

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2017

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It was a full house for our November meeting when we welcomed Steve Nakoneczny who took us around the former BR regions showing us a selection of colour slides by the celebrated photographer Keith Pirt. There was even an excursion over to Ireland and we thank Steve for making the trip down from Sandy in Bedfordshire to give us a most entertaining evening and a look back at a bygone age.

Our final meeting of 2017 will be on Thursday December 7 when Alex Green will be presenting 'The Regional Railways Story'. Like his brother Chris Green, Alex had a management career in British Rail, being Project Manager and then Director of Operations of Regional Railways North West. He later worked as a Tour Manager for Great Rail Journeys, visiting many countries of the world. He was picture editor for the book on The Regional Railways Story. For us he will be talking about his experiences in setting up and running the Regional Railways sector of British Rail. Seasonal refreshments will be served with the tea and coffee, and there will be a free raffle organised by Mike & Davina Ware. Make sure you get your free raffle ticket on the way in. Please note, there will not be a bookstall this month, this will start again at the January meeting. Doors open at 7pm for 7.30pm start.

Following the sad passing of longstanding member Ralph Clark, the Society is making a donation to 'Dorothy House'. It was Ralph's wish before he died that any collection should go to this charity.

After meeting in October, Network Rail have confirmed that they are taking campaigners plans seriously to re-open for passenger traffic the Heathfield branch from Newton Abbott, although they are warning that it will cost a considerable amount of money to do so. The plans are being backed by local politicians and a further meeting is now due to be held this month. Another project in Devon has had to be put on hold due to funding issues. Work on a new two platform station for Exeter at Marsh Barton costing £7.4 million has yet to commence. The station should have been completed and open by the end of this year, but Devon County Council has still to find the funding although it is still stating that the station will go ahead when the necessary finance can be put in place. The re-opening of the line from Bere Alston to Tavistock was on a list of lines announced by the DfT on November 29.

The Swanage Railway has started a crowd funding initiative to raise funds for their LSWR Class T3 Number 563 to help restore it to working order. The former NRM locomotive, which last steamed in 1948, was moved to the 'Flour Mill' workshops in the Forest of Dean on November 13 where it will be stored under cover and dismantled to assess the amount of work required to bring the locomotive back into working order. The appeal will close at 5,09pm on December 23, and donations can be made via the Swanage Railway website. Meanwhile LSWR T9 30120 will be staying on the Railway until 2020 after the NRM sanctioned specialist repairs to be carried out on one of its cylinders. Ivatt Tank 41312 will now be staying on the Railway until the end of January 2018.

On Thursday December 28, the Swanage Railway will be holding a 'Winter Warm Up' gala using their home fleet locomotives with an intensive timetable in operation. The Avon Valley Railway will be running trains after Christmas on December 26, 27, 31 and January 1. At the West Somerset Railway there will be a 'Winter Steam Festival' on December 29 & 30 while the Gloucester and Warwick Railway stage a 'Mixed Traction Christmas Cracker' on the same dates. Trains also run on December 27, 28 & 31. See all the Railway's relevant websites for full details of their post-Christmas operations.

On November 19 it was announced that the Government will give £300,000 to co-fund a study which will look into reopening the Cowley branch and how new stations, services and routes across

Oxfordshire can be developed. In a report by the National Infrastructure Commission it said passenger services could be back on the revived Cowley Branch Line by 2019. Chiltern Railways is supporting the 'ambitious' plans to get trains running through to Cowley within the timescale given. The North Dorset Railway Trust has sold their Virgin livery Mk3 Buffet car. It was moved from Shillingstone station and taken to Crewe in early November to be used for spares, predominately for its bogies (as these were required for further use on other coaches) and also its catering equipment was due to be reused. The boiler from Shillingstone's resident USA designed tank locomotive 30075 is being moved the short distance from Shillingstone to Henstridge to be overhauled at Vincent Engineering where their workshop is adjacent to the former Somerset & Dorset station in the town. 30075 is owned by 'Project 62' along with 30076 which is also at Shillingstone waiting restoration.

Santa will be at Midsomer Norton station on Sundays December 3, 10 & 17 giving out presents to children (prior booking is essential). Trains will also be running on these dates.

50 years ago this month the Great Western Society ran a special train from Plymouth to Didcot transferring preserved stock. The train of six coaches was hauled by 6998 'Burton Agnes Hall' which had been stored in a siding at Totnes. The 'Hall' piloted 0-4-2T, 1466 this having been on the Dart Valley Railway at Buckfastleigh. It was also 50 years ago when the last trains used Southampton Terminus station. This had closed for passenger and parcel traffic on September 5, 1966 prior to electrification of the line between London Waterloo and Bournemouth but Southampton Terminus was not included in the upgrade. The Royal Mail however continued to handle traffic at the station with Christmas Postal trains being the last to use it in December 1967. After this the offices closed transferring all mail work to Southampton Central. 20 years ago on December 13 1997 Class 58 - 58042 worked the first leg of a Pathfinder Tour through Bath Spa from Swindon heading for Coventry. 'The Festive Fiend' then headed to London Victoria behind 56035 where 60018 took over for a run to Tonbridge. 92011 hauled the train back up to Wembley for 90127 to take over back to Coventry. Finally 58026 worked the train back to Westbury again passing through Bath Spa.

The new franchise holder South Western Railway is holding a public consultation for its proposed December 2018 timetable changes. Quite a number of their routes which originally were operated by South West Trains will see some major changes. SWR operates Waterloo to Bristol through services via Salisbury as well as to Yeovil Penn Mill via Westbury and Frome. The proposed 2018 timetables can be viewed on the SWR website where the consultation form can also be found. SWR is undertaking a £50 million makeover of their Class 444 and 450's used on the Weymouth to Waterloo route. The work will be carried out by Siemens at Eastleigh with the first unit due to be started this month.

Work is progressing slowly on the restoration of former London Underground 'Q' Stock by the London Transport Museum. Four vehicles remain which can be formed into a unit, these being Driving Units 4416 & 4417, built in 1938 and withdrawn from passenger service in 1972. Trailer 08063, built in 1936 and withdrawn from passenger service in 1971 and Driver Unit 4184 dating from 1923 and withdrawn in 1971. It is currently planned to restore a three car set using 4416, 08063 and 4417 with 4184 perhaps being used as a trailer in the future. All four vehicles are currently at LU's Acton works where work is being undertaken. No date has been set for the completion of the restoration, but they are not expected to be ready for the 150th anniversary celebrations of the District Line next year. The former Metropolitan Railway electric locomotive Number 12 'Sarah Siddons', also owned by the museum, has been sent to Eastleigh where inspection work will commence as part of an overhaul that will last well into 2018. This locomotive holds the distinction of being the oldest standard gauge locomotive allowed to work on the main line in Britain. No 12 celebrates its centenary in 2023.

I have received a request for information from a member of the S & DRHT at Midsomer Norton and wondered if any BRS member can assist with an answer? He is trying to find out which locomotive was hauling the 7.05pm Bath Green Park to Bournemouth on Friday 5 June 1964. It was a BR Standard Class 4 2-6-0 of the 76XXX series, with a low-sided tender hauling three rather dull maroon carriages. This was the return working of the 1.10pm Bournemouth to Bath. It would probably have worked the 6.48am Bath to Bournemouth, and the previous evening's 6.48pm Bournemouth to Templecombe, and 8.50pm Templecombe to Bath. If it was a Bournemouth based loco it is likely to have been either 76011, 76026 or 76027 but does anyone have any records or ideas? Please email me at [bob.bunyar@lineone.net](mailto:bob.bunyar@lineone.net) if you can help solve this one so I can pass it on.

Trial Eurostar services are due to start this month between London - St Pancras and Amsterdam Central, with a full service due to start operating in the spring of 2018.

The new forth platform at Bristol Parkway station is due to be completed and opened by the end of this month increasing capacity at the station. This is situated on the 'down' side.

There are quite a number of significant railway related 'projects' due for completion and to look forward too next year if all goes to plan. The Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway are scheduled to open their extension through to Broadway in March and there is the likelihood that 'new builds' 6880 'Bretton Grange' will be steaming at the Llangollen Railway while at Didcot 'Saint' 2999 'Lady of Legend' should be operational in the first quarter of the year. Other rebuild projects are also progressing well and should make good progress in 2018. By the end of next year the engineering and signalling works on Filton Bank in Bristol are due to be completed bringing back a four track stretch of railway from Dr Day's Junction through to Filton Junction. As previously mentioned in the Newsletter, commuter services could be running on a daily basis between Exeter and Okehampton (announced by DfT & GWR on November 29 as part of GWR franchise extension) and a study into re-opening the former section of the Borders Railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle could be sanctioned. A through steam special will be running from the Mid Hants Railway to Bath on Wednesday December 6 with Black 5 45212 starting its journey at Alresford and running via Alton, Farnham and Guilford. On the same day, the Belmont British Pullman will also be visiting the City from London Victoria hauled by a Class 67. The previous day, December 5, the Northern Belle is due in Bath top 'n' tailed by two Class 57's. On Tuesday December 19, 70013 'Oliver Cromwell' is booked to haul The Cathedrals Express to Bath & Bristol from London Victoria (dep 0845) and run via Slough and Reading to Bath (arr.1415). It returns to London Paddington, departing Bath at 1750. (These times are provisional)

Railfuture is campaigning for a programme of incremental improvements to the route between Salisbury and Exeter to increase service frequency and to improve its capacity as a diversionary alternative to the Great Western route to/from Exeter. Network Rail however has recently announced that it doesn't have any current plans to upgrade the former 'Southern' main line with extended loops or new sections of double track. The former double track route from Salisbury to Exeter was of course mostly singled in 1967 with a number of loops provided for passing services.

Great Western Railway have launched an online souvenir shop which can be found at [www.btcwebstore.co.uk/gwr/](http://www.btcwebstore.co.uk/gwr/) The range of items on sale at present is quite small, but new items will be added and the site is due to grow!

The Swindon & Cricklade Railway has started work on their northern extension. Volunteers are now clearing years of growth of trees and vegetation north of Blunsdon station towards Cricklade on the track bed of the former Midland & South Western Junction Railway. Track laying of the first 500 yards of the extension will not commence until next year, but the Railway does already have sufficient track sleepers and fittings in stock ready to lay it. This part of the old MRWJR was closed to

passenger traffic on September 11, 1961 but remained opened to Cirencester Watermoor for three more years serving also Cricklade with an infrequent freight service. There is no trace of Cricklade station today due to redevelopment, so when the town is eventually reached, a completely new one will have to be built.

A 7 mile section of the old MSWJR could be reopening for passenger traffic in the future. MP Claire Perry chaired a meeting in November with town councils, Network Rail and South Western Railway into restoring services between Andover and Ludgershall which currently is only used by MoD traffic. It has been estimated that it would cost £4 million to open a station at Ludgershall for passenger services but this would not allow MoD use. For the MoD to keep using the line as well as for passenger use, it has been estimated that it would cost £7 million for new infrastructure at Ludgershall.

Work on a new carriage shed will start next month at the Furnace Sidings site on the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway. It will be a three road shed capable of holding 12 Mk1 coaches and it will be built where former British Railways/National Coal Board exchange sidings were once situated.

We look forward to seeing you all on December 7 when Alex Green will be presenting 'The Regional Railways Story'. If you are unable to attend, on behalf of the committee may I send you our Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year. Our first meeting of 2018 will be on Thursday January 4 when member Brian May will be presenting 'Whilst I've Been Away: A Photographers Diary 2013 – 2017'. An evening not to be missed!

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