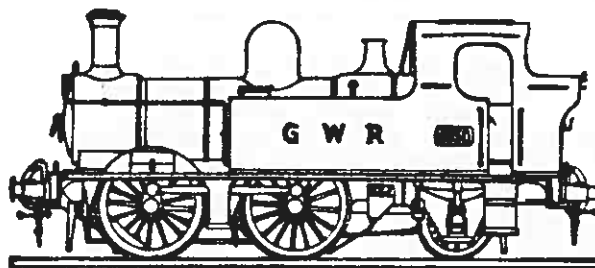


THE MARLOW DONKEY



SEPTEMBER 1985 No 36

Newsletter of the MARLOW & DISTRICT RAILWAY SOCIETY

FROM THE CHAIR

My Committee and I were delighted last May when the Honourable William McAlpine accepted our invitation to become the first President of our Society. It seemed to us an ideal appointment as Mr. McAlpine is a prominent rail enthusiast and a member of our group from its earliest days; there is also the close relationship through the Fawley Museum Society.

In future months we shall read in the various railway journals how the general public, including railway buffs, have viewed the various GW150 activities. Cancelling the Swindon Exhibition was regrettable but understandable. This omission was admirably filled by the Great Western Society at Didcot. In the past eighteen years there has been a veritable transformation of the former GWR engine shed and environs. This 16 acre site can rightly claim to be "a living tribute to the Great Western Railway".

Several members of our Society travelled to Reading University in May to hear a lecture entitled "The Royal Road - 150 Years of Enterprise". The talk, cleverly enlivened by visual aids, was one of a series given countrywide by Mr. Philip Rees OBE. Two members witnessed the Bristol-Plymouth steam-hauled excursions. A party of us saw the broad-gauge replica "Iron Duke" at Reading's Open Day. We then proceeded

to Didcot where a very full programme had been arranged. The GW 150 Exhibition Train was an additional attraction.

When David Shepherd gave his excellent talk to our Society he promised to play host at Cranmore, our chosen venue for the 1985 family outing. He was as good as his word and accompanied us on our inspection of the East Somerset Railway's preservation centre. A full account of a very enjoyable day is given elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Some first rate publications have appeared to supplement the GW 150 celebrations. As was to be expected David & Charles have scored a success yet again with their book entitled "The Great Western Railway - 150 Glorious Years". The publisher's blurb rightly states "Altogether it is an extraordinarily rich book on an extraordinary institution - possibly the best-loved and most-publicised transport system in the world's history. It would be a man (or woman) whose enthusiasm will not be fired".

Das

MEETINGS PROGRAMME

All meetings are held in the Gainsborough Suite, The Chequers, Marlow, commencing at 20.00 hrs.

Thurs. 17 October Red for Danger, Green for Caution - Mike Hanscomb

Mike needs no introduction to long standing members, those of you who have joined in recent years are in for treat. Our best loved signalling engineer will be revealing more of the mysteries of his profession in his own hilarious style.

Thurs. 21 November Chinese Steam in '85 - Brent Hudson

Last year Brent took us across Russia. He now concludes the route of the Trans Siberian Express to Peking and then to Hong Kong. China's huge steam fleet will be featured including the only works in the world still building main-line steam.

Thursday 19th December GW150 in Retrospect

A look back at the highlights and problems of this memorable year. (provisional)

Sat. 21 December ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER
19.30 for 20.00 hrs

Once again the Chequers is the venue for this popular event. The usual choices of menu will be available at a cost of £10.50 per head (excluding wine etc). Please make bookings as soon as possible to Mike Walker, using the form in the centre of this newsletter, with a deposit of £4.00 per person.

Thurs 16 January Annual General Meeting

The formal part of the meeting will be followed by a programme of members contributions or slide presentations.

Thurs. 20 February Photographic Competition

Following the success of last year's contest, we're devoting an entire evening this year, with extra classes (separating home and overseas subjects) so more of you can win. Full details in the next issue.

June's meeting was somewhat off beat but extremely enjoyable. Mike Sharman revealed the contents of his collection of railwayana. It would appear that his house is furnished with such delights as railway clocks, notices and builders plates, even a complete GE station fireplace. His main interest is railway lamps and many restored examples were to be seen in slides and in the "flesh" for inspection. His attic contains hundreds more and it was a wonder to us his house stood up!

The trials and tribulations of the Great Western Preservation Group at Southall were described in July followed by a field visit in August. The group have won their battle against the developers and are now fund raising with a view to buying the site and developing London's only operating steam museum. The curious title of the July meeting "Barry to Tuxedo Junction" was explained as the source of locomotives and some revenue through the group's Jazz Band.

The family excursion was a major success and thoroughly enjoyed by all. It was a pleasure to be entertained personally by David Shepherd. A full report is carried in this issue.

Despite the cancellation of the GW 150 exhibition our Swindon-Gloucester steam trip went ahead on August 11th, again a full report follows.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

We welcome a new member to the Society, Quentin Hawkes of Reading. We hope he will enjoy the Society's activities. He is particularly interested in following some of the BR steam specials and would be interested to hear from other like minded members with a view to car sharing etc.

Bas Woodward has made a full recovery from his

recent operation and resumed his duties as Chairman in July after a month's absence.

Ron Brooks also had to undergo major surgery but is now on the road to recovery. We look forward to seeing him at the meetings again before long. No doubt Ron is using his convalescence to review several more books for his regular column!

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Our membership has fallen to the mid-forties this year which is a cause of some concern. Your committee plans a major publicity drive this autumn to increase awareness of the Society's existence to those enthusiasts hidden in the area. You can all help by trying to recruit new members. In the past a large percentage of new recruits have come through personal introductions and this must continue if the Society is not going to gradually fade away. We also intend having a stand at the Beaconsfield Model Railway Exhibition on 5th October.

CHANGES AT CHEQUERS

We seem to be plagued by alterations to club-rooms! An application has been made for Listed Building Consent to convert the upstairs of the "Chequers" into six bedrooms. If this is passed, and it probably will be as there is a chronic shortage of accommodation if the area, a detailed application will be made this autumn with work starting in January for completion in time for the 1986 tourist season. This of course means we loose our meeting room in the Gainsborough Suite, however a new function room will be created at the rear downstairs which will become our venue. Obviously things may be a little difficult in the transition, so please be patient. We will keep you up to date.

RAILWAY ROUNDABOUT Notes & News

MORE RATIONALISATION

Having abolished the former Divisional Management system, the Western Region have started to examine the reduction in the number of Area Managers. At present it is not certain when the changes will occur but it is likely to be during 1986. Our local area, based on Slough which includes the branch, will be swallowed up by Paddington. Other changes will be as follows:-

Oxford transferred to Reading
Worcester (at present under Oxford) to Gloucester

Westbury to Bristol
Llanelli to Swansea
Cornish Rail to Plymouth

TIMETABLE CHANGES SUSPENDED

A highly controversial set of timetable changes planned to take effect on 30th September affecting the local services between Paddington and Reading have been abandoned. The official reason is due to diagramming difficulties, despite having printed working timetables and public amendments, but it was felt that the changes would be too monumental to be implemented mid year. It is likely they will now be introduced in a revised form in May when the main line service is completely recast.

Dubbed "Death Wish 150" in certain quarters, the changes would have reduced the present off peak four trains an hour service between Slough and Paddington to three, with the existing all-stations train extended out to Maidenhead.

OLD MAIDENHEAD RECALLED

Wild Swan Publications have issued a GW150 edition of the "British Railway Journal" which has a feature article on the original Maidenhead station (1838-1872). Not only is this illustrated by the familiar engravings but early photographs and a complete set of scale drawings of the site and buildings. A fascinating piece of research, well worth the £3.00. It whets the appetite for the publisher's forthcoming volume on the Wycombe and Great Marlow Railways.

DIDCOT MGR CHALLENGED

As a result of the railmen's support for the miner's strike, the CEBG have successfully applied for permission to use trucks to supply Didcot power station in place of some of the Merry-Go-Round trains from Nottinghamshire. Up to 100 trucks a day will journey south, with a similar number of empties of course. A new access road will be built into the station but a tremendous amount of environmental damage will result to many town and villages, all due to the luddite attitude of our trade unions, and only in Britain would it be allowed.

CORNISH RAIL 142's ARRIVE

Not only are a handful of dmu's in WR chocolate and cream for GW150, but the new class 142 twin-unit railbuses now being delivered to "Cornish Rail" for service in the far west wear an updated form of the hallowed colours. The first was noted by member Alan Costello when he visited Derby works in July. Not to be outdone, the next batch of 455's for the Southern are to be green.

59's ON COURSE

More details of the forthcoming class 59's have been released. The first was reportedly being tested at La Grange in August. The tractive effort of 60,000 lbs reported in the last issue is the continuous figure. The maximum t.e. is no less than 122,000 lbs (compared to 54,000 and 61,000 lbs respectively for the class 56). Delivery is set for the year end.

The livery will be mid-grey with a mid-blue band top and bottom, the upper one bearing "Yeoman" in white. A full height 'Y', blue on white, will appear on each side. Official BR illustrations show black underframes and the yellow warning panel restricted to the lower cab front only. The units will carry US style twin beam headlights and "limit bells", just like "King George V". All will be named:-
59.001 "Yeoman of England"
59.002 "Yeoman Enterprise"
59.003 "Yeoman Highlander"
59.004 "Yeoman Campaigner"

These, and the numbers will be on cast brass plates - what else?

JOINT LINE STEAM

At the time of writing the future of the Marylebone-Stratford steam specials are in doubt following the decision by Trans National, the American tour company, to cancel its 150 seat per week booking. The long term future of these trains are dependant on ticket sales, they are presently planned to continue until October.

It is to be hoped that, with the dark evenings coming, BR will withdraw these trains for the winter and reintroduce them next summer with a fresh group of locomotives, possibly including one of the "Castles".

We will continue to bring you the latest news at our monthly meetings. Whatever the future - 1985 has been a year to remember.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Firstly, may I say how interesting I found Bas Woodward's article on the Welsh Highland Railway. What a fascinating line - if ever there was a narrow gauge "folly" then the WHR was it. Having walked stretches of the line I can only say what a magnificent folly. One of preservation's most unlikely dreams is to travel from Portmadoc through the incomparable Aberglaslyn Pass to Beddgelert and on past South Snowdon Station and on to Dinas Junction. Now with the LNWR line gone the WHR would go right into Caernarvon. Such is the stuff that dreams are made of!

On a lower plane I have been asked to expand on two items in recent "25 years ago" articles. Firstly, the standard tanks for the Isle of Wight. The original report (Railway Magazine June 1960 page 443) quoted the Railway Observer stating that three standard class 2 84xxx class 2-6-2 tanks were being modified at Eastleigh, including reduction of the width over cylinders by 7 inches, shortening the chimney by 3 inches and removal of cab side windcreens. In the August issue of Railway

Magazine (page 593) the story changes to say that the alterations "when equipment is ready on one engine only for trials" include a new shorter chimney, reduction in the dome height, cab roof lowered, cab side windcreens removed and fitting of compressed air braking. Subsequently due to a change of plans the order for new equipment was cancelled and the loco never went to the Isle of Wight.

The other item that has caught people's eye was the photograph of a train at Shobnall Maltings. The signal box in the background is now at our President's railway museum. The photograph appears on page 634 of the September 1960 Railway Magazine and was taken by D.H. Ballantyne. The caption reads "Bath Railway Society special train at Shobnall Maltings on May 21, during a tour of the Bass system. The engine, No.11, was built by Neilson Reid in 1899 and is painted red. The four wheel coach is a year older"

I hope this additional information is of interest to our readers.

Roger Bowen

BOOK REVIEWS

Ron Brooks

This time there is something old, something new, something studious but nothing blue.

THE ROYAL TRAINS Routledge £5.95
by C. Hamilton Ellis 0 7100 8293 2

Lots of black & white photos and a feed of the author's paintings in colour. Plenty of information about an era that has gone forever. Did they really live like that?

THE GREAT WESTERN WAY H.M.R.S. £7.20
by G.N. Slinn 0 902835 03 3

Do you lie awake at night convinced that your favourite GW restoration project is being handled by incompetent and ignorant vandals? If so this book will be the cure since it has ALL the answers including a colour chart. Of course you could be proved wrong. A multitude of photos and diagrams and a constant pleasure to dip into.

ELECTRIC TRAINS IN BRITAIN Ian Allan Ltd.
by B.K. Cooper £5.95
 0 7110 0972 4

Pictures and diagrams in plenty and you could end up knowing about the relative merits of DC, 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ AC, Thyristor Control, Rheostatic

Braking. This should ensure your immediate expulsion from the next steam up you attend, but the younger generation will give you rapt attention. A mine of information which is otherwise difficult to come by.

GREAT WESTERN IN COLOUR New Orchard
by O.S. Nock Editions £8.95
 1 85079 0183

This is a celebration by an enthusiast who is aided and abetted by the Meadways. Compared with 150 Glorious Years (see last reviews) it isn't such good value for money but it covers the ground and conveys very well the 'flavour' of the GWR. Apart from the price it would be an ideal present for a favourite nephew.

RAILWAYS & VICTORIAN CITIES Routledge £4.95
by J.R. Kellest 0 7100 0371 4

Railways and Victorian Cities bear a marked resemblance to chickens and eggs - it is sometimes very difficult to decide which caused which. This tome (over 400 pages) with maps where necessary, looks into this for London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow. Not to be taken lightly, and for me in small doses, but constantly revealing unsuspected influences on early railway practice.

One of the "Star" events of British Railways modernisation plan occurred on 12th September 1960 with the inauguration of electric passenger services between Manchester Piccadilly and Crewe.

The 12.15 pm West of England express hauled by Bo-Bo locomotive No.E3040 was despatched, with a special headboard, by the Minister of Transport, Mr. Ernest Marples to mark the commencement of the 25 kv electrification scheme. The scheme, which included the Styal loop and conversion of the 1,500 volt DC Altrincham line as far as Oxford Road, totalled 42 miles and was the first stage of the scheme covering the whole main line to London.

Although some of the main line locomotives had been delivered earlier, delivery was taking place of 35 four car electric multiple units from Wolverton Works, 15 for the Manchester-Crewe service and 20 for the following year's Liverpool-Crewe service. Electrical equipment was supplied by the British Thomson-Houston Co. Ltd.

At the same time a much more mundane type of vehicle was being delivered by the Gloucester Railway Carriage & Wagon Co. Ltd. These were a batch of ten diesel powered parcels vans for the Western and London Midland Regions.

What else of interest? The frontispiece to the September "Railway Magazine" showed a Crewe to Euston train headed by "8P" 4-6-2 locomotive No.46242 "City of Glasgow" running alongside the "new" M1 motorway near Welton, south of Rugby - the photograph clearly illustrates the northbound carriageway of the M1 for some distance with as few as seven cars and no lorries or coaches on it. How times have changed!!

1st October 1960 saw the Centenary of one of the best known of all railway termini, London Victoria. It was built by the Victoria Station and Pimlico Railway, which had a route length of 73 chains!! In effect the

undertaking was a "terminal company" of the kind well known in the USA but unusual in British Railway practice. In its Centenary year Victoria handled 959 trains daily at its 17 platforms, of which nine took two trains each.

With the introduction of the winter timetables on September 12th the Western Region withdrew the Bicester slip coach from the 5.10 pm train from Paddington. This was the last of the once numerous slip coaches in Great Britain. The earliest was introduced in 1858 by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, and the South Eastern Railway. The GWR was however always the principal exponent and after the First World War the only line to resume the practice on a considerable scale.

On September 12th London Transport introduced electric services between Rickmansworth and Amersham, also on the Chesham Branch. Initially the service was operated in off-peak times with "T" type compartment stock with through peak-hour trains by electric locomotives.

An announcement was made that "Castle" class locomotive No.4073 "Caerphilly Castle" was to be presented to the Science Museum at South Kensington where it was hoped that it would form the centre piece of an extension to the museum.

In September the last Great Central "Director" class locomotive No.62664 was withdrawn from service.

After a review of passenger and freight traffic, the London Midland Region decided that the summer only passenger service should be retained on the Ulverston to Windermere Lakeside branch.

The usual mixture of old and new, but it seems a different age, was it only 25 years ago?

SOMERSET STEAM - LONGLEAT LIONS

Len Stroud

The East Railway Company Ltd - The title itself harks back to the proliferation of railway companies of 1800's - early 1900's before amalgamation. It is, however, a section of the line originally running from Wells to Witham via Shepton Mallet, Cranmore and Wanstrow. More of this later but perhaps this 'Little Gem of Fact' will demonstrate the reason behind our M.R.S. members setting out by coach on a 'fact finding mission' on Sunday 21st July.

Bright sun and clear sky boded well for the trip and a good party, including our Chairman newly recovered from an operation, left the Marlow Donkey heading west for a short spell down the motorway, branching off to join (thankfully) the pretty route through the rolling country of Hungerford, passing signposts to roads disappearing into the hills and valleys leaving us to wonder what lay at Inkpen, Great Bedwyn, Aldbourne, Burbage and many more distant villages. It has often been said that it is the destination that matters not - for it is getting there that gives the pleasure. So I must not eulogise too much on conservation (for the destination DID matter).

We did, however, have a very pleasant 'Coffee and Comfort' halt at Marlborough - so much to see but another occasion. Aboard once more we moved on through Devizes, Trowbridge, Prôme to Shepton Mallet and CRANMORE RAILWAY STATION the hub of the ESR.

After our splendid driver manoeuvred the coach through narrow lanes into the car park we were immediately greeted by the man himself David Shepherd, coming aboard to welcome us. There can be no doubt why things hum when he is around - he emanates enthusiasm and verve from the moment you meet him (and this was not my first time). In no derogatory way he makes me think of a young lad who has just unpacked his first Hornby OO!

After pointing out various amenities which we "must not miss" we set off on a guided tour of the station, motive depot and breaking off for a two-sitting hot lunch in a converted carriage, which had been the work of his volunteer carpenter who had transformed it to a dining section, serving counter and an "out of this world" kitchen - and a good meal it was too!

If I can just intersperse at this point, a few figures taken from the 'Journal' for 1983/4 will give some indication of the scale of the operation. Days Operated 59. No. of trains operated 368. Passengers carried 18,077. Passenger train miles 552. Gross passenger revenue £9,052. Average passengers per train 49.12.

A section of the station building is pure Brunel, but I have a photo from 1901 which, changing the fashions of the day (and reducing the staff) could have been taken on our visit. David Shepherd spent considerable

time 'selling' the project and apart from showing the various offices (we noticed the grand Stationmaster's House had gone) he was very proud of his 'ladies comfort room' and also pointed out the original 'Gents' cast iron retreat and the extended platform buildings.

The museum is housed in the signal box (now disconnected) - the lower floor of memorabilia and upstairs the art gallery of the many faceted works painted by David Shepherd - railway and his wild life and conservation interests.

The whole area and its many departments showed much activity. The only disappointment perhaps that we were a week too soon to see 'Black Prince' in steam - ONE cannot have everything and there was so much else to see.

After lunch David Shepherd collected most of us (somebody had to miss out) and took us through the motive dept.

75029 Green Knight is the major reconstruction well on its way, but other teams were busy on (I think) 4 other locomotives with 3 others in FULL working steam for the day. My 1983/4 list shows ten locos on shed from 1398 Lord Fisher via 1719 Glenfield, 4101 Crane Tank, 6634 56XX 31323 Bluebell, 32110 EL, 47493 Jinty, 68005 Austerity, 75029 Green Knight and 92203 Black Prince.

David Shepherd showed us in passing the Video coach which the lads had converted from an old passenger coach with a chequered history, including use by German Forces in the 2nd World War. For 'undisclosed' purposes.

So much to see - so much to hear, not only train noises should go on tape - I have only tried to show what a good day we had, but cannot stop without commenting on the devotion to their individual tasks by the volunteers "and there's never enough" (D.S.).

E.S.R. have recently received permission to steam into Cranmore station from BR and we

piled aboard for a trip down to Mendip Vale (a conservationists delight of flora and fauna - and thoughtful picnic spot) via Merryfield Lane Halt with 3 engines in steam turnround facilities are helped on a regular timetable by always having an engine 'on site' for the return journey.

As I mentioned David seemed available everywhere and in one of his trackside chats he expressed concern at the number of budding railway societies growing around the country, full of enthusiasm and current energy and imagination who have little chance but to lose what funds they have in grandiose schemes which will never reach fruition or even buy a loco. He is not alone in this feeling and even E.S.R. are continually seeking revenue to continue, and this is a well run and tremendously outgoing concern.

I must record one last pleasing note on our trip. Just before our departure we heard that a visitor on the platform having a nostalgic and very moving look round was 91 year old Mrs. C. Hall, the widow of Cranmore Station Master in the 1930's. Rather overcome by the event she posed for a photo with David.

Rain set in with much more than a shower mid afternoon and we boarded our coach for a shortened safari tour round the Longleat Park with a lot of hilarity aboard at animal antics.

- And so for home where we arrived reasonably early with Mr. B. Beckett winning the raffle prize of a signed print (Green Knight/Black Prince) and a slightly less happy quartet as we passed only two hostelrys both with 'No Coaches' signs out.

P.S. One last burst of statistics (why not?)

Good Friday 1863 - 1st 2nd 3rd class
Depart Wells 8.50am arrive Weymouth 11.45am
via Shepton Mallet, Cranmore, Witham & Yeovil.

Advertising footnote: Gin 12/- GALLON
Brandy 24/- GALLON

Say No More!

THE BRILL BRANCH

Roger Bowen

Fifty years ago London Transport closed its most rural outpost and unlikely branch line, the Brill Branch.

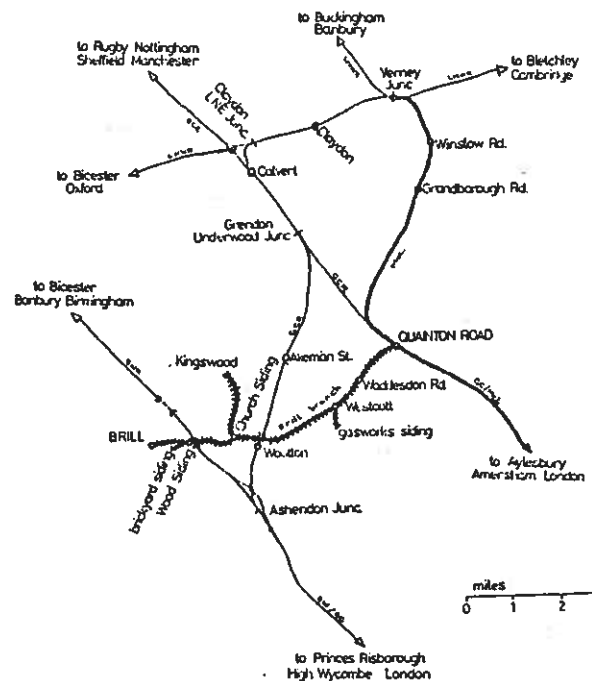
A railway full of myth and mystery. Quite what was the Brill Branch, and how did a short line in deepest mid Bucks become part of London Transport?

On 6th August 1860 the Aylesbury and Buckingham Railway was incorporated to build a line from Aylesbury to Claydon via Quainton. The station at Claydon was named Verney Junction in honour of Sir Harry Verney, deputy Chairman of the Company. Originally backed by the LNWR it withdrew its backing and the GWR loaned the line rolling stock.

The Duke of Buckingham, who was Chairman of the Aylesbury and Buckingham then decided to build a line from his estate at Wotton to Quainton Road, the "Wotton Tramway". The line opened on 1st April 1871 to goods and mineral traffic. The extension to Brill opened in April 1872. In 1872 a passenger service was inaugurated with an Aveling and Porter engine of traction engine design hauling a borrowed GWR carriage.

In July 1890 the Metropolitan Railway absorbed the Aylesbury and Buckingham and after it had opened its main line to Aylesbury in 1892 took over running the Aylesbury and Buckingham from the GW stock. Shortly afterwards the newly built Great Central joined the Metropolitan at Quainton Road. Various proposals were put to extend the Wotton Tramway to Oxford which did not materialise. A limited company was formed, The Oxford & Aylesbury Tramroad Co. which took over running of the line, but the

extension was never built. The original Aveling and Porter loco was pensioned off but miraculously preserved and is now in the



London Transport Museum at Covent Garden. A further change occurred on 1st December 1899 when the Metropolitan Railway rented the line from the Oxford & Aylesbury Tramroad Company for £600 p.a.

Although they purchased the existing rolling stock, the Metropolitan soon brought in stock that it had acquired from the Aylesbury to Verney Junction line, notably the 'D' class 2-4-0T locos built in 1895 by Sharp Stewart.

The next development came in April 1906 when the Metropolitan and Great Central Railways Joint Committee assumed control following the joint bodies formation and control of the whole main line from Harrow South Junction to Verney Junction (including the Chesham Branch). Due to the poor state of the line it was completely relaid and in 1911 the Board of Trade Inspector agreed that the speed limit be raised to 25 mph.

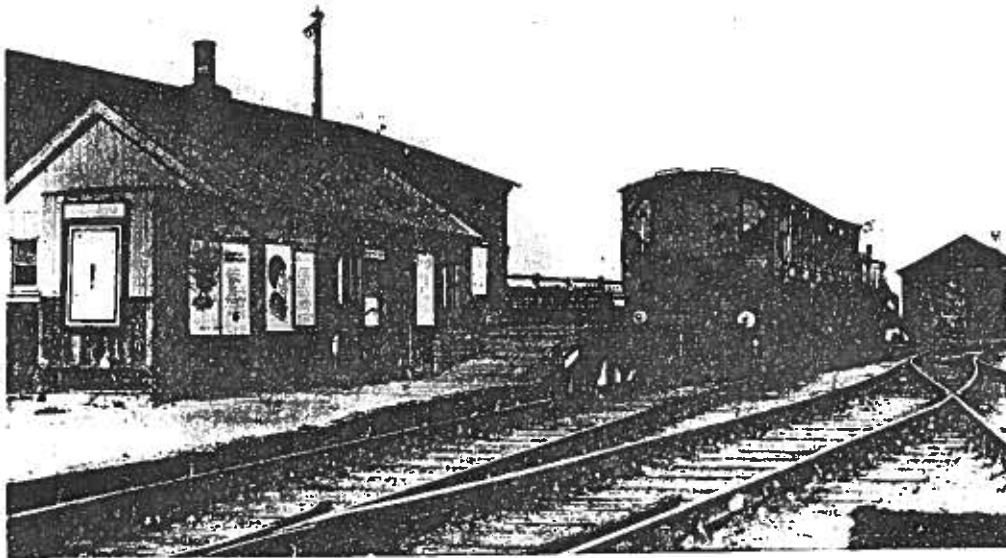
With the electrification of the Underground lines two "A" class 4-4-0T Beyer Peacock engines were allocated to the Brill branch, No. 23 built in 1866 and No.41 in 1869. At this time there were four trains daily each way, usually mixed. The line was still rented from the Tramroad Company who repeatedly tried to get the Joint Committee to purchase, without success.

In 1933 the Metropolitan was absorbed into the London Passenger Transport Board who decided in May 1935 that they would not run suburban services beyond Aylesbury. The Brill Branch was the first to be closed, on 30th November 1935. With the closing of the line No.41 was scrapped in 1936 but No.23 soldiered on as London Transport No.L45 until 1948 when it was withdrawn for preservation and restored to its 1903 cabless condition. It can now be seen at the Covent Garden Museum along with the Aveling & Porter engine.

Today there is little left, even the trackbed has disappeared in part. However Quainton Road Station, which closed in 1963, is the site of the well known preservation group and has a few Brill Tram relics.

If you want to know more the standard book of reference is "The Wotton Tramway (Brill Branch) by K. Jones, (Oakwood Press 1974), although a new book has just been published "The Brill Tramway", by W. Simpson (OPC 1985), which one suspects is more pictorial but with less text than the older book.

Thus it came about that fifty years ago a remote hill top village in Bucks, near the Oxon border, lost its railway line, one uniquely operated by the largest urban transport operator in the World, London Transport.



M820 BRILL STATION 1935
A London Transport Photograph

Pamlin Prints ©
Croydon 1972



DR. FOSTER AND THE MDRS WENT TO GLOUCESTER - IN A SHOWER OF RAIN

David Gardner

Having no transport of my own I arranged a lift and just before 8 am on Sunday 11th August Derek Robson arrived with Citroen for the short drive from Bourne End to Beaconsfield. At the station we met Bas Woodward and at 8.20 am precisely our train arrived behind diesel 47442 to take us via the Greenford Loop to Reading and beyond. Just past Didcot it began to rain and it was still raining on arrival at Swindon, where green diesel No.47484 "Isambard Kingdom Brunnel" was parked next to a rather tatty class 25. Here we met up with Mike Walker and four or five other members of the party, who had mistakenly taken an earlier train drawn by "IKB".

Our connection to Gloucester (in fact the train that Mike and the others had taken previously) was already standing by, a rake of seven Mk.1 coaches painted in chocolate and cream with BR crest on the side.

Engine No.5051 Dryallwyn Castle soon coupled up to the train. This locomotive, the pride and joy of the GWS was for most of its working life named "Earl Bathurst". It was not my first choice of hauling power, 3717 "City of Truro" being high on my list, but in the event perhaps an ideal one as the "Castle Class" were one of the commonest express types on the Swindon-Gloucester line.

After a few photographs had been taken we all duly crowded into our respective compartments and were soon passing row after row of class 25 diesels and O8 shunters awaiting scrapping. This was to me at least, a sinister reminder of the days when steam locos lined these tracks some of them, like 5051, now restored and working again.

The route to Gloucester is very scenic, passing through Kemble (the one time junction for Tetbury and Cirencester), the Golden Valley

and Stroud. It is also steeply graded and passes through three tunnels, so the engine was required to work which made for an exciting journey. I have travelled this section of line many times, both in former steam days and more recently behind diesel power and it never ceases to amaze me what a glorious stretch of railway it is.

Apparently two steam specials were being run every day and such is the appeal of the steam hauled train that large numbers of people of all ages gathered along the route to witness a sight which, until a few years ago, was a rarity.

As it was still raining on arrival at Gloucester and our departure time had been brought forward 40 minutes to 1.20 pm Derek and I adjourned to the Duke of Wellington which was just outside the station and we were very soon followed by a great many others. Unfortunately food was not available at the bar because, as we were told, "Sundays are usually very quiet here!" If only they had known! We left Gloucester promptly at our appointed time and just caught a glimpse of the now lined black 7819 "Hinton Manor" which had apparently failed on an earlier occasion. Our return trip being mainly downhill produced a good turn of speed, possibly as much as 70 miles per hour and, despite my earlier aspirations, 5051 performed well. I noticed little smoke which added up to good coal and firing as well as an engine in prime condition.

On reaching Swindon 4930 "Hadley Hall" was waiting in the wings to take the second special of the day at 3.45 pm. This gave us plenty of time to see the preserved railway village and in particular cottage No.34 Faringdon Road, which has been refurbished as it might have appeared around 1900. Next came the Railway Museum which I last visited in 1962. The most noticeable change since then was the fact that the locomotives were no longer sparkling clean and actually looked used. It was possible to go into the cab of the "Dean Goods" No.2516 and listen to a recording of the engine being driven and an explanation by its driver. Our return stroll took us past the works and the main entrance, which I have gone through on several occasions during the early 1960's.

Gale force winds by this time virtually blew us back to the station where we watched the departure of 4930 Hadley Hall and its train. Our departure was scheduled for 4.16 pm then

it was off to Didcot, where I noticed more than a few changes. The BR station is now called Didcot Parkway and has lost its original front entrance buildings and canopy on Platform One. The water tower is now sign-written "Didcot Railway Centre" and on reaching the entrance the same slogan was produced on a GWR style nameplate.

Two newly restored loco's No.5572 and No.1 "Bonnie Prince Charlie" were in steam along with old faithful No.1466 which was operating its autococh on the branch. As a member of the GWS I am highly critical of its management system. For instance, far too many loco's are being restored at any one time, about six at present. Surely it is better to work on a one or two at a time basis. Even the newly restored "Heavy Freight" No.3822 was in the shed minus its safety valve cover.

In the yard were the usual rusting hulks, several of which will probably never be restored. Why not make static exhibits of them such as Nos. 5322 and 6697. The same situation exists with the coaching stock. Broken glass and scrap metal litters the whole area around the carriage sheds and sidings and should either be closed off to the General Public or cleaned up. The branch line section is an example of what can be achieved and I take my hat off to those volunteers who have worked on this task. Though much remains to be done it does have an air of near completion about it.

The Broad Gauge "Iron Duke" was on a well wagon minus its chimney and I felt annoyed that its preparation for despatch could not have been delayed for one more day so that we could have seen it on track designed for it. Despite misgivings, time soon passed and I managed to snap No. 5572 and visitor No.9466 before my film ran out!

Our Class 47 made light work of the return journey and swept over 'Brunel's' route towards London. A stop at Reading, then just beyond the restored Hanwell station we once again took the loop line, making stops at West Ruislip and Gerrards Cross before Derek, Bas and myself took our leave of the train at Beaconsfield a full 32 minutes earlier than expected.

Congratulations to Chiltern Trains for a well organised and truly enjoyable day and thanks also to Mike Walker who informed us of the trip in the first place. Unlike Dr. Foster there is every likelihood that I will go to Gloucester again.

EIGHT DAYS TOO SOON

John Sears

One half of B.R. closed on 1st January 1948, the other on 1st May: government ownership had lasted just over two years.

No, don't reach for your reference books, or start writing to the editor. Instead book yourself a seat to come exploring Somerset, Devonshire and Hamilton.

If you've chosen the right day we'll go the Great Way Round and see a "toaster" on Amtrak's North East Corridor main line near the Baltimore-Washington International Airport. Ignore the grumbles of the non gricing types on the 'plane at the devious routing. Don't they know it's only poetic justice? Weren't Bermuda's original British visitors really bound for the North American mainland?

Captain Speaking's eased the 1011 down onto the runway at Kindley Field. We're here! Bright, clear air, blue sea, white roofs, sandy beaches and railway remains to explore.

We can start once the taxi is out of the airport and on The Causeway. Over to the right are the remains of the railway bridge from Ferry Point. When we're on the North Shore Road the track bed is a fairly constant companion for the next couple of miles.

But enough for now. The Hamilton Princess awaits (you're paying!), with showers and refreshments. Tomorrow we'll start to explore seriously. It's only a short walk down Pitt's Bay Road into Hamilton. We take the first left after the Ferry Terminal and walk down Queen Street to the library. A couple of hours here mugging up on the theory and history, followed by lunch at the Coral Beach Club and we'll be off to Somerset to start exploring.

In 1908 Bermuda passed a Motor Car Act of the sort we need today - it banned them. Despite such a hopeful start the usual rigmarole began over efforts to provide rail transport. The first attempt was in 1910, when the Bermuda Trolley Company Ltd., a Canadian corporation, tried and failed. Then in October 1922 a report on a light railway was published by a Mr. W. Foxlee, M.I.C.E. Next, on 4th August 1924, the Bermuda Railway Company Limited was incorporated by an act of the Legislature. It was granted an exclusive concession to "operate a rapid transit rail system in the Island during a period of 40 years". 1925 brought an early Christmas present on the 22nd when the plans were approved. Construction was to start within six months and to take 2 years. However, three time extensions were needed

until the first section of the line was opened. On 1st November 1931 the line opened from Hamilton to Somerset. St. George, the Island's old capital, was linked to Hamilton, its new capital, in February 1932.

Balfour, Beatty was responsible for the construction work which must have been based on best Irish tradition. The defects make amusing reading. Some cuttings "leaned towards the centre of the track". Rail, originally rolled in 1915 to Russian standards was only 67lbs/yd when new and had been stored in the open since manufacture. The sleepers were untreated, widely spaced, there was no ballasting and no attempt was made at draining the right of way. Added to that lot were the 7 steel, 15 wood and 16 composite bridges which hadn't been painted! I'm sure you can imagine the troubles the young railway was born with.

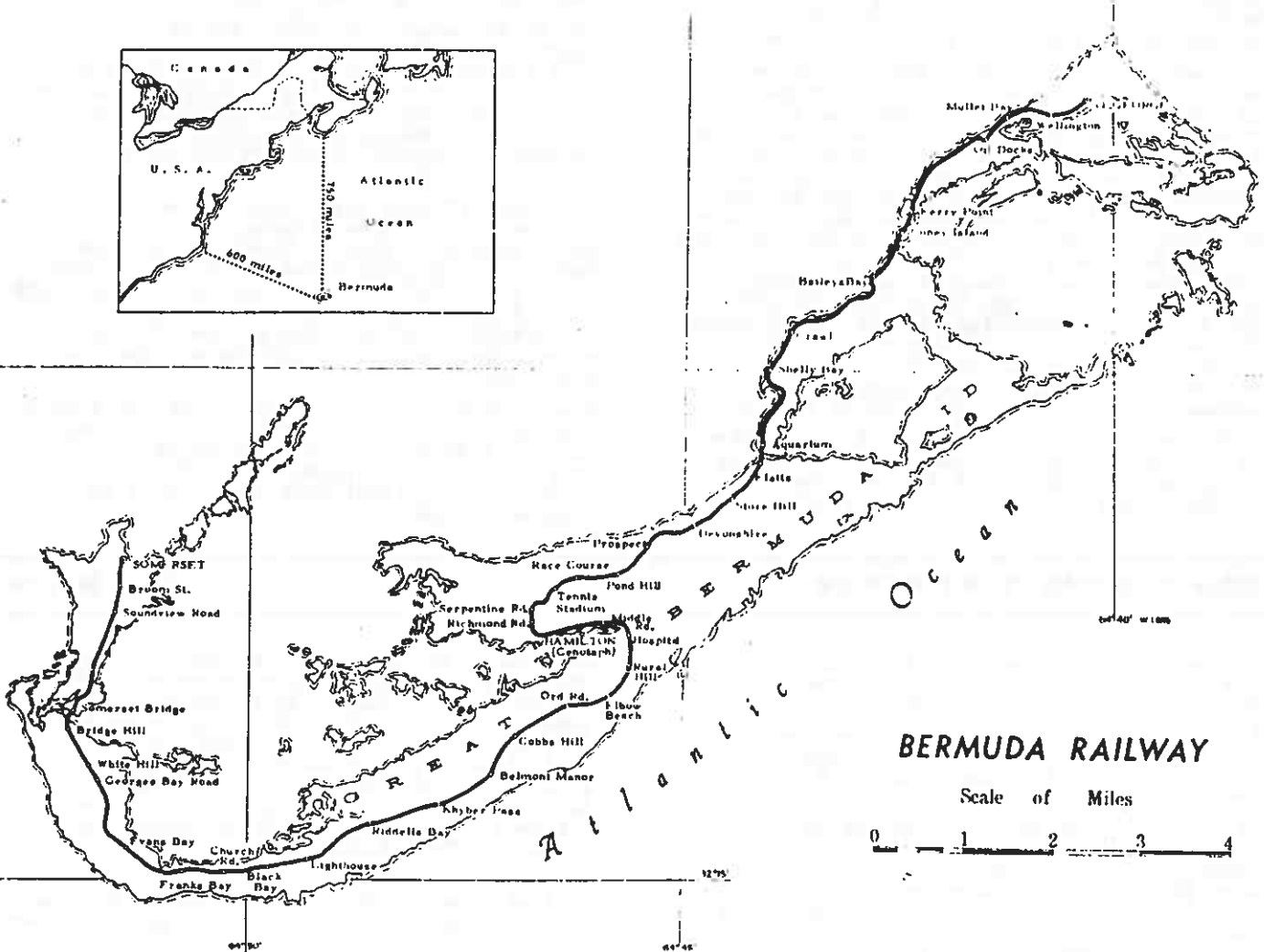
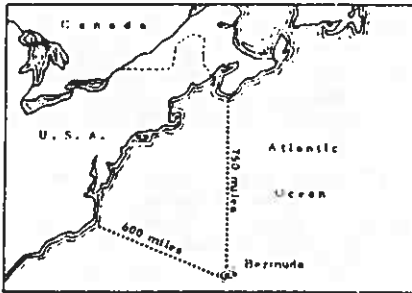
The line that was built ran practically the entire length of Bermuda from St. George in the N.E. to Somerset in the west. From St. George to Flatts the line's course was along the North Shore, with plenty of bridges, including a swing bridge between Ferry Point and Coney Island, cuttings and embankments. After Flatts the line climbed to a summit around

prospect - all of 90 feet above sea level! From there it dropped down through the outskirts of Hamilton, entering the city at the Tennis Stadium. A curved tunnel took the line under the gardens of the Bermudiana Hotel onto Front Street.

Street running along Front Street, with downtown shops on one side and ocean-going ships on the other, took the line to its stop at the Cenotaph. Next a long, curving trestle began the bottom half of the large S the line made around Hamilton. Another climb followed up to Rural Hill from where the line undulated along the middle of the Island. Just before Church Road the line curved through a deep cutting as it dropped down to Franks Bay, where a bridge was necessary to maintain an even alignment. From there on to Bridge Hill the line used a level and fairly direct course.

The railway's 150 yard crossing to Somerset was quite a contrast to the road bridge - the smallest drawbridge in the world. The railway ran under the slopes of Fort Scaur, pursuing a back door entrance to Somerset, 21½ miles and 130 minutes from St. George.

To be concluded.



BERMUDA RAILWAY

Scale of Miles



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