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“PROGRESS”

The newsletter of Tarka Valley Railway
C.I.O.

Registered Charity Number 1162632

TARKA VALLEY RAILWAY

We regret the delay in publishing this issue of the Newsletter due to various factors, but hope we can now update members on all that is happening on the railway.

Those members who visited the Yeovil Railway Centre in August had a most enjoyable day. The Yeovil site is very interesting with a variety of features to examine. We were warmly welcomed and were able to ask questions and look ‘behind the scenes’ in several areas.



We were all excited to see a sister locomotive to our own ‘Progress’ in the shape of ‘Cockney Rebel’ which bears the works number 4000007 as opposed to our 4000001.



We were able to obtain useful information on the manufacturers of both our locomotives from the good folk on site. Finally we were given a demonstration of the locomotive turntable in action which was much appreciated. Thanks to all those at Yeovil for their kindness.

A good crowd gathered at Torrington station (aka The Puffing Billy) on Saturday August 19th to see the Tarka Valley Railway’s new locomotive officially named “TORRINGTON CAVALIER”.



After an introduction by TVR Chairman Mark Smith, the unveiling of the nameplate was carried out by Mark Keeley, Chairman of the Torrington Cavaliers. This was followed by the breaking of a bottle of champagne on the running plate of the locomotive.

Many of the Cavaliers were present in full regalia and the occasion was supported by the Mayor of Torrington, several past Mayors, local, district and county Councillors, officials from Rotary, the Balsdon Trust and other local dignitaries. Afterwards, the invited guests adjourned to the Puffing Billy for a buffet lunch.

The new loco is already looking much better in the two months since its arrival. The cab and roof have been painted in the original Ruston & Hornsby green. Work ‘under the bonnet’ is now well under way with Bob and his team disappearing for hours on end!

Membership renewal reminder:

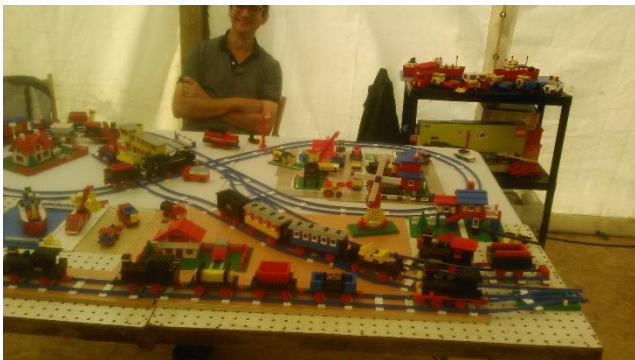
Membership renewals were due on July 31st and those few members who have not yet renewed will find a renewal application form enclosed with this newsletter. Please do return your form as soon as possible – your membership counts! Thank you.



The June Open Weekend was blessed with decent weather and a steady crowd of visitors enjoyed the event.

A successful day – financially and as a publicity exercise - was had when we attended the Appledore Summer Festival in mid-August.

It seems we need to mention the weather again now which leads to a report on the August Open Weekend held on August 9th/10th. To say we suffered from the weather is an understatement! The Thursday before was fine enough for us to erect our marquee but after that it rained on and off (mainly on) over the whole weekend. Three of our planned exhibitors were not able to attend and the ground rapidly became waterlogged. In spite of this, and with some gallant efforts of our volunteer members, we managed a reasonable result. Those hardy folk who did exhibit seemed to enjoy themselves and said they hoped we would invite them again!



Taking down the marquee is normally the following Thursday, but on this occasion the weather decided that this would take place over the Tuesday night leaving chaos to greet the early risers on Thursday! A fraught few hours followed whilst the tent poles and the canvas were rescued from fences and hedges. Well done to those stalwarts involved.

Notwithstanding the vagaries of our North Devon Summer, we have been fortunate in having very few working Thursdays curtailed by inclement weather which has enabled us to significantly progress activities on all fronts.

The Trail edge up to the over bridge has been trimmed back on both sides and the grass regularly mowed keeping the area tidy to much positive comment from visitors. Continuing on the South side, we have had the remaining area of the coal dock cleared and surfaced using 14 tons of road planings. Temporary Netlon fencing was erected at the end of the car park and gravel laid giving much needed extra room for vehicle manoeuvring.

The platform beds and coal dock garden were tidied up and replanted where necessary in readiness for inspection by Torrington in Bloom. We await the outcome. Rubbish and vegetation clearance is an ongoing task across the site making the environment more attractive to visitors. The platform railings and station running in board are being restored back to “better than new condition”.

A new and much sturdier entry step into the carriage has been made and fitted making entry and exit much easier. Shop sales have continued at a steady rate since the start of the season and frequent donations of books have kept the sales team occupied in quiet periods. Book sales are one of our biggest sources of income and we are always grateful for gifts of unwanted paperbacks. Unfortunately we cannot accept any more hardback books, other than specifically railway books due to lack of storage space. As the summer draws to a close (or should that be ‘has drawn to a close?’), we can look back to a successful period with record volunteer hours recorded.

This leads us to an appeal for volunteers to join the ranks of members who not only turn up on a Thursday to work on the whole range of tasks needed to be done on site but those administration jobs which have become more important as the railway has grown. Over the past couple of years or so, we have recruited many new active members who have enabled the railway to progress to the stage where we are ready to begin the exciting work of expanding the tracks up the line towards Bideford. BUT we need more hands and brains to help in this job, so if you have a few hours you can spare either on site or ‘in the office’ PLEASE get in touch. You can make a difference.

Drop in on a Thursday and meet the team or email us at tarkavalleyrailway@gmail.com to find out more.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES:

I was delighted to be able to contribute in a small way to the naming ceremony for Torrington Cavalier on 19th August.

I was mightily impressed by the good will and enthusiasm for the project, not only from the railway enthusiasts present, but the wider Torrington community, and the councillors from all three local authorities.

Those of you who were present noticed I said quite deliberately that Devon County Council have agreed the extended lease. I believe this to be right in principle. However, I didn't say there are a number of issues still to sort out. There are legitimate concerns that it is right for the officers of the Council to raise, and for us to answer.

One of the issues that the event helped with was to calm car parking worries, as we showed how easy it is to accommodate a large number of vehicles on site without inconveniencing our neighbours, or other road users. Capacity can be further increased by marking spaces, and some bank clearance to improve visibility. Devon County Council have raised a number of other issues relating to detail of the lease, and we have addressed these. Their response is now awaited. Your Board has met with Dominic from the Puffing Billy partners. He was not only relaxed about car parking, but also told us that on days when TVR are in attendance their business benefits.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will read the usual appeals for additional volunteers. Thursdays are the customary working and open days. The progress on site preparation is evident, and later in the year the success of the coach and other trading will show clearly in the annual accounts. We do need to increase the number of working parties and the days on which our carriage is open. Our current volunteers are fully committed, increase in activities will only come about if there are more volunteers. The carriage team enjoy not only counting the cash at the end of the day, but also the opportunities to meet people and explain our Railway's history and its plans for the future. I have challenged the board to open up to four days per week next summer, they will only be able to meet that challenge with your help.

Mark Smith.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Members

November 15th 2017 – details to follow.

Publicity: We are currently reviewing our overall publicity operation with a view to updating this where necessary and expanding how we publicise ourselves. Part of this will involve a reworking and reprint of our membership brochure as well as producing the next 'Progress' magazine.

Press publicity is currently not as we would like it. Submissions to the local press are often ignored or printed late. We have had much more success with regional papers such as the Western Morning News and the national railway magazines like The Railway Magazine and Heritage Railway.

If any member has some constructive thoughts on this, please get in touch.

Children's corner:

We are looking into setting up a club for children based on our new locomotive "TORRINGTON CAVALIER". Several of the Thursday gang have started calling the loco 'Rusty' so the idea is for 'Rusty' to start a club for children and to send them a regular newsletter with an update of how 'his' restoration is going and other suitable and relevant news and games perhaps. If you have any useful ideas for this, please let us know on the usual email address.

Forthcoming events (at the Puffing Billy):

September 29th - 'FRESHSPRING' (steamship berthed at Bideford). Talk by John Puddy.

October 27th – 'Fall & Rise of steam in England & Wales'. Talk by John Gulliver.

November 17th – QUIZ by Martin Wilson.

December 9th/10th – **SANTA CLAUS!**

2018 January 26th – 'WW1 Ambulance trains'. Talk by Barry Beckenham.

To book, contact either the Puffing Billy or call into the carriage on a Thursday.

September 30th/October 1st - Stall at L&B Railway, Woody Bay.

October 8th - Collection day at Sainsbury's in Barnstaple.

October 28th - Collection day at Tesco in Barnstaple.

100 Club update:

June winner - No 41 R Martin, July winner – D Goodwin, August winner – No 32 Mrs J Munt.

If you would like to join the 100 Club there will be six draws left this year in October – March. Please send a cheque for £6 (or £18 to include next year's draws) to TVR Treasurer, Brierley, School Lane, Torrington EX38 7AJ by Monday 23rd October to be included in the October draw.

Gift Aid – A big ‘thank you’ to those members who have signed up for this. We will be submitting our claim to the Tax office at the end of the financial year and currently this will produce a sum of over £1,000! If you haven’t yet signed up, please consider doing so. We can claim Gift Aid on membership AND donations.

The ‘Sponsor a Sleeper’ scheme to assist with the cost of the Trackwork needed for our plans is producing a good response from members. A £25 donation will help the railway and you will receive a certificate in acknowledgement. We have also introduced a “Sponsor a Rail” scheme at £1,000 (this is a 60 ft. length of rail) which will include Life Membership. These would make a great gift for a friend or relative (think ‘Christmas’!).

Easyfundraising.org.uk

You can help TVR raise more money when you shop online by registering with the above. Then use this portal to access your shopping site and every purchase you make will generate a donation to us! There is no cost to either you or the TVR as the site is paid for by the retailers for directing customers to them. How much we get depends on the amount of use the site gets, but clearly the more it is used, the more we will get. Please give it a try.



A feature of which we introduced earlier in the year was a model – strictly speaking, a representation - of the Torrington station site as it should appear in a few years’ time when we have reached the first occupation overbridge. This is in effect a 3D version of a drawing showing the site as it is planned and has generated a vast amount of interest and understanding by visitors. It has proved even more useful than we had hoped in showing what we are trying to do, and how the Railway will share the ground with the Trail.

AND finally, from our overseas correspondent (Rob Martin):

During a winter break in Cape Town, my wife and I did some investigating and discovered a heritage steam railway run by volunteers. On a number of Sundays in the holiday season, they run steam train trips from the main station in Cape Town. Departing from the hotel at the station, a vintage SAR Class 16DA steam locomotive number 879, built in 1929 named Katy with period wooden coaches travels through the winelands en-route to Stellenbosch.



Atlantic Rail 4-6-2 “Katy” photo by Peter Rogers

On arrival at the Vredenheim Wine Farm, the afternoon began with wine tasting followed by a three course meal overlooking the beautiful gardens and the distant Hottentots Holland Mountains. Following that was a guided tour of the Big Cats Park, home to lion, tiger, leopard and cheetah. To finish the afternoon, a quick whiz around the wine shop to bring back supplies before boarding the free minibus back to the station for the return steam train journey to Cape Town. A great day out and all this for the cost of approximately £35 each. Now that is something for TVR to aim for. We must start planting those vines!

EDITORS’ note:

On the subject of vines.... Two of our leading lights attended a major rail exhibition recently and were duly wearing their TARKA VALLEY RAILWAY polo shirts. At one stand they were asked if they were Australian! “No, why?” they responded. “Oh, we thought that ‘TARKA VALLEY’ sounded like a really good brand of Australian wine!” Well, as Rob said in the previous article, perhaps we could venture in that direction once we have an operating railway..... Any winemakers out there?

Also: Don’t forget our website:

www.tarkavalleyrailway.co.uk - and visit our **Facebook** page for weekly updates on our work. We also have a regular column in the Torrington CRIER and other local publications when possible.