

Marlow & District
Railway Society

Please reply to:

THE MARLOW DONKEY - No 7 - JUNE 1978

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Steam on British Railways, with the one exception of the Vale of Rheidol line, ended on 11th August 1968. Ten years have passed; enthusiasm and interest in steam matters have not waned. Railway journals and endless books from Ian Allan, David and Charles, D Bradford Barton Ltd and the Oxford Publishing Company, pour endlessly from the presses - albeit now at inflated prices. Railway World in 1968 cost three shillings; it is now the equivalent of eight shillings.

G M Kichenside wrote in his editorial ten years ago, "You have served us well; long may you continue in private ownership". At that time B R were determined to keep steam off their lines. The ban continued for three years. However, Alan Pegler still exercised his continuing permission to run Flying Scotsman. In 1968 the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway were newcomers to the preservation scene and were running trains to Oxenhope. The Dart Valley were hoping to re-open the stretch between Totnes and Ashburton, but had encountered "legal snags".

Now in 1978 what a wealth of interest there is for the steam enthusiast. We have the National Railway Museum at York, the Great Western Society's Railway Centre at Didcot, the Severn Valley Railway between Bridgnorth and Foley Park, the lovely Bluebell Line, the Kent and East Sussex. The list seems endless. Who would have thought in 1968 that ten years later we would have almost 350 main line engines still in existence?

As railway buffs of the armchair we should be most appreciative of the thousands of workers who have wrestled so hard with old locomotives and carriages in all weathers to restore them to attractive, active rolling stock. Nor should we forget the long-suffering wives and girl friends, often drafted in to do their bit also, but ever used to their men folk disappearing at week-ends to follow their hobby.

H C Casserley recently paid a tribute to "the enterprise and foresight of Messrs Woodhams of Barry". Unlike the other scrap merchants around the country the Woodham Brothers kept the majority of the locomotives they received so that preservationists could select and purchase for their lines suitable stock worth putting back into service.

At the end of the sixties over 200 engines lay in the sidings at Barry Island. Now such locomotives as the Duke of Gloucester, Leander, a G W R King, several Castles, Halls and Manors, Black Fives, Jinties, S R Moguls, G W R prairie tanks, 2.8.0's and 0.6.0's are all safely with preservation societies.

From time to time letters from pessimists appear in the railway press. "It can't last", they complain, "inflation and flagging interest will kill off many of these enterprises". So far we can see little evidence that societies and companies are beginning to lose ground. Even our nationalised railway system has realised it is time to "get in on the act". They are actually using their own preserved collection to run special trains for enthusiasts in 1978.

NORMAN ASTON-SMITH MEMORIAL SEAT - Contributed by Malcolm Campbell

In order to perpetuate the memory of Norman Aston-Smith who died last September our contemporary group the Marlow Maidenhead Passengers' Association enlisted the assistance of no less an august body than BR(WR) who magnanimously agreed to donate a GWR platform seat from Platform 9 at Reading Station. For their part the MMPA has a brass plaque suitably engraved fixed to the seat which now resides at Bourne End Station.

To perform the unveiling ceremony on 1 June 1978 the MMPA was able to twist somebody's arm a little and persuaded no less a personage than the Divisional Passenger Manager Ken Riley. The ceremony was attended by Norman's relatives and members of the MMPA MDRS Bourne End Cine Club the local press and the newly formed Newbury Passengers' Association. Members of the MDRS were generously invited by Alan Wheeler publicity officer of the MMPA as Norman had been a member of both.

Ken Riley who had been introduced by Maurice Oram the chairman of MMPA said he had had quite a number of meetings with various groups, passenger associations and enthusiasts' societies but the evening's ceremony was unique for him. He felt honoured in being asked as he had known Norman personally for several years. In paying a warm tribute to Norman he said that Norman had had a vast knowledge of both railway history and operating practice and his criticisms were always of a helpful and constructive nature.

The speaker then paid the MMPA a pretty compliment when he said it was always a pleasure when he had official dealings with them as they were always ready to negotiate on difficult matters and concerning their own special excursions were always co-operative in making their own publicity.

The plaque duly uncovered and recorded on film Maurice Oram invited all those present to adjourn to the Marlow Donkey for light refreshments. Those not having their own transport duly travelled on the branch train which was being worked by a single power car 55028 with driving trailer 56286.

At the hostelry our genial mine host had provided a buffet befitting the occasion. At this informal party a member of the newly formed Newbury Passengers' Association who had been invited by the MMPA was seen to have a long and earnest chat with Ken Riley. The writer gleaned later from the Newbury PA representative that he considered his contact with Mr. Riley to have been profitable.

The Bourne End Cine Club took pictorial records of the various groups each earnestly discussing matters pertaining to transport. No doubt we shall see the results of this one Thursday evening in the future. One such cameo included our Hon Sec and Hon Treas discussing material for this journal.

Many thanks to MMPA on behalf of the MDRS for the generous invitation. Long may the two groups co-exist in support of, and interest in, our local transport.

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome the following new members:-

R G Woodham	43 Albert Road, Caversham, Reading, Berks. Tel Reading 55977 Ext 2387 (Office Hours)
D Kempton	13 Chapman Lane, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe Bucks. Tel Bourne End 26551
K Green	55 Glade Road, Marlow, Bucks. Tel Marlow 73185

SECRETARY'S ADDRESS

Please note that Roger Bowen has now moved to 14 Perth Road, High Wycombe. His telephone number remains 39065.

DISPLAY OF RAILWAYANA

For those members who may have missed it look out for the display in the off licence window of the Marlow Donkey which was prepared by Alan Wheeler.

EXCURSIONS FROM HIGH WYCOMBE

The LMR of BR are operating the following "Merrymaker" special trains from stations between Ruislip and Bicester with connecting special train from Aylesbury.

Sunday 23 Jul	- Dawlish Teignmouth Torquay Paignton	- £3.80
Sunday 20 Aug	- Southampton Bournemouth Weymouth	- £3.60
Sunday 16 Sep	- Rhyl Colwyn Bay Llandudno	- £3.90
Sat 21 Oct	- York	- £3.90

Fuller information can be obtained from the Travel Centre at High Wycombe Station.

On Saturday 30 September a further excursion is being operated picking up at High Wycombe. Called the "Wadebridge Wanderer" the destination is naturally enough Wadebridge although the train will also visit the Gunnislake and Looe branches. Further information can be obtained from the Main Line Steam Trust Railtours 117 Coombe Rise Oadby Leicester LE2 5TZ. Bookings open on 1 July.

BRITISH RAILWAYS STEAM SPECIALS

We hope to join one of these. They operate Tuesdays only. Travel by electric from Euston or Watford to Preston. Steam Carnforth - Sellafeld & return. Through fare £8 ex London. See Roger Bowen or Mike Norris for details.

SOCIETY TIE

Ted Gregory is looking into the possibility of a Society tie. The cost would be about £2. If you are interested please let him know.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON MEMBERS INTERESTS

If you have not yet completed this please return as soon as possible.

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME FOR 1978 at 2000 HRS

- 15 Jun Railways of Western Canada. Mike Walker will give his first hand knowledge of this subject based on a recent visit he made to the area.
- 20 Jul Searching for Steam around Europe. Robert Barker will give his illustrated talk on his extensive travels in search of European steam.
- 3 Aug Visit to Leghton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway. Depart Marlow Donkey by road motor at 1815 hrs. Cost about 80p each. Please book in advance with Bas Woodward.
- 21 Sep Mainly Narrow Gauge films. These will be:
- Land of the Little Trains
 - Festniog Summer
 - Along these Lines
 - Steam
 - Craftsmen of Dinorwic
- 19 Oct Irish Railways. A talk by Leslie McAllister of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland.
- 16 Nov Members Evening. A series of short talks by our own members. Please see Stan Verrinder if you wish to contribute.
- 14 Dec Still to be arranged but will probably be a film evening.

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME FOR 1979

This is still under discussion by your committee and if you have any views on what should be included please let them know. At the moment there are two dates which are fairly certain - 26 April 1979 Colin Garrett and February Ken Riley Divisional Passenger Manager BR (WR).

SUMMER EXCURSION

We visit Brockham Railway Museum and the Bluebell Railway on Sunday 16 July 1979. Leave Marlow Donkey at 0900 hrs returning at 2000 hrs. Approximate cost £2.50. Please book in advance with Stan Verrinder who says there are only a few seats left.

EXCURSIONS FROM MARLOW

Our friends the Marlow Maidenhead Passengers Association have two more excursions by rail from Marlow and stations to Maidenhead planned for 1978.

On Sunday 20 July 1978 the destination is Tenby and on Sunday 10 September 1978 the destination is Llandudno. Further information from our member Alan Wheeler whose other hat is Publicity Officer of the MMPA (25 Barnards Hill, Marlow - tel 2995).

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The birth and development of the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway was the theme of their past chairman A P Tompkins on 16 April 1978. His enthusiasm showed through in a highly successful evening.

Those of us who were unlucky not to be at the 1973 centenary celebrations of the Marlow Donkey had the omission remedied by the Bourne End Cine Club when they successfully recaptured the event on film which was the highlight at their presentation of railways films on 20 April 1978.

On 18 May 1978 Mike Halls who gave us a talk on Southern Railways last year entertained us again with another difficult railway topic London Transport Railways. Our commuter members will now be able to travel with added zest with the knowledge gained from an enjoyable night.

PAST EXCURSIONS

April Fools Day saw a successful visit to Willesden Traction Maintenance Depot organised by Roger Bowen.

Mike Norris in getting together a party for Snowdown Colliery on 20 May 1978 had to contact everyone by telephone because of the shortness of time.

A very small party only was possible for the visit to Amersham Signal Box on 11 May 1978. In view of the number of members who were disappointed in not being able to go it is hoped that another visit in 1979 can be arranged.

WEA COURSES

Your secretary has again been invited to give a number of lectures to the WEA this coming Winter and you may be interested in details.

Last year's successful "History of Railways" course is being repeated this time at Chesham and Princes Risborough. The Chesham course is at the Thomas Harding County Middle School, Fullers Hill, Chesham on Wednesdays at 1945 hrs from 27 September. Further details from Mrs B M Shirley 102 Bellingdon Road, Chesham (tel 2049).

The Princes Risborough course is at the Princes Risborough County Middle School on Tuesdays at 2000 hrs from 19 September. Further details from Mrs J Eastwood 16 Chiltern Close Princes Risborough (tel 3635).

It is anticipated that there will be courses at Amersham and Wendover starting January 1979 the subject being "Steam Engines".

AMERSHAM SIGNAL BOX - Contributed by Roger Woodham

The London Transport Signal Box at Amersham was the venue for a most interesting and enjoyable Society visit on 11 May 1978. As our guide we were fortunate in having Signaller George Hance the late turn signaller that day. Signaller Hance took great trouble explaining the working of the box and with answering our numerous questions.

The area controlled from Amersham is the Metropolitan Line from Chorleywood just north of Amersham station to the boundary with the London Midland Region of British Rail and includes the single track Chesham Branch.

Although Amersham would be described as a power signal box interlocking of points and signals, perhaps surprisingly, is achieved mechanically using a frame based on the same principles as that in a manual box. However, routes are set by the signaller from a push button console. Outside points and the train stops, which are fitted at all signals capable of showing a red aspect as on all LT lines, are operated by compressed air and the main running signals are of the coloured light type.

The actual signals on the "Mainline" are a mixture of three and four aspect designed to suit the different breaking characteristics of LT electric trains and the BR dmus, working the Marylebone to Aylesbury service, which share the same tracks.

I believe the aspect of the working of the Amersham Signal Box we all found the most interesting was the arrangement for working to the adjacent signal boxes, especially the BR ones on the line towards Aylesbury. Trains proceeding towards or coming from Rickmansworth, the next box to the south, are

not offered or accepted in the traditional manner as train describer apparatus is provided. Between Amersham and Aylesbury there are intermediate boxes at Great Missenden and Wendover, however, these are normally only "switched in" at peak periods. Track circuiting is provided all the way to Great Missenden and when this box is open block instruments are not required although trains are described by standard bell code. Beyond Great Missenden the line is not track circuited and when Amersham is working through to Aylesbury three position block instruments are used. Also when Great Missenden is closed it is necessary for the guard of a train that has arrived at Amersham from Aylesbury to operate a "plunger" on the platform to inform the Amersham signalman that his train has arrived complete with tail lamp. Only then can the road be set for the train to leave the platform and train out of section sent to Aylesbury.

We were lucky to be at Amersham at the time Great Missenden "switched out" following which we waited for the next train to arrive from Aylesbury to see for ourselves what happened when the guard operates the plunger.

Just before we left we were shown the "works" under the box by the duty technician. Then it was off to the Marlow Donkey for refreshments but not before we had thanked Signalman Hance and the duty technician for helping to make this a most successful visit.

STEAM IN POLAND - Contributed by A K Palmer

Anyone wishing to record the sight and sound of large numbers of steam locomotives at work should draw their attention to the Polski Koleje Panstwowe (PKP), the state railway of the Polish People's Republic, and despite the apparent amount of red tape and exaggerated rumours that have arisen one can have a thoroughly enjoyable holiday in Poland either on a group package or as a freelance individual as this account relates.

It was with some intrepidation that my companion and I crossed over the River Neisse last August from the East German border town of Gorlitz into the Polish administered area of Silesia on our way to Wrocław (formerly Breslau and pronounced Vrotswaff!) Despite having obtained a permit in advance from the Railway Museum in Warsaw to visit three running sheds there is still a long list of places where railway photography is forbidden and the presence of large numbers of militia made us point our cameras with care. Even though it was Sunday evening we observed several freights including some double-headed mainly by Ty45's, which are a Polish copy of the German Krieglok. On a passenger train we noted an OK1 a fast disappearing class better known as the Prussian P8, all of which are over fifty years old.

Returning to Wrocław station the next morning we were greeted by the sight of a Tkt48 (2-8-2T) on a double-deck suburban train. A sprightly run in an electric unit brought us to our first shed at Jaworzyna. We waited nearly an hour for our permit to be cleared before we were shown round by the armed depot policeman. Locomotives present were all Ty2, German class 52's (not Westerns!) left behind at the end of the war, and also a solitary stored Ok22 which is an enlarged copy of the Ok1. We made our way on to the town of Opole by using various trains headed by Pt47, Ty2 and Ok22. We spent much of the next two days travelling around the Opole area including a change of trains at three o'clock in the morning. Our eventual arrival was at Pyskowice motive power depot which contained Ty45 and Ty23 which are similar to the German Class 58. Also present was a Tr203 one the numerous 2-8-0's sent over from America and Canada to aid the Allied advance through Europe at the end of the war. These Sl60's with their low axle loading were ideal for temporary and unsound trackwork. Pyskowice is in the heart of the Katowice/Bytom industrial area and perhaps 2000 or more of the remaining 5000 Polish steam engines operate in this area. Tkt48 operate most of the non-electric local services along with Ty42 and Ty45 although Katowice sees Pt47 2-8-2's working the Raciborz suburban trains tender first. Although most express passenger trains are now diesel newer steam is still replacing older steam in certain areas.

In Warsaw the process of converting the old Główny station into the National Railway Museum is underway. The new Centralna station is so extravagantly constructed that it would relegate Euston to the status of a wayside halt. Główny now contains a selection of old locomotives from the constituent railways of the PKP, mainly of German origin, although one of the only two Polish built pacifics Pm36.1 is displayed. Poland due its flat terrain and lightly layed track opted for 2-8-2's rather than 4-6-2 for express work and gained from their superior acceleration.

A forty mile run from Warsaw brought us to Sierpc which is home to many Ty2 and Ol49. The latter are a Russian designed class used extensively on stopping trains in Eastern Poland. They are characterised by their air horn used instead of a whistle. At Sierpc station we were nearly arrested by the station policeman for photographing a Tr203 shunting but we parted on good terms after he had examined our permit despite its apparent lack of validity for the station area.

At Sierpc we proceeded on to Łódź (pronounced Wudge) which included a three mile climb up a 1 in 100 gradient behind an Ol49. Here we connected into the 2343 overnight departure to Rzeszów near the Russian border. The train takes ten hours for its journey complete with wooden seated coaches some of which continue on to Jasło behind a Ty2. Ten hours behind a Pt47 are guaranteed to exhaust even the most dedicated enthusiast. This area still sees some of the last remaining Pt31's. Unfortunately all good things have to come to an end and as our rail passes were due to expire at midnight we made our way back to the Baltic port of Szczecin and crossed over to Pasewalk in East Germany where were greeted by Ol and O3 pacifics hard at work but that's another story.

Locomotive classes in use:-

Common

Pt47
Ol49 Russian design
Tr203 USATC s160
Ty2 ex DR52
Ty5 ex DR50
Ty42 built to DR52 design
Ty43 built to DR42 design
Ty45 built to DR50 design
Ty51
Ty246 built in USA
Tkt48

Rare

Pm2 ex DRO3
Pt31
Ok1 ex KPEV P8
Ok22 modified Polish P8
Ok127 similar to DR86
Tr201 USATC S160 (differs from Tr2
Tr202 Vulcan Liberation
Ty4 ex DR44
Ty37
Ty23 similar to DR58
(DR = Deutsche Reichsbahn)

Coding used:-

k = if second letter denotes tank engine
P = Express passenger
O = Ordinary passenger
T = Freight

Second letter unless tank engine denotes wheel arrangement.
(e.g. y= 2-8-0). If Polish built always two digits giving
year introduced. Therefore Pt31 is express 2-8-2 introduced
in 1931.

General information:-

All U.K. visitors require visa from the Polish Embassy in full
passport after currency vouchers have been purchased for the
length of the visit. These cost US \$5.00 under 26 or camping,
otherwise \$10.00 and are converted into non-exchangeable
złoty (Polish currency) at the border.

Polrailpass gives unlimited travel to those going by rail.
8 days 2nd class costs \$20.00. Other time periods and 1st
class available. Available from Polorbis (Official tourist
office) from which further information can be obtained at
82 Mortimer St. London W1.

Timetables are published annually but are hard to obtain in
Poland or abroad. Available from BAS Overseas Publications
Ltd. 50/50A Sheen Lane London SW14 8LP. Cost about £13.
Thomas Cook International timetable details main services.
Free pocket timetables are available for main cities giving
times and platforms.

Book List

Last Steam Locomotives of Eastern Europe, Ian Allan
Twilight of World Steam, Eagleson and Ziel
World Steam, published monthly
Continental Railway Journal, published quarterly.

VISIT TO YORK - Contributed by Steve Lewis

On 11 March 1978 17 Society members took part in the British Rail 'Merrymaker' excursion to York. The day began somewhat inauspiciously with fog in the Wycombe area, and the train running late due to engineering works at Neasden and Gerrards Cross Box being switched out. It finally arrived 15 minutes late, however, behind an immaculate 47, and the coincident arrival of the up Birmingham train provided the rare spectacle of two "proper" trains at Wycombe Station at the same time.

Time was gradually regained throughout the journey, however, despite our being checked on Hatton Bank, at Saltley to give a regular West to North express priority, and at Rotherham for the same reason. York arrival was a few minutes early.

Most of the party immediately adjourned to the "Railway Mania" bar of the Station Hotel before going their separate ways to explore the City and the Railway museum.

Most of the party then met up at the museum for Mike Hanscomb's signal demonstration. Mike explained interlocking mechanisms, both with colour light and electric points, and with semaphores and manual points. Not surprisingly, Mike attracted a fair audience of "ordinary" visitors during his demonstration.

It is very difficult to take in everything of the very fine exhibition of locos rolling stock and model displays in the museum. One needs far more than just one day. Particularly interesting are the sectioned "Merchant Navy" loco and the precision working models of valve gears. Its a pity that these latter have become playthings for young children. It was also pleasant to view the LMS pacific "Duchess of Hamilton" again, dwarfing all the other locos there. A minor criticism was the lack of ordinary pre-nationalisation coaches, for which the display of magnificent royal and special saloons did not quite compensate.

There is an awful lot to see in the City of York, and of course a single afternoon is totally inadequate for sightseeing. There will be an even greater attraction to Railway enthusiasts after May 1st this year, when the Derwent Valley Light Railway re-opens for tourist traffic. This small Railway has led an independent and profitable existence since it first opened, and last year commenced running passenger trains for tourists using the NER type 0-6-0 tank "joem" and ex-LNWR "hardwicke". Layenthorpe Station presented a well kept appearance, though there was no activity on the day of our visit.

The otherwise uneventful journey home was enlivened by a full brake application near Tamworth, resulting in a stop just past the signal. The reason for this was not ascertained.

The train ran nicely to time to Wycombe, time for several members to get a couple of jars in at the "Flint Cottage".

While it is fashionable to "knock" British Railways these days, the journey was an example of very efficient operating, and represented excellent value for money.

WILLESDEN MOTIVE POWER TRACTION DEPOT - Contribution by Roger Bowen

Undaunted by the weather and April Fools Day 8 intrepid members met at 1000 hrs outside the "Marlow Donkey" for the journey from Marlow to Willesden.

An uneventful journey in two cars brought us to the approach road to the depot at 1035 hrs giving us 25 minutes to watch trains progressing on the West Coast Main Line. Whilst waiting we were joined a further 4 members of the party who had found their way from foreign parts such as Amersham and Wendover. Amongst the activity seen whilst waiting was an immaculate 87004 pass by slowly with nameboards covered in plywood - obviously ready for naming. Your Secretary commented that this was obviously for us to ceremonially name "Marlow Donkey" during our visit, naturally to be christened with a pint of Wethered's best. Unfortunately it was not to be.

At 1100 hrs our party reported as requested to the depot and were somewhat taken aback at being allowed access without a guide whereas the permit stated "representative will conduct throughout". Much was to be seen in the depot, both electric and diesel electric locos present were of the 83, 85, 86 and 87 classes, with 08 and 25 class diesels on shed. One 08 was notable as being in green with a lion crest, another was immaculate in blue with yellow connecting rods and red detail, named in chalk "Royal Shunter".

Interest was shown in a wheel grinding machine which ground wheels whilst still on the train - in this case a Euston-Watford dc unit. In the workshops a lot of time was spent in the pantograph shop where an interesting member of staff explained all the problems of the different types of collecting shoes used on pantographs.

Outside the sheds was the main Willesden breakdown train with modern diesel electric 76 tonne crane TDM 1093. An older 6½ tone hand crane ADM 2/6½ built for the LMS was elsewhere near the depot. Also stabled was the Division's electrification train composed of 1920's vintage LMD carriages modified with flat roofs for attention to the overhead catenary.

Having exhausted the delights of the depot our party prepared to retreat to the nearest hostelry - the "Willesden Junction Hotel" complete with an inn sign representing a poor illustration of a GW "City". However Mike Hanscomb had sought the advice of one of our Colonial friends working in the ticket office and advised us to try a different establishment. Much muttering ensued after a dismal trudge into the centre of Harlesden in the pouring rain where we finally came to rest in the "Royal Oak" only to find that they didn't serve food on Saturdays. Before the party left the Secretary had to castigate those present for slipping a 25 cent Canadian coin into the collection he would be handing over to the Treasurer warning them of the ire that would be generated by Stan Verrinder if he were presented with the offending coin.

The party returned to Willesden Junction via a convenient "Chippie". The railbourne contingent left in a dc unit with the comment that this was the first time Mike Hanscomb had been seen behind bars (the dc units have bars to all their opening windows). The main party returned to the "Marlow Donkey" in time for a swift "Half" before closing time.

I should like to thank all those who attended for coming in particular Mike Walker for driving. Thanks are of course due to the London Divisional Manager of BR (LMR) for permitting us to visit the depot. All who attended enjoyed themselves, the only disappointment to the Secretary was the smallness of the turnout. Perhaps our next visit will be more popular.

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