

Marlow & District Railway Society

Please reply to:

THE MARLOW DONKEY NO. 27

March 1984

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

In December issue of our Newsletter there was a brief resume of our Society's activities during its first seven years. 1984 has already brought several readjustments. Last autumn the Society bid regretful farewells to our Treasurer, Stan Verrinder, whose work has taken him to Eastbourne. His enthusiasm and keenness will be missed; we are all grateful for his endeavours helping to keep our finances in the black. Already Mike Walker is proving a capable successor to Stan. At the AGM in January our Secretary and erstwhile lecturer, Roger Bowen, decided to take a rest from his labours. He has served the Society well as its 'king-pin', arranging a succession of excellent speakers for our monthly meetings, writing endless letters and making innumerable phone calls. In addition he has hired (and returned) many first-rate films and written a quarterly column for our Newsletters. Fortunately he remains a committee member and will be able to steer and advise our new Secretary, Pete Greatorex, in his early months.

We were unanimous in our praise for the new venue of the Christmas dinner. Mike Norris, who once again organised this happy occasion, found a new restaurant which provided a much improved menu. Thank you, Mike!

So London's youngest railway terminus is to be the first to disappear. The directors of the Great Central Railway at the turn of the century were determined to reach London. This they accomplished by crossing existing lines, burrowing under Lord's Cricket Ground, and excavating tunnels right into Marylebone. The National Bus Company visualise asphaltting the final ten miles of GC track and creating a fine new coach station. Coaches at present using Victoria could thus curtail their journeys from the north and this would reduce a little of the congested traffic in the centre of London. Already the bus faction are suggesting 'concrete to Birmingham' as a further option.

Driving up to North Wales just before Christmas I broke the journey at Llangollen to see how the comparatively new railway preservation society are faring. The station alongside the rushing waters of the River Dee looked attractive; it has been lovingly restored. The track which used to run from Ruabon to Corwen has been relaid for a mere one and a half miles on the Corwen side and already visitors can travel along the beautiful valley during the summer months. During 1983 a borrowed "Jinty" tank no. 7248 from Steamport - was in use as the ex-GWR pannier tank no. 7754 was under

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heavy repair. I found the engine shed and yard standing at quite a height above the running line. The pannier tank was in pieces and there was no sign of the "Jinty". It might have been in the shed but it had probably been returned to its home base at Southport. A tartered up industrial tank was outside the shed. In the words of Railway World's editor (Feb. 1984) this locomotive was far "too glossy and overpainted" to represent the thousands of drab industrials once employed at our coal mines and factories.

We are pleased to welcome several new members this year. If any of them would like to contribute an article to our Newsletter the Editor is always happy to receive their copy - written or typed.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

When I heard that I was to be transferred to Eastbourne it was with a heavy heart that I realised this meant the end of my formal connection with the Marlow and District Railway Society.

I shall miss chasing everybody for articles to go into the "Marlow Donkey" and being overwhelmed with cash for annual subscriptions and meeting nights. However my two successors seem to have got into the swing very quickly. The December edition was particularly good and Bas Woodward is to be congratulated. Mike Walker seems to have rapidly developed that essential for every treasurer, being careful with the cash.

May I thank everyone for the parting gift of the book on "The Southern Railway". I wonder how it was known that I wouldn't have that particular book. It will seem strange not having the GWR on the doorstep and perhaps the book will help me to at least tolerate the SR.

I would also like to thank those who said so many kind words about my role in the Society but it was all made so easy by the help which was given, especially by Roger Bowen. Lastly my thanks to Roy Mee for his poem in the December "Marlow Donkey" and the message spelt out by the first letters of each line.

The friendships that I have made will I hope remain and, perhaps when you are in Eastbourne you will pay a visit. I, in my part, intend visiting the Society at every opportunity, certainly the Christmas dinner when Mike Norris sends me the details.

Stan Verrinder



FORTY YEARS.....back! - by BPW

By 1944 Railway Magazine had shrunk down to six slim magazines a year. Photography of railway subjects in wartime was not encouraged, and articles carefully avoided anything likely to assist the enemy.

Twenty-one years earlier, on 1st January, 1923, the many railway companies of this country had evolved into four major lines. "There can be no doubt that the bringing together of the lines has had its effects in the spheres of efficiency of service and operating, but equally, the railway enthusiast before 1923 had a far wider scope for the pursuit of his hobby than his present-day contemporary." We who can remember nationalisation in 1948 must have had the same reaction - mixed feelings!

There's no denying that "British Railways" (their wartime name) did a wonderful job between 1939 and 1945. Manpower was depleted by regular "call-ups" and yet half as many trains again as in pre-war years were run. Every day 1000 extra trains were needed for war workers and 1500 special trains for troops and their stores. To move one division and its equipment necessitated the use of 140 trains. In the early months of 1944 the build-up for "D-Day" was requiring tremendous efforts from our railwaymen. To ease locomotive shortages 400 American engines had arrived and 280 home-built austerities were already in service.

Somewhere I have seen a photograph of Etonians employed on locomotive cleaning. Hundreds of civilians worked similarly in 38 different depots and loading and unloading wagons was performed by both men and women volunteers all over Britain.

Just before Christmas the death was reported of John G. Robinson. He was 87. Having been Locomotive Engineer of the Great Central he could have been the first Chief Mechanical Engineer of the LNER. In fact the appointment of Gresley to this post was the result of Robinson's advice. I always thought of John Robinson and his GC locomotives when I saw his old ROD's from World War I clanking along GWR tracks pulling lengthy trains of rattling coal wagons.

Between September 1939 and December 1945 British railway workshops built 587 locomotives. A further 50 were supplied by outside contractors. When it is remembered that during the first three years of the war there were 10,000 air attacks on various railway installations one wonders how standards were maintained and new equipment could be produced.

The diesel/electric controversy had begun by early 1944. Some electrification had taken place before the war but the Minister of War Transport, P.J. Noel-Baker, was looking forward to a dully electrified system when peace returned. However, over in the States the diesel locomotive seemed to be in favour. "The New York, New Haven and Hertford Railroad has decided not to electrify the system between New Haven and Boston though the first 70 miles have been converted already. Instead of electrifying more mileage the company is purchasing 24 diesel-electrics." The article concludes that with the rising price of coal and the comparative cheapness of post-war oil, diesel locos are the future motive power for British railways.

R.E.L. Maunsell died in March, 1944. He was 76. Lovers of the old Southern Railway will remember that he became CME in 1923 and remained in the post until 1937. The Lord Nelson class were a tribute to his excellent designing, but even better perhaps were his class of 4-4-0 three-cylinder engines known as the Schools. His other locomotives, mainly for freight haulage and secondary passenger services, were well-liked and some have survived to run on preserved lines.

Readers' letters in these old journals are most interesting. They came from both service people and civilians alike, and from many foreign addresses. All expressed delight that they were not deprived of railway literature at a most traumatic time in our history.

Let Mr. Wallace of Johannesburg have the last word in this retrospective glance back. "The Magazine, which I have taken for many years, is a compact production which appears to have lost almost none of its features. Editorial ingenuity has risen to the occasion and produced a most readable and informative information railway publication."

PROGRAMME OF MONTHLY MEETINGS

- March 15th - "Great Central Railway"
Speaker: Mr. J. Mitchell from the London Group of the Great Central Railway.
- April 12th - "South African Railways"
Speakers: Mr. Ray Freeman and Mr. Bob Young.
- May 17th - "Steam Locomotive Restoration"
Speaker: Mr. Alan Rees, C.M.E. Severn Valley Railway.
- June 21st - "B.R. Motive Power Developments"
Speaker: B.R. (W.R.) Provisional
- July 19th - "Canal Restoration"
Provisional

NARROW GAUGE IN WEST WALES by R.D. Bowen

Most railway enthusiasts know that narrow gauge in North Wales is closely linked to the slate industry. It will come as a surprise to many to find that the narrow gauge also served slate in West Wales, and that traces can still be seen.

Porthgain lies on the Pembrokeshire Coast between Fishguard and St. Davids. In the mid 19th Century a trio of London businessmen put money into the then small port of Porthgain. Its neighbour, Aber Eiddi was already exporting fine slates from its little harbour, and with the improvements to Porthgain a 3ft gauge tramroad was built the three miles to haul Aber Eiddi's slates to Porthgain. Porthgain prospered as it was able to exploit both granite and brick clay as well as slate. Many London, Liverpool and Dublin public buildings are built of Porthgain granite. The 3ft gauge tramroad was extended to serve these workings.

By the turn of the Century the port was feeling the pinch of not being connected to a main-line railway. There had been plans for a railway to St. Davids with a siding to Porthgain and in readiness for this a short length of standard gauge track was built on the quayside. It was, however, not to be and Porthgain closed in 1931.

Over 50 years later it is still possible to trace the history of the site, tramways and the tunnel connect the slate pit, cuttings, and engine house, and numerous spurs of almost vanished sleeper bed show where trains of granite came up from the quarry at Pen Clegyr. The track bed of the tramway to Aber Eiddi can still be seen.

A fascinating spot, well off the beaten track, found by chance by many, but an amazing find for anyone interested in Industrial Archaeology.

"DONKEY BITES CAR" - John Sears

"When you've entered all the credits, their total automatically becomes the debit total" The acting Passenger Services Manager droned on. The biggest junction in South Bucks. was receiving quite a bit of attention after the recent change in staffing. Luckily for all, the 9.41 Marlow arrived causing immediate action. The railman to the ground frame and the P.S.M. to find a seat aboard the single car.

That day's original donkey had been replaced because it was not allowing the driver to reengage the "spoon" easily. A D.E.T. and power car had become just a power car and when it left Bourne End the train was almost full.

The P.S.M. was sitting on the up side, facing, in the last bay of seats. The van was leading. Looking up as the train approached Cookham Crossing he could see clearly as a small white car suddenly appeared from Cookham and drove onto the crossing. As the train had reached the crossing too the P.S.M. was somewhat surprised and waited for a collision.

Non came - "Good grief, they got acr....." Bump! and the train stopped. A faint crunch was all, now sense of impact at all, and one stupid motorist had done it. The train's passengers appeared unaware of anything other than an unscheduled stop short of the platform.

The P.S.M. got up and went to the van. "What shall I do Percy, phone?" "Is Wally okay?" Leaving through the van door the P.S.M. jumped down onto the platform ramp and went to the booking office. Out of the corner of his eye the car's roof appeared crushed down to the bottom of the windows. Tanja the clerk was already on the 'phone but Cookham's only got an internal. Where's the police station? No, cancel the call, 'phone Maidenhead "Hi Orlando, phone for police ambulance there's been a crash on Cookham Crossing". Who next? Better tell the govnor. That cut short the Friday "prayers"!

The local police are here. Customers are standing around gawping. News comes from Maidenhead of a 'bus coming soon and going to Marlow first. The P.S.M. announces that to the passengers, by now detrained and waiting in the station forecourt. The 'bus does come and, after clearing a path through parked vehicles, soon departs.

More emergency services arrive. The car driver has escaped injury. He is thanked by the P.S.M. for his troubles the P.S.M. is not amused.

The train is disentangled and clears the crossing. Waiting traffic clears and two Alder Valley double deckers can at last proceed. Time 9.41 Marlow can at last arrive at the platform now a garage has towed the car, a metro, away. The train fills with passengers and leaves almost on the dot as the 10.55 from Cookham.

The P.S.M. is now sitting in a police Grenada giving a statement, trying hard not to let his position bias his memory. "I'd say the car was doing at least 20, the train 10 or less" "are you okay?" asks the Constable. "Yes, just very angry".

B.R. have sent their compliments and a bill to the car driver. The Divisional Manager and the Regional Manager have seen the train drive: Wally was okay till a few days later when the latest of too many incidents strick home. He's going to retire early.

For the record:- Friday 23rd December 1983 Power Car W55021 and Austin "Metro" TPA 850X.

SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY TRIP by S.T. Medway

Sunday, 17th July promised to be yet another hot summers day as members and friends of our Society boarded the coach outside the Marlow Donkey. The MDRS trip this year was bound for the Severn Valley Railway. Much to the relief of many, our transport provided comfortable seats and only one deck!

Very soon Oxford was behind us, but ahead clouds had hidden the sun and as we paused at Broadway for a stretch, the first rain in many weeks was felt, albeit very light.

Our arrival at Bewdley, the southern end of the Severn Valley Railway, showed signs of heavier rain and the rumbling of thunder further up the line suggested we had missed a storm. With a little time before our train departed, a welcome coffee in the buffet and then the sounds of activity soon announced its arrival. LMS Black Five N 5000 ran round its train of LMS stock, ready to return, tender first to Bridgnorth. Our party settled for the trip in our reserved coach and were off.

A brief glimpse down through the trees of Bewdley and into the countryside, following closely the river from which the railway gets its name. By now the sun was again shining as the train crossed the river at Victoria Bridge, from where fishermen and picknickers could be seen enjoying the riverside along with canoeists on the river.

Ardley station, our first call, is a passing point on this single track route and as the signal ahead was against us, we were probably waiting for a train to clear the next section. As we waited, and waited, a member of the station staff suggested that the recent thunder storm had caused an obstruction on the line ahead. As it turned out the delay was caused by lightning striking a telegraph pole at Bridgnorth, affecting the S & T communications. Eventually a GWR 2-6-2, tank 5164, rolled in with a train of BT Mk I coaches in blue and grey livery.

Our way ahead clear, we were off again, heading towards Highley. The undulating route combined with speed restrictions gave plenty of opportunity for the loco to be opened up, the exhaust beat echoing back off the steep banks at the trackside. As we called at Highley a group Morris Dancers provided brief entertainment on the platform.

Off again and a wander down the train to the last two coaches. These were LNER teak coaches. With large windows and bright interior surfaces the feeling of light spaciousness was given. These two coaches were in a lovely condition and still subject to further refurbishment.

Another train passed at Hampton Loade, headed by a GWR 4-6-0, 7812, Erlestoke Manor.

The run into Bridgnorth crosses the side of new bridge works, necessitated by a road widening scheme. According to a fund appeal display at Bridgnorth station, the Severn Valley Railway are expected to contribute to the funding of this work.

The train finally rolled into Bridgnorth. Ready to depart stood BR standard tank 80079 at the head of the "Severn Valley Ltd", a reserved seat only dining train. This consisted of various GWR catering vehicles, aboard which the passengers could be seen enjoying lunch. A resounding departure

by 80079, then we were off to look round. First priority was lunch in the cafe.

Fully refreshed it was time for a browse round the station shop and then to the loco shed, Here were engines of varying origins and liveries. The 2251 class 3 205 in GWR green (SVR's first loco), an LMS 3 F 0-6-0 tank number 47383 in BR black and probably the cleanest loco of the day, an ex WD loco No.600 Gordon resplendent in blue with red frames and side rods, and an Ivatt 2MT 2-6-0 in BR green No.46521 adorned with a brass bell - any ideas of its origin? Actually in the shed, apparently being lit up and lending an atmospheric smokey haze to the interior stood 43106. This loco, a 2-6-0 4MT, has a somewhat un-British appearance with a high running plate and the cylinders appear prominent as the frame is not swept down forward of them, as is the common practice, but come to an abrupt halt level with the smoke box front.

It was time to head back for our train, which was reached with minutes to spare for the departure time, but there was no need to hurry, another quarter of an hour before our train was drawn out of Bridgnorth by 5164.

By now the sun was doing its bit for the bar sales. So much so that as we paused at Hampton Loade a member of the bar staff was despatched across to the "Severn Valley Ltd", waiting in the other platform on its return to Bridgnorth, for extra glasses.

Following a leisurely journey back to Bewdley, where the Morris Dancers were now jigging, a visit to the model railway was next on the list. Built into an LNER bogie van was an expansive 'N' gauge layout, fully automatic and inhabited by an A4 Pacific, a 9F Jubilee and others. Many fascinating hours could be spent admiring this fine spectacle, but for the heat within the van soon became uncomfortable.

As we waited for departure time (of our coach) interest was provided by 7812 running round its train and finally departing.

And so it was time to head for home. The SVR proved to be most interesting. The railway gave a feeling of being a working railway, with trains operating frequently and providing a variety of stock.

The line certainly merit a further visit in the future.

PS. Regarding the bell on 46521, I have since been informed that it was fitted by its present owner for his own reasons.

TRANSPORT TRUST by R.D. Bowen

The Society has been affiliated to the Transport Trust since its very early days. The Trust is "The National Charity for the Preservation of Britain's Transport Heritage".

For ten years the Duke of Edinburgh was patron, he has now been succeeded by Prince Michael of Kent. The Trust is based in offices in Marylebone

Station and had organised a number of events including a recent Transport Pageant at Donington Park near Derby.

Recent projects that the Transport Trust has aided include the restoration of the Norfolk Wherry "Maud". She was built in 1899 by Halls of Reedham and was in use until the mid 1960's when she was scuttled in Ranworth Broad. In June 1981 she was raised again and taken to Upton Dyke, eleven miles east of Norwich, for restoration. Practical assistance has been given by the Transport Trust and financial assistance from the Broads Authority. It is hoped that it will not be too long before she is sailing again.

The Trust is still aiding the project to restore the DH88 De Havilland Comet - "Grosvenor House" with the aim to have it restored to flying condition for the 50th Anniversary of the 1934 England to Australia Air Race.

These are two small examples, therefore, of how the Trust is helping deserving causes in Transport Preservation.

BOOK REVIEW by Ron Brooks

Now that the Christmas celebrations are well behind us a detailed study of the steam locomotive in its working context will enable us to get even more pleasure from our monthly talks. A fairly meaty batch this time.

'THE STEAM LOCOMOTIVE' by W.A. Tuplin

Moonraker Press £7.95.
239.00198.2

An easily understood, comprehensive account of the steam locomotive, discussing not only design, construction, operation and maintenance but the complex inter-relation of all these with one another. While it cannot fail to increase knowledge it does nothing for the steam loco's image.

'LOCOMOTIVE DESIGNERS IN THE AGE OF STEAM' by J.N. Westwood

Sidgwick & Jackson
0 283 98332 9

This book is in two parts, the first providing a history of the development of steam locomotive design, the second a potted history of the designers - and some of them needed a few screws tightened.

'LOCOMOTIVE MANAGEMENT FROM CLEANING TO DRIVING' by J.T. Hodgson & J. Williams.

The Railway Engineer 5/-.

Yes, 5/- in 1924!. The British Railway Companies decided very early on that the best way to get first class drivers was a long weary climb up the

BOOK REVIEWS - continued

promotion ladder. This book not only demonstrates this but contains fully detailed descriptions and diagrams of all aspects of the locomotive and its ancillary equipment. It must have been pored over by every aspiring cleaner.

'THE RAILWAY WORKERS' by F. McKenna

Faber & Faber
0 571 11563 2

The books reviewed above give more than a hint of the sheer hard work the steam railwayman had to put in. This book gives chapter and verse with oppression and victimisation thrown in. In spite of the appalling conditions the railwaymen had pride and loyalty but who would want to go back to the labour intensive conditions so vividly described?

'HOW TO DRIVE A STEAM LOCOMOTIVE' by B. Hollingsworth

Penguin Books £2.95.
0 14 00 5329 0

The book tells you how to drive two, and gives encouragement to build your own (small) engine. It is as easy to read as it is informative. A marvellous book for armchair drivers.

25 YEARS AGO by R.D. Bowen

Extension of electric workings feature in April 1959 with the completion and inauguration of electric services between Colchester and Clacton and Walton on the Naze on the 25kv 50 cycle overhead system. Only local services were involved pending main-line electrification between Colchester and Liverpool Street. As a temporary measure the rolling stock used were 4 car sets intended for the London, Tilbury and Southend line, due to go in service on that line in 1960.

In the four years from the launch of the Modernization plan in 1955 over 100 main-line diesel locos, 800 diesel shunters, 2,400 diesel multiple-unit vehicles, 1,000 electric multiple-unit vehicles and 4,000 locomotive hauled passenger carriages had been built.

A sign of the times was the announcement that the "Bristolian" would be accelerated to give a 100 minute non-stop time between Paddington and Bristol; an average speed of 71 mph - the fastest in the country. The train would be hauled by the new diesel hydraulic locos entering service.

On a sorry note a private bill was before Parliament to allow the South Wales Transport Company to close the Swansea and Mumbles Railway, opened in 1804. A more happier note was struck on 1st May to celebrate the Centenary of the opening of the Royal Albert Bridge at Saltash.

In March Western Region closed to passengers the branch between Newton Abbott and Mortenhampstead and the North Eastern Region the branch from Hawes to Garsdale. In April the narrow gauge Cavan and Leitriam Section of CIE closed, this had consisted of some 50 miles of 3ft gauge line.

Advertised for the summer was a new rail tour train - the "Welsh Chieftain". This would run from the coastal resorts via Criccieth, Portmadoc, Barmouth, Dolgelly, Corwen and Rhyl. In April the Royal Train was worked from Windsor and Eton Riverside by Merchant Navy 35027 "Port Line" to Weymouth, and then onto Port and Dockyard via the goods only Portland Branch by two gleaming pannier tanks, 3737 and 4689.

Clearly a mixed bag for the spring of 1959.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO.....?

Standing on the overbridge at Ruscombe recently watching 56.031 and 56.032 storm past with "Britain's Heaviest Train" set me off on a reflective mood. There were 43 bogie tipplers, airbraked, riding on extremely complex bogies and hurtling along at what would have been a good pace for an express not so long ago. All this and no brake van either!

As a modeller with a special interest in pre-grouping and pre-nationalisation freight stock I have become acutely aware of the slow and largely unsung revolution in the British freight train, although it is only in the last couple of years that the change has become really obvious.

At nationalisation BR had 1,197,561 wagons with an average payload of about 10 tons. All but a few hundred were little more than a box, open or closed, on an extremely primitive four-wheel chassis. The axles ran in simple split bearings lubricated with oil, if anyone remembered, and the whole assembly ran up and down a simple steel guide, the "W iron", with a set of leaf springs for suspension. The frames were often of timber. As for brakes, well a small number had the automatic brake but most had only a simple handbrake, and despite being outlawed in 1907 a small quantity still had a single side brake. Short wheelbases made such wagons unstable so speeds were limited to around 35 mph.

BR. at first continued to build wagons little different from those its predecessors. The multitude of wooden coal trucks were replaced by thousands of all steel 16 tonners, mostly unfitted. Most new vans and general merchandise opens were vacuum fitted and many older wagons were retrofitted, but the short wheelbase remained.

The 1955 Modernization plan envisaged a totally vacuum braked wagon fleet by the mid-sixties. With hindsight this would have been impossible, but it left a legacy in the WR's fleet of lightweight diesel hydraulics.

In the sixties the good doctor inspired a rethink. Managing to shed its legal requirement of common carrier, BR tried to discourage the traditional wagon load traffic in favour of the "Freightliner" and unit trains for movement of bulk loads, chemicals, coal, minerals, cars etc. New vehicles for these services were all built to work at greater speeds up to 75 mph for bogies or 50 mph for rigids and had the new dual pipe air brakes. Four wheels now had wheelbases of 15' or more giving greater stability. How many of your know the APT came out of research into the high speed riding of four wheeled stock?

After the abolition of private owner coal wagons with nationalization and BR's early brown, grey, rust and dirt liveries a pleasant change was the revival of private owners in the seventies. Only a few of these belong to the "owners", some are BR owned in the livery of dedicated customers or leased from companies such as Procor. Wagon had returned with the modern Speedlink wagons and services.

The number of traditional wagons have been in decline since the early fifties, but in the last decade it had reached slaughter proportions. The TOPS computer allowed thousands of withdrawals by making more productive use of resources and now the last few hundred face imminent destruction.

Within a short time, the unfitted freight will be a thing of the past, unlike the end of steam, or even some diesels, passing almost unnoticed, but Railfreight will never be the same again and future generations will not know the meaning of Toad, Mink, Mica, Hyfit, Mex or Conflat. Somehow HAA or VDA doesn't sound the same.

"HASTINGS" DEMU VISITS BOURNE END

To the lists of unusual motive power which have visited the local branch must be added "Hastings" class 202 (6L) DEMU number 1031, first, and most probably last, of its kind to do so.

The occasion was a Branch Line Society tour on 11th February 1984 arriving at Bourne End at 15.39, 2 late, and leaving again at 16.13, 8 late. In the meantime the 3 car DEMU forming the scheduled 15.41 Marlow to Maidenhead passed through driven by Doug Quarterman.

This was the first special to visit the branch since the withdrawal of local staff. The need to stop and reset the points at Bourne End during departure caused the 8 minute delay and serious knock on delays to the branch service.

1031 was the first uniquely Southern motive power on the branch since 32425 "Trevose Head" visited on 29th July 1955. It was also only one week short of the 1st anniversary of the last visit by a DEMU. the prototype 210 set, on 19th February 1983.

The tour had originated at Victoria and after exploring the delights of Brixton, Crystal Palace, Selhurst and Clapham Junction, moved onto Western metals. As well as Bourne End, it visited Greenford LT, Brentford Goods, Windsor & Eton Central, Henley and Paddington before returning to Victoria.

NORTH AMERICAM NOTEBOOK - MATTERS ARISING by Mike Walker

The comment in the last article in this series recording the demise of the Pennsylvania Railroad's magnificent GG1's during the summer proved a little premature. Hardly surprising really as, like cats, GG1's have had many lives. However the end finally came on 31st October 1983.

The GG1 story starts in 1910 when the PRR opened its underground downtown Manhattan terminus in New York. Approached through tunnels under the Hudson River and due to the ban on steam traction imposed by city laws, the PRR opted for electric traction which it continued the whole length

of the 225 mile main line to Washington plus some branches, including the Philadelphia to Harrisburg line. The chosen system was 11Kv 25Hz overhead. The same system was chosen by the New York, New Haven & Hartford whose New Haven to New York main line joined the PRR end on at Pennsylvania station, New York.

The early PRR electrics were an assortment of box cabled units with rigid frames and outside rod drives. Wanting something better, they borrowed a New Haven EP3a, also a box cab but 2-C+C-2 arrangement. The trials were successful so the PRR, in conjunction with Baldwin and General Electric, set about designing an improved version.

The Prototype, 4800, was built by Baldwin with GE electrical gear and was delivered in September 1934. Measuring 79'6" overall it was carried on an articulated 2-C+C-2 underframe, each driving axle had its own AC traction motor. The body had a large centre section about 30' long containing the two cabs. At each end a high nose carried a diamond frame pantograph. The prototype body was constructed from snap head rivetted plates which made it look a bit of a battleship and earned it the nickname "Ole Rivets".

Testing completed, production began in 1935. Industrial designer Raymond Loewy, already employed by the PRR to style its steam streamliners and Pennsylvania station (NY) ticket halls, gave "Ole Rivets" a face lift. All welded bodywork and some subtle curves produced one of the most beautiful shapes ever to grace the iron road everywhere. All the production locomotives were built in PRR's own shops at Altoona, Pennsylvania, with electrical equipment by both GE and Westinghouse. They were rated at 4,620hp, continuous, and geared to run at 100 mph. In the period up to June 1943, 138 locomotives were produced, numbered 4801 to 4938.

The fleet became standard motive power for the frequent inter-city main line and gave reliable service throughout the forties, fifties and into the sixties. As passenger trains started to decline in numbers the GG1's started to appear on local and freight service as the aging box cabs were retired, the Pennsy choosing to reject the new demonstration units offered by GE and Westinghouse.

First threat to the GG1's came in 1966 when the Government backed "High Speed Ground Transport Project" was launched. This featured upgrading of track and new e.m.u's designated "Metroliner" intended to operate at 125 mph. However, before the new stock could be introduced, the PRR joined with the New York Central and later the New Haven to form the ill-fated Penn Central, which started to deploy GG1's north of New York. In 1971 they found themselves on the front of Amtrak trains and in 1976, with the break up of PC, the fleet was divided. 30 were now owned by Amtrak, 15 with New Jersey Transit and the remainder to Conrail, although 20 of these were leased to Amtrak.

The "Metroliners" never reached their proposed speed and were plagued by breakdowns so the GG1's, by now 40 years young, were still racing along at 100 mph. Amtrak ordered 25 heavy 6,000hp C-C's from GE in 1975 to replace the GG1's. These, the E60's, proved unsuitable and were soon relegated to slower services or withdrawn, whilst the GG1's just kept on rolling, another life.

Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Improvement Programme foresaw conversion to 25 Kv 50 Hz which doomed the GG1's, as did the Environmental Protection

Agency who outlawed PCB, a chemical used in transformers and capacitors, and the G's flowed with it! Being uneconomic to change these components the operators secured a brief reprieve in 1977.

The decline was in though. Conrail's were retired by 1980 and Amtrak's followed in 1981. In September 1981 your writer saw his first and only live GGI, NJT's 4872, in the depths of Penn station, New York, later in the day seeing several retired Amtrak's units at Wilmington as the new 7,000hp ASEA B-B's handled the varnish, the end seemed close. But not quite, various last dates were fixed, all passed the GGI's remaining on commuter runs. By late summer 1983 only 4872, 4876, 4877, 4879, 4882 and 4884 remained active but with the sale of nine Amtrak E60's to NJT and the final current conversion set for 1st November the end had finally arrived, just short of a half century of service. 15 remain in preservation, spread as far as St. Louis and Texas, but due to lack of suitable power non will run again.

During their lives the GGI's have had many liveries. The Pennsy used dark blue, brunswick green and tuscan red all with gold pinstripes.. Hard up PC chose black as did NJT and Amtrak although seven of the latter were silver with blue stripes and red noses, a G with a cold! In 1977 following a comment in "Trains", enthusiasts raised money to paint 4935 in Pennsy Green (D200 is nothing new) for excursions until she blew her main transformer in 1981. NJT then stopped in and restored 4877 to tuscan red. This unit was much in the limelight at the end. The very last revenue GGI run on 31st October saw the locomotive fail on its way from New York to South Amboy completing its run behind a diesel!

A curious sideline to the story of the GGI's is Amtrak's search for a replacement. In 1975 GE offered the C-C E60C in competition with a B-B from GM/ASEA. The GE was 20,000 dollars per unit cheaper, and thus chosen. Within six years the E60C was declared unsuitable for high speed service and replaced at great expense by, you've guessed it, the GM/ASEA design, which is successful!

In his excellent talk in November, George Herrman took us on a high speed bus tour of downtown Richmond, Virginia, during which we glimpsed the remains of the old C & O/SAL Main St. station, but we missed the greatest gem the city has to offer the railfan, one still in daily use, the triple crossing.

The Southern Railway was first on the scene building its line from West Point along the north bank of the James River before crossing it in the downtown area. Later the Seaboard Air Line built a northsouth line through Main Street station which crossed the SR and then the river. So far, so good, but railways cross each other all over the world, so what's so special? The arrival of the Chesapeake & Ohio in 1901 that's what. A branch from the main line through Main Street headed west for Lynchburg, crossing the ST and SAL in the process, right over the existing crossing creating what is thought to be the only triple crossing in the world. For good measure, the highway engineers have recently put a road over the C & O a few yards to the east.

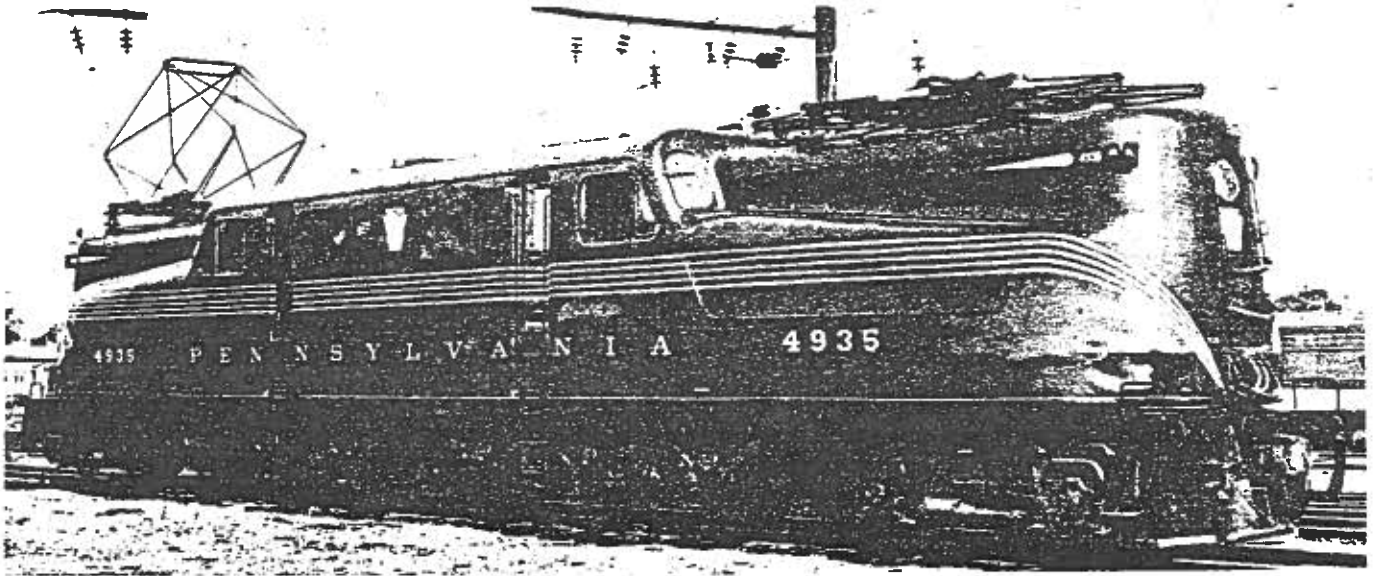
Naturally, such a unique location involving three different railroads is an obvious choice for photography. The problem is, of course, timing. One train is easy to get, two difficult and three well nigh impossible. In the unlikely event of all levels being occupied together sods law states the

photographer, fed up with waiting, is propping up the nearest bar! Fortunately US roads are more flexible than BR and will make arrangements to pose trains.

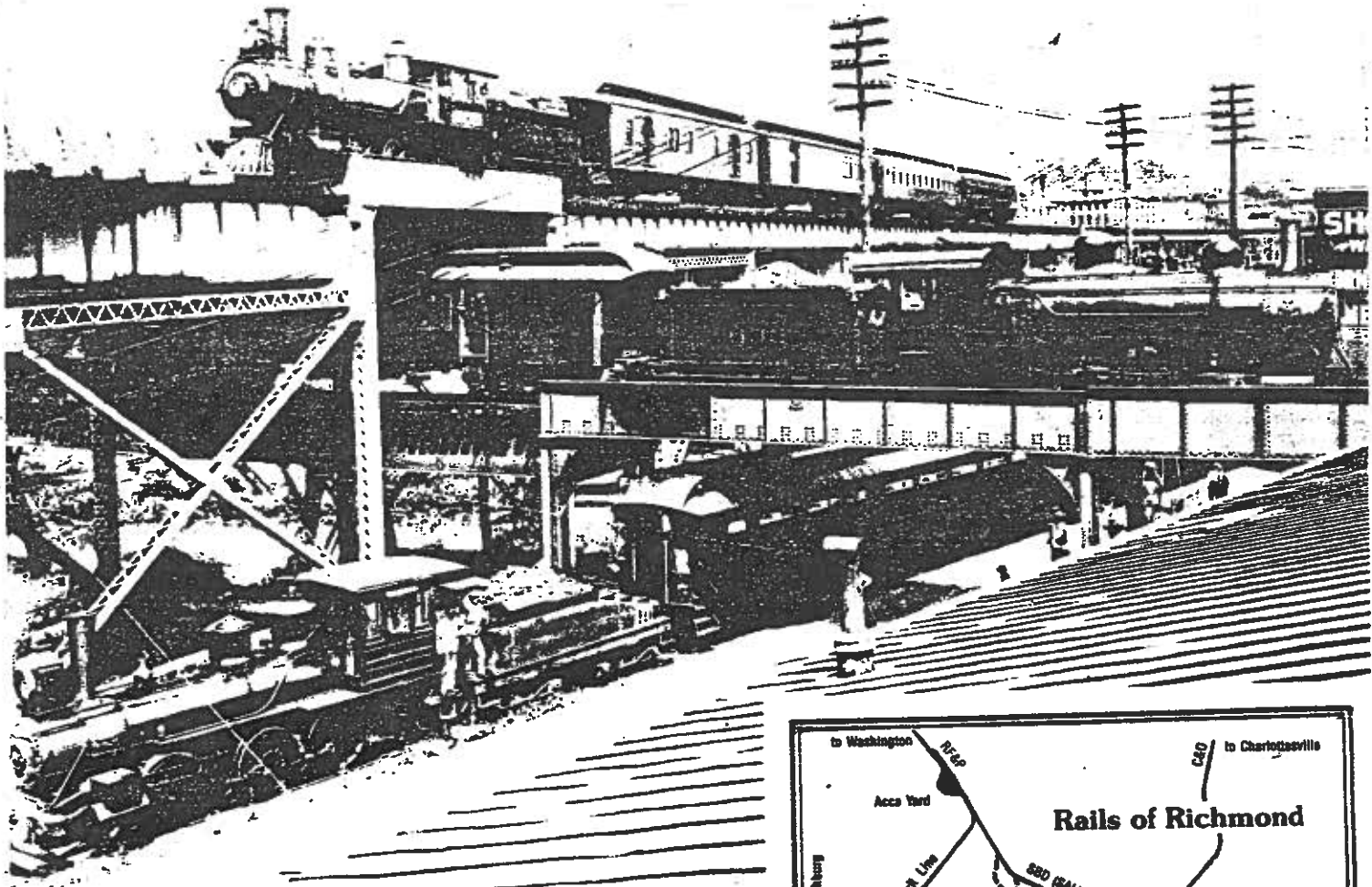
The first occasion was in 1906 when C & O put 4-6-0 175 over SAL's 4-6-0 633 and SR 0-6-0 1504. The result, often retouched, is often found in coffee table type books and is shown here. In 1926 C & O Pacific 433, SAL 4-8-2 267 and SR Pacific 1204 were the stars. Diesels first took part on 1st September 1949 with ST ALCo RS2 2106 and SAL EMD E7 3048, but the C & O remained in steam with 2-8-2 2327. Exactly 17 years later the National Railroad Historical Society held its annual convention in Richmond which was an excuse for another photocall. This featured C & O GP7 5874, SR GP35 2678 whilst the SAL (by now merged into the Seaboard Coast Line) sent along GP40 622.

Most recently more mergers and another NHRS convention in town led to another photocall. On the evening of 19th July 1983 the Southern's preserved but active FP7A's 6143 and 6144 were crossed by a GP40 proclaiming its identity as Seaboard System 6719, the result of the recent Seaboard Coast Line/Louisville & Nashville merger, and Chessie System GE B30-7 8295. Both the Chessie and Seaboard systems are under the common management of the CSX corporation. This latest event, the first by night, tied up all lines for about five hours.

Finally, news of the world's largest active steam locomotive, Union Pacific "Challenger" 4-6-6-4. 3985. Following protests from the National Park Service concerned at grass fires caused by stray sparks and from exhausted firemen (footplate variety!) the big black machine has just emerged from Omaha works following conversion to oil burning. Meanwhile UP is stripping its 6,000hp D-D DDA40X diesels of all usable parts before trading its EMD. Built as the world's biggest diesels in 1969-70 these 98'5" monsters have been in store since 1981, hopefully "Centennial" herself, 6900, will be preserved by UP.

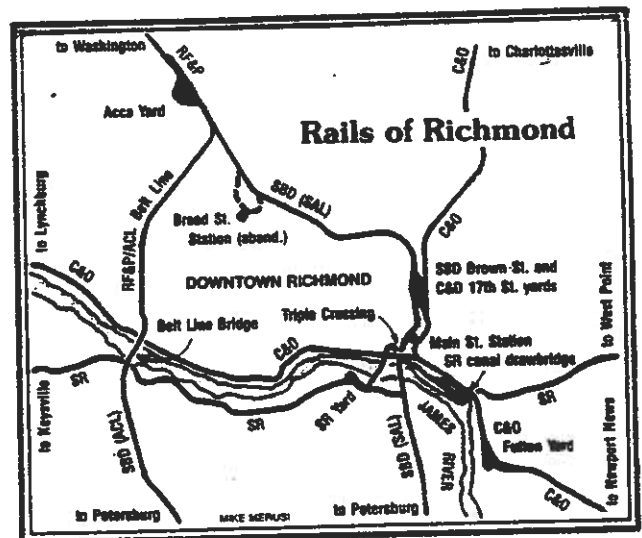


Ex- Pennsylvania Railroad "GG1", 4935, as restored by Amtrak in 1977



Richmond's Triple Crossing, 1906.

- top:- Chesapeake & Ohio 175, F-10, 4-6-0, (Cooke 1890)
- centre:- Seaboard Air Line 633, L-2, 4-6-0, (Baldwin 1906)
- bottom:- Southern Railway 1504, 0-6-0.



PICTURE QUIZ SOLUTIONS

1. Western Region - Deflector hand holes replaced rails following Didcot derailment 1955.
2. 2EPB Class 416/2 Nos. 5781-5795 ex-South Tyneside, note enlarged van area.
3. Protected by track circuit.
4. "The Marlow Donkey" during early seventies.
5.
 - a) Box - West end
 - b) Tiverton - West end
6.
 - a) New Zealand Government Railways
 - b) National Railroad Corporation (Amtrak)
 - c) Swiss Federal Railways
 - d) West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS - A REMINDER

A small number of members have not yet renewed their subscription for 1984. We look forward to your continuing support and the Treasurer is awaiting eagerly for your subscription.

Those not renewing in the near future will not receive the June Issue of the "Donkey".

ANNUAL FAMILY EXCURSION

The eagerly awaited and popular annual excursion is on Sunday 8th July to the Main Line Steam Trust (Great Central Railway) at Loughborough. Your committee has persuaded a reluctant Roger Bowen to act as courier and point out the remains of the GCR on the way north.

Once again a single deck coach will be used picking up in Marlow High Wycombe, Princes Risborough and Aylesbury. The fare will be £6.00 adults and £3.00 children which includes train trip, a deposit of £1 per person is collected upon booking.

These trips are always popular and we are restricted to 53 seats so please book early on the form below to Mike Walker, "Solgarth", Little Marlow, Bucks, SL7 3RS. Tel: Marlow 3899.

MDRS EXCURSION TO LOUGHBOROUGH - 8TH JULY 1984

BOOKING FORM

Name: Tel:

Address:

Please reserve	adult seats @ £6.00 each	£.....
.....	child seats @ £3.00 each	£.....
I enclose	£1.00 per person deposit	£.....
Total Balance Payable		£.....

I intend to join the coach at