

WEST SOMERSET STEAM RAILWAY TRUST



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Feedback on any of the reports would be most welcome.

The next Newsletter (No 10) is planned for March/April 2018. Relevant submissions are invited, any time between now and the end of March, the beginning of April 2018.

Winter Steam Festival

Do not forget the Winter Steam Festival. The Festival will be held on December 29th and 30th December 2017. In a period of the year when it is usually thought of as being cold, here is an opportunity to ride in nice warm steam heated coaches. It is planned that up to four locomotives will be in operation on this truly Great Western Railway branch line.

WSSRT Board of Trustees Meetings up to November 2017

Copies of the full minutes relating to Board meetings and Annual General meetings are available from the WSSRT Web site <http://www.wssrt.co.uk>

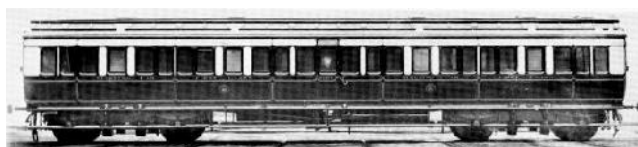
Safety Strategy. It was noted that the WSR PLC had updated their Safety Management System (SMS) and the updated version is now on the Staff website.

WSSRT Governance. Lady Gass, the current WSSRT President has indicated that she wished to remain as President, a meeting with the Chairman is to be arranged.

The Trust is considering the appointment of a Vice Chairman – and a job spec is being prepared.

The WSSRT is also seeking new Trustees for the following roles: Safety Management; Education & Training; Communications and Museum Curator. Please see the item entitled 'The Role of Trustees' on page 9.

WSSRT Policies. The Board discussed the salient points relating to a draft Volunteer policy. The WSSRT is monitoring new



legislation relating to Data Protection; this is to be discussed at the February Board.

New Volunteer Leaflets and Recruitment.

2,500 new leaflets had been produced and will be distributed to stations and salient WSR outlets early next year. Inviting local schools to undertake specific projects in the Museum is being considered; if pursued this may result in more volunteers coming forward. The setting up Facebook and Twitter accounts is being considered.

Museum Developments. The Gauge Museum. Statistics showing monthly visitor numbers and donations during 2017 are now available, it was agreed that these would be updated regularly. Changes to the displays during the visit of the Flying Scotsman had been well received and it had been agreed to keep themed displays changing on a regular basis. Blue Anchor Museum. An advertising board for the Blue Anchor Museum has been put up on Minehead Station and the boards at Blue Anchor have been updated.

Flying Scotsman. The Gauge Museum experienced only a small number of visitors due to the importance of keeping the platforms clear for loading and unloading passengers.

(Geoff Evens)

Volunteers invited to join the teams at Blue Anchor Museum and the Gauge Museum at Bishops Lydeard

It is the intention of the Trust next year to open and staff both Museums on every Sunday, Bank Holiday and Gala day from the March Gala to the last running day in November. We were able to achieve this at Blue Anchor in 2017 (many thanks to those who helped this year) and are hoping to do the same at both Museums next year. In addition, the Gauge Museum will be open but not staffed on all running days.

In addition, the Gauge Museum Model Railway will be open for as many days as volunteers can be found.

None of this will be achievable without more volunteers. It is not an onerous task; it just requires volunteers to be there and to be able to talk to the visitors; training will be given. Opening hours are normally between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm (depending on the number of visitors around).

If anyone is able to help please contact David Baker on davidbaker687@btinternet.com or on 01392 851752 stating whether you would like to help at Blue Anchor Museum, the Gauge Museum or the Model Railway at Bishops Lydeard.

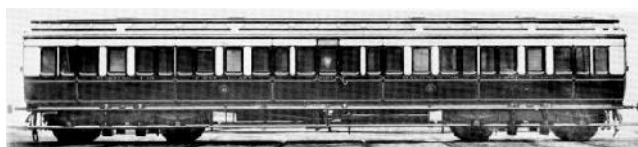
(David Baker)

Heritage Lottery Bid for the Gauge Museum

Although the Trust's initial application for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to develop the learning offer at the Gauge Museum was rejected, we have been encouraged to submit a revised bid. The HLF Development Officer for the South West visited Bishops Lydeard in June (as well as attending the Flying Scotsman reception on 5 September), and gave some helpful feedback on points to cover in the revised bid. We have also continued to get support from the Somerset Museums Development Officer.

We plan to resubmit our bid in March 2018. To ensure the best chance of success, we are working with Far Post Design - a museum design consultancy based at Okehampton, but operating across the UK. They are also currently working with Wells Museum, and previous assignments have included the Tank Museum at Bovington and the Motor Museum and Beaulieu.

(Chris Bolt)



Museums Networks

Reflecting its increased responsibilities for museums on the West Somerset Railway, the Trust has joined the Association of Independent Museums and the South West Federation of Museums and Art Galleries. As a small charity, the Trust also benefits from free membership of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations. One of the benefits of membership is access to free training courses. Different Trustees have attended courses including one on 'Understanding your audience' and also went to the Museum Volunteering Forum held at M Shed in Bristol on 2 October.

The Trust continues to participate in the Museums in Somerset network. This meets three times a year at different museums around the county (most recently at the Dunster Dolls House museum), with other members including Watchet Market House museum and Bishops Lydeard Mill, as well as larger museums such as Haynes Motor Museum (where the Spring meeting was held). This group also operates the 'Somerset Routes' website (www.somersetroutes.co.uk) containing details of all members of the group. This is being relaunched in 2018, and the Trust will be updating the material on the West Somerset Railway museums in time for the relaunch.

(Chris Bolt)

2016-17 Financial Results

The Trust's financial year ends on 30 September, and the draft accounts for the year to 30 September 2016 were approved by the Board and sent to Monahans (who are the Independent Examiner for the accounts - in effect a simple form of audit) at the end of October.

The main highlights of the draft accounts were:

- Income £20,829 (up from £11,840, reflecting two legacies totally nearly £5,000 and also donations made in the Gauge Museum which now come to the Trust)
- Net income £13,691 (up from £5,988)
- Capital expenditure £6,231 (up from £1,807, reflecting the first instalment of the cost of re-upholstering seats in carriage 6705, which has been contracted out)
- Net current assets (largely cash balances) £56,730 (up from £49,335).

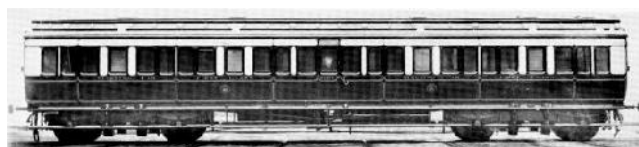
Although the balances have increased, these are expected to fall again in 2017-18 reflecting the cost of completing work on 6705, work to repair paintwork on sleeping car 9038 and small improvements in the Trust's museums including replacing the heaters in the Blue Anchor Museum. These plans are set out in the new Business Plan (see separate item).

(Chris Bolt)

2018 - 2020 Business Plan

The Trust now prepares a three-year Business Plan, which is rolled forward annually. The draft Plan for 2018 - 2020 was published for consultation in early December. Copies were sent to stakeholders, including the PLC and Association, as well as to members and supporters. This is to ensure that the plan is robust, reflects the Trust's charitable objectives and the priorities of its members, and aligns with planned activities of other bodies operating on the West Somerset Railway. It can be downloaded from the Trust's website.

The plan covers all the Trust's current and anticipated future activities, and includes financial projections on a calendar year basis (which reflects the planning period for the PLC). Given planned work on restoration of heritage carriages and on maintaining and developing the Trust's museums at Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor, total expenditure is



expected to exceed income over the period of the plan, even assuming an increase in members and other donations. By the end of 2020, the Trust's reserves are projected to be close to the minimum required by the Reserves Policy. The Trust will therefore be looking at other sources of potential income to allow the scope of its activities to be maintained and enhanced.

The final version of the plan will be submitted to members for adoption at the AGM to be held on Saturday 21 April.

(Chris Bolt)

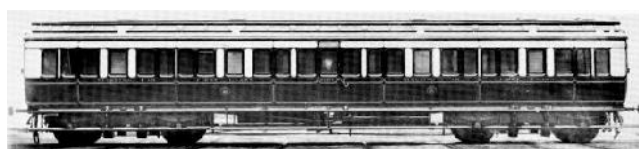
Completing Collett BCK No. 6705



Collett BCK No. 6705 (Chris Austin)

After months of careful study, research and comparisons, the flooring has been laid in 6705 and is ready for the lino to be laid on top. Why has it taken us so long? Well, the GWR laid a slurry of brick dust and cement on top of the floorboards, both to provide a fireproof layer, to reduce noise levels and to provide a firm base for the linoleum that was laid on top. For us this was not so easy as we did not have the dead level base needed for the slurry to be laid, and in service, such a base cracks as the coach body flexes in traffic.

So, the decision was made to lay the floor in wood and we set out to search for material to use as a fireproof barrier. After a lot of searching, we found a suitable fireboard, and this has been laid, sandwiched between two layers of plywood to form a smooth base that will not crack. It has been laid in each compartment, and along the corridor. The two toilets have been left with their original base and tiles with some careful restoration and replacement of damaged tiles planned.



All is now ready for the lower panelling to be completed and there is a lot of painting and varnishing to be done. The seats are due back from the upholsterers in mid-January, and then the compartments can be completed.



Collett BCK No. 6705; Seat back resplendent in new upholstery (Chris Austin)

Work is well advanced on the lavatories, but pipework needs to be reconnected, with some repairs while there is more painting to do both here and in the guard's van.

Door locks remain to be fitted and the gangway doors which are being repaired. 2018 should be the year she can again carry passengers, in time to celebrate the old lady's 80th birthday.

Sincere thanks go to the corps of determined volunteers who have got us this far. Having honed our skills on 6705, we are all looking forward to moving on to 3639, where we can do it all over again!



Toplight No. 3639 at Williton in October 2008. (Claire Sheppy)

(Chris Austin)

Artefact Acquisitions

A steady stream of new items has been donated to the Trust, and one or two bought during the year. Star exhibit is the Minehead signal box plate, and the story is told elsewhere. We have also been given the 1955 closure notice for Brean Road Halt, a quiet spot between Weston super Mare and Highbridge a couple of miles from the holiday park that was the start of the Pontins empire in 1946. The other local stations between Weston and Taunton closed later in 1964 (Brent Knoll in 1971) leaving just Highbridge and Bridgwater today. Before closure the halt had enjoyed a reasonable service, including a through train from Paddington. Many more closures in the Bristol Division were to follow following the Beeching Report of 1963 so Brean Road was an early casualty.

Many of the bequests are small personal artefacts or interesting working instructions. One such from Major King, the former Inspecting Officer of Railways, is the Paddington platform alterations in February 1952 to accommodate the funeral train of King George VI. Another, from a former Taunton supervisor is a list of Western Region water troughs and alternative water points for locomotives if these were out of action. This is a railway feature that is long gone and largely forgotten, but before anyone suggests recreating one on the WSR, remember you need about a mile of level track and that the optimum pick-up speed was 45 mph!

The Minehead Lost Property Register has been kindly donated to the railway and records all the lost items between 1908 and 1968. We will be analysing this for good stories over the coming months.

We have a huge collection of photographs, far more than we can process currently, covering many railway subjects, and of varying quality. Following the good example of the Severn

Valley, we plan to form a group of volunteers to assess this large and growing collection so that they can be catalogued and properly preserved. Not all will be of good enough quality to print or enlarge for display, but who knows what gems lie hidden in the boxes of colour prints or on the CDs? Get in touch if you would like to be part of this project and we can get started.

(Chris Austin)

Glorious Galas

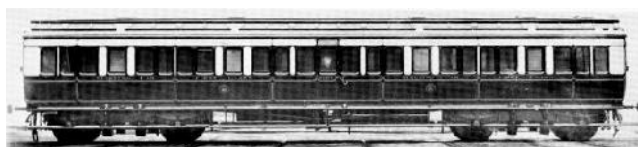
This year has passed in a blur, and of course the abiding memory is of that green engine with the German smoke deflectors that drew the crowds in September. At the Gauge Museum we like Galas because they bring a few trains to platform 1 and alighting passengers make a bee-line for the museum. They bring some interesting locomotives and people to the railway, and, surprisingly, visitor numbers were up in October, compared with last year, particularly at Blue Anchor, even though it was just after the *Flying Scotsman* visit.

The model railway remains the main draw at the Gauge Museum, and visitors also love working the levers in Powderham signal box. The experience was brought to life on the days that we were joined by Mike Hanscomb, with his black box that rings the block bells, operates the instruments and provides the sound effects of the train you have just signalled. Magic!

(Chris Austin)

Sorting out the Sleeping Car

The sleeping car remains, as ever, a subject of admiration by all our visitors. Many have never seen a sleeping car before, while others reminisce about earlier holidays to Scotland or across Europe on sleepers. Children are intrigued by the gas lighting and the quaint taps revealed when the sinks are lowered to reveal them. The tiny lavatory with its very



basic facilities seems to exercise endless fascination for all.

Restoration of the car was completed almost 12 years ago, when it was painted by Ralph Timmins. After a few outings to the Norton rally and the *Antiques Roadshow*, the paintwork needs some remedial work, and this has just been undertaken in the museum by Duncan Hensley and Harry Spencer from Restorations at Williton (Harry is also a model railway operator). Paint has faded over this period, and matching it to the original has been difficult. We sought help from a paint supplier who used a spectrograph to identify an exact match, but the subtle change in the colours proved too much for it, and we had to revert to more traditional methods (our eyes) to produce the result we were seeking.

Cracks and flaking paint have miraculously disappeared, and it all looks as good as new for 2018 and beyond. On any measure, they have done a first-class job and it is so good to see such expertise being deployed by a new generation of West Somerset staff.



GWR Sleeping Car no 9038 following the paintwork repairs and a topcoat of varnish has left the car gleaming and ready for 2018.

(Chris Austin)

The Reception and Press Event 05 September 2017

The Reception and Press Event in the Gauge Museum was organised by the PLC to coincide

with the first days running of locomotive no 60103 Flying Scotsman. It was planned that local politicians, main line railway companies, tourist organisations and organisations of note would be invited to attend.

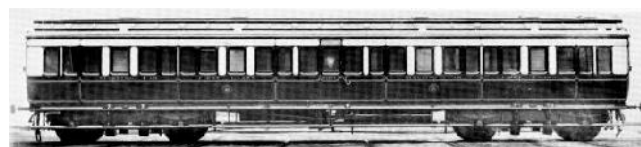
There were over 90 invitations sent and 60 acceptances, which is quite a high percentage. We also had the WSR, WSRA and WSSRT Chairman and a good number of PLC Directors to help.



Guests attending the Reception and Press Event in the Gauge Museum (Sam Burton)

The WSSRT provided positive and helpful support to the event the museum, having staff on hand to explain artefacts and to provide guided tours of the sleeping car. In addition, an outside catering company, contracted by the WSR Catering Manager, provided the food and drink. The service was very good and the canapés were first class – not a grey sausage roll or undercooked chicken leg in sight.

The consensus of all who attended was very positive and everyone enjoyed the event, especially seeing Flying Scotsman up close.





The Mayor of Taunton Deane discussing the Flying Scotsman event with 3 former WSR Chairman, Chris Austin, John Irvén and Mark Smith (Sam Burton)

A small sample of comments received after the event.

Councillor David Fothergill, Chair, Somerset County Council wrote; *‘Just a short note to thank you and the whole WSR team for the very kind invitation to the Flying Scotsman event. It didn’t take too much thinking about when I was asked if I was free to go along! What a prestigious event the whole visit has been for the WSR and the wider Somerset Community.*

My congratulations to you all for capturing such an iconic visit and many thanks for allowing me to share in it.’



Councillor David Fothergill, enjoying the Gauge Museum reception along with Councillor Clare Paul (Sam Burton)

Cllr Rosemary Woods, Vice Chair, West Somerset Council wrote; *‘Thank you so much for the photographs. We really did enjoy the reception and meeting both yourself and your star performer. There is a real buzz around*

West Somerset regarding the ‘Flying Scotsman’, she is the centre of discussions hereabouts. I have shared some of the photo's that I took on Facebook and again they have been received with acclaim. I shall also share, to encourage engagement with the event over the weekend. Can I congratulate yourself and the WSR team on their organisation?’

There were many other comments displaying similar sentiments, so I think we can be very pleased with the outcome.

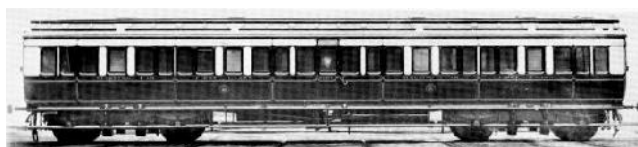
(Geoff Evens)

The Flying Scotsman visit, 5th to 12th September 2017

The Flying Scotsman visit to the WSR was from the 5th to 12th September 2017. During this period the railway carried several thousand passengers at premium fares and very many positive comments were made about the event and the arrangements. It was apparent that many of these passengers were new to the railway, and were not traditional heritage railway enthusiasts. The timetable worked well, and there was sufficient recovery time built in to enable any unforeseen delays to be overcome by late afternoon. The mixture of non-stop “express” trains with stopping trains for normal passengers was well received. The “school trains” proved extremely popular with the children (and teachers), and we have received much positive feedback.



The Flying Scotsman about to leave Bishops Lydeard on 5th September (Sam Burton)



Although staff and volunteers worked extremely hard, over very long hours, the general impression received was that staff and volunteers enjoyed working on the event, including at the intermediate stations. There was a substantial sense of collaboration across the railway.

(Geoff Evens)

Model Railway in the Gauge Museum, Bishops Lydeard

The end of October was to see almost the end of another season of model railway operating at Gauge Junction and probably our busiest season so far, we had experienced in our years of operating as a major attraction in the Gauge museum. When we closed for the month on 29th we had received a total of 11,245 visitors since we opened the gate back in March and exceeding our total last season at the same date by 19 visitors. Before we finally finish for the 2017 season we will be operating on most days when the railway is running through until January 1st 2018 when we will finally close until March 17th 2018 to undertake our usual winter maintenance and development work.

Probably our highlight during a busy season was the visit of Flying Scotsman back in September when we were able to open every day of the visit to add pleasure to any visitors who were able to make it across to Platform 1. In keeping with the theme, we ran our own North-Eastern display with the title of 'Gresley and teak' with very many versions of the famous loco appearing from the collections of the operating team, some very historic Hornby models making daylight from their storage boxes.

It has been a pleasure this season to work as part of the Steam Trust and to have the support of the Trust and be part of museum team as well as providing the Trust with a very active and enthusiastic team of young people. Many visitors have commented on the high standard of modelling that we have now

reached with the layout and the amount of action provided by the varied collections and traffic running around our tracks. At last we are able to provide a layout up to exhibition standards which is very much due to the enthusiastic work put in by small team that work through winter cold to build the exhibition.

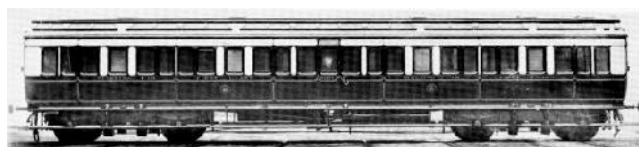
Thanks are due also to the operating team who exhibit their own collections and put in many long hours operating and answering questions from our visitors. Congratulations to James Pearson who was selected this year by the company and awarded the Tracker of the Year Award which was presented to James by company chairman Alan Nicholson during the annual presentation of awards at Minehead on October 29th. James works with great enthusiasm both as an operator and the artist who constructs much of the scenery which can be viewed on the layout.

It has been a great season and we are all looking forward to a happy and enjoyable conclusion to the 2017 season during December before we get down to another winter to make the exhibition look even better for 2018.

(Alan Meade)



James Pearson, a member of the Gauge Museum Model Railway team being presented with his Tracker of the Year Award at Minehead on the 29th October by Alan Nicholson, Chairman of the WSR. (Alan Quick)



**West Somerset Steam Railway Trust
Souvenir Mugs**

The Steam Trust have available special souvenir mugs depicting the sleeping car 9038. This is a limited edition of 144 mugs and will not be repeated once all have been sold. These will be available from the Museums at Blue Anchor and Bishops Lydeard or at any events where the Steam Trust have a stand. These can be pre-ordered but must be collected from the Steam Trust.

For pre-orders please contact David Baker on davidbaker687@btinternet.com or 01392 851752.

The cost will be £5 per mug but for Steam Trust Members with a current Steam Trust Membership card, there will be a 10% discount making them £4.50 each. Steam Trust members will need to produce their membership card when purchasing.

(David Baker)

West Somerset Railway Heritage Committee.

Ian Coleby, WSSRT Director will be advertising shortly for volunteers to be a member of the WSR Heritage Committee. The group would advise all parts of the railway on heritage issues, sometimes challenged by the need to meet modern standards. On behalf of Ian we would like to invite any WSSRT members who have an interest in Heritage to let us know by e-mailing info@wssrt.co.uk

(Ian Coleby)

Minehead Signal Box Nameplate

In the late 1960s the cast iron nameplate from Minehead Signal Box was acquired by a private collector. The nameplate came up for sale again recently, and has now been secured by the WSSRT thanks to numerous donations from interested parties.

The nameplate is the one worn by the second signal box extant from 1934 to 1966, and it is possible that it came from the first one. It is currently displayed in Blue Anchor museum

but, with help from the Friends of Minehead Station, we are planning to display it permanently at Minehead



(Geoff Evens)

The Role of Trustees

The Steam Trust is managed by eight trustees, two of whom would like to stand down after many years guiding and advising us. So, we are looking for at least two new trustees to help us carry on the good work. In particular, we are looking for people who might support us on safety management, education and training and communications, in addition to the usual roles of the trustees of a registered charity. We are also looking for someone to take on the role of curator for the Gauge Museum, to lead the volunteer team who are there to engage with visitors and tell the railway story. Please contact Chris Austin if these important roles appeal to you (austinca2@googlemail.com)

Chris Austin

Join the Trust: You can now become a member of the Trust for a minimum donation of £1 per month, although most members contribute more than this, thereby helping fund the work of the Trust. Membership forms are on the website <http://www.wssrt.co.uk>

Volunteers are welcome, either at the regular weekday sessions – Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays – or at our monthly Sunday working parties between 10.00 and 16.00: see website for details. New volunteers can contact Chris Austin for further details.

