon Loco Dept.! But it made a fine sight approaching Glyndyfrdwy on Saturday afternoon. It could almost have been the Somerset & Dorset. Finally, there was Dennis Howell's 9466 (**Bottom Left**).



Home-based locos taking part included 7822 *Foxcote Manor* deputising for 34081 arriving at Carrog (**Centre left**), 3802 which proved almost totally elusive to our cameras but was caught entering Berwyn (**Centre**) and 5199 seen taking a breather between trips at Llangollen (**Centre Right**).



En route to Llangollen, Dave Theobald had paused to snap 45407 and 45231 heading the RTC's *Central Wales Explorer* at Hadnall north of Shrewsbury (**Right**) bringing his loco count for the day to 13!

# 25 AND 15 YEARS AGO

Tim Edmonds

## 25 YEARS AGO

Both the major railway unions, ASLEF and the NUR were in dispute with the BR Board over a five per-cent wage rise, linked to productivity improvements - including the implementation of flexible rostering of train crews. The NUR called an all-out strike from 28th June, which shut down the entire network, but suspended its action two days later following a vote against the action at its national conference. Flexible rostering remained an issue for ASLEF, however, and their members - also on strike - continued action until the union's executive agreed to a resumption of negotiations on 18th July.

The internal railway system at the British Aluminium Company's works at Burntisland, Fife, ceased operation after more than sixty years. This was because major investment was necessary, but could not be justified with the decreasing use of the system since 1972.

In readiness for the de-nationalisation of Sealink, from 11th July BR divested itself of the ports of Fishbourne, Fishguard, Folkestone, Harwich, Heysham, Holyhead, Newhaven, Parkeston Quay and Stranraer. It also disposed of the piers at Gravesend, Lymington and Ryde, the floating harbour at Tilbury and the jetty at Portsmouth Harbour. All were taken over by a new company, Sealink Harbours Limited, which remained a subsidiary of Sealink - setting the stage for its eventual privatisation.

The subject of the Marlow & District Railway Society's monthly meeting on 15th July was 'Restoration of 6024'. The speaker was D.K. Polley and the meeting was held at 'The Marlow Donkey' public house in Station Road.

The centenary of the opening of the line that was to become the Bluebell Railway took place on 1st August. As part of the celebrations the National Railway Museum lent the sole surviving LB&SCR B1 class 0-4-2 *Gladstone* for display throughout the summer season. The loco was also a centenarian, having been built at Brighton in 1882. The NRM itself celebrated its ten-millionth visitor on 27th August - less than seven years since its opening.

## 15 YEARS AGO

The National Garden Festival took place at Ebbw Vale from 1st May to 4th October 1992, and two of the exhibits had a railway theme. 'The Old Dramway' was a reflection of the decline of the industrial heritage of South Wales, with overgrown narrow-gauge track scattered with derelict wagons and leading to an adit mine. The festival was located on a hillside and a funicular railway was built for the duration of the event, offering visitors an unusual way to reach the upper part of the site.

At the 'Taunton 150' event on 1st July a serious bid was made to derail the VIP special on the West Somerset Railway, headed by 3440 *City of Truro* and Prairie tank 4561. The train was halted dramatically between Leigh



*Built in the year that the Bluebell Railway's line was opened, LB&SCR B1 0-4-2 214 Gladstone is displayed in Sheffield Park station on 25th April 1982 (Top).*

*The British Aluminium internal railway system at Burntisland closed in the summer of 1982. Three years earlier smartly turned-out 0-4-0DM No 1 (JF 4210004/1949) is seen at the works with a train of empty wagons on 22nd August 1977 (Below).*

*photos unless stated: Tim Edmonds*



*A train at Manmoel station, the summit of the funicular railway built as part of the National Garden Festival, Ebbw Vale. 13th August 1992.*

Woods and Roebuck thanks to the swift actions of a ganger who flagged down the train after discovering a sleeper and other debris on the track. Investigation revealed that a number of keys had been loosened or removed.

Although it was originally planned to dispense with all loco-hauled operations on Network SouthEast's 'Thames Line' from the start of the summer timetable, this was not possible because of protracted deliveries and commissioning of class 165 'Network Turbo' units. Four loco-hauled diagrams therefore remained, covering services on the Paddington-Newbury-Westbury and Paddington-Oxford-Banbury routes until sufficient 165s were available. The last loco-hauled trip on these diagrams was the 19.20 Paddington-Oxford (1F66) on 3rd July, hauled by 47431.

After 32 years working out of Marylebone on Banbury and Aylesbury services, the class 115 DMUs worked for the last time on the evening of 29th July. Just before 19.00 an eight-car formation left Marylebone Depot and entered the station, amid exploding detonators to mark the occasion, then left as the 19.11 for Aylesbury via Amersham. Network SouthEast provided a headboard which read 'Final class 115 DMU on the Chiltern Line 1960-1992'.

A plaque to commemorate the centenary of Pantyffynnon signal box on the Central Wales line was unveiled by Theo Steel, Regional Railways Director South Wales & West, at a ceremony on 19th August. This was the idea of the local staff operating the box, signalmen David Davies and Gwyn Griffiths and relief signalman John Rowe. (Your scribe was on holiday in South Wales at the time and, at the invitation of the PR Officer at the event, he was invited to witness the ceremony and partake of the refreshments afterwards, as a freelance journalist! His family were also invited. Fortunately this generosity was justified when his report and photograph of the box were published in *The Railway Magazine* for November... Incidentally, the event was not timed for arrival by train and the big-wigs arrived in their company cars, which did not give a good impression).

*47431 passing Maidenhead on 3rd July 1992 with the 19.20 Paddington - Oxford, the last loco-hauled 'Thames' service.*

*photo: Mike Walker*

## IRISH HUMOUR?



Killarney like Bourne End, is a terminal! The sign (page.3) is on the left.

www.mdrs.org.uk



*This is not a scene of genuine railway dereliction (Above), but the exhibit called 'The Old Dramway' at the National Garden Festival, Ebbw Vale. 13th August 1992.*

*On a derelict platform at Pantyffynnon station, guests enjoy refreshments to celebrate the centenary of the signal box (seen left background Below). 19th August 1992*



## 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 July 2007**

# CHILTERN SPLENDOUR



The elegance of the GWR returned to the Joint Line on 5th May when Chiltern Railways used 4965 *Rood Ashton Hall* and the Tyseley chocolate and cream set for a special from Birmingham to Marylebone.

The up train stormed towards White House Tunnel (it could be heard all the way from High Wycombe!) but the return was a little more restrained through High Wycombe in deference to the speed limit.



5049 *Defiance* brought up the rear both ways to provide train electrical supply and act as a pilot for shunting at Marylebone.

*photos: Mike Walker*

