



THE PLATFORM

THE OFFICIAL E-NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY

Second Series No. 3, December 2024

With all good wishes to everyone for Christmas, and for 2025



Santa Express entering Williton, hauled by BR(W) 4-6-0 Manor Class 7828 Odney Manor. Photo: Mike Lanning

From the Chairman

The end of the year for the West Somerset Railway is the time that we review what went best during the previous running season, and what we want to develop for the future. More widely 2024 has been an uncertain year for all of us: I am sure you don't read this newsletter to receive a summary of world events from me – quite the reverse! But, of course, it's impossible to forget that the national – and international – economic situation has an impact on people's leisure spend, which is what most of our passengers are spending when they travel with us. We also have to make sure that, year by year, we have to improve and develop our offer to those passengers.

Look back ten year or more, and you can see how far we have come, so we look forward to 2025 with some confidence. There will be some innovations, but the core basis of the railway isn't going to change. We have a good understanding of what our passengers want when they visit us, and we will continue to provide this – only better and better, year by year!

So, it is in that context I sincerely wish you and your families and friends, a very Happy Christmas and all good wishes for 2025...and thank you for your all support.

Jonathan Jones Pratt, West Somerset Railway PLC Chairman

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2024 Christmas Events on the West Somerset Railway

Panto Train

The West Somerset Railway in collaboration with the Experiences Group have created an event with all the characteristics of a traditional pantomime, however there's a twist! It will all be on board a heritage steam train travelling through the beautiful scenery of the Quantock Hills.

With the popular Winterlights train having its final date during the Christmas programme of 2023, the railway wanted to create a new fun, family-friendly event that could take over from the magic of the Winterlights services and leave lasting festive memories for passengers of all ages.



Photo: Aaron Manley

Kerry Noble, West Somerset Railway General Manager said “We are excited to introduce a brand-new event to our Christmas line up. This event is perfect for families who can experience the festive cheer of a traditional pantomime but also enjoy the extraordinary experience of it being performed on a moving steam train!” The Panto Train will run twice a day on selected dates between Saturday 14th December and Wednesday 1st January. Please see our website for further information about the event: <https://www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk/events/view/panto-train>

Santa Express

Starting on 1st December on select dates till 24th December 2024.

Step aboard our festively decorated heritage carriages for a magical ride behind a steam locomotive through the scenic Quantock Hills from Bishops Lydeard to Williton and back. A gift from Santa and refreshments will be waiting for you at your table, with the man himself visiting during the journey. Tickets must be pre-booked as seats for each train are limited and are selling fast. Registered carers may travel for free where a seat only will be provided. Additional snacks and beverages will be available at the welcome marquee in Bishops Lydeard. <https://www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk/events/view/santa-express-bishops-lydeard>

For a full list of Christmas events please visit
<https://www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk/events/christmas-events>

Steam Locomotive News from Richard Hiscox

Locomotive department wise we have run just under 10,000 steam miles on the WSR this year so far with a variety of motive power available which include 9351,7828,7812,6695,9466 and staying on longer 6990 which the latter used in filming taking place on the WSR and departing us back to the GCR at the end of July.



Spring Steam Spectacular 4 May 2024: Hunslet No 1873 entering Washford Yard With the morning up goods. Photo: Josh Brinford

After a very successful steam spectacular event which saw a wide range of varying motive power run on the WSR we totalled up just shy of 2,400 miles in the four days of this special event. The star of the show by surprise was Hunslet works 1873 *Jessie* which was a superb little machine and drew quite an interest by all who crewed her.

Unique WSR Mogul 2-6-0 9351 has had a vacation in the Cotswolds by visiting our friends at the Gloucester and Warwickshire Railway at Toddington for their spring gala and

with some negotiation managed to stay and work for them for an extended period earning the WSR some income whilst doing so. The loco ran 324 miles there and was very well received.

Flagship 7828 *Odney Manor* continues to be in regular service and looking better than ever nowadays with its new Churchward tender which was built to the exact drawings that Swindon, produced by the dedicated team of volunteers at MD workshops having ran over 2,000 miles already since built.

We also welcome GWR built sister *Manor* 7812 this season to the WSR after running very well in 2023. We welcomed back 7812 for the remainder of the 2024 season on the WSR.

Another busy but successful year with various guest locomotives during the year of varying types from one of Britain's oldest locomotives built in 1863 "Furness 20" to one of the newest finished in 2024 *Betton Grange*. The Steam fleet at the time of writing has run just shy of 30,000 miles on the WSR this year so far. We are now preparing 9351,7828 and 9466 for the festive services.

6695 arrived on the WSR in March, on loan from the Swindon and Cricklade Railway to help us start the season operations. This allowed us to carry out longer-term winter maintenance work on *Odney Manor*. 6695 operated 2500 miles during her visit.



WSR 2-6-0 Mogul No 9351 and BR(W) 0-6-0PT No 9466 on shed at Minehead, 30th November 2024. Photo: Ben Grellier

We were pleased to welcome 6990 *Witherslack Hall* to the railway in April, on loan from the Great Central Railway. This was originally a short-term loan to help us out before and during our May gala. However, a filming contract on the railway, and 6990 being the preferred motive power, the GCR kindly extended their loan until the end of July.

7828 *Odney Manor* returned from the Great Central Railway following a period of weekends running at Loughborough and being their star guest at their gala. This was part of the deal for us keeping 6990 for an extended period, and one with which we were very happy to oblige. *Odney* operated nearly five hundred miles whilst there and was very popular with crews and visitors.

9466 has operated 2800 miles this year. We've had a few mechanical issues to sort during the year but given that the loco is nine years into her boiler ticket she has gone extremely well. She proudly operated the non-stop, fully loaded, 7 coach "Steaming to the Seaside" charter in April with ease. Sadly, she has now had to be withdrawn, and has joined the queue for major overhaul, which will be undertaken at Williton.

2024 saw ever popular 7812 *Erlestoke Manor* back with us arriving on the 23rd May and helped us during the peak season, operating 65 days and 4,800 miles before departing back to the SVR on November 4th.



7812 will return in late April 2025 and stay with us longer term currently until 31st December 20 27: our thanks go to the Erlestoke Manor Fund.

Looking ahead into 2025 various negotiations with a variety of locomotive groups and societies is currently going on to secure adequate motive power for us for 2025 and beyond. With our current timetable five locomotives is a comfortable position to provide sufficient motive power, allowing for boiler washouts etc.

GWR 4-6-0 No 7812 *Erlestoke Manor* arriving at Blue Anchor, 27th July 2024. Photo: Mark V Pike

We have a good team of volunteers who support us at Minehead, although we could do with more at Williton. They have proved invaluable, bringing with them various skills, and help us with washouts and other maintenance tasks. A big thank you to them all.

The small but enthusiastic volunteer team at Minehead who had a major part in the rebuild of Churchward tender T2061 now running behind *Odney Manor* have recently taken on the challenge of building complete new side tanks for WSRA owned small prairie tank 4561. The current tanks were recently delivered to us for assessment and rectifying, but the current thinking is that building completely new tanks would perhaps be an improved solution. We are working closely with the WSRA on this. Other components from 4561, such as the coupling rods, are also here to inspect and determine what's required to make good again.

2024 saw the class 115 DMU running as a three-car unit again covering just shy of one thousand miles during summer running. The ever-hard-working volunteers one of which is the backbone Paul Murray to whom we are incredibly grateful for all his knowledge and hard work helping to keep this operational.

Behind the scenes much more investment is being spent on the DMU vehicles than perhaps previous years, the latest project being the class 117 power car 51354 which has just been outshopped from MD and nearly ready for testing after much mechanical attention and bodywork with a hope to being paired with the good class 115 power car 51880 whilst 51859 is not far from being withdrawn from traffic.

The Carriage and Wagon team have busy keeping the existing fleet Mark 1 fleet operational. It's hard to believe many of our carriages are now 70 years old! Various carriages have been stopped during the year for maintenance, some more extensive than others. This has delayed work on rebuild projects currently in the works, but we hope to move this forward soon. Buffet 4346 will see some well needed external bodywork repairs and repaint over the winter ready for next year.

Meanwhile a small team of volunteers at both Minehead and Williton who are regulars in other roles across the railway continue excellent work on the many unique wagons we have on the WSR.

Infrastructure *from Phil Young*

Phil Young writes:

Now that we are at the end of the running season, attention turns mostly to maintenance tasks. The never-ending work of lineside clearance and vegetation management continues, with a second round of weed spraying completed in early June, and particular attention paid to maintaining the required sighting distances at crossing points. The weekly line patrols continue to provide a steady stream of minor faults which require rapid rectification, such as spot re-sleepering, replacing cracked fishplates and attending to dropped joints. Finally, there has been a lot of hard work by the volunteer Pway gang at Washford yard replacing a large number of very life expired sleepers, which should eventually give the Steam Trust a sizeable yard for the heritage carriages project.



The line near Kentsford Farm Crossing after a visit from the Road Rail Vehicle and its flail attachment, in late autumn (27th November 2024)
Photo: Jake Genge

With regard to the winter ahead, the large items on the “to do” list are the repair of the Loco shed roof at Bishops Lydeard, and the relay of the section of track near Tribble Bridge that was affected by last year’s landslide. In addition to these larger jobs will be a myriad of rail replacement as and where needed, the elimination of several “wet beds” and associated replacement of sleepers together with work to improve the drainage. We also have point timbers to change at Blue Anchor and Washford, thanks to the kind assistance of the WSRHT and WSRA.

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**Somerset
Council**



Regular Services to Taunton?

Regular services from Bishops Lydeard to Taunton (or even from Minehead) have been talked about ever since the newly independent WSR opened in 1976. The earlier story is well set out, for example, in Ian Coleby's Middleton Press Book, Heritage Railways: West Somerset Railway available from WSR shops at Minehead and Bishops Lydeard (worth buying in any case!).

*The present proposal is of a different order from earlier discussions. It has involved purposeful discussions between Somerset Council, Network Rail, Great Western Railway and the West Somerset Railway PLC, and a preliminary submission to the Department of Transport. There is still a long way to go, but **Steve Williams, Chair of the SOBC Project Board** describes the progress so far.*

Strategic Outline Business Case

In October, the PLC in partnership with Somerset Council submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to the Rail Minister, Lord Hendy for the restoration of scheduled train services between Bishops Lydeard and Taunton. This is a major step towards supporting this sustainability of the West Somerset Railway as a premier steam heritage line over the longer term.

The Council and the PLC have set out a strategic intention to see main line trains reach Bishops Lydeard. This first phase envisages an hourly frequency with Bishops Lydeard being developed as a park-and-ride "hub". The service model is derived from the successful trial project run by the PLC and Great Western Railway in 2019. The SOBC has been developed over the last two and half years by a Project Board consisting of the PLC, the Council and the former Local Enterprise Partnership for the South West (the latter was dissolved in April 2023). The Project Board consisting largely of WSR volunteers has been ably supported by Great Western Railway and Network Rail. PLC Directors managers and staff have also played their part in ensuring that we have a realistic proposal that can work.

The aim from the outset has been to ensure that we can preserve the integrity of the WSR and its operations whilst putting together the economic and commercial case intended to attract more visitors to West Somerset. We also want to make an impact on the modal shift from existing and future car usage as part of the Councils wider environmental agenda. There is also a significant social mobility and community cohesion aspect to the proposals. West Somerset scores low in a number of social and economic indices and the ability to widen access to employment, education and other opportunities for local people is a key part of the case for change.



Back in June 2006, First Great Western (as it then was) Class 158 two car DMU takes the branch with a special to Minehead after changes in the connection with the main line at Norton Fitzwarren.

We engaged external consultants to help with the economic case together with other experts to help to refine the precise infrastructure and technology requirements. The proposition is a fairly low cost and low risk scheme. All the infrastructure enhancements required are focused on the section between Norton Fitzwarren Junction and Bishops Lydeard. These can be undertaken pretty quickly once approval has been given and will be under the control of the PLC to deliver. The real challenge will be growing the market which the Business Case sees as a mixture of commuters, visitors to the WSR and the wider tourism and leisure sector.

The Project Board consulted extensively with local councils and businesses across West Somerset and received significant stakeholder support for the scheme. Because it is relatively straightforward to deliver, the PLC and the Council have asked Government if we can bypass the Outline Business Case stage and go to Full Business Case (FBC). Clearly, an FBC cannot be developed without proper project management and external experts and so we have asked the Rail Minister for funding to enable us to do that.

The real challenge of course will be the revenue consequences of such a service. Detailed technical analysis suggests that there will be a revenue gap which will be examined in further detail at FBC stage.

There will be no change to the operating model on the WSR. Scheduled services from the mainline network will run at 25 mph and the existing Light Railway Order. GWR have confirmed that this will still be competitive with current bus and car travel times into Taunton.

The Project Board has now been stood down but all the WSR volunteers who were part of the SO BC work have said that they are “signed up” for the Full Business Case. We put an ambitious target of FBC completion by the end of 2025 with, following Government approval and revenue support in place, services ready to run toward the end of 2026.

This project has taken two and half years to come to fruition. I would like to take this opportunity publicly to thank all my volunteer colleagues who have worked tirelessly to bring this about and for all those who provided external support particularly Somerset Council, Great Western Railway and Network Rail.

Will we succeed? Well, most readers will know that the new Government cancelled the Restoring Your Railway programme (which most commentators say was unfunded anyway). However, with the emerging focus on improving infrastructure and life chances and a Rail Minister who knows something about railways and how they work, we are keeping our fingers firmly crossed that we have a chance.

News from the West Somerset Railway Association

The Steam & Vintage Rally



Aerial view of a busy Rally this year at the site at Norton Fitzwarren.

Photo: Chris Haig

This year’s Rally, led by Ben and Roxy Orton, held at the Norton site, was a major success – and blessed by reasonably good weather. Next year the dates are 3rd and 4th of August. Many volunteers from throughout the

railway join us in running the Rally, so, if you have not been in touch yet, please do contact us: all the details and contact information is on www.steamrally.org.uk

And next year please do come along and enjoy the event. Entry is free to anyone with a WSR volunteers identity card, others are just £15 and children go free.

Locomotive Restoration

The work on preparing two of the WSR locomotives to be ready to join the home fleet in 3-4 years is continuing.

BR standard 4MT. All the spare parts stored on the Bluebell Railway have now been transported and are in safe storage in Williton, thanks to the efforts of Colin Turner, the 80064 team and Jeff Price. Since the WSR took ownership of the locomotive, work has been progressing steadily to carefully disassemble the locomotive and establish exactly what is needed to restore it to full working order. On 28th November the boiler was lifted off the chassis and since then the cladding has also been removed. By April 2025 we hope to have a restoration plan and budget that will inform not only the work needed but also the fundraising plan to support it.

Small Prairie 4561 restoration is also moving ahead, with further work carried out on the frame. At the end of October, a Rolling Chassis was achieved to Ryan Pope's satisfaction. A superb result and a huge milestone in what has been a very long journey. Work on the boiler continues at Riley's and working with British Engineering Services, a way forward has been agreed for the full restoration of the boiler. In the meantime, we have assembled a full list of the parts for the boiler reassembly. This means that we now know exactly what parts we have, and which ones will need to be manufactured or purchased.



*GW 2-6-2T (Small Prairie) No 4561 minus boiler outside the shed at Williton.
Photo: WSR*

WSR DMU Appeal

The Association is running an appeal for the restoration of the WSR's DMU: details are attached. The railway is keen to have it available into the future. It is especially valuable during the less busy part of the season, or for less busy parts of the timetable, and its lower fuel consumption is particularly welcome now that coal and diesel costs are so high. From a heritage angle, it is the only member of this class still working, which makes it important to retain.

The WSR owns a working Class 115 DMU 3 car set. This consists of power cars DMBS 51880 and DMBS 51859 plus TCL 59678. It is the only class 115 set still in operation. The British Rail Class 115 Diesel Multiple Units were high-density sets which operated the outer-suburban services from Marylebone Station usually on the Chiltern Main Line and Great Central Main Line. The WSR also owns class 117 power car W51354.

The WSR DMU urgently needs refurbishment and overhaul. The unit has been assessed and the intention is, following testing, to operate a hybrid DMU set using power cars 51354 (class 117) and 51880 (class 115) whilst car 51859 undergoes a much-needed C3 classified repair overhaul. TCL 59678 and DMBS 51880 are in a fair condition but will also need work as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, power car 51354 was found to have defective brake cylinders and so was unable to operate until they can be replaced with overhauled cylinders. The planned hybrid set was therefore not able to work this summer. Power car 51859 underwent a temporary repair to the roof and bodywork and passed an A exam, which enabled it to operate under running maintenance and it was therefore be seen in service on the railway during the 2024 Summer season. This simply goes to illustrate the precarious nature of the DMU and the urgent need for longer term sustainable repairs to all the cars.

Other support for the railway

We have recently released £25,000 for the restoration of the heritage points at Blue Anchor (the Minehead end) This money have been waiting for some time until there was the capacity to carry out the work, so it will be great to see the work done.

Donations to our work are always greatly appreciated. These can be either to the general fund of the Association, or for specific projects. For full details of how to contribute please go to: <https://wsra.org.uk/fundraising/>

*Compiled from information kindly provided by **Geoff Garfield**, Chair of Trustees.*

News from the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust

*Trust Chair **Mike Thompson** writes:*

As we reach the end of another successful operating season, the Heritage Trust can look back with pride at the achievements of the past 12 months.



Sidings with Dunster carriages in the distance



Workshop with 9037 at the far end

By far the largest achievement was the purchase of the former S&DRT shed and track at Washford, along with an agreement for a 10-year lease of the site from the PLC. Washford Yard has some 2000 feet of track and sidings and considerable amount of work has been required to bring it to a serviceable state. This work has been undertaken by the PLC infrastructure team with at times support from PWay volunteers. The Trust purchased approximately 60 sleepers that have been installed by the PLC, with 40 tonnes of ballast added to provide a level and secure installation.

These sidings provide sufficient space to stable all the carriages owned by the Trust that are awaiting restoration. Ten carriages will be stored at Washford with two in the shed and eight in the sidings. So far five carriages have been moved to Washford and plans are being made to move the remaining five from Williton before February next year.

Washford shed itself has two full length lanes, and there are two workshops within the building: a large ground floor workshop approximately 20m x 4.5m wide and an upper workshop approximately 9m x 4.5m.



Dust extractor

The Workshops now contain a full range of professional woodworking equipment capable of meeting the needs of the major joinery tasks undertaken by the team. Comprehensive dust extraction is provided by a large dust extractor stationed outside the workshop and connected by ducting to the various machines both on the ground floor and in the upper workshop. We also have a compressed air system installed which has been commissioned and tested.

The team has built racking for timber storage, tools and materials storage.

Other storage is provided outside in our secure shipping container. We also recently moved the horsebox body from Bishops Lydeard to the yard. It will be used for storage until we embark on its restoration when funds permit.

The Trust held its Annual General Meeting on Saturday 28th September in the Village Hall at Bishops Lydeard. There was again a good turnout of Members and I was delighted to get to speak with so many of you who were able to come along. Several members commented how they feel the Trust is really moving forward and growing its presence on the railway.

The Trust's finances are in good shape and, although it was a fairly quiet year in terms of legacies, we are already seeing evidence of further probates underway where the Trust is likely to benefit. It is heartening to know that so many people think of us when preparing their wills and I am determined that the Trust will deliver on these expectations.

Geoff Evens stood down from the Board at the AGM after over 30 years' service on the West Somerset Railway. Most recently, Geoff has led work on Museum Accreditation and Mike commended his special abilities around the development of policies and procedures. We will miss his valued opinion on a range of topics, based on his many years' experience on the railway.

In November this year, for the second time, the museum team held an act of remembrance in the Gauge Museum commemorating the GWR railway workers who died in the war. We were honoured to have the presence of senior figures from the military and local community groups attending and we are hoping to turn this into an annual event.



Thanks to Kerry Noble and the PLC, *Odney Manor* was renamed "*Norton Manor 40 Commando*", complete with 40 Commando headboard, for the occasion. The locomotive, driven by Mervyn Hebditch, Chief Traction Inspector, was in steam outside the museum for the duration of the service. This was further evidence of the different groups on the railway working together for a beneficial outcome. Much credit must also go to Ian Camp for taking this from the seed of an idea to a well-respected ceremony on the railway.

Another new event was a wedding party who had chartered a train with the PLC, who suggested starting with a small reception in the museum area, and then have the QB on Platform 1 ready for photographs. The Trust readily accepted and hosted the reception.

I kept a distant watch on events and could see there was a fantastic atmosphere and that everyone really enjoyed themselves. It was another example of the railway groups working well together and weddings are something we should definitely promote on the railway.

The Trust's next big challenge is to get carriage no.6705, ready for service. The team at Washford have already done an amazing job fixing the various leaks in the roof and sorting out the vacuum brakes. Its poor exterior paintwork has been stripped back ready for priming and painting, and a huge amount of work has been undertaken to improve the guttering on the carriage to prevent rainwater ingress that inevitably cause damage

to the internal walls and paneling. Guttering with additional rubber seals has been fitted to one side of the carriage; work on the second side is now underway.

The vacuum braking system has also had some extensive restoration work carried out. To help us undertake this task and to test the braking system as we make changes, we have invested in a vacuum pump; currently the brakes hold vacuum for the required 45 minutes, rather than 1 minute or less when we first started the work.

Our goal is to have 6705 ready to be repainted and outshopped in time for the Steam gala and either run as part of a service train or on shuttles to Norton.



3639 inside Washford shed

Our attention will then turn to 3639, which is also now under cover at Washford. With the advice of the Heritage Carriages Restoration team, the Board is considering options for its restoration given that at one point in time during the First World War it was configured as an ambulance coach. In the medium term, the Trust also hopes to be able to erect a covered canopy over the sidings at Washford to help protect the unrestored carriages.

During the PLC's 40's weekend, we held our first public open day at the

Washford shed and the team did a fantastic job setting up access facilities for our first time visitors, after completing the required risk assessment documentation. Everything went off very smoothly and this event also helped to raise further funds for the Heritage Trust.

We also had a recent visit from the General Manager and CME of the PLC to check on our compliance with the PLC Safety Management System (SMS) and I can report they were very pleased with the progress made with the facilities at Washford. We also received some helpful suggestions which the team will be implementing over the next few months, as well as continuing to develop the necessary safety documentation, not just for the existing volunteers, but for any new arrivals in future.

Blue Anchor Museum remains our biggest short term challenge. The team there has made great strides with preparing the museum to receive the new displays but sadly, water ingress is still a problem, creating significant damp issues. The Trust is working closely with the PLC and the plan is to bring in a drainage contractor to try and divert some of the flows. We are also working with the PLC to install Wi-Fi and Internet connections between the Museum and the Signal Box in order to support our audiovisual and technology requirements.

As a result, the Trust Board reluctantly acknowledged that the Museum could not reopen in 2024. But our firm target is to reopen in early 2025 - which also happens to be the 40th anniversary of its original opening in 1985.

The Trust continues to develop its community outreach and education activities, providing enriching learning opportunities for individuals of all ages. We offer a variety of engaging activities such as guides, trails, and family-friendly events to enhance customer visits and deepen understanding of our fascinating history. I was delighted to see the Trust receive a grant of just under £5000 for our 'Talking Nature' project. This grant was awarded by Museum Development South West, with support from Arts Council England. I also recently attended a lecture in West Buckland to hear Chris Austin give a fascinating presentation on various historical aspects of the railway. There was a large turnout of over 50 people and we received a generous donation from this community group. Ian Camp is planning further talks for 2025.

The Gauge Museum continues to thrive with the emergence of the small retail section developed by Ian Camp. We have also started a cooperation with Chris Vine, the author of Peter's Railway books. These are selling well and we are planning a two day "Young Engineers Experience" event for Spring 2025 with Chris in attendance.

Ian also oversees and the ongoing work of the MODES team (Peter Over, Mike Boyce and Alan Tilley) in researching, describing and archiving all the artefacts either owned or hosted by the charity.

The model railway team have done some great of work on the layout on the upper floor and this section of the museum is always a major draw for lots of our regular visitors. If you are a frustrated Railway Modeller, why not join our team on the model railway? Full training is given and you can always contact them via info@wsrht.co.uk.



We still need to see more people come over from Platform 2 to the Museum, and are working on ways of overcoming the inherent limitations of the BL site.

Work also continues on the Arts Council Accreditation process for our museums, now under the guidance of Steve Williams, following the recent departure of Geoff Evens. The focus continues to be on collections management and how we care for our various artefacts. We are confident of submitting an application by the Art Council deadline of October 2025.

Finally, the Board continues to plan for the future. It will continue our regular reviews of the Trust Business Plan in light of recent developments, and is very focused on fundraising given the likely demands on our resources over the next few years. We still have nine more carriages to restore and we want to erect some canopies to give them more protection. We have agreed to work in partnership with the Association and the PLC to establish a Fundraising Coordinating Group to provide oversight and structure to the way in which we pursue external grants and other funding opportunities. This should help ensure we are seen working together as one railway and not overlapping in any grant applications.

As always, I will end by encouraging your support for our many projects, either through volunteering or by becoming a member of the Trust. We can always be reached at info@wsrht.co.uk or by looking at the Trust's Web site www@wsrht.co.uk and on the Trust's Facebook page.

News from the DEPG. Andy Royal writes...

Regular visitors to Bishops Lydeard station will be familiar with the Class 09 shunter D4107 (09019) that is often to be seen shunting coaches and preparing trains in support of the timetabled workings. The precise controllability of this vintage diesel-electric loco, the design of which dates back to the 1930s, makes it the loco of choice when loading and unloading visiting locomotives from road transporters, so it gets top priority whenever it needs repairs or maintenance.

Class 09 Shunter D4107 (09 019) was enjoying the autumn sunshine while working at Bishops Lydeard on 19th October 2024. Photo by Jacob Nickolls ©



The loco moved to Williton in November and was stabled inside the loco shed so that work could begin on several areas in parallel. The first target was the Westinghouse compressor, which was known to be developing a fault, but after investigation was found to be worn out and in need of replacement. The next target was the battery boxes, which had corroded badly with very little metal remaining between the batteries and the engine itself. The batteries were disconnected and removed so that the corroded metal could be cut out and new metal welded in.

The front 'Oleo' buffers were also known to be soft and in need of attention, so they have now been removed and sent out for specialist overhaul. With so many maintenance tasks that also need to be done, it may not be possible to attend to all of the corrosion issues affecting the bodywork, but the worst areas will be dealt with and the loco will probably need to return to Williton next winter to have the rest of the work completed.

Info: D4107 was built at BR's Horwich Works (Manchester) in 1961, entering service at Carlisle Upperby depot on 16th November of that year. The loco moved to the Southern Region from 1968 onwards, being based at Hither Green (Lewisham) along with our Class 33s. The loco acquired dual brakes at that time and continued in mainline service until 2009, entering preservation in 2013 upon arrival at Bishops Lydeard.

Looking back at June this year, the WSR's Summer Diesel Festival was a big success, bringing in the crowds and providing the sights and sounds that resulted from an intensive timetable being worked by interesting traction. The 2024 event reached new heights, with very big smiles from the visiting public on all three days and a high standard of reliability and punctuality. Such events take masses of planning and organising, and volunteers from across the railway family teamed up to deliver a very enjoyable and commercially successful event that generated some very positive press for the WSR. **Well done all !**

Visiting Class 46 D182 (46045) was a very popular choice and ran with well-filled coaches on each day of the event. Pictured ready to depart from Stogumber for Minehead on Friday 7th June 2024 with the DEPG's Tom Courtney 'in the chair'. Photo by Mark Ireland ©



Visiting Class 50 50033 (D433) 'Glorious' was the star of the show, fresh from overhaul at Kidderminster on the Severn Valley Railway and delivering some fine performances over a four-day period. Pictured on the approach to Crowcombe Heathfield on 7th June 2024 by Josh Brinsford ©

The pair of Class 20s, one of which (20142) was in London Transport livery, were not the only unusual sights at Williton on Thursday 6th June 2024, as DEPG Publicity Officer and Secondman Mark Bladwell acknowledged the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings with a very patriotic waistcoat! Photo by Natalie Royal ©



Our Class 35 'Hymek' D7017 has settled down to deliver a reliable and energetic performance throughout this season after being put through her paces in a series of test runs that took place back in April. The loco was rostered on ten days through the summer, and she delivered on each occasion. Now that the season has ended, we need to attend to her bodywork because it is showing signs of corrosion, the damage from which will accelerate if left unrepaired. The loco is receiving attention at the WSR workshops in Minehead and will also receive a repaint before returning to Williton in the new year.

Sister loco D7018 is also out of service while repairs are being made to her transmission, but we hope to have both locos back in service next year to commemorate 50 years of 'Hymek' preservation.



Saturday 15th June 2024 and Minehead had a distinctly diesel feel about it as the WSR's Class 115 DMU was stabled alongside Class 33 'Cromptons' D6575 (33057 nearest) and D6566 (33048) while the crew of Class 35 'Hymek' D7017 changed ends to run back onto the stock to form the 14:30 departure to Bishops Lydeard. Photo by Carolyn Nation ©

The Diesel Depot at Williton continues to be a hive of activity with progress being made on every loco in our care, but the headliner is our **Class 52 D1010 'WESTERN CAMPAIGNER'**, the subject of a major fund-raising effort over the past three years, and currently undergoing a bogie overhaul that required the loco body to be lifted from the bogies and placed on stands.



The lifting of the body of Class 52 D1010 'WESTERN CAMPAIGNER' took place at Williton on Monday 8th July 2024 using two 130-ton road cranes that were provided by Baldwins Crane Hire. The photo shows the loco body in the air and about to be slewed over to sit down on the ex-BR-Swindon stands, one of which is visible in the foreground. Photo by Martin Howard ©

The bogies are of a very unusual design, each having three axles that are mechanically coupled and driven via an intermediate gearbox that is mounted on the bogie frame. This leaves no room for a centre pivot, so the weight of the loco body is carried by four columns that transfer the load to the secondary suspension on the outside of the bogie frames. The traction and braking forces are transmitted between the loco body and the bogie frame via massive brackets equipped with manganese steel liners, the lateral control being provided by dampers.



The body of Class 52 D1010 'WESTERN CAMPAIGNER' is now resting safely on the ex-BR-Swindon stands at Williton. One of the bogies can be seen alongside, before being moved the short distance to the DEPG loco shed. Pictured on Monday 8th July 2024 by Natalie Royal ©

Records show that the last time the bogies were separated from the loco was at Swindon Works in 1972, but it is also likely that some bogie maintenance took place at Laira depot in 1975 as staff at that depot went to great lengths to try and keep the last surviving members of the class in service. Our D1010 was one of the last four of the Class in service, being withdrawn in full working order on 27th February 1977, the last day of diesel-hydraulic locomotive operations on BR. The loco had covered 1,360,740 miles during her 14 years in service, working express passenger services to and from Paddington and working heavy freight trains across the Western Region.

The accumulation of dirt and grease inside the bogie frames certainly fits with the 50-year interval since the previous lift and it is going to take many hundreds of hours of work to clean and disassemble the bogies so that the various pivots and bushings can be examined and replaced where necessary. The springs will be removed for inspection and testing and other complex parts such as the dampers and cardan shafts will be overhauled by specialist subcontractors.

50 years of dirt and grime adorn the bogies of Class 52 D1010 'WESTERN CAMPAIGNER'. Pictured at Williton on Saturday 13th July 2024 by Andy Royal ©



Our Class 14 'Teddy Bear' D9518 is making progress towards having the cab assembly re-attached, with work currently taking place on the electrical re-wiring and the overhaul of the many small parts that together form the control system for the locomotive. The re-installation of the cardan shafts in July was a major step forward because they fit under the cab floor and are very hard to work on with the cab in place. Sister loco D9526 put in some great performances during the gala and has also been working some goods trains to and from Norton Fitzwarren, including providing hundreds of visitors with brake van rides during both days of the WSRA Steam Rally!

Some of the team members involved in the restoration work on D9518 stand proudly beside the chassis of the partly-rebuilt loco – (L-R) – Tony, Linda, Nick and Gwyn. Pictured at Williton on Tuesday 11th June 2024 by Terry Deacon ©



After putting in some sterling service on the brake van rides at the WSRA's STEAM RALLY at Norton Fitzwarren throughout the previous weekend, our Class 14 'Teddy Bear' D9526 was used to return the 'Quantock Belle' dining set to Bishops Lydeard on Tuesday 6th August 2024. Pictured on the double track section at Norton Bridge by Terry Deacon ©

Our two Class 33 'Cromptons' D6566 (33048) and D6575 (33057) continue to be the workhorses of the line and have been in use on engineering trains and stock positioning moves in addition to their booked use on passenger turns (which were mostly on weekends under the Blue Timetable). Both locos benefit from the combination of frequent use and careful monitoring by volunteer loco manager Ian Robins and his team, with action being taken in good time to prevent a developing issue from affecting dispatch reliability.



Class 33 'Crompton' D6566 (33048) waits with the afternoon departure for Bishops Lydeard while celebrity 'Black Five' 44871 (4871) runs around its stock before preparing to return the 'West Somerset Express' to Paddington. Pictured at Minehead on 10th August 2024 by Josh Brinsford ©

Making progress involves effort and money, in fact large quantities of both. The DEPG is a **charity** that is run entirely by volunteers, with income from loco hire, donations and from sales via our online store. If you can help by donating your time, then please JOIN US and come along to the depot for an introduction to what we do and how we do it. If you can't spare your time, how about making a donation or browsing our online store? Go to **depg.org** or scan the QR code below:

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The DEPG provides a weekly broadcast email entitled "ROUNDUP" that is available to all. To join this mailing list, email ROUNDUP ADD to contact@depg.org

Fund Raising

We commend the following WSRA appeal to you. (Full details are on the website listed below the picture.)



BUY A BAG OF BALLAST

- £12 buys a bag of ballast
- £24 buys 2 bags of ballast etc etc
- £480 buys a lorry load of ballast

<https://wsra.org.uk/buy-a-bag-of-ballast>

Second Hand Books

We have a number of locations that always welcome donations of second-hand books, whether of railway interest, non-fiction or fiction. These help raise vital funds for the railway.

At Bishops Lydeard books are collected and resold by the WSRA and it best to leave books at the WSRA Office, behind Blackmore House. At Minehead books are collected and resold by FoMS at the bookstall "Reader's Halt" on Minehead station platform. Various intermediate stations take and resell books but please talk to a member of staff before leaving books for resale.

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15th December 2024