

Marlow & District
Railway Society

Please reply to:

MARLOW DONKEY NO.20

SEPTEMBER, 1981

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

So common-sense has prevailed. The railway unions and BR narrowly avoided a complete shut-down of the system on the last day of August. Now it is possible seriously and sensibly to consider economies and productivity. A strike would probably have led to irreversible closures and an even sparser rail system.

Periodically I read the statistics concerning cancelled trains. The pattern is always the same. Southern Region always blame "staff shortages and failure of equipment" for the frequent non-arrival of commuter trains. The Western Region report just ONE cancellation is a total of 500 trains. The old GWR esprit de corps is not dead, the pride in its former high standards is still there.

I have watched the departures of locomotives from Woodham Brothers' scrapyard at Barry Docks over the past ten years - not literally of course, but in the pages of railway publications. In the September edition of Railway World there is a report of "Hall" 4-6-0 No.7903 Foremarke Hall being moved to the Swindon and Cricklade Railway, "West Country" 4-6-2 No.34007 Wadebridge travelling by road to the Plym Valley Railway, and another Stainier 8F 2-8-0 No.48624 soon to be transferred to Buxton by the Peak Railway. The interest and enthusiasm of Robert Adley MP will ensure that any locomotive salvageable after so long a time will eventually find a home. Workers employed by the Youth Opportunities Programme will endeavour to protect the remaining 70 or so examples. I am amazed that these purchases can be undertaken, particularly as the cost of such items as retubing is now so phenomenally high. Some critics are already complaining that we are preserving "too many Halls" or that "we've enough Black Fives". Once the Barry supply dries up we shall have only the occasional continental veteran to add to our preserved collection.

Those of us who enjoyed a visit to the Nene Valley Railway in July were happy to find a well-run organisation. With help from a kindly city council and interested industries in Peterborough the NVR is able to run a service linked at one end to BR and at the other the possibility of extending the line at Yarwell Junction when finances permit.

I was looking through the huge collection of railway publications in the Torbay Railway's Paignton bookshop a few days ago. Books keep appearing on the shelves from a large number of publishers. Surely the supply of photographs will begin to dry up soon even if the demand for "constructive and readable nostalgia" continues indefinitely.

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THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME AT 1945 HRS. FOR 2000 HRS.

- 15 Oct.1981 "The Railway Collection of the Science Museum" Tony Hall Patch who is the Assistant Curator will tell us about the collection.
- 19 Nov.1981 Members 15 minute talks. Offers of talks are still invited although most time has been taken. Roger Woodham will take the names of volunteers.
- 17 Dec.1981 The Christmas Film Show will be "The General". For the uninitiated the title of the film is taken from the name of a railway locomotive. Written directed and starring Buster Keaton it was made in 1926 and would be on many film buffs top ten list and certainly ranks among the best comedy films ever.
- 21 Jan.,1982 5th Annual General Meeting followed by members slides.
- 18 Feb.,1982 Kent and East Sussex Railway - talk and slides (Provisional).
- 18 Mar.,1982 Trans-Siberian Railway. Talk and film by Richard Kennan of a journey by rail to the Far East.

CHRISTMAS DINNER 1981

This year's annual Christmas Dinner will again be at the Blue Flag Cadmore End on Saturday 19th December, 1981. No price yet but will be around £8.50 per head. For those who have not been this has been highly successful every year it has been held. Please give your names to Mike Norris as soon as possible with a £5 deposit for every person. There have been disappointed members every year so book early.

EVENING CLASSES

Your secretary Roger Bowen will again be tutoring two 10 week courses this autumn, this time the subject is "Steam Railway since 1948". One course will commence on Monday 21 Sep.1981 at Roans County Secondary School, Amersham; the other at the John Colet Secondary School, Wendover. Details of the Amersham course from Keith Simpson, Amersham 6224 and the Wendover course from G. Jenkins on Wendover 623311.

After Christmas there will be courses on "London's Transport" at Aylesbury and Amersham. Full details in the next "Donkey"

CHILTERN TRAIN EXCURSIONS

The following will be run from Wycombe line stations:-

- 16 Sep.1981 Blackpool Illuminations
- 10 Oct.1981 -do-
- 10 Oct.1981 Windermere Weekend until 12th.
- 17 Oct.1981 Dunkerque or Meli Park (Belgium).
- 24 Oct.1981 York or Yorkshire tour.
- 30 Oct.1981 Central Wales Weekend until 31st.
- 28 Nov.1981 Dunkerque incl.Hypermarket for Christmas shopping
- 19 Feb.1982 Not an excursion but an evening at Wycombe Town Hall with stands by BR and Sealink with films incl. "Night Mail and "Lets go to Birmingham.

Details from Chiltern Trains, 1, Druids Walk, Chinnor Tel. Kingston Blount 52198.

KEITH COACHES

- 27 Sep.1981 Didcot Enthusiasts Day and Pendon Museum.
Calling at Aylesbury Stoke Mandeville and Risborough.
- 13 Dec.1981 Santa Special to Mid Hants Railway. Calling at Aylesbury,
High Wycombe and Marlow.
- 2/3 Apr.1982) Brunel Weekends. These are jointly with BR and follow this
2/3 Oct.1982) year successful day excursions. One way by rail and one way
by coach with an overnight stop at a hotel overlooking
Clifton Suspension Bridge.

Each of the above with Roger Bowen as courier/mentor.

GREAT CENTRAL MERRYMAKER

The final GC Merrymaker is on Sunday 25th October 1981 from Baker Street joining a coach at Aylesbury where your secretary is the courier. Included is a return journey on the line between Loughborough and Rothley. Details from Area Manager BR Marylebone.

SOCIETY NEWS

Most members will be already aware of the continual help which Alan Wheeler and Charlie Smith give to the Society. However for new members Charlie looks after and provides the film equipment for our film shows. Alan is responsible for the display window at the Marlow Donkey and has mounted an exhibition in the South of England Building Society shop window and also one currently at the Marlow Library.

Two new departures are in this issue of the Donkey. Firstly our first article by a non-member which is on the Nene Valley trip in July and is written by Neil Dickinson. He mentions the uneventful bus trip but some members were heard to say that this to some extent spoilt it. It is to be noted that Neil mentioned strong liquor three times which is just about par for articles. The second departure is what it is hoped will be, a regular feature a pictorial quiz prepared and presented by Mike Walker.

There is a rumour to the effect that the Treasurer in a unique bout of generosity intends not collecting 25p per head for the Christmas film show. If this is true then all members are urged to take advantage of an occasion which will surely not happen again.

From time to time appeals are made for articles for the Donkey. Why not you? Try a brief one of say 100 words as a starter to the field of literature.

NENE VALLEY RAILWAY

Neil Dickinson

Where in Britain can you travel on Danish coaches behind a Swedish locomotive, or have tea on a Wagons Lits Diner on the same train? The answer, of course, is on the Nene Valley Railway.

NENE VALLEY RAILWAY - continued

I last rode on the NVR in 1974 and was therefore keen to visit it again to experience the railway in full operating order, so I was pleased to join the MDRS excursion on 19th July. I'm not a member of the Society (well Bristol to the Donkey on a Thursday evening is a bit far!) but I have been to a couple of meetings in the past and also enjoyed the Society's Rocket 150 weekend at Rainhill last year.

Having heard tales of mishaps on previous Society bus trips it was natural to suffer a little trepidation, but in the event all was well, for we had a W registered Bristol VR of United Counties. Leaving Marlow on time and picking up at Wycombe, Risborough and Aylesbury we were soon at Bedford. A stop here for elevenses had been arranged. The early opening of the bus station cafe especially for us was also appreciated by more local passengers. After leaving Bedford the bus, which had been sporting the destination "O60 Excursion from High Wycombe" changed to "462 Special Railway Service", as we sped up the A1.

The main centre of the NVR's operation is at Wansford Station which is actually on the A1, but our trip was to be a little more interesting, so we headed towards Peterborough Station. Time here permitted a swift pint before joining our train.

Peterborough has undergone tremendous changes since I was a frequent visitor on spotting trips in my youth. Here our initial railborne transport was a 2 car train on the BR link from Peterborough to Orton Mere station of the NVR. One surprise was seeing a splendid signal gantry over the single track, which has been installed for sighting test purposes for BR drivers now that there are no semaphore signals on the East Coast main line.

Orton Mere station is a new one, constructed by the NVR and consists of a single platform with a runround loop. We did not have to wait long before the sound of steam could be heard and Swedish Railways 2-6-2 tank No.1178 appeared resplendent in its livery of blue and black with red lining. It smartly ran around the train of Danish coaches and Wagon Lits Restaurant Car so we quickly boarded for the 20 minute ride to Wansford. The route passes through the Nene Valley Country Park which attracts many visitors on a sunny Sunday afternoon like this one. The intermediate station at Ferry Meadows has been built to serve the Park.

Originally the line continued to Northampton but now the tracks end just beyond Wansford where the NVR kindly provided a guide to show us around. Here the NVR has done many works including rebuilding the original platform, moving the edge further from the track to enable locos and stock built to Continental loading gauge to be used. Surprisingly apart from that little work was necessary to the rest of the railway to enlarge the gauge.

Wansford is now the home for a variety of European engines including another Swedish tank, 2 Danish Railway tanks, a French (Nord Railway) compound express loco and 2 German tanks. British locos are few in number and include No.1 "Thomas the Tank Engine" complete with face on the smokebox door, which anyone who has read the Rev. W. Awdry's famous books will recognise. Actually the engine is an ex British Sugar Corporation O-6-OT but try telling that to the kids having their photos taken in front of it!

One complication of running Continental engines and stock is that these use the air brake rather than vacuum brake and as a result the British locos have

NENE VALLEY RAILWAY - continued

had to have air braking equipment fitted. Thankfully this has been done unobtrusively and as a bonus enables Southern electric multiple units to be hauled.

We were impressed with the wood panelled interior of a Wagon Lits sleeping car built in Belgium in 1949 to prewar design. This coach was bought by the BBC for the play "Caught on a Train" and subsequently given to the NVR as part of the play was filmed on the NVR. In fact the NVR is no stranger on TV as it features not surprisingly, whenever foreign railway scenes are required, the "Secret Army" series providing many examples.

Our 2 hours at Wansford passed quickly and the time came to retrace our tracks. The train back to Orton Mere was packed and as it was a hot afternoon many took the opportunity of sampling the draught Greene King in the Skandia Bar in one of the Danish coaches.

The journey back to Marlow was largely uneventful with one exception. I don't know if there is a precedent for the Society being refused admission to a pub, but I daresay the establishment in question (I think it was called the Fox and Grapes) has now been suitably blacklisted.

Thanks for a thoroughly enjoyable day out are due to Roger Bowen for his usual efficient organising and Les Smart for arranging the hire of, and driving our transportation.

ANOTHER OF TED'S BITS AND PIECES - Ted Gregory

"An interesting sidelight on the beginning of the railway age is a letter written to the Dowlais Co, asking for an opinion on the value of different types of railway.

The writer, a subscriber to the proposed Stockton and Darlington Railway, writes with an earthiness seldom found in official documents: "It is astonishing, the number of different opinions we have received upon this Subject, one person says, "I am of opinion there is as much difference between a Rail and a Tram road as there is on a dark night between the best part of a Black and White Woman".

From "Remains of a Revolution" by Anthony Burton.

TRANSPORT TRUST - Roger Bowen

As members will know from previous mentions in the "Donkeys" the Transport Trust, to whom we are affiliated, have done a good job in assisting in the restoration of historic transport relics including the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway "Invicta", of 1830, the Sandringham flying boat "Southern Cross" and the DH88 "Comet" aircraft. Now it is assisting with a new project of recovering and restoring two 5' 6" gauge locomotives built in 1857 for the Truro and St. Johns Railroad in Nova Scotia.

The locomotives were built by Stephenson and despatched from Glasgow on the wooden hulled 700 ton barque "Thomas" which went aground on the rocks of Orsay Island, Islay, on 26th August, 1857 whilst bound for New Brunswick.

TRANSPORT TRUST - continued

In 1977 the wreck was located by RAF divers who discovered 21 artefacts all subsequently discovered as parts of mid-nineteen century railway engines. It was then decided to launch "Operation Iron Horse" to recover and reconstruct the remains of the locomotives for public display, the estimated cost being £70,000. The Transport Trust has agreed to assist with the project and no doubt members will be hearing more of the project in coming months.

The Trust is also in the process of publishing a book of interviews by Sir Peter Allen with 22 people famous in the history of transport, the cost of which is being underwritten by Rolls Royce Motors Ltd. Another project currently being pursued is a joint operation with the Association of Railway Preservation Societies to set up a national fund for railway preservation in this country.

Thus can be seen that the Trust is being very active in its aim of helping all aspects of transport history.

DAY TRIP TO BLAENAU FFESTINIOG - Mike Walker

On Sunday 28th June a party of 11 joined a Chiltern Trains excursion to the Ffestiniog Railway. Unusually our secretary was not present. the train arrived on time behind 47 473 and an uneventful journey was only punctuated at Coventry by an engine change, 47 193 arriving to take over as 47 473 had to return south light engine. No doubt the WR was not prepared to allow LWR to take advantage of Old Oak's high maintenance standards.

Avoiding Birmingham via Bescot we continued to Chester, here there was a surprise, the experimental Leyland 2 car railbus 140 001 was sitting in a siding. It was due at Chester on the 26th and on the 28th should have been in South Wales so something must have been amiss.

At Llandudno Junction we lost 47 193 and 40 115 and 25 143 were attached for the trip up the beautifully scenic Conway Valley branch. On arrival at Blaenau Ffestiniog North the reason for the superpower was revealed, because of the rebuilding in progress the loop was out of use and two locos were needed to shunt the stock. In the yard another surprise, the original Leyland LEV Railbus undergoing trials.

A fleet of buses took us to Porthmadog where an added bonus was seeing a Ruston and Hornsey 4 wheel diesel "Kinnerley" hauling a two coach train at the Welsh Highland Railway station alongside the BR line. Compared to the FR the WHR is a poor relation, but is no worse than the FR 15 years ago, so who knows what may be in store. Back at the other end of town double Fairlie "Merddin Emrys" was to haul our ten coach train whilst "Linda" was shunting the yard. The FR never ceases to amaze, it is a full blown main line in everything but gauge and the Fairlie stormed up the grade with the greatest ease. At Tanygrisiau we had time to photograph the train's departure before rejoining the buses for the short trip back to Blaenau.

A special stop was arranged at the site of the new central station as several of us had elected to walk to the North station. At central the BR track is being relaid, incorporating a run round loop at the platforms and footbridge at an advanced stage of construction, and the track bed for the FR prepared. Between the stations the widened track bed and new bridges are

DAY TRIP TO BLAENAU FFESTINIOG - continued

visible. All BR track is relaid whilst the bridges appear to indicate the FR here will be double. Back at Blaenau North there was just enough time to take a close look over LEV before starting our return journey.

Once again 47 193 came on at Llandudno Junction and we arrived home after another enjoyable and well organised excursion, the only problem is that Porthmadog is "dry" on Sunday!

SOMME RAIL TOUR - Roger Bowen

A number of our members have had the privilege of visiting the Chemin de fer de Baie de Somme. Your Secretary is, however, possibly the only member to have visited the line when it was still a commercial operation.

The occasion was a rail tour operated jointly by the Railway Magazine and the Locomotive Club of Great Britain, the date, Sunday 15th May, 1966. The tour commenced at Victoria Station at 0822 with a special train to Folkestone Harbour hauled by 1,600 hp electro-diesel No.E6029 on its first revenue earning journey. At Folkestone the S.S. "St. Patrick" was joined for the crossing to Calais. The vessel was built in 1948 by Cammell Laird for the Channel Islands services and even after transfer to Folkestone still carried the GWR coat of arms on her bow.

At Calais Maritime the special train to Noyelles was hauled by SNCF No.231E22, a classic four cylinder compound pacific designed by the famous French designer André Chapelon. At Noyelles the party transferred to the special train for Cayeux-sur-Mer via St. Valery-sur-Somme.

The line is mixed metre gauge and standard to St. Valery and metre gauge onwards. The Société Général des Chemins de Fer Economiques were granted a 99 year concession in 1884 to construct lines north and east of Abbeville. These were opened between 1887 and 1892 including the lines which in 1966 formed the Réseau de la Somme from Noyelles to Cayeux, Le Crotoy and Canchy. As with many French lines diesel railcars came early and steam was eliminated in the early 1960's. However, loco hauled stock was retained for holiday specials hauled by one of three centre cab diesel hydraulic locos normally used for freight trains and it was such a combination that the special party travelled in. At St. Valery Canal the party halted to inspect the workshops and a second halt made at Lanchères-Pendé to look in vain for two steam locomotives that were reported to have been owned by the local sugar beet mill. The tour continued to Cayeux where the loco ran round. On the return a stop was made on the outskirts of St. Valery to look at rusting remains of the lines steam locomotives, these incredibly were still there when members visited the spot in 1981.

All too soon Noyelles was reached and the main line train back to Calais, this time hauled by 141R476 of Longueau shed, one of 1,340 2-8-2's built in the U.S.A. for SNCF between 1945 and 1947. The "St. Patrick" was joined to return to Folkestone for its last revenue crossing for six weeks, the next day saw the start of a national seamen's strike. Back in England E6029 took the return train back to Victoria to arrive at 2218 hours.

Only fifteen years ago but what a change from today's railways!

TWENTY FIVE YEARS AGO - Roger Bowen

New electric rolling stock was the highlight of the Autumn of 1956. The Southern Region introduced prototypes of its new four-car corridor multiple-unit design for the Kent coast electrification scheme. Numbered 7101 - 7104 and designed 4-CEPB, they were completed at Eastleigh Works and entered service on the Central Section of the Southern Region.

The underframes and bogies were similar to the two-car suburban units on the Southern and North Western Regions, the bodies closely following the then standard design for main line gangwayed steam stock. Each unit was comprised of a corridor second, a corridor composite and two motor brake saloon seconds, the latter each having two axle hung traction motors of 250 hp each.

The other rolling stock to be introduced was the first of a batch of 24 three-car sets for the Mersey Suburban services. The design was similar to the Wirral electric stock introduced by the LMS in 1938. The new stock comprised of one second class motor car, one composite trailer and one second class driving trailer. Construction was divided between Metro-Cammell and the Birmingham Railway Carriage and Wagon Co Ltd, with electrical equipment by Metropolitan-Vickers.

Preserved railways were still in their infancy. The Ffestiniog had just carried out steaming trials of No.3 "Taliesin", formerly No.11 "Livingston Thompson", the 0-4-40 Fairlie which had been completely rebuilt. Track clearance was taking place between Minfford and Penrtyndudraeth with a view to re-opening this section in 1957. On the other preserved Welsh line, the Talyllyn, 37,000 passengers were carried in the season, an increase of 10,000 on 1955. The other well known Welsh narrow gauge line, the Welshpool and Llanfair, was still used by British Railways for freight traffic finally closing on 5th November, 1956.

Like 1981 there was flooding in August 1956, then on the East coast main line, which was cut at Granthouse on 28th August. The line was re-opened on 30th August, in the meantime services were being diverted via the Waverley Route.

New locomotives entering service to September 1956 were two 3400 class 0-6-0PT's, seven 0-6-0 Diesel Electric's, three class 5 4-6-0's, two class 4 2-6-0's, one class 4 2-6-4T and six class 9F 2-10-0's.

IN SEARCH OF FRENCH STEAM - Mike Norris

On Saturday morning June 16th a party of nine left Marlow in dry but overcast conditions. The first half of the journey to Dover was accomplished ahead of schedule and therefore it was decided to cut out lunch stop and drive straight on, with the hope of reaching our destination in time to catch an earlier hovercraft. This was achieved, and after a sunny and calm Channel crossing, Boulogne was reached in plenty of time to pay our usual visit to the hypermarket, in order to replenish our stocks of drink and cigarettes. Having arrived at our hotel in St. Valery we were soon eating a large and delicious meal, a task which occupied most of the evening.

The next day we set out for the Chemin de Fer Touristique de Froissy. On the way we called in at the SNCF depot at Amiens. Since it was Sunday the place was deserted and we were free to observe the Yard and Roundhouse which was full of

IN SEARCH OF FRENCH STEAM - continued

locos. What a sight this would have been in steam day! However after a few minutes a member of the staff was found, who informed us that without a permit we must leave.

Our arrival at Froissy coincided with lunchtime about 2 hours before the first train. We therefore went onto the nearest village, Bray de Somme, and sat outside one of the bars in the main square having lunch. While we sipped our beers we watched the families leaving church. The young girls were in white dresses as it was Pentecost Sunday.

The railway we had come to visit starts at Froissy at a point where the main road crosses the river. The line runs beside the river for several kilometers and then starts to climb up to the plateau on which is found its final destination at Dompierre; a total distance of 14 kilometers.

Shortly after our arrival at Froissy our train pulled into the station. It comprised 5 open coaches pulled by a tank engine. The engine ran around the train, backed onto its coaches and shortly afterwards set off for Dompierre. The train trundled along for several kilometers on a level stretch beside the river, passing the shed and main depot, until it reached the first stop. At this point the tank loco was detached and to our amazement replaced by a huge 0-8-0 tender engine (German 1925). To many of us it was the biggest narrow gauge loco we had ever seen. However as the journey progressed it became clear why a change of loco was necessary. After our stop the line immediately started to climb sharply, the gradient continuing through a tunnel (about 600 yards long) and on for several kilometers more until the point was reached where we stopped for the second time. In order to reach the plateau several hundred feet above, the line now zig zags up the hill. The engine is forced to propel its coaches backwards up the hill for a distance, before again pulling them normally. As we approached the summit the 0-8-0 looked a magnificent sight working hard up the gradient. Once on the top the line levels out, crosses and runs beside a road until its destination.

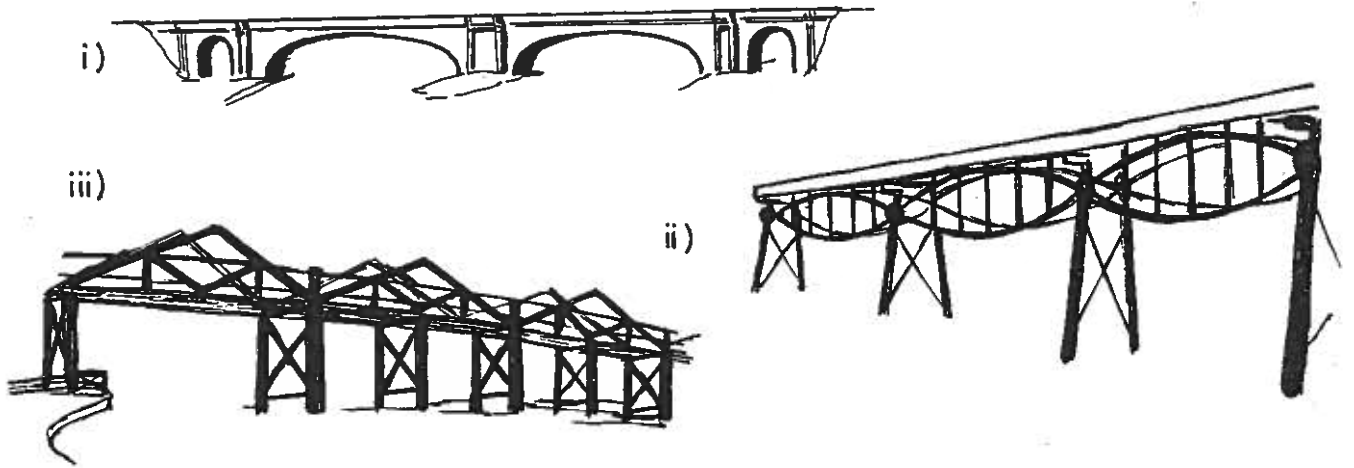
Having returned to Froissy, we drove to the sheds where we found some 8 locos in various states of repair. During our visit we helped a French motorist when the front wheels of his car got stuck between the rails on a level crossing. We lifted him clear a minute before the next train came!

And so back to St. Valery where we again had a superb evening meal. The next day we went to Le Touquet for lunch and shopping. Then on to Boulogne to catch the hovercraft. It was a uneventful day except when going through the customs in Dover. We were instructed to empty the van and as a result some of the party were forced to pay duty on their drink and cigarettes.

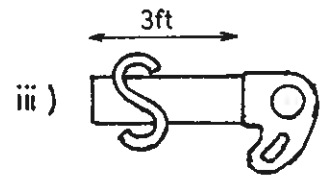
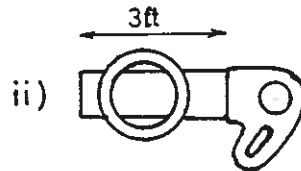
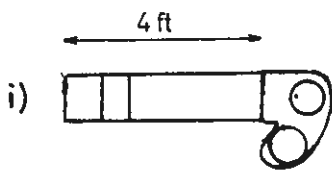
It was a most enjoyable trip for all concerned. Special mention must be made of the work done by our two drivers, Roger and Derek; and also our interpreter Roy, whose help, especially at meal times was invaluable.

PICTORIAL QUIZ

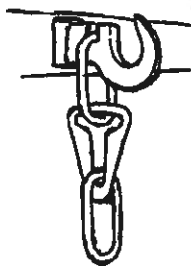
1. Identify these bridges.



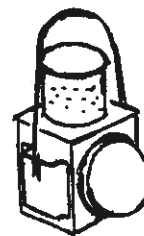
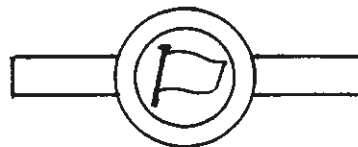
2. On the Great Western, what do these signals indicate ?



3. What type of coupling is this, why is it used ?



5. Side fixing makes this loco lamp unique to one company, which ?



4. To which class of British loco does this nameplate belong ?

6. Can you identify these railway logotypes ?



SOLUTION TO PICTURE QUIZ - Mike Walker

1. (i) Maidenhead. (ii) Stockton and Darlington - Gaunless Bridge.
(iii) The original Wycombe Railway Bridge over the Thames and Bourne End.
2. (i) Home, starter or advanced starter on passenger line under absolute block working. (ii) Home, starter or advanced starter under permissive block working. (iii) "Shunt Ahead" permitting a shunting movement in advance of an advanced starting signal.
3. "Instanter" used on fitted freight vehicles enabling them to be closely coupled in a train but can be used as 3 link when shunting.
4. "Merchant Navy" class - SR.
5. Great Western.
6. (i) Dutch State Railways (NS). (ii) Consolidated Railroad Corporation (Conrail). (iii) Coras Iompair Eirean (CIE).
(iv) Spanish National Railways (RENFE) or New South Wales Public Transport Commission, Rail Division. (v) Swiss Federal Railway (SBB-CFF-FFS). (vi) BR - who?