



# Swanning Around

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

Issue 103 – November 7<sup>th</sup> 2023

October has been a very different month for content in Swanning Around. Normally we are here to let you know what has been happening, often those things out of public view, with a more recent addition of SITREP from the railway's Trust management. No SITREP this time as the directors have been busy since the Annual General Meeting of the Swanage Railway Trust gave us the news that the railway's finances were in a parlous state. More on that later.

Also in this issue we cover the last public services of 2023, billed as the T3 Gala, before The Polar Express, which is the railway's Christmas offering, begins in mid-November.

A much shorter issue than usual (phew! - ed)

Let's start with a picture from the T3 Gala. 563 is seen at Harmans Cross with fireman Shaun Philpot and guard Nick Munson in attendance.



Photo:  
Gary Packer

The financial situation is difficult to explain without going into great depth and detail, which Swanning Around would prefer to come from the Council Of Management (COM). There have been changes in the portfolios of management personnel since the Trust AGM on 14<sup>th</sup> October and the current directorial incumbents are busy ensuring that we have a business case for continued operations, and so are unable to provide a SITREP for this issue at this time. So it is up the Swanning Around to attempt to explain the issue for you.

At the recent meeting of the COM, personnel changes included a new Trust chairman, Frank Roberts, with new deputy Will Sheret, while former Trust chairman Gavin Johns takes over the chairmanship of the Swanage Railway Company with Robert Patterson looking after commercial matters for the Company. We wish them well! They've got a big job to do.

Where has all this come from and what happens next?

The main issue is that the Company should make a surplus through the high summer season with which it is able to repay the usual annual winter loan from the Trust that enables the railway to operate through the low season with lower or zero cashflow. Owing to Covid, Ukraine, etc. and the passenger levels are around 25% down compared to 2019, costs are escalating for both the railway and its potential customers, so that surplus hasn't materialised (that's the nice way of putting it!), which leaves the Trust out-of-pocket as well as the Company.

If the Company continues to make losses without a business plan to put the organisation back in the black, then Charity Commission rules will prevent the Trust from backfilling the accounts without the directors being personally responsible for the debts, and nobody's going to be happy about that!. So there, in a nutshell, is the quandary that puts the railway into a financial crisis.

So that's why the Swanage Railway is putting out an appeal to supporters to make some donations to ensure that the railway can survive the winter period.

A business plan is currently being prepared that will ensure that the Company can in future operate with a surplus in the main operating season, usually from Easter to October. That will permit the Trust to loan some more funding to the Company, but the available funds are extremely limited, and that's where you come in as our supporters to ensure that the Company has enough in the bank to continue operations!

There's more information and an invitation to donate on the Swanage Railway web site at

<https://www.swanagerailway.co.uk/save-your-railway>

Please help if you can.

Please note that this page has been compiled by the editor from information available to members of the Trust. Any inaccuracies, blame the editor!



The T3 Gala week started with the U class 31806 in charge of the service trains while 563 worked the 3-coach special services, for which a premium fare was charged.

However, 34070 *Manston* had just spent the weekend at the Bluebell Railway's Giants of Steam Gala, and returned in time to take over the services from mid-week. The timetable for this two train gala was unusual in that all the train crossings were at Corfe or Swanage, unlike the usual passing each other at Harmans Cross.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October, we find the two trains passing, at Corfe as *Manston* enters with a train for Swanage, and at Swanage as 563 arrives at platform 1 with *Manston* waiting to depart in platform 2.







With normal public services finished until after Christmas, it must be time for a megashunt!

On several days in October and early November, movements were carried out to assemble the train set for use with The Polar Express. Coupled with this, the opportunity has been taken, with the coaches out of service, to smarten up some of those coaches left with a lacklustre paint finish after the sea air down here has done them no good! So there's been a bit of shunting in and out of the goods shed, as well as moving the steam locos to the sidings out of the way.

So here's some evidence from the Swanage web cam with driver John Denison shoving the locos to the sidings on 30<sup>th</sup> October and driver Nigel Clark moving another coach for the train set on 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

Both class 33s and the shunter 08 436 have been involved in this activity.



## The Polar Express

Did we mention the The Polar Express? Yes, The Polar Express is coming to the Swanage Railway, as you already know if you have been reading previous issues of Swanning Around!

Bookings are open, so if you want to know all about it, go to the Swanage Railway web site at

<https://www.swanagerailway.co.uk/events/view/polar-express>

where there is more than enough info and directions for booking.

There'll be more about The Polar Express and preparations in the next issue of Swanning Around. (and there'll be some other news as well!)

## Swanage Railway



THE POLAR EXPRESS™

### BOOKINGS NOW OPEN

Service provided by Fused Events and Crosstown Concerts not the Swanage Railway.

Swanage Railway does not take nor administer bookings, Swanage Railway gift cards, memberships, Season Tickets or promotional vouchers cannot be used against this product.

PLEASE NOTE: Swanage Railway does not have access to the booking system for this event, please email [ticketing@crosstownconcerts.com](mailto:ticketing@crosstownconcerts.com) for all enquiries.

Sign up to receive the latest ticket news from The Polar Express™ [SIGN UP HERE \(EXTERNAL WEBSITE\)](#)



**Enjoy Time in Swanage**

[www.swanagerailway.co.uk](http://www.swanagerailway.co.uk)

Telephone 01929 425800







photo: Peter Pickering

We've not had much about the goings-on in Herston Works recently, but of note has been the transport of 34053 *Sir Keith Park* to Tyseley Locomotive Works to have its boiler swapped for the one that has been overhauled by the North Norfolk Railway. Another major step forward for Southern Locomotives in its return to service. Here it's being loaded up at Herston Works in early October.

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With the Pullman Observation Car 14 about to go for an indoor winter holiday in Margate (probably better than an outdoor one there anytime! Sorry Margate!), it seems like a good opportunity for giving credit where it's due to those responsible for getting it looking that good. You may remember that the vehicle was given a serious makeover inside and out just before the visit of *Flying Scotsman* in October 2022, a whole year ago. In order to keep it that way, it went to Margate last winter for dry storage, and is due to do the same this year.

photo: Andrew P M Wright





photo: Andrew P M Wright



Here's a view of the refurbished interior, with *Flying Scotsman* on the end, if you look hard!

The whole overhaul was put together by the Carriage and Wagon Department under Alan English seen here flanked by Joao Martins and Will Rudge (who have both since left the company). Also involved in bringing this vehicle up to museum standard were members of the Heritage Carriage Group and from the Estates Department.

photo: Graham Taylor





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!

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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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