



# The Friends of the National Railway Museum

**Briefing 74**

**South of England Group**

**July 2014**

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

## **SUMMER OUTING**

As previously published, the South of England Group summer outing to the Forest of Dean will take place from Friday 19<sup>th</sup> - Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September. It will be essentially on a “pay as you go” basis. There will be no payments collected in advance. The onus will be on you to book both your hotel room and breakfast by phone or the internet and you will settle your account on departure as private individuals. Group booking is not possible. Likewise admission charges at the railways to be visited will be paid individually on arrival, there being no cost advantage for group bookings compared with concession rates.

The programme will be as follows:-

- 1) Book your room etc for the days you intend to stay at the PREMIER INN, Ledbury Road, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7QJ. Tel no 0871 527 8944. Meals are taken in the on-site Beefeater Grill. The earlier you book the cheaper the tariff and internet bookings are even lower.
- 2) Friday afternoon: Provisional agreement has been made to visit the FLOUR MILL LOCOMOTIVE works at

BREAM near Lydney (GL15 6HT) but subject to change depending on circumstances. The works are not open for visits by the general public and we are being given special treatment as we are part of the NRM activities.

3) Saturday: DEAN FOREST RAILWAY

4) Sunday: Morning visit to the GWR museum, The Old Station, COLEFORD and the PERRYGROVE railway also in Coleford in the afternoon.

5) Monday: Journey home via the WYE VALLEY and the Old Station at TINTERN and course, the ABBEY if you so wish.

The precise timings will be available later.

The number of participants needs to be clear by the end of August, so as to give advance warning to some of the sites. Please inform Les Butler, our Outings Coordinator, of your intentions by telephone (01753 885588 evenings). Leave a message if necessary on the 1571 system, but please provide your name and telephone number.

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## WINSTON CHURCHILL - THE EXHIBITION

As you will know, the South of England Group has been raising funds for the restoration of 34051 *Winston Churchill* in time for the January 2015 commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Sir Winston Churchill. The NRM have now issued details of their plans for a special exhibition. The exhibition will start on 30 January 2015, 50 years since the date of Churchill's funeral and will finish on 8 May 2015, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day. Its centrepiece will be No 34051 *Winston Churchill* and will also feature Churchill's funeral van - Southern Railway Van S2464S and one of the Pullman Cars that carried passengers to his interment at St Martin's Church, Bladon, near Blenheim. In addition to recreating part of the original funeral train, the project will include a display of illustrative panels to explain the exhibits and feature a montage of news reels from the era exploring the mood of the nation at the time as well as memories of the funeral, Churchill as a man and his association with railways. The funeral van is owned by the Swanage Railway but will need a considerable amount of work to bring it up to exhibition standard. The NRM

conservation team have made a preliminary survey and, providing funds can be raised, it should be possible to complete the work in time for the exhibition opening. Some of this work will take place in Locomotion's workshop but there is currently some uncertainty of the state of the axles, springs and frames which could require some expensive contractor repairs. Once the vehicle is on site at Shildon, some of these costs will become clearer, and will hopefully drop, although this is by no means certain. The NRM budget allocation for the exhibition will not cover this work so they are making an appeal to supporters for additional donations.

The Friends have agreed to support the exhibition/restoration of the carriage with a donation of £20,000 and the NRM is hopeful of raising the remainder through responses to their appeal.

Meanwhile, we expect to see No 34051 in late October at the Mid-Hants when it should be on display at the Autumn Gala following completion of its restoration. We hope to have the outreach stand there to help raise some of the remaining funds needed.

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## NRM & LTM SIGNALLING

As you will see on page 8, we will have a presentation from Russell Hollowood at our September meeting. Russell has a particular interest in railway signalling and has been the person managing the restoration of Borough Market Signal Box, for which the funding has been generously provided by Mike Hanscomb and our Group. Russell will update us on progress, and describe some of the other artefacts at the NRM.

Russell will also be featuring in a special afternoon event at the Acton Depot of the London Transport Museum on

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October. There will also be presentations from the LTM team responsible for the signalling displays there as well as an opportunity to see the restored signalling frames demonstrated. We have arranged that FNRM members can also attend this LTM Friends event. It starts in the lecture theatre at the Depot at 14.30. There is no need to book, although the LTM Friends would like an indication of numbers expected. So if you want to attend, please drop me, Mel Draper, an e-mail (address on page 8) and I will let the LTM Friends know.

## OUTREACH

We made our regular visit to the London Festival of Railway Modelling at Alexandra Palace from 22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> March. We were in the West Hall, opposite to the theatre, so had an excellent view of the presentations, including that given by the Luton Model Railway Club of their “Great Train Robbery” layout. Attendance at the exhibition, however, seemed lower than previous years.

The South West Herts Exhibition at Queens School, Bushey was, by contrast, better attended than previous years, due to the excellent promotion by the club.

Our next event will be the Northampton and District Model Railway Exhibition on 19<sup>th</sup> July at the High School, Newport Pagnell Road, NN4 6UU. Why not come along, or even spend a bit of time behind the stand?

## SISTERS IN THE FAR EAST

It may come as a surprise to you that the NRM has a sister in Japan. Back in 2004, Andrew Scott and Helen Ashby visited the Umekoji Steam Locomotive Museum in Kyoto, Japan and as a result a “sisterhood” agreement was drawn up with the NRM.

In May, Mrs Chairman and I visited Japan on a package tour and took advantage of a free day in Kyoto to visit the Museum. I had previously made contact with the Director, Mr Isamu Hyoto, through Helen Ashby and we were given a red-carpet welcome. Naturally, I took along various gifts, including the new A4s book, our DVD “NRM Live” and a Mainline 2012 DVD, “Ian’s little book” (Stars of the Tracks) and a print of the Winston Churchill painting.

The Museum was established in 1972 and is currently much smaller than the NRM - but has a half-round loco-shed that the NRM would die for (I think it was this that gave Steve Davies ideas for developing the South Yard). I say “currently” because a huge new museum is being constructed behind the present one at a cost of 7 billion Yen (about £50million) – at the expense of Japan Railways West. Unlike the NRM the Museum is not a public entity but is part of JR(W) – which is in competition with JR (East) – which has its own Museum! Other than the loco shed the Museum is limited to a wooden station building from

Nijo, near Kyoto, dating from 1904 and re-erected in 1998. The displays include some imaginative ideas such as a loco driving cab with operable controls and a device for training firemen in how to get coal into the correct part of the firebox.

The Museum has a fairly substantial steam fleet of which several locos are steamable. Most of the locos follow US practice with two outside cylinders and high running plates, but at least one is of British origin. They produce a little cartoon book for children where the star is a little engine called “Nelson”. I asked the author (the Museum’s Publicity Officer) if she knew who Nelson was ..... no, but it was a good name!

There are short trips on a long siding throughout every day the Museum is open. Indeed, an extra locomotive had been steamed and ran light engine on a parallel track especially for the British visitors!

The aim of my visit was to tell Hyoto-san about the Friends and the ways in which we help the NRM. As he said, the Museum has not really had any need for voluntary help thus far because it is relatively small and JR(W) picks up the tab. But things may change once the new building is open. We shall see, but the seeds have been sown.

Speaking of seeds, a tree was planted by Andrew and Helen in 2004 and we were photographed alongside it.

We had a further surprise in that Dr Saijo Hiroshi, Chairman of the Kyoto University “Railfun Club”, and his wife then took Charmian and me out for a ride on the Sangano scenic railway (diesel hauled open coaches) through a very attractive river gorge. We returned to Kyoto by the modern high speed route – dead straight, tunnels and bridges!  
The overwhelming impression we were

left with was of really nice people who couldn’t do too much for us and a Museum, which although quite small, that had many features which we would struggle to emulate. If you are ever in Kyoto, don’t miss it! You can see details on the web at [www.mtm.or.jp/eng/umekoji/index.html](http://www.mtm.or.jp/eng/umekoji/index.html) or just put “umekoji” into Google.

*Ian Harrison*



British built loco No 1080 of D9 class, 1901. Mainly used for hauling mineral trains on private lines.

Mainline loco C571 specially steamed for the British visitors. Shinkansen in the background.



Charmian & Ian Harrison with Hyoto-san beside the “sisterhood tree”; part of the Nijo station building in the background.

## THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

It was standing room only, when the Director of the NRM, Paul Kirkman, came to address the group. Paul has a museum background, having completed a MSc in the subject. At the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, DCMS, he was in charge of museum funding. He had regular contact with Ian Blatchford, the Science Museum Director, and was seeking a secondment, but was surprised to be offered the temporary appointment as Steve Davies' replacement. When the permanent job was advertised, he applied and was successful. Having been in post for some 18 months now, he has made a few changes and has developed thoughts about the future, which he explained during his talk.

His first impression of the NRM was that it was even bigger and more impressive than he remembered from his first visit in the later 1970s. It clearly has the best collection of any railway museum in the world. It also benefits from the strong support of the Friends and from the City of York. But there are always some things that could be done better, for example:

The present displays don't give a clear enough sense of the impact of railways on history, such as their impact on human life and the key part they played in the industrial revolution.

There is a "tiredness" evident in many of the displays, especially in the Great Hall and the "front of house" presentation.

*Flying Scotsman* has been taking up more than its fair share of staff time. It was the biggest issue facing the NRM, but is only one of some 170 vehicles and several million items in the care of the NRM.

Paul's conclusions are that the museum needs to tell its story better, have better infrastructure, and staff should spend less time on *Flying Scotsman* to devote more time to the former two issues. Without these changes, the NRM is in danger of

becoming more like a heritage railway operation and not a national museum.

In these days of economic squeeze, you can't overlook finances. Although the museum is reliant on public funding, covering some 75% of costs, the amount of money available from this source is reducing. It is essential that annual operating costs are reduced and alternative funding sought. There are three steps to be taken in addressing this:

1. A restructuring of staff with some reductions. A new Head Curator is to be appointed, combining the previous posts of Head of Knowledge and Professor of Railway Studies. The job will entail both research and explaining the collection. There will be a new Head of Public Programmes who will be responsible for event design and planning, with the aim of maximising attendance. A new Head of Operations will bring back some of the responsibilities previously centralised on the Science Museum, and allow the NRM to operate more smartly.

2. Develop a more long-term plan for events. This will fall to the new Head of Public Programme, and aim to establish a rolling 3 to 5 year plan. This will use the NRM's own collection and material from other sources, to underpin the story behind each event based on the preparatory research which a long-term planning horizon will allow. Some events have already been identified, such as an exhibition of train spotting, Winston Churchill's Funeral (Paul paid tribute to the financial support from our Group), the return of *Flying Scotsman*, and, in 2016, the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. The York Theatre Royal will be based at the NRM while their home theatre is refurbished and will put on a number of events – a repeat of the Railway Children, the History of York, and a play about *Flying Scotsman*.

3. A master plan for the re-development of the York site. This will be a 10-15 year plan to bring the museum back up to a world-class site. It will improve the approaches to the Museum with a single entrance and take advantage of the parallel plans of Network Rail and the City Council to develop the surrounding railway land. The Council has already earmarked £10M towards the cost of a new road bridge into the area and is supportive of better links between the NRM and the station and city, as well as linking to two parts of the NRM at York. The latter will initially be by improving the current underpass, but will ultimately involve the closure and re-routing of Leeman Road. Plans to develop the South Yard include the improvement of the miniature railway, the contract for which has been placed, as well as bringing back the big-wheel and developing a bigger temporary exhibition space (the current one is too small to attract sponsored events). Paul also wishes to see something similar to the Science Museum's "Launch Pad", an interactive gallery where children can understand the technology of the railway. This may be via a paid-for entry.

The biggest challenge will be changes to the Great Hall to tell the story of the railways. This will take some of the ideas developed as part of NRM+ and involve:

- Making the space more dramatic, using better lighting, more movement and dynamic displays
- Pulling items from the warehouse to form parts of the display
- The introduction of 10-20 vignettes interspersed around the Hall to tell various railway-related stories. The subjects and scope of these vignettes still need to be developed, in addition to raising the money for their development. This can't just come from the DCMS but must include the Lottery Fund and

sponsorship.

On funding, Paul noted that the NRM can borrow money from DCMS for investment especially when used in conjunction with private funding. This may help when it comes to influencing the development of the areas around the NRM, as well as in the establishment of the temporary exhibition space and the reinterpretation of the Great Hall.

Turning to Shildon, there were hopes for a big "phase 2" for the site, but these have had to be put on hold because of the funding position. There are some relatively small improvements which can be made which will have a big effect on the site. These include better catering facilities, better events rooms, and a miniature railway, all of which could be income generators. The money raised can then be ploughed back into better interpretation of the displays

On the plans for Leicester North, the Heritage Lottery Fund still needs to come to a decision{\*}. The museum will be owned by the GCR but house National Collection items. This will reinforce the NRM policy to concentrate items at fewer, larger sites. Currently there are 41 sites which have items loaned from the NRM; too many to manage effectively. Concentrating them will reduce overheads and allow better supervision.

#### **Paul then took questions:**

##### How should the Friends fit into the plans?

They have an important role in supporting the museum and helping to raise funds. There is a deep affection for the NRM which the Friends have been instrumental in fostering. There is a question about how the Friends in their fund-raising capacity should fit alongside the corporate sponsors of the Museum.

##### What about the NRM operating its locomotives?

- The NRM cannot compete with the likes of the major heritage railways, so it will work with them.

Can the NRM use audio-tour technology?

This is being considered, not just using the traditional loaned units, but also interactive equipment, e.g. at Dresden Museum, visitors can download a guide to their smart phones (for a fee). The NRM can't afford to put on guided tours, but would welcome volunteer-run tours.

What will be the impact of the commercial development of land around the NRM?

- The NRM owns some land in the development area which it does not use effectively, e.g. the Foundry Lane store, and Concrete Works. These could be sold or better uses found for them.

What about the NRM Welcome?

- Visitors need an opportunity to appreciate what to see and do. The current "welcomers" works to some extent and encourages donations. To get a better, welcome facility will probably have to await the removal of Leeman Road.

How to get children to appreciate the interactive displays, rather than just "button-push"?

Agree that this is important. Also, the shop doesn't link educational items with the collection. This should be possible alongside general merchandise sales. The big question is should NRM focus on its educational role rather than just be a good day out.

Is the NRM just a steam museum?

- We need to make more of the modern railway. One of the curators is working on a history of electric railways. The NRM has launched a competition with HS2 on how to make the overhead catenary more aesthetically attractive.

Should there be another "Great Gathering" type event?

- Paul would like to see something done around the return of *Flying Scotsman*. The Great Gathering was massive in scale. All the hotels in York were sold out and there were a lot of

international visitors. At Shildon, the local infrastructure was strained. Even one of the NRM's corporate sponsors couldn't get through the queues of traffic!

What about STEAM? - This is run by Swindon Borough Council, but most of the displays belong to the NRM. More should be done to draw attention to STEAM and to the other local railway museums, e.g. Darlington North Road.

What is the position with North Road Museum?

- Darlington Council have given a two year funding period of grace. Ultimately that funding source is likely to dry up. The management are looking to link up with the A1 Trust which is co-located.

Will cash constraints limit growth? - The NRM still receives a lot of exhibits via the Railway Heritage Designation Committee, which oversees the disposal of railway items. The problem is where to put newly acquired items, e.g. a Eurostar train! This will need a measured approach on what to collect. To provide a steer, a curatorial team is working to establish a "dream collection".

What more can be done for publicity?

- Prince Charles was the Mallard 75 events patron, but his diary prevented him from attending any of the "Great Gatherings". He came after the events for a site tour. He was particularly interested in the Royal Carriage collection and gave his own stories about what it was like to ride in them, and the instructions he was given by his grandfather on the use of the bath. Now if only we could get him to contribute to the National Oral History of Railways project!

*{\*} Post-Meeting Note: The GCR bid for Lottery funding was unsuccessful. It is likely they will re-bid at a later date.*

**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>