

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

12th September 2005

The work of the Railway Mission since 1881

Ian Markey

Chairman, The Railway Mission

10th October 2005

The work and developments in the NRM Engineering Department

Jim Rees

NRM Rail Vehicle Collections Manager

14th November 2005

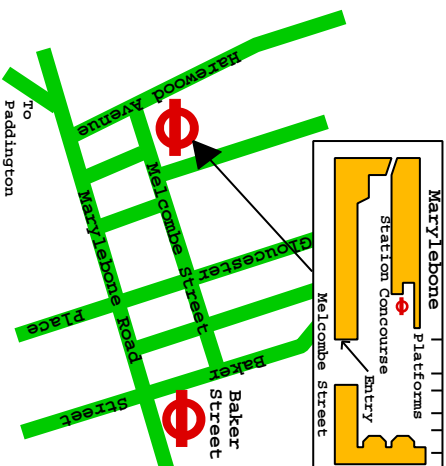
Kent & East Sussex Railway reborn

Donald Wilson

K&ESRY

AGM and Social, plus some railway

related entertainment



The meetings will be held in the Conference Room at Marylebone Station. Please enter from the door at the left within the gateway at the entrance to 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 - we suggest a donation of around £1 to £2 per head - tea or coffee included. Guests are welcome. Meetings usually finish by 21.00.

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The Friends of the

National Railway Museum

Briefing 38

South of England Group

June 2005

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

OUTREACH REPORT

On 2nd and 3rd April we attended the London Festival of Model Railways at Alexandra Palace. This is the largest show in the South of England taking up two of the halls. We were strategically placed at the entry to the second hall. As this was the one with most of the layouts, we were visible to virtually all visitors. Our stand was a little compressed but we managed to display a good selection of goods and leaflets. We had plenty of interest, especially on the future of Flying Scotsman, including the planned excursions on the main line. As there were many specialist model railway clubs in attendance, it is not surprising that we were quizzed on some of the more esoteric aspects of the history of railways and the Collection locomotives. Many are unaware of the resources available at the Museum and, of those we spoke to, many would welcome the improvements planned by Helen Ashby (see separate note of her talk). We encouraged several people to make visits up to York, even attempting to get a visitor from the US to make the pilgrimage. I'm not sure whether he will, but he bought a railway company plaque all the same! Sales were up on last year, which seems to be a general, and welcome, trend this year.

Our next event was at the Trinity Church

in Biggleswade on 11th June. This is where Martin Dawes, author of the book on the Great Northern Cemetery Railway, is minister. We had a surprise visitor, the Bishop of St Albans, who was attending a nearby meeting of the Church diocese and dropped in (see page 5). The Bishop of Bedford, unfortunately had another engagement and sent his apologies. Not bad patronage for a local show!

Our next event will be the Sandy Train Collectors Fair on 2nd and 3rd July, with the East Hertfordshire Model Engineering Society open weekend on 9th and 10th July. The latter is held at their grounds in the Garden Centre at Great Annwell, Ware, on the A1170 road to the south of Ware. It is well worth a visit not just to see the live-steam 7" gauge locos and model railways in various scales, but to pick up a plant or two at the same time!

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EVENING LECTURE 14th MARCH 2005

Helen Ashby, NRM

On seeing her visiting card, some have commented that Helen must "know a lot", in her position as Head of Knowledge and Collections at the NRM. Her 90 minute talk lived up to this reputation, covering her oversight of the "stuff" in the National Collection. "Stuff" is a bona fide term, referenced in the International Council of Museums (ICM) guidance as "any item or thing suitable for documentation in an archive". Helen's job is to give the public greatest access to this stuff at the Museum, its library, Internet web site, or via sharing exhibits with other bodies. Only through such sharing can knowledge be put to use.

The collection got going following the 100th anniversary of railways in 1925, although some items pre-date that. Apart from the LNER site, access to items was limited, until the Clapham museum really formed the "national collection".

The acquisition policy dictates the collection, and Helen dedicated her talk to this activity. New items must be "key" to the telling of a particular railway "story", and current policy is targeted at gap-filling. Items will be cared for according to the national and international standards for museums and there are partnerships with other bodies to share exhibits and storage. All potential acquisitions are judged against 4 criteria:

- Is it relevant to the Museum aims?
- Is there a use for the object?
- Is it reasonably complete?
- And does it have good provenance.

Further prioritisation comes from the "assessment criteria", each being graded according to a 10 point score. These assess whether the item is:

- Unique or scarce?
- Representative of a type?
- Worthy of preservation?
- Part of an established series?
- An important development?
- Represent a significant event or change in history?
- Of regional, national or international importance?
- and whether a surrogate, e.g. a model, suffice to stimulate the audience?

Every item must score at least one "10" against one category, and at least "20" overall. In addition it must get markings for regional, national or internationally significance. The Board of the Collections Development Group meets monthly to make the final assessment.

An item is ruled out if its preservation would run counter to the ICM code of ethics, e.g. it contains radioactive, hazardous, or illegal substances. This may seem hypothetical, but it was found that the LEV had been used by someone sleeping rough - it had to be professionally checked for both hazardous materials and banned substance.

Once in the collection, the new Multi-media Information Management System (MIMSY) indexes every item, gives location and status, and links to relevant information. The Museum's storage facilities are not ideal; the Warehouse and Shildon are the exception, but other storage at Foundry Lane, the Station Hall basement, Blythe House (near the Science Museum), and the old Bristol Temple Meads trainshed basement leave a lot to be desired. The aim is to consolidate all these stores in a new, purpose-built York

Neil finished his talk with some pictures of artefacts which have been designated by the RHC. Inevitably these included some of the 11 Cuneo pictures in the national collection, but also the embossing stamp used by the GWR board, and the box containing the company stamp (this produced some interesting comments on the interpretation

Helen Ashby - continued from page 3

Rocket, the original, will never be restored and not even the most radical railway enthusiast would have it otherwise. The working and sectioned replicas show how it looked and worked. The archaeological survey by Michael Bailey and John Githero, gave us a comprehensive record of this iconic loco.

Some exhibits are just too big! Take the BR Boiler wagon set; even if it could go undercover, it would be too unwieldy. It moved boilers, and it's built like one, so it will not suffer from being outside. An occasional lick of paint is all it needs.

Other items need more attention. The SR 2B1L set suffered years of neglect and is in the workshop undergoing major renovation. It will then be on static display - there is no 3rd-trail track and the NRM has no intention of laying any bearing in mind the hazards to visitors!

Modern exhibits come with complete documentation, even driving manuals, so there is little danger in destroying evidence for future generations and it is quite in order to operate and repair them.

Finally, Helen addressed a new challenge - how to preserve the "intangibles", e.g. working skills, traditions and personal experiences. The National Railway Community Archive is an attempt to do just this. Visitors may use a computer, scanner, printer and voice recorder, to preserve their railway-related memories. This allows everyone to share experiences

of the letters S and D beside the two locks. Perhaps both the company secretary and a director had to be present to gain access to the company seal.

At the end of the meeting, Neil invited those who wanted more information on the Railway Heritage Committee to take copies of its 2003 annual report, or to look at its web-site www.rhc.gov.uk.

and can capture different views of the same event - the perspectives of a union member, management and customer of, say, a railway strike can be quite different. The National Archive of Oral Railway History, supported and run by the Friends, is another example. Trained volunteers interviewed a broad selection of railway employees and committed the results to audio tape. The collection of some 500 interviews is now catalogued and many have been transcribed and made available to researchers. What about the engineering and technical skills needed for locomotive and rolling stock restoration? The NRM has recruited its first "Modern Apprentice" who is being trained in practical and theoretical disciplines by the existing workshop team, supplemented by lessons at York College. More are likely to follow.

Helen restated her commitment to make the collection as accessible as possible, but noted some limits, such as health & safety requirements, will remain - some visitors are amazingly "lemming-like"!

Questioning was wide ranging, covering the challenges posed in maintaining the archive of audio and graphical material in the face of continual changes in technology, and the management of links with other museums and institutions. The Chairman, Dr Ian Harrison, proposed a well-deserved vote of thanks for this insight into the work of the Museum.

EVENING LECTURE 11th April - "Railway Heritage Committee", T Neil Butters, SRA

Following Helen Ashby's explanation of the NRM collection policy on 16th March we heard from Neil Butters, of the SRA, how the Railway Heritage Committee identifies artefacts and records for retention for posterity.

Neil's interest in railway heritage began early, attending school in Brackley enabled him to take the last train out of Marylebone calling at Brackley, changing at Leicester for the last scheduled passenger train north of Aylesbury on the former GCR line. Later, he worked at 222 Marylebone Road with its splendid heritage toilet seats inherited from the former hotel.

The development of railways in Britain were an essential part of the industrial revolution. They introduced the concept of a national time standard (later Neil was to show us the plaque on Church Stretton station which gave the difference between local time and railway time). In their time the railway companies were the largest corporations in Britain and were in the forefront of the development of company law. To ensure that this heritage was not lost, the Railway Heritage Committee was set up to designate railway records and artefacts for preservation and to agree the disposal of these when they were no longer required for operational use - in a manner similar to the "Listed Building" concept. Their responsibility cover only movable artefacts - the preservation of stations and other structures is the responsibility of the Railway Heritage Trust. The RHC remit covers all the former BR organisation. However, after privatization, some of the railway organisation was absorbed in companies without a railway background, e.g. the track maintenance companies and the

railway research laboratories (now part of AEA Technology). Work is in hand to extend the scope of the RHC to cover the new private rail companies. The former LT railways are not within scope, being covered by their own museum.

As rail enthusiasts we are keen to retain the artefacts, but from a historical point of view, the company records were of equal importance. Annual reports and board meeting minutes have always been a useful source of information along with engineering drawings, but the RHC extended its remit to include such things as organisation charts, staff newsletters and magazines (will our own "Briefing" get designated status?). Some problems were encountered. The original Brunel signed copies of some civil engineering drawings were still in use! New, or replacement, documents are held only in electronic form and the archiving technique for these is still in its infancy. With privatization, the Public Record Office is no longer available for archiving these records so an alternative is being sought. The NRM's proposed Search Engine project is a possible solution. (It is hoped that we can have a talk on that project in our 2006/7 season.)

Some designations may seem "overkill". For instance, all the HST fleet is designated. However, as Neil explained, these units have years of work ahead of them. The most suitable will be retained at the time of withdrawal. To designate a particular unit now would be inviting it to be the one involved in an accident! Not only rolling stock is covered - we were shown examples of Eurostar uniforms which are set for preservation, and the the plaque on Church Stretton station has been designated.

facility. This will also offer a new reading room with facilities both for serious, accredited researchers and casual visitors.

Some railway societies have provided valuable contributions by indexing and scanning the drawings archive. Helen would like to invite others to help (the job is massive), but lack of space and a poor environment for drawings (and volunteers!) means that this is seriously constrained. The current store is located under the platforms of the Station Hall. There are problems over water ingress, mainly when heavy rains overloads the drainage system (it is above river level so does not suffer from that source). The basement under the cafeteria has other problems - rodents attracted by the discarded food; luckily they have not yet discovered a taste for the archive! Nevertheless, this does show how urgently better storage is needed.

Even the "best stuff" has its problems. Helen showed us some damage to Queen Victoria's Carriage. This was due to the ravages of time and, surprisingly, because the very best, and most opulent, materials were used. The pressure of the cotton overstuffing in the pure silk cushions has led to separation of the silk threads. Specialist renovators (the same ones used by the National Trust) were called in to skilfully back the damaged material with equivalent fabric. Microscopic stitching was used to make the repair virtually invisible. The renovated interior is now displayed using state-of-the-art fibre-optic cables in the original gas-lighting fittings. The result is similar to its appearance in service. Carefully controlled heating and humidity will preserve it that way.

There is much discussion on how to conserve the more mundane rolling stock. The answer depends on how much of the original fabric remains. If conservation risks damaging original material, it is

generally left well alone. For example *Lode Star* still has its original Swindon paint, so the removal of asbestos was done carefully to avoid any damage. *Winston Churchill* is in the same state as at withdrawal, and removal of the work-hardened grime would be unforgivable. A more flexible approach can be used with other prestigious locos. *City of Turro*, and *Flying Scotsman* have been subject of so much past restoration work that little remains from their original build. But the iconic status of the locomotive needs to be maintained, so professional restoration is quite appropriate as and when required. The business case for *City of Turro*'s latest restoration could be questioned as its main line outings have been very lightly loaded. Recent visits to preserved lines have been more fruitful. *Duchess of Hamilton* has also undergone several restorations, but unlike *Turro* and *Scotsman*, there are other examples of the class running, so the Museum cannot currently justify restoring it to running condition. However, cosmetic conversion to streamlined form could give it a unique position in the story of this powerful locomotive class - a feasibility study is underway. The Lynton & Barnstaple coach is another interesting, and quite different case. After withdrawal in 1934, this became a garden summer house. It is a unique survivor, but should it be restored to operating condition? Considering it has spent most of its life as a summer house, that there is no running gear and no suitable line to run it on at the NRM, it is not surprising that it continues to be exhibited in "as is" condition. Visitors are equally split between those who want it restored and those that don't, so the best compromise is to leave it.

(continued on page 7)

NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM

Here is another in the occasional series of world railway museums.

If you look around Brooklyn at the junction of Boerum Place and Schermerhorn Street, you will see what appears to be an ordinary entry to a subway. Yes, there is no grand entrance to this museum, just a hole in the ground! Built in the decommissioned Court Street subway station, the museum is two stories high, or rather deep. On the lowest level are the collection of New York Subway Cars, some 20 in all, the oldest dating from 1907. Nearly all are accessible, so you can explore the insides, with their fascinating collection of interior



Photographs clockwise from top left:



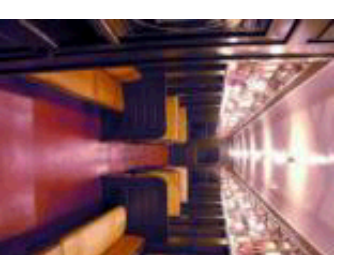
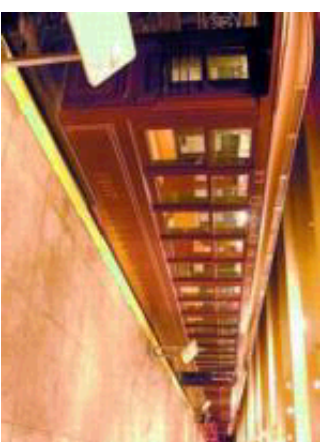
advertising, most of which are originals of the period when the specific car was in service. On the upper level there is a history of New York public transport, covering not only the subway and surface railways, but the elevated railway and street tramways (both once extensive but now gone) and the buses – the short-lived trolley buses, modern diesel and the soon-to-come non-polluting versions. There is a small shop, but at the time of my visit there were no refreshment facilities. For a modest entry fee of \$5, you can spend a fascinating few hours investigating public “transportation” in the Big Apple. Nearest N.Y. Subway station is “Borough Hall” on the 2, 3, 4 or 5 lines.



Steep-cab electric loco No 5 (1910) used for maintenance;

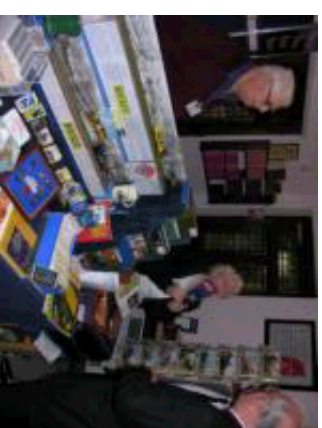
The “hole-in-the-ground” entry to the museum;

General view of platforms with IRT “R36” cars No 9542 & 9543 Manufactured by the St. Louis Car Co. and in passenger service from 1964. Some of these “Redbirds” were used to make artificial reefs along the Atlantic coast when withdrawn in 2003.



Above: external and internal view of BRT Brooklyn Union Elevated Car No 1407 (1907);
Left: Display of signs from 1904 and Grand Central (1918) and subway automatic block signal (1935)

A BISHOP VISITS



At the “Trains at Trinity” show on 11th June, the Bishop of St. Albans, the Right Reverend Christopher Herbert, paid an impromptu visit. He is seen, top left, talking to George Haslar and Dorothy Brown on the FNRM stand, above, with George Howe of Sandy Transport Society discussing the merits of brass Railway pay tokens, and left, admiring the 3mm layout Tytenhanger Lane, with the Biggleswade Methodist Minister, Martin Dawes, and our own Phil Brown.