



Swanning Around

A Look At What's Happening Around The Swanage Railway

Issue 63 – June 17th 2020



The above doesn't seem to apply to those recently visiting Dorset beaches, or to some who are now able to go shopping, but it still applies at the Swanage Railway!

In spite of recent relaxations in advice from the Government, resumption of volunteer activity at the Swanage Railway is still strictly controlled. You will see in this issue that volunteers have been out and about over the last week or so, but that is not the green light for everybody. Do not turn up on spec. You can only volunteer at present under management control. Contact your line manager for details.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any heritage railway, but the organisation doesn't survive without income. There's plenty in this issue about the fundraising required to keep us from going under.

There's so much stuff to report for this issue that it's difficult to know where to start!

So let's start with the important stuff—money! You may wonder why we are still asking for donations when controls with respect to Covid-19 are being relaxed? The numbers are quite simple. Even though there appears to be little expense as we are not running trains, there are still monthly commitments of around £46,000. Sounds like a lot of money? Not when you consider that when the railway is operating normally, turnover is in excess of £3,000,000 per annum, and normal expenditure is not far behind!

The railway's management has been liaising with suppliers and creditors to do everything possible to minimise outgoings at this difficult time, but there are still bills to be paid!

Right now, we have no commercial operations to provide cash flow, no turnover, and nothing to sustain the railway through the lean times in the winter into the next operating season in 2021. So your continuing contributions are vital to our survival. Even when we start restricted services (see later), we are hardly going to make any money.

How can you help?

First of all, have a look at the Swanage Railway's latest two **Save-Our-Service** videos, presented by our volunteer fireman (and budding film star!) Josh Voce. These have been excellently produced with the help of a professional at no cost to the railway, and have been praised already by other viewers in the heritage world. They're good!

Then you can donate by visiting www.saveourservice.co.uk for PayPal and www.swanagerailwaytrust.org/giving for details about bank transfers and cheques along with Gift Aid that can further boost your donation by 25%.

You can also donate by **texting 'SOS' to 70470** to donate £10. This costs £10 plus a standard rate message charge. Alternatively, you can choose to give any whole amount between £1 and £20. E.g. texting 'SOS 4' = £4 plus a standard rate message.

Check out these videos on Facebook at :

<https://www.facebook.com/swanagerailway/videos/898172407262179/>

<https://www.facebook.com/swanagerailway/videos/2527374390912055/UzpfSTE0ODk0MzEzOTE6MTAyMTcxMDc3MDcxMTMzNTk/>

or on the Swanage Railway YouTube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgXKPljQDGM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V878LIFk0dg>

As of Tuesday 16th June, the running total is **£211,284.46**

However you have chosen or will choose to donate, it's a big THANK YOU from us!

Let's have a picture.

Did you wonder how the management has managed to manage during this Coronavirus crisis? So did we, but trustee Stuart Magnus has shown us how.

Here's his picture of a Council of Management meeting carried out over Zoom. Should have had shares in that company!



We're all grateful for the work they do, especially now, in a crisis which sorts out the achievers from the also-rans, and we are seeing the results of their work in the contents of these pages.

Back on the subject of money, the total raised so far has passed the halfway mark of the target sum, but we have to remember that only the best of optimists would believe that the target sum would see us through to Easter 2021, when we may hope to start making some surplus funds. We almost certainly need more, so don't stop donating!

Gavin Johns, now chairman of both Swanage Railway Trust and Company, has issued a Staff Briefing on 12th June, amongst which is a tentative plan to start heavily restricted services in mid-July. This will, of course, depend on such things as Government guidance and a confirmation of a satisfactory business case, and management is working to produce the procedures to be adopted. It has already been established that we are able to prepare to restart operations and that sufficient volunteers will be available to work.

Before everybody starts making plans to descend on Swanage, the proposal for this service is that it will be strictly controlled within requirements to support social distancing, which means all services will be online pre-booking only, and will be similar to Santa trains with limited entry to and exit from trains, and no access to intermediate stations. Train capacity will be around 18-20% of normal. Risk assessment is ongoing.

Staffing will also be strictly controlled. Safety of both staff and travelling public is paramount.

Look out for further announcements.

Publicity has been key to getting the message out there that we need help, and here's Gavin getting himself on telly with BBC South Today on 5th June. Looks dangerously close to the edge of the turntable pit, but the lens has foreshortened the picture. They really are obeying the two-metre rule!



Picture : Andrew P M Wright

Also getting themselves on South Today are John and Julie Trott. Apart from looking after the garden on the embankment at Swanage, seen here, John is the train manager for the Wessex Belle dining train, and Julie is part of the catering staff on the train.

Picture: Andrew P M Wright



When you want local people on your side, get them on your publicity video!

Our latest video, 'Standing Together', includes some local dignitaries, not least our MP Richard Drax, seen here being interviewed at Corfe Castle station by video presenter Josh Voce.

Picture: Gavin Johns



Relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions has permitted the railway to allow volunteers on site in the first weeks of June, under controlled conditions, to carry out works essential for continued maintenance in support of resumption of services.

All these functions have been risk assessed before allowing the volunteers on site. Volunteers cannot just turn up. All these volunteer functions are under strict management control.

Here's a picture by Andrew P M Wright of Swanning Around's editor looking rushed off his feet in Corfe Castle signal box on 10th June. The box was open to facilitate some rolling stock moves and to allow Signal and Telegraph technicians to check everything was working properly. They had plenty to do!



The next day, 11th June, and some volunteers are out with the Permanent Way gang, greasing fishplates on the track between Townsend and Afflington bridges.



Permanent staff Billy Johnson, left, and Barry Light, with the white hat, are seen with volunteers, left to right, driver Pete Doel, regular PWay volunteers Chris Laidlaw and Anton Keep, and fireman Gary Cox behind the camera, who provided this picture.



Rolling stock moves in progress at Harmans Cross on 10th June, with driver Peter Frost, Guard Steve Jenkins, and shunter Josh Voce.

The weather has been just right for plant growth recently, so Corfe Castle station Manager David Scott has been out with the weed killer.

Both pictures by Andrew P M Wright





Mine's bigger than yours! Barry Light in Big Daddy with a flail passes Sarah Bamber under all that ppe giving the lineside grass a haircut. The flail has been doing a great job along the railway, but the trimmer is kinder to signal wires, eh, Barry?

Here's Barry again, with Billy Johnson in the cab, on a care and maintenance run. Nice picture of the castle!

Both pictures by Andrew P M Wright





Painting and repair work on Harmans Cross signal box has resumed, with Dave Taylor and Brian Crouch outside with the paint, while, below, carpenter John Piper is re-purposing the old church pews from the ladies waiting room at Corfe Castle to provide timber for the woodwork repairs for the box, and for Norden ticket office.

Both pictures: Andrew P M Wright





Norden ticket office is getting a makeover, with Phil Minshall painting the building, and David Budd and Stuart Magnus preparing the door.

The interior of Swanage signal box gets some polishing attention from Trevor Parsons.

Both pictures: Andrew P M Wright





In Swanage signal box, S & T technician Fraser White carries out a maintenance examination of the Tyers No. 6 single line tablet instrument. These types of machine are over 100 years old and still going strong, from back when things were built to last!

Meanwhile, S & T volunteers Richard Williamson and Nick Rutt are checking the operation of the Swanage-end points at Harmans Cross with the help of the signalman.

Both pictures: Andrew P M Wright



Another welcome source of income has come in the form of supporting overnight testing of the new South Western Railway class 701 Aventra trains manufactured by Bombardier at Derby. Swanage Railway is providing track access to the Swanage line and support staff, and is receiving a commercial fee for doing so.

At the beginning and end of each week, the train uses the Swanage line to allow Bombardier engineers to attend to preparation work at ground level that would not be appropriate on a 3rd rail electrified line, especially in the dark!

The train to be tested was brought to Wareham on the night of 14th June by GB Railfreight. Swanage Railway conductor driver Peter Frost is seen talking to the Corfe Castle signalman to obtain the single line token for access to the Swanage line, and ready to board the leading class 66 loco, wearing appropriate Covid-19 ppe.





The train was attended to just south of Holme Lane bridge, above, and was observed arriving on our line on the Corfe Castle signal box track diagram, as the track circuits lit up. A rare event for the signal box to see action in the early hours of the morning!

Picture above: Andrew P M Wright





This is what the 10-car Aventra no. 701 002 looked like on Sunday night the 14th June at Wareham station.

Want to see what it looks like in daylight? There are numerous videos on YouTube. Try this one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAEhAINb4s4>

This was when it was being towed from Derby to Eastleigh on 10th June.

Even at 2 in the morning the enthusiasts were there!

Both pictures: Andrew P M Wright



In issue 62, we said that covers for the exposed fixings for the carriage shed project were being made somewhere off site.

Graham Taylor made 37 covers in his garage, and on 1st June, in some particularly warm weather, he and Nick Coram fitted them.

Picture from Graham Taylor



And this is what they looked like when Billy Johnson drove past on a track and security inspection.

picture: Andrew P M Wright



Another opportunity to help the railway!

From Randy Coldham, Trustee and Fundraising



Athelhampton House have kindly agreed that, for the forthcoming week 14th-20th June, they will donate the proceeds of the first 1000 tickets to our SOS Appeal. Only the gardens are open with the house, shop and restaurants closed. To visit the gardens you can only do so by booking on line at:

www.athelhampton.com/onlineticket

Have a couple of hours in a beautiful garden and at the same time help the Swanage Railway.

The house is just off the A35 near Puddletown.

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From Clive Hardy, we have the long service badge awards for July:

Nathan Au - Passed Fireman - 10 years - 1st July 2020

Oscar Martin - Driver - 20 years - 18th July 2020

Jim Wheeler - Permanent Way - 5 years - 1st July 2020

Clive has also been busy providing an analysis of the results from the Survey Monkey questionnaire for volunteers mentioned in issue 62. The next three pages are quite interesting if you like statistics!

It also highlights why there is always a shortage of volunteers, when you see the age range most of them are in!

C-19 Survey Monkey. First impressions.

The first thing to say is that the response has been excellent, with over 350 active volunteers (and some 20 inactive ones) answering the survey and so providing much very useful information for SR.

Below are a few snippets from the results which may be of interest.

The answers to question one confirmed that the top five postcodes for SR volunteers remain, in descending order are :-

BH19 – Swanage

BH20 – Wareham

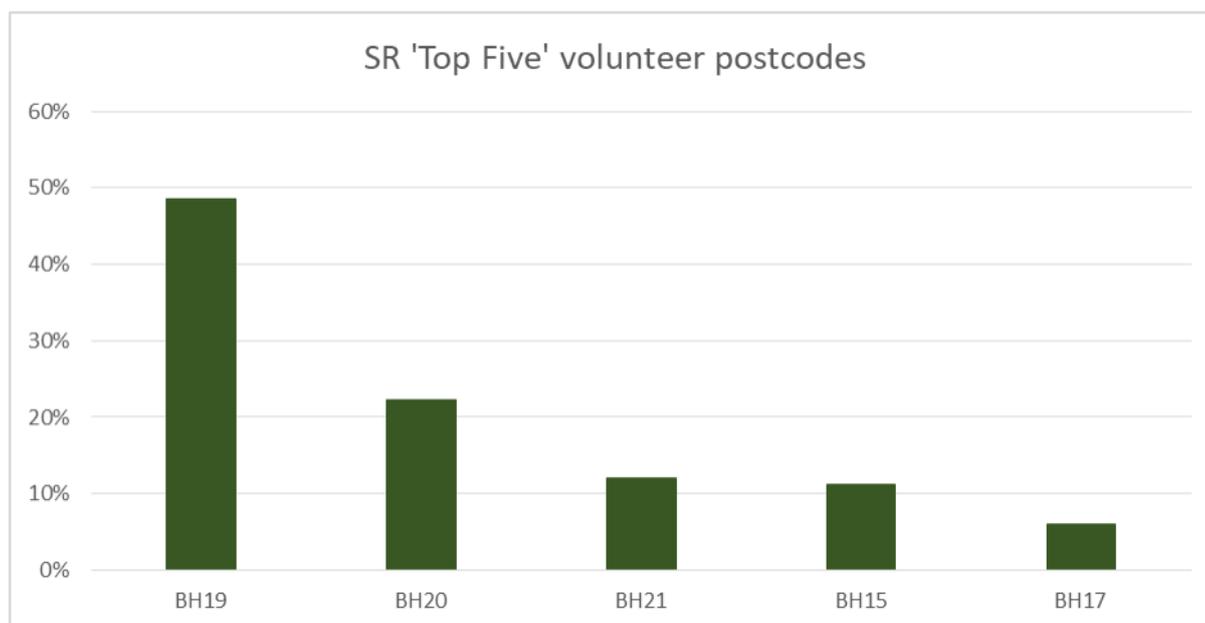
BH21 - Wimborne

BH15 – Poole town,

and

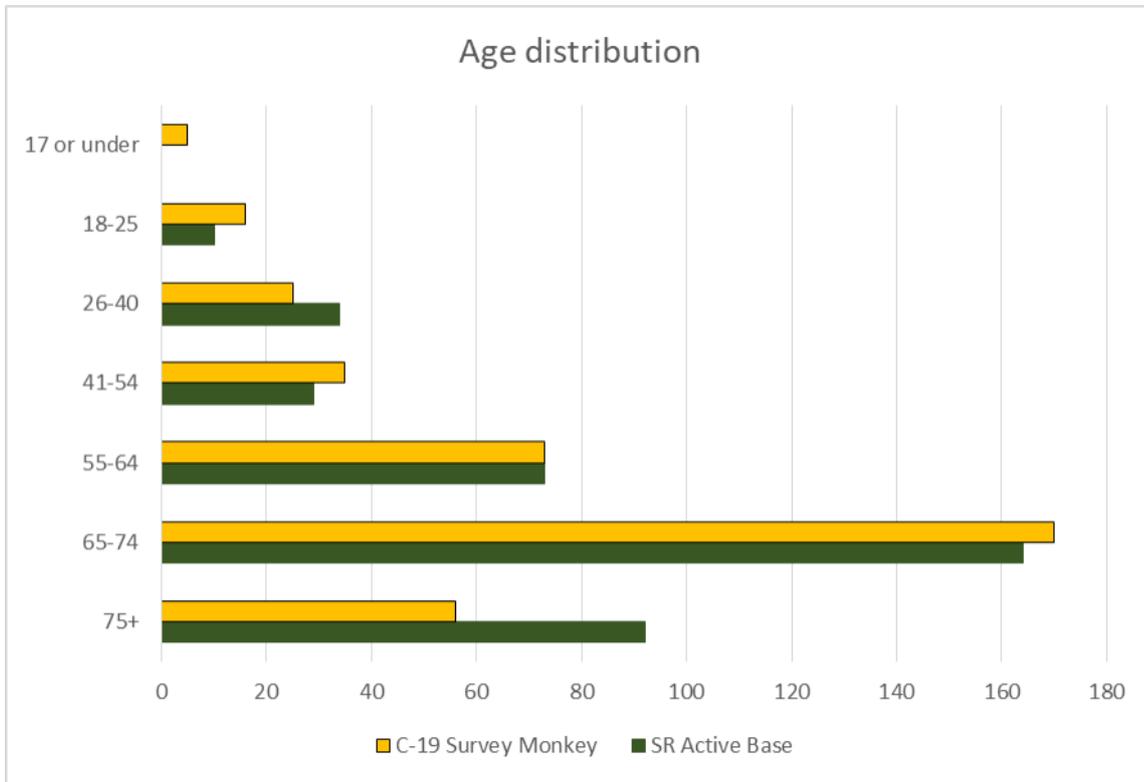
BH17 – Canford Heath / Creekmoor,

with those five being home to 46% of volunteers.



Question two was about ages, and there was a very close match between the survey numbers, and those supplied previously by volunteers.

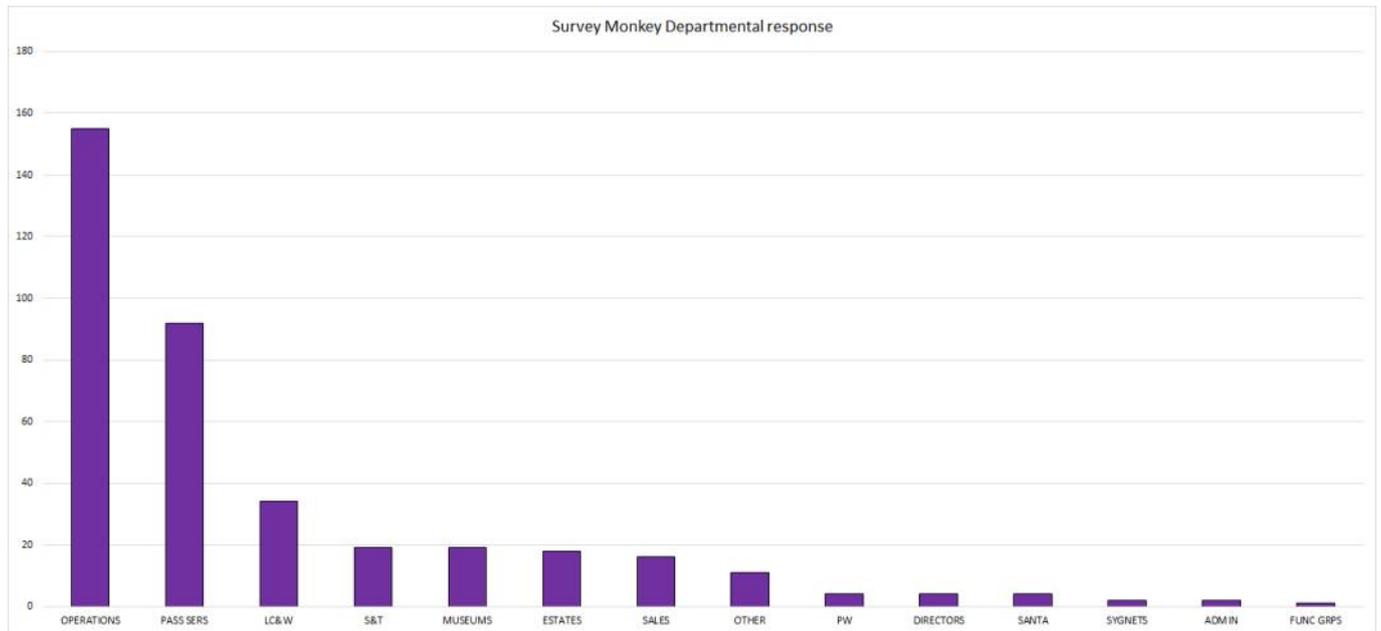
The orange line shows the numbers in each age group as reported to Survey Monkey, and the green line the ages reported by apparently active SR volunteers via the Volunteer Information form and other routes.



That the Survey Monkey numbers are higher in some cases can be explained in large part by the 2020 operating season being cut short, and not everyone who might have become active in Operations and Passenger Services by now being included in those SR numbers. But also, SR doesn't yet have age data for all volunteers.

The much lower 75+ age group number from Survey Monkey perhaps points to a lower level of IT engagement by that age group, and that some have recently called time on their volunteering for SR. The under 18s are not included in SR's active volunteer figures.

As for the departmental response, that was also broadly in line with volunteer activity, with both Operations and Passenger Services returning results at a level very similar to annually expected rostering levels. Taking these survey return levels and rostering rates into account and applying them across the whole volunteer base produces an active volunteer figure for all of SR somewhere in the low 400s, which is consistent with other current estimates.



It is most encouraging to see that so many volunteers have responded to the survey. With the results from other parts of the survey SR has a lot of very useful information to work with. On the subject of returning to volunteering, most people are happy to return as long as it is within government guidelines, and if SR provides any PPE that is required.

And if their usual volunteering activity isn't available, the alternative voted most popular by volunteers was trackside vegetation control, followed by painting. So potentially plenty of hands available to keep the place looking tidy!

Very few think the railway should stay closed until it is all over, so it seems that the rules on social distancing will be a significant guide to any decisions to re-open, but most people will know that already.

Clive Hardy

clive.hardy@swanagerailway.co.uk

About the questionnaire,

Gavin Johns, Chairman, writes:

The overall conclusions are that there is a good volume of volunteers prepared to operate this summer but regulations to distance and protect staff and customers must be achieved.

Further points;

- *response rate 384/645*
- *63% in 55-74 age*
- *good cross section of all operating grades*
- *65% want to volunteer in their normal role but 55% will work in other areas if required*
- *71% happy to start asap provided guidelines applied*
- *majority expect regulations to be applied especially social distancing*
- *tendency to be concerned at catching coronavirus - but not so that it deters from volunteering*
- *majority think railway should re-open*
- *moderate concerns about mixing with the public*
- *a significant majority think that communications have been good.*

Not surprisingly many willing to do other jobs want to work out of doors - lots identifying a willingness to join the Light brigade on the track.

Seems that the survey has been particularly useful for helping management to assess our ability to restart services in the near future.

Don't forget, though, that attendance at the Swanage Railway, for both public and staff/volunteers, will be strictly controlled in accordance with the appropriate Government guidelines in force at the time.

Volunteers should read the volunteer updates and staff briefing notes for information and guidance.

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

If you fancy volunteering for something, or need more info about a project, department, or anything else on the railway, then contact **Volunteer Liaison Officer Mike Whitwam** on

iwanttovolunteer@swanagerailway.co.uk

or the volunteer contact phone number

01929-475212, where you can leave a message.

You will get a prompt response.

NOTE: All new volunteers MUST go through Mike Whitwam for induction and registration before they can start on the railway.

-----ooOoo-----

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

swanning.around@swanagerailway.co.uk

Views expressed in 'Swanning Around' are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily the views of the Swanage Railway Trust or the Swanage Railway Company. No liability accepted for errors or inaccuracies.

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Swanning Around also appears on line at:

<http://www.srstaff.co.uk/swanningaround>

and

<http://swanagerailway.co.uk/volunteers-diary>