



East Somerset Railway

BETWEEN THE LINES...

The Newsletter for the East Somerset Railway

Issue No. 1 December 2020

Welcome to the first issue of our East Somerset Railway Newsletter! We aim to bring together news and views from all areas of the railway and hopefully help the ESR family feel connected – especially in these uncertain times.

Firstly, a few words from Dick -

'This year has been a very testing period for the ESR, requiring all our resourcefulness to deal with the difficulties the coronavirus has given us. But I am pleased to say that the Railway has come through it well. Whilst some railways have not run at all, we have managed to keep going with most services operating and kept our visitors and staff safe with the various measures we have taken to sanitise surfaces and maintain the necessary distancing. Perhaps it isn't a surprise with so many people not travelling abroad, that our visitor numbers have been good, even though we haven't been able to put on our special events.

Since we were shut down for so long earlier in the year, it was to be expected that our income would be hit quite hard. However, the financial assistance we have received in the form of government grants and the job furlough scheme, which has paid much of the wage bill, has meant that the Railway isn't in financial difficulty. The really important result of this is that we are able to continue to fund vital work such as track renewals and meet commitments to completion of the Cranmore station project.

We have just started running our Santa Special trains which generate much vital income for us and so it is critically important that we are able to run them. Much work has gone into devising a completely new way of running this event aimed at keeping everyone safe but providing the same wonderful time. It is a huge relief that we are able to run these services and we hope ticket sales, which are well down, will recover in the next few weeks.'

Museum News.....

The Waiting Room and Museum are all set to be a splendid attraction for visitors to the Railway next season. Here's an update from Derek -

The infrastructure team have been mainly involved with Waiting Room/Ticket Office /Museum refurbishment this year, with other tasks fitted in along the way.

The walls have been treated to a new coat of paint which is breathable to help with the damp problems. The colour scheme for the walls was taken from samples of paint underneath the paper or removed surface, so it resembles the walls from years gone by.

Three windows have been replaced which were made by Owen in CTMS and a new movements office window by Terry.

Most of the internal woodwork has been painted by Tony (aka Rembrandt) who has also painted some of the external fascias.

The boring stuff like washing and scraping of walls and pollyfillering (a new word) was carried out by Lynne in between maintaining the gardens

Internal fittings and windows have been mended, affixed and installed by Phil (who has a never ending source of supplies, much better than Wickes).

The bulk of the work has now been completed, with just the finishing touches and installing the items in the museum and labelling etc. So it's now over to our almost resident curator to add the finishing touches and presentations. Who is this you may ask (and people often do)? - it's the one and only Lisa the guiding and driving force behind the project.

Thanks to all the others who have contributed to the works e.g. Nick and Elaine and not forgetting Dick's upholstery on the bench.

A new feature in the museum will be a pin board where visitors can leave a note of their earliest Railway memories. We'd be interested in hearing yours too! Email: info@eastsomersetrailway.com

Blast from the past – can you remember any of these former railway personnel from Cranmore and the neighbouring Stations? Any information gratefully received!

C Greenslade, Stationmaster, Cranmore; L N Hanger, Stationmaster, Shepton Mallet; R Hayes, Stationmaster, Wells; Don Whitaker, Fireman, Cranmore; B J Walton, Signalman, Cranmore; Bullock, Ganger, Witham; Melvyn Walton, Signalman, Cranmore; Fred Warren, Ganger, Cranmore; L H Lush, Stationmaster; M D Attwood, Signalman, Cranmore; Arthur Febrey, Leading Porter, Cranmore; Reuben Nicholls, Porter, Cranmore

School Visits

We were delighted to be able to welcome two schools during the autumn. 95 children and their teachers from Stoberry School, Wells and 14 children and teachers from Yetminster. Nick Waton described his day with Stoberry School pupils, 'I had to talk for 25-35 minutes about our local railway to each of five groups in turn. Susie Johns reappeared (she had left us two years ago to work in Bath and had time as she is furloughed) and took the Evacuation exercise, Mike Kelham helped her and talked about being a guard, while the signal box, miniature railway and engine sheds were visited too. I found that group quite receptive and it was a pleasure to teach them, even though two groups thought from my picture that Mr Brunel was Willie Wonka!'

Lottery Project Update November 2020 from Gary Amos

We are pleased to report that our National Lottery funded project has achieved a few more milestones since the last report back in May. In the former 1858 station building used as a museum the internal refurbishment is nearing completion. The waiting room has now been internally restored to recreate its former atmosphere and is essentially complete. All three rooms have had new floor coverings, and the opportunity has been taken to use the joinery skills of Owen from CTMS to make a few more replacement windows which were found to be in a worse condition than expected. During the laborious task of wallpaper/paint stripping on the old walls the original pastel colours were found and these have been matched in the new decoration to give the period feel of the rooms.

The Waiting Room is complete and the booking office now has all rotten panelling replaced, and the main museum room is no longer damp with new ceiling, lime plastering, new windows and flooring.

We are justifiably proud at what has been achieved and the whole building has been renovated for future generations of visitors.

Over on the new platform, Jeff from CTMS has been restoring (in his own time) and fitting spear fencing replacing the temporary post and wire fence installed just before the March lockdown, and some traditional enamel signs have been attached to it. The new station nameboard kindly fabricated and donated by a former member of the ESR has been installed as well as the reproduction Victorian cast iron lamps. Following a lot of tidying up and bricklaying at the signal box end by Derek, Lynne and the station team have done some planting of shrubs, trees etc. to tidy up the back edge of the platform.

All in all, the two phases of the lottery projects have achieved one of the key aims to recreate the country station atmosphere and so a big thanks goes to the station team volunteers for all their hard work in 2020.

Our next task is to refit the museum in readiness for the 2021 season – and (COVID19 permitting) running the postponed 2020 events for people living with dementia. To this end

Lisa, our education officer is well on with the museum design and we all hope that 2021 will see us being able to fully demonstrate our dementia-friendly capabilities.

Lisa managed to get around to see a number of staff and volunteers during the year to give them an insight into what being a “dementia friend” was all about, and will resume this again in 2021 COVID 19 permitting of course! There is no doubt that our branding as “The Friendly Railway” is crucial to our success, and volunteers being able to interact positively with a wide variety of visitors and send them away happy is what we are about.

Steve’s Words from the Workshop...

Despite COVID 19’s best efforts we have still managed to make good progress in the workshop and running shed this year. Obviously we have had to carefully manage the return to work putting in place many measures to ensure it is safe to do so.

4110 arrived at Cranmore at the start of the year for restoration from scrap yard condition and we were able to put in a solid month of stripping before the first lockdown. This was followed by 2.1/2 months away before we gradually resumed work. There were some positives from the situation though as a number of volunteers were furloughed from their day jobs meaning that they could spare some more time to help us midweek.

4110’s frames were fully stripped, inspected and repainted and the hornguides were ground before rewheeling in October. The axleboxes had all been shimmed and machined to suit.

The valves and cylinders have been rebored but the cylinder bores are now oversize and will require liners to be fitted.

The boiler has also progressed very well. All of the crown stays and steel side stays have been removed and we are well advanced on retapping ready to accept the new stays which are currently on order. The lower sections of the throatplate, doorplate and side wrappers are all rather wasted and so will be cut off and renewed with fresh steel plate.



Running Shed



At the start of this year we had a great gala planned with 5239 (fresh out of overhaul before it returned to Paignton), 5637 (the last time it would run at the ESR before being withdrawn for overhaul), 4555 (just arrived from Paignton) and resident 46447. Unfortunately lockdown prevented this happening at the last minute which was very disappointing.

Our operating season resumed with 46447 and 4555 sharing the duties but fairly early on, 4555 showed evidence of a leak through the copper in the corner of the firebox. Despite our best efforts with an experienced copper welder we were unable to repair this crack and so the loco was returned to Tyseley for them to carry out the repair as they had previously overhauled this boiler.

Whilst 4555 was out of action, we were fortunate enough to be able to hire another GWR small prairie 5542 from the South Devon Railway (as they had chosen not to resume operations). All being well, 46447 will operate our Santa trains with 5542 on stand by and we should see 4555 back in the New Year.



Santa Specials 2020

There is a revised plan for working Santa Specials this year which involves a train ride first and then a supervised walk to the newly signed Platform 2. Families will wait in two coaches there before being taken through to the Grotto to see Santa. After that, they will go on past him and out of the third coach further East along that platform. All this has meant that two extra coaches have had to be decorated as well as the Heritage Centre, (HC) while new lights need to be hung along that platform too.

The extra work does not stop there; social distancing and the variable size of each family group mean that bookings have to be monitored closely. It is a difficult exercise to allocate the seats and compartments to make best use of the restricted capacity.

P-Way

Work has been hindered by a shortage of ballast nationally. Instead, and prior to taking possession of a lot of the line in January, lots of concrete sleepers have been stacked on the well wagons, ready to be taken to where they will be needed. Some vegetation removal has been undertaken too.

View from the Office

This summer an option to buy a Guide Book priced at £5.95 was added to the section of our website where visitors purchase their tickets. This proved to be a great idea, as copies flew off the shelf and we had to have more printed. The opportunity was taken to update it to allow for changes in the workshop, the locos and elsewhere and these also sold well. So far we have sold 130!

Leaflets for 2021 have just arrived. They include the timetable with trains services scheduled to start on 13 March and to end on 31 October, with nine 'Santa' days. References to School days and Cream Teas have been included but readers are asked to check our website for details of any special events if and when we are able to arrange them.

Don't forget to visit our shop for your Christmas purchases – we have a good selection of gifts for adults and children.

Please remember to use easyfundraising every time you shop online! Over 4,000 shops and sites will donate, so you can raise FREE donations for us no matter what you're buying.

These donations really help us out, so please sign up if you haven't yet. It's easy and FREE! You can get started at

https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/eastsomersetrailway/?utm_campaign=raise-more&utm_content=en-n2



Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition.

Any comments, news, hatches, matches or dispatches, etc for next time, please send to:

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