

WEARDALE RAILWAY

NEWSLETTER No 65 - 2 OCTOBER 2012

HONORARY VP WILF HUME : 100 YEARS YOUNG
POLAR EXPRESS STOCK BEING ASSEMBLED
STORMS AND FLOODS HIT RAILWAY AGAIN

- **WILF HUME : A TRIBUTE :** As part of the celebrations of the 100th birthday of the Trusts Honorary Vice President – the following tribute is given, it has also appeared in the local and Railway Press. There are further items in the Newsletter covering the event.

WILF HUME

As part of his 100th birthday celebrations on Sunday 16th September, Wilf Hume, an Honorary Vice President of the Weardale Railway Trust, caught the afternoon train from Stanhope to Frosterley where he alighted and proceeded to a party in the Village Hall. Wilf was Clerk to the Rural District Council in Weardale from 1958 to 1974 and was instrumental in gaining approval for the cement works at Eastgate in Weardale by leading a deputation to the House of Commons in 1963. It was these cement works, which commenced operation in 1965, which led to the retention of the railway in Weardale. The works closed in 2002 and shortly thereafter the line was bought by the Weardale Railway Company.

Wilf has been a generous donor to and enthusiastic supporter of, the Weardale Railway. On his 97th birthday he was given a footplate ride on the recently acquired steam locomotive and thus achieved a lifetime ambition. He had one special request “ I would really like to put just one shovelful of the coal on the fire if the driver will permit me.” He was a regular speaker at the Annual General meeting of the Weardale Railway Trust until two years ago and also made a speech at the inauguration of the coal freight train service in 2011.

Until last year Wilf lived in his own house in Frosterley and did his own shopping and cooking. He kept fit by working out every day on an exercise machine. Then, after a fall late last year, he has moved into a care home in Stanhope. He loves to chat with visitors and talk about his recollections of people and events in the dale and can tell a host of stories about his long, active and distinguished life.

G C Mudd 13 September 2012



On the left, Wilf Hume and just some of the 63 family members who joined in his 100th birthday celebrations. On the right : seated with his daughter Margaret as he journeys to Frosterley for his party. On the train champagne was served, speeches made by Wilf and he led the singing all the way to Frosterley. (Photos : left : David Scott and right : John Lewins)

- **COACHES FOR THE POLAR EXPRESS (1)** : Seven MK 2 coaches stored at the Yeovil Railway Centre since 2007 after their use on the ECT operated service from Bristol to Minehead departed on the 24th September after some work to make them suitable for main line movement. Ramparts Rail examined the coaches and made minor repairs. They were moved out of the yard by a Fowler diesel ‘Cockney Rebel’(see photo).Then 31602 was sent light from Bristol Barton Hill to Yeovil Junction to collect and remove the coaches which are destined for Okehampton (3) and the Weardale Railway (4). The coach numbers are 6181 6002 5920 9492 3354 3425 and 3402.



Coaches for Weardale : seven Mk 2 coaches were moved from the Yeovil Railway Centre to operate on the BARS Polar Express services. On the left the coaches leave the yard at Yeovil, and on the right near Bristol heading for Okehampton. See item below .(Photos courtesy of the Yeovil Centre website : www.yeovilrailway.freeservers.com/)

- **COACHES FOR THE POLAR EXPRESS (2)** :Alistair Gregory reports : “Here is the latest news regarding the carriage refurbishment project for the Polar Express trains. Our partners in this project are Rampart Rail, a railway restoration company based in the Midlands who are also supplying contractors to work on the vehicles at our workshop at Meldon Quarry. We have now moved all of the cars to be restored out of storage and to facilities to be worked on using our sister company Devon and Cornwall Railways. In total we have around a dozen cars being worked on, all ex BR Mark 2f air conditioned coaches. We are also grateful to the Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association, who have done a fine job restoring two of the coaches already at Meldon Quarry for both Polar Express and Dartmoor Railway services. I look forward to updating you with a progress report in the next newsletter!” See photos below.



The interior of the a Mk 2 coach destined for use on the Polar Express, before (l) and after (r) restoration work at Okehampton. (Photos : Alistair Gregory)

- **G5 GROUP REMINDER** : Following the success of our first open day in August, we are holding a further open day on SATURDAY 6TH OF OCTOBER. Details on the website :- <http://www.g5locomotive.co.uk/>

- **WR GENERAL MANAGER'S UPDATE** : Graham Isom reports : Well the season is nearly complete and I wish to give everyone my heartfelt thanks for all the hard work, that each of you have put in to make the railway run throughout quite a traumatic period. But we have got there. Next, Polar Express is coming to a station near you and the bookings are also at an amazing stage, this will help both the economy of the area and ourselves as a railway. The platform at Witton-le-Wear, is going through the planning presentation at various meetings and hopefully this will be all in place for next seasons timetable. As reported elsewhere, yet again this year the weather struck us and thanks again to all the efforts of volunteers and staff alike we managed to keep the trains running. At the time Marion and I were travelling back from a funeral in Caerphilly, we passed into and out of the storm and when we reached the Catterick area on the A1M we might just as well have been sailing. It was very frightening to say the least going into and out of varying depths of water, hoping the old girl would survive (I mean the VW Passat) not Marion!



September 3rd in Wolsingham depot. The boiler of No 40 is lifted from the frames and loaded on to the truck transport to Loughborough Locomotive Works. (Photos : Left : Keith McNally, right : Richard Maughan)

- **LEAMSIDE LINE TO BE LIFTED** : It is sad to read reports of yet another County Durham railway being lifted, this time the disused 21 mile 'old main line' from Ferryhill to Pelaw on Tyneside. In better days it had figured in plans to reopen it for passenger traffic in its entirety or as part of an extended Metro to Washington. This still may happen at some time in the future but meanwhile Network Rail after persistent and repeated thefts of rail for its scrap value have decided to lift all the remaining track. Network Rail has no plans to sell off the land or change its use and says if in the future a business case and funding becomes available, reinstatement could be an option then a full renewal of all railway components would be required. After mothballing in 1992 the double track was reduced to a single line and some sections at level crossings were removed. In 2003, scrap metal thieves removed about a mile of track south of Penshaw. The theft was carried out over six days by workers who had been paid to remove the line, and were unaware that what they were doing was illegal.
- **WR ON TRIP ADVISOR** : Comments on the railway have now started on a Trip Advisor site, here are a couple of recent ones :-
 - "I used to see regular cement trains to and from Eastgate Cement works. But no more. Now its a great heritage railway from Bishop Auckland to Stanhope (The 'Capital' of the Dales). Some steam trains and diesel railcars run to a timetable and we went on a steam special. Great little line with scenic views and good walks nearby. Tasty refreshments also available with a selection of good local amenities in Stanhope village 5 minutes easy walk away from the station. Take a day out in the Dale and enjoy a ride on the train." OCT 12.
 - We left Bishop Auckland and took a slow route up the dales passing areas I knew as a child, the train had 4 carriages all the same price so you can sit where you want to but all dating from different periods in time. Bathrooms were spotless. Downside in Bishop due to costs from network rail it can't use the mainline station so takes a little finding but look on the website and it can be found, same with Stanhope it is a little walk from the town centre so if you can't walk too far if might be a case of there and back on the next train.

- WILF HUME'S 100th : A STATIONMASTER WRITES :** Kevin Hillary turned up in full stationmaster kit and reports : Quite a crowd had gathered at Stanhope Station, waiting for Wilf to arrive for the trip to his Birthday Party (one of many I suppose) It gave me great pleasure to welcome his arrival and escort him to the front of the train which had been named "Wilf Hume 100" for the trip. Many photos were taken of Wilf and his family I am sure one or two will appear elsewhere. A champagne reception was organised on board the train, again photos were order of the day. With the train delayed for few minutes it was time for the trip to Frosterley. On arrival at Frosterley Station a fanfare rang out from the front of Black Bull, even the local Policeman was on hand to wish Wilf a Happy Birthday. Wilf was greeted at Frosterley Village Hall by Stanhope Silver Band. I have only known Wilf for a very short part of his life but in that short time I learned just how influential he has been to Weardale.
- No 40 : WORK UNDERWAY ON BOILER AND FIREBOX :**As mentioned in the last Newsletter the boiler was lifted from the frames of the Trust steam locomotive on September 3rd. It is now in the Loughborough works of LMS. Meanwhile a new firebox is being reconstructed at a workshop on the South Devon Railway. Back in the depot in Wolsingham work continues, first the frames will be steam cleaned, then there will be an inspection of the cylinders and pistons and following this the frames will be lifted as soon as the hoist is available, probably early October. Thus work will continue in three locations with the target of having No 40 back on the line for Easter 2013.



No 40, minus boiler, firebox, tanks & cab awaits attention at Wolsingham
(Photo : Richard Maughan)

- YOUTH TEAM NEWS :**David Million reports : Work has now started on the new Youth Team model railway display at Stanhope Station. The display, which will be eventually open to the public has been sponsored by Bachmann who donated a large quantity of buildings, scenery, locomotives and rolling stock. Youth team will work on the 16ft layout which is located in the Team coach "5226" at the east end of Stanhope station.



Youth Team members with part of the Bachmann railway stock donation, see news item . (Photo : David Million)



WR associate railway the Rio Grande Scenic operates special 'autumn colours' trains – an idea for next year

- THE YOUTH TEAM CHANGES :-** David Million continues his explanation of the recent changes : “I would like to take this opportunity to explain a bit more of what the changes are and why we have made them. The new Stockton & Darlington Youth Team is more than just a new name and a new brand; it is now about providing more training and work experience opportunities for young people, and skills, to help in future career choices. The first, and most important aim of the Youth Team, is that of developing our members with their future in mind, and to achieve this goal a network of organisations are now involved which offer a wide range of opportunities for members at various locations. The SDRYT is not just for rail enthusiasts, the opportunities available can be easily transferred into non-railway careers, such as customer service, retail and engineering roles, so any young person is very welcome irrespective of their intended future career path. We have increased the upper age limit to 20 so that those in higher education can benefit from what we have to offer, gaining skills and hands on experience in addition to their formal education and qualifications. Weardale Railway is still a big part of the Youth Team, providing members with both operational and non-operational opportunities, plus the option of being involved in many planned special events. We see the Weardale Railway as an important and vital partner within the scheme, and overall we believe that WR will see Youth Team involvement increase. In the next issue I will describe how the SDRYT will work with its other partners.



Polar Express is on the way : two more photos from the press launch ceremony at Stanhope on the 12th July- when a group of schoolchildren and adult passengers received an early visit from Santa plus hot chocolate and cookies. (Photos : Steve Gregory)

- MARKETING UPDATE :** Jo Brown, Marketing Manager reports : The Grandparents Day Afternoon tea on 7th October has already successfully sold out! The popularity of vintage era events is evident and we will build on this in the future. We held successful days operating stands at Stanhope Show and Hackworth Park Centenary Event and in addition the Trust attended the Locomotion event. Polar Express sales going well with over 4,000 tickets already sold! First Class is proving very popular and bookings are coming in from far and wide! The main marketing campaign is just getting underway and we expect ticket sales to rise sharply in the near future. My focus now is on next year, producing plans, re-designing our literature and preparing our ourselves for a well organised and successful 2013! Next event for your diary is Halloween on October 27th with on board magic, spooky refreshments and frightful fun. (Editors note – a poster for the Halloween special was attached to the last Newsletter.)
- INFRASTRUCTURE NEWS UPDATE :-** As mentioned in the last Newsletter, there has been further settlement at Broken Banks which lies immediately west of Bishop Auckland. Investigation have shown that the line needs to be re-profiled and in places raised by up to nine inches. This will require approximately 100 tons of ballast. Slippage has been a long running problem at this site for several decades. The vegetation flail owned by BARS/RMS is currently on the Dartmoor Railway and will shortly move to Weardale for an extended stay. Meanwhile the Sunday Gang and RMS personnel, when available, are working on those locations needing attention. Vegetation control spraying was carried out earlier last month. A bridge survey has been carried out and the reports are being studied. Attention is now turning on to tackling the several speed restrictions which have had to be imposed after the extreme weather conditions over the last few months.

- **STORMS HIT RAILWAY YET AGAIN :** Trevor Horner reports : Following the torrential rain early last week old mine workings to the rear of the abattoir at Witton-le-Wear became overloaded with water and this burst to the surface through an old shaft. Within a matter of minutes a virtual river was flowing through the abattoir premises and into the track at the level crossing and also threatening to flood the adjacent houses. The abattoir owner brought in 3 JCB's and diverted the bulk of the flow to the east, where it cascaded down the bankside and into the track spread out over a distance of some 100m. The water was above rail level and the RMS gang worked quickly to dig channels under the rails to reduce the level so that we could be sure the track was still stable. The outgoing coal train had been held at Wolsingham, but was then brought forward and passed through the flood without incident at 5mph. The water was still running the following lunch time but at a much reduced rate most of which was being captured by the lineside drain and fed away to a culvert.



26th September and the floods return. On the left the scene looking west at Abbatoir Crossing (see news item.) On the right the scene at a culvert washout west of Wolsingham station – the culvert has since been cleared, but further work is needed at this site. (Photo (l) Trevor Horner, (r) Steve Bissell)

- **WILF HUME'S 100th BIRTHDAY :** One more account of the day , this time an excerpt from his daughter's account of the full three days of celebration which were held in Stanhope and Frosterley : *Joe (son in law) brought Wilf from the Home to Stanhope Station, where Wilf thought he was having a cup of tea, as has happened on other occasions. Wrong.... a steam train was waiting, which had been provided for this special day, (the No 40 which Wilf is especially fond of is having a nine months overhaul.) They've been using a diesel engine at other times. For today's celebration the steam engine was renamed WILF HUME No 100. Wilf is the Honorary Vice President of The Weardale Steam Railway, the Bishop of Durham being the President. The Station master greeted us in a top hat and carnation button hole and proudly wearing his medals. A reception of photographers all keen to photo the 100 year young man with the renamed steam engine. It felt like Royalty, and Wilf was overwhelmed. Presentations were made. On the train champagne was served, speeches made by Wilf then he led singing all the way to Frosterley, At Frosterley another gathering of friends and family, including Peter and his family and 2 dogs. More photo's. A presentation of the Name plate from John Lewins who made it. The publican of the Black Bull had a wonderful display of old WW2 flags and a flute player wishing a happy birthday. He asked if Wilf , now in his wheelchair to save his energy, could have a photo taken outside his Pub. A Police car pulled up and a Policeman came over and Said " Its taken me a 100 years to catch up with you !!!)*
- **STANHOPE STATION SHOP : VHS PLAYER NEEDED :** Mike Rapp who continues to build up the trade and a team of volunteers at the trust operated shop on Stanhope station has the following request :- The VHS tape player in Stanhope Station WRT shop has finally given up the ghost. As the Trust derives a modest but useful income from the sale of VHS tapes, I would like it to continue. Would any kind member (or indeed anyone) have a machine surplus to requirements which they would care to donate? Please contact Mike on : mike.rapp@tiscali.co.uk

- **RISK ASSESSMENT FOR LEVEL CROSSINGS** : Donald Heath, Operations Manager reports on this critical aspect of our railway :- A railway consists of many parts – trains, track, stations, maintenance depots and level crossings. The fifth item – level crossings, contains the biggest and least easily controlled of all the risks that face a railway operator. Unfortunately for the Weardale Railway we have over 50 level crossings and these all require regular surveys to ensure that they are safe for both the railway and the people who use them. Part of the assurance process consists of carrying out risk assessments for each crossing so as to identify the risks in order that the operators can satisfy themselves that they have taken every reasonable action to either completely remove the risks or to make them as low as is reasonably practical. The crossings were divided into groups. The first group were those that have public highways going over them and which, in generic terms, are obviously the high risk ones. The next set of crossings consist of those which have farm traffic using them where the frequency of risk is going to be lower and the users are more likely to be more alert to the dangers of the railway by means of their frequent use of the crossings and their relationship to the railway. The third group consists of footpaths and those crossings which are described as “field to field” crossings and are, by definition, in much less frequent use. We completed the survey right through from Bishop Auckland to Stanhope No. 2 crossing and also included Unthank public highway crossing. The results of the risk assessment are now being written up and an action list has been compiled.



Weardale Railway majority owner, Iowa Pacific, is now moving into mainline railroading in the USA, operating services in restored Pullman coaches between three major US cities (See news item)

- **IOWA PACIFIC TO OPERATE PULLMAN SERVICES** : Starting this month on the 29th, Iowa Pacific will be operating trains on the main US rail network, initially between Chicago and New Orleans and later running to New York. Excerpt from their website :- “Carefully brought back to service and ardently detailed to be as historically accurate as possible, our classic Pullman Cars offer passengers the chance to rediscover the style, ambience and craftsmanship of the golden age of rail travel. Modern conveniences such as showers, wireless Internet access and power outlets have been carefully added to maximize comfort and enhance your experience, all with classic American dining.” See more at :- :- <http://www.travelpullman.com/About.aspx>
- **POLAR EXPRESS : FROM THE NET :**
- *Just though I'd post in case there are any MSE peeps in & around the North East. The Weardale railway are having the Polar Express train over the Christmas period. It looks absolutely gorgeous & it's the first time it's been in the UK.*
- *Looks fab. The Polar Express is approximately a one-hour round-trip, with evening departures from November 16 through December 30 from the Weardale Railway train station in Stanhope, County Durham. You meet santa too like the kids in the film Kids are encouraged to wear their pyjamas, and Santa gives them a bell that you can only hear if you believe. Sealed money box - £26.00*

- GROUNDFRAME IMPROVEMENTS AT SCOTCH ISLE** : Trevor Horner reports : Work has recommenced at the Scotch Isle East GF with the objective to get it fully working and commissioned. Under the direction of Roly Johnson the lever frame was lifted 5” on Sunday 23rd September and all elements requiring attention were identified. The frame tappets and locking blocks were removed for modification in order that this frame would be locked in the same way as those at Bishop Auckland. The modified locking was replaced and tested for correct operation on Saturday 29th September. Minor alterations were made on site and a part was found to need remedial welding. A programme of works has now been determined and it is expected that further site work will be carried out in the very near future. Hopefully the process of clamping the points will soon be a thing of the past. **Editors Note : See also item from Donald Heath at the end of this Newsletter**



From the archives ; the scene at Broken Banks near Bishop Auckland in 2007 and now after the recent rain further remedial work will need to be carried out. (Photo : John Askwith)



Roly Johnson carrying out final adjustments to the ground-frame locking at Scotch Isle East. See news item. (Photo : Trevor Horner)

- BISHOP LINE NEWS** : Bob Whitehouse the Community Rail Officer for the line from Bishop to Darlington reports : The Partnership seems to go from strength to strength and this is particularly noted in the increased patronage on the line. A survey undertaken on my appointment shows that many people are unaware that a service exists on the line. This has resulted in a campaign to make people aware of the line. The major flows on the line are towards Darlington and beyond in the morning and the return in the evening. The flows towards Bishop Auckland (and the Weardale!) during the day are not hugely populated although showing a small increase. The branding of the line has taken place and a more recent survey shows that this is now being recognised. *Both Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council have received funds from the Government to support sustainable travel along the rail corridor from Bishop Auckland to Darlington. This has resulted in a number of initiatives including the appointment of Travel Rangers who will in due course be based at Bishop Auckland Station.* The announcement that the contract has been awarded to Agility Trains to build Hitachi Intercity Express Trains adjacent to Heighington Station is very welcome. There is also a plan for a 25kV test track being built from the site adjacent to the current running line in a south-easterly direction. Many of you who travel the line will have noticed track replacement taking place resulting in a really smooth ride even on Class 142's! *Station adoption continues to go well and I am pleased to say that Bishop Trains have been appointed station adopters of Bishop Auckland Station. There are moves by community groups in Darlington to improve the historic area of North Road Station and beyond for cultural and economic reasons.. This is particularly welcome bearing in mind that the 2025 Stockton and Darlington bi-centenary is looming and planning really needs to start now.*
- CALLING ALL RAILWAY TIMETABLE ENTHUSIASTS** : The Network Rail passenger timetables are accessible online on several sites. Now the full working timetables are also available for the complete network online for the first time. The site is not very visitor friendly but with some patience it is possible to track down individual lines. Find it at :-
[http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browseDirectory.aspx?dir=%5CTimetables%5CWorking%20timetable%20\(WTT\)&root=](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browseDirectory.aspx?dir=%5CTimetables%5CWorking%20timetable%20(WTT)&root=)

- WEARDALE RAILWAY TRUST AGM : 17th November 2012** : Just a reminder that the Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 17th November 2012 at Stanhope Methodist Church School Room. The meeting will start at 10:30 AM prompt * (Registration from 10:00 AM) *. It is important that members bring their membership cards with them in order to gain admission to the Annual General Meeting. Any member unable to attend the Annual General Meeting may nominate another member to vote on his/her behalf by applying for a proxy vote. All proxy vote forms must be correctly filled in and seconded and must be returned to the Company Secretary by Friday 9th November 2012. All written resolutions for discussion at the Annual General Meeting must be received by the Company Secretary by 3rd November 2012 Any other business such as questions to the Directors should be notified in advance to the Company Secretary or at the appropriate point during the AGM at the discretion of the Chairman. The Secretary, James Lynn, can be contacted at :- j_a_lynn@hotmail.com



Some recent DCR Moves : 56303 powers away from a signal check at Trowell Junction on 27th September 2012, (Photo : Ben Wheeler – both photos from the BARS blog : <http://bars-blog.weebly.com/latest-news.html>)



56311 & 56303 approach Clay Cross tunnel on 10th Sept. on a working to Peak Forest. (Photo : Phil Sangwell)

- GARDEN RAIL EDITOR VISITS WEARDALE RAILWAY** : A recent editorial in the ‘Garden Rail magazine described the editors visit to several railways in the North East. Here are some of his comments on the Weardale Railway :- “Well the current Mrs Gorton and myself had a most enjoyable break in the Northumbria, thank you for asking, and the weather was certainly very kind to us. Both the Tanfield and the ‘new wave’ Weardale Railway were very welcoming and on the latter line the ladies in our party cooed with pleasure as they were ushered into a well-maintained 1st class open Mk 1 coach. During the journey all of us enjoyed the informed commentary provided by David Skuse, who had also met us at the Network Rail station at Bishops Auckland. Indeed on both lines the friendly and informative staff made determined efforts to provide us both with an enjoyable experience on ‘their’ line and also with refreshments The Weardale railway starts from a single platform at the back end of a trading estate in Bishop Auckland – but don’t let that put you off. The countryside on the 55minute journey is superb and Stanhope station is a little gem.



From the archives : Wilf Hume on 1st August 2009 as he takes his footplate ride on No40 with daughter Margaret, grandson Alex Gibson and great-granchildren Emily and Noah (photos : I Gardner)

- **REMINDER : OLIVER CROMWELL DUE :20th OCTOBER** : As mentioned in the last Newsletter the Railway Touring company Charter visits Stanhope from 12.20 to 13.35hrs on Saturday 20th October. There are still some seats from York available : e.g. Standard Class is £67 which includes the trip north to Morpeth via the Blyth & Tyne. Other classes and full details on : --- <http://www.railwaytouring.net/uk-day-trips/weardale-railway>



From the archives 2 : scenes from November 2009 :-
The WRT 'Dogfish' wagons being put to use at the work location at Broken Banks in November



The Sentinel shunter en route to Escomb on a works train (Both photos : Alistair Gregory)

- **WEARDALE RAILWAY GROUNDFRAMES** : Donald Heath, Operations Manager, explains the evolution of groundframe design and the improvements that are underway on the Weardale Line

As those of you who help run the operational side of the Weardale Railway know, all of the points that are in the main running line are controlled by groundframes. With the exception of Stanhope East, these are three lever groundframes which have a standard set of locking such that when the groundframe is in the normal or closed position, all of the three levers are at the back of the frame furthest away from the operator. Each groundframe consists of a release lever, a facing point lock lever and a points lever. The working sequence has been identical where the release lever has to be pulled to the front of the frame (nearest the operator that is), followed by the facing point lock lever so as to unlock the facing points and then the points lever to reverse the points. Unfortunately, this combination has meant that the operator has had to make the hardest pull or push with the other two levers at the front of the frame inhibiting his efforts to move the lever which had the heaviest load on it.

Steve Bissell, who in the late 1980s/early 1990s was the Signal Works Engineer at Newcastle and thus had the Weardale Railway within his area, has persuaded one of his old Signalling Engineering Inspectors to come and help with the installation and maintenance of the groundframes, point rodding runs etc. This gentleman, (Mr Roland Johnson), has spent the whole of his career in the north east of England where a number of things were done rather differently. One of those different things was that the standard arrangements of levers in a groundframe was an alternative arrangement to that which appertained in the southern part of the LNER, on the LMS and in

Scotland. Because this North Eastern variant has advantages for the safe and easier operation of the groundframe, Steve and I have agreed that we should, over the next while, convert all of our existing groundframes to this new method of locking. The change, which has already been implemented at Bishop Auckland West groundframe and was incorporated from the start on the Connecting Line groundframe, is that the groundframe operator no longer had to reach over levers to do the heaviest pull/push.

In simple terms, this means that when the groundframe is closed/locked, the release lever and the facing point lock lever are in the reverse position – that is to say they are nearest to the groundframe operator. (The points lever is still in the normal position furthest away from the operator.) When the groundframe is used, the groundframe lock is removed and the release lever is put in the normal position and then the points are unlocked by putting the facing point lever into the normal position. The way is now clear for the points to be moved without any obstacle from the facing point lock lever and/or the groundframe release lever. This is both safer for the operator and much easier.

So far, the groundframes at Bishop Auckland West (2) have been arranged in this locking configuration. The locking at the Scotch Isle East groundframe has been altered so that when it is finally commissioned – hopefully before the end of this month – it will have the same arrangement of levers. Scotch Isle West will follow and when a new three lever groundframe is installed at Stanhope East, this will be done in the same way.

Edited by : Gerry Mudd : 2 October 2012 : Comments, suggestions, contributions are welcomed.
gcmudd@ntlworld.com