



# "ONLINE"



## **THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY AND THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY ASSOCIATION OCTOBER 2009**

### IRIS HORN MBE

The Railway has learnt of the passing of Iris Horn of Stogumber Station. Iris passed away at a Taunton nursing home on Monday 21 September 2009. In June, Iris was awarded the MBE in the Queen's Honours List for voluntary services to the rail industry in Somerset. With her husband Harry, Iris looked after Stogumber Station for many years, and she continued as Station Master following the death of Harry in 2000. The couple first moved to Stogumber in 1948 when Harry was appointed Signaller at Bishops Lydeard and later Williton until his retirement in 1969. A truly lovely couple who will forever be in the hearts of everyone who were fortunate to meet them. Mark Smith, Chairman of the West Somerset Railway Plc, said "Iris was so much a part of the Railway and especially the Stogumber scene. Passengers and visitors were always made so very welcome at the Station. There was honey and other Somerset treats on sale, and I was never short of an instruction or reminder if the company in any way fell behind with maintenance or repairs. We can but offer our heartfelt thanks, and our sincerest condolences to Iris's family and her many friends at this sad time." And the Chairman of the WSR Association, David Holmes, adds "Stogumber was Iris and Iris was Stogumber".

### MARK SMITH'S ADDRESS AT IRIS HORN'S FUNERAL.

When the Horns moved the family home to Station House, Stogumber in 1948 I wonder if it occurred to them that the Railway, then Harry's employer, would play such a dominant role in their lives for the next 60 years?

They followed the history of the Railway through rationalization, Harry's retirement, closure, abandonment and re opening but eventually they became part of that history themselves.

For who, when thinking of the WSR can fail to remember the quiet station the usual mile and a half from the village it served? We all remember visits to Stogumber Station and the welcome from the lady in charge there.

The welcome from a lady head down at war with weeds in a flower bed somewhere, or serving tea in her waiting room and more latterly gently dozing in straw hat on the bench in the sun.

In my early days with the Railway, I felt Iris was in the shadow of station master Harry, but gradually as his health and mobility deteriorated, so her strength and fortitude revealed itself. Overtime Iris took on more responsibility and control.

Then, shortly after Harry's funeral, I found myself being entertained to tea. I wondered how I might broach the subject of a new station master when it suddenly dawned on me that Iris was waiting to be asked.

"Would you like to be station mistress" I asked tentatively.

"No" came the immediate reply, "but I will be station master." And stationmaster she was until more recently when authority confirmed unchallenged she subtly allowed her self to become Station mistress!

Visits to the station were always a delight, except when the Company had failed to attend to the subsidence on the platform, or winter salt had not been delivered for the foot crossing. For this charming deceptively frail lady had a sense of responsibility, and the courage to remind Managing Directors of their shortcomings.

In the mid eighties a group of young men arrived at Stogumber. With vision and energy they started to overhaul the station. They disturbed the peace of the place, they brought their girl friends, wives and children, a noisy barbecue or two as they carried out heavy repairs to the buildings and extended the platform..

Later the Company turned up to extend the platform. Flower beds were up rooted and garden churned to mud by the machines.

There were tensions undoubtedly, but it is to Iris's great credit, that she embraced the need for these intrusions, - without ever wanting to admit as much.

Iris understood the need for funds. We have all been offered tea and refreshments, with honey, souvenirs and produce from Station House garden for sale.

On visits to Minehead to collect purchases for her Station Shop, Iris would call in to see me, rummage in her basket and produce a substantial cheque to help with the project of the moment.

On other, usually Winter occasions I have been summoned to the house, plied with tea, home made cake and regaled with stories of the family - based on the pictures so proudly displayed on mantel shelf and sideboard, and then sent home with the obligatory cheque, my list of instructions and a jar of honey or jam.

The gardening was first a necessity - to feed a family at modest cost, and then a passion.

The results are visible from Space. I looked at Google Earth this morning, the aerial picture taken a year ago show house and station gardens neatly tended, and of course the baskets, troughs and beds of flowers at the Station demonstrate Iris's imagination, energy and skill either by her own hand or by persuading some unwitting volunteer to get busy for her..

I recall a Sunday Times supplement written some years ago. In unsentimental but evocative writing, it described the station at Stogumber as the best place in England for a picnic. It was entitled "Somerset's Arcadia" a place of peace and tranquility, and was unwittingly a perfect tribute to station mistress Iris Horn's long commitment, energy warmth and authority.

I am sure that in saying a heartfelt thanks to Iris for her life of commitment to her friends, her family and to her station we must all want to wish her something of the peace and tranquility that she worked so hard for so long to create.

JAMES WILLIS

The Railway is greatly saddened by the passing of one of its brightest young stars. Known by his smile by all who had the good fortune to work with WSR 'Tracker' James Willis, 14, who died at home on Sunday. Volunteer Andrew Padfield who worked with James at Bishops Lydeard Station commented "James charmed everyone he met and did everything he was asked with his trademark smile." The West Somerset Railway Association said "We are going to miss him greatly at Bishops Lydeard. James was into everything - Permanent Way, Special Projects, Rally, the Station and the Model Railway and we never heard anything but praise" and West Somerset Railway General Manager Paul Conibeare said "We are all upset with the tragic news and our condolences go to the family. He was a well liked member of the team and was known as 'Smiler' because he was always so pleasant." May we all thank James for bringing so much to the Railway and may we also express our sympathy to his family.

WHAT DOES THE BOARD THINK?

No not a new panel game but the 2009 Volunteer Liaison Meeting which will be held in Bishops Lydeard Village Hall on Saturday November 21st at 2pm. Representatives of both the PLC and WSRA Boards will be present to answer questions on all matters WSR.

*(David Holmes)*

## SPECIAL EVENTS NEWS

As I pen this report at Williton Diesel Depot the Autumn Steam Gala is drawing to a close after four days of experiencing just a small part of what made the Great Western Railway "The Railway" to so many people. During the Gala we have used eleven Great Western-designed locomotives in service ranging from the mighty "King" to the workaday "Pannier", all of which proved to be "The Stars" of the show, appreciated by our visitors and WSR staff who came to experience the Great Western. Unfortunately we were unable to run a full Bishops Lydeard to Norton shuttle service on the Thursday and Friday because two trains arrived from the mainline bringing much needed stone for the Association Norton Fitzwarren Triangle project. However this allowed us to redeploy the designated shuttle locomotive, Pannier Tank 9466 to bank service trains from Bishops Lydeard to Crowcombe Heathfield, a method of working we have not employed during a Gala for many a year. On the Saturday and Sunday 6024 "King Edward I" was used to haul the newly introduced non-stop lunch time working from Norton Fitzwarren to Minehead replicating the Summer Saturday Down Paddington of yesteryear. On the Saturday the "King" carried the former GWR style Train Reporting Numbers on the smokebox in another first for a recent WSR Steam Gala. Three of the four seven coach train sets in use also carried the carriage destination roof boards that were another common feature of former Great Western and British Railways Western Region services up the end of steam on the mainline. Two sets represented the London to Minehead services whilst the third had a portion off the "Devonian" that ran from Bradford Foster Square to Kingswear. The latter train did not actually convey a Minehead portion but I thought it a nice idea as I used that train from Sheffield (Midland) to Churston (for Brixham) many times in the 1950's to visit my grandparents. On train catering proved to be a real challenge for our catering team as we still lack a third WSR buffet car but they were again well supported by the Quantock Belle team who supplied a never ending supply of tasty bacon butties to passengers at seat throughout the train on the fourth set who much appreciated this informal add-on service to the normal buffet car fare.

Overall the performance of the eight visiting Swindon-designed steam locomotives was good although we did suffer three problems on Saturday with 0-6-2T 6695 having to be withdrawn from traffic at the start of the day, her diagram being covered by the designated standby locomotive "Mogul" 9351 recalled from Williton (6695 was back in action on the Sunday). The 5029 "Nunney Castle" suffered a clinkered fire at Washford on a Saturday afternoon up service to Bishops Lydeard that resulted in a 30 minute delay followed by 6024 running low on steam on the last down service to Minehead that added further time into a train already running nearly 30 minutes late.

The timetables in use during this Gala were those used for the 2009 Mixed Traffic Gala when time keeping on all three days was within the 0-10 minutes Right Time

Measure currently used by many of the mainline Train Operating Companies. For this Gala we again we achieved 0-10 minutes on the Thursday, Friday and Sunday but lost it on Saturday afternoon. Based on these results, subject to detailed review, we hope to adopt these timetables for future Galas planned for 2010 and have them available to traffic early next year so those who plan to be involved can familiarise themselves at their leisure during the dark days of January and February.

Despite the doom and gloom predicted by the t.v. weather men about gale force winds and rain on the Saturday, all four days of the Gala remained dry with the sun appearing for various periods of time (the weather forecast on BBC Bristol on Friday night also mentioned that the Gala was taking place and the recommendation that the best day for a visit for a Sunday may have helped with the rise in passenger numbers on that day). Thursday was the best day overall meteorologically speaking. However the photographers report they have captured some great shots at various locations along the route and all can look forward to seeing our Railway at its best when the results of their labours are published. Overall in terms of passenger numbers we had increases compared with 2008 on the Thursday and Sunday and downturns on Friday and Saturday. The final total was 5,628 compared with last year's 5,715. Thankfully most visitors seemed to be enjoying themselves but the proof will be in the content of the letters and emails the Company receives in the next few days.

Looking ahead the next two day Special Event is on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> when we hope to have 5542,6695 and 7802 available to complement our own Minehead-based steam locomotives and the DEPG heritage diesel locomotives based at Williton. The final locomotive roster for this event will be finalised at the SEPT meeting on October 8<sup>th</sup> and will be published next week. Hopefully this year we will be blessed with some warm Autumn sunshine for this event after the two cold and grey dreary days we had to endure last year.

Finally on behalf of the Special Events Planning Team can I thank you all for your personal contribution that together delivered an enjoyable and successful Autumn Steam Gala that has got us off to a great start with our year of GWR 175 anniversary celebrations.

*(John Cronin- Chairman SEPT).*

#### PASSENGER FIGURES YEAR TO DATE

The combination of the good weather and the various bits of sheer hard graft that go into promoting the WSR continued to pay off and by the end of September the total number of passengers carried had reached 191,963. By way of comparison the figure for this point in 2008 was 169, 216 and in 2007 we stood at 179,675.

## BEST KEPT STATION AWARDS 2009

The Best Kept Station awards were held today, 26<sup>th</sup> Sept, at 14.30, at Watchet station.

The winners are;

BEST KEPT STATION 2009	Bishops Lydeard
RUNNER-UP	Watchet
MOST IMPROVED	Minehead
BEST FLORAL DISPLAY	Bishops Lydeard
MOST ATTRACTIVE GARDEN	Crowcombe Heathfield

Congratulations to all the winners.

Mark Smith, Paul Conibeare and David Holmes were there, to present the awards. As always, Mike Buttell and his staff at Watchet were very hospitable, providing tea and cake for all.

Many thanks to David and Jennifer Bailey, who spent a lot of time re-visiting all the stations, trying to decide the winners. David said the choice was difficult this year, as all stations were so much improved from 2008.

*(Magda Davies Stations Liaison Officer)*

## THE BEER FESTIVAL

The tenth anniversary Festival took place at Minehead on September 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> and was once again blessed with its traditional good weather. Somerset CAMRA ordered the usual wide array of cask conditioned beers from local breweries and those from further afield. Passenger figures were on a par with those from past years with trade slightly down on the Saturday but showing a rise on the Sunday when the Tone Valley Jazz Band celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a rousing set at the lunch time.

## KEY LAND AT NORTON FITZWARREN IS PURCHASED

In the last two weeks Network Rail and the WSRA have exchanged contracts on the sale of a short length of the original Barnstaple branch to the Association. Paperwork is still awaited from solicitors but the land which will be incorporated into the triangle works has been sold to the WSRA for the consideration of £1. It will enable the headshunt at the Taunton end of the triangle to extend to a locomotive plus four or five coaches if necessary and may in time permit the re-connection of the Barnstaple line junction with the Minehead branch. Earlier this year Network Rail permitted and supervised some undergrowth clearance work in

preparation for the final transfer which will make the process of restoring the trackbed much faster and easier. The deal has been several years in the making because of the complex and contorted system of due diligence that has to be observed to ensure that land which is sold is truly redundant and is of no further use to the national network. The sale has come just in time for the Norton project as recent ballast deliveries mean that further work can be carried out on the formation before the autumn weather sets in.

#### STOGUMBER STATIONMASTER

With the passing of Iris Horn the post of Stationmaster at Stogumber is now vacant and applications are invited from anyone who would like to be considered to step into the role. These should be addressed to Paul Conibeare at Minehead.

#### PERSONNEL FORUM UPDATE

So what has your Personnel Forum been engaged with recently? A major work, now almost complete, is the 'Staff Handbook' a form of manual which will inform us of a host of information affecting us all ranging from Health & Safety to Staff Relations to Sickness to Accident Reporting, and all those things which relate to our work on the WSR. If you have a matter which affects your work on the WSR, you should be able to find reference to it whatever your role. The Staff Handbook will eventually be supported by a Staff Manual containing policy statements and references to relevant legislation.

However part of the work on the Staff Handbook on the sections dealing with Discipline and Grievance has been held up because we have been checking that those individuals involved in 'safety critical' incidents or Rule Book infringements are dealt with appropriately. Whilst recent changes in Employment Law have set a new standard in the way both Discipline and Grievance matters are dealt with, not every incident can be resolved in the same way. So information on the way in which other Operators and Network Rail deal with 'safety critical' matters has now been gathered and will be incorporated into WSR procedures, as the relevant authorities would expect.

Another major task being undertaken is the creation of a new Staff Database. When our Training Officer, Geoff Cross, set about gathering material to create a catalogue of Training Programmes across the railway it became evident that there have been some inconsistencies in the way essential information has been recorded. In order to ensure that this information about our individual roles, relevant competencies and qualifications is accurately recorded, this revision is necessary. So slowly an all embracing database is being compiled from the current information collected. Before implementation you will be informed of the information held about you, and how it will be used. There will be an opportunity for you to amend it if relevant, as

required by the Data Protection Act, and you will be told who will have access to your stored information.

Why do we need this? Well, as you will appreciate, the operation, maintenance and management of any railway requires a very special set of skills and a particularly dedicated team of people to carry them out. We operate very much in the public domain and are responsible for the safety of ourselves, our customers and our visitors. We must ensure by law that all of our team has the appropriate training and knowledge to carry out their duties safely and it is the railways duty to maintain an up to date record of these skills and training.

It must be made clear that there has been no security issue disclosed during this exercise in gathering information about you, or that already held. The WSR is registered with the Information Commissioners Office as required under Data Protection legislation, and complies with all the requirements of that legislation regarding privacy and disclosure.

As indicated at the outset the Personnel Forum was created to help the WSR and those who work with it deal with 'personnel' matters by providing guidance on the best course of action. For some this may not always be a solution of course, but a preferred course of action. We cannot presume to solve everything for everyone.

*(John Wilton, Personnel Forum).*

## DIESEL NEWS

During September the DEPG heritage diesel locomotives over the Somerset CAMRA Minehead Festival Weekend with both Class 14 "Teddy Bear" D9526 and Class 35 "Hymek" D7017 working scheduled passenger services. The Hymek was then used again on the last day of the month to cover for the 1655 hrs. MD/BL DMU service as part of the preparations for the Autumn Steam Gala.

At Williton Depot the turbocharger has been refitted to the Maybach MD655 engine being prepared for Class 52 D1010 "Western Campaigner" and the next major stage of the rebuild will be pressure test the engine. The thorough clean and repaint of the Class 25 D7523 engine room has also been progressed and it already looks and smells much cleaner in there as a result of the efforts of the team. During the month we staged our first formal DEPG MIC when Geoff Cross and Peter Vile held a PTS course at Williton that 16 members of the DEPG team successfully completed.

Williton DEPG Diesel Depot and Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre was open again to visitors to the Railway on all four days of the Autumn Steam Gala and the team welcomed a good number of visitors to the depot who expressed an interest in the work we do in maintaining and restoring and maintaining our heritage diesel locomotive fleet. The Gala Traffic Control was again located in the DEPG Diesel Depot Office and District Inspector Chris Thacker and his Control Office Team were kept well supplied with tea and biscuits from the depot mess room. A mobile

food outlet was also on hand to provide lunch for the visitors, control staff and the depot team but sadly the number of visitors looking around the depot and using the food outlet was insufficient to make it worthwhile retaining the caterers' services on the last day of the Gala.

On the Saturday of the Gala Class 47 D1661 "North Star" was put on standby after the designated standby steam locomotives 9351 had to be dispatched to Minehead to cover for the non-availability of 0-6-2T 6695. In the event D1661 was not required but there was a time late on Saturday afternoon when we thought we might have to venture forth to rescue 5029 "Nunney Castle" from Washford.

Looking ahead the DEPG will again open the Williton Diesel Depot and Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre over the last weekend of October for the two days of the "Somerset in Autumn" Gala when D1661, D7017 and D9526 will be in service. The rest of our heritage diesel fleet should be on depot and all are welcome to drop by Williton to view them and the depot and to meet the DEPG team "at home".

*(John Cronin)*

#### CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT NEWS

I. WEED KILLING – The Summer of 2009 has been a good one for weeds, this has been because of the strong winds in the early summer, followed by the wet and humid conditions. These were ideal conditions for seed dispersal and subsequent germination. The E.U. has recently legislated away some of the more effective 'old school' chemicals that had good staying power and this has virtually resulted in the need to actually see a weed before it can be dealt with. As part of the battle against the weeds, it was decided that we should create a new TURBO(T) SPRAY WAGON. As the name implies it is a conversion of a Turbot ballast wagon and the decision was taken to do this with the aim of improving efficiency. We previously had to set up and then break down the equipment on one of the more popular 'common user' wagons, this took up much time and also involved utilising the Esso tanker for water storage. This meant that not only did we waste a lot of time, but it was also operationally more problematic because the ESSO tanker was an unbraked vehicle.

The Turbo Spray Wagon has been adapted with safety hand rails and a central walkway that permits access to the five on-board tanks, these are inter connected by a network of pipes which eventually run out to a central control console on the front of the wagon. It is a fully pressure pumped system and the chemical / water mix is accurately targeted via two buffer beam located spray booms and two side lances. This means that the controller can avoid wasting the very expensive chemicals and also direct the spray exactly where it is needed. The results of the most recent spraying exercise will become clear by the end of October and if these results are considered to be sub optimal, then a further spray might be undertaken before the winter sets in.

Will all readers please note that the chemicals that we use on the railway have all been tested and approved as safe for the uses that we make of them and as a result they have the necessary safety certification. The alternative to spraying the railway would be to permit the creation of a weed jungle type of environment, this would then of course create an unsafe operational railway environment.

2. TRACK MATTER – We hope in the near future to have a further independent dynamic track assessment undertaken and this will hopefully confirm that the on-going track maintenance work along the line is giving the required output results.

3. MINEHEAD SIGNAL BOX – the recent appeal for assistance to apply the gloss paint coats to the repaired box was answered by Chris Johnson. We are extremely grateful to Chris for his dedicated work, which at times has involved him working up to six consecutive days in order to make the most of the good September weather and as a result the paintwork was 95% completed prior to the ASG. Chris has worked on the railway before, but he missed the original request for help because he was taking time out. He has become a keen member of FOMS (Friends of Minehead Station) and as always, both FOMS Works Manager Gordon Harris and Chairman John Farmer have been of great assistance to us. Without this type of excellent volunteer support the infrastructure of the railway could not be maintained in the condition that it is – many thanks again to all who assist the C.E. Department with the myriad of tasks that are undertaken around the railway.

*(Tony Phillips)*

#### A GOOD YEAR FOR THE RAILWAY'S BUS SERVICES

The free-to-travel West Somerset Railway bus service has had a very good year. Alan Grieve, one of the regular bus drivers, writes "The Bank Holiday services from Dunster Station to the Village and Castle ran on eight days and carried 2093 while the Dunster Station services to Dunster Steep Car Park for the Country Fair and the Show carried 144 and 301 respectively, making a total of 2538 passenger journeys to and from Dunster Station - it must be remembered that the Show took place on a dreadful Wednesday at the end of July when torrential rain never let up until the evening, hence the low figure. Meanwhile the service run during the Thomas event carried 1490 around Minehead on the Saturday and 1062 on the Sunday so, all in all, the West Somerset Railway bus services have carried a grand total of 5090 passenger for the year. Thanks must go to all the volunteer conductors who have coped with the passengers, cheerfully answering all their questions, making sure they remained seated upstairs on the open toppers and ensuring none fell of the back platform!"

DEAR PAUL

My apologies in not writing before but would you please give our thanks to all at the WSR for their kind help and co-operation before and during the Somerset CAMRA Beer Festival on September 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. Not just at Minehead but at Bishops Lydeard and all points in between. We think that the Festival was the best so far with so many visitors looking forward to next year's event.

Particular thanks must go to the staff of the Turntable Café at Minehead for their great English Breakfasts of which 27 were supplied at 08.30 hrs sharp over the three mornings, Fri-Sun including no less than 11 on the Sunday morning. Most of all the friendship and camaraderie between WSR and Somerset CAMRA is an enjoyable experience for all those who are involved.

*(Phil Emond. Vice Chair Somerset CAMRA)*

#### WEST SOMERSET MINERAL LINE VISITS 2010

We have now been talking to Blue Motors of Exmoor about this and we will be running three more of these outings in 2010. The basic pattern of the trips is that passengers travel from Bishops Lydeard to Williton where they are met by the coach and the guide Martyn Babb. The coach then explores the remains of the old Mineral Line, which closed in 1911 and also takes in a lunch stop at an Exmoor Inn (food and drink is not included in the price), reaching Minehead station in time for the last train back to Bishops Lydeard. The package is also available to interested groups and societies, although the maximum number we can accommodate is 23.

#### GUARDS NEWS

Having just celebrated his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, many congratulations are due to Danny Hignett on passing his guard exam and becoming a Passed TTI. In due course he will be made up to Grade I status. Well done Danny.

*(Peter Vile)*

#### FRIENDS OF STOGUMBER STATION REVIVED

The Friends of Stogumber Station have been re-formed after a few dormant years. The people involved on the new FoSS management committee are Ken Davidge as Chairman, Angie Scutt (Secretary), Jenny Davidge (Treasurer), Roger Sanders (Works and Projects), Anne Bettridge (Grounds and Gardens) and George Troake (Membership Secretary). Membership forms are being produced and will be printed in time for the Gala. And there should be a newsletter - provisionally entitled *Buzzard Chronicle* - available soon.

## HERITAGE COACHES PROJECT UPDATE

Collett coach no 6705 has been enclosed within a plastic cocoon at Crewe. The shelter allows volunteers from the Heritage Carriages Project of the [West Somerset Steam Railway Trust](#) to restore the Collett bow-ended brake corridor composite regardless of the weather. No 6705 was built in 1938 and later exported to a museum in USA, before being repatriated in 2007. Recent work has seen the steel body sheets removed. The good news is that the woodwork is in generally good condition. The major wood replacement will be sections about 10ft long above the solebar on both sides and at both ends. In total, fourteen ex-Great Western carriages have been secured for the [Project](#), with work underway on several vehicles.

## HALLOWEEN SPECIAL TRAIN

On the Evening of 31 October 2009 the Halloween Ghost Express will leave Bishops Lydeard for Transylvania Central (aka Stogumber). Amid mournful whistles, in the darkness, the express will leave promptly at 6.30pm and arrive at Transylvania Central at 6.55pm. Transylvania can only be reached on a Broomstick or by The Halloween Express, as earthbound vehicles (cars) are banished and will be waylaid by werewolves at the border. There may just be the odd ghost on the train, so all children must be accompanied by responsible adults! Please come in costume as prizes will be awarded. At the station you will be treated to Hot Soup (Dragon's Blood or Witches Brew), Hotdogs and Tea. There will be entertainment in the gardens if you dare to venture in. Having been thoroughly frightened the train will depart at 8.30pm for a mad dash back to normality at Bishops Lydeard (arrive 8.55pm). Will you dare to ride? Tickets for young ghost hunters 5-15 years of age are £7.50 each and adults £10.00 each (children under five are free) and includes the train, food and entertainment. Booking is essential as no tickets are available from the booking office (all too scared to work!). Telephone 01643 704996 for tickets.

## AUTOCOACH 169

Work continues to progress apace on the repair and overhaul of the frames and chassis of GWR Autotrailer no 169. John Wood reports "The steelwork on the driving end of the frames is now almost complete with attention soon turning to the side angled 'stretchers'. Some of the work has turned out to be less onerous than originally expected so we are now also turning our attention to re bushing some of the worn brake gear bearings. Further good news is that we have now obtained one of the last remaining missing 'large' components namely the hand brake column.

Look out for further news soon and see the Autotrailer 169 website [www.auto169.co.uk](http://www.auto169.co.uk) for more news and a number of images of current work."

#### FIRST AID COURSE

I am arranging a First Aid Course for late January or early February. Anyone interested in taking part in this please let me know. It will take place at either Minehead or Bishops Lydeard and it takes one day. Anyone interested please let me know either leaving your name and phone number at Minehead Office or phone me on 01643 703266 or e-mail on [kgmardell@talktalk.net](mailto:kgmardell@talktalk.net).

(Ken Mardell)

#### WINTER DRAWS ON

Over the weekend of the "Somerset In Autumn" Gala the clocks will go back to Greenwich Mean Time and the hours of daylight will be short. As always this will give more opportunity for the less-honest members of society to start looking for anything that is easily removable from the Railway and for the "bored" brain dead to carry out vandalism. So please lock away all that you can when you finish your day's work, make sure security lights and cameras are working and generally ensure that we make life as difficult as possible for the ne'er do wells. Also remember that surfaces are going to be slippery through damp or frost so take a little longer and a little more care where you are working.

#### PROMOTING THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY IN GERMANY

Two West Somerset Railway Association volunteers have been busy promoting the Railway in Germany. Malc Stacey and Brian Chislett, both volunteers at Bishops Lydeard spent time at the town of Ettlingen in Germany during a town twinning festival with Clevedon which presented the opportunity to promote the West Somerset Railway. Brian speaks fluent German and was able to give much useful information about the WSR to potential customers.

#### PROMOTING THE WSR IN BIRMINGHAM

Meanwhile a little closer to home Martyn Snell and John Simms, together with Antony Brunt of the Exmoor Tourism Association, were at the Group Travel Trade Fair at the National Exhibition Centre on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. They were joined there by Chris Austin on the Thursday. A number of good contacts were made, and are being followed up, and there were invaluable face to face meetings with existing customers whose feedback about visiting the WSR was universally favourable.

## WSR RAILWAY STAFF CLOTHING

Again with the colder weather looming up it may be of interest that Colin Howard has West Somerset Railway Staff sweatshirts on sale at Minehead Station Shop and fleeces on order. The garments are black with the Company Crest and gold lettering. The sweatshirts cost £15 and the fleeces £24 and of course you will need to have a valid staff id card to obtain one. Sizes available range from Small to XXXL.

## THANK YOU.

What a beautiful day we spent on your railway on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September. The trains and stations were charming and brought back happy memories for my mother, born in 1926, as the railway was the usual mode of travel back then. My childhood memory (born 1954) was falling down the gap between platform and carriage. The icing on the cake were the gentlemen, who work voluntarily we understand, who showed care and attention to our every need throughout the entire day. Thank you. We shall be back again for another lovely day.

*(Brenda Brice and Linda James)*