



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 25

South of England Group

March 2002

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

SOUTH OF ENGLAND GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

About 40 members and guests attended the 10th AGM of the South of England Group on 14th January 2002. Apologies were received from Alan Pegler, Capt. Bill Smith, Peter Lugg (who had to attend another function as vice president of the Institute of Civil Engineers), Ian Johnson (FNRM Enterprises) and Henry & Ella Mills who had a bereavement in the family - we send them our condolences. We were joined by William Greenwood representing the FNRM Executive.

George Rutter gave a review of the year's activities, but started by noting that the inaugural meeting of the Group was held in the Science Museum on 22nd January 1992, with 16 members in attendance. These included Roy Bell, Philip Brown, Roger Emerson, Ian Harrison, and Gordon Knowles, all of whom were present for this 10th AGM. A special mention was made of Capt Bill Smith, who has been very supportive of the Group. His recent immobility has prevented his attendance at our events but the Group confirmed its desire that he remains in position.

During the last year, the Group held five evening meetings, organised by Philip Brown. There has been an average attendance of 18 at these events. Our summer visit was to Pendon and Didcot museums with an attendance 20. In addition, four issues of the Briefing have been sent to members. This has been the first year without our top fund raiser "Steam on the Mer". As a result we have had to find alternatives. We attended 13 events, totalling 18 days of sales (compared to 10/18 last year), producing a surplus of £1450 (compared to £1200 in 2000). Our thanks to all who have helped during the past year. However, we had to bear a 70% rise in cost of sales reflect our attendance at the more prestigious Model Railway Exhibitions. Within those Warley Exhibition at the Birmingham NEC was an outstanding success, with attendance in excess of 15,000, many of whom came to the stand. Another rising show is that at Alexandra Palace, but our experience there last year with a small area for a high fee has made us question the merits of attendance. In addition to our surplus, we should bear in mind payments to the museum shop of over £2300 for stock which helps with their takings. More importantly is our contribution of £1500 to Friends Enterprises for the sales of Railway Crests, carriage prints, books and greetings cards. We made a fourth grant of £850 to Eastleigh Railway Preservation Society towards the restoration costs for Lord Nelson. We had hoped that we might be accompanying Lord Nelson on main line tours soon but unexpectedly more extensive repairs to the locomotive boiler has delayed the restoration project and the ERPS is still seeking the solution. Whatever happens, everyone aims to get the locomotive running by Trafalgar Day 2005.

Looking to the future, we must be on the lookout for other fund raising opportunities. In the coming year, several of the Museum's engines will be making outing and we are investigating the possibility of accompanying them with the sales stand. These include *Green Arrow* to Barrow Hill and Quainton Road, the *Super D* to Cheddleton, the *Rocket* replica to Quainton Road and, in the longer term, *City of Truro* to the Gloucester & Warkwickshire Railway. For both of the latter we are ready to take our 4mm examples of the engines to demonstrate on our sales stand track. Philip Brown has again organised a series of evening meetings with a varied programme of speakers, so please do come along and support us and lets see if we can reverse the slight down turn in the average attendance. In

addition, our Summer Outing is something special this year - see the accompanying article.

On the 3 year cycle of elections to the committee, Alan Gosling and Ian Harrison were re-elected, there being no other candidates. George finished by offering his thanks to the committee for their support and announcing that he was standing down from the chair following the AGM, with Dr. Ian Harrison taking over that office. George will, however, continue to be involved in the Group, concentrating on secretarial duties and representing the Group on the Executive and will seek election to Council.

With that announcement, William Greenwood came forward with a surprise presentation for George who has been the driving force behind the Group since its inception. William noted George's untiring work for the FNRM, both through the Group's activities and in his various committee work in York, and the support provided his wife, Margaret, who accompanies him at the events - and provides the refreshments for the AGM social. William concluded by handing George a copy of the recently produced *Mallard* nameplate and commemorative plaque.

Following the formal events, and this surprise presentation, there was a showing of a short video which is aimed at obtaining corporate sponsorship for the Museum - if anyone knows of a possible source of such sponsorship, you can obtain this tape as an introduction to what is on offer.



George Rutter (left) receiving his presentation plaque from William Greenwood
Photo: Dorothy Brown

SUMMER OUTING 2002

As mentioned in the AGM report, above, this year is our 10th anniversary and, for that reason, a special summer outing is being organised. This will take the form of a visit to the Severn Valley Railway on 20th July. We will arrive for the 12.45 departure from Kidderminster, travelling in a specially reserved Observation Coach attached at the rear of the train, for the return journey to Bridgnorth. During the journey there will be a buffet lunch served and a cash bar will be on hand to supply drinks. The cost of the outing is expected to be £35 person, excluding travel to/from Kidderminster. Places in the Observation Coach are limited, so in order to reserve your place complete the enclosed form and return it to George Rutter with your cheque covering a deposit of £15 per person

Arrangements are being made for travel by Chiltern Trains from Marylebone with pick-up points along the route, e.g. Gerrards Cross, High Wycombe, Princes Risborough, Bicester, and Banbury for the journey to Kidderminster. We will attempt to negotiate bulk ticket discounts for this journey so if you would like details please say so on your form.

OTHER DAYS OUT

In addition to the Summer Outing, there are a number of other opportunities for a day out. The main one is the 25th Anniversary Dinner on 25th May. A party from the South of England Group will be attending. We hope to organise a table at the dinner for the SoE party and you are quite welcome to join us - please get in touch with George Rutter who will provide information on the planned travel and accommodation arrangements. Details of the Dinner were given in the last *Review*. Also, don't forget the FNRM AGM on 22nd June; again, a party from the SoE Group will be making the trip to York, so why not join in?

Green Arrow is to make a series of runs between York and Scarborough on the 21st March, 18th April, and 6th May. There are connections from Kings Cross (possibly hauled by D9000) with the usual pickup points. Cost, inclusive of the journey from Kings Cross is £29.50 per person. There are likely to be other trips later in the year. The FNRM sales team will, of course, be on board Further details can be obtained from Hertfordshire Rail Tours, telephone 01438 812122.

"The work of the Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Preservation Trust"

by Keith and Joan Jackson, 11 March 2002

Ian Harrison introduced our husband and wife team of speakers by quoting some notable facts of the LNER. The salary of the General Manager in 1923, Ralph Wedgwood, was £10,000 P.a. (equivalent to £350,000 at today's rates), it employed 220,000 people, generated few dividends for its shareholders, but still managed to persuade its financial backers to come up with the money to introduce its world-beating streamlined trains and special stock.

Keith and Joan, took turns in filling in the history of the Society. It all started with a letter to the railway press in 1965, proposing the formation of a society to preserve an A4 in operating condition on the main line and calling for a monthly contribution of 6s. In May 1966, *Sir Nigel Gresley* was purchased for £4500 from BR. It had run 1,500,000 miles since its construction and was in a very run-down state. An overhaul commenced in August at Crewe. On 5 March 1967, the A4 Locomotive Society was formally instituted at the time of the engine's release from Crewe. The first run from Crewe took place on 1 April, with a high speed run - in fact so fast that the signalman at Warrington saw the track indicators moving so quickly that he thought it was an electrically hauled train. There were some further running in turns from Crewe on parcels trains following this first overhaul. The engine was allocated to one driver, Bert Stewart who became very familiar with running the engine to give its full performance. At that time, there was no support crew, the engine being maintained by BR.

In 1968 steam died on the mainline, and *Sir Nigel Gresley* was exiled to Philadelphia sidings in the North East. Here, the support crew was established, one of whom was John Graham, the current chief engineer of the society. For many years Julian Riddick was the Chairman of the A4 Locomotive Society, and a major driver in the project. Gradually things eased, and 1972 saw the return on a Newcastle-Carlisle run, followed by several others. These were organised by David Ward at BR. In late 1970s the engine went to Carnforth, where two further overhauls were done. These didn't cost too much, which is just as well as the income was not great. However, the overhauls had caused the society to go into debt, but they were bailed out by a member. As a result of lineside fires during its runs over the Settle and Carlisle, spark arresters had to be installed. A series of experiments has had to be made to perfect these and is still continuing.

The Post Office issued their famous-engines stamps in 1985, and they wanted *Sir Nigel Gresley* in steam at Marylebone. Their power as a major railway customer effectively broke the ban on steam in London. The original naming ceremony was on 26 Nov. 1937 at Marylebone by William Whitelaw, Chairman of the LNER, and this was repeated at the Post Office event with a renaming ceremony, presided over by the present William Whitelaw (the original's grandson). As a result of the Post Office's initiative several things happened - regular steam excursions started from London, and Keith and Joan married! Several tours from Marylebone were organised by the Cambridge University Railway Circle, Haddenham and Thame station was opened with a special to Marylebone hauled by *Sir Nigel Gresley*. On one memorable occasion, *Mallard*, *Sir Nigel Gresley* and *Flying Scotsman* were all on Marylebone specials and positioned outside the servicing shed.

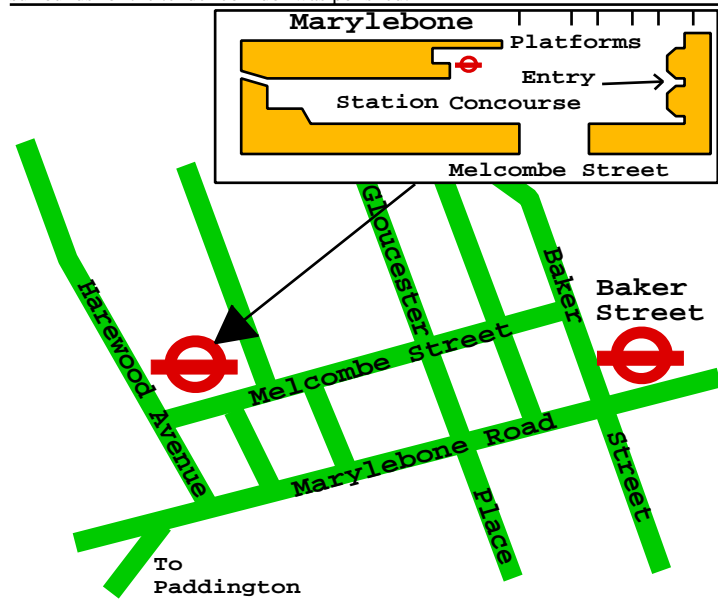
The engine then moved to the Great Central, where they put the loco into BR blue livery and put the commemorative post war speed record plaque. While at the Great Central they decided to go for charitable status and changed the name to Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Preservation Society Trust Ltd. Joan became a trustee, with society members becoming members of the trust. Later, the engine moved via the East Lancs to NYMR, a number of members live nearby and provide the core of the support crew.

Privatisation has removed some restrictions and opened up many possibilities. The main difficulty is the technical supervision of the engine. A Railtrack approved maintenance plan is needed with the support of competent people involved. This makes the whole thing more professional. The loco has visited many preserved railways, which allows more income in a week than in a whole year on the main line. However this produces more wear and tear. The latest overhaul is to Railtrack main line operating standard MT276 being carried out at Grosmont and involving approved contractors. There will be train air brakes and TPWS. A series of photographs taken during the last overhaul at Carnforth showed the components of the engine and Keith described the current state of each of these - most now needing

major refurbishment or replacement. One interesting point was the inside of the mainframes, which is painted white, in an attempt to reflect as much light as possible as no natural light gets down past the streamlined casing - it stays that way for at least a few weeks!

To fund the latest overhaul a case has been made to Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant of £294,000. There is a carefully approved restoration programme, overseen by Richard Gibbon (as independent examiner), and paid for in stages in arrears. The trust is an educational organisation which gives talks over the country.

Philip Brown proposed the vote of thanks, recalling his time as engine cleaner, as recorded by Keith, and the particular need to ensure that the brass window surrounds for the tender corridor was polished.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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.

OUTREACH EVENTS

We have already made our first outreach visits of 2002, to the East Bedfordshire Model Railway Exhibition, on 16th February, and the Reading Vintage Toy Fair on 24th February. We are due to attend the Alexandra Palace Model Railway Exhibition on 23rd and 24th March - following the renegotiation of our stand cost (see AGM report overleaf).

Between 27th March and 4th April, *Rocket* will be visiting the Buckingham Railway Centre at Quanton Road. A few weeks later, between 22nd April and 9th May, her place will be taken by Green Arrow. The SoE stand will be in attendance on 31st March, 1st April, 5th and 6th May. If you intend to visit the site by public transport, you will be interested to know that Chiltern Railways are planning to run shuttles to and from Aylesbury on the Bank Holidays.

In addition to these events, the stand will also be attending the Loddon Model Railway Exhibition at Reading on 11th May, Acton Depot open day on 15th and 16th June, and the Sandy Model Railway and Toy Train Exhibition on 6th and 7th July. Updates will be given on the Group's Web site, see address below. If you would like to take part in any of the events, please get in touch with George Rutter.

Contact Addresses for South of England Group

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

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