

# Marlow & District Railway Society

THE MARLOW DONKEY No 28

SEPTEMBER 1983

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Have we too many railway preservation societies in this country? This was the question recently posed in a Sunday newspaper. Mr David Madden who is secretary of Railway Preservation Societies stated in this article that there are 38 working railways at present; in 5 years time this number could rise to 65. A surplus of such railways could dilute the number passengers for each company, he said, and voluntary labour could also be spread too thinly. There are 409 steam locos owned by preservation societies and a further 375 are in various museums and depots. Dai Woodham's "Rest Home" at Barry still houses about 75 further locos albeit hulks stripped of most of their fittings. These engines are ALL sold or reserved but many will one day reappear in their former guise.

BR are working their HST's to death according to a recent newspaper item. New timetables call for many of these units to be travelling nearly a 1000 miles a day at very high speeds. The result? Far more breakdowns and requests for older diesel types to be drafted in have been the outcome. WR have recently had to transfer 5 units to LMR leaving their 31 remaining sets to be worked even harder.

Sir Peter Parker retires from the Chairmanship of BR on the 11th of September. History will no doubt judge his stewardship of a much criticised nationalised industry. He leaves BR in an optimistic atmosphere with talk of "break-even" finances. However, Tom King the new Transport Secretary, will no doubt study with interest BR's projected mini "Beeching" before finding any additional finance. At first sight the lifting of mainly freight only track and a further cut-back in manpower over the next 5 years does not look too alarming.

Oswald Nock is an indefatigable author of railway books. He has written more than 100 over the years and outlived many of his contemporaries in this field. I have much enjoyed a recent publication by him entitled "On Steam". He has chosen to write of a dozen of our best preservation railways; he also includes a chapter on Steamtown at Carnforth the base from which BR obtain locos for their own steam-hauled excursions. The inevitable change-over from steam to diesel and electric motive power was a very rushed and expensive operation. "So far as the scrapping of locos was concerned their (BR engineers) carefully considered recommendations, based on a century of hard experiences, were over-ruled by politico-neophytes." Rescuing locos for preservation had to be done quickly. The result was the disappearance of almost all Gresley's fine engines and a somewhat over preservation of certain classes eg Halls and Black 5s.

FOR NEWS OF THE AUTUMN STEAM BARBECUE AND CHRISTMAS DINNER -  
SEE PAGE 2 - DON'T MISS EITHER OF THESE TWO ATTRACTIONS!!

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME AT 1945 HRS FOR 2000 HRS

- 15 Sep 1983 Railway Film Show. The films will be  
Snow - BTA 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.
- 17 Nov 1983 American Journey. One of our members George  
Herrman tells of his journey by railroad through  
the breadth of North America this summer.
- 15 Dec 1983 Railway Debate. By popular request we introduce  
our first railway debate. Suggestions for subjects  
and volunteers for speakers to Roger Bowen please.
- 19 Jan 1984 Annual General Meeting. Followed by members  
slides.

STEAM AND BARBECUE

You are invited together with the family to a barbecue to be held by the Fawley Museum Society on Saturday 17 September at 1500. There will be steam rides and a chance to see what has been done by them. The cost is £1.50 for adults and 75p for children and this includes drink. Please do not leave your booking to the last minute. Please contact Mike Norris at 29 Riverpark Drive Marlow SL7 1QT - telephone Marlow 5227-as soon as possible.

CHRISTMAS DINNER

The final details of the Christmas Dinner are not yet available but will be given at the September meeting. See Mike Norris.

BRUNEL WEEKENDS

On 1 and 2 October visiting the South Devon Railway, overnight in Plymouth. On 5 and 6 November the GWR between Reading and Bristol, overnight in Bristol. Both tours from Paddington, Reading and intermediate stations. Details from your Secretary or Kingdom Tours at 33 Kingsbury Aylesbury tel Aylesbury 33999.

GREAT LITTLE TRAINS OF WALES

On 31 and 1 April 1984 visiting Tallylyn and Festiniog Railways, overnight in Harlech or Barmouth. By rail with coach transfers, out via Cambrian Coast Line, return via North Wales Main Line. Details as for Brunel Weekends.

On Tuesday from 27 September for 10 weeks at 1930 hrs at the Grange County Secondary School Wendover Way Aylesbury a course tutorial by your Secretary. Details from Mrs M Boait 224A Wendover Road Weston Turville, Aylesbury - tel Stoke Mandeville 3346. This course will be repeated at the Raans County Secondary School Amersham on Tuesdays after Christmas.

Looking back one is always struck with many similarities to our own time. As has often happened in this series of articles this has occurred again.

With news just received of BRs proposed 1983 cut-backs, mid 1958 sound very familiar with curtailments of passenger services as an economy measure. The Scottish Region cancelled some Sunday trains and on the Western more than 600 main line and branch trains were withdrawn. Also announced were plans for the closure of almost the whole of the lines of the one time Midland and Great Northern Railway, only 15 miles from Melton Constable to Cromer would remain open out of a total of a 192 mile system.

Things were bad over the Irish Sea too. The Great Northern Railway Board was to be dissolved and the remains of its system divided between the Ulster Transport Authority and Coras Iompair Eireann (The Irish Transport Company). Its works at Durdalk had already been sold.

Overseas things looked more rosy, naturally, with a report on the "Mistral" express of the SNCF which with an average speed of 79.4 mph from Paris to Lyons with a stop at Dijon was the fastest in the world for a distance exceeding 300 miles. This with a 16 coach train of 655 tons hauled by a 4, 300 hp Co-Co electric loco.

On a more optimistic note at home the first main line diesel loco to be built at Swindon Works No D800 was named - Sir Bryan Robertson at a ceremony on 14 July. This 2200 hp loco was based on the German Federal Railways V200 class and was fitted with 2 Maybach MD650 engines.

The number of line closures was on the increase, the nearest to home being the LMR cross-country line from Weedon to Leamington Spa which closed to passengers on 15 September. Another passing of an era was the retirement of O V S Bullied as Chief Mechanical Engineer of Coras Iompair Eireann.

Perhaps the most symbolic announcement of the summer of 1958 was the placing of orders for the supply and erection of the 3 steel railway bridges over the M1 due to open in 1959. Did we realise in 1958 what a fundamental change the motorways would make to the nations travelling habits?

#### ACCIDENT

Many of you will have seen in the local papers news of the accident involving the Marlow Donkey. For those who have not no expense has been spared in obtaining the details.

Doug Quarterman was quietly driving the 13.15 from Maidenhead to Marlow on Thursday 4 August 1983 and had reached Furze Platt. Suddenly a van owned by the Royal Borough decided to try and get across, unfortunately the train was in the way. The van was a right off and the train suffered minor damage. After a delay of about 50 minutes Doug drove onto Marlow. No one suffered injuries other than shock.

BOOK REVIEW

Ron Brooks

This time we can start with a laugh and then get down to something serious but fascinating. I hope this doesn't create a run on the local library or my rates will go up!

RAILWAY RIBALDRY by W. Heath Robinson.

Duckworth £3.95.  
0 7156 0823 1.

You'll never believe that this was originally produced at the request of the G.W.R. The cartoons cover a wide spectrum, from laying out the original line to staff training, including the atmospheric railway and building Saltash Bridge. A giggle on every page.

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THE STEAM LOCOMOTIVE by L. Greggio.

Hamlyn £12.00  
0 600 38428 4

This lavishly illustrated book starts in 1804 at Pen-y-Daren and ends in 1980 in the German Democratic Republic, passing 750 illustrations, nearly half in colour, on the way. The way the pages of illustrations, each with a most informative paragraph of text, are inserted into the narrative is at first off-putting but soon accepted. The print, the paper, the pictures and the content are a delight.

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THE BRITISH 4-6-0 by John F. Clay.

New English Library £4.95.  
450 03218 3

An informative text plus pictures on every page, 27 in colour. Educational and entertaining, it never deviates from its chosen subject.

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BRITISH ATLANTIC LOCOMOTIVES by C.J. Allen

Ian Allen £2.25  
07110 0042 5

An exhaustive text with a hundred or so black and white photographs. The running times and other tables with which the book is liberally provided are a mine of information covering 143 pages.

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BRITISH PACIFIC LOCOMOTIVES by C.J. Allen

Ian Allen £2.00

The same format as 'ATLANTIC' with the same full treatment of design and performance including a chapter on PACIFICS that were never built - 240 pages of fascination.

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VIDEO REVIEW

Mike Norris

The copy for this new feature was not received in time for this issue. I know that you will be greatly disappointed as this series promised great things (ED).

ADDITIONAL BOOK

Not wishing to 'horn in' on Ron Brooks' Book Review nevertheless I thought you might like to have news of a little venture by Berkshire County Library. They have published in a facsimile form George Measom's "The Illustrated Guide to the Great Western Railway" published in 1852 and an early form of the well known GWR advertising machine. At £2.50 it is a good buy even if it is a bit short on railway material. (ED)

Now leaving on time at 08.32 should have been a clue. The 2-car DMU leaving Marlow before 08.35 is unusual. However, we left at a gentle rate, with no sense of urgency, towards Bourne End. Normally this part of the journey takes 6 minutes plus or minus  $\frac{1}{2}$  min. This morning we took 8 minutes. Power car L130 was the 2nd clue; this power unit is a notorious low power, high failure rate unit.

The Bourne End staff made for a rapid turn-round and we were given the off at 08.43 bang on time. However, the station man did say to the driver "They have the spare set at Maidenhead ready if we see you back again". The driver seated himself and uttering something like "Come on you old b...r" operated the controls. A gentle acceleration followed as the single engine of the DMU L130 propelled us towards the bank towards Cookham. The other engine of L130 rested, as it had done since earlier that morning - Wednesday March 23rd - it didn't feel up to starting work! A steady plod up the gradient followed; about halfway up at milepost 28 to nearer the top at Milepost 27 $\frac{3}{4}$  took 1 min. 25 sec - 11 mph average. With speed falling all the time we reached the peak and started down the bank towards Cookham Station.

Perhaps seeing our gentle approach, together with a rare use of the brake to bring us down to 10 mph for the level crossing, or because he was an idiot, a waiting passenger on the platform jumped down onto the line to retrieve something he had dropped. This caused further braking, as he found he couldn't get back as easily as he had jumped down. The result was a very slow entry and stop at Cookham at 08.50 just 3 mins late.

The run to Furze Platt was steady and uneventful; we did get into 2nd gear at one stage and arrived just before 09.00. The track from Furze Platt (MP 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ ) towards Maidenhead has a misleading gradient upwards for nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to a peak at the bridge over the A308 road. Trains often take about a minute to reach MP 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ , the first  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from Furze Platt - standing start plus crossing.

This morning we left Furze Platt, several car drivers slept whilst the 2 car set crossed the road; some 3 minutes later we reached MP 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ , but we were slowing fast! Some 100 yards short of the bridge we came to a final stand. Our driver threw the controls into reverse, and we ran back to Furze Platt, the guard operating the hooter at the now front of the train. Buzzer codes between driver and guard were used as they approached the road crossing and we drew into Furze Platt once again.

Persons were seen hurrying in all directions, mainly passengers, but our guard and driver had prepared for this eventual ity. The guard informed us that a relief train was being sent, at that very moment, from Maidenhead to take us, in the failed DMU, into Maidenhead. The train then set-back to the 3-car stop limit, to allow the relief set to join us, clear of the crossing. At 09.19 a 2-car set, powered by L128 gently drew up until the buffers gave a little. L128 carried a number of BR engineering staff, one quickly dropped the coupling and commenced connecting the power cables, etc., but true to form one would not join properly, and so at 09.28 we were ready to depart once again from Furze Platt, as a 4-car 3-engine unit. We proceeded, not at too great a rate, towards Maidenhead, where we arrived only 40 minutes late on the timetable journey time of 24 minutes

I left the train and its crews to continue on my way to work - a little later than normal.

Ed: any news about further records on the branch will be gratefully received.

It all started some many years ago, there down on the old Somerset and Dorset, which I used to see in its final stages before "that other region" arranged for the through summer services to be diverted - or "lost". In days which occasionally... included the sun, a steady stream of through workings were handled by any engine or pair of engines that could usefully turn a wheel. The grand old 2-8-0 locos would parade up and down on express workings, more reliable than the Bulleid Pacifics - with their tendencies to slip or catch fire!

I thought, on the closure of the S & D, that that was the end of the saga; but not so! During a run back from holidays near York last year, we somehow - to my wife's surprise - found ourselves at Butterley on the Midland Trust Line, where one of the two remaining 2-8-0s is preserved. After a footplate ride on a "Jinty", the friendly driver there dropped me a tip that the 2-8-0 would be running on two of the "Cumbrian Mountain Express" trips....so the rest was inevitable.

Now this year, as all good enthusiasts will rightly know, the SLOA Pullman train itself works through from Euston to Carlisle (for southbound trip). Here on the day, "City of Wells" - unrebuilt Bulleid Pacific - met us, in pristine condition; and on an eleven car train of 440 tons, she gave a sparkling performance up the hill to Ais Gill.

From a standing start at Appleby - after suitable photographic run-throughs in rough weather inclusive of rain - "City of Wells" picked up the train in the true style of Highland Workings during the locomotive interchanges of 1948. Never at a loss for steam, and with only one or two slips on the driving wheels, she accelerated the train to 56 mph across the viaduct, before settling down to a steady 35-36 mph in the final stages of the climb.... undoubtedly an excellent performance by any standard.

The run, thereafter, is relatively easy - the main problem to Hellifield, for the driver, being to stop the train running away.

And at Hellifield, there she was....clean, decent, and with a good head of steam. The true Midland look was there, but for one noticeable exception: the outside Walschaerts valve gear - copied, be it noted, on the Scots and Jubilees and other LMS outside valve gear engines of later years. (Who was the creator of the myth that the Scots were copies of the Nelsons?)

Mind you, the 2-8-0s still had the old valve travel and "woofly" exhaust of old Midland engines; but there was no hesitation on the climb up the 1:100 bank to Giggleswick. A steady 22mph up the bank, from a cold standing start with no time to warm up. After that, a steady charge down the bank, at up to 50 mph - not a high speed, by modern standards; but as a fitter had said at Butterley, "She's an old 'un, and its not fair to hammer those boxes at much more than 45 mph."

The run was a great exercise in the nostalgia stakes. The Bulleid "beat", the Midland "woofle" were there in abundance; and as usual, despite the poor weather, the roadside turnout was impressive. I was pleased to see a blind lad with a tape recorder, at Applebey, taking down the sound effects - and

presumed he had walked down the road from his home, for a few minutes: that is, until I saw him again at Clapham! He had wheels alright!

The Cumbrian Mountain Express is probably the most interesting of the nostalgia runs, to me. The locos have a real job of work to do, in getting a heavy train up that bank: and the enginemanship must be of the highest order. It must be a great team at Carnforth.

Mind you, whatever they do, I'll never forget that night, years ago, southbound from Carlisle after a mediocre Footplate on a Gresley Pacific from Edinburgh. I waited expectantly for the replacement, which turned out to be a really filthy Jubilee, with dusty coal, but with a Yorkshire crew who were going to show us a thing or two. First, Appleby - stop to stop in 36 minutes. Then up that bank on a black night, with not a light in sight but for the shower of sparks from the chimney, coal dust swirling around the cab, and the bang-bang of the firehole door as the driver went hell for leather, on a pitching, bucketing, lurching engine which fair made the welkin ring on its climb up the bank....but that's another story.

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CLIMB TO AIS GILL SUMMIT BY "CITY OF WELLS"

Load 7 Pullman plus 4 BR Coaches=434 tons tare

WEATHER - Poor, windy and wet DATE 2 May 83

CARLISLE - APPLEBY 48 minutes Quiet Run

<u>Mileage</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Speed</u>	<u>Time</u>
		<u>mph</u>	<u>min/sec</u>
0	Appleby	0	0.00
	Viaduct	56	
	Tunnel	44	
	Griseburn Viaduct	36	
7.5	Crosby Garrett	41	12.55
10.7	Kirkby Stephen	36	16.36
	Birkett Tunnel	32	
	Ais Gill(approach)	35	
	280 Mile Post	-	28.35
17.6	Summit	-	24.25

Average Speed CARLISLE - AIS GILL 30.6mph

The morning of Thursday 8th October 1981 was bright if chilly as we stepped from the taxi outside Denver's Union Station. Although it was only 7 am the station was alive with passengers anticipating one of the finest scenic rides in the world, for then, Thursdays were "Zephyr Days" in Denver. The station announcer was already calling out the details of Denver & Rio Grande Western train 17 as we stepped onto the platform. There she was, three classic EMD 'F' units on the front followed by eight cars, four of them domes, the low sun glinting on, and highlighting, the gold and silver paint and burnished stainless steel. Homage duly paid with camera and film, we take our seats aboard the "Rio Grande Zephyr".

At 7.30 sharp the conductor gave the traditional "All Aboard" and "highballed" the engineer, the EMD 567 engines changed from their idling burble to an urgent growl and we were off. Picking our way through downtown Denver we passed Union Pacific GP40X 9001 which had piloted us on the eastbound Amtrak the previous evening and then we got a good view of the contents of the local Burlington Northern engine terminal, including a rare EMD F45. We were riding that company's tracks at this point, but at Utah Junction on the north side of town we gained Rio Grande track, slowed to pick up train orders and then accelerated, for the first time we headed west.

What a view unfolded, leaving Denver behind we met the front range of the Rockies head on, a vast wall rising from the edge of the prairie. Unlike the view one receives of the Rockies on Canadian Pacific west of Calgary where one gradually enters the mountains, there appears to be no way a main line could penetrate this range. Hence the D&RGW motto "Mainline Thru The Rockies - Not Round Them". For the first 50 miles or so we climb at an average 2% (1 in 50). Just after the passing loop at Rocky (this is a single line) we encountered the famed "Big Ten" curve, so called because throughout its double S convolutions across the mountainside, the curve does not exceed 10° of arc or 574' radius.

As we sat down to breakfast in the diner we could see the line climbing away above us and look back on Denver. Crossing Highway 72 the train passed through the first of fifty tunnels on the route, twenty eight before the summit. By 9 am we were well into the mountains and at the Tolland loop encountered our first eastbound train patiently awaiting our passage. No less than eight locos lashed in multiple were at the head of around one hundred load high capacity coal cars bound for the power stations of the mid western cities, two more 3,500 hp units were behind the caboose to restrain the train's 12,000 tons downhill!

At the next loop, East Portal, we met another train, this time three units and a shorter train of general freight. This loop is so called because it is just outside the imposing eastern entrance to the 6.2 mile long Moffat Tunnel. Completed in 1928 this replaced the former tortuous climb over the Rollins Pass at 11,600', but even so the continental divide is crossed in the tunnel at 9,239'. The line emerges into daylight again at Winter Park, a popular ski resort to which the D & RGW run special trains in winter, and then enters an area known as Middle Park, which consists of high meadowlands. Surrounded by the Arapahoe



National Forest this was once an inland sea and is now a popular ranching area. By Granby the line has dropped to 8200' and again the scenery is about to change.

Alongside the line a small fast flowing stream appears. This is the mighty Colorado River which will be a constant companion for the following 238 miles. This infant river has managed to carve some spectacular gorges and, of course, many miles further on passed through Grand Canyon. The first of these features comes just after Hot Sulphur Springs, 86 miles from Denver, where Byers Canyon is encountered followed by the village of Kremmling and then Gore Canyon. There is just room for the river and rails to squeeze down the canyon beneath colourful rock walls rising nearly 1,500 ft. above the train which plunges through several short tunnels. Elsewhere in the canyon there are a network of wires above the rails which if broken by falling rocks, trip the signals to danger.

Emerging from Gore Canyon we arrive at Bond and Orestod. This is a junction, the original Denver & Salt Lake line climbs away to the north up the Yampa Valley to peter out at Craig whilst the main line turns southwest still following the river. The next 40 miles to Dotsero were opened in 1934 and follow Red Canyon and form the cut-off. At Dotsero the original D & RGW line from Denver via Pueblo and the Tennessee Pass comes in from the south east. The name of the junction comes from ".0" on the 1885 survey of the Colorado River, Orestod is Dotsero in reverse.

Next is Glenwood Canyon, 18 miles of colourful towering rock walls. The Colorado, swelled by the waters of the Eagle River after Dotsero, shares the canyon floor with the railway and Interstate 70, although this is only a single carriage-way one of the few such sections on the interstate system. By now it is around 1 pm and we emerge from the canyon to call at the first large centre on the journey, the popular resort of Glenwood Springs, 185 miles from Denver. During the short stop many passengers leave the train and courtesy buses line the platform ready to whisk visitors off to the better hotels. From a railway point of view it is a junction for the branch to Aspen, now truncated at Woody Creek, and from 1887 to 1918 the short lived Colorado Midland came through the town. Indeed as the present day D & RGW leaves town it occupies the old CM formation to Newcastle, allowing I-70 to occupy the old Rio Grande route.

The next 90 miles through Rifle to Grand Junction are less spectacular and pass through an area which is becoming geologically more important with reserves of uranium and oil shales. On this journey we were evicted from the rear dome observation car to enable a wedding to be performed! We took the opportunity to take a light lunch in the diner. Approaching Grand Junction we passed the large marshalling yard with the D & RGW's unique chop-nosed SD9, 5705 (the result of a collision in 1970) on hump duty.

Grand Junction station, 275 miles, was reached just before 3 pm and there followed a 15 minute stop whilst the train was refuelled, serviced and photographed. The town's name refers to the junction of the Colorado (formerly Grand) and Gunnison Rivers. The branch from Montrose also joins from the south, the remnants of the original D & RGW line via Gunnison.

West of Grand Junction the valley broadens for several miles rimmed on the south by the cliffs of Colorado National Monument, but soon Ruby Canyon is entered, so named because of dark reddish tone of the rock, and across Utahline, the boundary between Colorado and Utah marked by a huge line painted on the canyon wall. A couple of miles further on the "Zephyr" overtook a westbound freight waiting in Westwater loop and finally took its leave of the Colorado River which turns south.

Having left the river the scenery changes to barren desert edged to the north by Book Cliff. After passing the junction for the Potash branch at Crescent a break in the desert is encountered as the line crosses the Green River, 380 miles out and at 4,075 ft altitude, the lowest point on the line. The climbing resumes at first gently towards the Utah coal fields and the next station stop, Helper at the foot of the climb to Soldier Summit.

Helper is so called because it is where helper engines are added for the 1 in 40 climb of 1610 ft, indeed two GP40's were knuckling up to the caboose of a westbound coal train ready to follow us up the hill, which was climbed in fine style. As we left Helper a pair of Utah Railway's ALCo RSD5's, a rare model these days, could be seen coming off that company's short line. Halfway up an east bound freight was passed on the double track, headed by Union Pacific SD40's exercising their running powers.

Over the summit at 7,440' we descended through the Warsatch Mountain range through Thistle and down towards Provo. It was now getting dark, so dinner was next on the agenda. A superbly cooked steak amid linen tablecloths, silver ware and fresh flowers. The only let down was the fact that the ex-Union Pacific diner deputised for the native "Silver Banquet".

After dinner we returned to the front dome to observe the final entry to Salt Lake City down the middle of a busy main road at 20 - 30 mph! The headlight illuminated the way ahead whilst the mars light threw its beam in wide sweeps first left and then right. Just about on time, we came to a stand at Salt Lake City just before 9.45 pm, 570 miles from Denver. In days of old the Western Pacific took over the "California Zephyr" for California, but we took the connecting minibus up to Ogden and joined Amtrak's "Pioneer" for Seattle.

Although the "Rio Grande Zephyr" has passed into history one can still enjoy this route, courtesy of Amtrak, and daily at that. Finally a word about the demise of the RGZ. It was not as smooth as my last article led one to believe. A massive storm over Utah on April 10th severed the D & RGW at Thistle. The RGZ was stranded at Salt Lake City and returned to Denver via the UP, the remaining journeys ran only to Grand Junction. The first week or so of the new Amtrak "California Zephyr" was diverted over the old "San Francisco Zephyr" route over the UP, with bus links to Grand Junction.

#### 1983 FAMILY TRIP

Details of the trip we had this year to the Severn Valley have had to held over until the December edition.