



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 64

South of England Group

December 2011

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

AGM & NEW YEAR SOCIAL

The meeting on Monday 9th January will be our Annual General Meeting and New Year Social. This will take the regular format of a short formal AGM, covering reports on our activities and funding situation, together with the election of committee members. This year Alan Gosling, Les Butler and Ian Harrison are due to finish their 3 year term. The committee would benefit from additional members, so do come forward if you would like to take part in the organisation of our Group. Please let George Rutter know if you are willing to do so. Mainly,

though, the event is an opportunity to see yourself on the silver screen and catch up with what is going on, as well as enjoy the food and drink.

Attendance at the AGM is free for members. There is a small charge to join in the New Year Social to offset the costs of the seasonal food and drink. We have kept this the same as last year - £8 per head. It would assist us in making sure there are enough refreshment stocks if you would fill in the enclosed booking form and return, by 4th January please, with a cheque for the appropriate amount.

FNRM BRANDED CLOTHING

I've already despatched one combined order for the production of Polo and Sweat Shirts. Those who placed orders with me will find a confirmation note with this Briefing and a reminder or the amount due, if not already pre-paid. These orders will be ready for collection at the AGM. If you haven't yet ordered

one of the new garments and wish to do so, please get in touch with me as soon as possible, telephone or e-mail are best and will avoid the Christmas mail. Details were included in the last edition of the Briefing. The cut-off date for me to place a further bulk order so that delivery takes place at the AGM, will be 16th December.

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AN EVENING WITH SIR WILLIAM McALPINE

It was a great pleasure for another full house to be able to welcome one of our Vice-Presidents, Sir William McAlpine, together with Lady McAlpine (Bill and Judy to their friends) to our meeting.

Bill held us in rapt attention for over an hour with his account of his rail-related activities, beginning with a little known fact – that there was a cycle track on the flat roof of the Great Central Hotel, just opposite our meeting room, which was intended to give guests the opportunity for a “work-out” before dinner. Mind you, if you came off the bike, it was a long way down.....

Bill reminded us that he had been a member of the Transport Trust that was given the task of finding a replacement for the Clapham Museum: after searching diligently they found a suitable site at Crystal Palace, only for Ministers (the Heath Government) to decide that the new Museum had to be outside London - with the result we all know and love.

Prince Philip was invited to open both the North Road Museum at Darlington (built by Bill's firm) and the new NRM on the same day (27th September 1975); Bill's problem was that he had to be at North Road when HRH left and at the NRM before he arrived – on the Royal Train. Bill tried to cadge a lift on the Royal Train but “security” disallowed it, so he called in the firm's helicopter: on a misty day flying was a bit of a problem, but he made it just in time. Only to discover that the train bringing the other dignitaries from London was 90mins late. No wonder the Tories privatised the railways! Bill reminded us that he had been approached to buy up the Dart Valley line with the intention of lifting the track and laying a narrow gauge line. He and some friends hired a BR DMU for £100 and went for a look-see. They came to the

conclusion that the railway would be best left as standard gauge and we should all be grateful that they did!

He has acquired various coaches in his career, notably about 200 when he and Pete Waterman bought out the BR Special Trains Unit – quite a train set! His love in coaches is probably GE No.1, the Directors' saloon that for many years Bill was able to attach to mainline trains being hauled by 4472. It is unusual in that it boasts an American style verandah at the back. On one occasion Bill was able to take all the ex-Chairmen of BR for a jolly on it.

Speaking of jollies in saloons, Bill reminded us that when senior officers went out for a line inspection it was not unknown for there to be a little intoxicating liquor on board. It really wouldn't do for “dry” staff to see their betters drinking on duty so a junior member of staff was posted to warn “signal box coming up” – at which point glasses and bottles disappeared under the table!

At one time, Bill owned both 4472 and 4079 *Pendennis Castle* and kept them at Market Overton where it was hoped to establish a steam heritage centre. Unfortunately BR made life difficult by realigning the ECML and mainline access became impossible – so they were transferred to Carnforth and Bill established “Steamtown”. Interestingly, the workshops at Market Overton did the sectioning work on 35029 *Ellerman Lines* which is, of course, in the NRM. A little bird tells me that various parts were missing and were cannibalised from another Bulleid Pacific in NRM ownership – and we are now trying to raise the money to put them back!

(I understand that in fact the new bits will be fitted to 35029, and 34051 will

have her bits restored to their rightful owner).

Bill is still very much involved with the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, of which he also led the rescue in 1972 by getting 20 friends each to contribute £5,000 to buy enough share capital to get the railway back on its feet – again with the success we see today. As Bill commented, preserved railways are now big business and have to be approached in a business-like way. (Members may like to know that we are planning a trip to the RHDR and the Kent & East Sussex Rly on a day to be decided next year).

And the elephant in the room? Well, very little was said about 4472 as the story is probably well known to all. Bill paid tribute to the late George Hinchcliffe, who sadly died on 20th September, for not only masterminding the rescue from San Francisco but then taking on the job of managing Steamtown and the 4472 operations in this country for the 23 years that she was in Bill's ownership.

And just to reinforce Bill's connection with 4472, one of our members, Jim Baldwin, presented him with the first of a new "4472 pack" that includes "the definitive book" on the loco, three DVDs

and a set of reproduction ephemera such as loco record cards, drawings, timetables and period photos. These will be available in the shops in about 6 months' time. (Jim has also produced a pack called "The Greatest Steam Locomotives" that is available now in major high street outlets).

And finally.....members will know (and some have visited) that Bill has his own train set at home – it just happens to be standard gauge! It happened because he chanced to learn that the last McAlpine steam loco (Hudswell-Clarke 0-6-0 N°31, used for shunting around construction sites) was about to be scrapped and as the scrap price was minimal he said "take it home".

As some may know, Fawley Hill lives up to its name and the only way in was across a neighbour's field. The low loader got stuck in the mud and as it was needed elsewhere, the loco was unloaded onto a track panel, of which Bill had two. So over the next two weeks, the loco was edged forward by pulling the track panels one in front of the other with a bulldozer. Nothing is ever simple in running a railway!

Ian Harrison

PRINCES RISBOROUGH NORTH SIGNAL-BOX

The Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway Association have drawn our attention to the plight of Princes Risborough North Signal-box. This is the largest surviving Great Western signal-box in the country but, having gone out of service in 1991 and not receiving any maintenance since 1998, is showing major signs of neglect and vandalism. The CPRRA has launched an appeal. The work will involve getting a lease on, or outright purchase of the building from

Network Rail, together with major restoration work to repair cracking walls, missing downpipes and rotting structural timbers, together with security improvements. They hope to get support from the Railway Heritage Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund. Donations and further information can be obtained from their web site at

<http://www.chinnorrailway.co.uk/princes-risborough-north-signal-box>

A CAMDEN WALKABOUT

Those whose memories have not entirely disappeared will recall that in February 2011 we had a talk from Peter Darley of the Camden Railway Heritage Trust about the history, and efforts to preserve, the railway area of Camden around the Roundhouse and Primrose Hill. On 5th October we followed up with a visit to the area by about a dozen members ably guided by Peter himself.



Beginning at Chalk Farm LUL station – the exterior of which is remarkably well preserved in Northern Line “tile” style, we noted the steam loco mural adjacent – oddly enough of a GW Castle loco!



The Roundhouse – originally an engine shed for freight locos built in 1846 – was converted to a theatre in 1966 and now supports productions aimed particularly at the 11-25 age group. It was used as an engine shed for only 8 years before the

central turntable became too small. It was then used for storage until acquired by Gilbeys in 1869 as a bonded warehouse (as were most other buildings in the vicinity). Below the performing space is a circular room where once was the turntable boss – and rather like St Paul’s Whispering Gallery it has an odd acoustic – but only if you stand in the centre!

For those of us who live in the sticks, Camden Market was a revelation. Virtually invisible unless inside the walls of the old railway premises, a new world of boutiques and exotic eateries opens up. It may be tat, but fascinating for all that!



Some shops are within the arches of the North London line, still with the odd horse (albeit fibreglass) negotiating the labyrinth of tight alleyways.



A bar now resides in the horse hospital where the horse stalls have been converted into cosy seating areas

complete with feeding trough and channels in the floor...! Outside it is possible to walk along the horse ramp which was used to move the animals between the floors.



A stroll alongside the Regent's Canal showed where the ropes of horses hauling barges had bitten deep gouges into the wrought iron bridgework. Nearby were ice-wells about 100ft deep where around 2400 tons of ice were stored. Some was still there when the site was re-developed in the 1980's!

From a railway perspective the most potentially interesting part of the walk is the site of the stationary winding vaults which actually lie underneath the mainline on the north side of the Canal. Sadly the vaults are now flooded and there is no access. But we are assured that

they are cathedral-like – as indeed we saw during Peter's talk in February.

And then a walk to view the eastern portals of Primrose Hill tunnels: the original (1837) tunnel now carries the slow lines whereas the fast lines use the 1879 tunnel.

Although cut and cover would have been possible, the London & Birmingham Railway agreed to bore tunnels to preserve the ambience of the area, owned by Eton College, and whose street names reflect aspects of Eton College history.



Sadly, the portals are now difficult to see although there are plans to create a viewing space if only various well known bodies connected with railways will play ball - or even a wall game!

Ian Harrison

FNRM OUTREACH STAND AT THE NEC



The Outreach Stand was at the Warley Model Railway Exhibition, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham on 19th - 20th October. This photograph shows the display of exclusive NRM 00-gauge locomotives and rolling stock, together with some of the other NRM and FNRM merchandise. The photograph was taken shortly after closing – it was nearly impossible to get near the stand during opening hours to take a picture. See Outreach Report on page 7.

MEMBERS' EVENING

We had another full house on 14th November for a members' evening of slides and videos. This substituted for our scheduled speaker, David Thomas, who was having hospital treatment. We wish him well and look forward to seeing him at a future evening meeting.

We started with a short talk from Gary Mogan, from York, who explained the links between the NRM and Japan Central Railways. The NRM has been raising funds for those affected by the earthquake/tsunami which hit Japan earlier this year. A further fund-raising dinner is being organised for 26th January at the Matsuri Japanese Restaurant, 15 Bury Street, London SW1Y 6AL.

Mike Hanscomb briefly described the developments surrounding the Borough Market Signal Box, before introducing a film from his collection, covering rush-hour at Waterloo. Much speeded views of passengers disembarking arriving trains were inter-cut with shots of the signallers operating at seemingly leisurely pace. He followed this with a short clip he recently took in Switzerland, showing modern shunting practice – a shunter jumping from a propelled wagon, between the rails and then coupling up; he obviously trusted the shunting engine driver.

Although we couldn't show the extended video due to technical difficulties, Jim Baldwin presented a five minute clip of his production of N° 60019 *Bittern* on the Palatine train run from London Euston to Manchester. This involved multiple camera shots – from the cab, the train, line-side and helicopter. Some of the shots were spectacular and give an impressive reminder of the run. Jim had copies of the DVDs of this and other steam specials which he offered members at 25% off normal price.

Ian Harrison showed a short video of early scenes at the Bluebell railway in the

1960s and of excursions hauled by *Flying Scotsman* and N° 60024 *Kingfisher* in 1965 and 1966 respectively.

Phil Brown presented some recent photographs showing the complex shunting manoeuvres at Rensselaer when the Boston and New York portions of the Lake Shore Limited were reassembled whilst a local train for Vermont called.

The two 4,000hp locomotives which had come in on the small 5 car Boston portion took over the combined train whilst the electro-diesel from New York came off.

The latter being required for the tunnels into New York City. The new station at Rensselaer is an example of the recent work on the US passenger railroads and is to be further enhanced under the US recovery spending with another platform.

Ian Harrison showed clips of the work of the US Big Boys, followed by the work leading up to the steam special commemorating the 60th anniversary of the *City of Truro* record-breaking run. This concentrated on the Bristol to Paddington leg when BR selected the best of its "Castles" to haul the train.

Throughout the evening, Mel Draper presented selected 35mm slides which have been donated by the widow of the late Brian Gilliam. The donation also includes sets of ceramic "collector-edition" plates with locomotive designs, loco and wagon cast builders' plates and framed prints of railway and town scenes.

- all are to be sold in aid of the *Winston Churchill* appeal. None of the circa 5000 slides have any indication of what, where or when they were taken. Those presented in the evening concentrated on the earlier ones, dating from the early 1960s, covering BR and Belgium steam, and the early years of preservation. While the quality of these early slides had suffered, they stimulated a good debate to try to identify the locations.

OUTREACH REPORT

We have had a particularly successful couple of months with the Outreach Stand. Sunday 25th September saw us attending the Model Railway Exhibition held in Banbury School on the outskirts of the town. This was a new location for us and we didn't quite know what to expect. However, we were made very welcome by the exhibition organisers and attendances were quite high, with a good deal of interest in the Museum and what we had on offer. We have already booked to attend again next year.

Two weeks later, on Saturday 8th October, we were again visiting Ashlyns School, Berhamstead, for TAD-Rail, the Tring and District Model Railway Exhibition. Due to logistics problems (primarily due to your scribe being on holiday) we were unable to use our own tables, but the organisers offered the use of theirs. Again interest in our stand was high.

The big event, however, was on the weekend of 19th - 20th November, the annual Warley Model Railway Exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. The majority of Hall 5 was allocated to the event and attendances on both days were high. On the Saturday, the stand was quite often 2 or 3 rows deep. Our leaflets on What's On at the NRM took a rapid dive. With the backing of the NRM, at all these events we were able to sell the NRM-exclusive, 00-gauge locomotive and wagon models produced by Bachmann. We were fortunate that

supplies of the new Midland Railway Compound N° 1000 arrived early on Saturday 19th. People were so eager to get one that we were selling from the just-opened cardboard boxes for the first few minutes. Many of those who bought this and the other models had read prior advertising but wanted to see them before parting with their money, and there were quite a few who were initially hesitant but, having admired the quality and heard from other visitors about the extremely high standard of finish, went away as proud new owners.

Another talking point was Railfest at the NRM, scheduled for the extended week 2nd to 10th June. Interest, from potential visitors and stand holders is high. The new What's-On leaflet has brief details, and a good many people went away preparing to book their accommodation and travel arrangements.

The stand is attending the East Beds. Model Railway Exhibition on 11th February and the London Festival of Railway Modelling on 24th - 25th March.

News on the support for NRM locos on the mainline has not been so good, partly as so few have run. Even when they are promised, they seem subject to late cancellation or locomotive substitution. However, we continue to lend support where possible.

If you would like to help in any of these events, please get in touch with any member of the committee.

RICHARD CAUSEBROOK

We have been informed of the death of Richard Causebrook. Richard was one of the founder members of the Group and one time committee member. He attended most of the meetings and outdoor events until ill health caught up with him a few years ago. Richard will be remembered for his slide shows. For one he had sought out the locations of the Bourne drawings

of the London to Birmingham Railway and compared them with modern day views. Some artistic licence was evident! He also prepared a memorable sequence of slides showing all the stations mentioned in Flanders & Swann's "Slow Train", set to the relevant music. We have sent a message of condolence to his wife Peveril.

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>