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[www.friendsofvt.org.uk](http://www.friendsofvt.org.uk)

## Steam in Trust Newsletter No. 31 – summer 2023



*With the 'Shakespeare Express' season upon us, it's an ideal opportunity to look through the archive where archivist Michael Hughes found this image of GWR Bulldog Class 3399 'Ottawa' heading a train to Stratford-upon-Avon. The train is just joining the North Warwickshire Line at Tyseley South Junction. The photograph was taken about 1935 by G.H.W. Clifford.*

### **Message from the Chair**

Paul Hatton

**Dear Member,**

Welcome to *Steam in Trust* Newsletter No. 31, the occasional newsletter for Members of the Friends of Vintage Trains.

The Friends have been busy since the previous issue of *Steam in Trust* was published, including arranging two further social events for our members which are discussed in detail in this newsletter. Do come along to either or both of these to meet other members and also discuss any aspects of the Friends with your Committee, who are always represented at our events - we are always pleased to meet as many of our members as possible.

In the previous *Steam in Trust* the Friends' donation to the Sutton Miniature Railway Boiler Appeal was described. We are pleased to see that work on the Sutton Belle's new boiler is proceeding apace following this donation - we will have an update on this in the next *Steam in Trust*.

We always welcome contact from our members – see the Contact Us page on our website at <https://friendsofvt.org.uk> for our contact details and, as always, thank you for your continued support.

**Paul Hatton, Chair**

### **Corrections/feedback from previous *Steam in Trust***

In the previous *Steam in Trust*, p32 featured the key used by the then Prince Charles when opening the Birmingham Railway Museum in 1988. We speculated that 806 was the Museum accession number but Geoff Middleton has clarified that 806 referred to the Royal coach number. Thanks Geoff for clarifying.

The photo on page 9 was from Andy Walton not Andy Watson. Apologies Andy.

### **Vintage Trains Open Days**

VT's first Open Weekend since COVID was held in July, commemorating the Centenary of the Great Western Castle Class with a line-up of 4 examples, including *Pendennis Castle*, on loan courtesy of Didcot Railway Centre. Three were in steam.

The Friends shared a stand with Phil Dalton, a previous Chair, who offered to sell items of OO gauge rolling stock from his collection, donating 50% of takings to FoVT. Phil sold all the models, resulting in a donation of £302.50. Over the two days we raised a total of £439.48. Grateful thanks to Phil for his wonderful donation and his help over the weekend.

### **Developments at VT**

There have been several developments at Vintage Trains. Highlights include:

- Formal opening of the Metropolitan Railway Carriage and Wagon Works at Tyseley on 20<sup>th</sup> June. The newly-built carriage shed, with 1,550 square metres of floor space, was partially funded by a grant of £168,369 from the ERDF funded Property Investment Programme awarded by Birmingham City Council. The new carriage works will employ an additional ten full time staff members.
- The first *Shakespeare Express* of 2023 ran on 16<sup>th</sup> July, with the season running through to 3<sup>rd</sup> September.
- New tours have been added to the Vintage Trains tour programme using both steam and heritage diesels. Included is a diesel explorer 'The Scarborough Belle' on 16 August, the steam hauled 'The Chester Venturer' on 14 October, a diesel explorer to Blackpool to see the illuminations on 11 November, and the steam hauled 'The Merchant Venturer' to Bath or Bristol on 5 December. The 'Polar Express' will run on selected days from 25 November. Call the Vintage Trains office on 0121-708 4960 or click on the Vintage Trains' website <https://vintagetrains.co.uk/explorer-trains-steam> for more information or to book seats.
- The Tyseley guided site tours are now fully booked but keep an eye on the website in case new dates are offered.

### **Membership Forms**

For those not aware, we have a new Membership Secretary, Mrs Sharon Salter, a volunteer and member of the Friends Committee. Sharon asks that on receipt of your membership renewal letter, please return the cut off slip. It contains vital information about your membership and gives you the opportunity to update your telephone numbers and email addresses. To make the payment choice clear (choice of BACs or Standing Order), please tick the box at the bottom for BACS and return the cut off slip to the address shown at the top of the letter.

### **What's On?**

Following our thoroughly enjoyable visit to the Electric Cinema (followed by Wetherspoon's directly opposite for lunch) on 25<sup>th</sup> May, members are invited for a second visit on **Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> October** (10.15am for 10.30am start). The Electric Cinema, the UK's oldest working cinema, is in Station Street just outside New St Station in Birmingham.

As previously, a morning of railway themed films with a BT documentary will be followed by 'The Unstoppable', a 2010 American disaster action thriller directed and produced by Tony Scott, starring Denzel Washington. Based on a real-life CSX 8888 incident, it tells the story of a runaway freight train and the attempt to stop it.

The donation is held at just £5 each, in cash on the day please. You are welcome to bring a guest, also £5. Seats are limited so please phone Neil Ewart on 07805 817711 or email [neilewart88@gmail.com](mailto:neilewart88@gmail.com) if you would like to come along.

Unfortunately the trip to the Kent and East Sussex Railway in September has been cancelled but in its place we are planning a visit to the *Holdens* GWR-themed Great Western pub in Wolverhampton on **Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September**. This Grade II-listed, previous CAMRA National Pub of the Year, pub is near the former low-level railway station and was sympathetically refurbished in spring 2021. It contains old station pictures and many other artefacts. More details of this historic pub can be found at <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/articles/Great%20Western/pub.htm>

No booking is required, just turn up at New Street station at 12.00 noon and meet by the main ticket office on the concourse. Trains to Wolverhampton are plentiful and don't forget your WM travel pass. We plan to arrive at the pub around 12.45pm if you wish to meet us there. This is our first pub-based social event, so do join us and other like-minded members of the Friends for an interesting trip with good food, good beer and good company.

Coming up in November we will, once again, be attending the *Warley National Model Railway Exhibition* on **25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> November** at the NEC, Birmingham. If you are planning to attend do pop along to our stand in Hall 5 and say hello. We will again be focussing on the restoration work the volunteers are undertaking on the Sutton Miniature Railway stock.

### **Tyseley Station adoption**

The gardens are blooming, with recent planting sponsored by the Shakespeare Line Group and a hefty discount from Earlswood Garden Centre. The dry spell in early July placed a great demand on the small team with frequent watering being necessary.

The brickwork around each bed has been repainted in white by youngsters from The Prince's Trust, a great improvement on the previously-bare bricks. We thank West Midlands Trains for making the connection with The Prince's Trust.

A statue of Shakespeare should arrive soon, to be installed by Network Rail. All stations along the Shakespeare Line are receiving a Bard to emphasise the theme of the line, and interpreting Shakespeare's plays which, in the case of Tyseley Station, is 'All's Well That Ends Well'.



Security is being improved by West Midlands Trains with CCTV and additional locks. Since implementation, it's notable that levels of vandalism and general litter have dramatically reduced.

Offers of help with watering and general duties at Tyseley, especially from those local to the station, would be most welcome. Please contact us at <https://friendsofvt.org.uk/contact/>

On the topic of gardening, work on the Tyseley Memorial Garden and picnic area is progressing with some of the artefacts found in the museum clearance and from around the site being moved into this space to form what we hope will prove to be an informative, educational and reflective place. Items such as a section of broad gauge track, an ATC ramp and the Signaller's Air Raid Shelter are included.

The Site Tour Guides are also highlighting these artefacts during their tours around the site. The tours have proved very popular and, as mentioned earlier, are now fully booked for the year.

### **Cards and calendars**

Included is an order form for our 2024 calendar and greetings cards, all proceeds from the sale go to our funds. The theme for the calendar is 'The Shakespeare Route' with superb images of a variety of motive power through the ages, historic stations and historical snippets for each month. The front features a painting by John Austin FGRA, showing *The Cornishman* passing through Henley-in-Arden in the 1950s.

We also offer a set of 5 postcard-sized greetings cards. Each pack has 5 mixed cards each featuring a Vintage Trains locomotive; the inside is left blank for your own personal message and can be used throughout the year, not just Christmas.

Details of the cards and the calendar, including a gallery of the calendar cover, all of the calendar images and all of the greeting card images, can be found on our website at <https://friendsofvt.org.uk/about/>

### **Help us to reduce our postage costs**

Members frequently request that we reduce Friends of Vintage Trains' postage and printing costs by sending out this *Steam in Trust Newsletter* by e-mail as a printable PDF to members who have internet access. This also reduces the time spent in dispatch and distribution.

If you would like to help us reduce costs by receiving a printable PDF copy, rather than a paper copy, then please complete the form at <https://friendsofvt.org.uk/nel>. If you have already signed up to help us in this way we thank you.



*Keeping the Shakespeare line in mind, this photograph from the archive shows Hall Green station down waiting room with pre-war travel posters on the walls, peeling plaster and a 'modern' electric fire with a trail of soot up the wall, plus GWR furniture.  
Feb 1970  
Image C.C. Green*

### **New Members' Welcome**

Welcome to the following new members, we hope to see you at one of our forthcoming events:  
I Putney, C Timothy, M Tombs, P Bowen, A Bryan, P Borg-Bartolo  
and family members Mr & Mrs S Fisher.