



Vintage Carriages Trust

# *Carriage Chronicle*

News for Members: January 2024



- The Chatham starts to turn Green
- AGM Report 2023
- A Changing Visitor Profile?
- Museum Refurbishment Update

# Welcome to the January 2024 'Carriage Chronicle' Members' Update - *Bob Sprot*

Welcome to the January 2024 'Carriage Chronicle' and may we wish all our Members a Happy New Year. This issue features the further progress we have made on our major update of the Museum, including the final touches to complete Phase 1, as well as the preparations for Phase 2, which is now well underway.

Also in this edition is a report on the Annual General Meeting held on 11 November 2023. A separate booklet of the minutes of the meeting and the detailed reports given to attendees on the day is enclosed.

We have included an interesting article noting the changes that are becoming increasingly evident in our visitor profile, and what this could mean for the future activities of the Trust. Finally, there are also the usual updates on our carriages and locomotives including the continued use of our Bulleid carriage at Emsbay.



VCT S1469 Bulleid Carriage at Bolton Abbey - Photo: EMBR Archive

Contents	Page
Membership Matters	3
VCT AGM 2023	4-5
A Changing Visitor Profile?	6-7
Museum Refurbishment Phases 1 and 2	8-11
Workshop Update	12-13
Locomotives Update	14
Events	15

# Membership Matters - *Bob Sprot*

## Members Update

We would like to welcome the following new Members who have joined the Vintage Carriages Trust in the last four months - Michael Kendrick, Ron Dumbell and Sophie Adamson.

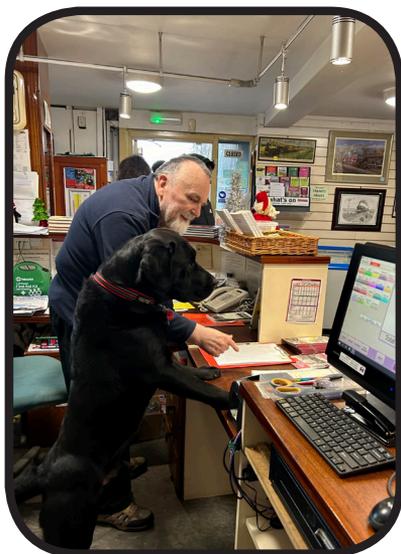
Sadly, we have been notified of the death of the following Members - Mr. I Bulmer and Mr. Robin Lush. Robin was a renowned railway photographer and over more than fifty years took many high quality photographs of our VCT carriages when in use on the KWVR. These included iconic pictures of many of our carriages in the 1970 film of *The Railway Children*. The Chairman, Trustees, Staff and Volunteers would like to send their deepest sympathies to all the families and friends.

## Membership Renewals 2024/5

A reminder that our **next** membership year runs from April 1 2024 to March 31 2025. New membership cards will be sent to Honorary Members, Life Members and Members who pay by standing order arrangements during the January to March period 2024. Members who renew annually will receive the appropriate renewal letter in March 2024.

## Legacies

The Trust has been very fortunate in recent years to be the beneficiary of a number of legacies. These can vary from a substantial financial bequest to the designation in wills of railway items including books, magazines and model railway lines. We have a leaflet available on request to [membership@vintagecarriagestrust.org](mailto:membership@vintagecarriagestrust.org), which will give you further details if you wish to consider leaving items to the Trust.



Trainee Volunteer 'Angus' on till duty with John Wallis on Boxing Day 2023 -  
Photo: Ruth Wilson

# Report on the VCT AGM 2023

- Dave Carr and Trevor England

The Annual General Meeting of the Vintage Carriages Trust for 2023 was held at 2.30pm on Saturday 11th November 2023 at the Civic Centre, North Street, Keighley.

As usual on the day of the AGM, we were able to offer a Museum and Workshop visit and buffet lunch before the meeting. Last year we found that the room available at the Bronte Hotel was too small for comfort. Therefore, this year we decided to move the location to the Civic Centre in Keighley. Those attending were able to transfer from the Museum to the AGM by train, bus or car. Our thanks as always are due to Ian Wild and Gillian Foster for organising and serving the lunch and to our Trustee Sheila Seabrook for her continued generous sponsorship of the cost of the event.

Before everyone departed to Keighley for the AGM Chairman Trevor England presented the Wallace and Gromit award for the annual outstanding contribution to the Trust to volunteer Paul Holroyd for his work on our new Museum Interpretation.

At the AGM, the results of the postal ballot were announced, and as in recent years there were twice the number of votes received than the number who attended in person. This allows greater involvement for those Members not able to be present at the meeting. Full minutes of the AGM are contained in a separate attachment with this issue of the Carriage Chronicle.

Presentations at the AGM were as follows:

- The Chairman Trevor England gave an overview of the activities of the Trust in the previous year and presented a Workshop report.



Chairman Trevor England presenting the Wallace and Gromit Award to Paul Holroyd before the AGM - Photo: Peter Yewdall

# Report on the VCT AGM 2023

- *Dave Carr and Trevor England*

- Bob Sprot explained the sound financial position of the Trust. This was on behalf of our outgoing Treasurer Paula Bowker who was also thanked for her work for the Trust over recent years. Bob also presented reports on Membership, Retail and Rail Story, and on our Museum displays on behalf of Alexandra Stockdale-Haley.
- Our Museum Mentor Bob Gwynne, who is retiring from the role, gave a thought provoking address with particular reference to future challenges facing all preserved railways and museums.
- Ian Smith reported on the successful overhaul and relaunch of Sir Berkeley at Middleton and the initial work being carried out on Bellerophon at Foxfield.
- The Annual Report & Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023 was adopted and our Auditors Spenser Wilson were reappointed.
- Finally, in the Election of Trustees Debbie Cross and Robert Taggart were reappointed, and Kath Carlton and Peter Yewdall were elected as new Trustees all for a three-year period. Kath as well as being Secretary to the Friends of the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway brings her knowledge of museum artefacts and collections to the Trust. Peter is working currently in retail and has agreed to take over the important and growing social media activity for VCT.

Following the AGM the Trustees held a short meeting and elected the main officers of the Trust for the coming year. These are: Chairman Trevor England, Vice Chairs Debbie Cross and Ian Smith, Secretary Dave Carr, Treasurer and Membership Secretary Bob Sprot.



New Trustees Kath Carlton and Peter Yewdall - Photos: Bob Sprot

# A Changing Visitor and Customer Profile? -

*Bob Sprot*

It has become increasingly clear that we are witnessing considerable changes to our visitor and customer profile at the VCT Museum. How we deal and manage these changes is of huge importance to VCT in the next few years. Our visitors in a very general way can be divided into two distinct categories, although there are many differences and nuances within each of these groups, too detailed to explain in this short article. The two categories are:

**Railway Enthusiasts** - this group probably at about 30% of our total visitors remain our core visitor and customer base. They tend to come from an older and predominantly male age group - although not exclusively - and are our most important retail customers purchasing our traditional donated product groups of magazines, books, dvd's, model railways, framed pictures and railwayana. Currently this group give us over 70% of our retail sales. They are interested in seeing our restorations taking place and our carriages in action. Their peak times to visit are steam and diesel galas. However, going forward we are likely to see a decline in their numbers through natural causes.



A different audience - KWVR Beer and Music Event October 2023 - Photo: Bob Sprot

# A Changing Visitor and Customer Profile? -

*Bob Sprot*

**The Family Market** - this group is our growth area and already represent 70% of our visitors. They tend to be younger than the enthusiasts, visit us as a family unit and display different requirements. The areas of most interest in our retail offer to this group are gift lines, children's products, model railways, confectionery and soft drinks. Magazines and books unless heavily discounted have less appeal to families. Currently this group gives us only 30% of our sales turnover, and because their chosen product areas are 'bought in' rather than donated, the profit return to the Trust is heavily diluted. However, families and non-enthusiasts are much more likely to be interested in our Museum and the stories and social history that our collection provides. Only last year the family market dominated our visitation and sales during the visit of Flying Scotsman in May 2023.

## Conclusions

- We will continue the restoration and maintenance work on our carriages and locomotives and use them whenever possible.
- Our emphasis for the next couple of years must continue to be to maximize our income by ongoing sales to enthusiasts, whilst developing the retail product areas that appeal to families.
- The refurbishment work we are undertaking in the Museum of making our displays more interesting and relevant will assist us in growing the appeal to the family market.
- Through the 'Rail Story at ingrow' concept we will increase the marketing of our Museum to encourage greater visitation.



'Expanding Gift areas aimed at the family market' Photo: Bob Sprot

# Museum Refurbishment - Finishing Phase 1 - *Paul Holroyd*

## Improving our Interpretive Signage

The last two issues of the Carriage Chronicle have included images showing the progress we have made with the refurbishment. In this article, I will try to explain a little more about the final element of phase one - our interpretation. Many local lines have been closed for 59 years, so plenty of people have never seen trains running through their towns and in many cases have never travelled on a train. You need to be approaching 70 years of age to remember everyday steam in the West Riding. Most of our Museum visitors- as opposed to those in our shop - are not railway enthusiasts, and know very little about railways. A large proportion of visitors can only spend 30 minutes or so with us. This, then, is the challenge: to appeal to both the casual visitor and the enthusiast, and to grab their attention and make an impact in just 30 minutes. So what have we done?

## Wall Displays

- We have used a larger size typeface for all the new signage.
- We have tried to explain some of the great changes that the arrival of the railways brought about, such as faster journey times, the standardisation of time and the greater availability of fresh food.
- We have also tried to place some of the signs and posters into context: underneath the Bradford Exchange running-in board there is a photo of a Fairburn tank loco at Bradford Exchange, with a running-in board clearly in view. By courtesy of David Webdale who runs the excellent [www.lostrailwayswestyorkshire.co.uk](http://www.lostrailwayswestyorkshire.co.uk) website, we have also included a map of central Bradford.



Keighley Wall Display with new Interpretation Panels - Photo: Paul Holroyd

# Museum Refurbishment - Finishing Phase 1 - *Paul Holroyd*

- We have also tried to include a few “people” stories. In response to visitor queries, we have had information about the Bronte family of Haworth on display since 2016. Now however, the information is in a much more prominent and relevant position.

## Carriage Information Panels

Turning to the carriage information panels, Robert Taggart has produced a very eye-catching design.

- We have tried to layer the information, so that the basic questions, which are asked by most visitors, are dealt with in the first few lines.
- We have used sub-headings to split the information into bite-sized chunks, and to encourage visitors to discover interesting facts.
- For the person who would like to know everything about each carriage, we have added the QR codes, which link to the VCT website, which were first produced back in 2013 by Graham Holroyd.
- Before going into final production, we did trial versions and sought feedback from visitors, and from Sarah Oswald of Museum Development Yorkshire.



Bradford Wall Display - Interpretation  
Panels - Photo: Paul Holroyd



New Walkway Board -  
Photo: Bob Sprot

# Museum Refurbishment - Finishing Phase 1 - *Paul Holroyd*

- Together with the blue plaques, which were first introduced in 2011, we hope that the new interpretative signage will be of interest to our visitors, and encourage them to recommend VCT to their friends.



Blue Film Plaques displayed on Met Brake  
427 - Photo: Bob Sprot

## Preparing for Phase 2 of the Museum

### The Wall Bays

On November 21 2023 work started to remove the signage and wooden display boards in the four bays between the shop entrance and the mess room, and on December 6, the last signs were removed. Chris Smith did most of the work, with assistance from Norman Overend. Whilst this may sound like a simple exercise, many of the signs were large and heavy, needing three people at times to lower them safely to ground level. As before, each item was photographed, and the images and new locations of the items emailed to our Archivist Robert Harvey, so that the computer database, which lists everything from paperwork to signs, could be updated. Philip Walton then removed the two small televisions.

Work then switched to the railway-side wall of the building, with most of the replica signs being removed from the walls. The Stephens Ink thermometer, the Spen Valley signal box signs, and two London-area totem signs have been re-located onto the railway-side wall. Chris has also moved a Liverpool & Southport sign into a much more prominent position.

# Preparing for Phase 2 of the Museum Redevelopment - *Paul Holroyd*

## New Doors

As well as re-cladding the walls, the builders are creating a wider exit doorway from the Museum to the shop, and installing a new Workshop door - complete with a window - that will allow visitors to see into the workshop when the shutters must be down. The remaining doors on the shop side of the building are also being replaced.

## New Displays

What will be displayed, once the builders have finished, including themes to be featured and their interpretation, is in preparation, and will be featured in the next issue.



Bare Walls ready for Phase 2 -

Photo: Bob Sprot

## Workshop and Carriage Update- *Trevor England*

Progress in the workshop has been much slower than we had hoped since the end of the Covid pandemic. Four years on, we have a smaller volunteer workforce and we need to adjust the projects to meet the present situation. If we could find two or three new volunteers in their forties or fifties with some carriage restoration experience that would be very welcome. Currently the main priority is to complete the work on the Chatham carriage. Then a concentrated effort to progress the Midland carriage towards completion can begin again.



Chatham Guards Compartment minus Doors undergoing repair Photo: Paul Holroyd

# Workshop and Carriage Update- *Trevor England*

## **SR No3554 Chatham**

The team has continued to work on the Chatham. What was expected to be a quick repaint and interior tidy up for its centenary this year has turned out to be a bigger project than planned. Some of this work was recognised as needing to be undertaken a number of years ago, but as the carriage was in constant use on the KWVR after the Covid lockdowns it is only now that we are able to tackle the job.

The doors on the guard's compartment have been found to be in need of some extensive rebuilding. Apart from the guard's compartment area, both sides are now being progressed and are in green undercoat. The upgrade of some of the interior woodwork is being carried out and the toilet area is very much improved. The compartments are now starting to come back together. As well as tidying up the woodwork, some attention is being given to the luggage racks. In the brake area, the hand brake wheel has been removed to assess why the gap between it and the bulkhead has become an issue. In addition, the steam heat radiator which is life expired will be replaced by a new one purchased and which looks of the correct period.

The plan is to have this carriage looking well in time for the Chairman's Day in June. We are also hopeful that the KWVR will wish to use it in the Vintage Trains in the summer.

## **Midland No358**

Since the last report, little has changed, but we are hopeful that the team can move on to this carriage in the spring. Lowbridge are continuing to work on producing the superior cushioning for the first class compartments.

## **Diesel Rail Bus E79962**

The work on this vehicle is still on hold until we can see progress on the Chatham and Midland carriages. If we can build up the size of the workshop team, it would allow us restart the restoration on the Keighley end.

# Locomotives Update - Ian Smith

## Sir Berkeley

Footsteps have been added to the saddletank to assist crews when the engine needs to take water. It saw service on New Year's Day and the modifications have been successful. In addition, Middleton Railway Trust Engineer Steve Roberts spent some time inside the tank, de-rusting and then repainting the inside - not a pleasant task by any means, but necessary to prevent build-up of rust inside the tank. The front right hand axle box has been running warm and will be investigated with a view to possible white metalling to cure the problem. This work will ensure its reliability and we hope to hire the engine out to other railways during 2024.



Sir Berkeley complete with new footsteps working at Moor Road, Middleton on New Year's Day 2024 - Photo: Ian Dobson

## Bellerophon

The overhaul at Foxfield continues slowly, with work still being concentrated on the boiler.

### Bellerophon Model

There have been further delays in the production process of the model which hopefully is due to appear later in 2024.

# Events and Publicity - *Bob Sprot*

## KWVR Beer and Music Festival - October 2023

As noted in previous years this event attracts a different audience to Ingrow, and we welcomed several hundred 'new faces' to have a look at our Museum. This helped boost our sales of ice cream, confectionery, and surprisingly soft drinks, over the three days of the Beer and Music festival.

## Bulleid S1469 at Emsay

Our Bulleid carriage has seen extensive use on the Emsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway 'Polar Express' train in the run up to Christmas.

### Late News:

We have been able to agree a further twelve months loan for the Bulleid carriage with the Yorkshire Dales Railway at Emsay. This has again given us the necessary space within the VCT building to allow us to progress the other workshop projects. We have been offered the opportunity later this year for a VCT members ride in the carriage. Details of this will be given in the next Carriage Chronicle, scheduled for publication in May, as well as at the Chairman's Day event in June.



Our Bulleid carriage on the Christmas 'Polar Express' Train at Emsay December 2023 (but not going to Padstow!) - Photo: Richard Jones



Phase 1 Museum Wall Displays Complete - Photo: John Sagar

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