

WEST SOMERSET STEAM RAILWAY TRUST

Welcome to issue 6

Welcome to newsletter number 6. It is being issued in time to be able to include information in advance of the forthcoming Steam Fayre and Vintage Vehicle Rally. (6th and 7th August, at Norton Fitzwarren)

As before, any feedback would be welcome.

A little light entertainment. "West Somerset Steam Railway Trust team comes a very respectable third in Oake Village Hall quiz night."

On 24th of April, we, the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust, received the following e-mail from Steve Williams, Planning Director for the West Somerset Railway plc.:

Colleagues

I am deliberately abusing my access to Board circulation in order to offer you a little light entertainment! As some of you know, I chair the Committee that runs the shop and post office in Oake. We are having a general quiz on Saturday 2nd July at the Community Hall here to raise money for the shop which is run as a community activity. With all that cerebral firepower around the board and management tables, I thought where better to go to try and put a team together (up to 6 people but can be more than one team) to take part than the PLC?

If anybody's interested or is willing to put a team together, could they contact me for more details. I've suggested to my shop committee that this is a challenge that the PLC is bound to be up for! Unfortunately, I cannot participate as I am the quizmaster!!

Steve

This e-mail had been circulated to most of the West Somerset Railway plc board, which also includes two of the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust board as well (Chris Bolt and Ian Coleby)

As a result Chris Bolt circulated the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust board and volunteers to enquire as to whether we would be interested in taking part. The net result was that the Trust raised a full team (The 670 fivers) of six members (Chris Austin, Chris Bolt, Ray Clack, Ian Coleby, Greg McNelly and Claire Sheppy). And a great evening was had by all who participated (some 15 or 16 teams took part.)

The West Somerset Railway Trust has a new website; it can be found at

www.wssrt.co.uk

After years of being very difficult to find even using search engines such as google, it should now come up as both first, (click on the link it produces,) or second, which link will take you straight to the website.

The Trust also has a new email address, it is info@wssrt.co.uk

Already quite a few people have started using this address, it is also now the starting point for potential new members who discover about the WSSRT through the internet.

PROGRESS ON 6705

Greg McNelly writes :

There has been so much transparent finishing liquid used on the coach it is almost completely vanished.

... please note there is no misspelling in that statement.

(Anyone who knows Greg will know that he has quite a mischievous sense of humour!)

He continues
More seriously ...

Tim (Randle) & Ray (Clack) made a jig for routing the compartment door trims and we have the material required. The trims will probably be cut tomorrow (6th July 2016) and treated soon. Ideally they'll be in place by the time the article is published. Looking ahead the floors are entering the critical-path as is re-upholstering the seats. We must see about getting them done very soon.



ABOVE: Getting a Rolls Royce finish. (Photo by Chris Austin)
BELOW: Internal varnishing (Photo by Peter Thompson)



The Registered Office of the Trust has been moved to Bishops Lydeard from Williton and is now 'The Railway Station, Bishops Lydeard, TA4 3BX. New leaflets will show the new address.

Chris Austin writes concerning Key Board Meeting decisions:

The Trustees met on 4th July. The minutes will be published on the new Trust website when agreed, but in the meantime, the following principal matters were discussed:

1. The financial position was good, thanks in part to the very successful fundraising during the Spring Steam gala.
2. New arrangements had been introduced to enable gift aid to be claimed on volunteer donations of materials for carriage restoration.
3. A three year business plan would be developed for the Trust and, after consultation would be proposed for adoption at the 2017 AGM.
4. The PLC was starting the process of creating formal agreements with supporting bodies relating to property and rolling stock storage. The first meeting would take place shortly with the Trust relating to BA museum, storage of coaches awaiting restoration and use of Williton shed and yard.
5. Progress on 6705 was noted and it was agreed that the next steps should be to complete work on the Sleeping Car, preferably this year and to start work on the restoration of 3639. A plan for the latter would be required, as well as the appointment of a project manager.
6. In developing a suite of policies to support better governance of the Trust, Chris Bolt would develop a Disposals Policy (relating to sale or exchange of artefacts or records), an essential requirement in relation to any future HLF application. It was also agreed that, in the absence of a Trust policy on volunteers, the PLC policy would be adopted at this stage.

Director's responsibilities.

These are now:

1. Chris Austin, Chairman, overall strategy, representation on PDG, Southern Gateway and Williton development groups.
2. David Baker, Company Secretary, governance issues, records.
3. Chris Bolt, Treasurer, business development, grant applications, fundraising, representation on Southern Gateway group.
4. Ian Coleby, Historical advice, marketing.
5. John Jenkins, Technical advice, representation on WSR Heritage Group
6. Claire Sheppy, volunteer communications, website, newsletter.
7. Pete Treharne, Blue Anchor Museum and corporate memory advice.

Work to be started on a second coach

Membership of the West Somerset Steam Railway trust and the number of working volunteers are both increasing steadily. As a result of that, working on one coach can mean that one is getting in the way of someone else (due to the limited space within a compartment for example). One solution to this problem that has been suggested is that we might consider working on a second coach whilst finishing off the first one.

As a result of this, as many working volunteers as possible were circulated by e-mail to ask for their suggestions as to how to proceed and as to which coach seemed the most likely candidate to be worked upon next. As a result of this, several replies were received from working volunteers, these were then compiled into one document and submitted for consideration by the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust board. It should be noted that several factors had to be taken into account, such as should we be successful in obtaining Heritage lottery fund grant money, then work on the selected coach or coaches must not have been started.

The one obvious candidate to work upon next is in actual fact toplight coach 3639 on which work was actually commenced in 2008, but for a number of reasons, (not least of which was the arrival back in this country of 6705 from the USA,) was later shelved.

Reasons for recommencing work on 3639 include:
Work on it having been started, it is ineligible for Heritage lottery fund grant. It is already on the rails and able to be moved about, which will include the ability to move it into the Swindon shed.
Drawings have been prepared for the various structural timbers for this particular coach including the extremely complicated corner pillars.
There is a small fund already available for this particular coach.

Thus, having debated the matter, the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust board at the board meeting of 4 July made the decision that work should recommence on 3639, as from late September or early October.

Management of the coaches awaiting restoration.

With some five coaches sitting in the Sherring's yard awaiting their turn for restoration, and several other coaches elsewhere on the West Somerset Railway line possibly designated for the heritage carriages project (including the two at Dunster where access to them is considerably restricted by being adjacent to a running line), it is necessary to maintain a watching brief on all of these coaches to endeavour to ensure that their further deterioration is slowed down as much as is feasible. Mostly, this has been achieved (not always successfully) by the use of tarpaulins. The problem with tarpaulins is that they deteriorate fairly quickly, and are somewhat susceptible to gull attack, which although gulls do not have claws as such, do have very powerful beaks. Some while ago the idea of a steward for each the coaches awaiting restoration was put forward, and certain people volunteered to maintain a watching brief on a specific coach. They were Greg McNelly, whose responsibility was 4546 (the bow ended corridor coach in the Sherring's yard); Tim Randle, whose responsibility was TK 3631, (a toplight corridor coach now in the Sherring's yard which came from the South Devon Railway), Derek Blazdell, whose responsibility was TK 3665, (also a toplight coach and which sits in the corner of the Sherring's yard), and myself, Claire Sheppy, whose responsibility was 7538, (the toplight tri composite brake coach which came from Chinnor), and is also one of the four coaches side-by-side in the Sherring's yard. Greg McNelly has suggested that now that there are more volunteers, that instead of there being a single steward, that we have pairs of stewards to share the responsibility of keeping a watching brief on these coaches whilst they wait for restoration. We therefore seek further volunteers prepared to come forward with a view to taking on board the stewardship or joint stewardship of one of the coaches. Of course the ideal situation would be to be able to get all of them undercover, but this is something of a fanciful notion for the time being. It is sad that these once fine coaches are slowly deteriorating, and it is up to us not just for ourselves but for future generations to ensure as far as is possible that the deterioration is slowed down as much as is practical. Further stewards are thus required to keep a watching brief, including one (or two) for TK 5856 (the coach which came from Tintern) which currently acts as a store and also contains the drawing board donated to us by IBM). If anyone is interested in taking on this role for any of these coaches then please do get in touch. It basically involves keeping an eye on the coach when you happen to visit, and then reporting on any urgent remedial action which might need to be taken (it does not necessarily involve your doing it, as it might well be that it would need a small team of people to do the work safely for example.)

Returning now to the subject of tarpaulins, which appears to be the general method of trying to preserve coaches awaiting restoration on most heritage railways, I personally am not convinced that that is necessarily the best way. It really depends on the state of the coach as it currently is as much as anything. With 7538 for example, I have been endeavouring to slow down deterioration in a rather different way whereby each of the window openings has its own wooden frame, to which a sheet of polythene is affixed with felt roof nails. (When the polythene eventually deteriorates which it invariably does in time, the polythene is removed by removing the felt nails, and a fresh sheet of polythene fitted in its place.) Timber getting wet is not necessarily the problem, it does not matter if timber gets wet as long as it can dry out again fairly quickly, the biggest source of deterioration concerns where water remains in place on the timber, if that then leaves the timber both moist and warm, that gives a classic

Norton Rally.

The Trust will be at the rally, which takes place on Saturday and Sunday the 6th and 7th August, as will the sleeping car and 6705. We will have our gazebo there too, with displays and books for sale. Volunteers to help in setting up on Friday 5th and on the two days of the show would be welcome, whether you can manage a full or half day, or even a couple of hours. Details from Chris Austin. austinca2@googlemail.com.

Chris Austin : Chairman

HLF STRATEGY

The strategy concerning Heritage Lottery funding was again debated. It has been suggested to us that we consider a pilot project initially.

Chris Bolt writes concerning the Business Plan:

Developing a clear business plan for the future direction and strategy of the Trust is important to ensure that the work of the Trust is appropriate to its charitable aims and can be funded, and to provide a baseline for demonstrating what is being delivered. It will also be a crucial input to any future major grant applications, as will be needed for example to progress the Trust's elements of the Southern Gateway project. At its July meeting, the Trustees agreed the broad structure of the business plan, and will develop the detailed content over the next few months. Our current plan is to agree a consultation draft at our December meeting, and then seek views from members before putting the final version to the AGM next Spring for formal adoption. The plan will cover a three year period, on a calendar year basis, which mirrors the PLC's business planning structure.

An also writes concerning membership:

Membership continues to grow. At the AGM, we were able to report strong growth in membership in the first few months of the year, in part because of a reduction in the minimum donation required to become a member. We now have 52 members, including many of the regular volunteers working on 6705 at Williton. But more members would always be welcome. This newsletter is circulated to members and supporters. If you are a member, can you encourage someone else to join the Trust to support our work, whether simply financially or by volunteering as well. If you are not a member, would you consider joining, and participating more fully in deciding the future strategy of the Trust? The minimum donation is £12 a year. Membership forms are on the website (see below)

environment for dry rot to form. Dry rot, being a fungus, needs warm damp wood on which to survive, so as long as there is a good airflow through the coach itself, dry rot should itself not become a problem. As far as the roof is concerned, which on 7538 has the potential to leak like a sieve, as it is a boarded roof rather than a sheet metal one, we have endeavoured to keep this as waterproof as possible by nailing sheets of vinyl flooring over the worst of the areas. The gulls do find that rather more difficult to break up, but even so the winds of the area eventually tease under the areas at the edges so again the vinyl flooring has to be patched up from time to time.

Claire Sheppy.

SLEEPING CAR

The board also resolved that we would endeavour to finish the remaining jobs needed to be done on the Sleeping Car by the end of the year.

BELOW:

Lest we forget:

The late Chris Van Den Arend, with the Sleeping Car, which must be regarded as just one of the many achievements under his leadership on behalf of the West Somerset Railway (Photo by Claire Sheppy)



WORKING SAFELY

It was agreed that The WSSRT would work to and implement the volunteer policy and the safety management policy as operated by the plc.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Next Newsletter (No 7) will be published in December 2016. Relevant submissions are invited, to be submitted any time between now and the end of November or early December

Join the Trust: You can now become a member of the Trust for a minimum donation of £1 per month, although most members contribute more than this, thereby helping fund the work of the Trust. Membership forms are on the website.

Volunteers are welcome, either at the regular weekday sessions – Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays – or at our Sunday working parties between 10.00 and 16.00: see website for details. New volunteers can contact Chris Austin for further details .