

WEST SOMERSET STEAM RAILWAY TRUST

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Feedback on any of the reports would be most welcome.

The next Newsletter (No 9) is planned for November/December 2017. Relevant submissions are invited, any time between now and the end of October, beginning November 2017.

WSSRT Board of Trustees Meetings held on 16 February and 22 April 2017

A brief synopsis of matters discussed and decisions taken during the Board of Trustees held February and April 2017. Copies of the full minutes are available from the WSSRT Web site.

Finance and Commercial Matters. It was reported that the Trust finances were in a healthy state and two legacies had been recently received, the Annual Accounts were approved and Directors signed copies as appropriate.

Governance Matters. A paper was presented outlining issues relating to a new Membership Campaign, the return address for membership applications would be the registered office at Bishops Lydeard.

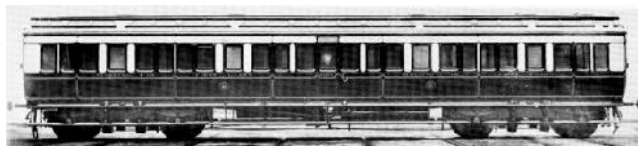
Policies. Several policies, as required by the Charity Commissioners, were discussed and appropriate amendments agreed. All amended policies were to be added to the WSSRT website.

The Trust and The Association. Following a meeting with the WSRA representatives it was agreed that any merger between the WSSRT and WSRA would be premature at this stage but a future dissolving of both organisations and a completely new set-up should not be ruled out altogether at some stage in the future.

Southern Gateway. Consultation meetings had been held and feedback had been requested by mid-May.

Williton. It was agreed to circulate details of the developments which contains details of how it will remain an engineering, training and resource centre. Also included are details of a catering outlet and reference to the Brunel connection.

Museum Development. A visit to Swanage, organised through the South West Heritage



Trust, is to be held on 30 May at the Swanage Heritage Railway and hosted by Dorset Museums.

The Gauge Museum. A Fire Risk assessment had been carried out in the Gauge Museum, the most effective method of raising a warning to vacate the premises was to 'shout'. A similar exercise would be carried out at Blue Anchor.

Blue Anchor Museum. The museum leaflets were to be updated and a quantity of these would be placed in local holiday camps and other appropriate outlets including placing a poster on the railings outside the Station at Minehead.

Carriage Project. A volunteer Project Manager is required to organise the work to draw up a working a schedule of outstanding issues to enable the remainder of the work to be undertaken more effectively.

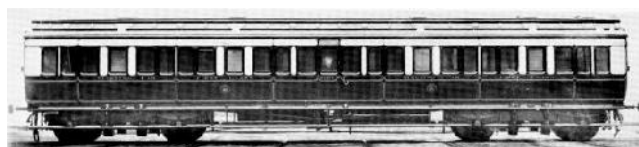
Somerset West Lottery. The Somerset West Lottery was to be launched in May and the WSSRT could be considered as one of the good causes.

Heritage Lottery Fund Bid for the Gauge Museum. The final draft of the HLF Bid has been submitted. Letters of support were obtained from Local Authorities, Parish Councils and local Schools. (Subsequently the HLF have informed the Trust that the bid was unsuccessful).

Antiques Roadshow. Sleeping Car, No. 9038 will be used as an exhibit at Minehead for the Antiques Roadshow on 17 May. In addition, some artefacts owned by the WSSRT may also feature.

Flying Scotsman. The WSSRT had been asked to host the VIPs in the Gauge Museum for drinks and snacks at the launch of the visit by the Flying Scotsman on 05 September.

(Geoff Evens)



WSRRT Annual General Meeting 2017

The 35th Annual General Meeting of the Trust was held in the Gauge Museum on Saturday 22nd April and was chaired by the Chairman, Chris Austin; approximately 18 members were present.

Southern Gateway Project. Ric Auger from the WSR PLC made a presentation on the options for the Southern Gateway Project at Bishops Lydeard and the Trust will be responding to the proposals in the near future.

Financial Statements. The minutes of the 2016 AGM were approved as were the financial statements which showed the reserves to be in a healthy state.

Election of Officers. As set out in the WSSRT Articles of Association John Jenkins and Pete Treharne retired from office and, being eligible, were re-elected as Directors.



Geoff Evens was elected as a Director to the Board. Geoff has been a volunteer at Bishops Lydeard, a Director of the WSRA, WSR PLC Director and Company Secretary.



Alan Meade who had been a volunteer Guard and Roster Clerk for many years has latterly been involved with the model railway in the Gauge Museum. Alan has been invited to join the Board of Directors from Monday 24th April.

Business Plan. The Trust Business Plan for 2017/19 was approved and this lays out the objects and priorities of the Trust, the current financial position, the future activity, risk to delivery and financial projections together with evaluation and review.

Chairman's Update. The formal business was followed by the Chairman's update and Chris Austin reported that membership was at its

highest level with 63 members. He also reported that the Trust had now taken over the responsibility for the Bishops Lydeard Gauge Museum, including the model railway. Chris Austin also reported that a leaflet was being produced to increase membership and a second one to encourage more volunteers.

In Conclusion. This was followed by a question and answer session and a visit to the model railway in the Gauge Museum.

(David Baker)

Progress with Collett BCK No. 6705

Work has now started on the brake van, painting the ceiling and now working on the doors and walls. One external door has been renewed with proper tongued and grooved boards, replacing the plywood internal panelling. The inside of the van is 'scumbled', a mixture of paint and varnish, where a comb is used to draw out the varnish to create a wood grain effect, a new challenge for the team working on the coach. Some original scumbling is in much better condition and this is being retained. Work has started on clearing the toilet compartments for rebuilding and fibreglass repairs have been carried out to the sinks and toilet pedestals to enable the original items to be retained.

In the corridor, the lights are recessed into the ceiling and were protected by an inverted dome shaped glass shade. Some were missing and some cracked, but replacements have been sourced, formed from plastic but looking identical to the originals, a result gives the proper 'period' feel to the corridor ceiling.

The gangway doors are being overhauled with new outer skins and will shortly be re-hung. Work continues on the myriad small fittings in the compartments and around the windows. After much discussion and consultation, we are close to being able to complete the compartment floors.

We should shortly receive the first of the re-upholstered seats back from Abingdon for a trial fitting, and then the remainder of the seat frames will go away to be dealt with. Once the flooring is down, we will be able to install the lower panelling and complete the interior fittings prior to replacing the seats.

We are still working out how to manage the plumbing in the toilets, and, reluctantly, how to replace the frost damaged lead piping with something that will be safe and robust to use in service.

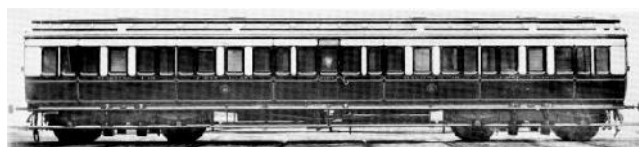


Collett BCK being shunted in March (Chris Austin)

The pace of progress and the number of volunteers means that we need a better system of identifying and allocating the work to be done to completion, and to ensure that materials are available in time to carry out the work in its proper sequence. I have been starting to sort this out with the help of colleagues working on the coach, so that more productive use can be made of the precious time of volunteers and we can see it roll out and into traffic rather sooner than might otherwise have been the case.



Peter Thompson cleaning the vacuum gauge from the brake van of BCK No. 6705. (Chris Austin)



My thanks to everyone involved in the restoration, for their practical skills, inventiveness, and their indomitable cheerfulness, as well as for their generous contribution of time and often materials, as we move into the latter stages of restoration.

I was pleased that Andy Forster, the recently retired CME called in recently and endorsed the work being done as professional and to a proper standard for the railway.

(Chris Austin)

Museums in Somerset

The Trust has joined the 'Museums in Somerset' group, which comprises museums of all sizes across the county. It meets three times a year to share experiences and to hear presentations from South West museums experts on various matters relating to collection management and developing understanding of museum visitors.

One of the presentations was on care of collections - including the right materials and tools to use. (One key message for us was that Brasso is banned, because it can cause long-term damage!) We have also joined with other Somerset museums to survey our visitors using a simple one-page survey form, with online analysis to summarise results and compare with other museums, which was first rolled out across museums in Devon in 2016. We started using the survey forms at the Spring Gala, and are working steadily towards our target of 350 forms by the end of the season. We will share the results in a future edition of the Newsletter.

With support from Liz Neathey, one of the Museum Development Officers for Somerset funded by the Arts Council, we have started to explore the steps we will need to take if we decide to seek accreditation for our two museums. To help with this, we held a joint meeting at Bishops Lydeard in November with volunteers from the Swanage Railway Museum and experts from the South West

Museums Development Programme. We are paying a return visit to the Swanage Railway on 30 May.

(Chris Bolt)

Museum Making: Project to Refresh the Gauge Museum

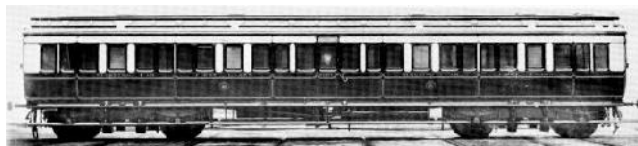
In March, the Trust submitted an application for HLF funding for its 'Museum Making' project to refresh and upgrade the Gauge Museum at Bishops Lydeard and to develop an education programme for the railway, linked with local schools and colleges. The bid was for £65,000, with the Trust proposing to add £10,000 from its own resources on top of volunteer input valued (using HLF methodology) at over £15,000.

We have now heard that our bid was unsuccessful. The decision letter gives very little information, but does give the Trust the opportunity of a feedback session with the HLF Development Manager, which we will take up.

All this is deeply disappointing, particularly given that we had taken expert external advice and had strong support in our application from the PLC, the Parish Council, the County Council and local schools.

Once we have met the HLF to hear their feedback, we will develop fresh plans to take forward the museum improvements, which may well include a revised grant application. With the Southern Gateway Project Board, we will consider the effect of this on the larger application planned for the carriage restoration and display shed at BL as part of that project.

The HLF decision is a set-back, but it will not prevent the Trust continuing to improve the Gauge Museum steadily as we have been doing since we took over responsibility for it at the beginning of this year. Already, a number of the display cases have been



rearranged or refreshed, and some of the larger items have been relocated to create more space around the entrance to the museum.

(Chris Bolt)

Model Railway in the Gauge Museum, Bishops Lydeard

The Steam Trust are pleased that Alan Meade and his team operating the model railway in the Gauge Museum are now part of the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust. Alan has joined the Board of the Steam Trust and hopefully he and his helpers will feel part of the Steam Trust and the Trust will be able to give them support in the future.

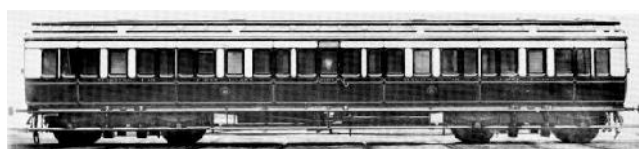


Operators Matt Jackson, James Pearson and Tom Donnelly, the winter working team. (Alan Meade)

There is discussion about putting together an 'N' Gauge model railway to fit into a cabinet adjacent to the model railway, and also the possibility of a similar one being put into the Blue Anchor Museum. These displays to be either coin operated or push button operated. If anyone has any interest in being involved in these projects, or any experience, perhaps they would like to contact David Baker on davidbaker687@btinternet.com and I will pass on your details to Alan.

(David Baker)

Update from Blue Anchor Museum



Following Pete Treharne's decision to be less involved with the Museum at Blue Anchor, it is pleasing to note that through the increase in volunteers, the Museum will be open every Sunday, Bank Holidays and Galas. There is still room for one or two volunteers if anyone would like to volunteer to help, please contact me if you would like to join the team. I can be contacted on: davidbaker687@btinternet.com

It is hoped over the winter period to look at the displays in the Museum and to ensure they are relevant to the Great Western Railway and possibly put in one or two interactive displays.

(David Baker)

The Spring Steam Gala

The four-day pageant of steam came a little later this year at the end of April, and we were able to support the railway through stewarding the Gauge museum throughout, sleeping car visits and the perennially popular model railway. Over the period, we had just under 700 visitors and earned some useful income from donations and sale of books. It was also an opportunity to try out the visitor questionnaire designed to provide us with some data about visitors' profiles and interests to enable us to reflect their interests in planning future developments in the museum.

While there was no strong theme to the gala this year, on the model railway, the 50th anniversary of the end of steam on the Southern was properly marked with a splendid cavalcade of Southern locomotives and rolling stock on the Saturday and Sunday. Thanks to everyone who came along to help out during the gala and to help our visitors understand a little more of what they see both in the museum and on the railway.

(Chris Austin)



Sleeping Car no. 9038 leaving the Gauge Museum on its way to Minehead to be part of the BBC Antiques Roadshow. (Chris Austin)



Views of the Gauge Museum without Sleeping Car No. 9038 which was away for the BBC Antiques Roadshow at Minehead. (Geoff Evens)

The BBC Antiques Roadshow

Second only to Fiona Bruce, the Trust's sleeping car was a star attraction at the Antiques Roadshow filming on 17th May. Despite torrential rain (only some of which got inside through a ventilator!), thousands of visitors came to the show and hundreds stopped to admire the sleeping car, or to look inside. It was the backdrop to many of the expert assessments, and three of the valuations were made in filmed interviews inside the passenger saloon of No. 9038.



Matthew Haley of the Antiques Roadshow discussing the history and value of a pack of early playing cards in the saloon of No. 9038. The cards are laid out on the old leather suitcases kept in the car for display. (Chris Austin)

From September when the first show is to be screened, we can certainly say "as seen on the Antiques Roadshow" in our leaflet. A second programme from yesterday's filming is being made for transmission next year. The UK audience is six million viewers, and the show is seen in Australia and New Zealand, on BBC i-player and Yesterday.



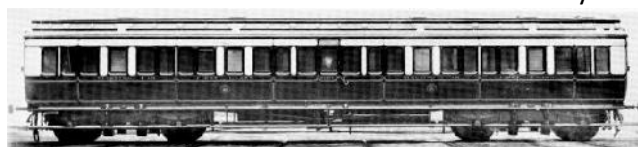
Sleeping Car No. 9038 provides the backdrop for showing Fiona Bruce and Ronnie Archer Morgan of the Antiques Roadshow discussing a vase. (Chris Austin)

Both the PLC and the BBC were delighted that we were there, and in terms of spreading the word, it was a good day for the Trust."

(Chris Austin)

A Brief History of Luggage

Love it or loathe it, luggage is an almost indispensable part of travelling. Sleek and compact rollers that are a pleasure to use; bedraggled bags that just refuse to lie down and you cannot help but grudgingly respect; convenient carry-on bags; check-in beasts



that can handle anything baggage handlers can throw at them, or of course throw them; the world of luggage is amazingly diverse. However, we tend to think of luggage in terms of recent developments, but people have been carrying luggage in some form or another for centuries.

When Did the Earliest-Known Wheeled Luggage Appear. The Knights Templar are recorded as the first to make use of wheeled luggage: The soldiers used the wheeled cases to transport armour and other items as early as 1153 during the Crusades. The recorded history of luggage for the next several hundred years remains sparse, with few specific accounts of how personal belongings were transported other than in trunks or bundles.

By 1596, the Oxford English dictionary had added the word luggage with a definition. The word meant “denoting inconveniently heavy baggage” and came from the verb “lug.” Throughout the 17th and 18th century, art and literature portrays the migrations of people across Europe usually depicting travellers walking or riding horses as they carry knapsacks, trunks, and other loose bags.

Almost a millennium after its first appearance, rolling baggage is next seen during the British Raj. Guests arriving at an official reception were seen with wheeled carry-all’s. A British Colonel who was attending the event recognised the potential and drew a sketch applying to London for a patent. The Colonel’s patent application was lost and the patent was granted instead to Prince Albert by Queen Victoria, the invention was named the “Travelling Carry-All, Omni-Conveyance, Be-wheeled”.

Rail and Steamship Travel and Luggage Design. Railways and steamships in the mid 1800’s was the prominent mode when travelling a distance. Bags placed in luggage racks, luggage vans or in the holds of ships could slide around due to rough handling or the chaotic conditions as found in rail transfer

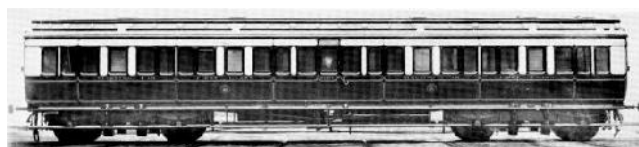
sheds or similar. If the bags and trunks weren’t tough enough, they could be crushed or split open. Luggage designs of the day were often built of wood and leather and could include heavy iron base in order to withstand such conditions.

The Suitcase and Luggage Design. A suitcase revolution came about with the advent of the automobile. Suitcases began as an afterthought in the luggage and leather goods business, but they soon became the very symbol of travel. Early suitcases were lighter and more portable than trunks, but they were still bulky by today’s standards. The popular imagination dates the beginning of the suitcase to the period of industrialization in the 1800’s when well-heeled travellers stood on smoke-filled platforms ready to board their trains for summer excursions, it was the beginning of mass tourism, of travel for travel’s sake, a summer day could draw hundreds of thousands of visitors to British beaches. Travel wasn’t just for the wealthy anymore.



The new Gauge Museum display includes luggage labels, dating from a more genteel era, these labels would allow the porter to put your heavy suitcases in the van, so you weren't troubled with it in your compartment. (Ian Coleby)

Suitcases had to become lighter and cheaper if they wanted to compete; leather, wood and steel gave way to cardboard, plastic other modern materials and today luggage design is tightly linked to aviation. Carry-on luggage, which was transformed in 1987 with the wheeled “Rollaboard” bag and its now-ubiquitous collapsible handle conforms to the dimensions of the airlines with the smallest storage area. When new weight restrictions for checked in bags being applied during the 2000’s, practically every luggage manufacturer released new lightweight models to stay competitive. These suitcases tend to be vertical instead of horizontal,



because of their wheels, and relatively stout and thick, because of airline restrictions on suitcase dimensions.



Luggage and passengers loading onto a coach at Minehead. (Ian Coleby)

The present trend has encouraged people to travel with far more luggage than they used to, which has overwhelmed the capacity of trains on the main line to manage the additional volume successfully, I am sure we have all experienced this, especially when the volume of luggage makes progress through the Underground stations so slow.

Malcomb Stacy then a volunteer at Bishops Lydeard noticed some vintage luggage thrown into a skip. With permission, he retrieved the items and took them home. In his garage, he started cleaning them and restoring damaged and missing parts.



As a member of the West Somerset Steam Railway Trust he decided to try and sell the restored items to the public at the West Somerset Steam Fairs and private sales venues, with all proceeds going to the WSSRT. This has become a successful activity with

Malcomb renovating donated items from Bishops Lydeard and Crowcombe Heathfield stations then taking them to various venues to raise funds for both the WSSRT and the Friends of Crowcombe Station.

(Geoff Evens)



Sleeping Car No. 9038 returning to Bishops Lydeard following duties during the filming of the BBC Antiques Road Show at Minehead. (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 Sunday working parties between 10.00 and 16.00: see website for details. New volunteers can contact Chris Austin for further details.

