

# WEARDALE RAILWAY

**NEWSLETTER No 60 - 1 MAY 2012**

## **EASTER SEES RESUMPTION OF REGULAR SERVICES IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUE AT BISHOP AUCKLAND RECORD MONTH FOR FREIGHT TRAFFIC**

- **RECORD MONTH FOR WEARDALE RAILWAY FREIGHT TRAFFIC** : March 2012 saw the railway set a new record for the number of freight trains operated over the line in a calendar month. A total of 27 trains, usually loading to 19 wagons, were operated running to either Scunthorpe steelworks or to the power station at Ratcliffe near Nottingham. The trains normally depart from Wolsingham at 10.30hrs, Mondays to Saturdays and the empties usually return between 22.00 and 23.00hrs after completing their roundtrip. Since the inauguration of this traffic in June last year only one scheduled train has not run and this was due to pathing issues on the Network.
- **WR APPRENTICE SCHEME COMMENCES** : April 1 saw two new apprentices commence their placements in the Wolsingham Depot. They are Luke Blackett and Ben Riley, both living in Weardale and both of whom are already familiar with the operational side of the Railway as they are also members of the WR Youth Team and as such are regular volunteers. They will work on Heritage projects under a scheme operated by the Heritage Skills Initiative, an organisation hosted by the North East Civic Trust. It is hoped that this scheme can be further extended in coming years as the scope of activities on the Heritage side of the Railway grows. Acknowledgements to Arthur Temple for his work in initially setting up this project.



En route from Shildon to Wolsingham Depot the Class 122 'Bubble Car' owned by Trust Director Dr Wood. (see news item). 7 April 2012. Photo : John Lewins, taken near Toft Hill.



Class 66 No. 66849 heads an outward bound coal train passes the heritage train in the platform spur at Bishop Auckland. Note the ballast alongside the line for use to complete the run around loop. Photo: John Lewins.

- **CLASS 122 'BUBBLE CAR' ARRIVES ON WEARDALE LINE** : The single car diesel unit No. 55012 was one of 20 such units which were built by Gloucester RC & W in 1958 and used on lightly travelled branch lines. The last BR operational service was in 1995 on the Stourbridge Town branch. 55012 passed via Loadhaul into EWS ownership and was seriously vandalised while stored at Thornaby. It has since been acquired by Trust Director Dr Mike Wood and has been virtually rebuilt inside and out by Rail Restorations NE at Shildon. The units are popular on heritage railways and at least six others are to be found on other railways from South Devon to East Lancashire. They have a passenger capacity of 95 and were rated for speeds up to 70mph. If you want to see 55012 operating for the first time in many years visit : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9Yku4vwsEs> . We will try to keep you advised of any planned running days on the WR.



No.40 back in action on the 2012 heritage service passing Witton le Wear crossing on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (Photo : David Scott)



Until the Bishop Auckland loop is completed Class 31 will be used in top and tail mode along with No 40. 31601 seen here near McNeils crossing on 15 April. (Photo : J Lewins)

- No 40 BOILER INSPECTION DUE IN MAY :** As can be seen in several photographs on this issue, No 40 is back in full operational service thanks to the squad of hard working Trust volunteers. The current boiler certificate for No. 40 expires in October this year. Additionally its Annual Inspection is due in May and after this we should have a clearer idea of when we will have to withdraw No.40 from service. A provisional slot has been booked in a boiler shop to expedite any repairs or renewal which may be deemed necessary. The Trust's No 40 loco fund currently stands at over £34,000.
- WRCIC STAFF CHANGES :** Jo Brown took over as Marketing Manager in January of this year. As well as having qualified in Travel and Tourism studies, Jo is a 'Weardalian' and has extensive local knowledge and contacts. Also joining the BARS management team in April is Alan Lee, who takes over from Chris Exley as Safety Advisor for the companies in the Group. Alan has previous railway experience in the railway traction and rolling stock, he is also a signalling and telegraph enthusiast. He has already visited the Weardale operations and will be a regular attendee at the Company Management meetings.



April 6<sup>th</sup>, Good Friday and the first day of the 2012 operating season, the resident DCR Class 31 hauls the Mk1 stock on its 16 mile run to Bishop Auckland ( Photo : Chris Simpson )



Graham Isom WR General Manager (L) with John Hargreaves a regular volunteer in many areas, now on the footplate of the Class 08 shunter. Photo : David Scott.

- 'BISHOP TRAINS' AT BISHOP AUCKLAND STATION :** In January this year David Million and Michael Wilkinson, both of whom have had a long association with the Weardale Railway, opened a shop which will sell items associated with trains and railways in the former DVLA Test Centre offices in the Bishop Auckland station building. Their focus will be on selling model railways, railway themed gifts and railway collectibles and they are also developing plans to set up a Travel Centre for rail and coach transport. They have set up a website : (<http://www.bishoptrains.com/>) to facilitate online ordering of sales items and are starting to build up sales on a national and international basis.



**Bishop Trains shop at the eastern end of the main Bishop Auckland station building, the entrance area includes toilet facilities and a ticket booking window. Photos: David Million.**

- **WR TRUST DIESEL LOCO ACQUISITION FUND** : As mentioned in the last Trust magazine the Trust Board is looking at the acquisition of a heritage locomotive – ideally a Bo-Bo loco with steam heat, such as a Class 25. A fund has already been started and after the sale of one of the former Lafarge Sentinel shunters it currently stands at over £6,000. A formal appeal will be started shortly
- **SPEED RESTRICTION TO BE LIFTED** : The 5 mph speed restriction near Witton le Wear has been an operational inconvenience since the line was reopened in 2010. While the railway was inactive in the 90's a lineside fence had been repositioned closer to the line giving a very restricted clearance. Long running negotiations have now been resolved in a mediation process which has resulted in an agreement to move the fence back to a position which gives adequate clearance. As there is also significant vegetation clearance to be undertaken at this site the work to move the fence will be delayed until after the end of the bird breeding season. After this passenger trains will be able to pass this location at the normal line speed, which is 25mph.
- **EASTER WEEKEND SEES RESUMPTION OF WR SERVICES** : On Good Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup> regular services recommenced on the Weardale Railway. The railway will operate two return services between Bishop Auckland and Stanhope, using heritage coaches and usually steam hauled every Saturday and Sunday until the end of October. The same timetable will operate on Bank Holidays and additionally on Fridays and some Thursdays during the summer holidays. The Easter services were well patronised with passenger numbers well up on the previous year. Passengers on the Easter services travelled with Bertie Bunny and Company and also had the opportunity to purchase refreshments from the Buffet car where the Youth Team helped out with the service. Patronage of the Buffet car on the longer run over the full line gave some very impressive financial results. Meanwhile at Stanhope station there were other activities such as a Treasure Hunt and an Easter Bonnet competition



**31601, 56091 and 56311 cross Etherley viaduct on 27 March near the end of its journey from Washwood Heath (near Birmingham) to Wolsingham. Photo : John Lewins.**



**No.40 pulls across Witton le Wear crossing on 22 April, behind it is the former LMS brake coach owned by Mile Wood standing in his Mk 1 brake now under repair. Photo : John Scott.**

- **BISHOP AUCKLAND STATION IMPROVEMENTS (1: TRACKWORK )** : Since the start of operations this year the Weardale Railway trains have been operating into a new and longer platform on a separate spur line at Bishop Auckland (West). Previously the WR platform was located on the main running line. The new arrangement means that through trains to or from the Network can pass trains held in the spur line. The next step in remodelling the lay out is to install a new set of points on the main running line at the Network (eastern) end of the WR owned land which will convert the spur into a loop – thus enabling engines to run round and obviate the need to ‘top and tail’ trains as at present. As a picture in this issue shows the ballast is on site and it is planned to complete the installation of the new layout in the next few days and commission the loop early in May.
- **NEW 2012 TIMETABLE LEAFLET ISSUED AND DISTRIBUTED** : Jo Brown and the Marketing Team have developed and produced the 2012 timetable leaflet. An initial print of 40,000 copies was made. Distribution has been organised to over 650 outlets in Co. Durham, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Cleveland, North Yorkshire and Cumbria. Emphasis is given to the opportunity to see 15 miles of superb scenery on a heritage railway with buffet car facilities on the trains. Attention is drawn also to (the now renamed) Whistlestop Buffet and the shop at Stanhope Station.



Tables laid ready in the First class coach for the Mothers Day special- see news item. Photo : JoBrown



Trevor Horner supervises the Tree planting near to Stanhope station. Photo Jo Brown.

- **STANHOPE STATION IMPROVEMENTS** : Work has been completed on a complete revamp of the station forecourt area in front of the main station building at Stanhope. The work included paving and kerbs plus a tarmac parking area and also new signage and lighting. The final part of the work will be a complete repaint of the station frontage which should be completed shortly. Also in a joint exercise with the AONB authorities and Groundwork North East one hundred trees were planted in the vicinity of Stanhope station on Mothers’ Day to enhance the appearance of the embankment near the water tank. Thanks to Arthur Temple for initiating this latter project.
- **THE VIRTUAL WEARDALE RAILWAY** : Now that the Weardale Railway Company website is reaching full operational capability and has all the information on train times, fares and future events we thought it would be useful to summarise the locations at which you can follow the Railway and associated organisations . The official WR Company website is : <https://www.weardale-railway.com/> This site is linked to and works alongside the volunteer operated WR Trust website which remains <http://www.weardale-railway.org.uk/> . The Weardale railway also has a Twitter site which is <https://twitter.com/#!/WeardaleRailway> and a Facebook location which can be found at : <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Weardale-Railways-CIC/216928285081456> . There is also a Youtube location for the Weardale Railway where videos of the activities can be viewed : [http://www.youtube.com/user/weardalerailwaytv?ob=0&feature=results\\_main](http://www.youtube.com/user/weardalerailwaytv?ob=0&feature=results_main) . Finally there is also a website for the Friends of Bishop Auckland Station ( formerly the B. Auckland station Trust ) : <http://bishopaucklandstationtrust.yolasite.com/mission.php>
- **FATHERS DAY : 17<sup>th</sup> June** : plans are under way to offer a ride on the train where Dad will be served with a locally brewed beer on board. More details in next Newsletter.

- **BISHOP AUCKLAND STATION IMPROVEMENTS ( 2 : PLATFORMS )** : One of the perpetual grievances we hear from passengers is of the inconvenient access to the WR platform, in that you have to take a circuitous walk from the Northern Rail platform at Bishop Auckland around the rear of B & Q and the Royal Mail offices to reach the platform. “You built the platform in the wrong place” is a typical comment. Actually it was built in the only place possible (i.e . on WR owned land) until such time as the Railway could conclude all the legal arrangements with Network Rail, who own the land up to our boundary and the main station building and platform and Northern Rail who lease the station. There have been other complicating factors but at last we are at the final hurdle and finance is in place to build a direct path from the Network Rail platform, alongside and fenced off from the track, to the WR platform – it will be on the level, tarmaced and will have lighting. Thus changing trains will be straightforward and take less time than changing, say, at York! Cannot give a precise time on this as there are third parties involved - but hopefully it will be during the summer season.



Easter Bunny time ; providing on board service are (l-r) David, Miriam and Rebecca Ashton, and Alex Thorkildsen. Photo : Helen Skelton.



31601 heads the morning train across Broadwood bridge on the first day of the 2012 season, April 6. Photo : Chris Simpson.

- **BBC FILMING ON THE WEARDALE RAILWAY AGAIN** : Helen Skelton, the former Blue Peter presenter visited the Weardale railway as part of the filming of a new BBC series for which the working title is ‘Dale to Sea’. The team travelled on the Easter Bunny special and also Helen carried out an interview with WR Trust Director and archivist John Askwith. The production team visited the railway again on the following Sunday to take exterior footage.
- **BISHOP AUCKLAND STATION IMPROVEMENTS ( 3 : FACILITIES )** : At the moment the Weardale Railway subleases part of the office block on the main station from Northern Rail. It is used mainly as an office and meeting room. Plans are being developed jointly with Durham County Council, to redevelop the whole of the western end of the station buildings to provide facilities for intending passengers, the provision of toilets and also revamped office/ meeting accommodation. Thus with these facilities plus the existing café and, as mentioned elsewhere, the recently opened ‘Bishop Trains’ shop – the two platform station at Bishop Auckland will take on a new lease of life. More on these developments in later issues.
- **MOTHERS DAY : FIRST 2012 EVENT A SUCCESS** : On Sunday March 18<sup>th</sup> a round trip was operated leaving Stanhope at 13.15 and returning from Bishop Auckland at 14.45. Passengers were served afternoon tea in the First Class coach Nina and Mums received a glass of sparkling wine. Meanwhile the children were kept busy decorating cupcakes for mum while on board. There was great feedback from passengers after this event. Now to the plans for Fathers Day (June 17<sup>th</sup> )
- **UPCOMING WR EVENTS** : Attached to this Newsletter are posters (A4 size) for the next three special events on the Railway – Teddy Bears Picnic on the 27<sup>th</sup> May, Fathers Day on the 17<sup>th</sup> June and War on the Line on the weekend of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> July. If you are a member of the Trust (or would like to join) and would like to help at these events or just get involved in any aspect of the Railway such as helping with the Café, Customer Service, Ticket Office & Administration, Cleaning and General Maintenance please get in touch with Ruth Carroll : [RCarroll@britamrail.com](mailto:RCarroll@britamrail.com)



**YOUTH TEAM news** : two new recruits ,on the left Jack Andrews, and on the right Rhys Jones and in the centre acting as mentors, are Alex Thorkildsen and Stuart Watters. The right hand photo shows the newly completed WRYT meeting room (The North Eastern Room) in the 5226 coach at Stanhope station. Photos : David Million.

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- **G5 LOCO NEW BUILD PROJECT MOVES AHEAD** : This project, the building of an entirely new tank engine to the original LNER design, has been led by Weardale Railway Director and Trust Vice Chairman Dr Mike Wood. The G5 Company has recently announced that it had begun the assembly stage of the G5 locomotive, which was designed by Wilson Worsdell for the North Eastern Railway in 1893. The locomotive is being assembled at the Rail Restorations North East (RRNE) works in Shildon County Durham. The frames, boiler, bogie and a number of castings were transferred in mid March from Great Northern Steam in Darlington, who had built the components under contract from the G5 Company. Mike explained that this was a significant step forward for the project. Rail Restorations North East will be responsible for the detailed management of the assembly work, advised by the G5 chief engineer, David Elliot, who is well known for his work with Tornado. Follow progress on : <http://www.g5locomotive.co.uk/>

Edited by G C Mudd

I May 2012 All comments, suggestions, contributions please to [gcmudd@ntlworld.com](mailto:gcmudd@ntlworld.com)