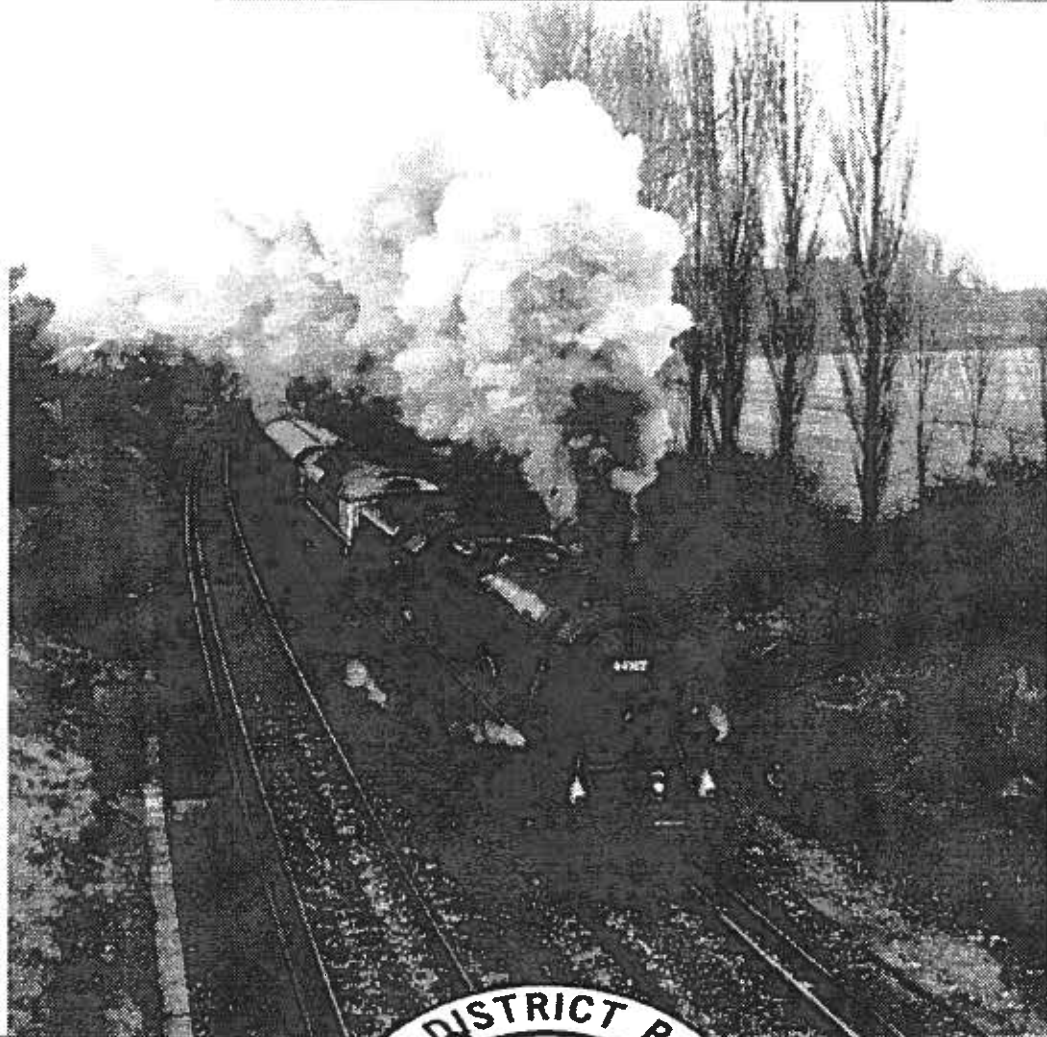
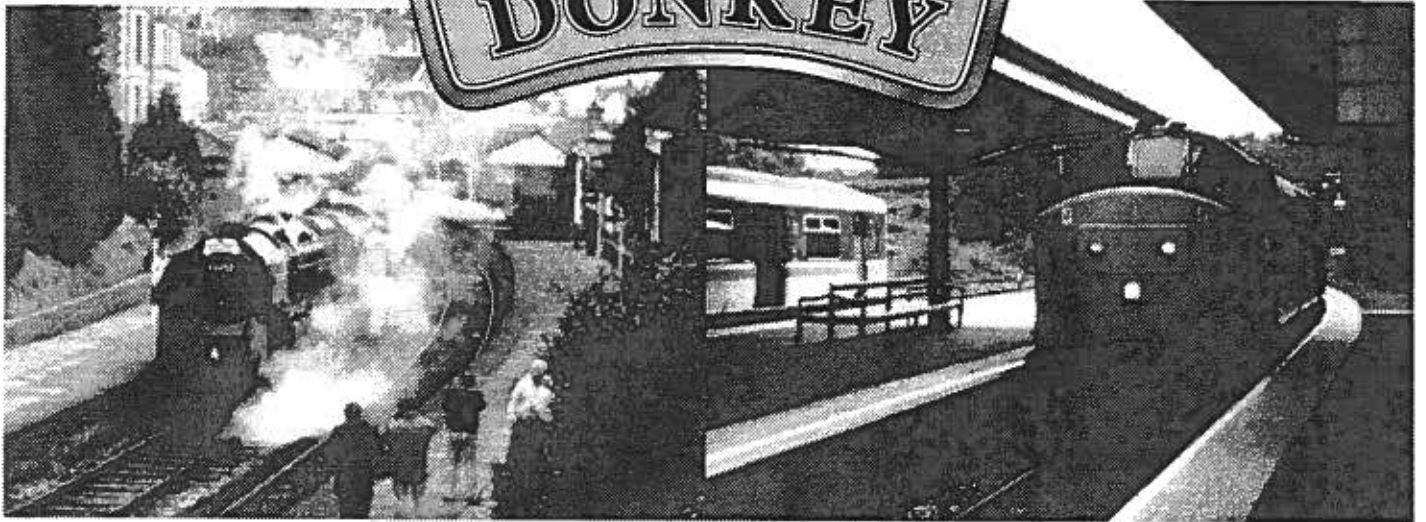


# THE MARLOW DONKEY



Edition

84

March 1998



Contents

Highball,

Passenger Extra 3025 West

Railways South West

# The Marlow Donkey - The Magazine of the Marlow and District Railway Society

## COMMITTEE

- President: Sir William McAlpine Bt
- Vice-President: Bas Woodward
- Chairman: Eddie Lewcock 27 Rupert Avenue, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP12 3NG  
Tel: (01494) 525638
- Vice-Chairman/Treasurer: Peter Robins 95 Broome Hill, Cookham, Berks. SL6 9LJ  
Tel: (01628) 527870
- Secretary: Roger Wallis 9 Bream Close, Marlow, Bucks SL7 2BB  
Tel: (01628) 485463
- Publicity: Tim Speechley 11 Rydal Way, High Wycombe Bucks. HP12 4NS  
Tel: (01494) 437428
- Outings Organisers:**
- Gordon Rippington: 95 Roberts Ride, Hazlemere, High Wycombe, Bucks HP15 7AN  
Tel: (01494) 711828
- Julian Heard: 58 Chalklands, Bourne End, Bucks SL8 5TJ  
Tel: (01628) 527005
- Mike Hyde: 11 Forty Green, Marlow SL7 2JX 01628 485474
- Donkey Editor: John Tuck 35A Danywern Drive, Winnersh, Wokingham, Berks RG41 5NS  
Tel: 0118 978 8225 E-mail: john@hkz.co.uk

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS: *Top Left: David Shepherd's visiting 9F 2-10-0 92203 'Black Prince' (Swindon/59) waits to take the 12.20 'Mid-Day Belle' dining train out of Llangollen station. 30 November 1997. (Tim Edmonds) Top Right: Yeovil Pen Mill - late running 18.08 departure Weymouth 'Sand and Cycle Explorer' with 37416 in charge. 13/7/97. (David Gardner) Main picture: 44767 Storming noisily up Buriton bank on a Days Out special from Waterloo to Southampton with Mid Hants class 33 and coaching stock. 31/1/98 (John Tuck)*

**Latest Copy Date for next issue of The Marlow Donkey End February 1998**

### EDITORS DETAILS

Donkey Editor, John Tuck, 35A Danywern Drive, Winnersh, Wokingham, Berks RG41 5NS

Tel: 0118 978 8225 Fax: 01628 485080 or E-mail john@hkz.co.uk

# TIMETABLE

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held at:  
Royal British Legion, Station Approach, Marlow at 7.45 for 8.00 pm.

### 1998

Thursday 16 April	THE BRITISH STEAM TRAM	Nick Kelly
Thursday 21 May	RAILWAY ARTEFACTS	Laurence Waters
Thursday 18 June	RAILWAY FILMS	Frank Banfield
Thursday 16 July	STRATFORD SHED	Stan Hinbest
Thursday 17 September	VIDEO EVENING	Mike Norris
Thursday 15 October	THE FLYING SCOTSMAN	David Ward
Thursday 19 November	INDIA REVISITED	Dr Brandham
Thursday 17 December	CHRISTMAS SOCIAL	

## DAY TRIPS

April 11 or 25	BEDFORD / BLETCHLEY	By car
Saturday 9 May	WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY	By Rail
Sunday 5 July	ISLE OF WIGHT	By Coach-Ferry-Train



# L M S R

## Local Miniature Steam Railways

Alan Wheeler

By miniature I mean those railways with a track gauge between 31/2" and 24", mainly 5" and 71/4", steam hauled and passenger carrying. At the top end of both the Chilterns and gauge is the Leighton Buzzard Light Railway, for those MDRS members now long in the tooth and memory, will recall that the society visited the line in the late 70's by a new double deck bus. The track was originally laid for the sand quarries, and has seen much rebuilding, particularly as much of the line now runs through a housing estate with all its attendant problems of vandalism. However the station, Pages Park, and main base houses a good selection of vintage narrow gauge steam and diesel locomotives including a De Winton 0-4-0 vertical boiler loco. The track runs for 13/4 miles and a regular service is operated throughout the summer.

Nearer home, a private line at Thame, owned by Ted Martin and laid to a gauge of 71/4" operates on a heavily biased GWR line. Even the chairs on the trackbed are scale reproduction GWR bullhead chairs, cast by Ted.

The line is some 1/4 mile double track in length. Locomotives

include GW Castles, 28xx, 61xx etc. Visitors by appointment.

Holmer Green is the home of the High Wycombe Model Engineering Society. The 71/4", 5" and 31/2" gauge line is a continuous kidney shape line, built on concrete piers and beams. At least 2 members of MDRS, Mike Walker and myself, were involved in casting concrete in the mid 70's for the line. Eddie Lewcock runs his 5" LMS loco on the line. The track is open to the public. Details from Eddie.

Although slightly out of the Chilterns, the ground level track at Ickenham, near Uxbridge, operated by Ickenham & District Society Model Engineers (IDSME) is a fully detailed railway. 31/2 and 5" gauge, the line has full signalling, both semaphore and colour light, scale size operational signal box, complete with model cat named Rover. An 18ft turntable is used to turn the complete train/loco following each passenger run, to allow it to run into the covered station ready for the next run. Locomotives include several narrow gauge, a 5" LMS 'City

of Nottingham', MR Compound, GWR and LNER locos. Open to the public first Sunday of the Month - April to December. WARNING several MDRS members operate locos on this line (we carried over 10,500 in 1996 - it can get very busy!)

High Wycombe sees our Chairman, Eddie Lewcock's 5" garden railway, Eddie admits it is only an oval with tight bends, but his LMS loco an rolling stock carries a number of grandchildren plus others a a good turn of speed. To view see Eddie.

Marlow sees my own 31/2"/5" track, a simple line 120' long with two bends and a multi gauge point and siding. The locos being a 97xx Pannier an 08 and 31/2" 0-4-0. Freight working being the main function of the line. Viewing/running by request.

Now at least one other member owns a 5" loco, a 2-8-0 GNR O2 tender freight loco, others in 'G' scale being live steam radio controlled. There are many other lines, both private and club within the Chiltern area - so steam is alive and well.

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

With almost 8% of 1998 already behind us, life on the rail front seems relatively quiet this January unless you value the chance of travelling on a through train from Paddington to Birmingham on certain days by Chiltern Trains. However it gives time to look back on two events I attended just prior to the end of 1997.

The first was a large rail exhibition at Wembley by most of the current big names in European Rail Transport. AD Tranz showed two complete coaches, one from the new Chiltern 100 m.p.h service and the second, a classic coach offering a conversion possibility for existing rolling stock, operating mainly south of London, in which the chassis and bogies are retained and the old bodies replaced. With new coaches costing £æ million and upwards each vehicle, it could be a money saver. In addition, not only were tilting trains explained but also the concept of steering bogies shown.

The second event was an address by Ed. Burghardt to a meeting of engineers in which he aired his views on the future of rail transport. His performance was impressive with none of the bluster that can sometimes ruin the American image. His arguments were well reasoned out and responses to the questions very much to the point One of the great features is that he introduces a new attitude to rail operation over here. As he says, present management thinks of contraction and the whole attitude must be changed around to expansion. With an investment by E.W. & S. of £400m in locos and wagons and more to come, he is certainly putting money where his mouth is and new traffic in a number of areas has already been generated. In fact, locos they had hoped to pension off may have to be kept to cover the expansion in traffic requirements.

One new feature being introduced in the Transportation Control System (TCS) which is to supersede T.O.P.S in 1998. This system will consolidate Train Planning, Loco & Wagon management, Customer Services etc. It will be interesting to see how Rail Track will work with it but I suspect that he will soon have that organisation taped. Clearly he, like the manager of GNER, does not like the idea of a separate track company. As it is very obvious, he has already driven a coach and horses through the idea of vehicle owning companies renting them out to operators.

It would be premature to make judgements but minds are cast back to two great American figures from the past who altered the face of the lines they controlled; the first being Charles Tyson Yerkes who brought the District railway up to date and the second is Sir Henry Thornton who masterminded the Great Eastern Jazz Service which produced an extraordinary increase in passenger capacity out of Liverpool Street at minimal cost and whose personal coach is now at Fawley Museum.

There is a mood of resurgence in rail transport in the air and in all our interest we must get some of these heavy lorries off the road. May Ed Burghart succeed like his predecessors, if he does, he is entitled to thanks from all of us.

I must cease now or else may be criticised for concentrating mainly on one subject, However we could be at the beginning of a new era in rail transport here in Britain. Railtrack are already predicting a doubling of traffic by the year 2010 so there seems to be exciting times ahead in the next few years, with a complete turn around from recent years. Keep your fingers crossed and a Happy New Year to you all.

Enough of modern times; I do hope that you enjoyed our two efforts to celebrate the 20th anniversary this year. Fawley is always an enjoyable experience and provides a time capsule celebrating the great years of steam railways, whilst David Shepherd always provides good entertainment and enabled the Marlow public to join in our celebrations.

It is nice to know that a new steam railway has been opened this year, the Welsh Highland line out of Carnaevon and complete with the narrow gauge, Garrets too! More miles have yet to be laid but it has beaten the Heathrow Express to the starting post and will add extra enjoyment on visits to North Wales in the years to come.

To all those wives and members on and off the committee who have worked so long and hard to make our events a success, I say a very big thank you on behalf of the Society. It was, for instance, quite a feat to provide over 150 lunches and teas at Fawley, with all the food having to be transported there as well as being prepared.

My personal thanks goes to those members of the Committee who have taken on extra jobs during this year and I offer you all best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

E. W. Lewcock, *Chairman*.

# RAILWAY ROUNDABOUT

## **To See or Not to See.**

A novel window design has been incorporated into rolling stock on the BUKIT PANJAN light rapid transit line in Singapore. Residents living close to the line will retain privacy in their homes despite the trains passing close by.

An electro chromatic film will be incorporated in the coach windows, which, when activated, turn the molecules round and makes normally transparent windows opaque. The mind boggles!

Reports that London Buses running in the Soho area are to be fitted are not confirmed!

## **Rail Freight Routes in Europe.**

A series of long distance freight paths are being set up in the European Timetable structure which private operators may bid for. These will be about 200 paths enabling trains to move 25% faster than now and the German, Dutch, Austrian, Swiss and Italian authorities are involved - France being unwilling to join. Routes include Antwerp to Genoa - Rotterdam to Domodona, Italy; Bremen to Brindisi via the Brenner Pass. A possibility in the future might be London to Sopron in Hungary.

## **AMTRACK.**

Has been saved from collapse at the eleventh hour by an injection of much needed funds totalling \$3.4 billion and \$2.3 billion for capital improvements, rehabilitation of the infra structure along with new rolling stock and locomotives. Passenger traffic in the USA has long been uneconomic in general and obviously continues to be so.

## **Track Improvements**

The doubling of the line from Princes Risborough to Bicester North is now well under way, a £1.3m contract having been let. Considerable interruption to services is occurring in January including No trains between the above towns from the 17th to the 25th January. Birmingham and Banbury services will run into Paddington and replacement buses operate between Risboro and Bicester. Services are also affected on the 4th and 11th January.

There seems to be a tendency for Rail track to close complete sections of line down for days on end. The line west of Woking was similarly treated last year. As there is a four year Track Renewal programme valued at £100m on the Great Western Zone in which AmeyRail and SECO/DGC of France will co-operate, are we likely to see Bristol cut off from Paddington for a while?

## **Drivers Reminder Appliances.**

Well that is what they call them now, the GWR had them working before World War One!

Anyhow a contract for £3.4m has been awarded to W.S.

Atkins Ltd to supply 4,600 appliances for use on Locomotives and M.U. Cabs with a view to reducing the risk of passing signals at danger. It seems that their fitting will be mandatory by December 1998.

## **Steam on the Main Line.**

A recent count of proposed steam runs on the Main Line in Britain this year, showed 56 trips excluding anything on the West Highland or Kyle of Localsh runs. The Mallaig run will be on week days from 22nd June to 25th September and also Sundays in August.

It is understood that Steam on the Met will run on the last two 16/17 & 23/25 of May and the locomotives expected to operate the service are 'B1' 1264, 'Mogul' 2968 and GWS 'Prairie Tank' 4144.

## **Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway**

As members may have read in the local and railway press, Chiltern Trains have suggested that the line from Aston Rowant to Princes Risborough could be reopened.

Talks have been held between the C&PRR and Chiltern Trains and both groups are in favour of the proposal. Because the C&PRR would have the freehold over the line from Chinnor to Thame Junction, Chiltern Trains would in theory have to pay an access charge to run over the line. This is likely to be waived as Chiltern Trains will pay for the relaying of the line from Chinnor to Aston Rowant and Thame Junction to Risborough as well as reopening the platform and providing the footbridge at Risborough.

It is proposed that Chiltern Trains would operate the line from Monday to Friday whilst the preservation group would use it at weekends and public holidays. Under consideration is the use of the Society's bubble car on Saturdays if there is sufficient demand.

As Aston Rowant station will be only 1/2 mile from the M40 exit, a 500 space 'Park and Ride' car park will be built there, with the station building being built in the original style.

Any problems occurring on the line during the week will be dealt with by Chiltern Trains.

If plans stay to schedule it is expected that the line to Risborough from Thame Junction will be open by March 1999, and through trains from Aston Rowant to Marylebone by Mid 2000.

*If this proposed scheme goes ahead, judging by the success of other Park and Ride schemes a 500 space car park will be to small by far. Well over 1,000 vehicles an hour head towards London past this M40 junction during the rush hour. Editor.*

**Late breaking News:** The King achieves fastest point to point timings on Settle-Carlisle.

# THE HISTORY OF THE NORMAN ASTON-SMITH AWARD

Alan Wheeler

The winner of the Norman Aston-Smith award for the best Marlow Donkey article of the year may ask - who was Norman Aston-Smith? So for the newer members, i.e. those joining since 1980 here is a brief history lesson. Norman Aston-Smith was NEVER a member of MDRS, he died about a year before the Society was founded! He was, however, a very active member of the Marlow / Maidenhead Passenger Assn (MMPA) as well as being a member of LCGB, SLS, GWS and several other major societies. Norman, retired and single lived in Furlong Road, Bourne End in a large victorian house, filled with railway items. Following his death, with no relatives, the firm of solicitors acting as executor were responsible for disposal of his collection. Several MMPA members, later founder MDRS members working in Bourne End, less than 5 mins walk from Norman's home. Contact with the executor was made who welcomed the idea of someone arranging disposal of the collection.

Over the period of 2/3 months I would go to Norman's house at lunchtimes, recording railway items. What a gold-mine! The front room was home to 400+ books, The rear bedroom contained 50+ box files filled with papers, photos, articles etc. GW cabside plate lamps etc.

Each week would see Newsletters from the various groups of which he had been a member dropping on the doormat. I contacted these groups, advising them that a list was being prepared and that all items were open to offer. A work colleague had just moved into a new house, asked if any garden tools were there, I said yes, go and look in the garden shed. Returning with several tools he asked what was the Bourne End sign in the shed. I had a looked, briefly, in the shed but not seen anything,

hurrying back I found the old Bourne End North Box nameplate, in 2 pieces.

The box files were all numbered by Norman and it soon became clear that he had started preparing a book(s) on the London, Tilbury and Southend line. Papers, photos, acts of Parliament, timetables on the line when stacked came to over 4 feet high! The Librarian of the Stephenson Loco Society purchased these. In all I produced a list running to 24 sides of A4. several books were presented, by the MMPA in his name, to Bourne End and Marlow libraries. The bulk of the collection was purchased by the Great Western Society - several van loads. It was agreed with the solicitor that my 'fee' for the clearance would be railway items. Bourne End North Box being part of that 'fee'.

One item, a wooden signal arm from the end of Bourne End platform was to become part of the MDRS. The MDRS had by now been founded and I suggested the arm as an award with the Society and so the Norman Aston-Smith signal (full size) became the prize for the best Donkey article of the year.

However the story does not quite end there. Winners - Stan Verinder, Mike Walker etc were loathed to take it home and display it in the living room, it tended to end up at the back of the winners garage for the year. In order to make it more acceptable, but keeping the same image (a signal arm) I made a 1½"/ft arm and Terry Dearling mounted it on its plinth.

This then is the story behind the Norman Aston-Smith award.

## A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

by Tim Edmonds

These days not only are we faced with a plethora of privatised railway companies, but the nature of what we used to call "preserved" railways has changed. Although it is true that many of the lines we know began as schemes to preserve the memory of the traditional steam railway, and many have achieved a serious museum side to them, it is becoming increasingly apparent that they are forging identities of their own and satisfying a market that did not exist in the pioneer days of the 1950s and 1960s. An organised weekend visit to three contrasting Welsh railways at the end of November 1997 got me thinking about their nature and identity. The three were the Welsh Highland, Ffestiniog and Llangollen Railways - all primarily steam lines operated by volunteer labour, but each different in background and outlook.

The first 2 ¾ miles of the ambitious WHR project consists of 2' gauge track laid along the bed of the former LNWR Bangor ó Afon Wen branch, while the rest of its proposed route is that of the original WHR. With financial aid from European and Millennium funds it has been built from nothing in less than a year. We had a tour of the centre

of operations at Dinas Junction, including some of the original station buildings and an extensive yard used as a base for construction work. In steam was ex-South African Railways 138, a class NGG16 2-6-2+2-6-2 Beyer-Garratt built in 1958 (carrying SAR-style bilingual numberplates with Welsh rather than Afrikaans as the second language) and our train was a set of impressive new coaches built by Winson Engineering.

The WHR has much of interest to the railway enthusiast but, as a new line using an assortment of new and second-hand equipment, it cannot accurately be described as a "preserved" railway. In its present form travel on the line for its own sake is the only reason for using it. The WHR's ambition is to extend through Snowdonia to Beddgelert and Porthmadog to provide a public transport service but its market would still be primarily for leisure. Perhaps we should classify it as a "leisure railway".

In contrast the FR has a distinguished heritage as an industrial railway and was a pioneer preservation scheme,



*Posed at the end of the loop at the new WHR Caernarfon station, ex-SAR 138 class NGG16 2-6-2 + 2-6-2 (BP7863/58) gets a taste of Welsh rain. 29 November 1997.*

but what is it today? Much of the route and equipment from the pre-preservation era is still intact, and there is an excellent small museum at Porthmadog, but this is very much a railway that continues to develop. Although our train was powered by a 0-4-4-0T double Fairlie of the type synonymous with the line, "David Lloyd George" is modern motive power, built at Boston Lodge in 1992, and the route included traversing the spiral loop and deviation line built in the 1970s. On the return journey we stopped at Boston Lodge where the original workshops have been updated with modern machinery to continue maintaining the railway. The FR manages to combine a recognition of its history with a valuable public transport and leisure function, but it is not simply a preserved railway. If we need a label then perhaps "heritage railway" is as good as any.

Of the three lines the Llangollen Railway is the most deserving of the title "preserved railway". It typifies the mainstream of the railway preservation movement, being an ex-BR line taken over before too much of the original infrastructure had disappeared. It has beautifully restored stations at Llangollen, Berwyn and Carrog, boasts an original tunnel and river bridge, and the service train was being operated by authentic motive power in the shape of 0-6-0PT 7754. Nevertheless, the need to attract customers means that

something more than preservation is necessary, and one such attraction is the dining train. The finale to our weekend was an excellent lunch on the "Mid-day Belle" dining train, for which the motive power was David Shepherd's visiting 9F 92203.

Dining trains are now an established part of the scene on many steam railways, as are Santa Specials, Thomas the Tank Engine weekends and similar events. Although they are not to every enthusiast's taste, these activities are now the major revenue-earning traffic of many lines and we should appreciate them as such. They are "real" trains rather than attempts to recreate the trains of yesteryear. Finally, it is a sobering thought that the motive power on all three railways over the weekend was younger than the railway preservation movement itself, the oldest of the

three steam locos having been built as recently as 1958!

Postscript:

These visits were organised by Bill Alborough as part of the "TEFS Grand Reunion Weekend" at the Hand Hotel in Llangollen. The Welsh Highland and Ffestiniog Railways



*David Shepherd's visiting 9F 2-10-0 92203 'Black Prince' (Swindon/59) waits to take the 12:20 'Mid-Day Belle' dining train out of Llangollen station. 30 November 1997.*

both operated out of season especially for us, and all three railways were generous in providing guides and in giving access to workshops and other behind-the-scenes facilities. Thanks to all concerned.

# HIGHBALL, PASSENGER EXTRA 3025 WEST

Mike Walker

"Highball, Passenger Extra 3025 West" came the radio instruction. In reply Wisconsin Central 3025 gave two short toots on its horn and slipped out of Schiller Park Yard at the head of a two-car passenger special conveying seventeen British railway enthusiasts on a most unusual railtour.

When Steam Powered Video was planning its Grand Chicago Rails Tour, getting into places usually off limits to rail enthusiasts was a high priority and Wisconsin Central was a natural target in view of its recent high profile activities in the UK. The company, through its Vice-President, Operations, Tim Kelly readily agreed to host a tour of the locomotive and car shops at North Fond du Lac in Wisconsin so plans were made to drive north and accommodation booked. Then WC's President, Ed Burkhardt, got to hear and asked how we were getting there. When told we were going by road he said he had a better idea and would provide a "Business Car" for us from Schiller Park (Chicago) and would accompany us himself. It took no time for SPV's Ian Andrews to accept this amazing offer although at WC's request we did not publicise it too widely in case it fell through.

Business Cars are a North American institution rather like British officers' saloons. They have lounges, a galley, sleeping compartments, conference/dining rooms and often observation ends - everything railroad managers need to live, conduct business and entertain on the road. They are often to be seen on special trains or attached to freights but the general public seldom gets the chance to ride in them.

We knew all was well when a phone call from Tim Kelly woke me at 6.30 on the morning before our trip. Whilst business commitments meant that Mr Burkhardt would not be able to join us our trip was on and would leave at 8 o'clock, could we be there 30 minutes earlier. Tim regretted that "we can only arrange two cars for the trip and we can't run at 125 mph like you guys, but we'll do our best".

We had expected our car(s) to be attached to a freight so on arrival at Schiller Park the sight of a locomotive attached to two cars was assumed to be a switching move. We quickly discovered it was in fact our own special train! The consist was locomotive 3025, an EMD GP40 3,000hp Bo-Bo which had started life on the Western Pacific in 1970 and arrived on WC in 1991 since when it has been upgraded, and cars Prairie Rose which was originally a diner on the Milwaukee Road and Sierra Hotel which was built as a dome-observation-sleeper for the fabled California Zephyr. Both are now privately owned but are housed and maintained by WC in exchange for free use as needed, an arrangement which pleases both sides.

We were welcomed aboard by David Wilson, Director - Intermodal Marketing and confessed railfan; Tom Baldner from Accounts but more importantly another railfan and Wisconsin rail historian and Kim Hosmer from Human

Resources who admitted to becoming a half-railfan only when she joined this "incredible company" two years ago. Also aboard was steward Dick Soyk who would keep us supplied with food and drink all day.

We were on the road just before our target time and we could soon experience the remarkable revival of the WC. A freight waited to follow us out of the yard as soon as possible and at almost every siding a southbound train awaited us. When WC took over in 1987 only 10 trains ran on the line each week, today that number has jumped to around 20-30 a DAY and the single line is reaching saturation point. Even more remarkable than that they were prepared to host a special for us.

To overcome this capacity crunch, WC is busy lengthening and installing new sidings along with a new signalling system. South of Antioch, just below the Illinois-Wisconsin state line, the company now hosts a commuter rail service operated by Metra. This has resulted in state funding for much of the upgrading in Illinois and it is hoped that as the service gets established - it started on August 19, 1996 with four weekday round trips - the state will fund double tracking of the 40 miles between Franklin Park (the Chicago end of the WC) and Antioch. The signs are good, with the usual WC midas touch applying and leading to higher than predicted loadings. Whilst the morning WC commuter trains were already out of our way, the last had swept past as we gathered at Schiller Park, one Metra train from Fox Lake on the old Milwaukee had to wait for us to pass at the flat crossing at Grays Lake.

From our vantage points of the dome or riding on the open rear platform of the Prairie Rose it was a delightful ride through the well-heeled suburbs and into the gently rolling countryside of southern Wisconsin, dotted with small farms, lakes and trees just reaching their peak fall colouring. The weather whilst overcast was at least dry in contrast to the preceding day's rain. We moved along at a fair pace and were actually specially authorised to operate up to 65 mph, well above the normal 50 limit, nevertheless the ride was very good and the track is obviously in great shape. At various small towns we exchanged waves with the locals and wondered what they would have said if they knew what was going on. The railfan telegraph was obviously working well for as the day wore on more and more cameras were to be seen lineside, they were particularly numerous around Waukesha WI, home town of Trains magazine.

One of the SPV party was a freight driver from Didcot who thus works for EW&S and therefore WC. It was not long before he was deep in conversation with Kim comparing working conditions and pay rates and was stunned to discover that a WC engineer makes almost double what he does but they do work longer hours. To get a feel for the job he was taken forward and after being given a brief resume of the controls, took charge of the train himself.



All too soon we threaded the town of Fond du Lac and drew into Shops Yard north of town and 140 non-stop miles from Schiller Park. On leaving the train we started our tour of the facilities. The car and locomotive shops were built around the turn of the century by the old Wisconsin Central which became a part of the Soo in 1909. The two are separate but adjoining. The car shop is a long thin building served by a traverser. It is equipped to handle everything from running repairs to complete overhauls and wreck rebuilds. We were given a demonstration of an awesome machine, designed and built by WC, which can straighten the most crumpled and twisted of bodies. As we went through we saw cars in various states of repair and finally outside the paint shop we saw a boxcar which had just emerged from a total rebuild and parked next to an unrebuilt one, the contrast was amazing.

The locomotive shop consists of two parts, the roundhouse where routine maintenance and lighter repairs are carried out and the machine shop where the heavy jobs are handled. Fond du Lac specialises in mechanical and engine work. Electrical work including fitting of the sophisticated micro-processor upgrades are done at Stevens Point. Several of the fleet were in the shops for various exams and repairs and a good cross-section of the roster was gathered in the yard for photography including #1, the seldom photographed shop switcher, a 600hp EMC SW1 built in 1939.

Over at the yard, instead of walking the "mile a luxury mini-coach had been hired in to drive us round just in case it rained - it didn't, things were not going well in the control tower. A loaded taconite ore train had failed on Byron Hill south of town. It was one of the trains which run through to Provo in Utah and was led by a pair of shiny new Southern Pacific AC drive 4400hp GE's. It seems such failures are not uncommon with these new beasts and WC usually likes to add its own pilot locos just in case, today power resources were stretched so they took a risk. Now they were having trouble finding power to go to the rescue. But they still found time to explain how the yard works, trains dispatched and cars tracked.

The railroad was anxious that we got going again by 2 o'clock but not before we all posed for photographs in front of 3025, not just for ourselves but also for WC. Our first departure was short lived when we realised Kim was being left behind, she was in the yard office nattering like all women do. When finally on the road we were relieved to find the stalled ore train had at least managed to die on the main at Byron siding so we were able to bypass it on the passing track.

Having served breakfast and morning coffee on the outward trip, Dick provided an excellent buffet lunch on the way home finished off with a superb jelly in WC house colours! Later he offered to make afternoon tea. We were a little hesitant as Americans are not the world's best tea makers - it's something to do with using salt water! David Wilson said WC would accept our challenge and minutes later individual silver tea pots and fine china cups appeared. We rated the effort at 8 out of 10 - honour was preserved all round.

Our southbound trip was not non-stop as we had to wait for one northbound freight and a lengthy wait at Lake Villa for the first outward Metra but again Fox Lake commuters had to wait for us at the diamond - I wonder if we got the same ones both ways? As darkness fell David Wilson and I stood on the rear platform - "travelling by rail as God intended" he maintains - talking railroading and waving to the home going commuters held in their cars at grade crossings. I remarked this was a bit like a presidential election train which prompted a story about how the CIA had thrown Ed Burkhardt off his own train whilst hosting a POTUS special for George Bush in '92. Ed remarked that "he'd been thrown out of better joints than this" but even so, WC is still a Republican railroad. All day we were able to discuss WC's remarkable growth and its plans for the future. Several more expansions are in the pipeline but future overseas expansion will be confined to English-speaking countries. All questions were answered including those which many would term as commercially sensitive and they were quick to admit their mistakes - yes, they have made some!

Although Ed Burkhardt was not there in person he was in spirit. Each of the team with us spoke of him as a personal friend and were recalling stories of his style of doing business and enjoying himself. All the employees we met, including a driver from New Zealand on an exchange posting, spoke warmly of their company and boss in a way that is rare today in any organisation, it seems that he is thought of as a cross between a favourite uncle and a god. It was encouraging to see that officers from other railroads we visited during the tour admire him and what he has done for the industry. One EB story told to us was of a time in the company's first year when it was in danger of defaulting on its massive start up loans. A programme of pay cuts was instituted but only those on more than \$30,000 were affected and the higher the earnings the larger the cut, Burkhardt and his senior colleges took a 75% cut. It showed that he was determined to make WC succeed and would make the biggest sacrifice personally. The economies worked, pay was restored and a lot of respect earned. WC is proud of never having laid off an employee since day one except where it has taken over grossly over-staffed operations, like here.

About 7pm we arrived back at Schiller Park and after protracted thank-yous and farewells we set off back to our motel still not really believing what hospitality we had received. The company had admitted it wanted something in return. "Just go home and spread the word we are not a bunch of two-headed yankee monsters coming to destroy your railways, we're going to make them great again". We didn't really need convincing and on the evidence of our close look at the dynamic "We Can" railroad, EW&S couldn't be in better or safer hands.

*This is an article that Mike Walker gave me over a year ago. However it is still very interesting and I am sure you will agree it is good to see EW&S is in the hands of a forward looking organisation. Ed.*

# RAILWAYS SOUTH WEST

## A travellers guide, Chippenham to Yeovil Pen Mill.

Although my family and I have lived in Chippenham, Wiltshire for nine years now, we have not ventured very far away in that time. However an invitation from a relative who lives in South Petherton near Yeovil was enough to get us planning days out on territories new. Although we could have hired a car if we had wished, it worked out much cheaper to go by train - so on Monday 11th August, we set off to catch the 17.24 Great Western 125 to Bath. This train arrived about six minutes late and was well patronised but we managed to get a pair of spare seats all the same. Our train was one of the recently re-conditioned units with smartened interiors and better sound proofing. Unfortunately the air conditioning had apparently broken down and it proved to be something of a hot issue in the compartment and cooler but rather noisy in the corridor, especially going through Box Tunnel at around 100mph. Luckily the journey time to Bath is usually about 15 minutes but it was something of a relief to step out of that

oven! At Bath we had to go through the subway to the up platform, where we caught the 17.51 Weymouth bound train. This South Wales and West train was made up of a four car sprinter set and departed about 1½ minutes down. Heading in an easterly direction, our train turned off the GW mainline, just beyond the site of Bathampton Junction station and onto the Bradford line. Both Freshford and Avoncliff are request stops these days and our train stopped at both. Avoncliff has got to have one of the shortest platforms on the English railway system, barely a short carriage in length and the line is crossed at this point by an aqueduct carrying the restored Kennet and Avon Canal. This halt has always put me in mind of the type of station that you got with a Hornby Double train set. There were moves a few years ago to close the halt but people power and a local authority grant have kept it open. In the summer months at least it is in frequent use by ramblers and locals alike. So hurrah say I to that!!

Bradford on Avon was the next calling point, a charming station built of stone and a real gem of a town to visit, with narrow winding streets and old cottages clinging to the steep hillside. It

also has an original Saxon church and some delightful canal and riverside walks. Trowbridge came next, a modern station serving the Wiltshire County town then the large junction of Westbury, where we joined the West of England Main line.

Until a few years ago the loco sheds were still in situ but the buildings are now gone; the sidings are in constant use by stone trains and permanent way equipment and wagons. A really busy place with plenty of trains coming and going. The town though is small, quite quaint and has hardly changed over the years, I should think. Both Westbury, and the next station along the line, Frome have avoiding lines, such is the amount of traffic but the overall roofed station at Frome, a rare survivor in itself, still sees some heavy passing trade! The building seems only to be used by taxi firms now but they are at least in a reasonable state of repair. The town is about ½ mile down the road and has many fine

old buildings and a stream trickling down the centre of one street.

A few miles along the line is the junction for the Yeoman stone quarry line and the East Somerset Railway. Witham station once stood here but closed in 1966 and has long disappeared.

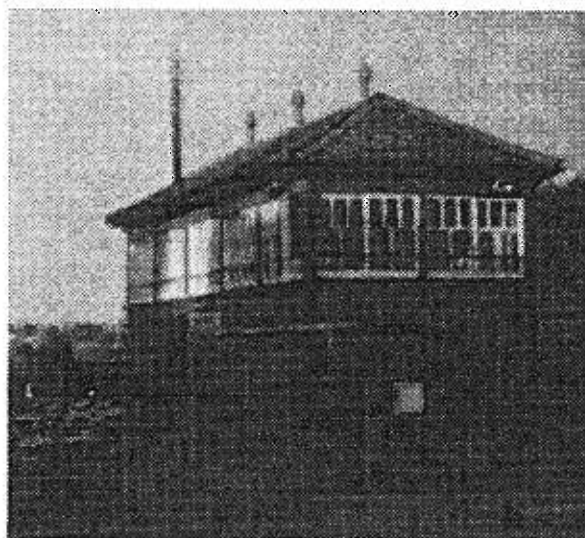
Bruton comes next a rather insignificant station, with long bare platforms apart from buildings at one end. I know nothing of the village but gather it is quite small and no doubt quite pretty also.

Continuing our journey, we crossed the track of the erstwhile Somerset & Dorset Line. The distance between here and Yeovil is 12 miles and there are two further stations, those of Sparkford and Marston Magna. These were closed in 1966. We reached Yeovil slightly late at 19.02 after an uneventful but much cooler journey from Bath.

Yeovil Pen Mill was a junction for both Weymouth, Taunton by way of Durston and there was also a link to the Southern Junction station. These days only the Weymouth line remains with, I think, a short spur towards the old town station. There is however much of interest not least the semaphor signals,



*Yeovil Pen Mill - late running 18-08 departure Weymouth 'Sand and Cycle Explorer' with 37416 in charge. Note the late running 18-08 to Weymouth and the GWR bench. 13/7/97.*



*Yeovil Pen Mill signal box looking N.W. 11/7/97*

original station buildings and signal box. The station layout is unusual with the main buildings on the road side of the platform and a canopied island platform. Both platforms 1 & 2 share the same single track and what is more this has quite a severe double curve. Until the removal of the all over roof in the late thirties, a speed restriction of 10 mph was in force but this was later raised to 30mph.

The once busy goods yard has been rationalised but what is left is still used. Other land has been built on for industrial purposes. Beyond the road bridge and in the triangle formed by the two diverting lines was a locomotive depot. Unfortunately I did not venture up to this bridge to study the lie of the land so I do not know if anything remains there now. Likewise I suspect the south end signal box has also gone.

As we were not due to be met at the station until 19.30 and there was a public house close by I decided to investigate it. My wife, Rosemary declined the offer of some light refreshment, deciding instead to stay on the platform to await her nephew.

The Great Western Public House proved to be most interesting with photographs of Yeovil and district railway scenes from the past lining the walls of the bar and the skittle alley. There were also other items of railwayana, such as wagon number plates, lamps etc. Although I only partook of a half a pint of ale, I was so taken by my surroundings that it was well past 19.30 when I came away and found Rosemary and her nephew Michael, already waiting in the car to drive off. Michael explained that part of the A30 and the A3088 have been built over the track bed of the old town and Taunton branch - however there is quite a bit of the former line still evident.

We spent a very pleasant couple of days visiting National Trust properties and gardens in the area and also took a trip to Lyme Regis - where time seems to have very much stood still.

On the Wednesday evening we made our way to return home. Our train was to be the 18.06 due into Bath at 19.20, thereby connecting with the G.W. service at 19.26 to Chippenham. However this was not to be and as the minutes ticked by it became obvious that we would not catch our connection. Some twenty minutes or so late our train arrived, not the expected Sprinter but a six carriage loco-hauled train with EWS liveried 37416 at the helm.

The first few coaches were painted in SW & W blue but the rest were in lined maroon, similar to BR stock in the 1957-64 period. We boarded the first of these. I have often seen this train referred to as the Weymouth Sand and Cycle Explorer drawing into Bath after I returned from meetings I attend in Saltford. At first these trains were made up of mainly Mk1 stock painted throughout in maroon but these have gradually been replaced by Mk2

stock and at the sametime some have been repainted blue. The internal features are much the same throughout given that all are open seconds or brake seconds and that the ride is the same. The track for a large part of the route is unwelded so that the old familiar clickety click was very noticeable taking me back to how it used to be. The class 37 gives a lovely sound when pulling hard and these machines have been around for a long time now, and, notwithstanding their various rebuilds, it is my belief that the railways have had their money's worth out of them!

Our train was filled with holiday makers, mainly day trippers I would think, returning home after a pleasant day on the beach. With quite a large proportion of children on board, several with their heads out of windows, it was hardly quiet but this somehow only added to the atmosphere of the whole experience which I was enjoying enormously.

When we made our first stop at Castle Cary a few people got off whilst others boarded the train. This happened at



*Yeovil Pen Mill looking south towards Yeovil junction  
11/7/97 7pm.*

all stations but not once did anyone come round to check the tickets. Given that few stations along the line had any facilities to obtain tickets one can only assume that a number of the travelling public got a free ride. I really think that it is time that the railway companies got their act together with regard to collecting fares. Fare dodging does not occur on buses so why should it be allowed to continue on trains/

At Frome some children failed to get off with their elders and there was much shouting for a few moments before the train

again stopped.. Westbury was the change over point for the crew and whilst we waited three Sprinters came and went in the opposite direction. We were now over 30 mins late but although the new driver seemed to be making something of an effort to regain time he was never going to get anywhere, as each stop seemed to introduce fresh delays.

We again made stops on request at Avoncliff and Freshford, then a mile or so on I noticed the nicely restored station of Limpley Stoke, no longer on the timetable since it closed in 1965! There was once a junction to the west of this point to Camerton. Closed to passengers over 70 years ago, it was made famous by the film the Titfield Thunderbolt. There is still a pub of that name at Dunkerton, off the Bath-Radstock road.

Our arrival at Bath was 19.56, thirty six minutes late but judging by the arrivals and departures whilst we awaited our now 20.26 to Chippenham we were not the only ones to have missed a connection, as every train seemed to be late that evening. Grumbles apart, I enjoyed the journey as it is a rare these days that I get the chance to travel in a loco hauled train.

*David Gardner.*

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

12th. of January, 1998.

Dear Mr. Editor,

May I make a few comments on various items in the December issue of the "Donkey"? The first item in "Railway Roundabout", about the timetable bid procedure..... well, the story goes something like this.

A TOC (Train Operating Company) devises a new timetable and enters the times into PROTIM which is a computer system used to timetable trains. Bids from all the 25 TOCs and Eurostar (UK) are sent electronically to Railtrack Headquarters. Another system, "Aplan", then combines all the 26 bids into one, which is then split up amongst the Railtrack Zones which time those stretches of route for which they are responsible. For example, a Manchester to Euston via Crewe train is timed by North West Zone as far as Madeley, thence by the Midland Zone. Once the Zones have done their work, the trains are put back together again, and Aplan selects the trains to send back to the relevant TOCs.

That's what's called the first iteration offer. The TOC considers what's been offered and responds with changes or requests to "try again" in their second iteration bid. Railtrack re-crunches the timetable and produces the second iteration offer, which is considered by the TOC. If all's well, or as nearly as can be achieved, the times will be incorporated in the next timetable. If not, then the TOC can take its problem to the Access Disputes Resolution Committee, a joint TOC/Railtrack body, who will consider disputes and offer decisions based on the greatest good for the greatest number. In addition to the twice a year timetable change, "spot bids" can be made to change things such as stops in trains, the public times as compared to the working times of a train, or the addition or deletion of individual trains.

The "Peterborough Process" was never actually in use. It was an attempt to create more flexibility in the timetabling process, almost to the extent in the 'bus world, but in practice it didn't fit with the summer/winter timetable split, and would have taken up far too much of the train planners' time. To provide an example of the timetable to which the planners themselves have to keep, the first bid to Railtrack for the winter 1998/9 timetable was made on the 5th. of December, 1997, the second bid has to be made by the 6th. of March, and the manual editing of the timetable database will cease on the 16th. of July. Meanwhile, the first bid for the summer, 1999 timetable has to be in by the 31st. of July!

While all that's going on, someone else is arranging any new track access necessary for the new services, but that's another story!

Your readers might be interested to learn that "Protim", the B.R. devised system used to enter trains into the Train Service Database, is also used by the Long Island Rail Road and Amtrak for their North East Corridor train planning.

The review of Christian Wolmar's "Great British Railway Disaster" makes mention of North Western Trains' services at Southport. I imagine it's a case of Mr. Wolmar not being in possession of up-to-date information, but in some ways he is inaccurate.

Firstly, no TOC actually "owns" a station. TOCs lease stations from Railtrack, apart from those "major" stations which Railtrack manage themselves; for example, Paddington. As each station is leased by one TOC only, known as the SFO, Station Facility Owner, any others which use it come to agreement with the SFO and become "beneficiaries" and share the costs pro-rata of operating the station. It is true that, for a time, passengers at Southport using the diesel services to Manchester and beyond had a separate entrance, but they most certainly did use the main concourse. By the way, is Southport's Marks and Spencer store the closest one to a station in this country? One entrance to it opens directly off the concourse, about 30 yards from the ticket barrier. For the last two years, NWT passengers have arrived and departed from platform four, and pass through the ticket barrier again. Our trains have Conductors who actually use their SPORTIS machines, unlike Merseyrail Electrics', whose Conductors sit in the back cab and .....(complete as you wish!).

As part of NWT's expansion plans, from this summer's timetable we are improving the service to Southport. There will be hourly through trains to Manchester Airport, and an additional train each hour, which will run to and from Manchester Victoria and will permit the trains to MIA to be speeded up, as the Victoria service will take over the stops at the smaller stations, some of which make Appleford look positively busy!

Regards,

John Sears

The views given are those of John Sears and Not NWT's.

# 25 YEARS AGO

Roger Bowen

The preservation news of the spring of 1973 was the placing of a contract to build the new National Railway Museum at York with Shepherd Constuction Ltd. of York with work commencing immediatley on the conversion of the old York North (Clifton) engine shed. Both the Museum of British Transport at Clapham and the old York Railway Museum would close later in 1973.

The modern news was the presentation by the British Railways Board to the Minister for Transport Industries of proposals to electrify four main inter-city routes at 25kv 25Hz: London to Edinburgh, the East Coast main line; London to Leeds via Nottingham and Sheffield; London to Swansea via Bristol and Cardiff and York to Bristol via Birmingham. Further proposals were for electrification at 750v DC to Weymouth, Salisbury, Uckfield, East Grinstead and from Tonbridge to Hastings. Marylebone to Aylesbury would also be 3rd rail electrification which would be compatible with London Transport.

25 years ago the death was announced of one of the best known railway writers - Cecil J. Allen passed away on the 5th February 1973 aged 87. Known for a whole range of railway subjects, train timekeeping was that which he was best known for, in particular he contributed no less than 535 'Locomotive Practice and Performance' articles for Railway Magazine. He recorded many famous runs, not least the 'Inaugural Run' of the Corination Scot on 29th June 1937 when after reaching 114.5mph on the approach to Crewe (the fastest speed in the British Empire) he recorded 2.1 miles in 1 minute 53 seconds pass to stop as the train almost came off the track on the approach crossovers to Crewe station.

Railway closures featured too - on 13 January 1973 Bradford Exchange station closed, replaced by the new Bradford Interchange. On 4 February 1973 the last train ran between Winchester and Alton, normally operated by d.e.m.u.s the last train ran from Eastleigh to Alton and return, it was formed of a class 33 No.6511 and two 4-TC sets, for a special fare of £1 including commemorative ticket.

On the 4 February Mr Michael Heseltine, the Minister for Aerospace and Shipping announced that the National Research and Development Corporation had decided to discontinue work on the tracked hovercraft project at Earith, Cambridge.

Minirail Ltd was applying to the Secretary State for the Environment for a light railway (transfer and amendment) order to the Axminster to Lyme Regis Light Railway Order 1899 transferring the railway from BR to themselves and authorising them to construct a light railway of 15 inch gauge from Axminster station to a point just 250 yards short of the old Lyme Regis station. (Does anyone know what happened to this project that presumably never developed?)

# 10 YEARS AGO

Roger Bowen

**From Marlow Donkey No.45 March 1988**

Believe it or not it is 10 years since we moved to our current meeting venue, The Royal British Legion hall. We had been having problems at the previous venue, The Chequers pub on Marlow High Street and so the opportunity was taken to move to a larger and more convenient location. Donkey 45 also advised members that the Society had purchased a Kodak Carosel slide projector.

Also recorded was a note that Bourne End station was undergoing a dramatic change with a 6,000 sq ft office building being built on the site of the old Marlow branch bay. At the same time Furze Platt was being completely rebuilt with the sleeper built platform being replaced by a modern concrete structure. Steam specials were still running on the joint line, no less than three in April and the same in May.

Three main articles featured in the Donkey - one by Eddie Lewcock on the pro's and con's of large and small driving wheels; Peter Robins on a rail journey through India and Phil Searle on The North Yorks Moors Railway.

# BOOK REVIEWS

Alan Costello

## **The Oxford Companion to British Railway History**

Eds. Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle

Oxford University Press

ISBN 0-19-211697 5

A mammoth book of nearly 600 pages claiming to cover the railway scene in Britain from 1603 to 1995. All aspects concerning Social, Economic, Technical areas of the railways together with the major people and places that are part of the railway history of this country. The subjects are in alphabetical order with cross references and names of books for further reading. Maps of the system in 1923 can be found at the back of the book. An interesting table included shows the equivalent value of £1000 in 1995 to: 1825; £45,737, 1895; £84,486 and 1900; £66,846. How good the book is I cannot say yet, as there is a lot of reading to do. For the selling price of £45 it should be accurate and useful.

## **Western Region Steam Twilight**

Colin Walker

Pendyke Publications

ISBN 0 904318 17 6

This is the first of five volumes, containing pictures of the last few years of steam on the Western Region. The author admits there is a large number of pictures taken in the Oxford, Banbury and Shrewsbury areas as he lives in this area. Hopefully the further volumes will cover a larger geographical area. The photos themselves (black and white) are very good with some covering both pages. They are not the usual 3/4 view and taken in sunshine but cover bad weather and all angles. Nice book, but if you buy the five volumes they will set you back £100!

## **Trains Illustrated Annual 1961**

Ed. G. Freeman Allen

Ian Allen

Another varied selection covering most of the UK. Photo features look at steam around Oxford, the West Midlands and the Leeds-Carlisle route. The main articles look at York using the 1922 timetable, loco performances Euston to Crewe over 50 years from 1905, speed signalling on the Mirfield line, London Tilbury and Southend line and the Great Central. A small article covers the trials of 2 King Class locos in South Wales. They were running trials on coal trains up the Ebbw Vale branch to see whether a new design was needed. On the foreign side, the railway centre of Basle is covered as well as lines in Turkey.

## **Murder on the Railways**

Ed. Peter Haining

Orion

ISBN 0 75280 873 7

A collection of fiction stories covering various aspects of railways with a criminal involvement. There are many famous authors including Dorothy Sayers and Leslie Charteris. This paperback is handy for carrying around and dipping into, when there is a little time to spare.

## **Circles Under The Clyde**

J Wright & I MaClean

Capital Transport

ISBN 1 85414 190 2

In December 1896, the world's 3rd underground system opened. This was in Glasgow. In contrast to London, it was 4 feet gauge and instead of electric power, it was cable hauled. The system consisted of a circle with inner and outer lines with island platforms. Because the coaches were confined to one of the two lines the livery of plum and cream was only painted on the passenger entry side of the coach, the other side being painted in one colour only. It was about another forty years before the line was electrified. It almost closed in the early 1960's but was modernised and now with it's new stock is an integral part of Glasgow's transport system. Another well researched book by Capital Transport with a detailed history and a large number of statistics.

## **EDITORS NOTES**