

NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2018
Posted February 25 2018.

Gerry Nichols certainly brought back the memories and stirred up the nostalgia with the photographs of the local area when he presented 'Steam Around Bristol' at our February meeting. This was one of our best attended meetings in recent times with an audience of 63 (43 members and 20 visitors). We thank Gerry for a great evening and hopefully he has more slides he can show us in the future.

We welcome back Stephen Bigley for our next meeting on Thursday March 1. Stephen will give us an unusual presentation showing railways at night with his talk covering trains, stations and other structures from Penzance to Oban. Familiar objects like canopies and rails will be taking on a new appearance between dusk and dawn. As usual, doors open at the Church Hall at 7pm for 7.30pm start.

A memorial service is to take place for our late President, David Shepherd CBE FRSA FGRA, who passed away on September 19 last year. The service, to which all are welcome to attend, will take place at Southwark Cathedral, London Bridge on Friday March 2 starting at 2pm.

Could you help Mike Ware with some answers please? Mike is currently writing a book about his dad Bernard, who worked on the S & D at Bath, and he has a number of questions relating to some of the working his dad undertook, and he's looking for answers for the following? - 44666 worked the 3.25 am Carlisle to Stoke Gifford freight on Tuesday September 28, 1965. The next day, Wednesday 29th September, it worked the 0815 Bath G.P. to Templecombe passenger train. Does anyone know how it got from Stoke Gifford to Bath, and what other workings it did on the 29th? 9F - 92155 worked the 0850 ex Gloucester freight into Bath G.P. on February 23 1966. Does anyone have details of its return working? Q Class 30541 worked the 0648 Bath G.P. to Templecombe train on Friday December 28 1962. Again details required of how this loco reached Bath and why the loco was used? Finally relating to diesels, when did the first 'Peak' work into Bath on 'The Pines Express' and when did the first Class 35 Hymek & Brush 47 start running into Bath from Bristol? If you can help with any of these questions, please email the answers to me and I'll pass them on to Mike or please see him at our next meeting.

Engineering works will be taking place over the Easter holiday period with no trains calling at Bristol Temple Meads for five days from Friday March 30 (Good Friday) until Tuesday April 3 inclusive. Services will terminate at Taunton or Weston Super Mare to/from the West, Bath Spa (the South) and Bristol Parkway (the north & Wales). Buses will provide connections to/from Bristol TM and will also be used to provide a Severn Beach line service. The line from Swindon via Bristol Parkway to South Wales will remain open. Do check your journey details if you intend travelling over the Easter period.

Major work will be taking place just outside the West Somerset Railway's Minehead station this month. Track renewal and resurfacing will be taking place at the Seaward Way level crossing between March 6 - and 10. This will affect the railway and will also requiring a total road closure. Later in the month, the WSR are holding a Great Western Routes & Branches gala from March 22 to 25 (incl). Locos taking part include 1450 (with Auto Trailer 178) 6990, 7714, 7822, 53808 & S160 - 6046. For full details go to www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk

Jinty 47406 will again be visiting Midsomer Norton station this month. On March 10 & 11, there will be a 'gala' weekend with 47406 running alongside resident Sentinel 'Joyce'. On March 17, there will be afternoon and evening 'Real Ale Trains' while on the following day, passenger trains will be

running, plus the opportunity to driver D4095 'for a tenner'. A 'Driver Experience Day' using the Jinty will take place on Thursday March 22 and the following day Time Line Events hold a photographic charter (bookings for this via Time Line website). Full details can be found on the Somerset & Dorset Heritage Trust website. www.sdjr.co.uk We are hoping to have an evening outing to Midsomer Norton with the RCTS Bristol Group in the summer. Details should be announced in next month's newsletter.

The Swanage Railway will be holding a 'Spring Gala' from March 23 – 25. This will feature home fleet locomotives 30120, 31806, 34053, 80104 & D6515 (All subject to availability). An intensive timetable will be in operation. Details at www.swanagerailway.co.uk

The Severn Valley Railway will be staging a Gala from 16 – 18 March. In addition to their home fleet locos, guest visitors to the event will include 6023 King Edward 11, LNER B1 1264 & B12 8572, A1 60163 'Tornado' and BR Standard Tank 80072. See SVR website for further details.

Fifty five years ago this month the very last train traversed the then closed Plym Valley line ran from Marsh Mills to Tavistock South on the former GWR route to Launceston. (Closed from 29.12.62). This was hauled by Prairie Tank 4555 with the train being run by BR to collect all the fittings from stations which they felt could have further use. After that, demolition of the route commenced some thirteen months later. A one and a half mile section of the line has been resurrected as the Plym Valley Railway at Marsh Mills and 4555 is now preserved on the Severn Valley Railway.

Thirty Years ago this month the Branch Line Society ran a tour on March 26 starting and finishing at Bristol Temple Meads which visited mostly local freight lines. Titled as 'The Usk and Severn Rambler' it was formed of a three car Class 117 DMU and ran from Bristol T. M to Severn Beach, before traversing lines from Newport to Uskmouth, Chepstow to Tideham, Caldicot to Sudbrook, Yate to Westerleigh and Lawrence Hill to Barrow Road (Refuge Transfer Station).

Mention is made above of Tideham (serving a quarry) which was then the end of what remained of the once Wye Valley line to Monmouth. Now Monmouthshire County Council are considering proposals again to convert the former line from Tideham to Tintern to a cycleway and footpath, but these plans were previously dropped five years ago due to opposition. The track does still remain in situ, heavily overgrown, from Chepstow (Wye Valley Junction) to Tideham, but the main line connection has been removed. Plans were also once muted to re-open the line as a heritage railway but nothing further seems to have developed. Tintern station is restored as a visitor centre and has a very good café.

Steam should be seen through Bath on Saturday March 24 when the UK Rail Tours operated 'The Sulis & Sarum' works through from Tame Bridge to Salisbury behind 60163 'Tornado'.

As in previous years, trains will be strengthened and extra services operated for the Cheltenham Race Festival from March 13 – 16 incl, which will see many services full to capacity! Steam hauled services will also be run on the Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway from Toddington to Cheltenham Racecourse station so passengers can 'arrive in style'. These trains are operated by 'Classic Hospitality Limited' and are not for general public use. As mentioned in previous newsletters, the G & W's extension to Broadway is scheduled to open on March 30, with a special timetable in operation.

Track work is taking place at Shillingstone station, the home of the North Dorset Railway Trust. A new point is currently being laid out ready for installation at the southern end of the station.

The Nailsea & District Model Railway Club are holding the 'Nailsea Model Railway Show' at Nailsea School, Mizzymead Road on March 24 & 25. There will be a mix of 13+ layouts attending plus at least 7 trade stands. The venue is just under one mile from Nailsea & Backwell station.

The Swindon & Cricklade Railway has launched a £2.5million appeal to extend north 2 miles to a new station site in Cricklade. They hope to open the first ½ mile of this northern extension later this year.

In the South West there is a further update regarding the Heathfield branch. Network Rail has now agreed to lease the branch from Newton Abbot to Heathfield to revivalists who will be called 'Heath Rail Link'. They hope to start running services within two year but they first need to find suitable rolling stock. Further West, Helston town council is now pressing Network Rail to re-open the whole of the Helston branch from the main line at the closed Gwinear Road station. The line to Helston closed to passengers on September 3 1962 and finally to goods on October 5 1964. At Gwinear Road the former 'down' platform and Helston branch bay still survive more or less intact and the Helston Railway Company now operates 'heritage' services on about one mile of restored line of the former branch at Prospidnick three miles to the north of the town of Helston at Trevarno Farm.

The new build 'P2 Project' presented by Huw Parker will be the subject of our next meeting on April 5. We hope however to see you on March 1 for Stephen Bigley's presentation 'Railways at Night'. 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