



# The Friends of the National Railway Museum

**Briefing 79**

**South of England Group**

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

## **SCIENCE MUSEUM WROUGHTON**

A select party of 8 members visited the Science Museum Group store at Wroughton on 9<sup>th</sup> September. We had a fascinating tour of the site. We started at the library and archives, where we were treated to a sample of the rare books and manuscripts. These included a collection of early Bradshaw guides and timetables, a collection of Bourne paintings, and technical drawings. Other items displayed for us were a copy of Charles Darwin's manuscript, and a portfolio of superb hand-coloured prints of Egyptian monuments commissioned by Napoleon during his Egyptian campaign.

We then moved on to visit four of the storage hangers, including the one housing the reserves from the NRM. The hanger for the latter has been re-clad with modern insulated material, is water-tight and the internal area is in excellent condition. About half of the hanger is dedicated to NRM items, housed on multi-layer industrial racking. These included many signalling items, wheel-sets, valve-gear, station roof stanchions, stone pillars, signs, and other memorabilia. There are multiple

examples of many of these which, of course, begs the question of which ones should be retained. The rest of the hanger has items from the Museum of Photography, and the BBC historical collection. Some of the other hangers, which hold Science Museum items, are in a poor condition, with holes in the side cladding, although the roofs appear water-tight. Inside are aircraft, including a De Havilland Rapide in Railway Air Services Livery, steam traction engines, bicycles, cars, buses, trams, missiles, and the world's first hovercraft. The hangers will need re-cladding or replacing in due course, possibly with a view to providing a (chargeable) storage service to other museums. A substantial portion of the site is to be used for a solar energy farm, and the old runways, which are no longer used for aircraft movements, are hired for testing work; Balfour-Beatty were conducting tests for road-tunnel fare gates at the time we visited. We were made very welcome by the site team and could have easily spent many more hours studying items on the site.

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## THE STATFOLD BARN RAILWAY

Over the past decade, the existence, and expansion, of the Statfold Barn Railway has been reported upon in various railway magazines. It is not open to the general public but, on a few “Enthusiasts’ Days” each year, entry by invitation is possible. This year, The Railway Magazine organised such a day, on August 8<sup>th</sup>, for its readers. Having read about the railway, I decided that this was an opportunity not to miss, and hence headed for the Staffordshire/Warwickshire boundary, to the north east of Tamworth, on what turned out to be a gloriously hot day.

The founder of the railway is Graham Lee, and it started out around 16 years ago as an oval of 2’0” track around a lake in the garden of his house, on a 1,000 acre farm that he bought in 1985. Salvaged components for an engine shed give the impression of far greater age. The engineering company owned by Graham acquired the Hunslet Engine Company, so preservation of the company’s last industrial steam locomotive, built in 1971, became a goal. An 0-4-2 ST, with works number 3902, it had been working on the Trangkil Sugar Mill estate on the Indonesian island of Java, under the local identity of *Trangkil No. 4*.

Whilst in Java, Graham visited a number of other sugar mills, and found examples of locomotives of many other manufacturers. From this, plans for repatriation and restoration formed, although it was necessary to prove to the Indonesian authorities that the locomotives could steam, the export of scrap metal being prohibited.

Former sugar industry railways seem to have been a fruitful source of narrow gauge locomotives, the Statfold Barn Railway having examples from South

Africa, Mozambique, the French West Indies, Fiji and India, as well as Indonesia. Other sources have been slate and cement works, the aluminium industry, civil engineering and military railways. This brought forth a number of gauges, but re-gauging has rationalised the situation to 2’0” and 2’6” gauges for Statfold’s running lines. Although the majority of the locomotives are of British origin, there are examples from French, Belgian, German, South African and American builders.

The locomotives were really too large for the garden railway, so development of the railway towards what we see today commenced. Acquisition of these locomotives over the years required stations, sheds, engineering facilities and, of course, track on which to run. With the advent of the “Enthusiast Days”, rolling stock was also required. The main concentration of turntable, shed and works buildings is close to the site entrance, and Statfold Junction station.

Today, the main station, Statfold Junction has three platforms, two having dual gauge track, and the newest only 2’0” gauge track. The canopy above the dual gauge island platform is supported by stanchions from Yarmouth South Beach station, and their ironwork bear the initials “E&MR”, the Eastern and Midland Railway, predecessor of the Midlands and Great Northern Railway. The dual-gauge track is known as the “Lower Line”, whilst the 2’0” track, which is set into a concrete farm road, is known as the “Upper Line”, for reasons obvious after a couple of hundred yards of travel.

A round trip from Statfold Junction, down to the “balloon loop” in the country, and back gives a run of about 3 miles. On the return leg, the train stops at Oak Tree

Halt. Alighting here gives access to the “Grain Store” a magnificent 32 road mixed-gauge round house. It is also the location of a collection of classic American road vehicles owned by one of Graham Lee’s sons.

The collection currently numbers 30 steam locomotives, of which 20 are operational. There are also around 30 internal combustion locomotives, and even a replica compressed air locomotive. On the day of my visit, 16 locomotives were in steam, and most trains were hauled, or “topped and tailed”, by at least 2 locomotives; the shuttle train between Statfold Junction and Oak Tree Halt seemed to boast 4 for much of the day!

A recent addition to the operational fleet is *The Goose*, which is Statfold’s representation of a type of passenger and freight carrying railcar, adapted from road vehicles, that saw use on minor lines in the U.S.A. *The Goose* follows that tradition by using a Morris lorry chassis as its base, with Statfold-built bodywork, designed to replicate that of its American forebears.

A new project is the restoration, to working condition, of Statfold’s first tram. Recently repatriated from Detroit, where it had run on a tourist-orientated tramway between 1976 and 2003, Car No. 14’s origins were on the Midland Railway’s 3’6” gauge Burton & Ashby Light Railway, which operated between 1906 and 1927, before the rise in bus services brought about its closure. Many of the cars subsequently saw use as sports pavilions, garden sheds and suchlike. No. 14 came under the care of a model railway club, before being selected for export and restoration for the Detroit project. In due course, may some of the Statfold Barn Railway gain overhead wiring for No. 14’s use? Time will tell.

Recent issues of the Railway Magazine, particularly the June 2015 issue, have described the Statfold Barn Railway far more eloquently than I can, but to really appreciate it, a visit is to be recommended; the venue for a future Friends’ “Outdoor Event”, perhaps?

*Roger Smith*

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## OUTREACH

We accompanied the stand of the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum (with Helen and Adrian Ashby) to the “grand steam-up” at the London Museum of Water and Steam at Kew Bridge on the extended Bank Holiday weekend 28-31 August. While the museum made us very welcome, attendance figures were low, despite the poor weather forcing people to find somewhere indoors. However, we persuaded a good proportion of those attending to plan a visit to the York or Shildon. The deputy director of the Sierra Leone Department of Culture paid visits on three of the days and was much impressed by the displays.

We have been invited to the Tysley Open

Days on 24-25 October where the Collection's locomotives *King George V* and *City of Truro* and we expect it to be well attended. It will be back to Birmingham the following month as we pay our usual visit to the Warley Model Railway Exhibition at the NEC. Unfortunately, our normal visit to the Tring & District Model Railway exhibition will not take place this year.

As always, you would be most welcome to visit our stand at any of these exhibitions – remember you get a 10% discount on purchases. Or, better still, give us a hand on the stand and get into the exhibition for free!

## WROUGHTON STORES



The new store holding NRM items at rear, old RAF buildings, at front.



Rack of signal levers, superheater header, and stone signs.



Signal panels, steam pipes, and wheelsets galore!



Railway Air Service De Havilland aircraft

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## STATFOLD BARN RAILWAY



Statfold Junction, with 0-4-0 ST 3904 *Jack Lane* (built 2005) at Platform 1, with a demonstration freight.



View of Statfold Junction Station, from the footbridge.



Corpet (Paris) 0-6-0PT 439 *Minas de Aller No.2* (built 1884), with Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0 WT 1643 (built 1930) waiting on the Balloon Loop.



Krauss 0-4-2T No. 4045 *Sragi No.1* (built 1899) is seen in the shed yard.



Davenport 0-4-0 1586 *Ryam Sugar Company No.1* (built 1917) is seen in the shed yard.



0-4-0VBT *Paddy* is seen on a circuit of the Garden Railway.



*The Goose* is seen on the Lower Line, returning to Statfold Junction, Platform 1.



The 32-road roundhouse, which is situated in the Grain Store.

# NRM COLLECTIONS AND RESEARCH: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Andrew McLean, Head Curator, NRM*

Twenty members and guests were present to welcome Andrew to Marylebone. Andrew joined the NRM 15 months ago from the National Trust. He has some family ties with railways, as his father worked for BR, ultimately at 222 Marylebone Road. It was not surprising, therefore, that Andrew's first trip to the NRM was the day after its opening in 1975. He was impressed with the displays and it made a lasting impression on him.

## Acquisitions

On joining the Museum, he was still impressed, but can now see where there is room for improvement. The archives collection is fantastic but there are gaps, so a new acquisition policy is needed. Two recently purchased items illustrate how the collection can be improved. The first is a complete set of Parliamentary papers covering railway matters between 1820 and 1906. The second is a folio of coloured prints and drawings covering the construction of railways by the British in India during the Victorian period.

More rail vehicles are to be added to the collection. A Eurostar power car has recently arrived and is now in the workshops at York. This is a "North of London" unit, but investigation of its background shows it made two return journeys through the Tunnel – to Paris and Brussels; so it can claim to be one which has travelled the widest range of longitude. A production HST set also needs to be added to the collection to complement the prototype power car which has recently been restored to working order. But which one, how many trailer carriages, and of what mix?

## Gems in the Collection

Moving away from the rail vehicles, the

collection also includes some 1.75M photographs and 15,000 smaller items. He is looking to put more of these on show to the public, especially the smaller items which otherwise are stored out of sight. Remodelling the Great Hall would facilitate this; currently the displays there are somewhat random. However, he does not underestimate the logistics problems in such a reorganisation and it is likely to take some three years to achieve. Ultimately, the "York Central" project should help create opportunities for a much better and more accessible display.

Andrew showed some examples of the small items which could find their way to the displays, including a ticket for the opening train of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1829, and Rasterick's notebook from the Rainhill Trials, with sketches of the competing locomotives and their construction. Such items are all delicate but they could be part of a short-duration display.

More robust is the Huskisson memorial, which is nominally "on show" in the Warehouse - yet difficult to see. Improvements are needed to the Warehouse to allow visitors to appreciate what is on offer. He described it as an "Aladdin's Cave" - on every visit he finds something he didn't know was there.

There is also the question of what to do to display the 500+ large original paintings. He would like these to be on show either in the Search Engine gallery or the display gallery next to Station Hall (which is environmentally controlled).

## Loans

*City of Truro* and *King George V* are to be exchanged for *Lode Star* and the GWR Railcar at Swindon's Steam Museum.

They will stop over at Tysley at the end of October. To enable this, *King George V* needs to have part of its cab removed in order to fit within the loading gauge as it is moved across Network Rail track.

The proposed museum at Leicester North presents good opportunities for the NRM to put more of its collection on public show. The proposal is now at stage 2 of the Heritage Lottery Fund assessment. While the NRM is not providing any cash to the project, it will provide access to the collection and the NRM's curatorial advice. The loan agreements still need to be finalised, but *Green Arrow* should be a core element of the items to be moved there. With a 2019/20 target opening, the wider plan is to target a similar date to restructure the displays at York and Shildon, to make them, also, more relevant to their locations.

### **Flying Scotsman**

Running in on the East Lancs Railway will precede a return to the mainline next year. An inaugural run from King Cross to York is provisionally scheduled for 27<sup>th</sup> February. It will be in BR livery as at the time of withdrawal from service, i.e. lined green, double-chimney, smoke deflectors. At York it will form part of the "Flying Scotsman" train service display in the Great Hall. This will also include the Stirling Single, Ivatt Atlantic and Deltic, with a collection of carriages, showing the facilities offered on the service in 1890, 1930, 1950s. The display will move to Shildon later in the year.

### **Vehicle Restorations**

Class 47, *Prince William*, will be repainted at York, but much of the restoration work now takes place at Shildon. Andrew wants to do more to emphasise that site's key role in the historical and modern railway (it is the location of the Hitachi plant for assembly

of the new Inter-city trains). The 2HAP is now at Shildon for restoration; the first job was for specialist contractors to remove the asbestos. Chris Green, ex NSE, is involved in the project and the NSE Society is raising funds. Once the asbestos is removed, volunteers and apprentices will commence work. [Note there was some discussion about whether the FNRM South of England Group should help the project – let us know what you think]. Finally, Deltic *KOYLI* needs attention to one engine and a repaint into 2-tone green to prepare it for the "Flying Scotsman" train display.

### **Future of Railways and the NRM**

When the NRM first opened, the HST and APT were the future of railways; both set the foundations for modern high speed rail. This positive story of the British contribution to the technology needs to be told to redress the negative press stories. The NRM needs to do more work to tell the story of modern railways and the future. For example, it could put into context the building of HS2 with those of earlier main-line railways (NIMBY's are nothing new!). Such an independent interpretation could useful balance press hyperbole. With the Hitachi assembly plant using part of the original Stockton and Darlington line, and Virgin East Coast taking over the "Route of the Flying Scotsman", there are clear links between the modern railway and its past. By the time of the 2025 celebrations (200 years of the S&D and 50 years of the NRM), Andrew looks forward to a reinvigorated NRM, re-establishing it as the best railway museum in the world.

There followed an extended discussion period with plenty of audience participation - evidence of the stimulating presentation which Andrew had delivered.

**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 FNRN SOUTH OF ENGLAND  
GROUP:**

**See Contacts at main index:**

<http://www.nrmfriends-south.org.uk/index.html>