



MINUTES OF THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE TRAINS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Held on 23 March 2025 at Tyseley Working Men's Club

The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate with 54 Members in attendance.

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and also Hayley Wakefield, Manager of the Tyseley Working Men's Club, and staff for their help and support in arranging this meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Peter Coulls, Phil Dalton, Robert Ferris Martin Frayn, Saeed Ghinai, Dave Martin, Brian Miles, Gill Smith, Brian Davis.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2024

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 March 2024 had been circulated with the January newsletter and were taken as read. No matters were raised and the Minutes were approved on a show of hands.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (Paul Hatton)

The Chairman's report highlighted the achievements over the period under review and looked forward to the year ahead.

In answer to a question raised by a Member, the Chairman explained that the confusion with two Annual General Meetings being held on the same day (the Friends of Vintage Trains [FoVT] and the Vintage Trains Community Benefit Society [VT CBS]) was unfortunate but there may be benefits in both the Friends and the VT CBS meetings being held on the same day in the future and it is something we will be exploring with VT CBS during the year.

At Vintage Trains, Nick Ralls, formerly with the Ironbridge Gorge Museum and Severn Valley Railway, has been appointed Managing Director. The Chairman has met with Nick and he is very supportive of the Friends. He and some of the Trustees had joined as Members which shows that the links with VT are strengthening.

The Friends continue to offer support to Vintage Trains in many ways, by promoting the need for volunteers through our Volunteer Enquiries page on our website. We also help with refreshments for guided site tours. We are very appreciative of the on-site volunteers, whether Members or not, for the time and effort they put in to working on site at Tyseley in a variety of roles.

We continue to use social media – facebook, X and regular email updates to our Members in order to keep up to date with latest developments.

Social events, organised by Neil Ewart, have included a 'turn up and go' visit to Aberystwyth, a visit to the Severn Valley Railway Diesel Depot, arranged with the help of Al Wallace, and a behind the scenes visit to Bridgnorth Engine Shed and we thank the Severn Valley Railway for their hospitality. Thanks are extended to Neil for all his hard work in arranging such a variety of activities.

Neil also co-ordinates the Tyseley Station adoption team and has succeeded in getting the station locked overnight which has made a huge difference to the overall appearance of the station with a lot less anti-social behaviour, graffiti etc. West Midlands Trains have repainted the booking hall, stairs and

flower beds. If anyone would like to help, particularly with watering the flower beds, do get in touch with Neil.

Discussions, led by Neil, have been held with the Henley-in-Arden station team, VT and Transport Museum Wythall to try to integrate the *Shakespeare Express* timetable and Transport Museum Wythall to the mutual benefit of all parties and these discussions are on-going.

Last year we had to raise our subscriptions and are grateful that this had little impact on our level of Membership. We currently have 374 Members. Special thanks go to Membership Secretary Sharon Salter, who does an amazing job, keeping track of renewal dates.

The Friends are members of the Birmingham Heritage Forum. Three meetings a year are held where leaflets are exchanged to promote VT and the Friends of VT. The annual Birmingham Heritage week was under threat due to the financial constraints at Birmingham City Council however the Heritage Forum raised enough sponsorship to run the Birmingham Heritage Week in 2025 but it is uncertain if there will be sufficient funding next year.

Steam in Trust is published by Heron Press in Rubery. A refreshed design was used in the last issue and any feedback would be very welcome. Denis Chick led on the re-design and worked with retired graphic designer, Philip Williams, who gave his time freely to make it look more modern. We would be happy to receive photographs from Members and consider them for use in the magazine.

On the Committee front, Chris Schroeder is standing down as Treasurer and we would like to record our thanks to him for his many years of service and we are pleased that he will be staying on the Committee. Denis Chick took on the role of Deputy Chairman. The Chairman thanked the Committee for all their unstinting hard work during the year, it has been a very busy and successful year.

The Chairman also acknowledged the staff at Vintage Trains and Tyseley Locomotive Works for the incredible job they do, all the Members and Volunteers. There are specific projects, where Volunteers are always welcome and Tony Watson, VT Volunteer Co-ordinator, would be pleased to hear from any potential volunteers.

4. **TREASURER'S REPORT (Chris Schroeder)**

The financial report covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2024. The accounts had been signed off by an independent auditor, Kevin McCullough, giving his time free of charge.

INCOME

The report gave a comparison with the same period for 2023 which highlights the income from Members' subscriptions which has increased. The Committee had considered long and hard before raising the fees but it was necessary to offset the cost of postage alone which will be increasing again later this year. The Committee is diligent in trying to keep costs down and in order to try and offset the effect of the increases we purchased a large number of discounted postage stamps at the old rate.

Members Donations – whilst we don't ask for donations, when renewals are sent many of our Members often include a voluntary donation and the Treasurer thanked Members for this generous gesture, it really does help.

Other income – We are restricted on what and where we can sell memorabilia and the report shows a significant drop from 2023 but we will continue raise funds through raffles and second hand book sales.

EXPENDITURE

Steam In Trust and the Newsletter are our biggest expenditure and the cost of the paper, printing and postage for *Steam in Trust* has increased although Heron use business postal rates which keeps costs down. Next year we predict this area will show a big increase but we will look at ways of managing costs.

IT fees – We have to comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which means keeping your data secure and inaccessible to external influences and we have appropriate IT software in place to do this. We purchased a new standalone laptop purely for the Membership work. It's not

connected to the internet and that keeps us secure and compliant with GDPR hence the slight increase in expenditure.

Social Events – we have a social events fund with an allocated sum of money which Neil monitors and with his very efficient organisation came in under budget.

Repairs and Maintenance – power tools were purchased for the volunteers and we think that is a good way of supporting Vintage Trains through the excellent work the Volunteers undertake.

Other expenditure – we subscribe to the Birmingham Heritage Forum and to Zoom. Normally the Committee meet face to face but on occasions we use zoom when someone is unable to attend in person.

Financial Donations to Vintage Trains – The Committee responds to requests from VT for funding and look at each request on merit. Recently a donation of £1k was made towards the cost of replacing curtains.

The Friends of Vintage Trains is a 'not for profit' organisation and aims to breakeven every year but also to put a little bit of money into our account for potential donations etc. In the previous year we had a deficit of c.£1,400 but in 2024 we turned that around and made a surplus of £676.

The Treasurer thanked the Committee Members for their support during his time in post.
The report was proposed, seconded and approved on a show of hands.

5. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

An annual review of the Friends documentation is carried out to ensure it is up to date, as a result of which the Committee are seeking to provide clarity in certain areas of the Constitution, a copy of which was sent to all Members in January. No objections have been received and therefore it is proposed to amend the Constitution as follows:

- The new Friends logo has been added at the top of the document.
- Item 3, Objects - A new section (g) is recommended in order to seek in-kind non-financial support from individuals. This is included to cover such things as external advice on print design where that advice is given freely and on a voluntary basis.
- Item 6.3 – The reference to 'designated officer' has been changed to 'Membership Secretary' to give clarity.
- Item 6.5 – The length of time Members' details are held on the Membership database, in the event of non-renewal, has been changed from three months to six months after which time the Member's personal details will be deleted. This confirms our compliance with GDPR requirements.
- Item 6.8 – this amendment is to clarify the criteria for Honorary Membership and that the maximum number of Honorary Memberships at any given time is up to, but not exceeding, a maximum of 10.

The amendments to the Constitution were proposed, seconded and approved on a show of hands.

The Treasurer noted that under item 4, Assets, an asset register had been set up covering laptop, projector, PA system, etc. The register is available for Members to see upon application to the Treasurer. The value of each asset is reduced by 20% per year.

6. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

The current Committee, Denis Chick, Neil Ewart, Paul Hatton, Mary McCullough, Fraser Pithie, Sharon Salter and Chris Schroeder had confirmed they would be willing to stand for election.

The appointment of the Committee as above was proposed, seconded and elected on a show of hands.

A nomination to join the Committee had been received from member Mrs Janet Corbett and the Committee recommended her nomination for appointment and *this was proposed, seconded and Mrs Corbett was duly elected to the Committee on a show on hands.*

7. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Chair - Paul Hatton was willing to carry on as Chair for the next year and *this was proposed, seconded and approved on a show of hands.*

Secretary – Mary McCullough had indicated she would be willing to continue as Secretary and this appointment was proposed, *seconded and duly elected on a show of hands.*

Treasurer – Janet Corbett had indicated she would be willing to take on the role of Treasurer and *this was proposed, seconded and duly elected on a show of hands.*

8. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

The Committee felt that, although not a legal requirement, it was important that the accounts were audited independently in order that our members were reassured the Friends' records were kept in good order. The Committee recommended that Chris Schroeder be appointed to carry out the 2025 audit of accounts. *This was proposed, seconded and approved on a show of hands.*

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A question was asked as to whether it would be more cost effective to send membership renewal reminders out by email but the Membership Secretary noted that many Members did not supply an email address. The Committee will take this suggestion forward and discuss the merits of an email renewal system.

The Maintenance Volunteers wanted to acknowledge and thank the Committee for their support in providing power tools which had proved to be very useful and this was much appreciated.

Signed

P. Hatton

Date

22 March 2026