



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 5

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

May 1996

MIDLAND RAILWAY TRUST

On 18 March the Group had a most interesting presentation by Mr Peter Featherstone on the aims, and considerable achievements, of the Midland Railway Trust. Using his extensive collection of pictures the speaker first gave us a brief history of the Midland Railway Trust. The aim was to record the heritage of the local area and provide leisure facilities for all, rather than to pander merely to the enthusiast. Further slides showed the rolling stock, both motive power and freight and passenger vehicles. The standard of restoration shown was impressive. The speaker noted that two of the passenger vehicles had been purchased as working vehicles, until it was discovered that they had interesting histories. Both are now in service. Still awaiting attention is a wooden Pullman car. Careful paint removal has shown this to be the original car built in Detroit, and then dismantled for transport to UK. Ever mindful of costs, the Midland Railway had used part of the packing cases in the erection of the car at Derby.

Of course the exhibits had a Derby bias. Notable locomotives were the Kirtley 2-4-0, Fowler 4F 0-6-0 (both from the National Collection) and the S&DJR 2-8-0. These were balanced by a collection of Stanier super-power: Duchess of Sutherland, Princess Margaret Rose and Princess Elizabeth. Butterley has become the home for a large number of diesel locomotives, with a Sulzer collection of classes 44, 45, 46 and 47.

We were taken for a tour around the centre. This started with a trip by train, noting the variety of station designs used, and finished with a walk through the Country Park. In between we were shown examples of railways of all gauges from "OO" to 4ft 8½in. There was, notably, no mention of 7ft 0¼in! As we travelled around we noted a collection of road vehicles, with a big collection of railway drays, and the pit buildings of a disused coal mine on the site.

Mr Featherstone enthralled his audience with his description of the Midland Railway Centre, and many of them must have made a note to visit, or re-visit, the centre soon.

NORTH MEETS SOUTH AT COVENT GARDEN

On Saturday 17 March, a combined group of 15 Friends paid a visit to the London Transport Museum at Covent Garden. The meeting was organised by William Greenwood, Honorary Secretary of the FNRM.

Our hosts, and sister organisation, the Friends of the London Transport Museum, made us most welcome, providing a tour of the museum, before a buffet lunch. In the afternoon, we were taken on a short walk to the now closed Aldwych Tube Station. Here we were privileged to be guided behind the locked gates to see the inside. At the end of a short branch of the Picadilly Line from Holborn, the station was never heavily used. As a consequence much of the fabric was left largely untouched during the regular cycles of improvements. Removal of layers of paint and posters has uncovered the original tiled notices and signs. The lifts date back from the date of construction (1907) and were imported from Chicago, the home of the chairman of the Underground Electric Group board, the colourful Charles Tyson Yerkes. Not surprisingly, the lifts are now unpowered, so we descended the spiral staircase to platform level, to explore the rail tunnels. This included the second platform, unseen by the passengers, which is used by London Transport for trials of station signs and decoration. The station is also finding a use as a set for various film and television features - so the next time you see an underground station on the screen, it's likely to be Aldwych, whatever the station sign says! Our tour symbolically ended at the brick wall at the end of the overrun tunnel where, despite all the plans for the extension of the line across the Thames, the tracks terminated.

Our thanks go to our hosts and we look forward to other opportunities for exchange working between our two bodies.

SUMMER OUTING

As mentioned in the last Briefing, the summer outing on Sunday 19 May will be to Sir William McAlpine's private line at Fawley Hill, near Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire. As anticipated, more people have asked to attend than can be accommodated. The lucky ones are listed below. Admittance tickets (the number requested is shown in brackets) have been sent - if you have not received them please contact George Rutter. Those who have told us they will travel by train, (shown by a *) will be met at Twyford station - arrivals are at 12.07 and 12.21. If you have not been successful - don't be too disappointed. We have arranged with Sir William that we can go again next year. To make things fair, all those who missed out this year will be put at the top of the list for next year's outing. The date for 1997 has not yet been fixed, but we will be in touch as soon as it is.

Those expected on 19 May are: M Clews (2), P Brown (2), R Causebrook (1), M Draper (1), C Firminger (2), I Harrison (1), P Harrison (2), G Haslar (2*), I Johnson (2), W Kay (2*), G Knowles (2), R Martin (2), J Moore (2*), A Peglar (2*), R Requena (2), M Rutter (1), T.C. Scrimgeour (2). Make sure you bring your ticket(s); otherwise admittance may be refused.