

Rocket On Tour - Weeting Steam Fair 1993

In the summer of 1993 the NRM's Rocket replica made a tour of the Midlands and East Anglia, including the Weeting Steam Fair on the Norfolk-Suffolk border. The South of England Group of the Friends provided a display stand showing the work and facilities of the NRM and selling amongst other things "Rocket" ties and other memorabilia.

The Fair covers agricultural and fairground use of steam, with an impressive array of traction and showman's engines as well as a steam fair. A 5" gauge railway layout had been complemented by a length of standard gauge track, although with a complete absence of ballast there was no way that passengers could be carried.

Philip Brown and his team, mother Dorothy and friend Robina Curtis, arrived on the Friday evening with their caravan and parked close alongside Rocket's demonstration track. That evening a couple of traction engines arrived and their drivers proceeded to examine Rocket with a professional eye. We found ourselves having to answer such technical matters as "How do you clean out the flues without a smoke box door?" (with difficulty, I think) and "What is the pipe alongside the chimney for?" (it's a mercury pressure gauge).

Rob Shorland-Ball was round early next morning with extra stock and after breakfast Richard Causebrook arrived. We soon had our display boards and sales table out, and the few short showers of rain made us adept at getting a plastic sheet over the stock quickly. Whilst this was going on Rocket was gently getting up a head of steam, before giving demonstrations runs. The gradient was not steep, after all we were not far from the Fens, but Rocket could not make it to the end before it ran out of momentum. This provided a continuous point of interest as its driver attempted to get further up the track.

Amongst our visitors were the team from the Norwich Castle Museum, which was the next port of call for Rocket. We gave them as full a briefing on the locomotive as we could, and ensured that they had Rocket ties to wear!

George and Margaret Rutter arrived for the Sunday, and brought some sunny weather. Trade was better, but we did not manage to sell anything to the Minister of Agriculture, the Rt Hon Gillian Shepard, when she arrived to travel on Rocket's footplate. (See photograph in the November 1993 newsletter.)

Finally it was time to leave what had been a very enjoyable week-end, (and our neighbours, Zulu and Zebedee, who had been patiently ploughing a straight furrow throughout the week-end).

Forthcoming Events

20,21 & 27,28,29 May "Steam on the Met"

Group stand at Rickmansworth (20th & 21st),
Amersham (27th & 28th), Harrow-on-the-Hill (29th)

9 July Isle of Wight Steam Railway trip (see overleaf)

Evening 18 September Speaker - Andrew Scott (NRM)

Evening 13 November Speaker to be arranged

Evening 8 January 1996 AGM and evening social

Evening 18 March 1996 Speaker to be arranged

All the evening events are held at the South Eastern Career Development Centre - see map below - starting at 19.00 (doors open at 18.30 with light refreshments).



The South Eastern Career Development Centre is located off Meymott Street. Approximately 5 mins walk from Waterloo or Blackfriars

NRM Stock Spot - Where are they now? - The Drummond T9

In this occasional series we shall offer a potted biography of NRM stock with local connections.

Built in 1899 at Nine Elms, the Drummond T9 "Greyhound" 4-4-0 No 120 (BR 30120) is the only survivor of her class. Initially based at Nine Elms, on the South Western section of the LSWR, she gradually migrated westwards to Eastleigh and Exmouth Jctn as more powerful Maunsell and Bulleid locomotives were introduced. She was one of the last of the class to be superheated, in April 1927, receiving a boiler and other changes to designs by Urie who had retired 5 years earlier! On 28 November 1942, she was strafed by enemy aircraft whilst at Wool; the damage was not too serious and she returned to service on 12 December. Earmarked for preservation in 1960, she was restored to LSWR livery (incorrect on a superheated T9) in March 1962, hauling railtours before official withdrawal on 14 July 1963, having worked over 1.7 million miles!

After store at Brighton and Tyseley, she moved to the reserve collection at York in October 1977. In 1981 the Urie S15 Group agreed to restore her on the Mid-Hants at Ropley. When stripped, she was discovered to be a kit of parts from many other T9s and other types: only the frames, cylinders and loco bogie are "genuine 120"! She steamed again on 7/8 May 1983 and worked on the Mid Hants before moving to Swanage in 1990. When her boiler certificate expired in 1992, plans to overhaul her at Swanage were frustrated and she eventually moved to the Bluebell Line. She is in the "queue" at Sheffield Park and can be seen in SR Malachite Green livery. Needless to say, donations to help cover the cost of rebuilding would be more than welcome - anything given to George Rutter (see below) will be passed on to the restoration team. Wouldn't it be nice to see her in steam on her 100th birthday in August 1999?

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