



# The Friends of the National Railway Museum

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**Briefing 51**

**South of England Group**

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

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## SUMMER OUTING

The station at Amberley appears to be a typical small rural station on the line to Arundel. But on weekends it sees an influx of rail enthusiasts, joined on 12<sup>th</sup> July by a party from the South of England Group. As the 9.32 from Victoria pulled out, the party was complete and under the watchful eye of Les Butler were escorted through the turnstile.

Then followed the difficult question, what to do first? Beckoning were the narrow gauge train, a vintage bus and (of special interest to those from the refreshment-less train) the restaurant. Over a cup of coffee it was possible to study the map and plan the activities for the day. The train (or the parallel vintage bus service) connects the major sites of this museum, but the walk is short and there are many exhibits to be seen on the way.

After lunch a parade of visiting locomotives took place. The 2 foot gauge was once used extensively in many quarries and sand pits for moving the material to the transfer sidings and the main line trains. Although steam was represented, internal combustion ruled the day, mainly variations on the Simplex theme. Each locomotive gave a demonstration of its capabilities before all were coupled to produce narrow gauge "super-power".

To some of the visitors, the museum's

electrical power display took us back to our childhood (or even to our early days in employment). There were all the familiar labour saving devices as electric power became more extensive about the house. For the school-boys in us there were handles to turn such as a Wimshurst machine to produce spectacular sparks through static electricity.

Easily missed was a collection of buildings by the museum entrance. Here were examples of stationary engines, but also a well equipped machine shop and an exhibition of printing machinery and its products.

All too soon, it was time to leave as closing time approached and the rail travellers were back at the station waiting for the Southern train back to Victoria. At Horsham our Bognor Regis portion was joined by the Portsmouth portion. Suddenly our "This is coach 2"

*(continued overleaf)*

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announcement became "This is coach 6". (On the down journey, the announcement at Horsham had been "If you are going to Portsmouth and can hear this announcement you should quickly transfer to the other portion of the train".) My thanks to Les Butler for his

organisation. And what, you may ask, does he have planned for next year? Les's soundings of the membership pointed to a weekend visit to York for next year's AGM combined with a trip to the East Lancs Railway on the Sunday. He has already commenced the planning.

*Phil Brown*

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## RAILS TO METROLAND

On 8<sup>th</sup> September, Dr Clive Foxell entertained 18 members with a fascinating historical review of the Metropolitan Railway, drawing on his extensive collection of vintage photographs. Clive was invited to give the talk following the review of his book "Rails to Metroland" by our chairman, Ian Harrison. It was this title which gave the theme for his talk.

Clive's first involvement with the Met was when he became a casual cleaner at Neasden shed during the war - the other "staff" were mainly Italian prisoners! A memorable event occurred in winter 1943 when the coal ran out. The shed foreman employed an innovative way to clean out the bunker - he threw a hand grenade in it! Clive started his review by pointing out that the Met's origins were after a period of chaotic development – unrealistic schemes, uncooperative land-owners, and no strategic input from government. Buckinghamshire was left with just the lines of the GWR and London & Birmingham (subsequently LNWR), both with branches to Aylesbury. Harry Verney, owner of most of the surrounding land and the Duke of Buckingham promoted the Aylesbury to Buckingham, and the Brill to Verney junction lines. Neither were very profitable; the latter just limped along as the Brill tramway.

Meanwhile London was expanding rapidly causing major congestion problems (nothing changed there, then!) Part of the solution was a buried railway,

in a cut & cover tunnel. Commenced in 1861 and opened in 1863 this was the foundation of the Met. Steam and smoke pollution was a problem. Various ideas were tried including "Fowler's Folly". This used hot brick to raise steam – it only made two runs! Finally Beyer Peacock were asked to supply some purpose-designed condensing engines. Despite these problems the line was a success, with one million passenger in its first year. It still lost money, paying dividends out of capital, leading to the dismissal of the chairman and his replacement by Edward Watkin. He had a background in various railways, from the trans-Canadian to the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire – at one point he was a director of 23 railway companies. His "secret plan" was to develop a railway all the way from Manchester to France, using his directorships of the MS&L, the S.E. and the Ch.de.F. du Nord, as well as owning the channel tunnel company (original) shares. However he started small, using a line to St John's Wood as his launching pad to build a series of local lines northwards, reaching Neasden in 1879, Harrow in 1887, then Rickmansworth. All this activity had a big effect on the local economies bringing in rare commodities - like fish! Then on to Aylesbury, taking over the Aylesbury and Buckingham railway and the Brill branch, the latter with plans to extend to Oxford. Meanwhile he extended the MS&L (soon

to be GCR) southwards, and planned the terminus at Marylebone. Unfortunately, Watkin then had a severe stroke. He attended the opening in a wheel-chair, and soon lost control of the company.

With Watkin's departure, the Met and GCR were now competitors. The GCR and GWR planned new lines to take business from the Met, and fought over routing priority for trains at the various junctions. A serious head-on accident at Aylesbury in 1904 put the spotlight on these conflicts and led to the creation of a joint company.

Meanwhile, the Met obtained powers allowing it to acquire land for non-railway purposes. Thus came "*Metroland*", which blossomed just after the First World War. People wanted to move out of London mortgages were available, and the houses offered by the Met's estate company were very attractive – so much so that it had more annual income than the railway! It's not clear who invented "*Metroland*" but it was used extensively on posters, pamphlets and film. Some 20,000 houses were sold bringing investment to the

railway – new locomotives, Pullman cars, electrification, and new offices at Baker Street.

Clive quickly summarised the following decline. Acquisition by London Transport saw many steam locos sold to the LNER, and operations streamlined. The line then suffered heavy bombing during the war. By 1962 there was an eclectic mix of electric multiple units, electric and steam haulage, and diesel multiple units. The depths were plumbed in the Serpel plan, under which the line was to become a bus way. But it survived and was transformed into today's successful Chiltern Railway. However, just as in Victorian days, there are still problems over sharing fare income, priorities for train paths etc.

As to the future, who knows what Cross-rail will bring? The latest plans have been cut back and will have little impact but that could change. Investment in the Met electric stock is still under question. More positively, Chiltern Line development continues with investment in a new station at Aylesbury Vale Parkway – to serve a new conurbation just as at the height of the *Metroland* developments.

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## COMMEMORATIVE BENCH FOR CAPTAIN BILL SMITH

A bench with commemorative plaque in memory of our past president, Captain Bill Smith, was unveiled on 20<sup>th</sup> June prior to the FNRM AGM. The cost of the seat was covered by SoE Group funds and it is currently located in the small garden by the side of the NRM's miniature railway. Bill was the first person to privately preserve a main-line locomotive, ex-GNR 0-6-0T N<sup>o</sup> 1247. As many members will know, until ill health rob him of his mobility, he regularly used to attend our meetings and spoke passionately about the engine. Unfortunately, his family could not be

present at the unveiling but sent messages of support. His son, Christopher Smith, wrote "*You and your colleagues have decided upon a lasting tribute to my late father, and this is wonderful. The Railway Museum was close to his heart and I am very happy. At some stage during the summer I will travel to York and have my own private thoughts, whilst sitting on the bench.*" The photographs, overleaf, show anticlockwise from top left, the bench, the plaque, some of the members from the South England Group, our Group Chairman Ian Harrison and FNRM Chairman Frank Patterson, all of whom were present at the event.

## CAPTAIN BILL SMITH MEMORIAL BENCH



## A4s AT YORK

*photographs by Ian Harrison*

On 6<sup>th</sup> July, the NRM played host to all four UK-based preserved A4s - Nos 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*, 60009 *Union of South Africa*, 60019 *Bittern*, and 4468 *Mallard*.



4 lined up in the yard



3 left after 60019 departs for duty



2 in front of the NRM

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1 loco departs south on the railtour

## SUMMER OUTING TO AMBERLEY MUSEUM



Photos: Roy Bell (top left) Phil Brown (below left), Les Butler (top & bottom right)



## NAPIER 200 EVENT

The outreach stand, right, attended Quainton Road for the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Napier. Various products of the company were present, including the most powerful Deltic version produced (below)- CT18-42K, turbocharged and charge cooled, output 3,700bhp It was used in the Indian Navy's Seaward Defence MTBs. Photos: Phil Brown



## STEAMING THROUGH AUSTRIA

The Chairman's summer holiday was a Railway Touring Company "Steam Safari of Austria"; similar to the Swiss one we did in 2006 and which was reported on in Briefing No.43 (October 2006).

The first thing that strikes you as you travel in Europe these days is the ease with which national borders come and go. It's not that long since there were passport and customs checks, but all that has gone and most of continental Europe is homogeneous.

Beginning the steam tour in Innsbruck, we visited the Achenseebahn and Zillertalbahnhof on consecutive days: they are very different narrow gauge railways on either side of the mainline station at Jenbach. The Achenseebahn is a rack and pinion metre gauge railway ascending some 440m up to the Achensee, a charming high level lake resort; whereas the Zillertalbahnhof is a 760mm gauge valley line, 32km long, which was virtually derelict and then found a new lease of life when it was used to shift spoil and materials for a new dam thirty years ago, and has never looked back.

Innsbruck itself is now the centre for major railway works with the construction of the Brenner Base Tunnel – 56km long connecting Austria and Italy (see the article in Wikipedia).

A mainline ride through the Tyrol brought us to the St Wolfgangsee near Salzburg which boasts a steam powered paddle boat. The aim of our journey was to ascend the Schafberg (1783m), again by rack and pinion steam. From the summit there are stunning views across to the high Alps – all very reminiscent of the Brienz Rothorn in Switzerland.

Austria is a country of real topographical contrasts: to the south of the Schafberg are high mountains, to the north the

almost flat fore-Alpine plains of Germany and "Lower Austria". Our next destination was the Steyrtalbahnhof, a narrow gauge railway operated by ÖGEG – the Austrian Railway Preservation Society. The 20 km ride along the Steyrtalbahnhof is impressive enough, but ÖGEG have also acquired a redundant colliery site at Amplfwang, north of Vöcklabruck, where they have constructed a new standard gauge roundhouse (with turntable) containing 38 steam locomotives; and have assembled a large collection of diesel and electric locos, and a variety of passenger and freight stock. There are museum buildings and workshops as well. The Austrian Government funded the roundhouse, but all the rest is self financed. It is quite stunning, with a range of steam locos assembled from Austria, Germany and the Eastern European states; about 6 are in mainline condition. The Museum has its own 10km standard gauge running line which joins the mainline near Vöcklabruck. Not content with railways, ÖGEG also runs a steam ship on the Danube!

The Ybbstalbahnhof is very similar to the Steyrtalbahnhof but is operated by ÖBB, the state railways, with diesel-hauled service trains over its 54 km length. Steam trains are in the hands of an 0-8-4 that is privately owned but driven by ÖBB crew. The ÖBB team were very obliging in fitting in run-pasts in scenic spots.

Moving to Vienna, there were the obligatory tram rides but also a visit to the railway museum at Strasshof, a small village about 25km east of the city with the most amazing collection of standard gauge railway vehicles. Sadly, the museum, based in an 8 road loco shed and former steam depot, seems to have far more stock than it can accommodate or

maintain, with the result that much of it is simply rotting slowly outside. The museum (marketed as the HeizHaus) runs mainline steam on several weekends and has some unique locomotives such as a one-man operated standard gauge steam loco and an 0-12-0.

Our last steam journey was in the far north of Austria, hard against the Czech border at Gmünd; a 43 km journey to Gross Gerungs on part of the Waldviertlerbahn - a forest railway that is now largely devoted to tourist

operation. As we were the only train on the line, run-pasts were frequent and spectacular!

Reflections on the trip include the friendliness of all whom we met and the lack of paranoia about ordinary people wandering around trains – OK, narrow gauge and low speed, but a pleasant change. And exactly the same problems that we have: good intentions that seem almost pre-destined to fail because too few people are committed to trying to preserve too much hardware.

*Ian Harrison*

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## OUTREACH REPORT

It's been fairly quiet through the summer - also known as the UK monsoon season! The event at Quanton Road on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> June had weather that was typical, heavy rain and strong winds on the Saturday. Unfortunately, we had been allocated a space out on the lawn and we had come without any cover. The organisers took pity and allowed us to take shelter in the awning outside the main centre which, you may recall, is the relocated Oxford Rewley Road station building. This provided some protection for the water which was following the rules of gravity, but not that which was coming sideways and upwards! We had to rig up some tarpaulins at the side of the stand to prevent too much ingress of the wet stuff. Not surprisingly, our display was somewhat muted, but things brightened up on the Sunday, when the sun attempted to shine and the rain stayed away, but the wind still blew. With a borrowed gazebo, we took our place on the lawn and, firmly pegged to the ground, served the passing customers. The main attraction was the Deltic Preservation Society's *Alycidon*, which was on the visitors' shuttle service. A

photo-shoot in mid afternoon, placed it beside the 24-litre Napier Railton racing car of 1933 - with a top speed of 168 mph, it would easily beat a Deltic on the ECML. Accompanying the Railton was a varied selection of vintage and veteran cars, all powered by some form of Napier engine. Inside the station building there was a fascinating series of displays of the history of the Napier company, which was formed 200 years ago, hence the celebrations. So, plenty for visitors to do despite the weather, but attendance was disappointing. Not surprisingly our takings were also disappointing.

Our next stand event will be the Tring and District "TAD-rail" exhibition at Ashlyns School, Berkhamsted on 11<sup>th</sup> October. There is a free vintage bus service from Berkhamsted station should you wish to join us. The event of the year will be at the National (Warley) Model Railway Exhibition at the NEC on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November. We hope to see you there.

Meanwhile, we continue with our presence on the trains running in the South of England which are hauled by NRM locomotives. A list appeared in the last copy of the *Briefing*.

**FOR CURRENT LIST OF FORTHCOMING LECTURES**

**See the Diary section of the web page at:**

**<http://www.nrmfriends-south.org.uk/Diary.html>**

**FOR CONTACTS IN FNRM SOUTH OF ENGLAND**

**GROUP:**

**See Contacts at main index:**

**<http://www.nrmfriends-south.org.uk/index.html>**