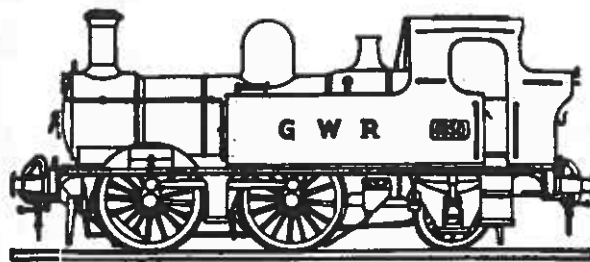


THE MARLOW DONKEY



SEPTEMBER 1986

Newsletter of the MARLOW & DISTRICT RAILWAY SOCIETY

FROM THE CHAIR

It is now exactly ten years since Roger Bowen began his excellent series of railway lectures in a Marlow Secondary school. From this series of weekly talks was born our Society. The MDRS was formed in January 1977 and our Committee are keen to celebrate our tenth birthday in a truly fitting manner. You will find details of our celebrations elsewhere in this and the December Newsletter. Incidentally Roger is still lecturing - a series of talks on steam preservation has just begun at Wendover.

After several months of uncertainty, Marylebone Station, London's "youngest" terminus, has yet again been revived. It had been resolved to sell Marylebone and to close Wembley Complex, Sudbury and Harrow Road, Sudbury Hill and Northolt stations. Marylebone was to have become a coach station. Part of the station may still be closed and only two platforms retained but there has been a 15% rise in the number of passengers using the Aylesbury line recently. The success of the steam-hauled "Shakespeare Specials" running each Sunday may also be an additional fillip. Those travelling on the Wycombe line are also to continue using Marylebone rather than Paddington. More modern dmu classes are being diverted to Marylebone from areas getting brand new units.

The media continue to enjoy sniping at British Rail. The recent fatal crash between a train and a car on the Hull-Bridlington line took place on an unmanned, barrierless crossing. Obviously such crossings are part of BR's policy of cost cutting but the proliferation is only part of a great deal of criticism of this nationalised industry. The Chairman of the Central Transport Consultative Committee has revealed that complaints have increased by 39% during 1985/6. A plan to increase fares by more than the rate of inflation has naturally been greeted by irate passengers as one more reason to protest to BR. Bad timekeeping, overcrowded

and cancelled trains, dirty carriages, unhelpful station staff etc. etc., on top of doubts as to passenger safety, all fuel the media's relish for bad news, but BR must be vigilant in maintaining the gradual improvements that have been evident in recent months.

As the last Barry hulks are towed away by optimistic preservationists there is quite an interest in retrieving British locomotives that went abroad with the demise of steam. Two engines brought back from Greece have arrived on the Watercress Line in Hampshire. The purchase of a former LSWR M7 tank engine will delight all those who remember these attractive Southern locomotives. They were once a common sight on lines all over the south of England. From more than one hundred M7's taken into British Rail ownership in 1948 there are only two left. One is stored at the National Railway Museum at York, the other, which the Swanage Railway have now purchased, has been in Steamtown, Vermont in North America. Drummond introduced the O-4-4T's in 1897 and most continued to give continuous service up to the end of steam in the '60's.

This summer's better weather will no doubt be reflected in improved attendance figures at the many railway preservation centres when they are published later in the year. When our Society planned to visit the Havenstreet complex on the Isle of Wight, I recalled Ian Allan's comments in his monthly article "Plain Track". His 1985 visit was a disaster. Members of our group appeared in general to comment favourably on the enterprise, rather limited as it is. Here also, as in so many other steam centres I have visited recently, is an example of steady progress.

Das

MEETINGS PROGRAMME

All meetings are held at The Chequers, High Street, Marlow at 7.45 for 8 pm.

Thurs. 16th Oct. THE WORK OF THE RAILWAY POLICE

An unusual subject for a meeting, with a look at a little considered aspect of our railways.

Thurs. 20th Nov. MORE FROM THE NRM ARCHIVES
Tony Hall-Patch

The Assistant Curator of the Science Museum returns again with more rare footage from the NRM's film archives. Included tonight, The Lynton & Barnstaple. Note the change from October for this meeting.

Sat. 13th Dec. THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Once again this popular social event is upon us. Please make your bookings early to Peter Robins, 95 Broom Hill, Cookham. tel. BE 27870.

Thurs. 18th Dec. CHRISTMAS VIDEO SHOW

More video footages from around the world, including the premiere of the MDRS's own video. Come along and see yourself!

Thurs. 15th Jan. 10th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM will be special as it marks our tenth birthday. We ask all members to attend we need your help to make our plans a real success.

SOCIETY NEWS

New Member

We welcome another new member to the Society, Mr. K. Ball, our third from Robinson Road Loudwater, an obvious hot bed of railway enthusiasm. We are still anxious to expand our numbers, so if any other members have neighbours and friends who are interested, bring them along.

Previous Meetings

For various reasons we were unable to bring the Post Office Railways talk in June, but our own Peter Robbins stepped in at short notice with an excellent slide show on the subject of Turkish steam, supported by sound effects.

July's meeting was another in house offering with a slide presentation on the railways of British Columbia and Vancouver's Expo '86 World's Fair.

As usual there was no August meeting, but a good sized party journeyed to Bounds Green HST depot on the evening of the 21st for a tour of the plant as a follow up to the excellent talk by John Cronin in March.

A full report of the successful trip to the Isle of Wight appears elsewhere in this issue.

Fawley Steam Day

Our apologies to those members who had intended visiting Fawley on 31st August. Owing to circumstances beyond our control, a total lack of serviceable motive power, the Fawley Museum Society have cancelled all steam-ups for the rest of the year. We will have another go in 1987.

On The Box

Society activities are currently being recorded on video, thanks to the help of David Hird. The results will be edited into a promotional video about the Society, which will be premiered at our December meeting.

The Chequers

Having warned of changes at the Chequers, we feel a little like the boy who cried wolf, as both the June and July meetings were held in the Gainsborough Suite! However, the builders were already at work, starting on the roof. Obviously, things have moved on during our summer break but there could be disruption to our September and October gatherings, please bear with us.

On Show Again

The Society will be having a stand at the Marlow-Maidenhead Passenger Association's exhibition at the Bourne End Community Centre on Saturday 27th September. In addition to our stand, there will be model railways, stands, an all-day film show and displays of vintage and modern buses. The MMPA and BR are hoping to get one of the new "Sprinter" dmu's to operate the branch for the day. We look forward to seeing as many members as possible.

Birthday Plans

An exciting and adventurous programme of special events is being prepared to celebrate our 10th Birthday next year. We will present full details in our next issue, but it looks like 1987 will be a year to remember.

Wanted Urgently

One of our birthday plans is a special 10th Anniversary issue of the Donkey. This will be a proper litho printed booklet which will mirror our history. Your editor urgently requires photographs to illustrate this. Will all members who have taken photos, prints only black and white or colour, on any club trip or event. Please dig them out for our perusal. We do not guarantee to use everything, but full credit will be given.

RAILWAY ROUNDABOUT Notes & News

STATION REBUILDING

Work is now well underway on the new station complex at Reading with completion due in 1988. During the work a forgotten tunnel has appeared and found to contain many GW relics which are being moved to the NRM for cataloguing. If you drive to Reading station, please note the car park is now on the north side of Vastern Road.

Meanwhile, Bourne End has received a new slate roof whilst the interior is being completely remodelled with a new ticket office and staff accommodation.

BOURNE END TO FAWLEY

As part of the works at Bourne End, the old up waiting room, long disused, has been removed. But fear not it is to have a second life as our President has acquired it for re-erection at Fawley. The wooden structure is in remarkably good condition and dates from c 1896 when the second platform was installed at Bourne End.

NEAR MISS AT EARLEY

An observant driver of a train loaded with petrol averted a major disaster at Earley on 6th August. Petrol spilling from one car caught fire on the hot brakes. Spotting the problem the crew quickly uncoupled the errant car and moved it to safety. By the time the fire brigade arrived, workers from the nearby Shell depot had the matter well in hand with extinguishers.

SPRINTERS FOR MARYLEBONE?

The Bucks County Council have recently discovered that BR intend to introduce the new "Sprinter" dmu's on GC suburban services at an early date. This does seem a little odd, the WR units are much older than their LMR counterparts, in fact the WR sets are some of the oldest now operating on BR.

EVENING CLASS TIME

Those of you who live within reasonable distance of Aylesbury will be interested to hear that Roger Bowen is tutoring another evening class for the W.E.A. this autumn.

The course starts at 7.30pm on Tuesday 30th September for 10 weeks. The venue is the Grange County Secondary School, Wendover Way, Aylesbury and the subject "Steam Revival".

Further details can be obtained from Roger Bowen or from Adrian Taylor, WEA Development Officer for Bucks, Walton House, Walton Street, Aylesbury HP21 7QQ, telephone Aylesbury 83648.

Roger will be tutoring a second series of lectures after Christmas. This time the subject is "History of Railways" and the venue is High Wycombe, exact place still to be decided.

Members will shortly be celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Society. Equally, Roger is celebrating 10 years of railway lectures. Those long standing members will, I am sure, remember that the setting up of the Society in January 1977 was as a follow up to the first series of lectures by Roger for the WEA in Marlow. The celebrations that are to follow will, I am sure, tell you more.

R.D. Bowen

Having brought us Scotrail, Chris Green is now making his mark with Network SouthEast, Reputably with a budget of £60,000,000 it seems that only paint manufacturers and printers are winning, as a programme to paint everything red, white and blue gets underway. Surely this money could be better spent, the long suffering commuter cares not what colour his train is, rather that it is clean, reliable and on time. Locally NSE's launch has coincided with serious deterioration in local services, as Ernie Dove recalls in this issue. Meanwhile on the Joint Line a directive instructs staff that the NSE dmU must run as a set, so if a trailer fails it runs as 3 cars and lets the passengers stand.

Poster-Yeoman named their four EMD's on 28th June at an open day. 59.001 became "Yeoman Endeavour", 59.002 "Yeoman Enterprise", 59.003 "Yeoman Highlander", 59.004 "Yeoman Challenger". During the ceremony EMD presented two US loco bells, one for 59.001 and one, engraved with the 21 members of the building team, for the office. Recently one of the class was hauling a train through Goring when an axle on a hopper wagon broke. Sensing increased drag, the logic computer piled on more power, the crew oblivious to the damage they were doing!

JOINT LINE



STEAM UPDATE

Remember, just two years ago David Ward was adamantly maintaining there were insurmountable difficulties in, and no commercial demand for, steam operation out of a London terminus. Now the Joint Line is most heavily steam operated line in Britain (thanks to the efforts of the Post Office, not BR) and the trains are such a common sight, the novelty is wearing off.

This year most of the work has been done by "Sir Nigel Gresley" and "Sir Lamiel". "Clan Line" has now returned after a lengthy sojourn at Southall for cylinder and bogie repairs. Various ailments, culminating in a complete middle cylinder rebore, have kept our President's "Flying Scotsman" out of the limelight for most of the season.

The big news currently is the imminent arrival of the World Speed Record holder "Mallard" for a short season, see below for operating dates. The Eastern and Southern domination may be in danger, "Clun Castle" successfully completed clearance trials in May and it is proposed to try a similar exercise with "King George V". Now that LMS pacific "Princess Elizabeth" is

active again, there are suggestions that she may appear next year. BR certainly needs to ring the changes to stimulate public interest and custom.

In the Christmas period a series of short workings will operate between Marylebone and High Wycombe. There will be a flat charge of £8.00 for all ages, but children will receive a present from Santa. There is no truth in the rumour that this will be a Network SouthEast carrier bag or tie!

17/18 Dec 20/21 Dec - 27/28 Dec

Operating Dates:

"Mallard" arrives at Marylebone Saturday 4th October and operates the Sunday Luncheon trains on 12th and 26th October and 2nd November. On Saturday 8th November it operates the "Peter Allen Pullman" on behalf of the Transport Trust throughout from Marylebone to York.

The Sunday Luncheon trains will also run behind 4472, 4498 or 35028 on 28th September, 19th October, 16th November and 28th December.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOURTEEN COUPLED

Dear Editor,

Further to your article on page 6 of the June issue, this locomotive is referred to in Russian Steam Locomotives by H.M. LeFleming and J.H. Price (pages 51-52), with the virtually identical drawing produced in that book by A.E. Durrant. The comments are much the same as made in the article; but additional technical information given was that the cylinders were 29-1/8 inches x 31-7/8 inches, coupled wheels 5ft 3in diameter, boiler pressure 242 psi, and grate area 129 sq.ft.

The all-up weight of the engine alone was 208 tons: and the reason for 14-coupled was the weight limit on the axles, of 20 tons. This weight limit had been laid down in one of the early Five-Year Plans; and the loco was produced, as the Moscow Institute of Transport Engineers had been given the task of establishing the maximum obtainable freight locomotive dimensions and performance, with this axle load.

According to Le Fleming, there was considerable opposition from a number of more practical people, at the Communist Party session, that the 2-10-2 would have been a more useful engine; and this, in fact, proved to be right.

No details exist of its scrapping; it clearly was not used to any great extent.

The inflexibility of this design is obvious - compared with, say, the Beyer Garrett principle

but unfortunately, even in Russia, Beyer Garrett did not seem to succeed (although one, the 4-8-2 + 2-8-4 was built at Manchester in 1932, and at that time was the largest locomotive built in Europe, preceding by two years the Russian 4-14-4.

Eddie Lewcock

P.S. The sand pipes on the drawing mysteriously disappeared in the lower regions!!

VIDEO REVIEWS

Dear Editor,

From the GWR remoteness of East Sussex I follow the fortunes of the MDRS through the pages of the MARLOW DONKEY.

The last edition had a remarkable first and the Editor is to be congratulated. This was an article by my old friend Mike Norris on video offerings. In nearly 7 years as Editor I failed to get Mike to contribute despite threats and flattery.

I hope everyone enjoyed this year's family outing to the Isle of Wight. May I put a "plug" in for the 1987 event - why not a visit to East Sussex? After all it was back in 1978 that the MDRS last saw the Bluebell. As icing on the cake there are possibilities of also visiting the Lavender Line (5 miles) Sheffield Park (1 mile) and the Bentley Motor Museum (8 miles).

Stan Verrinder

The evenings are drawing in and it is time to think of a 'good read' once again. The best place is by a coal fire and a very good source is as far as possible B.T. (Before Telly). Queen Victoria's subjects, who knew a good thing when they invented it, loved a good read and the more words the better.

OUR IRON ROADS Vols 1 & 2 Gresham Books Ltd
£7.50
ISBN 0905 418 88 3/5

The Victorian 'good read' referred to above is well provided by these two volumes. No aspect is left un-investigated - and bearing in mind that the up dated volumes are about the 1880 railway scene it is astonishing how detailed and searching these volumes are. They will tell you for instance the official way to put change in your cash-tray (complete with diagram); how to be a good driver; the duties of a station master; military operations; mineral traffic; and a fair bit about the founding, financing and fabrication of the railways. Lay in a good supply of colza oil for your students lamp, once you start these books are impossible to put down.

GEORGE STEPHENSON Weidenfeld & Nicholson
£4.95
ISBN C 297-76934 0

This biography couldn't help but run along two rails, narrow gauge of course, because George and his son Robert were the railway pioneers. They were soon joined by other masters but this book concentrates on the interaction between

one man and his time, and a relatively uneducated working man at that. Another good and informative read.

RAILWAY ART New York Graphic Society
C. Hamilton Ellis ISBN 0 8212-0710-5

It isn't possible to keep up too high a level of study so take a break and look at the picturer in this most interesting book by a railway artist in his own right. There is also a most interesting explanatory text and a fair amount of colour.

THE FUN WE HAD
K. Taylorson

This is a collection of articles by a band of enthusiasts especially for our interest and is the sort of book ideal for a short 'read' but be warned the next article always seems that little bit more interesting than the one you have just read.

**NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY BUSES,
LORRIES & AUTOCARS** Mid Valley
Ken Hoole Narrow Gauge
Rlys Ltd

Perhaps we forget that the railways were suddenly BIG and had to invent big business almost from scratch. They ran buses and lorries, developed railcars, and invented "collection & delivery" almost in passing. Much of this is illustrated in this interesting volume. Lots of ideas and many dimensional diagrams for the modeller.

Network SouthEast

David Gardner

With the official launching of BR's Network SouthEast on 10th June, two events quickly followed which were of local interest to our local area. The first of these, Aylesbury Station Open Day took place on 14th June with extra reduction fares being available to Princes Risborough from Chiltern Line stations. A special free service DMU in the new Network colours then ran to and from Aylesbury and Quanton Road. At Aylesbury, which by the way had been newly repainted, an exhibition of BR locos, including D200, wagons and coaches was on view plus brake van and cab rides behind an early 1960's style green 'class 08' shunter.

The main attraction however was 'A4' 4498 Sir Nigel Gresley which was in steam and running in the station confines all day. Other attractions included film shows throughout the day in a specially equipped carriage; Trade and Model Railway stands on the platforms and half price entry to Quanton's Steam Centre with, of course, free travel there and back.

The event was very well attended and made an excellent day out for minimum expense, though it must have been hell if you just wanted to go towards London by train and didn't know what was going on!

BRANCH LINE NEWS

Ernie Dove

Some interesting local branch line news. Reading depot crews took over operation of the Marlow branch on Monday 7th July and as usual there have been plenty of teething troubles. Although the train crews come from Reading the stock comes from Old Oak Common, all meeting up at Maidenhead, except it didn't work sometimes resulting in late running and cancellations. To add to the problems, there have been troubles with the token equipment causing more delays in the peak periods. Fortunately for the passengers a system exists whereby your writer is informed of problems by BR so that passengers at Marlow can be advised of what's going on. Some specific incidents include the following.

Monday 7th July started with a 6.00 am phone call. The Reading crews had arrived at Maidenhead, but no stock from Old Oak Common. Another call at 6.20 confirmed the first train was cancelled but they were hopeful about the next. At 6.50 a third call announced that a train was on the way arriving at Marlow at

7.20 to form a belated 7.14 departure, after which everything returned to normal. It appears that no driver was rostered to bring the c.c.s from the Common.

Wednesday 9th July, phone call at 6.15 advised trains would be late owing to stock failure. However, a four car unit was found which donated a single power car to the Marlow shuttle with three cars forming the 07.26 Bourne End to Paddington, better to have some train than none at all.

The next day was trouble all day with the token equipment so the 12.30 Bourne End-Marlow and 12.41 return were cancelled. Pilot men rode on trains and were then ferried back to Maidenhead by car for the next run. Token troubles continued through to Friday 11th July causing the cancellation of the 06.23 Bourne End-Marlow and 06.41 Marlow-Bourne End for the third time in the week.

The first trip to Marlow was again lost on Wednesday 16th July due to a driver shortage, so

following a 6.30 call there was another early morning walk over to the station to spread the bad news.

The most serious incident occurred on Thursday 17th July when the 10.14 off Maidenhead, on arrival at Marlow, slammed into the stop blocks, shearing the fishplate bolts and moving the whole thing 18-20 inches, saving a lot of damage to the power car. However, the service was suspended for three hours, resuming with the 14.14 off Maidenhead. Meanwhile Alder Valley were called in to operate a replacement bus which proved useless owing to hold-ups caused by road

works on Cookham Bridge. Further embarrassment for the driver, was the presence of two Transport Police constables on the train looking for vandals!

Needless to say the Marlow-Maidenhead Passenger Association is extremely concerned with this deterioration in local service and are taking the matter up with BR, which now appears to mean Chris Green, Network Southeast Director at Waterloo. It seems that 10 drivers were made redundant when Southall closed - and there are now not enough to cover all duties!

TWENTY - FIVE YEARS AGO

Roger Bowen

In the autumn of 1961 new developments seemed to go on apace on the railways.

It was being reported that the first of six electro-diesels ordered two years previously for experimental operation on the Southern Region were nearing completion. The underframe being built at Ashford Works and the body, engine and electrical equipment fitted at Eastleigh. Under electric power it would achieve 1,600 hp, fitted with the English Electric 4SRKT engine in the Hampshire & Hastings diesel units it will produce 600 hp off the third rail.

Actually being delivered were the first of a further 69 type 2 Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon/Sulzer diesel electric locomotives for the Scottish Region. Compared to the previous batch they had GEC electrical equipment and engines uprated to 1250 hp.

Much larger however was the delivery of the world's most powerful diesel locomotive - a 4,000 hp diesel hydraulic by Krauss-Maffei, one of six for the Southern Pacific and Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroads in the USA. Before delivery it was allowed to show its paces on the steeply graded Semmering line in Austria.

An American idea being tried in this country was the "Roadrailer". 50 vehicles were on delivery from the Linwood, Scotland, factory of Pressed Steel, being developed from the "Railvan" concept on the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad.

Closures were however becoming more significant. On September 11th the former Midland & South Western line closed as a through route, leaving three sections only open for freight only. On 30th October the Dunton Green to Westerham

branch of the Southern Region closed - after a fight typical of London "Commuter area" closures. In fact the T.U.C.C. had recommended that the line be left open but it was overruled by the Minister of Transport, Ernest Marples.

Other points of interest. The Southern Region accelerated the timing of the "Atlantic Coast Express" so that its 2 hour 58 minutes schedule from London to Exeter was six minutes faster than the "Torbay Express". This was found to be well within the powers of the locomotives used, rebuilt Merchant Navy Class locomotives.

Other than the preserved example, the last "Midland Compound" was withdrawn, No.41168. Unusual sightings at Marylebone were "Royal Scot" No.46140 on the Marylebone-Perth car sleeper and "Jubilee" 45569 on the 4.25 pm Marylebone-Nottingham semi-fast. Unusual Western Power included the use of 2-10-0 No.92229 on the 7.15 pm Paddington-Bristol express.

From September 11th London Transport Metropolitan line services were recast when Amersham instead of Aylesbury became the terminus of Metropolitan line trains. The new A60 stock was used but only a temporary timetable applied pending the completion of four-tracking the following year.

An announcement was made in the October 1961 copy of "Trains Illustrated" that from January 1962 the magazine would be renamed "Modern Railways" to reflect its changing content. At the same time the cover price would rise from 2/- (10p) to 2/6d (12½p).

Yet another interesting period in Railway history, one however showing the trend to more closures of lines.

VECTIS STEAM AND RATTLERS

Mike Walker

The annual summer trip this year was planned as the most ambitious yet and, despite early voices of dissent, was one of the best patronised for years. Our planned early start was slightly delayed by our Treasurer being caught by the engineers total occupation of junction 8/9 on the M4, but otherwise the journey down was completely uneventful as we made our way down the M3 and M27, to arrive at Portsmouth spot on clock-in time for the ferry.

The 45 minute crossing of a mill-pond smooth Solent was a pleasant interlude and gave the opportunity for a drink, snack or merely to observe the multitude of other craft, yachts, ferries and even hovercraft using this busy channel. Leaving the ferry we made our way first to Ryde, to drop off those to whom the beach held more attraction than steam, and then on to Havenstreet.

Quality not quantity. That's the motto of the Isle of Wight Steam Railway and they live up to it. What a pleasure to arrive at an unspoilt country station, obviously well kept, and to survey a yard which does not look like a division of the Woodham operation. On our arrival

two diesels, "Tiger" (NBL 0-4-0 ex Esso Fawley) and BR '05' 2554 stood in the yard together with 37 "Invincible" a diminutive Hawthorne Leslie 0-4-0ST dating from 1915 and late of the RAE at Farnborough. Presently No.24 "Calbourne" arrived with a four coach train and lost no time in running round.

The last surviving '02' 0-4-4T can only be described as immaculate. Wearing the post war malachite green SR livery it was polished from buffer to buffer. Standing in Havenstreet station at the head of its short train, it made a wonderfully nostalgic sight and sound as the Westinghouse brake pump thumped rhythmically away. Some chauvenistic members questioned the presence of a lady fireman, but all boarded the train for the short journey to Wooton.

Again it was a delight to ride in traditional timber bodied compartment stock (not a Mk.I in sight!) through the gently rolling countryside. After only 1½ miles however we arrived at the western terminus of Wooton. The new station here is approaching completion but until approved by the DoT passengers are not permitted to alight, so "Calbourne" ran round once more

and we set off back to Havenstreet.

We were then taken on guided tours of the small workshops where the two Terriers, 8 "Freshwater" and 11 "Newport", together with a brake third were undergoing heavy repairs. Also in the shed was a magnificent Isle of Wight 4 wheeled composite coach nearing completion. The IOWSR has been fortunate to recover several early carriage bodies and these are now being restored and mounted on modified BR CCT chassis. It is intended eventually to create a complete Victorian train to go behind one of the "Terriers", a laudable project indeed.

The lasting impression of the Isle of Wight Steam Railway is very high. As stated the aim of quality not quantity is achieved by a small but dedicated bunch. We now made our way back down the narrow lane to Ryde, set down some members, picked up others and set off on a leisurely anti-clockwise circumnavigation of this picturesque island. Some of the roads though are not made for a modern 40' long coach and a trip through Yarmouth was prevented by a weight restriction, whilst a hairpin bend climbing out of Ventnor taxed Gavin's driving skill to the limit.

Several members alighted at Shanklin and sampled BR's last remaining operation on the island. This of course is in reality the Overseas Division of London Transport, being operated by the old "Standard Tube" stock dating from 1924 to 1927 and don't they look it, complete with above floor electrical gear and clerestory roofs, the ride is lively (square wheels and no

springs!).

At Sandown the island's only BR locomotive 03.079, a rare type anywhere now, was in its usual location among the PW wagons whilst Brading sported a complete set of operational gas lamps, surely unique on an electric railway. The large number of dumped and cannibalised cars around Ryde St. John's works confirmed that the day must be rapidly approaching when someone is going to have to make some serious decisions on the future of BR's most unusual operation.

All too soon it was time to gather up the entire party and catch the ferry back to the main land. The journey back to Marlow was by way of the scenic Meon Valley and Alton (which took us under the Mid-Hants). So ended one of the most successful trips yet and one which we can relive as a video was made of the entire trip. This will be premiered at our December meeting.

Thanks must go to Peter Robins for the organisation and to Gavin Francis for his expert driving for the fourth year in succession. Incidentally some members questioned why we had a coach from London, well the answer is simple. Gavin normally spends Saturday and Sunday working for Limebourne driving the Round London Sightseeing Tours and is therefore able to get a very modern coach at an extremely advantageous rate. It is not generally known that Gavin does not get paid for driving us which is why we always arrange a good tip.

Where to next year?

ABOVE SIR PHILIP ROSE'S VIADUCT

David Gardner

During the last 12 months there has been more than one mention about local industrial railways and I wondered how many members of the MDRS know about the narrow gauge system that existed beyond Rayners Avenue and the impressive 'Sir Philip Rose's Viaduct at Loudwater. Until quite recently if one wanted to catch a bus to Rayners Avenue, the stop was advertised in the timetable as Gravel Pits and this is what the railway served, yet even 30 years ago when my two brothers and I were young boys the gravel pit was deserted and worked out.

I say deserted because we never saw anybody there no matter what time of day we visited the site, but all the equipment was there and in working order.

For a start there was a large crane on which we could move the jib and shovel up and down and from side to side. All the glass was intact on the cab and the door opened and shut. No vandalism having taken place.

The site was high above the valley with only a dirt track leading to it and was quite small by modern standards, but of course to our childhood minds it was vast. The railway ran from a deep overgrown basin up a steep incline and into a narrow tunnel. How far this tunnel descended we never discovered as fear of what might be lurking down below discouraged us from going more than a few yards into the dark hole and not having anything to light up our passage into this prospective hell was enough to send us scurrying back to the comparative safety of the outside world.

At the basin end the track came to a halt in an earth bank which formed a primitive buffer stop. A metal truck rested on the track and we would all push the wagon up the incline as far as we could then pile into the hopper for an exciting ride down the slope until we hit the bank with a bump. Looking back, these rides were fairly short and got shorter as we got tired and could not push the truck so far up the line. These rides however came to an abrupt end when we hit the bank rather hard one day and the truck came off its rails. Despite all our efforts we could not get the truck back again so abandoned it where it lay. There was always the crane to play with anyway.

One day we arrived to find the crane wrecked which effectively put an end to our enjoyment and trips to the pit, for the walk from our home in the valley and village of Loudwater was a long one. Years later a much older boy, or young man as he must have been then, told me that he and his friends had purchased a certain brand of weedkiller, mixed it with sugar, and blown the crane to bits.

It did not however encourage me to do likewise. I have often thought about revisiting the site to see if anything remains of the railway. It would still mean a stiff walk as, to the best of my knowledge, there is still no proper road but at least it would satisfy my ever increasing curiosity.

Does anyone know who Sir Philip Rose was anyway?

SWANSEA & MUMBLES

Roger Bowen

Members will recall that the Swansea and Mumbles Railway was the first in the world to carry passenger traffic.

Opened in April 1806 for goods traffic, the earliest reference to passenger traffic was the 25th March 1807 when one Benjamin French

paid the Company £20 per annum "for permission to run a wagon or wagons on the Tram Road for one year for the conveyance of passengers". All traffic was, of course, horse powered and in the early days operated on a toll basis rather than the railway run its own trains. Very similar to canals at the time.

This little note however is about the intrigue of the lines closure on the 5th January 1960. Briefly the background is that in 1898 the Swansea Improvements & Tramway Company obtained a 999 year lease from the two owners of the line, The Swansea & Mumbles Railways Ltd. and The Mumbles Railway & Pier Company. At this time the SITC had been taken over by the British Electric Traction Company who became firstly the largest tramway group in the country, then the largest bus group, and now a major industrial conglomerate with interests ranging from Thames Television to Initial Laundry's via Biffa Waste Disposals. But we digress. In 1927 the SITC was amalgamated with another BET subsidiary the South Wales Tramways Company to form the South Wales Transport Company. In 1929 the line was electrified with double deck cars, very similar indeed to trams. These were built by Brush at Loughborough, at that time another BET subsidiary.

Things went on quietly, in 1954 the Company celebrated 150 years of its incorporation. However, in 1958 South Wales Transport made an offer, which was accepted, for the purchase of the line from the owning companies. The rental at that time was £13,900 pa and the General Manager at the time of the SWT claimed it was cheaper to buy in the lease than continue paying for a further 950 years! He dismissed speculation about any possible plans for closure. Yet a few months later a bill was submitted to the House of Lords entitled the "South Wales

Transport Bill". Only after some time was it realised that this bill included a clause to allow the original Oystermouth Transport Act to be repealed and the line closed. Many protests were made, but two points were never answered. Firstly the SWT said that they could not afford to modernise the line and could only buy replacement buses which were a lot cheaper. Yet they did not have to buy the line a few months earlier did they?? Secondly they said they were losing money on the operation. No one could challenge this as the SWT had failed to publish its accounts and balance sheet since 1956, quite illegally and contrary to the Companies Acts!:

Inevitably the grant got its way and the line closed in 1960.

From the above, one can see that British Railways are not the only organisation who are good at arranging information in such a way as to suit themselves when they want to close a railway line.

Much fuller details of this saga, with a lot of interesting photos are included in a fascinating book entitled "Rock and Roll to Paradise - the History of the Mumbles Railway", written by Rob Gittings and published by Gomer Press in 1982 at £5.95. An earlier book, with greater history of the line, is the "Swansea and Mumbles Railway" by Charles E. Lee, published by Oakwood Press originally in 1942, with the latest edition in 1977.

THE ABINGDON BRANCH

Bas Woodward

One of our Society's earliest excursions took us along several unusual sections of line in the Thames Valley. At Radley Station between Didcot and Oxford we reversed on to the rusting metals of the old branch to Abingdon. It was my first journey along this line since a war-time trip in a badly leaking carriage.

Abingdon was the County Town of Berkshire in the nineteenth century and no doubt there were many who thought a journey by stage-coach to Steventon, which was their nearest railway station, was a slight on their town's good name. In 1837 and 1838 Bills were laid before Parliament expressing a hope that a short link to Didcot could be built. The first attempt was blocked by the Lords; the second by a Mr. Duffield, the local Member of Parliament.

In 1844 the GWR built the line from Didcot to Oxford, but violent opposition from Mr. Duffield and his short-sighted friends, prevented this track from passing through Abingdon. It is no surprise that Reading replaced Abingdon as Berkshire's County Town.

Eleven years later the Corporation of Abingdon had a change of heart. Parliamentary blessing was given. Land in Stert Street was purchased for the provision of station buildings and a spacious goods yard. June 2nd 1856 saw traffic beginning to use the broad gauge track to a wooden platform at the junction with the main Oxford line. Radley Station was not built until 1871.

Plans to build a wagon and carriage works at Oxford were received with horror by the University authorities. Abingdon approached

the GWR and offered to accommodate the railway. However, it was pointed out that much of the land around Abingdon was liable to flooding. Swindon decided to build their wagons and carriages near their locomotive works.

Broad gauge gave way to standard gauge in 1872. The branch was single track, two and a half miles long, and crossed an area of water meadows. The terminus at Abingdon had one platform and buses arrived and departed alongside. People referred to the 'Abingdon Flyer' with the affection Marlow people once bestowed on their 'Donkey'.

Freight traffic was important on this line. Lord Nuffield (William Morris) had built his MG factory locally and I can remember in war-time trains of Abingdon-built tanks standing in the goods yard. The small engine shed was demolished in 1954, and in the same year the sidings to the gas works were taken up.

Before the AXE descended on this line there was a reasonably good passenger service. Trains connected at Radley for both up and down lines. There was only one engine in steam, a push-pull 14xx 0-4-2T, serviced each night at Oxford Shed. I remember freight trains before the war were always pulled by pannier tanks, and I would assume these continued to be used until diesellisation.

With the enthusiasm being engendered over the re-opening of Wallingford's truncated branch line I would not be surprised to read soon of yet another preservation venture, this one based in Abingdon - now a small town in Oxfordshire!

DONKEY DAYS - Part 4

Len Stroud

By way of a foreword to this further collection of memories and anecdotes may I record my great pleasure at your kind reception of my rambling thoughts. Please be assured that I am composing the following section, not ambitiously seeking next year's award, but at your Editor's request!

May I suggest in support of appeals from the Editor for more material for the NEWSLETTER from the membership that the above title be continued when and if my contributions cease? There MUST be others who have items to contribute by way of short anecdotes, jokes, queries and open-ended discussion. THINK ON.

With the proliferation of books and magazines covering all fields of railway interest now on the market and the unending supply of brochures at private railway level, I think back to my sole written contact with THE railway as a lad of 11 - 12.

This was the abandoned copy of the GWR staff magazine which my father brought home. At my age much of the content was beyond me but I found snippets of interest in what, by present day standard of presentation, was a dull mass of print to my estimation. Very occasionally I remember a stray cartoon creeping in and for no reason at all one has stuck in my mind over the years and I can see it line by line even now.

This brings me back to 'The Branch' indirectly by way of the halcyon days of awards for the 'Best Kept Station'. Very few present day stations have the staff or the inclination to spend the hours that, between the wars, were used to beautify small and large flower beds on station platforms. Although GWR Marlow did not shine in this direction, I believe Bourne End, Loudwater and Woodburn Green made 'a showing' as did Cookham. Taplow on the main line was always worth noting but I cannot recall the winners of the awards.

The aforementioned cartoon showed a country station platform with a mid-distant view beyond the platform buildings and a semi-circled flowerbed over which stooped the rotund posterior of the station 'gardener' planting out additions to the plot. In the far distance the smoke and steam of the oncoming train was just visible, while the frantic waving figure of a lad was running towards us. No doubt in answer to the yells of the boy appeared the caption... "Dang the 4.15 boy - hand me the dibber". It seemed that man knew his priorities! As I said - memory is a funny thing and why I should retain that picture is inexplicable.

Humour can be written or portrayed or can be fleeting as a moment of time - some momentary action that causes instant laughter - and is gone. Let us get back to Marlow and pause over the quirks and pranks that sometimes came upon the staff and others.

It was once a practice - maybe still is - for baskets of pigeons to be despatched to stations many miles from their home loft to be released for their homeward flight. This often happened at Marlow. On release from their baskets, the birds seldom spent much time before orientating direction and setting off home. On one occasion they were seen to fly to the station roof and line up along the ridge and perch like swallows on a telephone wire before migration. Several passengers were standing around or sitting on

benches awaiting the next train out. Now the porter who released the birds was always thought a bit of a wag, and on this 'release' he affected great concern and stared up at the ridge scratching his head and looking generally 'put out'. Onlookers heard him say to the effect of 'How the ---- am I going to get them back in the - baskets?'

Of course several suggestions came from all quarters and people who would not consider talking to 'strangers' offered ideas and contradictions to him and each other for some minutes ("Lay seed on the platform lined up to the baskets, man" etc). No-one noticed that the birds had meanwhile winged away. Not many more noticed the grin on the wags face as he walked away from the chattering gathering.

Our monthly gatherings of the MDRS has produced many talks from the more travelled of our members and when we saw slides of lineside life in faraway places - India - Peru - off the beaten (Railway.Ed.) track I remember one incident more close to home. One or more slides showed natives clamouring for the hot water from the loco as it waited for overlong halts at wayside stations.

I have made previous mention of the new outlook given to the signal box at Marlow under female influence. If you will now picture the booking office partially under control of the same influence of 2 booking clerks (female) the following incident will tally with both signal box tidiness and my foregoing paragraph.

The two girls (they were no more) shared duties with male colleagues who, shall we say, did not keep up the general tidiness desired by their counterparts and forever dumped 'fag ends', sandwich wrappings and clerical clutter about the working surfaces and desks.

Came the day of the rebellion and the girls set to and decided on a general clean up (they happened to be on duty together) windows were cleaned - desks dusted - instruments polished - fittings re-arranged in order. The train arrived from Bourne End and all ceased temporarily to attend the issue of tickets to outgoing passengers. As usual the loco halted abreast of the B.O. door on the platform. Comes a bright idea from one of the workers. Picking up a handy bucket, she trots off to the loco and requests some hot water. Some demure from within the cab and a querulous enquiry 'What do you want that for?'

In all innocence back came 'I've got to wash my drawers!!' (complete breakdown of crew). Please send S.A.E. c/o Editor for complete list of comments.

MARLOW BRANCH.														
Week Days.														
	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.
Bourne End dep.	8 25	9 3	10 30	11 18	12 20	1 28	2 3	3 8	4 28	4 58	5 45	6 48	7 43	8 38
Marlow .. arr.	8 25	9 16	10 43	11 25	12 27	1 45	2 7	3 10	4 35	5 5	6 52	7 53	8 55	9 45
Marlow .. dep.	8 10	9 40	10 16	11 0	12 6	1 40	2 40	3 40	4 10	4 45	5 30	6 23	7 25	8 20
Bourne End arr.	8 17	9 27	10 33	11 7	12 12	1 27	2 27	3 27	4 27	5 22	6 27	7 22	8 7	9 27
Sundays.														
Bourne End dep.	8 30	9 50	10 45	11 45	12 45	1 45	2 45	3 45	4 45	5 45	6 45	7 45	8 45	9 45
Marlow .. arr.	8 45	10 5	10 50	11 50	12 50	1 50	2 50	3 50	4 50	5 50	6 50	7 50	8 50	9 50
Marlow .. dep.	8 30	9 40	10 30	11 30	12 30	1 30	2 30	3 30	4 30	5 30	6 30	7 30	8 30	9 30
Bourne End arr.	8 37	9 47	10 37	11 37	12 37	1 37	2 37	3 37	4 37	5 37	6 37	7 37	8 37	9 37

K--Wednesday and Saturday nights only.
S--Saturdays only.

As it was - the public timetable of Spring 1902.

The MARLOW DONKEY is published quarterly by the MARLOW & DISTRICT RAILWAY SOCIETY

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