



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 67

South of England Group

October 2012

Vice Presidents – Sir William McAlpine Bt., FRSE, FCIT, FRSA; Richard Hardy

STEVE DAVIES LEAVES THE NRM

If you subscribe to railway magazines, you will have seen that Steve Davies is to leave the NRM at the end of this month. The news came in the form of a press release on 20th September which noted that Steve is to leave for a job in the private tourist and leisure sector. His temporary replacement is Paul Kirkman, on secondment from the Department of Culture, Media and Sports. For a post of this seniority, it is normal to advertise, so keep your eye on the press if you want a new, challenging job!

You will recall that Steve addressed the Group in September 2010, giving a very

up-beat talk on his plans. In his tenure he has been a very dynamic head who has certainly drawn attention to the Museum. We have already seen some of his plans come to fruition with Railfest, the work on Station Hall, and the temporary repatriation of the two A4s from North America. Progress on his other plans, such as his thoughts on the South Yard, will need to wait the new incumbent.

He always took a very positive approach to the Friends and made the effort to visit us on our stand when our paths crossed. I am sure we will all miss his enthusiasm and energetic approach to the post.

CHANGE TO NOVEMBER MEETING

Chris Beet, from the NRM, was to have addressed us in November. Unfortunately this has not been possible. There is no connection with the news above, just the difficulty of fitting in with Chris' availability. He has pencilled in our April meeting in his diary, so we look forward to seeing him then.

Instead we will hold a members' evening on the theme of "Trains from faraway places". We already have an offer for part

of the evening, of a presentation from Jim Baldwin on his research on the genesis and subsequent fate of the passenger coaches which accompanied *Flying Scotsman* on its tour of the USA.

If you have any interesting photographs of railway operations or equipment from overseas, please bring them along. If you need them transferring onto electronic form, please get in touch with Mel Draper (address on back page).

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| STEVE DAVIES LEAVES THE NRM..... | 1 |
| CHANGE TO NOVEMBER MEETING..... | 1 |
| ON AND OFF THE RAILS..... | 2 |
| OUREACH ACTIVITES..... | 3 |
| ROMNEY, HYTHE & DYMCHURCH RAILWAY..... | 6 |
| WINSTON CHURCHILL (NEARLY) RETURNS HOME | 6 |
| FORTHCOMING EVENTS..... | 8 |

ON AND OFF THE RAILS

Bill Davies joined us on 10th September to describe some of his experiences as a train driver and driving instructor. Bill started by pointing out that he is an exhibit at the NRM – more precisely a photograph of him and Peter Parker is on display to mark the introduction of driver-only operation. His Thameslink uniform, down to his thermal underwear, is also in the Museum.

His interest in railways started at the very early age of three when a neighbour took him on a trip to see the trains at Nottingham Victoria station. He was hooked. Despite his father being headmaster of the local grammar school, Bill was never particularly academically gifted and had already made his mind up that he wanted to be an engine driver. He entered BR on 8th September 1964 at Toton. This was an unfortunate time with the demise of the role of fireman and the impact of the Beeching report starting to feed through.

He had many anecdotes of the characters at Toton, such as 'Ricochet Ted', a shunting driver who always seemed to bounce his charges off the buffers; and 'Ben the Bog-House Man' – inevitable a social outcast. Bill's early task was cleaning steam engines – usually just before the engine was withdrawn. Within three weeks, Bill was given the task, as part of a demonstration to senior staff, of applying a new cleaning fluid for removing brake/oil emulsion off the new diesel-electrics. Unfortunately, the loco chosen was “straight from the box” and already pretty clean. But the cleaner was still applied and it was then blasted with high pressure water. With the senior staff congratulating themselves on the effectiveness of the cleaning fluid and moving off to enjoy their refreshments, Bill and his mate were left with the engine. Perhaps their efforts with the

water jet had been a bit too enthusiastic as they had managed to get all the way through to the electrics. They could smell the burning and hear a crackling sound – and in places the outer shell was down to bare metal. Although they had to appear before their shed foreman to explain themselves, they were exonerated partly through the intervention of their union representative who questioned the absence of the provision of protective clothing bearing in mind the effect the fluid had had on the locomotive.

Toton drivers, being dominated by freight working, always had a reputation for slow running, possibly due to their eagerness to earn overtime on journeys – the rumour was the 20 mph signs were installed to try to get them to speed up! With the Beeching cuts making inroads into the multitude of depots, all the displaced staff were gradually concentrated at Toton – and everyone was senior to Bill! So he moved to Nottingham.

Here there was a more interesting mixture of workings - local passengers and expresses with long-distance freights. He had the opportunity to take trains as far as Immingham and Lincoln. They had always had difficulties with GN loco men and Bill told the tale of the experiences of a colleague who, on taking over a working at Lincoln for Nottingham was faced with a B1 which was reported as poorly steaming. A GN regional inspector joined them on the footplate and said all it needed was a good crew to get the best out of it - he tried to demonstrate but still couldn't get it working. Meanwhile the Nottingham crew had noticed that the previous GN team had forgotten to tighten the smokebox door. After the inspector had become sufficiently exhausted, the driver nipped up to the front, gave a quick turn of the nuts and

the fireman had it blowing off in no time, accompanied by a reminder that all it needed was a good crew.

Bill moved to Kings Cross, initially working on the train-heating boilers, before becoming second man on the Class 31 outer-suburban services. Kings Cross was full of people who had become redundant from other sheds as a result of the Beeching cuts. After a while, Bill was promoted to the Leeds link, taking freights and sleepers to the North of England, Ultimately he qualified as a driver. Bill praised the Deltics as impressive locomotives able to handle the crack expresses; but he didn't like their boilers which were located in the noisy environment between the two engines. If you had to start one with the engines running, you knew about it.

While he got more pay as a driver, he couldn't get on the regular driving turns at Kings Cross, so he moved to Charring Cross which, at that time, was in need of extra footplate staff. It took him a year of route learning around Kent before he was fully qualified. He thoroughly enjoyed it,

where else would you get paid for admiring the Kent countryside? In 1978 the Bed-Pan line was created and extra drivers were needed at Bedford, so five were moved there from Charring Cross, including Bill. At that time the section from Holborn Viaduct to Farringdon had closed, but as one of his last acts as head of the GLC, Ken Livingstone got £46M to reopen this 700 yards of route and so form Thameslink. Bill was in his element with his knowledge of both the Southern and Northern sections. By then he was a union representative, and enjoyed that, but he also felt it important to pass on his experience in other ways, so he became a driving instructor. However, in the mid 2000s, with privatisation musical-chairs and the explosion of "new management speak", he decided it was time to take the redundancy package and go.

Throughout his talk Bill entertained us with his anecdotes of events and characters. He illustrated it with examples from his photographic collection, many showing amusing situations he had seen during his lifetime on the rails.

OUREACH ACTIVITES

Our 2012 outreach activities continued at Northampton Model Railway Exhibition on 21st July for our first visit to this venue. We were made very welcome and had a good position in the main hall. The stand drew a good deal of interest and it is likely we will return next year. On 23rd September we attended the Banbury Model Railway exhibition. Unfortunately, the weather had taken another turn for the worse and attendance was significantly down on last year, but that meant that we had plenty of time to chat to people. As at Northampton, we were in the main hall – clearly, our stand has a reputation with show managers as something to focus on. Our next event will be Tring & District (TADrail) exhibition on 13th October

which this year will be held at Cottesloe School, Aylesbury Road, Wing, LU7 0NY, rather than the school in Berkhamsted; so if you are a regular, make sure you come to the right place. The following weekend, we will be at the National Festival of Railway Modelling at the East of England Showground, Peterborough. This will be another new venue for us, but it has got a good reputation and we look forward to a busy two days. The year ends, as usual, with the Warley Model Railway Exhibition at the NEC, Birmingham on 24th and 25th November; this is always busy and generally reckoned as the model railway event of the year.

I hope to see you at one of these shows.

THE 2012 GREAT DORSET STEAM FAIR



The Wednesday mud bath.



Friday and the heavy cavalry come over the hill with *Winston Churchill* in tow.



Finally, the locomotive gently descends onto her display track.



Real steam, en-mass, takes charge and *Winston Churchill* takes a twirl round the ring as the main display on Saturday.



What was all that about rain? A beautiful Saturday evening with loco and stand.

MID-HANTS RAILWAY



Winston Churchill and SoE Stand at Alresford Station on 7th September.

SUMMER OUTING TO THE RHDR



The group join the 10:12 departure from St Pancras; Javelin 395 006 *Daley Thompson*.



(above) Our outdoor events coordinator, Les Butler, leads the way, while (below) the rest of us cram in behind.



Our Chairman takes a video while waiting the departure of the 12:00 from Hythe.



(left) No3 *Southern Maid* at New Romney.

(bottom left) No7 *Typhoon* at Dungeness.

(below) No2 *Northern Chief* at Romney Sands.



ROMNEY, HYTHE & DYMCHURCH RAILWAY

On 29th September, rather later than our normal summer one-day visits, five of us met at St Pancras International to take the relatively-new Javelin service along HS1. The date was, however, providential as, for once this summer, the skies were completely blue with no sign of rain. The journey seemed to take no time at all, whisking us through the Kent countryside at 140 mph to Ashford, before the rather more mundane third-rail kicked-in for the short run to Folkestone Central. The concept of integrated transport doesn't seem to have permeated this far south-east, so a bit of exercise was necessary to get us to the bus station where we boarded the 102 service to Hythe. The car park here had a couple of Jeeps in WWII livery, showing that the Autumn gala was in full swing. We boarded the 12:00 departure, hauled by *Southern Maid*, which was well loaded, to New Romney. Here more of the Group joined for lunch. Suitably refreshed, we explored the environs of the station. The OO model railway above the café was in full operation. A display of models and photographs showed the line's history.

Outside a band played music to accompany the diners, there was a Punch & Judy show, and the shed and armoured train were available for inspection.

At 14:05, the next west-bound train arrived, hauled by No7 *Typhoon*, which we boarded for the journey to Dungeness. Here there was a vintage vehicle display alongside the station and overlooked by the open 19th century lighthouse and, now closed, 20th century nuclear power station. A special 4-coach train departed first. This put our departure some 10 minutes late. We de-trained at Dymchurch to see the display of WWII military vehicles, mobile hospital and dance-hall. In need of more refreshment by this time, we adjourned to a nearby pub. A quick inspection of the various timetables, showed that by catching a bus from here we could make the 17:56 HS1 Folkestone departure. Unfortunately, the bus service was delayed, but, with a quick change at Folkestone bus station, we caught the HS1 service with a couple of minutes to spare. It shows that a day-trip from London, or further afield, is now possible with ease to this interesting railway.

WINSTON CHURCHILL (NEARLY) RETURNS HOME

On Tuesday 28th August, a heavy transport rig from Allelys arrived at the NRM to load No 34051 *Winston Churchill* and bring it to Dorset. The objective was to place the locomotive as the centre piece of the heavy-haulage display at the Great Dorset Steam Fair, located on the Salisbury to Blandford Forum road. Salisbury was the home shed of 34051 for most of its working life, so the engine was definitely to be on its home ground, if not rails. The Museum had asked the South of England Group to accompany the locomotive at the show with the aim of raising the profile of the restoration project. We arrived at the show on Tuesday evening and were met

by the organisers who placed us in a prime location next to the display track.

The locomotive's journey along the motorways was uneventful and, after an overnight stop, the locomotive arrived at the fairground on Wednesday morning, the opening day of the show. Unfortunately, it wasn't just the fair that opened, the skies did too, torrential rain flooding over the whole area. The ground turned into liquefied mud, with the odd steam traction engine doing its best to work it up like a food blender. The result was inevitable, after a journey of 250 miles, *Winston Churchill* remained on the hard-standing by the entry, half-mile from its destination.

The rain finally eased on Thursday morning, but demonstrations in the display rings were severely curtailed. The rain had been replaced by a strong south-westerly gale. This dried the ground, but caused us a few headaches on the stand as we tried to stop everything heading off by air in the Salisbury direction. A little light overnight precipitation cast doubts over restarting the show, but by mid-morning the ground had dried out sufficiently for the steam tractors and rollers to move – in their normal direction rather than sideways, as had been the case thus far for those brave enough to try!

Then at 10:10 what should appear over the horizon at the top of the field but *Winston Churchill*. The Allelys crew had wisely chosen an unusual route to the display area via a partially metalled surface. After checking the trailer and the rest of the route, they roped in three other heavy-haulage diesel tractors to help drive, and more importantly, brake the trailer and its 80 ton load. A careful descent of the hill saw the assembly arrive next to the display track. With some well-practised work, the locomotive was gently eased off the trailer and, by 14:00, No 34051 was safely settled on the permanent way and taking pride of place at the show. Naturally, this exercise had drawn a massive following from the spectators, and we were kept busy providing information, selling souvenirs and taking donations. The commentators made many references to the restoration project, NRM and the the Friends, thus bringing more people our way.

Saturday was by far the best day of the show, with large audiences for the re-loading of the locomotive onto the trailer, its trips round the display arena, at one time hauled by three steam tractors, and subsequent re-railing onto the display track. For once the weather was kind with no rain, light winds and occasional blue

sky. Sunday saw the summer back to normal, with rain pouring down and the mud returning. No further attempts were made to move the engine at the show.

The following Friday, we reconvened at Alresford on the Mid-Hants Railway. There, reunited with its tender, was No 34051, looking splendid on the cattle-dock siding as an imposing frontispiece to the station entrance. The Mid-Hants operated a gala over the extended weekend, with an impressive line-up of locomotives on an intensive service. Two other National Collection locomotives were in action, No 850 *Lord Nelson*, and No 925 *Cheltenham*. They were in the company of 9F No 92212, LMS (BR) Black 5 No. 45379, GWR mogul No 5322, U class No 31806 and WC No 34007 *Wadebridge*. The weather was kind and patronage high. On Friday, Jim Lester, the fireman when No 34051 hauled Sir Winston's funeral train, was present and we took the opportunity to pose him in front of his past charge. Not surprisingly, many photographers were in action and I expect we will see the results in the various publications over the coming weeks.

The Mid-Hants Railway, by way of thanks for the loan of the engine, ran a dining special, "The Churchillian" and a Real Ale Train (colloquially known as "The RAT") on 22nd September, offering the profits to the restoration appeal. Both were fully loaded. Overall, therefore the tour to the Great Dorset Steam Fair and Mid-Hants Railway have proved a very successful way to boost the appeal fund. We thank Allelys, who arranged the transport at no cost, the GDSF management, who offered us stand space at no charge, and Mid-Hants Railway for their strong support.

We now await the start of the restoration, news of which may appear shortly.

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>