



This edition merits a larger front picture than normal!

Ops Directors Ramblings: Issue no. 17

April 2017

There have been thanks aplenty following the recent extravaganza featuring a well-known engine with airborne Caledonian connections. And to those voices I now add mine.

The Big Picture

Looking at the event from an Ops perspective from the 13th April to the 19th we ran 173 train journeys over our railway, and provided cover for some 600 duties across the department over the 7 days in addition to providing un-rostered help. One might also draw attention to the number of already very familiar faces which were seen at the Railway for several days at a stretch over the event. Responsibilities ranged from engine driving on the one hand to carriage cleaning on the other, from seeing visitors over foot crossings to working signal boxes. Ops staff also helped in “non-ops” areas such as driving golf buggies or rescuing lost children (or being available to do so if needed).

They tell us we attracted in the region of 20,000 visitors over the event and to cater for these, we ran services from 7:30 in the morning on some days and from 8:00am otherwise, with last trains returning home at up to 10:30pm. And for the whole of the period we rostered staff to baby sit engines over-night; truly a 24/7 undertaking.

The Ops Part in it.

So, for Ops, a magnificent effort which helped to deliver the event after hosts of staff, behind the scenes, worked like Trojans to make the line ready to stage it in the first place.

Readers in other departments should take their own credit for the work they put in, and must excuse me if, through these pages, I address Ops staff especially; no lack of gratitude for your efforts should be inferred.

For some of us the event started at 00:45hrs on the 12th April at Sheffield Park to see the guest safely over the threshold and for others it ended at 4:50 am on the 20th at East Grinstead, as we bid her farewell with the wish that “lang may her lum reek...” as she set sail for York and home.

Our Railway ran like clockwork for the whole week, thanks in no small part to the “timetabler of the night”, closeted in a lonely study in West Hove (actually), whose efforts in providing plenty of slack in the schedules to claw back the odd minute here and there helped ensure that we delivered a “right-time” railway overall.

There were the expected odd minor faults with engines, and carriages but these did not interfere with the main business of carrying our visitors and were dealt with where necessary by the engineers with minimum delay or disruption, so thanks to them too. And thanks to our S&T colleagues as well; there was just one glitch in the signalling right at the very end of the event as (for the first time in some months) we put the line into “long section” in readiness for the outward move the following morning. I suspect that the yellow token pixies in the equipment at Horsted Keynes resented being woken up. But they were soon placated thanks to the efforts of Brian Hymas, who went to Horsted House Farm just at the point when he was thinking it was safe to go home.

And while we are thanking people...

Thanks should particularly go Chris Knibbs and Chris Haynes for their untiring efforts in the run up to, and during, the event. Peter Underwood, and Phil Gain are now lying in darkened rooms trying to get over the trials of filling all these duties, while Adrian Lee and his Inspectors are having a well-earned rest having inspected the signalling staff to exhaustion. Stuart Marks is now able to once more to earn a crust, to keep body and soul together and his Inspectors are also now settling down to a more normal existence. Not to overlook, all the SM's who are indenting for new feet after spending seven days in row standing on them, having also spent hours in meetings and going “goggle-eyed” over spreadsheets beforehand, planning duty diagrams and the like.

And we should also not forget that all these were working very closely with Gordon Owen, who as General Manager had the overall responsibility for pulling off the event. His wife, Pauline, must have forgotten what he looked like in the period from the end of March, but he can now remove the camp bed from his office, and take things at a slower pace for a while, and bask in a warm feeling of success well earned.

And while we are handing out the plaudits we should thank Noel Hartley from the NRM and Clive and his colleagues from Messrs Ian Riley for their contribution to making the event a success. They put all our crews at ease in handling this national treasure and laid a smooth path for them which helped everyone relax. So, once more we have hosted a visiting engine, and not only have we staged an event which our customers enjoyed because we enjoyed it, but we have also made some new friends in the wider world, and look forward to working with them again at some time in the future.



*We welcomed NRM and Rileys staff in March for a familiarisation day.
Here Peter Underwood, Stuart Marks and Chris Hunford host Noel, Matt and Clive on 541*

And Finally.....

So a “Mono” Ramble this time, normal service will be resumed ere long.



*4472 Brighton Sept 1966
David Ward (From Flickr)*

But to finish, it was interesting to come across a picture of Flying Scotsman yesterday, taken as she rested by the stops in Brighton Station on the 17th September 1966 having completed the first leg of a tour from Victoria to Salisbury, via Brighton, Fareham and Eastleigh. That tour was billed as “Flying Scotsman Goes South”. Sound familiar?

This was (as far I can recall) the last time she came to Sussex - 50 odd years ago. I well remember being taken down to the Level Crossing at Worthing,

opposite the old “B” signal box to watch her pass, and we all waved and cheered as she glided through on her way to the West.

Has much changed? well, yes. The colour of the engine, a set of smoke deflectors and a Kylchap exhaust; the Box, the gates and the old Broadwater Bridge have all gone, along with the gas lights on Worthing station (even the name changed), but the attraction though...? That was the same, and that is why we did it.



*Seen from the “Other” East Grinstead Station
Who needs a flag-pole when you got one of these?!!*

As Harry Corbett was wont to say “Bye-bye everybody, bye-bye”

Russell
25th April 2017