



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 24

South of England Group

December 2001

Vice Presidents - Captain Bill Smith VRD, RNR; Alan Pegler

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM YOUR MEMBERSHIP OF THE FRIENDS?

From 1st December 2001 admission to our Museum will be free of charge to all. The only exceptions will be for Thomas The Tank Engine and other specially arranged days when a charge will be made to cover costs incurred. Friends will retain free admission on such days.

For some time now the management of The Friends has been concerned to provide added value to your membership. An improvement in the quality of the quarterly Review has been achieved and will continue, and it is now recognised as leader in its field. But what else is needed?

A group has been formed with a "Brain Storming" remit. George Rutter has been co-opted to this group particularly to represent the membership from far afield. If you have any ideas for benefits which you would like to be made available - no matter how many or how wild please - let him know, preferably in writing but by word of mouth if necessary. Nothing can be promised but you might spark that illusive something.

The aim is to retain the recent growing membership trend, against the perceived loss of benefit. In recent years The Friends have provided a great deal of enabling cash which has attracted funds from other sources and we can only continue with that work by retaining and further developing our membership. In turn the membership needs its rewards. Again, your ideas please.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As advised in the last Briefing, this year's AGM will be held on Monday 14 January 2002 at the Station Meeting Rooms, Marylebone Station - see map overleaf for details. The formal business will start at 19.00 and will be followed by the traditional social gathering with seasonal refreshments. Two members of the committee are due to come to the end of their term - Ian Harrison and Alan Gosling, and both are willing to restand. If you wish to put your name forward for membership to the committee, please get in touch with the Chairman, George Rutter, whose address is overleaf.

There is no charge for attending the AGM, and any member of the Friends, whether they live in the South of England or not, is welcome to attend. There will be a charge of £ 6 for those who wish to remain for the social gathering to cover the cost of the refreshments. Guests are also welcome to the AGM and social (although cannot vote at the AGM). Please send George Rutter a stamped self-addressed envelope, together with your cheque, made payable to "FNRM South of England Group". Tickets for the social will be sent out a week prior to the meeting.

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the South of England Group and arrangements are being made to celebrate this event. The intention is organise a special summer outing in 2002. Arrangements are in hand to visit the Severn Valley Railway on Saturday 20 July where we are planning to have an Observation Car attached to a service train and a buffet provided. The cost is likely to be around £30 per head. We shall also seek an arrangement with Chiltern Railways for special fares from Marylebone, Gerrards Cross, High Wycombe and Banbury for members wishing to travel by that route. Further information will be available in due course.

OUTREACH PROGRAMME

Since the last Briefing, the Outreach team have been very active with visits to a number of model railway exhibitions throughout the region. We started on 20 October for a weekend at the prestigious National Model Railway Exhibition, organised at the Birmingham N.E.C. by Warley Model Railway Club. The event attracted over 15,000 visitors over the two days, and it seemed that most of them paid a visit to our stand. By the Sunday afternoon our stocks were extremely low and we were nearly out of publicity material. Even so, we took over £1500 in sales - greater in the two days of this event than we usually manage to sell over the five days of the successful "Steam on the Met" events during previous years. Needless to say, we have already booked our place at next year's show.

The following weekend saw us at Colchester Model Railway Exhibition. We had a prime spot right next to the entrance and exit which guaranteed that everyone saw us and we made sure that most people went away with some publicity material. Sales, however, were a little disappointing, probably because most people had spent up by the time they exited via our stand!

On 3 November, we rounded off our visits, by attending the High Wycombe Model Railway Exhibition. Again there was a good deal of interest in our stand with Christmas cards and gifts high on the sales list.

Most of the second-hand books mentioned in the last Briefing have now been sold - but get in touch with George Rutter should you be interested in any items on the list - you may be lucky!. Our next year's outreach programme will start at the East Bedfordshire Model Railway Exhibition at Biggleswade on 16 February, when a new version of the mobile "Rocket" display track will have its first outing.



Outreach Stand at the N.E.C.

Photo: Mel Draper

THE WORK OF THE GWR PRESERVATION GROUP

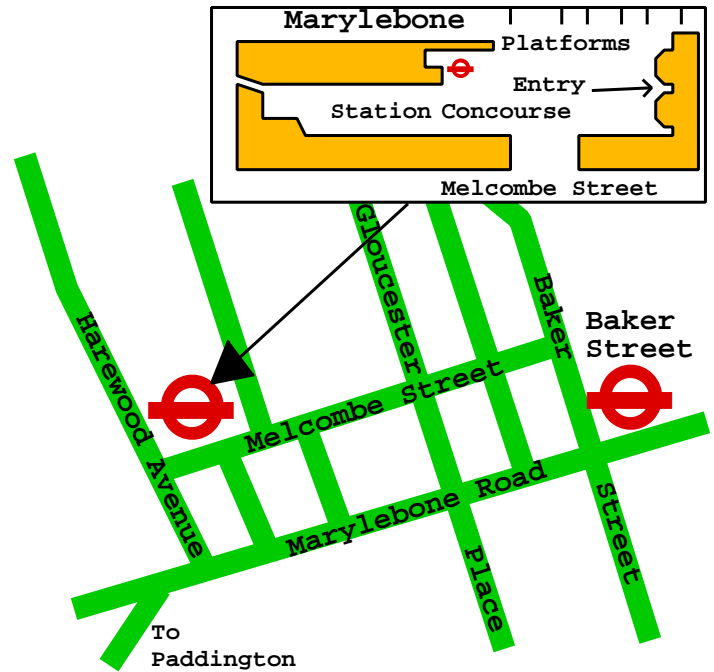
by R. A. Gorringe, Chairman

An advertisement in the Railway Magazine had led to the formation of the group, with membership mainly drawn from West London. Introducing Bob Gorringe to our November meeting, Roy Bell (member 22) noted they had first met at Barry scrapyards on a cold January Sunday in 1975. Bob took up the story - he wanted to purchase an engine, and after a few more visits, identified one, albeit marked for sale to WSR! It took 9 months to raise the purchase price of £6000 and another £2000 to move it, but where? They had decided to run it at Paington when complete, but that would have meant considerable travelling time for the restoration team. Bob identified an old warehouse at Southall. Originally part of the Otto Monsted factory, an early margarine producer (Bob showed us an 1893 photo of the building) and then the Maypole Margarine company, it now belongs to Walls Meat Company. A lease was signed by the Group in 1979 and the first engine arrived later that year. They unsuccessfully investigated running on the adjoining Brentford branch. However, shortly after, Bob heard that the AEC works was about to close and he successfully negotiated to buy their 1938 0-4-0 diesel shunter. The AEC driver gave instructions on how to drive it, although only how to use 2 gears - he had never used the higher gears in the company sidings! The Group's motive power grew again in the early 1980s following a successful tender for one of the remaining two steam locos at the Acton Main Power Station. A RSH engine, which still had two years on its boiler certificate, duly arrived at Southall. Another visit to Barry saw a Pannier tank added to the collection.

Then came the bombshell - Walls Meat Company had sold the site and wanted them out! Coincidentally, the Southall depot was closing. A two year trawl through BR bureaucracy ended on 18 September 1992 with approval for the transfer - just-in-time because a writ had been served on them by the Walls Co. A full day's work saw the move from the old warehouse to Southall shed, but it was two more years before the site could be opened to the public. Attendance grew until, by 1996, some 10,000 people visited. Then in 1997 Railtrack refused to renew the lease. This was a bitter blow, especially as they had just secured a £250,000 local authority development grant. Despite protests nothing would change Railtrack's mind and Flying Scotsman were ready to move in. Despite Railtrack offering to find another site, there was still nowhere to move. Finally, Railtrack agreed to the use of a disused siding, along with a large heated industrial building, left after completion of the Paddington to Heathrow line. While a good facility for restoring stock, it cannot be opened to the public.

Meanwhile South West Trains' Strawberry Hill site was redundant. A planning application from the Group was successful. Back to Railtrack, but they said the lease had to be agreed with South West Trains. Unfortunately they would not agree a reasonable rent. Railtrack, who had previously said they would help secure an alternative site, refused to help! This is the current situation with SWT still making no use of the site and not willing to reduce the rent.

Because of all the uncertainty they lost some members over the years, but the group continues. Although not having public access, they raise money through a sales stand and restoration work still continues. Their latest engine 9682 achieved fame by hauling the Queen and Prince Philip on the Bodmin and Wenford Railway; it is currently on the North Norfolk, and they hope to have it fitted with AWS equipment for running on Railtrack. Meanwhile Flying Scotsman's use of the Southall site has not turned out as expected. Although the engine does come back to Southall, it spends most of its time at Stewart's Lane, and there is some possibility of agreeing some use of the site again, and who knows, we may even see 9682 running on the Brentford branch.



Forthcoming Events

- 14 Jan 2002 AGM and Social, plus some railway related entertainment.
- 11 Mar 2002 "The work of the Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Preservation Trust", Keith Jackson (postponed from November 2001)
- 13 May 2002 "Oxford to Cambridge - then and now", Richard Crane, Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association.

The meetings will be held in the Meeting Room at Marylebone Station. Please enter from the door between Upper Crust and W.H. Smith's Bookstall at the east side of the station concourse. The talks commence at 19.00 and there will be a person on the door to let you in from 18.30. If you arrive after 19.00 and find the door locked, please telephone 0771 554 9907 There will be a voluntary collection to help cover the cost - a donation of around £1 to £2 per head, tea or coffee included. Guests are welcome.

Friends Tours for 2002

Following this year's successful tours to Italy/ Spain and the Isle of Man, see Reviews 96 and 97, arrangements are now complete for a 15 night tour of France starting 19 July. This will take in many preserved, tourist, and scenic lines throughout the country. It will be possible to "drop out" after part of the trip, or join part way through, so there is plenty of scope for flexibility. Why not try out the new Euro currency - and get used to the € symbol. If you're a Euro-sceptic, there is an alternative, a four-night tour of the Great Little Trains of Wales. This starts on Monday 24 June through to Friday 28 June. For more details write to William Greenwood, Friends of the NRM, National Railway Museum York, YO26 4XJ.

Talking of the introduction of the Euro, don't forget the suggestion in Review 97 (page 10) to donate your francs - or drachmas, escudos, lire, marks, pesetas or schillings before the end of February. How about bringing your notes or (French, German or Spanish) coins to the AGM in January?

Contact Addresses for South of England Group

GROUP WEB PAGE - <http://Homepage.ntlworld.com/ms.draper/index.html>

Chairman :

George Rutter, 75 Upper Lodge Lane, Hazlemere, High Wycombe, HP15 7AS : Telephone 01494 716684
e-mail george@rutter75.fsnet.co.uk

Briefing Editor:

Mel Draper, 18 St Margarets Gardens, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 8NU: Telephone 01767 221673
e-mail ms.draper@ntlworld.com