

NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2018

Posted January 29 2018.

What an excellent start we had for our first meeting of 2018 when Brian May presented his show 'Whilst I've Been Away: A Photographers Diary 2013 – 2017'. Brian took us on his travels around the UK and then to Serbia and Romania with his stunning photographs of steam and diesels in both close up and in the landscape. We thank him for a great start to 2018 and hope he might once again give us a show of his travels in the future.

For our next meeting on Thursday February 1, Gerry Nichols will take us back to the age of steam in the Bristol area. With his detailed local knowledge, he will take us on a tour, showing different locations within a 15 mile radius of the city. This will certainly be an evening of 'local' nostalgia and another meeting not to miss. As normal, doors open at St Mary's Church Hall at 7pm for 7.30pm start.

Just a reminder, if any member has any recent changes of details, i.e. address or email, would you please advise me so I can update our mailing list. Please contact me at [bob.bunyar@lineone.net](mailto:bob.bunyar@lineone.net)

If you had any unwanted books for Christmas or if you are having a new year clear out, why not bring them along for our Book Stall. Just mark them with a suggested price and put on the table and then check at the end of the meeting to see if they have sold. If not, would you please take them home again. The book stall did very well at the January meeting and all monies raised go to Society funds.

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last BR steam to operate and a number of events are being planned. Although the anniversary is not actually until August, the first event will be held at the Mid – Hants Railway from February 9 – 11 and this will include a recreation of the famous Fifteen Guinea special, featuring Black 5's 45231 & 45379. Tickets are available in advance and full details are on the MHR website. A locomotive which was in use at the end of BR steam and is still with us today is 70013 'Oliver Cromwell'. It will be coming off the main line roster as its boiler certificate expires very shortly and one of its last workings over the former Western Region will be on March 1 when it operates 'The Cathedrals Express' from London Paddington to Cardiff and return for 'Steam Dreams'.

The RCTS Bristol Group have a presentation of local interest at their meeting on Friday February 2. John Baxter from the SDHRT will be presenting 'Midsomer Norton's Rise from the Ashes' at St Peters Church Hall, Church Road, Filton. BS34 7BX. Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start.

Although most 'heritage' railways are currently in their winter shut down period, some will be opening and operating basic services during the February school half term period. The West Somerset Railway will be operating on February 10 & 11. 13 – 15 incl and 17 & 18. Trains on the Swanage Railway will be running 10 – 18 incl as will the South Devon Railway. The Severn Valley Railway will be operating slightly later in the month between February 17 – 25 incl.

The Helston Railway in Cornwall has now completed work at its current limit of operation at the rebuilt Truthall Halt, and this includes the provision of a newly built GWR Pagoda. The railway has an 'Extra Mile' fund running for the purchase of track, sleepers and ballast to extend the running line on the former Gwinear Road to Helston branch. The ultimate aim is to rebuild and preserve as much as possible of the former line between Nancegollen and Water-Ma-Trout on the outskirts of Helston.

On Saturday February 3 the Sodbury Vale Model Railway Club will be staging their 34th Annual Exhibition at St Mary's Church Hall, Church Road, Yate from 1000am – 4.30pm. Fourteen layout are due to be on display with six trade stands in attendance. On February 17 & 18 the Sedgemoor Gauge

'O' Group hold a show at King Alfred School, Burnham Road, Highbridge from 10.30am (10am Sun) to 4.30pm (4pm Sun). There should be eight layouts and six trade stands in attendance. Both of these exhibitions are less than one mile from the local railway stations at Yate and Highbridge. Devon County Council has joined South Somerset County Council, into looking into the possibilities of re-opening Chard Junction station on the former SR main line between Exeter and Salisbury. The original station closed from March 7, 1966 and the idea being mooted is that a re-opened station could be incorporated into a proposed Devon Metro system.

Thirty years ago this month in February 1988, some of the last remaining locomotives departed from the South Wales - Barry Scrapyard. Those leaving Woodham Brothers yard and travelling just a short distance for storage that month were 2861, 5227, 6686, 7927 and 92245. These locomotives were part of what has become known as 'The Barry Ten' originally being purchased by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Of these locomotives 2861 and 5227 have become 'donor locomotives' for the new-build Churchward 2-8-0 'Night Owl' No 4709 at Didcot. The frames of 2861 have been scrapped, but as only some parts of 5227 were used for various recreation projects, most of the engine is to be displayed at the Didcot Railway Centre in un-restored condition. 6686 is still in scrapyard condition and is due to be restored for use on the Barry Island Railway. 7927 'Wyke Hall' has been disassembled and does not now exist. Its frames and wheels have been used for the 1014 'County of Glamorgan' recreation project and its boiler used for new build 6880 'Betton Grange'. 92245 is to be dismantled and sectioned in the future as part of an exhibition at Barry that will tell the story of the Woodham Brothers scrapyard. However, the boiler will not be used for the exhibition and has been moved to Peak Rail for future restoration. For interest, the other locomotives which were part of the 'Barry Ten' were 4115 which also went to Didcot as a donor locomotive for 4709 with its boiler going to 6634. 5539 is now at the Llangollen Railway and under restoration. 44901 is at the Vale of Berkley Railway awaiting restoration as is 80150 at the Mid Hants Railway, and 48518 does not now exist as parts were used for 1014 'County of Glamorgan' and 45551 'Unknown Warrior' projects.

Staying in South Wales, it is now 10 years since the line to Ebbw Vale (parkway) re-opened to passenger traffic on February 06, 2008. The new single platform station at Ebbw Vale Parkway is built adjacent to the site of the former Victoria station. The re-opening of the line from Ebbw junction (Newport) saw double the amount of predicted passengers using the services to Cardiff. Other stations on the route are at Llanhilleth, Newbridge, Crosskeys, Risca, Rogerstone and Pye Corner with a 40 minute frequency service being provided. A very successful re-opening!

The Minehead Chamber of Commerce and the Minehead Rail Link Group are pressing for the current GWR operated Cardiff to Taunton services to be extended through to Minehead by running over the West Somerset Railway in a bid to open up opportunities and tourism in the West Somerset area. For further details and information see their website at [www.mineheadraillinkgroup.org.uk](http://www.mineheadraillinkgroup.org.uk)

GWR have published their own 2018 timetable book which gives all their train times together with bus connections, seating layouts of their HST & IEP trains, information on all their stations with their booking office opening times (where applicable), types of tickets available and route maps. There are also details given of scheduled engineering works. The 368 page book costs £8 and locally it can be purchased from Bath Spa, Bristol T M and Parkway, Chippenham and Westbury stations.

Network Rail have again met with the Heathfield Rail Link group about the re-opening to passenger traffic of the Newton Abbott to Heathfield line. Following the meeting, the group has reported that it was very positive and there is light at the end of the tunnel, but with lots of work still to do to go forward. Suggestions are being made that the line should also be re-laid from Heathfield to serve the growing town of Bovey Tracey where the station buildings still remain used as an information centre.

The Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway carried 100,619 passengers in 2017 beating all previous year's numbers, and this was despite losing several days of operation in December due to snow. This year should see the G-WR beat this figure again with their opening to Broadway on March 30.

Great Western Railway has name 800 10 - 'Michael Bond', the creator of Paddington Bear. The naming ceremony was fittingly held at Paddington station.

Work is due to commence very shortly on the new servicing depot at Exeter which will be on the site of the present stabling point alongside St David's station.

Stephen Bigley will looking at 'Railways at Night' when we meet on Thursday March 1, but prior to that we hope to see you on February 1 for 'Steam Around Bristol' presented by Gerry Nichols.

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