



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 29

South of England Group

April 2003

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

11TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

13TH JANUARY 2003

25 members attended the AGM and social which was held in the newly refurbished meeting room at Marylebone station. We are very grateful to the station master for making these facilities available to us.

To start the formal part, our Chairman Ian Harrison gave a review of last year's activities. There had been five evening meetings, ably organised by Phil Brown, with an average attendance of 21. Although we have a well developed forward programme of talks, we would welcome suggestions (and speakers) for future meetings. The Summer visit to the Severn Valley Railway proved very successful, with 23 members & guests attending. We also had four issues of "Briefing" and regular SoE Group contributions to the NRM Review.

Our contribution to the Outreach programme for the Museum included attendance at 16 events totalling 22 days, an increase of 3 events and 4 days from last year. Our sales generated a surplus of £2226, up £287 from 2001. In addition to our surplus, we also made payments to NRM shop of over £1700, and a contribution of over £1300 to FNRM Enterprises. Our thanks to all who have helped during the past year. We put our funds to good use by giving a further grant of £5,000 to the Eastleigh Railway Preservation Society towards the cost of restoring *Lord Nelson*, this being in addition to our four earlier grants of £850.

In accordance with the 3 year cycle for Committee Membership, Philip Brown & Mel Draper were due to stand down but both were duly re-elected. Roger Grant-Smith also agreed to be co-opted to the Committee. This results in a committee consisting of:

Chairman	Ian Harrison
Secretary	George Rutter
Treasurer	Alan Gosling
Meetings organiser	Philip Brown
Editor	Mel Draper
Members	Roy Bell, Norman Lee, Roger Grant-Smith

In addition to the formal activities, everyone had a very enjoyable informal exchange of views while devouring the food and drink.

OUTREACH EVENTS

Our attendance at model railway events continued with our first outing of the year on 15th February to the East Bedfordshire exhibition at Biggleswade. We had a slight problem when we found out that we were not expected! However, the organisers quickly made space for us and we were soon doing business. On 8th and 9th March we attended the St Neots exhibition, having a good spot by the entrance, even selling our first plaque before the event opened. The main event of the Spring took place on 22nd and 23rd March - the London Festival of Model Railways at Alexandra Palace. Our stand space was in the second hall and we had a good flow of visitors on both days, possibly because they had to get past us to see most of the layouts. We carried some new product lines, such as diesel outline mouse mats, and railway theme desk tidies. These, together with our existing lines, produced a steady trade which should more than cover the high costs of attendance. It was encouraging how many of the visitors commented that they had recently been to the NRM, but we still encouraged them to go back and sold the benefits of a visit to those who hadn't been.

Green Arrow visited the South of England but, due to unforeseen circumstances, the programme had to be curtailed. Nevertheless, thanks to Past-Time Rail, we had a presence on board those trips which did run. On 1st February she hauled the return leg of the "Dick Turpin" from York to Kings Cross, her first time at this London terminus since withdrawal in 1962. On 8th March she returned to York hauling the "Scarborough Flyer". This was subjected to a major delay at the start due to various Network Rail problems and further delays on the return behind a clapped-out Class 47. Meanwhile *Green Arrow's* was safely return to the NRM. There should have been two other runs during February but these had to be cancelled for a variety of reasons - none connected with the engine, which performed faultlessly. Despite these problems and the relatively light loading on the trains, we generated a good deal of income from the sale of booklets and mementos.

Our Outreach events will continue over the Summer with visits to various sites throughout the South and, possibly, helping our colleagues in the North in supporting the Doncaster "Works" open days on 26th and 27th July. More details in the next *Briefing*.

COBHAM BUS MUSEUM OPEN DAY 6 April 2003

by Phil Brown

For a change of scene, I went along to the Cobham Bus Museum Open Day. The plan was simple, train to Finsbury Park, then Victoria Line to Vauxhall and train to Weybridge where there would be a shuttle bus service to the Cobham museum site and the main display at Brooklands. However, along with the other "anoraks" I had 2 more bus journeys than expected.

On arrival at Vauxhall it appeared that all down trains were going to Wimbledon. There was no explanation or indication how one could get to stations further down the line. However, when I found the platform supervisors office I was told that there would be buses from Wimbledon to Surbiton, with the trains continuing from there. Consider my confusion when as we approached Wimbledon the announcement was that the bus would go Weybridge. This would be a problem since a friend was to join me on the train at Walton, one station short of Weybridge. Once out of the station, all was clear. There were buses for the various local stations and an express bus to Surbiton. Thank goodness for mobile phones to retime the meeting.

A short walk from Weybridge station and we were boarding one of the old faithful RMs which took us on to Cobham. The museum is based on a former bus depot, whose claim to fame is that during the war it was used by Barnes-Wallis for his "bouncing bomb" research, using the adjacent Silvermere Lake. Outside were a number of its older exhibits, including some K type London buses (with solid tyres) and 2 buses which had once worked in Jersey. Bit of useless information. The bus depot in St Helier on Jersey was so narrow that buses used a turntable, a problem not affecting the railcars of the Jersey Eastern Rly, whose Snow Hill terminus the bus station once was.

Returning to Brooklands there was the sight every commuter dreads. Hundreds of buses but none going their way. I was tempted to see whether Stagecoach would take me home since their bus was going to Biggleswade, apparently. Through the lines of buses moved a hoard of anoraks, notebooks at the ready to record all the vehicle numbers. They were rewarded by buses from all over southern England, from beautifully restored pre-war veterans to ones which had yet to be sullied by the feet of fare paying passengers. It was noticeable how all the latest buses had facilities for wheelchairs to enter and leave. We tried one of the latest buses for the journey back to Weybridge and very comfortable it was too.

By now, the cold was beginning to get through and I was glad to get back on the ubiquitous 4VEP for the journey homewards. The arrangements for the bus link went well (as it had before), for by now the lack of information was not critical to me. In truth the journey out had worked smoothly, but it would have been nice to have received clear details of what was happening.

Two thoughts come to mind in conclusion. With all the buses on the rail replacement service and the open day, what were the normal services using? Why are there so many stations in the area with names starting with W?

SUMMER OUTINGS

As explained in the last *Briefing* we will be making a visit to Yorkshire to coincide with the FNRM AGM on 21st and 22nd June. Thanks to our events organiser, Phil Brown, matters are now well advanced. In addition to the AGM and time at the Museum, the trip will involve an evening tour and buffet at the York Brewery, and a day out on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, including lunch in a special dining coach. It is the latter which means that we are restricted in numbers. While we are at capacity, there is always the possibility that someone could drop out at short notice, so if you want to check if a place is available, please contact Phil Brown (see overleaf). A full report on our experiences will appear in the next edition of the *Briefing*.

In addition to our visit to the North, the Northern Group is coming South. Between 30th May to 2nd June, there will be a trip around the Hampshire and Dorset area. Details were given in the last edition of the *Briefing* and *Review*. Although intended for those members coming down from the North, members in the South are also invited to join in. If you are interested, please get in touch with Brian Knowlman at the Friends office in York

EVENING MEETING 10TH MARCH 2003

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway by Paul Gower

Paul joined the movement to re-instate the L&BR in 1979. He is just completing a new research of the line, having amassed several hundredweight of reference material. He was consequently well equipped to give use a historical journey of the whys and wherefore surrounding the line.

He started the story in 1885, when P&A Campbell, the coastal shipping company relocated to the Bristol Channel from the Clyde and selected Lynton and Lynmouth as one of their destinations. The journey from Minehead, the nearest port, to Lynmouth was about 4 hours. Coaches remained horse drawn until 1920 because of the poor state of the roads. The alternative journey for land-based travellers was not much better. Barnstaple station opened in 1864, but had a 3 hour journey to Lynton. This state of affairs carried on until 1898 when the railway opened.

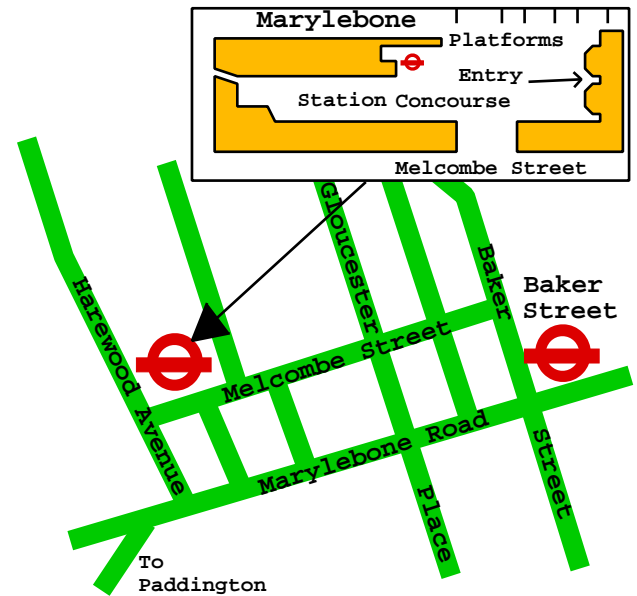
Meanwhile at Lynton, the first inter-urban transport in UK had been built - the cliff railway linking with Lynmouth. This was built by Georges Newnes, the publisher and benefactor of the town. On the opening day his associates from London, who chose the sea route, couldn't land because of the state of the sea - clearly something must be done. When the GWR proposed to build a standard gauge railway to Lynton, Mr Newnes proposed a rival narrow gauge, and cheaper route to Barnstaple, and secured the support of the populace. Paul believes that his reasons for doing this were not altogether altruistic; his personal objective being to avoid day trippers from using the GWR, who could spoil the tranquillity of his holiday retreat in Lynton.

Once the line was opened, it quickly became apparent that the scheme was not the business success the locals had wanted. Working expenses ate up the whole of the income, and a dividend was not paid until 1913. Gradients were severe and long, and any train over 4 coaches had to be double headed. Like many light railways, the stations were nowhere near the villages they were supposed to service and so could not compete with the new motor buses. Mr Newnes bought some buses to bring passengers to the railway, but these failed and were ultimately sold to GWR.

Until 1933, the carriages didn't have heating other than than cast iron water bottles. However, to attract summer tourists (of high social standing of course!) observation saloons were constructed. These were initially open, but were glazed when sparks set 1st class passengers clothes on fire; the 3rd class remained open to the end. Despite the operating costs, the management didn't cut any corners to make sure that their benefactor could be proud of the line. Shed staff had to polishing on the locomotive tank sides with a "fish-scale" pattern, changed daily, so that the Supervisors could easily check that the job had been done.

Despite these problems, the LBR has a number of "firsts" to its name: it was first to have concrete sleepers, to have all bogie coaches, to have roller bearings on the coaches, all fitted goods stock, and the first motor bus feeders

Paul finished his talk by looking to the future. A partly restored line will open on May 11th this year at Woody Bay, initially running demonstration goods trains. Snapper Halt is being bought by some supporters for transfer to the company, representing another step on the way to reinstating this fascinating line. Note that there is an unrestored L&BR coach in the "garden" at the NRM.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 12th May "Operating or Wrecking the National Collection",
Richard Gibbon, NRM
- 8th September "IT developments at the NRM",
Robin Gray, NRM.

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.

OVERSEAS EQUIVALENTS OF THE NRM - THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM, SYDNEY

With the very high quality of our railway museums in the UK, foremost of which is, of course, the NRM, there is a danger that we overlook the offerings in other countries. This is intended to be the first of a series of articles looking at some of the leading museums in the world which have railway transport displays. I hope it will be useful if you are planning a holiday to the countries covered and give an impression of how they compare with our facilities.

As your editor has just returned from a trip to the Antipodes, it makes sense to start there with a visit to Sydney's *Powerhouse* Museum. This is relatively new, housed in an old power station, and is now the country's main general science and technology museum. The conversion has been done very well, producing a four-storey exhibition, with easy access for the disabled to all floors, a well stocked shop, two cafe's, theatre and education rooms. Pride of place at the entry, is Engine No 1, a 0-4-2 Robert Stephenson & Co. product of 1854 (works No 958) This engine pulled the first train in New South Wales on 24th May 1855, and is displayed with a mixed replica/restored contemporary train. One interesting diversion is that in each of the coaches are mannequins, set out as passengers and, if you put your head through the window, you can overhear their conversations. Nearby is a display of "bridge" rail recovered from the original first line in New South Wales. Housed in the original Turbine Hall is the main transport display. Dominating this is the old departure board from Sydney Station, very reminiscent of the one at London's Waterloo during the first part of last century. Here you can also see 4-4-0 locomotive, No 1243 of 1862, together with the

1891 Governor's personal saloon coach - a step down from our Royal coaches, but impressive, nonetheless. A climb up some steps gives access to a signal box which has been converted into a display of public transport through Australia's history, covering road, sea and air, as well as rail. Still with a rail theme, is a display of trams, including a C-class electric car of 1898. There is a fascinating interactive video display showing the development of the system, as well as a display of Australian tram-track construction, including the use of Australian hardwood sets which, apparently, were hard wearing as well as quieter than our own granite equivalents. For those with a more general interest in steam, there is an extensive collection of stationary and mobile steam engines, housed appropriately enough in the old boiler house. This includes an (historic) example of what happens when a boiler goes bang! Nearby is an original Boulton and Watt engine which is still steamed at regular intervals.

With its other displays covering manufacturing, air transport, chemistry, musical instruments, and a very extensive spacecraft exhibition, not to mention its regular rotation of temporary exhibition, the museum is well worth a visit. Like the NRM, there is a membership support organisation, which provides benefits to its members - including free admission. One thing made me envious, the well equipped members room housed on the top floor of the museum, with its own kitchen, lounge chairs and library.

Next time, across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand to look at some of their Museums.

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