



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 4

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

February 1996

Annual General Meeting

On 8 January over 30 friends gathered for the AGM and New Year's social Evening. Our Chairman, George Rutter, gave a short summary of our activities over the last year. He advised us that our fund-raising had been effected by a shortage of open days and the cancellation of steam trips due to the drought. Despite this, our funds at year-end stood at £2551, including £2000 in a charity investment account at the Abbey National, so earning interest until we have enough to make a donation to the NRM for a suitable project. Two committee members, Ian Harrison and Alan Gosling who, under our constitution were up for re-election, were duly voted back to their positions.

Ian Harrison entertained the group with a quiz, posing some challenging questions using clues in his videos. Although the quiz had twenty questions, it shows how difficult they were that the winner scored half marks! Our Vice President, Captain Bill Smith then gave a series of light-hearted recollections of his work with the NRM at the replica Rocket. This included his reminiscences of the initial outing to Kensington Gardens and overseas tours to Japan and USA.

Summer Outing

This year we have something special for the summer outing. First it is earlier than usual, on Sunday 19 May. Second, it will be to a railway which is not normally open to the public, Sir William McAlpine's private line at Fawley Hill, near Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire. We expect a small industrial locomotive to be in steam and offering rides. It will also be possible to view the extensive exhibits in Sir William's collection.

Arrangements are still to be finalised, but one thing is for certain - we will only have a limited number of tickets for entry - so they will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Admittance will be free, but we suggest you provide a small donation (at least £2 per head) to cover the cost of the coal and help offset the other running and maintenance costs. Please send the donation with your application, using the enclosed form, to George Rutter (address on rear). Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope, which George will use either to send your ticket, or the disappointing news that you're too late. There may be a slight delay while we receive the tickets from Fawley Hill, so if you don't immediately get your envelope returned, don't worry, in this case "no news will be good news"!

To help coordinate transport, please use the form to say whether you will be driving there, whether you have some spare seats in your car or if you need a lift. For those intending to travel by train, we will arrange for some cars to meet at Twyford station between 12.00 and 12.30, but again, please mark the form if you intend to travel this way. We expect to leave Fawley Hill at about 17.30.

Clan Line - A New Era Begins

What was advertised as a talk on the new era beginning for "Clan line", turned out to be two lectures on very different, but equally important, aspects of running a preserved steam locomotive. Firstly, we were given an insight into the research needed to explore the market for large steam motive power. As railway enthusiasts we tend to forget that the enthusiast market cannot sustain the variety of rail tours which are on offer. This was a similar message to that given by Andrew Scott was at our last lecture: "the NRM at York has to remember that the enthusiast is only a small proportion of its market". One of the conclusions of the MNLPS was that in order to market "Clan Line", the locomotive had to be able to handle modern coaching stock - and that meant air braking.

The other lecture was on the installation of the air brakes. The original idea of George Westinghouse seemed to be simple, but the auxiliary items result in a very complex system, especially when it has to work with vacuum brakes. The actual design was based upon that installed in BR diesel locomotives. It was revealing that the cost of the actual compressor was but 5% of the total cost. Indeed, the complexity was such that it took some time to detect a design error whereby the various safety features prevented the system starting up - vacuum could not be created until there was air pressure, but the air system did not work unless there was vacuum! Another area which had absorbed much effort was the exhaust for the air pump. This was not a concern for the operators, but the MNLPS realised that enthusiasts would be offended by steam coming out of the tender. Eventually a solution was found which minimised the offending steam, without the problems found when the exhaust was directed under the tender.

The MNPLS did not regret having chosen to install the air pump in the tender. The result was tucked neatly out of the way, but was accessible for servicing. To have attempted to fit the pump between the locomotive frames would have been much more difficult to accomplish and maintain.

The 2 lecturers were supported by 2 other members of the MNLPS and the evening finished off with a free ranging discussion on a number of technical topics - like the fitting of "Buck-eye" couplings to match Southern EMUs.

