

WEARDALE RAILWAY

NEWSLETTER No. 54 - 22 MAY 2011

NEW PLATFORM AND LINE AT BISHOP AUCKLAND **No 40 SCHEDULED TO RETURN MAY 29th FOR WHIT WEEK** **FREIGHT OPERATOR SELECTED : TIMINGS AWAITED**

- **THE SUMMER TIMETABLE : LATEST NEWS :** As explained elsewhere the Railway has deferred issuing a new printed timetable until it has confirmed times for the freight trains from Network Rail. Andrea Davidson, Weardale Railway Marketing Manager confirms that until further notice we will continue to operate the Community service on the existing published timetable.
- **MAY BANK HOLIDAY AND WHIT WEEK PLANS :** A steam hauled Heritage service is scheduled to operate over the May Bank Holiday weekend starting on Sunday May 29th and to continue to operate every day during Whit Holiday week through to Sunday June 5th. This will operate on the times published in the existing timetable. Sunday May 29th is the Teddy Bears picnic event (see separate poster) In addition to the activities at Stanhope, light refreshments will be available at Wolsingham for passengers joining there or transferring from the services from Bishop Auckland. The Whit week trains will receive publicity in the media also advising of events within Weardale which we will be supporting in providing heritage transport. For those events being held some distance from stations arrangements are being made with local bus transport to provide transport at cost to convey visitors to and from these events from relevant stations.



The newly extended coal loading siding in Wolsingham Depot (No 4 road) as on 18th May. Looking from the buffers towards the main line (left) and right the new road as it curves towards the exit from the depot. (Photos ; D Scott)

- **INFRASTRUCTURE WORK : NOW ITS BISHOP AUCKLAND :** As work in the Depot on the coal loading facility is expected to be completed during the coming week, attention now moves to constructing the turnout and siding leading to a newly re-sited platform at Bishop Auckland West. This will enable trains to and from the Network to pass a train sitting in the platform. A new section will be designated between the Network Rail signal at Bishop Auckland and the turnout into the West platform and it is of sufficient length to stand a coal train while it awaits permission to enter the adjacent sections without interference to the passenger trains between Darlington and Bishop Auckland or our own trains to or from Stanhope. This work will take place in early June over a two week period during which time the passenger service between Wolsingham and Bishop Auckland will be suspended. It is also planned to install a weighbridge on the line east of the Witton-le-Wear level crossing during this blockade.

- NEARLY THERE : FIRST COAL FREIGHT NEWS :** Since the last Newsletter UK Coal have engaged Colas Rail to be operator of the freight trains from Wolsingham – we understand they are going to the steelworks at Port Talbot. The trains will normally run on weekdays, arriving around 8am and departing at noon. However we are still awaiting confirmation of the detailed timings from Network Rail – namely the arrival and departure times at Bishop Auckland before we can issue a revised passenger timetable. The trains will consist, normally, of twenty one 100 ton wagons. Colas Rail operate Class 47 and Class 66 locos.



A trio of D & CR locos, part of the BARS group, on the left en route from Washwood Heath to the Great Central Railway (North) station at Hotchley Hill (right). Photos from Ben Wheeler, a Newsletter subscriber. See these and other excellent photos on his site : <http://www.flickr.com/people/benwheeler03/>

- FIRST ‘FREIGHT’ TRAIN FOR THE GROUP :** BARS mainline operating company is Devon and Cornwall Railways –into which are now rolled the locomotives previously owned by Hanson Traction, acquired by BARS earlier this year. Along with this acquisition came a licence to operate special freight movements (not regularly scheduled trains – these require a full freight licence which BARS is currently in the process of obtaining) The first freight was in fact a trio of locomotives, all DCR owned, from Washwood Heath, the BARS depot near Birmingham and Ruddington on the Great Central Railway (North) near Nottingham, The locomotives involved were 56311, 56303 and 31454 .(See photos). Later there was a second movement of two locomotives to the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway for their diesel gala. There are completely unconfirmed reports of a possible Weardale Railway Diesel Gala being considered.



Munro O'dell, Stanhope Station supervisor receiving the £223 collected at the recent funeral of Ken Ward and kindly donated towards the No40 fund (D Scott)



Dales outdoor weekend May 8th, the two 141's pass at Scotch isle while operating an hourly service on the line. (Photo : D Scott)

- COACH BOOKINGS CONTINUE TO GROW :** Now that the summer season is underway the level of coach party groups making trips over all or part of the line continues at levels well ahead of last year. In the last two weeks of May, over 300 passengers from 7 different tour companies have booked to travel on the line.

- **DALES OUTDOOR EVENT** : The Weardale line saw what was probably its most frequent service since the days of the LNER (or maybe the NER) over the weekend of May 7th and 8th when seven return trips were operated between Stanhope and Bishop Auckland using both 141 units and passing them at Wolsingham Depot. The service operated as planned except for part of one early morning service on the Sunday morning. All trains ran through to the special platform at the Stanhope Showground (Unthank). Indeed there was one extra train on the Friday night – the last service to Stanhope was extended to Unthank to convey three passengers who had travelled from Manchester – that’s what we mean when we call it a Community Service.



No 40 : Work continues on the Trust’s stream loco –here is a montage of progress photos taken by Ruth Carroll. As we go to press and after a satisfactory hydraulic test , the tubes are installed and expanded, the grate is in place and the brick arch is now being completed. The full steam test is planned for Thursday 26th May and if all is OK No 40 will be back in operation on Sunday the 29th .May.

- **WOLSINGHAM SHOWGROUND – MORE EVENT DAYS** : DCC Planning committee has unanimously approved an application from the Wolsingham Show Society to increase the number of event days from 14 to 35 per year and also to build a storage and toilet block on the site. Last year the Society co-operated with the Weardale Railway in opening a special platform for the Wolsingham Show – the new extension of event days could hopefully provide scope for further co-operation utilising a temporary platform at Scotch Isle with direct access to the Showfield.



A photo taken by your editor on a recent holiday in New Zealand as a tribute to WR Honorary Vice President Arthur Temple who has been a stalwart for many years, but does not , as yet, have a station named after him.



Harry Potter at Shildon : The Hogwarts Express , aka Olton Hall, at Locomotion for their ‘Wizard Weekend’ (Photo : J Lewins)

- PATROLLING THE LINE :** As Trevor Horner our Infrastructure Manager explains these patrols are an essential part our railway operations : “ Tony and Paul (see photo below) along with Mark Bailes and Norman Raine carry out virtually all of the regular patrolling between Scotch Isle and Unthank LC. Principally the track is patrolled on a 2 weekly cycle and importantly the direction is reversed at each subsequent patrol. The line is split into 4 sections: Scotch Isle to Wolsingham Station; Wolsingham to Frosterley; Frosterley to Stanhope and Stanhope to Unthank (eventually Eastgate). Each patroller walks 2 sections, thus limiting their walks to a maximum of 4 miles. Patrollers have undergone a period of training and mentoring before they are “passed out” to patrol on their own. They complete a report and sign a document to confirm where they have walked and what they found – a fundamental requirement for audit purposes. These 4 gents are some of the “unseen” volunteers that keep our railway safe, turning up in whatever weather comes on their rostered day.” If you think you would like an outdoor volunteering role doing an essential job for the railway - please contact Trevor on trevorhorner@btinternet.com .
- SUMMER TIMETABLE ALTERATIONS ON THE BISHOP LINE :** The new Northern Rail timetable introduced on May 23rd has altered many train times but has resulted in a more even pattern of trains without adding to or cutting the number of trains. Mondays to Saturdays there are ten trains per day – a welcome feature being the addition of an 8.21 departure from Bishop Auckland filling in the previous long gap between the 7.21 and the 9.25 trains. The Sunday service remains the same, with the additional summer train to Whitby (departing Bishop Auckland at 8.39) and two return trains in the evening from Whitby. Day Return fare to Whitby is £18.80 (Railcards £11.75).



Tony Dykes (l) and Paul Hunt (r) prior to setting out on track patrol from Stanhope, two of the ‘unseen’ volunteers keeping the railway safe (see separate item) (Photo : R Carroll)



The temporary platform at Stanhope Showground on the 7th May-served by an hourly service from Bishop Auckland, see separate item (Photo : R Carroll)

- BISHOP LINE DEVELOPMENTS :** The recently created Community Rail Partnership for the Darlington- Bishop Auckland line has launched its website (<http://www.bishopline.org/>) Branding of station signs with the new logo has also taken place. Plans still continue to develop improvements to the stations along the line. A line guide is currently being prepared by Northern Rail and will be available shortly. The new summer timetable contains information on a new ‘Duo’ ticket whence when two adults travel together, one travels at half price. The normal adult day return fare between Darlington and Bishop Auckland is £4.30 (before any duo or railcard discounts) The bus return fare is £6.20.
- A STATION FOR WITTON LE WEAR :** A group of residents, led by Jim Crowther, a local businessman, are trying to re-establish a short platform on the site of the former railway station in the village (just east of the level crossing). It is envisaged that the project costs could be funded from the joint efforts of Durham County Council, Witton Castle Caravan Park, Witton –le-Wear Parish Council, the Weardale Railway and contributions from the residents. The Parish Council is taking an active interest by organising a Monthly Cash Lottery (Tickets are available at Stanhope Station booking office)

- **LETTER FROM A READER :** I live in France now but was brought up in Bishop and I made great use of the line. I have been constantly surprised that the line has survived ever since Beeching times. I gather that the line is under threat again. Does the WVR have contingency plans for this possibility because such a closure would have a huge, even fatal, impact on the WVR? If such a closure becomes a probability, would it not make sense for the WVR to attempt to take on the Darlington/ BA line? It would be a huge shame if the WVR were to be compromised by the closure of the above line - and I am so looking forward to my first visit to the WVR. John Vasey

- **EDITORS REPLY :** At the moment it is only the future of the Sunday Service that is in doubt as from December of this year Durham County Council is withdrawing the subsidy which previously supported the service. The weekday service is not threatened as it forms part of Northern Rail's franchise commitment. Ridership on the line has been increasing recently and new fare offers have been introduced also – so I believe Northern Rail are doing their best to stimulate traffic. WR has looked at and is still looking at the possibility of running through from our line at least as far as Shildon and potentially to Darlington. To do that we need mainline capable stock and locos, which WR currently does not have – we could, in time, use affiliate company (BARS) equipment but need a passenger operating contract granted by the ORR (the Regulator). BARS is giving priority to obtaining a full freight operating contract – a process that is taking many months but looks as if it may happen soon.

- **WELCOME TO NEW VOLUNTEERS :** Among new volunteer 'recruits' are two former Groundworks employees (Are Josh Rainton and Mandy Heslop , Josh is now a **Travelling Ticket Inspector** and Mandy would like **to train as a guard**. (Mandy is still employed by Groundworks at present) At the present time we have a group of at least seven people waiting to be inducted. Once inducted we will be able to match their skills and experience to the various roles as volunteers. As a result of the Northern Echo article we have had 2 people express their interest as becoming volunteers. We have also had a Trust Member who has decided to become a volunteer as a result of the article in Between the Lines. This is just the start of our two month recruitment initiative.(Thanks to Ruth Carroll for this item)



Work is progressing on the roadway into the depot, the turning circle for the lorries and, in the distance in the right hand photo the loading pad area. May 18th. (Photos : D Scott)

- **HITACHI OPEN DAY EXTENDED :** The Open Day hosted by Hitachi at the Excel Centre in Newton Aycliffe to be held on May 26th has attracted so much interest that it has been extended to a full day event. The Hitachi Super Express trains, which will be used on the East Coast and the London – South Wales main lines, will be built in a new 450,000sq ft purpose-built factory at Newton Aycliffe. More than 700 individuals representing over 400 companies are set to attend. Alistair Dormer, the managing director of Hitachi Rail Europe said “It is extremely encouraging to have this level of interest in the project, so early in the process. We are committed to using North-East suppliers wherever possible, and we want to start building the relationships and gaining a good understanding of the local businesses, what their strengths are and how we can work together with them.” Weardale Railways will be represented at the meeting.



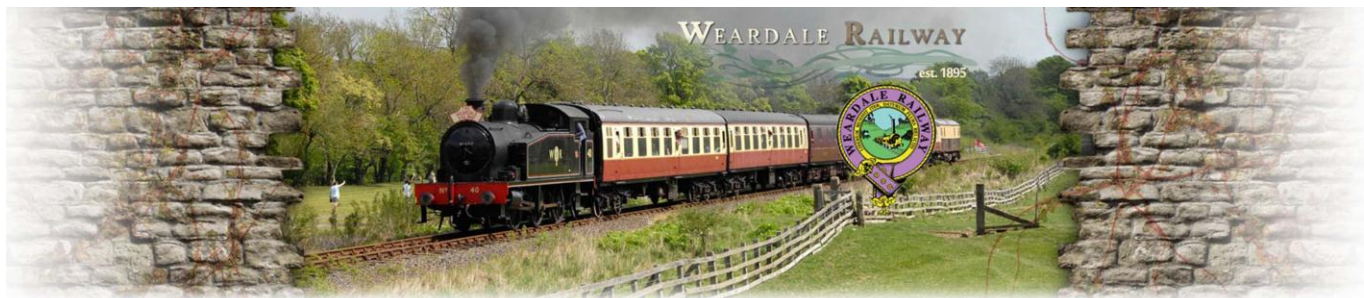
Two views of a GE B -39-8 loco newly decked out in the colours of the Saratoga and North Creek Railroad- the latest railway to become part of Iowa Pacific. These photos taken in Walsenberg, Colorado on May 16th prior to the long journey to its new home in New York State. See separate item. (Photos : Ed Ellis)

- **IOWA PACIFIC CONFIRMS NEW RAILWAY OPERATION** : A new railway joins the Iowa Pacific ‘family’ to which the Weardale Railway also belongs. It lies in Northern New York state about midway between New York and Montreal. It is the Saratoga and North Creek Railroad, a 57 mile long former branch line of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad –whose colours are represented in the new livery. The branch connects with the Amtrack service on the mainline (now owned by Canadian Pacific).A timetable, just published (see : <http://www.sncrr.com>) shows a thrice daily service over sections of the line on 5 days per week and includes some trains which connect directly with the New York bound services on the main line . Services start on May 30th and run through to October 11th. In the winter ‘Ski Specials’ will operate to resorts in the Adirondack mountains. There are also freight possibilities being developed.



A Special ‘first train’ ran over the newly completed road 4 at Wolsingham Depot on Friday 20th May, hauled by the WR and RMS shunters . (Photo : D Million)

Edited by G C Mudd : with thanks to all contributors : Contact : gcmudd@ntlworld.com
22 May 2011



Calling all Bears!
Full Steam ahead for the Number 40
TEDDY BEAR'S PICNIC
MAY 29TH 2011
STANHOPE STATION

Children under 15 who have brought their bear
travel free with two adults paying full fare

Children's Entertainment

Mr Twister - Magician and Ventriloquist

Bouncy Castle * Welly Throwing Competition * Face Painting

Picnic packed lunch on sale at Stanhope Station
Just bring your own rug to sit on

www.weardale-railway.org.uk



Whilst every effort is made to maintain advertised services, Weardale Railway C.I.C reserves the right to cancel, alter or suspend any train without notice and accepts no liability for loss, inconvenience or delay thereby caused.

