



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 69

South of England Group

March 2013

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

AGM AND NEW YEAR SOCIAL

The AGM was held on Monday 14th January. Thirteen members were present, together with two guests. During the formal business, Ian Harrison gave a summary of the activities of the group during the last year. We held six evening meetings, organised by Jeremy Moore and made a visit to the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, organised by Les Butler. Four editions of the Briefing were distributed and the Group's web-site was kept up to date. Our outreach work to promote the Museum in the South of England continued, both at model railway events and on board trains which are hauled by Collection locomotives. This year, these were supplemented by visits to the Great Dorset Steam Fair and the Mid-Hants Railways Autumn Steam Gala, both in connection with the tour by locomotive *Winston Churchill*, as part of the fund raising work for its restoration. Treasurer, Roger Smith, reported on the healthy balance sheet, noting that we

have moved banks from Yorkshire Bank to NatWest, albeit with some difficulty, but securing a compensation payment to add to the funds. The funds to support *Winston Churchill's* restoration are building up well and should receive a boost once the limited-edition prints of the specially-commissioned painting of the locomotive is available in the Spring. Les Butler described the plans for the Summer Outing to the FNRM AGM at York and the Middleton Railway, and stressed the need for those interested in joining the weekend tour to express their interest by the end of January, in order to ensure that hotel accommodation can be secured in York. George Rutter, Jeremy Moore, and Roger Emerson were formally re-elected onto the Group's committee.

Before and following the formal business, everyone enjoyed the buffet refreshments while watching photographs of the year's events.

CONTENTS

AGM and New Year Social.....	1
Changes to the Spring Evening Lectures.....	2
Six A4s at the NRM.....	2
Outreach and New Product Lines	2
Outreach Stand.....	3
Mainline Tours.....	3
Bridging the Gap.....	6
Forthcoming Events.....	8

CHANGES TO THE SPRING EVENING LECTURES

Unfortunately, our planned speakers for March and April will be unable to give their presentations. We hope to see Chris Beet from the NRM at a new date, probably after work on *Flying Scotsman* has been completed. We have, however, confirmation that the new NRM Director, Paul Kirkman, will speak to the Group at the first evening meeting in this year's Autumn season, on 9th September. We look forward to welcoming him then.

Meanwhile, the March meeting presentation will now be given by Mel Draper who will show some of the collection of slides taken by the late

Brian Gilliam, who donated them to the FNRM. He is gradually going through the collection to catalogue them, before considering their future disposition. Whilst some are relatively easy to identify, others are not. The March evening meeting will include a selection of the latter to challenge members' knowledge. Dust down those ABCs, shed books and reference material, because here (finally!) is a practical use for them.

The April talk will be given by Charlie Masterson and Brian Atkins who will describe the work to restore GWR 2-8-0T No 4253.

SIX A4S AT THE NRM

Plans for the commemoration of the record-breaking run of *Mallard* are well advanced at the NRM. As you know, 60008 *Dwight D. Eisenhower* and 60010 *Dominion of Canada* have been, temporarily, repatriated for the event. The Friends have donated £50,000 towards their cosmetic restoration. 60008 is now complete and is currently exhibited in the Great Hall by the turntable alongside *Mallard*. 60010 is still at Shildon undergoing its restoration. The aim is to have the three joined by the three privately preserved A4s, *Sir Nigel Gresley*, *Bittern* and *Union of South Africa*, for an unveiling ceremony at the NRM on 3rd July. All six locomotives will remain at York for the following two weeks, giving you time to pay your respects. There is likely to be a lot of publicity associated with these events,

bringing national and international attention. The NRM and FNRM are, of course, keen to capitalise on this and the latter, in particular want to use this to spread the word on the good work we do. Even our fellow rail enthusiasts in North America are not being left out of this as the two locos will have plaques attached to them explaining the role of the FNRM in bringing them back to pristine condition. {but I don't think it says "and keep them that way!"}

In the following weeks, there is the possibility that *Mallard* may move to other locations along the East Coast main-line as part of the celebrations. These arrangements have still to be confirmed, so keep your eyes on the press and the NRM web-site. If the loco ventures into our patch we can expect to be on call with our outreach stand.

OUTREACH AND NEW PRODUCT LINES

The stand has attended the East Bedfordshire Model Railway Exhibition, at Biggleswade, on 23rd February. Always a busy event, this year was no exception, and we were in our usual prominent position in the main hall.

This year we were testing out the market with a new product range, courtesy of the Science Museum Group marketing team and Star Editions. The latter company has been granted licences to the entire collection of railway posters owned by

the NRM. Members of the committee recently visited their factory in Needham Market to view the collection and discuss possible links. The reception we received from visitors to the Biggleswade show was enthusiastic - sufficiently so for us to commission an initial range of items in time for our next show - the London Festival of Railway Modelling at Alexandra Palace on 23rd-24th March.

We have a number of commitments over the coming months. We are attending the celebrations at our Vice President's home, Fawley Hill, near Henley-on-Thames, for the 100th anniversary of his Hudswell Clarke locomotive. There will be a number of other charity groups, with whom Bill has links, together with other attractions – and, of course, the railway

running. It promises to be quite an event and very popular. The following week we will be at Toddington to celebrate to reopening of the full length of the Gloucester-Warwickshire Railway, which is also being attended by the NRM's Schools Class No 925 *Cheltenham*. This will be a major attraction in the area, with the loco running to its “home” town, potentially generating some good publicity. In addition we wait to hear whether there will be an opportunity for the outreach stand to take part in the Steam on the Met celebrations. With the possibility of *Mallard* being on static display in our region and the mainline excursion, this means that there will be plenty of outreach opportunities. This explains the message below! Please help.

OUTREACH STAND

23-24 March	London Festival of Railway Modelling, Alexandra Palace
11 May	South West Herts MRX, Alexandra School, Watford
18-19 May	Fawley Hill Steam & Vintage Weekend - marking 100 th anniversary of Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST Engine N° 31
24-27 May	Gloucestershire, Warwickshire Railway Steam Gala

MAINLINE TOURS

All operated by Railway Touring Company. Volunteers needed to help with on-board sales.

6 April	70013	Liv St – Norwich – Kings Lynn – Liv St
11 May	70013	Kings Cross – Skegness & return
6 June	70013	Euston – Northampton – Chester & Return
9 June	70013	Liv St – Norwich – Lowestoft & Return
24 & 31 July, 7, 14, 21 & 28 August, 4 & 11 September	30777	Victoria – Weymouth – Waterloo

HELP NEEDED WITH OUTREACH

Outreach is an important part of the FNRM work to draw attention to the Museum's activities and to raise funds to help with its work. We need more volunteers to help with this work. We cannot pay expenses, but you get entry to the event for free and often a free lunch. We try to have enough people to allow time off from stand duties to enjoy the event. Most of all you get the warm feeling that your efforts are helping the Friends and the Museum achieve their objectives.

Contact Mel Draper for more details – see back page for address/telephone/e-mail

THE ROTHER VALLEY

Bypass



Robertsbridge Bypass

The route is shown in red dots from Robertsbridge Network Rail station at the lower left to the Kent & East Sussex Railway station at Bodiam, upper right. The track-bed from Robertsbridge station to Northbridge Street (the road coming north out of Robertsbridge town centre and curving to the East) is already owned by the RVR, as is the route from

RAILWAY ROUTE

Junction Road

Bodiam Station

Junction Road

Junction Road to Bodiam Station. All that remains to complete the line is the bit in the middle – see “Bridging the Gap” on page 6.

(Aerial photographs from Google Maps)

EAST BEDS MODEL RAILWAY SHOW



The Outreach stand attracts interest at Biggleswade 23rd February 2013

NEW PRODUCT RANGE



We are developing a new range of products for sale on the stand. On the left are (from top to bottom) Boxed Mugs, Fridge Magnets and Greeting Cards, Magnetic Notepads and packs of 6 postcards. On the right are a Tea-towel, Shopping Bag, and A4 Posters.

BRIDGING THE GAP

The cold weather had put several people off attending our February meeting, but ten were present to welcome Mark Yonge of the Rother Valley Railway. Mark gave a fascinating illustrated talk of the work to link the Kent & East Sussex Railway to the railhead at Robertsbridge and thus connect with the national network.

Mark started with a brief historical description of the origins of the line, around 1900, as a Colonel Stevens light railway. This was built to serve the market town of Rolvenden which otherwise would suffer economically from its isolated position. Ultimately the line extended from Headcorn to Robertsbridge, thus connecting two main-lines and having a total length of 24 miles. Its demise came some 50 years later as a result of road competition. As we all know, in 1961 the new K&ESR was formed and re-opened the part of the line between Tenterden and Bodiam as a preserved railway, reaching Bodiam at the turn of the Millennium. But the section from Bodiam to Robertsbridge is a gap which leaves the railway isolated from the national rail network. There have long been aspiration to "bridge the gap", but these were met by resistance in high places; even Rt Hon Barbara Castle refused to sanction the attempts, when the Robertsbridge bypass was being planned. The Department of Transport continued to resist until recently, when the glimmer of a more open approach appeared.

In 1990/91 a new company, the Rother Valley Railway Company, was set up to pursue the extension. This is a completely separate legal entity from the K&ESR. Its sole objective is to secure the land and build the extension, and then wind itself up, selling the resulting asset to the K&ESR for a nominal amount - probably just £1. Before the formation of the

company, Mark had walked the route to confirm that there was nothing insurmountable which would prevent the completion of the extension. This gap of 3 miles looks relatively easy on the map, (see page 4 and 5) going through relatively flat countryside. However, there are three level crossings over busy roads and several bridges over water-courses, and all the track-bed had been sold to adjacent landowners.

The first objective was to extend the track from the current railhead at Bodiam. Originally the owner was reluctant to sell and was very opposed to the extension of the railway. However, the property, comprising some 30 acres of land and a large house, came on the market. In stepped a beneficiary, who raised the money to buy the estate, separating the track-bed from the title deeds, then reselling the remainder at a profit, effectively securing the trackbed for the extension. This allowed track to be laid from Bodiam west towards the site of the first level crossing over the B2244, Junction Road. Interesting, the new land-owners of the adjoining estate are now very supportive of the railway and, while current agreement only envisages 12 trains a year running on this part of the track, Mark doesn't envisage much difficulty, when the time comes, to run a more intensive service once the extension is fully built. It's the old story - resistance to something new, but acceptance and support once things are operating.

Around 200 yards on from Junction Road is Austin Bridge which was installed around Nationalisation and is in reasonable condition, probably suitable for restoration. The trackbed is mainly intact, traceable as a tree-lined path, between here and the Robertsbridge bypass, the A21. This will be the major

planning challenge with the road authorities, but Mark believes they can get agreement. The site of the crossing will be close to a roundabout, so traffic will (or should!) be travelling slowly. Train movements, however, will be relatively swift at that point and they envisage the barrier only being lowered for 45 seconds. There will be full-width barriers here and at the other two level crossings. Just after the bypass, the line will run over a small culvert, but the bridge here has already been demolished. The line runs across an open field to the next crossing at Northbridge Street. This road is now relatively quiet - it used to be the main road before the bypass - so a level crossing should not be too problematic. Following this is the land which the company has already purchased. Bridge number 6, immediately after Northbridge Street, will need to be demolished as it is in a poor condition. The company already hold a stock of bridge material at their Robertsbridge site, sufficient to rebuild these and the others on the line. Indeed, bridges 3 and 4 on the rest of the line leading to Robertsbridge, have already been demolished and rebuilt with heavy-duty concrete abutments and steel deck. The first bridge out of Robertsbridge, Bridge 1, has been restored; it was rebuilt at Nationalisation and in relatively good condition. When rebuilding Bridges 3 and 4, they uncovered some interesting archaeological evidence of how Colonel Stephen's team went about their bridge-building work - not surprisingly it was cheap and cheerful, using random cast concrete blocks which also doubled up as scaffolding points.

There was a pinch-point at the entry to Robertsbridge station yard which necessitated the company buying some additional land on the town side. This has allowed them to have sufficient space for

the platforms, running line and run-round loop. Network Rail are willing to allow a connection to be made to their engineer's siding - which actually used to be the original Rother Valley Railway platform. A new station building has been designed and is expected to be completed within two years. Mark showed us the photographs taken in January and early February showing site clearing and foundation preparations - so there is no grass growing under the project's feet (literally!). There will also be a carriage shed and loco shed at Robertsbridge which have still to be started. Track for the extension has already been sourced from London Transport and will be laid by the K&ESR track gang. Assuming they can purchase the remaining land, and get the permissions for the level crossings, it would be possible to complete the entire extension in just two years. The local public are supportive and it will be difficult for others to stand in the way when they see rails approaching from two directions.

During questions, we asked how they envisaged the service operating on the line. Mark felt that full length journeys would only be made on special events. However, there could be potential to run shuttles from Robertsbridge to Bodiam to connect with the K&ESR services or even in partnership with the National Trust to service visitors to Bodiam Castle.

We were all struck by how positive the outlook is for the extension and how enthusiastically Mark champions the project. He noted that now would be a good time to come and see it. A group from the Colonel Stephens Society did just that last year, using a vintage bus to take them to see the sights, and sample some of the local pubs in the area. Perhaps we ought to follow their example?

**FOR CURRENT LIST OF FORTHCOMING LECTURES
SEE THE DIARY SECTION OF THE WEB PAGE AT:**

**[HTTP://WWW.NRMFRIENDS-
SOUTH.ORG.UK/DIARY.HTML](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](http://www.nrmfriends-south.org.uk/index.html)**