

West Somerset Steam Railway Trust
Associate Members' 30th Annual General Meeting
Sunday 25th May 2014 at 14.30 hours
Gauge Museum, Bishops Lydeard Station

Apologies - Chris Bolt, Greg McNelly, Tim Randle, David Randles

Chairman's Report (Chris Austin)

Chris Austin expressed sadness at the passing of Chris Dowrick, who had been persuaded to take on the role of Trust Chairman on a temporary basis and continued in the post for over a decade. We would miss the stimulation that Chris provided, as well as the very tight financial control he applied by "keeping his foot on the brake".

The finances were in a better state than had previously been thought. More money was coming in for both the Museum and the coaches. Less was spent on the coaches in 2013 than in previous years, which reflected the increased use of volunteers. Chris Austin was particularly grateful to 6705 project leader Greg McNelly, Tim Randle, Ray Clack, Derek Blazdell, Claire Sheppy and Mike and Jenny Dunse. Some 5542 Limited volunteers also help out on 6705 and their assistance is greatly appreciated.

If Chris Austin had a disappointment from the year 2013 it was that the Station Farm project had not been progressed. He would do his best to restart this. This had, in turn, delayed any progress on the Heritage Lottery Fund application. He stressed the necessity to keep vehicles awaiting restoration in good order and was particularly concerned about those three based at Dunster West which is a very exposed location.

No.6705 had stayed inside the shed at Williton since last October, much longer than expected, but was likely to move into the yard in June 2014. Work on rewiring and light fittings had been completed. Work was progressing on the ceiling panels with all third class roofs and corridor completed along with the vestibules at either end. The next big job was to be the refitting of the windows. Inadequate sealing and fitting of the windows at Crewe meant this job had to be largely done again, this time using traditional Great Western methods. The timber would come ready fabricated and the work would take two to three months over the coming summer. A start had been made on matching the stain for the interior woodwork - staining takes place prior to varnishing. When this work was done, completion would be in sight, hopefully by the end of 2014.

Peter Darke asked whether it was the intention to ask the Plc to run 6705? Chris Austin said yes, it was the intention to hire out the vehicle. Peter Darke asked whether it would be in regular use? Chris Austin considered that it would be a high days and holidays vehicle! appearing at galas or for filming and other similar duties. The fact that it was not Mark I slam door and therefore non-standard stock meant that there was another problem to resolve.

No.3639 was in the north yard at Williton. West Somerset Restoration had been asked to do work on the underframe and running gear so that the vehicle could be moved around the Railway; currently the vehicle was too fragile to be moved. Much research into the history of the vehicle had been carried out and it was hoped that a bid for funding to carry out work on the coach during 2015 might be forthcoming - this would allow display of the vehicle in 2016. A one inch to the foot scale model of an ambulance coach had been viewed at Windsor.

Claire Sheppy said that she had photographed the above model thoroughly and produced drawings (these were on display at the meeting). Next a clear trace and overlay would be produced. With different sizes and types of window, Claire thought it would be a massive task to convert 3639 back to an ambulance coach, judging from research so far. More and more information was coming to light.

Peter Darke asked whether there were complete trains provided by each railway company? Chris Austin said yes, companies provided their own sixteen coach sets to a standard formation, just with differing vehicles according to region.

A website link to the Royal Collection was a possibility and Claire Sheppy thought there was enough material for an exhibition.

The financial reports for the first half of the year 2014 were in line with expectations.

Blue Anchor Museum (Pete Treharne)

Winter had been very wet and this had made maintenance tasks difficult. The Spring Steam Gala had seen better results over four days than over the seven days of the same event in 2013. The Museum had had its first 200+ visitor numbers day since 2007. However, Easter had been bleak in terms of passenger and visitor numbers at the station. For comparison, in April 2013 there had been £95 taken in sales and donations whilst in April 2014 there had been £93 taken in sales and donations with 100 more visitors.

Den Snook had come down to paint, but the weather was too poor. The small display case in the Museum had been completed. The previous weekend had seen only one greetings card sold @ £2.00 - and that was to the curator! A recent special had brought in £8.20 in takings.

Archivist (Ian Coleby)

Ian Coleby had brought two exhibits with him, a token and a brass signal box lever lead; the latter was believed to be from Minehead signal box.

Any other business.

None.