

WEARDALE RAILWAY

NEWSLETTER No.40 : 30 MAY 2010

MAY 22 REOPENING MEDIA COVERAGE AND PHOTOS
SPECIAL EVENING BUFFET TRAIN FOR VOLUNTEERS ; JUNE 3rd
NEW PLATFORM BUILT AT BISHOP AUCKLAND IN FIVE DAYS

MAY 22 :REOPENING CEREMONY PLUS ARRIVAL OF NEW GENERAL MANAGER :

The reopening round trip from Bishop Auckland passed off without a hitch on May 22nd and in perfect weather – a welcome change from the opening day of the first stretch of the line in 2004. The ceremonies are described in more detail in the media coverage, the links to which are given elsewhere and shown in photographs in this Newsletter. May 22nd also marked the arrival of Malcolm Dean as General Manager of the Railway, he had to hit the ground running and is now being briefed by the current management team as well as working on the community services as required. Malcolm expressed his appreciation of all the hard work that had gone on to make the day possible : “I want to thank all the volunteers and Junior Club members who turned out on the day and also make a special mention to Donald Heath, Steve Race and Norman Swindle for their expert handling of No.40 on what was a challenging diagram on a very hot day. Looking forward we have even greater challenges to face. We are now operating a daily service and we need help in pretty much all departments but particularly on the operating side : controllers, drivers, guards, crossing keepers. At the moment we are only keeping the service going by taking people away from their normal jobs and relying on the dedicated help of you, our volunteers. We are in the process of recruiting and training a limited number of paid and part time staff to assist, especially in the early and late operating shifts, but we can only operate a viable service if we also increase our ratio of volunteer helpers. Could I ask everyone to think about whether they could help and to ask people they know. Also if they know anyone who used to volunteer and stopped for any reason then perhaps they could be persuaded to have another go.”



On the evening of the 19th May a test run to Bishop Auckland was made using No 40, the Class 73 and four coaches – here shown crossing Etherley viaduct. This photo taken by John Lewins from a newly discovered vantage point – it is on a public footpath . Can anyone dispute the fact that this is probably the longest single run that No 40 has done in its 56 year life – 10 miles , depot to Bishop Auckland. Prior to this it has only seen use on very short runs on the Ashington colliery network then the Norfolk Railway and runs of just over a mile on the Colne Valley Railway.

- HOW TO BUILD A STATION PLATFORM IN UNDER FIVE DAYS :-** We don't know if there is a category in the Guinness Book of Records for platform building – but if there is it would probably now be held by Steve Goodwin and the gang from RMS ably assisted by the new recruits from the Future Jobs Fund. The prefabricated structure was designed completely in house by BARS general Manager Mike Fairburn who described it as a simple but innovative design. The components are all fabricated from common steel sections and are easily handled with simple site plant and equipment. The platform is also capable of easy removal and re-location, which it is intended to do once arrangements have been negotiated in the fullness of time for access to the main station. The design offers significant advantages over some of the other demountable platforms available, not least that it was significantly cheaper to construct and install. Mike said, this is a real triumph and also much to the credit of the installation team who did a fantastic job. (Thanks to Mike Fairburn and Steve Bissell)



How to build a station platform in four and a half days. Top left : timber sheets laid on the prefabricated framework of used lengths of rail. Top right : painting of the platform surface , fencing in place. Bottom right, work underway on the fencing before the path down to the platform was surfaced and bottom right, the completed 40 m platform, which lies 150 m west of the Network Rail platform at Bishop Auckland. Photos : S Goodwin, except bottom left : A Gregory.

- ‘NINA’ Mk 1, COACH BACK IN SERVICE :** At times it seemed an impossible task to get our Pullman style Mk 1 coach restored in time to be included in the rake of coaches for our opening day on May 22nd , but with the final touches of paint still being applied on the previous day, ready it was. It looks magnificent, inside and out and it is a tribute to many hours of hard work by Steve Race and the team of volunteers, latterly assisted by the young folk on the job creation scheme. Thanks are also due to the generosity of Trust volunteer and former Director Julian Shepherd who purchased the coach at the time of the troubles in 2004 and has since donated it to the Weardale Railway Trust, we hope when he is recovered he can come up to Weardale from his home in Coventry to ride the coach. Meanwhile there are photos elsewhere in this Newsletter.

- PRESS AND VIDEO COVERAGE OF THE REOPENING DAY** : There was a large amount of local press and media coverage of the opening day and the events leading up to it such as the building of the 'instant' station at Bishop Auckland and the HMRI inspection. There is a good article in the Northern Echo on the platform building – it is at : - http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/local/bishopauckland/8180287.Rail_links_DIY_platform/ Also in the Echo is coverage of the opening day with an embedded video which includes some words from Company President Ed Ellis, this is at : - http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/8180460.Crowds_turn_out_to_witness_re_opening_of_rail_link/ BBC Tees coverage is at : - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/tees/8699252.stm> . Newcastle Journal coverage can be found at : - <http://www.journallive.co.uk/north-east-news/todays-news/2010/05/24/railway-welcomed-back-into-the-dale-61634-26505506/> Steve Gregory an Iowa Pacific representative on the Board of Weardale Railways has posted a video of the opening at Bishop Auckland at:- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBpxmMzxYtI> and there is a video of the 141 departing Stanhope on its first day operating the community Service, on May 23rd , you can see it at : - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT5cDHjw_MA
- CLIVE AND WENDY ELSDON** – are now well and truly in harness managing the Commercial and Marketing side of the Railway. A lot of their hard work is behind the scenes, however one aspect of their work you can see is that they also are running a Weardale Railway Twitter page which last month reached it's 500th follower and now contains over 1000 'Tweets' . You can find it at :- <http://twitter.com/weardalerailway> . For those into Facebook, there is also a Weardale Railway facebook page, which currently has over 150 members.



Another John Lewins photo : Inaugural train passing Holbeck 4. Next job – repainting the Griddle Car.

EXTRACT FROM EMAIL :

Dear Weardale Railway,

I took the train from Wolsingham to Bishop Auckland on Saturday (May 28th). I intend to use the service regularly in the future to obtain my weekly shop. The service from the volunteers on the train was excellent especially young Stuart. The journey itself is in places breathtaking reminding me what a beautiful part of the world in which I live.

The train service for me is in many ways far more convenient, my only criticism would be that there aren't enough trains on a Saturday (my only day off). On Saturday I caught the 11.30 train - you can't spend 4 hours in Bishop Auckland! In future I'll take the earlier train so that I'm not in Bishop Auckland for as long, but the departure time isn't as convenient for me.

Anyway thank you all for getting the service up and running. Weardale has for a long time needed extra public transport and the links the rail network provides are a Godsend. By the way I wasn't the only person on the train for domestic reasons and another two ladies felt like me that just one more train in between times would have made more sense, thank you once again

Name and address supplied, and well done Stuart !

- **HMRI INSPECTION** : As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Inspector visited the line on May 17th and passed the line for use subject to the completion of work at three sites. This work was done and after confirming this with the Inspector on the 21st the Railway received the formal consent of Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate to commence running passenger services between Bishop Auckland and Wolsingham. Further improvement works have to be completed over the next 3 months. If these works are successfully completed then the consent will be extended without end date.
- **HERITAGE RAILWAY MAGAZINE COVERS WEARDALE REOPENING** :- There is an excellent four page article covering the history of the railway, its development and the future plans in the May edition of Heritage Railway magazine. It is illustrated with many photos, including some taken by our own John Lewins and John Askwith. You can read the article, but without the photos, at :- <http://www.heritagetrail.co.uk/news/weardale-s-wheel-turns-full-circle> . Highly recommended, see if you can still obtain a copy.



Some scenes at the new station at Bishop Auckland on May 22nd as the invited passengers get ready to board the Inaugural train for Stanhope and bystanders crowd on Latherbrush Bridge to view the train as it departs
(Photos : T Wansbury)

- **BBC1 TV LOOKING FOR HUMOROUS RAILWAY STORYTELLERS** : Would you like to appear on prime time TV and do you have some entertaining stories to relate of your railway experiences? Laura Clark, an associate Producer for a BBC1 production team has sent us the following message : *"We're making a brand new, prime time, Saturday night BBC1 entertainment show which takes a light and humorous look at life in Britain. We are searching for people to contribute their personal stories to the programme. The show is hosted by comedian John Bishop. He'll be taking a look at Britain through the stories, opinions and experiences of people from all backgrounds and walks of life. Essentially we are looking for people with funny and endearing stories. We are particularly keen to hear from someone who works with Trains. If you or anyone you know is interested in appearing on the show or would like some more information just give me a call on 020 7202 2460 and I'll fill you in on all the details. Any help at all would be greatly appreciated"*

- **VOLUNTEER SPECIAL : THURSDAY EVENING JUNE 3rd** : Mark Westerfield, passes the following invitation to current Weardale Railway volunteers and employees : *“In recognition of all that has been accomplished on the Weardale Railway in the recent past, a special train will be run on Thursday evening, June 3 between Stanhope and Bishop Auckland and return. The train will utilise our 141. We will leave about 2015, following the arrival of the last service for the day. We will serve beer, soft drinks and cater a buffet supper. Please bring your significant other and join us for an enjoyable evening of much deserved credit for the current state of the Weardale Railway.”*



No 40 with the inaugural train at Bishop Auckland, prior to the Blessing by the Dean of Durham (Photo : M Westerfield)



The beautifully restored coach ‘Nina’ on its first outing since its full restoration by the team at Wosingham Depot (Photo : S Gregory)



No 40 hauling the five coach train plus no 73 at the rear passing Holbeck 4 on May 22nd (Photo : J Lewins)



The inaugural special arrives at Stanhope (Photo : J Lewins)

- **REOPENING CEREMONY PLUS ARRIVAL OF NEW GENERAL MANAGER** : The reopening round trip from Bishop Auckland passed off without a hitch on May 22nd and in perfect weather – a welcome change from the opening day of the first stretch of the line in 2004. The ceremonies are described in more detail in the media coverage, the links to which are given elsewhere and shown in photographs in this Newsletter. May 22nd also marked the arrival of Malcolm Dean as General Manager of the Railway, he had to hit the ground running and is now being briefed by the current management team as well as working on the community services as required. We hope to have a message from him in our next Newsletter once he is settled in.
- **HERITAGE SERVICES CURTAILED** : The Railway management have decided that until we have more staff and volunteers fully trained up on the many jobs it takes to operate a 16 mile railway that it is not practical to operate the planned Heritage services on Saturdays and Sundays until further notice. It is hoped that the delay will not be too long but it was felt prudent to make sure we can reliably operate the Community service before we take the extra step of running heritage services. Additionally, although No 40 performed well on its opening special from and to Bishop Auckland it had to return light engine at the end of its duties at Bishop Auckland because of a hot box. The delay will give time to carry out the necessary repair.

- WEARDALE RAILWAY : NORWAY EXTENSION :** The following email was received by our webmaster, Frank Holmes, on the 14th May from Kari Lindstrom of Stavanger in Norway : *“On my walk along the shore here at Bø Randaberg I saw this sign telling me to be aware of the train from the Weardale Railway.. To stop look and listen. How could this sign be placed here? Did it sail over the North Sea? Anyway ramblers will stop and comment for sure. Good luck to you who work with this homepage and the Weardale railway.”* Frank comments : Opening the line to Bishop Auckland has been an achievement, but an extension to Stavanger.....? A more mundane explanation would be that the sign found its way into the river aided by floods or vandals, floated out to sea at Sunderland and was eventually washed up on a Norwegian beach. Any other ideas? See photos below.



The Weardale Railway in Norway. Kari Lindstrom walking the beach near Stavanger in Norway came across this sign, from one of our level crossings, on a fence on the foreshore. Any other suggestions as to how it travelled the North Sea?



More scenes from May 22cd ; The Stanhope Silver Band performing at the station after arrival of the train.



Ed Ellis, left giving a speech whilst Lord Foster looks on

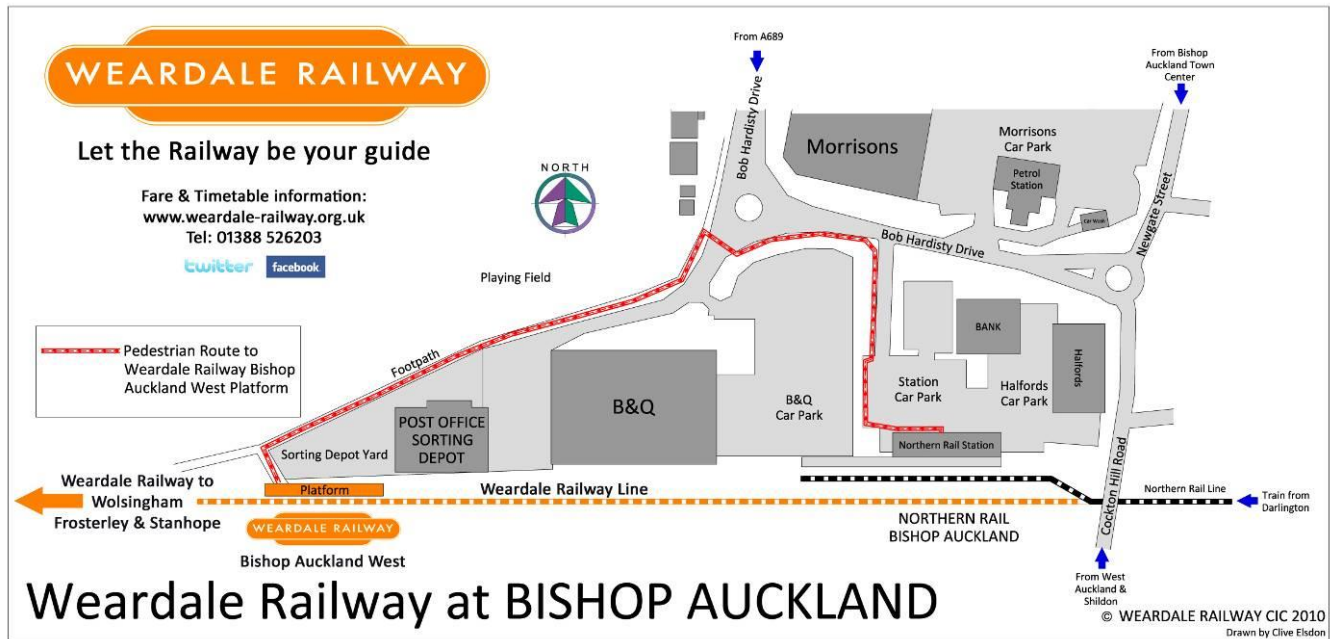


No 40 breaking the reopening banner on a special run through the Station.



Passengers at Stanhope during the break for lunch and refreshments.

- BISHOP AUCKLAND WEST : HOW TO GET THERE :** Until such time as we can work out a mutually satisfactory and affordable, arrangement with Network Rail at Bishop Auckland we will be using the Temporary platform, erected 150m to the west, on Weardale Railway land. To keep the pedestrian route on public or WR land the passengers have to walk around the B & Q and Royal Mail properties – this walk takes 4 to 5 minutes, which needs to be borne in mind when passengers are transferring between trains where the connection time in most case is only 10 minutes, Clive Elsdon has prepared this map (BELOW) which clearly shows the route, you may want to pass it on to any intending travellers you are communicating with.



- MORE PHOTOS ? :** Steve Gregory whose photographic talents have been shown elsewhere in this issue has uploaded over 100 photographs taken over 22, 23 May on to his Picasaweb site from which you can download for private use. You can access the site at : - <http://picasaweb.google.com/scgregory1/WeardaleRailwayMay2010Inaugural02?feat=directlink> Meanwhile here are two more of his photographs, this time showing the arrival of the first community service train at Bishop Auckland on a very pleasant and very busy day for the Railway. One through passenger was Company President Ed Ellis transferring to the Darlington train on the next step of his journey to Chicago. On the right, 141 driver for the day was John Hargreaves



- **TAILPIECE : MIKE AMOS COLUMN FROM THE NORTHERN ECHO :** Mike writes regular columns in the Echo covering all aspects of life in the area, he was one of our guests on the inaugural opening run and in the 27th May edition wrote the following piece which I think is worth publishing in full as it really catches the atmosphere of the day. Thanks to Mike for his permission to do this – and as he says in his reply “ *I thought it a fantastic occasion, reflecting much credit on all concerned. I guess the hard bit is to come, but would love to see the Weardale succeed. I shall certainly use it again (and this time pay”!)*)

ALL FIRED UP.

AS well as having a bit of Greek and a smattering of Hebrew, senior Anglican clerics used also to have to be engine drivers, or at least passed firemen. So it always seemed, anyway, so great their passion for railways, and for coals of fire.

The Dean of Durham continues that happy tradition, small-boy delighted to be asked last Saturday to bless the inaugural Weardale Railway train from Bishop Auckland to Stanhope.

“I am the envy of all the clergy in the Church of England,” said the Very Reverend Michael Sadgrove. “No clergyman could be happier than I am right now.”

The rest of us, it should be said, were pretty ecstatic, too. There were merrymaking musicians, antimacassar class carriages, wartime period costumes, fox furry ladies, fun. Simultaneously, paradoxically, it was a journey back in time and a significant forward stride.

The dean was a north London lad, confessed to having put pennies on the line, spent hours by the tunnel portals out of Kings Cross to await the Pacifics as, northwards, they crusaded. He it was, indeed, who persuaded GNER (as then it was) to allow his ceremonial arrival into Durham to be in the cab of a 225 from Doncaster or somewhere.

At Bishop Auckland – Bishop Auckland West for the moment, while one or two lines are uncrossed – he enviously eyed the footplate, was invited to go higher (rather like the Parable of the Wedding Feast), beamed beatifically.

“It’s like first footing with a bit of coal,” he said, and posed in front of the loco like Bernard Cribbins in *The Railway Children*, a man utterly in his element. I even got to carry his camera case.

“You’d make a good verger,” said the dean.

Thanks to British American Railways, the Weardale’s major investor – the company has six lines in America, another in Peru – scheduled services have resumed westward from Bishop for the first time since the 1950s.

Ed Ellis, the chairman, still pronounced “Stanhope” as if Stan were Bob’s brother – locals call it Stan-up – and Wolsingham like it was that place in Norfolk where good Catholics go on pilgrimage. None holds it against him. The company also hopes to restore freight services, coals to and from Wolsingham. “It’s going to help make this a thriving part of County Durham,” said Mr Ellis.

Saturday’s was a steam special, headed by No 40, a former NCB locomotive based at Ashington, where it hauled both coal (of which there was a great deal) and colliers (of whom there were a canny few, an’ all). That it carried a 51F shedplate – 51F, as everyone knows, was West Auckland – may be regarded as a locoman’s licence

It was a glorious, sun-blessed, genuinely thrilling occasion, scores waving Union Jacks on the platform like No 40 was doubling at Last Night of the Proms. We waved back; waved back like billy-o. Crowds foamed over Latherbrush bridge, just out of the station. More, wantonly waving, lined every vantage point. Who’d ever have thought it?

Among VIPs were 97-year-old Wilf Hume, former clerk of Weardale Rural District Council, and Lord Foster who, as Bishop Auckland’s MP 20 years previously, had helped promote the dream that the railway might return. “Is there anywhere on earth we’d rather be?” he said.

Lord Foster, as always, wore pinstripe suit and tie. It is not, of course, the same pin-stripe suit, more of an all-weather outfit. “I’m on duty,” said Derek.

Up at the Black Bull in Frosterley, the only pub in England with its own peal of bells, 20 ringers had arrived from Northumberland to chime celebration.

At Stanhope, the silver band played us in, played us out again.

Duncan Davis, the Black Bull’s landlord, had persuaded the returning train to drop him off at Frosterley, ringing ahead to order three pints of Nell’s Best – two for the musicians, who richly had earned their refreshment, and one for the dean’s verger, whose duties may have been rather lighter.

It was a wonderful day on one of God’s wonderful railways. Truly a transport of delight.



**Mike, at a Frosterley refuelling stop
(Photo : D Davis)**

