

Marlow & District
Railway Society

Please reply to:

THE MARLOW DONKEY - NO. 4

DECEMBER 1977

Your Chairman and committee wish a very Happy Christmas, and peaceful New Year to all members of the MDRS, and indeed to all railway lovers everywhere, including the BRB.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

There is no doubt at all that to ride behind a King or a Merchant Navy pacific as some of our members did on 1st October last is an experience not to be missed. The sounds and the smell of smoke from a big engine working hard are as appealing to the enthusiast as anything you care to name, and it is only to be regretted that British Rail's publicity department has either not understood the potential or has failed to convince the Board that they could make a great deal of money running main-line steam locomotives in every part of the country.

But there is, of course, very much more to railways than that, and some of us proved the point when we joined a three car DMU at Slough on 19th October, for a gentle amble along some of the Thames Valley branches and up to Bicester. Now there is another aspect of railways that has a distinct and unique appeal - the unusual (for passengers) train workings, the reversing, the stops in places no longer visited by scheduled passenger trains, getting to know the BR crews and even having a pint with them in pubs adjacent to long dead stations - all these things and many more call for a poet to record rather than a mere purveyor of prose.

How much more attractive would the trip have been had the train been hauled by one of Collett's much loved 14xx class, or by a pannier? Surely the possibilities for making profit out of honest nostalgia have been proven elsewhere, so why have not BR cottoned on to it? Is it too much trouble? Or are there problems which BR have not publicised? Surely lack of locos and stock can not be the reason - the country is stiff with both, thanks be!

We can but hope that the enlightened ones in authority (surely there must be some) will have their way but meanwhile for me, as for many others, the spirit of all railways is to be found in the picture of a 1400 simmering quietly to itself in the bay on a peaceful and sunny afternoon. Though I might be tempted by the sight of an up fast hauled by a Castle with eleven on going hell for leather through Sonning cutting.

IN MEMORIAM

Most of our members will by now know of the untimely death of one of our members, Norman Aston-Smith, on 11th September. Norman was well known in Bourne End, not only among railway enthusiasts, and his love of railways was deep and abiding. In recent years it took the form of active participation in the affairs of the MMRPA whose members will certainly miss Norman as much as those of our members who knew him. To his family we offer our sincere condolences.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 12TH JANUARY 1978, AT 2000 HRS

The first AGM of our Society will be held in the Marlow Donkey on 12th January 1978, and all members are asked to make a special effort to be present. In accordance with the rules three members of your Committee will stand down and will be eligible for re-election. Any other paid up member who would like to serve (and I mean "serve" - there is work to be done) is asked to make his nomination known to Roger Bowen (in writing) not later than 1st January 1978. Should there be more nominations than vacancies an election will be held during the AGM. The new committee will then meet briefly after the AGM to elect the Society's officers for the coming year. If any member has it in mind to raise a subject for general discussion it would be appreciated if he would give the Secretary Roger Bowen prior notice in order that time may be allocated for the purpose.

The Agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Chairman's Report
2. Treasurer's Report
3. Provisional announcements of Events in 1978 - Secretary
4. Items for general discussion
5. Election of committee members

Time permitting the AGM will be followed by an ad hoc display of members' slides. Please let Roger Bowen know what you have so that he can arrange a programme. The projector and screen will be provided but you have to give the chat.

Enclosed is a copy of the rules of the Society for those members who have not received a copy. The present members of your committee are as follows:

Les Spicer - Chairman
Roger Bowen - Secretary
Stan Verrinder - Treasurer
Bob Hatfield
Roy Mee
Mike Norris
Bas Woodward

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

On 22nd September 1977, five pre-nationalisation railway films were shown and probably the highlight for most members was the construction of a pacific locomotive at Crewe in 1938 and the operation of the crack LMS train Coronation Scot in 1937.

Roy Mee and Bas Woodward conducted a finely described trip down memory lane on 20th October, when they both returned to their early railway days from 1929-1939 around Bedford and Oxford. They enjoyed it and so did we.

The Isle of Man Railway was the subject of David Cotterill's illustrated talk on 17th November. His knowledge and affection for the railway was obvious to everyone, and this added to everyone's enjoyment of the evening.

Our gratitude to Roy, Bas and David for their very successful efforts. Also to Bas once again for supplying and operating the film equipment and to Roger Bowen for arranging the film evening.

VISITS

There have been three visits or trips in which members of the Society have taken part. On 10th September, a visit was made to the Severn Valley Railway; the 1st October saw some of our members enjoying steam traction on the "Midland Jubilee"; a ramble down the byeways of the Thames Valley took place on 29th October. Each of these is described in this issue by Mike Walker, Mike Norris and Bas Woodward.

FUTURE VISITS

British Rail is running a trip to York from High Wycombe on Saturday 11th March 1978. Few details are available at the moment but the cost is £3.90 second class and departure will be about 0830-0900 which will probably mean about 4-5 hours in York. Some members are already going. Would you like to join the party if so please give your names to Roger Bowen at the December meeting.

There is no more news about the projected trips to France and to the LBNGRS.

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME AT 20.00 HRS

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| 15 Dec 1977 | Christmas Film Show - consists of "Night Mail" "Thirty Million Letters" and "In Touch with the World". |
| 12 Jan 1978 | Annual General Meeting followed by members' slides. |
| 16 Feb 1978 | Signalling by Mike Hanscomb and helpers. Practical demonstrations will be a feature and members will be asked to join in. |

- 16 Mar 1978 Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway - a talk by A.P. Tompkins who is the chairman of the LBNGRS and will show the Society's film "Steam Train to Stonehenge".
- 20 Apr 1978 "Day of Steam" a record of the 1973 centenary run of the Marlow Donkey and other railway films presented by the Bourne End Cine Club.
- 18 May 1978 London Transport Railways by Mike Halls.
- 15 Jun 1978 Railways of Western Canada by Mike Walker.
- 21 Jul 1978 Irish Railways - further details to be announced.

MEMBERSHIP

We bid welcome to the following new members of the Society since the last issue in September:

- L. Clarke 27 Willoughby's Walk, Downley, High Wycombe, Bucks. Tel: HW 31374
- J.R. Colverson Morays Wharf Lane, Bourne End, Bucks SL8 5RU. Tel: BE21312
- T.A. Gibson 4 Aston Lane, Remenham Hill, Henley on Thames, Oxon. Tel: Henley 2456
- P. Griffiths 8 Loddon Road, Bourne End, Bucks.
- A.J. McMillan 9 Fair Acres, Prestwood, Gt. Missenden, Bucks.
- N. Miles 27 Straight Bit, Flackwell Heath, Bucks. Tel: BE 25280
- C. Mortimer 3 Hillwerke Chinnor, Oxon. Tel: Kingston Blount 51866.
- G. Nutley Lindfield Stag Lane, Gt. Kingshill, Nr. High Wycombe. Tel: Hdmer Green 5622.
- R. Summers Kenrick Ramscote Lane, Bellingdon, Chesham, Bucks. Tel: Chesham 758
- R.H. Summers East Wing Cholesbury Tring, Herts. Tel: Chesham 737.
- J. Young 41 Elizabeth Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon. Tel: Henley 3270.

Our membership is now up to 39 and now includes ~~our~~ first member of the fair sex Jenny Young. At least one member is pleased about Jenny joining and that is Bas Woodward because he is no longer the last name on the membership list.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Sorry to bring up at this festive time of year the subject of annual subscriptions. Members, except those who have paid in advance for 1978, are reminded that the annual subscription is payable on 1st January 1978. Would you please pay your subscription to the Treasurer either at the December meeting or prior to the AGM in January. If you are paying by post the Treasurer's address is on the form enclosed.

TWO POINTS OF VIEW - Contributed by Ted Gregory

From "The Book of the Thames from its Rise to its Fall" Published in 1859. "Immediately on leaving the shadows which the tall trees of Bisham throw on the water, the eye and mind are relieved by the graceful suspension bridge which spans the Thames at Marlow - Great Marlow. It is a quiet town, and has the recommendation of being not very close to a railroad".

From a letter to the local newspaper in 1862. "Strangers are rarely seen in Marlow nor will they be while access to the town is so difficult and tedious, we must have a railway link with the line which connects our bigger neighbour, Wycombe, with the Metropolis".

PUBLICITY

Since the Society was formed earlier this year we have had a considerable amount of publicity. Many of you will have seen our entries in the "Comming Events" columns of "Railway Magazine" and "Railway World". The July "Railway World" also carried a few lines announcing the formation of the Society. We also received a mention in the Autumn 1977 edition of "Travel Back" which is the journal of the Transport Trust.

The greatest amount of publicity we have received however has been from the "Bucks Free Press" which has carried five items on the Society's activities.

TRANSPORT TRUST

Members will know from the September number of The Marlow Donkey that we are now affiliated to the Transport Trust and enclosed is a copy of the Council report to the 13th AGM on 26th November, 1977.

NAMING OF THE NEWSLETTER

The most popular name put forward by members as a name for the newsletter was THE MARLOW DONKEY and this has been chosen as you will have noticed from the front page. The first one to suggest this was your Editor but unfortunately the Treasurer refuses to pay out the promised prize of a pint of bitter on the grounds that he is an interested party.

VISIT TO THE SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY - Contributed by Mike Walker

On Saturday 10th September 1977, five members gathered on High Wycombe station to await BR's excursion to the Severn Valley Railway. Despite a warning that it was running five minutes late, a pair of 25s drew into the station a minute or two early. Some confusion over seating arose by the substitution of the scheduled corridor second by an open second and the lack of one coach.

Our outward journey was by way of Princes Risborough and Bicester, at both places pausing to collect passengers, and then on through Banbury to Leamington Spa where we turned right onto the single track line to Coventry. This has for many years been freight only but was restored to scheduled passenger use in May 1977 to allow diversion of the Paddington to Birmingham trains to enable them to serve the new station at Birmingham's new exhibition centre.

From Coventry we were running "under the wires" into Birmingham New Street, where we changed crews before continuing our journey. This took us through the Black Country, Smethwick, Stourbridge and to Kidderminster.

We had to alight at Kidderminster as BR could not for some reason arrange to take the train onto the SVR despite the fact that Bulmer's Cider Train had used the link only a few hours earlier. The short road journey to Bewdley was made in a fleet of a dozen assorted Midland Red buses which included two which Roger Bowen and I found very interesting as they had come from operators absorbed by Midland Red, you know, sort of "pre-grouped" buses.

The visit coincided with a SVR enthusiast's weekend and on arrival at Bewdley we found that ten locomotives were in steam and trains were running every 40 minutes! After a look around the yard we travelled on the rarely used section to Foley Park near Kidderminster behind 6960 "Reveningham Hall" with Ivatt 2MTs 46443 and 46521 assisting at the rear. This "super power" was not because of the route but because locos can not run round at Foley Park. Back at Bewdley the Hall was detached and the moguls took us on up the 12½ mile line to Bridgnorth.

On the way up the valley we passed "Black 5" 45110 at Arley and had to wait at Hampton Loade for 7819 "Hinton Manor" to pass non-stop whilst 2-6-4T 80079 was awaiting our arrival at Bridgnorth before departing with yet another southbound train.

Having sampled the local brew in the station's own bar (this is a highly civilised railway) we visited the shed. A moving sight at one time was both the afore-mentioned moguls the Stanier 8F, J94 no 193 and Manning-Wardle "Warwickshire" all in steam and gathered at the south end of the station, the weather being such that steam hung around, beautiful for photographs.

We returned to Bewdley on Bulmer's Cider Train behind the 8F. Owing to our peculiar licensing laws we were unable to sample the wares until the train was moving.

On arrival at Bewdley we visited the Gentlemen's convenience which had been opened in our absence. This beautifully restored Victorian cast iron structure had been inaugurated with appropriate Clochmerle ceremony.

All too soon it was time to reboard the buses for Kidderminster. The return journey was made via Worcester, Oxford and Banbury with reversals at the last two points. Much to my surprise the two 25's showed themselves to be capable of quite a turn of speed and the journey from Worcester to Oxford was one of the fastest had ever made, faster, I regret to say than behind a Hymek! Our return to High Wycombe was as punctual as the departure.

All in all an excellent day out at what must be the best organised of the preserved railways. British Rail intend repeating the excursion next year so those of you who missed this train will have another chance, do not miss that one!

THAMES VALLEY RAMBLER - Contributed by Bas Woodward

It was a very tempting advertisement and one far too good to disregard. The Reading and District Branch of the Muscular Dystrophy Group proposed to hire a dmu to explore the branch lines of the Thames Valley. As the clocks were recently changed back and the light would begin to fade by about 16.30 hrs. it was decided at the last moment to ignore the Windsor, Henley and Marlow lines which are still open to passenger traffic and to concentrate on five "freight only" lines.

At 10.05 hrs. on Saturday, 29th October, six of our members travelled westwards from Slough in bright sunshine towards Reading. We were in a three-car dmu, number L.587. After a check to allow HST 253-009 to leave Reading Central for Paddington we crossed to Reading West and found ourselves travelling down a single line track to the Goods Yard, a line which has probably seldom admitted passenger stock before.

After Reading a fast run to Didcot was followed by a somewhat slower journey to Radley. At Radley Station the train was reversed and went along the Abingdon branch, now only used for transporting new MG cars to the main line. The occupants of the train, including B.R. staff, headed down the stationless platform to sample Moreland's bitter; our members of course merely wished to make comparisons with the products of Wethered's!

Leaving Oxford behind us we were switched on to the old LNWR tracks which pass beneath the A.40 near Wolvercote; then we headed by a remarkably straight route to Bicester. At Islip we noted oil storage tanks which we gathered housed aviation fuel for the air base at Upper Heyford. As we approached the derelict former LMS station at Bicester we noticed continental freight wagons in the extensive sidings of the army depot. The train halted here for fifteen minutes and some of us visited the signal box. Five trains a day pass along this line in each direction; the ten interruptions to traffic on the Aylesbury road are not appreciated by local motorists. The Marylebone-Banbury line crosses over the former LMS line at right-angles just north of where our train was standing.

At two o'clock we hurried back through Oxford Station to Kennington Junction and were held by a red signal before travelling up the former Princes Risborough branch. This was a nostalgic location for one of our group who did his train-spotting opposite the signal-box at this point. The branch extends now only as far as the site where Leyland cars from the Cowley works are put on to transporters and sent down to the marshalling yard at Hinksey.

Passing the Great Western Society's depot in the fading light we noticed a green pannier tank standing outside, but all the other locomotive stock was hidden away in the engine shed.

We next stopped at Cholsey and Moultsford Station in order to reverse on to the old Wallingford Branch. The track has been truncated by a new road and housing estate and now finishes outside a large factory belonging to ABM Ltd. This firm, we were informed, are maltsters and process a large quantity of barley, some of it from the Continent. Business is obviously brisk enough for B.R. to keep the line in reasonable order and for a number of freight trains to use it each week.

Encouraged no doubt by the frequent sight of HST's speeding along our dmu sprinted away to Slough, arriving at Platform 5 a good ten minutes earlier than scheduled. It was an exceedingly worthwhile journey and one that everyone thoroughly enjoyed. I personally had the added bonus of winning the raffle - a copy of M. Pope's "Steam Ramble No. 1".

THE MIDLAND JUBILEE - Contributed by Mike Norris

A joint venture by the 6000 Locomotive Association and the Merchant Navy Locomotive Association took place on 1st October 1977. Two trains were involved with the "Midland Jubilee" running from Euston to Paddington via Watford, Birmingham, Crewe, Chester, Shrewsbury, Newport, Swindon and Reading and the "Western Jubilee" travelling the same route but in the opposite direction.

At 0810 on a beautiful sunny Saturday morning our party of six left Euston on the "Midland Jubilee" hauled by 5000 hp electric locomotive no. 86244. For those who had not travelled on this route before the comfort, smooth ride and quietness of the Inter-city stock was impressive. Before reaching Crewe where 47 class no. 47437 took over, stops were made at Watford and Birmingham New Street. Although no. 86244 achieved the high speeds expected of her, the arrival at Crewe was 5½ minutes late due to hold ups in the Birmingham area between New Street and Bescot.

After the short journey from Crewe to Chester we left the train and awaited the arrival of Mk 1 coaches to be hauled by A4 Class no. 4498 "Sir Nigel Gresley" and thus began the highlight of the whole trip - 135 miles of steam hauled traction. The A4 was booked to haul the train to Shrewsbury, a distance of about 45 miles, in 69 minutes. She made an impressive sight when tackling the bank at Gresford - 4 miles at 1 in 82½ and finally reached Shrewsbury on time.

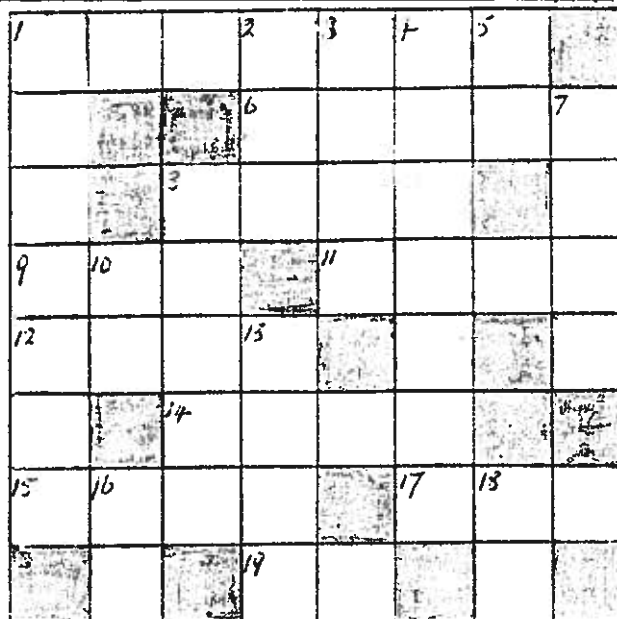
We were lucky enough to be able to spend about 1½ hours at Shrewsbury which enabled us to observe a number of stock movements around the station as well as time for a drink in a local pub. At the southern end of the station is a triangular junction in the centre of which is situated the signal box. The junction was used by three steam engines for turning. Firstly, after uncoupling from our train, by "Sir Nigel" and then by "King George V" after she had arrived with the "Western Jubilee". Lastly "Princess Elizabeth" ran in light, turned and then steamed off to Craven Arms.

For several members of our party the next stage of the journey was to be the highlight of the whole trip - the 20 miles to Craven Arms hauled by "King George V". She looked magnificent, and as happened during all the steam haulage, was admired by hundreds of people beside the line - they stood on bridges, stations, in the fields etc. Arrival at Craven Arms was 1½ minutes late due to problems caused by the last coach in the train, a Gresley buffet car. Further time was lost for the same reason when "Princess Elizabeth" took over and conveyed us for the 30 miles to Hereford, where the offending coach was detached.

As we drew into Hereford, Merchant Navy class "Clan Line" was waiting in the adjoining platform. Her condition was immaculate, resplendent in green and red livery. As to two engines changed, local traffic came to a standstill because of the vast crowds watching. For the 40 odd miles to Newport, no. 35028 was offered a challenge bearing in mind the late departure. She responded magnificently as she raced towards Newport, gaining 12 minutes over the distance even though she was slowed to 10 mph by a speed restriction for a bridge over the River Usk.

The final leg to Paddington behind a class 50 no. 50027 (replacing the HST which at the last minute BR were unable to provide) produced a sprint performance, the journey taking only 103½ minutes for the 133½ miles.

RAILWAY CROSSWORD - Contributed by Les Spicer



Across

- 1 Mobile homes for nobility.
- 6 Platforms sometimes were.
- 8 Heavenly body visible in Swindon.
- 9 Destination for many early travellers.
- 11 French connection.
- 12 Full tenders need this.
- 14 This plus a hill made history.
- 17 Some say the Deity owned it.
- 19 This line could be ancient and modern, but not western.

Down

- 1 An MPD the Romans called Deva.
- 2 These passed the post at speed.
- 3 Most cleaners were.
- 4 A late star which wasn't.
- 5 An early "garden" railway.
- 7 All top-link men were.
- 8 A loco home in the west.
- 10 Everybody needs to be good at this.
- 13 An enthusiast's day is always by steam.
- 16 Many were uplifted at this ford.
- 18 Modern version of 17 across.

The solution will be given in the March issue of "The Marlow Donkey". Entries please to be given to your Chairman at the AGM on 12th January 1978. The winner to receive a pint of Marlow bitter.