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www.friendsofvt.org.uk

Tyseley News No. 29 – spring 2022



Tyseley Station flower bed restoration

Photograph: Sharon Salter

Message from the Chair Paul Hatton

Dear Member,

Welcome to Tyseley News No. 29, the occasional newsletter for Members of the Friends of Vintage Trains.

At the AGM in March we were pleased to welcome over 45 members which was an amazing turnout especially as we know many people are concerned with the continued uncertainties surrounding Omicron. My colleague, Neil Ewart, as the retiring Chairman, thanked Members for their continued support and loyalty through two very difficult years since the last AGM where we were able to gather together.

Three members of the Committee have retired this year and the Chairman thanked Dave Martin, Geoff Middleton and Bernard Wright for their hard work and years of service on the Committee.

At the meeting the following Committee was elected:

- Chair – Paul Hatton
- Deputy Chair – Neil Ewart
- Treasurer – Chris Schroeder
- Secretary – Mary McCullough

- Committee: Robin Coombes, Fraser Pithie, Jeff Robinson, Sharon Salter, Matthew Self

We are delighted to welcome Fraser and Matthew as new members of the Committee, and to Chris as a returning Committee member - I am sure you will be hearing more from them in the coming months.

The minutes of the AGM are included in the Newsletter.

Steam in Trust

As was reported at the AGM, '*Steam in Trust*' had been nominated for the 'Internal Communications Publication' award at the Heritage Railway Association, the dinner being held on the same day as our meeting. '*Steam in Trust*' didn't quite walk away with the top place but it was awarded runner-up to the West Somerset Railway Association magazine. The very fact that '*Steam in Trust*' was nominated at all is a huge achievement and we are thrilled with this recognition. We are particularly grateful to Mark Smee and the rest of the team for all their efforts in producing such an interesting magazine. Mark has now decided to hang up his keyboard, stepping down as Editor, and we recorded our thanks to Mark for doing such an extraordinary job in developing the magazine. To try and emulate Mark an Editorial Board is now being set up and we hope to emulate Mark's high standards and continue to produce an interesting read for you. Until the Board has been set up and in a position to produce '*Steam in Trust*' we wanted to ensure that you are kept inform of the Friends' activities, hence this interim '*Tyseley News*'.

Social Event

It was also reported at the AGM that many members had told us that they are still a little reluctant to attend large gatherings due to the continuing Coronavirus pandemic and for that reason it had been decided to postpone the Friends' Social event on 9 April but we are happy to report that this has now been moved to **Saturday, 20 August** at 2pm at the Tyseley Working Men's Club. Our guest speakers are Robin Coombes and Denis Chick. Denis will give a short talk about the Transport Museum at Wythall where he is a trustee and Deputy Chairman, and Robin, a Friends of Vintage Trains' Committee member, will talk on '*The Art of Railway Photography*' based on (some of) his extensive photographic collection. Free car parking will be available in the Tyseley Locomotive Works car park. The Club, opposite Tyseley Locomotive Works, will be open from 1.30 pm with the talks beginning at 2pm. There will be a raffle and a complimentary buffet. Members are very welcome to bring a guest for whom there is no charge. Although registration is not required, it will be helpful if you would complete the brief 'expression of interest' form from the link to the social event on our website: www.FriendsofVT.org.uk, or by telephoning 07384 471552. Thank you, it helps us to plan the catering requirements.

Keeping in touch

We are thinking of additional ways to keep in touch with our members, especially those who are unable to join in our social events. Some ideas that we have are:

- Zoom presentations/seminars from invited speakers, similar to the talks that we have at our social events, to reach more of our members.
- meeting up informally, at a designated time and location, to visit a place of interest in the Midlands area.
- a regular Zoom members-only chat. This would be a relaxed, social chit chat with like-minded people - think of it as meeting in a virtual coffee shop. This would be facilitated by the Committee, who would join in to (hopefully) answer any questions that may arise.

If you would be interested in any or all of these events, or have any other suggestions to involve more of our members, then it would be very helpful for us to gauge interest by dropping us a note through the contact form on our website or leaving a message on 07384 471552.

As well as keeping in touch with Members through 'Steam in Trust', 'Tyseley News' or via the Members' only discussion page on Facebook, we also use an email mailing list but we need Members to opt-in if they would like us to keep in touch this way. It is a means of quickly contacting Members with any last minute news or if we are made aware of any special offers from Vintage Trains; we won't use this method of communication for any other purpose, i.e. news from other external organisations. If you have not opted in already and would like us to add you to the e-mail circulation list, please let us know via the contact form on the Friends of Vintage Trains' website or by returning the enclosed 'opt in' form.

Please rest assured that we take your privacy seriously and will not use any personal information for any other purpose.

Calendars

We are getting ahead of ourselves ... the 2023 Friends of Vintage Trains calendar is now on sale! The theme for the 2023 calendar is based around Vintage Trains' tours around the counties and is the same style and format as our previous two calendars, i.e. A4, spiral bound on the top edge, month-to-a-page with a description of the featured locomotive and an interesting snippet looking back at historical events in that month. The front cover image, taken by Robin Coombes, features 7029 *Clun Castle* with the 'Cotswold Explorer' at Frampton Mansell on the steep climb to Sapperton on 6 April 2019. The calendar costs £6 plus postage and can be ordered via the website www.FriendsofVT.org.uk or by using the enclosed order form.

Volunteering

Since the AGM, we have heard from Vintage Trains about an exciting opportunity for people who are interested in working in the hospitality field. VT are looking to build a team of Waiters/Waitresses to serve food in the Pullman/Club Class coaches on Vintage Trains' tours later in the year. These are paid positions and if you or family or friends are interested in learning more, please email volunteering@vintage trains.co.uk and they will be able to give you more information.

On the volunteering front, the train line from Solihull to Moor Street Station is going to be closed from 20-25 June 2022 for essential track work and during this period there will not be any train access into Moor Street Station which gives an opportunity to carry out some remedial work on the station. To that end we have been asked if we can help by painting some of the benches on the platforms. If you would like to join us then let us know what days you would like to attend and we will let you have further information.

All the volunteer teams at Tyseley are working hard on site maintenance, train stewarding, engine cleaning and the miniature railway. The gardening team, too, has continued to work on the flower beds at Tyseley Station and we are grateful to Spencer, the consulting engineers currently working at Tyseley, who, in the last few days, have generously provided soil to infill the middle flower bed and the manpower to move the 5 tons required. This was very timely and enabled the gardening team to then plant the bed with a red, white and blue theme to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The planting is part of the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group initiative and we are grateful to them for arranging the donation of the plants from Earlswood Garden Centre. Do take a look if you are travelling through Tyseley Station.

As Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations begin, we would like, on behalf of the Friends of Vintage Trains, to send our congratulations to Her Majesty on achieving such a remarkable milestone and to thank her for all her years of dedication to duty.

Best wishes, everyone, stay safe.

Paul Hatton, Chairman, Friends of Vintage Trains

MINUTES OF THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE TRAINS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Held on 19 March 2022 at Tyseley Working Men's Club

Item	Subject
1.	<p>CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME</p> <p>Neil Ewart, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the AGM after a couple of difficult years where we were unable to meet personally due to the Coronavirus restrictions. It was good to see so many people this year.</p>
2.	<p>APOLOGIES</p> <p>Richard Bason, Dave Collings, Harry Cowan, Phil Dalton, Robert Ferris, Dave Martin, Mr and Mrs A D Roberts, Gill Smith, Brian Wildman, Bernard Wright, Hugh Wright</p> <p>The Secretary confirmed the meeting was quorate with 45 members in attendance.</p>
3.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The Minutes of previous meeting held on 27 March 2021 had been circulated prior to the meeting and were taken as read. There were no matters arising. The Minutes were approved and signed.</p>
4.	<p>CHAIRMAN'S REPORT</p> <p>There had been a minor drop off in membership due to natural causes but the Committee is very conscious of how to retain memberships and once the trains, social events and open days really get going again we hope we will be able to increase our membership. It was reported by our Membership Officer, Christine Brown, that a lot of members had renewed for five years, which is really helpful and cuts down on postage and administration costs. Members were asked to include a stamped addressed envelope when renewing. Christine had asked the Chairman to relay her thanks to Members for their patience when there had been any queries.</p> <p>The Friends continue to develop a very good relationship with the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group who were represented at the meeting by Fraser Pithie. They, amongst other things, organise and co-ordinate all the stations along the North Warwickshire Line to Stratford. Our gardening team have made a great start in planting up the flower beds on Tyseley station; there is some remedial work needed on the middle bed and Spencer's, the contractors working on the LMRCA, have promised to repair and fill the bed with soil. We hope this will happen soon and we can begin planting up with a red, white and blue theme in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.</p> <p>The Friends of Vintage Trains have recently been accepted as a member of the Heritage Railway Association (HRA), Robin Coombes is our representative. It is a prestigious organisation and we hope to learn a lot from this alliance. 'Steam in Trust' has been nominated for an award in the Internal Communications Publication category at the HRA awards - just to be nominated is a wonderful achievement and we look forward to hearing the outcome shortly. s</p>

The Chairman thanked all the members who returned the survey undertaken in the summer. The replies have been analysed and the Committee are addressing the issues raised, particularly encouraging younger people to join the Friends which is a similar situation with every supporter's organisation in the country. We don't have the answers but we have to think about it and if anyone has any thoughts do get in touch.

The Chairman also thanked the members of the Committee for their time and effort over the year, as well as Chris Schroeder and Mark Smee who had been co-opted. Mark Smee has decided to stand down as Editor of 'Steam in Trust' and an Editorial Board will be set up. The Chairman also thanked Christine Brown for her work as Membership Officer.

Three Committee Members have retired during the year and the Chairman thanked Geoff Middleton, Dave Martin and Bernard Wright for their support and service. Tony Watson resigned during the year following his appointment as a Director of the Vintage Trains CBS.

The Chairman also wished to acknowledge the following – the management and paid staff of Vintage Trains, it has not been an easy time for them, the staff at Tyseley Locomotive Works for the incredible job they do, under pressure, Members, and volunteers whether they are members of the Friends or not. There are several volunteer projects in hand – amongst them is the work on the LMRCA, site maintenance, gardening, trains are fully manned with stewards, and the miniature railway to name but a few.

During the year the Committee wanted to acknowledge and award two Honorary Memberships to Bob Meanley for his incredible support to the Friends over the years, and to Fraser Pithie who is secretary of the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group and who has helped enormously with the Tyseley station adoption – a certificate was presented to Fraser.

5. **TREASURER'S REPORT**

In the absence of the Treasurer, the Chairman presented the Treasurer's report. The unaudited accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting and the audited accounts were available at the meeting.

Our finances are in good shape with nett total funds available of £18,572. This was largely thanks to Members renewing their subscriptions, and sales of calendars and greeting cards and the on train buffet sales. The 2022 calendar had achieved a profit of c.£2,000 on an order run of 500. The 2023 calendar is being produced and a similar number will be ordered.

During the year, on your behalf, we donated £10k to the restoration of two Pullman coaches. Alastair Meanley was consulted to ascertain what the priorities were and £5k was donated each to the reupholstering of a Pullman coach and the Eagle bogie lift.

We plan to run the Social events although the programme is currently held at the moment as a lot of members had expressed concern about Omicron and so the Committee have decided to postpone the April event until later in the year. There is some funding in the budget to cover costs of the social events but with a raffle the costs are generally covered. These events are exclusive for Members and a guest with the hope of encouraging new members.

During the year we were asked to step in to manage and staff the Buffet on the train, and we were able to sell our souvenirs on board as well. The team did a sterling job and money from this venture will be donated to Tyseley when a suitable project has been identified. The Chairman thanked the team for picking up the task and carrying it out with such professionalism. For various reasons the management of the Buffet has reverted back to Vintage Trains but we carry on organising the stocking and staffing – thank you Brian Miles and your team for continuing this work.

During the year we received a very generous donation of £1,060 in memory of a former volunteer, Alan Price and this was used to purchase power tools for the volunteers on site, as they needed to be replaced to meet new Health and Safety regulations for power usage. We are always grateful for donations, large or small, made by our members.

6. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

The following committee members were nominated:

Robin Coombes, Neil Ewart, Paul Hatton, Mary McCullough, Jeff Robinson, and Sharon Salter agreed to stand again for the Committee. Chris Schroeder had put this name forward to re-join the Committee along with two new nominations, Fraser Pithie and Matthew Self.

Proposed: Clive Gough. Seconded: Nickey Churchill. All were appointed on a show on hands.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Paul Hatton had been nominated to the post of Chairman, Mary McCullough – Secretary, Chris Schroeder – Treasurer.

Proposed: Graham Mapp, Seconded: Les Ross. All appointed on a show of hands.

8. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

Proposed to appoint Kevin McCullough to act in the capacity of Auditor. Mr McCullough is ACMA qualified, is not a member of the Friends and will therefore act in an independent capacity.

Proposed: Chris Schroeder; Seconded – Brian Miles. Appointed on a show of hands.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

One of our Members, Trevor Matthews had written a book entitled 'The Craft of the Fireman'. Ray Churchill introduced the book, which he saw on a visit to the Severn Valley Railway, purchased a copy and couldn't put it down. It is an extremely in depth look at what the fireman does and Ray recommended anyone to buy it. Trevor has very kindly donated 20 copies of the book to the Friends with all monies raised going to the Friends funds. We are extremely grateful to Trevor for this very generous gesture.

The incoming Chairman, Paul Hatton, presented a small gift to Neil for mark his Chairmanship.

The meeting was then declared closed.

Talk by Michael Whitehouse, Chairman, Clun Castle Trust

After the formal business of the meeting, Michael Whitehouse spoke about the future and how the business cannot survive without proper consideration of the people involved, whether they be staff, customers or passengers. It has been very hard to recover from the pandemic but was looking for a very positive outcome.

Michael gave an update on how the business processes and documentation had been reviewed and new appointments had been made to help drive the business forward, training people and running trains safely.

The recent Welsh Marches tour ran with Clun Castle on exactly the same day as Clun travelled the same route, 50 years earlier which was a wonderful achievement. Alastair Meanley has taken a further step forward to becoming a fully licenced steam driver by driving for part of the journey. He has passed his rules, and now needs to do 250 hours on the footplate to prove his driving skills. VT have also taken on another driver who can be trained up to be a steam driver.

In respect of the rolling stock, the Pullman class seats on the train sell out almost immediately, but the Tourist class are slower to sell. We need to get the coaches in a first class condition and last year this represented a spend of £250k and will be more over the next two years including controlled toilet emissions. The land currently owned at Stratford will be sold to help fund.

Next year there will be three express steam engines in full working order – and they will all be painted in British Railways green!



MEMBERS' SOCIAL EVENT

Talks by Robin Coombes and Denis Chick

'The Art of Railway Photography'
and
'Transport Museum Wythall'

When? Saturday, 20 August 2022

Where? Tyseley Working Men's' Club, 573 Warwick Road, Birmingham B11 2EX

Time? Doors open at 1.30 pm, talk starts 2.00 pm

Cost? Free

Refreshments provided and a cash bar will be available

This social event will be hosted at the Tyseley Working Men's Club which is situated opposite Tyseley Loco Works. Doors will open at 1.30 pm for a 2.00 pm start. Car parking will be available at Tyseley Loco Works.

The guest speakers are Robin Coombes and Denis Chick. Denis will give a short talk about the Transport Museum at Wythall where he is a Trustee and Deputy Chairman, and Robin, a Friends of Vintage Trains' Committee member, will talk on *'The Art of Railway Photography'* based on (some of) his extensive photographic collection

This exclusive members' event is a benefit for members and there will be no charge for you to attend and to bring a guest for free. A light refreshment buffet will be provided.

Registration is not required, but it would greatly help our planning, especially for the catering, if you would complete the brief 'expression of interest' form on our website: www.FriendsofVT.org.uk, or telephone 07384 471552.