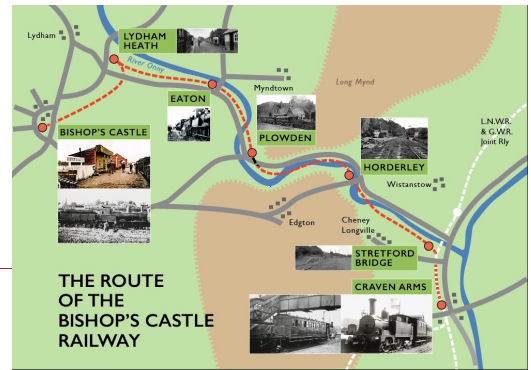


B.C.R.S. NEWS

June 2020

No 42

Monthly Newsletter of
The Bishop's Castle Railway Society



Weighbridge Project update

Some good news at last.....

Six volunteers met outside the weighbridge on 2nd June, bringing their own picnic chairs and flasks of coffee, they sat at least 2m apart and held the first project meeting for 11 weeks. It was agreed unanimously that work could restart, but with a different set of rules and a revised Safety Policy.



David and Mike securing the window in the left hand side of the building

As a result, three volunteers worked last Tuesday and five of the six windows were wedged into place.

The result has once again transformed the building.



The interior view of the two front windows to room 3



Roger checking that the window is straight before securing

The Building Control application has now been submitted and we wait with fingers crossed that it will be approved very soon and work can begin on the rainwater soakaway and other jobs that are dependant on that approval.

Thank you to everyone who has generously donated to the "Watertight by Winter" Appeal. So far we have raised £660 towards the £2,300 cost of the new doors. We know that there are many charities appealing for help, especially at the present time, yet felt that we had to do something to ensure that the restoration achieved so far was not undermined by another winter's weather. The building has come such a long way since being revealed from the undergrowth three years ago.

**Donations can still be made by BACS to HSBC – Bishop's Castle Railway Society Co. Ltd
Account 01229877 Sort Code 40-12-02 ref: Doors
or cheques can be made payable to B.C.R.S. Co Ltd. and sent to**

Mr Malcolm Jones, BCRS Treasurer, 40 Upper Road, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury, SY3 9JQ

From the Chairman.....

The Long Road

I'm a member of two other Railway Preservation Societies and have been following their efforts to cope with the Covid-19 situation. It's clear that, for these active railways, no income has presented more problems than just the obvious ones; the Ffestiniog, for example, spends £40,000 a month whether it runs trains or not. Planned maintenance cannot take place, partly because there's no one to do it, and partly because the money isn't there.

Right now they are appealing to their membership and their membership has responded enthusiastically, which is remarkable considering the pressure this pandemic puts on people and their finances. So it is with us: we've had generous contributions to our appeal to get the weighbridge "Watertight by Winter".

Our joiner has started work on the construction of the doors and we've devised a plan to enable volunteers to work on site safely, following the latest guidelines. There'll be some changes made but windows will be installed, gutters fitted and woodwork painted.

These things are small potatoes to the big railway societies but just as vital to us. All that matters is that we keep up momentum, whilst staying safe, and your support and help is vital to achieve this.

It seems unlikely we'll be starting the winter programme of meetings in September. We don't know yet if gatherings, however small, will be permitted and, if they are, whether it will be practical to hold them. The venue might not want us, the speakers might not want to come and maybe, neither will the audience. Of course, we're not the only ones affected; on every street similar dilemmas are faced and we just have to accept that it is what it is. We just hope that we have a happy ending and 2021 is a better year for us all. I'll repeat what I said last month: be safe, be well, and be patient! And thank you for your continued support.

An appeal (but not for money!)

As I've said above, it's unlikely we'll be starting the programme of meetings in September and so I thought I would run, via Zoom (ah, Zoom, saviour of the lockdown), a quiz on the first Friday of September.

Now, does anyone out there have a full Zoom account they could "lend" to us on that evening; it would save having to stop halfway through and re booting the quiz.

If you can help, please get in touch with me.

John Rimmer

The Montgomery Project

In last month's edition Jonathan David asked the question....

"The caption on page 14 of Lucas says wagon 58 had been rebuilt, though I am sure elsewhere it says that Beddoes built it. Which is correct?"

Jim Trenfield replies..... "Regarding the article about the Montgomery Project, Mr David asks if Emmanuel Beddoes built or rebuild wagon 58.

A few years ago I transcribed some pages from his account ledger for 1907 and this was published in issue 93 of the BCRS's Journal for the Summer 2016. The extract lists work carried out on rolling stock numbers 54, 55, 57 and 59. The entry for 12 March reads "Taking No 57 apart" and that for 26 March has "Putting together No 57 CW" with work proceeding for several weeks. I think it probable that No 58 would have been rebuilt in a similar fashion. The account ledgers were donated to the BCHRC and they might list work done on No 58.



New-build Carlisle by Peter Featherstone

My project to build Carlisle in gauge 0 started many years ago and is now making tangible progress.



The basic loco parts have been cut and trial assembled but of course there is still a lot of work to do on the detail.

“Stay Home” has given me a few more hours of shed-time and I decided that a start should be made on the 6-wheeled tender. This was built by Beyer Peacock and, unlike many railway company workshops, they were not ashamed of showing rivets – there are over 1000 of these visible on the sides, ends and top. These I embossed using a GW Models rivet tool after several false starts and much discarded material! I finally choose to

use .008” tin plate, this making it easier to form the flare at the top of the sides and end. It is an undervalued modelling material – I have several locos made from tinplate (from Lyons Golden Syrup cans) that are over 60 years old and showing no signs of rust. (Some lines of rivets have been temporarily painted black to prevent solder creeping over them.) The assembled tank, coal rails and division plate are designed to be bolted to the footplate as they will be easier to paint separately. The wheels are carried in inner frames, the front axle fixed and the other two on compensating beams. Carlisle’s tender, having been GWR, had standard ‘Dean’ buffers and I have acquired some very nice ones made by Markits. The loco buffers are of course different, and I am still searching to see whether some might be available or whether these will have to be homemade.

Pick-up uses the American system with one side pickup on the loco and the other on the tender. One extra contact on the loco avoids problems at section breaks. She runs very nicely – here on the 1 in 50 climb to Wingham Road. (Apologies that this looks horribly like the demolition train.)



I have attempted to copper plate the chimney cap - the chimney is turned brass. Remembering my school chemistry, I made a solution of copper sulphate suspending in it a stout coil of copper wire and a test piece of brass. These were connected to a dc controller and once the polarity was sorted and the test piece survived the chimney cap was dipped in. After 20 minutes or so the cap had a noticeably coppery look that should suffice.

I have started to make the tender springs but these are not yet satisfactory. There are also 4

GW style lamp irons to go on the tender that will be an exercise in metal origami. The loco has 3 lamp irons, all different from the tender and each other!

The joys of scratch building and of the BCR.

The latest report of Albyn Austin`s progress with his layout of Bishop's Castle station

Have just completed my model of the large timber derrick or more correctly Scotch derrick for Bishop's Castle Goods platform. It is built from a couple of poorish photos and the Mike's Models replica that was too big for the space.

After I nearly completed it I found its correct name was a Scotch derrick and someone had made a nice O gauge model of one and the Ballater (Deeside) local history society had restored one. Their website has loads of photos - my gearing is rather off and various other details are a bit off too.

The model was built of plasticard and plastic rodding mainly with gearing from an old Wills platform crane and from an etched brass sheet by Ambris engineering with brass chain from the local model shop. Other bits from the scrap box or from left over bits from kits. The wooden bracing supports are made from laminated coffee stirrers, connected at the top with plasticard brackets and a 10 BA brass screw, which also pivots the jib.

The weight boxes contain lead under the gravel and I've put them on a card base with a bit of foam sheet on top that will be grassed over in due course.

Have now completed the second, smaller timber derrick for the goods platform. This is made in a similar way to the big one but uses balsa wood for the jib and support legs. The main body is plasticard with bits of brass, plastic rod, bits from the spares box, etc and etched brass gears by Ambris Engineering. Brass chain is from the local model shop.

All the buildings complete. Just the cattle dock to model but I think I may build the Ford pick-up truck next - another Zebrano kit of a Russian copy of the Ford,



Jim`s monthly selection of videos

Here's "Wash and Brush Up" from the 1950s showing how a locomotive would be cleaned, tested and returned to service. Dirty work! Running time 25:19. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LC1BEc04i-0>

Memories from a former railwayman. Running time 6:54. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDefGU-CWMo&list=PL1Xb2CCsSAuEEhJNc2xbdi5D5iRp2cag2&index=3>

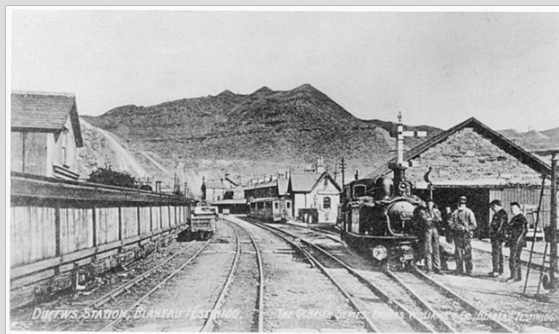
This railway video is rather different...! Running time 11:23. Elf & Safety inspectors should look away. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTqtythamJs>

Model railway layouts don't get much more realistic than this! Running time 19:44. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5u-JeBkpBI>

Finally, a big Hornby Dublo layout at the Great Central Railway Model Event in 2019. Running time 11:32. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aisar3LmQBU>

Other Decrepit Railways Were Available

“Arrival at Dinas junction of the last train was invariably late - so much so that word got about and the habits of the train being known, and the connections for Caernarvon, etc., having been missed time and again, it was not surprising that after a very short while the Company found there were never any passengers beyond South Snowdon! The delights of the journey were not increased by the shunting which the train did at all intermediate stations, long after darkness has fallen (this was in November 1926). The train was unable to travel at speed after dusk as there were as many cows on the line as telegraph poles beside it.”



The Festiniog Railway Vol. Two J.I.C. Boyd (Boyd's bible)

We are used to remembering the Bishop's Castle Railway as a rather run-down affair, although it is worth remembering that some photos exist showing engines and stations in a fairly spruced-up state. But it is certainly true that, towards the end of the railways existence, decrepitude set in.

The passage above describes the Welsh Highland Railway but the Festiniog, considered by some at the time and afterwards to be the ne plus ultra of narrow gauge railways, was not much better. The condition of their engines at the time was poor, as was the quality of the coal and “it became quite the usual practice for the railway to hire charabancs or cars to go to the help of stranded trains. Engines might leave their trains anywhere on the line and proceed with what little steam they had to the next station where an emergency signal would be sent for road vehicles to enable passengers bound for Llandudno, etc., to make connections with standard gauge trains.” (ibid.)

Elsewhere things were little better. The hundred of Manhood and Selsey Tramway in West Sussex was a very basic Railway and closed in 1936. It never really recovered after being extensively flooded in 1911 and photographs show a railway in a similar state to the BCR.

The Weston Clevedon and Portishead Railway entered receivership in 1909 after nine years (so it lasted longer than the BCR in that respect) and in 1911 it joined the Selsey Tramway as part of the portfolio of lines run by Col. Fred Stephens. Some lost causes, others rejuvenated, they were a cross section of light railways built around the turn of the century; a triumph of hope over experience, as Dr Johnson said of a slightly different set of circumstances!

The Southwold Railway, built to 3ft gauge, closed in 1929 and had a history reminiscent of the Bishop's Castle Railway; debt, mixed trains and poor punctuality! An abandonment order was not obtained until 1990! There is a movement to restore the link between Halesworth and Southwold but, like all similar projects, it's a very long-term aim.



Halesworth, Southwold Railway

All these lines had much in common; they operated in rural areas, there was less traffic than anticipated and they became easy targets for competition from road transport. Without them, the history of many places would be poorer and we, as enthusiasts, would have much less to enthuse over.

John Rimmer

And finally some more good news via Stuart Dickinson.....

SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY NEWS

General manager Helen Smith has released this very encouraging announcement :

Plans for the SVR's reopening are progressing well, although many uncertainties remain as to how things will have to be managed, especially from a visitor perspective. The Railway is working towards a target date of **4th July to reopen its pubs**, the King & Castle at Kidderminster and the Railwayman's Arms at Bridgnorth, and **1st August for the reopening of the line** itself to the public.

One of the first priorities is bringing back the Railway's 1,800 working members along with furloughed paid staff. We're working up a plan to bring back our volunteers and paid staff in a phased way. This means we can keep everyone safe, and manage the demand on facilities such as toilets and staff rooms. Furthermore, everyone who works at the Railway must complete an online coronavirus awareness course before they return. This is important for their own safety and for that of our visitors.

It is likely that the initial services may be on a pre-booked basis only, to manage social distancing between passengers and also staff, this is in line with the thinking expressed by some other heritage lines.

The Rail Regulator has issued guidance to these railways on managing re-opening, stressing the need to ensure that all staff are still competent to carry out their duties, bearing mind the time since they last worked, especially those in safety critical roles.

So all in all, challenging times lie ahead, including the uncertainties for all the tourist/leisure industry, over whether there will be huge pent up demand or a reluctance amongst many potential visitors to be in larger groups of people.

The Survival Appeal has reached the amazing total of £745,000, so far.

Falling Sands Viaduct Work commenced on the 2nd phase of the repairs; repointing of the brick arches, using specialist contractors working off ropes. The was brought forward from the planned late summer start to give them unfettered access during the shutdown, instead of working around train services. Unfortunately, some bats had taken roost under one arch; which as they are protected species, necessitated temporarily stopping the work to allow investigations and assessment by Natural England.

www.bcrailway.co.uk

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