

BATH RAILWAY SOCIETY

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DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2018

Dear Member,

We had a most informative and interesting meeting in November when Chris Austin OBE MA FCILT gave a talk on 'Disconnected: Broken Links in Britain's Rail Policy' in the first part of the meeting. This was followed in the second half by a questions and answers session which with Chris's long railway experience he was able to easily give answers to the varied questions. We thank him for coming to visit us, along with his wife, from Bromley in Kent.

For our December meeting on Thursday 6, we will have a fairly local subject when John Barlow and Robin Jacob talk about 'Mendip Stone and Class 59's. Of course the 59's work out of the vast Merehead Quarry complex between Frome and Shepton Mallet hauling large volumes of stone for the construction industry. We will hear how Foster Yeoman arrived at the point of ordering the Class 59's and then from their conception until the present time. As usual the meeting starts at 7.30pm, but please be aware that the Bath Christmas Market is taking place and traffic may be heavier than normal.

We welcome new member Andrew Crosse from Bath who joined us at the November meeting.

With Christmas now fast approaching, don't forget if you're looking for any railway related presents then the Titfield Thunderbolt bookshop in Larkhall (open Wednesday to Saturday) has a very good selection of books, maps and some model railway items. It is located at 3A Upper Lambridge Street, Larkhall, Bath, BA1 6RY (Just off Larkhall Square) Tel. 01225 462332 or visit www.titfield.co.uk

our own book stall will again be open for business at our next meeting, so if you have any unwanted books to get rid of before you get new ones for Christmas, do bring them along to sell. Please put a price on them you think they should sell for with all money going to Society funds. If they don't sell, please can you take them back home with you afterwards.

Over the Christmas period there will be further work on the electrification of the main line between Bristol Parkway and South Wales. Replacement coaches will run between Bristol Parkway and Newport, and long distance trains between London and South Wales will be diverted between December 24 and January 1. Other works will be taking place across the network over this period, so if you intend travelling, do check on what is running! On December 1 & 2 no trains will run between Bristol TM & Parkway, including Severn Beach Line, due to ongoing four tracking works on Filton bank, although the new lines have now opened for revenue earning traffic.

There are several special trains calling at Bath Spa during December. On Monday 4, The Northern Belle will be picking up passengers during its 'circular' tour starting in Cardiff. It also picks up at Bristol T. M. The following day will see a steam special arrive with booked locomotive 61306 at its head. This train originates at London Victoria and is being operated by Steam Dreams. On Saturday 15, Pathfinder Tours 'Chester Chuffer' will be picking up on its way from Eastleigh to traverse lines in the Midlands area. This train is diesel hauled.

The West Somerset Railway is to completely close for 3 months from January 2, with the cancellation of a proposed 'Atlantic Coast Express' weekend, Spring Gala and the February half term trains.

If you want to get out to get a 'train fix' after Christmas the Avon Valley Railway will be operating on Boxing Day and then on December 29 & 30 plus New Years Day with mince pie specials. The

Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway are staging a two day 'Christmas Cracker' gala featuring home fleet steam & diesel with trains running the full length of the line on December 29 & 30. There will be some double heading and top and tailing. On the same two days, the West Somerset are having a 'Winter Steam Festival' using 6960, 7822 and 53808. Swanage Railway have their annual 'Winter Warmer' event on December 28 using home fleet steam & diesel. See all the railways websites for full details of services.

Looking back 60 years ago this month, the last section of track on the former Limpley Stoke to Camerton line was lifted when the remaining piece of line back to Limpley Stoke from the Midford direction was removed.

20 years later, the last passenger carrying trains ran from Bodmin Road to the then end of the line at Wadebridge on December 17, 1978. Organised by the Bodmin Lions Club they ran two return trips over the then freight only line from Bodmin Road at 10am and 2pm using 2 x 3 car Metropolitan Cammell units B803 and B804. There was quite a party atmosphere on the trains and large crowds turned out at Wadebridge to witness the final departure leave the station that day with the St Minver brass band playing on the platform as it left. The line beyond Wadebridge to Padstow had been lifted in 1968 and the final freight train had run down to Wadebridge from Bodmin on September 2, 1978. Trains might return to Wadebridge in the future if the Bodmin & Wenford Railway extend, although a new site for a station would have to be found due to development over the former track bed.

Work is due to start next month extending the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway to Wistlandpound. This will require the rebuilding of two bridges (Numbers 54 & 55). It should be completed by summer 2019.

It has been announced that direct train services will run into Newport station from Ebbw Vale by 2021. Currently passenger trains from Ebbw Vale can only run to Cardiff and cannot access Newport station until upgrades of signalling and track have taken place. The line was originally closed in April 1962 and reopened on February 6, 2008 for services to Cardiff. Also in Wales, the footbridge at Abergavenny station is currently being refurbished. A temporary one is being provide in the meantime.

On Saturday December 15, the Nailsea & District Model Rail Club are holding an Open Day at The Barn, Great Western Road, Clevedon. There will be at least 10+ 'home grown' layouts, some under construction and of various scales and gauges, and at least two trade stands in attendance. It is open from 10am to 4pm and admission for adults is £3.

An Edwardian Funicular railway at Bournemouth is not likely to be restored to working order in the near future due to lack of funds. The Borough Council cannot afford to stabilise the cliff following a collapse on April 24, 2016 which left the cliff railway strewn with rocks and damaged one of its cars.

RCTS Bristol member Arthur Turner is disposing of some of his many railway books and magazines and must clear 70+ years of Railway Magazines (1946-2017) and a complete run to Today's Railways Europe from No. 1 to this year. They will need to be collected from his home in Bristol, but he is not wanting payment. A small optional donation to the Railway Children would be appreciated. If any BRS member is interested please contact Arthur, his telephone number is 0117 9620255

Santa Specials will be running over the old Somerset & Dorset line from Midsomer Norton station on December 2, 9 & 16. These will be hauled by Sentinel steam locomotive 7109 'Joyce' with adult tickets priced at £6 and children £9 (1 - 16years). Adults fare includes the train ride, a mince pie and a Christmas punch drink. Five trains operate each date with the first departure at 11am. Bookings can be made via their website, where further details can be found or at the station on Sundays & Mondays.

The long mothballed line to Tytherington Quarry in South Gloucestershire is to be brought back into use. Stone traffic will be returning to the line which runs from Yate on the former route to Thornbury.

Well known Gloucestershire based railway photographer from the 1970/80's, Norman Preddy passed away last month aged 75. He was also a frequent traveller on rail tours from the area in that era.

On Sunday February 3, 2019, the Branch Line Society are running a tour from Bristol Temple Meads, called the 'Looe Brush'. It will feature two Class 47's in top 'n' tail mode for a rare loco hauled trip over the Looe branch in Cornwall and then the short section of freight line from Coombe Junction to Moorswater. Full details available on the Branch Line Society website under fixtures.

We look forward to seeing you on Thursday December 6, for the talk on Mendip Stone & Class 59's, but if you are unable to attend on behalf of the Committee may I wish you compliments of the season and we hope to see you again in the New Year. Our first meeting of 2019 will be on Thursday January 3 when summer will come to us a little early! Our guest speaker will be Mike Fenton who will be telling us all about 'GWR Camping Coach Holidays'.

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