



HALESWORTH TO SOUTHWOLD NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY SOCIETY

Honorary President Mr Roger Desborough

A non-profit community organisation, dedicated to re-opening Halesworth's Heritage Narrow Gauge Railway to Wenhamston and beyond

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'Halesworth's Happening': Members' General Edition

December 2019

Members of HSNR: Welcome to the second edition of our round-up newsletter. You are receiving this because you have opted in – if that is not the case, please let us know.

From now on, we plan to make this newsletter a quarterly: those of you who wish for very up-to-date news can of course subscribe to the weekly Headshunt, while for those who only require more general information, we believe that a three-months round-up will suffice.

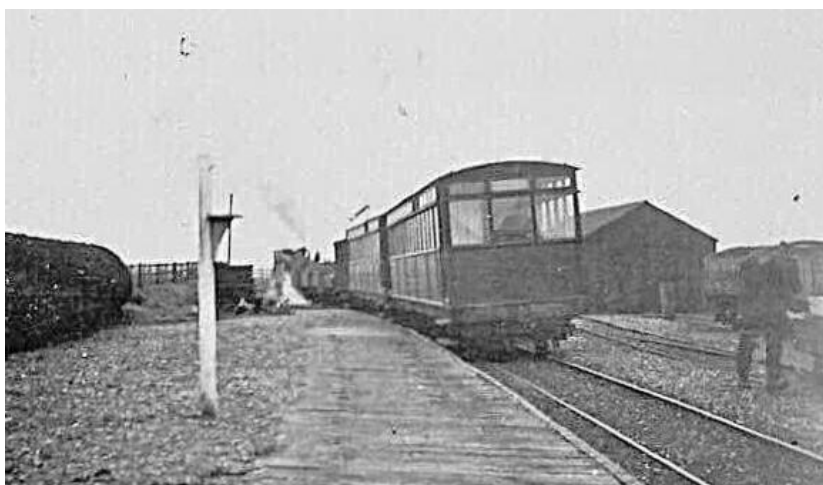
In less than 2 years, our Society has achieved a lot – and there is inevitably a lot more to do. We can discuss it at our **members' meeting at Holton Village Hall on Saturday March 28th, 2020, starting at 14.00** – we hope that many of our members will be able to attend and ensure that your views are taken into account. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those of you who have helped the Society – our active and indefatigable volunteers, our Society Officers, including with special mention - Ken for his funding of so many projects, and his grasp of the social media – David, for his essential behind-the-scenes work with our finances and membership - Mike for his efforts on the trackbed – and the most generous donations and sponsorship of so many of you, towards our aims.



Historical Notes by Ken Penrose

Left - a lovely early photo of a peaceful and tranquil Blythburgh Station, which, incidentally, was not built until a few years after the rest of the railway came into operation. Notice that there are two large sheds. These were in addition to the small shed with loading platform, also just visible in this photo. The small shed is often pictured in photos taken from the A12 road bridge, from which the whole

station scene could be viewed. This shed carried adverts for manure. One can only speculate what the other two sheds were used for. In the second photo, note the standard SR buffer stop is situated outside the doors of the shed nearest the church in the first photo. Although this may not have been put in until the station improvement works (referred to below) were carried out. (There are some indications in this photo that the shed may have had brick infill - but the print is not detailed enough to make this out) These may have also resulted in the demolition of the first of the larger sheds, that is, the one



between the small shed and the one nearest the church. The station sign shown in the first photo is the early type with the station name painted on it. Improvements to the line, carried out between 1902/8, included a new station sign with raised lettering and large

enough to need stanchions to support it.

Above is a fine photo of Blythburgh Church, which is a part of a charming, bucolic scene. In the background, in front of the church, is the fence which encloses the trackbed of the Southwold Railway. The photo also shows the only distant signal on the line. It was put in when the passing loop was completed. The second photo shows this signal next to the trackbed. On the next page is a photo of a pre-1908 OS map of

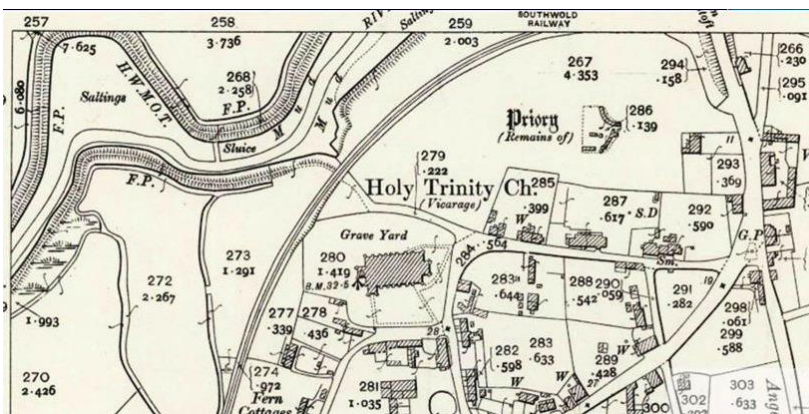


Blythburgh, courtesy of the National Library of Scotland, hence no signal post is shown on it.

Things done over the last two months

1. Rolling stock:

- a. RFS Locomotive: the loco team, now led by Harry and



Alan, continue to press on with this very complex project – the loco has been lifted by 300mm (thanks to a loan from the Middy of two jacks, and another one from our own member Roger) – so the team can get underneath a little more easily. We now have a fully-working compressor and engine, and in mid-December our team managed to get the forward-reverse system working – now that leaky systems are closed out, so that the air brake pressures are up to their posted marks. The interaction between the air and electrical systems has proven more of a problem, with an

entire hierarchy of safety-interlocks which all must be fully operational before a wheel can turn.

- b. Wagon 1 /Project 3: this 3-foot-gauge Hudson ironstone quarry wagon is owned by James – so he is paying for all the materials needed. The timber body frame has been bolted to the steel underframe, and both ends and both sides are now in places. In December, Jamie made two of the four cotter pin latches for the side doors



– and we can now copy those for the other end. There's a lot of painting to do (GER freight grey with black metalwork), and the white lettering, which Stewart has offered to do – but we are in sight of the end of this Project. We will need to work out how to get it onto the rails at the Folly – either in one piece, or dismantled.

c. Wagon 2/PW trolley: this has proven very valuable for PW work, and has been extensively used for Project 1. It will be equally useful for Project 2 (pointwork), both for laying down track and testing the result. It was temporarily retrieved from the Folly site before the Christmas recess.



d. Coach 1:
the underframe is an ideal workbench – not what we bought it for! – but we now have another set of wheels (with roller-bearings) which we could use – these

are being evaluated to see if they are better than those we received with the original wagon. A trial-fit into the existing underframe W-irons will be useful in the decision. We now have a Halesworth-based welder who can do the alterations, while the Middy are looking at whether they can re-gauge one or other of the wheelsets using their new lathe.

- e. The HSNR are constantly researching other rolling stock and locos: we also have a long-term ambition to build Sharp, Stewart “Halesworth” of 1879. The first, small, step towards this was made recently, when we ordered the number plate. We’d also like to build one or more Cleminson balconied passenger coaches. A battery-electric loco is particularly sought. A lightweight powered item – such as a Wickham PW trolley, or similar, would be very useful indeed, as it could relatively easily be transported to the various



places along the valley where three-foot track can be found. A standard-gauge trolley could quite easily be re-gauged.

2. **Workshop:** we are rapidly running out of space, especially now we have a fourth point, some extra rails, and two more wheelsets – all from the WHHR in Porthmadog. Recently we made a start on extending Siding 1, as a tramway, across the road for a test track: two extra panels are already in place. We are very grateful indeed to Mr and Mrs Roger Desborough for allowing us to use their farm for our work, and putting up with our constant noise and presence: without the workshop, none of our work would be possible.
3. **Projects agreed with the Millennium Green:**
Project 1: Tracklaying has reached the Network Rail fence, so that eight out of the ten panels are in place. Two of our Sleeper Sponsors (illustrated) laid down their own sleepers at the north end of the track: we now have 52



Project 2: Jamie and James have been re-gauging the point at the workshop. Not an easy task, as the entire geometry is changed – but the point nose (the hardest bit) is now done, apart from a little welding, with the stock rails and check rails almost complete. We don't plan to start fund-raising for this Project until Project 1 is done, but it's likely to cost not much less than the first, despite the fact that the point itself has already been paid for by Ken and James. We will

sleepers sponsored – a very good result – with 80 comprising the entire Project, that leaves 28 to go. There will now be a pause, as the weather is likely to be difficult, and there's no shelter at the worksite. Now that the brickwork on the bridge arch has dried out, with earth removed and a membrane in place, there's a little re-pointing to do, once the danger of frost has gone.



probably need to start by fencing off the site (heritage fencing as at the Blyford Lane site), as it's close to the footpath.



Project 3: Wagon 1 is getting on very nicely. See above.

Project 4 – a comprehensive onsite notice board explaining what we have done, and the history of the site.

4. **Blythburgh Goods Shed:** this Project is on hold until we can find a tree

surgeon - we have decided that the adjacent footpath and public car park make it essential that a professional undertakes the work. As soon as that is done, our digger contractor will be able to dig out around the brick base, and deposit the material thus provided into the large hole in the floor inside. This in turn will allow us safer access to the structure. First, we will provide temporary extra supports to the roof: that will allow the main timbers to be mended and replaced. Then, as the structure will be safe, we can organise how to do the remainder. Member Brian of Halesworth has donated timber, and corrugated sheets, all of which will be very useful in helping us to complete this project successfully.

5. **Membership:** we have 112 members at present, and almost everyone is renewing (which is very promising – as it shows that our members are happy with how we are getting on). Those who choose it receive the weekly “Halesworth Headshunt”, designed for volunteers and those Members with particular interest in the “nuts and bolts” of railway re-instatement: the rest of the Members receive this - “Halesworth’s Happening”, a quarterly news-sheet of more general interest, most by e-mail, but some by post. We have a fully operational and informative website, and a good presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, thanks to Ken, our social media guru.
6. **Publications and merchandise:** our most successful sales item, so far, is the Halesworth Hub book which Ken paid to be written and printed. This describes Halesworth’s transport

history. Apart from our own sales, at shows and exhibitions and through the online shop on our website, many have been sold through local bookshops. If any Member does not have a copy, you can buy it from us at the special members' price of £6.50. A very welcome addition to our retail range are the branded mugs (illustrated), designed and paid for by two members – Bridget and Tony – who we share with the MSLR. Ken is organising some facsimile railway paperwork – timetables, etc. – which will be on sale in the New Year. Many Members have donated a considerable amount of second-hand items - books, CDs, magazines, and so on – and we have been very pleased to receive a collection of models and railway artefacts from Linda in Halesworth, and a valuable Thetford station running-in board from Brian of the same town. We have also had made fridge magnets of the Halesworth station sign, and Society badges – all of these have gone well. More sales items are planned. We'd particularly like to have models of our own rolling stock to sell, either scale ones for discerning modellers, or simple toys for children.



7. **Relationships with local organisations:** James attends meetings of the following, representing HSNR: Halesworth Tourism Group, Halesworth and Blyth Valley Partnership, Halesworth Heritage Open Days, East Suffolk Travel Association, and East Suffolk Line Community Rail Group North (where we have submitted a proposal to erect a notice board showing the original HSR Halesworth station). 50 Christmas Cards have been sent to supporters and suppliers.
8. **Workdays:** we generally work on Tuesdays and Sundays. These days are chosen so that we do not conflict with the SRT's Wednesdays and Saturdays, or workdays on other railways like the Middy. The work done varies depending on the weather, and numbers vary between 1 and 6, with occasional highs of 8 or 9.
9. **Trackbed:** we continue to try to obtain ownership or at the very least access to sections of the former trackbed, helped in this endeavour by Chris and Mike, who constitute our trackbed team. Recently, we almost succeeded with a short section of the land on which the former trackbed was situated, but the arrangement fell through at the last minute, sadly. By our March 2020 meeting, our team will have contacted all owners of land whose land holdings include a part of the former trackbed between Halesworth and Holton.

We have taken on a very large range of Projects – not only those on Halesworth Millennium Green, but with our rolling stock, rails and pointwork, our search for land and Halesworth premises, our Blythburgh station shed plans, and our outreach to many other organisations. Looked at logically, we have neither the resources in staff nor assets to complete them. However, the prize – the part- or complete-restoration of one of the most iconic heritage railways in the country – is such a large one that we feel justified in having equally-large ideas. The picture shows a scene on the Welshpool and Llanfair – a railway of similar length and quite similar gauge, and you can see how at home it is in the landscape.



No-one in the early years of heritage railways would have believed that either the Welsh Highland Railway or the Lynton and Barnstaple could even be revived, as in both cases the trackbeds were all that was left – and little or no rolling stock was extant. But one is now open in its entirety, while in the case of the other a section is open and other parts are well on the way to opening. So – it can be done! But only with the active help of our Members, to whom we commend this report.

Season's Greetings to all our members and supporters

Ken and James