



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 2

South of England Group
Vice President - Captain Bill Smith VRD, RNR

May 1995

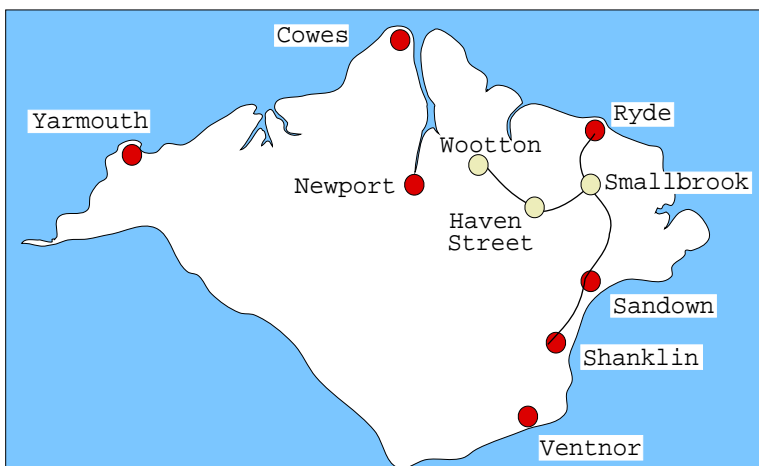
Friends Summer Visit 1995 Isle of Wight Railway

Every summer the South of England Friends arrange an informal visit to one of the railway centres in the region. Previous years have seen us at Sheffield Park and Wansford. This year there's a trip over the briny for the Isle of Wight Railway. The visit will take place on Sunday 9th July. All Friends are invited to come along and enjoy the day out as well as meeting other members of the FNRM who live in this part of the country.

As this briefing went to press, the new summer rail timetable had just come out, but the "Supplement" was still awaited. The times of the London to Portsmouth service below are therefore provisional. The Isle of Wight are a little better organised and we already know the times that they will be running services!

Those coming via London should catch the 09.25 Portsmouth Harbour train from Waterloo. This picks up at Woking (09.51), Guildford (10.03), Hazelmere (10.18), Petersfield (10.29) and Havant (10.43), arriving at Portsmouth at 11.00. We take the 11.20 boat, and the "new" Isle of Wight train (refurbished 1938 tube stock) to Smallbrook. Here we transfer to the Isle of Wight Steam Railway for the 12.15 departure to Wootton, where we arrive at 13.00. A vintage coach connects at Wootton for visits to Osborne House or Barton Mill Vineyard, returning to Wootton for the 16.01 departure. The return train from Portsmouth Harbour leaves at 17.20 for Waterloo at 18.55, dropping off at the same points.

The railway has made major improvements over the last few years. If you have not visited it for some time, why not come along? Depending on the numbers coming, we may be able to organise a group discount for the travel on the Isle of Wight Railway. Please inform the chairman or newsletter editor (see reverse for telephone numbers) if you expect to be there.



Spring Report

On 9 January we held our third AGM and buffet/social evening. After the brief formal matters were dealt with, members of the committee provided entertainments by way of slides and video. Richard Causebrook showed us his "Then and Now" pictures of the London to Birmingham Railway, using his own slides and the 1830 Bourne engravings, proving that the artist's eye matched no known focal length. Philip Brown showed slides of our summer activities and then took us on a trans-American rail trip. The evening closed with Ian Harrison's video review of the past two years in the south including the outing to Eastleigh in the "Queen of Scots" set hauled by No 33109 Captain Bill Smith RNR.

The weekend of 25/26 March marked the centenary celebrations of Woking Borough Council. This would not normally merit mention here, but part of the festivities included runs by 35028 "Clan Line" and M7 30053 on the ex-LSWR main line. Some of the committee helped with stewarding and at least one was seen on the early evening regional TV news thoroughly enjoying himself. The group also set up the display stand on Woking station and, despite the cold weather, the group spread the details of NRM and generated some £200 in revenue.

Bob Barnes, General Manager of Venice-Simplon Orient Express (UK), gave an illustrated and informative talk to 25 Friends on the evening of 27 March. He shared the problems and delights of restoring 70 year old Pullman cars from near derelict condition to sumptuous splendour. Each car is lovingly restored so that it can continue to earn its living on the most prestigious train service in the world. With restoration costs around half a million pounds each, it's no wonder that journeys on the VSOE are something special. It's not just in Europe that this special service is offered - a new Pullman train "The Eastern and Oriental Express" now runs from Singapore to Bangkok, via the Bridge over the River Kwai. Bob described how the redundant "Silver Star" carriages were transported from New Zealand to be completely rebuilt as air-conditioned Pullman cars on the new service. The talk did not just cover railway matters. Bob has a keen interest in ships and described some of the nautical aspects of the company. This included the use of a 5 star liner to link Venice with Istanbul, so that passengers can achieve the original goal of the VSOE. During the trial for this service, the captain performed some astounding navigation by sailing through the Corinth Canal, which officially is 2 metres narrower than the ship! It's not just ocean going ships which the company uses, Bob described the plan to rescue a German river cruiser from Dresden for use in a reconstituted Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in Burma. Bob ended his talk by discussing the ethics of using authentic historic items of rolling stock in commercial business, and held out some tantalising possibilities for the future - VSOE through the Chunnel and further haulage by a certain air-braked steam engine.

CONSTITUTION

The group now has a formal constitution, which is subject to final agreement with the FNRM Executive Committee. The main elements of the document cover the aims and membership, which are replicated opposite. Those wanting a full copy of the document should contact the Chairman (see overleaf).

Aim and Objective

The objective of the Group shall be to further the work of the Friends as set out in the Constitution and Rules of the Friends and to promote such activities and fund raising events of a local nature as will further the aim and object of the Friends.

Membership and Subscriptions

Membership shall be open to all members of the Friends as defined in Rule 4 of the Constitution and Rules of the Friends. There shall be no local subscription.