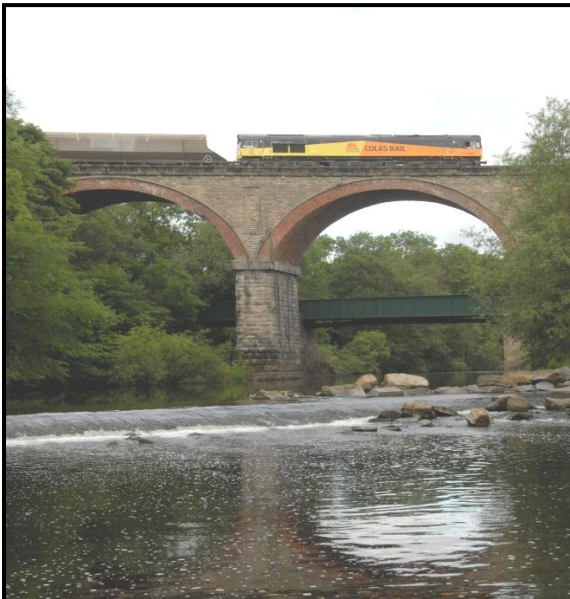


WEARDALE RAILWAY

WRCIC NEWSLETTER No 56 -4 JULY 2011

**WEARDALE FREIGHT TRAINS NOW RUNNING REGULARLY
NEW PLATFORM AND LAYOUT AT BISHOP AUCKLAND WEST
SPECIAL SERVICE FOR WITTON le WEAR FAIR**

- **FIRST FREIGHT TRAIN OPERATES SUCCESSFULLY :-** As foreshadowed in the last Newsletter freight traffic has now returned to the Weardale line. The first train carrying coal to the steelworks at Scunthorpe departed on the 16th June. This was the first commercial freight train on the line since the demise of the cement traffic from the Eastgate works in 1993. The locomotive and wagons arrived the previous day and the train was successfully loaded the following morning in the new coal loading area in the Wolsingham Depot. Each train carries approximately 1,200 tonnes of coal in 19 high capacity wagons. If you missed it you can see a video of the first loaded coal train passing Primrose Hill just west of Bishop Auckland station on Youtube :-
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xV1M8R3SvpU&feature=channel_video_title



Photographers were out in force on the 16th June as the first coal train left Wolsingham for Scunthorpe. Colas Rail Class 66, No. 66842 seen crossing Etherley Viaduct on the left (John Lewins) and on the right, passing Shildon (John Askwith)

- **WOLSINGHAM DEPOT NOW OPEN FOR FREIGHT :-** After a long period of planning and consultation, work commenced on preparing the depot for coal loading in April of this year. This work was completed and the works approved by the Planning Authority in time to receive the first train on June 15th. Works included paving on the approach road and turning circle for the trucks arriving from the Park Wall site, a car park area and the loading area, New security fencing and facilities for the operating staff were also provided. The incoming train is split into two and each part is shunted in turn into the depot loading siding using WR Class 08 shunters. The wagons are then reassembled on the loop line at the depot exit ready for the Class 66 locomotive to haul the train to its destination. The loading of the wagons is handled by a sub contractor of UK Coal, who also have contracted Colas Rail to haul the coal trains. The trains weigh approximately 1875 tonnes in total when loaded and 660 tonnes when returning empty to Wolsingham, therefore each train is delivering 1200 tonnes of coal.

- WR TRUST MEMBER DRIVES FIRST FREIGHT TRAIN :** The introduction of freight traffic to the line has attracted widespread media and internet attention. Your editor noted a message on one website that the first train was driven by a WR Trust member. Following this up, it transpires that Trust member, Cameron Tyre had indeed driven the Colas Class 66 on the first trip to Wolsingham from Tees Yard, after which he also drove the first four trains of loaded wagons to Scunthorpe. Cameron lives in Largs, Scotland and lodges locally in Weardale. He said “It is a great achievement for me to be working on part of the original Stockton & Darlington Railway and also to be working revenue freight trains on a private railway. Since Thursday 30th June I have signed the route between Wolsingham Depot and Bishop Auckland and now can work the coal trains on my own on Weardale rails from Wolsingham to Bishop Auckland.” Cameron has been working on the railways since May 1989. He first qualified to drive Class 66 locomotives in September 2002 whilst based at Freightliner Heavy Haul's depot at Wilton, Middlesbrough and is now employed by Colas Rail Ltd.



‘Sheep may safely graze’ at Scotch Isle (left) as 66842 stands in the loop awaiting the remaining wagons being loaded. On the right the full train can be seen heading south at Eldon Lane. Both photos 16th June : John Lewins.



A very happy Ed Ellis, Iowa Pacific President stands in front of 66842 on the inaugural day, June 15th. On the right, a view inside the cab of the Canadian built Class 66. That must be Cameron's lunch on the right (see item above)

Photos : L : Norman Swindle, R : Steve Gregory.

- FREIGHT TRAFFIC BUILDS UP :** After the first train on June 16th, the following week saw several trains to Scunthorpe steel works and in the week beginning June 26th trains operated to Scunthorpe and on the Friday (July 1) to the power station at Ratcliffe just outside of Nottingham. In the coming week Scunthorpe trains are planned on Tuesday and Thursday (6, 7th July) and on Friday, again, to Ratcliffe. The trains to Scunthorpe leave Wolsingham at approximately 10.45 hrs passing Shildon at 12.14. The journey to Scunthorpe takes four hours and after two hours unloading head back north, passing Shildon at 20.40 hrs and arrive at Wolsingham at 22.00 hrs. The Ratcliffe trains leave Wolsingham later – at 12.30hrs and arrive back at 23.30 hrs. Northbound trains are designated 4Z66 and southbound as 6Z66. Variations in these traffic patterns will continue during this trial period.



The first load of coal arrives from the Park Wall North site which lies 5miles north east of the Wolsingham Depot. It is then distributed over the loading pad area before being loaded onto the wagons. (Photos : Norman Swindle)



While the Class 66 waits in the background, the WR 08 shunter hauls half of the train into the new long siding for loading operations to begin. Both photos : Steve Gregory)

- WOLSINGHAM DEPOT : NEW PROCEDURES:** As some of the pictures in this Newsletter show, the depot as well as being a train and locomotive storage and maintenance area is now also the site of an active coal loading point and as such the WR Management have issued new guidelines to all staff and regular volunteers. As a summary these state that **there is no public access to the depot**. Rostered volunteers and staff arriving by car may use the approach road from the main A689 and must park in the designated area and must wear hi-vis clothing before proceeding on foot to the WR/RMS area of the depot, following the marked walking route– they must not cross the coal loading/lorry turning area. If arriving for work on foot then they must use the footpath between the steel works and Robson's Caravan sales point and also have hi visibility clothing on when leaving the footpath and walking on the track through the main depot gates at the southern end of the depot and following the designated walking route to the south of the ash pit. Further safety briefings are being arranged. The only place that members of the public can observe depot activity is from the previously mentioned public footpath where it runs between the river and the depot fence
- WR AND UK COAL MAKE JOINT PRESS STATEMENT :** Ed Ellis, president of Weardale Railways, commented: “This is a major step in our programme of developing the railway into a viable provider of both freight and passenger services to the Wear Valley. We anticipate that these services will benefit the local area through increased economic activity, employment, and mobility. We are looking forward to a long and beneficial partnership with UK Coal and local communities.” Gareth Williams, Managing Director for UK Coal’s Mining Division, said: “This will allow the bulk movement of coal by rail, significantly reducing the overall environmental impact of our operations at Park Wall North, and we are delighted to be working with Weardale Railways and RMS.” The full statement is reproduced at the end of the Newsletter.

EDITORIAL : As readers will observe there is a strong emphasis on the activities associated with the commencement of the coal traffic. This is partly due to the fact that we have received a record number of photographs from members and supporters in County Durham and across the country (for which thank you and keep them coming) but also it is to underline the fact that this is a transformative moment for the Railway. Many of you reading this have been involved with the Railway since the last century and followed it through the initial struggles to reopen five miles of the track in 2004 and the five ensuing years of the ups and downs of the project. Since then we have seen the arrival of British American Rail Services, the reopening of the full line, the expansion of passenger services and now the introduction of freight services. This has cost in the region of £5 million in funding and direct investment and the involvement of volunteers and staff in several hundred thousand hours of work.

There is still a way to go in building up the community and Heritage services and improving our ‘product,’ to use the current term, but with strong backing of our main shareholder, BARS, and the contributions from the Trust and the support of Durham County Council we are now in a much better position to maximise the value of the Railway to the local community and to the general public. There no doubt will be further challenges ahead but we can all take some pride in what has been achieved.



A view of the concrete sections for the new platform at Bishop Auckland West in the Wolsingham station ‘yard’.
Photo : David Million



A view of the Depot taken from near the entrance, on the right, part of the barrier around the loading area
Photo : David Scott

- **BISHOP AUCKLAND STATION PROJECT :** As previously outlined, the introduction of freight traffic through Bishop Auckland necessitates the relocation of the existing WR station (Bishop Auckland West) onto a siding alongside the ‘mainline’ and the erection of a new, more substantial platform. It had been hoped to have this ready prior to the start of freight services, however the relocation has involved negotiations and agreements with three different land owners. The good news is that these negotiations are now complete and work will begin over the weekend of July 9th & 10th to slew the existing track to accommodate the siding. Then on the weekend of July 23rd & 24th, the new points will be installed. During this period the new platform will be erected and work will be undertaken on a direct footpath between the WR platform and the NR platform significantly shortening the walking distance. The not so good news is that during this period there will be days when we cannot operate trains to and from Bishop Auckland. However once these works are completed, hopefully in time for the summer school holiday period, we will be able to hold trains and pass them at B Auckland increasing our operational flexibility and simplifying timetabling and pathing of trains.

FROM THE EMAIL INBOX : My Wife and I have just returned from a trip on the Weardale Railway (Tuesday 21st June). We travelled on the 13.45 Bishop Auckland to Stanhope returning on the 15.15. This was our first trip on the line and both enjoyed our ride very much. My Wife and I have just returned from a trip on the Weardale Railway (Tuesday 21st June). We travelled on the 13.45 Bishop Auckland to Stanhope returning on the 15.15. This was our first trip on the line and both enjoyed our ride very much Many Thanks
K & P Powley.

- SPECIAL TRAIN FOR VISIT OF HIGH SHERIFF** : The previously announced visit of the County Durham High Sheriff to the Railway was marked by the running of a special train hauled by No 40 on June 15th. Representatives of several other local organisations were represented as well as BARS and the WR Trust. The train ran between Wolsingham and Stanhope and lunch was served in the Nina first class coach.



Driver Norman Swindle with Emily Ellis who helped serve lunch on June 15th special for the High Sheriff.
Photo : Ruth Carroll.



Sue Snowden (Bishop Auckland TC Forum) with Ed Ellis and Kevin Busath (BARS) on the right in Wolsingham Station on June 15th. Photo : Ruth Carroll.

- WR TRAIN SERVICE ALTERATIONS : JULY** : Because of the combined effects of the works at Bishop Auckland (see separate item) and the pathing of freight trains, during July the Railway will be issuing timetables on a weekly basis. The services between Wolsingham and Bishop Auckland will be the ones mainly affected. This will cause some inconvenience to our regular passengers, but as explained elsewhere once completed these works will enable a more robust timetable to be developed by the time of the school holiday period incorporating steam, community and freight services – train and platform staff will need to carefully communicate this to passengers.



Weardale Railway freight on the Network – two photos from Junior Club member Chris Simpson. (See separate item). On the left at Eaglescliffe heading north on the 15th June and right passing Shildon, heading south, June 16th

- JUNIOR CLUB MEMBER'S RAILWAY PHOTO WEBSITE** : The photographs above were taken from a website opened by 15year old Junior Club member, Chris Simpson. His excellent railway pictures of Weardale and elsewhere can be seen on : <http://thornabykingfisher.zenfolio.com/> A visit is recommended. Chris comes from Saltburn to volunteer on the Railway. Both his grandfather and father worked at the Darlington Locomotive Works and he is aiming to continue the railway connection for another generation.
- YOUTH TEAM MEMBER'S 'TANNOY' PROJECT UNDERWAY** : Stuart Watters, a Youth Team member, has developed a specification and installation plan for a loudspeaker system at Stanhope Station for use in special events. The WR Trust has agreed to fund the Project.

- SPECIAL SERVICE FOR WITTON LE WEAR FAIR : JULY 9th.**: General Manager, David Million reports : As part of our continuing support for the Witton le Wear new station project group the railway will be providing special train services to and from a special temporary platform at the village over the weekend of 9th and 10th July. July 9th is the day of the Witton le Wear Fair (Starts 2pm on the Village Green , link here : <http://wittonlewear.com/>) On that day two vintage buses will travel from Witton le Wear to Stanhope station on connecting with our 12.35 departure, bringing around 80 passengers who will travel by train back to Witton le Wear. The group will include David Bellamy, who will then officially open the Fair. At the Fair the WR will be promoting the special service on the following day, Sunday July 10th. Due to engineering work at Bishop Auckland (see News item elsewhere) the Sunday services will operate between Stanhope and Witton le Wear only. We will also promote volunteering, the WR Trust, WRjc and the Weardale Railcard. The weekend and next weeks Special Timetable are attached to the end of this Newsletter.



- WEARDALE RAILWAY : NEW WEBSITE :** As announced in the last Newsletter a new Company website is about to be launched – linking into the existing Project/Trust Website . Phil Bleacher who has developed the websites for other IP operated companies has sent this provisional mock up of the ‘home page’ . It is hoped to introduce the new site later this month probably coincident with the introduction of the new post engineering works timetable.
- BISHOP AUCKLAND STATION TRUST NEWS :** After a recent meeting with Northern rail the Station Trust website has reported that Northern Rail are going to relocate the noticeboards back to the entrance of the station also fit two new CCTV cameras for better security for the passengers benefit, a new Tannoy is to be fitted which will give information on delays or cancellations and also when the trains are due to arrive. From a WR point of view we welcome these developments and also recognise the good work the Trust has done in refurbishing the platform area and hope the day is not too distant when we can operate a joint station with Network Rail at this location and further simplify train operations.

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

UK COAL - WEARDALE RAILWAY – RMS LOCOTEC

COAL TRAINS OPERATING OVER WEARDALE RAILWAY

MAINLINE coal trains began operating last week over the Weardale Railway in Durham as part of an agreement between UK Coal Mining Limited, Weardale Railways CIC and Rail Management Services Ltd. (RMS)

Up to 150,000 tonnes per annum of high quality coking coal, from the Park Wall North surface mine in the Wear Valley, will be shipped to the market over a three year period using a new coal transload facility at Wolsingham. Using rail transport for most of the journey will create jobs in the local area, help reduce coal imports and cut carbon dioxide emissions compared to using only road.

Initially up to three trains a week will run from Wolsingham to a Scunthorpe steelworks, with the haulage contract being awarded to Colas Rail. Class 66 locomotives will pull trains of up to 1,200 tonnes in weight and operating these over the Weardale Railway from Bishop Auckland to Wolsingham has involved detailed operational planning. Gareth Williams, Managing Director for UK Coal's Mining Division, said: "This will allow the bulk movement of coal by rail, significantly reducing the overall environmental impact of our operations at Park Wall North, and we are delighted to be working with Weardale Railways and RMS."

Coal from Park Wall North was moving solely by road but UK Coal was keen to take advantage of the potential use of rail transport via the Weardale Railway. The seam of Durham coal that is currently being mined is believed to be untouched by former deep mining operations, creating the perfect conditions for the high quality coking coal required by major manufacturers in the UK market.

Rail Management Services will provide groundstaff and a Class 08 shunting locomotive at the transload facility serving trains operating over the Weardale Railway from Wolsingham to the connection with Network Rail at Bishop Auckland.

The Wolsingham loading point is located on the site of a former steelworks and coal will be stored here after a short road journey from the Park Wall North site six miles away. The 18 wagon rakes will be split in half at Wolsingham to enable loading before being reassembled into a single train for transportation via the East Coast Main Line to Scunthorpe.

Ed Ellis, president of Weardale Railways, commented: "This is a major step in our program of developing the railway into a viable provider of both freight and passenger services to the Wear Valley. We anticipate that these services will benefit the local area through increased economic activity, employment, and mobility. We are looking forward to a long and beneficial partnership with UK Coal and local communities."

WEARDALE RAILWAY PASSENGER SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 4th JULY 2011

The revised temporary passenger timetable dated "Monday 27th June until further notice" operates with the following exceptions:-

Wednesday 6th July 2011

10:30 Stanhope - Wolsingham service is extended to Bishop Auckland West.

An additional service will run from Bishop Auckland West to Stanhope departing at 11:35.

Friday 8th July 2011

10:30 Stanhope - Wolsingham service is extended to Bishop Auckland West.

An additional service will run from Bishop Auckland West to Stanhope departing at 11:35.

12:35 Stanhope - Bishop Auckland West service terminates at Wolsingham.

13:35 Bishop Auckland West - Stanhope service is cancelled from Bishop Auckland and will start at Wolsingham at 14:08.

Saturday 9th July 2011

All services will call at a temporary station at Witton-le-Wear in connection with the village fair weekend

Sunday 10th July 2011

Services are suspended to/from Bishop Auckland West in connection with essential engineering work. The Community Rail service will operate between Stanhope & Witton-le-Wear (temporary station) only.