



Edition

124

March 2009



Contents:

Where did it all begin?

3000 At His Funeral

A Great west Coast Rail Journey

The Marlow Donkey

The Magazine of the Marlow & District Railway Society

COMMITTEE

President:	Sir William McAlpine Bt
Chairman:	Tim Speechley. 11 Rydal Way, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP12 4NS. Tel.: 01494 638090 email: tim.speechley@ntlworld.com
Vice-Chairman	Julian Heard. 58 Chalklands, Bourne End, Bucks., SL8 5TJ. Tel.: 01628 527005 email: julian@jeh.org.uk
Treasurer:	Peter Robins. 95 Broome Hill, Cookham, Berks., SL6 9LJ. Tel.: 01628 527870 email: pd.robins@btopenworld.com
Secretary:	Malcolm Margetts. 4 Lodge Close, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 1RB. Tel.: 01628 486433 email: mandw.margetts@btinternet.com
Webmaster:	Tim Edmonds. 90 Green Hill, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP13 5QE. Tel.: 01494 526346 email: tfedmonds@btopenworld.com
Committee:	Roger Bowen. 10 Cresswell Way, Holmer Green, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP15 6TE Tel.: 01494 713887 email: roger_bowen@hotmail.co.uk
Outings Organiser:	Mike Hyde. 11 Forty Green Drive, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 2JX. Tel.: 01628 485474 email: michaelahyde@uwclub.net
Donkey Editor:	Mike Walker, Solgarth, Marlow Road, Little Marlow, Marlow, Bucks., SL7 3RS. Tel.: 01628 483899 email: mikewalker@solgarth.eclipse.co.uk

Website: www.mdrs.org.uk

The contents of the *Marlow Donkey* represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Society

CONTENTS

TIMETABLE - Forthcoming meetings	Page 2
CHAIRMAN'S NOTES Tim Speechley	2
SOCIETY & LOCAL NEWS	3
WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN? Part 1 Alan Morris	5
ACTON DEPOT Photos of the Society visit	9
3000 AT HIS FUNERAL . . . Stan Verrinder	11
A GREAT WEST COAST RAIL JOURNEY Part 1 Ron North	13
25 AND 15 YEARS AGO Tim Edmonds	17
FROM THE ARCHIVE Member's photos.	19

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Top: J69 0-6-0T 68619 station pilot at London Liverpool Street 22 April 1957.

Photo: Alan Morris (Article page 5).

Bottom: Amtrak 113 at Eugene, Oregon, 1998.

Photo: Ron North (Article page 13).

TIMETABLE

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the Red Cross Centre, Victoria Road, Marlow, at 7.45 for 8.00pm.

- Thursday 19 March **DARJEELING HIMALAYAN RAILWAY** Paul Whittle
A look at one of the World's most spectacular railway lines. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway climbs through a series of loops and spirals amid some of the finest scenery on Earth.
- Thursday 16 April **TOUR DE FRANCE BY NARROW GAUGE** Michael Bunn
That great authority on all things French, Michael Bunn, returns with a look at the world of French narrow gauge, showing us there's more than the Baie de Somme.
- Thursday 21 May **FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE ADRIATIC European Steam in the 1960's** John Gulliver
A look at the many faces of steam across Europe in its final decade.
- Thursday 18 June **A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BRITISH RAILWAY SIGNALLING Part 1** Mike Walker
In the first of two presentations, Mike examines the Black Arts of railway signalling starting with traditional mechanical signalling and the Absolute Block system.
- Thursday 16 July **LONDON TRAMWAYS – THE STORY TO 1932** to be confirmed
A speaker from Transport for London will tell us the tale of London's tramway systems up to 1932.

FORTHCOMING VISITS

- Saturday 9 May **A VISIT TO SWINDON** by train
A visit to the new Swindon Control Centre, by kind invitation of First Great Western, and the Steam Museum. See page 3 for further details.
- Saturday 11 July **AMBERLEY RAILWAY GALA**
Full details will be announced shortly.

Please note: The above programme is correct at press time but subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Please check the Society's website www.mdrs.org.uk for the latest details.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

You would think that writing these few words every quarter would come easily but I have every sympathy for those authors who suffer from writers' block. I sometimes struggle for inspiration and it's not easy having spent a more or less railway-free three months, though that ended a few days ago when, rather like buses, or in fact nothing like buses, three steam specials ran out of London on the same day. Unfortunately, pressure of other things meant I could not spend all day chasing them, much as I would have liked to, but I did see *Tangmere* (leaving an enormous black smoke trail worthy of its classmate *City of Wells*, aka Vesuvius) and, finally, my first view of *Tornado*, though I very nearly missed it. Where are all the decent phot spots these days?

I've been clearing out my late Mother's flat recently and it brings home to you just how much "stuff" people collect during a lifetime. As railway enthusiasts we are probably guilty of being some of the worst culprits and if you are anything like me you will have many (too many) magazines, books, slides, guides, railtour programmes, models, notebooks, pictures etc etc. I know I should go through it all and thin it out but a) I don't really want to get rid of it and b) I haven't got the time. It does fill an increasingly large proportion of the house though and if I am to avoid serious difficulties with my dear wife I will have to prioritise this. I keep saying I'll do it when I retire but suspect that may not be soon enough for her.

Looking at the brand new page on the Society's web site, showing steam specials on the Joint Line, makes you realise just how lucky we were for that all too brief period from the mid 80's to the early 90's. There seemed to be specials almost

every weekend, sometimes both days, and occasionally two on the same day, such as when *Sir Nigel Gresley* and *Mallard* worked two trains in October 1986. The variety of locos was also quite amazing with very few of the operating main line engines not being used. Additionally, we had the Santa trains bringing even more steam to High Wycombe. At the beginning of this period I was living in the Hounslow area and working in Uxbridge. We were actively house hunting and on many occasions I combined photographing the steam with collecting house details from local estate agents and I'm sure, in part, the frequency of steam was an indirect cause of the Speechleys coming to live in High Wycombe. I do find it rather ironic that the only decent shot we could muster of the "Return to Steam" special in 1971 is from Dave Theobald who had to come all the way from Cambridgeshire to phot it.

As I write this we have just had the AGM. I think you all agree the provision of the reports in advance does reduce the business side of the meeting to a minimum, yet still gives you the opportunity to comment if you want to. The last thing I want the members to feel is that you are being controlled. This is your Society and your comments and suggestions are appreciated and I hope you feel all the committee can be approached at any time. It was a great shame the digital technology let us down on the night but Julian salvaged the evening's entertainment admirably. Congratulations to Mike Page for winning the Norman Aston-Smith award for his Lickey Incline article.

Tim Speechley

SOCIETY AND LOCAL NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

It is good to be able to welcome two new members to the Society, John Newman from Great Missenden and Vincent Caldwell from Speen. Welcome to you both, we hope you enjoy coming along for the ride.

In view of the recent doom laden article in the *Railway Magazine* suggesting that groups like ours are in a terminal decline, it is a pleasure to report that we start the year with nearly 60 members which must be a record! Some of those have still to renew their subscriptions for 2009 (hopefully an oversight, chaps!) but it's certainly an encouraging trend and suggests we must be doing something right!

PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The annual Christmas Party in December was as usual a pleasurable occasion. This year it was under the control of the Heard family with daughter Caroline cooking up a superb meal whilst Julian set a fiendishly difficult quiz.

January saw a packed house for the final visit of Ron White. Ron was in top form as he took us through the latest additions to the Colour-Rail catalogue - probably his last as Ron is currently in the process of selling the business and retiring. However, such is the persuasive powers of our Chairman that Ron might return in future with a selection from his personal collection.

The brief formal section of the AGM in February was followed by members' contributions. Slides were shown by Brian Hopkinson, steam on the Southern and diesels on the Western, both from 1967; Gordon Rippington with some of his personal favourites from the Colour-Rail collection and Peter Robins with steam in the snow around the world and brought right up to date with a charter on the GCR in early February. Unfortunately we were let down by a laptop and projector that refused to communicate so were unable to see some digital programmes but Dave Theobald stepped in with some spectacular images of Mexico's Copper Canyon and we saw DVD's of member Roy Symmons garden railway and 7 1/4" GWR 14xx and Society activities last year. Thanks to all who contributed.

SWINDON VISIT

Mark Hopwood has invited us to inspect his new joint First Great Western-Network Rail Control Centre at Swindon on Saturday 9th May. The centre oversees operations across the entire FGW system and it is from here that decisions are made when things don't go according to plan, i.e. when a train gets late or something breaks, and with our reputation...

Mark and his team are still finalising the itinerary for the day but the plan is to travel to Swindon by train from branch stations and/or the main line, visit the control centre in the morning then after lunch at a suitable hostelry visit the Steam Museum before returning home.

Numbers are limited to around 15 and reservations are now being taken so if you are interested in taking part please contact Mike Hyde as soon as possible. As usual

our thanks go to Mark for arranging this further chance to see behind the scenes. Other trips are being planned and details will be announced in due course.

NORMAN ASTON-SMITH TROPHY



Mike Page, who joined us last year, was the winner of the trophy this year for his article about the Lickey Incline in the September issue. He is seen above receiving the award from Tim Speechley at the AGM.

For those who enjoyed the article there's another treat to come as Mike has prepared a feature on his annual trips from the West Midlands to County Kerry in the late 1940's and 1950's. This will follow later this year on the conclusion of Alan Morris's memoirs which begin this time.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

After successfully floating the idea at the AGM we are now starting to flesh out the idea. Current thoughts are that it will be held on a Saturday afternoon probably this coming autumn and there will be two sessions – they may be on different dates. The first will be aimed at those of you who are relative beginners or perhaps considering taking the plunge and will cover topics such as the different types of digital camera – which is best for your needs or skills, basic functions and operation and how to download, save and print the resulting photographs.

The second session will be for the more advanced and will cover topics such as night work and how to get the best out of an image using programmes such as Photoshop. We will also consider scanning of slides, negatives and prints into digital format and how to use Photoshop to improve or restore these. Dave Theobald has become an accomplished expert in this field and will be explaining how it's done.

It is intended to allow participants to get “hands-on” experience during the sessions as this is the best way to learn. There will probably be a modest charge made to cover the additional cost of extra hall hire etc.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The annual meeting of the Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Association should be well worth attending. Mark Hopwood will be attending and making a presentation in his role as Managing Director of FGW and will be bringing the local management team with him. There will also be management representatives from Chiltern Railways and there will be, as always, an opportunity for questions and debate from the floor. An additional guest speaker will be the well known rail industry journalist and commentator Christian Woolmar.

The meeting is on Friday 27th March at 20.00 in the Community Centre in Bourne End, that's behind the parade of shops – turn in by the Total petrol station. Admission is free and non-MMPA members are welcome to attend and join in so come along for what could be an interesting evening.

MARLOW BRANCH WORKS

It is understood that Network Rail are proposing two major projects on the branch in the coming months. First, the bridge across the River Thames at Bourne End is supposed to be getting a long overdue shot blasting and fresh coat of paint, it is currently very rusty.

Second, the Brooksby and Marina Level Crossings in Bourne End which are currently locally monitored open crossings (AOCL) are both to be equipped with automatic barriers. The latter crossing has one of the worst records on the network for near-misses and there have been several actual collisions particularly as use has increased following the new riverbank housing development and the increased desire for messing around in boats. Hopefully this will remedy the problem.

CHILTERN PLAN FOR EVERGREEN 3

The ever resourceful projects team are itching to get going again. Project Evergreen 1 was the redoubling between Bicester and Aynho Junction, Evergreen 2 the expansion of Marylebone and enhanced signalling; now, having finished Aylesbury Vale Parkway, it's time for Evergreen phase 3.

At the moment this is still in discussion with Network Rail but the proposals this time include either reinstatement of both through lines at Beaconsfield or a single bi-directional through line at Denham, revisions to the track layout at a number of points including Princes Risborough and Bicester to increase line speeds for non-stopping trains and a general programme of line speed enhancements which will see the present maximum of 75mph between Northolt Junction and Princes Risborough raised to 85 or 90mph.

As a separate but related issue, Wrexham & Shropshire are talking to NR about raising the speed limit for their trains over the Chiltern Line to the same as apply to Chiltern's class 168 DMU's. At the moment loco-hauled trains over the line are restricted to 70mph east of High Wycombe and 75-90mph north of Princes Risborough. This is because of the different braking characteristics of loco hauled and multiple unit trains but WSMR are arguing that their lightweight trains which have high performance disc brakes throughout can brake in the same way as a DMU.

NEW ROUTES?

Chiltern are proposing the construction of a new chord at Bicester which will allow trains from Marylebone to run directly to Oxford. The company has put forward a proposal to the DfT to construct and finance the chord itself along with upgrading the Bicester - Oxford section and providing an additional station at Water Orton near Oxford. It proposes to run up to 4 trains an hour to and from Marylebone and they could be running within 3 years of approval being given.

Additionally, the overgrown trackbed between Claydon Junction and Swanbourne has recently been cleared to enable a detailed assessment to be undertaken to determine the amount and cost of work required to reopen the line as part of the proposed East-West Link between Milton Keynes and Oxford which is once again looking a possibility.

AND TRAINS

FGW's fleet looks set to change over the next few years. Just before Christmas the DfT announced it was about to order 200 new DMU vehicles which would be allocated to Northern, TransPennine and FGW who would use their share in both the Thames Valley and around Bristol, two areas that currently suffer overcrowding.

Four bidders have been short-listed, Bombardier at Derby, CAF in Spain, Rotem-Hyundai in Korea and CSRE (Chinese Sourced Railway Equipment). This is part of the proposed order for 1300 new vehicles announced some time ago and is now being touted as part of the Government's "financial stimulus" package but at press time the actual order had not been placed.

Probably a little further in the future is the arrival of the IEP or InterCity Express Programme designed to replace the venerable HST's. On 12th February the Government announced it had awarded the construction to Agility Trains a consortium of John Laing, Hitachi and Barclays. Three versions will be built, an all-electric, a diesel and a dual-mode version. The first will appear on the ECML in 2013 and on the GWML in 2015 by when the latter may be electrified as far as Bristol. A new depot to service the trains is planned as part of the Reading rebuild.

More immediately, Chiltern are expecting to take delivery of their small fleet of 2-car Bombardier class 172 Turbostars late this year.

BUT NOT FOR WREXHAM, YET

The saga of the supply of WSMR's own stock drags on. In mid-February the situation was that Axiom, the contractor, had only just finished the design work and it was discovered they had not even ordered the required materials! To say the least WSMR management are furious and it is unlikely they will see their own trains before mid-summer, a year late!

SPECIAL FGW OFFER FOR OVER 55's

Until 7th April FGW are offering travel to the over-55's between any two stations on their network and return for a flat £25.00 or £45.00 first class. There are a few restrictions but details of the promotion called Club 55 can be found at www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/club55 or by calling their telesales on 08457 000125.

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN? 1943 to 1968

Alan Morris looks back on a quarter-century of memories.



When I arrived at a certain age with a zero on the end, I began to wonder why I became interested in railways in the first place, and, what my best memories were in the sixty five or so years of railway interest. Here I recount the first twenty-five years.

It all started during the Second World War, when I was evacuated to a village north of Hitchin in Hertfordshire. An aunt and uncle lived in Letchworth about 5 miles away and occasionally we went to visit them. This entailed walking on roads, footpaths and crossing the four track East Coast main line north of Hitchin. Even in the war some trains passed at quite high speeds. We looked up and down the track and, if it was clear, ran across the boardwalk as quickly as possible.

On one occasion we had to wait for a 'streamliner' to pass pulling a freight train. The locomotive was called *Silver Fox* and was filthy, but it was during the height of the war. I later learned that the loco was an A4!

In 1944 I returned home to Southall, just in time for the flying bomb (V1) and soon after for the rocket (V2) attacks. I lived next door to a family with a son, Peter, who was six years older than me.

He owned a Trix Twin model railway and played on his bedroom floor and sometimes I was invited to join in. I remember Peter saying he couldn't get any new wagons or coaches for his railway due to the war, but was going to make some. He asked me if I would I like to go down to sidings adjacent to the main line with him so that he could sketch some wagons and then try to make them, using match boxes etc. Where he got the wheels, buffers and other parts from, I never did find out.

4917 Crosswood Hall at Southall in 1950. By then the locomotive had already visited Swindon and wears BR mixed traffic lined-black. It was withdrawn in June 1963 and cut up the following March. Note the mixture of GW semaphore and searchlight signals in the background.

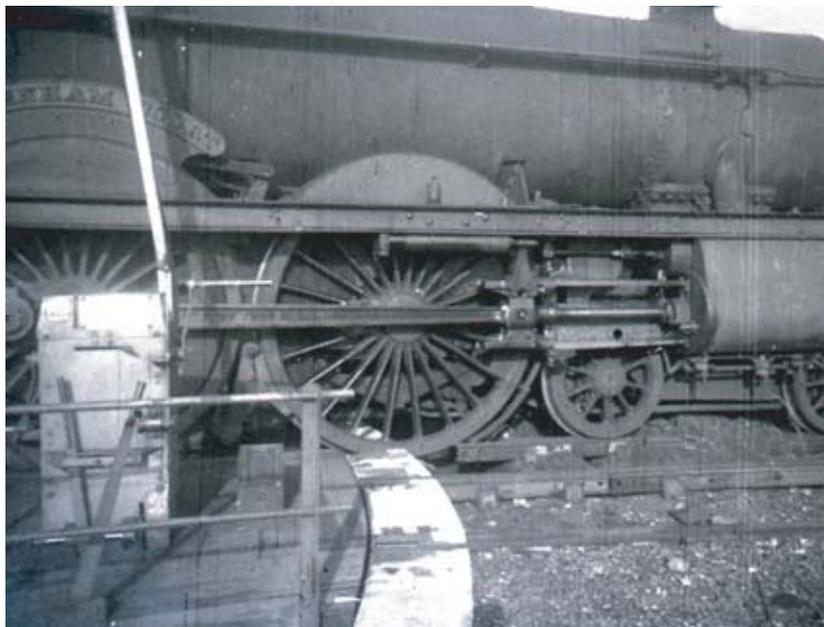
All photos by Alan Morris

There I saw some youngsters collecting engine numbers. That's how it all began. A few hundred yards from my house there was a good spot for train watching. There was a footpath leading from Southall to Norwood Green passing through a tunnel under the railway. On the left was the AEC factory, and on the right a playing field used by railway staff behind the Locomotive Shed (SHL). (A few years after the war the shed - by then 81C - was extended over half the playing field, leaving just space for one football pitch. A new turntable and some additional sidings were added.)

Further along the footpath there was a bridge over a connecting line into the AEC works from the Brentford branch. Standing on this bridge one could see inside the works, and usually its unique diesel shunter, built by AEC. This is, I believe, now part of the GW Preservation Society's collection in the old Southall loco depot. In front of the rail connected workshop where at least some the pre-war GWR railcars were built was No. 18, static until after the war, presumably because AEC were involved in more important products such as tanks for the war effort.

Together with other enthusiasts I used to congregate in the corner of the playing field to watch the trains, play football, and occasionally, I hate to admit, put half

The result of a driver being more interested in a football game than watching what he was doing! 2954 Tockenham Court is off the rails on Southall's turntable one Sunday morning in 1950. It lived to run for another two years.



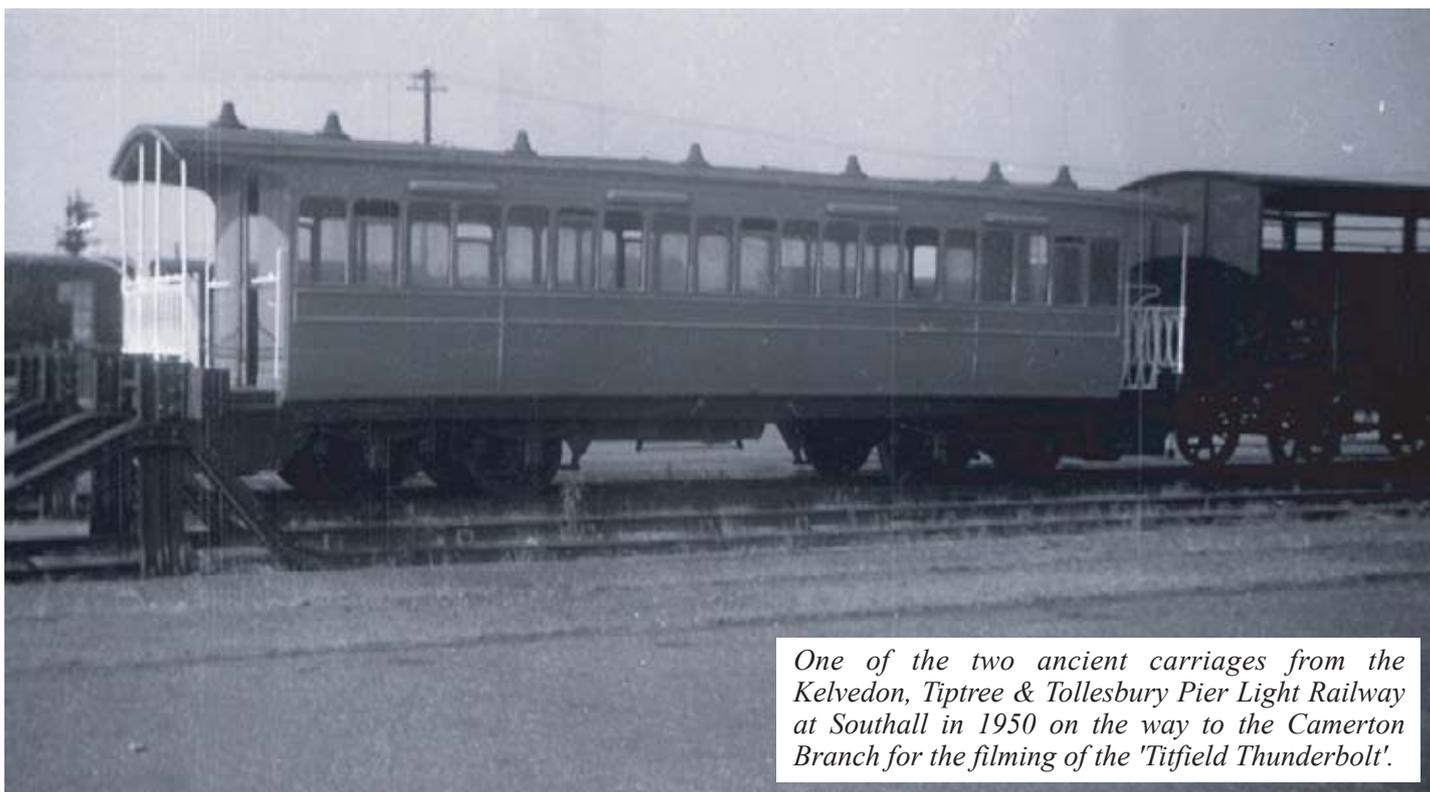
pennies on the line and then retrieve them squashed to about the size of a penny. A driver from Southall shed, George Vince, used to mow the playing fields when off duty and regularly tried to get rid of the youths in the corner of 'his' field.

I went on a number of rail trips in 1948. One of the most exiting was my first visit to Swindon Works on 31st March. If I remember correctly, once a week a group was admitted to the works at 2 pm on Wednesdays, and was conducted around by an elderly gent who we thought resembled a crocodile, so we named him 'croc'. It was brilliant, seeing steam locos in all stages of being taken apart, worked on, lifted up by gantry cranes, reassembled, painted or even lined up awaiting scrapping. The boiler shop was incredibly noisy with riveting and drilling machines, heavy duty presses etc. There were men working there, insulating boilers with asbestos based materials, which years later, were found to be incredibly dangerous to health. I wonder how many lived long enough to get their pensions. We wrote down engine numbers as fast as we could, particularly those in the scrap line that we should never see again. Also there were those from far away places (to us that is), like the Welsh valleys, Swansea docks or the Cornish branch lines. One of the narrow gauge Vale of Rheidol locos was being overhauled.

On my second visit to Swindon on 25th August 1948, before the official works visit, we walked about a mile west of the main works to the sidings where some locos

awaiting scrapping were stored, climbed over the fence and recorded what was there. On this visit, I remember seeing an ex-Port Talbot Railway 0-8-2T number 1358.

In the late 1940's I used to go occasionally from Southall to Hanwell, and on to Brentford by trolleybus and to Clapham Junction by train where there was always plenty to see, as there is today. As you would expect, there were unrebuilt Merchant Navies and the other 'spam cans', Lord Nelsons, King Arthurs, emembrances etc. but most interesting to me were older or more unusual sights like ex-LBSCR I3 4-4-2T's on Victoria to Oxted trains, or an ex-LSWR T14 'Paddlebox' 4-6-0 in its final years, passing through with a few vans. M7 0-4-4T's used to arrive with some ten coaches or so pulling them through the washing plant having brought them from Waterloo. Very special was the occasional boat train to Newhaven hauled by a 'Brighton Atlantic' 4-4-2.



One of the two ancient carriages from the Kelvedon, Tiptree & Tollesbury Pier Light Railway at Southall in 1950 on the way to the Camerton Branch for the filming of the 'Titfield Thunderbolt'.

Stranger in the camp. N1 class 0-6-2T 69462 stands at Southall on 22nd April 1957 ready to work a special for the Southall Railway Club. In those innocent days it was possible to arrange almost anything. Built as GNR 1582 in 1911 at Doncaster, it was withdrawn exactly two years after this working.

I recall an incident at Clapham on one very windy day when an empty milk churn was blown off the platform and short circuited the power supply by touching the third rail. Electric trains were stopped for a while until the power was restored.

Back at Southall, there was an 'incident' in 1950 at the nearly new turntable. It was a Sunday morning and there was a match being played on the adjacent football pitch. One of the shed staff drove Saint Class 2954 *Tockenham Court* on to the turntable. Unfortunately, as it arrived, there was a penalty awarded on the pitch, and the driver was so busy watching this that he forgot to brake in time, so the Saint hit the buffers beyond the turntable, pulled the rails embedded in the edge of the turntable out and was partially derailed. It took a couple of days to sort out and I can only guess what was said to the driver.

I expect you have all seen 'The Titfield Thunderbolt', but



did you know that part of it was filmed at the rear of Southall shed in 1950? There is a scene where a 1400 Class 0-4-2T comes off a turntable and goes across country. The access tracks to the turntable and nearby sidings were covered in turf so that the loco appeared to go across country. In the film this scene was continued with the outline of the 14xx made of plywood etc. and fixed to the side of a lorry. Not very convincing, at least to a railway enthusiast. I watched this happening standing behind the Directors chair and was given a free cup of tea into the bargain.

Also in the 'The Titfield Thunderbolt' a pair of open balcony coaches recently withdrawn after many years of use on the Kelvedon, Tiptree & Tollesbury Pier Light Railway were parked in the sidings at Southall whilst in transit to the Limpley Stoke and Camerton branch where much of the film was made.

On the same day, J69 0-6-0T 68619 was performing its usual duties as station pilot at London Liverpool Street for which Stratford shed kept it in this immaculate condition. Two years later it swapped the lined black seen here for Great Eastern style dark blue which it retained until withdrawn in October 1961.



In the early 1950's some friends and I started the Southall Railway Club, which used to meet in a hall at the south end of the footbridge near Southall station. This bridge was where a lot of train 'spotting' was done and also provided access to the loco shed.

At the railway club we held a number of monthly meetings, produced an occasional magazine, which was typed and duplicated and had photographs stuck on the cover of each copy. I still have a few of these in my possession. We also arranged railway trips which were relatively easy in those days, helped by the fact that one of our members joined British Railways at Paddington and, though in a very junior position, knew who to approach in the hierarchy.

I remember two of those trips, the first in an ex-GWR diesel railcar No 4 which we more or less filled, and travelled to Swindon via the Wallingford, Farringdon and Highworth branches. The second trip was from Southall to North Woolwich. As a group of mainly teenagers, we boldly asked for a Kings Cross suburban set and an N1 0-6-2T to take us. 'No problem', we were told and 69462 and train duly turned up at Southall at Saturday lunch time. This may have been the one and only visit of this type of loco to Southall, to the GWR, or the Western Region. We went via Acton, Cricklewood, Farringdon (not the one mentioned above) and Stratford to N. Woolwich. The N1 could not run round there, so an L1 2-6-4T 67735 was provided for the return journey. That outing was on 22nd April 1957 and I think it cost £5-0s-0d each.

In 1947 and 1948 I went with my parents on holiday to Dawlish by train. We had to change trains at Exeter St. Davids, and I remember going on the all stations train from Exeter to Dawlish hauled by Bulldog 4-4-0 No. 3401 *Vancouver*. I loved going to Dawlish as we could spend time on the beach and watch the trains passing behind the sea wall, in those days 100% steam operated.

I was always interested in the history of the railways of South Wales, so when an opportunity arose on 3rd October 1948 to travel on an excursion to Cardiff, a friend and I went, boarding the train at Ealing Broadway, hauled by a County 4-6-0 (I didn't record which one). We managed to visit Barry, Cathays, and Cardiff Canton depots where to our delight we saw some ex-Barry, Brecon and Merthyr and Taff Vale Railway as well as many ex-GWR locomotives, such as 5600 class 0-6-2T's, before the home journey. This was really exciting to a thirteen year old as these never appeared back at my Southall base. The journey back to Southall was a nightmare as the train was delayed by about two hours not arriving back at Ealing until after 10.30 at night. I had to catch a 607 trolleybus back home, to be met by my distraught father, who had telephoned the railway, and the police but to no avail. I had to be up next morning at about 6.30am to do my paper round (for which I was paid six shillings - 30p a week). If I remember rightly, six shillings was also the fare on the excursion train.

In 1949, a small group of us went all the way to Reading, Didcot, Oxford and Banbury and back in a day. We managed to bunk Didcot and Banbury sheds but not Reading and Oxford. I remember this because it was the

first time I had a camera with me, albeit a Brownie Box. I still have one of the pictures in my collection, of Grange 6841 on Banbury shed. On another visit to Didcot, I remember seeing Duke 4-4-0 9083 COMET with its nameplate skilfully modified with chalk to 'INCOMETAX'. At Oxford we saw one of the last 3500 Class 2-4-0Ts No. 3589, and an ex-LNWR 'Prince of Wales' 4-6-0 25722, with inside cylinders but, unusually, outside valve gear.

For years I had seen express trains passing Southall with carriage destination boards saying 'Paddington - Exeter - Plymouth - Penzance', so in 1949 I managed to persuade my parents to go to Mevagissey in Cornwall on holiday. We went on 'The Cornish Riviera', 10.30 from Paddington hauled by 4-6-0 6010 *King Charles 1* to Plymouth and on to St. Austell with a Castle. On Sunday 17th July I visited St. Blazey loco depot and having noted the various locos on shed, including 0-6-0 PT's Nos. 1930, 2050, 2181, 2182 and 6417, Moguls 5318 and 6356, 2-8-0T 4215, 4500 class 2-6-2Ts Nos. 4503, 4516, 4529 and 4552 and Halls 4940 *Ludford Hall* and 5926 *Grotrian Hall*. I emerged to walk back to the bus stop when a driver on the footplate of 4940, which was about to leave the shed, called out 'You going back to the station', 'Yes', I said. 'Come on up then' he said. So I did, for my first ever footplate trip. The Hall was about to work a train to Newquay so firstly we had to go to the sidings to couple on to the coaching stock and then go to the station at Par. I thanked the engine crew and went to leave the station when I realised that I didn't have a ticket as I had come from Megavissey by bus. I told the ticket collector what had happened, and he let me leave! It was an exciting afternoon indeed.

In 1949 I went, with my parents, to Eastbourne where I saw one of the last remaining ex-LSWR A12 0-4-2 tender locos in the station. This holiday gave me the chance to ride on the branch to Eridge via Hailsham pulled by a nearly new Brighton built Class 4 2-6-4T. I also rode on the Eastbourne miniature tramway which operated in the East of the town. A few years later it closed and transferred to Seaton, where it still thrives.

To be continued. . .



4021 British Monarch backs out of platform 10 at Paddington on 14th June 1952 probably bound for Ranelagh Bridge having brought in an up train probably from Oxford just four months before withdrawal.

There will be more of Alan's wonderful reminiscences in the next issue.



photo: Tim Speechley

ACTON

For the last "outdoor activity" of what turned out to be a busy year, ten Society members enjoyed a semi-private tour of the London Transport Museum's Acton Depot on Saturday 29th November.

Located within the sprawling Acton Works complex, the Depot is housed in a purpose-built building and contains more than 30,000 items for which space is not available in the main museum at Covent Garden. These range from complete rail vehicles, trams and buses down to small items such as badges and models with just about anything connected with LT and its forebears in between. It is also the restoration and conservation base for the LTM.

photo: Mike Walker

Undoubtedly, *Sarah Siddons* [Top] was the star and we were able to admire the recently applied Met livery. Hand painted by a museum volunteer, the finish is incredible, with no brush marks to be seen.

The volunteers are committed to restoring a 4 car set of pre-war Q class surface stock [Bottom] at least cosmetically and hopefully to running condition. So far the two intermediate cars are largely finished but the driving cars need much work. As was the case with Q stock, all four cars are different; three are of the clerestory type, whilst one of the driving cars is of the later style with the flared skirts.

The museum also has a good collection of Standard tube stock including fully restored 3327 [Left] and one rescued from the Isle of Wight.



photo: Tim Edmonds

photo: Mike Walker



DEPOT

Another train which gets used from time to time, most recently during the Amersham Heritage Day on 14th Sept. is the superbly restored four car set of 1938 Tube Stock [Right]. Alongside it is another Standard stock motor car still in ex-departmental condition.

A reminder that in times gone by, the Metropolitan Railway reached far out into the country is this magnificent teak milk van [Below] - complete with a load of churns, although we assume they were empty.

Trams are not forgotten, with traditional E class 1025 and modern Feltham type 355 [Centre right].

three photos: Mike Walker



The Depot also contains an impressive collection of London buses and trolleybuses some of which are seen here [Bottom left]. These were of great interest to Malcolm Margetts in view of his long association with AEC and Leyland. LT1076, nearest, was restored after being used as a summer house near High Wycombe

We were also privileged to see the extensive collection of original artworks [Bottom right] not normally open to the public.

two photos: Tim Edmonds



3000 AT HIS FUNERAL. . .



Stan Verrinder uncovers the career of an ancestor.

Can the love of railways and family history be successfully mixed? I think they can, but read on and judge for yourselves.

The story starts over twenty years ago, when I was transferred to East Sussex. Impish members of the Society, led by Mike Norris and Roy Mee, gave me as one parting gift, *History of the Southern Railway* by C F Dendy Marshall. I don't know why, but I had a peek at the index at the presentation, and there to my astonishment was, "Verrinder E W 120, 132". Looking at the references, which dealt with the London and South Western Railway, I read on page 120, "He [W M Williams, superintendent of the line] was succeeded by E W Verrinder", and page 139, "On 23rd July, 1893, E W Verrinder, superintendent of the line, died after 42 years' service, and was succeeded by G T White". With my unusual surname I thought he had to be a relative, but had no idea who he was. His name then passed out of memory, and the book remained on my book shelf to gather dust.

When I retired I took up family history to add to railways, and other pursuits, to keep the little grey cells active, and Edgar William Verrinder (1837-1893) came back into vision, and I started to learn about him, things like date of birth, marriage and his children.

However, the real breakthrough came in a odd way. Every year, since living in East Sussex, I have gone to the annual model engineering exhibition at Brighton, to meet up with Mike Walker, to quaff a few beers, and to learn about the Society's goings on. It was on one visit that I noticed a stand run by the South Western Circle, the historical society for the London and South Western Railway. The members on the stand gave me the names of two fellow members to contact, Colin Chivers and Gordon Weddell, who gave me much valuable material and advice.

Edgar's first entry on the official scene came with his unusual baptismal entry in the register for Lydney parish church, Gloucestershire:

18 June 1837. Edgar William Verrinder son of Charles and Elizabeth Verrinder - father a gentleman's servant residing in London and mother at present in Lydney; the mother supported by spouse.

Edgar's father Charles (1806-1879), born at Gloucester, had started his working life as a servant but by 1839 (when the third of five children was born), he had obtained the position of verger at Salisbury Cathedral. He went on to become head verger, and as a tribute to him his children installed a magnificent full height stained glass memorial window, on the east side of the north transept.

Like all working class Victorian children, Edgar started earning early, and at fourteen, in 1851, he was appointed to the LSWR Woking station, Surrey, as an apprentice at £25 pa. A year later he was transferred to Wimborne in Dorset, at £30 pa, where he stayed for four years, with yearly increments of £5 pa, plus a bonus of £10 in 1856 for good service. In 1856 he was appointed a clerk at £70 pa, and went to Farnham, Hampshire. Further promotion came when he was 21, and went in 1858 to the goods department at Nine Elms at £90 pa. Then came a number of short term postings including station master at Godalming, Surrey, in 1859 at £90 pa plus a house, followed by Andover, Hampshire in 1860.

The years 1862-4 were important for Edgar. In 1862 the LSWR took over the broad gauge line from Crediton to Bideford, Devon, from the contractors, Messrs Brassey and Ogilvie, who

had built the line and then operated it under contract for a number of years. He was sent to Barnstaple, Devon, at £100 pa and almost immediately afterwards was appointed Superintendent of the North Devon Lines at £120. The line was broad gauge, but converted first to mixed gauge, and absorbed into the LSWR system, though broad gauge trains were also run for many more years. That he made a success of his Devon role is shown by his promotion only two years later in 1864, when Edgar was appointed station master at Waterloo and salary raised to £225 pa in succession to W M Williams who had been promoted to a new position of Passenger Traffic Superintendent.

In only 13 years he had risen from a junior clerk to a post where he was at the age of 27 in charge of the largest, and most important station on the whole LSWR system.

Just under three years later, he had more responsibility when he took general charge of the working of trains under W M Williams at an increased salary of £250 pa. Shortly afterwards Godson, the Superintendent of the Line, died in 1868 and was succeeded by W M Williams, Edgar became one of his assistants being appointed Superintendent of Metropolitan District and all lines east of Weymouth, Dorset, and Salisbury, Wiltshire, inclusive at £300 pa. Under Williams and W H Preece (the Telegraph Superintendent) he was involved with the introduction of electric block signalling and the interlocking of points and signals at Waterloo and the suburban districts, taking the lead in its extension throughout the LSWR, after Williams died in 1874.

In 1871, when he was 34, he managed to find time to marry Mary Woods, some seven years his junior. Mary was advanced for her time because she refused to drop her surname and became Mary Woods Verrinder. Edgar was going up the social ladder as the wedding took place at the very fashionable St George's, Hanover Square, London.

Finally, he reached the pinnacle of his profession in 1882, when on the death of his chief he was appointed Traffic Superintendent at £900 pa. He was in charge of all passenger and goods staff. The operation of all normal and special traffic, such as holiday and racing specials were his responsibility. Buildings, track, stations, signalling, were all under his control. His success in this work from 1882 to 1893 (his death) is shown by the growth in LSWR revenues, from both passenger and freight of about 25%, from £2.75m to £3.5m per annum.

Some idea of his activities, and their range, can be found in the newspapers of the time, especially *The Times* and (*Manchester Guardian*), and even *The Scotsman*, all of which are available on line. There are tens of references to him, attending accident inquiries and inquests, testing of passenger communications, opening new stations and lines, looking at experimental couplings, and the subject of inevitable letters from irate, never satisfied, passengers. The following extract from *The Times* of 12th March 1879 is an interesting one as it concerns the marriage of Queen Victoria's favourite son, Arthur, Duke of Connaught to Louise, daughter of Frederick Prince of Russia,

'The special train conveying the royal party through the green fields of Kent passed Chatham and all the more important stations crowded with people who raised cheers for the Duke and Princess as the train went by, at the paper mills of St Mary Cray a large group of work-girls had assembled to have a distant view of the train, and at Clapham Junction there were many spectators. Here (at 12.55) the first stoppage was made.

The Chairman, directors and other officials of the London & South Western Railway [were present], . . . and Mr Verrinder [general manager [sic!], now took charge of the train, having been previously presented to their Royal Highnesses.'

Something, you will not find in today's newspapers, were the numerous compliments to him about successful arrangements for special event, e.g. race meetings including Royal Ascot, fleet reviews at Portsmouth, army large scale manoeuvres, major agricultural shows and international exhibitions.

He managed to find time to be one of the trustees of the Widows and Orphans Fund, vice-president of the Orphanage, on the committee of the Superannuation and Pension Fund, an arbiter to the Guards Universal Friendly Society, and, most importantly, was a member of the Railway Clearing House Superintendents' Conference from 1874 until his death, being elected chairman in 1878.

Unfortunately the only known photograph of him which appears in the *South Western Gazette* is of poor quality and not suitable for reproduction. However he was described in the *Morning Leader* as "a handsome man, of magnificent physique - he must have been six feet high" and "a striking figure amongst the executive authorities of the South Western Railway [and] inevitably attracted attention at Waterloo".

He was associated with many improvements of the LSWR system, and the last major improvement during his time was the widening to six lines of the Metropolitan Extension Lines from Nine Elms to Waterloo, and the complete resignalling of that station in 1892. In all the various notices he issued, there is a striking clarity of thought and attention to detail. This is only too clear in those issued for notification of the Waterloo resignalling. One of these notices has a large track diagram in three colours, with illustrations showing the position and purpose of the signals on the various gantries. All staff involved had to attend meetings where the new system was explained. Looking at photographs of the completed scheme I wonder if the modern engine driver could cope with the complexity involved.

However, the most famous of all these notices he sent out was one for the provision of red ties to be used as an emergency warning. On the draft notice of 1886 can be seen his careful housekeeping, where the issue was cut in half.

Supply of Red Neckerchiefs

Guards, Ticket Collectors, and Ticket Examiners, are to be supplied with neckties of red material which will always be worn by them when on duty. Each man will be supplied with 2 squares cut in half which will make 4 neckties, and they must last 12 months. To preserve uniformity these ties should be worn in the "sailor's knot" fashion. Superintendent, Stationmasters and Inspectors must see that the Directors order with reference to these red neckties is strictly carried out.

In 1921 a correspondent ("Disgruntled of Tunbridge Wells"?) wrote to *The Times* complaining that LSWR staff were wearing Communist Party symbols.

His death at the age of 56 on the afternoon of Sunday 23rd July 1893 came suddenly after a short illness. It was widely reported in the national, local and railway press, all of which carried obituaries. That in *The Times* was typical of the many:

'The Railway world sustained a severe loss from the sudden death of Mr E W Verrinder, who for many years has been the traffic superintendent of the London & South Western Railway. Mr Verrinder who was in his 56th year had been in the service of the company for 42 years and after filling various important posts was appointed assistant traffic superintendent in 1867 [1868] under Mr Williams. For the last 20 years he has been head of the department, and had, in that capacity, on many occasions taken charge of the Queen's special train when Her Majesty travelled from Windsor to Gosport. The last occasion

Mr Verrinder was on special duty was last Thursday, when he took charge of the Queen's train to Gosport, and it was upon this journey that he became seriously unwell. Medical advice was at once obtained, and he was found to be suffering from an attack of diabetes in an advanced state, from the effects of which he died on Sunday afternoon, at his residence near Clapham Junction. The news of his death will be received with great regret, for he was not only an able administrator, but was much beloved on account of his general amiability of character. One of the first messages of condolence addressed to his widow was sent from the Prince of Wales. The funeral will take place at the cemetery at Brookwood tomorrow. A special train for friends will leave Waterloo at 1.55 starting from platform 1, and will return from Brookwood to London immediately after the funeral.'

For the provincial press, part of the obituary in *The Southampton Times* was:

'There are many capable men in the South-Western service, but it will be a difficult matter to replace Mr Verrinder, whose powers of organisation and administration were of a very high order.'

He is buried at Brookwood (see note below) in the section set aside for LSWR staff. He was carried from the chapel, to his grave, in torrential rain by relays of guards, in between lines of uniformed staff, said to up to six deep in places. As well as the LSWR chairman, directors and senior staff, most other railway companies were well represented. Nearly all LSWR station masters were present coming from as far as Barnstaple and Torrington in Devon. The *South Western Gazette* estimated the mourners were between 2,000 and 3,000, easily the largest number for any burial at Brookwood.

Even allowing for the obsequious reporting of the time, it is clear that Edgar Verrinder was well respected, and well liked, by all grades of LSWR staff. As one member of staff was reported as saying at his funeral by the *South Western Gazette*, "Ah, the poor old governor used to bark a good deal sometimes, but he would rarely ever bite". However, the regard that he was held in by the staff is best shown by the inscription on the front of the marble kerbstone surrounding his memorial at Brookwood:

'Erected by the Officers and Servants of the London & South Western Railway'.

He left his widow, and children, well provided for, leaving £13,339 9s 1d, upwards of £1m today. The LSWR directors gave her £1500 as a special gratuity, and she was allowed to remain in the company house for three years rent free. The house was Holly Lodge, 52 St John's Hill, Clapham, a stone's throw down the road from Clapham Junction.

If you have stayed the course, and are still reading, you must be wondering when I will reveal if Edgar Verrinder is an ancestor. Edgar's lineage has been traced back to 1739 and Gloucester, mine to 1663 and the village of Bisley in Gloucestershire, some seven miles away. If I had to guess, Edgar was the sixth cousin of my great grandfather.

A NOTE ON BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

Situated five miles west of Woking, Surrey, it was opened in 1854 and at 500 acres is the largest in the UK and had, uniquely, two railway stations in the grounds served by a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile single line branch at Brookwood station. All burials were originally intended to be by rail from a special station adjacent to Waterloo, but the service ceased when this station was bombed and partially demolished in 1941.

Stan Verrinder was one of the Society's founding members in 1977 and served as treasurer and editor of the 'Donkey for many years. Now an honorary member, he, wife Eileen and a family of cats live at Seaford.

A GREAT WEST COAST RAIL JOURNEY

Part 1 SEATTLE to SACRAMENTO

Ron North



This is the first time I have written for the *'Donkey'* and I suppose this article would not exist if it were not for my model railway club having its own monthly news letter called the *'Wycombe Flyer'* and the editor's request at the A.G.M. for more articles please.

I have since supplied the *'Flyer'* with several model railway related articles but the one described here is the 'Great Rail Journeys' holiday my wife and I took to the west coast of America, Seattle to San Diego by Gray line coach and Amtrak in May/June 2008.

But first let me say something about our previous railway holidays, first and foremost we don't do 'Gricer' trips, anything that involves photo run pasts, chasing trains in rental cars, grubbing around in steam sheds, is out as far as Mrs. North is concerned, 'Great Rail' holidays are about as far removed from this as you can get.

They are certainly not cheap as they are mostly first class rail travel, five star hotels, and accompanied throughout by a tour manager. They tend to appeal to retired professionals who are not short of a bob or two. I think it would be considered vulgar to complain about prices, these people are not deterred by cost; they can be good travelling companions though as most have had interesting careers and are not of a shy or retiring nature. I would describe them as railway sympathetic rather than enthusiast; in fact I think for some, these holidays have not lived up to the sea cruise style pampered luxury they perceived of a rail holiday.

This trip was our second with 'Great Rail Journeys' our first was to the Hartz mountain region in East Germany which was very good, the reason for travelling with them again was because we couldn't find anything similar from another tour company.

Seattle, home to Boeing, Microsoft and Starbucks, is the starting point for Amtrak's 'Coast Starlight' seen here at King Street station waiting to start its 1369 mile journey to Los Angeles on 17th April 1998. Since then, little has changed apart from the livery. On the right, the 'Empire Builder' has just arrived from Chicago.

photo: Mike Walker

Many years back when I was prepared to do Fly/Drive holidays I was going to drive from San Francisco up the coast to Seattle which I have since been told is a splendid experience but takes what seems like forever. So here then is my account, it is presented in a diary style format, don't fall asleep, it took a long time to write.

Day 1: London to Seattle

I am writing this on flight BA 282 which departed 18.00 from Los Angeles LAX to London Heathrow e.t.a.12.00 noon in 9 1/2 hrs time. Mrs N and I arrived here in the USA thirteen days ago with a group of fellow travellers taking part in 'Great Rail Journeys' West Coast and Yosemite tour. Our holiday would have been much cheaper if we had organised it ourselves, but I wanted nothing to do with hiring a car as I work in car rental, so we swapped the joys of the multi-lane highway and traffic jams etc, for the bus and train.

Gray Line coaches seem to be good at turning up at hotels at a given time of the day, not so good in our experience at airports or railway stations. Picture 34 tired people at Seattle airport waiting for our pre booked coach to the city which should have been there waiting for us. This is when our tour guide earns her money, the only response from Gray Line the coach should be there by now! well can't you contact the driver? No! Complete radio silence, lots more phone

and 45 minutes later our coach arrived. I suspect Gray Line may have had a rocket from the UK. Our lady driver was totally unfazed, problem with airport security she said cheerily.

On leaving the airport we passed by some filling stations and the price of a gallon of fuel had just broken above four dollars, Yes said our driver, we are getting very concerned the price is going up every week, we pointed out that petrol in the UK was already about ten dollars a gallon, How on earth can you Brits pay that much? She said, well we pay it because we have to was our reply. But to be fair we supposed that Americans use a lot more than we do.

Our wait at the airport was compensated by a lovely drive into down town Seattle that looked glorious bathed in late afternoon sunshine. Our Mayflower Park Hotel was ideally located, being not far from the famous Pikes Place Market and right next to a monorail that connected with the Seattle Space Needle. (Built for the World's Fair in 1962)

Day 2: Around Seattle

We had a guided city tour and a trip out to the Seattle 'Museum of Flight'. It features many interesting exhibits which include the original Boeing wooden factory building reassembled on site complete with some of the original machinery, its own airfield that features flying displays, and a collection of planes dating from pioneering days right through to the space program. A tour had been arranged for us but we had to break loose from this in order to have time to go aboard a Concorde and a retired Air force One, used by former presidents Kennedy and Nixon, altogether a truly excellent museum.

Day 3: Seattle to the Golden State

Today were taken in the morning to Seattle's King Street Station (which once played host to Great Northern and Northern Pacific passenger trains), to board Amtrak's flagship train The 'Coast Starlight' for our journey south to Sacramento. This was to be our only night aboard the train and I heard one or two folk saying they were looking forward to the experience, having ourselves already sampled overnight travel on the 'Caledonian Sleeper' from Euston to Inverness I wasn't so sure they would be so keen next day.

Our train was formed of double-deck Superliner coaches and we were allocated a compact roomette on the upper deck which could be made into a private compartment with two comfortable seats beside a large window, which converted into upper and lower berths by night, we also had

collective use of a viewing lounge and a restaurant, and each car (not roomette) had a shower and WC facility. Some of our party had paid an extra £100 each for an upgrade, but all they seemed to have got was a slightly larger roomette with a micro wash basin, (another headache for Pamela our tour rep).

As our train headed south I think it became obvious that I had more than a passing interest in trains as I could be observed darting about with my camera in hand, not only in the lounge car trying to look out both sides at once, but also down stairs as well, mostly it was a waste of time as by the time I spotted something of interest we had gone past it. But to an American railway modeller such as myself this was the holy grail, we passed large freight yards sometimes forming the junction with short lines with interesting or unusual motive power, private industrial sidings and major loco stabling points. Our train stopped at Portland, a major railroad hub, and several small stations to pick up and set down passengers and mail.

By mid-afternoon our train was speeding through the Willamette Pass and by early evening started the climb into the Cascades, we passed the site of a major mud slide which had washed out the line for several months, it had only been reopened in April and heavy plant was still on the site. By this time it was getting dark and from the comfort of the restaurant car we could see the trees and banks were covered in snow, and it had started to rain, this was indeed a wild place.

One disappointment was that our train was booked to pass Mount Shasta after midnight, but it had been a long day and most of our party were ready for bed, we had been told our train was running early, so we wouldn't have much sleep before our arrival in Sacramento.

I was still peering through the window at isolated settlements along the way with dim lights twinkling through the rain and sleet, when our train arrived at 10 pm in at what appeared to be a deserted Klamath Falls station, as we drew to a stop the whole place became a hive of activity, people carrying luggage emerged from the brightly lit station, a man on a motorised trolley towing a handcart packed high

Sporting the current livery, Amtrak 113 stands at Eugene, Oregon, 310 miles into the journey, whilst the passengers enjoy a 'comfort break'. Smoking is not allowed on the trains or in stations, but it is on platforms so extended stops are scheduled at regular intervals.

two photos: Ron North





Above Eugene the 'Coast Starlight' climbs into the Cascade Mountains of southern Oregon by means of series of horseshoe curves, loops and tunnels to gain altitude. There are actually three levels of track running parallel at this point. On 21st April 1998 GE P42DC Genesis diesels 112 and 119 led the southbound train out of Tunnel 17 on the middle level.

photo: Mike Walker

with goods headed for our baggage car. I reckoned the loading would take about 10 minutes so I got off the train and made my way over to the station. Wow! I thought as I observed the interior decor this whole place just can't have changed much since the 1950's.

I made my way past the baggage car, staff still busy loading, then on past our pair of Genesis P42's the sound of the engines semi drowned by a mighty Union Pacific freight train on an adjacent track its crew impatient to continue the trip north from whence we had come. Another freight train approached on the next track its lights blazing bright as it drew to a stop.

I could see this one had BNSF power; I was then treated to a display of sheer awesome power as the three locos got to grips with their heavy departing train, and the ground seems to vibrate as they pass. A glance over my shoulder confirmed the baggage car to be almost loaded so I made my way back though the light drizzle and re-boarded the

train. Pure magic I thought can't capture this with any photo or DVD, so did any of my fellow travellers witness any of this? No they had all gone to bed,

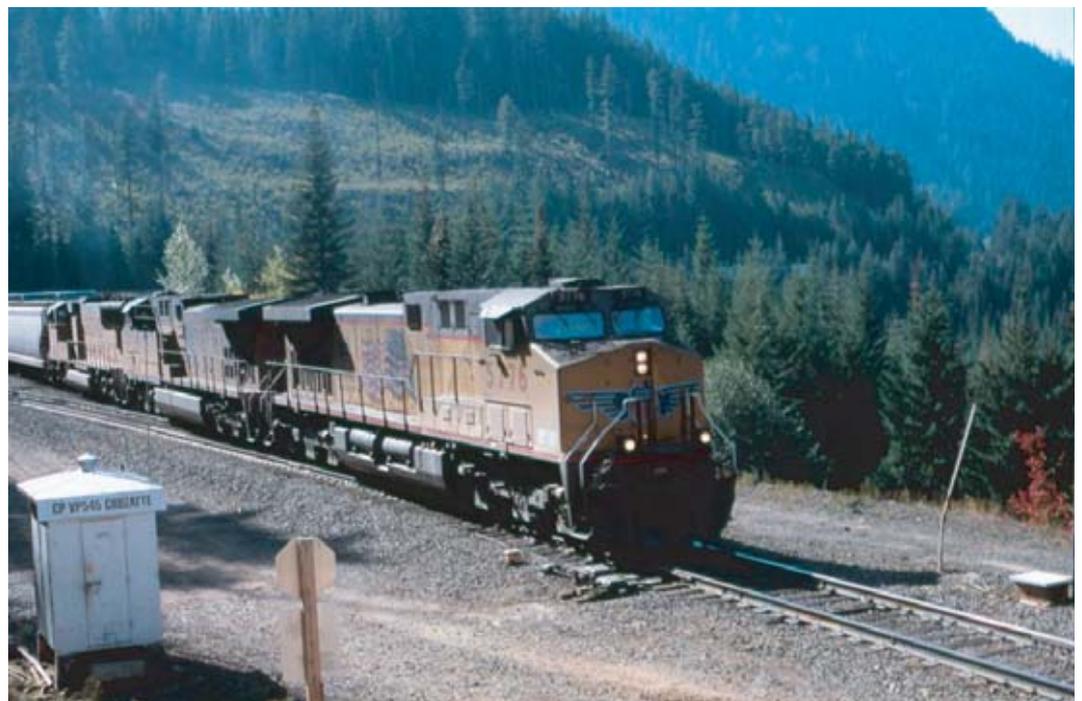
Day 4: To Sacramento

Began at 4.30am in the morning when we were woken up for a 5.30am arrival at Sacramento, our train by now was running 75 minutes early. Coffee, soft drinks and biscuits had been provided in the vestibule of each car. When I say woken up, it might be the wrong word to use, I only heard one of our party say they had slept like a log, not a word from those that had looked forward to the experience. After I had returned from my 'train spotting', as my wife put it, I was assigned to the top berth as punishment, there was barely enough space to climb up into it, a safety strap prevented rolling out, I find sleeping on a train difficult especially this one as our driver was sounding the horn for every grade crossing, dirt track and footpath as it sped through the night.

At the top of the upper level, a southbound UP freight led by GE ES44AC 5776 climbs past the south end of the Cruzatte Siding on 1st October 2003.

As Ron mentions in the text, this area was victim to a huge landslide early in 2008 which took away the whole hillside visible above the locos, plus the tracks on the upper and middle levels of the loops (where the 'Starlight' is shown above) and deposited the debris across the lower level closing the line for several months. A photograph taken here today would look very different.

photo: Mike Walker



We peered through the window as we approached Sacramento, and as dawn broke we could see it was going to be a nice day, I could see vast areas of empty space where marshalling yards and depots once stood, a freight train passed by with some CSX power in the consist, that's a long way from home I thought, then our train stopped and it was time to get off. On the platform Pamela directed us all into the large waiting hall, she told us our coach hadn't arrived, Gray Line know we are here she said, and went off to phone them again. I think that unlike the Airport most of us didn't care, we were just glad to doze in something that wasn't moving.

We got into conversation with a couple that had joined the tour in Seattle, they were doing two holidays in one, they had started their holiday in Canada and finished with a trip on the 'Rocky Mountaineer' they said they thought it was fantastic, but were not impressed by Amtrak, I said to them it was the difference between a totally private run operation with the price pitched to the maximum the market would stand, and a state funded, scheduled passenger train service.

I went on to say to him (the ladies by now had lost interest) that I sometimes read the Don Phillips column in *Trains* magazine, he has over the last few years chronicled the decline of Amtrak as its management battles with congress for its very survival. President Bush has cut Amtrak's subsidy year on year, he even has a veto on what the money is spent on, all this against a background of deferred maintenance, staff cuts, and a steady increasing passenger demand. My fellow travellers' view was that a privatised 'Coast Starlight' would be a good thing, no crack of dawn arrivals, the whole route travelled in daylight hours, it would probably offer red and gold leaf levels of comfort, wider choice of food, more staff, the fact that the trip would cost twice as much, would be of no consequence. I suppose such a service would fit more easily into today's more

demanding world, and that all the things that appeal to me, like observing the daily routine of the scheduled 'working railway' maybe has run its time. Americans will have to decide on Amtrak's future, if they want to keep it, then it will require them to pay more tax.

Pamela had returned looking a lot happier, we could now board our coach, which was apparently waiting for us at the specified time, just not in the right place, downtown Sacramento instead of the station. Our driver was extremely friendly and helpful, and we were soon on our way out of town on the first leg our journey to Yosemite, but first stop was for breakfast at a 'Denny's' restaurant. It was here that Pamela realised she had another problem to deal with, (who said we don't need a tour rep) the couple who had shared a table with us on the previous evening had left a money belt on the train which contained about £180 in cash, both passports and several credit cards. Any of us could have done the same thing but it was more understandable in their case as he was not a well man. Straight away other members of our party offered an immediate loan of cash; it would be several days later mostly thanks to Pamela that they would be able to recover it from a police station in Oakland. It would be nice to say everything was intact, but the cash was missing.

We re-boarded the coach and were soon on our way to our next overnight stay at a lodge in Yosemite National Park.

To be continued.

Below the jagged peaks known as Castle Crags, a southbound Union Pacific freight led by EMD SD70M 5014 threads the spectacular Sacramento River valley in northern California on 8th October 2003.

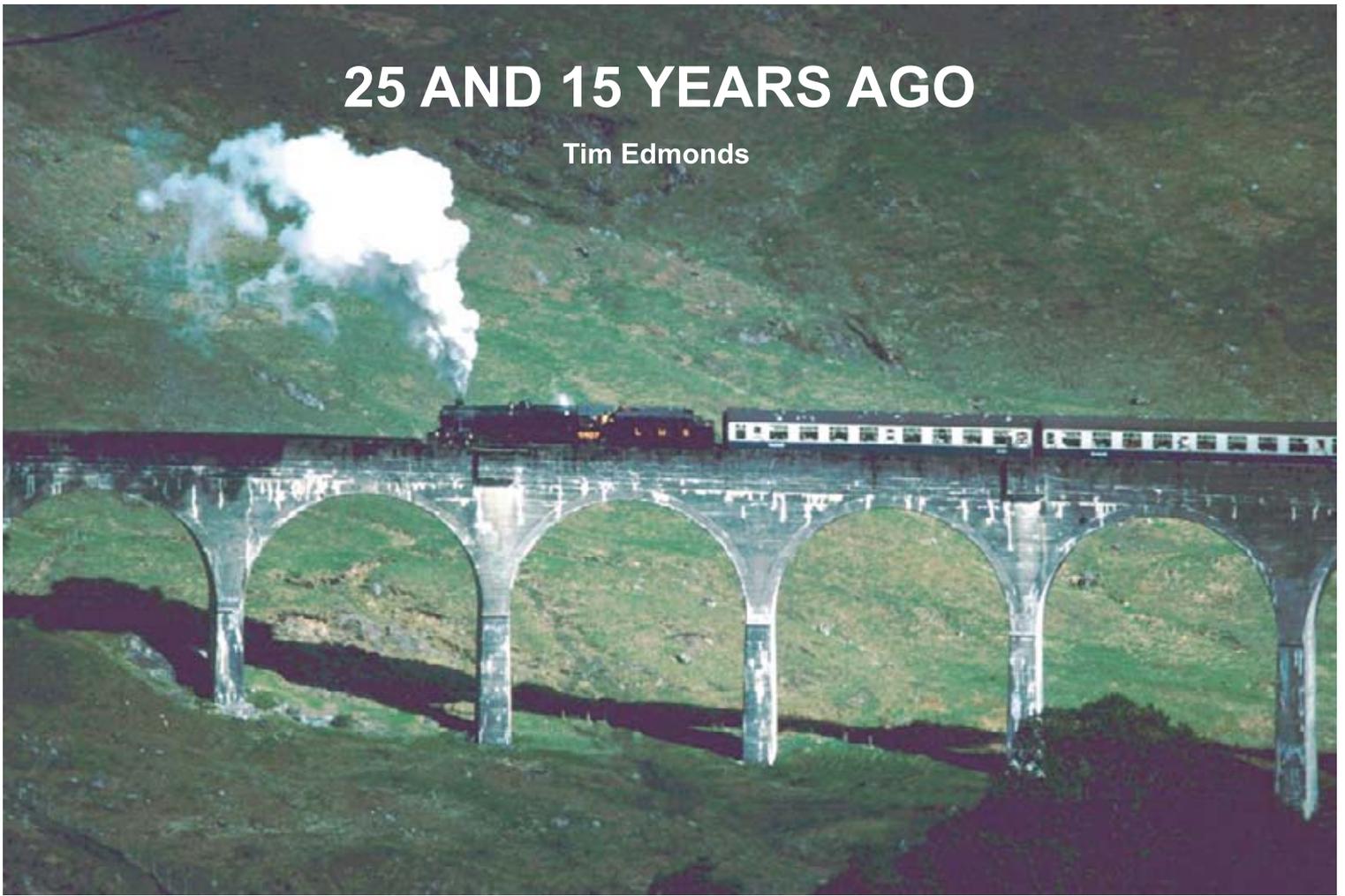
Unfortunately for Ron, the 'Coast Starlight' covers this section at night.

photo: Mike Walker



25 AND 15 YEARS AGO

Tim Edmonds



25 YEARS AGO

British Rail Engineering Ltd began delivery of an order by Coras Iompair Eireann for 124 main-line MkIII coaches, the bodies of which were made at Litchurch Lane Works and the bogies at Derby Locomotive Works. The first completed vehicle was formally handed over to Paul Conlon, the Chairman of CIE, by James Urquhart, the Chairman of BREL on 7th March at Derby.

Completion of the restoration of the two 1863 platforms at Baker Street to an approximation of their former Victorian appearance was marked by a ceremony on 10th April. This involved a group of LT players in period costume alighting from a Hammersmith & City Line train at Platform 5 to be greeted by waxworks figures of Disraeli, Gladstone and Madame Tussaud - visiting briefly from the nearby Madame Tussaud's exhibition. The restoration work included uncovering and cleaning brickwork and ceramic tiles in the shafts above the platform walls which had originally served both to ventilate and light the station.

Press days on 26th and 27th April saw the launch of the International Garden Festival at Liverpool, which included a 2½ mile long 15in gauge miniature railway operated by locomotives lent by the Romney Hythe & Dymchurch and Ravenglass & Eskdale Railways. Although of considerable

Black Five 5407 eases over Glenfinnan Viaduct on 27th May 1984 with a SLOA "West Highlander" special from Fort William to Mallaig during the first weekend of operation [Top].

Lack of turning facilities at Mallaig meant that tender-first operation was required for the "West Highlander" trains on the return from Mallaig. Here NBR 0-6-0 673 Maude is seen between the tunnels near Beasdale on 28th May 1984 [Right].

two photos: Tim Edmonds



interest to railway enthusiasts, and actively seeking volunteer helpers, the Editor of the *Railway Magazine* reported that official attitudes were very discouraging to any visits behind the scenes - even to the members of the press - and appeared to be very 'anti-gricer'.

The new "Gatwick Express" rail link between Victoria and Gatwick Airport was launched on 10th May when the Lord Mayor of Westminster cracked a bottle of champagne across the buffers of electro-diesel loco 73123 at Victoria station before an inaugural run. Full services began on 14th May.

More than 20 years after regular steam working was replaced by diesel traction, steam returned to the scenic West Highland Extension line from Fort William to Mallaig. A preview run was made on 24th May before a series of trips took place over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend from 27th to 30th May. The locos used were LMS "Black Five" 5407 from Steamtown, Carnforth and NBR 0-6-0 673 "Maude" from the SRPS at Falkirk. These were a precursor to regular excursions on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays in the summer peak.

15 YEARS AGO

During the spring work took place to build a new station at Gunnislake, Cornwall. The previous station had been an intermediate stop on the branch from Bere Alston to Callington, but the line was cut back in 1966 when the service to Callington was withdrawn. Following the closure of the former LSWR main line between Bere Alston and Okehampton a local service from Plymouth to Gunnislake survived, but the terminus was sited just west of a low bridge over the A390 road. The resiting enabled this bridge to be removed and the provision of improved car parking facilities. The old station closed on 31st January and a replacement bus was provided to Calstock until the new one was opened on 2nd June.

Andrew Dow, appointed Head of the National Railway Museum in January 1992, left on 31st March "to return to a career in industry". There was no statement of the reasons for



On 24th April 1994, two weeks before The Queen inaugurated the Channel Tunnel, the great British public got their chance to sample the new wonder when Eurotunnel and Network SouthEast teamed up to run a series of "Tunnel Taster" shuttles from Sandling through to the English crossover, about 1/3rd of the way through the tunnel using Class 319's. The trains were running to capacity all day with a lengthy queue at Sandling.

Here 319027 passes through the Dollands Moor international freight yard on its way into the tunnel. The classic DC lines to Folkestone are in the foreground.

photo: Mike Walker



Remains of the old station at Gunnislake [Top] on 23rd April 1994, looking towards Callington from the approach to the dismantled A390 bridge. Originally this was an island platform, but only one face had been used since it had become a terminus in 1966.

Work in progress [Above] on the new station (left) and car park (right) at Gunnislake on 23rd April 1994, seen from the abutment of the dismantled bridge over the A390. The approach embankment, on a steep gradient, has been completely removed.

two photos: Tim Edmonds

this shock announcement and Dow himself was forbidden to talk about it under the terms of his financial settlement - the issue is still clouded in secrecy. His replacement was Andrew Scott, previously Director of the London Transport Museum.

On 1st April (an unfortunate choice of date!) British Rail, as it had previously existed, changed forever when responsibility for the railway infrastructure passed to a new public sector body - Railtrack. This was to serve 25 new passenger train operating companies (TOCs), three heavy freight companies, one mail carrier and one freight distribution business - plus a unknown number of 'open access' operators. The TOCs would eventually be franchised, but to begin with BR continued to operate the services, seven of which were ready to operate as 'shadow franchises' (and one, Gatwick Express, had already started the previous October).

The official inauguration ceremony for the Channel Tunnel took place on 6th May. The Queen opened Waterloo International station before boarding a Eurostar train through the tunnel to Coquelles, Calais. There it drew up nose-to-nose with another Eurostar which had brought President Mitterand from Paris, where he had formally opened the Channel Tunnel section of the Gare du Nord. This manoeuvre was only possible by overriding the TVM 430 signalling system and using radios, since the Queen's train had changed tracks to work 'wrong way' during its transit of the tunnel.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



On Friday 11th June 1965 7029 *Clun Castle* hauled the last scheduled steam departure from Paddington, the 16.15 semi-fast to Banbury seen approaching Beaconsfield.

photo: Tony Caton



Six years later, 6000 *King George V* became the first to break BR's notorious Steam Ban with a triumphant tour which, on Monday 4th October, brought it to High Wycombe where it seemed the whole town had come out to watch.

photo: Dave Theobald