

## Acting Chairman's Report for the 2021 AGM

As I write this there remains a lot of uncertainty about Covid but we all have to stay optimistic and look forward to seeing our trains out again.

It has been a long time since the last AGM. Your committee held back organising one in the hope we could get together in a room with all of you. However, events have conspired against us and we have had little choice but to follow everyone else and will be holding a 'virtual' AGM with just the committee on 27 March 2021.

We do sincerely apologise for this but please be assured this is a stop gap situation until things return to normality.

It is tempting to look back and assume little has been happening. Certainly there have been no trains and volunteers have been unable to access the site. We have been very aware that there has been a danger of losing many of our members due to apparent inactivity. Your committee has met via Zoom on a regular basis and have tried to plan for the future while making every effort to consolidate all that has gone before. We also firmed up a contingency plan so that all Committee posts are covered should the need arise.

**Please rest assured that we recognise and highly value your loyalty and the fact you have continued your membership. Also, a warm welcome to all new members.**

During the lockdown the Friends, in conjunction with Vintage Trains, have adopted the main line station at Tyseley. With the assistance of the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group we have embarked on renovating the flower beds and more ambitious projects are in the pipeline.

I can recommend you view the Friends' web site which is continuously being updated and checked for accuracy.

A proposal has been accepted for the Friends to take over the entire running of the buffet on future trains. A small working group are putting together the final details.

*Steam in Trust* has been produced and we have to thank our editor Mark Smee for his very hard and demanding work producing such a commendable publication. This cannot be published without contributions. Recently these have been many and varied. If you would like to contribute then do not hesitate to put pen to paper (that dates me!) and send items to Mark.

During the lockdown we produced the first ever Friends of Vintage Trains calendar and that has proved to be hugely successful, resulting in a profit for the Friends. A set of greetings cards has also been created from the calendar pictures and these are available to purchase via [www.friendsofvt.org.uk](http://www.friendsofvt.org.uk) website or by using the order form sent out with the latest edition of *Steam in Trust* which you should have received in December.

The committee are looking at ways of improving the benefits for you as members. One certainty is that there will be social events organised, with guest speakers, as soon as we are able to do so. The intention is that these will be free to members. In addition anyone attending will be able to bring a guest for whom there will also be no charge.

As per our Constitution we have pledged some more money towards specific projects. However, we are very conscious of the fact that this is your money and we are waiting for an announcement that the projects are actually going ahead and we will be given details in writing. One such project is to help to restore a vital

Pullman coach.

We are extremely grateful to our Members who have made some additional financial donations over the year, particularly in memory of Henry Pinchin and Peter Brown. The Committee felt the most appropriate use of the Henry Pinchin Memorial Fund would be to contribute towards the purchase of the Pacers. We sadly lost Henry last March and his interest lay very much in the journeys we undertook, not just the locos, so we think this would be a fitting tribute to his memory. We also sadly lost Peter Brown in September and the money donated in his memory we think will be best used on the Tyseley Station flower bed project where he was a very active volunteer. We hope you approve of these donations.

We must ensure we have enough reserves to continue producing *Steam in Trust* for you all plus finance the planned socials, etc.

Finally, I must thank your Committee for all their hard work and that they have all offered to remain in post for another twelve months.

In addition I must mention Christine Brown who has picked up Peter's reins as Membership Secretary and Hugh Wright who deputises as Treasurer. Also Chris Schroeder who had to stand down as Chairman but is co-opted onto the committee where he invariably dispenses valuable advice. There is a vacancy on the Committee following Peter's sad passing and I would like to recommend Tony Watson to you to fill this vacancy. Tony has been a long-standing Thursday night volunteer at Tyseley, and a Train Steward. He has recently taken on the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator for VT so I think he is in a unique position to join the Committee and contribute to our discussions. Unless there are any objections to this proposal, this will be voted on at the AGM.

On behalf of the Friends of Vintage Trains I, as Acting Chairman, thank you again all for your support throughout these tricky times.

**Neil Ewart**

Acting Chairman

Friends of Vintage Trains

January 2021