



# The Friends of the National Railway Museum

**Briefing 70**

**South of England Group**

**June 2013**

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

## **LATE SUMMER OUTING**

You may recall that our February evening lecture was given by Mark Yonge of the Rother Valley Railway. During the discussion, Mark made the suggestion that we organise a group visit to see the progress on the railway. Les Butler has since been in touch with him and identified Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September as a suitable day. This coincides with a gala on the adjoining Kent and East Sussex Railway. A bus link will be operating from Robertsbridge to Rolverden. There will therefore be the opportunity to enjoy the special events taking place, together with a brake van ride on the Rother

Valley Railway from Bodiam to the current end of the track. Mark will be there to meet us to show us the progress which is taking place to extend the rails towards Robertsbridge.

Please let Les know by 1<sup>st</sup> September (see last page for address) if you intend to take part so he can inform Mark of the rough numbers and let you have details of the event.

The AGM and Middleton Railway visit took place as scheduled on 8/9<sup>th</sup> June, but space limitations mean that it cannot be covered in this edition. The report will appear in the next edition.

## **RAILWAYS CHANGE LIVES**

The National Archives and the NRM have organised two conferences on this subject. These will be held at Kew on 7<sup>th</sup> September and York on 14<sup>th</sup> September. Tickets for FNRM members for either event cost £40 – a £10 discount on normal price. Details are available on the NA web site:

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/railways-change-lives](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/railways-change-lives)

or see page 13 of the last NRM *Review*. According to my contacts at Kew, half the tickets have already been sold, so book quickly if you are interested. We aim to have a small stand at the Kew event to fly the FNRM flag and explain a bit about what we are doing to help the cataloguing of some of their archives.

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## MARCH AND APRIL EVENING LECTURES

Due to some changes caused by short-notice withdrawal by our booked speakers, Mel Draper used the two lecture sessions to present selected slides from the collection of the late Brian Gilliam.

Brian was a long term railway enthusiast, member of the Friends, the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society, and held the post of secretary of the Stephenson Locomotive Society. In addition, his final job was transport manager for the Science Museum.

He started photographing the railways in the 1950s and continued until shortly before his death in 2006. The resulting collection of some 4500 slides, covers a wide range of topics. Much is concerned with UK railways, but there are also shots of railways in Ireland, mainland Europe and wider afield, e.g. South Africa.

### Problems

Brian seemed to prefer Agfa film stock which, unfortunately, does not age well. As a result, much of the early material has had the colour washed out. Many of the early cardboard slide mounts have also deteriorated. Where the material warrants it, these have been replaced with glass fronted plastic mounts, thus removing the distortion from the film stock. In some cases, it will be impossible to restore the colour, but in others, again where the material warrants it, some computer enhancement may be used.

The main problem, however, is that there is little supporting information to identify the subject of the photographs. The slides came in 110 boxes, of various types and shape. These contained slides of various vintage, location and subject, with seemingly little in common, although Brian obviously thought so as he used them in this order for his own slide shows. Some of the slides, particularly the early card-mounted types, have numbers written on them which may have

cross-referenced to his notebooks (which are not available), but in most there is simply the processing date to go on. Thus the name of the two evening sessions - "What, Where, When" - which used the collective brain-power of our audience to help identify around a hundred of the slides.

### Presentations

Mel used the March presentation to show the original slides using a 35mm optical projector. This allowed close examination of the image where necessary, but even so, in some instances, the required detail, e.g. a locomotive number of nameplate, was just beyond the grain emulsion limits to allow identification. The second, April, presentation, used computer generated scans of the slides, shown on the meeting room wide-screen display, but even with computer generated zoom, some detail was still not visible. All very frustrating!

The presentations were split into a number of sections.

The material dealing with the NRM covered the early days of the Museum at York and its predecessor there, as well as shots of the British Transport Museum at Clapham. One memorable shot is of Frank Patterson welcoming members of the SLS to York.

Visits to Locomotive Works and Depots covered both steam and more modern time. Some of the interesting shots show examples of experimental diesel types during their last days.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that with Brian's membership of the SLS and RCTS there are a good number of photographs of special excursions. Many of these are well recorded elsewhere, so it proved relatively easy to identify the location and date of many of these.

Perhaps the most challenging slides are those of line-side and station shots. Some can be identified by reference to maps

and published photographic albums of regional railways. Others are more difficult. One which stimulated much debate was an early monochrome image of an A4 on a passenger express, passing through a station on the fast, non-platformed, lines. There was much debate during the presentation about where this was. Subsequent exchanges by mail and e-mail, with help via Roger Harrington from the LNER Society, have confirmed the location and date - see the "then & now" shots in the centre pages.

### **"To Do"**

There is still much to do on the collection. All the slides are now numbered and a database has been created listing the slide details (film stock, processing date, number, type of mount, etc.), and image details (engine numbers/names, type of locations, possible date, description of scene). The slides are also gradually being electronically scanned. These steps will

allow others to help identify the 'what, where, when' of the subject.

If you want to help in the process of identifying the slides and completing the catalogue, get in touch with Mel Draper (details on back page) who will arrange to loan you a box of slide, with copies of the electronic scans and database.

### **Lessons Learnt**

There are some lessons for all of us who have personal slide collections here:

1. Make sure your slides are catalogued and someone knows where the catalogue is.
2. If you have early cardboard mounts – replace them.
3. If you use Agfa film (or re-branded equivalents) get them electronically scanned immediately. Kodachrome doesn't suffer the same degradation.

Further presentations from the collection may be given if we again find ourselves in need of a fill-in following the withdrawal of a scheduled speaker.

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## **WINSTON CHURCHILL UPDATE**

The locomotive currently remains at the Mid-Hants Railway, following its tour last year to the Great Dorset Steam Fair and the Mid-Hants Steam Gala. The NRM collection team have now completed an assessment of the work which is needed to bring the locomotive back into presentable condition and suitable for long-term conservation. The first step, a survey for any remaining asbestos, has been completed and has not identified any significant contamination. This has allowed the issue of a tender for the restoration which involves remedial work on the cladding (where an oil-bath fire caused damage in the latter days of its BR service) and refitting of various pipework and equipment. The boiler will be treated with preservative, before the engine is repainted into pristine condition. Lest you worry that this is in danger of destroying original BR

paintwork, don't – research on the records has shown that the engine was repainted shortly after leaving BR service.

The work will cost around £44,000, not significantly more than the initial guess of £35,000. This means that our efforts to raise money are still within striking distance of providing enough funding to cover the entire restoration project. The next stage in raising this money will be the publication of the limited-edition art prints of the engine at Battledown Flyover, in the company of *Ellerman Lines* and *Sir Lamiel*. The original painting for this print is in the latter stages of completion as these notes are being written. Details of how to get yourself a copy will appear soon, but if you want to put your name down to reserve one now, please get in touch with the FNRM office at York.

## THEN AND NOW - SELBY

Amongst the Gilliam collection of slides is one of Selby taken early afternoon in the summer of 1958, showing 60030 *Golden Fleece*, on the up *Elizabethan*. A near-equivalent shot taken in May of this year is also shown. Ideally, the “now” shot should have been taken about 10 feet to the right, but an exact positioning of the camera is not possible due to the growth of a large trees – as is so often the

case in these days of limited vegetation clearance on our railways. Nevertheless, you will be able to see how much has change – and how much hasn't. While it is disappointing that we no longer see A4s on regular London Expresses, it is still possible, thanks to Hull Trains, to get a service to the Capital – and taking far less time than it did in 1958!



The summer of 1958 with the south-bound express passing on the through lines



The early summer of 2013. No through lines, and the platforms have been extended. The station yards are now a car park (left) and industrial estate (right) - with intervening forest. The station buildings and footbridge are remarkably intact, as are some of the warehouses on the horizon. But no A4s in sight, just a local DMU in the bay platform about to head off to Leeds.

## PHOTOGRAPHS OF PRE-RESTORATION BMJSB

A few photographs of the “before” situation of the Borough Market Signalbox taken during the AGM visit on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Note the amount of rotten wood, especially at the lower levels, and the unfortunate plywood “new” access

door. The lever-frame, while needing removal of rust, is in fairly good condition. See next page for details of what is about to happen.



Above – A composite shot of the frame with the lower cover off, showing the interlocking bars. This miniature frame was an important intermediate step between the old mechanical frames and electrical push-button types

Above and Right – External views of the 'box. The door, on the left of the view immediately above, was inserted on arrival at the NRM to allow prospective visitors to exit, having entered by the main door, shown in upper view. Visitors may soon be able to do so again.



## BOROUGH MARKET JUNCTION SIGNAL BOX

Those who travelled to York for the AGM had the opportunity of a special guided tour of the 'box. This was organised by Russell Hollowood, Assistant Curator of Signalling. Normally the 'Box is closed to visitors but Russell opened it up so our group (plus a few members of the public who sneaked in with us) could see the work which needs to be undertaken, both inside and out, to get the 'box into presentable condition.

Russell has already contracted with a company which specialises in woodwork restoration and they are preparing material off-site for installation. The intention is to have all this ready so that the entire restoration of the outside woodwork can be completed in a single, week-long campaign (weather permitting!). This will minimise disruption to NRM visitors.

Work to be done includes:

- removal of all plastic-based paint (this is the cause of much of the wood-rot)
- replacement of rotten wood with new material of equivalent type
- repair of the sash windows
- replacement of the second, plywood, door with a more substantial door,

door-frame and sill, in keeping with the rest of the 'box

- re-treatment of the wood with a traditional wood preservative which allows the wood to breath while maintaining water-proofing.

Once this is done, the 'box will be waterproof and work can start on the restoration of the lever frame. A team of volunteers is being assembled to undertake this work during the coming months.

The Museum is reviewing the plans for the long-term future of its major exhibits, BMJSB amongst them. This is expected to be available in September, at which point we will know whether the 'Box is to remain in its current position or be relocated elsewhere at York or to another location. Having seen the substantial foundations upon which the 'box is built, I know where to put my money.

Speaking of money .... The restoration of the woodwork is being funded by contributions from Mike Hanscomb and the South of England Group. I am sure that the money will be well spent in bringing this unique item of signalling history both up to a presentable state and making it available for public viewing.

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## OUTREACH REPORT

This has been a busy time for outreach. On 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March we made our annual trip to Alexandra Palace for the London Festival of Railway Modelling. The west hall had been re-arranged, and our new position was in the centre of the hall opposite the theatre. This proved reasonably successful and there were not too many people complaining that they couldn't find us. You may remember that weekend – it featured the last big snow-storms of the spring, and it hit hard on Sunday. Alexandra Palace was definitely above the snow line and travelling was

difficult – definitely not worth the risk trying to descend into the traders car park (where the old railway station used to be). Not surprisingly, attendance on Sunday was below expectations but, despite this, we had a profitable weekend.

Things were then quiet until May, which turned out to be an exceptional busy time. On 11<sup>th</sup> May we attended the South West Herts Model Railway Exhibition where we were in an exceptionally good position – immediately opposite the refreshment area. As a result, we did good business, and were kept busy with people wanting

the talk about the latest developments at the Museum, the A4 Great Gathering, and plans for the next exclusive OO models. It proved to be our most successful visit to this location.

### **Fawley Hill**

The following week, we answered the call from our Vice-President, to bring the stand to his home. The weather was kind to us, bearing in mind that we were outside – only a light breeze to worry about and no rain, despite the predictions from the weather men's crystal ball (I believe it is called a super-computer!). We were in good company, the first day there being a Ford Cosworth Rally car parked next to us, and the following day a collection of Rolls Royces nearby. Sir William and Lady Judy McAlpine's extensive charity interests were clearly demonstrated by the number of stands from organisations with which they are associated. The entire event was a superb show for anyone interested in transport – everything from steam buses to camels!

### **Gloucestershire-Warwickshire Rly**

The following weekend was the late May Bank Holiday, which saw us at Toddington on the Gloucestershire-Warwickshire Railway. It was their steam gala to celebrate the reopening of the full line from Laverton to Cheltenham Racecourse. However, the reason we were there was to support the visit by the National Collection locomotive N° 925 *Cheltenham* – possibly the first time the locomotive had visited (the outskirts of) its namesake town. This wasn't the only connection with the NRM because in the workshops is the LMS 4F 0-6-0 locomotive N° 44027 which is in the final stages of its restoration to running order. In fact we were there soon after the NRM team, led by Helen Ashby, who had visited to see progress, and our hosts were very keen to promote the good working relationship.

Thanks to Phil Brown, we had the benefit of a caravan to retreat to during the extended weekend. This proved a real godsend especially on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June when a storm blew up, with rain and gale-force winds. We had taken the precaution to weigh everything down using a few borrowed rail-chairs, but some nearby stalls were not so lucky – the candy-floss stall was last seen flying in the direction of Cheltenham! Saturday was a much calmer day with lots of visitors – so much so that some were complaining that the trains reminded them of London commuter services. Sunday was great weather with the sun shining and good business, but the weather was back to UK normal on Monday, cold and breezy. We followed the lead of the other stands and packed up early. Despite this it was a good weekend for promoting the NRM/FNRM at one of the more remote parts of our region.

### **Rail Tours**

The two National Collection locomotives, which were active in our area, have been laid up with various problems. However, fingers-crossed, things are about to change. *Oliver Cromwell* has now had the work done on its boiler and is back in the pool of operating engines. We will have a presence on 6<sup>th</sup> July when it hauls a special from London Victoria to York, no doubt taking several hundred visitors to the Great Gathering. Our colleagues in York will be there to meet them, but Ian Harrison and his on-board team may well have got to the travellers first to “warm them up”.

Further excursions are anticipated. If you are interested in joining the on-board team pool; please contact Ian (see back page for address) who will give you details of those planned. The stand will be attending the Northampton Model Railway Exhibition on 20<sup>th</sup> July, before taking a break for the summer.

**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>**