

WEST SOMERSET STEAM RAILWAY TRUST

Welcome to newsletter number 7. It is being issued in time to be able to include information in advance of the forthcoming Winter Steam Festival. (29th & 30th December)

As before, any feedback would be welcome.

Wishing all readers a peaceful Christmas and Happy New Year

Winter steam Festival.

The winter steam Festival will be held on December 29 and 30th 2016. In a period of the year when it is usually thought of as being cold, here is an opportunity to ride in nice warm steam heated coaches. Four locomotives will be in operation on this truly Great Western Railway branch line.

However, the locomotives running during those two days fittingly at the end of this 50th anniversary of the closure of the Somerset and Dorset railway are scheduled to be 44422, 53808, 53809, and representing the Great Western Railway will be 6960 Raveningham Hall..

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED FOR STEAM TRUST MUSEUM AT BLUE ANCHOR

The West Somerset Steam Railway Trust are looking for volunteers to assist with the staffing of its Museum on Blue Anchor Station. This is not an onerous task and requires a person to open up the Museum and then to be available during the opening hours to answer any queries. Full training and crib sheets will be available. The Museum is usually open on Sundays from April to October between the hours of 10.30 am to 4.30 pm.

The volunteers can spend an enjoyable day talking to enthusiasts and watching the trains go by.

Anyone interested in helping should contact David Baker on

davidbaker687@btinternet.com or 01392 851752.

PROGRESS ON 6705

Greg McNelly writes :

The running-boards (steps?) have all been cut & shaped from pieces of old running board from TK5929 (the coach from Leeds that was dismantled for spares) This means that, potentially, they are older (more authentic?) than 6705. We are awaiting suitable coach-bolts for fitting them.

The emergency-brake gear, on the "A" end of the coach, is being prepared for refitting. The valve has a new washer. The linkage to the butterfly flags has been temporarily fitted up and a need for a pair of brass pins identified. These will be commissioned soon. Finally the original down (or up) pipe had been broken off and was too short. Another pipe has been found and the minor modifications to fit it are being undertaken, about another week needed.

The pictures are being fitted into the compartments and a source for new ones is in hand. I was under the impression that all frames had pictures in when 6705 but we seem to have lost some. Does anyone know of the rest and/or some others we could use? With the pictures go the maps & mirrors. Two new mirrors are being sourced, one to replace a broken one and the other because the consensus is that the old one is much too pitted to be used. I think it's bit of fun to show how bad it is but who am I to decide, eh?

BELOW: This photo was taken at Taunton, look closely at it to see if you can spot its relevance to this newsletter.



Chris Austin writes concerning Key Board Meeting decisions:

The trustees met on 15th November without our colleague Pete Treharne who had been unwell, and we sent him our good wishes. The key points from the meeting were:

1. A change in banking arrangements was agreed to take advantage of a higher interest rate for the funds that need to be retained to meet our minimum reserves requirement.
2. We agreed to set up a reserve fund at the request of a group of signalmen on the railway, to which they will contribute, to be used to purchase heritage items for signal boxes along the line.
3. It was agreed that the Trust's first business plan should be circulated for consultation, so that it could be considered at the next AGM.
4. The text of the annual report was agreed for submission to the accountants who review our annual accounts.
5. We went through the arrangements for taking over the management of the Gauge Museum at BL from the beginning of January. A meeting to discuss the content of the HLF bid to improve the displays in the museum would be held on 13th December.
6. Dates for opening the Blue Anchor museum in 2017 were agreed and David Baker will now be seeking volunteers to help fill those dates. Museum finances are being managed by Chris Bolt.
7. With a growing number of volunteers, and changes in the requirement for managing safety, we agreed to prepare a safety strategy for the Trust, and then to identify the requirements to deliver that strategy within the overall safety management responsibilities of the PLC.
8. Membership cards were being designed by Ian Coleby for use by members from next year.

**Details from Chris Austin.
austınca2@googlemail.com.**

Peter Darke (who holds the copyright for this photo) writes:
"The photo was taken by Mr Arthur Garry, who retired to Minehead just before the war, having married a Minehead girl in the 1920s. When I was a teenager, in the 1950s, he used to take me to Taunton on Summer Saturdays, when Taunton Station was, of course, absolutely heaving with steam, which really fired my enthusiasm. When Arthur died in Minehead in 1969, his widow handed over many of his photo albums to my father for me, and I published with Ian Allan in 2012 a book of his GW photos from the Edwardian era. In his albums, dating from just pre-war, and then through the 1940s, '50s and early '60s were many photos taken at Taunton. His subjects were mainly locomotives, but covering the entire spectrum from shunting tanks to 'Kings', rather than complete trains. This photo had rather escaped my attention, most of all in connection with W6705W." (None other than our 6705!)

A visit to another Heritage Railway, by Peter Thompson

North Norfolk Railway, (The Poppy Line)

In many respects the North Norfolk Railway and WSR are very similar heritage railways. Both have resulted from single tracked routes built to reach seaside towns for the affluent at the time; Sheringham and Cromer by the M & GN for the NNR and Minehead by the GWR for the WSR. Both are now primarily tourist businesses serving visitors and their respective mainly rural populations after having been saved by railway enthusiasts in the 1960/70s. Both offer special events each year for railway minded visitors. Without volunteers, neither would flourish. Both suffer from the degradatory effects on locos and vehicles from being located close to the sea and its associated weather.



Above
Vintage coaches on the North Norfolk Railway
(photo: Peter Thompson)

Although the smaller of the two railways, the NNR has achieved a better track record in the restoration of heritage coaching stock, in particular those pre BR Mk 1s of which the railway has sufficient in two BR colour schemes. Their supreme set has to be the Quad-art set in varnished teak that often runs with a 4 wheel LNER pigeon van. Just about to be out-shopped is a 4 coach BR suburban set. Also in running order as NNR's vintage set are examples from the M&GN (but incorrect underframe), MR and Wisbech & Upwell tramway, with a GER 6 wheel brake third soon to join the set. Further GER and LNER corridor coaches are in store awaiting restoration. Of interest is that the NNR holds an annual 'carriage convention' where coach restorers from heritage railways can attend the seminars and discuss methods of restoration.

Chris Bolt writes again concerning the Business Plan:

The Trust's first Business Plan

As a matter of good charity governance, and to underpin the grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund planned for early 2017, the Trustees have developed a three year Business Plan which has been published for consultation. This sets out the Trust's plans for future activities, with a financial projection which shows how income and cash balances will be used to further the Trust's objectives for promoting heritage and education on the West Somerset Railway.

As well as continuing with carriage restoration - we expect to complete work on 6705 and re-start restoration of 3639 as the next big project - the Trust will see a step change in its responsibilities when it takes over management of the Gauge Museum in 2017.

The plan is on the Trust's website (<http://www.wssrt.co.uk/2016/11/28/the-business-plan/>),

and the consultation runs until 31 January 2017. The final version of the plan will be presented to members at the AGM in April, and will be updated annually.

Draft 2016 accounts

The draft accounts for the financial year ending on 30 September 2016 are now being reviewed by the Independent Examiner. (Given the size of the Trust, we do not require a formal audit.) The final accounts will be published well in advance of the next AGM, which has been fixed for Saturday 22 April at 1430 in the Gauge Museum, Bishops Lydeard.

The highlights of the accounts (with the previous year's figures in brackets) are:

Total incoming resources £11,840 (£16,378 - boosted by a legacy in 2015)

Total resources expended £5,852 (£9,553)

Capital expenditure (carriage restoration) £1,807 (£3,133)

This railway has also raised the funds to build a secure covered carriage shed to protect their hard won heritage assets and recently a new boiler shop. Sheringham station now has new toilets, shop, an enlarged catering facility and Tourist office. And recently the NNR has managed the purchase of a 9F and now have a turntable on site for a future project at Holt station. One can only admire the managers, volunteers and stakeholders of this railway in their ability to raise funds to achieve their goals. Perhaps we in Somerset could learn from our colleagues in Norfolk.

As a personal note, a year ago I attended both days of the 40's weekend on the Poppy Line and can state that as a visitor and passenger it was the most interesting and fun experience of any heritage railway that I have visited in the last 40 years.

(More from Peter Thompson is planned for the next newsletter.)

Coaches at Dunster

Eight volunteers formed a working party to replace damaged covers on our Collett BTK no 5131 which had been damaged by the wind in this exposed spot. We also discovered serious damage to the cover on the adjacent coach, Toplight TK 2578 which will have to be dealt with in the 'closed' period in January. We also cleared the invading undergrowth to prevent damage and improve access to the coaches.

Below : volunteers pulling a new cover over Collett bow-ended brake third coach no 5131.

(Photo: Chris Austin)



Developing the Gauge Museum

The Trust is closely involved in developing the 'Southern Gateway' proposals for the whole of the Bishops Lydeard site, with both Chris Austin and Chris Bolt sitting on the Project Board which is chaired by the PLC. The full proposals will include covered storage for the Trust's heritage carriages, as well as a display facility and a new visitor centre.

Cash balance at year end £49,335 (£45,393).

A new Signal Box Heritage Fund

Following a suggestion from Robin White and Chris Pratt, the Trustees agreed at their meeting in November to establish a new restricted fund called the Signal Box Heritage Fund. This will fund the acquisition and installation of heritage items such as GWR furniture, notice cases, brass door handles and the like. This could even, with the agreement of the PLC, extend to operational equipment. A number of signalmen have indicated a willingness to support the fund, but donations will be welcome from anyone with an interest in signal box heritage. The membership forms on the website (<http://www.wssrt.co.uk/membership/>) have been updated to include the option to contribute to the new fund, or can be obtained from Chris Bolt, Trust Treasurer.

The Trustees are developing procedures for administering the new fund, which will include arrangements for bidding for financial support and could include an element of match funding from the Trust's general fund.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership continues to grow. We now have 54 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)

2017 WSR Spring Gala.

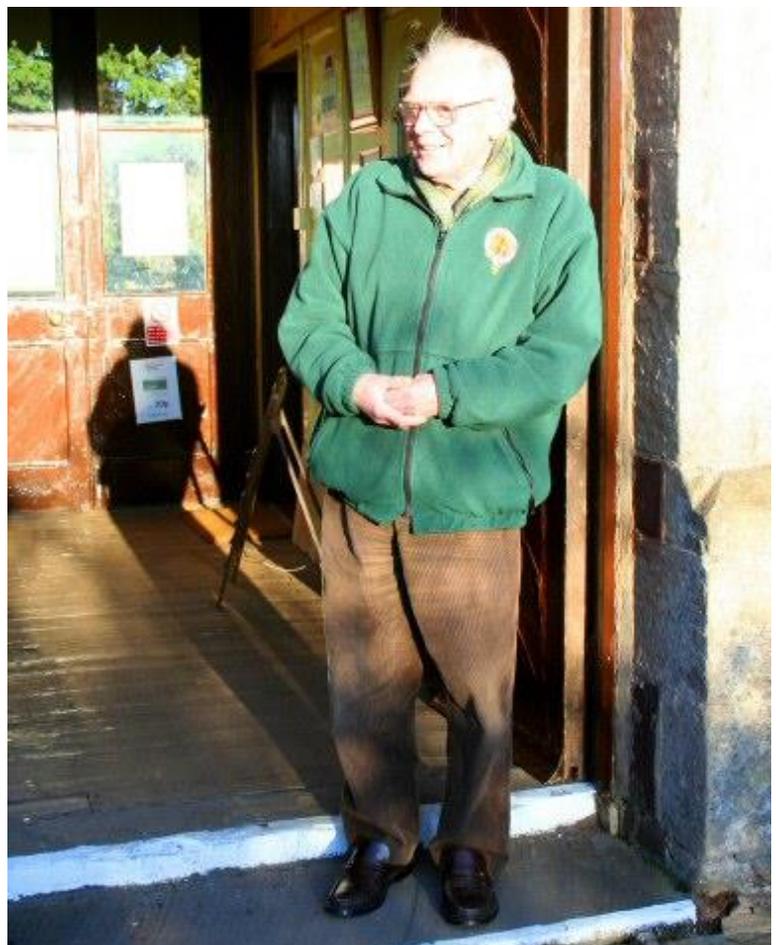
The Spring Gala will be later this year, it will be held from Thursday 27th April to Sunday 30th April

The proposals will require significant fundraising, and the Project Board agreed that a 'taster project' should be developed both to trial some of the visitor facilities to be included in the full project and to establish a track record with the Heritage Lottery Fund for a successful smaller project. So a proposal is being developed for a project to re-present the Gauge Museum, which the Trust will be managing from 2017. This will include new displays - some of them interactive - to increase the number of visitors to the museum and the time spent there, and provide funding for an education officer to work with local schools and other groups.

The Trust is getting support from the Somerset Museums service in developing the proposals, and we held a successful meeting at Bishops Lydeard on 28 November with colleagues from the Swanage Railway museum who are also looking to develop their collections. The visit included a tour of the Gauge Museum, and all the visitors were very impressed by standard of work involved in the restoration of the Trust's sleeping car.

We are planning to submit a funding bid to the HLF by the end of February. We will also be considering whether to work towards accreditation under the Arts Council scheme for the Trust's museums. A full update will be given at the AGM.

**BELOW:
Lest we forget:
The late Chris Dowrick
(Photo: Peter Nicholson)**



The West Somerset Railway Trust website 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, which link will take you straight to the website., and second (click on the link it produces.)

The Trust's email address is now 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.

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.

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. We continue to consider how to improve documentation concerning this.

Chris Dowrick was almost entirely responsible for my becoming involved with the heritage carriages project, along with my own parents who had been supporters of the West Somerset Railway project from the very beginning in 1976. For many years we had owned a chalet at Dunster beach so Dunster station was a regular calling point and as such it was not surprising that my parents got to know Chris quite well. If you go into the waiting room there, you will see a poster in a glass case of the Severn, Avon and Wye Valley Railways. This poster had real significance to us as a family, with all of us six children having grown up in Malvern in Worcestershire. The poster was donated by my parents in memory of my uncle Fraser, also a railway enthusiast and one time volunteer on the North Norfolk Railway.

I have lost count of the number of times I have told the story as to how I once visited Dunster station with my parents where Chris Dowrick, on asking where I lived, asked if I would be interested in helping with the heritage carriages. "It's very easy", he said, "Just turn up and you could perhaps do some painting." So I did duly turn up only to find eight people ripping 3639 apart, and asked the immortal questions "Where are your drawings?", and "How are you going to know how to put it back together?" And to cut a very long story short, that is how I got involved in measuring and drawing the various coaches of the heritage carriages fleet.
Claire Sheppy.

Thanks to Chris Austin, David Baker, Chris Bolt, Peter Darke, Steve Edge, Greg McNelly, Peter Nicholson, PeterThompson and Claire Sheppy for information for this newsletter.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Next Newsletter (No8) will be published in late June 2017. Relevant submissions are invited, to be submitted any time between now and the end of May 2017

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 .