

# WEST SOMERSET STEAM RAILWAY TRUST

## In this issue

Welcome to the first in this new series of Newsletters from the Steam Trust. We will be circulating these every six months, with the second issue coming out in Summer 2014. Wherever possible, we will use email to save on costs.

The main articles in this issue cover the Trust's plans for restoring 3639 as an ambulance coach, and progress towards completing work on 6705 in 2014.

## Financial results

The Trust financial year ends on 30 September. Draft accounts for 2012-13 have already been endorsed by the Board and sent to the reporting accountants for their review.

The main highlights are:

- Income £18,824
- Expenditure on carriage restoration £8,285
- Other costs (insurance, storage, museum costs etc) £4,866
- Balance in General Fund £8,582

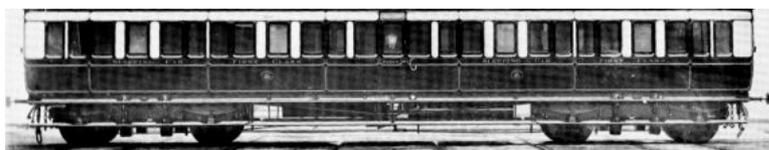


## GWR ambulance trains

Toplight coach 3639 was built in 1908 and converted to an ambulance coach at Swindon in 1915. It formed part of one of thirty ambulance trains provided by British railway companies that were shipped to France. They were designed for the evacuation of the wounded from the front line to receiving hospitals in northern France or back to the Channel ports, rather than as 'hospital' trains. We have so far been unable to find evidence of where 3639 operated, and we would be pleased to hear from anyone who can shed any further light on its exact use.

After the war, 3639 was repatriated and after conversion at Swindon, was taken back into the GW fleet in 1921 as a third compartment (TK) coach.

At its meeting on 20 November, the Board agreed to undertake a feasibility study on the possible restoration of 3639 in commemoration of the centenary of the First World War. We will need to undertake work on the coach body and undercarriage, and are considering fitting the interior out in sections to show the various coaches within



## Updating the company's Articles

The Trust is a company limited by guarantee, as well as a registered charity. Every company has a Memorandum and Articles of Association, and the Trust's have not been changed since 1972! Company law has changed significantly since then, and the Board is currently preparing a draft of new Articles, which we hope to bring to the next AGM.

We do not envisage making any changes to our charitable objects, which would require the approval of the Charity Commission. Most of the changes will simply be updates to improve clarity and reflect latest company law.

The only significant change that we are envisaging relates to membership. Currently, there is a distinction between Full Members (limited to 50 in number) and Associate Members. Only Full Members can vote at a General Meeting, for example. The Board's view is that there should only be only one class of Member, with the only criterion for membership being a minimum annual donation to the work of the Trust.

the ambulance train, including a ward car, the pharmacy car, and the staff's facilities.

The Trust already has nearly £10,000 earmarked for the restoration of 3639. But based on our experience with 6705, the total cost of the project is likely to be around £100,000. We have made an initial approach to the Heritage Lottery Fund, but need to do a lot of work on costs and on the plan for displaying the carriage before we could make a full application. HLF funding for such a project is likely to be at most £50,000 so we would need to raise at least £40,000 from other sources.

We are aiming to complete the feasibility study by the end of March. If this is favourable, we will work towards funding application by the end of 2014, with the aim of completing it in time for the centenary of 3639 coming out of Swindon works.



3639 is currently stored at Williton. It carried poppies in November for Remembrance Sunday.

### Chris Dowrick

The death of Chris Dowrick this year was a sad loss to the railway and the Trust in particular. Involved since the earliest days, Chris' role proved crucial during the financial difficulties of the late 1970s and early 1980s and his active support and guidance as a board member over many years helped the railway recover and grow. He was a familiar sight with his twin brother Colin as joint station masters at Dunster, and was known to many other heritage railways as their ticket printer. As 'temporary' Chairman of the Trust for many years, he was also its Treasurer and had supported it from the earliest days during the restoration of 4160. His sound advice, practical experience and companionship is already missed by everyone who knew him and the railway, and the Trust in particular, has lost one of its great champions and most stalwart supporters. Our sympathies go to Mary. Chris Austin

## 6705: two steps forward, one step back

Good progress is being made with coach 6705, the Collett coach brought back from the USA.



During the summer, the coach was lifted and the bogies removed, stripped down, cleaned and repainted. Worn and broken components have been replaced (the eye bolts are being machined at Williton currently for fitting before the end of the year). While it was on jacks, the opportunity was taken to complete painting of the underframe and to treat the wooden floor of the coach with wood preservative.

The bogies have now been reassembled and replaced under the coach. The vacuum brake system has also been restored and tested. The underframe is now in running condition and only the battery boxes and dynamo remain to be replaced.

The coach body was restored at Crewe and was painted at Williton. However, a number of defects have become apparent while we have been working on the coach, particularly as a result of water ingress while it has been kept outside the shed. The main problems have been leaking gutters and roof leaks, some rot discovered in the cant rail and window leaks.

The GWR method of securing windows was to provide a rebated timber frame to hold the glass and the assembly was through the bodyside to compress the sealant in a sandwich between the timber and glass. This was not the method used during the restoration at Crewe, but to ensure safety and prevent further leaks all windows will now be replaced using the GWR approach.



The other requirement to complete the body of the vehicle is to fit the gangway connections. The frames for these have been cleaned and painted and can now go to the South Devon Railway at Buckfastleigh to have the bellows and wire hoops fitted.

Much preparation has been done on the internal woodwork but we have had to replace some of the panels fitted at Crewe. Internal panels below the windows will be replaced with plywood sheets (rather than strips), using a router to simulate the effect of planking. These will be screwed rather than pinned to the main frames and will be a much more robust solution to the problem.

Remaining internal tasks are upholstery (which will largely be contracted out), internal painting and varnishing, and plumbing in the toilets.

We have taken advice from SVR on floor covering and plan to use a resin mixed with sand to repair the composite flooring produced at Swindon originally. A linoleum covering will be required throughout and carpets in first class.

Unless further problems emerge, we hope to complete work in time to allow the coach to operate during the Autumn Steam Gala at the end of September. Passengers will then be able to experience the soft cushions, the comfortable springing, leather window straps and polished woodwork of another era.

## Update on Station Farm

One of the priorities for the Trust is to provide covered storage for its carriages. Storing wooden bodied coaches in the open results in more rapid deterioration, with sun and sea air creating problems as well as rain. Our longer term plan is to build a storage and display facility on the Station Farm site at Bishops Lydeard, which is now owned by the West Somerset Railway plc. This project is referred to in the Ten Year Plan on which the plc is now consulting.

We have regular meetings with the plc, and with the Association, to develop plans for the site. Any major grant application to the HLF will need to show how the project will bring benefits to visitors and to the local community: preservation of heritage is not enough to secure a grant under the current HLF guidance!

**Further information about the work of the Trust, in particular regular updates on progress with restoration of 6705, can be found on the Trust's website [www.wssrt.co.uk](http://www.wssrt.co.uk).**

**If you wish to make a donation to the work of the Trust, or to change an existing standing order, please contact the Treasurer, Chris Bolt ([cwbolt@gmail.com](mailto:cwbolt@gmail.com)).**

## Other news

### ***Sleeping car 9038***

The Sleeping Car was displayed at the Steam Gala in August. There is still some work to be done before restoration is complete, including fitting the taps, which have now been plated, and the sinks. We already have all the necessary fittings, and will do this work as soon as volunteer time is available.

### ***Other carriages***

The Trust's carriages awaiting restoration are stored at Williton and Dunster. They are surveyed regularly to minimise further deterioration. Carriage 5131 was recently moved from Washford to Dunster to release space at Washford required by the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust.

### ***Gift aid and small gifts***

Gift Aid claims now have to be submitted online, although this does result in much faster payment. This is all part of the Government's plans to make the scheme more beneficial to charities.

One change made this year is to allow Gift Aid claims to be made on small donations (up to £20) without a Gift Aid declaration. This has already been used to claim on donations to the Trust at the Blue Anchor Museum and at galas, adding over £300 to the value of these donations.

### ***AGM***

The Board expects formally to sign off the accounts for 2013-14 around the end of January. This will allow the AGM to be held much earlier than in recent years, in late April or early May. The date will be publicised on the website as soon as it has been fixed.