

MARLOW - MAIDENHEAD PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Number 149

Winter 2010



Newsletter Editor Robert Latham
Email: newsletter@mmpa.org.uk

MMPA covers transport in Maidenhead - Marlow, High Wycombe and Twyford - Henley-on-Thames.

40th Anniversary



Photo Warwickshire Railways

An immaculate GWR '517' class, 0-4-2T No.203, with a non corridor, eight compartment bogie brake coach and a four wheel passenger brake van pose with the train crew and station porter at Alcester Station. The Loco is similar to No. 522 which operated between Bourne End and Marlow – the Marlow Donkey.

In July 1846, The Wycombe Railway Company was incorporated by an Act of Parliament. The Act authorised the construction of a single line from the original Great Western Railway (GWR) station at Maidenhead, to High Wycombe. Construction began in 1852, and the completed line to High Wycombe, was finally opened on 1 August 1854.

For many years High Wycombe station and the Marlow - Maidenhead Branch Line were linked. That link was broken and the branch was threatened with closure which is why the Marlow - Maidenhead Passenger Association was set up as a pressure group to support and protect local passenger interests.

It is believed by those with long enough memories that 2010 sees the 40th anniversary of the forming of the Association. In the late 60s and early 70s British Rail were in the process of closing many lines they regarded as 'uneconomic' following the Beeching Report although there is doubt about the way some figures to justify closure were obtained. The Marlow Branch was one of the branches to be closed. A group of local people decided to fight the closure proposals and set up the start of what is now the MMPA. The early days involved lengthy technical and commercial discussions with British Rail. Nearly 300 people supported the first public meeting in March 1972 and this strength of feeling had a suitable impact on the railway authorities.

Apart from fighting closure of the Branch the early years saw a number of rail excursions promoted by the Association from Branch stations to Wales and the West Country. In addition in 1973 the Association organised and promoted a steam hauled

celebration of the centenary of the Branch on a July Sunday. The locomotives used for Maidenhead to Bourne End were Great Western 6998 *Burton Agnes Hall* and prairie tank 6106. Bourne End to Marlow was operated by 0-4-2 tank 1466 coupled with autocoches 190 and 231. The adult fare from Maidenhead to Bourne End was 50p! Over 12,500 tickets were sold. The event was only possible as there were no Sunday services on the Branch then. These were reinstated in 1984.

Back in the late eighties the Excursion Officer of the Association was Mark Hopwood now Managing Director of FGW.

The work of the MMPA has expanded from that of 40 years ago, to now give passengers a voice in making sure local stations and transport services are the best they can be. The Association is thriving and now has a remit to include all local transport issues and reviewing proposals that could affect local people and submitting statements and putting forward our own proposals to the relevant authorities including but not limited to Network Rail, First Great Western, Chiltern Railways, bus operators and local authorities. We also liaise with local interest groups to ensure we their interests can be represented in our meetings with the various organisations. The Association is currently looking at the proposals for changes to the rail franchising process and the proposals for regeneration of Maidenhead town centre in particular how it will affect the bus and rail interchange at Maidenhead Station.

In endeavouring to ensure better service and resolution of problems the Association tries to encourage people to use the Branch more since that's the best way to assure its long term survival.

* * *

Winter timetables

New First Great Western and Chiltern Railways timetables operate from 12th December and are being issued with this MMPA newsletter. There will be considerable disruption to services through Reading over the Christmas and New Year period due to the major works in the station area. If you are planning to use the trains through Reading do check on the changes before you travel or purchase tickets.

* * *

Ticket failures

It has come to our notice that rail travel tickets issued by both portable machines used on the train and by some station ticket offices fail to operate ticket barriers at a number of locations including Paddington Station and London Underground. If you experience this at any time please advise the Association and if possible provide the ticket so we can raise the issue again with FGW who believe they have already resolved the problem.

* * *

FGW Update

The FGW Public Performance Measure for London and Thames Valley for this period (7) was 92.6% (2.03% worse

than target). (For comparison Period 5 achieved 93.6% 'on time arrivals'). The Moving Annual Average was 91.1% (0.48% worse than target). Performance was affected by several major incidents:

- 24 September Lightning strike, Cholsey (3,106 DM)
 - 6 October Suicidal male, Paddington (2,854 DM)
 - 7 October Cable fault, Swindon (1,704 DM)
 - 8 October Points failure, Southall (3,061DM)
 - 22 October Power Failure, Bristol Panel (3,182 DM)
- (DM = Delay Minutes)

In several recent months performance has been below target and Network Rail has been working with First Great Western to produce an infrastructure recovery plan to turn this around. A particular problem for the Branch has been the repeated failure of the token system that is used for signalling and operation of the points at Bourne End. MMPA is trying to arrange a meeting with the relevant Network Rail personnel to get an understanding of the problem and how it has or will be resolved.

FGW Electrification

The Government has announced that it is to proceed with electrification of the FGW main line to Newbury, Didcot and Oxford. The Association intends to press for the Branch to be included in these plans as we believe there is a risk of the Branch being sidelined with a second rate diesel service only to and from Maidenhead with all that could imply for the future.

* * *

Reading Christmas Major Timetable Changes

MMPA has received details of the amended services over the Christmas period to allow the work on Reading area remodelling to take place. Full details can be found on the FGW website at

<http://www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/Content.aspx?id=4888>. in

general services will be affected from Monday 27 December 2010 to Monday 3 January 2011. An hourly service will predominate between Marlow and Maidenhead. Rail replacement buses will operate west of Maidenhead taking 35 to 50 minutes to Reading and 60 to 70 minutes to Didcot Parkway to link up with rail services to the west.

The revised Marlow Branch timetable can be found at:

http://www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/Documents/Custom/Reading/LTV%20TTs/GW10%20RDG%20T03e_%282%29.pdf.

London to Reading services can be found at

<http://www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/Documents/Custom/Reading/LTV%20TTs/3b%20%20-%20Greenford%20-%20Reading%20local.pdf>

Otherwise phone FGW at the number given under Travel Information.

A404(M) bridge replacement over the Western Main Line

The Highways Agency (via their website) has suspended publicising the closure programme in advance for the A404(M) itself. Motorway signs provide notice of imminent closures and local media are informed.

* * *

Moor Street Station

Moor Street Station in Birmingham has been rebuilt by Chiltern Railways. It is to be reopened on 11th December by a steam charter special to Paddington via Reading and Maidenhead hauled by GW castle class 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgemont*.

The recommissioning of this station is part of Chiltern Railways plan to improve journey times between London (Marylebone) and Birmingham to provide a rational alternative to the services out of Euston. When the Evergreen 3 Project is complete the journey time is planned to be 100 minutes.

* * *

MMPA membership

If you are a branch line passenger or local transport user please help MMPA get what's best for our community by

joining now. With preliminary consultations on franchise rebids beginning next year, now is the time to begin building strength so that our voice can be heard before it's too late to protect local interests and push for improvements Please also spread the word amongst friends, neighbours and fellow passengers who could benefit by having our public transport services be the best they can be by joining us. With your support, MMPA can have a positive impact for all those living, working or visiting in the area served by the branch line. Many thanks!

* * *

Sir Nicholas Winton at Maidenhead

You may have seen the local paper report of a sculpture of Sir Nicholas Winton being unveiled the London end of platforms 2 and 3 at Maidenhead Station. It has already been commented by one passenger that they wondered 'why this elderly gentleman should be so intent on his paper that he missed the train!'



* * *

TRAVEL INFORMATION

BBC Radio	95.4, 104.1 fm and DAB.
Berkshire:	(also phone 08459 - 311333)
National Rail enquiries:	08457 - 484950 (24 hrs) or www.nationalrail.co.uk or text
First Great Western:	08457 - 000125 (0700 - 2200 daily)
Chiltern Railways:	08456 - 005165 (08.30 - 17.30)
Arriva Bus:	0844 8004411 (0900 - 1700 Mon - Fri)
First Berks Buses:	01753 524144
Carousel Buses:	01494 533436
Traveline:	0871 - 2002233 (0700 - 2200 daily) 10p/min on BT landline
RBWM Transportation helpline	01628 796666

Also see our web site www.mmpa.org.uk for links.

* * *

Contact MMPA

If you have any issues or comments regarding public transport in the area that you would like to raise please use the Contact Us links on the MMPA website www.mmpa.org.uk.

* * *

Seasons Greetings

On behalf of the Committee of the Association may I take the opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and safe and comfortable 'on time' travel in 2011.

