

*Marlow & District
Railway Society*

Please reply to:

THE MARLOW DONKEY NO.18

MARCH 1981

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I think fellow railway enthusiasts would agree with me that the most readable of books and articles are those which recall the combined smells of steam and hot oil, even the draughts and coal dust. The books of O.S. Nock, Cecil J. Allen and Professor W.A. Tuplin are invariably excellent but they are never so entertaining as those written by men with first hand knowledge - and a good memory. I was recently given a copy of Nostalgic Days, Harold Gasson's sequel to Firing Days and Footplate Days. As a Didcot fireman he recounts his adventures in the old GWR areas around Oxford and Reading. He writes at length about the line which connected Didcot, Newbury, Winchester and Southampton. This rural route now torn up played a vital part in the war effort as troops and munitions had to be moved constantly throughout the six years of conflict. Some of the photographs were supplied by Gasson himself. I was rather amused by "A steam man's delight" - a diesel in flames on the line at the bottom of his garden at Kennington near Oxford.

Another welcome gift at Christmas was Railways through the Chilterns. Mr. C.R.L. Coles has provided a fine selection of photographs dating back to the 1930s. The various routes round and through the Chiltern Hills are taken in turn. Mr. Coles has described each of these lines, representing three out of the "Big Four" companies, and the notes describing his photographs are most informative. Half the pre-war branch lines have gone and a browse through this book is a nostalgic delight.

When we were young observers of the GWR scene we used to refer to the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton line as the Old Worcester and Worcester. According to a recent news item the track is worn out. By May 1981 the metals will be so worn that heavy diesel locomotives and their Inter-City trains will be replaced by dmu's. An irony is that Sir Peter Parker, BR Chairman, commuting from Minster Lovell near Witney to Paddington will have to change at Oxford in both directions.

A cynic recently described the future of BR as a rundown outfit with just a few prestige trains which most members of the public cannot afford to use. There is an element of truth in this. Our Transport Secretary, Mr. Fowler, is apparently very sympathetic to BR which even with a subsidy of £14 million a week is running at a weekly loss of £1½ millions. Overmanning a low productivity are once again said to be the main causes of BR's malaise.

British Rail have honoured two hero drivers from the steam age: Two express electric locomotives have been named this month (February). One bears the name of John Axon, the other of Wallace Oakes, both of whom died at the controls in their endeavours to save the lives of their passengers. This seems a thoughtful and kindly gesture by the BRB.

1981 may prove to be rather an anticlimax after the excitement of Rainhill. However, it is apparent that plenty of rail tours will be available. We should be grateful to those concerned in all the planning and preparation on the preserved lines. May I quote Bernard Staite, Secretary to the Steam Locomotive Operators Association - "It is no fun lighting up a 0200 hours in a howling gale with the rain lashing down, or racing against time to change boiler tubes, fire box stays or any one of a hundred other jobs so that their locomotives can perform to the delight of thousands both off and on the train."

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Our sincere congratulations to the Scottish Railway Preservation Society. They have been given the ARPS Annual Award for restoring two steam engines to an acceptable standards for main line running. One of these locomotives is 0-6-0 No.673 Maude which some of us saw at Rainhill last May. She had come down from Scotland under her own steam. The second loco is former LNER 4-4-0 No.246 Morayshire. Well done, Falkirk!

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME AT 1945 HOURS FOR 2000 HOURS

- 16th Apr '81 - Pre-nationalisation steam slide show by Rcn White of "Colour Rail".
- 21st May '81 - "Expedition India". Colin Garratt returns for another visit sponsored by Praktica Cameras.
- 18th Jun '81 - "Last Years of BR Steam". Jim Sarney recalls his own experience working on the Joint Line.
- 16th Jul '81 - "Return of Flying Scotsman". Film and talk by Derek Cross.
- Aug '81 - No evening meeting but see below for half day tour.
- 17th Sep '81 - Autumn film show.
- 15th Oct '81 - "The Railway Collection of the Science Museum", Mr. A. Hall-Patch who is the Assistant Curator will tell us all about the collection.

ANNUAL FAMILY TOUR - SUNDAY 12TH JULY 1981

As announced at the AGM our tour will be to the Nene Valley Railway on Sunday 12th July. Our double decker bus will leave Marlow at 0930 picking up in High Wycombe, Princes Risborough and Aylesbury and will travel to Peterborough. A short time will be allowed here before joining the diesel train for Orton Mere. At Orton Mere the Nene Valley Steam Train will take us to Wansford. It is hoped that Harold Caunt our speaker in February will be able to show us around. We return via the same route arriving back in Marlow by 2130.

For those who missed Harold Caunt's talk the Nene Valley Railway is a standard gauge line just over 5 miles long running from Orton Mere to Wansford and is the former LNWR line running east from Peterborough. Apart from BR standard locos, 7000 "Brittania" and 73050 "City of Peterborough" the line has a unique collection of continental locos and rolling stock.

Expected inclusive fare £4.50 adults and £2.25 children. Bookings to Stan Verrinder.

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AUGUST HALF DAY TOUR - SUNDAY 16TH AUGUST 1981

Because of the problems of members getting away on Thursday evenings it has been decided not to run an evening tour this year but to have a tour on Sunday 16th August. Departure from Marlow at 1400 for the Quainton Railway Collection where there will be at least one loco in steam. We hope we will get a conducted tour of the site. On leaving we will look at a few places on the GC line north of Quainton including the new rubbish transfer station at Calvert. Return to Marlow around 1900 hours.

FRENCH WEEKEND - 6TH TO 8TH JUNE 1981

After two successful mini bus tours to France we select a different railway for our excursion on 6th-8th June. Staying in the same hotel in St. Valery-sur-Somme we intend to travel on the Chemin de Fer Froissy-Dompierre at 60cm gauge line. There will be time to look at the CF Baie de Somme of course not forgetting the superb menu of Hotel Guiliame de Normandie. Bookings to Roger Bowen.

FENBASHER - 4TH JULY 1981

Many of you travelled on the unusual "Valleybasher" tour last year and got to know Newport Station well. This year the same people are running the "Fenbasher" so that you can get to know Kings Lynn Station just as well. Seriously this is a comprehensive tour of goods lines in the Fens including Wisbech, all the Kings Lynn branches and St. Ives as well as the freight only Midland line through Corby. The date is 4th July from St. Pancras returning to Kings Cross. Roger Bowen hopes for a good response so please contact him if your are interested. Fare £11.95.

EVENING CLASSES - AUTUMN 1981

Advance information for this Autumn. Your secretary Roger Bowen will again be tutoring a 10 week course at the John Colet County Secondary School, Wendover. The subject is "Steam Railways since 1948". The course commences on Wednesday 23rd September and further information can be obtained from Mr. G. Jenkins, 11 Orchard Close, Wendover (Tel.623311).

FAWLEY RAILWAY

Members will recall that following a meeting in February 1980 between your committee and Ken Woodham the Society agreed to organise working parties on the Fawley Railway.

Although we all thought that this arrangement would continue indefinitely, not least because of the report made at our AGM in January 1981 by Jim Sarney, much has happened in the last few weeks. The Fawley Management, for reasons of their own, have decided to cease employing full time staff at Fawley. This we are told has caused insurance problems for our own members working there and that the only answer was for a new Society to be formed. Your committee was concerned initially because of the lack of consultation and discussion regarding this. However following assurance that any of our members will be able to join the new Society it is thought that this is probably the best answer in the long term.

An initial meeting was held at Fawley on 22nd February 1981 when a steering committee of 7 was elected. This consists of Ken Woodham, Jim Sarney, Bob Hatfield, Graham Nutley, Mike Norris, Ron Brooks and Roger Bowen. The inaugural meeting of the new Society will be held at the Marlow Donkey on Thursday 30th April at 2000 hours. We are assured that all Members of the MDRS interested in continuing work at Fawley will be welcome to attend.

Although there is not intended to be any formal links between the two Societies it is anticipated that their aims will be complementary and that many will wish to be members of both.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING JANUARY 1981

The minutes of the 1981 AGM are now available and any member wishing to have a copy should ask either Stan Verrinder or Roger Bowen. A copy of the rules which were slightly amended at the AGM is also available.

RAILWAY TRIPS EXCURSIONS AND VISITS

The Marlow and Maidenhead Passengers' Association will be running the following bargain trips starting from Marlow 28th January - Cardiff and Tenby, 23rd August - Torquay and Paignton.

Chiltern Trains of 1, Druids Walk, Chinnor (Tel. Kingston Blount 52198) will have the following on the Wycombe line:-

- 10th Apr. - 2 day weekend to Inverness Kyle of Lochalsh & Skye
- 25th Apr. - Cambridge Ely, Norwich Fenland Nature Reserve
Bulbfields Tour or Norfolk Broads Tour.
- 9th May - Calais Northern France Coach Tour or coach trip to
Chemin de Fer de Baie de Somme.
- 25th May - Aberystwyth or Towyn for Vale of Rheidol or Talylyn.
- 2nd Aug. - Ashford-Hastings or Kent and East Sussex Railway.

BR Merrymaker Excursions on the Wycombe line (Chief Traffic Clerk High Wycombe Station Tel. HW 36044).

- 18th Apr. - Exeter via Birmingham.
- 15th/16th May - Edinburgh.
- 24th May - Paignton.

Hertfordshire Railtours of Chestnut Walk, Welwyn, Herts will run the following from Marylebone, Moor Park, Aylesbury and Risborough

- 16th May - Metro Thanet railtour of Kent lines with stops at Sheerness and Dover Western Docks. Rare loco hauled train on Met GC Joint line.

LNER Society Railtours of Little Tile House, Nightingales Lane, Chalfont St. Giles (Tel. Little Chalfont 2952) on the Wycombe line.

- 4 May - Carnforth, Lake Windermere or Derwentwater tours or Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway.
- 9 May - Dawlish, Teignmouth, Newton Abbot, Torquay, Paignton, Torbay Steam Railway or River Dart Cruise (via Birmingham).
- 26 Sep. - Carnforth or Ravenglass - Miniature Railways
Cavalcade day on Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway.

Keith Coaches of 30, Buckingham Street, Aylesbury (Tel.28686) will run the following escorted and guided coach tours from Amersham, Wendover and Aylesbury (Escort/Courier Roger Bowen).

31st May - GCR Rail Trail visiting points of interest with a photo stop at Quorn and return trip on GC Loughborough to Rothley line.

5th Jul.- Brunel Tour (also from Risborough, Wycombe and Marlow) visiting Swindon Railway Museum, SS Great Britain and Clifton Suspension Bridge.

17th Sep.- Didcot Enthusiasts Day and Pendon Museum (also from Risborough).

BR are having an open day on the Vale of Rheidol on Bank Holiday Monday 4th May 1981.

50 YEARS AGO - Contributed by Bas Woodward

As a very junior member of the group of railway enthusiasts in Oxford in the late 1920s and early thirties 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 boringly alike.

At Aylesbury station, shown on the 1923 map as Met and 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 word METROPOLITAN on their sides for this was the era when Metroland was being build 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-cylindered 4-6-0s. They were the largest express engines built for that company. The first of them was No.5900 (formerly 2222) Sir Gilbert Claughton and they were eventually a class

of 130 built between 1913 and 1921. We saw Nos.5963, 5916 E Tootal Broadhurst, 5919 Lord Kitcheners, 5970 Patience, 5985, 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-cylindered Scots were later reboilered by Stanier and although there are only a couple of the class still in existence all were still 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 that day in 1931 we saw Nos.6128 London Irish Refleman (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 Refleman, 6159 The Loyal Regiment and 6150 The Life Guardsman.

The Prince of Wales 4-6-0 class was represented by Nos.5666 Plynllymmon, 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 Penmaerawr.

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 7Fs 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.

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 5s.

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 rugger 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.

25 YEARS AGO - Contributed by Roger Bowen

Two long term significant announcements of March 1956 were decisions made public by the British Transport Commissioning. One was to adopt 25 kv 50 cycles ac for all future British electrification schemes, except on the Eastern and Central Sections of the Southern Region and on London Transport. The second was to adopt the vacuum brake for future freight.

rolling stock and anticipating that in ten years the vacuum brake would be standard on all wagons.

1500 volt d.c. electrification had previously been standard for proposed electric lines but the decision to change was made after experimental use of 25 kv ac between Lancaster and Morecambe and on the SNCF at Aix-les-Bains. The proposed Euston-Manchester/Liverpool electrification was costed at £117.8 million for 25 kv ac and £123.6 million for 1500 vdc electrification. Work was to be pressed forward with Crew-Manchester as a pilot scheme for completion by January 1959.

With regard to brakes, the BTC admitted the decision to retain and extend vacuum brakes was not made primarily on technical grounds but on the grounds of the cost and inconvenience of changing over to air brakes.

The main event occurring at this time was the entry into service of the first rebuilt "Merchant Navy" class locomotive, 35018 "British India Line" which made its debut on the "Bournemouth Belle" in Easter week 1956. The locomotive was rebuilt at Eastleigh Works to designs prepared at Brighton Works under the direction of Mr. H.H. Swift, Chief Mechanical and Electrical Engineer, Southern Region. Some major changes from the unrebuilt version were made. This included a new inside cylinder, a dispensing with the oil bath lubrication, a new smoke box and orthodox boiler cladding. The boiler was unaltered but was fitted with a BR standard rocking grate.

Interesting happenings of local interest included a sighting on 5th March when 6018 "King Henry VI" working the 7 a.m. Weston-Super-Mare to Paddington was stopped at Maidenhead with the centre driving axles fractured. Two days later the Royal train from Paddington to Cheltenham Races was headed by 5066 "Sir Felix Pole" and made up of one of the former LMS saloons and seven ex G.W. coaches. On 10th March 60055 "Woolwinder" was delayed at Princes Risborough with a fallen brick arch whilst hauling an excursion to the International Hockey Match at Wembley. On 15th March 45546 "Fleetwood" arrived at Marylebone on the 3.19 a.m. parcels from Bletchley, the first recorded "Patriot" at Marylebone. Two days later another unusual type at Marylebone was 7913 "Little Wyrley Hall" which had brought in an excursion from Birmingham (Snow Hill).

Early 1956 saw the introduction of rail sounds on record - the 10 inch 78 rpm variety by Transacord of Princes Risborough @ 10/6d each plus 2/- postage!! According to the reviewer in the April 1956 "Trains Illustrated" the best record was No.3 which featured various A3 class locomotives leaving Aylesbury.

New locomotives to BR stock in March 1956 were two 9400 class O-6-OPT's, three diesel mechanical O-6-O's, three diesel mechanical O-4-O's, one diesel hydraulic O-6-O, ten diesel electric O-6-O's, two class "5" 4-6-O's, two class "4" 2-6-4T's and two class 9F 2-10-O's.

How railways have changed in 25 years!! Other things have not, however, as British Railways agreed to lop £12 million from its planned capital expenditure for 1956 "in deference to the Government's request for economies to defeat inflation". Oh well, perhaps things don't change after all!

"THE FIRST AND LAST" - Contributed by Roger Bowen

On Saturday, 24th January, 1981 the Western Region of British Rail organised an excursion called "The First and Last" over the Staines West Branch railway. The title is appropriate as this was to be the last train from

West Drayton to Staines West before closure and the first train over the new connection between Staines West and the Southern Region Staines to Windsor and Eton Riverside line.

The reason for the line closure and the new connection is the construction of the Staines to Colnbrook Section of the M25 London Orbital Motorway which will run over the trackbed of part of the branch line. There is an oil depot immediately outside the old Staines West Station so clearly there had to be a way of retaining rail access to this. As the Staines West line runs parallel to the Southern line at one point it was a cheaper solution to put in a connecting link than to have to lay in a substantial length of line parallel to the new motorway.

The branch runs from West Drayton to Staines via Colnbrook. The section from West Drayton to Colnbrook was opened on 9th August, 1884 and the line was opened throughout on 2nd November, 1885. It was built by the Staines and West Drayton Railway and worked by the Great Western Railway. The owning company was absorbed into the Great Western in 1900. The line was closed to passengers on 27th March, 1965.

Our excursion, on which a number of society members travelled, was made up of 3 x 3 car diesel units of the standard Western Region London Suburban pattern built by Pressed Steel from 1959. The train left platform 4 at Paddington on time at 10.50 and travelled via the relief lines onto the Greenford line. Traversing the Greenford loop the train passed Hanwell and Southall before reaching West Drayton. Here the line bears off to the right for a short distance before completing lefthand semi-circle under the Great Western main line. Evocatively the track of the old Uxbridge branch is still insitu for a short distance beyond West Drayton.

Our train trundled slowly through the somewhat dreary "countryside" of West Middlesex, passed the odd scrap yard and apparently disused oil terminal. It was said that the latter served Heathrow Airport prior to a long distance pipeline being provided. The remains of Colnbrook Station were noted before reaching the section that was parallel with the new motorway works. Over the Southern line by a bridge before coming to a halt just short of the Staines West oil depot. Here the new facing points were "clipped" and the train passed forward over the new connection onto the Southern line. The train went onto Staines Central where after a few minutes scheduled halt it went on into the carriage sidings. A reversal here, after time to study examples of those maids-off-all-work, 4-VEP units stabled here. Our train took us onto Windsor and Eton Riverside, fitted in between the clockwork regularity of the inter-connecting electric services that serve the area.

Plenty of time was allowed at Windsor, so after checking that the "Winter Royal" in an Eton hostelry travelled well from Marlow, an inspection was made of the Great Western Station, Windsor and Eton Central. It was a sorry sight to see such a fine station with only a single line serving it with a sparse service. Back at the Southern Station, with its three platforms and half hourly off peak service the contrast could not have been greater. The Western diesel unit did look a stranger there, especially when someone twiddled with the destination screen and came up with long lost destinations such as "Fairford" and "Birmingham Snow Hill" not to mention Staines. A nice touch was that someone had put on the train the headboard from the last passenger train on the Staines West branch in 1965, suitably amended.

Sharp on 13.58 the train took us back to Staines Central for reversal back over the new connection to the Western Region branch. On our way back over

the motorway works we were told that this section was due to be lifted four days hence. All too soon we reached West Drayton and after a short halt we travelled direct to Paddington, arriving one minute early at 15.44.

A fascinating day, enjoyed by all, with much better weather than could be expected for late January. Top marks to the Western Region staff for organising such a unique excursion.

THE WYCOMBE RAILWAY AND THE MARLOW DONKEY

Part 10 - Conclusion

To conclude this story some details of the more unusual incidents which have happened over the years. Unfortunately, the area has not had an accident free record. The worst occurred at Aylesbury Town in fog on 23rd December, 1904, when the 2.45 a.m. Great Central newspaper train from Marylebone approached the double reverse curve at the south end of the station at excessive speed and was derailed. The locomotive and tender, GCR class 11B 4-4-0 No.1040 built in 1903, and four coaches mounted the down platform and a further two came to rest on the up platform. Amongst the debris and wreckage were a large number of Christmas puddings which were being conveyed on the train. Unfortunately the 10.20 p.m. express from Manchester was also entering the station and came in slight collision with the wreckage. Five were killed on the spot, the fireman and guard of the newspaper train and two enginemen and a dining car attendant travelling as passengers on that train. The driver, an experienced man, was fatally injured and was unable to explain his action before he died the following day. As a result, the layout at Aylesbury was remodelled in 1907 to eliminate the curves (see Part V September 1979).

Most of the accidents on the branch have involved the many level crossings. On the evening of 6th January 1961 a down train of six coaches hauled by 2-6-2T 6151 collided with a van on the Strande Castle crossing south of Cookham. A passenger in the van was killed but the driver survived. This was the third crash on the crossing in three years but the only fatality, as a result the crossing was sealed to road traffic and is now a pedestrian crossing only.

A year later, on 14th January 1962 another level crossing collision occurred at Spade Oak near Bourne End, when a Marlow bound 'Donkey' struck a Volkswagen car towing a dinghy on a trailer. Two of the cars occupants were opening the gates whilst the car was on the crossing. The impact pushed the car ninety yards and killed the driver.

There have been numerous other crossing collisions, including some incredible escapes. In June 1976 for example an eastbound DMU hit a tractor on the Westhorpe crossing at Little Marlow. The tractor was literally sliced in two. The engine finishing up one side of the line, the cab on the other, and yet the driver walked away merely shocked. The front of the DMU was badly damaged and Hymek 7011 came to the rescue, the last Hydraulic to visit the branch.

At 11.43 a.m. on 25th July 1963 an engineers train bound for Loudwater was near the Thomas & Green Siding between Bourne End and Wooburn Green when an axlebox assembly on "Dogfish" ballast hopper wagon DB992730, fully loaded, collapsed derailing the wagon. The Old Oak breakdown crane arrived behind 6161 and eventually the cripple was hauled back to Bourne End. Attempts to shunt it into the up siding resulted in three more derailments and so in

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desperation the wagon was lifted onto the down platform ramp at the Maidenhead end, there it stayed until 8th August when, still loaded, it was put on to a well wagon and taken to Swindon.

However, there have been happier even humorous incidents. A major storm blew up when the 6.04 p.m. Marlow to Maidenhead failed to operate on Sunday 9th October, 1955. The National Sundays the following week carried reports of the driver walking off into the night and passengers walking a mile to catch a bus. It appeared the fireman went home leaving the train. In truth he had been working since 8.30 a.m. and worked up until 6 but his relief had missed his connection at Maidenhead. As for claims that BR were inundated with demands for refunds, only one claim for 2s.5d. (12p) was received.

Until September 1961 our Society's esteemed meeting place was known as the Railway Hotel, but was renamed the Marlow Donkey to commemorate the passing of the steam trains on the branch at the suggestion of the landlord Tony Hollingworth. Three regulars decided to celebrate by dressing as cowboys and held up the train, which was stopped half a mile from Marlow, with the aid of cartridges placed on the track. The joke was not shared by the British Transport Commission who charged each with entering a train unlawfully, wilfully stopping a vehicle on the railway and obstructing the driver in his duty. Marlow magistrate fined each man 30s. (£1.50).

I have been asked to mention Marlow's other railway, the narrow gauge system operated by the Marlow Sand & Gravel Company. When I first came to the area some 23 years ago this was an extensive system but is now confined to the Westhorpe Pit. Of 2'0" gauge it has three Motorail Simplex O.4ODM locomotives Nos.3 (5867/34), 4 (8790/43) and the most recent 5 (21283/65), a fourth (7176/37) is dismantled. The stock consists of side tippers. The track work varies as the various areas of the pit is worked, but currently it may be clearly observed from the top of Winter Hill and from the Marlow trains.

This concludes the story of the local network. Much has changed over the years, no longer does Fred Funnell, station master at Marlow, get his staff to repair punctures on commuters bikes, no longer does the train wait at Bourne End for the Lord Justice to arrive in his Rolls Royce and take his first class seat to London. However our branch is still open and hopefully its future is reasonably secure. It has seen competition come and go, the Marlow to Bourne End bus was withdrawn in 1980 and the future of the Marlow to Maidenhead bus service is now very uncertain. Meanwhile, the W.R. authorities plan to include the line in its electrification proposals which form part of the £775m investment programme recently put forward by BR.

This series has barely scratched the surface of the subject, I have left out a lot of material in order to keep the articles to a reasonable length. Many members have joined during the writing of this series and may be interested in acquiring those parts they have missed, well the Editor has hinted that it may be possible to reprint the appropriate parts, although the Treasurer has suggested a small fee may be necessary, so if you are interested please contact Stan Verrinder.

Finally I would like to thank all those who have helped by contributing information, the MMPA, British Rail Western Region commercial, civil engineering and signals departments, to OPC whose many albums have contributed a lot of background detail, who realised that the token exchanging photo on page 103 of "A Pictorial Record of GW Signalling"

was taken at Bourne End?

A special mention however must go to the late Norman Aston-Smith who kept detailed notes which have been invaluable in writing this series and special thanks must go to Alan Wheeler for loaning them to me. The signal arm which forms the 'trophy' for the best article in this journal was part of Norman's collection and my thanks go to all those members who voted for this series this year.