

THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

150

September 2015



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A Connecticut Yankee in
King Arthur's Court

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

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The contents of the *Marlow Donkey* represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Society

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Top: First of the Turbos to appear in GWR green was 166204 in late July seen arriving at Reading minus branding.

Photo: Mike Walker. (Article page 5).

Bottom: A Deltic in Cambridge on a diverted regular working. Class 55 55017 The Durham Light Infantry.

Photo: Don Woodworth. (Article page 19).

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Rd, Bourne End at 7.45 for 8.00pm.

- Thursday 17 September **(NOT SUCH) MODERN TRACTION** Paul Chancellor
Paul, current owner of Colourail, presents a selection of pictures depicting diesels on the main line from their inception. The first half covers Penzance to Bristol, featuring all the classes of diesel that have worked on this route over the years, whilst the second half will cover all those classes not already seen in part one.
- Thursday 15 October **MOSTLY GW FROM THE RAIL ARCHIVE STEPHENSON** Brian Stephenson
Well known photographer Brian Stephenson maintains a huge archive of pictures going back around a hundred years from many photographer "names" of the past. In this presentation he will concentrate on the Great Western, hopefully with some shots from the GW/GC Joint line.
- Thursday 19 November **THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM** Anthony Coulls
Anthony is the NRM's Senior Curator of Rail Vehicles and is based at Locomotion, Shildon. He is also Chairman of the National Traction Engine Trust (in his spare time ?). This young man is a great enthusiast and excellent speaker and tonight will give an insight into the work of the museum and its staff.
- Thursday 17 December **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**
Our popular Christmas social evening will follow the format of previous years and as last year, Georgie Caldwell has kindly agreed to do the catering. Further details to follow shortly.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I'll wager that for the majority of you the enthusiasm for railways started or was encouraged by an Ian Allan ABC booklet or Combined volume, either purchased with carefully saved pocket money or received as a gift for birthday or Christmas. So it is sad that the man responsible for so many "Train Spotters" died recently at the end of June, just a day before his 92nd birthday which, unknown to me until I read an obituary in one of the magazines, was the same day as my own birthday. As a youngster I was never really that interested in trains and it was only when my friend from North Wales came to stay with us in London and always wanted to be off spotting that I started too. My first "Combine" was the Winter 1962/3 edition, already well out of date when I bought it half price from a Smith's bookstall at one of the London termini, for I remember going to Paddington and asking about the "Kings" I'd seen in the book and being told they had all been withdrawn for ages (I suspect it was by then early 1964).

Having started with trains, Ian Allan later published useful booklets on all sorts of transport related subjects, including the British Bus Fleets ones, several of which I have, despite never having been a bus spotter in my youth, though developing an interest in road transport when I became involved with a small group of bus and coach preservationists in my very late teens. There has been some discussion recently about "Buses" and their place in our *Marlow Donkey* magazine, following Mike Walker's article about the history of Thames Valley in the last edition. I realise that, like Marmite, you either love them or hate them and consequently, as we are indeed a railway society, the haters would argue there is no place for buses

in our magazine and I myself did pull Mike's leg about this when I first saw the June issue. However, it was a damned fine article about local transport and I discovered a lot about a subject of which I knew nothing (as a boy brought up in London Transport's realm). I don't see any problem at all in having the odd non-railway article in the *Donkey* and if you aren't interested then there is no compulsion to read the piece. In fact I have to admit that occasionally I will gloss over an article in a magazine relating to the modern scene as these often do not appeal to me so much as a good old wallow in nostalgia.

As I write, I have just returned home after a holiday in the "Dales" (often called the Yorkshire Dales, though we were staying in Lancashire and Cumbria was just up the road). This was very much supposed to be a non-railway holiday with Mrs.S and another couple but being quite close to the Settle and Carlisle line, which was hosting a number of steam specials, I managed to "escape" on a number of occasions and saw *Duchess of Sutherland* at Ribbleshead viaduct, *Galatea* at Ais Gill summit (albeit in a gloomy gale) and, the high spot, *Scots Guardsman* at Helwith Bridge making an enormous racket heading north. The noise was just fantastic and was audible long before the train appeared and way after it had gone. This was the first time I had seen this loco since its last overhaul and I had forgotten just how impressive a Scot can be, highlighted, of course, by the splendour of the S&C.

I hope you have been making the most of the Summer and look forward to seeing you at our meetings once they resume in September.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

As has become the norm in recent years, June was our annual joint meeting with the Maidenhead & Windsor branch of the RCTS and this year we were entertained by the branch chairman, Steve Ollive who took us on a tour of the German narrow gauge lines. Unfortunately, these were all taken in the same miserable weather conditions of mid-winter which hardly did the subject justice.

The season wrapped up in July with a superb presentation by Steve Nakoneczny show-casing the photographs of the late Ken Pirt. Whilst the emphasis was on the East Coast, the other regions got a look in with images shot in the late 1950s and early 1960s. But for most, it was the twenty or so shots near the end featuring the railways of Ireland in the latter days of steam that really made the show, a subject rarely seen in colour and of such outstanding quality.

AND VISIT

It might be our third visit, but over two dozen members signed up for the visit to the Statfold Barn Railway on 12th September which is taking place as this issue is due to be completed so a full, illustrated report will appear in the December issue.

DAVID WALTER

Sadly we have to record that David Walter from Tylers Green and a member for many years, passed away in May. He enjoyed our meetings but had been unable to attend over the past couple of years due to ill health.

ISSUE 150!

With this edition the *Marlow Donkey* reaches its 150th issue which by any standards is a major milestone for a small society publication such as this.

As our archivist Malcolm Margetts recounts in this issue, its origins can be traced back to the first months of the Society's existence and soon settled down to a quarterly publication schedule with only a couple of issues being missed thanks to the efforts of the successive editors starting with Stan Verrinder, followed by myself, the Mark Hopwood and John Tuck before returning to me - I'm a glutton for punishment! John is still involved in the final production stages keeping his graphic design and computer skills honed in the process.

The *Donkey* has come a long way from those early duplicated newsletters. It was a long while before we were able to even consider including illustrations whilst the development of modern computer-based technology has allowed us to present a far more professional all-colour magazine more economically particularly now that roughly 90% of the circulation is done electronically reducing the number of printed copies we require - and here we must again thank First Great Western for their generous assistance in that matter.

New technology has brought with it too a change in the role of the *Donkey*. The supporting weekly, or thereabouts, newsletters allow us to keep you the

members well informed about events as they happen - special or unusual workings for example in a way that was impossible previously, leaving the *Donkey* as more a journal of features and reporting on events of the recent past. There have been suggestions that the two be combined with the printed magazine ceasing but for the present that is not an option as a handful of members do not have access to a computer.

Whilst it is the editor that puts the magazine together, it is the contributions from membership in the form of articles and/or photographs that make it possible. Like my predecessors, I can't write the whole thing myself - although it's been close a few times! Therefore, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have contributed articles and photographs over the years without your efforts the *Donkey* would have withered years ago.

But, of course, it's an on-going challenge to fill each issue so once again I appeal for contributions. My last appeal a couple of issues back brought an encouraging response particularly on the theme of "what got me started". Tony Caton tells his story in this issue and I have a couple more in the pipeline but more either in the same vein or on other aspects of the wide subject of railways are always welcome - if each of you made a single contribution we'd have plenty of material for years! Next time sees the final instalment of Don Woodworth's entertaining memoirs that have been running for the past couple of years so that's a big hole to fill.

Because this is the 150th issue, it's got an extra four pages but this is not going to be the norm. Here's to the next 150 *Donkeys* - but I don't intend to be editing no.300!

MAIDENHEAD RCTS MEETINGS

Our friends at the RCTS have organised the following programme for the coming months. As always MDRS members are welcome to attend the meetings which are held at Cox Green Community Centre, Highfield Lane, Cox Green starting at 19:30.

Mon 28 Sept **Electrification and Enhancements on the Great Western.** Tom Pierpoint (FGW) and Kevin Miller (NR)

Mon 26 Oct **The Mid Hants Railway** Brian Dalton

Mon 23 Nov **The Regional Railways Story** Gordon Pettitt

Mon 21 Dec **World Railways in an Era of Change**
Chris Jackson, The Railway Gazette

NON-STOP INTO MAIDENHEAD

Regular patrons of the *Marlow Donkey* (the train that is) may have noticed it no longer has to crawl round the curve and invariably stop for brief while at the signal outside Maidenhead station.

This is because when the signalling control was transferred to Didcot at Easter the former approach release arrangements were lifted. Trains now only have to stop if platform 5 is already occupied - the distant even shows green now for the first time in living memory!

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FOOTBRIDGE NOTES

Work is now well under way to construct a footbridge linking the two platforms at High Wycombe replacing the old subway and allowing the main down platform to be extended at the London end to accommodate 9-car trains. The new bridge will include lifts for disabled access. The whole project is costing some £4 million and is due for completion at Christmas.

Whilst work is progressing, a temporary footbridge is in place but as this does not have lifts, a dedicated wheelchair accessible taxi is on standby to ferry disabled passengers between the main and north entrances.

From the enthusiast's point of view its location completely ruins the classic photo angles at the station both of Up trains passing and of down trains from the top of the car park. Such is progress!



A computer-generated impression of how the new footbridge at High Wycombe will look.

Chiltern Railways



The new "temporary" footbridge at Taplow taken from the old bridge, looking east.

Photo: Peter Robins

STEAM THIS AUTUMN

There are a handful of main line steam specials booked in this area this autumn as listed below although, as always, these are subject to change or cancellation particularly as a couple are booked to be hauled by 6023 *King Edward II* which is not yet main line approved.

Updates will be made in the weekly newsletters.

Sat 26 Sept Paddington - Reading - Worcester RTC 6023

Tue 29 Sept Banbury - Swindon - Kingswear SD 6201

Sat 3 Oct Tyseley - Oxford VT 5043

Sat 18 Oct Paddington - High Wycombe - Stratford-upon-Avon SD 61306

Sat 21 Nov Tyseley - Oxford VT 4965/5043

Thur 26 Nov Victoria - Reading - Minehead SD 6201

Sat 28 Nov Paddington - Reading - Worcester RTC 6023

Sun 29 Nov Paddington - Reading - Bath SD 6201

Two recent specials. Hastings DEMU 1001 climbs to Saunderton summit on its way from Hastings to Stratford-upon-Avon on 4th July and 70000 Britannia passing Ruscombe church on 25th July working from Paddington to the West Somerset Railway.

Both photos: Mike Walker





The return of the Great Western Railway

When Mark Hopwood presented his Vice-Presidential address at February's AGM he took several opportunities to tease his audience about a possible new brand for his company. Those paying attention got the message!

From the start of the new franchise on 13th September the name will change from First Great Western back to the hallowed Great Western Railway with First Group blue livery and logos disappearing in favour of a new dark green scheme and a GWR logo in the form of an updated version of the 1930s "shirt button" motif. First will, however, still hold the franchise.

The first appearance of the new brand came with the refurbished First class interiors on the HSTs late last year whilst the sleeping car fleet has been going green during the year. The first DMU, 166204, appeared in late July along with 57605 followed by the first HST in mid-August. None has been branded until the new franchise actually starts.

The new colours will be applied to all stock except that with a short life expectancy with the GWR (Pacers, some Sprinters and the Adelantes) plus all the new stock.

New uniforms will be issued and future publications and publicity will carry the new brand as will those stations managed by the company.

How the new livery will be applied to the HSTs and Class 57 locomotives when fully branded. The door are silver and the small lettering below the cream line reads Great Western Railway at the left end and Operated by First Group at the other. The GWR monogram is on a matt green diagonal seen on the side of 166204 above.

Image: Great Western



First of the Turbos to appear in GWR green was 166204 in late July seen arriving at Reading minus branding.

Photo: Mike Walker

57605 Totnes Castle was the first loco repainted and is seen at Derby RTC.

Photo: RVEL



The rebrand will not just be confined to the trains but will cover publicity, uniforms and station signage.

Images: Great Western



BI-OX: OUR NEW RAILWAY

From 26th October, if all goes to plan, it will be possible to travel by train from High Wycombe to Oxford for the first time since 1963. MIKE WALKER looks at how a line once given up for dead has been reborn as a modern £300 million high-speed railway fulfilling one of Chiltern's key franchise commitments.



When awarded its unique twenty-year franchise in 2003, Chiltern Railways committed itself to re-establishing a link between the Chiltern main line and the city of Oxford, something which had been lost when the old Wycombe Railway between Princes Risborough and Kennington Junction had been closed to through passenger traffic in January 1963.

Initially it had been hoped to reopen that line but studies soon showed major obstacles; Sustrans had turned the Princes Risborough to Thame section into a national cycleway and there was the small matter of bridging the M40 plus the need to reconstruct Wheatley Tunnel. Attention therefore turned to upgrading the existing line between Bicester and Oxford, connecting it to the Chiltern line by a new chord. This was the chosen path and, after some delay, is now being delivered following a works programme which has in effect provided a completely new railway.

HISTORY

The line from Bletchley to Oxford, plus that from Verney Junction through Buckingham to Banbury, was built by the Buckinghamshire Railway. Bletchley to Banbury opened on 1st May 1850 with the Verney Junction to Islip

The new station at Oxford Parkway nearing completion on 10th July 2015. Located adjacent to the Water Eaton park and ride site, it will act as the terminal when the line opens pending completion through to Oxford.

photo: Mike Walker

section following on the 1st October of the same year, then to Oxford Road (ironically the site of the new Oxford Parkway) on 2nd December and finally to Oxford on 20th May 1851. The line was worked from the outset by the LNWR which absorbed the Buckinghamshire Railway in July 1879.

The line led a fairly uneventful life and had become a part of the longer Varsity Line linking Oxford with Cambridge. It became an important freight route during the Second World War with an improved junction at Oxford and a new connection with the GC line at Claydon whilst BR proposed a major hump yard at Swanbourne near Bletchley although that was never completed, however the associated flyover at Bletchley was. The line survived the Beeching axe but succumbed to further BR cuts with the through Oxford to Cambridge passenger service being withdrawn after 1st January 1968 - only the Bletchley to Bedford service survived. Following this, Oxford to Bletchley was singled and freight traffic became increasingly sparse. After the Turbos took over Chiltern services, the Claydon to Bletchley section was moth-balled as there was no longer a requirement to send units to Bletchley depot for maintenance.

A minor revival started when Network SouthEast initiated an "experimental" service between Oxford and Bicester on 15th May 1989. This passed to Thames Trains upon privatisation and then to First Great Western who in turn relinquished control to Chiltern in May 2011 in readiness for its new life.

On the last day of operations prior to closure for rebuilding, a very wet 14th February 2014, Chiltern's 165012 arrives at Bicester Town with 2T08, the 10:00 from Oxford.

photo: Geoff Plumb





This picture, looking west from the Kidlington Road bridge at Islip in April 2015 shows how complete the reconstruction has been with all the old infrastructure being removed and an entirely new roadbed created. In the distance a crane assists the construction of Bridge 43A, one of seven new bridges which have replaced foot and vehicle crossings on the route, in this case the former Mill Lane Level Crossing.

photo: Geoff Plumb

REBIRTH

Chiltern's decision to upgrade the former LNWR line came as part of a wider scheme promoted by the East-West Rail Consortium which seeks to reopen the entire Oxford to Cambridge route. In November 2010 the government gave approval to the first stage of this scheme by agreeing to the upgrading and reopening of the Oxford to Bletchley section including the new connection at Bicester as part of Chiltern's 'Evergreen 3' upgrade.

The initial aim was to reinstate double track throughout designed for a 100mph maximum speed (in recent times the Oxford to Claydon section had been limited to 40mph or less) but delays in authorising the wider East-West scheme and the discovery of structural problems meant that for a while only a single line would be restored. Full funding for the East-West scheme being forthcoming, however, meant the double track could go ahead as planned.

The upgrade was not without its opponents. The discovery that bats liked to roost in Wolvercote Tunnel delayed the commencement of work whilst Chiltern came up with an acceptable plan for their removal and rehusing. More delays occurred just as work was about to begin when a Bicester resident sought a judicial review of the plans citing that the diesel fumes from passing trains would cause damage to rare grasses bordering the line! Thankfully the courts threw that out.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

Chiltern ran its last trains between Oxford and Bicester on 14th February 2014 after which an express bus service was provided. Within days, contractors had lifted the old track from Bicester Town station out towards the east side of town but prior to that, in the summer of 2013, work had begun on creating the embankment for the new connecting chord.

Transformation! Bicester Town, now known as Bicester Village to emphasise its proximity to the popular shopping centre, nears completion on 6th May 2015. The viewpoint is almost exactly the same as that opposite. A footbridge has since been added.

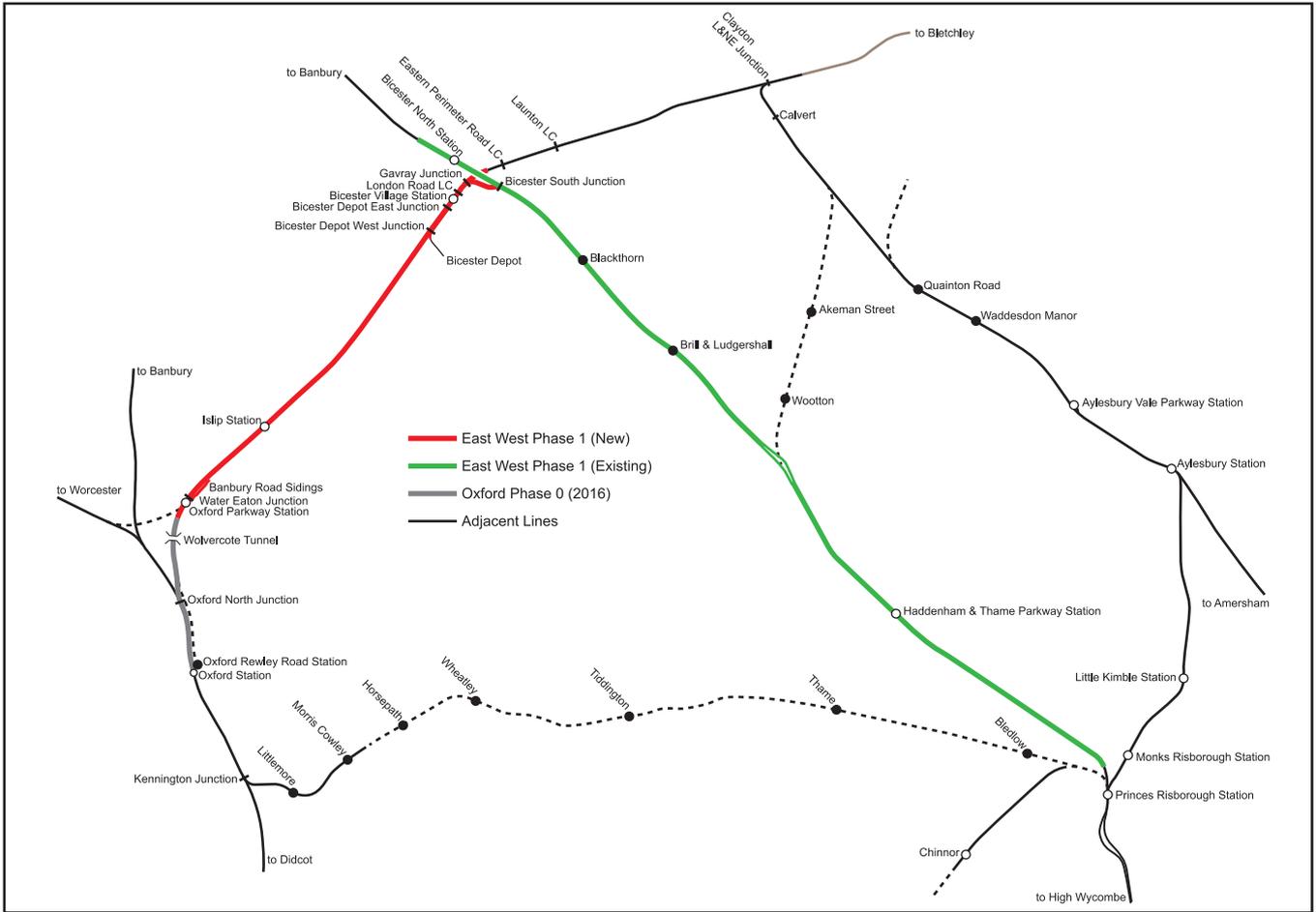
photo: Geoff Plumb

In addition to passenger trains the line also carried two important freight flows, aggregates to the terminal at Banbury Road near Oxford (chosen site for the new Oxford Parkway station) and traffic to and from the Central Ordnance Depot at Bicester. Special arrangements had to be made to accommodate those during the construction.

During Phase 1 (the Bicester to Oxford Parkway works) the former could be accommodated by its normal route from Oxford although as work progressed, access to the sidings was made "under possession". Once the work to rebuild the tracks east of Bicester Town station had been completed to a point that they were useable, the daily Didcot - Bicester COD train was rerouted via High Wycombe and Aylesbury, again operating at Bicester "under possession" allowing the contractors unobstructed access to the Bicester to Banbury Road section.

All the existing infrastructure was removed including the old roadbed allowing what is, in effect, a totally new railway to be constructed on the old site. As the new line will have a permissible speed of 100mph, all the numerous crossings on the route had to be replaced by new over-bridges, seven in total. The exception is the London Road level crossing in Bicester where it was impossible to build a replacement bridge. It will therefore remain a level crossing controlled by CCTV by the Marylebone signallers who will control the whole of the new line.





Additionally, the somewhat decrepit bridges over the River Cherwell near Islip which were subject to a 20mph limit were completely replaced with a modern new structure.

There will be three stations on the new line. Two, Bicester and Islip replace existing structures, Oxford Parkway will be new - although as mentioned, more or less occupying the site of a long-lost halt. Bicester's new station will be a few yards west of its former location and will have two, slightly staggered, platforms linked by a footbridge with lifts. The new station building will be a commodious structure in glass, steel and concrete. Controversially, Chiltern have announced that it will no longer be Bicester Town (renamed from London Road at the 1989 reopening)

but instead will become Bicester Village to emphasise its proximity to the well-known shopping centre which Chiltern sees as a major revenue generator for the line but the good folk of Bicester are reportedly unimpressed particularly as the government proposes to turn the town into one of its new Garden Cities!

Islip station is also on approximately its former site and will also have two platforms linked by a accessibility compliant bridge although the station building will be less grandiose.

Before work could start at the Oxford Parkway site much had to be done. First the massive concrete grain silo erected during WWII and a landmark for miles around had to be demolished. This was completed late in 2013.



Two views of the new connection at Bicester. At left we see Gavray Junction (which is named for a nearby street) with the new Bicester South West Chord swinging off to the right. Colas 70804 is standing on the line from Claydon under the bridge carrying the Chiltern main line. This view was taken from the footbridge which replaces the former Tubbs Lane crossing. A view from another new footbridge, over the chord (right), shows the new connection climbing at 1 in 103 to join the Chiltern main line at Bicester South Junction.

both photos: Geoff Plumb

Two views of the new connection at Bicester. At left we see Gavray Junction (which is named for a nearby street) with the new Bicester South West Chord swinging off to the right. Colas 70804 is standing on the line from Claydon under the bridge carrying the Chiltern main line. This view was taken from the footbridge which replaces the former Tubbs Lane crossing. A view from another new footbridge, over the chord (right), shows the new connection climbing at 1 in 103 to join the Chiltern main line at Bicester South Junction.

Islip station starts to take shape on 6th May 2015 as Colas 70809 delivers materials on train 6C32. The new station's platforms will be much longer than its predecessor which was located where the telegraph pole stands in the right background.

photo: Geoff Plumb



A view looking west from the new bridge, 40G, which will replace the former crossing at Oddington east of Islip. In the far distance can be seen another new bridge, 40H, which replaces four former foot crossings.

Between October 1905 and October 1926 a halt stood on this side of the crossing which was adjacent to the cottage, one of six between Oxford Rewley Road and Bicester London Road that were served by LNWR steam railmotors.

photo: Geoff Plumb

In addition, the old Banbury Road sidings which were in the shadow of the silo, had to be relocated to the east of the site before station construction could begin.

Oxford Parkway will be similar in scale and facilities to Bicester Village although the station building is of a completely different design (see photographs). Although it is located next to the Water Eaton park-and-ride facility, it will have its own 800 space car park as Chiltern expects to attract considerable commuter traffic from places north of the city such as Kidlington and Woodstock. All three stations have platforms capable of accommodating 9-car trains.

MAIN LINE TOO

In addition to the provision of the new Bicester South Junction, there will be a number of changes to the signalling on the Chiltern main line between just north of Princes Risborough and Bicester North. This includes adding several new signals and converting others from 2 to 3 aspect which will allow more trains to run over this increasingly busy section.

Bicester South Junction will also feature the first modern splitting distant to be installed on the LNW Zone. They have been specified to ensure drivers have the best possible indication as to the line ahead when taking the new route due to the level crossing at Bicester.

OPERATIONS

At the time of writing, late July, Network Rail have indicated the new line will be open for test and training purposes from 15th September and Chiltern remain hopeful that passenger services will start on 26th October - driver training has been on-going since early June using Chiltern's simulator that has been loaded with a detailed simulation of the route.

As is usual for Chiltern, trains will not operate at a regular clock face timetable with constant stopping patterns but as a rule there will two trains per hour between Marylebone and Oxford Parkway - one running fast to Haddenham & Thame Parkway, the other semi-fast including a call at High Wycombe. Pending the opening to Oxford proper, a dedicated bus will connect the two stations. Current plans

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are for most services to be worked by the Class 168 units with some being stabled overnight in Banbury Road sidings. There will be one loco-hauled each way daily.

As mentioned above, the new line will be under the control of the north workstation signaller at Marylebone IECC but the signals will be plated 'OB' (Oxford-Bletchley). ATP is not being installed on the new line as the Chiltern system is now regarded as obsolete. Both lines are bi-directionally signalled.

The former ground frames controlling the entrances to both the Bicester COD and Banbury Road sidings have been removed and these are now fully signalled in accordance with modern practice.

An interesting point is that the direction of travel is being reversed. Traditionally, it was Down from Bletchley to Oxford but that will now be Up which means when the full East-West service starts its trains will not change direction between Milton Keynes or Bedford and Oxford. However, Chiltern services will change from Down to Up or vice-versa at Gavray Junction. For the time being there will be no change to the Bicester - Claydon section.

ONWARD TO OXFORD

Work will start immediately on the Oxford Parkway to Oxford section called, somewhat confusingly, Phase 0. Unlike Phase 1 this will initially be single track from a future crossover called Woodstock Road Junction just before Wolvercote Tunnel through to Oxford North Junction which will be improved. the "Jericho Line" from there down to the station will also be upgraded and the existing Up Turbo (or "Jericho") Sidings will be remodelled.

At Oxford station work has begun to extend the present bay platform towards the footbridge and the present Dock Siding to give another bay platform of the same length. They will accommodate 5 and 7 cars respectively, less than desired but the maximum possible without either replacing the canal bridge north of the station or demolishing the main station building - neither desirable! Oxford city council have revealed long-term plans to move the station completely south of Botley Road but this is some years off, if ever.

Although passenger services were withdrawn during the reconstruction some freight services had to continue including the daily service between Didcot and Bicester COD. This was diverted off its usual 'direct' route via Oxford taking a circuitous alternative via the GWML and the Chiltern route through High Wycombe and Aylesbury.

On 17th June 2014 "royal" 67006 Royal Sovereign has a single van in tow as it nears its destination passing the works to install Gavray Junction. At this point it is being operated under "possession" rules as it would be if it were working an engineer's train into a worksite.

photo: Geoff Plumb



It is hoped that the line through to Oxford will be available for use from February or March next year indicating a possible start of public services at the May timetable change.

AND TO BLETCHLEY

Initial works have already begun for Phase 2 of the East-West Rail project on the disused line east of Claydon L&NE Junction with vegetation clearance and the drilling of exploratory boreholes. Consultation with local interests over the future of several level crossings on the route have been on-going.

There will be one intermediate station on this section, at Winslow. This will be located on the west side of the A413 Buckingham Road, some 600 yards west of the original location. At Bletchley there will be additional high level platforms provided on the flyover for East-West services.

Current plans are for Phase 2 to be completed in 2019 when a service of two trains per hour will operate between Oxford and Bletchley with one continuing to Bedford, the other to Milton Keynes. There are also plans to extend Chiltern services from Aylesbury Vale Parkway to Milton Keynes.

Whilst it has been announced that the complete Oxford to Bletchley line would be electrified as part of the "Electric Spine" route giving a more direct all-electric route between Southampton and DIRFT at Daventry, the confirmation of this and timescales depend on the outcome of the review of major rail projects currently underway.

With regard to continuing East-West Rail beyond Bedford to Cambridge that remains a long-term aspiration. It is, however, less straight forward than Phase 1 and 2 as much of the original trackbed has been built over and therefore lost requiring a completely new alignment to be chosen in many sections.

In conclusion, I would like to record my thanks to my colleagues at Chiltern Railways for their help in preparing this article and to Geoff Plumb for generously allowing several of his excellent photographs to be used.

IN THE BLOOD by Tony Caton



In response to our Editor's request for more articles for the *Marlow Donkey*, Phil Searle and myself came up with the idea of all the members writing "Your first Memories of Railways", or what got you interested.

My first memories are being taken up to Old Oak Common with my Dad, who was a GWR Driver, when I was 5 or 6 years old. To go past the Carriage Sheds, then turn right, and there in a row were four or five Class 47's, not Brush Type 4s for you Diesel nuts, but G.J. Churchward's "Night Owls". Then into the Shed - inside the Shed I would ask Dad if I could have a ride on one of the four turntables. To stand on the wooden boards when a big tender engine would come on and also to be inside was a bit dark and smoky. Health and Safety? Oh no!! I can also remember seeing a King coming out of the Shed opening its cylinder cocks, the sensation was deafening for a young lad.

Early memories of trains in the night were to stand on Maidenhead Station to see express trains at speed whistles blowing and lights from the fire boxes, a sight not to be forgot.

One occasion I remember is that on New Year's Eve engines up at Old Oak Common would open up their whistles - you could hear the New Year being whistled in where we lived at Shepherds Bush.

I must thank the Marlow Donkey (train) for being here. My father served in WW1 and received an injury. He was invalided out - came back to the GWR and was sent down to Marlow as a young fireman, He met my mother, who was born just outside of Marlow. She would tell me that she would ride on the engine sometimes!! I don't know how long Dad was at Marlow before he went back to Shepherds Bush accompanied with a young bride.

Great Western men at O.O.C. would seem to pick Weymouth for holidays, Dad was no exception. In those days we did not book, just find a B&B somewhere by the station. There was lots of steam to see, Western and Southern but best of all was to see Channel Islands trains go through the streets, passing the cars and people. One time we went to Jersey on one of the railway-owned steamers, either the *St. Helier* or *St. Julien*. The crossing was as rough as it could be.

I had lots of trips with Dad on 9400, 1500 or 5700 Panniers, also a Hall, a Castle (7017 *G. J. Churchward*) and a King, 6011 *King James I*. Best of all to me was to listen to lots of his stories of footplate work at O.O.C. One story he told me, just before he was a driver, he worked a train to Plymouth Docks with a King, on the train were some soldiers because on board was gold bullion bound for U.S.A. for the War effort.

As the years went by, Dad came off Main Line, he did the last 3 or 4 years on the "Ups and Downs" - the O.O.C. to Paddington empty stock workings, no sign of a Bear then. Through ill health he retired at 60. They say hard work doesn't kill you, but he died aged 63. My Dad did nearly twenty years as a Fireman before he was made a Driver at Swindon, where the necessary medical examinations were taken. I think they made some of the older Drivers retire early to make way for younger men.

The downside to footplate shift work was to be told to be quiet "Your Dad's in bed - and having to go to work at 2.00 a.m. or 3.00 a.m. in the morning. He said one of the "worst things" was to get out of a warm bed to cycle up to O.O.C. from the 'Bush on a cold winter morning and then prepare a locomotive.

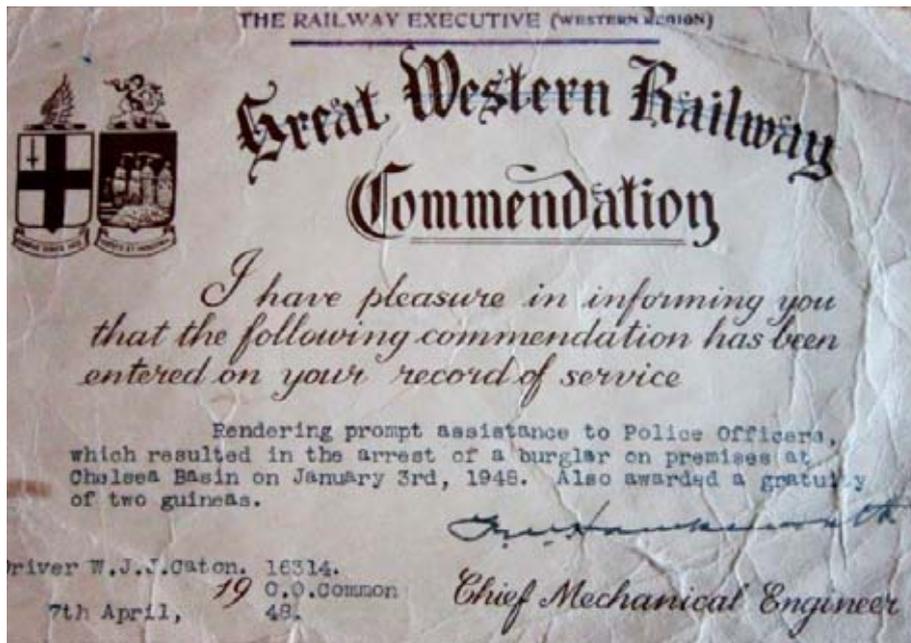
The photo of Dad (opposite) is at Kingswear, just before the War. The engine is 6007 *King William III*, which had had a collision with a goods train at Shrivvenham in 1936. The driver was killed, but the fireman, Joe Cozens, suffered minor injuries and shock. He was an O.O.C. man who ended his last years coach shunting at O.O.C. I am not sure, but Dad said Joe lost all his hair caused by the accident. I seem to remember my Dad saying that G.W.R. offered to buy a wig, I'm not sure if he took them up on the offer. I had numerous rides with Joe on 5700 tanks, the power of these little engines was something to see.



A scene familiar to Tony in during childhood holidays in Weymouth, Pannier 1367 makes its way along the Quay branch on 4th July 1960.

photo: Alan Morris/MDRS archive

A commendation issued to Tony's Dad in recognition of his assistance to the Police early in 1948. Note how the hallowed name has been crossed out and The Railway Executive (Western Region) added. It is signed by CME Frederick W Hawksworth.



THE SHRIVENHAM ACCIDENT

The accident Tony refers to above was a rare blot on the GWR's otherwise excellent safety record. It occurred at 5.30am on the morning of 15th January 1936 and involved the previous night's 9.00pm Penzance to Paddington express, including sleeping cars, which was running under clear signals but collided with the brake van and five wagons of a special Aberdare to Old Oak Common mineral train which had become divided as a result of the failure of a drawhook.

The loco, 6007 *King William III*, overturned onto its right side as a result of the impact whilst the body of the first carriage was torn from its underframe and rolled down the embankment.

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It was estimated that around 100 passengers were aboard and one, a lady, plus as Tony records, the driver, a Mr E Starr, were killed. Another ten, mostly in the front carriage, were seriously injured and seventeen, including the fireman, received what the accident report calls "minor injuries and shock".

The primary cause of the accident, apart from the coupling failure, was the failure of the Shrivvenham signalman to check the mineral train was complete when it passed his 'Box then accepting the express and giving it a clear road.

Mike Walker

The Marlow Donkey – Early Days!

Malcolm Margetts looks back

Several months ago your editor Mike Walker asked me to identify an article from the earliest days of the *Donkey* for reproduction in this 150th commemorative issue. My first reaction was to think this a straightforward task so, I gladly accepted. But was I qualified to judge? And equally importantly could I be trusted to make a sensitive preference in a subject where I had to admit some pre-conceived views mostly of a pro Great Western nature?

So I set myself a target of reading through the first 24 editions covering the period to September 1982, to get an overall view and then by a process of elimination narrowed the field down to a manageable list which, I emphasise, appealed to me and was inevitably based on my personal experience of railways from my earliest memory in 1942 to August 1968.

In the end I could not choose a single article above all others which encompassed fully the hopes, aspirations and experiences of the early MDRS membership in its search for steam railway utopia, so I chose a different route and finalised on a selection of four short essays and to draw attention to an article in eleven parts which was too long to include in my submission but which warranted special comment.

But before I name my choice a few words about MDRS in general and the *Donkey* in particular, and what snippets of information did I uncover about our Society which the passage of time has erased but which today almost 40 years later bond us together and where membership in 2015 is at an all time high.

For the record “The Newsletter “ as the first three editions were titled was first published in April 1977, typed on an pre war typewriter of a style that would not be out of place in a museum today, with every typing error being corrected by Tipp-Ex. From the start there was a strong emphasis on overseas railways with an enthusiastic report in issue number one based on Southern Greece.

What I found intriguing with this article was the high level of detailed information and the speed with which it had been contributed in what were undoubtedly were difficult circumstances. Publication was only days after the Society was mooted a sure indication of the enthusiasm towards its formation of those founding members!

This article set the pace for the growth of interest in overseas railways in the 1970’s, as our members became more adventurous and starved of the sound and smell of steam for nine whole years sought new opportunities to develop their passion.

Well I can hear members already saying get on with it! Name your choice man! So here goes in publication order!

Here then is the first article, one of four for your consideration:

The Railways of Southern Greece. Issue No.1 1977 Roger Bowen

To many people Greece means ancient ruins and above all the Acropolis. Whilst no one who visits Southern Greece should miss these wonderful sights a railway enthusiast has much else to interest him.

The Greek Railways are entirely State owned and in 1971 consisted of 975 miles of standard gauge line, 600 miles of metre gauge line, 14 miles of 750mm gauge line and 18 miles of 600mm gauge line. Both the standard and metre gauge serve Athens, while the whole railway network of the Peloponnese is metre gauge except for the 750mm gauge rack and adhesion line from Diakofto to Kalavryta. In addition to the State Railways the Athens Electric Railway is a standard gauge line 17 miles long from Piraeus, the port of Athens, to Kifisias in its northern suburbs. It is the only electric railway in Greece and uses 3rd rail multiple unit stock. Most of this was built by M.A.N. in West Germany between 1952-58, but some older wooden bodied stock built in Belgium is also used. The Athens Electric Tramway also owns the only tramway in Greece which runs on 7 miles of standard gauge track from Piraeus to Perama. The stock used is bogie cars built by Fiat in Italy in 1938. Ever versatile this operator also has a bus network based in Piraeus using Mercedes and Chausson vehicles.

Returning to the State Railways, all services in Southern Greece now appear to be operated by diesel locomotives and multiple units. The only steam seen in use in January 1977 was a standard gauge 2-8-0 built by Baldwin in the USA in 1947 which was shunting the sheds near Piraeus. However quite a lot of dead steam was seen dumped at the Piraeus sheds and on the standard gauge main line north of Athens.

These included 2-10-2’s built by Ansaldo in Italy in 1953-54; ex British War Department Austerity 2-10-0’s, a USA class S160 2-8-0 built for the US Transportation Corps in the war of the type used in 1942-43 on the G.W.R, and an 0-6-0T of the US Transportation type purchased by the Southern Railway in England after the war and now preserved on the Kent and East Sussex Rly and the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway. Some unidentifiable metre gauge steam was seen dumped west of Athens, whilst a line of dead 0-6-2T’s, built by Cail in Paris in 1891-94 were seen on the 750mm gauge at Diakofto.

The present day locomotives on the standard gauge are some large shunters built by Krupp in West Germany, and also an unidentifiable manufacturer in Romania. Main line locos are some built by General Electric in the USA, by Jung in West Germany, and by M.L.W. Industries in Canada. Diesel multiple units are by Esslingen in West Germany and some very recent deliveries from East Germany. On the metre gauge the only locos identified were built by the American Locomotive Co. and the 750mm gauge line is operated by 2 car rack and adhesion diesel railcars built by Billard of Tours, France and Decauville also French.

Rail services are not frequent by West European standards, but, if based in Athens, a number of day trips can be fitted in on both standard and metre gauge, as well as a trip on the 750mm gauge line from Diakofto to Kalavryta. The latter is extremely attractive running through a gorge not unlike the Welsh West Highland through the Aberglaslyn Pass in Wales. Despite all its internal political difficulties there appears to be no restrictions on photography of any railway installation, and a permit to visit and photograph in the main shed and works was readily forthcoming from the Railway Head Office. Rail fares are very reasonable by British standards. The Greek Tourist office in London is very helpful in providing accurate details of fares and times, whilst the official timetable covering all State Railway services is available at 20 drachmae (approx 35p at current exchange rate).

If anyone is considering a holiday in Greece I can thoroughly recommend they look at the railways, and even better to travel on them. Steam may have gone but there is still a lot of interest left. Nowhere else in Europe can you travel 240 miles in one metre gauge train as you can from Pireaus to Kalonero via Athens, Corinth, Patras and Pirghos taking 7 ½ hours in all.

Is your appetite whetted?

Roger Bowen followed this launch article by contributing several more pieces mostly on local or European Railways and certainly opened the regulator and helped get the *Donkey* on the move!

By mid-summer 1977 enthusiasm for the Society was boundless, membership had reached 23 and new members were joining weekly and in September with Issue 3 a more formal title was sought for the Newsletter. Membership reached 39 with the inclusion of Sir Wm McAlpine, but sadly member Norman Aston-Smith died.

1978 opened with our first AGM and the appointment of Basil Woodward as Chairman and Stan Verinder as editor the decision taken to adopt *'The Marlow Donkey'* as our house magazine title. Basil's appointment marked the introduction of several years of thoughtful contributions to the *Donkey* in the form of Chairman's Notes. Many of these reached the closing stages of the selection process each beautifully crafted with heartfelt enthusiasm for things GW.

By the Autumn of 1978 Mike Walker started contributing with part 1 of what eventually ran to an 11 part series titled *'The Wycombe Railway and the Marlow Donkey'*. The series took us from the earliest days to the line final period of decline under BR, and was supported by maps and detail plans of Bourne end and Marlow station and yard areas drawn up in 1910. For any member with a strong interest in local history these articles are a must and the station plans are a treasure to study.

By 1980 a note in *Donkey* 15 confirmed average attendances had reached 40 with a total membership of 51. Now some 35 years later we can be proud that membership exceeds 60 and we still achieve attendances in the region of 40, but at a time when many other Railway Societies are reporting decline.

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This must in part to the continued publication, albeit in much enhanced form of the *Donkey*. It is no coincidence that the editor for six of the opening seven years was Stan Verinder, now an honorary member, and was supported in the main by the work of Mike Walker, Roger Bowen and the late Basil Woodward. Without their contribution in those early years and Mike Walker's outstanding contribution to the present day, I am certain that the *Donkey* would not exist today.

Inevitably when studying these frail early copies of the *Donkey* one is drawn to questioning how much life has changed in the 35 to 40 year period to today's experience. Most of the early MDRS trips were by BR operated charter trains from High Wycombe to the far corners of the UK for remarkably low priced fares even allowing fully for inflation - now replaced by a more limited range of high priced charter operators from less convenient starting points. This has sadly encouraged the wide-spread use of car groups to satisfy our interest in steam.

On the other hand, some things never change, particularly the editors appeal for more member participation in keeping the flow of articles flowing, or the Treasurer reminding members to pay their subscriptions!

As is customary with most Societies' house magazines the Chairman presents his opening remarks in a topical style on the opening pages of each issue. The Chairman of the day, Basil Woodward introduced each successive copy of the *Donkey* for several years, and I have selected the notes from edition 4 the first to be released under the *Donkey* title as an example of his lucid style and inspirational choice of subject matter:

Chairman's Notes. Issue No. 4 October 1977 Basil Woodward

There is no doubt at all that to ride behind a King or a Merchant Navy pacific as some of our members did on 1st October last is an experience not to be missed. The sounds and the smell of smoke from a big engine working hard are as appealing to the enthusiast as anything you care to name, and it only to be regretted that British Rail's publicity department has either not understood the potential or has failed to convince the Board that they could make a great deal of money running main-line steam locomotives in every part of the country.

But there is, of course, very much more to railways than that, and some of us proved the point when we joined a three car DMU at Slough on the 19th October, for a gentle amble along some of the Thames Valley branches and up to Bicester. Now there is another aspect of Railways that has a distinct and unique appeal – the unusual (for passengers) train working, the reversing, the stops in places no longer visited by scheduled passenger trains, getting to know the BR crews and even having a pint with them in pubs adjacent to long dead stations – all these things and many more calls for a poet to record rather than a purveyor of prose.

How much more attractive would the trip have been had

the train been hauled by one of Collett's much loved 14XX class, or by a pannier? Surely the possibilities for making profit out of honest nostalgia have been proved elsewhere, so why have not BR cottoned on to it? Is it too much trouble? Or are there problems which BR have not publicised? Surely lack of locos and stock cannot be the reason – the country is stiff with both, thanks be!

We can but hope that the enlightened ones in authority (surely there must be some) will have their way but meanwhile for me, as for many others, the spirit of all railways is to be found in the picture of a 1400 simmering quietly to itself in the bay on a peaceful and sunny afternoon. Though I might be tempted by the sight of an up fast hauled by a Castle with eleven on, going hell for leather through Sonning cutting!

Now for something different! In the same edition of the *Donkey* I came across another story that I thought would stir the imagination of the 1970's enthusiast so starved of steam and always denied the opportunity of seeing the principal locos from the big four in prestige condition on the same charter and actually hauled by each of them. Read on and re-live this experience:

Midland Jubilee Issue No.4 October 1977 **Mike Norris**

A joint venture by the 6000 Locomotive Association and the Merchant Navy Locomotive Association took place on 1st October 1977. Two trains were involved with the *Midland Jubilee* running from Euston to Paddington via Watford, Birmingham, Crewe, Chester, Shrewsbury, Newport, Swindon and Reading and the *Western Jubilee* travelling the same route but in the opposite direction.

At 08.10 on a beautiful sunny Saturday morning our party of six left Euston on the *Midland Jubilee* hauled by 5000 hp electric locomotive 86244. For those that had not travelled on this route before, the comfort smooth ride and quietness of the Inter-city stock was impressive. Before reaching Crewe where 47 class 47437 took over, stops were made at Watford, Birmingham New Street and Bescot.

After the short journey from Crewe to Chester we left the train and awaited the arrival of Mk1 coaches to be hauled by A4 Class No. 4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley* and this became the highlight of the whole trip – 135 miles of steam hauled traction. The A4 was booked to haul the train to Shrewsbury, a distance of about 45 miles, in 69 minutes. She made an impressive sight when tackling the bank at Hereford – 4 miles at 1 in 82 and finally reached Shrewsbury on time.

We were lucky enough to be able to spend about 1¾ hours at Shrewsbury which enabled us to observe a number of stock movements around the station as well as time for a drink in a local pub. At the southern end of the station is a triangular junction in the centre of which is situated the signal box. The junction was used by three steam engines for turning. Firstly after uncoupling from our train, by

Sir Nigel, then by *King George V* after she arrived with the *Western Jubilee*. Lastly *Princess Elizabeth* ran in light, turned and then steamed off to Craven Arms.

For several members of our party the next stage of the journey was to be the highlight of the whole trip – the 20 miles to Craven Arms hauled by *King George V*. She looked magnificent, and as happens during all the steam haulage, was admired by hundreds of people besides the line. – they stood on bridges, stations, in the fields etc. Arrival at Craven Arms was 11½ minutes late due to problems caused by the last coach in the train, a Gresley buffet car. Further time was lost for the same reason when *Princess Elizabeth* took over and conveyed us for the 30 miles to Hereford, where the offending coach was detached.

As we drew into Hereford, Merchant Navy class *Clan Line* was waiting in the adjoining platform. Her condition was immaculate, resplendent in green and red livery. As the two engines changed, local traffic came to a standstill because of the vast crowds watching. For the 40 odd miles to Newport, No. 35028 was offered a challenge bearing in mind the late departure. She responded magnificently as she raced towards Newport, gaining 11 minutes over the distance even though she was slowed to 10 mph by a speed restriction for a bridge over the River Usk.

The final leg to Paddington behind a class 50 No. 50027 (replacing the HST which at the last minute BR was unable to provide) produced a spirited performance, the journey taking only 103½ minutes for the 133½ miles.

My final choice is based on pure nostalgia and focuses on another contribution by the late Basil Woodward and his exploits visiting the WCML in 1929 or 1931, mostly by cycle from Oxford.

Basil goes on to say how saddle-sore he was on this trip, but he leaves to the reader's imagination the other delights of those line-side trips, the bottle of Tizer and the squashed sandwiches that were all consumed on the outward journey leaving you ravenous for the return several hours later:

Fifty Years Ago. Issue No. 18 March 1981 **Basil Woodward**

As a very junior member of the group of railway enthusiasts in Oxford in the late 1920's and early 30's I envied the older boys their occasional cycle rides to Tring or Bletchley stations on the former LNWR main line from Euston. I did make one trip to Tring station on a borrowed bicycle and returned very weary and saddle sore.

A school friend and I studied our road maps and devised an easier route. We decided to cycle to Aylesbury. The bicycles could be stored at Aylesbury (High Street) station where we would entrain for Cheddington a rural junction midway between Tring and Bletchley.

I have retained notes from that day among my railwayana. As this was only eight years since the LNWR was absorbed into the LMSR grouping and before William Stanier left Swindon for Crewe one can appreciate what

changes had been made on the so-called 'Premier Line' in half a century. I wonder though if small boys cycle to this line nowadays to gaze at the 'electrics' which all look so boring alike.

At Aylesbury station, shown on the 1923 map as Met & GC Joint, GW and GC joint, we were happy to see two old friends prairie tanks belonging to the GWR Nos. 6102 and 5179. There was also an apple green stranger there No. 5594 bearing the letters LNER. Two other engines Nos. 41 and 105 bore the words METROPOLITAN on their sides for this was the era when Metroland was being built and such locomotives were to be seen anywhere between Baker Street and Verney Junction.

The old LNWR station known as Aylesbury (High Street) was on a branch line and operated until February 1953. I doubt whether it had much value as a passenger line but it certainly had a busy freight operation linked as it was to the main line at Cheddington station. We duly arrived at Cheddington and spent several happy hours watching the passing trains. Many of the locomotives we saw had come down to Oxford LMS station from Bletchley but I did see 45 'cops' that day.

The commonest class to be seen was the one easily recognised by the five elongated holes along the frame sides – the Claughton. We saw twenty of them that day. These locomotives constructed by Bowen-Cooke for the LNWR were heavy four-cylinder 4-6-0's. They were the largest express engines built for that company. The first of them was No.5000 (formerly 2222) *Sir Gilbert Claughton* and they were eventually a class of 130 built between 1913 and 1921. We saw 5963 *E Total Broadhurst*, 5915 *Lord Kitchener*, 5970 *Patience*, 5986, 5981, 6013, 5927 *Sir Francis Dent*, 5930 *Clio*, 6014, 5979 *Frobisher*, 5924 *James Bishop*, 5938, 5934, 5908 *Alfred Fletcher*, 5989, 5974, 6029, 5969, *John O'Groats* and 6023 *Sir Charles Cust*. It is interesting to note that No. 6004 (originally named *Princess Louise*) lingered on surviving World War 2 until 1949, although it never ran as 46004.

We also saw twelve of the 'new' Royal Scots designed in 1926 by Sir Henry Fowler. The 71 3-cylinder Scots were later re-boilered by Stanier and although there are only a couple of the class still in existence all were working in 1959.

Nos. 6125 to 6149 originally had the names of earlier LNWR locos and only changed to regimental names just before the war. On this day in 1931 we saw Nos. 6128 *London Irish Rifleman* (I have no record of a possible earlier name) 6136 *Goliath* (pulling the *Royal Scot* train), 6146 *Jenny Lind*, 6141 *Caledonian*, 6142 *Lion*, 6165 *The Ranger*, 6143 *Mail*, 6148 *Velocipede* (on the *Midday Scot*), 6132 *Phoenix*. 6160 *Queen Victoria's Rifleman*, 6159 *The Loyal Regiment* and 6150 *The Life Guardsman*.

The Prince of Wales 4-6-0 class was represented by Nos. 5666 *Plynlimmon*, 5642 *King of the Belgians*, 5753 *Premier* and 5684 *Arabic*. Precursors and George V classes included Nos. 5239 *Coptic*, 5307 *Senator*, 5318 *Swiftsure*, 5244 *Tubal*, 5243 *Lapwing*, 5393 *Loyalty*, 5371 *Moorhen* and 5392 *Penmaenmawr*.

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In those days most of the freight trains on that line were pulled by 0-8-0 tender engines. Numbered 8893 to 9494 and attributed to Bowen-Cooke many were rebuilds of Webb and Whale locos. Fowler introduced a similar class of 7F's in 1929. Seventeen of these rugged monsters passed before us pulling long trains of coal wagons.

Among the remaining locomotives there were eleven 'Compounds' looking exactly like No. 1000, the sole remaining example today.

It was several years before I again visited this exciting line. By now William Stanier had arrived on the LMS and 'Westernised' the Scots. There was a strange Swindon Look to some of his designs for the LMSR. One recalls among others the Moguls, Jubilees and Black 5's.

After this fascinating glimpse of a 'foreign' line we probably returned quite contentedly to our beloved Stars, Saints and Bulldogs. The Halls were then coming off the production line at Swindon and when brand new would work a running-in turn to Oxford. Probably on the next Wednesday afternoon (intended for rigger or cricket) we would cycle to Steventon bridge to watch the *Cheltenham Flier* hurtling towards Foxhall Junction and beginning to take the Didcot curve.

Fifty years ago the steam age seemed set to continue for the foreseeable future: we certainly never visualised an age when only diesel or electric propulsion was to be seen on the lines of a nationalised network.

Inevitably in penning this short article one is drawn into examining the then and now situation. First and foremost the quality of the *Donkey* both in editorial and reproductive terms has changed beyond all measure. Our Chairman, Tim Speechley produces 'The Chairman's Notes' to an exemplary standard and projects a positive voice but reflective and considered view of railway matters. With the added benefit of a regular contribution from our members in Cambridge, Somerset, Northern Ireland, the USA and Little Marlow.

By far the most remarkable change for the better is the quantity and quality of the photographic support and the shortening of the preparation cycle leading to regular production helped enormously by the support over many years from John Tuck.

But dare I say that none of this could happen without the active participation of the membership in the form of more articles. Let's hope that in 35+ years when edition 300 rolls off the press this enthusiasm for railways has further increased and the local railway has named one of its EMU's *The Marlow Donkey*!

Editor's note:

These extracts from the early *Donkeys* are deliberately unillustrated as were the originals. As Malcolm points out, they were produced on a typewriter and printed on a stencil machine - it was many years before we were able to crudely include pictures. But what a pity, can you imagine seeing what Bas saw lineside on the WCML?! See page 23.

TRACTORS, CHOPPERS AND A TUG IN CUMBRIA

There are trips which are planned over months in meticulous detail that seldom live up to expectations and there are those that are done on the spur of the moment that exceed all and become memorable. Such a "bash" was a two-day excursion to Cumbria in late June by Gordon Rippington, Peter Robins and your Editor. We only decided to go on Sunday evening and 36 hours later on Tuesday, 23rd June, we were on the road.

The objective was to observe the recently introduced loco-hauled trains on the Cumbrian Coast Line with Class 37s ('Tractors'), some flask trains and whatever else might appear.



Photo: Peter Robins



Three photos: Mike Walker



We enjoyed a day of superb sun and were able to get several workings including 37402 *Stephen Middlemore 23-12-54 - 8-6-2013* rumbling across Eskmeals Viaduct with Northern Rail's 2C34, the 14:35 Carlisle to Barrow-in-Furness (**Top**) and 37606 departing from Foxfield with 2C41, the 14:37 Barrow-in-Furness to Carlisle (**Above**) whilst 37218 runs along the coast at Braystones (**Left**) with 2C47, the 17:31 Barrow-in-Furness to Carlisle. That's the Sellafield plant in the background.

Earlier in the day we'd caught the last two active 'Choppers' 20305 and 20309 at Silecroft with 6C51, the 12:58 Sellafield to Heysham Harbour Power Station empty flasks.

The Marlow Donkey

After a night at St. Bees (interrupted by Mr Robins' incessant snoring!) we awoke to find the sun replaced by somewhat grey skies.

Undeterred, we went to Parton to catch 37402 squealing round the sharp curves with 2C40, the 08:42 Carlisle to Barrow-in-Furness (**Right**) before heading south to Kirkby-in-Furness for the final morning northbound.

There seemed little point repeating the previous afternoon's shots in cloudy conditions and with Mr Rippington itching for steam we headed for the Settle & Carlisle.



Four photos: Mike Walker

Arrival at Ais Gill was just in time to catch Colas 'Tug' 60087 *CLIC Sargent* growling uphill with 6J37, the 12:58 Carlisle Yard to Chirk Kronospan log train running around 40 minutes early (**Above left**) and were just about to repair to the Moorcock Inn when Peter spotted something else in the distance. This turned out to be DRS 37605 on 6Z31, the 11:48 from Carlisle to Holbeck Loco Sidings conveying a crane and trying to recoup some 75 mins delay.

Gordon got his steam-fix in the form of 45699 *Gala-tea* which came storming past with the return Carlisle to Lancaster *Fellsman* running spot on time.

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A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT

Part 8 The Dreaded "E" Word

Col. Don Woodworth

Don Woodworth, a friend of the late Dave Theobald, spent 8 years living in the UK in the seventies and eighties whilst serving with the US Air Force. A lifelong rail enthusiast, Don continues his look back at his experiences during that period which led him to explore almost every mile of the network and provides an interesting perspective on our railways at that time from the viewpoint of an outsider.



The Dreaded "E" Word – Engineering Works – Excursions – Electro-Diesels

Earlier in this series, I had made reference to the dreaded "E" word regarding engineering work on the railway lines, usually occurring on Sunday. I soon learned to check carefully in advance if I had any railway travel planned for a Sunday, or, better, to simply avoid travel on a Sunday.

On the plus side, engineering work had a decided plus if one weren't traveling – and that was the ability to see unusual workings. As I became more familiar with my surroundings in the Cambridge area, I began to learn what was normal and could thus also begin to appreciate the abnormal – such as Deltic and HST workings through Cambridge and Ely, etc. Having friends in the Cambridge Railway Circle to give me a "heads up" when such events were occurring didn't hurt anything either! The other, and much more fun, component of the letter "E" was "excursions" – which also produced unusual workings – such as Class 33s at Ely. Again, having friends in high places (aka the CRC) did not hurt anything!

Ely, before the wire went up and colour light signalling came in, was a sea of semaphore masts – the perfect foil for a modern HST. Here, E43096 and E43123 power a northbound, passing Ely South Box at 12:25 on the early afternoon of 6th September 1981. A close look at the signal box will reveal the signaller dropping the semaphore to danger following the passage of the HST.



What a treat to see a Deltic in Cambridge on a diverted regular working. Here, Class 55 55017 The Durham Light Infantry moves a train northbound through Cambridge at 10:18 on the morning of 30th September 1979.

Later that dreary morning an older example of English Electric power: Class 40 40092 lumbered through Cambridge at 10:50 with another diverted northbound ECML service.

All photos by Don Woodworth



We now turn to excursions. Deltics and HSTs were part of the normal BR Eastern Region fabric so, while it was a treat to see them on an ECML diversion coming through Cambridge or Ely, they still "belonged." A Class 33 from the Southern Region was another matter. It looked and sounded different and was definitely out of place. The appearance of such an interloper had to be planned – it just wasn't diverted from Kings Cross for the sake of operational convenience. Here, 33053 passes Ely (North Box) at 11:03 on the morning of 12th May 1979 on a special en route to Spalding – most likely for the annual tulip festival.

There exists an avoiding loop about a mile or so north of Ely station that allows cross-country trains going to/from the Midlands to avoid having to go into Ely and reverse directions to carry on with the locomotive leading. Lifting of the loop was being posited around the time I left the UK after my second posting at RAF Mildenhall but saner heads prevailed and it was only changed from double to single track. Especially during the summer, interesting power could often be seen on excursion trains from the Midlands heading toward the Norwich area. Here, we see a set of "Choppers", 20189 and 20077, eastbound at 11:32 on the morning of 14th July 1979 bringing a train from the Midlands to Norwich and (likely) the Norfolk Broads.



Presented here are some photos resulting from judicious application of the "E" words.

Strangers at Cambridge and Ely. If engineering diversions had the ECML blocked anywhere between Hitchin and Peterborough, diverting trains via Cambridge was a natural move.

BR's Southern Region Class 73 electro-diesels were especially interesting to me. I'm sure this was because the area of the States where I grew up back in Connecticut was home to my beloved New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad (usually referred to simply as "the New Haven").

In its day, the New Haven was the dominant railroad in southern New England and its trains that served the corridor between New York City and Boston, Massachusetts were legendary. From the early 1900s until early 1950s, the New Haven rostered an eclectic mix of steam, electric, and diesel power. Steam disappeared by 1952, leaving a declining roster of electrics and a growing roster of diesels to serve the railroad. By the late 1950s/early 1960s, the New Haven's financial position was growing increasingly precarious and a somewhat dubious decision was made to scrap the majority of its electric locomotives and a (better) decision to get rid of a lot of older odd-ball diesel power and replace it with a large buy of General Motors (Electro-Motive Division [EMD]) diesels.

It is difficult to conceive of a much plainer locomotive than a Class 73. It was what was inside the box that interested me with this type – certainly not its flashy appearance. Here, 73002 is at rest at Clapham Junction, London on 20th July 1974.

In contrast to the austere Class 73, the EMDs used by the New Haven Railroad were quite flashy, even in their somewhat tatty condition toward the end of the existence of the New Haven (it was merged into the ill-fated Penn Central system effective 1st January 1969 – a day that shall live in infamy!). Here, New Haven RR 2026 and a companion are moving a passenger train east at Milford, Connecticut on 11th June 1968, headed for New Haven and onwards to Boston, Massachusetts. If one looks closely at the undercarriage of the locomotive, it will be noted that it is of the B-A1A wheel arrangement, with fittings along the bottom edge of each bogie upon which 3rd rail contact shoes are mounted to enable it to shift from diesel to electric power when entering the access tunnels to Grand Central Terminal in New York City. Entrance to New York City is also the reason for the rather curious B-A1A axle arrangement, the idler axle in the trailing truck being added to better spread the weight of the locomotive when operating on the elevated viaduct leading to the Park Avenue Tunnels in New York City.



Of this buy, there were sixty FL9 diesel-electric/electric locomotives which could run on standard diesel power or pickup 3rd rail electric power. The reason behind this was to obviate the traditional change between steam (now diesel) power at New Haven, Connecticut for an electric locomotive to take trains forward to New York City. The FL9s are now gone from former New Haven territory but continue to serve a few tourist lines. In their dotage, the FL9s developed a very strong following (myself included). When they were new, though, I could have passed on them as they displaced a large number of American Locomotive Company (Alco) diesels that I liked a lot better. Long story short: though totally different in styling, the Class 73s were built for expressly the same purpose as the FL9s – to allow the locomotive to independently operate away from a source of electric power.

Doings at Derby

Through my contacts with BR officials as a result of my talks, etc. on the C5 Galaxy, I became friends with Mr. Mike Hall, who was an official at BR's Derby Railway Technical Centre. As Mike was keen on aircraft, I invited him and his family to visit with us and stay at our home so they could attend one of the big air shows periodically hosted at RAF Mildenhall. In a reciprocal gesture, Mike later invited me and my family to his home in Staffordshire. He also extended me a separate invitation to visit the Derby Works, which I gladly accepted. Shown here are a few of the goodies I got to enjoy whilst at the works.



Two discarded flyers at Derby Railway Technical Centre on 20th April 1980. Prototype HST power car 43000 and 43001, by now ADB975812/3, and used for high speed experimental testing and as dead load vehicle whilst APT 370007 displays its "standard" buffers and drawgear hidden behind its nose. Despite achieving a UK record of 162.2mph, the APT never fulfilled its promise, a victim of poor design and lack of investment.



Perhaps the most exciting part about being able to visit Derby was one's ability to see things normally beyond the view of the general public. In this instance, on 20th April 1980 I was able to see as well as ride the maglev test vehicle that was being experimented with for possible use as a means of public transport. It was an usual feeling to levitate and then to move along effortlessly, and especially interesting to discover that the driver could alter the quality of the ride by altering the strength of the magnetic field that propelled us along. The ride would vary from being as smooth as glass to bumping over a cobble stone street. My understanding is that some version of this technology was later instituted as a passenger connection from a BR mainline station to Birmingham International Airport – but that this effort was later abandoned.

All Things Great and Small

My family and I quite enjoyed James Harriot's wonderful television series "All Creatures Great and Small." We correspondingly enjoyed the large county of Yorkshire and its wide variety of scenery – and of railway equipment! In broad keeping with the theme of great and small, here are a few relevant photos.



On the small side, I always thought that the BR Class 03 shunters were cute – there is no other way to describe them. Lincolnshire is closer to Yorkshire than Norfolk or Cambridgeshire, so I've elected to show a Class 03 that I came across while on a sight-seeing trip to Boston, Lincs. to visit St. Botolph's Church, which played a significant role in the migration of the Pilgrims from England to America. While having a scout around following our visit to the church on 1st September 1979, I was pleased to discover 03079 perfectly positioned to include it in a photo with the "Boston Stump" in the background.



The considerably more common Class 08 shunters weighed in at 49 tons, well above the 30 tons of the little Class 03s, and rather dwarfed their smaller cousins in terms of size. In this photo of 3533 (08418) taken at Spalding, Lincs. on 5th July 1971, it looks as if the LNER 0-6-0 that once lived here had just left the building.

Moving to creatures great in Yorkshire, one should not forget the late, and to me lamented, Class 76 electric locomotives that plied the Woodhead Tunnel route. While BR's 80-series AC electrics had a rather sleek look about them, as if they were made for speed, the 1500V DC Class 76s had a rugged work-a-day look that said "I'm meant for lugging heavy loads." I quite liked them. In this photo, now long gone 76027 emerges from the western portal of the equally long gone Woodhead Tunnel at 16:37 on the afternoon of 15th August 1979.

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Disappointments and The Missing .001%.

My wife and children returned to the States about a month before I finished my final posting at RAF Mildenhall. By this time, I was down to an incredibly small number of line segments to be ridden in the greater London area – and one or two other bits that I had tried to ride but failed due to unforeseen cancellations of service whilst in the area to specifically ride them. The Brighton Belle Pullman and a return to the Balloch Pier line in Scotland were out of the question. I could perhaps consider the Balloch Pier line a "technical cop" as I'd tried to ride it twice and was twice prevented from doing so due to no fault of my own.

That left just one triangle in the London area to do. With things largely wound up at my duty station and the hand-over to my successor complete, I planned a final blitz for 20th March 1982 to try to cover all the trackage I still needed in the London area.

I succeeded admirably except for what was likely a ¼ mile segment of line that comprised one leg of a triangle that was only covered by one rush-hour train each day. I calculated that it would take me about 90 miles of riding to cover this segment and sadly had to give up this last bit of my quest as I had simply run out of time. It was sort of like Moses seeing the Promised Land – there it was, but I wasn't going to get there.

There's still a blank space in my log book but it's unlikely that the journey will ever be filled in. I've been back to the UK several times since then to visit family and friends, but so much has changed in the past 30 years that I would have to re-plot a new strategy to cover the missing link plus the many other changes that have occurred in the UK since then. I would have to cover the line to Stansted airport, the new cross-London line, and the Chunnel. On the plus side, I did get to see Paddington Bear at Paddington, but where oh where were the Wombles when I rode through Wimbledon?

Next Time:

Don concludes his memoirs with a look back at his post-posting visits back to the UK.

THE MIDLAND JUBILEE



In his article looking back at the early *Marlow Donkeys*, Malcolm offers a report on *The Midland Jubilee* of 1st October 1977. Mike Norris and your Editor were joined pioneer MDRS members Roger Bowen, Stan Verrinder and Bas Woodward. It now comes to pass that future

members the Two Tims, Edmonds and Speechley were in hot pursuit on the latter's motor bike. Tim E snapped 6000 on the Shrewsbury to Craven Arms leg at Wistanstow (Above) whilst Tim S bagged 6201 at Bromfield taking the train on to Hereford. It's a small world.

