



"ONLINE"



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

CONGRATULATIONS

As you will see from the rest of this larger than usual edition of "Online" we are both approaching the end of a new record year for the WSR and working hard to continue to build on this success for the future. The last 12 months have seen a major increase in the numbers of passengers travelling but on the other side of the balance it has also seen everyone on the Railway working harder than ever. With this month including the two days of the year when the West Somerset actually goes quiet I hope that the chance for a little peace and quiet will give us all time to look back over the last twelve months and reflect on all that has been achieved to improve our Railway and the welcome we offer that most important persons in the business, the customers and passengers. Since I became General Manager I have been continually impressed by the hard work and hard thinking that so many people do to try to improve the business from year to year.

In some areas the Railway is changing rapidly. After being at the helm from the start of the Railway's revival Michael Hodge and Walter Harris are stepping down as Joint Stationmasters at Crowcombe Heathfield and George Moon will no longer be doing valuable liaison work between the workforce at the Washford home of the SDRT and the Railway. But on the other side of this coin a number of "Trackers" have reached the age of 16 and have moved into the ranks of adult volunteers under training. The Railway continues to evolve and change but it never stands still, even though we try to offer a "timeless" world to our visitors.

Despite our record year please do not think that the Railway is now "rich". It is not and in continuing uncertain times work will be carried out on a "must be done" rather than "wouldn't it be nice to do" basis. Proposals for new ideas and celebrations are always welcome but they must be properly thought through and sensibly costed. There is no room for "I have had a good idea and if I'm wrong someone else will be able to pay".

But these things are for 2010. Please enjoy your Christmas break however you are spending it and accept my thanks of those of my colleagues on the Board for a job well done. Above all thank you for being such a resourceful workforce and one that it is a pleasure to work with.

(Paul Conibear – General Manager)

2009 CONFIRMED AS RECORD YEAR

The two days of operations on November 7th and 8th brought some good loadings to the Railway and helped to keep the passenger figures graph climbing to the point where we can now say that 2009 is the best to date since we re-opened in 1976. The figure year to date stood at 214,308 compared with 213,423 for the whole of 2007. The pre-booked December trains have sold well and the figure when we reach the end of the 12th month should be very impressive. However the counter goes to zero with effect from 1 minute past midnight on January 1st 2010 and this year has “raised the bar”.

STOGUMBER’S HALLOWEEN EXPRESS AND GHOST EVENING SUCCESS

The recent Halloween event was a resounding success. Nearly 100 passengers braved the Ghost Express from Bishops Lydeard on 30 October 2009. Many dressed-up for the occasion, adults and children alike. Prizes were awarded for the best, chosen by three young ghosts who work on the WSR in their spare time. The Hurdy Gurdy Man entertained one and all with his own variety of music, magic and stories. Plenty of messy games for people to get involved in, apple bobbing and doughnut chasing to name but two. Four solid days of hard work really paid off. This was the first time the Friends of Stogumber Station have held this, or any event at all, and judging by the response from the public, it won't be the last.

WILLITON RESTORATION

Gareth Winter, our Williton Engineering Manager, has expressed a wish to move on and will be leaving us at Christmas. Gareth has been with the WSRA for 20 years and during that time has managed the restoration and repairs to 6412 and Braunton amongst others - both to very high standards. The skills and standards that Gareth has instilled at Williton will be a lasting reminder of his time at the helm. We wish Gareth all the very best as he ventures to pastures new.

We will shortly begin the recruitment process to attract a new Manager to Restoration to take Gareth's work forward as we integrate the business within Promotions and expand the capability. We will also be looking to strengthen our restoration business by recruiting an experienced volunteer as Director with

responsibility for Williton within WSRA (Promotions). In the short term the existing team will be pressing on under the watchful eye of the Williton Management Group and an Acting Works Manager.

Currently Williton is completing the tender and main line OTMR work on "Braunton", the assembly of "Raveningham Hall" and has work committed to both "Dinmore Manor" and two Bulleid boilers - all for 'external' customers. With 4561 to restore, 7821 waiting in the wings and our own WSRA carriage fleet needing work we have a mountain of work and some very busy times ahead - watch this space!

(David Holmes)

2010 COLLECTABLES FROM BLUE ANCHOR STATION

The 2010 Special Souvenir mugs are already available from Blue Anchor Station at a cost of £3 each – no price increase on these!! The 2010 Mug depicts "Odney Manor" leaving Blue Anchor for Minehead on the Up Platform. Again there are only 252 in circulation.

New for 2010 (available already) are special tea towels depicting "Braunton" and "Odney Manor" at Blue Anchor. The price is £2.75 and there is a choice of colour.

Both will be available on the days of operation of the Minehead-Blue Anchor Santa trains in the run-up to Christmas and on the post-Christmas operating days including the Winter Steam Festival.

(David Baker)

LOCOMOTIVE 60163 "TORNADO"

The Institute of Mechanical Engineers would like to extend an invitation to any members of the WSR/WSRA interested in attending a talk on Locomotive 60163 Tornado scheduled to be given at SCAT in Lecture Theatre A on 25/02/10 at 19:00 by Bob Alderman the AI Steam Locomotive Trust Presentations Coordinator. If you are interested or would like further information please contact Mr Richard Peacock of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers on rppeacocke@hotmail.com or by telephoning 01823 432740.

HERITAGE CARRIAGES PROJECT UPDATE

More than most people will realise has happened at the Williton former concrete works site, since we first took delivery of the drawing board, donated courtesy of IBM at Hursley, Hants, Steve Richardson, who co-ordinated things, and the Hawkins family who arranged to transport the board, last March.

For a start, all of the three manholes, (two for foul sewers and one for a water main) have been raised to allow for the raising of the dip in the ground to the North West of the Swindon shed, right where it is hoped to bring in the two new sidings. Secondly, the far (North Western) corner of the site has been cleared of grass, scrub and topsoil and the area topped off with scalpings, which tidied up that corner considerably and presented a more suitable base for the arrival of another coach. Thirdly, all of the Statutory Bodies (i.e. gas, electricity, telephones, water mains and sewers) have been approached and have supplied records of their various services either across or on the edge of the site, this information has been transferred to one drawing, which also contained all of the spot levels around the site. (I say contained because some of these levels are already out of date due to the raising of the level in the North East corner of the site.)

The relevance of all of this was that it was all necessary preparation work for the fact that for the time being (other than the work being carried out at Crewe), the Williton concrete works site will be the centre for such renovation work as can be carried out at present, further work depends very much on more volunteers coming forward, to assist in the work.

Fourthly, a further coach has now arrived at Williton. This coach has come from Tintern, in the Wye Valley. It is a Collett era Gangwayed flat ended Third, built to diagram C67, lot 1509, completed on 28-2-35, and numbered 5856. This coach is by all early inspections, in a considerably better condition than some of the coaches already at Williton.

And finally..... Wanted: One or more Joiners who are interested in Railway restoration and would like to become an essential part of this fascinating project. Bear in mind that these coaches are either already or are approaching 100 years old, and that if they are left to disintegrate, a very essential part of our railway heritage will have gone for ever.

(Claire Sheppy)

DINMORE MANOR LIMITED UPDATE

7820

Work has progressed steadily with 7820 at Williton with many smaller items being removed and stored safely awaiting the opportunity to get the chassis over a pit to remove the brake gear in preparation for the wheelsets to be removed. The frames have been partially steam cleaned prior to the wheelsets being removed, after which steam cleaning of the chassis will be completed. Early on the morning of the 6th of November a crane arrived at Williton to load 7820's boiler on to a lorry for transportation to Riley & Son Engineering, Bury for repair.

Tender T2928

Restoration of the tender to be paired with Dinmore Manor once complete has taken a few strides forward of late with the specialist welding of new replacement sections of frames and fabrication of dragbox components by our volunteers. All of our on site machinery is now up and running and machining of brake gear pins has commenced. Phoenix Engineering are constructing a new 3,500 gallon tank which is due to be completed in the next 6 months.

3850

Now stopped for maintenance after a busy summer season the planned works will include renewing the big end bearings, replacement of the valve and piston rings, refurbishment of the expansion links and the removal of the 'Hall' chimney that is currently fitted having been pressed into service due to the poor condition of the original cast iron chimney. With the cast iron chimney now repaired it is to be fitted by popular demand!

SPECIAL EVENTS PLANNING TEAM

Looking ahead we now have just one two day Special Event left to look forward to in 2009 immediately after Christmas when we plan to continue our theme of celebrating the GWR 175th Anniversary by staging a Great Western Winter Scene. The aim of this Special Event is to give both visitors and staff an opportunity to enjoy some fresh air and get out and about after the Festive season celebrations at home with family and friends. The plan is to operate a seven train full line service from either end of the line on both days with departures from Bishops Lydeard at 1025, 1125, 1230, 1310, 1410, 1505 and 1600hrs. Departures from Minehead will be at 1015, 1110, 1220, 1315, 1405, 1500, and 1600 hrs. Bar and buffet facilities will be available on most trains and refreshments will also be available at principle stations including Bishops Lydeard, Williton, Watchet and Minehead. At Minehead and Bishops Lydeard mobile hot food stalls will also be on hand to provide hot drinks and food to keep everyone happy on what might be two cold but hopefully bright and dry days. The Gauge Museum and the Taunton Model Railway Group Clubroom (open 1030 to 1630 hrs) at Bishops Lydeard and the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust Museum at Washford will be open to visitors as will the DEPG Heritage Diesel Centre and Diesel Depot (1000 to 1600 hrs.) each day. Last but not least the two retail shops at Bishops Lydeard and Minehead will be open and the respective sales teams led by John Pearce and Colin Howard will be delighted to welcome you to their emporiums and help you choose a late Christmas present for yourself or a loved one. Please remember this could be "Arkwright's" last Christmas in charge at Bishops Lydeard if you believe one of the current rumours around the Railway that

he might be retiring in the New Year so there might just be some extra bargains on hand if he is feeling in a benevolent mood.

As to locomotives the plan requires a minimum of four locomotives in steam but we still hope to have a "Guest" to complement our Minehead based fleet as follows:-

5100 Class 2-6-2T 4160; 4575 Class 2-6-2T 5553; WSR Mogul 2-6-0 9351; SDJR 7F 2-8-0 88.

Yes we know 88 is not a former GWR locomotive but unfortunately 2884 3850 is unavailable for this event as it will be receiving winter maintenance and we need to use 88 as a substitute to keep the costs under control. As to a "Guest" locomotive we have found availability of former GWR locomotives from other railways to be non-existent so it looks like our "Guest" may be "King" Class 6024 "King Edward I" but this is still subject to contract.

Finally can we ask you to let friends, family and work colleagues know about the Gala so that we attract as many visitors as possible to come to view and ride our railway and spend a little of their Christmas cash with us as they enjoy our GWR 175 Winter Scene. Last year we welcomed 2,056 visitors so help please by getting the message out to the wider world.

Turning now to 2010 as I write this piece for "Online" SEPT still does not have an agreed budget to work with and that makes our task ever more difficult as I am sure you will appreciate. However in anticipation we will receive the full support of the Company Board for our plans for Special Events in 2010 we have continued to plan for the first two events in 2010, the Spring Steam Gala in March and the Mixed Traction Gala in June. The theme for the Spring Steam Gala is "The Standard Revolution" as we felt we would like to recognise the major input Swindon Works and its Team of Engineers had in the design, development, construction, testing and putting to work of the British Railways Standard Class locomotives built to complement the former GWR locomotives still in service on the Western Region of British Railways. The strategy for the Gala was to have at least one example of each Class of British Railways Standard Class locomotives currently operational and we identified four "Guest" locomotives as follows:-

8P Class 4-6-2 71000 "Duke of Gloucester"; ; 2MT 2-6-0 78019; 4MT 2-6-4T 80XXX 9F 2-10-0 92203 and others to be invited.

Looking beyond March to the June 2010 Mixed Traction Gala the chosen theme is "Diesels in the West" in recognition of the great contribution made by Swindon Works and the British Railways Western Region Engineers in the design and development of the diesel hydraulics at the birth of the British Railways Diesel era. On our Railway the Diesel and Electric Preservation Group owns four diesel

hydraulics and manages a fifth and they plan to have four in service for this Gala as follows:-

Class 52 "Western" D1010 "Western Campaigner"; Class 42 "Warship" D832 "Onslaught"; Class 35 "Hymek" D7017; Class 14 "Teddy Bear" D9526.

To work the planned intensive Gala timetable we need four more diesel hydraulics and as part of the SEPT Budget process we identified the following "Guest" locomotives:-

Class 52 "Western" D1015 "Western Champion"; Class 52 "Western" D1062 "Western Courier"; Class 42 "Warship" D821 "Greyhound"; Class 14 D9520.

Initial verbal enquiries have been made with the respective locomotive owners about possible locomotive availability in June 2010 and once the SEPT 2010 Budget has been finalised we can move to set up locomotive hire contracts and transport contracts.

Beyond June 2010 SEPT have decided to rest awhile and not commit precious resources to planning the last three Special Events in 2010 until we know how much money we have been allowed by the Company Board to invest in Special Events in 2010. This stop and wait strategy is because we already know the Spring Steam Gala will require considerably more investment in locomotive hire and transport contracts than we have ever committed before to for one Special Event and we may need to seriously review our plans for the other four Galas in terms of themes, physical facts and investment. All will be revealed in early in 2010 but for now I will bring this report to a close by wishing you all on behalf of my SEPT colleagues and myself a Happy Christmas and New Year and thank you all for the kindness shown and support so freely given in 2009.

(John Cronin; Chairman SEPT)

SPECIAL EVENTS IN THE AREA AROUND THE TIME OF THE SPRING STEAM GALA

Over the first weekend of the Spring Steam Gala, March 20th and 21st at least a couple of events are being planned. Dunster Castle are staging "A Taste of Spring" on both days between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. with local and National Trust produce on sale. Meanwhile at Porlock Weir the Ship -- 01643 862507 -- (known as the "lower Ship to distinguish it from the "upper Ship" in the village itself) is planning to hold a Real Ale Festival. As the lower Ship is part of a hotel set-up this may be of interest to some visitors with an interest in traditional steam trains and traditional beer.

STOGUMBER WAITING ROOM

RAMS have been given the green light to go ahead and build the Iris Horn Waiting Room over the winter months. If all goes to plan the building will be up and finished in time for the start of next season. A great big thank you to everyone who donated as every little bit donated in Iris's memory helped in getting this project on the move.

(From "The Buzzard Chronicle": Newsletter of the Friends of Stogumber Station)

CUTTING BACK

After a slippery November session on Washford bank, December's Cutting Back will be back on the level at Williton on December 12th / 13th where we have a strip of land to clear between South Yard and the neighbouring industrial estate. Short days but lots of work none the less so come and work up an appetite before Christmas!

(David Holmes)

GARETH WINTER.

At the last meeting of the Mutual Improvement Group Gareth informed the Group that he was leaving the West Somerset Railway with effect from December 24th. and would, therefore, not be attending any more of our meetings. The Group accepted his decision with disappointment and great regret. Gareth was a founder member of the Group, in November 2000, and has always been the one to give sound advice when others might not have given enough thought to the subjects under discussion. We remember, in particular, the enormous contribution he made to the preparation of the questionnaire for enginemen, which we distributed in the early days, to assess which areas of enginemen's knowledge were deficient and should provide subject matter for our first Classes. We shall miss him greatly and he will leave a gap which will be hard to fill. We thank him for all that he has done, not only for this Group, but for the W.S.R. as a whole – his legacy here is, of course: "34046 – BRAUNTON".

We wish him every happiness and much success in the future and hope that he will keep in touch to let us know how he is getting on, in pastures new!

(Tony Bray)

WILLITON WORKS

34046 "Braunton"

Having completed its WSR duties as planned The move to the mid Hants Railway had to be cancelled at short notice owing to difficulties with axle testing on the loan

tender. Since September the locomotive has been inside the Works having main line equipment fitted.

All the main components for the new tender have been completed and both frames and tank have received their first coats of paint. Attention is now concentrated on preparing the wheelsets prior to fitting to the frames and lifting the tank into position. Pipes and brake gear can then be completed.

6960 "Raveningham Hall"

The boiler barrel crinolines have been completed and painted and the cladding sheets lifted into position to check fits and any remedial repairs needed. The cab top section (roof, front and side top plates) has been repaired and given its preliminary coats of paint. Some work has been done on preparing the existing copper pipes and fittings ready for re-fitting when the loco. is re-assembled.

(Mike Johns)

PLANNING FOR THE "THOMAS" WEEKEND

The Friends of Thomas Weekend is taking place on 3rd and 4th July. This may seem a long way off but the first meeting of the planning group has now taken place. The railway is involved in Thomas the Tank Engine for a number of reasons. First – and most important – it encourages a new generation of children to be excited by real steam trains, in a context with which they are already familiar. On the West Somerset the Thomas weekend offers families with young children an opportunity for an excellent day out with even more on offer than usual. We have to be honest that the second reason we are involved is that the weekend makes more money for the railway than any other two day event (galas included). As we know all this money is ploughed back into the railway. Thirdly, and perhaps just as important, if we get it right then it offers all of us a couple of days with a difference, and some entertaining times. Of course the Thomas weekend is not prototypical running, but it can be a lot of fun for all of us.

In addition to the familiar arrangements of hiring in a "Thomas" loco, running the Sodor Express, and so, we are hoping this year to have a number of new innovations and experiences for young children. We now have good relations with the franchise holders of Thomas (and bear in mind that if there were no Thomas brand, then there would be no Thomas!). We are also working our way through some of the mythology surrounding CRB checking, and so on. Of course keeping children (and adults) safe, in every way, is our first priority, but this does not mean that everyone working on a Thomas weekend has to have a CRB check. There will be a need for some training but details will be announced nearer the time, and this should not onerous.

We will – as always – need a lot of help on the two days in question. But we also need help now. This does not need to be onerous either and can be tailored to fit your interests and time available. If you think you might be interested to help, please do get in touch. In the first instance contact Frank Courtney (frank.courtney@merganser.co.uk) or Martyn Snell (martyn.com@wsrail.net).

(Frank Courtney)

NEWS OF 5542 AND AUTOCOACH I69

5542

Arrival of 5542 a few days ahead of the Autumn Gala allowed us to progress one or two items of outstanding maintenance which were underway before the road transport left the site. Some attention was required to the L.H. valves of which the problem was quickly identified and repair was soon completed. A warming fire was lit to allow for a test run the following evening, however that was never to happen as the following morning 88 was feeling very poorly and we were hastily pressed into service to assist 88 and its 8 coach load to Minehead, completed in fine style with '42 then covering the B.L. turn with a slightly reduced load of 7 bogies for the 2 days prior to the Gala. Fine performances were achieved during the Gala on all 4 days and a range of October service trains were also rostered, finishing our visit with 2 days of running during the Autumn Colours event. 16 days of activity were undertaken without incident during the stay. We then undertook the penultimate annual boiler exam of the 10 year boiler ticket (makes you feel a bit older) at Bishops Lydeard compound in the first few days of November which was successfully passed without requirement of any work. The loco has now returned to the G/WR for Santa and New Year duties. Many thanks to everyone who welcomed the loco back again and for their best wishes, hopefully 5542 will return (home) again before too long.

AUTO I69

Having been given the opportunity to get most of the major repair work on the underframes of the carriage undertaken at the SDR workshops during September and October the carriage was hastily made ready and approved for movement to B.L for onward road transport over a weekend in late September. During the visit the rebuild of the Driving end underframes was completed along with the opportunity to needlegun almost all of the framework most of which has been repainted also. Some 'spare' time was available so the Luggage end' bodywork was carefully separated from the frames and moved along the chassis allowing the firts opportunity for close examination of the frames at that end. This revealed a much better situation than we had found at the driving end and has allowed the much

lesser repairs required to be completed. During the visit we have also had the wheels examined for tyre wear and thickness and the very good news is that profile is virtually 'as new' and thickness is also very good with at least 2 or 3 turnings left which should remove that item from the shopping list for a few years. The axles were ultra sonic tested when we first took delivery so all in all we now have a good solid foundation to progress the rebuild. The completed frames returned to the WSR on 5th November and are currently stabled at Bishops Lydeard. Work continues on the main wooden framework and section 2 which has also had a new floor section built from scratch recently, is looking more and more complete thanks to the regular midweek working parties. To confirm our commitment to progressing the restoration/reconstruction of the carriage in the best possible way we have now taken a lease on one of the small units (Number 7) on the Roughmoor Enterprise Centre adjacent to the station at Williton alongside our DEPG friends and whilst not a large floor space we are establishing a dedicated joinery workshop to allow continued progress in a more ideal environment. We welcome all visitors during any work days (usually Wednesday or Saturday). Unfortunately the workshop is not large enough to take the whole carriage so we are currently negotiating with the WSR Company to locate the frames at a suitable place to allow reconstruction work to progress unhindered. Our presence within the Swindon Shed will probably reduce over the coming months as we relocate our operation, but we will discuss this further with the 'new management' when they take office. As ever, new helpers or contributions towards our restoration funds are always welcome, please get in touch.

Seasons greetings to all.

(John Wood. Keep up to date with all the news at www.auto169.co.uk).

DIESEL NEWS

The headline news for the DEPG in November was that the Maybach MD655 engine successfully passed the pressure test stage by the middle of the month so that we were able to install the engine into Class 52 D1010 "Western Campaigner" on the last Friday of the month. There will now follow a programme of reconnecting and testing all systems associated with this engine including a trial start up in January or February before we can seek agreement to commence trial runs. With this engine restoration effectively complete the parts needed to progress the full overhaul of a second Maybach MD 655 engine for D1010 have been ordered from MTU of Germany and some have already been received whilst the balance are promised for February 2010.

The space created in the main shed workshop area following the completion of the MD655 engine restoration will be filled by the cooler group destined to be fitted in Class 35 D7018 once it has been restored and modified to take shorter radiator elements as we have insufficient original full length serviceable radiator elements to

equip this group and maintain some spares for the collar group in sister locomotive D7017.

Class 25 D7523 had its radiator sight glass renewed and antifreeze has now been added to the coolant in readiness for service during the coming winter months on Company Engineering trains. The locomotive's first job was during the last week of the month when she was used on a Permanent Way Inspection. Because of the planned major civil engineering work at Bishops Lydeard Locomotive Compound this winter the designated Company Service locomotive, D7523, will be based at Williton Diesel Depot. Our Class 08 D3462 will also come home to Williton for the winter once her duties as Bishops Lydeard Station Pilot are finished after the last service trains run on January 3rd 2010.

The light mechanical overhaul and body repaint to Class 03 D2119 is now being progressed and the cab interior has received the first coat of paint following a deep clean. During the month Class 42 D832 "Onslaught" was moved over on to No. 3 road under the 10 tonne gantry crane so that a minor engine repair could be progressed. As is often the case the scope of the work has increased following a discovery of a large hole in the turbocharger exhaust system. The antifreeze for this locomotive has arrived and once the engine is serviceable again the two independent engine cooling systems will be filled with antifreeze so that the locomotive could be used, if required, this winter. Class 47 D1661 "North Star" remains berthed at Minehead so that existing Minehead based qualified diesel drivers can familiarise themselves with the workings of this locomotive before they start a driver conversion course.

On the staff front the Shunting for Beginners MIC course was held at Williton in appalling weather on Friday 13th and three aspiring diesel secondmen enjoyed their first taste of operating our railway regardless of the weather. A full list of DEPG sponsored MIC courses for 2010 is currently being designed by Matt Cambourne and his Team and details will be available shortly.

That hopefully brings you up to date with the work of the Diesel and Electric Preservation Group Team at Williton Diesel Depot as this year steadily draws to a close. If you want to know more you are welcome to call and see us at Williton on any Saturday when the Depot is generally open to visitors curious to look around behind the scenes or you can view our official website at www.geocities.com/wsrdepg.

The Diesel Depot and Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre will next be formally open to visitors for the two days of the Winter Steam Festival on Tuesday 28th and Wednesday 29th December 2009 from 1000 to 1600 hrs. each day and all are welcome to call in and see the Team. But for now I will close this report about DEPG activities by wishing you all on behalf of my DEPG colleagues and myself a Happy Christmas and New Year and thank you all for the kindness shown and support given to us in 2009.

(John Cronin, Chairman DEPG)

WSRA TAUNTON BRANCH CHRISTMAS MEETING

You are all welcome to the Annual Christmas Quiz, which will be held, as usual, at the GWRSA 'Snug' Bar, at the north west corner of Taunton Station, at 7.45pm next Monday, 7th December.

As normal in the last few years, this should be an informal social get-together, which may be bar-orientated as much a projector-orientated, and the core of the evening will be a range of slides, some once again kindly provided by Walter Harris, the long-established, but about-to-retire Station Master at Crowcombe, kindly presented as an open and informal quiz by Martin Southwood, signalman extraordinaire.

I hope that many of you can come to contribute to making the evening fun, through trying to respond to the quiz questions.

For those of you that cannot make it, may I wish you the compliments of the season, and thank you all for your (ever-increasing) support over the last 6 years. I hope that my successor, Tom Adams, can construct an attractive programme, and that you will give him your support.

(Peter Darke)

CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT NEWS

The Winter Work Programme is now fully underway and schemes being progressed include:

1. DONIFORD – CHAIR RE-FASTENING

This work is part of a phased scheme that has picked up from similar work undertaken in previous years and involves the chair fixings being re-set within the concrete sleepers. This is proving necessary as a result of unwanted movement within the existing bolt, chair and sleeper interface. As with for example, the Watchet top and bottom curves, this is yet another location where such conditions arise due mainly to the running of large long wheelbase locomotives through these tight radius curves.

2. CROWCOMBE HEATHFIELD -DRAINAGE

The historic situation relating to the drainage problems at Crowcombe Heathfield have been becoming more of an issue in recent times, partly because of the rise in incidents of very heavy rainfall. Good track drainage is of course an essential foundation stone in helping to ensure that there is a sound permanent way and

without it maintenance issues can start to multiply. Initially the solution considered to be the most likely to be implemented, revolved around the possibility of installing a new track drain from the station area to Nornvis Bridge. However, as soon as we could gain track possession time to commence investigative trial pit digging, it soon became clear that the existing clay pipes, which almost certainly date back to at least GWR days, were still in good order. However, as the site investigations progressed, it also became obvious that there were many blockages and a distinct lack of catch pits in which to gain access to ascertain the causes of the blockages. As a result further investigative works will be carried out with the aim of defining the extent of the repair work that will be required to ensure that we can again have a fully working track drainage system at Crowcombe Heathfield. The site is an awkward one to work at being mainly located within a tight cess clearance cutting and with S&T cables running in close proximity, but so far a CAT scanner and water diving rods have proved to be effective services location identifying equipment.

3. WATCHET - MINERAL LINE BRIDGE

The following is a note from the recent plc Board Meeting supplied by Geoff Evens

- i) The Mineral Line Bridge was examined on 11 November by the Cambrian Transport bridge engineer Alistair Warrington who submitted a summary report to the Board.
- ii) The report concluded that the bridge has no major defects that are considered to require immediate action.
- iii) A full and detailed report is to be submitted recommending that the required repair work should be carried out during 2010/2011, or at the latest 2011/2012.
- iv) Once the full report has been received RBA will begin preparing the tender documents in order to ascertain quotations and costs.
- v) It was agreed that the project requires careful planning with an implementation date being the winter 2010/2011; preparations are to begin in the autumn of 2010.

4. RUNNING LINE RAIL CONDITION

Following the recent visit of the Track Test Train to the railway, the data provided from the ultrasonic rail test vehicle confirmed that a number of sites required more detailed investigation and testing. This additional work is undertaken by means of hiring in a specialist test machine complete with its skilled operator. The equipment is nominally referred to as being portable, but this is something of a misnomer because it takes two people to carry it about safely. The machine undertakes a more

detailed and localised ultrasonic test of the suspect sites with the aim of confirming and validating the structural integrity of the rails.

The ultrasonic testing undertaken is broadly similar in concept to that utilised to test wheels and axles, in that in simple terms, high frequency electronic oscillations create vibration waves are projected into a piece of metal (in this case a rail) and readings are taken from the echo reflections. If there is a discrepancy from the norm then it will show up on an electronic graph screen display and from this the skill of the operator will identify what the individual fault cause might be. The 'degree' of fault present then dictates the remedial action that has to be taken. Most of the faults found are totally undetectable by the human eye, being internal within a faulty rail. The faults can occur at any time and then develop into serious cracks and ultimately rail breaks under imposed load, i.e. a train. In general the older and more worn a rail is, then the more susceptible to faults it can be and if it suffers from the 'hammering' effect of wheel flats or wheel burns (from slipping wheels) then the risk level also increases. Thus the ultrasonic testing plays an important part in supporting the continued provision of safe track on the railway.

(Tony Phillips)

ANOTHER NEW BOOK TO BE LAUNCHED NEXT YEAR

I'm just putting the finishing touches to a new photographic book on the West Somerset Railway which is to be published in the spring of 2010 – hopefully in time for the spring gala. This latest volume is an update to my previous larger format book and covers the period 2004 – 2009, a period when I completely changed over to digital as my method of photographing the railway. This period has seen an incredible variety of visiting locos. Many locations are featured in the book showing the full range of seasons and variety of trains that now operate on the line. Further details of publication date and price will be given when available.

(Don Bishop)