



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 9

South of England Group
Vice Presidents - Captain Bill Smith VRD, RNR; Alan Pegler

September 1997

THE SUMMER OUTING LEIGHTON BUZZARD NARROW GAUGE LIGHT RAILWAY

The Leighton Buzzard Light Railway held its Heritage Weekend on 5th and 6th July, and the outreach stand was present on both days. This 2ft gauge line runs from the outskirts of the town on the boundary of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire to the still active quarries near the A5 road. Of the two, the Sunday was by far the busier. A fine collection of vintage road vehicles attended including fire engines, ambulances, lorries, delivery vans and assorted cars. The most unusual was the smallest, a hand propelled mobile fire pump for use on GWR stations. We were serenaded by a brass band for most of the day and made most welcome by the railways volunteers.

At 11.30 on the Sunday, our party set off on the train from Page's Park for the 3 mile run to the works at Stonehenge (not to be confused with the non-rail connected standing stones in Wiltshire). Here we were met by our guide and had a demonstration of the various diesel and petrol locos on a variety of goods trains. Many of the locos used to work on the line bringing sand from the quarries to the transfer sidings in Leighton Buzzard. A number have also arrived from a variety of military establishments throughout the UK. It was then back on the train to Page's Park to see the loco shed. Here, was the fine collection of steam locomotives, four of which were in steam to haul the passenger trains. These included the railway's flagship, Challoner, the De Winton 0-4-0 vertical boilered quarry engine. Hiding in the shed was the NRM armoured petrol engine. Compared to some of the locos, this seemed massive. Not only is it larger in loading gauge than most of its stable-mates, but it is armour plated, having been built for use hauling shells to the front line in the first World War. Our guide told us that the volunteers have had to make various adjustments to the track alignment and platform edging to accommodate the loco. Its good to see that even on narrow gauge lines the national collection locos can be seen in operation.

We were lucky that the we had good weather for the two days. Not only did this allow us to enjoy this narrow-gauge railway, but it allowed us to spread the word on the NRM to another part of the home counties.

IMPORTANT CORRECTION A Date for Your Diary

We are pleased that the Curator of Photographic Archives at the National Railway Museum, Mr Ed Bartholomew, is to come to our September meeting. Unfortunately, due to a typing mistake by yours truly, the date given in the last briefing for this talk was incorrect. The correct date is **Monday 15th September**

Ed's talk will be illustrated with extracts from the photographic collections held by the NRM. This includes records from manufacturers and railway companies as well as many thousands of pictures taken by a number of keen railway enthusiasts. His talk will include a discussion on how these collections are being preserved, and the arrangements for access.

The talk is bound to be popular, after all it is not every day that we get an opportunity in London to be exposed to some of the "core" work of the museum. I suggest you arrive early. As always, the meeting will take place at the South Eastern Career Development Centre, off Meymott Street, London (see rear for map). The doors will open at 18.30. I hope to see you there - but remember it's the 15th !

MICHAEL TURNER PRINTS

As described in the last edition of the briefing, the South of England Group have exclusive arrangements to sell these prints. All proceeds from the sales go towards the Friend's funds in aid of the NRM. If you have any friends or relations who are keen on railways, or even if they just like good paintings, why not buy one (or better still, several) for them. Remember it's only just over a hundred days to Christmas!

A small reproduction of one of the prints is shown here. This shows brand new Class 7P No. 70000 "Britannia" at Liverpool Street station at the head of "The Norfolkman" express for Norwich in 1951. The actual prints are 305 mm by 254 mm overall (that's 12 ins by 10 ins in old money) and are on high quality art paper suitable for framing. Each comes in a presentational folder with full description of the scene. The price is £3 each or £4 for copies signed by the artist. For information on the full range contact the Chairman (address overleaf) or visit our stand at one of the outreach events described in this briefing.