



"ONLINE"



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY AND THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY ASSOCIATION JULY 2009.

THE TWO WEEK GALA

It certainly felt that way during time that "Tornado" was with us. Large crowds assembled to see the engine arrive at the head of a Pathfinder Excursion train on the evening of Saturday May 30th and from Monday June 1st to June 15th we found ourselves with an 11.40 from Bishops Lydeard loading to eight, nine or ten carriages arriving well and truly filled at Minehead. As we were generally blessed with good weather during the visit many of the passengers spent time in Minehead or along the line and we undoubtedly put a lot of extra trade into local businesses.

However none of this would have been possible without another major input from a lot of people on the WSR. Those on duty at the stations, particularly the two termini had passengers, visitors, shoppers and car parkers in large numbers day after day. The on-train crews and buffet staff coped with the daily rush, and have generated lots of favourable comments from the public as to their friendliness and efficiency. Footplate staff learned the intricacies of another type of "Pacific". Booking staff also kept the revenue coming in and dozens of phone calls were dealt with. To everyone involved from the time the advance publicity was sent out and the pre-bookings began to the staff on duty when the tail lamp on the departing excursion train on June 17th passed over the junction and back on to the main line a major thank you is owed.

(Paul Conibeaere)

VISIT OF "OLIVER CROMWELL"

70013 Oliver Cromwell visited the WSR from 14th to 27th June whilst between main line duties at Bristol. The possibility of using the locomotive for the weekend 20th 21st was discussed but the logistics of hire agreement, insurance and other practical

arrangements limited the benefits. The SEPT team had already made approaches for the hire of the locomotive for the Spring 2010 Gala event and so it was decided to hold the use of Cromwell until then when its impact can be maximised along with other BR Standards. With the upgrade of the signaling at Norton Fitzwarren the WSR is becoming increasingly popular as a “watering hole” for main line locomotives and so this traffic is being encouraged. Further developments of the facilities at BL loco compound, when available, will ease congestion on site and along with the future availability of the triangle it is expected such visits will increase. At BL we are able to offer servicing, water and coal, only the latter was not requested on this occasion, and at Williton of course we have a developing repair base.”

(Andrew Forster)

THE CHAIRMAN’S REPORT TO THE COMPANY AGM

Not exactly what I said on the day. I don’t think my speech was taped or recorded in shorthand but I would like to put the salient points on record.

A lot of people worked extremely hard in 2008.

They gave of their best.

The turntable - I wrote my first reports and pleading letters in 1992 - was finally installed and commissioned.

A stunning addition to your company

An iconic feature for Minehead

But – the company made a substantial loss.

We could just blame the weather, the credit crunch, the cost of petrol, diesel and coal, difficulties of access whilst Minehead Station was a building site, but to do that would deny us the opportunity to analyse and learn for the future.

I think the seeds were sewn in 2007. At short notice the Company was offered the opportunity to run an experimental service of trains from Minehead to Bristol. Hindsight is a wonderful management tool as we all know but in retrospect the running of these trains gave us too little time to really promote them properly and the considerable effort that went into their operation, promotion and not letting down the partners in the project took Management time that could have been used in planning for 2008. Longer lead-in time would have given opportunities to involve more people in the many jobs that needed to be tackled and staff were added to the payroll because there was too little time left to recruit and encourage volunteers. Precious opportunities for planning and preparing for some of the difficulties that could have been anticipated in 2008 were missed. It is a hard-learned lesson for the future and one we must bear in mind.

The distraction of the Bristol service was followed by another – rail grinding!

That some of our rail is elderly and worn to a poor profile and side cut is not in doubt and the fact that rail grinding to restore a good profile is a long established and well proven process for improving rail profile and extending its safe working life is not in doubt.

We can only be grateful to our Civil Engineer for identifying the problems and arranging a rail grinding exercise at no cost to your company.

BUT - as has been well documented, the exercise was not well managed, caused serious disruption to our services, real distress to our staff, and costly damage to our steam fleet. Only time will tell whether it has achieved the desired aim of extending the safe working life of our rail.

However from there on the West Somerset Management and Staff reasserted itself as the recovery from the low point was startling. Everyone thought hard, worked harder and set out to turn things around. The Autumn Gala was as sparkling as he Spring event had been lack lustre. The Minehead Station Kiosk opened up new possibilities for catering, and our people can once again concentrate on giving every passenger, visitor and customer a memorable and enjoyable day out. My thanks go to you all.

But we cannot relax! As we look forward, we cannot expect our Railway to be immune from the difficult and confusing trading conditions currently experienced by the UK tourism industry. We cannot relax our efforts to promote ourselves at lowest possible cost, because we cannot relax the tighter grip and close control on spending.

9. There are exciting developments in prospect.

- i. Construction of the triangle and passenger platform at Norton Fitzwarren will bring new opportunities.
- ii. Our second company owned steam locomotive no 7828 is nearing completion in the Minehead workshops.
- iii. As is a new buffet coach to replace the Taunton Cider Buffet, finally retired after over two decades and almost countless miles in service.
- iv. The acquisition of about 5 acres of land at Bishops Lydeard will enable much needed siding capacity, and a home for our embryonic Historic Train Project.

Perhaps more seriously and immediately, we plan to substantially renew the Old Mineral Line Bridge at Watchet. Provisional estimates are in the order of £80 – 120k. It may not be as glossy, sexy or glamorous as a new turntable, but if we don't renew it, we don't have a Railway. So financial support is not just important, it's vital.

As you know, I held another post with the company until March 2006. Retirement was sort of alright, but it wasn't until I rekindled my interest that I realised how much I had missed my involvement.

When I was elected Chairman by your board, some familiar faces were missing. Brian Crudge our longest serving Association nominee, Neil Lowther, so long the guardian of your companies finances, Robin White who served energetically for a little under a year, and most significantly Chris Austin your so very capable chairman for some five years.

As with all our Board, none were paid, and the only hint of a scandal about their expenses is that None were paid.

To them all, and I suggest particularly to Chris, we owe a great debt of gratitude.

The board is supported by over a thousand staff, working with them can be challenging. They bring skills, competencies, enthusiasm and commitment. I would just like to end by thanking them for sticking with us through a difficult year, and to admit to them and to you that I am quietly confident that provided we keep our costs under control, and our offer to our customers of the highest quality and value for money we can look forward with confidence.

(Mark Smith)

PASSENGER FIGURES YEAR TO DATE

The visit of "Tornado" was also reflected in the passenger graph for the year to date. At the end of June we had carried 93,196 passengers compared with 76,683 at the same point in 2008. Perhaps more to the point at the end of June 2007, in the WSR's record year to date, the figure had reached 81,418.

However this doesn't mean that the Railway is "rich" or that we have "cracked it". Advance bookings for "Thomas" were weaker than in the past and there is a long way to go before December 31st. As always the next couple of months are key, particularly August. So if you can help spread the word and get leaflets out and about please contact the Commercial Dept at Minehead.

GUARDS EXAMINATIONS

Over the last few weeks, the following Guards have been examined and promoted:-

Mr. Hugh Gloyn and Mr. Justin Kerr-Peterson have attained Grade 2 Guard status.

Mr. Graham Archer, Mr. Jeff Gaskell and Mr. Stuart Merritt have been promoted from passed TTI to the rank of Grade 1 Guard.

Mr Derek Kelly has passed his Guard exam and been promoted to the rank of passed TTI.

Very many congratulations must go to these gentlemen on their achievements.

We are hoping to restart the refresher days in the near future. The Safety Critical Training Group is a new body on the railway and will oversee all safety critical training matters. This group will be responsible for organising the various days which will include shunting refreshers, vacuum brake refreshers, route knowledge refreshers, signalling training and incident management days amongst others. Each operating department will have a representative in the group, and this will lead to better co-ordinated training as many of the disciplines are common to more than one department.

(Pete Vile)

SPECIAL EVENTS NEWS

As we hoped the Volunteers "Tornado Starlight Express" on the eve of the Mixed Traffic Gala proved to be a great evening for the 500 aboard as many independent groups who, together, are the West Somerset Railway partied the night away. Thankfully we were blessed with a warm sunny June evening so that we all saw the Railway at its best and we were able to stand and chat in comfort on the platform at Minehead whilst our friends from the Royal Marines enjoyed a ride on the locomotive during the run-round. The Scouts from Dunster were also our guests and they did a magnificent job collecting for our chosen charity "Help for Heroes" and to both groups plus the AI Locomotive Trust we would like to say thank you for being with us and for your help and support. Without doubt no. 60163 is a magnificent locomotive and seated in the leading coach even my DEPG colleagues became quiet as the locomotive with Richard Jones at the regulator stormed the bank from a rolling start around Black Monkey Bridge. Thank you Richard and all our colleagues who volunteered to work so the rest of us could enjoy a lovely evening out with friends and colleagues.

What followed was three very busy days for the Railway as we welcomed nearly 4,000 visitors to the Mixed Traffic Gala that saw mainly heritage diesel hydraulics working the services plus "Tornado" as the guest steam locomotive. The weather was kind throughout and it was great to see so many visitors and staff with smiles on their faces both on and off the trains. These nearly all ran to time, achieving over 90% plus time keeping on all three days, something of a first as our reputation for

time keeping during WSR Special Events is not something we can be proud of most times in the recent past. The visiting diesel hydraulics were Class 52 "Western" D1062 "Western Courier" from the Severn Valley courtesy of the Western Locomotive Association, Class 14 "Teddy Bear" D9520 from the Nene Valley courtesy of the Iron and Steel Traction Group and Class 42 "Warship" D832 "Onslaught" from the East Lancs courtesy of the Bury Hydraulic Group. We thank those three groups for bringing their locomotives to the WSR, plus the AI Locomotive Trust for "Tornado", plus the DEPG Williton Team for fielding several of our home based fleet including Class 35 "Hymek" D7017 that appeared for the first time in four years with effectively an "as new" Maybach MD870 engine rebuilt at Williton. We would also like to place on record our thanks to the DEPG Team for arranging a superb BBQ at their Williton Depot to which all the visiting locomotive support teams were invited, it proved to be a lovely summer evening sitting and standing around under the stars enjoying good food, drink and conversations.

(John Cronin)

WEST SOMERSET STEAM RAILWAY TRUST NEWS

The Heritage Carriages Project is firmly moving forward. We have accepted the initial quote of Colin Worrall at Crewe to begin work on 6705. This first phase will consist of erecting a weatherproof structure around the coach and beginning to remove exterior panels to see how much work will be required.

We are very pleased that Walt Denning has agreed to act as the Trust's project manager at Crewe.

We now have four coaches stood in the yard at Williton and one in the Swindon shed. A further vehicle stands at Williton and two more in Minehead yard. We have offers of further coaches, but storage space is short and we may need to rationalise the vehicles we have. This will be determined by the coach catalogue and survey mentioned below.

The search has now started to fill other project roles:

1. fundraiser to help us with the lottery bid and to help us apply for other grants and corporate sponsorship to help the project progress.
2. general project manager to scope and prepare project plans, costs and schedules to support the bids for funding
3. work coordinator and caretaker for the five coaches at Williton.

Help required: In order to speed the work at Crewe, we are looking for a small team of volunteers who will be able to undertake unskilled or semi-skilled work on 6705 under the supervision of Walt and Colin. If you are able to get to Crewe

regularly and would like to help, please email us on info@wssrt.co.uk in the first instance.

It is now important that we raise the profile of the project to build maximum support. One important event is the WSRA Transport Rally held at Norton Fitzwarren on 1 and 2 August 2009. We have been offered a small publicity stand at the rally. The Trust now needs to borrow some display boards, have them erected on the site and then further help to man the stand during the two days of the show. We can supply graphics and if you can help, please email us on info@wssrt.co.uk

Once work has started on 6705, the next biggest job will be to catalogue and survey the coaches we have in order to see which ones we take forward next.

This project is key for the West Somerset Railway and we have the full support of the company and the Association with which we are working very closely.

More details can be seen on the Trust website www.wssrt.co.uk

AUTUMN STEAM GALA- "GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY 175th – THE PRELUDE"

Looking ahead the plans for the Autumn Steam Gala between October 1st and 4th are well advanced and the chosen theme is Great Western. Bearing in mind next year, 2010, is the 175th Anniversary of the birth of the Great Western Railway we plan, in true show business terms, to market this Gala as "Great Western Railway 175th – The Prelude" and then follow it up 12 months hence with "The Finale". Full details of our plans to follow but for now thank you to you all for delivering great galas so far this year.

(John Cronin)

CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT NEWS

(I). MORE TRACK

The railway has again increased its track length, this time however, it has happened at Bishops Lydeard and not Norton, where an interesting combination of bull head and flat bottom rail has been utilised. The reason for this work was the urgent need for more siding capacity in order to accommodate the ash wagon. The ash wagon, as its name implies, is used to hold ash that has been cleaned out from fire and smoke boxes and the wagon has to be regularly shunted to and from the locomotive compound in order to avoid it obstructing the use of the pit.

An inter departmental meeting of collective minds resulted in the formulation of a plan to produce a temporary solution to the problem of insufficient space. This was necessary because the locomotive compound is still a 'work in progress' project that has been held in abeyance pending further funding becoming available. This we understand, will then permit the installation of a second pit road and perhaps eventually covered accommodation. However, the existing concrete apron and fence line just allowed sufficient space to install a temporary second siding, which extends what is currently the stub siding that the 08 normally stables on.

The novel solution involved installing timber sleepers with bull head rail on the existing ballast bed and then flat bottom rails laid on the concrete apron, which are held to gauge with steel tie bars. This temporary siding extension is only for use by the ash wagon, but it will hopefully help to make life a little easier in relation to the logistics of operating Bishops Lydeard.

(2). TRACK RIDE QUALITY

Readers will have noted in the June issue of ONLINE that an independent inspection was recently undertaken of the line by Phil Kirkland. Whilst we await the detailed inspection report, we are pleased that he mentioned to one of the team following his inspection, that at times during the trip he could almost have thought that he was travelling over continuously welded track rather than jointed track, such was the quality of the ride. This comment is of course a reflection of the work programme specifications that have been implemented by both Company and Association teams during the last couple of years to create this step change in quality.

(3). TREE SURGERY

The scenery around Stogumber Station has changed a bit in recent weeks as a direct result of the excellent work undertaken by the Association Cutting Back Gang and then by professional tree surgeons. The gang undertook all the work that they felt confident to, but we were then still left with a number of large trees that were considered to be a safety risk. This type of safety assessment is based upon a number of criteria, but it was clear that any prolonged wet and windy weather could have a serious impact on those trees situated above and below the line at Stogumber that were either; already well out of vertical alignment, or had poor root support, or had large over hanging limbs, or were decayed, or had a combination of these faults. The tree surgeons worked mainly at height in harness equipment and took the trees down section by section and the larger cut sections were lowered down by a rope and pulley system. This method of working ensured that no trains were delayed and meant that it was possible to avoid the greater expense of out of hour's possession working. Iris Horn said upon completion of the work, that the

station was now looking nearly as smart as it did when she first arrived back in the days of the GWR ! We should like to finish this report by giving our collective departmental congratulations to Iris upon her recent MBE honour.

(Tony Phillips)

SUMMER DIESEL RUNNING DATES



The Diesel and Electric Preservation Group have announced the dates of diesel haulage of trains on the West Somerset Railway for the summer. Recently returned to traffic Hymek no D7017 will work on 11, 25 July and 1, 8 August; Crompton no D6566 hauls trains on 15, 29 August; whilst on 22 August, it is the turn of Warship no D832 *Onslaught*. See the timetables for the actual train diagrams. Class 14 no D9526 works a relief train during the CAMRA Beer Festival on 12-13 September. D9526 and D7017 will also appear at the Somerset in Autumn event on 24-25 October. For more about the West Somerset Railway diesel fleet, see the [DEPG website](#).

HELPING THE HEROES

During a wonderful evening on Thursday 11 June spent behind the celebrity steam locomotive no 60163 *Tornado*, West Somerset Railway volunteers, staff and supporters made a magnificent contribution towards the Help the Heroes charity. The 1st Dunster Scouts with a little help from a group of Marines of 40 Commando collected £931.50 towards the charity, it is planned that this amount will be made up to at least £1000. GB Rail Freight, a great supporter of the charity, is planning to bring a passenger charter onto the WSR on 11 July 2009; it is planned that the WSR will make the official presentation of the final total to Help for Heroes when the GB Rail Freight charter arrives.

The Railway express their thanks to everyone that contributed on the night especially the AI Trust, John Cronin SEPT Chairman and those WSR volunteers and staff that gave up their time to make the evening possible.

Many Thanks

(Geoff Evens)

DIESEL NEWS

June was all about the Mixed Traffic Gala and the DEPG 2009 Annual General Meeting and reporting the Gala first we were delighted to record heritage diesel locomotive reliability was at an all time high with no show stopping technical problems to record. This performance meant the crews could enjoy the event and contribute to delivering a “right time” punctuality return, something we have not managed in previous years. All the locomotives looked and sounded the part and the attractive mix of visiting and home based locomotives contributed to the growth in visitor numbers that no doubt was helped by the “Tornado” effect. For the DEPG Team and hopefully the visiting crews the annual Saturday evening Gala BBQ held at Williton added to the feel-good factor of being on the WSR such that our visitors will bring their locomotives again in future years.

Following the Gala the DEPG Company Annual General Meeting was held at Williton at which our long-serving Chairman, Robert Tiller, stood down as Chairman and Council Member after over 25 years service so that he can spend more quality time with his family. Without doubt Robert can be proud by what has been achieved by the DEPG Team under his leadership, from bringing the Group to the West Somerset Railway when the only facility they had to eat, sleep and work in was the Williton Goods Shed, to the magnificent Depot facilities to be found at Williton today. As a result more active members have been drawn to the Group and the results of their work could be seen and heard at the recent Gala when Class 35 “Hymek” D7017 returned to service with an “as new” Maybach MD 870 engine, fully rebuilt at Williton. The next challenge for the Team is to return the Group “flagship” locomotive Class 5s “Western” D1010 “Western Campaigner” to service with at least one fully rebuilt Maybach MD 655 engine in time to star in the June 2010 Mixed Traction Gala with Robert at the controls.

Following an election John Cronin was accepted as the Chair and Ian Robins has taken over as DEPG Company Secretary and under their guidance hopefully the Williton Team will continue to build on what has gone before and perhaps by 2011 “Hymek” D7018 will return to service.

(John Cronin, Chairman, DEPG)

THE STEAM FAYRE AND VINTAGE RALLY 2009

Preparations are well advanced for the Steam Fayre and Vintage Rally at the WSRA Norton Fields on 1 and 2 August 2009. This year, the Rally will have a large steam section featuring full size and miniature traction engines and, possibly, a steam boat for the first time. Vintage cars, motorcycles, fire engines, military and commercial vehicles will be on show, all sections being well supported. Stationary engines will line the approach to the main arena areas. Vintage railway wagons will provide a backdrop to the fields and it is hoped that modern traction will be on view for the

first time. The Pump Trolley Experience will be available on one leg of the triangle. The heritage buses will be running from and from Taunton Station, and this year the new Norton Halt will host a DMU shuttle service to and from Bishops Lydeard Station.

THE MODEL AND TOY FAIR AT MINEHEAD STATION

This popular event takes place on Sunday August 2nd, organised as ever by Chris Dyer. Expect 50 or more tables with the usual variety of railways and other models and admission is free for those arriving by train from along the line or in possession of a train ticket purchased at Minehead booking office.

LEAFLETS ORDER FORM

The following leaflets are currently available from the Minehead Office. Supplies are not limitless and reprints are expensive so please be sensible about the numbers (and check the store cupboard before) you order but if you need any on the list please complete the form and send it back to the Commercial Department at Minehead:-

	Number Required
2009 Timetables
2009 Catering Specials
2009 Hestercombe Express
2009 Footplate Experience
2009 Mineral Line Trips

ORDERED BY (Name).....

LOCATION:.....

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DATE:.....