

BATH RAILWAY SOCIETY

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SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER 2019

Dear Member,

We hope you have had an enjoyable summer break and welcome back to the 2019/2020 season of the Bath Railway Society.

Our last meeting in June was our Annual General Meeting at which all the existing committee members were re-elected and subscriptions were set to remain un-changed at £18. These are now due and we ask if you could make payment in advance of our September meeting as this is a special meeting (see below) and it will be extremely busy. Please send your subscription of £18 to our Hon. Treasurer, Jon Hughes, at 65 Solsbury Way, Lansdown, Bath. BA1 6JA. Cheques should be made payable to Bath Railway Society.

Following the AGM, our guest speaker was Mark Smith who gave a talk on 'The Heritage Railway Association' of which he is the Vice Chairman. Mark is also on the board of the West Somerset Railway and in his conclusion he talked a little about the problems that the Railway has been experiencing. Mark did not personally charge us for giving his talk, but asked that a donation be made to the Tarka Railway Group based at Torrington station in North Devon and we have sent £50 to the group. He had spent many hours with his HRA hat on helping the TRG obtain their leases with protracted negotiations with the local councils. If you are ever in the area do call in and visit the site at Torrington station. They are a friendly group who are trying to rebuild the railway back towards Bideford from Torrington station and so far have permission to lay about two hundred yards of track.

Also in June just over 20 members of the Society visited the rail installations at Merehead and Whatley Quarry's and we would like to thank John Barlow and Robin Jacob for setting up the visit. They had given us a talk earlier in the season on 'Mendip Stone and the Class 59's'. Thanks also go to our Secretary Robert Howes for doing the arrangements within the Society.

For the first meeting of our 2019/20 season, on Thursday September 5, we will welcome our President - Pete Waterman OBE DL – who will be presenting his inaugural Presidential address to the Society. For this meeting we will be moving from our usual venue at St Mary's Bathwick to The Museum of Bath at Work, Julian Rd, Bath BA1 2RH. Doors will open at 7pm when 'welcome' refreshments will be served prior to the meeting commencing at 7.30pm. We are delighted that Pete has agreed to come and address us and he will be travelling down from London. Please therefore can you make every effort to attend and give him a warm BRS welcome. There will not be a book stall at this meeting, it will re-open again at our October meeting.

The Avon Valley Railway has recently acquired ex-BR Class 08 shunting locomotive No. 08663 (D3830) which has been sold to them for the princely sum of £1 by Great Western Railway (GWR). The locomotive has spent its most recent years at GWR's St Philips Marsh depot, Bristol and was used to move diesel multiple units and High Speed Train carriages and power cars around the depot. It now only has air brakes, so vacuum brakes will have to be re-fitted for it to work with AVR stock. The Railway will be holding a 1940's Weekend on September 21 & 22 with vintage vehicle displays, re-enactors, music and much more from the era. See their website for details. 6th - 8th Sep

The Bournemouth and Poole Preservation Club will be holding their annual transport rally alongside Harmans Cross Station, Swanage Railway on September 6 7 & 8 (Open 10:00 - 16:00 Fri, Sat and until 3pm Sun). Over 300 displays of vintage vehicles, motorcycles, tractors, classic cars and commercial vehicles will be on show along with stationary engines, stalls, and refreshments (bar and catering) Swanage Railway Day Rover Tickets Include Free Entry to the Classic Transport Rally (otherwise £5 Adults). Saturday 7 will also be the last day of operation of the Summer Saturdays Only service operated by South Western Railway to Corfe Castle from Yeovil, Weymouth and Wareham. (Ex – London Waterloo via Templcombe.) See Swanage Railway and SWR websites for full details.

Devon County Council has announced that funding for a new station at Marsh Barton in Exeter has finally been secured. The scheme is now several years late as the station had originally been due to open at the end of 2016. Amendments and alterations to the design of the proposed station have been made to bring down costs and a new planning application will be made in early 2020, but no start dates for building work or opening of the station have been given.

Fifty years ago this month on September 18, 1969 an episode of the famous comedy series 'Dads Army' opened with a short clip from the film The Titfield Thunderbolt and it then goes on to show the cast up to their usual antics at Wendling Station, on the former Great Eastern Railway line between King's Lynn and Dereham which had closed in 1968. This section of the former line has been used for improvements to the A47, with the site of Wendling station lost under roadworks, but of course re-runs of the show continue to be shown on BBC2!

Ten years earlier on September 26, 1959 the RCTS Bristol Group ran the 'Bristol & South Gloucestershire Rail Tour' formed of 9769 hauling three corridor coaches with 150 participants on a 90 mile trip. The tour started and finished at Bristol Temple Meads and visited lines to Cannons Marsh, Avonside Wharf and St Philips as well as visiting Fishponds, Avonmouth, Henbury, Yate & Thornbury, and it traversed all three sides of the then Berekley Road triangle.

There will be a number of steam hauled trips in the area this month. On September 1 & 15 'The Royal Duchy' is due to run from Bristol Temple Meads to Par and return via Weston Super Mare and Taunton. On September 8, 'The Torbay Express' will run from Bristol and is routed via Bath Spa, Westbury and Taunton. On September 11, The Belmond British Pullman is due to visit Bath & Bristol from London hauled by 35028 'Clan Line'.

Shuttles trains will operate between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard (West Somerset Railway) on September 7 & 21 with the last of the year being on October 5. (See WSR website for details and times). The Railway is hoping to raise £250,000 by the end of this year for the renewal of rail, as mentioned by Mark Smith at our June meeting. So far just over £80,000 has been raised.

The Swindon & Cricklade Railway are staging a Military Weekend – "Home on Leave" – on September 7 & 8. There will be war time trade stalls, re-enactments, military vehicles and period music etc. The following weekend they have a 'Mixed Traction' event with steam and diesel hauled services.

The last 'summer Sundays only' services from Exeter to Okehampton will operate on Sunday September 8 and these services have been well patronised. Although GWR have been told by the DfT to instigate an experimental daily commuter service on this line, still no starting date has been given.

It has now been forecast that the line to Portishead from Bristol could be re-opened to passenger traffic in the autumn of 2023 with an hourly service running, while in Oxfordshire the line to Cowley from Oxford could be re- open for passenger traffic within the next five years.

The Royal Navy has been assisting the Helston Railway in Cornwall with track laying. Volunteers from RNAS Culdrose have assisted relaying a quarter mile of line south of Truthall Halt.

The next public meeting of the West Wilts Rail User Group will be at 7:00pm on Wednesday September 25 at the Civic Centre in Warminster (doors open 7pm). The guest speaker will be Nina Howe, Passenger Manager for Transport Focus which is the independent watchdog representing the interests of Britain's rail, bus, tram and scheduled domestic coach service passengers in England outside of London. The Civic Centre is situated in Sambourne Road near Morrison's supermarket in the town centre and approximately 15 minutes' walk from the station.

Looking ahead to October 6, you might just be interested in a rail tour in South Wales? This is a 'Pacer Unit' farewell tour when you can bounce around the Valley Lines to wish the units Bon Voyage. Bookings can be made via Transport for Wales, but sea sickness pills are not included in the price!

Looking forward, our next meeting will be on Thursday October 4 back at St Mary's Bathwick, but we hope to see you at The Museum of Bath at Work on September 5 at 7pm. Do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions about this meeting and please remember to send your subscriptions in advance to our treasurer if you can.

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