

*Marlow & District*  
*Railway Society*

Please reply to:

THE MARLOW DONKEY NO.24

SEPTEMBER 1982

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Warmest congratulations to our Secretary on the occasion of his recent marriage. We all wish Roger and Bronwen the very best in their future years together.

May I recommend to any of our members who have not seen it CRL Coles' companion book to his Chilterns volume, Railways through the Thames Valley. Like its predecessor it is a collection of photographs. These cover most graphically the past 60 years, mainly GWR prints but also included are locomotives of the other companies.

After the recent disruptions British Rail are once more attempting to become a viable and economic industry. Obviously National Bus have enjoyed a fillip and will keep many of those converted to coach travel. Transport firms have recently purchased 10,000 more lorries to cope with increased business. BR face a very difficult future and increasing fares, though necessary, may prove counterproductive.

The Sunday Observer Supplement has resumed its railway articles. A description of the Dovey Junction to Pwllheli line records one of BR's threatened areas. The 53½ miles of track with its 29 stations may disappear because of the GRIBBLE WORM. This creature and its allies are destroying the timbers of Barmouth Viaduct, half a mile of wooden structure which BR claims it cannot afford to rebuild.

I think the Kent and East Sussex Railway were recovering, albeit proudly, from the visit of the Queen Mother in her role of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. Those of us who travelled on the Society's annual pilgrimage found Tenterden a delightful Kent town and the remaining fragments of Colonel Stephens' branch line running down to Wittersham Road extremely well organised. Eventually the track to Bodiam will be back in use and there will be the added bonus of visiting an historic castle.

Progress is also the keyword at Pendon. As some of us saw recently the White Horse Valley project is well advanced. Eventually the addition of trains to the rural settings will provide a nostalgic memory of Brunel's Bristol line.

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME AT 19.45 HOURS FOR 20.00 HOURS

- 21st October 1982 - Members 15 minute talks. Our annual opportunity for members to talk about their "pet" subjects. Offers to Mike Walker please.
- 18th November 1982 - "Indian Railways" - A talk with slides by Pete Greatorex of his experiences of Indian Railways.
- 16th December 1982 - "Railway Film Show" - Tony Hall-Patch returns, this time with a selection of films from the National Railway Museum Collection.
- 20th January 1983 - Annual General Meeting followed by members slides.

CHRISTMAS DINNER

It is hoped to arrange a Christmas Dinner again this year. For details and reservations contact Mike Norris.

CHILTERN TRAINS

Excursions from joint line stations including High Wycombe area:

- 25th September - Boulogne, or Chemin de Fer Baie de Somme tour
- 26th September - Chiltern Explorer Rail/Coach tour
- 2nd October - Steam tour Carnf fourth; Lake District tour; of Windermere Cruise
- 9th October - Blackpool Illuminations
- 16th October - Blackpool Illuminations
- 24th October - Mid Hants Railway and Pendon (coach tour)
- 20th November - Calais or Flanders countryside tour
- 27th December - Santa Special on Severn Valley Railway

Details from Chiltern Trains, 13 Golden Hills, Chinnor, Oxford, OX9 4PT, Tel. Kingston Blount 52198.

KEITH COACHES

Coach tours of Railway Interest from Aylesbury conducted by your Secretary, Roger Bowen:

- 2nd - 3rd October - Brunel Weekend
- 23rd October - Great Central Trail

The Brunel Weekend is joint with BR (Western Region) and is available from Paddington and stations to Reading (one way coach, one way rail).

The Great Central Trail is joint with BR (London Midland Region) and is also available from London Marylebone (one way coach, one way rail).

Details from Keith Coaches, 30 Buckingham Street, Aylesbury, HP20 2LH, Tel. Aylesbury 28686.

## FILM SHOW

John Huntley will be presenting another railway film evening at the Civic Theatre, Aylesbury, on Tuesday, 19th October 1982.

## EXHIBITION

The Princes Risborough Model Railway Society (Founder Member, Stan Verrinder) will be holding "Railex 82" at the Civic Hall, Aylesbury, on Saturday, 9th October 1982.

## 25 YEARS AGO

R. D. BOWEN

The Autumn of 1957 was a fairly quiet time on the railways. Perhaps the most interesting event was the entry into of service of the first rebuilt "West Country" Pacific No.34005 "Barnstaple". Allocated to Nine Elms the locomotive was first put on running in turns from Eastleigh.

Diesel railcar deliveries continued unabated. A delivery had commenced of an order of 40 two-car units from the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Co. intended for Scottish Region local services from Edinburgh (Waverley).

In Ireland CIE were taking delivery of six suburban railcars, built at its own works at Inchicore. Both the BR and CIE units were fitted with two BUT engines.

Rail closures were taking place slowly. On 16th September the Southern Region withdrew services on the Bordon branch and the London Midland between Chester and Whitchurch. However, plans for new developments were announced.

In particular in connection with plans to open up new cross country freight routes a new spur was to be constructed at Fenny Compton between the WR Leamington-Banbury line and the ex SMJ line, and a new marshling yard at Churchdown between Gloucester and Cheltenham.

The last Brighton "Atlantic" No.32424 was still in active service, being regularly used on the 9.40 a.m. Brighton-Bournemouth and 1.50 p.m. return. A rare Southern working on the Great Central section was "Merchant Navy" No.35017 which worked light to Sheffield for hammer blow tests between Deepcar and Wharnclyff Woodmoor, south of the new Woodhead Tunnel. Another unusual working was "Royal Scot" No.46168 which worked a special from Windsor and Eton Central to Sutton Coldfield via Oxford. The last surviving "Star" No.4056 was reported as being in deplorable condition after having worked the 12.30 p.m. Newquay to Paddington on 7th September.

New locomotives to stock in the Autumn of 1957 were one Diesel Electric Bo-Bo, two diesel mechanical 0-6-0, five diesel hydraulic 0-6-0, nine diesel electric 0-6-0, eleven class 4 2-6-0, and four class 9F 2-10-0.

ANNUAL CLUB EXCURSION TO THE KENT AND EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY ON SUNDAY

18th JULY 1982

GEOFFREY LOWE

It was a fine summer's day as members boarded the United Counties double decker bus outside the Marlow Donkey, for this years club excursion to the Kent and East Sussex Railway. The tour departed at approximately 9.15 a.m. for the three hour road journey to Rolvenden, but a physical needs break was made at Sevenoaks.

Our arrival at Rolvenden was aptly timed to view the 12.25 p.m. departure for Tenterden Town tackle the 1 in 50 climb out of the station, before our party was escorted around the Locomotive Sheds by a Kent and East Sussex Railway member. Our guide explained that the Railway provided a home for 15 Steam and 5 Diesel Locomotives. Many of the Steam Locomotives were in need of repair, and normally on average £30,000 annually is spent on boiler refurbishment alone.

We than continued our journey to the small market town of Tenterden where a break for lunch was made, before joining the 3 p.m. train, for the 8 mile return trip to Wittersham Road. This train was hauled by 0-6-0 saddle tank No.25 "Northiam" and the coaching stock included an ex District Railway Coach.

On our return to Tenterden, there was more time to explore the 15th Century Church of St. Mildred, or walk the wide tree lined main street full of Georgian houses and shops with bow windows, porticoed doorways and shiplapped timber frontages, before joining the bus for the return journey.

A further break was made at "The Cricketers" public house at Weston Green, Thames Ditton, before returning back at the "Marlow Donkey" at 8.40 p.m. May I take this opprotunity to thank the tour organisers of the Marlow District Railway Society, and also members of the Kent and East Sussex Railway for making this year's club excursion such a success

This is the first of a series which aims to throw the spotlight on various aspects of North American railroads and their operation. Many British enthusiasts dismiss such railways as alien and uninteresting. The image appears to be one of decay and dereliction. This may be true of a few small areas, notably the north east, but one can find corners of the B.R network that have seen better days. As future articles will show major investment in advanced technology is the order of the day over much of the country.

Like the continent, the North American network is vast, amounting to slightly over 191,000 route miles of common carrier railroad serving 49 of the 50 United States, only Hawaii being unserved. With 13,000 miles Texas has more railroads than any other state followed by Illinois at 10,000. Even remote Alaska can claim 566 miles whilst Canada adds a further 44,000 miles to the total.

The U.S. system is operated by 118 common carrier railroads all, with one exception, private enterprise organisations. They range from the "super-systems" such as the Santa Fe (13,000 miles) and the Union Pacific (9,900 miles) down through the middle size systems. Denver & Rio Grande Western (1,800 miles), Boston & Maine (1,700 miles) and Kansas City Southern (1,648 miles) to short lines such as the 12 mile Corinth & Counce or the grandly titled Transcontinental Terminals Inc., 59 miles of former Louisville & Nashville branch line!

Canada boasts two transcontinental networks, the state owned Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific, part of Canada's largest private corporation, supported by a number of smaller lines some provincially owned such as the Ontario Northland and British Columbia Railway.

Recent years have seen a succession of mergers which have led to the demise of many famous names and the launch of new ones. The Seaboard Air Line merged with the Atlantic Coast Line in 1967 to form the Seaboard Coast Lines which six years later merged with the Louisville & Nashville to form "Family Lines", although under the latter SCL and L & N keep their identities. A few years later the Clinchfield joined the "Family".

The giant Burlington Northern was born in 1970 by the merger of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, the Great Northern, the Northern Pacific and the Spokane Portland & Seattle. At 16,000 miles this became the largest U.S. road and was further enlarged in 1980 by the St. Louis-San Francisco "Frisco" lines being absorbed.

The Illinois Central merged with the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio in 1973 to form the Illinois Central Gulf which serves much of the central section of the country from Chicago south to the Gulf of Mexico. The previous year the Chesapeake & Ohio had absorbed its historic neighbour the Baltimore & Ohio and the Western Maryland, establishing the "Chessie System" image. In 1981 the Chessie went on to form a loose merger with the Family Lines to form the CSX Corporation. This new system is even larger than the Burlington Northern.

The aforementioned mergers have generally been successful, not the most infamous of these mergers, Penn Central formed in 1968 by the Pennsylvania and New York Central roads joined a year later by the New Haven. This

trio had been intense rivals and the combined undertaking was beset by problems culminating in bankruptcy in late 1970, the biggest collapse in U.S. financial history. For several years PC bumped along in the hands of receivers deferring maintenance and generally going into decline. This gave rise to the image of U.S. railroads mentioned at the start of this article. By 1976 a further five north eastern roads were bankrupt, the Central of New Jersey, the Reading, the Lehigh Valley, the Erie-Lackawanna (an earlier merger) and the Lehigh & Hudson River. So important were these six roads to the commercial and social life of the north east that the U.S. Government was forced to establish the Consolidated Railroad Corporation (Conrail) which is now repairing the neglect and having some success re-establishing railroads in the region. Conrail represents the only direct state control in the U.S. other than Amtrak.

Other bankrupts were less fortunate. The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific, the "Milwaukee Road" was a 10,000 miles network from Chicago to the Pacific. Only a third survived a mid-70's collapse, the remainder being abandoned or taken over by neighbouring roads. Now it seems likely that the remaining "Milwaukee" network will be taken over by the Grand Trunk Western, Canadian National's U.S. subsidiary.

Even less fortunate was the Rock Island. Since filing for bankruptcy in 1973 the line operated in receivership until 31 March 1980 when 80% of the system was abandoned. A few short sections passed to other roads, but most is now a memory.

With the effects of the recession now hitting the industry more bankruptcies may be on the way. Already the Southern Pacific, a 12,000 mile network spread across the south west, is rumoured to be in deep trouble having diversified into other industries which are as capital and labour intensive as the railroads. Other big roads have also diversified but into more profitable areas such as energy, land resources, and property development. Up until now this has allowed the prosperous companies like the Santa Fe, Union Pacific and Burlington Northern to maintain high levels of investment and maintenance.

More mergers are happening or on the horizon. The Norfolk & Western, which has in the past absorbed the Wabash, Nickel Plate and Virginian roads, has merged with the prestigious Southern Railway on 1 June 1982. The merged system is to be known as Norfolk Southern Corporation, reviving the name of a line taken over by the Southern in January 1974. The Union Pacific seeks to absorb the Missouri Pacific and the Western Pacific, a move being challenged by the Rio Grande and the Southern Pacific. The ailing "Espee" has had negotiations on a merger with its arch rival the Santa Fe, but of late this has gone quiet, no doubt the Santa Fe does not wish to be dragged into another Penn Central!

There are several bodies which influence U.S. railroad practice. The Association of American Railroads (AAR) is a body which represents the interests of the industry, acts as a pressure group, sets standards for equipment etc. It can be represented as a cross between the old R.C.H. or the U.I.C. and the Road Haulage Association in the British experience. It is worth pointing out here that there is no Common User arrangement of freight cars as there was in Britain before nationalisation, cars return empty to their owners after use. Recently "Railbox" and "Railgon" have appeared. 38 railroads have formed a co-operative to own and operate a common user pool of box cars and gondolas.

- 1 -

The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) is a Government department which regulates and controls companies, not just in the railroad business. It has the power to refuse mergers and has to approve all abandonments before they can take place. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Dept. of Transportation (DOT) are also Government bodies. The FRA sets safety standards and investigates accidents, a railroad industry equivalent to the Federal Aviation Administration. The DOT regulates all forms of Transport and is much like our own Department of Transport. It operates on extensive Railroad Testing and Research facility at Pueblo, Colorado.

The track gauge used in North America is 4' 8½" but the loading gauge is far more generous. The maximum width is 10' 9" whilst the height in the east is 14' 6". Out west, where there are fewer obstacles the maximum height can be up to a staggering 18' 0". It is possible in such circumstances to have tri-deck car carriers or to carry 150 containers stacked two high on well cars! The maximum axle load is 34 tons. As a comparison BR allows 9' 6" by 12' 3" and a 25 ton axle load. Narrow gauge is confined to the 3' 6" gauge CN lines in Newfoundland, the 3' 0" gauge White Pass & Yukon, and a few preserved tourist lines.

This article has hopefully provided a background introduction to the subject. The next article will examine current trends amongst the 27,500 locomotives which roam the United States.