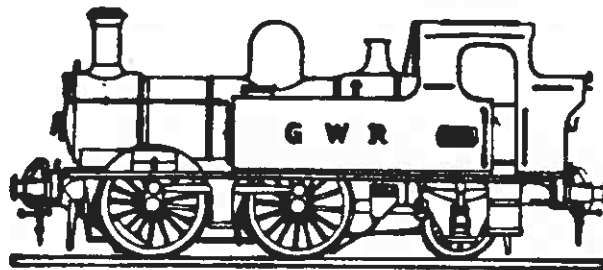


THE MARLOW DONKEY



MARCH 1986

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Newsletter of the MARLOW & DISTRICT RAILWAY SOCIETY

FROM THE CHAIR

Our Society's recent Annual General Meeting was actually our one HUNDREDTH gathering.

Following for film shows and repeat visits by our speakers it would appear that between 60 and 70 talks have been given over the past nine years.

The Christmas Dinner at the Chequers last December attracted fewer guests than earlier, but it was still a very enjoyable occasion. Full marks must go to Mike Walker for his organisation. Everyone seems to have had an extremely pleasant evening.

The 1985 Committee has been re-elected to continue for a further year. Two co-opted members, Peter Robins and John Sears, will bring fresh ideas into our deliberations.

Suggestions are being pooled for celebrating our tenth birthday in 1987. It is amazing how the Society has progressed since Les Spicer as Chairman, and our first Committee, launched the club in January 1977. Perhaps a booklet can be produced this year listing our many excursions and activities.

On 24th January 1986 BR ordered a fleet of electric locomotives at a cost of £25 million. We are promised "the most futuristic-looking trains seen on the network". They will be more bullet-shaped than the HST's but their top speed will be only 100 mph. 29 locomotives are to be built at Crewe; there is an option for a further 31 next year.

Though they are intended initially for the Euston-Glasgow service BR obviously has the projected Chunnel in mind.

The twin rail-only tunnel linking Britain and France is to be opened in 1993. There have been many abortive starts to a Chunnel in the last century (I have just been reading a document produced for Ernest Marples in 1963), but the Thatcher-Mitterand agreement could well produce results. Brussels in three hours, Paris in 3½ hours, are promised by the Channel Tunnel Group and its French partner, France-Manche. What price a future Society excursion incorporating 31 miles beneath the English Channel!

Das

MEETINGS PROGRAMME & CLUB EXCURSIONS

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

All meetings are held in the Gainsborough Suite The Chequers, High Street, Marlow starting at 7.45 for 8.00pm.

Thurs. 17 April RAILWAYS ON WIGHT ✓

A look at the islands railways past and present as an appetiser for our summer trip this year.

Thurs. 15 May MAIN LINE STEAM

With main line steam much in our thoughts recently we hope to get an insight to the planning, operation and maintenance of such trips. (provisional)

Thurs. 19 June POST OFFICE RAILWAYS

The Post Office is one of the railways oldest and biggest customers as well as operating its own system deep below London. (provisional)

Thurs. 18 July STEAMEXPO '86

A party of members is attending this major event as part of a tour of the Canadian West, this is their first hand report.

Sun. 13 July FAMILY OUTING TO ISLE OF WIGHT

This year's excursion to the Isle of Wight has something for everyone. Options allow visits to both the I o W Steam Railway and BR line, sightseeing around the island or just a day on the beach, with the comfort of a modern air-conditioned luxury coach. Full details are contained within. Contact Peter Robins, 95, Broom Hill, Cookham. Tel. B.E. 27870.

Thurs. 21 Aug. POST OFFICE RAILWAY VISIT

A rare opportunity to spend an evening examining the driverless trains carrying mail under the streets of London. Numbers are strictly limited so put your names down early. Contact Peter Robins. (provisional)

Sun. 31 Aug. STEAM DAY AT FAWLEY

We are invited to a steam day at our President's private railway at Fawley between Marlow and Henley. All members plus wives, families and friends are welcome. There is a charge of £1-50 per head to cover costs. Please obtain tickets from Peter Robins.

SOCIETY NEWS

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Following the AGM the Society's committee has been restructured. Bas Woodward, Pete Greatorex and Alan Wheeler continue as Chairman, Secretary and Publicity Officer respectively. Mike Norris takes the new post of Vice-Chairman, whilst John Sears is taking over as Treasurer allowing Mike Walker to concentrate on producing the Marlow Donkey. Finally, Pete Robins becomes social secretary looking after trips and events such as the Christmas Dinner. The addresses of the officers appear on the back page.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome a new member to the Society, Mr. G. W. Dunn of Marlow.

PREVIOUS EVENTS

The December meeting differed from the advertised, taking the form of a video evening. Something of an experiment but everything went well and we've received many complimentary comments. Special thanks to Charlie Smith and Bob Young who supplied the equipment and those who lent tapes. Something we shall definitely repeat.

The Christmas Dinner this year was slightly low on numbers which was a pity because Carol Shippey and her team set new standards of excellence.

The AGM's formal business was conducted swiftly and followed by a programme of short slide shows. Pete Robins on Turkey, Quentin Hawkes on GW150, Mike Walker on Long Island and John Sears with an entertaining sideways look at station architecture around the world.

February 8th saw our exhibition stand in action again, this time at the annual Chilterns Trains show at High Wycombe Town Hall.

NORMAN ASTON-SMITH TROPHY

The membership awarded the trophy this year to Len Stroud for his nostalgic reflection on the Marlow Donkey which continues in this issue.

STARTING TIME

Can we remind members that meetings start at 8.00pm. In recent months starts have been getting gradually later, meaning meetings go on later. Please try and be in the Gainsborough Suite by 8.00pm to permit a prompt start, remember some members have to get the last train home at 10.39 pm!

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Entries were disappointingly down this year, but the standards were still high. The results:

A - Colour Slides UK

1st P. Greatorex - Great Western Ltd. at Whiteball
2nd Q. Hawkes - Leander on Hatton Bank
3rd R. Young - L & H No.1 at Havorthwaite

B - Colour Slides Overseas

1st P. Robins - Pakistan SPS 4-4-0
2nd P. Greatorex - Guayaquil & Quito
3rd P. Robins - Polish TrkT48

C - Colour Prints UK

1st M. Walker - Santa Special at Appleby
2nd T. Dearling - 46229 at Aylesbury
3rd E. Lewcock - Iron Duke, the firemans view

D - Colour Prints Overseas

1st M. Walker - Furka-Oberalp
2nd M. Walker - Rhaetian crocodile
3rd M. Walker - Werneralpbahn

E - Black & White Prints

1st D. Gardner - 1421 at Bourne End
2nd D. Gardner - 4472 at High Wycombe
3rd R. Young - 4555 at Buckfastliegh

The Eddie Lewcock Cup for the overall winner was awarded to Pete Greatorex for the Class A winner.

Our thanks to all who took part. Lets have more support next year!

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A small number of members have as yet not renewed their subscriptions for 1986. Hopefully this is just an oversight and we look forward to receiving your subscriptions in the near future. Members not renewing by June will be deemed to have lapsed and will not receive the next Donkey.

To those who have renewed, many thanks for your continuing support.

Subscriptions should now be sent to John Sears, 32 West Fryerne, Parkside Road, Reading RG3 2BY.

RAILWAY ROUNDABOUT Notes & News

YEOMANS ARRIVE

The four EMD JT26CW-2SS locomotives (Serial Nos. 848002-1 to 4) arrived in the UK on 21st January. Following a visit to the RTC at Derby, they commenced trials and training in February with the first full load adhesion tests on the Savernake Incline on February 9th. 59002 managed to climb at 17mph dragging 43 loaded PTA hoppers and two idling 56's (approx. 5000 tonnes) but the trials came to an embarrassing halt when an earthing fault on the braking system put the silver painted unit out of action at Woodborough. A successful test on February 16th by 59.001 and 59.004 was followed by the start of revenue service on February 18th.

101 AT BOURNE END

Add another type to the list of unusual equipment which has appeared at Bourne End. On 9th December 1985 a 3 car Metro-Cammell class 101 dmu, C811, worked the evening peak shuttle from Maidenhead. C811 is allocated to South Wales normally.

AND 20's AT READING

Once strangers to the area, English Electric class 20's are becoming frequent visitors to Reading. Working both singly (rare anywhere) and in nose to nose pairs they are often to be seen in the west yard or m.p.d. around lunch-time.

BOURNE END BOOK SOON

We are informed by Wild Swan Publications that Paul Karau's definitive work on the Wycombe and Great Marlow Railways is now in the final stages of production and is expected in the shops by the year end. Several members have contributed to this mammoth work which has taken more than a decade to prepare.

MEMO TO STEVE MEDWAY

The in thing seems to be symbols to identify the home bases of locomotives, i.e. Terriers, Stags, Lizards, Cats etc. So how about a nice oak tree on the side of certain Western allocated locomotives and HST's.

STEAM ON THE MSWJ

There's a rare chance to travel on the last part of the Midland & South Western Junction still in BR ownership, between Andover and Ludgershall, on March 22/23rd. Each day there will be five return trips with the added and rare bonus of steam haulage on the Southern Region. Motive power will be a ~~Hunslet 0-6-0ST~~ ~~Austerity "William H. Austen" from the Kent & East Sussex with four BR Mk.1's.~~

NEW EQUIPMENT FOR BR

Currently BR is receiving its largest intake of new stock since the end of the Modernisation Plan. The variety is bewildering so here is a brief summary.

Locomotives

58.001 - 58.050 BREL Doncaster/GEC
3250 hp Co-Co heavy freight

59.001 - 59.004 General Motors (Electro-Motive)
3300 hp Co-Co heavy freight

87201 - 87.229 BREL Crewe/GEC
5400 hp Bo-Bo electric
streamlined 87/1 (WCML)

89.001 Brush Traction
7000 hp Co-Co electric
Prototype only (WCML)

91.001 - 91.031 BREL Crewe/GEC
6000 hp B-B high speed electric

These are the "Electras", 140 mph units developed from APT power cars. One cab streamlined, one flat fronted (ECML)

ACE 3000 ABANDONED

From the US comes news that steam locomotive promoter Ross Rowland is dropping his quest to build a modern steam locomotive efficient enough to displace diesels. Rowland is shutting down American Coal Enterprises, his steam research/construction company and selling ex-C & O 4-8-4 614, used in test service on the C & O early last year. Lack of investors and falling oil prices are given as reasons for the demise of the ACE Project.

DIESEL MULTIPLE UNITS

"Skipper" 2 car Railbuses
142.001 - 142.096 BREL Derby/Leyland
143.001 - 143.035 Barclay/Alexander
144.001 - 144.023 BREL Derby/Alexander

"Sprinter" 2 car units
150.101 - 150.150 BREL York (20m long)
150.201 - 150.285 BREL York (23m long)
155.301 - 155.335 Leyland
156.401 - 156.514 Metro-Cammell

ELECTRIC MULTIPLE UNITS

All built at BREL York

317.349 - 317.372 4 car 25 kv A.C.
GN Suburban

318.250 - 318.269 3 car 25 kv A.C.
Ayrshire coast

319 (46 sets) 4 car 25 kv/750 v D.C.
LM/SR cross-London

455/9 4 car 750 v D.C.
5901 - 5920 Southern Region

JOINT LINE



STEAM UPDATE

The programme for steam specials on the Joint Line for 1986 has been announced. This year the trains will be steam hauled from Marylebone to Banbury on the outward trip and throughout from Stratford on the return. This is designed to improve timekeeping, last year the time allowed to turn at Hatton as well as to coal and water at Stratford often proved to be inadequate.

Locomotives will be LNER Pacifics 4472 Flying Scotsman, which has proved slightly troublesome since its arrival, and 4498 Sir Nigel Gresley together with SR 4-6-0 777 Sir Lamiel and BR 4-6-0 75069. SR Pacific 35028 Clan Line is expected back later in the year following repairs.

Fares this year are £35 including lunch and afternoon tea. Bookings can be made through High Wycombe Travel Centre (tel. 41561). Once again demand is expected to be heavy.

Dates of Operation: Sundays April 20, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 18, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 inc ✓
May 4, 11, 18
June 1 to Aug 31 inc ✓
Monday May 26 ✓

SLOA also have two specials arranged.

Sat ~~28~~ March Kings Cross-York-Marylebone

Sat 12 April Marylebone-Stratford return

75069-177
75069 out/177 back out

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

May I please take up some space to comment on Mike Walker's "One week in September"?

- 1) The Western's HST are not "increasingly tatty" as anyone who's travelled in one of the refurbished jobs will know.
- 2) It's Sid, not Syd!
- 3) My continuous commuting (allowing for hols of course) has revealed cycles in performance, be it time-keeping, cleanliness or cancellations.
- 4) The 8.01 Bourne End now calls at Slough, Langley and Ealing. 6 minutes extra seems a reasonable price to pay for a far better service to those places. For example:-
'68/9 B. End d 8.07 20 min. wait at Slough a 8.52 Maidenhead (Reading a 8.45 8mins at M'head
'85/6 B. End d 8.01 Thru' train Slough a 8.27 (Reading a 8.40 10 mins at M'head
Trust Mike to travel to Reading!
- 5) I haven't got any records, but I'd be willing to bet the Down Relief wasn't closed for as long as Mike believes.
- 6) Adverse weather to me means anything adverse to operating a railway, such as torrential rain flooding track or electrics;

hot spells buckling rails. What does Mike think it meant - Snow?

- 7) I resent the suggestion that the driver had to wade through his paper and sandwich, thereby delaying the train. Come on Mike, I know you read the "Mail" but don't write like it too!
- 8) The 17.11 Paddington is normally the usual Mk.I rubbish forced on the longer distance commuters, unfortunately. Anyway, if it's alright for 'buses to be air-conditioned, why should the 17.11?
- 9) The 16.53 arrival from Cardiff (its the 15.20 Cardiff) is not booked to connect with any Gatwick train, so none would have missed their 'plane. Besides, there is no 17.04 to Gatwick.
- 10) And finally! I had the misfortune to use Alder Valley from Bourne End to Maidenhead on a Sunday recently. The 'bus (10.19, first of the day) was 11 minutes late, took twice as long as the train and cost 10 pence more than the standard rail single. Why should the short distance 'bus passenger subsidize the needless 'bus routes such as that from Marlow to London?

Thank you for your time, Mr. Editor -
John Sears

This time we have books which cover a very wide range of information, yet all are totally railway orientated - remove the railway component and nothing would remain. There is no doubt that an interest in railways can lead on to the most unusual topics.

RAILWAY CARRIAGE ALBUM (2nd Ed) Ian Allen Ltd
G.M. Kichenside ISBN 07110 1058 7
£10.95

This is one of the superb reference books that are available to quench the ever growing thirst for 'railway' information. Having said that, it also has over 50 pages of readable history of the railway carriage. The photographs, 400 or so in black and white, plus six coaches in full colour, are all crisp and clear and the paper and binding are a pleasure to handle. Not for the general reader but a mine of information if carriages come into your area of interest.

RAILWAYS OF THE RAJ Scholar Press £15
Michael Satow & Ray Desmead ISBN 085967 5335

It is now becoming respectable to allow some (not much!) credit for the Empire. The Railways of India are working still and the multitudinous races of that great sub-continent continue to use their railways to capacity as they did from day 1! This well produced book has about 50 pages of illustrated history and then a wonderful collection of black & white photos together with four fine colour plates. If you wanted to get an elephant into a truck or even get an elephant to shunt one for you, this book will provide a picture to show you how. All Fawley volunteers are advised to make a study of these procedures as you never know what might be coming next.

FREIGHT WAGONS & LOADS - GWR Oxford Pub. Co.
J.H. Russell SBN 86093 1552
£12.95

When the early railways were mooted few, if any, considered the carriage of passengers as a necessary priority, but very early prints show quite sophisticated specialist vehicles. Regular commuters assure me that this system still pervades the higher echelons of BR, but this book puts the continued interest in freight into perspective. The photographs are top quality, the information encyclopedic. Beautifully produced - I have the feeling that the mythical general reader would like this.

AMERICAN RAILROAD CERTIFICATES £9.50
Anne-Marie Hendy Stanley Gibbons Pubs Ltd
ISBN 0 85259 296 5

A short review of a fascinating book. A question which constantly comes to my mind about railways is how did they ever get the money to build them? The short answer is by selling those beautifully engraved pieces of paper and the American Railroads had plenty of financiers who could bring this to a very fine art. Each certificate of the 150 or so has a little essay on the railway that issued it and the temptation to look further into these early lines is difficult to resist.

THE RAILWAY ALBUM Sampson Low Marston & Co
E.S. Wolff

Another of those books that high class Uncles bought you for Christmas. The wealth of information they provided for their readers is surprising and of interest in providing a contemporary look at the railway scene. Another winner especially included for Alistair, but you would need a time machine (or a jumble sale) to get a copy.

EXPO The 1986
World Exposition
Vancouver
British Columbia, Canada
May 2 - October 13, 1986

STEAMEXPO - THE EVENT OF '86



1986 sees the centenary of the founding of the city of Vancouver and the completion of the Canadian Pacific transcontinental main line. In the one hundred years which have followed, a collection of tents and primitive log cabins has developed in Canada's second city, spreading around fjords and the Fraser River delta, some twenty miles across and with a population of 1.2 million (5% of the entire nation). To mark this landmark the city is hosting a World's Fair, EXPO '86, with the theme "World in Motion, World in Touch" and commissioning the world's most advanced rapid transit system.

As a special event for Expo, the last week of May will see STEAMEXPO, billed as the largest gathering of steam power for a quarter of a century. Upwards of 25, and possibly as many as 40, working steam locomotives will converge on the city. They will come not only from Canada and the USA but from such diverse nations as the UK, Indonesia, India, Czechoslovakia, Germany and even China. Starting on Friday 23rd May and repeating daily until 1st June, the locomotives will form a cavalcade (a la Rain-hill) each morning along the joint Canadian National/Burlington Northern mainline into the city before going on public display for the rest of the day alongside the CN station, conveniently just across Main Street from the East Gate of the main Expo site. This latter extends over 173 acres around one of the city's harbours, includes the old CPR roundhouse as a pavilion, and linked by part of the new rapid transit line to Canada Place a further Expo centre built on the old CP transoceanic liner terminal in the main harbour alongside the former CPR station.

At the time of writing, the exact list of attending locomotives was not confirmed. Pride of place will go to CPR374 which hauled the first train in 1886 and newly restored after years of neglect in a Vancouver Park. Most engine will be the city's leading tourist attraction, CPR "Royal Hudson" 2860, taking a break from its usual trips on the British Columbia Railway. Other known exhibits include a 4-4-0 from the Virginia & Truckee, a Union Pacific 0-6-0 and one of the Shay geared logging engines once so familiar in the province. Eight coupled engines will be there in abundance, including CPR3716, 2-8-0; GNR6060, 4-8-2; Nickel Plate 765, 2-8-4 and three or four 4-8-4's, UP 8444, SP 4449, N & W 611 and possibly C & O 614. The Chinese hope to enter a 2-8-2 straight off the production line.

Britain will be sending the 1979 replica of "Rocket", plans to send "Mallard", agreed by the NRM and Steamexpo, were abandoned as a sponsor could not be found to underwrite shipping costs.

Due to a steam ban on its US trackage by Burlington Northern, the steam engines will enter Canada on the UP/CP interchange at Kingsgate BC and then run to Golden followed by a 470 mile run through some of the west's most spectacular mountains and canyon's to reach Vancouver, so the build up could be even better than Steamexpo itself.

A party is going out from the MDRS and a full illustrated report will be given at the July meeting.

Without doubt the most significant news of the Spring of 1961 and arguably the most significant railway event in recent history was the announcement in April 1961 that Dr. Richard Beeching, Technical Director of Imperial Chemical Industries had been chosen as Chairman of the new British Railways Board. He would succeed Sir Brian Robertson, Chairman of the British Transport Commission in June 1961. Even at this stage the appointment was controversial as Dr. Beeching was to receive a salary of £24,000 a year, whereas Sir Brian only received £10,000 a year. It was pointed out however that Dr. Beeching would not gain financially as this was the salary he was already getting from ICI. The Railway Magazine reported "A noteworthy feature is that Dr. Beeching's present intention to return to ICI after only five years probably will cause him to be regarded in railway circles as a surgeon rather than a railwayman".

Deliveries of new types of stock slowed down to British Railways with the only type being a batch of open second class trailer cars with miniature buffets, by the Metropolitan-Cammell Carriage & Wagon Co. Ltd. for the North Eastern Region, which completed an order for that company of 760 diesel railcars. The buffet cars had gangwayed connections and were normally expected to operate as units in four-car sets. The Irish Railways were however getting a new locomotive type. 15 950 hp diesel electric locos for C.I.E. had been delivered from the General Motors Corporation of America. Other modernisation items of note included the re-signalling of Birmingham Snow Hill and the new power signal box there.

Preservation was in the news. Four passenger coaches from the Chesham branch of London Transport were acquired by the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society. They were built for the Metropolitan Railway in 1898. The first section of the British Transport Commission's museum at Triangle Place, Clapham, South London opened to the public on 29th March 1961.

It was the first permanent exhibition in Great Britain entirely devoted to the history of transport by rail, road and water. Referring back to the Bluebell it was reported that the BTC had offered them a former LSWR Adam 4-4-2T No.30583 and the last North London Railway locomotive 0-6-0T No.58850 for a total sum of £1,900.

Closures were in the news again. From 12th June services were to be withdrawn from the Paddock Wood to Hawkhurst branch of the Southern Region along with the remaining freight service from Robertsbridge to Tenterden on the former Kent & East Sussex Railway (passenger services had been withdrawn in 1954). Two months previously the Eastern Region withdrew passenger services between Bury St Edmonds and Long Melford, whilst the Western Region withdrew local trains between Bristol and Swindon via Badmington. On 1st April the C.I.E. closed 91 route miles of railway in West Cork, including branches to Baltimore and the former Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway. May saw a closure of a different kind, the publication of the last edition of Bradshaws Railway Guide, the first of which dated back to 1839.

Other points of interest: All 12 "Princess Royal" class pacifics on the LM region were withdrawn in mid-March. A letter in the June 1961 railway Magazine expressed concern that another preservation society was being proposed this time for the Kent and East Sussex Line. The writer considered that the supply of labour, cash and public support were not inexhaustible and that there was only room for a limited number of societies. He considered that the limit had been reached with three narrow gauge and two standard gauge lines being operated by Societies at that time.

Thus in the second quarter of 1961 we see the start of the "Beeching Era" and the early years of the railway preservation movement along with the remorseless list of closures, albeit small compared with a few years hence.

MINUTES OF THE NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 9th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at 20.00 hours on Thursday 16th January 1986 in the Gainsborough Suite of the Chequers, Marlow.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were expressed on behalf of members D. Smith, D. Robson, D. Abbot and R. Bowen.

2. MINUTES OF 8th AGM

The Minutes of the 8th AGM, published in the Marlow Donkey, were approved unanimously

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman, Bas Woodward, presented his review of 1985, and highlighted the following:

- (a) Hon. W.H. (Bill) McAlpine had accepted the post of non-executive President of the Society.
- (b) Membership had reached 52 by the end of the year; Stan Verrunder had been made an honorary life member.
- (c) A full and varied programme of meetings had been organised throughout the year, the undoubted star attraction being David Shepherd of the East Somerset Railway.
- (d) Summer outings had gone well, particularly the trips to Reading/Didcot in

June and the East Somerset Railway in July.

The Marlow Donkey newsletter continued its excellent standard and the Chairman expressed his thanks to Mike Walker and Mrs. Walker for their efforts. He also gave a vote of thanks, seconded by Ron Brooks, to other committee members.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer, Mike Walker, reviewed the balance sheet for 1985, showing an improvement in the overall balances from £189.75 at the start of the year to £233.29. This was attributed to the increased subscription rate of £5, and the fact that monthly attendances at the Chequers had been reasonably stable.

The Treasurer concluded with the statement that there was therefore no need for any change in the subscription rate this year, much to the relief of the meeting!

6. SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Secretary, Peter Greatorex, briefly outlined some of the meetings planned for 1986, including the Isle of Wight Railway in April as an appetiser for the Summer outing. It was also hoped to arrange a talk in June on the Post Office Railway, combined with a visit in August. Looking further ahead to the Autumn, Brent Hudson would be returning for a third (and final?) instalment of his marathon Trans-

Siberian/China trips. An approach was also planned to the Railway Inspectorate for a talk on railway accidents.

7. PUBLICITY REPORT

Alan Wheeler, Publicity Officer, started his report with apologies for the lack of magazine adverts, due to his recent house move; he now hoped to put more effort into these.

The Society had gained useful publicity at the Beaconsfield Model Railway Exhibition last year, and was planning to attend the Chiltern Trains show/exhibition at High Wycombe in February.

8. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

1985 Committee Bas Woodward (Chairman)
Peter Greatorex (Secretary)
Mike Walker (Treasurer)
Alan Wheeler (Publicity)
Mike Norris
Roger Bowen
Roger Woodham

Bas Woodward, Peter Greatorex and Mike Norris were standing down in accordance with Society rules, but offered themselves for re-election; carried unanimously.

In addition, John Sears and Peter Robbins were co-opted onto the Committee for 1986.

9. 10th ANNIVERSARY

The tenth anniversary of the Society would occur in 1987, and various ideas were out-

lined for celebrating the event:

- (a) Display of photographs in the Anglia Building Society in Marlow during Spring 1987.
- (b) Anniversary dinner (but this may adversely affect the Christmas dinner?)
- (c) Exhibition, followed by David Shepherd talk in the evening, at the Court Gardens, Marlow.

The meeting felt that, although it was a good idea to celebrate the anniversary solid support was required from the full membership to make it a success. Obviously, much more discussion was needed during 1986.

10. NORMAN-ASTON SMITH TROPHY

A ballot was conducted for the best article in the Marlow Donkey in 1985: the winner of the £10 book token was Len Stroud for his entertaining article - 'Donkey Days', published in the December Newsletter.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ernie Dove asked that meetings during 1986 start on time at 20.00 hours. The Chairman promised to improve timekeeping but that it depended on members being in their seats by 19.55.

The meeting was finally closed by the Chairman at 21.10 hours, to be followed by various members' slides.

Balance Sheet for Year Ending 31 December 1985

Income

Balance in hand on 1.1.85	189.75	(223.18)
Annual subscriptions	234.00	(106.00)
Meeting Subscriptions	169.00	(130.00)
Summer Excursion Income	294.00	(263.00)
Dinner Income	241.50	(304.00)
Donation	10.00	
Draw	21.00	
Building Society Interest	20.95	(16.15)

£1180.20

Expenses

Room Hire	157.50	(124.00)
Speakers Expenses	49.00	(43.00)
Transport Trust Subscription	16.00	(16.00)
Dinner Expenditure	260.61	(362.55)
Summer Excursion Expenditure	312.40	(247.40)
Competition prizes	29.95	(10.00)
Newsletter Printing	81.60	
Publicity & Exhibition	14.68	
Postage & Stationery	10.17	
Treasurer's Expenses	5.00	(44.12)
Secretary's Expenses	10.00	
	<u>946.91</u>	
Balance Anglia Building Society	209.41	(150.96)
Balance National Westminster Bank	14.12	(27.02)
Cash in Hand	9.76	(11.77)

£1180.20

Membership at 31.12.85 52 + 1 Honorary (53)
Average monthly attendance 30 (28)
(excluding April 1985)

BUCKINGHAM TO BANBURY

Roger Bowen

In the last edition of the "Donkey" closure of the Buckingham to Banbury (Merton Street) line was referred to in the "25 years ago" item.

The section closed was part of the Verney Junction to Banbury line. The line was originally planned by the Buckingham and Brackley Junction Railway which merged with the Oxford and Bletchley Junction Railway in 1847 to form the Buckinghamshire Railway. At this stage the line had not been built! The line was actually opened in 1850, from Verney Junction to Banbury the line was 21½ miles long. The Buckinghamshire Railway was finally absorbed by the London & North Western in 1878. The northern part of the line was later joined by the Northampton and Banbury Railway who had running powers over the last 5½ miles into Banbury. This line became part of the Stratford-on-Avon and Midland Joint in 1910. Always hard up, passenger services ceased on this line in 1951. The Verney Junction line soldiered on a little longer and became part of British Railways experiment in using single unit railcars. This commenced in 1956 with a shuttle of two railcars from Buckingham to Banbury. Two new halts

at Water Stratford and Radclive Crossing were opened, although Parthinghoe which had closed when the Blisworth service ceased was not reopened. The service was well liked but inconvenient due to the change to steam trains at Banbury. After 18 months the cars ran through to Bletchley.

Unfortunately, however, although an operating success with full trains at peak periods it was not a financial success. In July 1960 it was announced that although an operating loss of £14,000 p.a. with steam had been reduced to £4,700 with the diesel service, application was being made to close the line to passengers. In fact the last train ran on the last day of 1960. The bus company replaced the half hourly rail service with a twice a day bus service! The freight service lingered on until the line closed to all traffic in December 1964. The line was finally lifted in February 1967.

Those who are interested in finding out more, not only of the Buckingham to Banbury section, but the whole line to Verney Junction should read "The Banbury to Verney Junction Branch" by Bill Simpson and published by O.P.C in 1978.

Harking back to the Society's recent trip to the East Somerset Railway, many of you will remember seeing a coal stage and loading chute. My reason for mentioning this (under the above heading) has a purpose. An extract from the E.S.R. Journal (Winter 1983-84) reports that on Sunday 25th September 1983 an unfortunate accident occurred at Cranmore when a locomotive (Jinty 47493) struck the loading chute causing the whole structure to collapse, injuring two members who were duly detained in hospital. Both happily retained no lasting effect after release in five and fourteen days respectively. This report immediately brought to my mind, coupled with a famous song title "Anything you can do I can do better", an incident at Marlow Station in the thirties.

On arrival from Bourne End with a timetabled passenger train the loco was uncoupled, ran to the buffers and after the usual whistle blast as a warning to the signal box to change points, proceeded by the run round line alongside the empty train and then diverted up the spur line to the water tower. I presume this was normal practice and allowed for in the timetable. What occurred after watering certainly was NOT allowed for, and I never learned the reason why (who would tell a boy anyway?). Whether the loco was meant to reverse back to the points and proceed forward to the signal box before reversing again to rejoin the train standing at the platform, or whether it intended to proceed from watering to coaling, I can only conjecture. Proceed, however, it did - straight into and through the engine shed. Let me say straight away that the shed had doors at one end only and it was not a happy sight to see the smoke-stack and forward buffers of the 0-4-2 so mistreated and framed in fallen masonry and brickwork - the footplate staff were too far back for injury and I have found no translation for what was said - one half of the unlucky pair was Welsh anyway! It can also be imagined the signal man, who was in direct line of fire a few yards up the line in his box, had less than charitable thoughts at the time. (I believe a relief loco came down from Bourne End to maintain service but NOT to immediate timetable).

As I said "conjecture" was a much used word allround - but who did what to which I never knew, but the term "low profile" could have been first used at Marlow. The end wall of the shed was rebuilt and the infill of new brickwork was a continued reminder of "the act" until the shed was demolished along with the station in 1968. The loco suffered no more than indignity and returned to service after re-railing and cleaning off. How I would like to have listened in to the following enquiry.

It was the practice on an annual basis to cordon off the approach to the station on one day each year to maintain GWR rights of ownership and forestall any public right of way. Guardians of the barriers on that day were usually staff detailed (I always thought) for their size and burly approach ready to impress the law on any who took umbrage at having to "ask" to proceed on station business - and not everyone took kindly to seeking permission from the "lower orders" in this way. I remember, being but a lad, how teasing the men could be to such as I who "only wanted to see my dad". This barrier was also erected on the same day at a level crossing up the line. I doubt that BR have the staff available should this practice be revived.

The title affectionately given to the original engine - A 0-4-2 saddle tank - seems to have been retained over the years, although this loco was rebuilt as a side tank in 1884 and eventually scrapped in 1935, "Marlow Donkey" over later years became a general title covering whatever 0-4-2 was in service at any given time as regular exchanges with Slough shed stock became a pattern for necessary overhaul. It is probable, from the travelling public point of view, that many assumed the engine

was the one and only - unless note was taken of the change in the number painted thereon - 1448, 1450, 1462. A far cry from the original 522 seen in 1883.

61XX class locos were used on the Maidenhead/Wycombe line and from time to time came into Marlow with excursions and specials.

To complete the station area layout, one should not forget the lengthy run of allotment plots that ran the Southern Boundary of GWR property which were mainly well kept by many of the staff with a certain competitive spirit. Sadly these became less and less used in the later years as staff was depleted or retired men were replaced by younger staff less inclined to follow the pattern of their elders. Looking from the present platform over the coal bunkers towards the housing estate it is hard to recognise among the scrub, couch grass and weed any semblance of tidy plot and horticultural excellence.

Characters among the station staff were plentiful, with their facets and peculiarities, and I am pressed to forget their names, even though the years have passed, I would not wish to cause offence or ill feeling towards myself from descendants of these worthy people. I will say straight off that personal appearance in regard to uniform seemed good and would give a strong pointer toward present day attitudes - many a button was polished, some even sported roses or carnations in their buttonholes - porters were then an available species, not only did they take luggage for travellers but even opened the compartment door.

The Stationmaster was a strict disciplinarian and his appearance on platform seemed effective, but I remember his pet hate for anyone (staff or public) who dared to whistle in his hearing. We all have some idiosyncracies in our make-up and in his case many an errand boy was 'sent packing' from the platform even while delivering a package for dispatch from the parcel office. Staff, of course, were wise to this and curbed their urge to whistle, but even passengers were made aware by facial expression and only their seniority would save them from more concrete abuse.

I remember vividly that the station even supported a carriage cleaner (female) prior to World War 2. An excellent worker who, once a day during the morning shunting period, would attack the empty passenger rake with great energy and polish everything in sight during the period of the train's idleness. Passenger stock was of course non-corridor and the seating was made up of long cushions the full width of the compartments, these were daily hauled onto the platform (weather permitting) and thoroughly beaten by this diminutive soul using her broomstick in reverse. Before replacing them she clambered aboard, swept out, dusted all in sight, polished the gas globe in the roof (and sometimes the windows) finishing up by polishing (not dusting) the carriage door handle and the brasswork of the grip. A glow of satisfaction was well deserved when 'her' train was clean for another day.

The station clock in the general waiting room was as reliable as most GWR clocks and any slight loss or gain was attributed to weather conditions affecting the 'innards'. Many a city gent adjusted his own timepiece as he glanced upwards dashing for his early morning train to town (which unofficially had probably been held as he was seen panting up the station approach). One such 'gent' was heard to say 'I set my day by your clock'. Imagine his mouth-agape chagrin some days later to arrive at the station to find a member of the staff adjusting the time with a held aloft broomstick!! I hope it didn't warrant a letter to The Times.

"There's a phone call for you, Eddie..."

"Oh, thanks. Hello - Motive Power Depot ... Yes? ... A breakdown turnout ... I'll be right along ... Thanks very much".

So began another breakdown incident, at 8.30pm one night in December 1948, when I was temporarily with the 'on call' staff at Derby Loco Shed. It didn't take long to get into working clothes, and cycle down to 'Four Shed', as it was known.

On a winter's evening, this shed took one back into Victorian England - and more - for at this time, like so many other sheds, it presented a battered appearance which certainly would compare most unfavourably with its genuine Victorian condition. Indeed, some of the staff could remember that the turntable woodwork was holystoned regularly, in the 1920's. This made striking contrast to 1948, when the only things cleaned were pairs of dirty hands.

I arrived to find a few stalwarts checking the tool-van, and bringing to life the mess-van. Tilley lamps invariably were used for lighting and a coal stove for cooking. In fact, on a long trip (measured in hours, not miles), a really comfortable fug could be worked up in the mess-van. Plenty of strong tea was provided and a few of the lads would usually form a 'card school'.

It was the general rule that, when 'working out' to an incident, the train had top priority, running with express headlights; but when 'working back', it took its turn in the queue - so it was in the lap of the gods, when one got back 'on shed' ... not that anyone worried much on that score. Provided life wasn't at stake - which was the case most of the time - it was interesting and enjoyable work. I worked with the crew for several weeks, during the winter of 1948: and at that time, callouts averaged about three a week.

On the evening in question, it was about an hour before enough people had mustered for a start to be made. It was anticipated that the District 'Super' would put in an appearance, later on; so the 4-F loco which had been rustled up gave a short whistle blast, and off we set, in the direction of Peak Forest - with one 40-ton crane, match truck, mess-van and tool-van. Apparently, single-line working up the final gradient of this great climb had been in force, between Peak Forest Junction and Peak Forest itself. Due to a misunderstanding, a set of permanent catchpoints on the down road (but 'up' road, physically, if you're with me), had been unclipped by the ganger, before the final return of a Rowsley 2-F ... which poor machine peremptorily had been tipped off the track, complete with tender.

We arrived a little before midnight; and, with due caution, the gang got down into the six-foot way, to have a preliminary look around. It's as well to be sure of your landing ground, when getting out of a breakdown train on a black night. A year or so before, in the same area, Little Billy - 4'6" high - had stepped out on the snow ... and disappeared from view in a six-foot drift.

The first part of the operation was soon under way. It comprised cutting the loco-tender coupling, with a gas torch, the pins having

been jammed in securely and refusing to shift.

Soon, the crane was positioned precisely for lifting the tender, and the 'riggers' were run out. These are positioned to cramp down onto timber baulks brought from the tool-van. Rail cramps are used also; but these cannot take the main lifting reaction. Riggers are a must for any heavy lifting ... as a millwright foreman found out, one day at Derby Works, when carrying out lifting tests on a repaired crane: He'd not bothered to use them - and that crane was on its side for some time, before another could be found to right it.

With hills rising on either side of us, that night in the Peak was very dark - and very still, except for us. Standing back a little, I had time to take in the scene set out under the breakdown lamps. The noise of the crane engine and the clang of the odd sledgehammer echoed and re-echoed through those hills, whilst silhouetted figures of men doing a job with an experienced eye moved unhurriedly - yet purposefully - with an occasional, 'This way Bert', or, 'Take it steady George', serving for orders. It formed one of those railway scenes which, once stamped on the imagination, is not readily forgotten.

The Peak District is an ideal setting for such scenes. Another I remember was off the little snowbound town of Bakewell, seen at night from the rolling, pitching footplate of a Jubilee coming hotfoot down from the Peak, one winter's night - coaldust, steam and a whitehot fire setting the background to a fairytale scene.

Breakdown operations at Peak Forest continued until the tender was back on the road - at which point the gear was packed up and the riggers stowed back in the crane. Then the baulks were set back clear of the permanent way. The reason was that we had to set back and over to the blocked road, to let one important train pass: the night mail. About fifteen minutes after we were over the road, it came through, with a Horwich Crab in charge.

After this interruption, we had the line to ourselves for a few hours ... and the operations were repeated as before, but with extra lifting wires and straps used to take the greater weight of the engine. Once in the air, she was slewed slowly round and lowered onto the track, with steady eye and plenty of manual assistance. Then a temporary coupling was made between engine and tender, and a spare engine was provided to get her home.

Our job was over now and we could clamber back into the warm mess-van for mugs of hot tea and sandwiches. Soon, low intermittent rumblings from the track indicated we were homeward bound. Interest was raised, at Ambergate, to see which way we would be routed: mainline would give us a quick run back to Derby ... whilst freight-road would provide the reverse. Fortunately, it was mainline.

I arrived back at 'digs' to find the household finishing breakfast. With a few sallies to my fellow lodgers, regarding people who stay abed all night, I adjourned upstairs for a wash and a nap.

It hadn't been a newsworthy trip, after all ...

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