

*Marlow & District*  
*Railway Society*

Please reply to:

THE MARLOW DONKEY NO. 9

DECEMBER 1978

To all our readers a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

It is now thirty-five years since Ian Allan published his first ABC for the use of members of "Spotters' Clubs". It is interesting to realise that enthusiasm in railway matters continued throughout the war years, particularly as standards of maintenance, cleanliness and performance were progressively deteriorating from the high standards of 1939. Ian Allan's publications have maintained an accuracy improved recently on its previous high standard.

A veritable spate of Railway literature has poured from the presses of many publishers since British steam ended in August, 1968. Surely the supply of photographs must dry up soon! The duplication of subject matter must also become more noticeable. (However, memoirs are always most acceptable).

My earliest railway memories are of the decade leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Books on railway matters were few and far between. Our main source of information was Railway Magazine. The local library had bound volumes of this publication reaching back into the twenties. From this monthly book we compiled our own lists of names and numbers. Often the names of older classes of locomotive were copies from lineside observation. I also took the GWR magazine, the glossy version of which cost, I believe, twopence. There was not much railway news among the staff news of dinners and promotions, but we learned of new locomotives emerging from Swindon Works, or of engines now arrived in the large scrapyard on the west of the town. GWR enthusiasts also benefited from the lively PR department at Paddington. From time to time small, well produced booklets were on sale, always headed by "Duke Class, 4.4.0, 3252 - 3291," the first locomotive listed being "3252, Duke of Cornwall". Other Paddington publications were intended to promote the attractions of towns and countryside in the area served by the GWR. Cathedrals and Castles were described, the practically unknown beauty spots of mid- and North Wales, Devon and the Cornish Riviera were almost ecstatically recommended. Touring by car was still in its infancy.

The giant among the Casserleys, Nocks and Tuplins must surely be the late Cecil J Allen. His books and regular contributions to Railway Magazine reach back many years. Always readable, well researched and entertaining, C J A's writings have no equal.

It was he above all who wrote so complimentarily about the GWR. In 1921 after his first journey to Plymouth on the "Cornish Express" he wrote:- "I could not fail to be struck on this trip with the keen interest of all the crew of the train in its welfare; even in the restaurant car the names and merits of all the different drivers were known, so that to the excellence of the menus and the courtesy of the service were added an enthusiasm on the part of the staff that helped to make the trip to myself one peculiarly memorable". "Such was the family spirit that animated the truly great Great Western Railway", he added in a 1970 book when recalling earlier experiences.

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 25 JANUARY 1979 - 2000 HRS

The second AGM will be held in the Marlow Donkey on 25 January 1979. Three members of your Committee will be standing down in accordance with the rules and will be eligible for re-election. Any other paid up member who would like to serve should send his nomination in writing to Roger Bowen by 1 January 1979. Should there be more nominations than vacancies an election will be held during the AGM. The new committee will meet after the AGM to elect the Society's officers for 1979. If you have a subject for general discussion please give Roger Bowen prior notice so that time may be allocated. If you have not got a copy of the rules please ask Stan Verrinder for one.

The Agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of First AGM 12 January 1978 - circulated in Marlow Donkey No. 5 March 1978
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Announcement of events in 1979 by the Secretary
7. Items for General discussion
8. Election of 3 committee members

The present committee is Bas Woodward (Chairman), Roger Bowen (Secretary), Stan Verrinder (Treasurer), Mike Norris, Les Spicer, Roy Mee, Ted Gregory. Of these Roger, Stan and Mike will be standing down.

Time permitting the AGM will be followed by a selection of members slides. The Secretary will be pleased to have offers in advance so that he can arrange a programme. A screen and projector will be available.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Editor has been forced by the Treasurer to bring up the subject of subscriptions. Would you please pay your subscriptions with the enclosed form at either the December meeting or prior to the AGM.

THURSDAY NIGHT PROGRAMME FOR 1979 AT 2000 HRS

- 25 Jan 1979 Annual General Meeting which will be followed by member's slides
- 15 Feb 1979 Passenger Train Operations in the London Division of the Western Region. A talk by T P Worrall Divisional Train Superintendent London Division of Western Region
- 15 Mar 1979 More Aspects of Signalling. Who else but our own flag waver Mike Hanscomb
- 26 Apr 1979 Adventure in Latin America. An illustrated talk by the well known author Colin Garratt, sponsored by Praticka Cameras
- 17 May 1979 Mid Hants Railway. D J Lane of the Mid Hants Railway Preservation Society
- 21 Jun 1979 To be arranged
- 19 Jul 1979 To be arranged.

EXCURSION PROGRAMME 1979

Our first excursion will we hope be on Saturday 10 March 1979, when it is intended we join a Western Region special train to Taunton and the West Somerset Railway. Further details will be available later but anyone interested please contact Roger Bowen.

We have not yet finalised our summer coach tour but the suggestion is to visit the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway in the morning and go on to Whipsnade Zoo in the afternoon for the Whipsnade and Umfolozi Railway. Any other constructive suggestions are welcome.

We have heard nothing from London Midland Region yet but we have heard rumours that there will be another excursion from Marylebone and High Wycombe in April to the Severn Valley Railway enthusiasts weekend.

Finally the Society hope to organise another railway weekend to France in the late spring/early summer. Again anyone interested please get in touch with Roger Bowen.

WEA COURSES

Your Secretary will again be lecturing to two further WEA branches after Christmas. The subject this time is "Steam Engines".

One course starts on Tuesday 23 January 1979, at 1945 hrs at Amersham College of Further Education, Stanley Hill, Amersham. Details from Mrs. A Marshal "Wymondley" Burtons Lane, Chalfont, St. Giles, Tel. Little Chalfont 2159. The other course starts

on Wednesday 24 January at the John Colet County Secondary School, Wharf Road, Wendover. Details from B. Bridges, 36 Chiltern Road, Wendover, Tel. Wendover 623744.

#### PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Another successful film evening was held on 21 September 1978, which was devoted to Welsh narrow gauge. Bas Woodward and Roger Bowen combined in their usual way.

Irish Steam featured at the 19 October 1978 meeting when Leslie McAllister of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland kept his large audience truly entertained. He was so successful that there were mutterings from members about the possibility of an Irish visit in 1979.

On 16 November 1978 as an experiment the evening was devoted to a series of short talks by members on the subject of their choice. Our thanks to Ron Brooks, Malcolm Campbell, Ted Gregory, Steve Medway and Stan Verrinder for volunteering to appear before such a highly critical audience.

#### SURVEY OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Andy McMillan has completed his very comprehensive survey of members' interests and details were given at the November meeting. It is intended that details will be given in the next issue.

Andy as many of you will know got married this year to one of our members the former Jenny Young so the lateness of his report is understandable. Perhaps we may be lucky next year and see them. Not many members can boast of an address with Railway Cottages in it, which is their current address at Steeple Claydon.

#### 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE OPENING OF THE LIVERPOOL AND MANCHESTER RAILWAY

Spring Bank Holiday 1980 is still a very long way off but you are recommended to book this date in your diary now for this is when the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the Rainhill Trials which occurs in 1979 and the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1980 takes place. At Rainhill over the "Trials" section of the line will be mounted a cavalcade of railway rolling stock from the Rocket to the APT.

#### MARLOW DONKEY DISPLAY WINDOW

Alan Wheeler has excelled himself with his current display in the window of the Marlow Donkey. Even on recent cold mornings intending railway passengers have been seen stopping to admire it. You must not miss it.

### NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to the Society:

A.J.T. Caton, A.D. Mills, T.W. Samuells, M. Sherwood, C. Smith and J.A.G. Watson.

### 25 YEARS AGO

This quarter's offering is from the "Railway Magazine" of December 1953.

"The Minister of Transport has confirmed that the track of the closed Newport-Freshwater and Brading-Bembridge lines will not be taken up for another year. It has been decided to set up a committee to consider reopening the two lines privately".

BR has announced that passenger services on the former Kent & East Sussex Light Railway will be withdrawn as from 4 January 1954. The 13½ miles from Robertsbridge to Tenterden Town will remain open for freight traffic, but the remainder of the line the 8 miles from Tenterden to Headcorn will be closed completely. Authorised to Rolvenden (then known as Tenterden) were opened in 1900. The railway was extended to Tenterden Town in 1903, and to Headcorn in 1905. The name of the undertaking was changed to the Kent & East Sussex Railway in 1904".

### TRANSPORT TRUST

Our Society is affiliated to the Transport Trust. You may be interested in the following extracts from the report of its Council submitted to the AGM on 25 November 1978.

"Invicta - the Trust has started the task of restoring this famous locomotive built in 1830 for the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway. This locomotive was built at Robert Stephenson and Co. works and bears a resemblance to the Rocket. It is hoped to have it restored in time for the sesquicentennial celebrations for the opening of the Canterbury and Whitstable line in 1980 and it has been agreed that it will be permanently displayed under cover at the County Museum at Canterbury".

"Gordon locomotive - we are pleased to report this loco entrusted to our care and on loan to the Severn Valley Railway is undergoing an overhaul by them and should shortly be in steam again".

"Midland Railway Wagons - these were donated to the Trust by BR and moved at their expense to Quainton Road Station".

"It has been agreed that a loan of £400 and a grant of £350 to the Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway be made to bring their loco "P C Allen" back into running order. The work on the boiler is nearly complete and she should be running again next season".

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

I was very pleased to read the latest copy of your excellent publication.

I must, however, comment on the apparent anti-Southern bias of your correspondent, Alan Wheeler. I feel that the comment that the "Southern Region in general is so much behind the rest of BR" based on the levers in a signal box which is intended to represent Southern Railway practice of the 1930's, is most unfair. It is a fact that the Southern Regions's signalling of the 1970's is more advanced than other Regions, with plans in the foreseeable future for the entire Region to be controlled from only 13 signal boxes. The Southern has always been in the forefront of signalling developments which is, of course, absolutely necessary for a railway which carries more passengers than all the railways of the United States put together.

Before closing I must take issue with Mike Hanscomb's letter where he claims my statement that he has not been seen behind bars before is incorrect. He states that he has been seen behind the bar of the "Marlow Donkey". Whilst I have seen him frequently in front of, and leaning on, the bar of the "Donkey", I am sure Terry would never let him loose behind the bar. I stand by my original statement.

May I finally correct an error which appeared in my article on the Isle of Wight. The train concerned was train 1Z77 and not 1277 as stated.

Sincerely,

Roger Bowen.

MMPA 1979 PROGRAMME

The MMPA is arranging several events of interest for 1979. Two excursions will be operated and it is proposed that one will be to Cardiff and Tenby, whilst the other will be to York and Scarborough with a coach connection to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. It is hoped to get up a party for the latter trip. The dates and costs have yet to be finalised but notification will be given at the earliest opportunity.

In view of 1979 marking the 125th Anniversary of the Wycombe Railway the MMPA is considering special events. Depending on the outcome of negotiations now proceeding a further excursion from the Branch to the Torbay and both Dart Valleys may be operated in July.

## RAILWAY PRESERVATION SYMPOSIUM

The first Railway Preservation Symposium was held at the Institution of Civil Engineers London on 28 November 1978. Roger Bowen attended and gives this report on the papers which were read.

Mechanical Engineering - John Bellwood - Chief Mechanical Engineer of the National Railway Museum. He dealt with the question of preventative maintenance including periodical examination of boilers and motion. He pointed out that long term storage results in certain corrosion problems against which interesting methods of non-destructive testing had been introduced at the National Railway Museum. Swedish experience in the total enclosure of locomotives in vast plastic bags held promise.

Civil Engineering - Nigel Trotter - Honorary Civil Engineer of the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. This paper embodied the great variety of items on the civil engineering side of a preserved railway. Permanent way was given first place with comments on bullhead and flat bottom rails, types of sleepers, joints chairs and keys. Attention was drawn to flange lubrication and to the occurrence of wheelburn. The maintenance of bridges tunnels and other buildings and structures were dealt with. Useful comments were made on adaption of buildings for recreational purposes.

Operating and Safety on a Private Railway - Allan Garraway - General Manager of the Festiniog Railway. Attention was drawn to the vexed question of the extent to which preserved lines may be required to conform to the needs of the Railway Inspectorate in the interests of public safety. Permanent way and signalling were mentioned. Boiler maintenance was illustrated by reference to two notable explosions, one on the LNWR in 1921 and the other on the French PLM in 1935. Other aspects which were touched on were traffic control, staffing and supervision and standards of work. The business aspects of a preserved railway were gone into and the paper ended with some thoughts on the future.

Operation of Preserved Locomotives and Rolling Stock on British Railways - David Ward - Passenger Marketing Manager BR (LMR). The author of this paper set out the policy of BR with regard to the operation of privately owned locos and rolling stock over its lines. He mentioned mechanical and boiler inspections, insurance, facilities for coal and water, speeds and the issue of footplate passes. An analysis was given of charter train costs and marketing of tickets with particular reference to 1972-1978. The latter part of the paper looked at the future and the factors which are now pointing to the areas and conditions in which the greatest promise of future success appears to lie.

Some Practical Experiences and Lessons Learned - Richard Hardy - Executive Member Central Engineering Training Group BRB. He spoke on the management and understanding of railwaymen and the experience of day to day running of railways he had gained in 38 years as a professional railwayman on the LNER and BR.

The symposium closed with a reception among the locomotives at the Science Museum.

LAND OF MY FATHERS - Contributed by Ernie Dove

Sunday morning 10 September 1978 saw people of all ages making their way to Marlow Station for the last MMPA train outing of the year to North Wales.

We left Marlow at 0735 not realising or caring that it would be 17 hours and over 500 miles travelled before returning. Collecting more passengers on the way we arrived at Maidenhead where we boarded the main line train.

With over 600 of us off we went up line to Olympia first to play trains (i.e. engines running round) as the normal route was said to be unsafe for heavy trains and then we really got going.

While going around selling raffle tickets it seemed that everyone was enjoying themselves as we speeded along. Unfortunately BR did not realise what a coffee drinking lot we were as we soon ran out of milk. Well, before Crewe a bright boy suggested we dive out at Crewe and buy some while changing engines from electric to diesel. The idea was OK but we were let down at the train did not run into a platform. So no milk but our train spotters were more than pleased as a long line of engines were almost next door.

We then carried on dropping off passengers at their selected stops to arrive at Llandudno only 15 minutes late which was good going.

Weather good, warm but windy, some of us went up the Great Orme by tram (this was a must). Beautiful views and well worth the trip. With the trams inspected and books bought there was time for a wander around, a meal and then back to the train. A nice place.

Meantime the elusive milk had been obtained so there was coffee on the return journey which was uneventful. Last pickup was Chester next stop Reading onto Maidenhead and branch line to Marlow arriving at 0025. A long trip but well worth going especially for such a small cost.

(Ed: Ernie is to be congratulated on writing the first article on one of our trips without mention of alcoholic beverages or a public house.)



THE WYCOMBE RAILWAY AND THE MARLOW DONKEY - Contributed by Mike Walker

PART TWO - TO HIGH WYCOMBE AND BEYOND

The first proposal to construct a railway through High Wycombe came in 1845 when a Bill was promoted for a line from West Drayton to Oxford via Uxbridge, High Wycombe and Thame. However, like many such schemes the idea failed.

High Wycombe has not long to wait before another Bill was placed before Parliament. In 1846 the Wycombe Railway Company sought powers to construct a single track line from Maidenhead to High Wycombe via Cookham and the Wye Valley. This Bill was passed on 27 July but almost immediately the WRC found itself in financial trouble. As a result the company negotiated to sell the land it had acquired to the GWR for £20,000. This plan was thwarted by an Act which prevented the premature sale of railways.

The WRC's powers lapsed but were revived in 1852 and the following year the work started quickly, the proposed opening being in May 1853. The section from Maidenhead to Cookham presented no real problems apart from a cutting and two short embankments near Maidenhead. From Cookham the line had to pass through Winter Hill in a deep cutting and then cross Cock Marsh and finally the River Thames at Bourne End. The final section to High Wycombe followed the western side of the Wye Valley. The WRC retained the services of Isambard Brunel as its consulting Engineer.

The WRC constructed its own station near the centre of Maidenhead as the company felt it would be better placed to attract passengers than the somewhat remote GW station east of the river. The WRC station known as Maidenhead, Wycombe Junction was located in the cutting through Boyne Hill between Grenfell Road and Castle Hill. This was a single platform with a small wooden building halfway along. The booking office and entrance hall were on the bridge carrying Castle Hill. This unusual structure was constructed of red brick, its flat arch echoed Brunel's bridge over the Thames, whilst the pavement on the south side of the road formed the roof of the booking office, access to which was straight from the road. A flight of steps led down to the platform.

Before High Wycombe there were four intermediate stations, Cookham, Marlow Road, Wooburn Green and Loudwater. Each was provided with buildings of near identical design consisting of a two storey house with a single storey booking office and waiting room attached, constructed in flint with red brick trimmings and grey slate roof. Marlow Road station differed from its fellows in being the opposite hand but the style was unchanged. Houses of the same design were provided for the keepers of two level crossings at Harrow Lane, north of Maidenhead, and at Cores End.

Both Cock Marsh and the river were crossed by a timber viaduct and during the construction of this a Saxon burial ground was uncovered several relics being removed to the safety of the British Museum.

At High Wycombe the line terminated at the site of the present station. The original WRC station had two platforms opposite each other. The down platform had a building which was a slightly larger version of those elsewhere with the addition of a wide canopy supported by cast iron columns. The up platform sported a smaller building also with a canopy. The station also boasted a small locomotive depot at the east end.

The entire line was laid to Broad Gauge (7ft. 0½ins) but in a somewhat unconventional manner, even by BG standards. Barlow rail was used which had a cross section in the form of an inverted "V", about 12 inches wide at its base and with a flat on its apex on which the wheels ran. This type of rail was extremely heavy and relied on its own weight to keep its correct position, no longitudinal or transverse sleepers were employed. When the track was laid the webs were buried only the running surface being visible.

The target opening date fell by the wayside largely due to the main contractor going bankrupt halfway through the project. However, the line was finally opened on 1 August 1854 and was leased to the GWR who operated the line on behalf of the WRC who owned no locomotives or rolling stock of its own. Rather curiously only passenger traffic was conveyed, the line being considered unsuitable for freight traffic.

In 1858 the WRC with GWR support promoted another Bill seeking to extend the line through Princes Risborough and Thame to Oxford with a branch to Aylesbury. This met with the opposition of William Fenton chairman of the West Midland Railway, who claimed the new railway would pass through the area known as the "West Midland District" which "belonged" to his company. His protests were ineffectual and the Bill was passed during the 1858 Parliamentary session.

The first section of this line from High Wycombe to Thame by way of West Wycombe, Saunderton and Princes Risborough was opened on 1 August 1862. The line clung to the north side of the Wye Valley from High Wycombe almost to West Wycombe where it turned northwards up the broad valley past Bradenham. The last two miles into Princes Risborough was through the ridge of the Chilterns. From Princes Risborough the line turned westwards and headed in a virtual straight line across the plain to Thame, with one intermediate station at Bledlow which served the village a mile away.

Bledlow station was similar to those south of High Wycombe. No trace can be found of the WRC buildings at West Wycombe, Saunderton and Princes Risborough, which were demolished when the joint line was built, however one can assume they were similar to the others. That cannot be said of Thame which has an overall timber train shed and single storey building reminiscent of Ashburton or Morton Hampstead. The design differed slightly from those in the West, principally with the extensively glazed ends.

The 7½ mile branch from Princes Risborough to Aylesbury opened on 1 October 1863 thus providing the county town with a reliable means of transport to the area south of the Chilterns. The branch was unremarkable being constructed across open country with only one intermediate station at Little Kimble, which has a modest single storey structure. The line terminated on the west side of Aylesbury some distance away from the LNWR station opened in 1839.

A line linking the two, part of the Aylesbury and Buckingham Railway, was started but was abandoned before completion.

The final section of the line was opened on 24 October 1864 and linked Thame with the GW line from Didcot to Oxford at a point which became known as Kennington Junction, 36½ miles from Wycombe Junction at Maidenhead. This last section had intermediate stations at Tiddington, Whestley and Littlemore and recrossed the Thames just before Kennington Junction.

Although still in a perilous financial position the WRC promoted a Bill in 1864 for a London extension. This would have left the existing line just south of Loudwater (the junction facing High Wycombe) and followed the line of the present M40 viaduct across the valley before passing north of Holtspur to Beaconsfield. From here the new line would have passed through Seer Green, Chalfont, St. Peter and Denham to Uxbridge to join end on with the GW branch from West Drayton which has opened in 1856. The GW however felt unable to support the Bill and as the WRC had insufficient funds to go it alone this interesting proposal died.

The WRC secured a place for it self in railway history on 18 January 1864, when it became the first part of the GWR to employ train staffs to protect single lines. Initially there were 5 staffs for the sections Taplow to Cookham, Cookham to High Wycombe, High Wycombe to Princes Risborough and one for each of the lines from Princes Risborough to Aylesbury and Thame. A further staff was employed between Thame and Kennington Junction.

The WRC managed to survive until the leasing arrangements with the GWR came up for renewal. Then the GWR absorbed the WRC with effect from 1 February 1867.

North of Aylesbury the Aylesbury and Buckingham Railway was opened on 23 September 1868. This standard gauge line was to have been worked by the LNWR but they and A&B fell out so the GWR provided two locomotives and three coaches originally owned by the OW&WR which had to reach the A&B by way of the LNWR from Oxford to Verney Junction. The A&B made an end on connection with the WRC at Aylesbury. So as to allow both lines to be worked as a single service the Princes Risborough to Aylesbury branch was converted to standard gauge on 4 October 1868 at a cost of £2,500. This was one of the first sections of broad gauge to be narrowed. The GW continued to operate the through Princes Risborough to Buckingham trains until 1891 when the A&B was absorbed by the Metropolitan.

The Wycombe "main line" survived a further two years before being converted to standard gauge in 1870, the entire line being closed for a week from 23 August to 1 September whilst the work was done. Upon being reopened the railway was permitted to carry freight traffic for the first time. This was mostly handled at the passenger stations although at Marlow Road a goods shed was erected on the down side behind the platform.

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