



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 10

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

December 1997

AGM AND NEW YEAR SOCIAL

The New Year Social evening, which incorporates the Annual General Meeting of the South of England Group of the FNRM, will be held on Monday 5th January 1998 at the usual venue, South Eastern Career Development Centre, off Meymott Street, London SE1. A map is shown on the rear of this Briefing. As usual, there will be drinks and festive food, together with some entertainment. We are again threatened with a quiz, compiled by Ian Harrison, which will demonstrate just how much we don't know about Railways and their history. There will also be video and photographs showing some of the events we attended during the course of the year. In addition, we will have a short presentation on the work of the team who are restoring "Lord Nelson" at Eastleigh; see separate item.

Before the festivities, we will hold the AGM, when your Chairman will report on this year's activities. As usual, two committee members are due to retire in rotation. This year it is the turn of George Rutter and Roy Bell, both of whom are willing to stand for re-election. Should anyone else wish to volunteer they are welcome to come forward. Nominations to George Rutter (see overleaf for address).

Attendance at the AGM is, of course, free to Friends but regulars will know that we make a charge to cover the cost of the refreshments. We have again kept this at £5 per head. If you wish to attend, please write to George Rutter enclosing a cheque made payable to "FNRM South of England Group" should you wish to partake of the food and drink. George will mail out tickets just after Christmas, so only panic and ring George if you haven't heard by the weekend of 3rd/4th January.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? SR No. 850 (30850) LORD NELSON

The short answer to the question is Eastleigh - at last. Built to the design of Richard Maunsell, No 850 is the only survivor of its class. It was taken into the national collection from BR service in 1962 and after periods in store was restored to main line condition in 1980. It made a number of runs on the Cumbrian Mountain Express and other trips until 1986 without ever quite rising to the popularity of its northern sisters.

No 850 emerged from Eastleigh works in August 1926, the result of a determined effort by Maunsell to produce a locomotive powerful enough to haul the heavy boat trains single handed, but without breaking the severe weight limits then in place. In fact the loco weighed only a ton or so more than an "Arthur" but with a 30% increase in tractive effort. Until the emergence of the "Kings" it was the most powerful 4-6-0 in the country.

Nelsons were notoriously difficult to fire as a result of the long firebox. As is well known, the design was used as the basis of the LMS "Royal Scots" when Sir Henry Fowler's ideas for a class of Pacifics were thrown out by his Board. But the LMS dropped a cylinder, shortened the firebox and avoided the worst of the firing problems. They also shortened the wheelbase and created a rough rider - Nelsons were very forgiving of poorish track. Like the Scots and Arthurs, Nelsons started

life without smoke deflectors, but they were fitted after drivers complained of poor visibility.

Only 16 Nelsons were built. No 850 seems to have had a fairly unremarkable career, being based at Eastleigh for all of its life. As the Bulleid Pacifics came along, the Nelsons tended to be relegated to secondary work but still put in competent performances. Why was 850 preserved? A good question....it has some unusual features, having cranks set to give 8 beats per revolution and the Lemaitre chimney and blast pipe. It is not really typical of a British 4-6-0 in terms of the much larger numbers of GWR/LMS/LNER locos of that layout. But it is still here; after a long steam-less sojourn at Steamtown, No 850 returned to its birthplace in mid-September, see photograph above by Alan Gosling.

The Eastleigh Railway Preservation Society, restorers of No 828, has been given permission by the NRM to undertake a restoration of 850 to main line standards. ERPS is a small group and we have offered all the help we can to get the engine operational again. Most of all, cash is needed. Although the loco is superficially in good shape, there are cracks in the firebox and she will need a full re-tube - apart from any other less obvious problems that may be uncovered. Representatives of ERPS will be speaking to us at our AGM on 5 January so come and hear how you can help.