

ISLE OF WIGHT
STEAM RAILWAY
40th ANNIVERSARY
1971-2011

THE LAST TRAIN

SUNDAY

23rd JANUARY 2011



ISLE OF WIGHT STEAM RAILWAY

2011 CELEBRATIONS

‘LAST TRAIN’ 23rd JANUARY 2011

NEWPORT to HAVENSTREET

Today’s walk commemorates the movement of the Wight Locomotive Society’s locomotive and rolling stock from Newport Station to Havenstreet, forty years ago tomorrow, and the first tentative step in establishing the present Isle of Wight Steam Railway.

The move to Haven Street was reported eloquently by Richard Newman in the Spring 1971 issue of Wight Report. Here is the text verbatim.

TO HAVEN STREET !

by Richard Newman

At 8.30p.m on 24th January, the last South Western O2 rumbled across the Medina Drawbridge, Newport, high above the river and its quays, ending another transport chapter in the Island's history, for the rails it ran upon were to be taken up for scrap almost immediately afterwards.

Some 12 hours earlier on that Sunday, we had arrived at Newport Station to find "CALBOURNE" in fine form, standing next to the water column at the Cowes end of the platform. Bob Huxtable and Tom Jackman, of the Loco Dept., had already been working for more than 3 hours to prepare the engine for her historic journeys, and pressure was now building up to a satisfactory level for the move to begin.

Meanwhile, David Perry and Martyn Mullins, who had been "rostered" as guards during the final preparations made on the previous evening in a well – known Newport hostelry, were preparing the 3 set of former L.B.S.C.R. carriages which were to form the first train of the day. The carriages stood at the northern end of the yard, where they had been moved a couple of weeks previously to facilitate oiling of axle-boxes. George Wheeler, who was appointed in overall charge of the day's operations, had drawn up an official "Special Notice" for the use of all operating staff, which provided for 4 runs to Haven Street with the engine, together with a couple of additional journeys to be made with the former Ryde Pier Tram.

Consequently, at 10.am. the tram, driven by Terry Hastings and John Wenyon, pulled away from Newport to make an exploratory trip over the disused line, which had been the scene of much activity during the previous days. By this time, crowds had gathered at Newport Station and the Press reporters and photographers were already well - employed taking records of the occasion. Temporary "block posts" were set up for telephone messages to be sent from Haven Street to the Railway Medina public house, Newport, giving the 'all clear' for the train to proceed.

At about 10.40, "CALBOURNE" ran up the yard and coupled up to 3 carriages which were then hauled through the Up platform on to the Viaduct for a preliminary test run, after which water had been taken. As no difficulty was apparent, the train picked up the 'passengers' who had been standing patiently on the Down platform. Travel on the train had been restricted to Society members and special guests, and identity forms were thus prepared for completion by all who wished to make the journey. Before departure, a small ceremony was held on the platform for Miss

Hannah Winter, ardent railway supporter from Haven Street, who was presented with a bouquet by 7-year old Michelle Cobb of Bembridge to commemorate the occasion.

And so, with a blast on the guard's whistle from David Perry, acknowledged by a "hoot" from the engine, we were away – although slight delay was experienced in persuading a small dog not to stand on the track. As we crossed the viaduct and ran into the tunnel beneath Fairlee Road, it seemed almost as if trains had never stopped running – except for the crowds! At every vantage point along the line, there appeared a sea of faces – many local residents of course as the enthusiast world in general had not heard of the manoeuvre. One Society member in Fairlee Road added to the event by displaying a large green flag and Union Jack from his garden! Progress up the bank was excellent – over Halberry House and Mews Lane Crossings & through the avenue of pine trees towards Whippingham to prepare for the steepest gradient of all. Beyond Whippingham, the train passed the horses and cattle in a field later depicted on B.B.C. Television – these creatures had obviously never seen a train before! As we reached the summit of Wootton Bank, the train was brought to a stand on wet rails in the depths of the damp cutting – which is never penetrated by sunlight in winter. This was done intentionally prior to crossing the slip. Former loco Foreman Ivor Davis and "operating officer" George Wheeler clambered down from the engine and with Terry Hastings and Kim Chalkley, who had positioned themselves at the cutting, they anxiously watched as the engine was coaxed inch by inch past the embankment slip, which had been further swollen by the torrential rain of the previous 24 hours. The engines and carriages were gradually eased over the buckled track, witnessed by further crowds watching from Station Road Bridge. The most difficult part of the run had been successfully accomplished! From Wootton to Haven Street steam was cut off for the downhill run through the woods and into the station, where another large crowd of people of all age groups eagerly awaited the occasion and it is said that Sunday School attendances suffered badly as a result! Following due ceremony for the Press photographers, the engine took water ready for the return "light" to Newport. The carriages were berthed beyond the road bridge to the east of the station and the engine set off, pausing only for a moment after crossing Wootton slip. What a fine sight it made as it coasted downhill over Halberry House Crossing into Nweport, running bunker first into the brilliant winter sunshine.

The schedule originally planned had to be revised and it was some time before the next run was made, but the opportunity was taken to marshall the goods wagons into two trains; No. 24, coupled to several loaded coal wagons and the L.S.W.R. Brake Van left Newport at approx. 2.35p.m. carrying on board a despatch bag which contained a letter to Her Majesty The Queen. The document commemorated the

fact that this was the last train to call at Whippingham Station, once used by guests of royalty travelling to Osborne House. As the train ground to a halt at Whippingham (closed to passengers in 1953, and now a private residence), Alderman Mark Woodnutt, the Island's M.P., was waiting to receive the despatch bag from the engine crew (Bob Huxtable and Tom Jackman) and to convey it onwards to Buckingham Palace on the following Tuesday. Society officials posed for photographs on the buffer beam of "CALBOURNE" with Ald. Woodnutt, who was then welcomed aboard the engine for the remainder of the journey to Haven Street.

After some time the engine and Brake Van ambled through the countryside back to Newport. Little time was wasted upon reaching the station however, for daylight was fast fading. At 5.45pm., No. 24 departed from the 'Up' platform with three S.E.C.R. carriages well-laden with another load of passengers. Accommodation was strictly limited on this set for No. 4149, the Society's most recent acquisition, was devoid of all seats, whilst several compartments in the other coaches had been loaded with seat cushions and other miscellanea. A spirited run was made to Haven Street, where, in the darkness, passengers and onlookers one by one drifted away. One carriage (6375) had its electric lighting in working order at the start of the journey, but there was little power in the batteries and the lights grew dimmer as the train proceeded on its way.

The tram, which had been stationed at Haven Street for most of the day as 'water carrier', was sent back to Newport ahead of the engine at this time to collect the remainder of the miscellaneous equipment – which included a platform trolley and the pump used for replenishment of water supplies on the engine. Working on a time interval basis, the engine returned with caution some time later and arrived at Newport just after 7.15pm. to take on water and collect the remaining items – 2 wagons, the 6-wheel Midland crane D429 and its match truck and the 1898 L.S.W.R. van (56046). After engine and tail lamps had been found and placed in position, the train was ready to leave and, at 8.30pm. by the Town Hall clock, the motley assortment of wagons, loaded with a remarkable accumulation of materials, screeched out of the Up platform behind "CALBOURNE". A small crowd of Society members watched from the platform, cheering the train on its way. A shrill hoot from the engine, followed by a series of long blasts as 24 rumbled over the viaduct ended a 109-year association which the town of Newport had had with its railway since the inauguration of the Cowes & Newport railway in 1862. At this hour of the evening most of the people who had watched the day's proceedings had been driven home by rain, but two ladies hurried from Quay Street to the Viaduct and waved enthusiastically as the train passed overhead. Still hooting, the engine hauled its load into the tunnel and rushed the steep gradient on the other side.

This was perhaps the most sentimental journey of all – reminiscent of many a solemn ‘Last Day’ – for this was the final train out of Newport; the Society had at last vacated the Island capital. No. 24 made steady progress up the bank, but a stop was made just beyond Mews Crossing to inject. George Wheeler, now acting as guard, walked back along the line to protect the train in accordance with Regulations, for the tram was to follow from Newport some 20 minutes later. As it happened, the tram suffered a mechanical failure on the way and was only coaxed through to Haven Street by Steve Day and John Wenyon after repairs had been carried out using parts of the diesel pump it was carrying! Meanwhile, pressure had again increased on “CALBOURNE” to allow her to proceed. A local resident had thoughtfully provided a Tilley lamp to pinpoint the exact position of the slip at Wootton and had again sanded the wet rails to ease our passage. The vintage crane, formed into this train, was considered to be the next most awkward vehicle to cross the slip by virtue of its 6-wheeled rigid wheelbase but it rode the distorted track in a most satisfactory manner. With an acknowledging hoot, “CALBOURNE” ran downhill as far as the Haven Street distant signal, where a special stop was made to pin down brakes. The rainswept woods echoed with the clanging buffers and couplings on the old wagons and the hiss of steam from the engine as the train restarted to run the final few hundred yards into the platform, where another Tilley lamp swung from a post in the wind – a welcome signal through the darkness. At 9.50pm. the train came to a stand at Haven Street, whilst the tram eventually arrived at 10.30pm., having been delayed by its mechanical troubles. Our entry into the ‘White Hart’ public house shortly afterwards, to the strains of suitable “railway” piano music from the resident pianist proved that the villagers of Haven Street would not forget the day that their railway “came back”!!

A day which had made history for the Wight Locomotive Society was thus concluded most successfully with the major obstacle, Wootton Embankment Slip, conquered. Local newspapers went to town in their reports of the day’s events – with headlines such as “Scrap Merchants Beaten at Newport” (The News) and “Hundreds Watch Last Trains from Newport” (I.W. County Press). On 2nd February (later than anticipated) three gangs from Messrs. T.W. Ward of Sheffield, the scrap merchants, commenced work from Newport on uplifting the track with alarming speed. By the end of the month rails had been taken out on the Cowes – Wootton and Haven Street – Smallbrook Junction section with only parts of Newport Yard (and of course Haven Street – Wootton) remaining intact. We can not yet be complacent about our present position at Haven Street for capital raising must still continue, but we have achieved what the pessimists said we could never do – establish ourselves at Haven Street Station.

THE WALK

Our meeting point is on what had been the approach road to Newport Station, and through the good offices of Hamilton & Marshall, Funeral Directors, a commemorative 'blue plaque' has been mounted on their wall to record this once busy hub of the Island's railway network. Major General Martin White CB, CBE, Lord-Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight, has kindly consented to unveil this memento for public recognition.

HISTORY

The first Newport Station opened on 16th June 1862 as the southern terminus of the Cowes and Newport Railway, the first railway to be built and opened on the Isle of Wight. Consisting of a single line and run round loop, the station building was a small, wooden structure and seemingly only intended as temporary in view of several schemes for railways linking Newport to other parts of the Island. This original station stood approximately across the road from where we are standing.

Two other railways were built, the Ryde & Newport and the Isle of Wight (Newport Junction) Railways. The former opened on 20th December 1875, the latter finally on 1st June 1879 after having had a temporary terminus at Pan Lane since 6th October 1875. A new station to serve all three companies was built and stood to our left, under what is now Medina Way dual carriageway. These three companies amalgamated on 19th July 1887 to become the Isle of Wight Central Railway. A fourth company, the Freshwater, Yarmouth & Newport Railway opened on 11th July 1889, utilising a bay platform in this station.

Being at the axis of four radiating routes, Newport was the biggest of the Island's stations and contained four platform faces; in addition, there were extensive sidings, goods yards and locomotive sheds and workshops. The advent of the Southern Railway in 1923 saw major rebuilding of facilities, although the basic station building remained. Following nationalisation in 1948, closure of the line to Freshwater in 1953 and then the Sandown line in 1956 saw Newport become just a through station on the line between Ryde and Cowes. The locomotive shed closed in November 1957 and the final passenger trains ran on 21st February 1966, although coal traffic continued until October. The parcels office was utilised as a Parcels Concentration Depot until May 1972, after which the buildings were demolished, the track having been lifted earlier in the year.



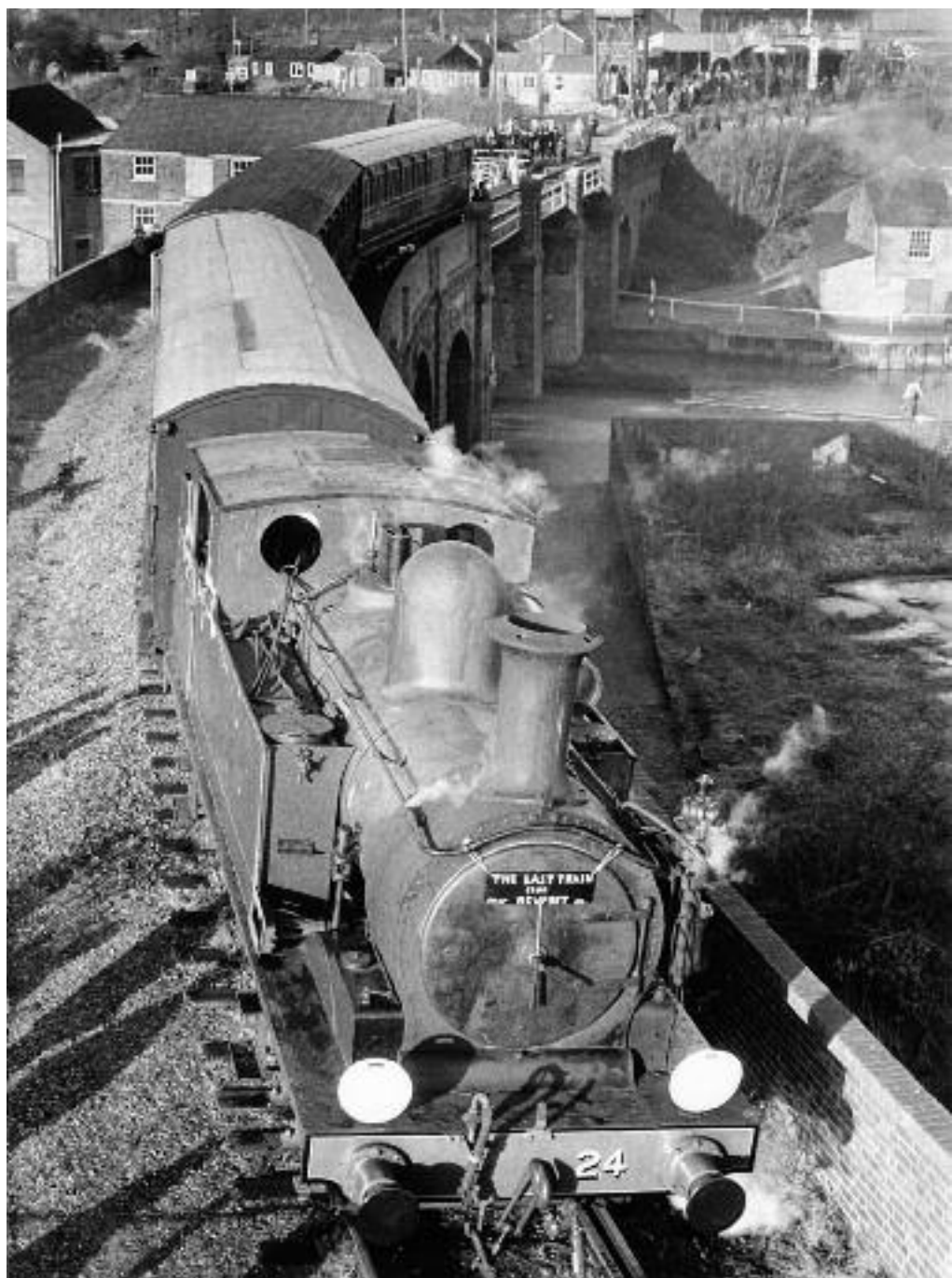
W24 steamed in preparation for the move of the Wight Locomotive Society's stock from Newport to Havenstreet. *Photo: Gary Merrin.*



The chassis of the Ryde Pier Tram is prepared for a test run to Havenstreet. *Photo: Gary Merrin.*



Crowds watch as W24 Calbourne draws into Newport's derelict station in readiness for the move to Havenstreet. *Photo: Gary Merrin.*



W24 and the three LBSCR bogie carriages are used to test the viaduct at Newport prior to running through to Havenstreet. *Photo: Gary Merrin*

THE ROUTE FROM NEWPORT TO WOOTTON

Immediately next to Hamilton & Marshall note the electricity sub-station, still proudly bearing the identification “Station Approach”.

We walk down towards Holyrood Street and turn left into Sea Street. On the corner stands the “Railway Medina” public house, known and frequented by generations of railwaymen! Passing the Quay Arts Centre, we turn left onto the Quay approach road. At the bridge across the River Medina, there are remains of the railway viaducts that spanned the river; on the west bank are the remains of the brick base of the abutment to the opening drawbridges, whilst to the east the piers of the Ryde line viaduct are visible. The dual carriageway bridge stands approximately where a low level bridge, approached by an incline down from the main goods yard, gave access to sidings on Newport Quay via a wagon turntable. No traces now remain. On the skyline across the river is the unmistakable stepped outline of the former electricity works building, which appears in many photographs of Newport station. Turning right immediately before the Riverside Centre, this area was the site of Newport Gas Works; we walk up through the car park on Footpath N175 and alongside the link road to Newport Tunnel. The portal at this end is not original, having been rebuilt to accommodate the new road system, but immediately inside the tunnel the filled in refuges are easily seen as well as several telephone insulators on the walls. The north portal is original and immediately outside is a short piece of bullhead rail, the stump of a telegraph pole and the turnbuckle from one of its support guys. On the top of the tunnel mouth is a sculpture of an O2 locomotive, No. 14 ‘Fishbourne’.

The trackbed immediately north of the tunnel has been infilled and housing built on part of the formation and it is not until the site of Halberry House foot crossing that the original level is regained. On the east side, railway concrete fence posts still stand. Further infilling has taken place between Halberry House crossing and the demolished Cross Street overbridge (SR Bridge 25), although the present footpath N209 follows the line of the railway. We now descend onto the trackbed proper and the old railway drains can be seen, still continuing their function of draining the alignment. Other artefacts from railway days are further concrete and bullhead rail fence posts and a section of concrete retaining wall on the east side. At Mews Lane the gate post stands partly hidden in the undergrowth.

North of Mews Lane, the alignment is not an official footpath, although generally used by dog walkers in particular! Depending on ground conditions, we may have to

divert at Mews Lane and walk alongside the busy A3054 Fairlee Road, as the trackbed may be flooded.

Opposite the Round House café there is a private access and Round House bridge, a cattle creep (SR Bridge 24), may be viewed, complete with its guard rails; also in the vicinity are some wooden and cast iron fence posts. From this point the trackbed is inaccessible and it is necessary to walk alongside North Fairlee Road to Belmont or Pinnock's Lane. Turning right onto the lane, the girders of Pinnock's Bridge (SR Bridge 21) cross above; immediately before the bridge, an access on the left leads up onto the trackbed. Although it is not possible to walk across Pinnock's Bridge, it can be viewed from either side.

The trackbed consists of ash ballast and various concrete, cast iron and pressed steel fence posts stand along both sides. A brick cattle creep (SR Bridge 20) can be viewed, although movement has cracked the wing walls and they are shored up with timbers. We soon come to Whippingham Station; the up platform ramp is visible before a high timber fence obscures most of the view of the station buildings. The down platform is extant amongst the undergrowth, including the foundations of the old waiting shelter. By standing on the old down platform some of the station may be seen, including marks on the brickwork where the clock once was attached. A glimpse along the approach drive to the old station reveals a PMV body, obtained from the IWSR.

The twin arches of Palmers Brook culvert (SR Bridge 19) are worth exploring before the site of Fattening Park Bridge (SR Bridge 18) is reached. No traces now remain and the trackbed has been infilled with rubble from the demolition of the bridge to remove the hump in Park Road. Once across the road, the footpath drops back to trackbed level and Fattening Park Farm Bridge (SR Bridge 17) is reached. This is not the original occupation bridge, which became unsafe and eventually collapsed, but a brick faced, concrete replacement constructed in 1999 to railway gauge by the IWCC following representation by today's walk leader, Roger Macdonald. Further on is another, unnumbered, culvert and close by a collapsed, concrete Permanent Way hut. In this vicinity are yet more fence posts, this time of an H-section iron. The path soon begins to climb through the site of Wootton Station, although nothing now remains to be seen, to meet Station Road, Wootton, and the end of the walk. The remains of the three-arch Station Road Bridge (SR Bridge 16), apart from the parapets, are still extant beneath the infill, although completely invisible.

We cross over into the IWSR's Wootton Station, where W24 Calbourne and our train await for the short journey to Havenstreet and refreshments. A return train will

leave Havenstreet for Wootton at 2.55pm, to enable bus connection to Newport and Ryde to be made.

We hope you have enjoyed today's walk. Further railway walks are programmed during 2011; details are on the special leaflet available and we look forward to seeing you again.



Looking south from Cross St bridge, an unidentified O2 has just passed Newport down distant from Ryde signal with a Ryde-bound train about 1930. *Photo: A.B.MacLeod*



Whippingham Station from the west in the 1960s. Note the overgrown siding in the dip behind the platform on the left.



Driver Tom 'Jacko' Jackman hands over a letter to H.M. The Queen at Whippingham to Mark Woodnutt MP, whilst train staff look on.



Wootton station looking west in 1949. The bank on the left was unstable then.



Wootton Station looking east. The station offices were situated in one of the bridge arches and a solitary coal wagon stands in Charlie Osborn's siding. 1949.



W24 proceeds gingerly over distorted trackwork and under Station Road bridge, Wootton, with a selection of goods wagons.



Having arrived at Havenstreet with the first set of carriages, W24 runs round before admiring crowds, prior to returning to Newport.