



"ONLINE"



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

A THANK YOU NOTE AND A REQUEST

We have had a good start to the season, as you will see elsewhere in this issue, and I would like to offer many thanks for all your continued support. To help to build on this, please if you are around and about check your local pubs, clubs, shops and tourist attractions for 2009 timetables. We have no funding this year to pay for a seasonal member of staff to drive around and check the many hundreds of existing and potential outlets as we have done in the past two years. So if you can put the materials to good use please pick up leaflets and dispensers from the Commercial Office at Minehead to help to meet the challenges for the rest of 2009.

(Paul Conibea)

THE HERITAGE CARRIAGES PROJECT

Following Robin White's stepping down as WSRA and Steam Trust Chairman there have been many rumours and stories doing the rounds about the future of the project. Elsewhere steps are being taken to carry matters forward.

The Steam Trust will continue to be the leading lights, chairing the working group and taking the lead but they will be supported by the Association and the Company. The first meeting of the new Steering Group will take place on May 15th.

The Company will be able to provide technical support, particularly with regard to the below floor area such as brakes, heating, lighting, suspension, draw gear, design work to make at least one vehicle accessible for disabled passengers, catering provision design etc, and of course accommodation on sidings until such time as the land at Bishops Lydeard becomes operable. The Company has now reimbursed the developer of the Bishops Lydeard Station Farm site for the costs incurred in obtaining the necessary planning consents and associated legal fees. The Steam Trust has agreed to reimburse the Company for these costs. Three possible sites have

been identified for storage of the two vehicles which we are due to receive from the South Devon Railway. First choice is Williton (by kindness of WSRA), second choice is Norton but with reservations about security and third choice Dunster Yard in the space to be vacated by the green DMU.

Andrew Forster will arrange transport of the coaches from the SDR and will liaise with David Holmes over location and preparation of the site. The Steam Trust will reimburse the costs involved. One of the SDR vehicles is only suitable as a source of spares and one of the first tasks of the Steering Group will be to develop a plan to dismantle and log into a store (probably a container) all the useful components.

Other matters that the Steering Group will have to offer as matter of high priority include supporting and encouraging the small workforce who are tackling 9705 at Crewe, confirming to those who have subscribed, or are subscribing money, that the Heritage Carriages Project is going ahead and will deliver historic vehicles for WSR use in the fullness of time, and to develop a fund raising plan and appoint a fund raiser.

(Mark L. Smith. WSR Chairman)

A BRIDGE TOO FAR?

West Somerset Council is preparing to work on the repair and repaint of Watchet Footbridge over the next 12 months. Although this will mean the erection of scaffolding and the closure of the line for an agreed period during the winter months this can certainly be viewed as good news at last, as although legally the bridge is not part of the WSR's maintenance responsibilities the general public inevitably assume that its condition is down to us.

(Paul Conibeare)

DIESEL NEWS

April started with our annual DEPG Williton Spring Work Week that this year focussed on Depot improvements rather than locomotives. The new access roadway from the Depot Yard to our two units on the Roughmoor Enterprise Centre was constructed and the fencing around the messroom and bunkhouse was completed. The pathway between the messroom and the bunkhouse was covered to provide a dry area for those of the Team that smoke. The walking route between No. 1 road and the back of the Down platform was extended and a semi-permanent safety fence was erected from the Minehead end of the Down platform towards Minehead between the Down Loop and No. 1 siding. This new fencing recovered from Bristol Bath Road Depot some years ago replaces the temporary, crash barrier, fencing that will be required later this year for the Norton Steam Fayre. Concrete was also laid in No. 3 road in the Maintenance Shed in anticipation of creating a new component overhaul working area later this year when we can finally

release our Lowmac wagon to the Heritage Wagon Fleet in time to appear in the planned M.O.D. freight train at the Autumn Steam Gala. Outside the kerb stones were all repainted and the Depot flower pots were tidied ready to accept new plants in May once the risk of frost has disappeared. During the week we also welcomed a crane contractor to the Depot who serviced our existing cranes and erected our new 2 tonne capacity crane in the new engine overhaul workshop. Finally we had a good tidy-up outside and inside and disposed of all rubbish and designated scrap.

On the locomotive front Class 08 D3462 remains in service as the Bishops Lydeard Station Pilot and Class 25 D7523 as the Company Contract locomotive. Both saw service during the month in support of the Company engineers and Class 33 D6566 also saw passenger service on the last Saturday of the month when she was called to work the first round trip of the 10.15 hrs Minehead diagram due to the non-availability at short notice of a serviceable steam locomotive. On the day D6566 was crewed by WSR Diesel Inspector Julian Bracchi with newly returned old friend John Cooke as his secondman who hopes to rejoin the Drivers ranks at an early date.

Progress continues on the rebuild of the MD655 engine for Class 52 "Western" D1010 "Western Challenger" but time is getting critical and we may not achieve a working locomotive in time for the Mixed Traffic Weekend which will be a great pity as it would have been great to have two "Westerns" to run in June. However the Team continue to progress the many other jobs outstanding on the locomotive that received a full set of batteries in the last week of April so that full electrical testing can commence now that the partial rewire has been completed. Class 35 "Hymek" D7017 is now ready for a full loaded test run that has been booked for Saturday 9th May followed by a similar trial for Class 42 "Warship" D832 "Onslaught" the next week and if all goes well we can then get started on cleaning and polishing both locomotives ready for the Gala.

Finally Ye Olde Codgers Team have started a partial revamp of the Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre ready for the Mixed Traction Gala in June and the peak summer operating season. Hopefully you will find time to visit us during the season to see improvements to our Depot that we are making as part of our contribution to creating a better experience for visitors to the Railway and delivering the DEPG "Williton Dream".

(John Cronin)

ADMIN HELP FOR THE GENERAL MANAGER

There is a need for a volunteer administration clerk to assist the General Manager on a couple of days each week at Minehead in dealing with typing, filing, and generally helping to keep the GM's administrative workload under control. Obviously confidentiality is also a key consideration. If you would like to help out in this way please contact me via 01643 700388 or paul.gm@wsrail.net

(Paul Conibeaere)

WSRA HOME COUNTIES GROUP PURCHASES THIRD MARK I COACH

The WSRA Home Counties Group has just acquired a new Mark I coach. Tourist Second Open no 4956 is the third TSO owned by the Group, and will join nos 4435 and 5024 in the service fleet. Built under Lot no 30690 at Wolverton in 1961, it seats 64 and weighs 37 tons. The vacuum brake and steam heat have been removed from No 4956, but re-instatement is considered not a difficult job. The air-braking and electric train heating will be retained for use should the situation arise. Arriving on the WSR in the third week of April, the seats have been removed and sent to the upholsterer, and other than the work mentioned above, following a clean, the coach will enter service as soon as the seats are returned. It currently carries the blue and grey livery, and because of the good condition, it will run it in that livery for the time being. A full external and internal repaint will take place when time permits.

COMMERCIAL DEPARTMENT VOLUNTEER HELP NEEDED

We are getting excellent assistance in the Commercial Office from Roger and Maggie Stobbs on Mondays but we could do with any more offers that are forthcoming on the other four weekdays, especially Thursdays. The duties include bookings for group travel and individual special events, working on mail shots, dealing with questions from the public and generally making sure that we are as efficient as possible at getting in a key ingredient in the success of every railway---revenue. If you have office experience and can help out please ring us at Minehead Station.

CUTTING BACK

Cutting Back is winding down for the summer to give the birds a chance to do whatever it is bird's get up to in the spring! We finished the season with a weekend clearing bramble and thicket at Watchet between the paper mill curves. Looks a lot better but it was not the best of stuff to deal with or the easiest location. On May 9th/10th we shall be beginning to clear the grass and nettles off the old down trackbed from Allerford toward Lydeard. This is becoming a little too heavily overgrown for a walking route and the HOBC drivers are having problems getting from one end of the train to the other when they reverse into the triangle site.

(David Holmes)

SPECIAL EVENTS NEWS

First may I take this opportunity to thank all those who found the time to provide inputs post the Spring Steam Gala regarding their personal thoughts on how we managed the Event. Without doubt they make interesting reading and SEPT will attempt to address the most important issues as we go forward through the rest of the Special Events year. The following list will give you an idea about the key issues raised.

1. Timetable not robust in terms of timekeeping.
2. Charter Trains and Galas do not mix
3. Insufficient recovery time built into timetable when trains run late.
4. 8 coach trains create crossing challenges
5. Emergency Timetable a good idea to recover service but not readily available to staff.
6. Difficult to contact Control as telephone always engaged.
7. Timetable requires some grades of staff to work too long each day.
8. No urgency when starting trains from terminal stations
9. Problems with too many pedestrians on Bishops Lydeard Station Overbridge.
10. Insufficient off-street car parking at Bishops Lydeard.
11. Insufficient toilets at stations and on trains.
12. Taunton to Bishops Lydeard via Silk Mills Park & Ride starts too late in the morning.

From visitors we received just a handful of written complaints but received many telling us that we got it right and thanked you all for welcoming them to our Railway with a smile and a cheerful greeting. Can I thank you all for delivering an enjoyable and successful Special Event that certainly got the WSR off to a great start to the year.

Looking ahead the Mixed Traction Gala is just six weeks away and I am pleased to report the four visiting locomotives have been confirmed. Already there is Class 42 "Warship" D832 "Onslaught" that is on loan to the DEPG from the Bury Hydraulic Group based on the East Lancashire Railway. The next arrival will be BR (E) A1 Pacific 60163 "Tornado" due to arrive with a "Pathfinder" tour from Gloucester and Bristol on the evening of Saturday 30th May. Then Class 14 D9520 should arrive by road, courtesy of our good friend John Antell, from the Nene Valley Railway during the week before the Gala. Finally Class 52 "Western" D1062 "Western Courier" arrives by rail from Bridgenorth on the Severn Valley Railway courtesy of First GBRf on Wednesday 10th June if all goes to plan.

The Gala timetable has been designed to maximize the use of the visiting diesel and steam locomotives with full support from the DEPG Williton based diesel hydraulic and diesel electric locomotives and the Company DMU and Class 03 diesel mechanical locomotive. On this occasion because the total number of passengers over the three days is expected not to exceed 3,000 it has been decided that there is no requirement to hire-in additional coaches as it is believed we can safely carry our visitors in comfort with the WSR based Mark I coach fleet. This will include

the latest coach purchased by the WSRA Home Counties group which is now resident in the Carriage Works at Minehead having vacuum brakes and a steam heating main pipe refitted.

Hopefully the sun will shine again for us and we will welcome many visitors to our Railway for the three days to enjoy both Heritage Diesel and Modern Steam traction.

Looking further ahead plans for the Autumn Steam Gala on 1st to 4th October 2009 are well-advanced and we hope to announce the line-up of confirmed visiting Great Western Railway locomotives next month in time to hopefully capture the interest of most of the visitors to the Mixed Traffic Gala. Repeat local and enthusiast visitors is the key to putting on successful Special Events that provide an enjoyable experience for both visitors and staff with the added bonus of having delivered a good job for all involved in the build-up to and delivery of the Gala.

Thank you all for your continued support on behalf of the Special Events Team.

(John Cronin)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

..or as Jon Tooke would say Elfin Safety! The WSRA Board has appointed Ian Aldridge as director responsible for Health & Safety. Ian's role will be to review WSRA locations and help and assist our staff and volunteers minimise the impact of complying with the ever increasing maze of legislation. Ian will be visiting various areas and offering practical help and advice with storage, COSHH paperwork, fire regulations etc. If you have any concerns or issues then please give Ian a call and he will be pleased to help you sort any problems. If you have no concerns then well done and thank you...Ian will probably pop around anyway to congratulate you personally - alternatively he may just feel your collar if his view is different to yours!

Seriously though I know this is a subject that everyone loves to hate and should be approached with a sense of proportion and common sense. However the WSRA (and the rest of the railway) does take the welfare of our volunteers very seriously and neither wants anyone put at risk nor to fall foul of any legislation or inspections. I hope and expect everyone to help Ian with his duties and listen to his advice. If you find any difficulty with this then please feel free to drop me a line.

(David Holmes)

DEVON AND SOMERSET FIRE AND RESCUE

The staff at Williton Fire Station will be carrying out a Training Exercise at Williton on Thursday 18th June to find out what can go wrong with steam locomotives and what the results are including the consequences of water shortage. Plus which parts of the locos get hot etc.

(Paul Conibeare)

NORTON FITZWARREN

The original planning application for the platform at Norton was withdrawn due to objections raised by the county highway authority about the increased level of car access. We have now re-entered the application with the potential for overspill car parking from Bishops Lydeard during busy days removed and trust that the revised form will be acceptable to Highways. If the application is successful then the platform should be ready for the Steam Rally in August, although the concrete may still be curing!

EVENING STEAM FROM BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS TO MINEHEAD ON MAY 30th.

And now for something completely different - an evening steam trip from Bristol to Minehead on 30 May. Diesel hauled from Gloucester to Bristol Temple Meads, where newly built Peppercorn A1 4-6-2 no 60163 *Tornado* takes over for the onward excursion across the Somerset Levels to Taunton and onto the winding and undulating West Somerset Railway to journey's end at Minehead. Enjoy a short evening stroll before heading back diesel hauled. Details are available from Pathfinder Tours on 01453 835414 or via www.pathfindertours.co.uk.

BISHOPS LYDEARD GAUGE MUSEUM MODEL RAILWAY

Brilliant start to the 2009 season for the Model Railway at the Gauge Museum. The Spring Steam Gala provided a real boost in 2009 and the trend is continuing with a total of 2,623 visitors on 19 operating days, compared to 2,100 in the same period in 2008. On the second Saturday of the Gala no less than 470 people visited the layout. The modelling team are confident visitors appreciate the hours of hard work improving the layout during the winter months. The layout in the Gauge Museum is well worth a visit.

SPRING STEAM GALA PRAISE

My son and I have recently returned home from the South West. We both enjoyed the benefits of pre-booked four day rover tickets for the Spring Gala and based ourselves in Williton.

Living as we do on the Isle of Skye the opportunities to experience a heritage line, or anything like a steam gala are few and far between. Therefore the whole

experience was pure joy, and for dad, soaked in nostalgia. It was particularly furthered by:

- i. quality interaction with many volunteers and staff over the course of the event, many of whom showed genuine interest in “father and son”, and did much to help us extract maximum enjoyment in, and fully benefit from all that was on offer
- ii. staff in all accessible signal boxes, who when approached at a “slack” moment, took a genuine interest in furthering our understanding of all that goes on, particularly facilitating my son’s interest.
- iii. Footplate staff, who when requested and it was appropriate, enabled substantial opportunities for my son to engage in questioning and enquiring how things work
- iv. all that was on offer at Bishops Lydeard by way of museum and models.

I want to particularly commend you for making the visit for my eleven year old motivational. It is encouraging to note this happening, as this is the generation that unless “captured” at this age won’t be there for lines like the West Somerset over the decades ahead. Having a group such as Trackers is a positive indication of intent and many other railways would do well to emulate your example, but I noted no evidence of promotion of this group during my visit, verbally, through any immediate literature or advertising. Indeed upon enquiry, it was clear many were unclear about the functions, activities or leadership of such a group.

I last visited Somerset in 1971 on a school geography field-trip, staying at what until recently was Crowcombe Heathfield Youth Hostel. One “assignment” that had credibility in that era, was to leave a coach load of pupils (divided into groups) miles from base with a map and a compass with the task of finding their way back “home”. I alone knew the railway had recently closed at the beginning of that year, so my group walked the line. I still have images of that experience firmly imprinted in my memory.

Between “then” and “now” you have exceeded all possible dreams and expectations over what also has to be acknowledged is a substantial period of time. Generally, I was excited and motivated by what I saw and must congratulate all concerned in their general pursuit of excellence. In the past I have been saddened by the politics and negativity behind the scenes at some railways: on visiting the West Somerset over four days, it was refreshing to note a spirit of optimism. Maybe I was in the right place at the right time: nevertheless, I pass all this on as a way of saying thank you and as means of encouragement to you for the future, and if any of this sentiment can be circulated amongst staff and volunteers, then so much the better.

(John and Caleb Moore)

OPERATING DEPARTMENT SWEATSHIRTS

The West Somerset Railway Operating Department sweatshirts are once again available to order at the bargain price of £17.00 each. These can only be ordered by filling in the form below and sending it back to Minehead office (address below) for the attention of Peter Vile and enclosing a cheque for the above amount to be made payable to Mr. A. Dorrington.

Please tick the appropriate box:

Colour	Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	Navy Blue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Green	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maroon	<input type="checkbox"/>
Size	Small	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>	Large	<input type="checkbox"/>	Extra Large	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

The West Somerset Railway

The Railway Station

Minehead

Somerset

TA24 5BG

(Peter Vile)

GRIMETHORPE COLLIERY BAND CONCERT

There are still a few tickets left for a concert featuring the Grimethorpe Colliery Band at the Regal Theatre Minehead on Sunday 17th May in aid of the Friends of Minehead Station. Tickets for the concert which starts at 3.00p.m. can be obtained by telephoning the Regal box office on 01643 706430

PASSENGER FIGURES TO THE END OF APRIL

The total number of passengers carried up to the end of the fourth month was 38,697 compared with 32,725 at the end of April 2008. We are now heading to an interesting period of the year in terms of comparisons as we should be booking shortly for “Thomas” and the visit of “Tornado” may have a major effect on figures at the start of June, which has traditionally been one of the most variable months in

terms of numbers travelling. To date over 300 advance tickets have been sold for the days when the AI is operating (not including the Mixed Traffic) and these have been going at normal prices. Advance booking of tickets doesn't guarantee seats but it does allow intending passengers to walk past any queues at Booking Offices and get aboard.

VOLUNTEER ACCOMODATION AT MINEHEAD

John Farley is heading the project to improve the volunteer accommodation at Minehead with funding available to improve the existing arrangements. The former buffet car, number 3058, may be used as extra lounge area but work to provide this will require voluntary support to get it completed within a sensible timescale. All offers of help in this matter should be addressed to John via Minehead locoshed.

(Paul Conibeaere)

OUT AND ABOUT

The Commercial Department in the form of Martyn Snell, John Simms and Vic Matthews was at the North Somerset Show at Wraxall on Bank Holiday Monday, May 4th. It was an exceptionally busy day with many leaflets running out ahead of closing time. Hopefully we should see some results by way of bookings in the next few weeks. Later in the month various line-ups will be at the Devon County Show and the Bath and West, in the latter case hoping that there is no repeat of last yer's major storm and flash flooding.

CROWCOMBE HEATHFIELD 30th ANNIVERSARY

It was thirty years ago when trains once again called at Crowcombe Heathfield Station. Tuesday 9 June 2009 marks thirty years since the stations at [Crowcombe Heathfield](#) and [Bishops Lydeard](#) were reopened to traffic. The folks at Crowcombe Heathfield are holding an event on the day to mark the occasion. It will be a [Green Timetable](#) day. The first passenger on or off the first train, the 10.25am from Bishops Lydeard will receive a small gift. As the train leaves the station, it will break a celebratory banner. Afterwards in the up waiting room, tea, coffee and a special cake will be served. Meantime, the last major renovation task in the original building, the booking office ceiling, is being refurbished with the work due to be completed on 30 April, just in time for the May Day Holiday.

CUTTING BACK AT ALLERFORD JUNCTION

The WSR Association Cutting Back Gang will be in action again on 9-10 May. This time, the Gang will tackle undergrowth on the former down formation at Allerford Junction, clearing the trackbed of grass, weeds, brambles. This will make the HOBC driver walking route safer and prepare the ground for a proposed headshunt. Parking will be on the hard standing inside the WSRA Norton site. New members welcome. Later in the month, professional tree surgeons will carry out essential safety work on several tress at Stogumber Station.

HERITAGE RAILWAY PASSES

The new HRA Pass year begins on March 1st and they will run from that date for twelve months. The price is now £22 for another year and the holder can obtain free travel for two on a large number of the country’s heritage lines, and discounted travel on some of the others. If you go in for more than two visits to “other lines” during the year the Passes rate as excellent value and they also raise much needed funding for the work of the HRA without which a lot more time and energy would have to be spent by individual railways in monitoring legislation and regulations being produced by local and national government.

To qualify for a Pass you need to be a regular volunteer on the WSR or a paid member of staff of the plc or the Association. **PLEASE NOTE: THE PASSES ARE ISSUED BY A WORKING MEMBER OF ANOTHER RAILWAY AND YOU SHOULD ALLOW TWO TO THREE WEEKS FOR PROCESSING TO TAKE PLACE.**

To obtain a Pass please complete the form below and forward it to John Simms at Minehead Office together with a stamped self-addressed envelope for the return of the Pass once HRA have issued it:-

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Phone Number:.....

WSR Department//Work Location:.....

I enclose a cheque, value £22 payable to “Heritage Railways Association” and a stamped self-addressed envelope for the Pass to be forwarded to me.

