



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 80

South of England Group

December 2015

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

AGM AND NEW YEAR SOCIAL

The Annual General Meeting of the South of England Group takes place on 11th January 2016 at Marylebone Station in conjunction with our New Year Social. Activities will commence around 19:00, with doors opening from 18:00.

Any member of the FNRM can attend and vote at the AGM. The meeting will take a report of last year's activities from our Chairman, Ian Harrison, and from our Treasurer, Roger Smith. There will be a vote, if necessary, for the rotating membership of the Group's committee. This time, the three-year terms of George Rutter, Jeremy Moore and Jim Baldwin are due to end. Due to domestic pressure, Jeremy has decided he can no longer continue as Indoor Events Coordinator, but I am pleased to say that Jim has agreed to take on this role. We are always happy to have nominations from any member who would like to join the committee and help run the Group's activities. In particular my own duties as Briefing Editor, Web-Master, Manager of the Gilliam Slide Collection, Outreach Coordinator and Council Member, could benefit from being shared around a

number of people. So if you would like to help with any of these, why not put your name forward to the committee.

Before and after the AGM there will be an opportunity to chat with others over a drink, and enjoy the food from the buffet. You will also be able to watch some of the photographs and videos of the Group's activities this year.

Attendance at the AGM is free, but to cover the festive buffet refreshment for the New Year Social, there will be a charge of £8 per person (the same as last year). Those of you who came last year will remember that we enjoyed a good spread, courtesy of M&S, and we anticipate the same this year. A form is included with this Briefing to allow you to indicate whether you require refreshment. We would be grateful if you would return this, with a cheque, to Roger Smith (address on the form) by Monday 4th January. This will allow us to order sufficient the food and drink for the evening and make sure there is enough for everyone.

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LYNTON AND BARNSTAPLE RAILWAY

Peter Miles, chairman of the Railway, addressed a packed audience on 12 October, as he outlined the railway's history, current position and future plans.

History

The original line was built under an 1895 Act of Parliament, the key supporter being George Newnes, a publisher (of amongst, many other things, the Sherlock Holmes stories). He had invested heavily in the development of Lynton, funding the Town Hall, Church, and the Cliff Railway to Lynmouth. Narrow-gauge was proposed as the topography would have made a standard gauge line very expensive. Even so, construction proved very difficult, but the line was finished, albeit late, and operated between 1897 and 1923. The Southern Railway then took over and made several improvements with the aim of attracting tourists, including relaying track and purchasing another locomotive. However, as it owned many of the local bus operators, it decided to close the line from the end of the 1935 summer season. The track was lifted and the assets auctioned, all except one of the locomotives going for scrap. That locomotive was used for track lifting and then was exported to South America but its subsequent history is uncertain. Many of the coach bodies found other uses. Coach 2 is an example, being sold for use as a local Parish meeting room, before being acquired by the NRM – it's the one now on display in the Great Hall, in “as found” condition.

The track-bed was sold as about 100 lots, most being bought by local farmers and incorporated into their fields. This, of course, has made difficult for the current L&BR to reacquire the land. However, some 60% of the 19 miles now have agreements in place for sale back to the company. Many of the land owners

recognise the economic boost the new railway has given, and will give to the area. Currently one mile of the line is open.

Interestingly, the original line was never “officially” closed. To do so, would have required a Parliamentary act, something which was never secured. One aspect of this is that Peter and his team regularly receive consultation documents on changes to generic railway legislation as the inheritors of the original company.

Restoration Begins

The L&BR received a grant from the Coastal Communities Fund for the restoration of the fourth coach and for another waiting in the wings. With the fourth coach in place, this has allowed the railway to carry 50,000 passengers this year, many of the trains running to capacity. This has generated £1.25M to the local economy, through hotel bookings, and additional spending by tourists. This meant that the Railway's planning application for an extension has been well received by the local council. Once planning consent has been given this will trigger large-scale investment and fund-raising, initially for the extension to the existing line (phase 2), then to a new station at Lynton (phase 2a) and finally to the outskirts of Barnstaple (phase 3).

Expansion

Peter showed a film of the original line taken by Edward Ward in the year just prior to closure. It is a fascinating and highly informative record of the old railway. Peter used the film to explain how the railway will be rebuilt. Some changes will be needed at Bratton Fleming, where the original station is now a dwelling and at Blackmore Gate, where the station is now a pub. The line will need to be lowered to pass under the busy A399. The film showed the train

travelling through a very deep rock cutting which, Peter informed us, was used as a refuse dump after closure. However, tests have not shown any particularly difficult remedial problems. Chelfam viaduct, perhaps the most significant piece of civil engineering on the line, is owned by the Highways Agency, who are only too keen to find a new owner. Part of the trackbed is under Wistlandpound Reservoir and it was though the line would terminate here. However, the earthworks needed to level the site for a station, mean that the trackbed will rise sufficiently to allow a deviation around the water; so the full line is, once again, the target.

Rolling Stock

The railway takes pride in its collection of four authentic working coaches. These have been assembled from recovered originals, re-using as much as possible. Their restoration has been helped by the earlier work of the Ffestiniog Railway. They used Coach 15 as a model for their “Barn” coaches, and collected much information on the original design, helped by the existence of of Coach 2 at the NRM. The Ffestiniog design of “Barn” coach bogies also means there is now a ready supplier of running gear. We were treated to a series of slides showing the stages in the process. The restoration of one of these coaches typically involved expenditure of £15k in wood, £20k in brass components, £46k in securing a suitable underframe, and £2k in glass – with the other odds and ends and the voluntary effort, it means each coach represents a £¼M investment. More coach restoration is in progress, although they will need to secure both “new” stock (to the original designs) and additional engines, in order to operate an effective service once the full line is restored. Next year they hope to have the replica 2-4-2

Baldwin, which is currently at Alan Keef's workshop.

To build and maintain a running railway doesn't just involve locomotive and coaches, the permanent way also needs to be maintained. For this, they need “departmental” vehicles. The railway was lucky in securing several surplus narrow gauge maintenance vehicles from South Africa including ballast wagons. These are already being put to good use in the rebuilding work.

Development Plans

Peter rounded off his presentation by showing volunteers active in this work. They come from many parts of the country, although one group, from the Welsh Highland Railway, is champing at the bit in order to get on with their speciality - “track laying” (with work in North Wales finished, they must be suffering “withdrawal symptoms”! - ed). However, there are inevitable frustrations. Recent environmental surveys found a dormouse nest , so work can only proceed outside the hibernation period – George Newnes didn't face those problems!

The estimated cost of the work is £15M for phase 2 and £51M for reinstatement of the full line. The company has been well advised by its development board which comprises the local bishop, past and present MPs, County Council chairman, and other local dignitaries. When they considered the reinstatement project, the board believe that the benefits to the local economy are so great, that the entire project, not just phase 2, should be put forward to secure local grants. The potential of a trip over the fully restored Lynton and Barnstaple line is likely to attract many more coach parties and individual tourists from all over the world, such is the attraction of the “old line”. We wish them well.

The route of the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway (Phase 2).



Total route is 19.29 miles between Lynton and Barnstaple.

Running route is 0.93 miles between Killington Lane and Woody Bay
= 4.8% of the total route.

Total of route owned by the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway Trust is 2.12 miles
= 10.95% of the total route.

Total of route owned by the Exmoor Associates is 1.79 miles
= 9.25% of the total route.

Total of route owned by statutory bodies is 0.69 miles
= 3.57% of the total route.

Tyesley Open Weekend



The line up of locomotives at the Tyesley Open Weekend. Left to right are No 3717 *City of Truro*, No 4965 *Road Ashton Hall*, No 6000 *King George V*, No 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgecumbe*, and No 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*



The FNRM stand at Tyesley – in the relative dry under the marquee

WAR OFFICE LOCOMOTIVE TRUST

Kim Winter opened by explaining that his talk could go under the title “Hunt the Hunslet”; we would see why later. The Trust was established for the restoration of an original WWI locomotive, to provide a focus for the remembrance of those working for the Railway Operating Division (ROD). It was quite appropriate, therefore, that we were meeting just two days prior to Remembrance Day.

History

Railways played an important part in World War I mainly due to the poor road conditions precluding effective transport of the vast quantities of men and equipment needed for the new industrial-scale warfare. Light railways were developed which were quickly adaptable to the changing conditions, were quick to construct and low cost to operate. France and Germany were the first countries to deploy them, with Britain being slower to see the benefits – still sticking to the trusted horse and mule train for many months. Ultimately, though, a complex but efficient railway system was developed, with standard gauge lines feeding material from the Channel ports to concentration points, where they were transhipped to light rail for movement to the front. There were 842 route miles of light railways in British area front alone.

Genesis of the Trust

Few people had considered the historical significance of these railways. Keith Taylorson's book in Science Museum library “Light Railways at War”, had triggered some interest in the subject and Gareth Robert had established the War Dept. Light Railway web site with the aim of listing all Hunslet locos which feature in the Imperial War Museum (IWM) photographic collection. Just over 10 years ago, Ian Hughes organised a meeting of some 20 people with an interest in the subject to consider what

could be done to secure one of the remaining locomotives from the period. As a result, the War Office Locomotive Trust was established.

Hunt the Hunslet – Part I

Ian subsequently visited Australia where many of the ex-WD locomotives were sent after the war, and identified five ex-WD Hunslets, including ROD No 1215 which was then under restoration at Brisbane. It had originally been bought for use on sugar cane plantations in Queensland. Withdrawal from service came in 1964, and was donated for use in an orphanage playground located near the sea. In 1995, the home closed and the locomotive, having suffered the attention of both children and salt-spray, was sold to Alan Roberts, an Aussie enthusiast. In 2004 he agreed to sell it to the WOLT, who pulled together the £25k price. They applied for an export licence, but this was initially refused on the basis the locomotive was of historical significance. When it was pointed out that it was only likely to achieve that significance through restoration in UK, its original place of construction, the licence was granted. It was repatriated on 23 September 2005, with P&O generously covering the transport costs. After partial reassembly it was sent to Shildon for display inside Locomotion. In September 2008 it moved to Apedale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and in 2012 restoration fully started with a complete strip down. Many parts needed replacement including a lot of the running gear and lubrication system. The boiler and firebox have been rebuilt but a lot of smaller parts still need to be repaired. Funding came from a PRISM grant, supplemented by grants from the Lottery heritage fund, Transport Trust, and contributions from many individual supporters. However, they still need about £10k to complete the job. The aim is to

get it ready for the “Tracks to the Trenches” event on 13-15 May 2016 at the Apedale Valley Light Railway. To make a donation, see <http://www.warofficehunslet.org.uk>

Hunt the Hunslet – Part II

Having found a Hunslet, the team also wanted to know more of its use in the War. The Trust members hired the IWM film theatre to view the Museum's collection of light railway films. So started the second part of the “Hunt the Hunslet”. They selected some 20 films for transfer to video, at a cost of £300, to allow closer study; Kim showed some of these. We saw many examples of motive power - Simplex types protected and armoured, Dick, Kerr petrol-electric, and steam locomotives from Hudswell Clark, Barclay, Baldwin 4-6-0s, and Alco 2-6-2T, but initially no Hunslets. There were views of Chinese labour corps carefully loading shells onto light railway wagons; a light-railway trip around Cologne showing the devastation in August 1918; Canadian engineers working on a cutting using horse-drawn ploughs; French troops (somewhat casually!) transferring ammunition; troops riding on a light railway train hauled by Baldwin loco as

they responded to the German offensive on 21 April 1918; workers at St Etienne sheds and workshops, assembling US supplied loco kits; troops of 9th division Scottish railway engineers repairing wagons and practising re-railing methods, and using a loco-powered syphon suction pump to drain a shell hole; and a Baldwin engine with a train of trench materials, passing a Dick Kerr loco – and FINALLY, there in the background was a Hunslet 4-6-0 - the only one in the entire film collection. We also light railways used to distribute mail to the front and remove wounded troops back to hospital. So, after spending £300 they had some interesting films of railway life in WWI but virtually no views of Hunslet locos.

Then a bit of luck. Someone found out that the National Film Board of Canada had uploaded some of its collection of WWI archives to the web. This included a Hunslet hauled train, another Hunslet and Baldwin with a train moving ammunition, followed by another Hunslet shunting in the yard to assemble a train. So the Commonwealth came to the rescue again! A book by Ian Hughes on Hunslet 1215 is available, giving history of loco, with a second volume in preparation.

OUTREACH

Our normal attendance at the Tring & District Model Railway Exhibition didn't happen this year; apparently the club's exhibition manager lost our contacts when his laptop was impounded on losing his job. However, we did enjoy a good time at the Tyesley Open weekend, 24-25 October, albeit that the skies opened on Saturday. While that made for a rather soggy yard, it did have the effect of pulling more people into our dry marquee! With both King George V and City of Truro displayed around the turntable, we had plenty of demand for the associated products on our stand. We have been invited to their open weekend

next year, which will be on 25-26 June.

28 and 29 November saw us take out place at the NEC for the Warley Model Railway Exhibition. As usual it was very busy, possibly a bit quieter than previous years, certainly with fewer families. As a result, our sales were slightly lower, but there was still lots of interest in the Museum and the Friends activities.

We will be attending the Model Railway Exhibitions at East Bedfordshire (Biggleswade) on 20th February, Leamington Spa on 5th-6th March and the Alexandra Palace on 19th-20th March. Why not come along?

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>