

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2017
Posted by September 28 2017

Our first meeting of the 2017/18 on September 7 certainly got us off to a great start when we welcome photographer Jack Boskett from Tewksbury. He showed us some stunning photographs and it wasn't all trains! We thank Jack for providing us with an excellent and entertaining evening.

Jack showed us several photographs of 'Mail Rail' in London and this will be part of the subject of our meeting on October 5 when we welcome Cyril Parsons as our Guest speaker. His subject will be 'Mail Rail and The Post Office & The Railway'. This is a timely presentation, following the planned opening of the Mail Rail Museum to the public in September. Cyril is a volunteer with the Postal Museum and will give us a two-part talk, covering Mail Rail (formerly the Post Office Underground Railway) and the Post Office & the Railways. The Mail Rail presentation will show how what was once a working underground railway has been converted into a visitor attraction.

You will no doubt have seen or heard that our President and artist - David Shepherd CBE, FRSA, FRGS passed away on September 19 aged 86. David became President of the Society in 1994, being well known in the railway world as he originally bought two steam locomotives directly from BR, (92203 and 75029) and he painted many scenes of railways, particularly in the dying days of steam. His two locomotives were initially based at the Longmoor Military Railway, but when this was closing, David searched for a new home and settled on Cranmore where he founded the East Somerset Railway building a loco shed and also setting up a gallery in the old signal box. He was also famous for his painting and conservation work with wildlife predominately in Africa and it was whilst out on missions there that he had three further steam locomotives, all British built, donated to him. In South Africa Class 15F 3052 was presented to him by Spoornet in 1991, and this is currently stored at Sandstone Estates in Ficksburg. He was also given two Zambian locomotives from the Mulobezi Railway, by the then President Kenneth Kaunda. One is still in the railway museum in Livingstone, Zambia, while the other was shipped to the UK and was kept at Bristol for several years. This 3' 6" gauge locomotive, along with a coach, was eventually donated by David to the National Railway Museum in York. It was in May 1996 when he last came to the Society for a special Saturday night meeting being held at Green Park. The following day the Society had a trip to visit his then railway at Cranmore. David leaves his wife Anvil and four daughters, but he will long be remembered as a great artist and for his dedicated work in wildlife conservation and outstanding contribution to railway preservation.

Sadly I also have to report the death of member David Pollard who passed away on Sunday September 17. David had been a member for nearly three years and was a great authority on the stone mines in the Corsham and Box areas. He gave the Society a very informative talk on the subject in 1991. He had an extremely varied and interesting life right up to the end, but started out as an apprentice at Swindon works in the late 50s early 60s, being made redundant with the end of loco construction looming. He then spent many years in engineering design but maintained a great interest in railways and Britain's industrial history. This led to his interest in quarrying and mining, with a particular passion for Bath Stone. In 1988 he opened Pickwick Quarry in Corsham as a museum with underground tours, a large collection of quarry tools, machinery and tramway artefacts. The museum closed in the late 1990s and he then struck a deal with Hansons and the quarry reopened around the year 2000 as Hartham Park Quarry with the museum collection being moved to an industrial unit (not open to the public) in Corsham. David lived in Box latterly, but had lived in Seend for many years. He leaves his wife Nina and son Thurston. At the time of writing this, funeral details are not known.

Just a reminder, if you've not yet renewed, membership fees are now due for the 2017/18 season at £18. You can post a cheque to the treasurer Jon Hughes at 65, Solsbury Way, Bath. BA1 6JA. (Cheques payable to Bath Railway Society) or pay on the door at the October meeting.

There will be some changes to the way that the bookstall is run, starting at the October meeting. Still bring along your unwanted books, priced up already and put on the table, but please check at the end of the meeting, and if they have not sold, then we ask that you take them home again. There will be an honesty box for monies, which will be collected at the end of the evening, and of course all proceeds are to the Society's funds. We will trial this method and hopefully it will work with your co-operation.

The name of Green Park station will soon be returning to the rail network, but alas it's not the one in Bath. The station will actually be in Reading on the Basingstoke Line, south of Southcote Junction. It is intended to serve the proposed Green Park Village residential development, the existing Green Park Business Park and the Madejski Stadium. Work on another new station - Worcester Parkway - is about to commence for opening in late 2019. This will be built in the triangle of land formed by the intersection of the Worcester to London (North Cotswold Line) and Birmingham to Bristol lines and the B4084 near Norton. The location is also close to Junction 7 of the M5 motorway.

The Swanage Railway's autumn gala planned to run from October 13 to 15 has been cancelled due to a shortage of locomotives.

Over the years the Society, together with the RCTS Bristol group members, have had the pleasure to be invited to 'play' trains for an evening at the Strawberry Line Miniature Railway at the Avon Valley Country Park. This five inch gauge railway is of course run by Mike Bass, who is well known to many! Mike now tells me he is retiring in March next year with the railway being taken over by the Country Park, although he will still be around to make sure the transfer all goes well. As a consequence of this, Mike will have several 5" gauge locomotives and wagons up for sale, so if you know anyone who might be interested they should contact him on 07960 151286 or 0117 9860124. We of course wish Mike well for his retirement and thank him for his invitations and time when we have had our evening visits.

Looking back to the month of October in past years, 40 years ago on October 1 1977, an Open Day was held at Cardiff Canton Diesel Depot with a dmu shuttle service being provide from Cardiff Central (riverside platforms) to the depot. 50 years ago on October 19, 1967, the remaining section of the Didcot Newbury & Southampton Railway north of Newbury was finally closed to freight traffic. (Passenger services had been withdrawn in 1962). Also closed to freight traffic 10 years earlier on October 12, 1957, was the line from Little Mill Junction (North of Pontypool Road) to Monmouth Troy. This date was also the centenary of the opening of the line and to mark the occasions Pannier Tank 4668 hauled the 'Usk - Monmouth Centenary Raitour' over the 16ml 12cl line from Little Mill starting at Pontpool. Passenger services on this line had been withdrawn in 1955 but Monmouth Troy station did remain open for general freight until January 1964 served by other lines. (A short truncated section of the line did also remain in use from Little Mill to serve Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF). Glascoed, but this saw its last freight train on January 3, 1993. The last recorded working of a passenger train on the line from Little Mill to Glascoed appears to be a nine coach rail tour on September 23, 1990 worked by 37 690 and 37 699 in top 'n' tail mode). The Monmouth Troy station building still survives but at a new location. It was taken down and moved brick by brick and rebuilt on the Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway and now serves the station at Winchcombe.

The North Somerset Railway Company, which is hoping to re-open the Frome to Radstock line, has purchased two wagons, these being a YBA Sturgeon, 27 tons numbered 994281, and a Flatrol

weighing 30tons. They are currently being stored at the East Somerset Railway, Cranmore, until such time as they can be used for track and infrastructure work on the NSR.

The Avon Valley Railway at Bitton have announced a date change for their Autumn Gala. Originally scheduled for October 14 & 15, it will now take place on November 4 & 5. (More details next month). The Railway are running a Murder Mystery Train on October 27 with Sherlock Holmes as its theme.

2017 is the 40th Anniversary of the foundation of the Deltic Preservation Society and to celebrate, the Bluebell Railway is hosting an Anniversary Gala from Friday October 6 to Sunday October 8. It will feature D9002, D9009 & 55019 and it's a Deltic only weekend. See the Bluebell website for details.

The West Somerset Railway will be staging their autumn gala from October 5 – to 8 entitled 'Bath & Beyond'. There will be an S & D theme as they will be operating visiting 73082 'Camelot', 34046 'Braunton' along with home fleet locomotives 44422, 53808 and 53809 to give a feel of the former Bath to Bournemouth route. Also in use will be 7820 'Dinmore Manor', 7822 'Foxcote Manor' and 6960 'Raveningham Hall. See the WSR website for full details.

On Sunday October 22, the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway Group are staging a WC&PR Anniversary Exhibition at the Parish Wharf Leisure Centre, Harbour Road, Portishead, Celebrating the 120th anniversary of the original opening of the line. This is a unique one-off event and there will be top-class layouts and original WC&PR artefacts on display along with photographs, dioramas and static models in different scales, society stands and traders. The venue is next to the Marina and light refreshments will be available. Open 10am to 4pm, Admission is £4.

The Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust are running a Rail Ale Train at Midsomer Norton station on the evening of Saturday October 28 from 7 to 10pm. Tickets cost £12.00 and this includes train rides, the first pint, an acrylic souvenir glass, and tasting notes. The station buffet will also be open. Tickets are available from the station or online at www.sdjr.co.uk

Sunday October 29 will be the last normal operating day for the Gartell Light Railway this year. The narrow gauge line near Templecombe will have trains operating from 10.30am until approximately 4.30pm. The railway is situated at Common Lane a short distance south of Templecombe village

It has been estimated that the cost to re-open Wilton station near Salisbury will be £5.5million. Wiltshire County Council is again looking into the possibilities of this with a Park & Ride station.

Did you know that GWR trains stop hourly and serve a station which the public cannot use? Lypstone Commando station on the line from Exeter to Exmouth is a rare example of a station not open to the general public. Although it belongs to Network Rail, it is exclusively for the use of visitors to the Royal Marine Commando Training Centre at Lypstone, despite it being accessible by a public footpath on the Exe Estuary Trail. The station, opened on May 3, 1976 and is advertised on the GWR website and in timetables, but marked as 'MOD Only'. The return fare from Exeter is £4.80. The Ministry of Defence cannot stop members of the public from alighting, although exit from the platform is via a locked gate and you would be challenged and ordered back onto a train by armed guards!

In a previous newsletter, mention was made about the possibility of re-opening the Newton Abbot to Heathfield line in Devon. Now a petition "Local Councils, Rail Operators and Network Rail, to work together: To Re-Open the Newton Abbot to Heathfield Railway Line" has now been started by the

revival group and they are hoping to reach 1,000 signatures and need more support. If you are interested in seeing this line re-open you can read more and sign the petition at

<http://chn.ge/2yzD6px>

The Swindon & Cricklade Railway has a small quantity of Grade B wooden sleepers to dispose of (suitable for domestic / garden use) at £5 to £20 each, depending on condition. Buyers to collect from Blunsdon Station (SN25 2DA). Contact Dave Randall by email at djrandall@tycoint.com between 8am - 5pm Monday to Thursday or, 8am - 1pm on Fridays or 07760476986 at other times and at weekends.

The Vale of Berkeley Railway in Gloucestershire has been donated the railings, gates, some windows and columns from the old Great Western Malvern Road Steam Shed in Cheltenham. The site of the former shed, which closed in 1966, is currently being redeveloped having last been used by a builder's merchant. The railway plan to use the railings in the future as part of the Sharpness Station restoration.

In the National Rail Awards 2017, Templecombe and Barnstaple stations were highly commended in the 'Small Station of the Year' category. Bicester Village station was the overall winner in this section.

Work is due to start later this month in preparation for a new bridge over Stapleton Road in Bristol. Sheet piling work will be undertaken as part of the project to re-instate four tracks on Filton Bank. This part of the construction work should be completed in December.

GWR is expected to introduce its new bi – mode Class 800 IEP's into normal passenger service this month. Two diagrams, one starting in Bristol and the other from Paddington are being planned with an un-confirmed start date of October 16. The diagrams can be found on the Real Time Trains website.

Our next meeting will be on November 2, when Steve Nakoneczny presents 'The Photographs of Keith Pirt'. More details in the next newsletter.

We look forward to seeing you all on Thursday October 5 at St Mary's Church Hall at 7.30pm for the presentation by Cyril Parsons on 'Mail Rail and The Post Office & The Railways'.

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