



"ONLINE"



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY AND THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY ASSOCIATION AUGUST 2009

THE PLATFORM AT NORTON IS OPEN

On 17 July 2009, the Inspector from the Office of the Rail Regulator gave his approval to the new Norton Platform. The platform was in use for the [Steam Fayre and Vintage Vehicle Rally](#) on 1 and 2 August 2009. Norton Platform - a final official name has yet to be decided - becomes the eleventh station on the Minehead Branch. Built on the edge of its 37 acre site by the West Somerset Railway Association, the new platform was built in just six weeks by Tiverton based John Luffman Trading. The new platform has been designed and built to current modern day standards and can therefore be used by both the steam and diesel heritage services normally run by the railway or modern visiting trains from the National network. Currently the platform will not be open for regular services but will be used to bring passengers to events at Norton.

SPECIAL PROJECTS AND NORTON

The platform at Norton passed its ORR inspection on Friday July 17th and is now cleared for passenger use. DMU shuttles for the WSRA Steam Fayre at Norton on August 1st/2nd was the first use of the new platform. The platform has been constructed as an island with a second face to the rear although there are no plans to lay a connection into this in the immediate future.

Elsewhere at Norton the Special Projects gang has sorted an amount of bullhead rail that had collected at our boundary with Network Rail. Some salvageable rail has been laid on the Allerford headshunt toward Barnstaple adding perhaps a 100m to the track laid. Some rail has been laid down ready to start work on the East Chord this winter and the balance – short lengths or severely wasted rail has been weighed in for scrap with the proceeds going towards some of the recent transport costs. A

similar exercise will be undertaken over the winter to sort an amount of flat bottom rail which has also accumulated at the same site.

September's Cutting back on the weekend of Saturday 12th / Sunday 13th will see one day clearing logs at Stogumber and one day at Watchet finishing the work started on the paper mill curve in April and left during the bird nesting season. Further details will be available nearer the date.

(David Holmes)

"DAY OUT WITH "THOMAS""

Thank you once again to everyone who worked over the hectic two days that marked the return of the little blue engine to the WSR. As always the queues were forming well before the show began and once the gates were open matters didn't quiet down until late afternoon. When we had all recovered ourselves somewhat the figures showed that passenger numbers were about on a par with the last visit from the railways of Sodor in 2007 and the exercise had been a profitable one for the Railway. However we would like to develop matters further and would ideally like to have a separate "Thomas" team dealing with the licensing, booking the entertainment and extra catering, and looking to dealing with the staffing side of the two days. The first step along this path will be to find a co-ordinator, so if you are interested and would like to find out what is involved please contact the Commercial Department at Minehead.

PASSENGER FIGURES YEAR TO DATE

The Railway had a successful set of passenger figures for July, helped by the various special events and particularly the return to the calendar of "Thomas". At the end of the month the total for the year stood at 125,127 as compared with 103,206 at the same point in 2008.

JOB VACANCY: - CIVIL ENGINEERING MANAGER

The West Somerset Railway is seeking applications for the post of Civil Engineering Manager based at Dunster in Somerset. This post involves leading and directing a team of five staff for the safe maintenance and renewal of track and structures on this 23 mile heritage line. The post involves "hands on" day to day management as well as project planning. Previous experience and/or professional qualifications are an advantage. In the first instance please send a copy of your updated CV with a covering letter to the address below or forward by e-mail to paul.gm@wsrail.net:-
The General Manager, the West Somerset Railway plc, The Railway Station, Minehead, TA24 5BG.

The closing date for applications is Tuesday 1st September 2009. No agencies or canvassing please.

SPECIAL EVENTS PLANNING TEAM

Plans for the Autumn Steam Gala continue to be developed and an all Great Western locomotive line-up has been booked that will hopefully get our GWR 175 Anniversary celebrations off to a good start. The "GWR 175 – The Prelude" as we have called the Gala will have eight visiting and four home-based former Great Western Railway designed locomotives if all goes to plan, the eight guest locomotives being as follows:-

"King" Class 6024 "King Edward I"

"Castle" Class 5029 "Nunney Castle"

"Manor" Class 7812 "Erlestoke Manor"

"Mogul" 5322

Small Prairie 4566

Small Prairie 5542

56xx 0-6-2T 6695

Large Pannier 9466

The four home based locomotives will be as follows:-

"Small Boiler Mogul" 9352

"Large Prairie" 4160

"Small Prairie" 5553

"2884" 2-8-0 3850

Unfortunately Williton-based "Hall" class 6960 "Raveningham Hall" will not be ready in time following overhaul to appear this year but SEPT hope to feature her in 2010 as part of the West Somerset Railway celebrations of the GWR 175 Anniversary.

Thankfully, now the locomotive line up has been confirmed many other arrangements for the Gala to be held on the 1st to 4th October 2009 can be finalised. Confirmation has been received that the Taunton Model Railway Group will be opening their Bishops Lydeard Clubhouse to visitors on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 1000 hrs to 1700 hrs each day and you might see a choice of former Great Western Railway trains operating from Bath Spa. The mobile Catering outlets will also be available to visitors and staff at Bishops Lydeard Station, Williton Diesel Depot, Watchet Station and Minehead Station. These will augment the station catering in the cafes at Minehead and Bishops Lydeard stations and the refreshment facilities at Crowcombe Heathfield, Williton, Watchet and Blue Anchor stations (not to forget the "properly served" tea in china cups at Dunster). The Locomotive Department at Minehead will be open to visitors on the Saturday and Sunday, opening hours from 1000 hrs. to 1700 hrs. (admission price £1) so all can have a good look around behind the scenes and see the latest progress on "Manor" class 7828 "Odney Manor", another locomotive SEPT plan to feature in 2010. At Williton

the West Somerset Restoration Company are unable to welcome visitors to their Works during this Gala for operational reasons but there will be plenty to see in the DEPG Diesel Depot and Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre that will be open on all four days from 0930 hrs. to 1700 hrs. In addition the Gala “standby” steam locomotive will be stabled in the Diesel Depot South Yard and visitors will be welcome to inspect and cab her and chat to her welcoming crew. Four sets of coaches will be in service including, hopefully, the Association “Quantock Belle” restaurant car and buffet car that will be offering a range of meals each day to visitors for whom we suspect that for many dining on a train is a new experience. As always “Arkwrights” shop at Bishops Lydeard, the Company Shop and “Readers Halt” at Minehead and the Museums at Blue Anchor and Washford will be open and keen to welcome both familiar and new faces along with the staff at all the respective stations, each of which have their own particular brand of Great Western magic for the visitors who chose to get off the train and explore. Hopefully the weather will be kind to us again and visitors and staff can enjoy the experience of another trip down the Great Western Railway.

Hopefully the weather will be kind to us once again and visitors can enjoy the experience of another trip down the Great Western Railway Memory Lane.

More news next month about the planned arrangements for the Somerset in Autumn” Gala on the 24th and 25th of October and the “Winter Steam Festival” on December 29th and 30th.

(John Cronin)

WEST SOMERSET RESTORATION

Braunton

On the tender chassis riveting has been completed and work has continued with fitting vacuum and steam heat pipes together with some air brake equipment. The overhauled vacuum brake cylinders and new bearings have been fitted together with the main brake beam and parts of the hand brake linkage. The completed tank is receiving its initial coats of paint. Support coach 35451 is having the luggage area flooring recovered and one of the exterior doors has been partially re-skinned. Some preparatory external painting work has taken place.

6024

Released to WSR traffic on 1 August and to resume main line duties from the 7th.

6960

Work is in progress with making up new crinolines for the boiler cladding which are having to be made to suit in the absence of detailed drawings. The frames with new ashpan and tender are parked in the North Yard pending arrangements for a major lifting exercise during which the ashpan will be fitted to the boiler and the whole assembly placed in the frames. This will enable the locomotive to go into the workshop in place of 'Braunton' and re-assembly can start in earnest.

4561/7821

The WSRA have now decided that the overhaul of 4561 is to take precedence, the initial stage being to dismantle the locomotive for detailed examination. 7821 remains outside pending arrangements for storage under cover off site.

(Mike Johns)

SATURDAY JULY 11th

One week after "Thomas" had left us we had another interesting day on Saturday 11th when we welcomed GBRf to Minehead for a naming ceremony. This involved two very smartly turned-out items of main line power, Class 66 66732 and electro-diesel 73141. These were named "John Smith" (by a surprised Mr. Smith – the founder and Managing Director of the Company) and Charlotte (one of the administrative team) respectively. At the same time the formal cheque presentation was made to "Help for Heroes" from the proceeds of the collection on the special staff train behind "Tornado". The station was decked out in flowers and balloons, the Watchet Town Band played, and refreshments were served.

In connection with the naming ceremony a special charter train ran from Paddington behind D1015 "Western Champion". Unfortunately the locomotive ran into problems on the downward journey and the train was late arriving at Bishops Lydeard. As we were also operating the normal timetable and had "Braunton" doing two round trips on a private charter operation this made the day a very interesting one for operations and station staff, before the "Western", now restored to full health left us again for Paddington on time at 18.10.

CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT NEWS

1. NEW STATION OPENS – The railway's newest station has been constructed, passed as fit for use and opened to passenger use in record time. Great credit must go to the Association Special Projects Team, who under the guidance of David Holmes have pushed the new Norton Fitzwarren Station scheme forward and delivered it in time for the annual Steam Fayre on the adjoining site. The Company

team have assisted the project as required and amongst other issues this has included both defining and then checking compliance with, the essential gauge clearance tolerances and dealing with the technical inputs required in connection with the 'handback arrangements' that confirm the application of normal traffic conditions and arrangements in advance of its first use by passengers. Now it really is the case that Taunton is the next station stop !

2. MINEHEAD SIGNAL BOX – The contract repairs undertaken on Minehead Signal Box have been completed. These have been partly of a structural nature and even involved the under pinning of one corner of the box. Once the outer cladding had been removed it was possible to ascertain that the old rail framework at the base of the building, which had been installed in order to assist with moving the box from Dunster, more than 30 years ago, had rusted away completely at one corner. Thus the structural support for that corner was being gained by means of the large main horizontal beams that are tied into each corner posts. Besides the structural repairs to the main timber framework, the external cladding was renewed on the rear and side elevations in the historically correct GWR weather board style. This work was carried out because of the very bad deterioration of past repairs that had been undertaken with poor quality 'ship lap' timber boarding. Before the replacement cladding was put in place a waterproof, but breathable, vertical membrane was fitted to help limit future internal damp related decay and also to try to prevent draft penetration (we do try to look after our S&T and Operating colleagues where we can !). The box has currently been left protected by a combined primer / undercoat paint and the Company Board have requested that volunteers are sought to apply the gloss paint. RAMS and FOMS were asked before the contract work commenced if they had any spare resources that might assist, but both have been fully committed on other projects. Hence elsewhere in this issue of ONLINE readers will note the contact arrangements for anyone who is prepared to volunteer to assist with undertaking this work. Please note that the department will of course assist where required with materials, equipment and guidance.

3. WATCHET FOOTBRIDGE – Due to an historic anomaly this structure does not fall within the WSR's direct responsibility, but that of the local authority. It is of course the route of a public footpath to and from Watchet town centre and because of our concerns about its deteriorating structural condition the local authority have agreed to commission their own condition survey. We will be involved with this and are hopeful that it will result in structural repair works being programmed to be implemented in the near future.

(Tony Phillips)

DIESEL NEWS

July has proved to be a month of catching up at Williton after the excitement of June and the Mixed Traffic Gala. After the Gala was over the Ferry Van was moved into the vacant berth in number 3 road in the shed for repairs to both large sliding doors and a full repaint. Whilst in the shed the opportunity has been taken to recover some of the Maybach engine spares including the cylinder heads so a start can be made on their overhaul ready eventually to use with the second Maybach MD655 rebuild engine for Class 52 D1010 "Western Campaigner" and a Maybach MD870 engine for Class 35 "Hymek" D7018.

The locomotives designated for service during the West Somerset Railway peak summer season timetable were also prepared for their next duties that saw Class 35 "Hymek" D7017 start the season on the last Saturday in July. Class 14 "Teddy Bear" D9526 was scheduled to be the next in service appearing on both the Saturday and Sunday of the Association Steam Fayre weekend covering for the Company DMU which was due to work an all day shuttle service between Bishops Lydeard and the new Halt at Norton Fitzwarren. Later in August the Class 33 "Crompton" D6566 will appear on the 15th when it will haul the Dick and Anne Holland Wedding Reception Train and the DEPG Team at Williton would like to take this opportunity to wish them a long, healthy and happy marriage in the years to come. Then it is the turn of Class 42 "Warship" D832 "Onslaught" to appear on the 1125 hrs. Saturday Bishops Lydeard diagram on the 22nd with D6566 covering the duty on the Late Summer Bank Holiday Saturday (29th) to round off the peak season.

On each of the Saturdays throughout the summer the Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre is open to visitors and all are welcome to drop in at Williton and meet the team. More news next month.

(John Cronin)

KEN RICHARDS

Many on the Railway will be sorry to hear that Ken passed away at 5 p.m. on Friday 31st July.

Ken had suffered a brain tumour earlier in the year and had undergone a course of radio therapy treatment. When I last spoke to Ken he was due to go to Bristol for tests to establish progress. Unfortunately he had been badly affected with loss of balance and had had several falls recently. A fall on Tuesday resulted in him being readmitted to hospital from which he did not recover.

It is good to know that in recent weeks many of his footplate colleagues visited him at home and he was able to enjoy a footplate ride on "Tornado".

I understand that the funeral will be later in August and I will ensure that those who wish to attend have all the necessary details.

(Andy Forster)

DML is pleased to announce that after careful consideration of bids received they have now awarded a contract for the chassis overhaul of 7820 to West Somerset Restoration, Williton. Work is due to commence in August with a target for completion within 18 months in good time to receive the boiler once repaired. After much hard work by DML volunteers the boiler is now ready and awaiting inspection which is due to take place shortly.

3850 Running Report:

After the completion of winter works and the replacement of broken/weak springs which prematurely ended 3850's spring gala appearances 3850 re-entered traffic early in May and was in use extensively until due a washout at the turn of the month. With the washout completed 3850 was back in traffic on the 5th of June

Tender Restoration Progress:

Profiled steel sections to replace the wasted front section of the tender outer frames have arrived on site and have been prepared for welding to the chassis by DML volunteers. They are awaiting a specialist contractor to carry out the welding of these sections to the chassis before assembly of the new dragbox into the frames can commence. The new replacement tender tank is now at 'flat pack' stage awaiting assembly once required, no sign of a cheap allen key and a poor set of instructions here though.

RLG HERITAGE WEAR

We have been contacted by this Company and they advertise themselves as making vintage transport uniform including railway uniforms. The uniform is researched for authenticity, which also includes the fabric and buttons. The uniforms are standard sizes and are made in a way that they were originally made for and that is for work purposes and are not made to bespoke, although minor alterations can be possibly pre-arranged. For more info contact Nigel on 01364 644665.

2009 STEAM FAYRE AND VINTAGE VEHICLE RALLY BEST EVER

Congratulations to all on a highly successful 2009 Rally! This was our second year on our own site at Norton Fitzwarren, and this year included the exciting addition of our new platform – I hope that you all bought your souvenir platform tickets.

The exhibits this year were expanded from the previous year, and despite worries about the weather and the condition of the ground, we had a great two days. We were all a little soggy around the edges on Saturday, but Sunday dawned sunny and clear, and the crowds were even bigger.

The Rally is a terrific team effort, and I would like to extend my thanks to the many volunteers involved throughout the year. From parking cars to catering to marshalling, every challenge was met, and we provided a superb event for steam enthusiasts and the general public alike. Well done everyone!

(David Holmes)

THE 10th ANNIVERSARY REAL ALE FESTIVAL

Yes it really is a decade since the good folk from the Somerset Branch of the Campaign for Real Ale first moved their annual beer festival to the platform of Minehead Station and were mightily impressed by the number of visitors who came along (even if it did mean a Saturday night nocturnal foray to the breweries of Wiveliscombe to obtain more supplies for the Sunday.

Since then the event has grown steadily and this year it is planned to offer up to 100 real ales and several ciders and perry, plus some wine and soft drinks. Hopefully there will be some Anniversary Specials from some of the brewers. The products of the many independent Somerset Breweries will feature prominently but there will be other products from around Britain to showcase the remarkable array of styles of cask-conditioned beers that are produced. For food there will be the Turntable Café and also the pasty van which has proved so popular at Gala weekends.

Music will feature on Saturday night and Sunday lunchtime. The evening session will see a new act at the Festival, "The Boys From Melbourne Street", a trio with three albums and a good deal of live radio work to their credit. Sunday lunchtime will be the welcome return of the Tone Valley Jazz Band who are now celebrating their 50th Anniversary of playing together.

As 2009 is also the 30th Anniversary of our running trains over the line between Minehead and Bishops Lydeard the locomotive that features on this year's festival logo and which will appear on polo and T shirts plus souvenir glasses will be 6024. We've almost got so used to seeing "King Edward I" about the place and so it's too easy to forget that until 1997 the bigger engines were ruled out from operating over the WSR on grounds of axle loading.

TRIP TO THE LAUNCESTON STEAM RAILWAY WEDNESDAY AUGUST 26th.

Blue Motors of Exmoor are running a trip to the Launceston Steam Railway, no doubt by a scenic route known only to Martyn Babb, from Minehead on August 26th. The capacity for the trip which will be by the Mercedes 23 seat coach is limited but anyone who is interested and would like to know more should contact Dave Johnson on 01643 708385. As an additional attraction Steam Locomotive Number 19 from the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is due to be in action and heading some of the trains.