



# The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 6

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

October 1996

## The South of England Group's Summer

It doesn't seem like 4 months since the last Briefing, probably because, as they say, "time flies when you're enjoying yourself". This summer has seen a very full programme of events which the Group has attended.

At the start of May, we were at the Shuttleworth Collection's Spring Air Display at Old Warden. This was a two day event, with different flying displays on each day. The weather was clear if a little cold. A good number of people were attracted to our stand, as much for the novelty of a railway display being in the middle of all those old aircraft. Quite a few visitors were taken aback when we told them we hadn't come from York, just a few miles down the road; especially those forming part of a coach tour from Pontefract. (I wonder how many additional visitors the NRM will have from Pontefract this year?) The culmination was when the commentator announced that he would like to convert the insides of one of the larger aircraft (a Russian Antonov An2 biplane) to look like the inside of Queen Victoria's Royal Saloon - your Chairman quickly supplied him with the appropriate NRM postcard. The result? Much laughter over the Tannoy's but a very complimentary advertisement for the NRM to the several thousand people in the audience.

"Steam on the Met" over the last two weekends of May was, as usual, a very successful event. Despite the cold and rain, we did good trade. The steam-train whistles sold particularly well, much to the annoyance of the photographers, who were chasing phantom engines. One benefit of our attendance is that we now have a small display on the up-platform at Rickmansworth station, giving details of our activities.

The Ipswich event in mid-June was a little disappointing. As you will have read in the press, the steam runs were restricted. More importantly for us, our stand was a little away from the station and, consequently, visitor numbers were low.

Two weeks later, at the start of July, saw us supporting the NRM "Rocket" replica at Bressingham Steam Centre. We were warmly welcomed by the staff at Bressingham and given an ideal position inside the locomotive shed where the rides on Rocket started. With the benefit of a number of heavy thundery showers (causing a rapid influx of visitors to the shelter of the shed) we had plenty of opportunity to draw their attention to the NRM. We had one of our most successful sales sessions on the second day, selling out of virtually all our Rocket stock.

Mid- August, and back to the Shuttleworth Collection for the Vintage transport day. This time, the other displays included vintage cars and lorries, as well as aircraft.

The August Bank Holiday saw the stand in the West Country, at the 21st anniversary of the East Somerset Railway. We were supporting the NRM's J52 which is at Cranmore. Again, the staff, including Steve McColl, made us most welcome.

It wasn't all work over the summer though. On 19th May, thirty Friends attended the visit the Sir William McAlpine's private line at Fawley Hill. With the extensive museum and break-van rides on the very steeply graded line, including footplate trips, there was plenty to keep us occupied all day. Keep an eye on this Briefing to see what's in store for next year's Summer Outing.

## FRIENDS AGM - 22 June 1996

About 50 friends met in the former "Buffers" restaurant with the Chairman, Prof Allan Patmore, and the Treasurer. Membership is up by 9% on last year and finances are satisfactory. The Museum has not called for funds whilst it prepares bids to the National Lottery, which will double all the Friends' donations. At present, the Friends have £35,000 available for a workshop viewing gallery. The Council is revising the Friends Constitution; our Constitution will need to be amended to match. The Chairman warned that annual subscriptions may need to increase.

The Friends Enterprises had a good year with more products and new outlets - look out for the Friends "Eurostar" cards at the International Currency Exchange, Waterloo!

The Chairman praised our Group's "lively" programme to promote the NRM at events around the South. Andrew Scott, the Head of the Museum, was pleased with the co-operation between the SoE Group and the York members in manning the stand at Loughborough during January.

Honorary life membership was given to Mr J C Bysouth (a retired railwayman and an benefactor of the Duchess) and Dr Michael Peagram (for funding the overhaul of "Green Arrow"). The 3 vacant Council seats went to Mr G Heughan, Mr M Wallace and Mr N Harris.

After the AGM Mr Ed Bartholomew, Curator of Photographic Archives, gave an interesting insight into the Museum's vast photograph collection, which includes official company records and private collections. He described how the Friends are helping to identify and catalogue items. Watch the Friends Newsletter for an article. We hope that Mr Bartholomew can give us a talk in London (possibly on 12 May 1997).

The new miniature railway was working during the day and is free. The picnic areas are good, but the gardens are suffering from weeds. Any offers from "green fingered" Friends?