

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

14th January 2008

AGM and Social, plus some railway related entertainment.

11th February 2008

The Romance of Steam on the London, Chatham & Dover Railway

Mr Alan Postlethwaite.

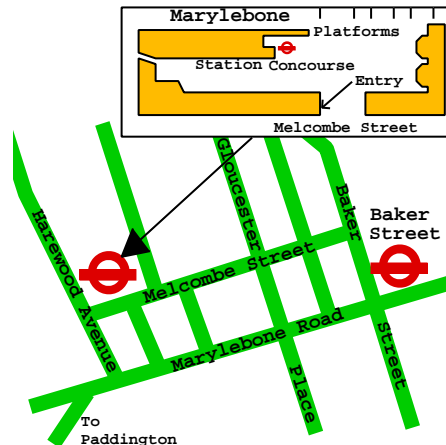
10th March 2008

Members Slide evening

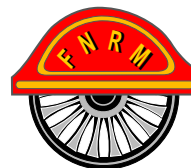
14th April 2008

'Be "Safe" Men!' Making Railway Workers Safe, 1900-1939

Mike Esbester, IRS York



Meetings are held in the Conference Room at Marylebone Station. Please enter from the door at the left within the station entrance gateway. The talks commence at 19.00 but 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 is a voluntary collection to help cover the cost - we suggest a donation of around £1 to £2 per head - tea or coffee included. Meetings usually finish 21.00 and guests are welcome.



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 48

South of England Group

December 2007

Vice Presidents - Alan Pegler OBE, FRSA; Sir William McAlpine Bt, FRSE, FCIT, FRSA

AGM AND SOCIAL

It's coming up to that time of year again. January 14th will see the holding of our Annual General Meeting which, as always, will be accompanied by a New Years Social with suitably festive refreshments and entertainment.

Normal business at the AGM comprises a review of the Group's activities and finances over the last year, together with the election of two committee members, as required by our constitution. The two committee members whose posts are up for election are Ian Harrison, our Chairman, and Alan Gosling - both are willing to stand again. If you have any further business for the AGM or wish to serve on the committee, please contact our secretary George Rutter.

Attendance at the AGM is open to any member of the FNRM, whether or not they reside in the South East of England. However, to cover the costs of the refreshments, there is a charge of £7 for participation in the New Years Social. That's the first increase for seven years - and equivalent to an annual inflation rate of 2.2%, for those of an economics leaning. An attendance form is enclosed. You might wish to come prepared to discuss some items. The first is the subject of our summer outing for the coming year. We alternate these between

full weekends and one-day outings. Although last year you had the opportunity to partake in both kinds (see page 4 for the second outing report) this coming year will be a single day outing. We have had several suggestions for suitable destinations - a trip down the Thames on the paddle-steamer *Waverley*, a visit to the Amberley Working Museum, Bluebell Railway, Romney Hythe & Dymchurch or even Kensal Green Cemetery (no, not to plant anyone, but to have a guided tour of the railway related residents there). It's now crunch time and Les Butler, our outdoor events co-ordinator, needs a decision.

The second is an appeal for some help. George Rutter, who has been the foundation of the Group since its inception, is about to move house. As a result, he will no longer be able to hold the stock and display equipment for our Outreach stand. We need to someone to

Contact Addresses for South of England Group GROUP WEB PAGE - <http://www.nrmfriends-south.org.uk/index.html>

Chairman :

Ian Harrison, 1 Kestrel Road, Kempshott, Basingstoke, RG22 5PA
Telephone: 01256 326081
chairman@nrmfriends-south.org.uk

Secretary :

George Rutter, 75 Upper Lodge Lane, Hazlemere, High Wycombe, HP15 7AS
Telephone 01494 716684
secretary@nrmfriends-south.org.uk

Briefing Editor :

Mel Draper, 18 St Margarets Gardens, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 8NU
Telephone: 01767 221673
editor@nrmfriends-south.org.uk

Indoor Events Coordinator :

Philip Brown, 75 Dells Lane, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 8LH
Telephone: 01767 312576
meetings@nrmfriends-south.org.uk

Outdoor Events Coordinator :

Les Butler, 15, Cophall Corner Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks SL9 0BZ
Telephone: 01753 885588
outings@nrmfriends-south.org.uk

INDEX

AGM/New Year Social	1
Sutton Coldfield Rly	2
Summer Outing 2 - Frimley park	4
Outreach report	5
Bill Smith commemorative Bench	5
NRM-Building Our Future from the Past	6
Forthcoming Events	8

volunteer to take over. Since we already have a North-of-London stand sub-group, in the form of Phil Brown and your editor, it would be ideal if someone in the south and/or west of London area could volunteer both to hold a share of the stock and service events in that area. That would solve both the immediate storage

issue and give us greater ability to reach areas of the region we have not yet covered. Anyone willing to take part in Outreach events is always welcome, whether or not able to store equipment.

So plenty to discuss and, with the usual food and entertainment, plenty to eat, drink and be merry about.

Lecture Report 8th October 2007

"THE LITTLE ENGINES THAT WENT TO SLEEP"

Mr John Tidmarsh, Sutton Coldfield Miniature Railway

John has worked as a professional railway engineer for BR, and Dutch Railways, but it is the 15" gauge that is his passion and, in particular, the long-lived vehicles on the Sutton Coldfield Miniature Railway.

John started with a brief history of miniature railways, tracing them back to the loco "Effie" of 1875 and the American Cagney locos. However, when Bassett-Lowke, and his designer Henry Greenly, entered the scene the UK market really expanded. They built quarter-scale models of main-line express engines - *Little Giant* of 1905 was the first which, after trials in Northampton Park, ran for many years at Blackpool pleasure beach.

At the time Sutton Coldfield was a popular leisure destination for many Birmingham residents. In 1907, the park management decided to try out a miniature railway and brought in "Nipper" a 10¼" gauge loco, which proved conclusively that there was a demand. During the winter of 1907 the line was relayed with 15" gauge track and a new locomotive "Mighty Atom" was obtained to the Bassett-Lowke design. It reopened the following year when rides were offered to an admiring public at the princely sum of 1^d for the ¼ mile ride.

Meanwhile Bassett-Lowke was involved in exports, opening a line at Nancy in Eastern France. He arranged to take

Mighty Atom to the new line in 1909, replacing it with another engine. World War I intervened, the park being used by the army as a training ground - including occasional rides on the miniature railway! At this time, Bassett-Lowke's "Miniature Railways GB" went into liquidation, but somehow "Mighty Atom" reappeared in the guise of "Prince of Wales" in 1919 at Southport. In 1929 it moved to Great Yarmouth where it was rebuilt. That line was very innovative and built a petrol-electric railcar, using an Austin 7 engine. The Austin company impressed, using photos in their publicity and even badged the carriages with the Austin logo.

In 1937, Pat Collins bought the railway equipment from Great Yarmouth and relayed it at Sutton Coldfield, opening it as the "Crystal Palace Railway", named after the park's 1851-vintage glasshouse (based on the Great Exhibition building). The line's layout was much altered from the pre-WWI version and the ride was now ¾ mile long. Then WWII got in the way and the line became very run down. In 1948 Mr T. J. Hunt bought the railway and another engine - a larger version of the Bassett-Lowke types, called "Douglas Clayton" and renamed it "Sutton Belle".

The park's fairground prospered after the war, and a third engine, "Sutton Flyer" joined the railway in 1952. At this point

will be centre-stage.

A railtour from London to Edinburgh on July 5th & 6th will see, at certain times, all four UK-based Gresley A4s in the NRM yard. This will happen when the railtour stops at York to change engines.

The York Theatre Royal will have their annual summer season performing "The Railway Children" at the NRM, from mid-July to end August - with real trains!

Key Developments: The Search Engine opens for business on 4th December, providing a drop-in centre, enquiry service, research centre, and exhibitions. Only the front of house will be complete, the rear still needs miles of shelves filling. While search engine will not immediately do anything to improve internet access to the 2-D collection, it will provide much better physical access for researchers, with more material digitized in coming years. The Friends may provide volunteer research assistants to help with enquiries. This chargeable service will also have the benefit of collating information which can be retained by the Museum, as well as generating funds for the Friends.

NRM+ aims to transform the Great Hall, the format of which hasn't changed much since opening. Andrew recognises the need to balance retaining the "wow" factor provided by the big exhibits, but fewer vehicles will be presented around themed topics - see above. To get the Hall ready will require £40M for a new single entrance (near the wheel), orientation area, restaurant, and new displays. A project brief is targeted for March 2008.

NRM occupies 28 of 100 acres of potential development area, the so-called "York Central". With its booming local economy, York needs this development opportunity. Recently, Network Rail, the land owner, has expressed interest in moving forward, but they still need to get

the Regional Development Agency to invest in the infrastructure (bridges) to provide the necessary good site access.

Locomotion is currently has 140,000 visitors pa. [c.f. 60,000 target] but there is a large list of small improvements which are needed, such as the renovation of the coal drops and stables. A new centre targeted at schools in the north east, is also being considered. This will cost £3M capital, but local councils will need to cover running costs.

Locomotive Rebuilds. *Oliver Cromwell* had less than 20 years service but has still taken a lot of time and cash to restore to running. *Flying Scotsman* had a cracked right hand cylinder, and a new cylinder is ready, but still has to be re-aligned and fix in place. *Lord Nelson* was inspected by insurance engineers and the HSE, and is in better condition than expected. The problems may be limited to the firebox crown, and tests are in hand to see if a relatively simple repair is possible. Other engines on loan include *City of Truro*, Beattie Well tank, and Super D. D200 is just back at York for repair but will then go out on loan. *Green Arrow* is about to have its inspection with the aim of a final 6 month permit. It is unlikely to run again for a long time as the NRM can't afford to have six big engines in operation. The T9 is at the Bluebell but needs to be relocated, and the 4F is to leave Butterley due to lack of progress on its restoration.

Commercial Models: The Museum is taking some joint risks with Backmann to commission OO models. The prototype *Deltic* will, hopefully, be the first of a series of iconic National Collection models. So far 1000 have been sold with first batch due for delivery in mid December.

So a fascinating and challenging future lies ahead for the NRM and we wish Andrew every success.

BUILDING OUR FUTURE FROM THE PAST

Andrew Scott - Head of the NRM

On 12th November, an audience of 29 was present as Andrew paid us a welcome visit. Andrew thanked the Group for "putting the word about" in the South and in return our Chairman, Ian Harrison, gave Andrew a photo of Bill Smith and engine 1247, which Andrew promised to display by the engine at Shildon.

Visitors - The NRM is the most visited museum outside London, with about 750,000 expected this year. Attendance was lowest in 1994 at 380,000. Last year's launch of the Yorkshire Wheel drove an increase to 905,000; Railfest had a similar effect in 2004. Without these special events, as this year, attendance is steady or dropping. Many people enthuse about the museum but haven't visited for many years, so we need to attract them with something new - after all, there is much competition for their attention. Two approaches are possible: a series of short term events, and changes to the core display to offer something new. An example of the latter was the 2006 launch of the *Flying Scotsman* story. Public investment in UK museums is large e.g. recently Hull received £75M and Sheffield £40M, but not in York! Because of its healthy economy, York is the only city in the North ineligible for grant assistance. Although central government funds the NRM, they only cover about 70% of running costs, so attracting other income and is essential.

The Vision - The museum needs to be seen as "the one stop shop" chosen by people from all walks of life to help them explore the work of the railway. It is definitely not just a depository for the relics of the steam age. In this regard, it is reasonably successful - the press often approach the NRM for background to stories, the re-opening of St. Pancras

stimulating the latest round.

Andrew's aims for the NRM to be seen as the world's leading transport museum. So competition comes not only from other international railway museums, e.g. Sacramento, but the "big-boys" museums, such as the US National Air and Space Museum. This is a big challenge.

Attraction: Even if readers of all railway magazines visited, this would still be less than half current attendances. Most visitors are just ordinary members of the public. But feedback suggests that there is insufficient structure for their visit, just being left to themselves. Andrew believes the NRM must be better at telling the story via "themed" museum tours. Examples could be:

- Shrinking our world
- Trains cars and planes - how railways deal with competition
- Tomorrows mobility

Immediate Priorities: The themes will take time to develop, but there are more immediate things to do. Next year will be the Chinese Olympics. The NRM has commissioned Michael Rhodes, already an accomplished railway photographer, to seek out examples of the old and new Chinese railway community. He has been trained as an oral history interviewer so he can capture the people and their stories. The resulting exhibition will run from March to Summer and use the Chinese Engine in the Great Hall as its focus.

Next year is the 40th anniversary of the end of steam on BR. "1968 and all that", covering 9 days of the Spring Bank Holiday will tell the story of this major change. It will be similar to, but not as big as, Railfest, with visiting engines, and stalls (we are invited!). *Oliver Cromwell*

"Prince of Wales" was put into store after over 40 years of service from its origins as *"Might Atom"*. Slightly earlier, another petrol loco, based on a GWR railcar, was built for the line, joining the Austin railcar as the "modern-image" traction. At this time, a 2½ litre Daimler-engined loco called *"Dingo"* was briefly tested at the Sutton Railway but did not stay. The *"Sutton Flyer"* achieved fame when it became the first "foreign" engine to run on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway in 1959.

In 1950's heydays, when John was a driver, the Sutton line normally used only one engine in steam. However, on busy days, both steam engines and the petrol vehicles were pushed into service. This could cause some difficulty as all the line's signals were dummies! The technique adopted was to hold one train on departure just outside the station until the second was approaching on the return, at which point the departing train went off. Meanwhile a third train, in one of the platforms, was loading up. This way they could handle up to 1,200 passengers a day and over 100,000 passengers in the year. The peak season was when the new station was built in 1957, but the end was not long in coming - 7 October 1962 when the lease on the land expired. The council made it clear they were unwilling to extend it, so all the stock was packed up, the line lifted and the site vacated.

And so things remained for nearly 40 years until Bill Hunt (T.J.'s son) received a call from Chris Shaw. Chris had put together a proposal for National Heritage Lottery funding to build a line in Cleethorpes to resurrect the old Sutton operation - and he was successful! T.J. and later Bill, had always refused to sell the stock piecemeal or to overseas buyers, in the hope of seeing it kept together and

operated again in UK. So the Cleethorpes proposal was too good to miss. Once everything was agreed, the engines and rolling stock were taken out of store, quickly overhauled and packed off to the R.H.D.R. for testing. Amazingly, with just a quick clean of the plugs and a new battery, the petrol-engined railcar started "first time out of the box". Indeed it ran so well, it nearly broke the line speed limit! The steam locos also worked perfectly. John was driver of the *"Sutton Flyer"* at the head of a special two-coach train, carrying the collected UK miniature-railway experts, over the Romney marshes - despite worrying if he had lost the knack, he managed it flawlessly.

So everything was sent off to Cleethorpes where a new 1½ mile long line was built. The original Sutton track was well past its sell-by date so new rail was obtained. However most of the rest of the Sutton gear was used - the Station building, the engine shed (converted to a museum) and even the signal box. The later is now controls signals and a level crossing - more than it did at Sutton Coldfield where it was just used as a staff mess room. Plans are in place to extend the railway a further mile past its current terminus at North Sea Lane. The stock has since paid visits to other locations, including to the NRM for the Railfest week in 2004. Further visits are planned; but one to the Kirklees railway requires brakes fitting to the passenger rolling stock - at present they have none! (The stock has a Railway Inspectorate dispensation to run under "grandfather rights" while at Cleethorpes.) But the key point is that trains are operating again in the same arrangement they were 40 years ago - including, when John and his colleagues pay a visit, with the original train crew! Truly a case of "the little engines that went to sleep - and awoke again".

SUMMER OUTING II - FRIMLEY LODGE MINIATURE RAILWAY

Our second outing was to Frimley Lodge Miniature Railway, Hampshire on 11th August. The Frimley and Ascot Locomotive Club were hosting a visitors day - not just for our group, but also visiting steam locomotives, with some impressive miniature steam running, such as a LNER P2 and BR Britannia. We were made most welcome, being given a guided tour of the locomotive stabling sheds and signal system, the latter being a computer-controlled network to monitor and control the signals and points. We had freedom to travel behind some of the engines, over the five eights mile run, on the mixed gauge (3½", 5" and 7¼") track. The layout is an elongated dumbbell with a length of double-track in the middle. In a wooded setting adjoining fields, it provides an interesting ride. The line is surrounded by a substantial park, where we enjoyed a leisurely picnic lunch - and even the sun was shining!



SoE Group Members in the woods



SR Schools Class N° 30907 "Dulwich"



4-6-2 N°70004 "William Shakespeare"



Members of the Group picnic in the park



LNER P2 N° 2003 "Lord President" [Roy Bell]



The "Engine Shed"

OUTREACH REPORT

We are at the end of the Autumn outreach season, having visited Model Railway Exhibitions at Colchester, Royston, and finishing at NEC (Warley). Colchester was held at the city's Institute and we were in our usual prominent place at the entrance. Unfortunately, because of major rebuilding work, the exhibition will be relocated next year to a much smaller venue and it seems unlikely that we will be able to fit in. Royston is also one of our regular venues and is popular in the region, even attracting the local mayor, who was keen to take away our publicity (the the museum needs to watch out for visitors wearing chains!). Warley is THE model

railway exhibition in the country. With no visiting NRM locomotive, we were away from the centre but nevertheless did good business, showing off, and publicising sales of the new prototype *Deltic* model to admiring visitors.

So far, next year we have bookings at the Biggleswade show on 16th February and Alexandra Palace on 29th & 30th March. With the Museum entering the model railway market, we expect significant interest.

As mentioned under the AGM item on page 1, we are looking for additional volunteers to help in the organisation of the outreach visits. If you can assist, please get in touch with George Rutter or Ian Harrison

COMMEMORATIVE BENCH FOR BILL SMITH

As reported in Briefing 46 and Review 119, our past Vice President, Captain Bill Smith, died earlier this year. As a long-time supporter of both the FNRM and our own Group, we believe it appropriate to mark Bill's association with the Museum and have proposed that a commemorative bench be located in the NRM gardens. The bench will carry a suitable metal plate to describe his links with the NRM. This idea has been endorsed by the FNRM Executive Committee and all we need to do is raise the necessary money (£1000) to cover the cost. We are already half way there after several donations, so if you wish to contribute, please get in touch with any member of the committee.

The photograph shows Bill and GNR N° 1247, which he bought for preservation and donated to the National Collection, at the time of the loco's centenary on 13th May 1999, when it was located at the GCR. It is currently at Locomotion, the

NRM outstation at Shildon

Photo: Dorothy Brown

