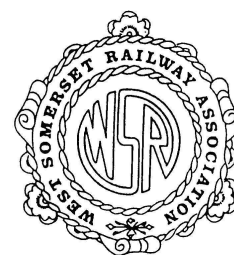




"ONLINE"



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY AND ASSOCIATED ORGANISATIONS MARCH 2010

SPRING STEAM GALA

At the time of writing this report on the last day of February I am pleased to confirm the line-up of ten steam locomotives for the GWR 175 "The Standard Era" March 2010 Gala is as follows:-

71000 "Duke of Gloucester", 92203 "Black Prince", 92212, 78019, 80104, 34046 "Braunton", 6024 "King Edward I", 4160, 5553 and 9351.

The five visiting locomotives are all scheduled to arrive at Bishops Lydeard by road so it is going to be busy in the lower station car park and we would ask you all to park as directed by the station staff to ensure we experience no problems of our own making when the locos and tenders arrive on the heavy haulage transporters.

Without doubt it is good to see "Braunton" in the line-up as in many ways she represents part of the British Railways Standard era having been completely rebuilt during the development of the Standards. Similarly the "King" in her present guise is almost as finally modified by Swindon in the 1950's. Hopefully there is something for everyone in this attractive line-up and advance ticket bookings to date bear out this thinking. Sadly we have run out of time in trying to work with First Great Western to operate rail shuttle services between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard on both weekends for this Gala so we plan to use the Norton Road for "top & tail" steam shuttles instead. We also hope to reintroduce the Dunster Goods Shunt that has always proved a good attraction for visitors when not riding the trains.

The contract for the free shuttle bus including use of Silk Mills Park and Ride Facility has been awarded to Quantock Motors whose garage is now at Bishops Lydeard Station. All other off-train arrangements are now in place and the hope is that fellow volunteers will report for duty in sufficient numbers to make the plans a reality. Finally something which we cannot control is the weather so it has to be fingers crossed that the sun will shine on us for the last two weeks of March.

(John Cronin)

MORE SPRING GALA INFORMATION

Wednesday March 24th will see a red timetable in action with four steam trains a day in each direction. It is intended that the two engines at work on that day will be 78019 and 80104 and normal fares will apply rather than Gala rates. So if you are coming down on that day for all or part of the second weekend you can enjoy something of a preview day or use the WSR to get to your accommodation if you are travelling by public transport.

For fans of freight trains operation the Heritage Goods will work over the whole of the line on Thursday 25th and Friday 26th and there will be the return of the “Dunster Shunt” with action in the goods yard on Saturdays 20th and 27th and Sundays 21st and 28th.

Also on the Saturdays and Sundays there will be shuttles along the line towards Norton Fitzwarren and the famous triangle site, leaving Bishops Lydeard at 11.45, 12.45, 13.45 and 14.45. These will be top and tailed.

And if you want to know more about any of these workings and the locomotive diagrams involved the information will be in the Souvenir Booklet which is now at the printers. Cost is £3, either in advance by sending a cheque to West Somerset Railway, The Railway Station, Minehead, TA24 5BG or from the stations along the line on the day.

WILDLIFE ARTIST AND RAILWAY ENTHUSIAST DAVID SHEPHERD – “THE MAN WHO LOVES GIANTS” – TO VISIT WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY SPRING STEAM GALA

Artist David Shepherd, famous worldwide for his love of wildlife and steam engines, will be visiting the West Somerset Railway on the first Saturday of its Spring Steam Gala, March 20th for a day that will combine two of his passions. For the past four decades David has owned a British Railways “Standard 9F” class steam locomotive which he named “Black Prince” when he purchased it from British Railways. The engine is currently based on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway but it is one of a number of engines hired in especially for the Steam Gala which takes place on March 20th and 21st and between March 25th and 28th. However whilst “Black Prince” is taking its turn at working trains between Bishops Lydeard and Minehead David will be spending the day at Bishops Lydeard station where he will be pleased to meet the press and the general public and talk about the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and the vital conservation work which it performs. Mr Shepherd is well known for his support for conservation work with critically endangered mammals including elephants and rhinos but the Foundation is also currently very active in the battle to save the world’s remaining wild tigers whose population has continued to decline rapidly in the face of development and poaching.

ALAN HAMOND AND BILL PERTWEE BOOK SIGNINGS IN SPRING GALA

During all six days of the Gala Alan Hammond will be signing copies of his latest (and possibly last) book about the Somerset and Dorset in Minehead Station Shop. The reason for this possibly being the last one is that over four decades have passed since the S&D closed and the number of former staff has been greatly thinned by the passage of time.

Meanwhile that fine actor Bill Pertwee will be enjoying Kindly Uncle Arkwright's hospitality and signing copies of his new book about "Dad's Army" in Bishops Lydeard Shop on March 27th and 28th.

CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT NEWS

This month is the last departmental news update that I will be submitting to ONLINE and future contributions will be made by Shaun Hodges the new Civil Engineering Manager. We start with a progress report on the Winter Work Plan and finish with a summary of achievements during John Buxton era as Chief Civil Engineer.

a) WINTER WORK PROGRAMME

As in every year it would seem, the Civil Engineering Winter Work Plan for the railway never goes according to the original proposals and this is mainly due to events outside our direct control. This year the inclement weather has played its part, as has the fast track financial authorisation for the construction of the second pit road within the locomotive compound at Bishops Lydeard, with its consequential implications for track alterations and improvements. The recent progress has been as follows:

b) CROWCOMBE HEATHFIELD -DRAINAGE

Apart from some finishing work to some of the catch pits, the track formation drainage enhancement works have been completed. There are still some further improvements that can be made if it is subsequently found that the track drains still struggle to cope with the surface water flood flow from the Baker's Orchard and approach road areas. However the heavy rains experienced in mid February successfully tested the new drainage works and no standing or flood water problems arose

c) NORNVIS BRIDGE AQUEDUCT RENEWAL

Many readers may not be aware that there is an aqueduct on the railway, the timber structure is attached to the downside of Norrnvis Bridge and carries the water that is drained down the gradient from Crowcombe Heathfield Station. The original oak aqueduct was in a very poor condition and it was no longer water tight or repairable in sections. As a result it has been renewed on a like for like basis, with the exception of the installation of an internal plastic liner that will hopefully ensure that the new structure has an even longer life than the original one.

d) SWITCH AND CROSSING TIMBER RENEWALS

At Blue Anchor, Crowcombe and Bishops Lydeard, work has been undertaken to replace a number of the long timbers that act as support bearers under the point work. This work becomes necessary because they eventually deteriorate to such an extent that they can no longer properly support the weight of the iron work on them both vertically and laterally. This is a time consuming and physical job to undertake, even when having the assistance of a road rail machine to lift materials in and out of the site.

e) BISHOPS LYDEARD LOCOMOTIVE COMPOUND

This was the main surprise work item for this winter and as these words are being written we are hard at work endeavouring to ensure that the new pit road will be ready for the Spring Gala.

f) FLAILING

The annual line side flailing clearance work commenced on Monday 22nd February and will be completed before the Spring Gala.

g) TAMPING, BALLASTING

There are still some outstanding ballasting and tamping improvements that have been held up by all of the other work, but it is hoped that this work can still be implemented. The first machine that is due to arrive shortly is a specialist 'S&C' tamper that, as its name implies, undertakes work on point work. It is required in order that the track on the approach to the new pit within the locomotive compound at Bishops Lydeard can be finished to satisfactory standards of level and alignment, in order that will permit its connection and immediate opening for use in time for the Spring Gala.

We trust that the endeavours of all who have been involved with repairing and maintaining the infrastructure along the line during the Winter will be rewarded by a very successful Spring Gala and that spectacles such as the hoped for prospect of a 9F locomotive banking a 9F hauled train into Crowcombe Heathfield, will really draw the crowds in.

h) THE JOHN BUXTON ERA AS CIVIL ENGINEER

Prior to departing from the railway, John Buxton has prepared a review of the substantial progress made within the WSR Civil Engineering organisation in recent times and some of the key points of this review are summarised below:

- Implemented a safety and technical review of the existing track condition and its compliance with relevant technical standards. This work high lighted the identification of the need to promptly rectify badly side cut rails and poor rail head profiles along the line. The implemented actions allowed the railway to avoid being in a situation of having to spending a very large sum of money on replacement rail.
- Convinced Network Rail's Infrastructure Organisation that the Norton Fitzwarren triangle site was deliverable as a HOBC spent ballast processing site and that the WSR had the professional skills and capacity to make the required commitments.
- Identified important cost saving opportunities for the railway to implement, such as for example; taking weed spraying 'in-house'; instigating specialist weld repairs on the track rather than undertaking component replacements; negotiating the donation of a significant amount of point work and other track components for the Norton Triangle project.
- Identifying significant structural issues relating to some of the railway's infrastructure and implementing appropriate action plans for the undertaking of remedial works, such as for example; Nornvis Bridge aqueduct replacement, Minehead Signal Box repairs, Castle Hill river bank erosion rock armour scour protection, Watchet Station foot bridge and of course monitoring the known situation surrounding the condition of the Mineral Line Bridge at Watchet.

- Implementing, with the valued assistance of Board Director Ian Stone, a regular programme of both ultra sonic rail testing and dynamic track geometry assessments.
- Implementing and then co-ordinating as required, the three tiered approach to station building repair and maintenance, with the on-going essential input from individual station teams and RAMS. In this respect there must be a special mention for Magda Davies, Keith Sandford and John Baines for their full support and help with this.
- Provided the Civil's technical input on major projects such as Minehead Turntable, Bishop's Lydeard Locomotive Pit and Blue Anchor Level Crossing renewal.
- Maintained a 100% record of not exceeding each Board approved annual budget expenditure.

Each and every external validation of the recent work undertaken by the department has confirmed without exception, that both the technical compliance and the quality of the significant on-going improvements, have achieved major leaps forward in both the safety and the quality of the railway's infrastructure. John recently stated that 'I certainly could not have achieved what I have done without the hard work and dedicated support of both Tony Phillips and Mike Shaw and the sheer determined graft of the company gang under the supervision of Alan Cottrell. I also wish to thank all of those who have assisted the C.E. Department with the myriad of tasks that are undertaken around the railway, from the Association PW gang, to the Cutting Back / Special Projects teams, to the RAMS team and the individual station maintenance teams, because without your help and support the infrastructure of the railway could not be maintained in the condition that it currently is. I wish Shaun Hodges, the Company's newly appointed Civil Engineering Manager, the very best for the future and I am sure that he will work hard to build upon the solid foundations that have now been put in place.'

(Tony Phillips)

NEW OFFICE ACCOMODATION AT BISHOPS LYDEARD.

I'm pleased to be able to inform you that I have now secured a lease deal, subject to final contract, on the Quantock Motors office building adjacent to Platform 2 at Bishops Lydeard sta with the owner. Once the legal stages are complete the building will be brought into use for the dual purposes of bringing all the WSRA's administration and office functions under one roof with a much better public interface, for memberships and Quantock Belle bookings etc., and a new buffet/café to replace the current cramped facilities in the shop. This will in turn enable the shop to be expanded, a desire of the WSRA Promotions team for some time.

The range of food in the new café will be expanded, although full detail's are yet to be worked out. There will also be some outside seating for the use of our passengers on those balmy summer days (!). A new entrance from the platform and foot crossing will be installed to enable safe access to the building across the station approach road for our passengers.

As the project progresses it is also planned to restore the waiting room on Platform 1 (currently in use as an office) as a heritage feature and to use the room for our on train staff's signing on etc., a much needed improvement over the current hut used adjacent to the signal box.

A good deal of work is now required to plan and design the new café, to be called "The Coal Yard" after the sites original use in earlier railway days, and get the conversion work carried out. It is however hoped that the new café will be brought into use during the first half of the coming season.

I believe this is an exciting development for the WSRA at Bishops Lydeard and will improve the offering to our passengers and bring additional funds into the WSRA to support the railway as a whole.

(Don Bishop)

JUNE 2010 MIXED TRACTION GALA

I am pleased to report the three visiting Diesel Hydraulic locomotives have been confirmed. This will give us 10 locomotives including BR (WR) "Prairie" 4160, plus the DMU, the full line-up being as follows:-

D1010 "Western Campaigner", D1062 "Western Courier", D832 "Onslaught", D821 "Greyhound", D7017, D9520, D9526, D1661 "North Star", D7523 "John F. Kennedy", DMU, and 4160.

The visiting "Warship" and "Western" locomotives will arrive by rail from Kidderminster courtesy of GB Railfreight Ltd and the "Teddy Bear" from Wansford by road, courtesy of John Antell. The advance publicity leaflet is available and being distributed and we hope that its availability to visitors to the Spring Steam Gala will hopefully generate many advanced bookings. For this Gala we do hope to introduce diesel shuttles between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard on the Saturday and Sunday. This means the Norton line from Bishops Lydeard will not be available to us so we plan shuttles from Minehead towards Blue Anchor. Shunting of Dunster Goods Yard will also be a feature of this event using a Class 03, number to be decided as we go to print, more news of this next month.

On the same weekend as our Gala the South Devon Railway managed by former WSR Director, Dick Wood, has decided to stage its own Diesel Gala. Hopefully we will both benefit from visitors who travel medium and long distance who decide to bridge the 57 mile gap and take in both events over the same weekend. Without doubt an interesting development that can be taken as a complement to our Railway so long as it does not reduce the number of visitors and total spend. For the future perhaps we need to think about some form of joint advertising and ticketing if both railways judge this change in date by the South Devon Railway to be a success.

(John Cronin)

DIESEL NEWS

February also proved to be a cold and damp month restricting most of our work at Williton Diesel Depot to inside tasks. Class 25 D7523 continued in service as the Company Service locomotive until she reached Minehead where she was stopped with a reported poor brake. At the end of the month she stood in Minehead yard awaiting the DEPG Engineers from Williton who need to attend her with special tools to manually adjust her brakes. In her place D1661 "North Star" has been made available and was used on two days in the last week of February to shunt wagons bringing concrete sleepers on the Railway off the mainline at Norton Fitzwarren. During that last week the DEPG undertook a mega shunt at Williton over two days to position the locomotive frames of 6960 "Raveningham Hall" in the Diesel Depot South Yard ready to receive her boiler. The installation took just four hours using a modern 90 tonne capacity road mobile crane and by the end of the second

day 6960 was back in the Works on No. 5 road over the pit, the berth "Braunton" called home for nearly twelve years.

Because of pressure of time we have completed a temporary repair to the cab roof of Class 08 D3462 sp she can be ready to return to duty at Bishops Lydeard in early March in time to offload the five "Standards" arriving by road for the Spring Steam Gala. We have measured up for a replacement steel roof and suppliers will be sought next month. On the last Saturday of the month we used Class 14 "Teddy Bear" D9526" to release the tender for "Odney Manor" from storage in the North Yard headshunt at Williton and propel it to Minehead for overhaul prior to returning to service with 7828. On the return trip D9526 propelled the tender for 7821 "Ditcheat Manor" back to Williton so that it can be paired with the engine as an exhibit during the Spring Steam Gala. In the Works the exam and repaint of the DEPG owned Vanwide Box Van B784676 and Goods Brake Van B952257 continue and they should be ready to return to service with the Company Heritage Freight Train in March.

Finally during the month we suffered a serious break in as thieves managed to get into the outside steel fenced compound and removed a number of radiator elements destined to be fitted into the modified cooler group for Class 35 "Hymek" D7018. The thieves came well equipped with an estate car towing a trailer with cover to move the radiators from site and the police caught one of the three thieves when he arrived in the Enterprise Centre on his second trip of the night. His two colleagues were in the compound on the railway side of the perimeter fence and so were able to scramble away from the police under the cover of darkness. Whilst the police later caught a second man later that night in Taunton the stolen radiator elements have not been recovered and we will need to purchase suitable replacements before the cooler group can be commissioned. In the meantime the remaining radiator elements have been moved to secure undercover storage and we have removed most of the spares from the outside steel fenced compound that could be removed by one man alone or with a fellow thief. Obviously this theft is a warning for all of us as the police advised this was not a casual crime, it was well planned by a gang of local scrap thieves based in Taunton. We need to review our security and to this end the WSR are arranging for their CCTV security contractor to come to site and have a look around with a view to investing in more security systems.

Looking ahead the Diesel Depot and Heritage Diesel Visitor Centre will be open to visitors on all six days of the Special Event and you are all welcome to have a look behind the scenes. If you call in at the weekend the Works will also be open fully to visitors and you can enjoy a cup of tea and a Cornish Pasty from the Pasty Man. Hope to see you down our way and cheerio for now until the next time.

(John Cronin)

HELP REQUIRED WITH PUBLICITY STANDS

Dates for various shows we are attending are:

North Somerset Show at Wraxall	4.5.10
Devon County Show at Exeter	20 – 22.5.10
Bath & West at Shepton Mallet	26 – 29.5.10
Taunton Flower Show at Vivary park	6 & 7.8.10
Dunster Show on Dunster Lawns	20.8.10

Martyn Snell would be delighted to have some assistance at any of the above. Email him on martyn.com@wsrail.net or telephone 01643 700383 with dates you would like to assist.

SIGNAL AND TELEGRAPH

It's been an interesting month for the S&T, with continuing work on installation of the Dunster West Ground Frame, preparation of components for the additional signalling equipment destined for Williton, and not forgetting the ongoing maintenance requirements of the large amount of signalling equipment (along with its increased use, ie. more trains cause more wear and tear.) On the electrical side, routine maintenance for the year began with Token Systems testing, starting at BL, by measuring the electrical characteristics of the Token cables (BL-CH, CH-WN, BL-WN, BA-MD). It was reported that the cable resistance was a bit lower than when measured last year, adding to evidence that the weather this year was COLD!

The most momentous occasion was the renewal of the life-expired point machine at BA (No.6) with a shiny new one. Actually, it is a reconditioned machine from UnipartRail (formerly National Rail Stores) which we part-exchanged with a redundant scrap machine, which saved us a few thousand pounds. A good team effort was evident that day, Marcus Blackman & Co. carrying out some mechanical work, including replacement of a worn back-drive crank, P-way Dept. providing a generator, Ameyrail carrying out the work as part of a Training & Assessment exercise, and Keith Clapp with his flatbed lorry and HiAb crane making the job of lifting out the old machine and lifting in the new one look very easy. He had to park near the boundary fence in the caravan park and we are grateful to the owners, Holbourne Leisure, for allowing access by the lorry and various vans during the day.

(Mike Hanscomb)

WILLITON WORKS

a) 6960 "Raveningham Hall"

The main item of note this month occurred during the morning of 24 February when 'Raveningham Hall' had boiler, ashpan and smokebox lifted and positioned on its frames. Work started in the South yard about 08.00 and soon after 13.00 the hired road crane was being readied for its journey back to Yeovil. No.6960 is now back in the workshop to be fitted out, the first priorities being to finalise the position of the boiler (Andy Forster has suggested it is about 1" behind where it should be) and then finally align the smokebox on its saddle and bolt it down.

The Williton team would particularly like to thank Andy Forster for the advice, help and guidance he gave during this exercise together with their colleagues in DEPG who carried out all the shunting arrangements needed to ensure everything was in the right place at the right time.

b) "Braunton"

Having re-setted the axles under the loan tender from 'Port Line' this has been cleared for use on heritage railways. A cold boiler inspection has also been undertaken by our Insurance Company, pronounced satisfactory subject to the test in steam due during the first week of March. This will enable no.34046 to take part during the Spring Steam Gala. The support crew are now busily getting the locomotive ready with much elbow grease being expended on cleaning and polishing.

c) Williton Works

During February possession of the Down Line was taken alongside the Swindon Shed to allow contractors access to the roof to renew the roof lights – translucent panels along each side. Over time the originals has become obscured and brittle, some leaking each time it rained. This renewal was the second stage in renewal of all the roof lights, the Sherrings Yard side having been done a couple of years ago.

Thanks are due to the railway's S&T and PW teams who made this exercise possible by moving one of their electrical cabinets out of the way temporarily and laying a ballast bed alongside the shed for the contractors 'cherry picker' access platform.

(Mike Johns)

PASSENGER FIGURES

You won't have any problems recalling that the weather over the February half term was rather less than wonderful and on the Wednesday and Thursday it was something of a wonder that anyone travelled at all. However at the end of the period of operation we had carried 2,787 passengers in the eight days compared with 3,074 over the equivalent period last year.

MINEHEAD ACCOMODATION COACH

After almost 15 years in the "hospitality business" Don Harris has handed the keys for the sleeper coach to Cheryl Ryan. It will continue as business as usual and Cheryl can be contacted for enquiries and bookings on 01984 641370 or 07891280876. Our thanks and appreciation go to Don for all his hard work over the past decade and a half.

(Chris Ryan)

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TREATING

A new venture for the WSR recently has been an all day training session in Incident Management where five teams confronted a significant problem working in real time alongside the emergency services in a table top exercise. There were also presentations by the Fire and Ambulance services, an interesting talk from the County Council emergency planning officer (now called environmental planning), and a major presentation by John Cope who is a Principal Inspector with the Rail Accident Investigation Branch.

The teams, who were made up from an invited audience of Directors, Senior Managers, Training Panels, MIC officers, and Controllers, all expressed praise for the planning and execution of the programme.

WSR Training Officer Geoff Cross reports that the day was an unqualified success, and he hopes that the issues raised will be taken on board by the Training Panels, and passed on to departments. Other action points are being considered by the railway management.

Geoff hopes that this type of training will be the blueprint for many more such exercises tailored to meet the needs of each operational branch of the railway.

(Geoff Cross)

SEPTEMBER 2010 LATE SUMMER WEEKEND

This is a new Special Event for 2010 and replaces the traditional "Somerset In Autumn" Gala held on the last full weekend in October. The move to early September this year is to try to get away from the cold and damp weather of recent years that has dictated the use of coach heating, something the DEPG Heritage Diesel locomotives cannot provide. Unfortunately when the date change was made back in the summer of 2009 we missed the possible conflict of events the change made with the Bodmin and Wenford Steam Gala although I would suggest it is questionable whether there is a conflict as our Special Event will use only home-based locomotives with the DEPG Heritage Diesels taking the leading role supported by a couple of Minehead based steam locomotives. The planned line-up of locomotives is as follows:-

D1010 "Western Campaigner", D832 "Onslaught", "Hymek" D7017. Class 33 D6566, Class 25 D7523 "John F. Kennedy", Class 14 D9526, DMU, 5553 and 9351.

I hope this planned locomotive line-up will be attractive to the diesel enthusiast, local families and holiday makers but I do not expect to see any Steam Enthusiasts as hopefully they will be planning to visit us for the Autumn Steam Gala at the end of September when we plan to stage the last of our series of GWR 175 Special Events in this 175th Anniversary Year.

(John Cronin)

STATION STAFF VOLUNTEERS.

We have a very busy season ahead and all our stations could do with some more willing volunteers.

If you, or anyone you know, would like to volunteer as station staff, please go to that station and make yourself known to the Station Master, or contact Ian Aldridge, our Volunteer Co-ordinator, by phoning 01823 433856. You will receive a thorough training and be made most welcome.

(Magda Davies Stations Liaison Officer)

OCTOBER 2010 AUTUMN STEAM GALA

As yet we have done little planning for this Special Event but we need to get moving as the plan is to have the advanced publicity leaflets for both the September 2010 Late Summer Weekend and this Gala available to distribute to visitors to the June 2010 Mixed Traction Gala and the "Tornado" week in July and so hopefully generate plenty of advance ticket sales. More news to follow next month.

(John Cronin)

CHANGE AT BISHOPS LYDEARD

After more than two years at the helm Bishops Lydeard Station Master Ken Davidge moves on. In recent times, Ken has been increasingly busy with other railway duties at Minehead and he now feels it is time to concentrate on that work. Ken clearly enjoyed his time at

Bishops Lydeard as he explains, "I have truly enjoyed my time at Bishops Lydeard. I know personally every member of the station staff, think very highly of each one and offer my sincere thanks for all their hard and dedicated work which has transformed operations beyond recognition. I am confident that their level of commitment to me will be transferred to the new Station Master when he or she starts. Bishops Lydeard is one of the jewels in the WSR's crown, a very busy terminus, and a lively station. I will always see it as my spiritual home and wish all the staff the very best future possible."

MORE SLEEPERS DELIVERED FOR NORTON

More concrete sleepers have arrived for use on the Norton Triangle. Around 900 concrete sleepers were delivered by rail on 22 February in eight Network Rail wagons. During the next few days, the wagons were unloaded at various points, with Class 47 no D1661 acting as shunter. D1661 ran light engine from Williton to carry out the task. The delivery provides a boost to the Triangle Project as tracklaying continues on the East Chord and former Barnstaple formation

THE PADDLE STEAMER "RYDE"

For many years, the former Southern Railway paddle steamer 'Ryde' has been laying derelict on the edge of the River Medina in the Isle of White. In 2008, a Trust was formed to rescue her and restore her as a major tourist attraction, potentially connecting the Isle of White Steam Railway and the Swanage Railway as a combined day out, based on the Norden park and ride facility. Last year, the Company that abandoned her went into receivership and the Trust has tried to buy her from the administrators. Their bid has failed. The administrators have offered no explanation, and earlier this year cutting up began in situ. An eleventh hour last chance to save her has come about because the scrapping process cannot proceed until a licence is obtained because the vessel is embedded in a Site of Special Scientific Interest!

My interest in 'Ryde' began as a nine year old, when I travelled aboard her across the Solent to Yarmouth in 1969. I believe that was her last voyage, still as part of our rail transport system and bearing the British Rail logo on her funnel! The enjoyment of that short adventure has stayed in my memory ever since. I had assumed she had either been scrapped long ago or cared for, but after I looked her up on the internet recently I discovered to my horror that she is abandoned and in imminent danger of being lost altogether. Her historical/heritage significance is immense; it encompasses railway, maritime and military heritage. She was launched in 1937 as part of the Southern Railway fleet and put into daily service on the Solent. The Royal Navy requisitioned her at the outbreak of War and 'Ryde' is one of the few surviving vessels involved in the D-Day landings.

There are only two operational paddle steamers left in Britain. One, of course, is the Waverley, a familiar visitor to Minehead, and the other is Kingswear Castle on the River Dart. Not surprisingly, paddle steamer preservation is not as developed as locomotive restoration. This is a situation that the entire steam fraternity need to unite over, sharing their expertise. The experience of standing alongside an enormous thrashing, sloshing paddle-wheel, and visiting the steam engine-room aboard Ryde, as am lucky enough to have done, is something that really should be not lost to future generations.

A petition to the Prime Minister has been running on-line for just a month, and this closed

on March 2nd having acquired over 3,000 signatures. The issue involved is not only the survival of Ryde but the lack of protection for maritime heritage in general. If you share my concern, please keep an eye on the situation, and offer any support that you can. The Trust are urgently seeking support from anyone and everyone to stop her from being scrapped.

The Ryde Paddle Steamer Trust can be contacted at www.psryde.co.uk. Further details and pictures of 'Ryde' in service are on that website. Pictures of her in 2007 can be seen at www.pskingswearcastle.wanadoo.co.uk/Ryde.htm.

(Aubrey McKenzie)

PORTABLE APPLIANCE TESTING GUIDELINES

The West Somerset Railway Portable Appliance Testing guidelines have been circulated regularly. It has become apparent that not all WSR work teams have been fully briefed on these guidelines so they are being issued again to ensure that there are up to date copies available to all members of staff.

A small number of 230v power tools are still being used on the railway and this equipment has not been inspected or entered onto the Company register. In order to allow everybody time to make the final changeover from 230v power tools to 110v or battery driven tools the WSR Portable Appliance Testing Officer has agreed to issue test certificates that will last up until 31 December 2010 provided the equipment has been fitted with an IN LINE 30mA Residual Current Device (RCD) and successfully satisfies the Portable Appliance Test. Any 230v portable electrical appliances found to be in use on WSR property after 31 December 2010 will be disabled and removed from the railway.

PORTABLE ELECTRIC APPLIANCES INCLUDING POWER TOOLS

- 1) A Register of Portable Electric Appliances will be kept in the General Office at Minehead. Only equipment that has been inspected and is on the register may be used on West Somerset Railway property, irrespective of ownership of the equipment.
- 2) Any requirement for additions or deletions to this register must be notified to the WSR Portable Appliance Testing Officer who will arrange testing prior to its use.
- 3) Inspection will be carried out by the WSR Portable Appliance Testing Officer.
- 4) To minimise risk and personal injury, battery driven tools are the safest option.

CORDED TOOLS

- 1) Corded tools must be only of the 110v type, and use an 110v power supply, the exception being ONLY when an 110v tool is NOT commercially available.
 - a) In this instance a 230v equivalent may be used and then only with a current and valid test certificate and with a green test label attached.
 - b) These 230v power tools **MUST** be protected by a 30mA Residual Current Device (RCD).
 - c) An RCD is a simple fitting designed to help prevent electric shock and other accidents due to faulty electrical appliances or wiring.
 - d) An RCD can detect changes in the proper flow of electric current (when a flex or cable is cut, for instance, or an electrical tool malfunctions). Within milliseconds of this happening, the RCD automatically disconnects the power supply to the equipment before you can be electrocuted or further damage can be done.

PORTABLE APPLIANCE INSPECTION AND TESTING

- 1) Inspection:
 - a) Without passing the initial inspection, no appliance can be passed as safe.
 - b) The inspection includes examination of the plug top, lead and the casing of the equipment.
 - c) The plug top is checked for the correct fuse size, adequate cord grip, correct polarity and tightness of terminations, cracking, heat damage and a plug with insulating pins conforming to current BS standards.
 - d) The casing of equipment is checked for any visual damage or cracks and any holes or vents that are apparent must not have a radius greater than 6mm.
 - e) There must not be any live parts within 80mm of the aperture.
- 2) Portable Appliance Testing (PAT):
 - a) The Inspection and tests that are to be carried out are described below, with tests varying dependant upon the class of appliance. However, the testing of all appliances is essential as part regular maintenance to ensure conformity to Electricity at Work Regulations.
- 3) Class of Equipment:

- a) Class 1. This is any equipment that has an earth connection from the mains supply. In most cases this equipment will have exposed earthed metal work and live parts will have basic insulation, e.g., fan heater, computer etc.
 - b) Class 2a. This equipment has no exposed metalwork and has two layers of insulation, e.g. desk calculator, dictation machine, etc.
 - c) Class 2b. This equipment may have exposed unearthed metalwork, which will be separated from live parts by two layers of insulation, e.g. power drill, etc.
 - d) Class 3. This equipment operates from a power supply less than 50v AC and has basic insulation with no earthed metalwork, e.g. lap top computer, mobile phone, etc.
- 4) Before using any Portable Appliance it is recommended that the checks shown on the following Safety Checklist are carried out.

SAFETY CHECKLIST

Checklist for Portable Electrical Appliance Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Is there damage (apart from light scuffing) to the cable sheath?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the plug damaged (e.g. the casing cracked or pins bent)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there inadequate joints, including taped joints, in the cable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the coloured insulation of internal cable cores showing where they enter plug?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the appliance appear to have been subjected to conditions for which it is not suitable (e.g. is it wet or excessively contaminated)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there damage to the external casing of the equipment or are there loose screws or parts etc?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is there evidence of overheating (e.g. burn marks or discoloration)?

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Is the main on/off switch damaged, does it operate incorrectly?

**IF THE ANSWER IS YES TO ANY OF THE CHECKS ABOVE THEN
DO NOT USE THE EQUIPMENT**