



incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

## NEWSLETTER THIRTY SEVEN – DECEMBER 2021

### TransWilts earns Government re-accreditation



Following a review of the last year's activities, its plans for the next 12 months and a look at its financial practices, the TransWilts CIC has been awarded accreditation from the Department of Transport. As well as recognising the high standard the CIC operates at, it allows it to access additional financial streams and sources of expert advice.

### Friend of Chippenham Station celebrate 180 years of history

Nearly 500 people visited the exhibition in Chippenham during September and October celebrating the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the town's station. The Friends Group had assembled a collection of photos charting the history of the railway in the town. As well as positive feedback from those looking round the exhibits, a number of new photos were discovered which have now been copied and added to the archive.

### Engineering work at Christmas

Network Rail will be taking advantage of the Christmas shutdown on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> December but work will also be continuing in the week between Christmas and New Year. From the 27<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> December trains from London to South Wales will call at Patchway rather than Bristol Parkway. Services through Yate and Cam & Dursley will also be affected by engineering work with bus replacing train services.

On Christmas Eve most services will finish earlier than normal with the last train from London Paddington to Swindon and Chippenham leaving at 21:02. The last service to Westbury via Melksham from Swindon will leave at 20:45 as usual.

On Bank Holiday Monday 27<sup>th</sup> December services will start later than normal. The first train along the TransWilts will be at 07:52 from Westbury. The first train to Paddington will leave Chippenham at 07:26 before calling at Swindon at 07:40. For the rest of the week the TransWilts will run as normal while on the main line, apart from the diversions caused by the engineering work mentioned above, some peak hour services will not operate. On New Year's Eve the last train for Swindon and Chippenham leaves Paddington at 21:32. A near normal Saturday service will run on New Year's Day.

On the TransWilts line the first train on a Sunday morning from Westbury has been replaced by a bus in recent weeks. This will continue up to the 5<sup>th</sup> December. The normal train will run on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December. On 2<sup>nd</sup> January a bus will again replace the train but will provide a rail connection at Chippenham to allow an arrival in Swindon shortly after 9am. No further engineering work is planned on the line in January.

## Defibrillator installed at Melksham

With assistance from Community Heartbeat and SMARtech electrical services, a defibrillator has now been provided on the external wall of the Melksham Hub café.

It can be unlocked in case of need by calling 999.



## Poppies to Paddington



TransWilts was honoured to be invited by GWR to take part in the Poppies to Paddington event on Armistice Day. Over 100 wreaths were brought to Paddington on the 11<sup>th</sup> November from all parts of the GWR Network. After being laid around the war memorial on Platform 1 – a short service of Remembrance was held ahead of the two minute silence.

The TransWilts tribute was handed over at Westbury by Community Rail Officer Sophie Martin.

## December timetable change

GWR launches its December timetable on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Apart from some minor retimings the only major change on the TransWilts is the 18:52 southbound service from Swindon which will only run as far as Warminster rather than Southampton Central although connections will be available.

Printed timetables will be available from the TransWilts platform noticeboards later in the month.

## Thanks to all our friends

The majority of TW Friends memberships expire at the end of October. Thank you to all those who have renewed. We really do appreciate your support. If you have not yet paid your subscription it is not too late. If you have mislaid your renewal letter please contact [friends@transwilts.org](mailto:friends@transwilts.org)

## Brighter outlook at Swindon



The newly formed Swindon Station adoption group have finished their first project. Planters have now been installed on the island platform and the top car park. If you want to get involved with the group you can contact them via Community Rail Officer Sophie Martin at [sophie@transwilts.org](mailto:sophie@transwilts.org)

## Numbers slowly picking up

With the lifting of restrictions throughout the autumn numbers using the TransWilts have slowly climbed.

In the four weeks to the middle of November GWR revenue on the line was more than 160% on the same period in 2020 and only 37% behind the pre-Covid 2019 levels. In parallel with that TransWilts surveyed passengers in Melksham at the end of October and early November. This showed signs of the start of the recovery in the morning peak – in particular the 07:51 to Swindon. As a result the Hub Café is now open from 7am Monday to Friday and 7.30am on Saturdays. It will remain open until 4.30pm each day.

## GWR cuts its carbon footprint

In the last two years GWR has reduced its carbon emissions by more than a fifth. A lot of this is due to electrification which has seen the HSTs withdrawn and the reduced use of other diesel trains. However the use of gas and electricity at stations and depots has been cut with the greater use of LED lighting, dimmer units and better heating controls. Rubbish collected on trains is now handsorted at depots to send more for recycling rather than landfill.

The TransWilts is also doing its bit. In the last year 1073 kg of carbon dioxide has been saved by those charging their electric vehicles at the Melksham Hub carpark.

## Campaign to save the Bristol to London Waterloo services

The December timetable sees the withdrawal of SWR's through services between Bristol Temple Meads and London Waterloo. As well as providing a direct link to the City and south eastern areas of the capital, it provided the only daytime through trains to London from Trowbridge and Bradford-on-Avon and reduces the service from Warminster. Spearheaded by Graham Ellis of the Coffee Shop Forum and with support by rail users groups across the area, a campaign has been running to get the decision reconsidered. While it seems likely the services will cease it is hoped pressure can be brought to re-instate them.

A petition to Westminster has gained over 6,000 signatures and various local MPs have raised the issue in the House of Commons.

## TW in December Modern Railways

Continuing restrictions have affected plans for some of the traditional pre-Christmas events but Modern Railways has highlighted what we do have planned.

More details available on the Melksham Hub and Trans Wilts websites.

### **SANTA GETS ON BOARD**

Similar projects will be taking place around the network, such as in Wiltshire, where TransWilts CRP is working on number of different Santa Train experiences this year. The first supports local families from Swindon who have never travelled outside of the town or on a train. Organised with

the help of contacts at local schools and volunteers from the CRP's station adoption groups, families will journey to Westbury station, where they will receive gifts from Santa himself, who has temporarily set up his Grotto in the station's White Horse Meeting Room (hireable, I'm told, at any time of the year for a very reasonable fee!).

Additional activities will be taking place a little further up the line at Melksham station, where the CRP's own Hub Café will welcome residents from a neighbouring nursing home. Even when looked after in care homes, many older people struggle with feelings of isolation or loneliness, particularly those without close family nearby. Projects like this can seem light-touch or overly 'seasonal', but in fact they have a profound and positive effect for those taking part. Given

the events of the last two years, I think we can all acutely relate to the instinctive human need to socialise, to talk and to share an experience with others. Simple activities like those delivered by TransWilts highlight again the value the railways can bring to communities beyond just economic and industrial growth.

Wherever you are in the country, there is likely a festive CRP project taking place near you. This column is sadly not long enough to cover them all in detail, so why not take a moment to search for events happening in your area? Perhaps you know someone who might benefit from taking part, perhaps you might be able to help deliver an event, or perhaps you might be able to provide additional support that enables more people to enjoy an uplifting or even life changing journey this winter. 

## Corsham wins favour from Restoring Your Railways Fund

The Department for Transport has announced the latest successful bids to its Restoring Your Railway Fund which aims to improve and extend rail services.

Up to £50,000 will be available to assess the feasibility of re-opening Corsham Station near Chippenham. It closed in 1965 and most of the station buildings apart from the goods shed were swept away. Since then the town's population has grown to over 10,000 and campaigning for the re-opening has been going on for the last 12 years.

Although not successful in the latest round, work is continuing to prove the case for Wilton Junction near Salisbury. A station where the lines from Warminster and the West of England meet would provide a park and ride facility for the city as well as a railhead for Stonehenge.

## Seasons Greetings

As the year draws to a close the chairman, directors, employees and volunteers of the TransWilts wish all friends and supporters a merry Christmas and all the best for 2022. Hopefully we can look forward to taking more steps towards a more normal world!

