



# The Friends of the National Railway Museum

**Briefing 58**

**South of England Group**

**June 2010**

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

## **AGM AND MEMBERS' EVENING**

Nineteen members and friends were present at Marylebone on 12 April for the rescheduled AGM. The formal meeting commenced with our Chairman, Ian Harrison, recapping the highlights of 2009. These included our donation to the Flying Scotsman Appeal and covering the costs of repainting J52 N° 1247 into correct GNR colours. The funds had been sourced from our sales on steam excursions (including 10 in 2009) and our Outreach stand. During the year we had an excellent range of evening meetings, organised by Phil Brown, who has now handed over the reins to Jeremy Moore and Martin Sixsmith. Les Butler was thanked for organising our Summer 2009 outing to the East Lancashire Railway, even though he was not able to go on it!

Looking forward to the coming year, Ian noted that we ought to look to expand the reach of the Group to FNRM members – there being some 400 FNRM members listed as living in the South of England, yet we only have regular contact with about a quarter of them. An intensive season of steam excursions hauled by NRM locomotives is scheduled for the coming months and volunteers are sought to help with manning the sales stand. We will also take the Outreach stand to a selection of model railway and other exhibitions. We also need to consider how we can better work with the Museum to support their activities, for

example we were not involved in the recent visit of *Rocket* to South Kensington. This is a topic we hope to pick up with the new Director, Steve Davies, who is due to address the Group on 6<sup>th</sup> September.

The election of members of the committee took place with George Rutter and Roy Bell both being re-elected unopposed. Ian thanked them, other members of the committee, and all who have supported the Group over the last year.

Roger Smith spoke about financial matters: our accounts had been reviewed by the FNRM auditors who raised no issues. Roger noted a successful year with sales income from the Outreach stand of £4194 and on-board trains of £7315. We had received donations of £1434, most going towards the Flying Scotsman appeal, this amount being doubled from Group assets to give a grant to the Museum of £2500. Other grants provided by the Group were £7877 for the repainting of N° 1247 and £4000 towards repairs to N° 30777 *Sir Lamiel*. The formal AGM finished with a

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reminder from Les Butler of the arrangements for the Group's forthcoming visit to the Nene Valley Railway.

The evening continued with presentations by several members of their photographs and videos. Phil Brown spoke about the development of US steam locomotives from the completion of the trans-continental railroad through to the "Big Boys" of the period around World War Two.

Mike Hanscomb then gave a presentation on Borough Market Junction Signalbox using a film of the rebuilding and modernisation of the junction during 1976. Prior to the changes, the 'box needed two signalmen to operate it, despite having only 35 levers – such was the intensity of the traffic. The upgrade work took place over the Easter of 1976, commencing on 15<sup>th</sup> April and traffic being re-instated on 20<sup>th</sup> April. The film showed the extensive pre-planning, track removal, re-laying, and subsequent

testing of the signalling. The old 'box was donated to the NRM and Mike finished with some photographs of its present sorry state "in store" at York. He believes it could still be renovated and, if combined with a computer simulation, could offer an attractive and educational display.

Roger Puddephatt then presented some photographs of the changing face of London's railway drawing on his collection from the past thirty years. This covered a wide range of main-line termini and underground stations, illustrating just how dramatic have been the alterations.

Finally, we watched the film "Night Mail" as a reminder of the previous talk given by Brian White on "Mail by rail" and a precursor to our visit to the NVR.

Our next indoor meeting is at Marylebone on 6<sup>th</sup> September when the new NRM Director, Steve Davies, will be speaking about his hopes for the future.

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## OUTREACH REPORT

On 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March we took our usual place at Alexandra Palace for the London Festival of Railway Modelling. The event is always a popular in the South of England and this year proved no different. There was a steady flow of visitors to the show, and past our stand, on both days. We had an additional attraction this year, in the form of limited stocks of the special edition NRM/Bachmann *City of Truro* model. Our other lines also went well and we were sold out of some items by the time the show closed on Sunday. The new automatic *Rocket* display track performed flawlessly – having undergone proving trials at the two previous shows (NEC and Biggleswade) and subsequent modification. This will now permanently replace the two original units, which have

served us well for the last decade and a half. The display never fails to attract attention, not only from the children who listen attentively to our explanation of the history of *Rocket* in its three model guises (and then receive a free information leaflet), but also many adults – who are equally intrigued as to how it works!

The following show was on 8<sup>th</sup> May at Bushey for the South West Herts Model Railway Exhibition. Not quite as busy as Alexandra Palace, but a steady trade and sale of our two remaining *City of Truro* models, made for a worthwhile event. As always, there were a lot of questions about the Museum, including several enquiries following the announcement of the move of *Mallard* to Shildon (not an easy place to get to from the South).

## MAINLINE STEAM TOURS

The Group's team continue to support the runs by the Collection's locomotives on mainline steam excursions. The current list of tours is below. Those marked “\*\*\*” mean that volunteers are still needed to man the mobile stand -contact Ian Harrison:

3 July	30777	Waterloo - Swanage	
4 July	70013	B'ham – Stratford ret (twice)	
9 July	30777 +	Waterloo - Swanage	
11 July	70013	B'ham – Stratford ret (twice)	
17 July	70013	Liv St – Norwich – L'stoft – Liv St	
18 July	30777 +	Waterloo – Weymouth ret	
21 July	30777 +	Victoria – Weymouth ret	
22 July	70013	Victoria – Canterbury ret	
28 July	30777 +	Victoria – Weymouth ret	
4 August	30777	Victoria – Weymouth ret	***
5 August	70013	London – Bristol ret	
11 August	70013	Victoria – Weymouth ret	
12 August	70013	London – Gloucester ret	
18 August	70013	London - Weymouth ret	
18 August	30777	London - Weymouth ret	***
29 August	70013	London – Norwich ret	
29 August	30777	London - Weymouth ret	***
1 September	30777 +	Victoria – Weymouth ret	
5 September	70013	London Br – Fav – Dover ret	***
18 September	70013	Liv St. - Norwich ret	***
24 September	70013	K.X. - Nottingham ret	***
26 September	30777 +	Waterloo – Swanage ret	***

“+” indicates another loco involved for part of tour.

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## ROCKET IN HYDE PARK

For a limited period in April, the Museum's replica *Rocket* was in steam at the south end of Hyde Park. The locomotive has just completed a major overhaul including major boiler work. The opportunity was taken, as part of this work, to bring the outline of the locomotive into line with the results of the archaeological investigations made by Michael Bailey and John Glithero on the original *Rocket* remains when they were temporarily housed at York.

The locomotive ran on some temporary track which was a little short bearing in mind the high fare, which would have made the TOCs proud. The pictures on page 4 were taken during a break in

the service (about an hour) on 12<sup>th</sup> April to let Andrew Scott and NMSI colleagues have a ride and inspect the engine. Andrew appears on the footplate in the first photo. These pictures were taken at the opposite end of the track from the platform.

I went on the first train after the break, there were perhaps 15 passengers on this one. I expect there would have been more, but for the long break and the cold weather. Also, many people did not know that it was there or that you could ride on it – perhaps there is a lesson in marketing there for someone.

*Photos and text: Martin Sixsmith*



*Rocket hosting NMSI top team*



*Rocket on its display track*



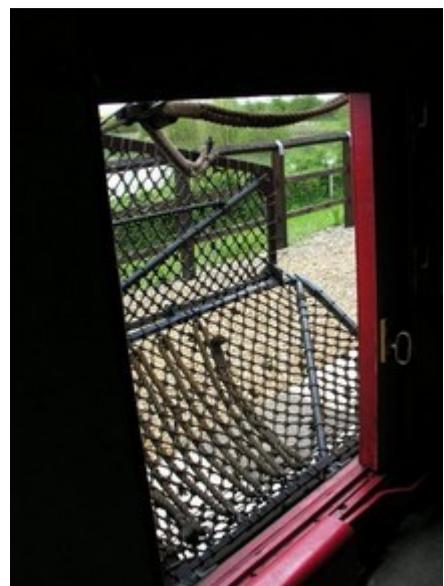
*Rocket passing the Albert Memorial*

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## SUMMER OUTING



The group on the steps of Wansford Signal Box



Clockwise from top left: 73050 at Wansford; TPO with 31108 at Wansford; Exchange apparatus outside and inside; Exchange apparatus at Yarwell Junction; Brian Moore and "his" TPO carriage; Group in Wansford Shed.

## SUMMER OUTING

On 15<sup>th</sup> May, ten members of the South of England Group assembled at the Nene Valley Railway for our Summer Outing. Part of the Group arrived at Wansford for the first train of the day – diesel hauled, up to Peterborough. Here we awaited the remainder of the party, most of whom had arrived by rail from London. Our own Martin Sixsmith, who is also a volunteer on the railway and guides groups of visitors, such as us, joined to take us round the sights.

A trip on the train down the line to the main base at Wansford allowed us to sample the delights of this remarkably rural line, bearing in mind that it commences close by the centre of Peterborough and is only 7½ miles long. As we approached Wansford, Martin pointed out one of the lineside mail-bag pick-up/set-down points. This one being on the main line to Peterborough sees less use, other than at gala days. The one we would experience was further along towards Yarwell Junction.

Getting off at Wansford, we had about half an hour to wait before the Rail-Mail train departed, so Martin took us to explore the inside of the signal box. This is situated on the north side of the railway, sandwiched in a narrow site between the old Great North Road crossing and the bank of the River Nene – indeed it slightly extends over the river. The box boasts a fine selection of levers, only a little foreshortened from the original installation due to the removal of the junction to Stamford, which was closed in 1929. The old formation of the branch is still visible from the 'box as a line of trees heading off into the distance. Where it used to join the NVR there are currently rolling stock sidings. Martin explained that there used to be a separate station on the Stamford line, accessible

by a footbridge across the River Nene and a raised causeway across the floodplain. Parts of the foundations of the footbridge and causeway are still extant. The 'box controls all movements around the vicinity of Wansford and Yarwell Junction, using electric repeaters for the more remote locations.

After a good tour round the 'box it was time to get out of the way while the signaller made arrangements for the arrival of the down service train, hauled by Standard Class 5 N° 73050 "*City of Peterborough*", a permanent resident of the line. As we moved off, the public address called out that the mail train would be departing from the opposite platform in about 15 minutes. We made our way in that direction and were met by Brian White, our March speaker, who was leading the demonstration. The train comprised 5 (check) ex-Royal Mail carriages, including the all-important sorting/despatch carriage. It was into this that we boarded, in the company of some public passengers, and headed off to Yarwell, hauled by the railway's Brush Type 2 N° 31108.

At Yarwell the members of the public derailed while we remained on board to experience the demonstration from the business-end. Brian thoroughly explained the process so we could understand what was going to happen in the very hectic few seconds of the exchange. We then reversed back toward the tunnel under the A1, and past the exchange apparatus, with the waiting audience. A blast of the horn, accompanied by the bellowing engine and we were on our way, picking up speed rapidly to the demonstration level of around 15 mph. Then in a flash, following Brian's call of "mark", the bags were swung out, the net lowered and three dull thuds followed. A successful exchange was apparent as two bags

bounced neatly on the nets and dropped onto the carriage floor. During the subsequent two repeat exchanges, Brian and the team explained more about the detail of the equipment and operation. Replacement pouches, for example, are made by a local saddler in the traditional way using buffalo skins. Each costs around £1200, so they tend to be well looked after. The exchanges happen at much lower speeds than the 55 mph which were more typical in normal service operations when the GPO were doing upwards of 2000 exchanges throughout the network each day.

All too soon it was time to welcome our other passengers back on board at Yarwell Junction and head off back to Wansford. Here we made a bee-line for the café to order our meals before the rush arrived. This is housed in the “new” station buildings which were built by the society to replace the original ones on the up side, currently in private hands. The original buildings, which date from the opening of the line in 1845, are now looking decidedly dilapidated. The society is trying to raise the funds needed to buy and preserve them before they fall down. While the new station is a commendable architectural replica of the original style of building used by the London and Birmingham Railway Company, nothing can substitute for preserving the real past – we wish them well in their efforts.

Suitably refreshed we then moved back to the mail train platform to await the arrival of the service train from Peterborough. Once this was safely in the platform, the N° 73050 detached from the front and the Class 31 attached at the rear and, following the brake checks, headed off with the passenger train to Peterborough. Meanwhile, the Standard 5 coupled up to the mail train and we got on-board in anticipation of the spectacle

which was awaiting us. Back to Yarwell Junction, but this time we got off along with the other passengers and headed along the track to the observation point near the exchange apparatus. Soon enough the entire train reversed back past our position and disappeared round the curve. Once the track team had loaded up the arm with two mail pouches, a wave of a yellow flag was acknowledged by a sharp whistle. Then some staccato bursts of steam exhaust, rapidly increasing in loudness and frequency, was the prelude to the passing of the train. In the blink of an eye, the bags were exchanged and the train disappeared around the corner back to Yarwell Junction. Two further repeats allowed us to track the operation and see the bits we missed earlier. After all the excitement, we then headed back to the halt as *City of Peterborough* reversed in the loop and coupled to the train to take us back to Wansford.

A tour of the sheds then followed under Martin's guidance, where we saw the work which is taking place on the railway's steam crane and diesel and steam locomotive fleet. The railway has developed a well appointed workshop with extensive yards so it is rather less cluttered than some other preserved railways.

We were left to our own devices for half an hour or so, to wander around the well-stocked railway's shop and the second-hand books, the latter housed in the static Rail-Mail carriages housed in the bay platform. These raises funds to help preserve and demonstrate the mail train, so is for a very good cause and a number of our party left with some purchases.

On arrival of the service train, we boarded and headed back up the line to Peterborough. Here we bade our farewells to Martin and the other members of the Group, after an enjoyable day out - and it didn't rain once!

**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>**