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www.friendsofvt.org.uk

Steam in Trust Newsletter No. 35 – Summer 2025



45596 Bahamas stands at Newport on The Cathedrals Express to Swansea on 5 July. The train commemorated the 175th anniversary of the route between Chepstow and Swansea opening, connecting it to the wider GWR network

Photo: Al Wallace

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to Steam in Trust Newsletter No. 35, the bi-annual newsletter for Members of the Friends of Vintage Trains.

Summer has well and truly arrived and your Committee has been busy arranging another social; more details are further on in this Newsletter. We encourage all members to join us at our socials, they are usually free of charge to members and their guests and often include a complimentary buffet. It is a great opportunity to meet other members and your Committee, who always welcome feedback from members on the Friends' activities, including suggestions for future socials.

In May we were pleased to be offered a limited number of tickets for an invitation only steam day event at the Fawley Hill Railway Museum, near Henley-on-Thames which we offered to members of the Friends. 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 on the steepest gradient in the country. We work hard to be able to offer these 'behind the scenes' events which are an added benefit of your membership; we encourage all members to support these events which are not open to the general public.

Like many voluntary organisations, we are a small group of dedicated volunteers mainly working from home and on specific projects such as the Tyseley Station team – read on for more about this team's recent success. We are in urgent need of more active members to keep the Friends running and developing, both for help on specific projects, again taking the Tyseley Station team as an example, and to help with the running of the group, especially on our small Committee. No in-depth knowledge of the railways is required, just an interest in the aims of the Friends and some spare time to join our small but active band of volunteers. To find out more, contact our Secretary Mary McCullough at secretary@friendsofvt.org.uk or leave her a message on 07384 471582 where she will get back to you.

Finally, I finish on a rather sad note. We have recently lost two of our incredible Members/volunteers.

Bernard Wright was an Honorary Member in recognition of his time as Finance Director for Vintage Trains and also as the Treasurer for the Friends in its various guises. Many Members may also recall Bernard as, amongst other things, the

Ticket Master with Henry Pinchin and Les Ross on the Shakespeare Express and other tours. There will be a full obituary in the next Steam in Trust.

We also note with great sadness the passing of one of our younger members and Train Steward, Adrian Knight. Adrian had an amazing railway knowledge with a particular fondness for the Class 47 diesels. Our thoughts and prayers are extended to Bernard and Adrian's families at this sad time.

If anyone wishes to pay their respects, donations can be made to the Young at Heart Charity in respect of Adrian. It's a charity which offers help and support to families of babies and children diagnosed with heart defects.

Donations in memory of Bernard can be made to Cancer Research UK or Alzheimer's Society.

Paul Hatton, Chair

What's On

Our next social event is planned for Thursday, 4 September in the Old Nursery Room at Kidderminster Railway Museum. Our guest speaker is Anthony Coulls, Senior Curator at the National Railway Museum, York who will give a talk entitled "2025. And what are we celebrating" so make a note of the date in your diary, it promises to be a very interesting talk. The day, including a complementary buffet lunch, is free of charge to all members and their guests – more details are on our website. We do ask that anyone who will be joining let us know either through the *Expression of Interest* form on the website or by giving Neil Ewart a call on 07805 817711 to help us plan the day, especially the catering. Doors open at 11.00.

The Guild of Railway Artists will also be holding their annual exhibition in the upstairs room at Kidderminster Railway Museum on the same day, so that's a great opportunity to see some amazing art, including a new commission of Les Ross's electric locomotive 86259 *Les Ross* painted by John Austin FGRA. This is also an opportunity to meet the artists, who are always keen to talk to other enthusiasts, so do pay them a visit after our buffet lunch.

Other Friends' activities



Neil Ewart, Peter Jeffs, Tony Edwards and Sharon Salter (with certificate), some of the members of the Tyseley Station team

Congratulations to the Tyseley Station Team, their efforts in bringing life to the enormous 60ft long flower beds on platforms 3/4 have been recognised with the West Midlands Railway *Station in Bloom 2025* award. They are an enthusiastic group and it is wonderful that the time and effort they have put into making Tyseley Station look much more welcoming has been appreciated by the Railway. As ever they could always use an extra pair of hands, especially during the warm summer months when the beds need a lot of watering, so if you feel you have some time and would like to lend a hand then please get in touch with Neil Ewart who draws it all together. Neil's email address is neilewart88@gmail.com or telephone him on 07805 817711.

Whilst the VT Depot Tours have been suspended due to works on the site, especially to the workshops, the Friends were offered a Members Tyseley Guided Site Tour in June. This was well attended and gave the Tour Guides the opportunity to dust themselves down and refresh their skills. If you have not

been on any of these depot tours we strongly recommend joining one of them, so do spread the word to any of your friends and colleagues who might be interested.

The Friends' 2026 AGM will be on Sunday 22 March 2026, again at The Tyseley Working Mens' Club. Future Vintage Trains Community Benefit Society AGMs will be held in late September or October so the unfortunate clash of dates in 2025 will not happen again. Planning for our AGM is in the early stages; we are considering having a complimentary buffet lunch and afternoon speaker or depot tour but nothing is confirmed yet. We will let you know more details as our arrangements progress but please put this in your diary for next year.

If you are finding this newsletter interesting and informative – and we really hope that you are – and you have an email address then why not sign up for our monthly email briefings? These monthly updates ensure that you would be the first to know about updates and news of forthcoming events, such as our socials, from the Friends and also late-breaking updates about the VT tours.

To help reduce our ever-increasing postage costs, would you consider signing up to receive this Newsletter as a printable PDF? We will always send a printed copy of Steam in Trust but sending this as a PDF would help reduce our costs. Let us know through the **Contact Us** form on our website if you are interested in either of these options.

Along the Shakespeare Line

We have followed the rebirth of Henley station in recent editions of Steam in Trust and it is sad to report that, in contrast to the good news about the Tyseley Station award, the Henley Station outside seating area was recently subjected to an arson attack. It's heart-breaking to see volunteers' hard work being so senselessly destroyed but it was amazing that the Henley team had tidied up the mess within 24 hours. A *Just Giving* page has been set up to help raise funds to replace the seating and shelter at <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sally-james-2>.

'A 55-year-old man arrested on suspicion of arson had since been bailed', British Transport Police said.



The arson attack at Henley Station

Vintage Trains updates

The Vintage Trains Tour Programme is in full swing with lots of exciting journeys in the pipeline as well as The Shakespeare Express summer season which kicked off fully on 27 July every Sunday until 31 August.

Among the forthcoming tour programme highlights are:

- 27 August - The Welsh Highland Explorer – Tyseley's Class 37, 37240, is heading to Holyhead - a part of Britain that would have once seen many Class 37 hauled trains.
- 15 November - the Blackpool Illuminations Explorer, returning from Blackpool after dark
- 18 October - Cathedrals Express to Newcastle is an extremely rare opportunity to travel behind a Castle Class locomotive in the North East of England
- 3 December - The Christmas White Rose to York Christmas Market, always a popular and usually sold out trip

Details of all the Vintage Trains tours can be seen on the Vintage Trains website at www.vintagetrains.co.uk or telephone the Booking Office on 0121 708 4960 if you have any questions.

Whilst the festive season seems a long way away in the current weather, Vintage Trains has confirmed that the ever-popular Polar Express train to the North Pole will be running again. Details will be available on the Vintage Trains website as they become available; we're sure that Santa and his helpers will welcome all visitors travelling to the North Pole with Vintage Trains, as they have done for the past few years.

Comings and goings

71000 Duke of Gloucester, the sole surviving example of the British Railways Standard Class 8P Pacific locomotives, left Tyseley Locomotive Works on Thursday, 1 May for the Severn Valley Railway following its protracted 10-year overhaul. The Severn Valley Railway hosted the locomotive's ongoing recommissioning, static and dynamic testing lasting three weeks, covering 250 miles of bedding-in. Unfortunately, a number of ongoing technical issues stalled its planned onward movement to Locomotive Services Limited in Crewe, where the loco will be based for the foreseeable future, until May 2027. 'Duke' members had been promised a first mainline run on 4 June, but this had to be postponed as this very complex locomotive needed some final adjustments.



71000 awaiting departure from Tyseley. Photo: Denis Chick

Take a look at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzKAhM_pT6U to see it leaving Tyseley and arriving at the Severn Valley Railway. As always, Allelys couldn't have made it look easier.

And finally

Hunt the mouse

Did anyone manage to find the mouse in the image of the Terence Cuneo Castles at Tyseley painting in the last Steam in Trust? It wasn't easy, if at all possible, given the space and colour constraints we have in Steam in Trust. Michael Whitehouse sent a close-up of a section of the painting near the picture frame with the mouse running along the rail - thanks Michael.



From the Archives

We featured an article in the last Steam in Trust celebrating 40 years of the Shakespeare Express. There is, of course, a great deal of behind-the-scenes work that is involved in running any excursion. Here we have a photograph from the Vintage Trains archive of 7029 *Clun Castle* being prepared at Tyseley for the second day's running.



WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS, AND CONTACTING THE FRIENDS

We welcome new members Mr & Mrs C Hastings.

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