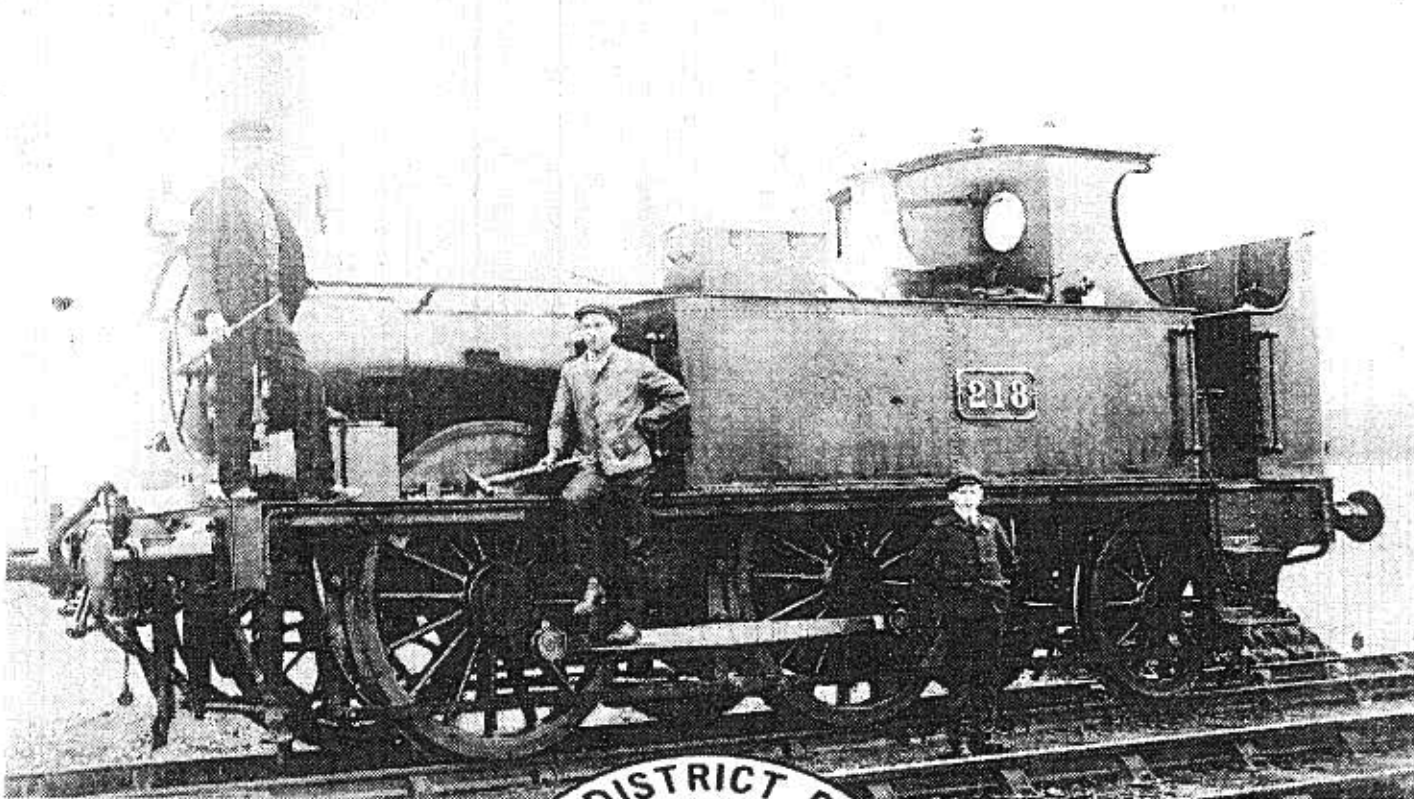
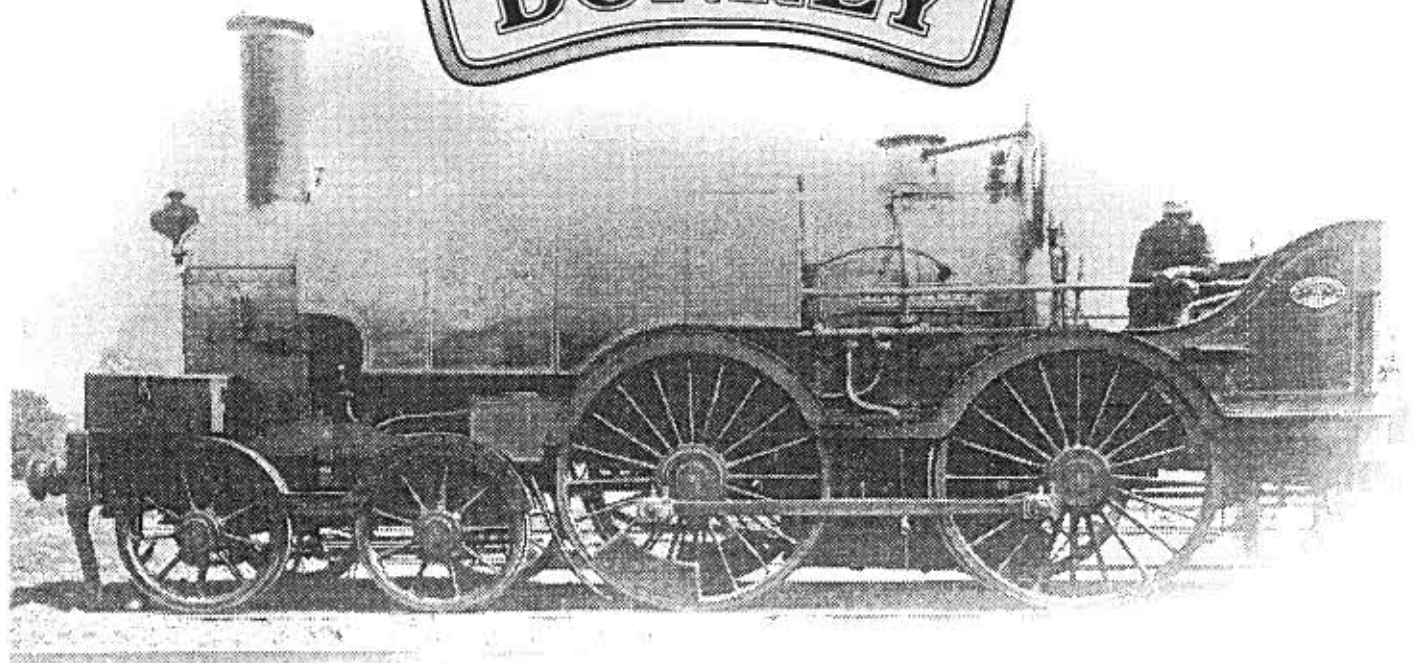


Merry Christmas

THE MARLOW DONKEY

to all our Members



Edition

87

December 1998



Contents

H.M.S. Trelawney

Sunny Side Up

El Transcantabrico

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

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CONTENTS	page
TIMETABLE	2
CHAIRMANS NOTES	2
H.M.S. TRELAWNEY	3
EAST COAST MAIN LINE CLASSIC WINNERS	5
SUNNY SIDE UP	7
MONA'S ISLE REVISITED	8
AUSTRIAN TYROL	9
EL TRASCANTABRICO	12
BOOKSHELF	13
LETTER TO THE EDITOR	14

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS: *Both of these were purchased by your editor from a holiday camp shop in Luxembourg!*
Can any member identify the locos?

Latest Copy Date for next issue of The Marlow Donkey 20th February 1999

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TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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

1999

Thursday 21 January	PHOTOGRAPHIC EVENING	
Thursday 18 February	AGM & SALES	
Thursday 18 March	MILITARY RAILWAYS	Keith Catchpole
Thursday 15 April	BRANCH LINES	Chris Gammell
Thursday 20 May	DIESEL	Derek Wright
Thursday 17 June	FILMS	Frank Banfield

DAY TRIPS 1999

May	SOMME RAILWAY	Car
Sunday in July	Romney Hythe & Dymchurch	Coach
August	DIDCOT EVENING	Car or Coach
September	North Norfolk	Train

Please note: The above programme is subject to change

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Our Society is running at a steady level at present, with a range of good speakers including of course our own members, more new members who are very welcome, have joined us this year & we now enjoy the 'New Clubrooms' after the Legion has made such an excellent job of refurbishment. Thanks are due to all who have helped to keep the show on the road, this of course includes the whole committee and best wishes for speedy recoveries are sent to both

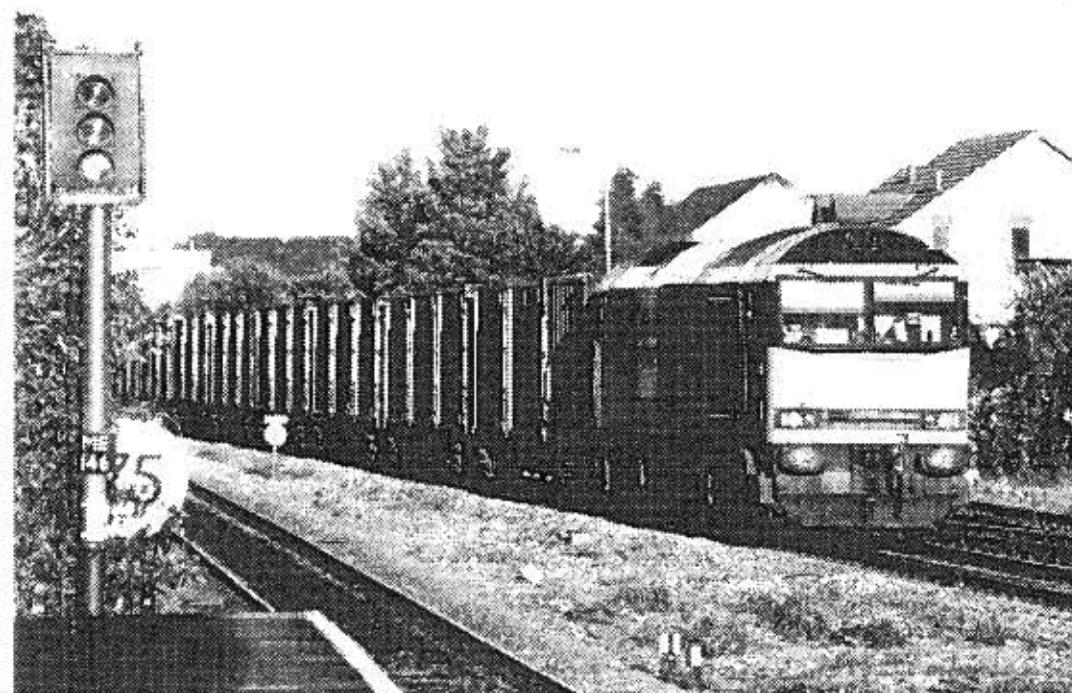
Mike Norris & David Pinner...

I take the opportunity at this time of the year to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

E. W. Lewcock, Chairman.

In the low evening sunlight, 60007 approaches High Wycombe station with the 19-40 Northolt - Calvert 'binliner' train. This is presently the only regular freight working through High Wycombe.

Photo: Tim Edmonds, 23 July 1998



H.M.S. TRELAWNEY

It was a circular from Chiltern Trains - nothing to do with Chiltern Rail incidentally - that started it all, a mini tour of the Highlands, Skye by train and coach, allowing this Golden Oldie to put his feet up for a while and let others worry about traffic jams; not that they occur in the northern part of Scotland but it is a long drive getting there!

So one Tuesday in June four of us set out for the "Highland Chieftain", having avoided the Underground Strike by use of a taxi from Marylebone. As the train is scheduled to run to Inverness, a 125 formation was used and we were just lucky to avoid the chaos arising from a broken wheel on a 225 train later that day. A rare opportunity was taken to lunch in the dining car, as the evening meal would be late; however despite good food, the riding was the worst I have met for some time and the smooth ride of the old LNER coaches albeit at lower speeds, was noticeably absent.

Edinburgh was reached in the scheduled time of 4 hrs 18 minutes, including three intermediate stops, giving an overall speed of 91m.p.h. North of the Scottish capital the run went through Falkirk to Perth thus missing the Forth Bridge, seen at a distance, unlike the Angel of the North which was very close to the line just south of Newcastle.

Running speeds were naturally lower in Scotland but the main interest was the famous climb on the Highland line to Druimachdar Summit, which at 1484 feet is the highest point on a British Main line. It is approached by a gruelling 17 miles mainly at 1:70 which called for double heading in steam days. Our H.S.T with its excellent power weight ratio and engines clearly in form sailed up at a steady 64 m.p.h. Descent to Kingussie (pronounced Kingoosy), was steady to arrive just before 7.15pm. After this, an hour's coach ride took our party of 32 people to Fort William for three nights stay.

The next day we split from the main party and travelled South over the West Highland, famous for its formidable gradients and Rannoch Moor, whose remote station has now a tourists shop on it.

Trains were either 156 or 158 sets, the latter with Loo door push button controls which defeated several ladies with embarrassing results, they missed noticing the "lock button" but why didn't the designers make one button do both functions? Some aspects of modern design are definitely retrograde like hopper windows and seats with no windows to look through.

At Crianlaraich there was just time to down a pint in the local before the return trip care being taken not to get into the Oban portion which came in coupled ahead of the Mallaig unit. The return run was pleasant and uneventful in the fine weather which lasted the whole holiday.

Mallaig was our destination the following day with superb views of the coastline further North on the run. A return ferry trip to Skye can be made in the turn round time there, followed by tea in one of the local cafes. The harbour is being re-built at the present time no doubt to help the Fishing Industry.

The line passes over the world famous concrete viaduct built by Sir William's ancestor and the first of many such

structures, the train swings round almost 180o here and the vastness of the landscape shows up to very good effect.

Inverness was our destination next day, via the Strathspey line, a distillery at Tomatin (pronounce locally Tomartin) and Culloden.

Progress from Aviemore to the Boat of Garten on the Strathspey line was brightened by provision of a bar coach complete with armchairs and settees of an up market nature; beers of a highly alcoholic content were on sale and an 8.4% "Skull Banger" helped enliven the day as did the whisky taster at Tomatin, where the brewery is situated right alongside the main line to Inverness.

It was near Aviemore that I came across the connection between Ruthen Castle (now a ruin) and Sir Nigel Gresley, the connection being the "Wolf of Badenoch", who was a great grandson of Robert the Bruce and terrorised the local populace. One of his bigger achievements was to burn down Elgin, a local prelate having incurred his displeasure. Gresley's "Wolf" was of course one of his famous 2 - 8 - 2 Locos.

Culloden now has a tourist centre with film reconstructions of the battle. I was taken by a notice written a humourless individual which stated "Dogs are not allowed on the battlefield".

The trip on the following day to the Kyle of Lochalsh by train and then to Portree on Skye by coach was again memorable. My first run on this beautiful line was on the footplate of a Black Five and it must be said that travel in a rail car pales into significance in comparison.

The climb on a footplate up the 1:50 around Ravens Rock out of Dingwell leaves echoing memories along with such unusual tit bits as the restart from Plockton Station built on a sharp curve. The driver with the train stopped, raised vacuum to 21" and waited for the guard's signal. Suddenly the needle dropped back and climbed again, at which point he started the train. It is all done by electric buzzers now of course.

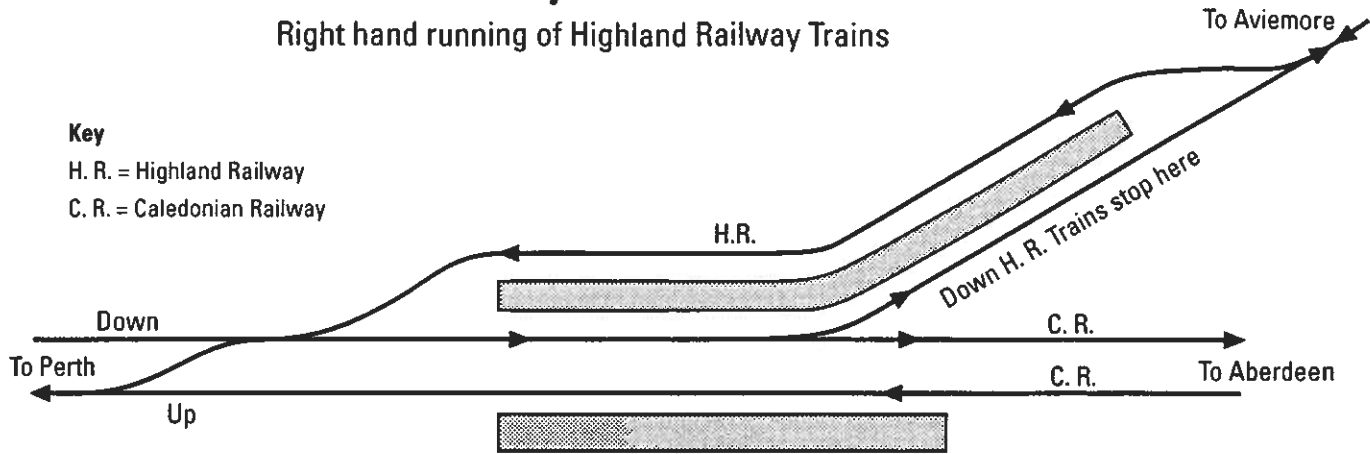
The Kyle Line in the last war, because of its remoteness was used for transporting sea mines used by the Navy and even locals had to carry their passports on trains. A large mines base was created there and Kyle itself became "HMS Trelawney". Its code name on the railways was Port ZA and all the mines had to be called UNITS.

In the early days before the line West of Strome Ferry, an extraordinary event happened to the steamer FERRET used on the Hebrides run. In 1874 the ship disappeared, having been chartered to confidence tricksters who sailed it to Australia where it was eventually discovered, where it was eventually discovered having been renamed "India". Four Highland Railway sailors who were on the Ferret, eventually claimed successfully for arrears of wages from the Highland Railway.

Plockton, already mentioned, is an attractive little village attracting artists, yachtsmen and photographers and is worth a stop over for a few hours. The day ended with a run past Loch Ness with its mythical monster and a quick look at the Caledonian Canal built by the great engineer Telford.

Stanley Junction

Right hand running of Highland Railway Trains



We broke away from the main party who returned home from Inverness and travelled back to Glasgow over the Highland main line.

The line is well described elsewhere but one point of interest occurred at Stanley Junction where the old Caledonian line broke away for Aberdeen. The Down signals were on two separate posts set far apart on either side of the Line and not on a bracket. This stirred the historical side in me, resulting in the receipt of information from my friend John Smith, that when a station, the Highland line indulged in right hand running through the platform. This enabled down Highland trains to draw on to the branch to allow following Caledonian trains to pass unhindered. Up Highland trains used the same platform but running right hand and crossed to the correct running on the Caledonian when leaving for Perth; the attached diagram shows the lay-out.

A visit to the Transport Museum in Glasgow gave me a chance to see again the Caley Single Wheeler No 123, the Jones Goods 4-6-0, first of its type in Great Britain, along with the GNSR 4-4-0 of a type very widely used

on that line. An interesting design point emerged here; the main frames went deep down behind the bogie wheels and were not cut away as in normal practice so there was no throw over on the bogie, only twist as on early GW locomotives.

A display disc designed for mounting on a buffer beam lamp iron with the word "Train Following" was presumably used on the Royal Train Pilot engine although it would be hard to see in the dark!

The trip ended with a good, and "on time" run back to Kings Cross as part of the holiday contract. From Glasgow, London is reached more quickly down the W.C.M.L. if train reliability can be trusted its also a more attractive route than the E.C.M.L. which apart from the holiday had been most interesting if not always railway orientated. I never knew that at Invergordon, HMS Natal blew up in 1915 after loading ammunition and coal. A buoy marks the site which is an official war grave like that of the "Royal Oak" sunk at Scapa Flow in World War Two.

E. W. Lewcock.

LOCAL RAILWAY NEWS

All Change at Thames Trains

Following the assumption of 100% ownership of Thames Trains, Go-Ahead have stamped their mark upon the company by some sweeping management changes. Roger McDonald, Managing Director, has left Thames Trains to work at Go-Ahead Group as Rail Strategy Director. Nick Illsley, Commercial Director, has left Thames Trains to work at Go-Ahead Group and Production Director, David Franks, is leaving to assume a new post as Managing Director of North West Trains, based in Manchester. Euan Cameron is the new Managing Director, assuming this role along with his existing post as Managing Director of Thameslink Rail, another Go-Ahead subsidiary.

Collision at Oxford on Sunday 16 November 1998

After a relatively quiet period, Thames Trains' Turbos have been in the wars again of late when an ECS move on this Sunday evening was driven into the rear of a Great Western Hereford to London HST standing in Platform 1 at Oxford Station. There were a small number of very minor injuries, although Thames Turbo 166221 suffered serious

damage and is expected to spend some time out of service under repair at Adtranz Works in Derby. A full investigation is now under way.

EWS Class 66s arrive in force

Such is the speed that GM is producing Class 66s for EWS, another boat has had to be hired to bring them to the UK. Anyone wanting to catch a glimpse will often see at least two examples stabled at Acton Yard most days, resting between crew training trips. Up to 66017 has been seen by late November.

Paddington Station Development

Members passing through Paddington station will have seen the extensive work now ongoing at Paddington station in connection with Railtrack's MasterPlan Project. Due for completion next summer it seeks to transform the station with full Heathrow Express baggage check-in for conveyance by train and a whole selection of shops, bars, cafes and restaurants as well as a fully refurbished 'lawn' area and the GW Hotel transformed into a 'Hilton'.

THE KEITH BROWN PAGES

EAST COAST MAIN LINE CLASSIC WINNERS

By Keith Brown

I expect we have all had a flutter at some time on the Derby, The Oaks or one of the other three classic races. All five classic races are for 3 year olds. The Oaks and the 1,000 guineas are for fillies only. What has this to do with the normal items of railway interest in the Donkey publication I hear you say. Well the title of this article gives the game away.

The L.N.E.R., sorry, this is not just a G.W.R. interest publication you know, adopted the names of the classic racehorse winners for their then new locomotives plying from Kings Cross down the East Coast main line. The A3 class, which were constructed first, had the majority of the classic winners names bestowed on them. With the advent of the A2s and A1s further winning horse's names were selected. Even with the advent of diesels the racehorse naming tradition was continued on eight of the class of twenty-two Deltics.

Class	Total	Racehorse Names	North British Names	Others
A1	49	13	18	18
A2	40	28	-	12
A3	78	73	-	5
Deltics	22	8	-	14
Total	189	122	18	49

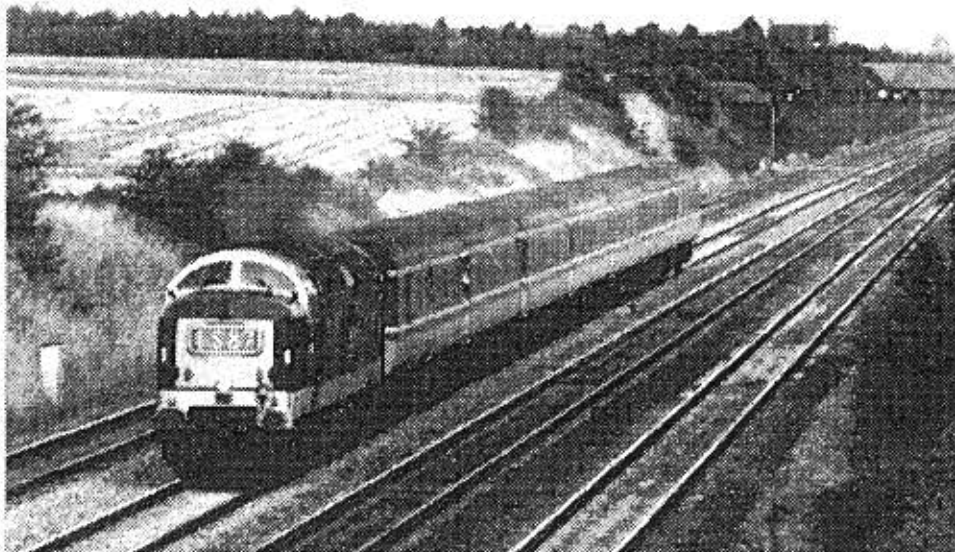
There are some interesting reasons for the names in the 'others' list. Of the A1's, that were built after Nationalisation in 1948, six were birds, four pre-grouping companies, six GNR & NER locomotive Superintendents, plus Balmoral. The last one of the eighteen was W.P.Allen, the Trade Union representative on the Railway Executive.

The A2's 'others' consisted of two Locomotive Superintendents, A.H.Peppercorn & Edward Thompson and ten Scottish names.

The five A3's which were not racehorses were 60056 (2555) named Centenary after the centenary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. 60054 (2553) was named originally as Manna but the name Prince of Wales was bestowed on this locomotive after the Prince of Wales had inspected it at Doncaster Works on the 11th November 1926. The Manna plates were later affixed to 60085 (2596). The nameplate Sir Frederick Banbury was given to 60102 (4471) to honour the last chairman of the Great Northern Railway. 60103 (4472) was given the prestigious name Flying Scotsman in connection with its appearance at the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley. The A3's were designed and built to work LNER's oldest and most famous train. The fifth odd ball is 60080 (2579) which was the well-known highwayman on the London to York road called Dick Turpin. I would have thought that they should have named this locomotive after his horse Black Bess to keep to the theme of our four legged friends. Strangely, as I was researching this article in iRuffs guide to the Turf I came across a horse called Dick Turpin. It was the winner of the 1933 Chester Cup race but as the locomotive was named in 1924 then the bandit at that time was certainly honoured with a locomotive named after him.

One last point of interest was in connection with 60064 (2563). This locomotive was originally named William Whitelaw,

in honour of him being the last North British Railway chairman and the first LNER chairman. In July 1941 the William Whitelaw name was transferred to A4 4462 (later 60004) in exchange for Great Snipe and the A3 was named Tagalie.



A 'modern' east coast race horse. Class 55 D9000 on the GW main line at Shottesbrooke, with the 11.26 SO Virgin XC train from Ramsgate to Edinburgh.

It and the 06.58 Birmingham - Ramsgate were regular Deltic turns throughout the summer.

Photo: Tim Edmonds

25 August 1998.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE CLASSIC WINNERS

NUMBER		Name of Horse	DERBY	St.	1000	2000	OAKS	NUMBER		Name of Horse	St.	1000	2000	OAKS
BR	LNER			Leger	Gns	Gns		BR	LNER		Leger	Gns	Gns	
60051	2550	Blink Bonney	1857				1857	60110	4479	Robert the Devil	1880			
60058	2557	Blair Athol	1864	1864				60069	2568	Sceptre	1902	1902	1902	1902
60070	2569	Gladiateur	1865	1865		1865		60061	2560	Pretty Polly	1904	1904		1904
60109	4478	Hermit	1867					60055	2554	Woolwinder	1907			
60048	2547	Doncaster	1873					60079	2578	Bayardo	1909			
60076	2575	Galopin	1875					60052	2551	Prince Palatine	1911			
60081	2580	Shotover	1882			1882		60059	2558	Tracery	1912			
60073	2572	St Gatien* d/heat	1884					60078	2577	Night Hawk	1913			
60074	2573	Harvester*d/heat	1884					60107	4476	Royal Lancer	1922			
60044	2543	Melton	1885	1885				60071	2570	Tranquil	1923	1923		
60057	2556	Ormonde	1886	1886		1886		60041	2506	Salmon Trout	1924			
60066	2565	Merry Hampton	1887					60104	4473	Solario	1925			
60047	2546	Donovan	1889	1889				60088	2599	Book Law	1927			
60083	2582	Sir Hugo	1892					60092	2746	Fairway	1928			
60063	2562	Isinglass	1893	1893		1893		60042	2507	Singapore	1930			
60067	2566	Ladas	1894			1894		60039	2504	Sandwich	1931			
60068	2567	Sir Visto	1895	1895				60038	2503	Firdaussi	1932			
60050	2549	Persimmon	1896	1896				60138		Boswell	1936			
60049	2548	Galtee More	1897	1897		1897		60125		Scottish Union	1938			
60106	4475	Flying Fox	1899	1899		1899		60523		Sun Castle	1941			
60046	2545	Diamond Jubilee	1900	1900		1900		60527		Sun Chariot	1942	1942		1942
60087	2598	Rock Sand #	1903	1903		1903		60524		Herringbone	1943	1943		
60101	2797	Cicero	1905					60518		Tehran	1944			
60100	2796	Spearmint	1906					60514		Chamossaire	1945			
60062	2561	Minoru	1909			1909		60530		Sayajirao	1947			
60045	2544	Lemberg	1910					55003		Meld	1955	1955		1955
60072	2571	Sunstar	1911			1911		55018		Ballymoss	1957			
60064	2563	Tagalie	1912		1912			60111	4480	Enterprise			1889	
60148		Aboyeur	1913					60075	2574	St Frusquin			1896	
60133		Pommern	1915	1915		1915		60082	2581	Neil Gow			1910	
60108	4477	Gay Crusader	1917	1917		1917		60094	2748	Colorado			1926	
60086	2597	Gainsborough	1918	1918		1918		60095	2749	Flamingo			1928	
60090	2744	Grand Parade	1919					60036	2501	Colombo			1934	
60098	2752	Spion Kop	1920					60533		Happy Knight			1946	
60097	2751	Humorist	1921					60528		Tudor Minstral			1947	
60091	2745	Captain Cuttle	1922					60516		Hycilla			1944	
60096	2750	Papyrus	1923					60515		Sunstream		1945		1945
60053	2552	Sansovino	1924					60512		Steady Aim				1946
60085	2596	Manna	1925			1925				Non Classic Winners				
60093	2747	Coronach	1926	1926				60136		Alcazar	1934 Doncaster Cup			
60099	2795	Call Boy	1927					55009		Alycidon	Sired 1955 Derby Winner			
60089	2743	Felstead	1928					60149		Amadis	1909 Doncaster Cup			
60084	2595	Trigo	1929	1929				60537		Batchelors Button	1906 Ascot Gold Cup			
60087	2598	Blenheim #	1930					60128		Bongrace	1926 Doncaster Cup			
60040	2505	Cameronian	1931			1931		60539		Bronzino	1910 Doncaster Cup			
60037	2502	Hyperion	1933	1933				60043	2508	Brown Jack	1929-34 Q. Alexandra Stks			
60035	2500	Windsor Lad	1934	1934				60153		Flamboyant	1921 Doncaster Cup			
60531		Bahram	1935	1935		1935		60134		Foxhunter	1932 Doncaster Cup			
60117		Bois Roussel	1938					60519		Honeyway	1945 July Cup-Newmarket			
60532		Blue Peter	1939			1939		60535		Hornets Beauty	1919 Royal Hunt Cup			
60520		Owen Tudor	1941					60534		Irish Elegance	1918 July Cup-Newmarket			
60521		Watling Street	1942					60144		King's Courier	1900 Doncaster Cup			
60522		Straight Deal	1943					60065	2564	Knight of the Thistle	1897 Royal Hunt Cup			
60517		Ocean Swell	1944					60121		Silurian	1923 Doncaster Cup			
60513		Dante	1945					60112	4481	St. Simon	1884 Ascot Gold Cup			
60511		Airborne	1946	1946				60526		Sugar Palm	1944 William Hill sprint			
60529		Pearl Diver	1947					60060	2559	The Tetrach	1913 Doncaster Cham-			
55020		Nimbus	1949			1949					pagne Stakes			
55015		Tulyar	1952	1952				60077	2576	The White Knight	1907 Ascot Gold Cup			
55007		Pinza	1953					60536		Trimbush	1947 Doncaster Cup			
55012		Crepello	1957			1957		60538		Velocity	1906 Doncaster Cup			
55001		St.Paddy	1960	1960				60105	4474	Victor Wild	1896 Jubilee Handicap			
#	2598	Blenheim substituted for Rock Sand						60150		Willbrook	1914 Doncaster Cup			

A service to nowhere!! In my article on the summer 1998 train timetables the paragraph on Anglia Trains should have read direct services from Sheringham to London Liverpool Street. Apologies. Not a Railtrack oversight I assure you. KB

SUNNY SIDE UP

Mike Hyde.

What to do one afternoon in Chicago? We had ridden the famous 'L' (as seen in television's ER) around the loop, taken the BNSF/ Metra from Union Station to Naperville on the double deck commuter push-pull train, sampled the famous stuffed pizza and been up the John Hancock Tower, etc. So whilst my better-half was out shopping I decided to indulge in a little railroad gazing.

Before leaving home I had written to Bob Ernst, NRHS Central Regional Vice President and he put me on to Bob Pinsky, Membership Records Officer also resident in the Chicago area. The latter agreed to meet me and we took the South Shore Line from Randolph Street station. This was said to be the last real Inter-urban service in North America. It is overhead electric and typically suburban from brown vinyl seating to modern graffiti adornment.

A brief chat with the lady driver failed to acquire a footplate ride but did allow an inspection of the cab and some photo shots (no, not of her). 35 minutes later we were at Hegewisch just over the border in Illinois where we met up with Bob Ernst who had decided to join us and provide the transport. A short drive into Indiana was the town of Hammond. First we saw a small amount of shunting by one of the IHB Harbor Line's switchers in their Burnham Yard then a walk across the road and tracks brought us to Stateline tower. No obvious access restrictions.

Here several lines merge and cross each other though not as many as once did seemingly from abandoned tracks and trackbeds. I counted at least ten diamonds. We waited a while, let a CSX freight go by and pondered whether to

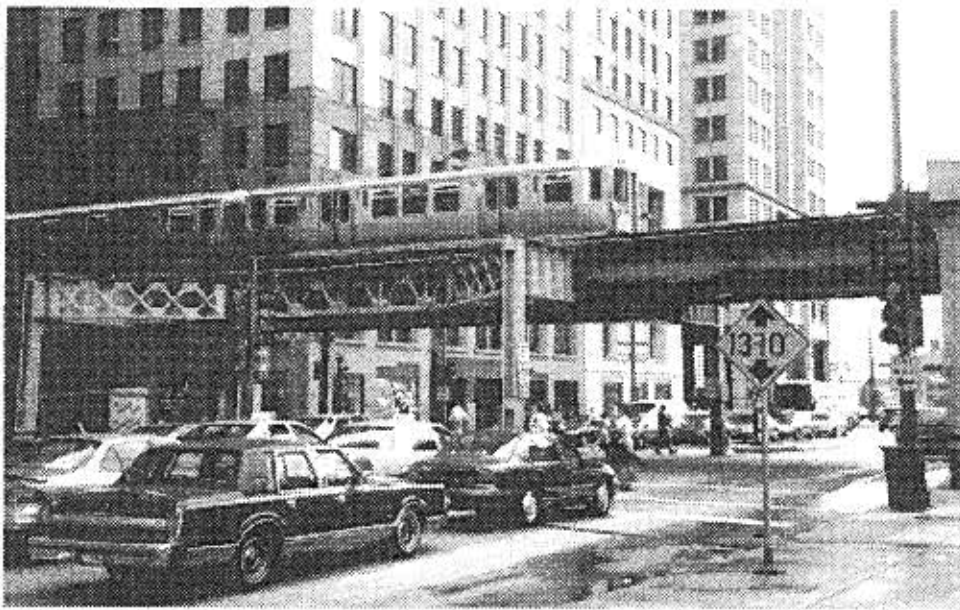
move on as action was slow on this very hot dry afternoon. Then a chance shout to the tower operator who looked out of his window brought an invite to 'come on up'. So we did and took a look around his dull and dusty, wooden domain.

Once 200 plus levers were on line but only half or so are still operational judging by the splashes of white paint on the out of use levers. A diagram on the wall showed former and existing rails at what had obviously been an extremely important and busy interchange. A light engine operation was expected so I went down to snap the two CSX locos going by. Half a mile up the Chicago line a Norfolk Southern pair with a few cars sat idling but showed no sign of moving. In the near distance another South Shore Line (CSS) train passed through the small community.

Time to go, so we said our farewells to the signalman. A visit to nearby South Bend station on Amtrak lines brought no action so we went on to Pullman, the former home of those famous railcars. Alas no more, with the works empty or boarded up and some buildings reallocated to other uses. The area, which takes its name from the company, survives and efforts are being made to refurbish many of the houses. It reminded me of Bourneville or Saltaire with houses, shops, park, even a church provided by the employer, but no pub/bars.

A drive closer into town brought us to the Amtrak depot near China town. Switcher 799 was repositioning 90222 (a de-engined F40). Behind us stood a magnificent old waterway lift bridge, of which I was to see others in my





US travels. Chasing the CTA Red Line up the middle of the state highway we eventually turned off and weaved our way into the Amtrak yard. My companions had no fear of interception and were ready with names to drop or lines to shoot. All we got were a few looks but we did not hang around. However the sight of the Observation car 'Silver Solarium' from the California Zephyr (having the day before seen the Pioneer Zephyr in the Museum of Science and Industry not far from where I was now sitting) together with another privately owned classic railcar was worth the risk.

The quick look at the St. Charles airline, a first storey height rail connection still in use in parts but likely to be severed for a new roadway, was memorable. As was a passing view of La Salle Street station (now only a shadow of its former Rock Island/NYC self) and a look at the original frontage of Dearborn station (ex Erie,GT,SF and now a shopping arcade) which completed my whistlestop tour with the two Bobs (collectively a florin?).

Before arriving at the windy (and sticky hot) city I had

the company of CSS, CSX, IHB, NS, Conrail, KLSC, CWP,Amtrak and Metra.

Mike Hyde.

Footnote: Chicago Union Station rebuilt in 1925 and recently refurbished , is magnificent. It is the only station in the US with a 'double-stub' track layout, ie, tracks approach the station from two directions, most terminating at their concourse. It is also the third busiest railroad station in the country and the busiest in the city with approx 50 Amtrak and 203 Metra trains on an average weekday providing 100,000 travelers. There are 13 north platforms and 15 off the south concourse with lounges, shops and facilities all under normal street level, not surprising when most city centre roads and bridges are on two levels. On the day of my visit CUS was home to a Genesis B40-8WH unit leading SuperLiners and standard cars plus a baggage car ex St Louis and a Metra F40PHM-2 unit with double deck cars bound for Aurora, Ill.

Mike Hyde *JULY 1998*

MONA'S ISLE REVISITED

Peter Bond

This was my sixth visit to the Isle of Man. The first was a holiday in Port Erin in 1952 when the IOMR was fully operational throughout, and somewhere I have slides of a four platform Douglas station complete with canopies and two trains leaving simultaneously under small scale semaphore signals. Then for three years in succession in the eighties, I ran TA and cadet annual camps at Jurby, giving me the chance to widely explore the island and experience the still extensive surviving lines. Finally, 1993 was a society visit with Mike, Mike and Terry & Co.

This time I was on my own on a 5 day package laid on by the IOM Tourist Board during the first 'enthusiasts week' in May this year to celebrate 125 years of steam on the IOMR. The cost was about £260 including flights between Birmingham and Ronaldsway and return, three star hotel, transport pass on everything, and a private hire bus to and from special events.

The Isle of Man is not renowned for some of its rather run-down hotels, but mine was OK. With quite good food and a large room overlooking Douglas Bay from which, whilst shaving, I could watch the boat come in, the horse trams on the promenade and No.1 Sutherland being transported between the two lines on a low-loader. Because, of course, we sometimes had No.1 on the MER or tram No. 33 on the IOMR.

No.1, Sutherland, restored just in time, was in pristine condition, newly painted in green, and steaming beautifully albeit one hundred and twenty five years old and after more than a million miles. We had a chasing bus when No.10 C.R.Wood and No.4 Loch double headed the afternoon train to Port Erin. The driver and conductor knew all the best sites and had even obtained permission from local farmers to cross their land to vantage points.

Special events included the MER tram complete with box van generator wagon operating on the IOMR Douglas-Port Soderick, and once to Port Erin with chasing bus. A splendid night photography evening on the MER at Laxey with illuminated trams running in parallel with each other and with Sutherland to South Cape (for Laxey Beach!), Also included was a talk slide show by the authoritative Trevor Nall at Peel. evening walks along the old Foxdale Line and St. Johns-Peel, rounded off by barbecues and visits to a couple of private garden railways.

The MER produced an amazing variety of vintage cars and trailers and ran them variously to and from Laxey and Ramsay with unusual shunting movements at Laxey. The SMR Snaefell line too had commentary trams and photography specials stopping at various points en route. The Port Erin museum was closed for refurbishment, but two disused locos were hauled up to Douglas and exhibited there.

All the time too, there was much travelling on both lines and also on a vintage bus, mostly in an atmosphere of merriment accompanied by loads of railway enthusiasts and it was a thoroughly enjoyable week on a beautiful island. There is to be a similar fortnight in July and another week in September.

AUSTRIAN TYROL WITH 'GREAT RAIL JOURNEYS'

Peter Bond

Our 'Great Rail Journeys' party of forty-three left Waterloo at 1227 on 24th August by Eurostar to Brussels where we had a mad rush change through immigration etc to catch a EuroCity (Thalys) train to Cologne arriving early evening for an overnight stop at a hotel near the Hauptbahnhof. Next morning, after a hearty breakfast, we boarded an Inter-City express (ICE) to Munich, travelling down through the Rhine Gorge and on into Bavaria. At Munich we had an hours wait for a Verona bound express, over the Austrian border to our destination - Jenbach in Tyrol.

Continental expresses are not dissimilar from our own, except that they are usually longer, but the interiors seem much more spacious. Even in second class, the seats are roomier and they recline and there is plenty of leg room - unlike economy class on any airline, needless to say. For me, rail is still the most comfortable and enjoyable way to travel.

The Hotel Jenbacherhof, our home for the next seven days, turned out to be a delightful family run Austrian style gasthaus, recently modernised, having rooms complete with baths and flower festooned balconies and boasting an excellent rooftop swimming pool. Amazingly there is a gauge 1 Austrian model roof garden railway that can be operated by guests through a window in the sun lounge by the pool. The location of the model itself is highly precarious with a three storey drop on one side and how the owner gets out there to deal with derailments we never really discovered.

Jenbach is a busy station on the main East-West route through Austria with a constant flow of trains between Vienna/Salzburg/Munich and Innsbruck/Italy/Switzerland and beyond. A third of the traffic is freight, including trains for cars and also heavy goods vehicles. Did you know, I didn't, that the Austrian government prohibits transient HGV's from passing through their country on their roads? So when they get to the frontier at say Brenner, all the foreign lorries have to leave the road and take the train until they get to maybe Rosenheim on the German frontier. Clears the roads and boosts the railway's profits! How about a compulsory HGV train from Dover to Holyhead?

Jenbach also has two steam narrow gauge railways starting from each side of the main line and their presence is one of the main reasons for our being based here. One is the metre gauge Achensee Bahn, built in 1899, which for most of its steep 7 kms is a rack and pinion job (see model of cogs in front of loco in photograph). This is a tourist line which climbs up to the high level lake of its name, where it is met by pleasure steamers which convey passengers another 13kms to the far end of the lake.

The other line is much longer, running up the Zillier Valley to Mayerhofen. The Zillertalbahn is a working railway, heavily used by the local population, but it does have five steam engines, mainly tanks, as well as the massive tender locomotive shown in the photograph.

We had two or three coach trips to beauty spots. The best was over the Alps to Krimml Falls and Zell-am-See which two places are joined by another narrow gauge railway, albeit not steam. The trip I enjoyed most was not on a train, but a tram. We went by train to Innsbruck, where a few of us joined a really vintage No. 6 tram, with two trailers, which goes all the way to a beautiful mountain resort with the unpronounceable name of Igls. After following the normal street tramways to the southern outskirts of the city, this route goes on to a reserved single track with passing places. Then for the best part of an hour it climbs and constantly winds its way into the mountains through thick woodland, which opens out to reveal indescribably beautiful scenery.

Apart from the tram driver there were three conductors, one for each car. They were all young lads in their late teens, who had a whale of a time, climbing along the side of the cars, shouting out place names and pulling leather straps attached to the cord which activated the bell in the drivers cab. The cost was about £1.75 and this entitled you afterwards to travel on all the Innsbruck trams free for the rest of the day!

Our group was surprisingly cohesive. In the evenings after dinner, we drank beer and schnapps and often there was a musician, and on the last night we had a party. There was a tour manager with us, an ex BR sales man, who looked after all our reservations and was very good at getting us half price party rates for independent excursions. Whilst many of us in the group were retired, we did have the younger elements. As always in the mountains, the weather was variable, but the air was like wine.

It wasn't strenuous ñ it wasn't meant to be, but it was very enjoyable if, like me, you appreciate Austria and the Austrians, with some trains thrown in. We returned the way we came but this time stopping overnight in Koblenz. By the way, can anyone tell me why our credit cards were largely unacceptable in Austria (even our own hotel wouldn't take them) or why you can get Duty Free on Le Shuttle, but not on Eurostar?

RAILWAY ROUNDABOUT

L.T. Are setting up a collection centre at Ealing Common Depot for old Underground trains & L.T. Buses. No further details are known about this project at the present time.

A recent photo of the Firefly locomotive at Didcot shows it well advanced in the construction stage & standing on its own wheels. So far it has cost over £3100,000 but more money is still needed to complete it. A curiosity is the nameplate which is in two sections for the word Firefly.

Anyone visiting Brazil can find preserved steam running on the 7 k.m. line at a holiday area in Sao Joac do Barra. A Baldwin 2-8-0. off the Sorocobana Itauna Rly has been refurbished by a retired railworker & friends who hope to eventually refurbish 2 more.

In Cuba, Alco 2 - 8 - 0 No 1816 built in 1919 is currently being rebuilt into a high performance machine under the guidance of the famous engineer, D.A. Porter whose recommendations

were incorporated into the remarkable Class 26 4-8-4 on the SAR. It is understood that plans exist to convert large numbers of steam locomotives due to the boycotting of diesel sales from the USA. Cuba, already popular for rail tours, may become even more so.

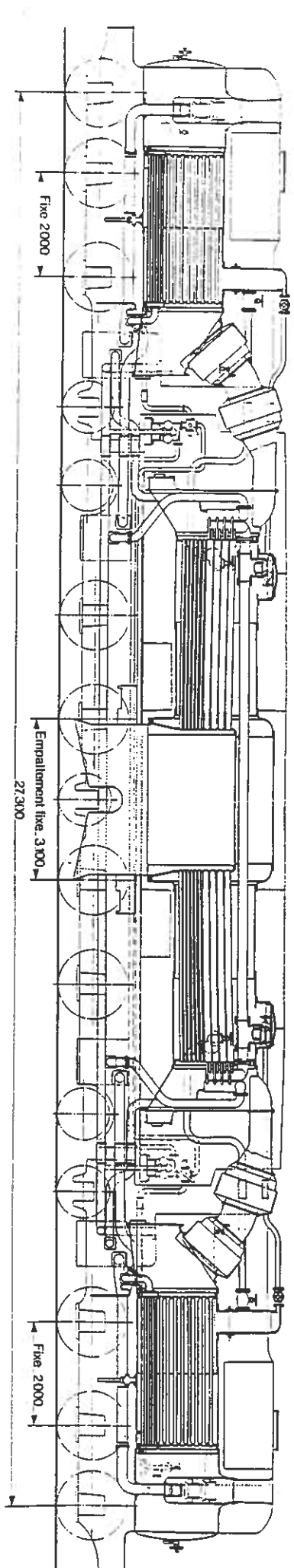
During the reign of steam a large number of extraordinary designs appeared and some were built. A whole evenings talk could be given on the subject, however one of the oddest must have been built by Tubize in Belgium in 1931. The locomotive was about 98 feet long and had the following wheel arrangement.

0-6-2+2-4-2-4-2+2-6-0

The boiler front had a passing similarity to the Belgian stream lined Pacifics and it is understood that line tests were carried out on this unit known as the Franco design. A photo of the loco can be seen in Locomotives International. (Usual Disclaimer)

Bank Holiday Monday on the C&PRR and visiting 0-4-OST 'John Howe' (AB1147/08) from Carnforth approaches Wainhill crossing. A few moments later sparks from the loco ignited a lineside field of stubble.

Photo: Tim Edmonds, 31 August 1998



THE MARLOW & DISTRICT RAILWAY SOCIETY
MINUTES OF THE 22nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT 8PM ON 19TH FEBRUARY 1998 AT THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION HALL, MARLOW

Apologies:

Peter Robins

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the members and visitors.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 20th February 1997 were read and approved for signature. (Show of hands)

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reviewed the year's meetings and noted the variety and quality of the speakers. He said the special events held to celebrate the Society's 20th Anniversary had all been well received and supported. He thanked all concerned for their efforts, especially the partners and friends for their invaluable assistance.

The Christmas gathering proved successful again and the Chairman expressed his thanks to Eve Reilly for the excellent buffet.

He thanked Julian Heard for providing the television for the Photographic Evening which in its new format was most enjoyable.

He expressed his disappointment at having to cancel, through lack of support, the coach outing to Amberley in July but pointed out that it served as an indicator when selecting future venues.

He said all the Committee had worked hard throughout the year, for which he thanked them. The Marlow Donkey continues to thrive and he thanked John Tuck for editing it, Tim Speechley for printing it and the members' wives for computerising the articles.

He concluded by requesting ideas for the Society's celebration of the Millennium.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

In the absence of the Treasurer, Julian Heard reviewed the Membership and Financial situation for the year. He said the membership for the year showed no net loss. On the financial side he said that the profit from the David Shepherd evening of £344.77 had been used to subsidise the Christmas gathering and that without the event the Society would have made a loss for the year of £20. Because of the surplus it would not be necessary to increase the subscriptions for 1998.

Julian Heard invited comments from the floor.

Roger Bowen commented that although the membership had not declined this year it was still below previous levels. The Chairman replied that the David Shepherd event had been used extensively to publicise the Society on radio, local newspapers and notice boards and had resulted in three new members. Mike Norris said that the average age of the membership was high and that efforts should be made to recruit and cater for younger members. Visitor John Rees suggested that speakers on modern

traction would help and he offered to provide names to the Secretary.

Keith Brown queried why the stock of Society Ties was not mentioned on the financial report. Julian Heard said that this was an oversight and he would advise the Treasurer in order to make a correction.

The Chairman requested that the report be accepted. Proposed Tim Speechley Seconded Allan Morris.

4. SECRETARY'S REPORT

The secretary outlined the programme for the coming year, he said it would include a wide variety of railway subjects presented by members and visiting speakers and would involve the use of Video, Audio Visual and film. He invited members willing to make a presentation to come forward so that suitable slots could be made in the future speaker programme. He thanked the members for their support.

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Secretary said that in accordance with the Constitution the three longest serving committee members Eddie Lewcock, Peter Robins and Tim Speechley would be stepping down from the Committee but that all had expressed a willingness to continue. As no new nominations had been received the Chairman said the committee would be the same as 1997.

6. NORMAN ASTON SMITH COMPETITION

Following a vote by the attending members the Chairman announced that the competition had been jointly won by Tim Speechley and Gordon Rippington. Each would hold the trophy for six months.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

John Boot raised the problem of people talking during the speaker presentations. He said it was distracting and often spoilt the occasion. The Chairman accepted the comment and invited the Membership to be more considerate at future meetings.

Mike Walker suggested a rail trip to Toton over the August Bank Holiday, 28th/29th August, might prove of interest. The Chairman agreed to take the suggestion to the Committee.

Gordon Rippington outlined the trips already planned for 1998 and invited a show of hands of interested members. As a result, it was agreed to proceed with the events.

This concluded the AGM and the Chairman thanked the members for attending. The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

The Committee for 1998/9:

Julian Heard	Mike Hyde
Eddie Lewcock	Gordon Rippington
Peter Robins	Tim Speechley
John Tuck	Roger Wallis

EL TRANSCANTABRICO

'A VISIT TO NORTHERN SPAIN'

Most people head south for the sun and sand when they fly to Spain or take the ferry to Santander. That's a pity because the northern coast of Cantabria, Asturias and Galicia is attractive in its own right and less populated or spoilt. So next time get off the ferry and turn right, ie, west.

To the east lies the land of the Basques, Vasco, with its own language (like nothing else), culture and railway system. The active museum at Azpetia is worthy of an article itself and those members who attend a society meeting in All Saints church hall last year may recall a few photographs I showed from my visit in 1997. I would go back tomorrow as it was so much fun and with so much to see. Perhaps a long weekend in the area but a car is essential.

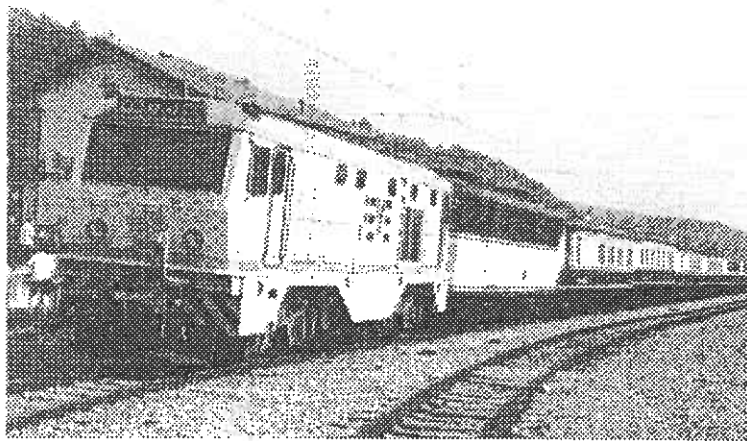
This northern coast is quite rugged for the most part but there are wonderful sandy beaches in parts. So the east - west line, mainly single track and metre gauge, in places is forced inland across country and at other times runs close to the sea charging through slimline tunnels and appearing quite suddenly over high viaducts or spectacular bridges.

This is the terrain of FEVE: the state narrow gauge (VE) system as opposed to RENFE for the broad gauge. FEVE do have other locations in central and mid Spain but I believe this is probably the best to view. El Transcantabrico was born in 1983 to try to recreate the comfort and style of the Orient Express (their claim not mine). It was the first tourist train in Spain and an instant success, taking 54 passengers in luxury in a westward or eastward direction each week through the season. Four sleeping cars each with eight air conditioned compartments within which are two bunks, sink and small cupboard. Loos and showers at the end of the corridor.

We thought the cabins were very cramped and with little room to store or hang clothes. Our solution to changing was for one person to go for a walk, shower, drink whilst the other dressed. Once outside the cabin then luxury it was, with ample and comfortable coaches, including a bar and a dance/disco coach in the consist. Service was first class and drinks not expensive. All meals in Spain were included in the trip.

At night the train pulled into a siding near or at a station and remained stationary. Breakfast was served on board, usually as we moved to our next destination, but we only normally travelled some 40 miles or so per day and never at a great speed. A stop for lunch was made whereupon we joined our attendant coach to visit a nearby town, castle, mountain and/or restaurant. This was repeated every midday and evening till some of us reach the point of not being able to eat or drink any more! Well, hardly any more food.

The pulling power was provided by a single diesel electric built by Alstom in 1985 - BB AD 16 B Bicabina. The loco was dedicated to the service as were the drivers and the crew. I was able to visit the footplate but not to ride. A tour of the engine compartment was interesting but uninformative due my lack of spanish and the drivers



amazing fluency in it !

Nevertheless by befriending the stunning and charming spanish courier who did speak English, I was able to return home with ...wait for it,... a complete handbook on FEVE stock, etc. There's dedication and prioritisation of tasks for you, or a measure of my pulling power.

As I said earlier, the blue and white matched train (disappointingly except for the yellow and grey loco) consisted of 4 sleepers plus 3 amenity coaches and 2 'furgons'; one for energy and one for service. The widest coach was 2.5 metres, so width on board was not a problem. We usually passed or stopped at a station to allow the service trains by, but this was not a very frequent occurrence, with less than an hourly service at most times. These trains were 2 or 3 car DMUs, type D.3256 by MAN (1983-86) but I occasionally saw one or two items of newer stock in service.

Clearly a lot of European money had been and was being spend in the region on public transport. New motorways were heading west and the railway infrastructure had been upgraded in several places. Wonderful old stations were refurbished, track renewed, and signalling replaced although tokens did sometimes appear. However, one section west of Viveiro only permitted the train to pass without passengers which for us and our friendly coach was not a problem. Clearly work remains to be done here before the money or energy runs out.

Our final rail destination was Ferrol where the broad gauge reappeared. We had seen it in Irun and had crossed one or two other rail lines, such as the commuter networks around Bilbao where originally we had boarded the train and at Gijon, where we were lucky enough to be shown around the new railway museum a few weeks before it was opened to the public. Here they have mixed gauge track and stock, steam and diesel, plus an English Electric loco in what I term, american styling (E7 like).

After a visit to Santiago de Compostela and overnight stay, we joined the RENFE service back to San Sebastian in the NE on the spanish/french border. That's when we did get some serious spotting done in the stations across the territory. But that's another story and a different gauge. At least we had the TGV and Eurostar to look forward to again after a final night's stay in Espana. Viva.

Mike Hyde

Should any member be interested I have details of the British company which organised this trip and specialises in all-inclusive overseas rail visits of a gentle nature: not intense spotting but relaxed riding, on interesting lines from Switzerland to Kenya and Sri Lanka. First class travel at a reasonable price. *Mike.*

BOOKSHELF

Alan Costello

ENCYCLOPAEDIA of the GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

Patrick Stephens Ltd

ISBN 1 85260 329 1

Issued in 1994, this book can now be bought from bargain bookshops at half the original price (£30). The main part of the book contains over 500 entries on all GWR related subjects. Appendices start off with a list of significant events in chronological order. This is followed by gradient profiles of the main line taken from the book issued by Ian Allan. Next, an alphabetical list of GWR and absorbed companies engine names. This is then followed by the names listed class by class, starting with the broad gauge. Finally a list of preserved locos and their whereabouts at February 1993. A number of photos and diagrams are included.

TRAINS ANNUAL 1964

Ed. G.Freeman Allen

Ian Allan Ltd

The performance of the Kings and N7's are featured this year. A history of the way passengers could contact the guard or traincrew starting from the guard looking over the train to the communication cord. Other articles look at the Tyne Dock to Consett iron ore traffic, the Glasgow to Aberdeen line and the local workings out of St.Pancras. Overseas countries featured are Australia and Germany. Colour plates are a mixture of photos and prints.

BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS FROM THE AIR - THEN AND NOW

Aerofilms

Ian Allan Ltd

ISBN 0 7110 2595 9

Yet another then and now book but this time all the photos are taken from the air giving a wider view of the subject. 125 locations from Wick in the north to Weymouth in the south are spread over 2 pages for each place. Some of the 'then' go back to the 1920's with the 'now' taken in 1997 or 1998. Looking at the pictures it can be seen that a lot of railway land has disappeared being replaced by houses and factories.

COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS

Ed.Steven Knight & Howard Johnston

EMAP Apex Publications

ISBN 1368 437 x

This is the second edition of this magazine size publication. All operating companies with their short histories are described in detail. Each section includes a simple map showing the area covered by each company, together with total route mileage. Also included is the subsidy over the years of the franchise, improvements made and future plans. Other information includes a brief stock list, maintenance depots and addresses of each company. Apart from the passenger operating companies including Eurostar, freight operations are listed such as EWS, Freightliner and DRS. Also listed are details of Railtrack and the Metro companies. A good selection of coloured photos accompanies the articles. Ian Allan have also issued a book in their ABC series giving similar details for twice the price.

BRITISH RAILWAY'S BRIDGES AND VIADUCTS

M.Smith

Ian Allan Ltd

ISBN 0 7110 2273 9

Without the infrastructures, railways would take very tortuous routes to cross rivers and valleys. The author describes Britain's notable bridges and viaducts built over the last 150 years, though the first bridge that can still be seen is in County Durham. It is the Causey Arch built in 1727 to take a 4-foot gauge railway across a river. The building of the bridges and their location, together with a picture in most cases, are described. Subjects include the bridge at Maidenhead and the viaducts on the Settle and Carlisle line. Although most were built during the last century, details can be found of more modern structures such as those on the Tyneside Metro.

Donkey Articles

No. 84 March 1998

LMSR (Local Miniature Steam Railways) Alan Wheeler
The History of the Noman-Aston
Smith Award Alan Wheeler
A Question of Identity Tim Edmonds
Highball, Passenger Extra 3025 West Mike Walker
Railways South West David Gardner

No. 85 June 1998

Over 30 Years Old and
Still Going Strong Keith Brown
St. Valentines Day Alan Morris

No. 86 October 1998

Holiday 1998 Alan Costello
So You Want to Ride on a
Diesel Multiple Unit Keith Brown
125th Anniversary of the Marlow Donkey Mike Hyde
Southern Vectis Mike Hyde
Class 66 in Close Up Mike Walker

No. 87 December 1998

H.M.S. Trelawney Eddie Lewcock
East Coast Main Line Classic Winners Keith Brown
Sunny Side Up Mike Hyde
Mona's Isle Revisited Peter Bond
Austrian Tyrol Peter Bond
El Transcantabrico Keith Brown

Letter to the Editor of Marlow Donkey from John Sears of Preston, Lancs

Dear Mr. Editor.

Keith Brown's article in the latest "Donkey" on the opportunities for "unit" travel over distances somewhat longer than 2 miles and 58.66 chains, was an interesting read. Surprisingly, the mention of North Western Trains (NWT) caught my eye. Oh the fun that was had by all as we battled to get agreement for the new access rights! I don't think I'm revealing any secrets if you allow me to expand a few points.

The Blackpool (BPN) portion doesn't run non-stop between Leyland and Warrington Bank Quay (WBQ), but calls at Euxton Balshaw Lane & Euxton station. There's now a wonderful sequence of names in that area; from south to north there are: Balshaw Lane Junction (where the four-track section begins), Euxton Balshaw Lane station and then Euxton Junction, where the line from Chorley joins the WCML.

The stop at Warrington is for operational purposes only. By the way, 1F03, the 6.27 from BPN to Euston (EUS), is booked in to WBQ at 7.34, and 1A25, the 6.43 from Rochdale to EUS is due at 7.38, and it attaches to the BPN set. The train runs from BPN to WBQ using access rights NWT has for the BPN to Holyhead and vv services.

The arcane world of track access rights was the speciality of my cell-mate at NWT, and I was able to experience at first-hand some of the hoops through which TOCs have to jump in their efforts to get new access rights. First there is the wonderful creation known as "Moderation of Competition" (my speciality), devised, unwillingly, by the Regulator to reduce the impact of new rail competition on TOCs. It means that NWT couldn't offer Warrington to London journeys unless Virgin agreed. Virgin's philosophy on competition differs wildly between rail and air. In air, it is a **good thing**, and BA's efforts to stifle it are evil. In rail it is a **bad thing** and other TOCs efforts to provide new services are evil! Needless to say, Virgin did not want to allow any more new services than they could possibly help, hence no passenger stop at Warrington. Tamworth, however, wasn't 'protected' under MoC, and NWT's stops there are 'open', that is, they pick up and set down in both directions.

Virgin's own new Blackpool service could only operate beyond Preston because NWT and Northern Spirit both agreed (for a fee) to allow it. Both companies are 'protected' between Preston and Blackpool; indeed NWT is also protected between Wigan North Western and Blackpool; and so the agreement they have with Virgin had to include that flow also. The flow between Milton Keynes Central and Euston is protected for Virgin and Silverlink, and no agreement could be reached to allow NWT trains even to call to set down only southbound, or pick-up northbound. Such stops at Watford Junction were agreed to by Silverlink only after stringent conditions were applied. The summer '98 timetable showed most of Virgin's stops at Watford Junction as 'open'. That was a blatant attempt by Virgin to increase its own revenue by causing the revenue allocating system ("ORCATS") to include Virgin trains in the pot for Watford to London money. Obviously if a train is set down only on its journey to Euston, then, in theory!, no one should join it for the Watford to Euston journey, and no revenue should accrue. Needless to say, Silverlink went a little ballistic, and Virgin were told to re-instate the restriction in their stops. It all shows, I feel, the desperation in the Virgin empire at meeting their target for revenue growth.

Further evidence of that came in the titanic struggle they put up trying to prevent *any* of the NWT's proposed new services being granted rights. Not as epic as the hearings over the PUG2 (Passenger Upgrade) proposals for the WCML, they were fraught, to say the least. At one point a gamekeeper turned poacher (one of Virgin's main team used to work for OPRAF!) claimed that

Manchester Victoria to Euston should be protected, and wasn't in the list of such flows because Virgin had "forgotten" to include it in their nominations! It was with no little glee that I was able to fax to our solicitors the information that Virgin had included it in their nominations, but the Regulator had refused to give it protection. I can remember taking the pages from the MD's fax when the decision came through – what would they say? NWT had got what they had asked for! The relief and excitement were palpable. Now to make the best of the pretty abysmal paths that Railtrack were offering. I haven't been able to check the working timetable myself, but a friend tells me that the weekday trains are booked via Weedon. My own trips on the up Blackpool/Rochdale and on the 14.40 from Euston to the Airport have both been via Weedon.

It will be fascinating to see if the service can develop as planned into one that is hourly south of Crewe. Patronage at present is best described as 'variable'. The autumn edition of "Ale Cry", the journal of the W.Lancs. branch of CAMRA, tells us that "Lord Alecan" has used it from Leyland to visit the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia. On-board service has been widely praised, and compared very favourably with Virgin's, though the demise of the catering trolleys will no doubt have a very adverse effect.

Returning to Keith's article. It reminded me of the time that the Scottish Railway Development Society was asking for examples of long distance dmu workings. It was the time that the first grant-aid list came out – remember it? It listed the actual amounts allocated to individual sections of the line. It was the list that didn't include Bourne End to Wycombe! The SRDS wanted to be able to provide examples of long-distance dmu workings in support of their suggestion that, to fend-off the latest closure threat, the West Highland and Far North lines should be so worked. As indeed they are now!

One long working not included by Keith is Wales & West's 5.50 Paddington to Penzance via Bristol train, a 325.25 mile jaunt by a class 158. It was a descendant of the old 5.30 Paddington to Penzance train, which ran for many a year. A comparison of its times over the years makes interesting reading.

	PAD	RDG	BTL	TAU	EXD	PLY	PNZ
1902	5.30	6.30	8.48	10.13	11.01	12.55	16.58
1947	5.30	6.20	8.34	9.58	10.48	12.45	16.25
1957	5.30	6.17	8.35	9.56	10.47	12.45	16.25
1961	5.30	6.17	8.31	9.43	10.34	12.15	16.25
1998	5.50	6.20	7.45	8.37	9.09	10.27	12.22

In 1961 the train terminated at Plymouth. From a body-crushing overall average speed of 28 mph in 1902, to 1957's 32 mph, the lack of any change over nigh-on 60 years is astonishing – did the market really not change, or was it – just a guess this of course – really the Railway's lack of attention to it that didn't change? This summer's average was 50 mph.

I'm pleased that Thames Trains managed to make something of Donkey 125 (now there's a thought!, how about a tilting turbo along the Marlow branch!) even if they did need the help of the MDRS and my e-mail from Manchester to get them started in the first place.

With best wishes,