



"ONLINE"



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY AND THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY ASSOCIATION DECEMBER 2008

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to report that you have achieved a budget surplus in October and November, the first since the dark days of Summer, although it must not be forgotten that January, February and April also outperformed against what can only be described as a very challenging budget and we cannot forget that there are substantial shortfalls in other months. The outcome is that some seriously severe restrictions on expenditure are already in place and will be ongoing. However, Martyn and the Commercial team are reporting encouraging advance sales for December, and that should help us finish the year in a positive "go forward" mind.

Someone once said "We promote in poetry and deliver in prose." This is so true of our Railway. We can use evocative language, stunning pictures in so many media to promote ourselves. The delivery of the services however requires careful attention to detail, lots of hard, sometimes physically demanding and often time consuming work. You deliver just that and I can but congratulate and thank you on behalf of the Board for all that you have achieved this year in spite of the problems and difficulties.

One of the areas of difficulty that has yet to be finally cleared is that of rail grinding. David Morgan has received a big input from a number of you, and thanks you for that. The Board has asked David if his Report can be completed in time for their 24th January 2009 meeting, and it is my intention to have the Report available to working members of the Railway by the end of that month.

In the October issue of On Line, I set out the organisational structure of the Company in order to clarify in both your and my minds how we manage our business. I regret that there was a mistake in my drafting for which I apologise. I am therefore reproducing the relevant paragraphs, with the error corrected.

We have a General Manager responsible through me to the Board. He is responsible for the profitable, efficient and safe operation of the business. He is supported in this by a number of managers. The Commercial, Retail, Catering and Steam Engineman Course Managers are responsible to the General Manager for planning, organising, promoting and selling all of our products, be it a seat on a train, a special charter, souvenirs or a decent cup of tea.

In turn the General Manager has a number of managers who are his suppliers or providers. Operators supply timetables and detailed working arrangements. The Chief Mechanical Engineer supplies locomotives, coaches, diesel multiple units and other rolling stock needed to operate our services, and for departmental transport. Civil Engineers provide the track fit to run the trains, the Signal Engineers systems for train control and mechanical engineers locomotives and rolling stock.

The General Manager is in the perhaps unenviable position of being responsible for all of this. He must ensure that everyone works efficiently, that sales are maximised, purchase costs minimised, waste avoided, sales and that managers communicate effectively with each other and more importantly with workers, customers and suppliers.

That deals with “profitably and efficiently” leaving “safety”. The General Manager can only deliver this effectively if we all play our part. We must all ensure that our activities are conducted in a safe manner with risks properly understood, mitigated and managed.

I expect that many of you who couldn't be at Minehead on 29th November followed my example and turned to Steve Edge's excellent website to look at pictures of our excellent turntable complete with King. The turntable is a remarkable achievement, by so many people starting with those visionaries who begged money from Taunton Model Railway Group to fund its removal from Pwhelli, to the lobbyists and funding partners who allowed talented architects, designers and engineers to modify, repair and install it. Incidentally, our civil engineers are aware of track settlement on the approach road, they have a contingency plan if it does not stabilise, and meanwhile they are making regular checks.

Finally, on behalf of my fellow directors, may I repeat my thanks to all of you and also wish you and yours a very Happy Christmas.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Smith
Chairman

SPECIAL EVENTS

November has proved an interesting month for your SEPT Team as work has continued behind the scenes to establish a clear understanding of what our expenditure budget for 2009 will be so we can start to plan the five events in the year ahead. At this time as I pen this report at the end of November I think we are now in a position to move ahead with confidence to plan a Spring Steam Gala with the theme of "Memories of the Big Four". If all goes to plan, as suggested by Keith Speller, we anticipate each of the Big Four will be represented by a large express passenger locomotive and he has in mind an A4 Pacific to represent the LNER, a Royal Scot to represent the LMS, a King or Castle to represent the GWR and "Braunton" to represent the SR. Two of those four will be new to our Railway and they should prove a super attraction for our visitors. The Gala will be held at the end of March and we plan to operate all day on-train dining on all six days of the Gala courtesy of Richard Knight and his QB Team whom we would like to thank for their support.

Before then of course we have the Winter Steam Festival to look forward to immediately after Christmas. The locomotives to be used are still to be finalised as we go to print because the home based fleet availability will depend on Andy Forster's winter steam maintenance programme. However it looks like we may have two visiting former GWR locomotives appearing, namely 0-6-2T 6695 and King Class 6024 "King Edward I", the latter due back on the Railway on December 22nd. We also hope to feature "West Country" Pacific 34046 "Braunton", plus a couple of own locomotives to provide an attractive line-up for this Festive Season Gala being staged over two days, Sunday 28th and Monday 29th December 2008, for the first time. We would ask you all to come and support the Railway either by giving your valuable leisure time to report for duty or to enjoy a day as a visitor. Bring your family and friends as well so we can make a party of what we hope will be an enjoyable two days for all, visitors and staff alike, at the end of a long and eventful year.

Finally on behalf of the Special Events Planning Team I would like to thank all for your support of Special Events during the year and wish you, your family and friends an enjoyable Christmas and New Year. Best wishes and God Bless you all.

(John Cronin – Chairman SEPT)

BRIAN WINTER

It was on the morning of November 11th that we received the sad news of the death of Brian after heart by-pass surgery in Bristol.

My own first contact with Brian came back in the days when I was still actively involved with the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust and together with Roy Pitman

and Alan Hammond was organising a Weekend Seminar. Brian had booked a place but at the last minute he discovered that his mother had booked them both to watch the live Eurovision Song Contest and had forgotten to tell him.

Brian moved to live in Minehead when he retired from his career on the main line railway network where he had risen to the top grade of signalmen. Having established himself in a bungalow which he called "Maesbury" he quickly became actively involved in the work of the WSR as a signalmen, booking office clerk and in Minehead Station office.

Brian was another of those invaluable colleagues who had only to turn-up for his general good humour and unflappability to rapidly contaminate the day. His catch phrases like "It's on its way from Blue Anchor Bay" (as we got news of a train entering section), "Have you got your ears on" (after taking a Christmas or "Thomas" booking over the phone) or "Help, I've gone deaf" (when things went quiet on Tuesdays) will be active parts of the Minehead station vocabulary for years to come. For Brian railways were a life-long enthusiasm – we once found a magazine photograph of spotters in the 1960's at Reading station with a young Winter prominent- but also they were fun. He was also a keen modeller with a 4 mm scale Somerset and Dorset layout at home and he was secretary for a good while of the Somerset Modellers Club. Weekends were for rail-touring and other enthusiasms included Aston Villa football club and Banks Best Bitter. Things to avoid were his remarkable sense of direction which was guaranteed to take you off on exactly the wrong route and meant that he had only to say "left here" for those who knew him to turn right, and his effect on machinery apart from railway signalling kit was inimitable. A trip to Austria that featured Brian using a GPS hand set will live with me for a very long time.

Brian Winter was a good man and a good mate and the shame is that this time he won't be able to claim "I was only resting my eyes". Any donations in his memory should be made to the British Heart Foundation.

(John Simms)

HERITAGE CARRIAGE NEWS

Another vehicle has arrived at Williton for the Heritage Carriages Project. Ex-GWR Collett CK no 5929 made the trip to Somerset from Leeds where a team of West Somerset Steam Railway Trust volunteers had spent some months preparing the carriage for removal. This task was made even more difficult due to the carriage once being cut in half, including the solebars. No 5929, now in one piece again, was inspected recently by the WSR Chief Mechanical Engineer, Andy Forster, who advised that a permanent repair of the underframe should not present problems. Pictures of No 5969 - and an Project Update - can be seen at the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust website. Meantime, the Trust are concentrating on GWR Toplight no 3639 with working parties booked for 29 November, 6 December and

20 December, all at the Swindon Shed, Williton from 10.30am to 4.30pm. New hands are especially welcome.

Claire Sheppy writes...

News on Nos 3631, 3639 and 5929

Working party dates scheduled for December will be:
6th December from 10.30am to 4.30pm, and

20th December from 10.30am until 4.30pm.

Also as a reminder, there will also be a working party on November 29th.(All at Williton)

We can ALWAYS make use of volunteer assistance. The project is starting to get really interesting now. Many of the coaches for the two sets are now somewhere or other along the line of the West Somerset Railway. But, other than to try to protect the other coaches from deteriorating any further than they have so far, we intend to concentrate our energies on 3639 for the time being. If you would like to get involved but have to travel any distance, please get in touch with me via the WSSRT email address info@wssrt.co.uk because I might be able to put you in contact with someone with whom you could share transport.

News on the coaches at Williton is as follows...

Toplight coach No 3631

Currently sitting in the former concrete works at Williton, where it remains in a very wet condition. It still contains quite a large amount of cutlery and crockery, much of it not matching anything else within the coach, (that is they are mostly oddments); if anyone could make use of these to provide even a small source of income for the W S S R T, I would like to hear from you. Otherwise it will just have to be thrown out.

Toplight coach No 3639

The shaped timber for both of the corner posts, (which I am reliably informed the Great Western Railway called corner pillars) and the first pair of door posts, plus two long lengths of timber for the new sole plates have now arrived on site, and are currently sitting on one of the work benches in the Swindon shed awaiting preparation of the joints. Additionally, Andy Forster in his role as CME of the West

Somerset Railway plc has now examined the underframe of 3639, and has made a number of recommendations.

Collett coach No 5929

Currently sitting in the former concrete works at Williton: Whilst he was visiting Williton, I took the opportunity of asking Andy Forster to have a look at the underframe of 5929 as well. Those of you who follow the news on the websites will be aware that the coach has been cut in half at some stage, and that has included cutting the underframe in two. It has consequently had to be rejoined, and Andy Forster has advised me that a more permanent repair of the underframe should not pose too great a problem. I have also started to take measurements of this coach in order to prepare some working drawings to assist with its restoration, and will start drawing up the survey shortly.

NEW DESIGNS FOR 2009 BLUE ANCHOR SUPPLIES

2009 MUGS:

The limited edition (252 only) of the Blue Anchor mugs shows "Braunton" arriving at Blue Anchor. These may well become collector's items again and will cost £3.00

FRIDGE MAGNETS:

The five designs for 2009 fridge magnets show 88, "Braunton", 4160, 5553 and Wadebridge at Blue Anchor Station. Cost £1.50 each

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SHOPPING BAGS:

These are new for 2009. The cotton bags show "Braunton" at Blue Anchor and can be used again and again to help the carbon footprint of the Railway. £2.50 each.

These items will be available to purchase at the Winter Steam Festival. Make sure you purchase early as stocks are limited.

(David Baker)

DIESEL NEWS

After the excitement of welcoming visitors to the Williton Diesel Depot during the two Galas in October, November has proved to be a quiet month for the Williton Team. Steady progress has been made in fitting out our new Depot Mess Room by Graham Perry and colleagues and we hope to move early in December if all goes to plan. The outside access pathways have been concreted and all services have been connected.

In the Shed work continues on connecting up inside the engine room of Class 35 "Hymek" D7017 now the Maybach MB870 engine is in situ and hopefully we will see a trial start up before Christmas. Good progress is also being made with the rebuild of the Maybach MD655 engine for Class 52 "Western" D1010 by Robert Tiller and his colleagues but it is still too early to say when this engine will be ready to fit in the locomotive. On the downside the Team discovered the other engine fitted to D1010 has suffered water ingress at sometime since the locomotive has had to be stored outside due to the exhaust cover becoming dislodged. Since there is no way we can store the locomotive permanently undercover and progress repairs and restoration of other locomotives we will have to face up to sourcing a purpose designed tarpaulin cover for the locomotive that she will have to wear when stored outside. To date the Group has resisted going down this road because we appreciate it means visitors to the Railway cannot see and photograph locomotives covered by tarpaulins but to prevent further damage we will have to introduce this method of protection.

During the month the Company service locomotives have been Class 08 D3462 and Class 25 D7523 and sadly the latter has suffered a partial cab floor collapse on the second man's side at the Bishops Lydeard end. This is not a new problem and the locomotive has been withdrawn from service and is back at Williton for attention. In her place Class 33 D6566 has returned to service after some attention to her Sulzer engine by Ian Robins, ably assisted by apprentices Leroy Ford and Matt Hunt. The problem of the Class 47 D1661 "North Star" not starting on the Sunday morning of the "Somerset in Autumn" Gala was found to be the starting contactor tips being welded together. Once freed up by Ian Robins and cleaned up and the batteries fitted to this locomotive so Neil McCannon has taken the good set from D1010 before she returns to service. Class 14 D9526 continues to remain berthed at Minehead and Simon Purvis spent a day there repairing a cab door that had been forced whilst she has been stored waiting a move home to Williton.

Finally as the Santa season rapidly approaches plans are in place for the Team Christmas Dinner to be held this year in a new venue for us the "Wyndham Arms" at Williton and I will close this alst report before the Festive Season by thanking you all for supporting the Williton Team during 2008 and wish you and your family a Happy Christmas and New Year. We look forward to welcoming you to our Depot once again after Christmas when our Williton Depot will be open to visitors during the Winter Steam Festival.

(John Cronin)

THE BARNSTAPLE BRANCH FORMATION

The West Somerset Railway Association report work in progress to level the Allerford length of the old Barnstaple branch prior to ballasting. The works have revealed the original formation was widened on the Up side using locomotive ash - probably from Taunton shed. This is more likely to have occurred during the installation of a second track in the 1930s. The formation rises sharply as it approaches the remains of the bridge over Allerford Lane and the formation is being lowered slightly to reduce the slope - the extra material being re-used to widen the trackbed to accommodate the ten foot requirement between tracks on what will eventually become a siding and a headshunt

WANTED – 1

Volunteers are still needed to help with the Catering on the Minehead Santa Trains on December 21st and 24th. Anybody who can help or would like more information please contact Susan Kaufman at Bishops Lydeard on 01823 431311.

WANTED - 2

Volunteers to assist with the talks provided to customers of the coach companies that visit the West Somerset Railway. We are in need of more couriers to provide talks to passengers who travel on the West Somerset Railway. Ideally we are looking for confident people with some knowledge of the line's history and points of interest along the route to provide these talks but help and training will be offered by our experienced team of couriers who are willing to offer help and guidance to any new members of staff. What have you got to lose? If you are interested then please contact the Minehead information office on 01643 704996 email: info@west-somerset-railway.co.uk or write in to The West Somerset Railway, The Railway Station, Minehead, TA24 5BG.”

(Samantha Minter)

2010 CALENDAR

Although we still some days short of 2009 thoughts are already turning towards the 2010 Calendar with a view to it going on sale, as per usual, at the Spring Steam Gala. To that end Colin Howard requires good quality images of the West Somerset Railway in all times of year and settings. If you can assist please contact Colin via viragocolin@tiscali.co.uk.

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY ASSOCIATION:- TAUNTON AREA GROUP MEETINGS

Provisional Programme for 2009 (Mk 3 - dated 1/12/08)

NB: Meetings will normally be held on the first **MONDAY** of the month

Unless otherwise indicated, meetings will take place at the Great Western Railway Staff Association, at the north east corner of Taunton Station

Unless otherwise stated, meetings will start at 7.45 p.m.

Monday January 5th:	Members' slides and photo competition
Monday February 2nd:	Pete Doel: Steam Ramblings
Monday March 2nd:	Bernard Mills: 3 Stations for Bodmin
Monday April 6th:	Ian Wright: Southern Steam in '60s
Monday May 4th (BANK HOLIDAY)	Visit to Perrygrove Railway and/or Dean Forest Rly (Joint visit with the GWS Taunton Group)
Monday June 1st:	Arthur Turner: Standard Gauge Steam in Wales
July and August:	Summer break...
Monday September 7th:	Ron White: More from Colour-Rail:
Monday October 5th:	PSOV: Mainline Steam videos
Monday November 2 nd :	Paul Blowfield: Isle of Man: Past and Present

Monday December 7th: Christmas Quiz

For any queries: please contact Peter Darke: Tel: 01984-656222;

Fax: 01984-656747

E-mail: peter.darke@virgin.net

FOR SALE

West Somerset Restoration is planning to dispose of a grounded Southern Car Carrying Transporter van body (CCT). The van structure is in poor condition but the steelwork would be a good source of spares or patterns. The new owner will need to make arrangements for its removal from the Williton site at the earliest opportunity.

If you are interested in and would like to know more please telephone 01984 633 47 or e-mail admin@wsrestoration.co.uk

(Geoff Evens West Somerset Restoration)

FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

This is the final edition of "Online" in what has been a difficult year for the West Somerset Railway. 2008 will go down in the history of the Company as one of the more difficult Trading Years and one in which fortune did not always favour us. We suffered from bad weather (or forecasts) during all or part of all the Special Events, except the Beer Festival which maintained its remarkable record of being dry climatically if not in terms of participation for the ninth year in a row. The rest of the problems are well-known and need no further repeating. All this has led to some difficult decisions having to be made and next year will not be an easy one with the effects of the economic situation impossible to predict.

However we have traded well in the last part of the year and we must look forward. As Mark Smith has said we have a major asset in you, the workforce. With the large wealth of experience and intelligence that you bring with you your ideas and opinions are going to be critical. If you have good ideas or can see potential problems please give me a direct call on 01643 700388 or call in at Minehead. If you wish to have a private conversation call me in advance and we will agree a mutually convenient time. The bookings for the Carol, Dunster and Santa Trains have been good and the Winter Steam Festival is looking attractive for enthusiasts and general public alike. Thank you also for all the out of running season maintenance work that goes on in the Winter months and for the planning that has been done already to see us through 2009 in good shape. Please enjoy the Christmas period and I look forward to working with you all in 2009.

(Paul Conibeaere)

SPECIAL EVENTS DATES 2009

SPRING STEAM GALA: March 21st & 22nd plus March 26th to 29th

MIXED TRAFFIC WEEKEND: June 12th to 14th

“DAY OUT WITH “THOMAS””: July 4th & 5th (subject to contract)

AUTUMN STEAM GALA: October 1st to 4th

SOMERSET IN AUTUMN: October 24th and 25th.