



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 59

South of England Group

October 2010

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

THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE NRM

STEVE DAVIES MBE, DIRECTOR NRM

On 6th September, despite the Tube strike, fifteen members and guests welcomed the new director of the NRM. Steve started by explaining how his interest was sparked in railways. This started at home in Darwin, Lancashire, but at a time which was just too late to get a real appreciation of steam engines in normal work. In the 1970s he used to tramp round Agecroft, and visit the embryo steam centre at Carnforth. Following joining the army, his career took him to many different countries, most of which provided an experience of steam. For example in Wolsztyn during 1992 he experience Polish steam before the tourists discovered it. Surprisingly, in the early 1990s he discovered that steam engines were still extant in the Berlin area of Germany. They were mainly used for coach steam heating but occasionally ventured on the main-line for runs, and Steve managed the odd ride or two. In 1996 he visited Sarajevo with NATO troops and secured a ride on a tank engine footplate, during which some disgruntled native took a dislike to his uniform and had a pot shot at him, but hit the cab side. His driver said it wasn't a real attempt to get him; if it had, they would have opened up with machine guns! After a spell as a military advisor in Sierra Leone (see later), he finished his army career as Chief of Staff Army Headquarters Second Division. He then applied for the post of

Science and Industry. On getting the job, in August 2008, he embarked on a programme of improvements in order to improve railway operations there. One project involved returning the K1 – the first Beyer-Garrett built by Beyer, Peacock & Co, back to Gorton works on the centenary of its building. It was positioned in the boiler works which is now little used, and Steve considers it as ideal as a potential railway works.

But back to 2004 in Sierra Leone. This is a reasonably stable area in West Africa, with superb beaches and, after the civil war, a reasonably placid existence, apart from the capital, Freetown, which is chaotic. It was a British protectorate from 1840 to 1961, and was always a British military hub, even being used in the Falklands war. Steve had done some research before he arrived and knew there used to be a 350 route mile 2' 6" narrow gauge line, the infrastructure and stock of which was British supplied. Although having some diesel locomotives, steam survived to the end of the system in 1975.

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During the civil war, the rebels had destroyed much of the railway's infrastructure. Prior to Steve's arrival the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway bought one of the steam locomotives and some of the carriages. One day, Steve took a trip out to where the Chinese had been gifted a factory to build a new manufacturing plant. He was welcomed with the question "are you from the government to take away the trains?". These had been lying there since 1977. Suitably surprised and delighted, he took a photographic record of what was left. Using his advisory position to the government, he arranged for a visit by the President and his cabinet to tour the site and Steve explained the historical significance of the remains. That night there was a documentary on the TV about the visit and Steve's plans to establish the national railway museum of Sierra Leone! Somewhat embarrassed into action and slightly overwhelmed by what he had taken on, he managed to recruit a team of local workers and together they set about to clean up the place. At this time, the government had provided no funding, so Steve used his own money to pay the workers and the materials to repair the building. Five months into the project Steve spoke to the British Council and, as a result, an invitation went out to Andrew Scott to attend the opening event with the President and local dignitaries. This turned out to be nothing like Steve expected. Once the public got to hear about the opening, they descended in hordes to see what the white man was up to. While the resulting mêlée was enjoyable, the result was that the entire place was nearly as dirty as when they started. Never daunted, Steve and his staff cleaned up overnight. The grand opening went well, but the relaxing boat ride with Andrew Scott, a few days later, turned into a nightmare as the boat crew hadn't told them they didn't have enough money for fuel, and the result was they became adrift 25 miles off-shore. A passing patrol boat, an exchange of money and a brief show of Steve's revolver, got them back to shore!

Coming up to date, Andrew and Steve have just returned from the Californian Railroad Museum which has a twinning arrangement with the NRM. This may result in the loan of one of their 4-4-0 locomotives, as used on the prairies and which helped to create a nation. Although such a loan has not been agreed, it could have a role at the NRM in showing how railways have influenced the geopolitical world. Steve has also visited the Nuremberg museum for the 175th anniversary for German Railways. At that museum, *Der Adler* is displayed alongside the NRM's sectioned *Rocket* and *Sans Parreil*. In return for the loan of the latter two engines, the Germans are offering their 05007 locomotive a class-mate of which, for a short time, once held the world steam speed record. This could be a useful addition to a display of world record breakers.

Steve is looking forward to the challenges in taking over the reins at the NRM from Andrew. Current major tasks include the implementation of NRM+ and the redevelopment of the Great Hall. Both now have the added complication of progressing at the time of government spending cuts. The plans currently include a £21M investment in the redevelopment of the Great Hall. This will result in a stunning presentation of the story of the railways. Steve showed the plans for NRM+ and how the displays will be arranged around the existing turntable. This will be decked over but the modification will still allow stock to be moved out, albeit only occasionally. There will be plenty of interpretive material to help visitors around the

various sections. These sections will cover various aspects of the history and role of railways in modern life, including freight transport and commuting, as well as how the railways themselves were built.

The construction of NRM+ also includes a new mezzanine floor, new entry and bridge over Leeman Road, together with the relocation of the signal gantry so it is positioned over the main entrance from Leeman Road.

After the Great Hall, the Station Hall needs to be made less gloomy. The priority here is a better presentation of the Royal Trains and the cleaning up of *Winston Churchill*.

The South Yard, which has evolved over the years into something of a dumping ground, is also coming under Steve's attention. It will become the site for a new part-roundhouse, which will be used as an operational base for the main-line locomotive fleet. The intention is to allow the public to see the servicing of visiting engines. It will also have the benefit of separating locomotive engineering, restoration and operation. A raked seating area around the yard will be used for open air presentations – not just for railway-related events but as a general facility for the York area.

Steve has also been considering how to bring some of the existing demonstrations up to date. For example, by using digital projection techniques superimposed on the real display, *Ellerman Lines* will become a simulation/presentation showing the science of steam engines.

He and his team are also taking advice from other international museums. The Japanese railway museum, for example, has an extensive number of simulations including a computer-linked real steam engine cab with all controls and instruments operating in real-time in response to the driver and fireman's

actions. They also have a narrow-gauge electric demonstration line which allows members of the public to try their hand at driving a miniature modern EMU on a fully signalled track. Some of these could be replicated in the South Yard together with a children's' play area and a 2ft gauge railway for visiting narrow-gauge locomotives.

The NRM's engines will continue to be out on the main line. The repair of *Flying Scotsman* is progressing and it will be out next summer – we have Steve's word on that! He also aims to have *Duchess of Hamilton* on the main line sometime in the near future. He does not intend to ignore the diesel fleet and will aim to have about 4 diesel-electrics operating (not hydraulics, due to the lack of servicing facilities). To facilitate all this, he has recruited two more fitters to boost the workshop staff.

The museums at York and Locomotion (which received its millionth visitor this month) are to be better integrated. In August next year there will be test runs of shuttles from York South Yard to Locomotion with steam and heritage diesel. In addition, *Evening Star* will come to York, while *Mallard* is at Locomotion. When she returns to York it may be possible for her to spend some days in York station to attract visitors to the NRM.

The Museum will continue to loan equipment to other preserved railways. This could include buildings as well as locos. They will also provide consultation services to overseas museums – Ecuador is already in the queue.

Steve is clearly passionate about railways and the Museum but he recognises that he and his staff cannot accomplish all the above and he looks to the Friends to help. Together it looks like we are going to have a busy time!

NRM EXHIBIT AT MILESTONES

Earlier this year Milestones, Hampshire's living history museum in Basingstoke, received an early 10th Birthday gift from the NRM, really a long-term loan in the form of *Woolmer* an 0-6-0ST. We reported its arrival in Briefing N° 57, including the complex transport arrangements organised by Moveright International (Andrew Goodman, from this company, will be addressing the Group on 8th November).



Dr. Janet Owen, Hampshire County Council's Head of Museums, Arts and South East Hub, spoke of the delight of being able to complete the railway scene and accepted a certificate of loan from Anthony Coulls, Collections Manager, NRM. Anthony related something of the history of the locomotive built by Avonside, Bristol in 1910 (Works No. 1572). It spent most of its working life on the Longmoor Military Railway before being retired to the Beverley Museum of Army Transport. When that museum was closed the part dismantled locomotive was accepted by the NRM and sent to Locomotion at Shildon where it was returned to display condition as part of its "Learning In Motion" project.



On 7th June members of the Friends attended the museum to observe the official hand over and to view the scene in front of a replica of part of Winchester Chesil station.



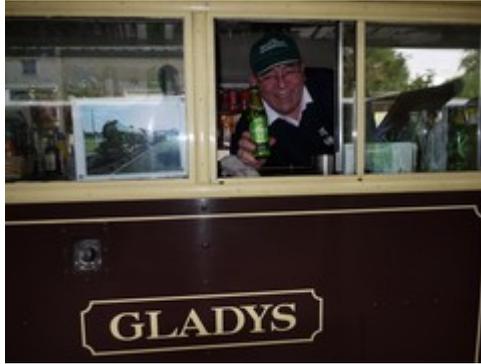
Milestones is well worth a visit with its street scenes set in two periods, 1900's and 1930/40's, both well populated with trams, buses, cars and lorries. There is even a working "pub", open at the right times. What is more Friends of the NRM get free entrance on production of their membership card.

George Rutter

A DAY WITH GLADYS

On the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
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ADVANCED NOTICE - SOUTH OF ENGLAND GROUP AGM & SUMMER OUTING

The AGM, weather, underground and train strikes permitting, will be held on Monday 10th January 2011 at our usual place. The formal notice will be sent out with the next edition of the Briefing, together with a booking form for the festive refreshments. We expect the cost of the refreshments will be £8, although this is subject to review. Please put the date in your diary now.

Les Butler, our outings coordinator, has also been busy planning next year's summer outing. Since this year we had only a day-out (to the Nene Valley Railway) next year will be a weekend

outing. As usual, this will take in the FNRM AGM in York, and the following day we will head off to the Yorkshire Dales for a trip and tour round the Emsbay & Bolton Abbey Railway. As its name suggests, this terminates near the historic ruins of Bolton Abbey Priory, so there will be the opportunity to visit that site and the adjacent river. Nearby hotel accommodation will be reserved for us. The date will be 18-19 June. Please put the date in your diary and come prepared at the AGM to express an interest in joining the trip.

MULTUM IN PARVO, OR A DAY WITH GLADYS

This year I travelled down to the Romney Marshes for a few days R&R. The campsite was approached over a level crossing but for a week there was no sign of a train whenever we crossed. From the site, we regularly heard the sounds of a steam train, but rarely caught sight of it. Then, consulting the timetable, we found ourselves returning to the site with just enough time to get set up for a photograph. At the expected time, there were distant sounds, not of a steam whistle, but of an air horn. Sure enough, as the train drew near, I had found one of the 2 diesel diagrams on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway ⁽²⁾. The next day we arrived at Hythe in good time for the popular 9.30am departure. *Northern Chief* (in BR livery) had just brought in the train from New Romney and was making its way to the turntable. Whilst on the turntable, the driver took advantage of the turntable pit to go around with an oilcan, before taking water and backing down onto the train. ⁽⁵⁾ Whistles were blown to get the last passengers settled into the coaches and we were off. ⁽⁷⁾ The RHDR claims to be

the smallest mainline railway in the world and one could imagine we were leaving a capital terminus as we passed the back gardens of the houses.

Soon we were clear of the metropolis of Hythe and onto the Romney Marshes. Across the level crossing of yesterday and passing isolated farm houses scattered around the flat landscape (but with the escarpment of Lympne always in sight). The first stop was Dymchurch, infamous for smuggling. We were to miss by a week their *Dr Syn* weekend, with the local vicar taking the part of his notorious predecessor.

Approaching New Romney we passed the PW depot and then saw the engine shed (*Northern Chief* would come off here on its return from Dungeness). From New Romney the line is singled as we passed the many holiday homes facing the sea. These were thinning out as the spring points for the return loop came into sight. Dominating the landscape were the 2 nuclear power stations, clearly visible for much of the journey. Below them is the small RHDR station, with buffet serving a welcome cup of coffee (or even an all day

breakfast). A stroll from the station across the shingle took us past several houses, the roof lines of which betrayed their origin as railway carriages.

Returning to the station, the next train was due to be diesel hauled, but clearly wasn't, being headed by *Hercules*, resplendent in Crimson Lake.⁽⁶⁾ What is more, attached to the rear was the observation buffet car, *Gladys*.⁽⁴⁾ Unfortunately, full dining service of lunch was not available, but we made do with a snack. If the catering is limited, the drinks selection was good and we sampled a bottle of their wine. Also on offer was a local brew of beer, (which the editor enjoyed on Phil's return!) as well as Pimms and even soft drinks.

The main operating base of the RHDR is New Romney and after watching the locomotive change and waving goodbye to *Gladys*, we explored the area, intending to get some food and take a later train back to Hythe. The weather forecast had not been particularly brilliant and many had turned to the railway as an alternative to the beach. As a result the buffet at New Romney had little to offer. However, relief was at hand as *Gladys*

appeared, now leading the down train to Dungeness, hauled by *Northern Chief*. We had the next hour to watch the operation of the buffet car. The operator's seat (he cannot stand up) has everything at hand, including a gas stove for boiling a kettle. (The coach even has gas heating.) The Nene Valley may be able to demonstrate postal pick up on the fly, the RHDR does it with tea.⁽¹⁾ Running into Romney Sands the buffet car attendant exchanged full and empty mugs with the platform staff as he passed.

At New Romney *Northern Chief* came off and made its way onto shed to be replaced by *Southern Maid*, in SR livery. Talking of livery, we did not travel behind another pacific, *Green Goddess*, which painted in LNER apple green could easily be mistaken for a Doncaster engine, until the driver stands up on the footplate!

On our final day on the marshes, we were driving over to Hythe for final shopping when a familiar whistle was heard as drove over the level crossing. Quickly parking, we saw *Samson*, in BR black, as it passed on an up train.⁽³⁾

Phil Brown

OUTREACH

It has been fairly quiet over the summer months. Our sales stand's last outing was to the Trains at Trinty event at Biggleswade. This coincided with the departure of Martin Dawes, who has been the Methodist Minister at this church for some 14 years. During that time he wrote the book "End of the Line" - a history of the Great Northern Railway funeral service trains of the mid-19th century. Martin presented his research to the Group in May 2000 (see Briefings19 & 30). We hope that, despite Martin's departure, this bi-annual show will continue. The stand is next out at the Tring & District Model Railway

Exhibition at Ashlyns School Berhampstead on 9th October, followed by the Warley Model Railway Show at the NEC, Birmingham on 20 & 21 November. Why not come to one?

On the trains, there have been some problems with *Oliver Cromwell*, which has meant that a non-NRM engine appeared at the head of a number of the tours. However, *Sir Lamiel* is still in fine fettle and we have been accompanying her on several journeys around the region. Sales have been holding up well both at the stand and on the trains, so our Treasurer should have some good news to report at the AGM!

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>