

BATH RAILWAY SOCIETY

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NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER 2019

Dear Member,

For our October meeting, we welcomed guest speaker Steve Beamon who travelled down from Buckinghamshire with his wife. Steve, who was a former Transport Police officer, gave us a talk about 'Policing for Railways, Docks and Canals 1824 – 2019'. Although we did not see many trains, I do hope you found this talk with its images of interest tracing the history of the Transport Police and we thank Steve for giving his time to come to visit us. Our thanks also go to those who helped provide the refreshments at this meeting.

For our next meeting on Thursday November 7 we will be taken up to the Capital by guest speaker Rupert Singleton who will be talking about 'The Redevelopment of London Bridge Station' @ 7.30pm. (Doors open 7pm). Work began in 2012 with the removal of the old train shed, and to keep the station open throughout the work has meant a phased construction over six years. Every platform has been completely rebuilt and platforms are now 25% more spacious. It also gave an opportunity to completely remodel the track layout at the station to unlock the bottleneck it had become. I'm sure Rupert will be telling us much more information, so do make every effort to attend.

The Avon Valley Railway has announced next year's dates for its 'Pines Express' dining trains, 'Murder Mystery' trains and 'Driver Experience' days. Go to its website for full details and bookings.

This year's 'Summer Sundays Only' service from Exeter to Okehampton has been hailed the best so far with 8,000 passengers being carried on the Sundays between May 19 and September 8. The GWR service was normally operated using a two car Class 150 Unit with the first train from Okehampton at 0953 carrying 90 to 110 passengers, but a figure of 125 was recorded on August 18. Network Rail will shortly be carrying out track maintenance works on the Okehampton line as far as the boundary with the Dartmoor Railway at Coleford Junction using GBRf to haul the infrastructure trains. To facilitate this Class 47 – 47739 has been used for some route learning/refresher runs for crews over the line.

The line between Barnstaple and Crediton will be closed from Saturday October 26 until Friday November 8 inclusive with a replacement bus service connecting with trains at Crediton. The main works will see the renewal of just over 2 miles of jointed track in the Yeoford area, and renewal of longitudinal timbers on a couple of underbridges and trackwork /reballasting just north of Umberleigh. These works will enable the line speed in these areas to be raised. Some of the lifted track is then due to be taken up to Barnstaple where it will be re-laid in the disused and currently trackless platform 2 where it will eventually be connected to the existing single line into platform 1. This will happen sometime in the future to help increase the capacity for more services and the running of charters on the line.

Infrastructure works will also be taking place and closing the West of England line from Bristol this month for an eight day period from Saturday 9 until Thursday 14. The works will be taking place at Cogload Junction and in Whiteball Tunnel completely cutting off Taunton station by rail. Replacement bus services will be operating and train services will be subject to alteration

with some diverted via Westbury, Yeovil Pen Mill/ Junction and over the LSWR line through Honiton.

A number of rail tours will be starting or passing through the area this month. On Saturday 16, A4 – 60009 is due to haul a Railway Touring Company special from Bristol T.M. to Chester & return also calling at Filton Abbey Wood. On Friday 29 and December 1, 61306 is scheduled to operate from London to Bath & Bristol and return for Steam Dreams with a further steam special on December 1 when 7029 Clun Castle is at the head of a special from the Midlands to Bath & Bristol & return for Vintage Trains. A pair of Class 50's - 50007 & 50049 work out of Bristol T.M. on November 30 with a Pathfinder Tours special to the North East area with the 50's hauling the train to Newcastle and return. This train also calls at Bristol Parkway and Cam & Dursley.

40 years ago this month on November 24, 1979, a rail tour called 'The Stoneliner' ran from London Paddington to local quarries and locations in the area. From Westbury the 11 coach train ran down to Radstock West top 'n' tailed by 37 204 & 37 232. The train returned to Westbury before heading down to Merehead Quarry. Returning to Westbury, 31 241 took over and hauled the train through to Bristol West Depot (via Bath) where 25 224 & 25 027 took the train forward to Tytherington Quarry and then back to Bristol Temple Meads. Here 31 241 & 31 136 took over for the return to Paddington via the Berks & Hants route and Newbury.

55 years ago this month on November 2, 1964, Churchdown station in Gloucestershire, situated mid-way between Gloucester and Cheltenham, was closed to passenger traffic. It had opened on February 2, 1874 and was a joint station operated by the Midland Railway and Great Western Railway companies. Today little evidence remains of this station.

Many of our heritage railways will be starting their 'Santa Specials' later this month but another attraction many of them are operating this year are the 'trains of light'. Railways doing this include the Torbay & Dartmouth, the Great Central, North Yorkshire Moors, Nene Valley, Churnet Valley and the Severn Valley, the latter having already sold over 75% of the seats available.

The Swanage Railway will be operating a 'diesel only' service on Sundays 10, 17 & 24 through November. The first service from Swanage departs at 1040 and at 1120 from Norden. Likewise the Swindon & Cricklade Railway are also operating a diesel service on these dates plus November 3. On November 2 & 3 the Avon Valley Railway will be operating a Diesel Rail Car service with six round trips per day from Bitton station. See all the railway's websites for full details.

In over 40 years of service, BR/GWR's fleet of the iconic HST trains have carried names of people and organisations from the cities, towns and communities they served. Steam - Museum of the Great Western Railway at Swindon, is currently hosting a unique exhibition of nameplates which have been carried by the HST's during their service and this display is on view until December 31 at the museum.

The Wincanton Model Railway Exhibition takes place on the weekend of November 9 & 10 at King Arhurs School, West Hill, Wincanton with at least 20 layouts and 6 trade stands. On Saturday 16, the West Wilts 0 Gauge Group hosts the Westbury Model Railway Show at The Paragon Hall, Haynes Road with 9 layouts and 8 trade stalls. The hall is 0.7 of a mile from Westbury station.

The West Somerset Railway is looking for a new Managing Director/General Manager and applications have to be submitted by November 29. The railway is also hoping to once again raise its axle loading to a 'red Route' status during 2020 to take heavier locomotives having

had to drop from 25 tons to 18.7 tons due to track faults. An appeal to raise £250,000 for repairs to the track has to date raised about half of the required sum. The appeal is open to the end of this year.

Two other local Railways are also appealing for funds to help with track materials to further progress their lines. The Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust has been offered a large amount of redundant track materials by Network Rail, including over 140 concrete sleepers and 14 x 60ft panels of track! It is estimated that transportation costs will be in the region of £15k to move the materials to Midsomer Norton. Meanwhile the Swindon & Cricklade Railway needs to raise £100k to extend 700yards northwards towards Cricklade. They have enough rail and sleepers recovered from the old Didcot Power Station to reach Cricklade, but require to purchase ballast, fencing and undertake drainage works for this first stage of works to re-instate the first 700 yards of line.

The BRS Committee will be meeting before our November meeting to discuss next year's programme. If there any particular subjects you would like to be covered, or if there are any speakers you know who we might be able to invite for our monthly meetings, please do contact the Chairman (details over) as soon as possible, so requests can be considered. Also if there are any other issues you wish to raise, please do get in touch.

Some late news, the Society has now purchased its own digital project a BenQ MW535. Money raised from the book stall run by Mike Ware has helped to pay for it, and it will be a big asset for us.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday December 5 when Matthew Searle will be our guest speaker presenting 'Switzerland on the Steep & Narrow'.

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