

Marlow & District
Railway Society

THE MARLOW DONKEY No 27

JUNE 1983

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Our July speaker will be Mr J Slater, editor of the Railway Magazine. We look forward to a most interesting and informative evening. This journal will be celebrating its 86th birthday in July and has successfully survived the Boer War and two World Wars. The first number was published on 1 July 1897 and within a few days the whole of the large issue was sold out. The original price was sixpence (2½p) - an annual subscription of seven shillings and sixpence (37½p) enabled the reader to receive his 12 copies post free. The magazine printed from linotype in Fleet Street was edited by a Mr G A Sekon. In 1910 Mr Sekon left to edit the Railway and Travel Monthly which incorporated road transport, aviation and shipping. Later the magazines were merged. The speed with which the RM disappears from the shelves of W H Smith's bookshops each month indicates the continued popularity of this excellent railway journal.

Sir Peter Parker has recently made his seventh and final report as Chairman of BR. He will not be reappointed in September and I await with interest the media's assessment of his leadership through a rather traumatic period of our history. BR's loss of £174M was undoubtedly due to some extent to industrial troubles but production rose by 8 per cent. Electrification says Sir Peter is the key to the future. It was pleasing to note that the Serpell Report was completely ignored in his statement.

I was recently handed a leaflet published by the Railway Development Society, whose address is 64 Cowper Road London W7. They aim "to co-ordinate rail advocates in Britain to campaign for the railways we have and to improve and expand the system." They rightly assert that "successive governments spend millions on roads and very little on our railways. WE NEED OUR RAILWAYS."

The choice of the Severn Valley Railway for our Society's July outing would seem an excellent one. This preserved line runs through delightful countryside linking Bridgnorth with Bewdley. The route was conceived to link Shrewsbury and Worcester and was a product of the "railway mania" of the 19th century. The present remaining section is fortunately not an isolated piece of track like the Bluebell line as it is still linked to Kidderminster. I remember this line as being rather lightly used although during the last war it was busy helping the movement of troops and their equipment. The prospectus of the original SVR company in July 1852 seems rather ambitious in retrospect, "The line will pass in close proximity to the great mineral fields of Shropshire, and through large manufacturing and rich agricultural districts, affording a direct outlet for the whole of this produce now mainly dependent for its transit upon the navigation of the Severn...in short, this line will accommodate a county entirely without a railway and where the want of one is severely felt."

REMEMBER PLEASE 1. THE 21 JULY MEETING STARTS NOT AT 2000HRS BUT 1930
2. THE 17 JULY OUTING - STILL A FEW SEATS LEFT

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME AT 1945HRS FOR 2000HRS

- 21 Jul 1983 Railway Magazine. Talk by J Slater the Editor of the Magazine. To repeat this starts at 1930 Hrs.
- 18 Aug 1983 Evening trip to be arranged, to Windsor, Henley or Didcot. Suggestions and ideas are required.
- 15 Sep 1983 Railway Film Show. The films will be
Snow - British Tourist Authority 1975
Under the River - BR 1959
100 years Underground - BBC TV 1964
Elizabethan Express - BR 1954
- 20 Oct 1983 Longmoor Military Railway. A return visit by Keith Catchpole.

SUMMER FAMILY EXCURSION - SUNDAY 17 JUL 1983

By luxury coach (not the lamented double decker bus) to the Severn Valley Railway. Inclusive Fare £6 Adult £5 OAP £3 Child. Last few seats available see Stan Verrinder - tel Marlow 71796 or write to 14 Lodge Close Marlow Bucks. The coach will leave the Marlow Donkey at 0845 hrs and will return at about 2045 hrs.

GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY

These tours conducted by your Secretary are again operating in 1983. Remaining dates are 9 Jul and 20 Aug. Details from BR LM or Keith Coaches Aylesbury Tel Aylesbury 28686.

RAILWAYS IN THE FOREST OF DEAN

On Sunday 11 Sep to the preserved station at Tintern, Dean Forest Rail Centre at Norchard and the Winchcombe Railway Museum with your Secretary. Details from Keith Coaches.

BRUNEL WEEKENDS

On 1 and 2 Oct visiting the South Devon Railway, overnight in Plymouth. On 5 and 6 November the GWR between Reading and Bristol, -overnight in Bristol. Both tours by rail from Paddington, Reading and intermediate stations. Details from Kingdom Tours 33 Kingsbury Aylesbury, tel Aylesbury 33999.

CHRISTMAS FILM SHOW

Traditionally the December meeting is a showing of a feature length film which has a railway theme. Dec 1981 "The General" starring Buster Keaton was shown and in previous years you have seen "The Ghost Train" and others. For 1982 the tradition was broken mainly as Tony Hall-Patch made available films from the National Railway Museum Collection but also because your committee had run out of ideas and was not sure that it met the wishes of the members. Have you any ideas?

The trend shown in previous quarters of more and more new types of stock for British Railways continued in the second quarter of 1958 with the delivery of two different types of railcar.

On 21 April a service of battery electric railcars was introduced between Aberdeen and Ballater on the Scottish Region. These were formed into two car sets made up of former multiple-unit railcars built at Derby in 1956 and converted to battery propulsion at Cowlairs Works in 1958. German traction and control equipment was fitted similar to that used by the German Federal Railways in their battery railcars.

Also delivered were five four wheel railbuses from Waggon and Maschinenbau of West Germany. Whilst the bodies were to a BR design the mechanical units were similar to railbuses supplied to the German Federal Railways. All five were for use on the Eastern Region branches from Witham to Maldon and Braintree also Audley End to Saffron Walden.

During May the decision was announced of the Eastern Region to purchase 22 diesel-electric units of 3300 hp English Electric Napier "Deltic" type for use on the East Coast Main Line.

On the debit side the last BR Beyer-Garrett was withdrawn No 47994 built in 1928 for the LMS and used latterly between Chesterfield and Toton. On 9 June passenger services were withdrawn on the Teign Valley line in Devon and the Pen-y-graig branch in Glamorgan, both Western Region. On the same date the North Eastern Region withdrew services between Cudworth and Barnsley Court House. As from 15 June London Transport withdrew Sunday services on its shuttle between Acton Town and South Acton.

The preservation movement was still in its infancy but the Festiniog Railway re-opened a further $4\frac{1}{4}$ miles of line from Penrhyn to Tan-y-Bwlch in April and expected to exceed its 1957 passenger total of 54000. The Society AGM Special from Paddington was hauled by "City of Truro", and from Ruabon by Dukedogs 9017 and 9021. Other unusual railway workings still occurred in May, the 1045 stopping train from Weymouth to Dorchester West was worked by ex LSWR T9 class 4-4-0 No 30706, a strange veteran on the Western line.

A last farewell to the Limpley Stoke to Canerton line, being lifted in April. This line closed to all traffic in 1951 was the setting for the "Titfield Thunderbolt" made in 1952.

MARLOW DONKEY ARTICLES

May your Editor once again appeal for articles. They need not be long - only enough to cover an A4 sheet and preferably but not essentially, typed. If you wish to remain anonymous and thereby not qualify for the "signal" award this can be arranged.

On Sunday 24th April 1983, Denver's Union Station saw the closing of the final chapter in the history of America's most beloved train, the "California Zephyr", or as it has been known for the last decade, the "Rio Grande Zephyr". The last privately run long distance train in the U.S. has finally succumbed to the economic climate of the 80's.

To examine the story of this train we must return to May 1869 when the first transcontinental, the "Overland Route", was completed with the meeting of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific (later Southern Pacific) in Utah. For forty years this was the only way from Chicago to San Francisco, with the help of the C & NW and Milwaukee Road east of Omaha. However, 1910 saw the completion of the Western Pacific from Salt Lake City to the Bay Area, the last link in Jay Gould's transcontinental dream and financed by the Denver & Rio Grande. The final connections in an alternative route, using the Chicago Burlington & Quincy east of Denver, were the completion of the 6 mile Moffat Tunnel under the Rollins Pass in 1927 and the 40 mile cutoff linking the abortive Denver & Salt Lake line. and the D & RGW which opened in 1933.

The C & NW, UP and SP jointly introduced a luxury streamlined diesel-hauled train, the "City of San Francisco", on the Chicago to San Francisco (Oakland) route in 1936. In reply, the CB & Q, D & RGW and the WP introduced the "Exposition Flyer" between the same terminal points.

Since 1934 the CB & Q had been making a name for itself with the series of "Zephyrs", lightweight diesel-electric streamliners constructed in stainless steel by the Budd Company. As a development of this programme, the presidents of the CB & Q, D & RGW and WP agreed to build a new luxury train to compete with the "City".

Delayed by the needs of war production, the new train started to emerge from the Budd plant in 1948. It was christened the "California Zephyr" and presented a beautiful sight. Built entirely in stainless steel, only the bogies were painted and they were silver. The train was the first to make extensive use of the recently introduced dome cars including a magnificent dome-observation car on the rear of each set, which normally featured 18 cars. Six sets were purchased, two being owned by each partner. None carried the name of its owner, except in small initials on the car ends. Only the name "California Zephyr" was carried above the windows. Additionally each car carried a name, preceded by the word "Silver", below the windows. Each partner purchased special locomotives, the CB & Q and WP choosing the EMD F9's, in off white/red and silver/orange respectively, whilst the D & RGW whose the rival ALCo PA/PB's in black and yellow, later changing to silver and gold F9's.

Amid great publicity and celebration the "California Zephyr" made its maiden runs on 22nd May 1949, taking 2½ days for the 2,530 mile run. The schedule was not fast, except for some 90 mph on the prairie, but was designed to allow full appreciation of the scenic splendours of Colorado and California's Feather River Canyon in daylight. The CZ's route took its passengers through some of the world's most spectacular scenery west of Denver, with which the rival "City" could not compete. The wide open spaces of Wyoming are no match for the mountains of Colorado.

From the outset the train set new standards of comfort and service. Regularly she carried loads of over 89% year round. A full range of accommodation was provided from chair cars to sleepers. The latter ranged from the traditional section, through roomettes to luxury drawing room suites. The train bristled with staff to attend to every whim and keep the train spotless. Each journey passed through the car washer at Denver, for many years this duty was performed by a steam switcher of the Colorado and Southern, a CB & Q subsidiary. At the end of each run the bogies were repainted!

The CZ retained its fame, mystique, and most important its clientele, throughout the fifties and sixties, only towards the end of the latter decade did patronage start to decline in the face of road and air competition. Nevertheless, the operators, unlike their rivals, steadfastly refused to reduce the quality of service and so the losses mounted steadily.

By 1969 the WP was in major financial trouble and sought to leave the partnership which would end the "California Zephyr". This led to an unprecedented outcry from the public, everyone it seemed loved the "Silver Lady", but nobody was prepared to pay for her. Thus, just two days before she came of age the CZ made its last runs on 20th May 1970.

The story was far from over. The Burlington Northern, into which the CB & Q had just merged, and the D & RGW were determined to maintain a service between Chicago and Salt Lake City. Reduced to tri-weekly and known as the "California Service" on the BN it was combined with the "Nebraska Zephyr" between Chicago and Omaha. West of Denver she was known as the "Rio Grande Zephyr" and was extended from Salt Lake City up to Ogden to connect with the rival and down graded "City of San Francisco".

In 1971 a newcomer appeared over the horizon in the shape of Amtrak, who proposed a tri-weekly service from Chicago to Oakland over the BN, D & RGW and SP. However with only 5 days to go before Amtrak was due to start of 1st May the Rio Grande decided to opt out and Amtrak had to divert to the UP through Wyoming for its "San Francisco Zephyr".

This decision meant the D & RGW would have to retain the "RGZ" for five years, but Amtrak was an unknown quantity, how many trains would it want? how much disruption would they cause? how would Amtrak pay? The D & RGW had a growing profitable coal traffic and could afford the loss to retain control of its own line. So a million dollars a year was a price the D & RGW was prepared to pay.

However if a train is worth running its worth running properly so whilst the sleepers went, the "RGZ" took 14 hours for its 570 mile journey, the domes remained and the diner kept on serving with silver on linen, with full menus. Meanwhile Amtrak slipped into the era of fast, plastic "food".

At the end of the mandatory five year operation of the "Rio Grande Zephyr", the company found ridership rising steeply as were losses, but as profits continued to pour into the coffers from freight, the D & RGW management saw the train as a flagship and major advertisement which it could afford to support. Despite the age of the equipment, careful maintenance ensured a clean reliable Zephyr was available for its thrice weekly journeys, westbound on Monday, Thursday and Saturday and eastbound on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. Wednesdays were spent in the shops at Denver.

Special trains were run to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Moffat Tunnel in 1977 and the 30th Anniversary of the "California Zephyr" in 1979, both needing every piece of equipment and the help of heavier freight units; for power. At other times the specially retained trio of F9's were in sole command, except for late 1982 when freight units were tried as the D & RGW looked for economies.

It is worth pointing out that the Rio Grande operated three passenger trains until recently, the "Zephyr", special weekend ski excursions from Denver to Winter Park (west of the Moffat Tunnel) from January through March, and the steam hauled narrow gauge Durango to Silverton line. The latter was sold in 1981 but the other two services seemed safe for the foreseeable future.

Then in early 1983 Amtrak tried a test train operating in place of the "RGZ". The D & RGW had decided to end the nations favourite train, with regret. The recession had reduced freight revenues thus the losses of the "Zephyr" could no longer be absorbed, and Amtrak would actually bring profit to the road. So on 24th April 1983 the "RGZ" rode into history and the next day the "San Francisco Zephyr" was rerouted. Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction regained daily service each way, Wyoming became the seventh state of the Union without Amtrak service.

To rub salt in the wound, Amtrak calls the train "California Zephyr", but formed of new double deck Superliners the new train is a poor replacement for its predecessor. Still the Ski-train remains, but that's another story!

D & RGW "RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR" EQUIPMENT

LOCOMOTIVES

5771	EMD F9A 1,750hp B-B d/e cab unit	built 1955
5762/5763	EMD F9B 1,750hp B-B d/e booster	built 1955
253/263	Steam Generator Car (ex ALCO PBl booster)	built 1948

ROLLING STOCK

1230/1231	Coach/Baggage Combine	Pullman Std	1949
1116	Kitchen/Diner	American Car & Foundry	1949
"Silver Aspen"	Coach (ex-16 sec.Sleeper)	Budd Co.	1948
"Silver Pine"	Coach "	Budd Co.	1948
"Silver Bronco"	Dome Coach	Budd Co.	1948
"Silver Colt"	" "	Budd Co.	1948
"Silver Mustang"	" "	Budd Co.	1948
"Silver Pony"	" "	Budd Co.	1948
"Silver Shop"	Dome Coffee Shop	Budd Co.	1948
"Silver Banquet"	Kitchen/Diner	Budd Co.	1948
"Silver Sky"	Dome/Observation Lounge/ Sleeper	Budd Co.	1948

Note: Only one combine was used per train. Vehicles 1116 and "Silver Shop" were normally in reserve.

1230/1231 built for D & RGW "Prospector", 1116 ex-Union Pacific in 1981. All others built for D & RGW "California Zephyr" sets.