

BATH RAILWAY SOCIETY

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JANUARY NEWSLETTER 2020

Dear Member,

A Happy New Year to you all and I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas?

Our last meeting of 2019 took us overseas in December when Matthew Searle was our guest speaker presenting 'Switzerland on the Steep & Narrow'. I hope you enjoyed the show? We must also thank Davina, and her helpers, for providing some seasonal cheer with mince pies during the half time break.

For our first meeting of 2020, we travel the relatively short distance up into Gloucestershire when we welcome as our guest speaker, Alan Price, who will be telling us all about 'The Vale of Berkley Railway Project'. The group have drawn up a comprehensive phased development plan in order to establish a Heritage Railway along the old Sharpness branch line, running from Sharpness through Berkeley Station to Berkeley Road where it meets the main Gloucester to Bristol line. This is an exciting project to bring passenger trains back to this line and I'm sure Alan will be filling us in with details of all their plans and ambitions. As normal doors open at 7pm for a prompt 7.30pm start.

Time does go quickly and our Annual General Meeting will be in six months' time from now on June 4 when the membership elect a new committee. This year we will be looking for nominations for new committee members at the AGM, so if there is anyone in the membership who might like to join the committee could they please contact our Chairman John Froud who will be happy to hear from you. We are giving you plenty of time to think about it and perhaps put yourself forward!

Mark Hopwood the MD of Great Western Railway is temporarily leaving GWR on 6 January 6 to manage South Western Railway for a short period while they appoint a new MD. During Mark's absence, his Deputy at GWR, Matthew Golton will be taking over.

At the Avon Valley Railway restoration work is taking place on Kitchen Car '1971'. This is a major project that has gone on mostly behind the scenes which volunteers have been working on. When restored, '1971' will become the new Kitchen Car, as their current vehicle 'Doris' needs significant bodywork repairs, and it will offer a better layout and a slightly more space for the catering team to work with.

The Severn Valley Railway are operating trains until January 5 daily. They are running between Bewdley and Bridgnorth only with five trains in each direction. See their website for full details.

In the previous newsletter it was mentioned that Worcester Parkway station would open with the start of the new December timetable, however, the opening has been delayed. Worcestershire County Council is hoping that it can now be opened in January, but no date has been given.

Planning permission has been granted for the introduction of train services on the Portishead branch. Further approvals now have to be sought from the DfT and it is now estimated that services could start running to Portishead in late 2023.

Pacer Unit 144 003, currently operated by Northern Rail, is to be preserved at the Great Central (N) at Ruddington when it comes out of service this year.

On January Saturday 4 and Sun 5, the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust hold their Annual Model Railway Display at Edington Village Hall, Lippetts Way, Edington, NR Bridgwater, Somerset. There will be 13 layouts on display and at least 5 trade stands. On the same weekend, the Wessex Association of Model Railway Clubs hold their 'Winter Exhibition Frome 2020' at the Cheese & Grain, Market Yard, Frome, Somerset with 17 display layouts and 7 trade stands. On Sunday January 12, Weston Hospicecare hold their 17th model railway at The Campus, Highlands Lane, Locking Castle, Weston-Super-Mare with 25 display layouts and 10 trade stands.

50 years ago this month passenger services between Bewdley, Kidderminster and Hartlebury were withdrawn by BR with effect from January 5 1970. The last service was the 19:20 DMU from Bewdley to Kidderminster on Saturday 3 January 1970. This resulted in Bewdley Station becoming disused, along with the lines from Bewdley to Stourport and Foley Park. The original Severn Valley Railway remained open for coal traffic between Hartlebury and Stourport Power Station, while a section of "The Loop" remained open between Kidderminster Junction and the British Sugar Corporation factory at Foley Park. Happily of course, Bewdley station has re-opened as part of the Severn Valley Railway.

Also on January 5, 1970 and closer to home, Saltford and St Anne's Park stations were closed to passenger services. There is hope that one day in the future these two stations may re-open but of course both have been completely demolished and there is no trace of them.

Pathfinder Tours are running one of their annual tours 1st Class tours to Western Scotland from April 10 to 13 with various options for off train tours available. The train starts at Cardiff Central with pickups/set downs at Newport, Bristol Parkway, Cam & Dursley and Cheltenham and the new Worcester Parkway. Full details are on the Pathfinder Tours website.

The Swanage Railway has won the Abellio Signalling Award at the National Railway Heritage Awards. This was for the design of its own token block signalling system which linked the railway's heritage semaphore worked system into the latest technology schemes of Network Rail enabling passenger services to operate off the heritage line onto the main line into Wareham station. The signal box at Corfe Castle has a direct link with the Basingstoke signalling centre. The interlocking of the two types of signalling was designed by Swanage Railway's Dr Mike Walshaw who presented it for approval to Network Rail engineers. The award was presented by HRH Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, at Merchant Taylor's Hall in London on 4th December.

The plan to return LSWR T3 Class Number 563 to working order is gaining momentum at the Flour Mill Workshops in Gloucestershire. It was built at Nine Elms, and entered service during March 1893 and its long career included working between Dorset and London. It was first withdrawn in March 1939 having covered 1.5 million miles, but returned to service the following month. Finally withdrawn in August 1945 it went into storage at Eastleigh before being moved to Kimbridge Junction near Romsey in January 1948 to await scrapping, but was saved by the celebrations planned for the centenary of Waterloo station that year. In March 1948, 563 was moved back to Eastleigh and restored to its original condition in preparation for being exhibited at Waterloo as a representative of the LSWR era. At the end of the exhibition, the T3 was stored at the Farnham EMU carriage sheds before being returned to Eastleigh for further restoration in preparation for future display at the planned Museum of British Transport at Clapham in 1961. 563 joined the rest of the national collection at York when the Clapham

museum closed in 1973. Subsequently, it was loaned out for stage productions of 'The Railway Children' in both London and Toronto and it was eventually donated to the Swanage Railway in 2017 being displayed at Corfe Castle station for a short period. The cost of returning 563 to working order will be around £350,000 and an appeal has been set up to raise this money. It could return to steam as quickly as 2021 if the fundraising hits its targets. See the T3 563 website if you want more information about this locomotive and its restoration.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday February 6 when we welcome back Amyas Crump who will be presenting 'Peter Gray's West Country'. This will be an evening of nostalgia looking back at bygone times and lines in the West Country photographed by the late Peter Gray.

We look forward to seeing you all on Thursday January 2, for the presentation by Alan Price, on 'The Vale of Berkley Railway Project'. A very good opportunity to get out after Christmas and New Year celebrations!

Please note:- All events and special trains etc are mentioned in good faith and hopefully details are correct at the time of publication of the Newsletter. Please however, do check before travelling or attending events as things can change