



# The Friends of the National Railway Museum

**Briefing 54**

**South of England Group**

**June 2009**

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

## **CAN YOU HELP A SCOTSMAN IN DISTRESS?**

As we are all well aware from reports in this publication and *NRM Review*, the Museum's rebuild of *Flying Scotsman* is turning out to be much more fundamental and expensive than originally envisaged. It might have been cheaper to start from scratch! However, it seems to me that our role as Friends is to help the Museum overcome this and other problems. I know that many members have already subscribed to the various appeals for 4472, but we now face a real emergency to get her back together and working again in the limited time available. Apart from anything else, the fact that she is blocking the Museum's workshop resources is having a knock on impact on other jobs.

Although our Group bank accounts have been depleted the tune of nearly £8,000 by our funding the repaint of 1247 (see page 4), the Group Committee has agreed that we should incentivise your support to 4472 by doubling any new donation you make by a matching amount from Group funds, to a ceiling of £5,000 (basically, that's all we've got left!). There's no point in our having money in the bank when the Museum is in dire straits.

If you would be willing to help, please send a cheque – for any amount – payable to *FNRM South of England Group* to our

Treasurer, Roger Smith, 125 Charmouth Road, St Alban's, Herts AL1 4SG by 31<sup>st</sup> August please. Roger will do the sums and send a cheque to the Museum for the total of donations, doubled. There will be a report in the September edition of *The Briefing* giving an update on how well we did.

Thank you

*Ian Harrison*

### **ERRATUM**

In the item in the last edition of *The Briefing*, there was a report of the Members' slide and video evening. The reporting of the unveiling of the new A1 *Tornado*, included reference to a speech of dedication by Edward Thompson's daughter. The speech was actually made by Arthur Peppercorn's widow. My apologies for the oversight.

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# THE RAILWAYS OF SWITZERLAND

Mr George Howe, of the Swiss Railway Group, gave a video-based presentation to our meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March. To reflect the interest in this subject, it was standing room only, with some 24 members and guests present.

George and his wife have been visiting Switzerland for some 30 years, so he has got to know the country and its railways. He provided a live-commentary to the video which he had prepared around ten years ago using a professional video editing service.

His tour commenced with a quick resume on the modes of travel for getting to the country, from the more traditional car and train, to the novel - paragliding! His first study was of the nocturnal activities at Basle station in the form of rapid shunting and luggage transfer movements. This included fly-shunting of carriage stock with passengers on board, and some locomotive permissive working which was more like tram operation.

The tour then moved on the St Moritz to take in some bob-sleigh running, "white turf" (aka snow) horse racing on the frozen lake, not to mention the extremely long freights coming from the Gotthard tunnel, and a large crocodile-hauled special.

We then followed metre-gauge the Appenzellerland Bahn rack railway line over the mountains to St Gallen where the mixed running of trams and trolley buses required some Swiss-precision-engineered overhead cabling.

A trip on the standard-gauge rack-railway from Rorschach to Heiden brought us to Lake Constance for a trip on the lake to Reinach. Then on to Lake Lugano. At Bellinzona we saw some of the workings in and out of Italy and sampled the tilting trains which are the predecessors of the

Virgin Pendelinos. A trip on the railway from Locarno to Domodossola, like several others we had already sampled, started by appearing to be a street tram system, but then metamorphosed into a light railway through the country. At Marone, the crossing of a train coming in the other direction was achieved by shunting into a dead-end siding and some quick reversing back after the other train had passed - any faster and it seemed that there was a risk of engaging the automatic couplings between the two trains.

In the second part we started with a view of the old No7 - a vertical boilered steam engine on the Pilatus rack railway. The Pilatus is the steepest rack railway in the world, with gradients of 1 in 2. Automatic traversers, rather than points, make for some rapid turnrounds. At the top, we had a quick view of some of the alpine flora and fauna - the latter being some fairly angry looking ibex which seemed to take a dislike to George's videoing. Over the other side of the mountain, the descent is via a cable car.

Although George acknowledges that his German is rather rusty, when he saw a promotional leaflet for "dampf parallelizing" he got the message. We saw samples of the resulting 23 minutes of parallel running of steam hauled specials, where the two trains weaved up and over each other allowing for some fascinating shots of Walschaerts valve gear in action. The train George was on was hauled by a German built heavy freight engine, but the other was double headed by swiss-built 2-8-0 and 2-6-0, the latter being the diminutive No1 of 1889 vintage. The return trip was also parallel running, but this time hauled by large and small crocodile electric locos. The connecting rods set your eyes fairly spinning round.

Following a number of shots of trains passing over the Filisur viaduct from the observation point on the opposite side of the valley, we saw another Crocodile, this time a narrow gauge one - operating a local goods train at Zernez. This led us to some views of the operations on the Brusio spiral which, at 1 in 14, is one of the steepest adhesion-only lines in the country. Just to add to the difficulty of its operation, the overhead voltage changes half-way down the line!

Back to steam, for the last few minutes,

with some shots of a steam special between St Moritz and St Aubin, followed by some demonstration of the self-propelled steam-powered snow-blower. Quite an ending - and it nearly was for George who was standing in the middle of the track as the snow-blower approached and stopped a few metres in front of him.

With trains operated like trams, trams which think they are trains, electric locos that look like steam engines and steam trains that accelerate like electrics, it is no wonder that Swiss railways are so fascinating.

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## THE EASTLEIGH EXPERIENCE

On Bank Holiday weekend, 23<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> May, Eastleigh railway works celebrated its centenary with a major exhibition. Just two years ago, it looked as though the works would be closed and demolished when Alstom sold the site to a property developer - indeed much equipment has been removed and some demolition has taken place. The idea that the works would be able to hold a major event in 2009 seemed like a pipe-dream. But it did, thanks to the renaissance brought about by Knights Rail who have taken over part of the works and brought in other contractors as well.

*Lord Nelson* was brought from the Mid Hants Railway along with the Ivatt tank and *Canadian Pacific*. *Manston*, *Eddystone*, and the M7 (now in plain SR black as "53"), came from the Swanage railway and *Clan Line* brought a railtour on the Saturday and then returned for the other days. So there was a line up of four Bulleids, *Lord Nelson*, the M7, 30587 & 41312. *Oliver Cromwell* brought a railtour on the Saturday but did not come onto the site, running on to Swanage

instead.

There was a comprehensive line-up of diesel power as well, including the immaculately restored 50026 *Indomitable*, 55022 *Royal Scots Grey* and D1015 *Western Champion*.

Sadly, your scribe was lashed to our stand and saw little of the action. But apparently around 20,000 people visited the show in warm summer weather. Unfortunately few seemed to be willing to spend money and although we seemed to talk to a lot of people, our takings were only very average in spite of having the new books on *Lord Nelson* and *Duchess of Hamilton* available. All the traders (of whom there were many) were in the same boat, with frustration that the crowds were not directed towards the stands area.

But nonetheless, the show demonstrated that there is still an appetite for old-style open days, if all the various hurdles can be overcome. I am grateful to those members who helped to man the stand over the weekend and to the show organisers for allowing us a free pitch.

*Ian Harrison*

## UNVEILING A LEGEND

It's not too often that one gets to participate in the unveiling of a locomotive, especially one that has made history. GNR J52 No. 1247 (aka 68846) is one such, having been the first standard gauge locomotive to have been presented to the nation, by Captain Bill Smith RNR in 1980. As you will recall, Bill was our Group's first Vice-President and the first Life Member of the Friends. Following his death in 2007, we decided that it would be right to repaint 1247 back into GN green after its repaint into BR lined black in 1995. Bill took enormous trouble

V2s etc that he couldn't possibly have afforded to keep.

About 50 people were present for the occasion, a good number of our own members having made the trip north, including our current senior Vice President, Alan Pegler – also the saviour of a well-known locomotive!

Although it is unlikely that 1247 will be returned to steam, she looked splendid alongside the Deltic prototype, Green Arrow and the APT-E, with the Furness Railway "Coppernob" as a backdrop to our buffet table.



*South of England Group Chairman, Ian Harrison, presents a memento to Peter Townend with Andrew Smith (middle). Alan Pegler (lower middle) and Michael Wallace, with backs to camera, look on.*

to get the GN colour scheme right when he bought her from BR in 1959 and putting her back into her "proper" colours we felt would be a fitting tribute to his memory. We paid all the costs out of our surplus from the sales stand.

It all happened at Locomotion (Shildon) on 16 May, the actual unveiling being performed by Bill's younger son Andrew and Peter Townend, the former shed-master at King's Cross who "helped" Bill select 1247 from the ranks of A4s, A3s,

The repaint was carried out by Shildon volunteers and a local signwriter who were presented with mementos. But their enduring legacy is in a locomotive which now truly represents what Bill Smith wanted – to let small boys (of all ages) see what railways were really like. And if you want to read more, get a copy of Bill's book "1247 – Preservation Pioneer" – a super read: second-hand copies obtainable via [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk)

*Ian Harrison*



*Nº 1247 in powerful company with prototype APT and Deltic*



*Nº 1247 in fully-lined GNR colour scheme on show at Locomotion, Shildon*

## ALL GAS AND FLARED TROUSERS

Eighteen members were present on 20<sup>th</sup> April when our member, Mark Evans, gave a talk which was inspired by the 1960s/70s comedy "All Gas and Gaiters". Despite the BR Modern Image which was introduced in 1965, the influence had not filtered down to many parts of the network by the early 1970's, the period of Mark's talk. Gas lighting, full station staffing and manual signal boxes still prevailed. (So there is the "gas" but what about the "flared trousers"? - read on!)

Yes, there were blue Class 47s, but green class 40s were still an everyday sight. Track modernisation was, however, beginning to have an effect, with removal of redundant sidings. Mark took us on a tour of the period, using his extensive contemporary photographic collection.

We started at Colwyn Bay, where his grandparents lived and Hull, where he was at university. DMUs predominated, including the transpennine stock, still running on the line they were designed for over a decade earlier. At Hull's Corporation Pier, we also one of BR's shipping services - *MV Lincoln Castle* on the Hull to New Holland service, now long since replaced by the Humber Bridge. *PS Tattershall Castle*, which also saw service on this route, is still with us, serving as a floating restaurant on the Thames near Hungerford Bridge. Moving inland to Selby, the ECML still was routed over the swing bridge, with Deltics in command. Further up the ECML, Newcastle still had its diamond crossings, making the prominent centre-piece of a shot from the castle. At South Shields, it was clear that not just railways have changed in the intervening 40 years - dock workers in cloth caps, and housewives in scarfs, mingled with girls in mini-skirts and long-haired students - yes - in flared

trousers; all waiting for the local service.

Further south, modernisation was starting to have an effect. Stevenage was having its Old Town station replaced with one located nearer to the new town, but DMUs and two-tone class 47s were still providing the services as electrification was still several years off. Broad Street, Acton South and Felixstowe Town were still open, although some attempts, all too late, at rationalisation were evident, in the form of pay-trains with their conductor/guards. On the western region in 1973, at Paddington, they were still holding on to their independence, with Western hydraulics, and the last of the Western Pullman diesel trains. Both were, however, shortly to be withdrawn. Windsor & Eton station showed that it was not just the railways of Britain which were in transition - the local bus company had just been taken over by the National Bus Company and had temporary stickers over the old logos.

In the south, Waterloo was still its old bustling self, but the staff sported corporate-style uniforms. Meanwhile at Charing Cross and Cannon Street, the passengers could still enjoy the sunshine while waiting for their trains. The Winchester to Alton branch was still operational, just, limping on with Hampshire units, but stations such as Ropley were fading away in gradual decline and still had to wait a few years before the preservationists rescued them.

In the Midlands, Mike's tour took in Loughborough and the Bush works, where *Lion* was in a siding having just undergone servicing; it only had 18 months service left in the UK. Class 25's were on trip workings from the ironstone quarries to the steel furnaces at Corby, and a little further north Rutland had just

(temporarily for 20 years!) lost its county identity. Lincoln St Marks was still open and Matlock had only just been converted to a terminus station.

Mark then turned to the situation on light rail, starting back in London on the Underground. While Earls Court is still recognisably the same today, the same cannot be said for Barbican and the East London Line. 'New' 1972 stock was beginning to penetrate the Northern Line, Epping was still serviced by silver 1962 stock, and Ongar still had a service! Elsewhere, in England the only light rail was in Blackpool, where a 'make-do-and-mend' approach kept the trams running, just!

The results of the previous decade's Beeching cuts was still all around. Abandoned lines at Buntingford in Hertfordshire, Holderness lines in East Yorkshire, the Waverley route, and the Oxford-Cambridge line, the latter two now sorely missed. However, BR still ran steam engines in the form of the Vale of Rhydol line which, apart from a change of livery, hasn't changed much. Elsewhere, there were still pockets of industrial steam, for example at Gascoigne Wood colliery, and many hulks still resided at Barry scrap yards awaiting their purchase and subsequent restoration.

Mark finished with a look at the preservation scene, starting with the old

York Museum, the 'stuffed & mounted' Derwent and 'Locomotion No 1' on Darlington Station, and the Clapham museum just before its collection was dispersed. Birmingham and Glasgow also still had their first-generation transport museums. *Flying Scotsman* had come back from its US sojourn and was running on the main line. Meanwhile, the preservation movement was getting up to speed with Tallylyn, the Bluebell and KWVR being at the fore. Tysley and Didcot were still being established and the Scottish Railway Preservation was still using temporary facilities at Falkirk and Glasgow shipyards. Tenterden and Loughborough were just seeds from which their routes would grow, while Goathland still had to gain fame from starring in television - but the passengers waiting for the NYMR service were sporting some 'great flared trousers'!

Mark closed with some photographs showing the, then, pride of BR. Class 86 and 87 locos on corporate-image liveried trains at Euston and Birmingham New Street. The prototype HST stood with admirers at Melton Mowbray having just broken the world diesel speed record. At Dover, BR was even operating its own cross-channel Hovercraft service.

For those present, Mark's talk brought back some pleasant memories of an interesting time in the British railway scene and society in general, even the flared trousers!

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## HELD OVER

Because of the amount of activity over the last few months, I'm pleased to say (as editor) that I've got more material than I can fit into this edition. I've therefore held over items on our Outreach programme until next time. There will also be a report

on the Group's summer outing. If anyone has any reports they wish to offer for inclusion in a future edition, e.g. a visit to a railway museum overseas, then please get in touch with me and I'll be pleased to publish it.

*Mel Draper*

**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>**