

A Look at What's Happening Around the Swanage Railway

Issue 14 – March 20th 2016

A slightly later-than-usual issue this time, to pick up all the latest news that is not happening when I want it to!

In March, there's tamping the line, commissioning the Norden level crossing, craning the Norden Nest, painting Corfe station and various other works in anticipation of the start of daily running on 25th March.

So much, it's a **Bumper Issue!**

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But let's start with a follow-up to the 40th anniversary on February 13th mentioned in the previous issue.

Here are some of the original pioneers from 1976, coming together to celebrate at Swanage station.

Present were station porter Jonathan Burke, steam locomotive drivers Nigel Clark, Peter Frost, Bob McGaw, and Nick Hanham, carriage restorer Jeremy Weller, and Neil Tatchell.



And, photographed from around the same spot in 1976, here's what they started with! At least there's a station building, but an awful lot of work had to be done before any track appeared here.



Both photos – Andrew P M Wright

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The expected hand-over of the Wareham Project to the railway company, at the end of March, is being preceded by the last major works to turn what has been regarded as a long siding into a fully signalled running line.

This included the hire of a ballast tamper to align the track and settle the ballast to a standard appropriate for (and probably exceeding) 25mph running.

From March 5th for a week, the machine started near the SR boundary at the Frome River bridges,

and proceeded to tamp the whole line through to Swanage.

Here the machine is on a gauging run at Quarr Farm Crossing.



This is the business end! The bit on the left lifts the rails, the bit on the right paddles the ballast! Shows how much I know!



But if you want to see how these Tonka toys work, I can recommend the many offerings on YouTube. You may want to start with https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auH6fg_kdk

It's way better than Coronation Street, but, alternatively, you may want to choose the pub!

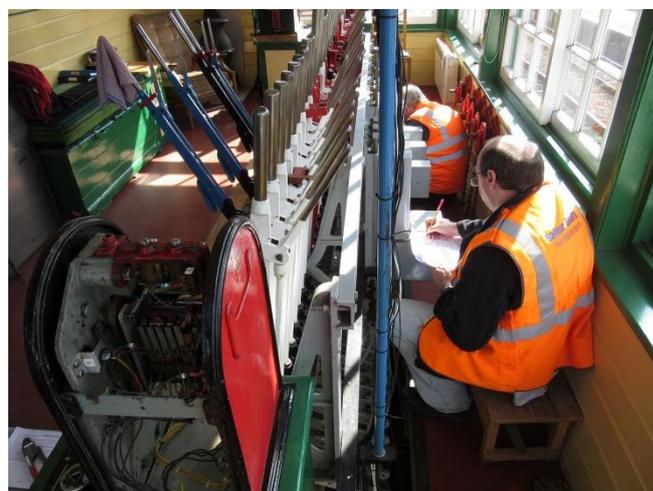
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Meanwhile, down at Norden and Corfe, the level crossing systems were being moved from 'test' to 'production' mode, for operator training and subsequent sign-off and handover.



Chief tester Dave Fry makes the permanent connections in the Norden Gates relay room in line with the wiring plans, on 14th March.

In Corfe box, Mike Southey and tester Brian Smith make the appropriate connections for the level crossing status repeater instruments on the block shelf, track circuit interlocking, and the interconnection with the Corfe to Norden token machine in the foreground.



Following these changes, initial training for Norden Gates crossing keepers took place on the Wednesday and Thursday following, a key enabler for compliance with the level crossing order.

More on page 4.

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Page 3

Struggling to find something for Page 3, and then these two turn up!

Yes! It's

Mucky Men of the Month!



What on earth are they doing in all that muck? Bryn Gittings and Paul Williams (r) are clearing the silt from a well and filter bed down by the stream at the end of Swanage shed. Happy as pigs in!!

Here's a wider shot of the action. Yes, it's another Tuesday gang job!



Sarah Bamber has changed her mind and makes good her escape, while fitter Billy Johnson provides helpful advice!

All part of the recovery of an historical water source, potentially for use around the shed, we're told.

If you want something to do on a Tuesday, you know where to come and what to expect!

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The new cleaning platform featured in issues 11 and 12 was an idea put forward by the former leader of the Tuesday gang, Tony Blackwell, who passed away late last year.

His good friends have applied a plaque to the "Blackwell Cleaning Platform" as an ongoing memorial to him.

Well deserved!



Bryn Gittings, Paul Williams, Phil Kimbrey, Bob McGaw & Alan I'Anson pose with the platform.



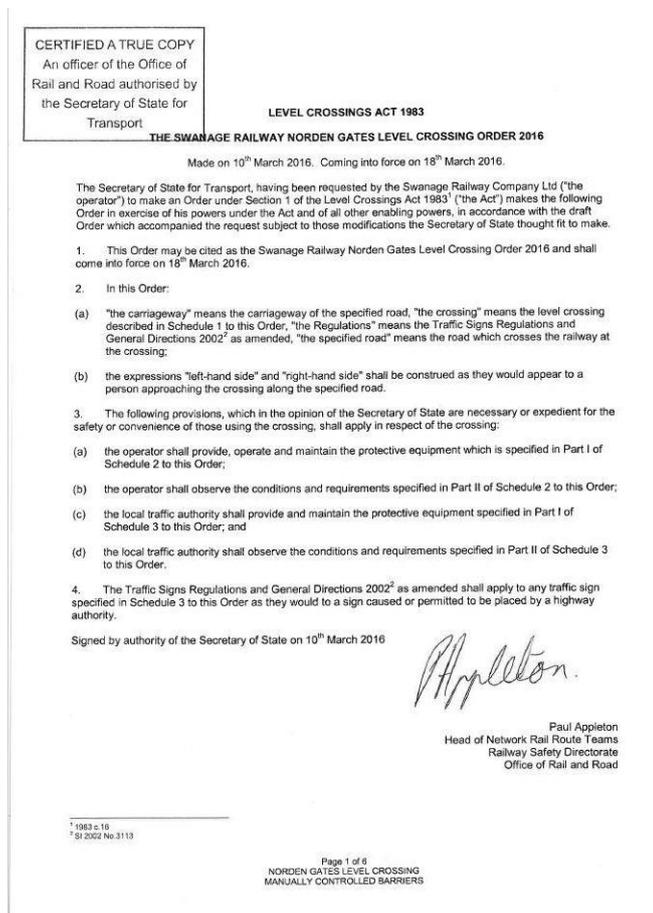
(Both photos – Phil Kimbrey)

Project Wareham

I'm sure I've no need to tell you that the commissioning of Norden Gates level crossing has been uppermost in many people's minds for some months, and that's why this issue is later than usual.

As of 16.30 on 18th March 2016, it has been brought into use, albeit as a reduced operation using Local Control.

Here's the important page of the vital document, the like of which is now about as rare as hen's teeth, as the rest of the country tries to outlaw such crossings!



At the prescribed time, Signal & Telegraph department (S&T) Manager Tony North removed the out-of-service cross from signal 4, and he and Mike Southey took down the up direction Stop board. Drivers now have to obey the signals!



There's still some more commissioning to do before full implementation, and S&T has been working hard alongside the testers to get us where we are today.

If you thought it was a simple job to get the gates and signals to work together safely, the complexities of the relay room and the programmable logic controller cabinet for operating the gates tell another story.

You've seen the relay room on page 2, and this is the inside of the gate control cabinet. Complex or what?!

But you just know everything will be all right – the pad at top left is running Microsoft Windows!



From Saturday 19th, all movements from/to the Norden to Worgret section will be directed under the control of a crossing keeper.

The first movements of Swanage Railway scheduled trains will be during the Spring Steam Gala, 8th to 10th April, when some services will be extended to the SR/ Network Rail boundary.

Here's the crossing on Friday 18th, still being tested, along with the completed removable barrier on the road/rail interchange bellmouth.



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The Norden Nest is gone!

Lifted out by the steam crane and the diesel-electric crane FBC1 on 4th March.

Not presently having any trained steam crane operators, we borrowed two from the Mid Hants Railway, where there is a similar crane.



Crane operator Colin Chambers looks on while Les White winds down the outrigger stabilisers and our own Peter Pickering checks the height, in the approved manner!

The lift was shared with FBC1 at the other end.



Up she goes! Lifted off its bogies and onto another pair placed on the running line, the coach was then towed away to a siding to await its next move.



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Also at Norden, after the Nest buffet coach had been removed, there was some tidying-up to do. General Manager Matt Green organised a team on the 18th March to sweep away the old and provide a new fence.

Looks much better now!

P'Way Manager Barry Light may be short of a few of his men later in the year when they go to Rio de Janeiro to join the Olympic fencing team! (sorry! couldn't resist it! I'll get my coat!)



The replacement refreshment kiosk at Norden will be open for business from Good Friday. Find it in the next issue of Swanning Around, along with something from the Spring Steam Gala.

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While most of the attention was at Norden, Corfe Castle station was starting to get its long-awaited redecorating.

The whole building, including the canopy, has been surrounded by scaffolding and the same people who painted the Goods Shed have been hired to do the job.

On 11th March, Stephen Pringle and Gary Islip set about preparing the canopy for painting.

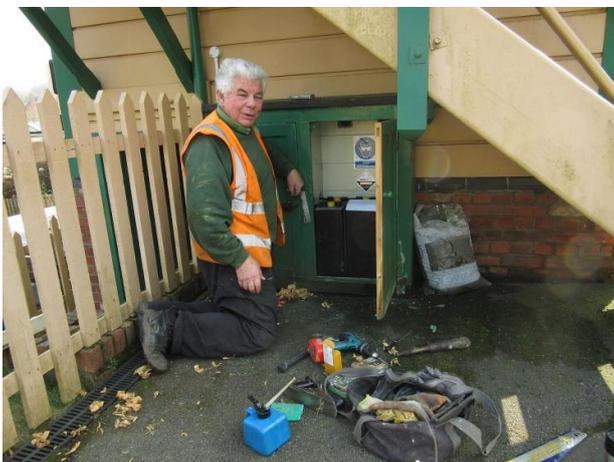


On March 17th, primer and undercoat done, Stephen and Gary now have to get the topcoat on before the scaffolding standing on the up line is removed, ready to run trains. Previously, trains were running bi-directionally through the down line, ok when there's only one train.



-----ooOoo-----

As you know, there's no escape when Swanning Around finds you out, and whilst getting material about the level crossing, David Bastable was found hiding under Corfe Castle signal box steps!



David is a retired chippy and spends a day here and there doing a bit on the railway, including repairing this door on the battery box.

If you have a day to spare here and there, or anywhere else, your help would be welcomed, in whatever capacity. Get off that sofa and get in touch!

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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 mike.whitwam@corfestation.f2s.com or volunteer@swanagerailwaytrust.org.uk 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.

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

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