



# Swanning Around

## A Look At What's Happening Around The Swanage Railway

Issue 106 – February 8<sup>th</sup> 2024

January for the Swanage Railway often means shutdown, with no trains. And so it is again this year, with track work at Swanage and engineering work at Norden to name just two reasons why trains cannot run.

However, we will be restarting public services from 10<sup>th</sup> February for Half Term week, followed closely by special events on Community Weekend. More details of that over the page.

Shutdown is a time for maintenance, and many examples are featured in this issue, including the Purbeck Mining Museum reception building.

Although we have a carriage cleaning facility near the shed, you can't beat a proper manual job! Volunteers cleaned the service stock at Swanage station in anticipation of the start of services.



Photo from Swanage Railway Facebook page.

Swanage Railway information can be found in many places online. Just Google "Swanage Railway" to find web sites and Facebook, XtwitterX, and YouTube locations.

Do it now!

## Community Weekend 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> February



**SWANAGE RAILWAY**

**Swanage Railway Community Weekend**  
17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Discounted Travel for all  
BH & DT Postcodes  
(Advanced tickets only, please bring proof of  
address for discounted travel when collecting  
tickets)

For more details and online  
booking visit  
[www.swanagerailway.co.uk](http://www.swanagerailway.co.uk)

- 08 Driver Experience
- Footplate Visits
- Signalbox Visits and Tours
- Guards Experience
- Ticket Inspector Experience
- Visit our Museums
- Learn more about volunteering
- Crane Demonstrations
- And much more...

Our Community Weekend is a different and interesting day out for all the family - a rare opportunity to see behind the scenes of a working heritage railway, explore some of the many different roles required to operate the Swanage Railway and find out about varied volunteering opportunities.

You will find more details of this event on the Swanage Railway web site at

<https://www.swanagerailway.co.uk/> and click on "Events and Experiences" to find details of how to book the experiences in the poster above.

**NOTE:** If you are resident in the Dorset postcodes BH (Bournemouth) and DT (Dorchester) you **must** book **in advance online** to obtain discounted travel tickets for the Community Weekend's train services. You must also provide proof of residence, driving licence or utility bill for example, when collecting your tickets at the railway.

Some of these experiences are chargeable, being a contribution to the railway's **Save Your Railway** campaign. You can, of course, make further contributions if you wish! Just sayin'!

The Save Your Railway campaign is ongoing, to ensure that sufficient cashflow is available to continue to operate without putting the directors/trustees of the Trust at personal liability for operating debts, as we have previously said in Swanning Around. The directors and trustees have been working flat out to put the railway on a satisfactory financial footing going forward. You can read about some of that in SITREP on the next page.



## SITREP Summary - February 2024

All working volunteers & staff should have access to Heritage Operations Processing System (HOPS). For access and other information please contact the SR HOPS Administrator Ben Dolman:

[ben.dolman@swanagerailway.co.uk](mailto:ben.dolman@swanagerailway.co.uk)

For SR Staff access, and to be added to the 'Volunteer Information' email group, please contact Peter Milford on [peter.milford@swanagerailway.co.uk](mailto:peter.milford@swanagerailway.co.uk)

SITREP is also posted on the Swanage Railway Trust website which provides members with information on the history of the modern Swanage Railway. Some areas require a password, which is available from [membership@swanagerailway.co.uk](mailto:membership@swanagerailway.co.uk) or by calling 01929 475202, leaving your name, membership number and contact number. Please note the office is not staffed daily.

**Welcome:** (from Trust Chairman Frank Roberts)

There may be no regular trains running, but many people are beavering away on the track, on engineering tasks, and at Norden Station dealing with a slip. In parallel there is considerable focus on our current financial situation, planning events to induce additional income and consolidating our position.

There was a monthly Board meeting at the end of January, closely followed by a Council of Management meeting where all twelve Trustees were present. It's been a very tough time of late, so I decided to go through some the better moments of the last few weeks, which I hope inspired one or two. I then asked the Trustees to highlight one of their better SR moments:

- +The success of the T3, which has been shortlisted for the Steam Railway HRA award.
- +Save Your Railway (SYR) passed the £100k milestone.
- +How the Railway has gathered around the Community Engagement Weekend.
- +The launch of Driver experience events, class 33 aspects and plans for Bulleid 2 weekend at the start of June.
- +“I'm staggered at how well things have gone of late” SYR being one aspect. The word proud was mentioned too....
- +Special Event planning, the Diesel Gala plans and the expected return of a 3TC this year!
- +A new boat, bus and train experience for 2024; more details to follow!
- +The Volunteer Recruitment & Retention Officer who is confident of hauling in 17 new recruits. In January!
- +A commendable 178,000 passenger carried in 2023; can we set a target of 200k for 2024?
- +Ah, and what did I mention? I mentioned that I had only been in my new role for three months, and its has been very intense, but my positives were:
- +The Save Your Railway with thanks to Ben Ford, and Nichola Watts supporting in the Finance office.

- +The Volunteer Delivery Group and Clare taking the lead for the Community Engagement weekend on 17+18 February.
- +The Financial Review Group and Neville's assistance with the Polar Express Review, Stuart's assistance seeking auditor support, and Paola's financial support in modelling the financial aspects of the Recovery Business Plan.
- +Stuart Palmer's lead in producing the Wareham Service report, considerations of options for the future.
- +SITREP!
- +Development Academy. Ongoing work to develop professional development training across the SR by Pete Duncalfe and Andy Hannaford.
- +Martin Sheret who has been pulling together the items sent into the Opportunities email address.
- +Key Performance Indicators which Will Sheret is developing to show us how to develop our business and monitor how we are doing.
- +All of the Special events Teams, now focusing on what we are planning for 2024!
- +The Social Media Team who are working hard to raise the profile of the Railway's NEW events.
- +And by no means least The Data Team; Robert Craine and James Forster who continue to develop an increasingly useful armour of facts and figures!

Underlying these fine aspects of the Swanage Railway is the crucial need to remain focused on one thing; the need to generate income on every single day that the railway operates.

Frustratingly we have not yet been able to finalise the Recovery Business Plan, it is 80% complete, and we hope to finish this imminently. I would like to thank all of you who are offering support and understanding at the moment, as we brace ourselves for the onset of Spring and the start of our 2024 operating season. Let's show all our visitors the railway at its best!

**The Swanage Railway Vision and Mission**

As we continue to develop the recovery plan it is important to reflect on what we are doing and why. To some this might seem obvious, however I thought it was worth reminding readers of our 'Vision' and 'Mission' statements agreed as part of the Swanage Railway Trust's Strategic Plan last year. As we continue to put the finishing touches onto plans for 2024 onwards, we will ensure that the whole railway works to deliver these more effectively. Expect to see more of these in the future!

<b>Our Vision</b>	<b><i>"To be a vibrant, volunteer led heritage railway attraction supporting the local economy"</i></b>	SRT Strategic Plan 2023
<b>Our Mission</b>	<b><i>"To ensure the preservation and safe operation of a heritage railway attraction that appeals to local residents, visitors to Purbeck, rail enthusiasts and volunteers, in order to be able to continually develop and bring economic benefit to the area".</i></b>	SRT Strategic Plan 2023

## From Lisa Gravett, Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Officer:

### Volunteer News

I've had such a lovely first 5 months in my new job here at Swanage Railway, the immense skills, knowledge and hard work of volunteers and staff never ceases to amaze me and the friendly welcome and help I've received from so many has been wonderful. It's been a very positive start to the new year with volunteer requests coming through, I've had eleven new enquiries already, six who have already been interviewed and ready for placement and the others coming for interviews soon. I attended the volunteer fair in Wareham on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January and spent a pleasant day talking to many people about the railway and volunteering, and fortunately had five people sign up to receive more information, so that's potentially 16 volunteers who will be joining us this year already. Let's hope this positive trend continues! I've also been contacting schools in the local area to find out if they are studying the Victorians and how the railway changed the local area, with a view to having guided educational visits in the future. I had some very positive responses from the schools I contacted and met with a couple of history leaders who explained how they were using the Victorian theme in their curriculum. After meeting with Heather Denning at Corfe Museum and looking at some of the wonderful artefacts held there, we were both excited at the possibilities for moving this forward and bringing the local community closer to the railway through educational visits. I am looking forward to the Community Open Days weekend on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of February. There will be a Volunteer Recruitment and Save Your Railway table at Swanage, Corfe and Norden. If anyone is available to help on those days to look after the tables, please do contact me at [lisa.gravett@swanagerailway.co.uk](mailto:lisa.gravett@swanagerailway.co.uk).

Here's Lisa on the Swanage Railway stand at the Wareham Volunteer Fair.

Photo from Lisa





Annual maintenance for steam locos includes the annual boiler inspections required for insurance.

Here we have fitter Rob Tuck in the cab of 34028 *Eddystone* replacing the steam chest pressure gauge which, along with other steam gauges, has been removed for calibration.

Once all the loco maintenance items have been completed, much with the help of volunteer staff, Ben Dolman prepares a warming fire in preparation for the inspection steam test.





On 6<sup>th</sup> February, a wisp of smoke from the chimney of U Class 31806 tells us that the loco is also being prepared for its annual inspection.

While back at the shed, the signal and telegraph department is busy trying to find some point rodding under the walkway boards in order to carry out adjustments and maintenance. Martin Dunn, Mike Southey and Fraser White are having to dig out the loco shed crud that has found its way around the bell cranks.



Other work at the shed has included refreshing the stone and concrete steps to improve safety. The original steps were in stone and with variable treads, and with wear and tear were becoming a safety issue.



Above, steps up to the bothy, and below, steps up to the coal stack.







Also at the shed, one of the coal elevators was supplied from a large hopper which is now life expired and looking like a colander, so will be removed, along with the elevator, and in its place a new retaining wall for the coal stack has been built.





Work continues apace on the 4TC brake coach 70824 on the jacks at Swanage. If you read SITREP on page 3, you may have noticed the bit about the expected return of a 3TC (that's a 3-car version!) this year. How and when this will be achieved we will wait and see.

In the meantime, we have found Kevin Hare hard at work on 6<sup>th</sup> February cleaning the brake end bogie ready for painting. He has already painted and fitted the battery box lids.





In a previous issue of *Swanning Around*, you will have seen Permanent Way Manager Ken Orchard sizing up the job at Swanage station, and here he is on 12<sup>th</sup> January, with some of the P'Way gang, doing the job.

Apart from further maintenance work on the track at the station, the major job was replacing the crossing timbers under the points at the seaward end of platform 2. Health and Safety manager Andy Haddon has come out to see how it's done—safely of course!



In recent times of variable weather, many railways, both heritage and mainline, have suffered embankment slips of some gravity, but Swanage has, touch wood, not been seriously affected.

There is a slip, however, behind the station building at Norden where the embankment up to the Purbeck Mining Museum demonstration track is trying to push its way into the refreshment kiosk.

Estates manager Pat Cattle has organised a team and materials to install a new sleeper wall to arrest the movement.

Read his work summary on the next page.

How to get machinery and materials to the platform? Use the cranes! Here's the mini-digger getting a flying lesson !

And here's where the slippage is, behind the station building. The previous barrier was no match for all that clay! This is the 'before'. Move on a couple of pages to see the 'after'.



Photos from Pat Cattle



Here's a summary of what they've been doing from Estates Department manager Pat Cattle:

*Firstly we removed the lamp post and the existing fence then the sleepers that were behind. We dug into the bank to remove the area that had slipped and in total removed around 40 tonnes of spoil that was transferred to the other side of the track behind the crane sidings to fill in a large hole.*

*Once all spoil and remaining sleeper wall was removed we concreted old rails into the ground to a depth of around 1200mm and then we formed new retaining walls using old concrete sleepers. We then backfilled with old used ballast and then graded the remaining bank down into the back of the new walls and in the spring we will re-seed the affected area.*

*We then refitted the old lamppost to a slightly new location to allow good access to the new area alongside and round the back of the building which in the future can be put to good use.*

*While we had the equipment available and on site we prepped the old picnic area ready for new recycled plastic steps we are making and also we are supplying two new octagonal picnic benches also made from recycled plastic all supplied by local firm Plastic Matters.*

*We also dug a number of trenches for the Purbeck Mining Museum so they could have a new duct put in for telecoms/data cabling and also water supply.*

*Special thanks should go to Adam Wylie from AJS Developments who kindly let us borrow a mini digger and dumper and also to local groundwork contractor Rob Smith who came and augured out the holes for the rails to be concreted into and also to Keith Bowers who came in on days he usually wouldn't so he could help by driving cranes FBC1 and FBC2.*

*This was a joint effort between both Estates and the PWay departments, with Telecomms on hand to install cable trunking.*

*Any costs associated with this work were covered by the 200 Club.*

On which subject, if you are a member of the Swanage Railway Trust you can also be in the 200 Club. The club funds many smaller projects, so is a very useful source of funding for the railway. Just about 50 pence a week will cover one entry in the monthly draw. Not only are you giving yourself a chance for cash prizes, you are also helping the railway, particularly at this time .

Our 200 Club has supported dozens of projects on the Railway for many decades, varying in size from signal boxes to hand tools used to complete a specialised job. Your support is just as important now, so please consider joining the Club, and joining the Trust if you are not already a member, realising the opportunity of being a winner in the monthly prize draw. (Usually six cash winners each month) Further information:

[Peter Parascandolo - 200club@swanagerailway.co.uk](mailto:200club@swanagerailway.co.uk)

Or [here](#) to find out about becoming a member of the Swanage Railway.



Here's a similar pic to the one two pages ago. This is the first 'after'. Compare this to the 'before' picture.

When the sleeper walls were completed they were backfilled with spent track ballast.

Photos from Pat Cattle





And Billy Johnson then graded the embankment with the digger.

While they had a digger on site, the opportunity was taken to dig trenches for water and telecoms services to the Purbeck Mining Museum (PMM).

Here, Telecomms department is installing the cable trunking in to the trench, alongside the PMM running line.



## Purbeck Mining Museum

From Peter Sills:

The only time we have to work on the fabric of the museum is when we are closed to the public, so this winter's tasks have included repairing the original Victorian wooden Foreman's office from Norden Clay Works.

With conservation very much in mind a temporary scaffold with weatherproof roof and transparent sides has allowed two PMM volunteers, Phil Ashworth and Stewart Fothergill to safely access the whole building from an eaves height walkway. The original roof was beginning to fail in places, but it has now been repaired with identical heritage material (corrugated tin) and treated with a traditional bitumastic paint.

The outside will be freshened up with a new coat of Fayles grey paint with the windows picked out in white, new weather and security shutters have been made and fitted by Nigel Cox and Derrick the carpenter.

The inside floor still needs some attention and an easy access ramp is planned for the front. In their spare time Phil & Stew have also repaired one of the outside seats around the museum and have built a small carpentry workshop and store under the main transshipment building.







You may remember that this is what the office looks like under the scaffolding.

And this is what the working conditions are like inside the tin tent! So much better than trying to work outside in the wind and rain we've had recently.

these photos from Peter Sills



As usual, volunteers are required in all departments, so,

To use your existing skills or to learn new ones, contact us about being a Swanage Railway volunteer by either sending an email to [iwanttovolunteer@swanagerailway.co.uk](mailto:iwanttovolunteer@swanagerailway.co.uk) or by calling 01929 475212 to contact Lisa Gravett, our Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Officer.

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If you are not a member of the Swanage Railway, don't be put off! Contact us and volunteer (or at least make an enquiry)! You know you want to! You will be most welcome!

-----ooOoo-----

Compiled and edited by John Denison

Email to [swanning.around@swanagerailway.co.uk](mailto:swanning.around@swanagerailway.co.uk)

Swanning Around also appears on line at:

<http://www.srstaff.co.uk/swanningaround> (not password protected)

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