TransWilts

Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER TWENTY ONE – APRIL 2019

Boost for Westbury

The number of car parking spaces at Westbury has been boosted following the completion of extension works on the southside of the station. In a partnership with Square Bay, the developers constructing houses nearby.

The newly laid out area now has 150 spaces and is already being well used.

The opening ceremony was carried out by Matthew Golton (Deputy MD - GWR) and Horace Prickett (Portfolio Holder for Transport - Wiltshire Council and TransWilts CIC Board member). Councillor Prickett said: "The new extended car park will be a great asset to rail travellers. I am pleased that Great Western Railway have listened to its customers and reacted in a swift and timely manner, completing the work very quickly. It is testament to the staff at GWR and their ability to listen to the needs of their customers. I have personally monitored the new spaces since they opened and can confirm they are well used and fill the need of rail passengers over a wide, very rural, area."

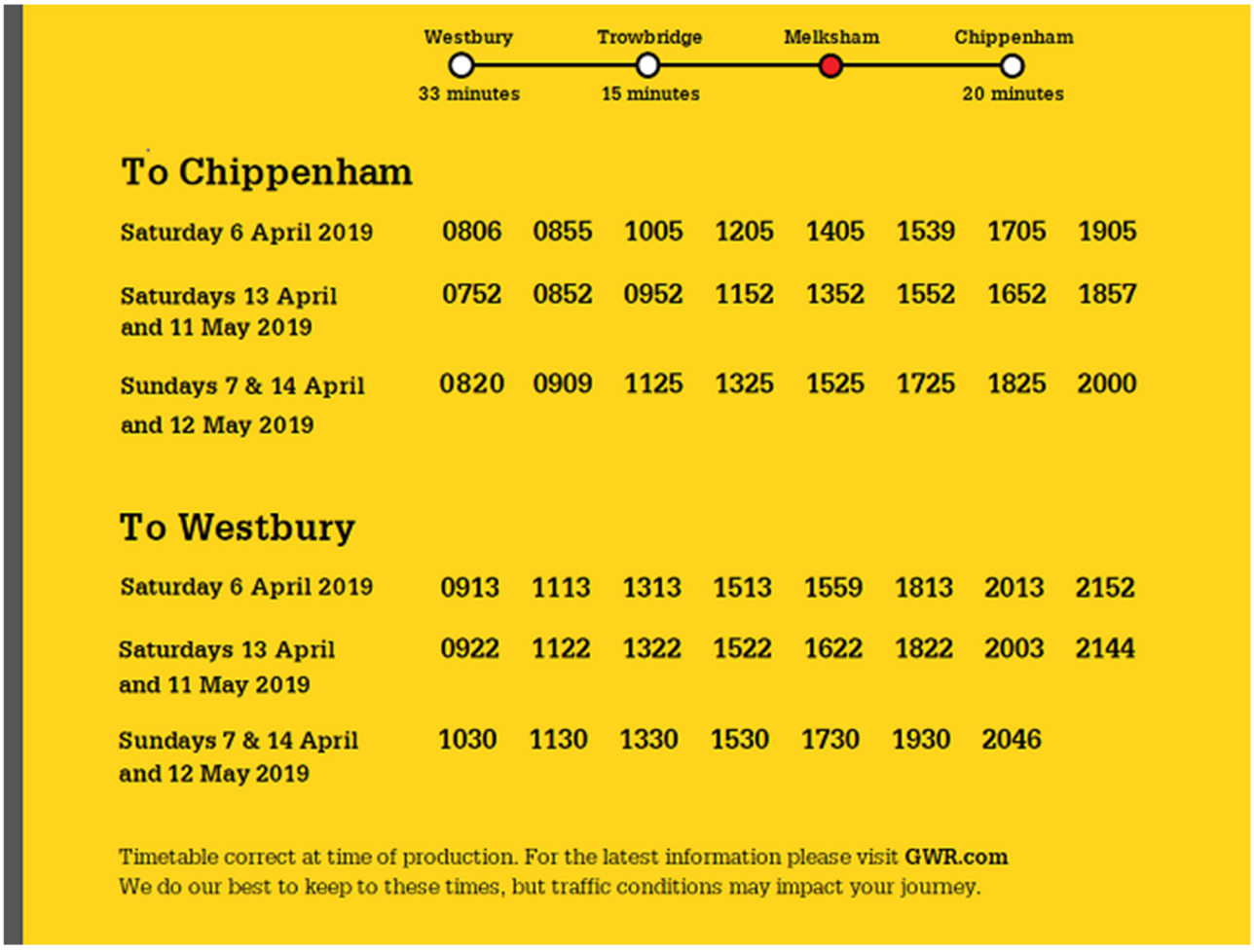
TransWilts joins the Great British Spring Clean

Over two dozen volunteers will be at Chippenham and Trowbridge on the 13th April to spruce up the stations and give them a deep clean to support the regular litter patrols by GWR. Meanwhile at Melksham Station the Melksham Rail Users Group is co-ordinating the tidying of the station car park and approach to provide a more welcoming appearance to the area for people arriving in the town.

New earlier Rail Replacement Bus on Sundays

GWR has listened to concerns from passengers facing a significantly longer journey into Swindon from TransWilts stations on a Sunday when the first train is replaced by a bus because of engineering work. Users were forced to catch a bus from Westbury at 08:36 which, after calling at Trowbridge and Melksham, arrived at Chippenham at 09:29. After a 25 minute wait there was then a further bus to Swindon which arrived at 10:30 – an hour and a half later than the usual train service.

Now from 7th April when buses replace trains on a Sunday there will be an earlier bus from Westbury leaving at 07:47 which will connect with a bus or train to Swindon and be nearer to the usual 09:04 arrival.



In addition signs will now be placed at stations with the actual calling times of the buses – the poster above is for Melksham.

Dates for your diary

11th April – Chippenham Rail Users Group
27th April – TransWilts CIC AGM
9th May – Pewsey Vale Rail Users Group
22nd May – Melksham Rail Users Group AGM
26th June – TW Stakeholder Conference

Reliability on the TransWilts improves

After a 2018 plagued by engineering works and an ominous start to 2019 when the works at Westbury over-ran there has been a dramatic improvement in the reliability of the GWR service on the TransWilts. Indeed for almost a month from mid-February every planned train ran. The main problems continue to be outside the direct control of GWR – either issues with the track or signalling or the need to divert long distance trains along the single line due to problems elsewhere. Staffing issues appear to be largely resolved.

It is hoped this can be sustained and the CIC is now looking at marketing initiatives to boost user numbers after last year's frequent line closures led to a 5% drop in ticket sales.

Engineering work round-up

A number of projects will affect TransWilts services in the coming months or impact on journeys to nearby towns and cities.

- Over the early May Bank Holiday Network Rail be working to replace a bridge on the Berks & Hants at Barnards Lock near Newbury. The majority of trains to the West of England will operate via Bristol but there will be some minor changes to train times between Swindon and Westbury. There will also be rail replacement bus from Pewsey to Swindon.

- The following weekend work will be carried out in the Bath area. Buses will replace trains between Chippenham and Westbury via Melksham and between Bath and Swindon via Chippenham.

- Later in the year there will be work in the Gloucester, Bristol Parkway and Taunton areas while at Christmas planned schemes affect the Newport, Guildford, Exeter, Warminster and Paddington areas. More details will be available nearer the time.

Chippenham Rail Users Group to get improvement update

Following the survey work carried out with the assistance of the TransWilts CIC to monitor passenger movements at Chippenham, the Rail Users group will meet on the 11th April to hear the latest progress. GWR have been working with local bus companies and Network Rail to progress the plans to improve the front of the station and provide better access from the north of the station, including a new lift.

Farewell to the High Speed Train

After more than 40 years front line service on routes out of London Paddington the final GWR HST 125 in public passenger service will leave the terminus at 18:30 on the 18th May bound for Exeter St Davids. In the last year they have been slowly replaced by the new IETs which can run on either overhead electric or diesel. Many of the HSTs have now left GWR with some now running in Scotland. A few will be remaining to run as four coach trains on services in the West Country and South Wales. GWR is planning a final charter train on 1st June to raise money for charity with the train visiting Bristol, Paddington, Carmarthen, Hereford and a non-stop run from London to Plymouth.

TransWilts CIC AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the TransWilts CIC will be held on the 27th April at Trowbridge Civic Centre. The official calling notice will be sent to members shortly. As well as the formal business the CIC will be updating the audience on its progress last year and plans for the future.

Community Rail in the City

Members of the TransWilts CIC will be at Reading Station on the 15th May taking part in the Association of Community Rail Partnerships' annual Community Rail in the City day. It is a chance for Community Rail Partnerships to showcase their work and encourage people who only use rail for commuting to explore the many local lines throughout the country for leisure purposes.

Come and see us – we will be by the ticket office on the south side of the station all day!

No more 153s

Although the last of the class 153 single carriage trains whicb operated on the TransWilts route since the extended service began in 2013 left Westbury last summer, they have been used to strengthen services in the Exeter area. However the final ones have now left GWR – including 153261 which carried its panel celebrating the first year of the enchanced TransWilts service until the end.