



Swanning Around

A Look At What's Happening Around The Swanage Railway

Issue 94 – January 30th 2023

Happy New Year, everyone!

Let's hope it stays that way, as we know that 2023 is going to be a tough year for everyone, and certainly for most heritage-based railways, ours included. Swanage Railway managers have the unenviable task of matching our product to the expected demand, without being able to fully predict what that demand is likely to be! Perhaps we will see some changes to the product which will, in themselves, attempt to generate additional interest from the paying public. A hugely difficult job when the paying public's personal budgets are so restricted by the present financial situation.

That doesn't mean that we can save money by not spending it. January is usually the time of year when little or no money comes from the fare box, but there is plenty to spend during an infrastructure down time, and this month is no different. There has been plenty of activity for our Permanent Way department (P'Way), at Swanage, as many watchers of the web cam on the signal box will have witnessed. There's plenty of that in this issue, plus the trains that we have run since Christmas, and much more. There's also been plenty going on that doesn't appear in this issue, so keep looking in future issues for some more interesting stuff.

So let's start with the post-Christmas service which, this time, was provided by the class 117/121 diesel multiple unit combination which was variable owing to the need to replace a gearbox oil seal on one power unit. Some days had the 121 unit leading from Swanage, and some other days had it on the other end. We like to vary the offering to give the enthusiasts something to talk about! Benefits for the railway and the customer included lower operating cost, better view of the Purbeck countryside, and an opportunity to give the units some exercise while they are waiting for a starring role in the next trial service to Wareham. On which subject, don't ask what's happening there. Swanning Around (SA) doesn't have that information, but we are hopeful of being able to offer an update in the next issue.

Here's the train, dubbed 'Winter Explorer', arriving at Swanage on 29th December 2022 with the class 121 single car unit leading.

Photo: Andrew P M Wright



Here we have a confession to make. In the previous issue we lied! Yes, what an admission! We had an item about our retiring signalling inspector Alan Greatbatch that simply wasn't true. No! It wasn't his last shift as a Swanage Railway signalman, only his last in Swanage box.

As witnessed in this picture, his last shift was at Corfe Castle in the rain on 31st December. Here he is in verbal exchange with driver Peter Frost in the 121 unit running solo, after exchanging single line tokens. Those of you with a magnifying glass may be able to spot guard Aidan Wright hanging out of his door at the back!



And here he is communicating with the Swanage signalman through the Tyers No. 6 single line tablet instrument. Along with the Tyers electric key token instrument alongside, this is part of how safety is incorporated into single line railway signalling.

Both photos: Andrew P M Wright





It's the volunteers who make this railway run, and here we have trainee guard Steve Dadd, above, and driver Tim Reynolds below, on 29th December doing their bit for the 'Winter Explorer'

Both photos: Andrew P M Wright



Recently, the Swanage Railway loco fitters were suggesting that some volunteers might like to help them on weekdays.

So, what characteristics do you need?

As demonstrated by fitter Ethan Waller (right), the ability to squeeze through very small access points.

Like fitter Chris Birmingham, you need not be concerned about working at height if you have long legs!



Both photos borrowed from Facebook

Seriously though, you don't need to be quite this extraordinary to help the fitters maintain our fleet. Why not get in touch if you are interested.

And Josh Webb demonstrates that claustrophobia will not get you a place on SA's page 3! What on earth is he doing in the ashpan, underneath the firebox grate, apart from getting very dirty?

Photo from Josh Webb



Another unsung activity after Christmas was the decommissioning of the Train of Lights by the lighting supplier assisted by Swanage Railway staff, seen here removing the lighting nets from the carriage roofs at Corfe Castle on 3rd January.





On the 7th/8th January, just to help lift the post-Christmas blues, a Winter Warmup event was held. This consisted of a mix of passenger and freight trains hauled by both steam and diesel locos. In support of this event, some of the railway's p'way wagons were given a smarten-up.

This rake of wagons is getting a good clean on 27th December in the image above from Gary Packer, and below, the painters are out in force on 29th December, with the wagons parked in platform 1 at Swanage.

Photo: Andrew P M Wright





Did the wagons need such a spruce-up? If these before and after pictures from Dan Bennett (via Facebook) are anything to go by, Yes!

And an appropriate plate on one of the wagons may suggest that this activity is somewhat belated! It says "Due for paint 1962"!





And for the event itself, the weather was less than kind, and chucked it down at times! But that didn't seem to deter the visitors, as the trains were well loaded most of the time.

Here's a few pictures of the different trains.

Above, we have U class 31806 with the freight train from Norden running into Corfe Castle on 7th January passing class 33 diesel D6515 on a passenger train, and fireman Josh Webb and signalman Andy Moody are exchanging single line tokens.

Below, 'Battle of Britain' class 34070 *Manston* departs Harmans Cross with a train for Swanage on 8th January.

Photo: Andrew P M Wright





The participating diesels were class 50 no. 50 026 *Indomitable* seen between Corfe and Norden and class 33 D6515 *Lt Jenny Lewis RN* also on the freight set, approaching Norden, both on 8th January.

Both photos Andrew P M Wright



Here's another great view with both steam and diesel. U class 31806 waits to depart Swanage with a passenger train on 8th January, as the freight with 50 026 *Indomitable* arrives, handing the single line token to signalman David Wild.

Photo: David Ensor



On 7th January, BBC South Today was at Swanage to record an item about the Winter Warm Up. Here, Allen Sinclair interviews guard Graham Monteith. Check out the technology that Allen is using to record material for later transmission on TV. How small is that?!

No good us pointing you at the BBC to look at the programme, it's no longer there, but Benjamin Spracklen has thought of all you out there who missed the item on South Today by copying it to Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/benjamin.tot.507/videos/675090151066312?idorvanity=210246815655287>

Photo: Andrew P M Wright





OK, so we've already told you about our signalling inspector Alan Greatbatch retiring, but here's some more!

On 8th January, with an assembled audience of his colleagues from past and present in Harmans Cross Village Hall, Alan was presented with a framed montage of pictures reflecting his past and present railway and signalling career, by Swanage Railway Trust Chairman Gavin Johns.

These photos and the framed montage by our official photographer Andrew P M Wright.



The P'Way people, consisting of both staff and volunteers, have been busy during this period of shutdown. They have been working between Swanage platform and the engine shed replacing sleepers and broken or damaged parts of trackwork in the vicinity of the pointwork in particular.

Rather than fill these pages with words, let the pictures speak for themselves.

All these pictures are from the Swanage Railway Permanent Way Facebook entries. There's plenty more pictures and descriptions there at

<https://www.facebook.com/SR.PWay>





After P'Way has been along and taken up the track and then replaced it, there's more work for the Signal and Telegraph department (S & T) to ensure the points are adjusted and the track circuiting reinstated.





Some of the broken chairs were available from stock and some were not, so somebody had to go for a ~~beano~~ trip to a supplier in South Wales for more 8C, 9Y, 8B or whatever chairs. Confused? So are we, so you'd better go to their Facebook entries if you really want the full story!

These pictures show the difference between a broken 8B chair and a new one.





Just to finish off this P'Way section, here's a view you don't often see at Swanage Railway. A whole bunch of people working, but nobody watching!

And as a bonus, it is not only the P'Way in action replacing timbers and such at no.28 point, but contractors are laying the concrete apron for the carriage lifting jacks. All this on the 25th January, as it says in the corner of this image culled from the web cam on the signal box.

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Also on the 25th January, there was activity at the road/rail interchange at Norden as brake coach 35464 returned from overhaul at Ramparts Engineering, and brake coach 9015 replaced it on the lorry for a return trip. Class 33 D6515 does the honours of collecting one coach and delivering the other to the loading point. That's 35464 on the right of the picture



Some pictures from the Sygnets January Track Walk from Furzebrook to Harmans Cross on 14th January, an annual tradition to break in our new members, followed by groups activities at the Harmans Cross Village Hall.

Photos from Sygnets leader Ben Ford, at Cats Eye user worked crossing and arriving at Corfe Castle station.





Our resident mainline-registered class 33 D6515 *Lt Jenny Lewis RN* has been out on the national network again. It was returning visiting loco 50 026 *Indomitable* back to Eastleigh Works for its owners on 11th January.

Above is a still image from the video on Facebook by Benjamin Spracklen, of the locos arriving at Eastleigh Works, which can be found at

<https://www.facebook.com/benjamin.tot.507/videos/594790982485308?idorvanity=210246815655287>

There is still some outstanding funding required to support the outgoings on the cab refurbishment. Here's a few words from the 71A Loco Group from the latest 'Spitfire' newsletter:

*Regards fundraising, Your Group still needs Your help to finish the funding of the cab overhaul work on Your locomotive. Firstly, **thank you** to everyone who has already made a donation to the Group's appeal for funding to cover the cab overhaul work. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. J*

We are almost there with the fundraising of the cab overhaul work, but donations are still required to fully cover all of the cab overhaul work done, so the Group is still looking for further donations to get this fundraising appeal "over the line". If you are able to make a donation, please fill out the donation form that is included with this email, making sure in particular to fill out the last part with all your details, and return it to the address at the bottom of the second page of the donation form. To anyone making future donations, thank you in advance.

Go to http://www.71alocogroup.co.uk/71A_donate.htm for details of how you can donate to this worthy cause. And check out the rest of the web site while you are there!

And to finish off this first issue of Swanning Around in 2023, here's a gratuitous photo by Andrew P M Wright of the countryside of Purbeck .

In a picture taken from somewhere on West Hill to the west of Corfe Castle (or has he got a drone?!), Harmans Cross is centre left and the older part of Swanage towards Durlston is upper right, with Wordsworth House at the top of the hill. You won't get pictures like this with the SA staff camera!

Give yourself a point if you can spot the DMU running between Harmans Cross and Corfe Castle.



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 475212 to contact Mike Whitwam, our Volunteer Liaison 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>