



The Friends of the National Railway Museum

Briefing 82

South of England Group

November 2016

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

AGM AND NEW YEAR SOCIAL

The Annual General Meeting of the South of England Group takes place on Monday 9th January 2017 at St Paul's Church, Marylebone, together with our New Year Social. Activities will commence around 18:45, with doors opening from 18:15.

Any member of the FNRM can attend and vote at the AGM. We will take reports of last year's activities from our Chairman and Treasurer. There will be a vote, if necessary, for the rotating membership of the Group's committee. This time, the three-year terms of Alan Gosling is due to end, and Ian Harrison and Les Butler are standing down. This means we have some vacancies on the committee, so if you would like to help with the group's activities, please contact the secretary, George Rutter (see the back cover) to put your name forward. There are many opportunities to assist, be it in helping prepare this briefing, running the lectures or the outreach stand.

There will also be an opportunity to chat with others over a drink, and enjoy the

food from the buffet. If you have any photographs or videos of railway-related topics, which you would like to share with other members of the group, this is a chance to show them. If they are available electronically (preferably on a USB memory stick) just bring them along. If the material is on something else, please get in touch with Mel Draper before the event, so we can be ready to project them.

Attendance at the AGM is free, but to cover the festive buffet refreshment for the New Year Social, there will be a charge of £10 per person. We always enjoyed a good spread, courtesy of M&S. 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 2nd 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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THE NEW MEETING ROOM

As mentioned in the last Briefing, we have finally alighted on a new meeting room for our evening lectures. The Marylebone Station Board room has served us well for the last seventeen years – our first meeting there was in September 1999. It had the advantage of being reasonably centrally located, well appointed – and free! However, the climb up to its third floor location and the limited space, were causing problems.

Our new location, at St Paul's Church, Rossmore Road, is only a few hundred yards away from Marylebone Station. It has some major benefits, it is larger and, very nearly, level access from the street. Our September and October meetings

were both held there and proved that the rooms are very suitable for our needs. There is a well appointed kitchen, with tea and coffee making facilities, as well as proper mugs, so no more plastic cups! A built-in video projector and large screen, mean that the presentations are easy to see. There are plenty of chairs, so no need to stand, and an excellent amplifier system mean the speaker can easily be heard, subject to yours-truely not having multiple thumbs on the wrong controls.

Why not come along? Details of the coming talks and directions are on the back page – the next is on Monday 14th November with David Maidment.

AMBULANCE TRAINS

Our evening September lecture was given by Dr Brian Robertson, previously the Squadron Commander of the British Army of the Rhine Ambulance Train, so he was fully qualified to explain the history and operation of such trains.

Brian pointed out that while trains had been used for military purposes from their early days, it was really only during the 20th century, and particularly in the post World War I period, that they were generally accepted. Casualties were transported back in wagons at the battle of Balaclava in 1854 and, in the American civil war at Gettysburg. However, for the South African Boer War from 1899 to 1902, the British made use of a special 7-coach train for casualty transport. This “Princess Christian Hospital Train” was built by Birmingham Carriage and Wagon Works and deployed as the first train to Ladysmith following its relief from siege. There is a letter posted from the train, dated 14th September 1900 from one of the nurses addressed to contacts in Surrey which explains the operation and schedules of

the train. During its time in South Africa, the train handled 7,548 patients and travelled 42,115 miles. Unfortunately, the Boers finally captured it and put it to the torch. By this time, however, there were other hospital trains in use and one, the “No 4 Train” features on a Seychelles postage stamp – one of a series of railway trains published by a country which doesn't have a railway!

Based on the British experience, the Russians deployed hospital trains during their war with Japan in 1904-5. These comprised standard coaches which were modified to accommodate stretchers – the Zavodovski conversions.

It was during World War I that Ambulance trains were generally deployed. We saw examples of several – the “No 7 Train”, the first one to come under enemy fire; the “No 24”, being loaded onto the *SS Africa* at Tilbury for service on the continent; “No 16” and “17”, which were sponsored by the UK Flour Mills Association. The Germans, French and others also deployed similar train and it is estimated that some 5

million wounded were carried on ambulance trains by all sides involved in the conflict. Narrow gauge trains were also used for ambulance purposes not just on the Western Front, but also in many other theatres of war – we were shown examples in Palestine and North Russia. We saw an example of the organisation involved in moving a casualty from Northern France via “Ambulance Train 28” on 16th October 1917. The details were documented on form AFW3118 which was attached to the patient, and followed him from the train onto *H.M Hospital Ship Carisbrook Castle* to join another 8 coach hospital train at Southampton for onward movement by the LSWR to the nearby Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley, Hampshire. This was one of some 4590 such casualty movements made during October 1917. By the outbreak of World War II, however, all this experience had been lost, the hospital trains broken up or reused, and the army organisational structures disbanded. So it all had to be re-invented. GWR Siphon G vans were hurriedly converted as a stop-gap measure, while special trains were being built. We saw a new ambulance train at Streatham Station in 1940, still awaiting final painting. Several trains were deployed to France during early 1940, with 9 lost during the evacuation of Dunkirk. Once such coach, AD3322, was captured by the Germans, used by them, then recaptured after D-Day, and repatriated to the Longmoor Military Railway; it still exists but is gently rotting at a location near Derby. More trains were produced to replace those lost and we saw one of these labelled “1943 – somewhere in the UK”. Another 34 ambulance trains were built for the US Army, based on GWR stock. Ambulance trains were also used in the North African campaign, using locally

modified trains, including one two-coach DMU railcar.

Unlike the loss of experience after the first world war, the ambulance trains were not immediately disbanded in 1945. Several were retained in Europe and new ones were constructed to European loading gauge. “British Army Ambulance Train No 1”, was one such, constructed in 1946. This was used to connect Berlin through the British corridor to Hamburg. Even with the increasing emphasis on using air for the evacuation of military casualties, the British Army of the Rhine still retained its Ambulance trains, many converted from DB rolling stock. A typical carriage would have 30 to 42 stretcher berths, arranged on 3 levels. This could result in a challenge to the more diminutive Army nurses who needed to treat patients in the upper berths! The German Army also kept some suburban stock serviceable for use by the BAOR. During 1985 to 1994, ten trains were operated by the Royal Army Medical Corps. The trains were not just formed of ward coaches; there were three kitchen/diner cars suitable for food preparation on longer runs, stores coaches to hold medical supplies and “couchette” coaches for staff living quarters and reserve casualty accommodation. A typical train would comprise 7 ward carriages, a divisional command coach, one kitchen/diner, one staff car, 3 sitting-patient cars and one or more stores cars. By 1994 the Ambulance Squadron was reduced to four trains, and all were scrapped in 1995. This effectively ended the British Army’s ambulance train capability. While they were operating, most of the trains were hauled by Class 216 locomotives hired from DB, as they were fitted for steam heating. There were some UK supplied Hunslet/Barclay diesel shunters – all have these, by now, been scrapped. During the early 1980s,

the army also looked at whether a new ambulance train should be built for use in Britain, based around a BR Mark 2F coach, but our loading gauge meant that bunks were only two high and, while one was built, it was never fully tested and ultimately scrapped.

Brian finished his talk by showing some photographs and video of the exercises which tested the deployment of the trains. One important aspect was the speed with which the patients could be moved from the lorries through triage to the train – the target was under a minute. There was a well-defined plan for the operation of the trains, which the exercises tested, including use of UK train ferries.

While UK has lost its ambulance train capability, they are still deployed around the world. The “Lifeline Express” is used in India to give medical care in remote areas; it is now in its third generation and has proved very successful. In 1994, South Africa ran the Phelophepa train. The word means “Good, clean health” in Tswana and Sotho dialects, and is pronounced pay•lo•pe•pa). It handled

some 9000 patients during the year. China also used a train similar to the Indian “Lifeline Express” treating 10,000 case of eye cataracts. Brian believes this shows there is still a role for ambulance trains, and also as potential means for dealing with evacuation and medical treatment following natural disasters.

During questions, we considered the current exhibition of a ambulance train carriage at the NRM, which while commendable and an excellent platform for telling the story through first-hand testimony is, of course, not an original WWI casualty carrying coach.

The documentation to back up the exhibition associated with casualties during World War I is inevitably incomplete. While all casualties were required to be fully documented when travelling on the hospital ships, this was not the case when on the ambulance trains. Thus if you are tracing an ancestor who was a casualty of war you stand more chance of tracing him from the ship records.

RAILWAY WORK, THEN AND NOW, CONFERENCE

On 24th September, The National Archive (TNA) hosted a conference for members of the Friends support organisations of the TNA, the London Transport Museum and the National Railway Museum.

The presentations started with an introduction to the railway records available at TNA, given by Chris Heather. While many people use these to research their family history for members who worked for the railways, this is not the only use. He showed some “nuggets” from the collection including accident reports and photographs of railway operations dating back to Victorian times. He was followed by Melissa McGreechan, from the Transport for London archives, who showed how to get access to their extensive collection of

staff records, much of which is held off-site in old salt mines in Cheshire – so pre-booking of visits is essential. Caroline Warhurst gave an introduction to the records available at the London Transport Museum, covering many aspects of the operational side of the London Underground. In addition, they hold the Reinhol collection of Underground Railway documentation, including posters and photos from the early period.

Continuing with London Underground, Piers Connor described how rolling stock commissioning and maintenance has changed; initially a “DIY” approach by the early Underground companies, this has moved to turn-key contracts with the commercial rolling stock suppliers.

Frank Paterson and David Tookey, from

the FNRM, gave an overview of the National Archive of Railway Oral History, NAROH, which is capturing the stories of railway workers from the most humble jobs to the top managers. We were entertained with examples showing the contrasting styles of reporting as well as some of the amusing antics which happened in BR and Grouping days. Capturing these stories has had its own challenges including how to keep pace with technological changes in voice recording and archiving, as well as the difficulties in transcribing the words of those with somewhat broader accents. Phil Graham then described the changes which have taken place in railway signalling, starting with the early days when accidents were the driving force of change to today's technology-driven

revolution. He emphasised how important it is to capture the working experiences of signalmen operating traditional boxes before these all disappear.

The conference finished with a presentation by Mike Esbester, who looked at the accident record of railway workers. He showed how the pre-Grouping and Big-Four railways approached the problem, initially by emphasising the role of the worker in looking after himself as part of his duty to follow the "rule book" - often fining workers if they did have an accident. Post World War I, the role of education became stronger, with improvement courses and, more recently, formal training. Perhaps one area of railway work where improvements have definitely been for the best!

FROM IAN HARRISON

Dear friends

Many of you will know by now that I have resigned the Chairmanship of the South of England Group. This came about as a result of a conversation with a fellow Committee member (and member of the FNRM Council) who told me that several (unspecified) members of the Committee were unhappy with (unspecified) aspects of my Chairmanship. Rather than cause rifts and factions in the Committee I decided it would be best to resign forthwith and did so, with effect from the end of the FNRM AGM in York on 11 June.

I have been on the Committee of the Group since its inception in 1992 and its Chairman since 2002. Since then we have given over £80,000 to the Museum to assist various projects including the rebuilding of *Lord Nelson*, the repainting

of GNR 1247, the external restoration of Borough Market Junction Signal Box and, of course, the restoration of 34051 *Winston Churchill*.

That has been possible due to the extraordinary effort put in by many colleagues to raise funds via our stand and on trains: I am more grateful than I can say to all who have helped in this way and through work setting up our evening meetings, summer excursions, doing the accounts, preparing the Briefing and many other activities. It is now for the Committee to elect a new Chairman from within its ranks or by co-option: no Chairman wants Banquo's ghost around the Committee table so my future involvement will be from the sidelines. I wish the Group well for the future and will continue to support it as best I can.

Ian Harrison

HOSPITAL TRAIN – BRITISH ARMY OF THE RHINE

Some photographs, taken by Dr Brian Robertson, illustrating his talk. More details are available at the NRM website – see <http://blog.nrm.org.uk/commander-of-last-british-ambulance-train-speaks-at-nrm-railways-and-warfare-conference/>



Ex-DB Bcyl rolling stock.



Inside Ex-DB Byg rolling stock with three-tier bunks.

FLYING SCOTSMAN AT TYSELEY



No 60103 was in foreign territory in September, when it visited Tyseley, see story on next page.

Above: On the turntable taking centre-stage, with LMS 4-6-0 Class 5XP No 5593 *Kolhapur*, and GWR No 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* admiring from the rear .

Left: *Flying Scotsman* makes its presence known over east Birmingham as the fire gets going in the early morning.

FLYING SCOTSMAN AT TYSELEY

Mid September, and Birmingham was set to welcome 60103. It was due a stop-over at Tyseley Locomotive Works before moving on for a few days on the Severn Valley Railway. Thanks to the good offices of Ben Mason, commercial manager of Vintage Trains, we were invited to have our stand at the event. As this coincided with Birmingham's "Museum Week", and as it was some 25 years since the engine last appeared in the city, advanced publicity was guaranteed and we anticipated a good turnout – we were not disappointed on either score. The local papers had been running the story for several days and carried photographs of the locomotive during its run into the city. The local radio and TV stations also had coverage.

Then Friday 16th September, arrived, and we set up our stand immediately in front of the locomotive which was located in the Works platform, alongside the LT-liveried ex-GWR saddle tank, which was to give visitors rides along the demonstration track. In anticipation of large demand, we assembled a long sales display, with stock piled up behind. Some of the stock we had brought with us, but most had been loaded onto the loco's support coach at York before departure from the NRM. We had some exercise in off-loading the latter prior to opening, as it had to be carried a few hundred yards from the coach to the stand.

Then the crowds arrived, often coming in surges as the Pannier Tank reappeared from its run. On many occasions people were two or three deep surrounding the stand. Although we started with good stocks of most items, we were cleaned-out of nameplate and locomotive profile (both 4472 and 60103) pin badges, NRM calendars, and boxed mugs, with fridge magnets, postcards and greeting cards all proving very popular. We used our large

stand to display the range of *Flying Scotsman* Tee-Shirts and this resulted in good sales with half of the children and a third of the adult versions being sold. And if you are still in need of a copy of our exclusive Michael Turner prints of *Flying Scotsman* at York, you are too late!

We had offered a service to those who were going on the locomotive footplate, to allow bags to be left behind the stand for safe keeping. As a visit to the footplate included a walk through the corridor tender, this was appreciated by those visitors with large rucksacks. We were a little worried when a lady with a very young child came by – but we weren't left holding the baby and he (or she) must be amongst the youngest visitors to the *Flying Scotsman's* footplate ever! One visitor, however, took our sign too literally. It was stuck on the adjoining railings and said "leave your bags for safe keeping here" – he left them immediately below the sign!

The weather was not good, a bit cold, light rain, and strengthening winds. Because of the latter, we were had to tie down the stand securely but, even so, there were a few worrying times when the whole lot seemed to wobble in the wind. Being located under a marquee awning, we thought we were safe from the rain. However, with the wind blowing straight into the marquee, and light rain, supplemented by the exhaust from *Flying Scotsman*, it made for an colourful (mainly black!) three days.

Our regular sales team were supported by five FNRM members for the Birmingham area. My thanks go to: Peter Bullock, Jan Gillett, Nick Higton, David Evans, Michael Hake, Roger Smith and Chris Heaton – as well as the cleaners at the Premier Inn for keeping my shower spotless after I removed the *Flying Scotsman* "atmosphere" each evening.

support local engineering staff in remote parts of the country. Mixed trains were run two or three times a week for local passengers and these continued into the 1970s.

Steam traction survived on the line much longer than other lines in central and southern Africa. This was because Australian blue-gum (*Eucalyptus*) trees were grown all along the line in order to provide wood fuel, their high resin content making for high temperature combustion. Welsh anthracite coal was imported for use on the coastal lines around Lobito and Benguela. Much of the motive power was formed of Class 6 4-6-0s built by North British in 1910 or at the Cape workshops in South Africa, and some lasted well into the 1970s. Some 4-8-0s were purchased from Baldwins in the 1930s. Six Garrett Class 10A 4-8-2+2-8-4 with Lentz poppet valves were supplied by Beyer Peacock in 1926, followed by another batch of 14 (Class 10B) in 1930. The Garrett locomotives operated the mail trains three times a week, but their main job was hauling the long Manganese, Copper, and Cobalt ore trains. The company continued to use shunting engines, left by the contractors from when the line was constructed – we were shown a photo of a 0-6-0 contractors engine, built in 1904 and used until 1975; they clearly wasted nothing! In the 1950s, they finally gave a nod to modernity by purchasing some diesel shunters from North British and Hudswell-Clarke. However, even at this time, they were still seeking bids to supply more Garrett steam locomotives for the main line and a further 18 (Class 10C) and 10 (Class 10D) were purchased in the 1950s. Diesels didn't really start to arrive in any numbers until the 1970s and, even then, their introduction was very slow.

When the Belgians left the Congo in

1960, they created an administrative vacuum which led to a lot of instability and quickly resulted in civil war. At that stage much of the copper ore was still being transported via Zaire and Angola. The war finished in 1967 when Mobutu came to power. However, the regional instability continued. Angola got its independence from Portugal in 1975, and civil war broke out there. It involved three factions, the NPLA which initially fought the Portuguese but were active mainly around Rwanda; UNITA, which initially started as a pro-Western force, but were responsible for most of the attacks on the railway; and FNLA, which didn't last long as the NPLA wiped them out. As a result of the fighting, it was not possible to run trains to the, then, Democratic Peoples Republic of Congo for most of the 25 year-long war. During this time trains only ran in daylight which, in order to maintain the traffic flows, meant doubling up trains, using two Garretts for haulage, one positioned half way along the train. Few passenger trains ran north of Luso while the war was on and, by its end, only the coast route from Benguela to Lobito was operating. Even the main workshop and shed at Huambo was destroyed.

It was only in 2001 that there was finally a complete ceasefire. At that point investment began to come into the country. The Chinese were willing to provide lots of money to rebuild the line so they could secure supplies of copper and other ores. The Angolans, meanwhile, bought Diesels from the USA, but much of the rolling stock is still British.

John showed some slides with views of the line and trains, most taken in the mid 1970s. One showed a 4-8-2 (11 Class) painted in the German style with red wheels and chassis. It had additional rails attached to the bodywork of the tender to allow higher stacking of wood, thus

boosting its fuel capacity. Wood supplies were not only used by the railway's locomotive; we saw a Fowler ploughing engines at Benguela shed, refuelling with Eucalyptus wood - probably obtained gratis from the railway!

We finished with a showing of some archive film recovered by Nick Lera, from Nitrate stock made in 1929. This showed various railways throughout

Africa as part of the story to connect “Cape to Cairo”, including a few shots of the Benguela railway. Railways never did stretch across the continent, and there were various shots of the essential river ferries connections. The general style and, according to John, the accompanying narrative (which wasn't available) was very much of its time and would certainly not pass modern “pc” standards!

OUTREACH REPORT

Since the last Briefing, we have had a busy time both with the *Flying Scotsman* excursions and with the outreach stand.

The *Flying Scotsman* hauled trains provided an excellent opportunity to sell Friends' merchandise. For the longer journeys we were able to work through the train with a specially designed trolley although service levels on the train proved challenging. On the shorter journeys this was impractical but thanks to the cooperation of the station staff at Salisbury and Victoria we were able to sell on the platform. Unexpected assistance came from the British Transport Police, who lifted the trolley off and on the support coach.

Each of these trips exceeded our expectations and meant that there was never a dull moment for the volunteers from the Friends. Items ranged from 50p postcards to £45 plaques and we soon learned that if you display it, then it will sell. Many of these trips will be repeated next year and offers of help will be appreciated.

The South West Herts Model Railway Club were, as always, very welcoming to our sales stand for their event at Bushey on 7th May, marking the final model railway exhibition of the spring season.

Tyseley Locomotive Works invited us back to their “Open Weekend” on 25th-26th June. This proved a little quieter than the similar event in 2015, but, having been told about *Flying Scotsman's*

forthcoming visit (see separate note), we used this as a bit of a practice run, checking out the space which we were allocated and the layout for the stand.

Following the summer break, we restarted our model railway exhibition tour with a new event for us, at Bishop Stortford. This plugs a gap in both our calendar of events and geographical coverage – being our most easterly location following the loss of the major Chelmsford event some years ago.

Having recovered from *Flying Scotsman* at Tyseley, on 15th October we were at the Tring and District Model Railway Club's event at Wing. We missed this event last year due to administrative problems, but were welcomed back this year both by the organisers and by quite a number of customers, who had noted our absence last year. Unfortunately many of our “regulars” were disappointed that we had run out of NRM calendars at Tyseley and not had an opportunity to restock in the intervening time. Better luck next year!

Our next event will be the major Warley Model Railway Exhibition in Hall 5 of the NEC, Birmingham on 26th – 27th November. If you are visiting, pop round to see us on stand D20.

It all starts again in 2017, with visits to the model railway exhibitions at Biggleswade, 18th February, Leamington and Warwick, 4th March, and Alexandra Palace on 25th and 26th March.

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>