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www.friendsofvt.org.uk

Steam in Trust Newsletter No. 34 – Winter 2024/2025



2025 sees the 60th anniversary of Clun Castle hauling the last scheduled steam train from Paddington on 11 June 1965 - the 4.15pm to Banbury - at an unknown location.

Photo: Vintage Trains Archive

Message from the Chair

Dear Member

Welcome to Steam in Trust Newsletter No. 34, the bi-annual newsletter for Members of the Friends of Vintage Trains. The Committee would like to wish all Members a very happy 2025 and thank you for your continued support throughout 2024. We also acknowledge those members of our railway family who are sadly no longer with us.

This printed newsletter is sent to all of our members, including those who have opted to receive it by email, since we are including the notice of our AGM on **Sunday 23 March** - our constitution requires that all members receive a printed copy of the AGM notice. The audited accounts will be presented at the AGM.

This year's AGM will be followed by a talk on *The Great Train Robbery* from Ian Boskett, which promises a detailed exposition of what happened before the robbery, during the robbery itself and its aftermath. Some of your Committee have seen the talk and highly recommend it, so do come along to the AGM and share your thoughts following another year of the Friends and stay for this social.

We have several events to celebrate in 2025. 7029 *Clun Castle*, built at Swindon Works in May 1950 to a design by Charles Collett for operation on the Western Region of British Railways and named after Clun Castle

in Shropshire, is 75 years old this year. It is also 60 years since *Clun Castle* hauled the last scheduled steam train from Paddington on 11 June 1965 - the 4.15pm to Banbury. On 27 November 1965 *Clun Castle* also hauled a British Railways *Farewell to Steam* railtour from Paddington to Cheltenham.

2025 also celebrates the 40th Anniversary of Vintage Trains' Shakespeare Express. The first services were on Saturday 8 June and Sunday 9 June 1985 with the first train headed by 7029 *Clun Castle*. The original plan was to also use 5593 *Kolhapur* over the two days but a hot axlebox meant that the LMS had to retire early, so the GWR took over for all eight trains over the weekend. We would love to hear from anyone who was on that first run, maybe for a feature in the next Steam in Trust. Our contact details are at the end of this Newsletter.

2025 is also the 200th anniversary of the modern railway with the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Already begun is a wide variety of activities and events planned to celebrate rail's remarkable past, its role today, and its importance to a sustainable future under the *Railway 200* banner.

A reminder to our members who follow the Stock and Workshop lists that we publish in Steam in Trust and are so ably maintained by Geoff Middleton. These are frequently updated, with the current lists always available on our web site. We also have an important message from our membership secretary, Sharon Salter – please see the shaded box on the last page.

We always welcome contact from our members using any of the details on the last page and, as always, thank you for your continued support.

Paul Hatton, Chair

Can you spare a small amount of time to help the Friends?

At our AGM, our treasurer is standing down for personal reasons after many years in the role so we are urgently seeking a replacement.

We maintain two bank accounts, current and savings. These accounts are maintained online and via in-branch transactions and are audited annually by an independent auditor. The financial year runs from 1 January to 31 December. The Treasurer is registered for online banking and has full online access to the accounts and can carry out all the necessary banking activities online.

The workload of the Treasurer is an average of only 1 hour/week. The roles and responsibilities of the Treasurer are:

- Maintaining and holding the financial records of FoVT, recording all incoming and outgoing financial transactions and regularly verifying and balancing the accounts against the bank statements.
- Preparing and presenting a brief summary report of the financial position of FoVT to each Committee meeting and also on an 'as required' basis.
- Paying all bills and invoices.
- The Treasurer has the delegated authority to purchase low value items required for the running of FoVT, such as stamps and stationery. All other expenditure must be approved in advance by the committee.
- At the end of the financial year preparing and presenting the annual accounts for the audit.
- Preparing and presenting a report of the audited accounts to the FoVT Annual General Meeting.

The Treasurer is also a member of the Friends Committee, which usually meets on the first Monday of every second month with the first meeting of the year in January, typically with most of the Committee around a table in person and others joining by Zoom if they are unable to make the meeting. If you are able to join us as Treasurer then this would also be your opportunity to play an active role in the activities and direction of the Friends.

If you would like to find out more about the Treasurer's role then please give Chris Schroeder a call on his mobile at 07785 725662 or drop him a mail at treasurer@friendsofvt.org.uk; he would be pleased to hear from you.

Regular travellers through Tyseley station will see the hard work that is put in by the small team who maintain the station, both the flower beds but also the work with West Midlands Trains on, for example, the installation of CCTV. With the (hopeful) approach of warmer weather the team would welcome offers of help, particularly from anyone local to Tyseley who could spare a couple of hours a week with the summer watering. If you can help please email neilewart88@gmail.com or give him a call on 07805 817711.

What's On?

We had a turn-up-and-go visit in December to the Grade II listed pub on Codsall station, which was converted in 1997 from the waiting room, offices and stationmaster's house, for pre-Christmas drinks. Remember that there is no need to book for these trips just join us at the meeting point and go.

Now that the days are slowly lengthening we are planning to offer a visit to *The Fawley Museum* on Sunday 18 May. The Fawley Museum is a private museum established in the 1960s by the late Sir William McAlpine at his estate near Henley on Thames. It hosts a fine collection of memorabilia and models relating to railways and other forms of transport together with a working standard gauge railway operating in his garden on the steepest gradient in the country.

We are intending to hire a 17-seater self-drive minibus (we have a volunteer driver). The approximate cost, depending on how many are coming, is estimated at £40 per person including entry. Visiting is by invitation only, so if you would like to join us please fill in the Expression of Interest form which is linked from the front page on our website, or give Neil Ewart a call on 07805 817711 **by 31 March**. If there is insufficient interest shown by then we will reluctantly have to cancel this social; we would, of course, let everyone know.

Steam in Trust

We hope that you enjoyed the recent edition of Steam in Trust, and the refreshed design. We do apologise for a couple of gremlins that slipped in – the missing last column in the crossword and the misalignment of some of the entries in the Stock and Workshop lists. The correct copies of both of these articles are enclosed with this newsletter.

Meanwhile we are working closely with our publishers on evolving the design – amongst other enhancements for the next issue are printing on different paper to bring out the detail and colours in the illustrations, and probably slightly fewer but larger illustrations to show more detail. We welcome feedback, good or bad, about Steam in Trust so do contact us.

Congratulations to Vintage Trains on the Polar Express

2024 was the twentieth anniversary of the Polar Express film, and Vintage Trains celebrated with another sold-out programme of Polar Express™ Trains. Every train advertised ran and they all ran on time! Four services a day operated on the weekends from 23 November to 22 December. There were also services on 22 November (dress rehearsal and charity passengers) and Monday 23 December. There were 18,944 passengers in this 2024 season.

The 2024 Polar Express™ Trains were a demonstration of the railway at its best. The professional staff of Vintage Trains, Tyseley Locomotive Works, Chiltern Trains, and Network Rail worked with the volunteers (many of them Friends of Vintage Trains members) to deliver a brilliant day out for the passengers.



The Polar Express at Moot Street awaiting departure to the North Pole.

Photo Michael Hughes

Vintage Trains update

Vintage Trains is pleased to announce the appointment of Nick Ralls as Managing Director from 1 February. Nick has most recently worked as CEO of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and has previous experience of the heritage rail sector, having been General Manager of the Severn Valley Railway between 2007 and 2019. We

have been in contact with Nick, he is keen to get to know the Friends and we look forward to a positive relationship with him.

The Shakespeare Express in 2025 will see fewer trains running just from Birmingham to Stratford with other services starting from Derby, Leicester or Worcester, building on the popularity of these trains in 2024.

And finally

We end with a photograph from the Richard Potts Collection of *Clun Castle* passing Swindon on 27 November 1965 with British Railways Farewell to Steam railtour from Paddington to Cheltenham.



Photo: R. Nash

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS, AND CONTACTING THE FRIENDS

We welcome new members Mr R Atkinson and Mr N Butler.

We always welcome contact from our members and can be reached by the **Contact Us** form on our website at www.friendsofvt.org.uk, email to enquiries@friendsofvt.org.uk, by phone to 07384 471582 or by writing to us at the address at the top of this newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP FORMS

Sharon Salter, our Membership Secretary, asks that members return the renewal reminder form **with their renewal, including if renewing by Bank Transfer** to the Friends' account. We need the completed form to be returned to enable the correct information to be added for any payment received. This especially manifests itself if a donation has been added to a renewal and paid via Bank Transfer; if the form isn't returned Sharon has to guess what the payment is for. She is also unaware that a payment has been made until our Treasurer sees the transfer, who is also unsure of who the transfer is from and for what reason it has been made.

Thank you