



"ONLINE"



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

2009 HERITAGE RAILWAYS ASSOCIATION LARGE GROUPS AWARD

I am writing from Sydney, Australia where I have just enjoyed a visit to the Zig Zag Railway. Thanks to the wonders of email, I learnt that the WSR has earned the 2009 HRA large groups award for the installation of the turntable at Minehead. This confirms that those far sighted people who rescued this turntable from Pwllheli in 1979 had exactly the right instincts.

I wrote my first paper trying to encourage support for the project in 1992, and it is to the greatest credit of those who took up the challenge after my departure as managing director in 2005 that the project has been brought to such a successful conclusion. The design layout and scheme that we now all enjoy was developed with great enthusiasm by a number of people both professional from our partners in the local and regional authorities, and by our volunteers who contributed work valued at almost 50,000 pounds.

I can but offer my congratulations to all who took part in any way either many years ago, or in more recent times, and thank you on behalf of everyone who has seen and enjoyed the turntable in operation. I think it would also be appropriate to thank the wards committee of the Heritage Railway Association who recognised the importance and value of the turntable not only to the WSR, but also to the town of Minehead that the Railway seeks to serve.

Well done and congratulations to you all.

(Mark Smith)

FROM MAJOR CONSTRUCTION SITE TO MAJOR AWARD

Further to Mark's article above the citation for the award reads: "for an outstanding achievement in railway preservation for the installation of a locomotive turntable at

Minehead, initially a useful piece of infrastructure but which has created a great town centre public attraction at the Railway's northern terminus.

As you will know, this Award is made annually to a member group, in HRA Membership Category 4 and above, which has an outstanding contribution to railway preservation. The award trophy is the large coat of arms which once adorned the locomotive of the LBSCR royal train and which the National Railway Museum has kindly loaned to the HRA." The actual award will be made at the NRM on Saturday 6th February 2010.

Looking back it seems a lot longer than two years ago that the construction work began with demolition of various buildings at Minehead and the creation of a large building site which also restricted access to the station. At the end of 2009 the turntable project has won a major award and drawn large crowds to the station whenever it has been in action. Thanks go to everyone who has worked on and through the installation work and has made such a major contribution to the ongoing success of the West Somerset Railway.

(Paul Conibeare)

"WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THE TRAINS AREN'T RUNNING"?

One of those annoying questions that will get asked over the next few weeks between the end of the main season and the start of the Dunster By Candlelight and Santa Trains. However reading through this edition of "Online" should give a taste of what a lot of us will be working on during the months to come (and in a lot of cases regularly throughout the year).

2009 ALREADY SECOND BEST YEAR IN WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HISTORY

At the end of October our year to date passenger figure had reached 212,196, a total that has only been exceeded by the whole year in 2007 (213,423). In the prevailing economic climate this is a remarkable achievement and really can only be put down to one thing, the quality of the people who make this organisation what it is. The amount of hard work that is put in seven days a week for 363 days a year has paid off with this impressive result and it is a good time to say thank you all once again.

However success brings its own problems with it and thoughts have been turning to how we cope with the difficulties that busy years highlight. Whatever we do we have to remember that the most important person on the WSR is the passenger and it is the passenger who decides when he or she wishes to travel and what journey to make. Reduce their choice and they will take their trade elsewhere. However businesses can make offers that may encourage different patterns of use and this is what we have to look at achieving.

JOB VACANCIES

Regular observers of activity at Taunton Station over the last year or so may well have seen the Taunton-Cardiff service trains, topped and tailed by EWS Class 67 locomotives.

This contract has now moved to GBRF and after discussions a contract has been agreed which will see the locomotives (which will now be Class 47's or 57's) and stock stabling at Bishops Lydeard overnight. The trains will depart ecs for Taunton at 6.10 a.m. and may not finish their day there until around 10 p.m.

It is accepted that volunteers are unlikely to be able or willing to cover these early starts and finishes and therefore there will be additional salaried posts available for the duration of this contract: we will be looking for a project manager who would be involved with the working of the trains in and out of Bishops Lydeard co-ordinating these workings with our normal day to day activities. In addition to this post we will be looking to employ Signalmen and Conductor Drivers. Anyone interested in any of these posts is asked to contact the General Manager in writing with a current cv. Or e-mail to paul.gm@wsrail.net Salary is by negotiation. The contract is due to begin in mid -December.

(Steve Martin- Operating Superintendent)

BISHOPS LYDEARD-TAUNTON-CARDIFF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

With the start of the above train movements inevitably some questions are being asked about what it will entail for the WSR. The following should answer the most commonly asked ones.

Are you stabling at weekends?

No, the set normally returns to Cardiff for weekly exams and external cleaning

Is it true that you will be refuelling off the top of a bridge?

Fuel will normally be taken at Cardiff. If it is necessary to take fuel on the West Somerset Railway it will be done by road trailer at the level gated access close to Deane Bridge. The company doing the refuelling will carry spill kits and risk assessments will be carried out by the supplier. The operation will be covered by their Public Liability Insurance.

Are you stabling spare vehicles?

Possibly 2 or 4 spare coaches.

Can you use the sets to run to Taunton or beyond?

We will continue to talk to GBRf about the use of the sets at weekends. Possible uses include the link between Bishops Lydeard and Taunton during Galas or for Railtour Operators to run excursion trains to destinations such as Weymouth, York or Paddington.

How long is the contract running for?

It is due to start on December 14th and finish in June 2010.

Will we be able to move the locomotives if required?

It is intended to convert our Class 47 drivers to Class 57's by means of a one day course, so that in a emergency we can move the set which will normally be stabled in platform one at Bishops Lydeard when we are not running.

How does this sort of operation fit in with a Heritage Railway?

It fits well as a means of building new business for the future and secures the link to the mainline at Taunton
(Paul Conibeaere)

CONGRAULATIONS

To Jenny Davidge on her appointment as Station Master/Mistress at Stogumber. Together with the revived Friends of Stogumber Station Jenny and the station team have been working hard throughout the summer to build up trade at the station and with full opportunities to promote the cream teas now on sale during the 2010 season we should see further progress on that front in the year to come. Certainly some passengers will take the opportunity of a round trip from stations at the Minehead end of the line on a nice afternoon and alighting for an enjoyable tea in the garden between the time the train leaves for Bishops Lydeard and its return. Incidentally with Jenny now at the helm at Stogumber and Ken in charge at BL this must be the first time we have had a husband and wife team in charge of two different stations.

SPECIAL EVENTS NEWS

Since our last report the Railway has staged more Special Events, the "Autumn Steam Gala" that saw us welcome 5,628 visitors who, hopefully, enjoyed a true Great Western Railway experience over the four days of the event. Then towards

the end of October we welcomed another 1,627 visitors over two days to the much more low key "Somerset in Autumn" and from the feedback received at the time and since it appears both events were enjoyed by all. This is despite there being a couple of unfortunate problems on the Saturday afternoon of the Autumn Steam Gala when we experienced steaming problems with the Castle and the King. On most days the improvement in timekeeping was maintained and the Special Events Planning Team would like to thank all colleagues involved for their input that delivered the result we are all trying to produce on a regular basis. However, as always a few problems arose along the way that we will need to think about and address where necessary as we all continue to further improve the product quality and so enhance our visitor experience.

Looking ahead we have now just the "Winter Steam Festival" to look forward to this year. This special event is scheduled to take place on Thursday 29th and Wednesday 30th December and the advance publicity leaflets have already been printed, displayed in the racks at stations along the line and posted out to other outlets such as heritage railways that open in the next few weeks and Tourist Information Centres. Please feel free to take a few and pass them on to family, friends and work colleagues who will hopefully find the time to come along to our Railway for a post-Christmas Great Western treat. With regard to which locomotives will be in service we hope to complement our Minehead based fleet with a "guest", the identity of which is still to be confirmed as we go to press, our aim being to recreate a "Great Western Railway Winter Scene." Behind the scenes our Operating Department are refining the preferred Special Events timetables based on our experiences in operating this year to date. Our aim is to sign off robust timetables that will be used for 2010 Special Events so that draft operating instructions can be developed by Pat Langan in the coming weeks so that he will only need to fine tune them in 2010 just before each event. This advance planning should deliver a better quality of product and reduce the stress and strain on many of us in the final days run up to a Special Event. Before final sign off the preferred timetables will be circulated to key team leaders for comment.

As always the first Special Event of 2010 will be the "Spring Steam Gala" that again in 2010 will be held over six days on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st "March" and Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th March. The chosen theme for this event is "GWR 175 – The Standard Revolution" in recognition of the great input of Swindon Works and its workforce in designing, developing, building and testing many of the British Railways Standard Class steam locomotives in the 1950's. The plan is to bring together for the first time in the Heritage Railway era an operational example of each of the eight classes of "Standards" that survive. As I am sure you will appreciate inviting eight guest locomotives is not a cheap plan in terms of transport costs and steaming fees but SEPT believe that together these locomotives will be a great attraction to get our new railway year off to another great start. Effectively if we pull it off it will be another "One Off" event that should put our "GWR 175 Anniversary

Celebrations” in a spotlight that will meet with a certain gentleman’s approval. More news about 2010 in our next report in the December edition of “Online”.

(John Cronin – Chairman SEPT)

AWARDS FOR BISHOPS LYDEARD STATION GARDENS

More awards for Bishops Lydeard Station gardeners Clive Goddard (Head Gardener) and Ian Aldridge. They received no less than three awards at the Taunton in Bloom 2009 presentations on 7 October 2009. The awards are Best Voluntary Organisation Floral Display (First), Best Public Access Site Display (First) and Best Display at Taunton Station. Once again the gardeners’ skills delight thousands of visitors and provide valuable publicity for the Railway.

CROWCOMBE HEATHFIELD STATION

After 35 years Walter Harris and Michael Hodge have decided to retire from the role of Joint Stationmaster at the end of January 2010. We are currently seeking applications in writing for the post (it is intended that there should be a single post holder in future) to include a current c.v. to the General Manager at Minehead Station. Alternatively contact me via my e-mail address paul.gm@wsrail.net. Closing date for applications will be 15th January 2010.

WEST SOMERSET MINERAL RAILWAY

The West Somerset Mineral Railway project will be coming to an end at the close of 2009 but before this happens there will be some interesting products coming on to the market. First off there will be a series of leaflets available with the following titles:-

The Incline and Winding House; Langham Hill and Bearland Wood; The West Somerset Mineral Railway; Winning the Iron Ore; The West Somerset Mineral Railway at Watchet; The Watchet to Washford Trail.

In addition Mike Jones and John Hamilton’s two volume publication on the WSMR, entitled “Neither Here nor There?” is due out at the end of this year. The first volume will contain a comprehensive history of the mines and the Mineral Railway and the second volume will contain Mike Jones’ drawings, archaeological findings and photographs. They will be published by the end of 2009 and reference copies will be placed in local libraries. A shorter illustrated history of the mines and railway will be published in summer 2010 by Black Dwarf and will be available to buy in all good bookshops as well as Exmoor National Park Centres and the Tourist information Centres.

Meanwhile at Watchet proposals for this end of the project have been put out to tender, and a contractor has been selected. Archaeological investigations have

revealed some of the track surviving under the present tarmac and concrete on the West Pier and the plan is to expose an element of these former rails and paving. The current railings along the harbour edge on the West Pier are also to be replaced with cast iron railings. At the entrance to the Mineral Yard a separate pedestrian access is to be created and a footpath laid around the perimeter of the yard to give walkers a safe access through the yard and out to the West Pier. Interpretation panels are to be displayed on the front wall of the Mineral Yard and on railings on the West Pier to explain the history of the Mineral Line.

2010 GENERAL (OPEN TO ALL) PTS COURSES

The following dates have been set aside for PTS training as follows:-

Saturday 13th March BL

Saturday 10th April MD

Saturday 10th July BL

Saturday 17th July MD

Saturday 16th October BL

Saturday 23rd October MD

All sessions will be in the lecture room at MD or in Brunel House at BL commencing at 10.00hrs unless otherwise stated nearer the time.

For places on the courses, please contact Geoff Cross, email geoff.cross@btinternet.com Tel 01823 663718 Mob 07719 909 596

SITE SURVEY SOON FOR WILLITON FOOTBRIDGE

The long term plan for the re-instatement of a footbridge at Williton Station takes another step forward. Chris van den Arend, Williton Station Master, writes "Whilst nothing obvious has been happening to the footbridge, our excellent Shop and Refreshment staff, helped indeed by other members of staff, have been gathering money to squirrel away in our [ex-Trowbridge] Footbridge savings account. We may not have all that we shall need, but we have a healthy amount to start work off. In November it is planned to have a ground survey of the earth where the footbridge foundations are to go. No doubt much the same place as the foundations of the 1874 timber footbridge were. The Station Master was familiar with the ground on the Down side as we had a very large hole dug in 1977 for the foundations of the water tower which eventually went between the tracks at the Minehead end of the loop instead, (and is now at Minehead). It was filled back in again and we planted the present laburnum there instead! Before long we hope to relate results and progress.

We deliberately have not appealed for more funds until something obvious is happening. As they say, watch this space”.

DEAR MERV

Thank you so much for granting a footplate pass to my father. We booked a carriage, brought plenty of friends and family and had a great day. To ride the footplate, especially of a beautifully restored Hall class, was really the icing on the cake - one very happy parent (well actually two).

He said afterwards that it had been his best birthday ever, which considering it was his eightieth is praise indeed.

Thanks again to you and the helpful staff who made it possible at a very busy time.

Regards,

John and Linda Stephenson

THE MAKING OF A (LADY) SIGNALMAN

I vividly remember my first trip to a WSR signalbox. It was during a Volunteers Day when I went with a group of potential volunteers to the signalbox at Minehead. There were quite a few of us, and I was standing at the far end by the equipment shelf. I had the bad luck for the bell to ring next to my ear, and I was astonished to realise that all those beautifully polished museum pieces on the shelf actually *worked*. How? What was their purpose?? It was then that I caught the bug. I had looked at most of the jobs around the railway – and I decided to attempt what for me was the most *mysterious* – Signalman. I began dropping by the Bishops Lydeard Signalbox on Sunday morning for encouragement from my mentor. He convinced me that I could learn it.

My next step was to convince the Signals Inspector that I was suitable Signalman material. We had an initial interview, and he warned me that it was ‘quite physical.’ ‘Bah’ I said, ‘I’m a farmer’s wife who can wrestle sheep to the ground and stack hay bales 5 high.’ He had no answer to this, and sent an e-mail to the other Signalmen (all men) that I was to ‘be extended every courtesy.’ And was I! Read on.

My first task was to complete a training turn in every box. My first turn was at Minehead. At the end of the day, I still had absolutely no idea what was going on. However, I did my first token exchange. The Signalman came out behind me, fussing and saying ‘now be sure to button your coat, hold the token farther away from your body,’ and I thought he was completely nanny-state about the whole thing. Then the train approached and I was suddenly terrified to be standing that close to a moving loco. If the Signalman hadn’t been standing there with his camera to photograph the whole thing I might have done something silly and girlish (like duck.)

My next turn at Williton was even worse. I thought that I knew up from down. Apparently not. I remember breaking into a cold sweat when I realised there was a train approaching from each direction and we didn't know which would arrive first. Once again I struggled through the day completely in the dark, but I did learn what the Signals Inspector meant by 'quite physical.' The next day I booked a session with a personal trainer and increased my upper body strength workout.

Eventually, the 2-day formal training course was scheduled, and at the end I was assigned to Crowcombe Heathfield Signalbox to begin training in earnest. I had a series of wonderfully patient instructors who worked very hard to ensure that I learned something each turn. They produced special training aids to help me to master the black art of crossing trains, and once we even scabbled around on the floor with an improvised model railway. 'Now, the bar of soap is the yellow token, and the collar is the red token ...' but I did hear him say under his breath, 'I hope the Inspector doesn't come in while we're doing this.' I don't even want to talk about my first attempts at booking. During one particularly awful turn, the instructor, desperate for something positive to say, said 'you answered the 'phone really well, that seems to come naturally.' Great.

There was also a lot of concern over what I would be called. There was a fear circulating that we would have to modernise and become 'Signallers.' No one, including me, wanted to do this, so we decided that I would be a 'Lady Signalman.'

The Signals Inspector after visiting one day, took exception to my cap and badge. Hearing this, one of my instructors gave me a cap with beautiful red piping from his Army days – this will be a treasured memento of my training.

Finally, after about a dozen turns, the light came on over my head, and I figured it all out. Just to keep me humble, I had a couple of mentally taxing turns emphasising the fine points of the Rule Book, where we simulated some seriously bad days with equipment failure, broken down locos to rescue and divided trains. Thanks to this, I passed my written exam with flying colours.

Then, came the fateful assessment turn with the Signals Inspector. My instructors said that I was ready, and I was. I passed out!!

From the very start of my training to my first turn on my own took 15 months. Counting all of the initial turns, formal training and training turns, it has taken me a total of 233.5 hours all in addition to the hours that I work as Association Manager. (This could explain my husband's constant cry of 'the railway *again* today?') And, I haven't begun to count the hours of independent Rule Book study – I have the only Rule Book in existence that has had two Florida holidays – serious stuff this volunteering!

It was a great experience meeting the Signalmen that I trained with, and it gave me a chance to hear their views on the Association and the future of the railway. They could not have been more helpful, patient and supportive. If you are thinking of trying your hand on the railway then I can thoroughly recommend it – give me a call and I'll put you in touch with our Volunteer Co-ordinator.

And my next goal? As a rookie, I must get past thinking 'what have I done wrong now?!' every time the telephone rings in the signalbox. Wish me luck.

(Susan Kaufman, Manager, West Somerset Railway Association, manager@wsra.org.uk
01823 431311)

QUANTOCK BELLE 2010

The "Quantock Belle" Dining Trains will run on the following dates in 2010.

SUNDAY LUNCHEON

March 14th: April 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th: May 2nd, 16th, 23rd;; June 20th, 27th;; July 11th, 18th;;
August 22nd;; September 12th, 19th, 26th;; October 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st;; November 7th.

SATURDAY EVENING DINNER

May 8th;; June 5th;; July 24th;; August 14th.

CHRISTMAS

December 3rd: Dunster by Candlelight Friday Evening

December 5th, 12th, 19th;; Sunday Luncheon

Bookings for trains from March to November will commence on January 13th for WSRA members and 20th January for the public and those for Christmas trains on 8th September. An Early Bird discount will be available for seats paid for in full by 30th April but please note that this does not apply to Christmas trains. Further details and bookings from Keith Sandford on 01823 433856. The 2010 "Quantock Belle" brochure will be available in November and any offers of help with distribution would be appreciated. Please contact Susan Kaufman if you are able to assist with this, also please contact Susan on 01823 431311 regarding any QB private charter enquiries as this is an area which we would like to expand in 2010.

(Richard Knight)

DIESEL NEWS

For the last "Somerset in Autumn" Special Event three DEPG Heritage Diesel locomotives saw limited service as none are equipped to provide steam heating for carriages. In the event both days of the Gala were much warmer than in the previous year and carriage heating was not essential on this occasion. For the record the three diesels were Class 14 D9526 that hauled the WSR Heritage Freight train on both days, Class 35 D7017 and Class 47 D1661 "North Star" that both worked passenger diagrams. Next year this event is being given the new title "Late Summer

Weekend” and moves to Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th September when it is planned to use the Williton based DEPG Heritage Diesels much more extensively.

Down at the Depot numerous infrastructure maintenance tasks have been progressed including building gutter cleaning and relamping in the maintenance shed. The new staff locker room has been painted and a suitable floor covering laid to improve staff changing facilities. The depot entrance lobby has been repainted and the whole depot site has been given a good clean and tidy-up. The body repairs to the Ferry Van have been completed and it has now been shunted out of No. 3 road to a new berth on No. 1 road outside the Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre. In its place in No. 3 road we have placed Class 03 D2119 that is due a light mechanical overhaul and body repaint. Included in the list of repairs is the overhaul of both starter motors and renewal of the timber cab window frames. In total we expect the locomotive to be in the shed for most of the winter and her place as both West Somerset Restoration Works and DEPG Depot Pilot will be taken by Sentinel DH16 now we have managed to free her from No. 3 road after many months of captivity. Work on the overhaul of a Maybach MD655 diesel engine continues and by the end of the month it was ready for pressure testing that if successful will allow us to install it into Class 52 D1010 “Western Campaigner” before Christmas. The second engine in the “Western” was successfully started during the month and following a full check of all the safety systems the locomotive moved under her own power for the first time in many months on October 31st. For all present who witnessed the move it was a “Magic Moment” and a great spur to return the locomotive to service in good time to star in the June 2010 “Mixed Traffic Weekend” that is being designed to celebrate the Diesel Hydraulic era on the Western Region as part of the Railway’s “GWR 175 Anniversary Celebrations”.

The internal repaint of the engine room of Class 25 D7523 has been completed and the next job is the replacement of the radiator header tank sight glass before we add 40 gallons of antifreeze to the coolant so the locomotive can eventually return to traffic in readiness to work winter engineering trains for the Company. Class 08 D3462 is also due to return to Williton Depot in November for an exam and so we can strengthen her coolant mix of antifreeze and water before the cold winds of winter arrive. On the other hand the diesel hydraulic fleet will now be winterized and put to store as they will not be required until the warmer Spring weather arrives.

The DEPG Williton Depot and Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre plus Depot South Yard were open to visitors to the Railway for all six days of the October Special Events and the DEPG Team welcomed many visitors who expressed a genuine interest in the work we do and demonstrated their support with some generous donations. These donations will be used to enhance the depot facilities and reward the active volunteers for their ongoing commitment to our diesels and the West Somerset Railway.

Finally a winter programme of DEPG MIC classes has started, the next class being a Williton Shunting Day on Friday 13th November for possible trainee diesel secondmen. These classes are being organised by one of the DEPG's younger members, Matt Cambourne, and I would ask you all to give him your full support if he asks for your assistance now and in the future. Effectively we are trying to establish a team of younger trained people who can take over and continue to maintain and operate our great railway as the older brigade who were the original railway heritage pioneers finally have to admit their age and step away from the work place. The question I would put to you is simply "Have you identified your successor and are you giving him or her the necessary training and encouragement to be sure you will hand over the reins to the right person?" Unless you do this wonderful railway as we know it could be at risk in the years ahead if skills are lost. The future lies in your hands.

See you next month.

(John Cronin- Chairman DEPG).

VISITORS TO SIGNAL BOXES: COMPANY POLICY

Visits to signal boxes by members of the public and potential volunteers are welcome at the discretion of the signalman, especially where the visitors are generally interested in "the kit", and this forms part of our charitable status work. However in the present climate surrounding children and the activities of the new Independent Safeguarding Authority from next year, children unaccompanied by parents or another adult are not to be allowed to visit. Members of a signalman's family should not be, and are not allowed to be, whether accompanied by an adult minder or not, present in a signalbox throughout a turn of duty although there should be no objection to a short accompanied visit at appropriate times.

(Chris Thacker – District Inspector)

THANK YOU

I would like to thank Gordon Harris and his team for all their work on our new storage wagon. They have done a tremendous job and I hope they appreciate the difference it will make to the shop to have good, accessible storage. Many thanks to you all. I would also like to thank John Farley for his work on the roof and waterproofing the wagon. The FOMS team and Tony Phillips and his team from the P/Way also played a big part in opening up the new shop doors and helping us to refit the shop. Again I would like to convey my thanks.

(Colin Howard –Retail Manager WSR)

TRAINING 2010

The training programme for 2010 has now been set up and I thought that it would be helpful to let you have an idea of the dates and the subject content; organisation is in the hands of both the M.I.C. Group and the Safety Critical Training Group – the latter having evolved from the Shunting Liaison Group, in accordance with the W.S.R. Safety Management System and now includes representatives from both the S&T and P-Way departments, under the chairmanship of Geoff Cross.

M.I.C. Classes – 2009/10

Class 2 – Saturday November 14th 2009- BL Village Hall – “Timekeeping” –this class is open to all grades concerned with timekeeping, who have already been notified.

Class 3 – Saturday January 16th 2010 –Minehead-“Lubrication”.

Class 4 – Saturday February 6th 2010 – Bishops Lydeard – “Boiler Management and B.R. Standard Locomotives – operation/faults and failures.

Class 5 – Saturday April 17th 2010 - Bishops Lydeard – “Loco Faults and Failures” - from the point of view of the home fleet.

Class 6 – Saturday April 24th 2010 – Minehead (to be confirmed) – “DMU Drivers Refresher Training Day” – may also involve guards.

Class 7 – Sunday April 25th and Wednesday April 28th 2010 (provisional)

Saturday and Sunday May 8th and 9th 2010 (confirmed)

On these dates we shall hold “Route Knowledge Training Evenings” – using the DMU – and looking at all the features of the line, including yards, from milepost 165.20 to Minehead terminus. Loco crew, guards and signalmen will be invited to these sessions.

Safety Critical Training Group Classes – 2010

May 14th to October 9th. Between these dates there will be 7 all-day training classes at Bishops Lydeard. As before, the afternoon will be devoted to incident training; the morning sessions will all include shunting training, with and without radio, together with P.T.S. or the vacuum brake or any other subject considered by the Footplate and Guards Panels to be in need of special attention. The class to be held on August 21st will be restricted to trainee firemen and guards and one other class (date to be

confirmed) will exclusively for those footplate crew and guards who are not yet P.T.S. certified.

October 21st and 30th. 2 classes devoted to “Evening shunting at Bishops Lydeard”.
(Tony Bray M.I.C. and S.C.T. Groups)

MINEHEAD SHOP OPENING HOURS THIS WINTER

Whenever timetabled services are running from Minehead we are open 9.30am to 5.30pm. On non-running days we are open 10.30am to 3.30pm Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

IN ADDITION

We will be open from 10.30am to 9.30pm on 4th and 5th December for Dunster by Candlelight. We will be open from 6.30pm on Monday, 14th, Tuesday, 15th and Wednesday 16th December until the return of the Carol Trains to Minehead.

On Santa days from Minehead, i.e. Sunday 13th, Sunday 20th and Thursday 24th December we will open from 9.30am to 5.30pm

We are also open from 10.00am to 4pm on Tuesday 22nd and Wednesday 23rd December.

(Colin Howard)

BISHOPS LYDEARD SHOP OPENING IN NOVEMBER

Meanwhile at Bishops Lydeard the shop will be open on operating days and on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays during November when trains aren't running.

FRIENDS OF MINEHEAD STATION

The project to erect a modesty screen outside the door of the disabled toilet at Minehead Station is moving ahead with the cast iron posts to support the screen on order from the foundry and a local carpenter on standby to make the woodwork once the posts have arrived and have been erected.

Five platform seats with cast iron “GWR” ends are being purchased to replace the old wooden seats and benches on the platform which are showing the effects of many years in the bracing seaside climate. Another project that has been given the “green light” to go ahead is the rebuilding of the engine shed chimney and work should be beginning in the near future.

At the last FOMS Committee meeting it was decided to fully fund the replacement of the spear top fencing and the gates at the seaward end of the station. The existing fencing and gates are “originals” and in some places have become decidedly weak and worn. The replacements will form a good match for the new fencing erected around the turntable area.

ANOTHER “WSR” BOTTLED BEER

After the success of Cotleigh Brewery’s “Old Steamer” bottled beer, complete with picture of 9351 on the label Taunton Brewery are now producing a bottled version of “Braunton in Steam”, a beer that was first brewed for the 2008 Beer Festival at Minehead station.

CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT NEWS

I. TRACK INSPECTION TRAIN

The railway recently had the opportunity of making use of a track inspection train and included in the consist that ran behind a visiting Class 31, was a vehicle that measured track geometry and also a vehicle capable of undertaking an ultrasonic examination of the rails, both of them “recording” along the length of the main running line. The trip took place on the evening of Wednesday 7th October and a number of the Company Board directors took the opportunity to travel on the inspection train in order to assist in appreciating the benefits to be gained from making such assessments.

The track geometry vehicle measures dynamically, i.e. it measures the track under load, rather than statistically. The readings that are taken are recorded onto a trace, which comprises upon it a number of graphs that are constantly recording data as the train runs along the line. The data recorded relates to: gauge, 3 and 5m twist, dip angles, curvature, crosslevel, cant, left and right top and alignment with all being compared against set NR standards. Any faults found are assigned a repair timescale depending on urgency and it was possible to compare the results against a previous run that was undertaken in July 2008. The results are most encouraging, especially as it should be acknowledged that July 2008 was probably the first ever recording using this type of equipment and this resulted in a number of historic faults being picked up. The new run for example demonstrated that a track geometry fault identified at Watchet lower curve had been temporarily resolved by the use of tie-bars and whilst tie-bars are not a long term solution, they maintain track gauge until full remedial works can be implemented. The fault at Watchet related to the longer wheelbase locomotives forcing their way through these tighter curves and “shuffling” the chairs sideways, the sleeper condition is fairly good, hence the resultant diagnosis. No dipped joint exceedences were recorded outside the Network Rail parameters and this is an important indicator of the track condition improvements that Chief Civil Engineer John Buxton has worked hard to achieve. There has also

been a significant reduction in twist faults, with the majority of the remaining twists being mainly minor historic ones that showed up at the same locations as previously, thus again confirming that no deterioration has taken place in recent times to the track quality and standards, although indicating that plenty more work remains in order to make good these items. It must however, be appreciated that the speed of such rectification is directly related to the skilled resources available to implement the remedial works!

Over the last few years we have had a number of ultrasonic inspections carried out along the line. The latest report shows that there we have now achieved the lowest number of defects within the rail ever recorded. This confirms that a number of defects (e.g. those inherent since the rail was drilled, or those resulting from traffic over time) have been removed through a programme of rail changing. The exact nature of the remaining faults will be verified by utilising specialist portable test equipment at the recorded sites in the near future. If these detections match the test train recordings then it is likely to lead to only one existing rail replacement being required.

Overall the data recorded shows that the WSR can be compared very favourably against the professional standards set by NR for its secondary lines rail and track geometry. Although with the continuing increase in traffic and the regular use of large locomotives this means that much extra effort will now be needed to sustain this level of achievement. Our appreciation particularly goes out to the members of the Company PW gang, whose sheer graft and dedication has helped to implement these improvements, as has that of the WSRA PW gang without whom we could not have managed to record such levels of improvement. It has been very satisfying for all involved to have yet further independent verification of the high standards that the WSR Civil Engineering Department has achieved.

2. WATCHET STATION FOOTBRIDGE

Our representations to the West Somerset Council about the condition of this structure, for which they are responsible, has resulted in them going out to tender for the first phase of structural repair work. We hope that this might see repair work starting on site during February 2010, but watch this space for more information.

3. WEED KILLING

The recent all line weed spraying exercise would appear to have exceeded our expectations in terms of its effectiveness and we now look forward to the annual flail cutting work in the early Spring to provide the next significant improvement in time for the 2010 Spring Gala. The new Turbo Spray Wagon was recently given an inspection by an independent agronomist, who has been involved with many other

heritage railways weed killing operations and in his opinion the WSR now has the best system operating on any of the other many heritage railways that he has been professionally involved with.

(Tony Phillips)

ANOTHER AWARD

Just before we went to press we were informed that “Old Steamer” has won an award for the best label design on a bottled beer this year. We have no news yet of what the award will consist of but presumably there will be no shortage of volunteers to attend the ceremony.

APOLOGIES

On Saturday 31st October a problem at the Internet Service Provider meant that the West Somerset Railway lost its internet communications with the rest of the world. This has delayed electronic mail out and may also mean contributions have been missed (if they have we will add them to the next issue). Our apologies but this is really a case of circumstances beyond our control and with no definite date for the return of the services we have decided to go to press.