

WEARDALE RAILWAY : NEWS UPDATE : No.16

06 APRIL 2009

No 40 NOW READY FOR BOILER INSPECTION DCC WORKING ON RAILWAY BRIDGES AND THE WITTON PATH

- **No 40 back in steam :** On Friday 3rd April work on No 40 was sufficiently advanced for the team to carry out a low pressure steam test. This was satisfactory and is the precursor to the full steam test and boiler inspection next week. Meanwhile work continues on the repainting of the exterior of the locomotive now that the reconstruction work is complete. If all goes well the engine will be re-commissioned after Easter for running in and should be available for revenue service in May. (T. Hewitt)



Lighting the fire for the low pressure steam test



Back in steam, N0 40 outside the Wolsingham workshop
(Both photos : T Hewitt)

- **DCC work on overline bridges :** DCC took on ownership of almost all the overbridges when the line was acquired by the Weardale Railway. DCC had earlier completed all their statutory examinations and identified repairs. Earlier this week pointing work was completed to bridge 26, adjacent to Heather View Caravan Park. A more extensive repair to the parapet of bridge 6 is scheduled to start on Monday 6th April. This has been held up for some while awaiting suitable ground conditions for access over the adjoining fields. Thankfully the current excellent weather has enabled the start to be made. (T. Horner)
- **Level crossings :-** Work to provide flashing road signals together with the appropriate road markings etc for the Witton le Wear crossing has started with surveys and preparation of plans for formal submission for a level crossing order – John Lambard is working on the designs. Surveys have also begun at the Engineman's terrace crossing (near the former Wear Valley Junction) and design work has begun for an open level crossing there. (S Bissell)
- **Track Recording.** Our shared “Amber” trolley, which we use to record certain track geometry faults, has now become available and a recording run is planned for W/C 6th April. This should give us sufficient time to carry out any necessary repairs before we start continuous running for the summer period. (T Horner)

- **Junior Club assist with track work :** Members of the Junior Club have been helping with the track work taking place to get the line ready for services to Bishop Auckland. Fishplate greasing and the replacing of missing track keys has kept the group busy on two Sundays during March and on Sunday 29th March 2009 the group reached Witton-le-Wear crossing having covered 6 miles. (D Million)

The team will tackle the track eastwards from Witton-le-Wear crossing on Sunday 19th April 2009, if you would like to join them please contact **David Million. (01388-747683 / 07711-017980 david.million@wrjc.org.uk)**



Junior club members Jordan Parker (left) and James Percy working on the track near Witton le Wear after covering the 3 miles from Harperley. (Photos: D Million)



Jordan and James taking a break beside the home signal west of Witton le Wear crossing. Wickham trolley in the background opposite the about to be restored crossing keepers cabin.

- **Message from Trust Chairman, Kevin Hillary :** With one successful event already this year (Mothers Day) the next event is the long Easter Weekend, with Easter Bunny hunts for the children all weekend, and on Easter Sunday, weather permitting (last year the run was delayed twice due to snow and ice) around 25 vehicles arriving at Stanhope Station from about 12 o'clock. These will be then on display in the car park. In April we will be running trains every day during the school holidays plus weekends. It would be nice to meet some new faces along with the old ones (not that we all have old faces you understand). We now have the Station building at Wolsingham which needs to be manned. Do you feel you could put your mark on the building? We now have a couple of volunteers tidying the garden around the Station. The railway is going forward again and I believe it will keep on going forward. If you can help in any way please contact us. If you cannot manage to help this time, come along and visit anyway, and help swell the coffers.
- **Can you help publicise the Railway? :** Volunteers are required for the following two marketing events:-

Wear Valley Food Festival

Saturday 18th April 2009

Event times: 10:00-16:00

Location: Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland

Local History Event

Saturday 16th May 2009

Event times: TBA

Location: County Hall, Durham

Both events involve manning a promotional / advertising stand.
Volunteers willing help should forward their details to John Askwith:-
(john@askwith02.fsnet.co.uk / Tel : 01325 462 253

- **'Chipper' Purchased by WRCIC :** All the vegetation clearance work has resulted in a build up of debris requiring processing to clear the site as lineside fires are now restricted by HMRI requirements. The Railway has just purchased a Chipper able to deal with logs up to 10 inches diameter.
- **Witton le Wear : works underway :** Work continues on the lineside path being built by DCC from the Witton crossing towards Bridge 3 opposite the Low Barns Nature Reserve.(see below) Once the path works at the crossing are complete then it is intended to hang the newly reconstructed crossing gates. Also on the programme is the restoration of the crossing keepers cabin with power and other facilities. (G Lord, T Hewitt)



A view looking west towards Witton le Wear crossing with the DCC lineside footpath under construction.(Photo : J Askwith)



An archive photo of the cabin at the crossing
(Photo : J Askwith collection)

- **Clearing the track to Bishop Auckland : Can you join the 'Tuesday Gang'?** We have been successful in increasing the number of weekday volunteers helping on the considerable task of getting the 10 miles of line between Wolsingham and Bishop Auckland ready for traffic later this year. This will be a landmark event in our railway's history and an accolade to all of the volunteers, past and present, who have worked hard to keep the line running. Although volunteer work can take place any weekday, certain tasks require a larger number of volunteers so we are proposing in the first instance to see if we can form a regular 'Tuesday Gang'. Volunteers are still welcome on other weekdays, for details contact Steve Race the day before.

The tasks involve track maintenance and vegetation clearance. If you can you play a part in making Railway history **please contact Steve Race on Mondays on 07918-777932. He will provide you with details about the location of the work taking place on the Tuesday.**

- **Welcome to the latest Weardale Railway volunteers :** Last month we welcomed 5 new volunteers and this month, so far, we welcome a further 4 volunteers. Michael Wilkinson reports he has more volunteers 'in the pipeline' for induction. So welcome now to L D Buckley, Neil Ritchie, Jean and Mick Eccles.(M Wilkinson, D Million)
- **New Volunteer Roster : EASTER VACANCIES - can you help?** Regular volunteers will have received the new consolidated roster prepared by John Hargreaves. As this update goes to press there are still some critical vacancies to be filled on Easter Sunday. These include assistants in the café and on the Griddle car on the train. There are also vacancies for Broadwood Crossing Keeper on the 6th, 7th, 8th and 14th of April. **For catering vacancies contact Kath Wood on 07779 571 228; for Broadwood - Donald Heath on 01904 608 808.**
- **Easter Draw :** The Trust's Easter Draw takes place on Easter Monday April 13th, so there is still time to buy or sell more tickets - Tickets are £1 each and counterfoils should be returned to Stanhope Station during the coming week.

- **Witton-le-Wear Footpath.** DCC have almost finished the groundworks for the new footpath. All necessary vegetation has been removed and several sections have had new drains installed. A minor problem related to some buried services has to be overcome in the vicinity of Witton-le-Wear LC. This will help us, as a new duct will be installed as part of the remedial works, which will facilitate us running an electricity supply to new road signals as required by the HMRI. Lineside and boundary fencing is progressing well and should be completed within the next week. A new bridge structure spanning a small stream was installed this week. (T Horner)



The bridge across a small stream east of Witton le Wear with both the boundary and lineside fences in place, the railway is on the embankment to the right. (Photo : T Horner)



Another view of the path under construction with the lineside fence in place, looking east. (Photo : T horner)

- **WAR ON THE LINE 2010 – Plans discussed :** Later this year the Weardale Railway will take a step back in time to re-live the period of the 1940's. In conjunction with the North East branch of Military Vehicle Trust and Yesterday's Heroes, the railway will once again host its annual 'War on the Line' event over the weekend of 19th & 20th September. The event will include a fashion show, hairdressing demonstrations, skirmishes, dioramas, military vehicles, home front displays and side stalls. A 1940's dance with entertainment is planned for the Saturday evening. (J Askwith)



As part of the build up to the event, members from the Military Vehicle Trust and Yesterdays Heroes visited the Weardale Railway on Sunday 29th March as an appetiser for the main event in September. (Photos :J Askwith)



- **Marketing spotlight :** Don't forget to remind your friends that the Railway is operating everyday from today until April 19th and on Wednesdays and Weekends until April 29. There will be activities every day over the Easter weekend and on the Sunday a classic car rally will visit Stanhope station around midday, also cream teas will be available in the griddle car. Looking further ahead planning is already well underway for our other events. If you would like to help with any of the events, please get in touch with Dave Million. We are already looking towards additional events in 2010. If you have any suggestions for events you would like to see on the Railway please get in touch with Ian Gardner on 019137101471

- News updates : Feedback :** The editor would like to thank the various contributors to these updates – their contribution is also valued by readers as evidenced by the following comments received recently : “This is a great way to keep members informed of developments on a regular basis. My Railway has been operational for over 30 years and we still aspire to something like this! Well done!”
 “I for one will be renewing my membership and might even find time to volunteer again now my degree is finally finished!”
 “Got the newsletter and it looks like excellent news. Fingers crossed.”
 “I have heard some really good things about the progress...now maybe the railway will become the asset it has promised to be all along.”
 “Our School has used the Weardale Railway twice recently and will do again in the future. We are very interested in the link to Bishop Auckland. Could you please add me to your mailing list.”
- No. 40 Appeal :** The appeal has now reached £25,000 thanks to recent donations including a cheque for £800 from the Junior Club and the recent sale of GNER crockery and glassware. This total comes from 112 separate donations as well as general collections. Each donor giving over £10 received a copy of the attractive photo montage prepared and donated by John Lewins. It is shown (reduced scale) below. (PS : You can also buy it in the shop.)



Edited by G C Mudd : 5 April 2009

Please send your contributions, comments, questions, photos etc to : gcmudd@ntlworld.com