

*Marlow & District*  
*Railway Society*

Please reply to:

NEWSLETTER NO. 3

SEPTEMBER 1977

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

As you will see from this Newsletter our appeal made some two or three months ago for contributions to this Newsletter has been successful. For which many thanks. So successful in fact that when the Chairman asked how much he should write himself the Editor replied very firmly "250 words, no more", so that is what he will get.

In the absence of an August meeting there is very little for me to comment on anyway apart from our very successful visit to Swindon works. Even the weather relented and we were able to wander through the scrap yards in comfort. The works are always interesting of course and we even saw steam in action in the form of a crane in the back sidings. One very noticeable feature was that the line of condemned diesels which we had seen only three months earlier had by now been reduced to a scattering of unrecognisable junk and to a handful of scrapped motors. It seems that Swindon men are as efficient at breaking locomotives as they used to be at building them. I wonder how they would get on today if we gave them an order for a new Castle?

The Great Western museum is a place of pilgrimage for most steam enthusiasts and one member was sufficiently carried away by the sight of "Lode Star" and "City of Truro" to suggest that we should devote all our efforts to getting them back on the road!

Oh well it's nice to dream!

Previous Meetings

His love and knowledge of steam were well evident when Alan Wheeler gave an illustrated account of the Great Western Society at Didcot on 23 June 1977. His son's contributions to the slides were much appreciated.

The wide travels of Roger Bowen were obvious when he started off his alphabetical guide to Continental Narrow Gauge with slides on Andorra on 21 July 1977.

Our thanks to you both.

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## VISITS

The trip to the RHDR on 17 July 1977 is entertainingly described by Malcolm Campbell in this newsletter. It was a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone despite and to some extent because of the mishaps. Our thanks are due to Alan Bond who drove the bus and his faithful aide Mike Walker, also to Bas Woodward for the efficient arrangements and Tom Gregory for making the MRDS bus destination board. As a postscript members may have noticed in the national press that the local authority intend using the RHDR to transport children to and from school during the coming winter - lucky children.

On 20 August 1977 18 members and one son visited the Mecca of steam at Swindon. Our thanks to those members who provided cars for the trip - Roy Mee, Mike Halls, Les Spicer and Mike Norris.

## THE THAMES VALLEY RAMBLER IN AID OF MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY FUNDS

The Reading and District Branch of the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain is running a rail trip called the Thames Valley Rambler on Saturday 29 October 1977. For the tour a 3<sup>rd</sup> car dmu will be used and will set out from Slough for Maidenhead, Marlow, Twyford, Henley, Reading (Central - goods only), Morris Cowley (Goods only), Oxford and Bicester London Road (Goods Only). The train will return to Slough via Oxford and Reading (set down). The tour is interesting in that 7 termini will be visited and of these 5 are open to goods only. The cost is £3.75 for adults and £2.00 for children and light refreshments will be available en route. A party from the Society is being arranged and members wishing to join please send cheques for their requirements to Stan Verrinder, 14 Lodge Close, Marlow, Bucks. SL7 1RB, and made payable to him. In view of the fact that it is likely this tour will be heavily booked remittances must be received by Thursday 15 September. Transport will be arranged from the Marlow Donkey to Slough.

## VISITS IN 1978

Two visits are under consideration by your committee at the moment for 1978. One to the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway and a two day visit to two preserved lines in Northern France. The French trip is very tentative at the moment because of the organisational problems involved and lack of knowledge as to whether or not members would be interested. It is appreciated that without some idea of cost you will find it difficult to give your views but could you say if you are interested in the possibility.

## TRANSPORT TRUST

In accordance with the wishes of the members at the June meeting the Society is now affiliated to the Transport Trust.

YOUR NEWSLETTER

It has been suggested that the newsletter should be given a name and your Editor has managed to squeeze out of the Treasurer the promise that the member who comes up with the best idea will receive a prize of a pint of the best Marlow bitter.

Has any member any other thoughts on the Newsletter. Is it containing what you want? Is it too short or too long? Should it come out at different intervals to the present quarterly issue?

At the moment the printing of the Newsletter costs the Society nothing as it is done through the good offices of Roy Mee.

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome a new member to the Society

W.H. McAlpine      Fawley Hill, Fawley Green, Henley-on-Thames,  
RG9 6JA, Tel: Hambleton 373.

One of our members has changed his address:

M. Saunders        5 Edgecote House, Amersham Hill, High  
Wycombe, Bucks.

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME AT 20.00 HRS

22 Sep 1977        Films from British Transport - 16mm sound  
in Black and White.

- Men of the Footplate      LMS    1938
- Cambrian Coast           GWR    1939
- A Study in Steel          LMS    1938
- A Countionary Tale       LNER   1944
- Coronation Scot          LMS    1937

20 Oct 1977        Railways of Bedford and Oxford by Roy Mee  
and Bas Woodward. A nostalgic return to  
the places where they did their first train  
spotting.

17 Nov 1977        Isle of Man Railway by David Cotterill. As  
David has spent his holiday in the Isle of  
Man this year he will be in a position to  
give the latest information.

15 Dec 1977        Christmas Film Show - 16mm sound the first  
film is in Black and White and the other two  
in Colour.

- Night Mail                GPO    1936
- Thirty Million Letters   BT    1963
- In Touch with the  
  World                    COI    1964

It is hoped that the co-producer of "Night Mail", Harry Watt will describe the making of it. TV viewers will have seen two of Harry Watt's films on BBC2 last July which were "The Overlanders" with Chips Rafferty and "Fiddlers Three" with Tommy Trinder.

- 12 Jan 1978      Annual General Meeting. Please note the change of date. The meeting will be followed by an evening of member's slides so please let the Secretary have names as soon as possible in order that a programme can be arranged.
- 16 Feb 1978      Signalling by Mike Hanscomb. Mike will be including some practical demonstrations in his talk.
- 16 Mar 1978      Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway by A.P. Tompkins. Mr. Tompkins is the Chairman of the LBNGRS and will show the Society's film "Steam Train to Stonehenge".

#### WEA LECTURES

The WEA Branch at Amersham feature "History of Railways" at 19.45 Hrs. on Mondays commencing 26 September 1977, at the College of Further Education and Arts Stanley Hill Amersham. The lecturer is our Secretary Roger Bowen. Enrolment will take place on the first evening and the course fee for 10 lectures is £3.70. Further information from WEA Amersham Secretary Mr. N. Bell, 9 Runrig Hill, Chesham Bois, Amersham, Bucks. - Tel: Amersham 5405.

#### A TRAIN JOURNEY DOWN UNDER (NOT UNDERGROUND) by Ted Gregory

1945 was drawing to a close, the war was over and I was in Freemantle the port of Perth, Western Australia, after a hellish voyage around the Persian Gulf, a 36 hour breakdown in the Indian Ocean and no fresh food for weeks. Add to this an attractive girl, the MCC had arrived and the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester had come to open the Royal Show, and it should be no surprise to learn that I "jumped ship".

Out there its roasting hot days and if you are walking around with an overcoat it looks somewhat unusual so I was arrested. Subsequently I was escorted to Perth station to be put on a train for Geraltion some 300 miles up the coast where my ship has sailed. This was at 4 pm on a Friday and I did not discover until later that if I had managed to miss the train the next one was on the following Tuesday. This was probably why the escort was arranged.

At the station was the Sydney Express hauled by what I now know to have been a Beyer Garratt. I had never seen anything so huge. I heard that the journey of about 2500 miles took 11 days of which 7 were over desert.

Our train being 3'6 gauge was narrower than a British one and the coaches had no corridors. The arrangement of my compartment was 4 seats across the coach and 3 on the other plus the door into the toilet. The next compartment had the same set up with its own toilet. I am not sure if the whole train was like it but it seemed a wasteful way of doing things. Sorry I am unable to tell you much about the engine except that it had a cow catcher, a bell, a searchlight on the smoke box door and possibly eight driving wheels.

The train moved off on the 18 hour journey and I left my escort behind and once we entered the bush it was obvious that there was no "jumping" the train. There was just nowhere to go. Sometimes we pulled into a station with nothing other than huge corrals and pens around them. Usually a child was ringing a handbell as the train pulled in to announce there was food and drink ready - hot meat pies and toast, mugs of coffee and whisky at sixpence a tot.

Now it is night. Throughout the journey the countryside had been dotted with the bleached and charred remains of gum trees. Now they took on fantastic shapes which were very eerie. One thing you do not expect to see on opening your eyes is someone walking past your window. Yet that was the way you moved from one carriage to another.

I have not mentioned that this was a single line so you can imagine my horror on waking up again to see the lights of another train on a collision course. We met on the only bit of double track on the line and the passing was a lengthy job as someone had to go to each end to switch the points.

The other train was interesting as it consisted of only two carriages the remainder being three decker sheep box cars. These were the size of our parcel vans with slatted sides like cattle trucks. Difficult to clean out I should imagine.

At the end of my journey at about 10 in the morning the following day was the ship loading the other half of a cargo of flour.

THE RHDR (AND SOME BUS GARAGES THROWN IN) by Malcolm Campbell

The Society's first outing on its own account as opposed to taking part in trips set up by other groups took place on Sunday July 17 1977. Our ultimate objective was the "Smallest Public Railway in the World" that serves the remote Kent marshes between Hythe and Dungeness. As the line has no direct railway links it had been decided to borrow a preserved RT bus numerically RT 2389.

Travelling along the Fulham Palace Road it became obvious that all was not as it should be with our transport and Alan our driver took us to the first of the garages we were destined to visit during the day. This was at Chelverton Road, Putney and 2389's thirst suitably slaked Alan made a phone call and arranged for a replacement bus.

Arriving at Richmond Goods Yard the party transferred to an old Green Line RF213 the only one which was in one piece and had a valid licence.

Unfortunately climbing the steep road through Sevenoaks it was obvious that things were not what they should be. A short pipe was missing on the injector leak-off and the result being exhaust smoke and fumes coming into the saloon. Accordingly Alan decided it would be as well to head for the M & D garage at Tonbridge. Arriving there we learnt there were no fitters on duty so we headed for Royal Tunbridge Wells where it was found that the leak had sealed itself with the heat. There was a delay in restarting because some of the party anticipating a long stop had to be dug out of a nearby pub.

With no more delays we arrived at New Romney and boarded the 1424 hrs. to Hythe drawn by one of the two Canadian Pacific types built by the Yorkshire Engine Co. in 1931. As we left the new addition to stock "Black Prince" arrived from Hythe.

During the eastbound run the party enjoyed the frequent sounding of the pukka Canadian chime whistle. Perhaps this enjoyment had something to do with the member of the party who with his expectant wife thought Dymchurch was the terminus and had to be pulled hastily back on board in the nick of time.

Arriving at Hythe there was a mad dash to the departure platform to join the "Golden Jubilee Non Stop Run to Dungeness". The station staff seeing the last minute rush of passengers promptly had two coaches transferred from the train that had just arrived. The transfer was done in proper full scale manner by the engine of the Express No. 7 "Typhoon".

Leaving several minutes late the driver set about pulling back the lost time and between Dymchurch and New Romney we were knocking on 35-40 mph. After Romney the marsh gives way to bare shingle and in spite of the open nature of the environment quite a few folk have had bungalows built out there quite recently.

At Dungeness we boarded the slow train back to New Romney and this time we rode behind No. 1 Green Goddess one of the original locomotives that closely resemble the famous Gresley Pacifics that once graced the East Coast route.

On arrival at New Romney there remained on thrill to experience - the sight of the eastbound "Golden Jubilee" hurtling through. Despite the cold weather photographers hung on and were eventually rewarded when No. 7 came racing through in full cry.

By now time was pushing on and it was time to start homeward. When Alan came to start up again it was found that the leak was giving trouble again so obtaining a length of pipe from the railway workshops he carried out an emergency repair. Despite this Alan thought it better to get it fixed properly and headed for Ashford East Kent garage. Well you may guess on reaching there we were informed that the fitters went off duty at 16.00 hrs. on Sundays. The inspector at the garage trying to be helpful and mistaking us for a genuine Green Line did offer to loan us a bus. I wonder how he would have explained how one of their brand new buses had gone astray if we had taken him up on his offer.

Alan decided he had had enough of garages and left Ashford heading for home. We did have one small reward on leaving when we saw KESR 12 on a low loader.

RF 213 was now behaving marvellously overtaking RML's etc. in fine style on the Maidstone bypass. As everybody was getting thirsty we stopped at a hostelry and sipped some Courage.

As we approached the fateful Putney the bus had an air lock in the fuel feed but we were not delayed too long. At Loudwater an air lock gave trouble again but the AA came to our aid.

At about 22.20 RF 213 pulled up outside the "express" stand at Wycombe bus station to the consternation of an AV inspector and dropped off 3 of our members.

RF 213 finally gave up the ghost on the last stage at Marlow and we had to push it to its resting place for the night in the Britannia car park.

NARROW GAUGE RAILWAYS OF EUROPE by Roger Bowen

The amazing thing about the Narrow Gauge Railways of Europe is how diverse they are or were. From small mineral lines to long distance routes such as those in Greece and the north coast of Spain and the late lamented Resau Breton in France.

I hope the illustrated talk at the July meeting whetted your appetite and you would like to know more of these lines. To this end I have compiled a short book list which should help should you wish to know more of these fascinating lines.

The list is split into two - the first general books on the Continental narrow gauge (some have a wider scope) and the second specific to various themes.

General Books

- Bygone Light Railways of Europe - Ole Winter Lawson - Oakwood Press - 1973
- End of the Line - Bryan Morgan - Cleaver Hulme - 1955
- European Narrow Gauge Steam Vols 1 & 2 - D. Trevor Rowe - Bradford Barton - 1975/6
- Narrow Gauge Railways of Europe - P. Allen and P.B. Whitehouse - Ian Allan - 1959
- Light Railways - W.J.K. Davies - Ian Allan - 1964
- On the Narrow Gauge - P.B. Whitehouse - Nelson - 1964
- Round the World on the Narrow Gauge - P. Allen and P.B. Whitehouse - Ian Allan - 1966

This is the accepted "standard" work on the subject.

Specific Subjects

- Austrian Travel Wonderland - W.J.K. Davies - Ian Allan - 1974
- French Minor Railways - W.J.K. Davies - David & Charles - 1965
- Light Railways of the First World War - W.J.K. Davies - David & Charles - 1967
- Mediterranean Island Railways - P.M. Kalla - Bishop - David & Charles - 1970
- Steam Locomotives of Eastern Europe - A.E. Durant - David & Charles - 1972
- Steam on the Sierra (narrow gauge in Spain and Portugal) - P.C. Allen and R.A. Wheeler - Cleaver Hulme - 1960
- Switzerland's Amazing Railways - C.J. Allen - Ian Allan - 1965.

Only one of the above is confined to the narrow gauge but all have a narrow gauge content and in some the narrow gauge is predominant.

The number of books on this subject is fairly limited but these should give an insight into a topic which is becoming of more interest as people travel more and more.

Good travelling!