



Swanning Around

A Look At What's Happening Around The Swanage Railway

Issue 83 – February 28th 2022

February means schools half term, and , as usual, Swanage Railway's 2022 season starts here.

To help with the services, former Great Western Railway 'small prairie' 2-6-2T has been hired in from the South Devon Railway. With Covid restrictions being largely lifted countrywide, passenger safety is still uppermost as we welcome our visitors.

Local enthusiast and photographer Gary Packer was on hand to record the first steam departure of the year as 5526 starts the first train from Swanage on 19th February.



Locomotives designed for the Great Western Railway tend to be slightly wider than those from other regions. Perhaps they had more room than other railways, or was it just that size matters?! Whatever the reason, whenever we have a Great Western visitor, particularly with outside cylinders, it is prudent to ensure they fit our railway and we don't damage the sticking out bits.

5526 was brought up to our unloading point already hot on the lorry on 16th February, so some time was spent at Norden raising steam, lubricating, and carrying out fitness to run checks . The loco was then run under its own power, checking clearances at all platforms on the way to Swanage.

As the loco is driven carefully through Corfe Castle station, Operations Manager Ashley Haines and Chief Traction Inspector (and GWR fan!) Nigel Clark check the clearances.

Photo: Andrew P M Wright



Clearances all good, so signalman Malcolm Munro makes ready to hand over the token for the loco to proceed to Harmans Cross for more checks.



All was not perfect, however, as 5526 had to be withdrawn for a couple of days to replace a broken spring. With the high standard of our permanent way these days, broken springs are a rarity, so this one was probably on its way out before it got here!

Here we are at Harmans Cross on 21st February. Driver Paul McDonald in 'Crompton' 33 111 has been inspecting the line after a visit from Storm Franklin, and waits to return to Swanage while the first service train of the day enters with 257 Squadron deputising for 5526.



The shutdown period between the new year and the February half term is a great time for the Estates team to be out and about, and the reasonable weather for this time of year has permitted them to do a lot of outside work.

Here are the members the regular Tuesday and Thursday gang, looking pleased with themselves, who have been repairing and repainting Norden station building, John Redwood, David Budd and Andy Shepherd, and they have been supplemented by Brian Crouch, Phil Minshall, Mel Smith and David Taylor.

Picture provided by David Budd



And the electricians have also been busy at Norden attending to the lighting.



Here's some good news for men at Corfe Castle. Not too interesting for the ladies as it's about the Gent's Toilet!

After being out of use for a year or two due to some vandalism, repairs have been completed and redecoration carried out by Estates.

Work is in progress on the décor by Phil Minshall on 4th February, and you can see that he's had plenty to do.



And here's the result. Nice and fresh to look at, and almost back to 1885 if it weren't for the additional essential modern electrical items. Notices for adjusting one's dress are from a different era,aren't they?



In issue 82, the 4TC group had most of the TC coaches in the platform at Swanage to cover the unrestored vehicles to keep the weather out whilst stored at Harmans Cross sidings.

This task was completed whilst trains were not running, and this is what they look like now.

Don't forget, you can help to see these vehicles, once used exclusively on London Waterloo to Bournemouth and Weymouth mainline services before electrification reached Weymouth, in use on the Swanage Railway by visiting the appeals page of the Swanage Railway web site at

<https://www.swanagerailwaytrust.org/giving>



Photo: 4TC Group



There was signalman's Mutual Improvement Class at Harmans Cross village hall on March 6th. Amongst the agenda items were a presentation of HOPS by Jonathan Evans, above, a summary of rule changes in the new rule book from Andrew Hext, below, and a role play exercise led by Robin White highlighting the importance of proper communication in railway activity.

HOPS, or **H**eritage **O**perations **P**rocessing **S**ystem, is an administration and management tool associated with operating functions such as rostering, competency management, and document control. People who volunteer at some other heritage railways will already be familiar with this system, but this is a new thing for Swanage Railway.

The role play was based on the communications (or not!) recorded for a 1989 accident at Holton Heath, just a few miles from the Swanage Railway.



As we saw last time, Signal and Telegraph department is always busy making improvements to signalling systems, and here they are again at Norden Crossing on 21st February. This time they are making improvements to help the crossing keeper understand what's going on when nothing seems to be happening after a button has been pushed!

Signalman Roger Pleasant is in the crossing keeper's cabin using some old-fashioned communication techniques to indicate instrument status to S&T technician Michael Paul in the relay room, while technician Mike Southey makes changes inside the room that should show up in the cabin.





Ahead of the new visitor season, changes are being made to the museum visitor experience in the Corfe Castle goods shed. What was the ticket printer room will now house a reception area and the Goebel machine will be on display for closer viewing. Sadly, the printer is unlikely to see use again, as card material stocks are now unobtainable. Swanning Around had a short article about this interesting machine in issue 9, [here](#).

Here's museum volunteer Roger Denning using carpentry skills with saw and hammer to make changes to the entrance doorway on 9th February.

Meanwhile, Heather Denning was smartening up some exhibit framing.

All this work being done to enhance the visitor experience on the museum side of the Swanage Railway, activities not in the front line of the railway, but an essential contributor to the railway's educational ethos.



Down on bridge 4 over the River Frome, some of the waybeam timbers are not looking too pretty!



The new beams are checked for size and fit before making up into a two-beam panel.

These photos from P'Way



And the new waybeam panel is lowered in by Billy Johnson in Little Sis.



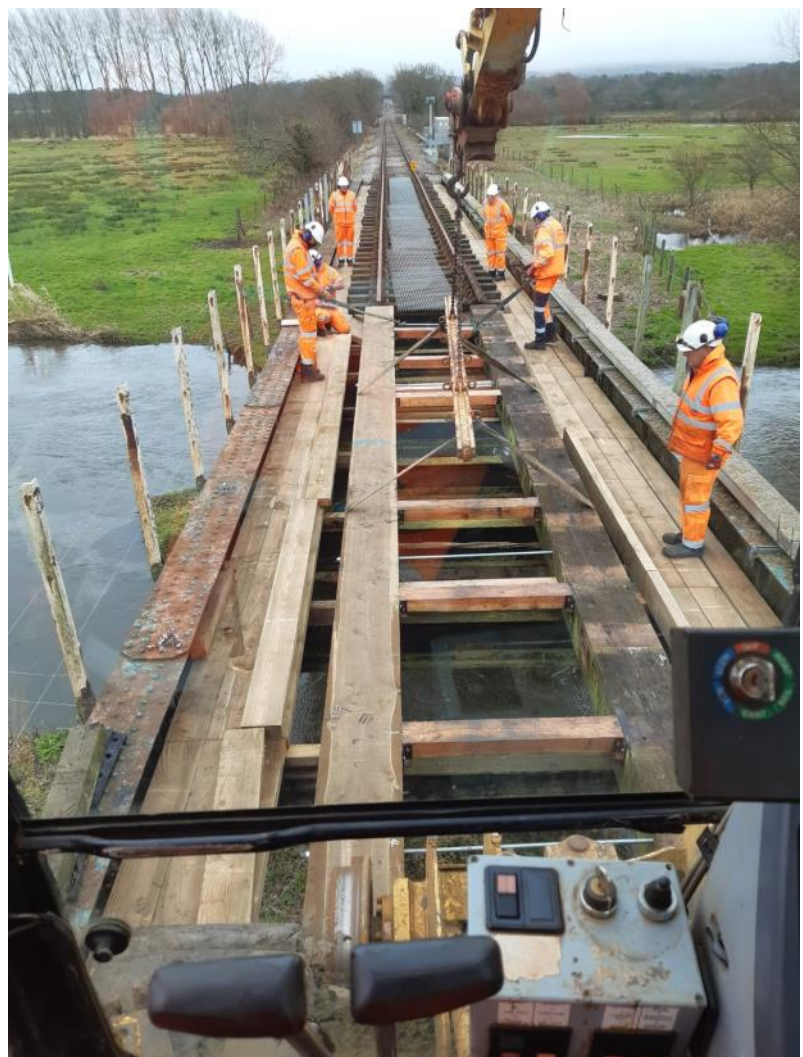
Photo: Andrew P M Wright

And here's the view from inside the cab.

Another panel with one new beam and one original is lowered into place on the steel bridge beams.

Surprisingly, (is that a real word?) water levels are still within the river banks, almost unusual for this time of year. Global warming, perhaps?

Photo from P'Way



Although Little Sis has been busy at bridge 4, she was feeling a bit lonely recently, but not for long!

Her workmate, Big Daddy, the Permanent Way department's wheeled road/rail machine, departed for a new life at the Gloucester Warwickshire Steam Railway.

Soon after, the replacement more modern Komatsu 160 was noted at Norden on 16th February.

Has it got a name, yet, Barry?



Photo: Barry Light





The weekend wagon menders, led by Jeremy Weller are usually to be found in the back of Swanage goods shed working on a goods brake van, with occasional outings to work on the Sygnets van doors at Corfe Castle. Jeremy and Doug Chick were recently spotted outside in daylight assessing their soon-to-be-latest project, a 1936 Southern Railway box van S48367. We look forward to seeing the current goods brake project in Swanning Around soon.

While, inside the goods shed, carriage and wagon fitters Alan English and Will Rudge inspect a water tank normally out of view in a carriage roof.



Photo: Andrew P M Wright

This tank would normally be in the roof of the brake coach from the Wessex Belle dining train set, which is having a spruce up inside the goods shed.



A short note about *Manston* this time. Progress at Herston works is ongoing and we hope to have more info on what's happening in the works next time. In the meantime, volunteer signalman and Southern Locos volunteer Stuart Magnus has sent this picture of himself standing where *Manston's* chimney should be, preparing and repairing damaged paintwork on top of the smokebox. It is intended that the loco will return to service not with a new paint job, but with a "previously enjoyed" finish!



Work has been progressing at Corfe diesel depot on the single coach 'bubble car' DMU W55028 after its engine change, and it had its first successful outing on Friday crew training runs on 4th February, seen here at Corfe Castle leading the three car class 117 unit. All four cars working!



How's the class 33 D6515 getting on at Eastleigh Works? This picture from Dan Bennett shows you! But there's still a lot of internal fitting to finish, and a bill or two to pay! Remember, you can help out by going to the 71A web site at http://www.71alocogroup.co.uk/71A_donate.htm . More pictures and news there also.



More news from the T3 class 4-4-0 no. 563 group.

Publicity is key to getting support for projects, and the 563 group has been doing a lot of it recently.

Not only has there been a several-page article in the new heritage railway magazine “Trackside”, as we commented on in the previous issue of Swanning Around, but group chairman Nathan Au has also been interviewed on local BBC Radio Solent! He likes putting himself about!

To add to this the group has also been on the Railway Mania Podcast on YouTube. Well worth seeing and you can view it at <https://youtu.be/kqt12JxxW9k>.

The tender appeal is doing well and is close to its target, but you can still help with the funding of this project by going to <https://www.swanagerailwaytrust.org/t3-appeal>

Your financial help will support the push to get this loco working on the Swanage Railway in 2023. Be part of it!

There will be more action news from the tender in the next Swanning Around.





Photo: Andrew P M Wright

To finish off this issue, another couple of pictures featuring the Great Western visitor, 5526, on a very pleasant storm-free 25th February.

Above, recently qualified signalman Aidan Wright has exchanged single line tokens with driver Steve Barker. Normally on our blue timetable with only one train running, Harmans Cross signal box would not be open, but is opening to allow signalmen and signalwomen or signalpersons or signallers, etc. to exercise learned skills and maintain competency.

It's rare to see a view through the cutting below Corfe Castle, so here's a good one from our official photographer Andrew P M Wright. He gets everywhere!



Photo: Andrew P M Wright

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 or by calling 01929 408466 to contact Jonathan Evans, 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!

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