

WEST SOMERSET STEAM RAILWAY TRUST

In this issue

Welcome to the third of our newsletters updating you on the work of the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust. We hope that you find something of interest in this edition.

As before, any feedback would be welcome.

Financial results for 2013-14

The Trust's financial year ends on 30 September, and draft accounts for last year were sent to our reporting accountants in November, after adoption by the Board.

Key highlights in the draft accounts (with figures for 2012-13 in brackets) are:

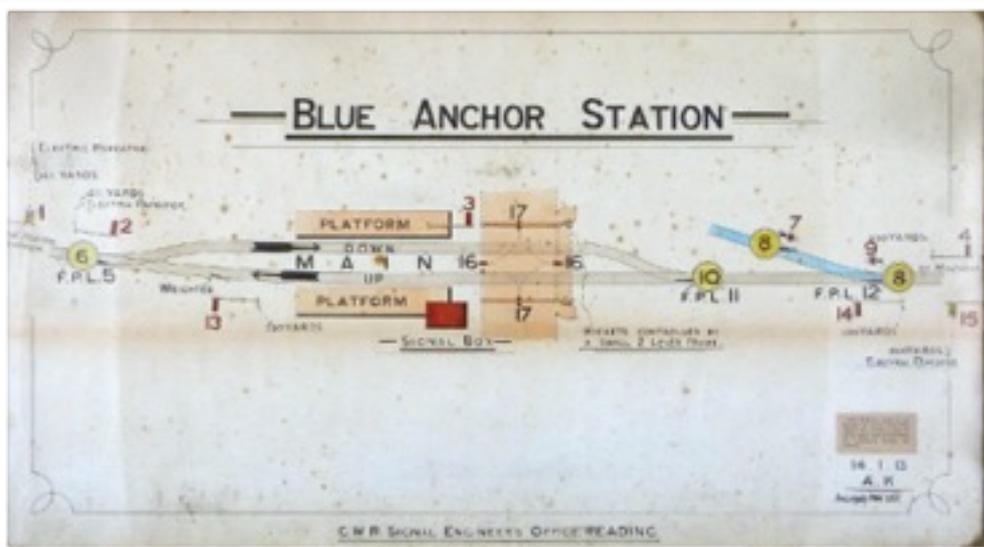
Income £15,408 (£18,244)

Revenue expenditure £4,461 (£4,867)

Net income £10,948 (£13,377)

Carriage restoration and other charges to reserves £13,108 (£8,285)

Cash at bank £43,285 (45,422)



Blue Anchor station 100 years ago

It's rather careworn, but a recent addition to the Trust's archive collection is this copy of an original GWR signalbox diagram from Blue Anchor. As can be seen, it was drawn by "A K" in January 1913 in preparation for the new goods siding which was opened in April that year. The diagram was later amended in 1934 when the platforms were extended and the signals at the up end of the station were moved and renumbered. As there was no need to alter the diagram after 1934, it is likely that this was the one in the box when it closed in 1971 - quite a few in this rather attractive antique style remained in use in smaller box well into the British Rail years.

It is interesting to note that the level crossing wicket gates are shown on the Minehead side of the crossing rather than (as now) on the Taunton (station) side. Quite when this change was made is unclear - the photographs



Restricted funds

Although the Trust has cash reserves of more than £40,000, only about a quarter of the total is in the General Fund, available to for use to support all of the Trust's work. The remainder is in so-called 'Restricted Funds', where donors have requested that only particular projects, such as the Museum, benefit.

Are you a member?

At the Trust's Annual General Meeting last year, the Articles of the company were changed to allow new membership rules to be adopted. Now, anyone donating at least £2.50 a month (£30 a year) is eligible to be a member.

By becoming a member, you are able to attend and vote at the AGM, and have a direct influence on the way the Trust operates.

To ensure that our records are up to date, all those who are eligible to be members under the new rules for whom we have contact details have been sent a membership form to complete.

If you think you are eligible to be a member and have not received a form, or if you would like to become a member, please contact the Treasurer, Chris Bolt (cwbolt@gmail.com) or by post at Cherry Tree Cottage, Blue Anchor, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 6LB). Only those who complete and return a membership application form will be able to vote at the next AGM.

we have frustratingly avoid this critical feature or merely hint at what the situation was on the ground.



The catch points just beyond signal 13 face in the opposite direction to what one might expect, but these were positioned to catch any vehicles running back down Washford bank and so were there to protect the level crossing. To ensure the effectiveness of this device, the local box regulations state that the points no 6 were always to be set for the up loop unless required for the passage of a down train. These catch points were weighted - that is there was a weighted lever that held the catch open, but allowed it to close as an up train's wheels passed over it. More recently, this catch was changed to a spring point where it was held open by a strong spring.

Points no 8 were removed after the line closed in 1971 and the camping coach siding was disconnected. This left signal 14 too far from points no 10 to protect them and so a new disc signal was provided and worked from the newly redundant lever no 12. I suspect that there are several people reading this who will remember this work being undertaken.

Alas, modern regulations prevent us equipping Blue Anchor with a signal box diagram in this style, and so this image is what we have to remind us of a time when artistry was allowed to exist alongside utility.

Ian Coleby

(Trust Archivist)

Progress on 6705

Work continues to bring 6705 fully back into service.

The new window frames - based on authentic GWR designs - have now been installed, along with the glazing. The picture (right) shows a completed window with the wooden trim surrounding it replaced. The neat finish is apparent thanks to the wooden rebates holding the glass in place which are bolted through the bodyside and tightened to create a watertight fit, helped with sealant. We are also replacing the surrounding panelling.

The second picture (below) shows Greg McNelly preparing to instal the last window in 6705, while behind him John Crocker cleans the remaining traces of the sealant from a window installed earlier.

Given that the glass has curved corners, it had to be measured carefully to ensure a good fit!

The next stage is to make sure the doors work properly, instal door locks (lost when the door posts were replaced) and overhaul the droplights.



Work has also started on stripping the paintwork which has to be renewed as a consequence of replacing the windows, and because some of the first application of paint had started to peel off. A different technique will be used to ensure an immaculate finish for the completed coach in the best Swindon tradition.

It has been good to welcome a number of new volunteers over the last few months, and on Wednesdays a team of six or more is now working to complete 6705, with three or four coming each Tuesday and Thursday.

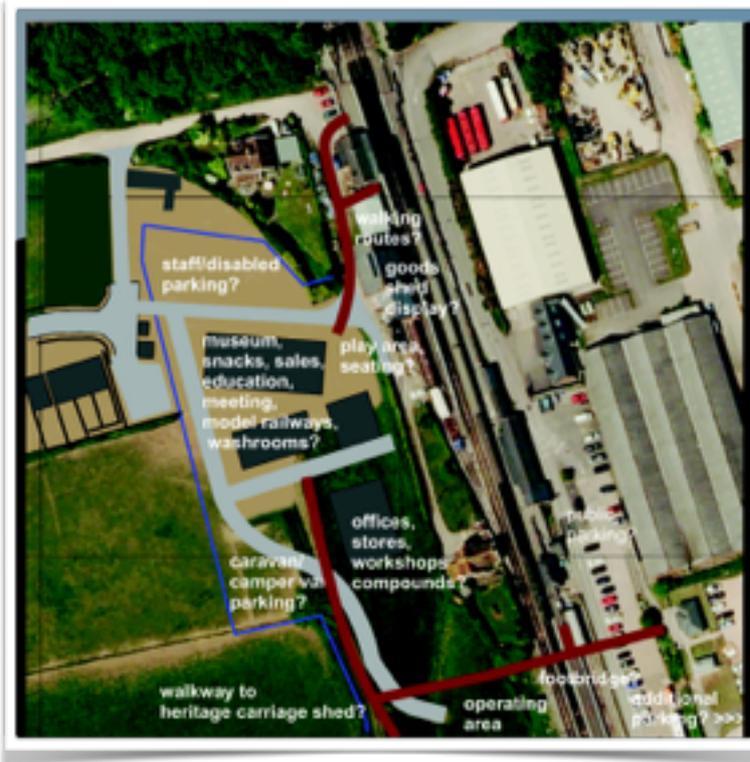
Volunteers are welcome, either at our

regular weekday sessions – Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays – or at our Sunday working parties between 10.00 and 16.00: dates for 2015 are 22 February, 29 March (also Spring Steam Gala), 26 April, 31 May, 28 June, 26 July, 31 August (Bank Holiday weekend), 27 September, 25 October, 29 November, and we will give ourselves a break in December!

New volunteers can contact Chris Austin for further details: austinca2@googlemail.com.

Bishops Lydeard developments

As part of the work to deliver the plc's ten year corporate plan, the Working Group coordinating developments at Bishops Lydeard is being reconvened. It includes members from the plc, the West Somerset Railway Association and the Trust, and is chaired for the plc by Steve Williams. The Group will look at all the ideas for development at Bishops Lydeard, including the Trust's proposals for a carriage shed and display area for its historic carriages.



Chris Austin and Chris Bolt represent the Trust on the Working Group. (Chris Austin also represents the Trust on the new Partnership Development Group which has been set up to allow all members of the WSR 'family', and the county and district councils, to discuss all aspects of development of the railway.)

Funding a carriage shed and display area will be critically dependent on securing grants, for example from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Given the current criteria for HLF grants, it is not enough to show that worthwhile heritage assets, such as Toplight carriages from a century ago, are being preserved. We will have to show how visitors would get better understanding of such things as the social context of rail travel, and as part of that show how visitors to Bishops Lydeard - including disabled visitors - would be encouraged to visit the display.

So being able to show how the Trust's ideas will work as part of the overall development plan for Bishops Lydeard is essential if the Trust is to be able to put together an effective grant application.

To support this, the Trust is also developing its own Business Plan, and will be consulting on this later in the year.

Other news

Blue Anchor Museum

Over half the Trust's cash reserves are restricted to support the Museum at Blue Anchor. Some can be used for acquisitions - allowing us, for example, to acquire relevant artefacts when they come up for sale. But we also need to maintain a reserve to ensure that the fabric of the building is maintained. As the Curator, Pete Treharne, pointed out in the last edition of the Newsletter, this is a constant task!

The Trust has recently agreed that the exterior of the Museum should be repainted. Work will start soon on the front of the valance, which requires scaffolding to be erected on the track. So this work needs to be done before the running season starts. The total cost of the work is about £5,000.

Sales

The Trust will again be selling magazines and during the 2015 galas to add to funds for carriage restoration and other projects. Additional items for sale are always welcome, and contact Chris Austin (austinca2@googlemail.com) to arrange collection.

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.