

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE LYMINGTON TO BROCKENHURST LINE



No. 70 December 2022

Dear Friends,

I would like to wish you all a **very Happy Christmas!** Two kind sponsors again came forward to support a Christmas Tree at St Thomas's church in Lymington. It is good publicity for the line and for membership. We hope that the tree will go down to the station after the end of the Festival in the church. If so, do look at the decorations, which again take a railway theme, with tickets affixed to old-fashioned luggage labels and small railway toys – all thanks to members of the committee Cllr. Jacqui England, Alexi Sugden and Alastair Mann.



The tree at St Thomas's this weekend (courtesy Stephen Jones)

Last September a number of you went with John Canavan to **Kintbury, near Hungerford** on the Kennet & Avon Canal with a trip by horse-drawn barge – magic! See below for a more detailed account of the trip.

Looking further into the New Year, we have decided (after a straw poll of members) to **hold the AGM in April or May**, when the days are longer and with luck the weather is better. As is now usual, there will be something of interest afterwards.

Our **early summer excursion** is being planned by John Canavan as I write this; this will be to the **Mid Hants Railway**, aka the Watercress Line, which runs from Alresford to Alton. We went there many years ago, and many of you have asked when a repeat visit would take place. There is to be an added attraction if we can organise it. Our Committee member David Mead is a staunch supporter and Volunteer on the line.



Medstead & Four Marks station on the Watercress Line

On a practical note, several people have drawn our attention to **SWR's inconsistencies in their website**; two people can visit SWR at the same time and find quite different answers to ticket costs, in particular. Do you have any experience of this? If so, please tell us, as we want to build up a picture and ask SWR to investigate.

Many people have asked about Rail usage; the latest figures show a significant rise moving back towards pre-Covid levels. LYT was at 200,270 compared with 252,270 for 2018/19. Interestingly, at the SWR stakeholder meeting they said that overall the network was back to 70% of pre-Covid. The Town station's figure is at around 80%.

There is also the inevitable **engineering work** in our area, so please check before you travel. In addition to **strikes currently forecast**, below is a colourful diagram showing days of disruption. Engineering work link: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/plan-my-journey/planned-improvements>

Strike Action link: https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/service_disruptions/industrialaction.aspx

Another line which may be affected is the GRW: see <https://www.gwr.com/strike>.

Finally, on a lighter note. One of our members, Tom Cornwall, is hoping to build a scale **model of Lymington Town station** around the 1950s/60s. If any of you have photos of the buildings he would be extremely grateful, especially if they show a view from the east side, e.g. of the water tower. Contact Tom Cornwall on tom.cornwall@btopenworld.com. He can copy them of course, so he doesn't need to keep the originals.

With best wishes from your committee, and from
Georgina

Tel. 01590 672406 g.craufurd@gmail.com

Below is a detailed description of the Kintbury trip by a member who took part in it:

APPENDIX 1

Kintbury Horse-Drawn Barge Excursion

By Brian Matthews

The Friends of the Lymington to Brockenhurst Line's second of their twice-yearly outings took place on Saturday 24th September. It required an early start, meeting at Lymington Town station at 07.10 to catch the 07.29 to Brockenhurst. After changing trains at Brockenhurst, Southampton Central, Reading and Newbury the party arrived at its destination, Kintbury, for a horse-drawn barge cruise operated by Kennet Horse Boat Company. 21 Friends were joined by some 19 other passengers on board the "Kennet Valley" for which the 8-year-old Clydesdale cob, "Drummer", provided the motive power for an 11.30-ish departure.

The "Kennet Valley" has full weather protection and toilet facilities, together with a well-stocked bar serving tea, coffee, soft and alcoholic drinks, plus crisps, biscuits and confectionery. There is also a selection of souvenirs and gifts. There followed a leisurely 2 hour trip on the Kennet and Avon Canal as far as Dreweat's Lock where "Drummer" was unhitched while the barge negotiated the lock, turned round and returned via the lock to Kintbury.



The late Queen reopened the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1990, after it had been extensively cleared and refurbished by dedicated waterway enthusiasts and local volunteers. It runs through what is often spectacular scenery for 140 km (87 miles) between the Thames at Reading and the Avon at Bristol. The canal section is 92km (57 miles) long and was constructed between 1794 and 1810 to link the Avon and Kennet rivers. It runs through Kintbury (Berkshire) which is a picturesque village just off the A4 between Newbury and Hungerford. The Kennet and Avon Canal is one of the many waterways looked after by the Canal and River Trust.



There was some free time to walk along the towpath, picnic or visit the local hostelry before rendezvousing at Kintbury station to catch the 14.51 service to Newbury. The first of several delays meant the return journey took longer than expected but we arrived back at Lymington Town station at 18.20, only an hour later than John's detailed timetable. This was the most

enjoyable way to spend a glorious early autumn day, which unexpected engineering works and threatened industrial action failed to spoil.

APPENDIX 2 NEW CHANGES TO SWR'S TIMETABLE

David Mead writes:

I have studied the changes in our area. During the off peak the up stopping services will run from Bournemouth to Winchester as now but the down services will be shown as a separate service from Southampton to Bournemouth and will depart later which means there's a 50 minute wait between the Cardiff service arriving and the stopping train to Bournemouth. On the plus side the times will provide a connection from the stopping service from Portsmouth and Southsea thus creating the long-awaited cross-Solent service: for example, Netley and Woolston with a link to Totton and Ashurst. The stopping train will no longer wait at Brockenhurst on platform 1 but will use platform 3, providing a cross-platform link to Lymington. Journey times from Totton and Ashurst to Sway, New Milton, Hinton Admiral, Christchurch and Pokesdown will be quicker without the 15-minute lay-over at Brockenhurst. However, going to Branksome and Parkstone will take longer with a 20-minute wait at Brockenhurst.

The semi-fast services from London in the off peak will divide at Bournemouth and instead of the rear empty to sidings they will provide a service to Poole only. Passengers will need to be aware that they are in the correct portion of the train, as now only the front five coaches go stopping to Weymouth. In the peak hours most of the London to Weymouth trains will divide at Southampton with the rear five forming the stopping service to Bournemouth and will then offer fast journey times to Totton and Ashurst without having to change. During the morning peak trains towards London have changes with an additional service from Brockenhurst to Southampton to make use of the now empty stock from the "college" train at 08.52; it will also start back at Weymouth giving an all-stations service to Southampton.

A couple of the 'up' morning trains have been speeded up; one will run as a full 10 coach train from Bournemouth and will include stops at Ashurst and Totton. The other will miss them out, but an additional Bournemouth to Winchester will provide the connection at Southampton. I can see that SWR have utilised the empty carriage stock (ECS) more to provide a public service which will offer more seats. The new times will need a bit of memory at first but hopefully members will be able to plan their journeys without too much confusion.

Importantly I hope members will use the late-night 23.13 from Bournemouth to Southampton, in order to enjoy evening shows in Bournemouth. It will be starting back at Weymouth and at our request will go to Southampton instead of terminating at Bournemouth. It will also run on Saturdays.

The weekend services are similar in pattern with the off-peak services running all day. Beaulieu Road generally maintains a two hourly off peak service, and will not benefit from the new late-evening trains.

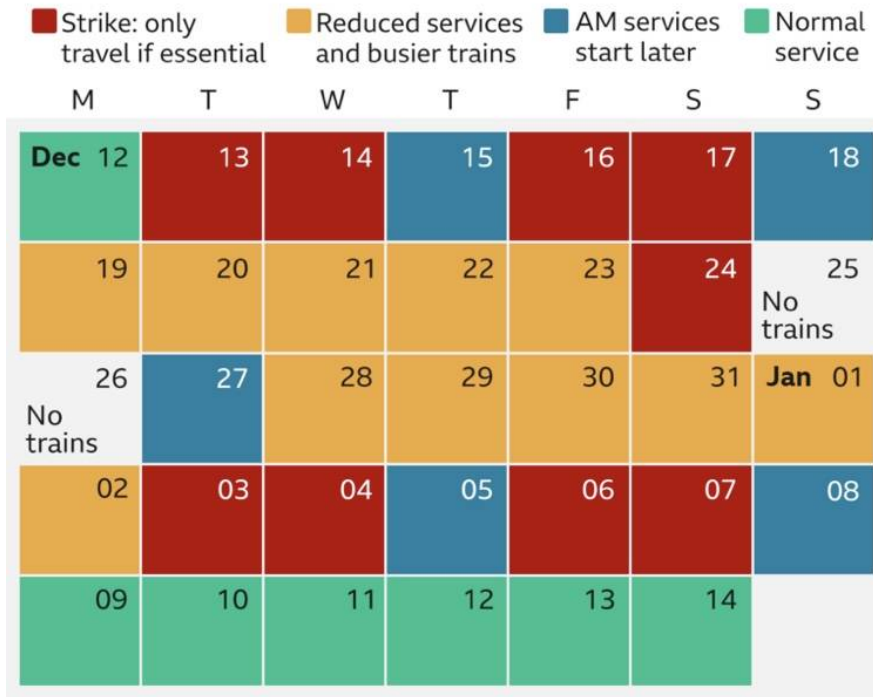
Train strikes

The frequently-occurring train strikes have caused a lot of confusion, so we hope that the diagram below will help people over the next few weeks. According to SWR web site there will be no trains on the Lymington Branch until 4th January 2023. The

mainline will only have one train per hour between Southampton Central and Brockenhurst and Weymouth also. There are no rail replacement buses. If this plan goes ahead there will only be service bus routes out of Lymington available. There are no trains west of Southampton on strike days.

When can I travel on the trains?

Days affected by strike action in England and Wales



APPENDIX 3: CHAIR'S REPORT

From a recent Committee Meeting

Thank you to Committee Members, Jackie, Alastair, Alexi and Steve who made the decorations and decorated our tree for the Lymington Christmas Tree Festival. I am glad to say that the tree has been bought (by an unknown person) with the proceeds going to the Friends of the Church.

Several volunteers took part in the autumn planting of the winter pansies at Lymington Town Station. Thank you for your help with this. It really does look pretty. There was an incident of minor vandalism when the Dessie planter and another small planter were overturned at the station. Marvin who works at the station restored them to their rightful place and all is now well. They will be chained up to prevent this from happening again.

The Group's autumn outing to Kintbury for a horse drawn barge trip was fully booked and went very well. John Canavan, our organiser, got a report in the Clubs and Societies page of the Lymington Times edition on 28th October. Thank you John for your efforts.

We have good news about the Secretary's post. Sadly for us, Georgina has given a year's notice that she intends to step down in April 2023. Fortunately, Alastair Mann and Alexi Sugden, fairly new Committee members, have stepped forward and will job share the Secretary job. Georgina will stay as our newsletter editor.

Happy Christmas and New Year Greetings from your Chairman,

Alison Hull