

The Potting Shed

The Newsletter of Poppleton Community Railway Nursery

Issue Number 2 - April 2009

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Welcome to the second edition of the Poppleton Community Railway Nursery Newsletter.

The great news is that we have come to an agreement with Network Rail on the lease and have now signed, also we have insurance in place.

The board are at present very involved in carrying out a complete survey of the site which, in the end, will give us a complete list of the work required and enable us to programme the work.

This is where the hard work starts and the help of all would be appreciated in getting the site up to scratch. Unfortunately, due to broken and unsafe glass on some greenhouses access to certain parts of the site will initially be restricted.

We have been fortunate in securing the contents of the nursery, which belonged to the Coach House at Rawcliffe. This was run by the NHS as a therapeutic activity for people with mental health problems. The nursery contains many shrubs and perennials, all in various stages of growth, along with a selection of herbs and bedding plants. This will form the basis of the Railway Nursery. It is proposed to move this stock onto the site over the next few weeks. The amount brought over to begin with be limited by the available space at the Railway Nursery. It is intended to only open a small part of the nursery to begin with while repair work is done. The rest of the stock will move on as space allows. Along with the plants will be a selection of tools and equipment which will also be donated to the new nursery. It is intended to grow a large proportion of hardy shrubs and perennials, along with spring bulbs, summer bedding, hanging baskets and containers, autumn bedding, Christmas decorations and hyacinths. We will also have some craft work allied to the horticultural seasons, handmade cards for Christmas, Valentines Day, Mothers Day, Easter and Birthdays. Candle making, hand made paper and hand made soap. As time goes on we will see what sell well and adjust production in favour of those items.

Contact Us

If you feel that you wish to contact any of the board or sub committee members then you should email the Company Secretary in the first instance at tony.nunn11@tiscali.co.uk

The board have set up sub committee's to run the various departments and to make it easier to operate and these are:

Horticultural - Paul Botting, Tony Nunn
Railway - Bob Brook
Publicity - Stephen Lee

Open Meeting

A meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 22nd April at the nursery commencing at 18.30 and all are welcome for discussion and ideas.

Site Rules

An initial set of site rules have been drawn up and these must be strictly adhered to. Anyone disobeying these rules will be subject to disciplinary action.

The rules may be altered or added too as time goes on, copies are available on request.

Membership

A membership form has been included with this newsletter and should be completed and returned to Bob Brook at the address shown on the form.

It has been decided that due to insurance requirements and the fact that we will be applying for Charity status that we must have a membership and that there will be 5 different categories and these are:

Full	-	£5 per year
Concession*	-	£2 per year
Associate Groups	-	£5 per year
Associate Schools	-	£2 per year
Day	-	£1 per day

* Student, unwaged and over 60's

Membership (continued)

Membership Rules

Only full and concession members over 16 will have the right to vote at meetings.

Only full and concession members over 16 will have the right to stand as directors or any other responsible positions.

Associate members will only have one card issued and is only valid when attending as part of a group. Any person in a group wishing to volunteer or use the premises at other times should join as an individual.

Only members will be allowed on the premises to work or meet/socialise/buy.

Membership will run for a calendar year January to December. Anyone joining after September will have membership until December the following year.

Members will be kept informed of the latest news from the nursery by means of a regular newsletter, this will be sent by email so it is important that we have an up to date record of your email. If you don't have email then arrangements will be made to post your copy to you, but a donation may be requested to help with postage.

Newsletter

The newsletter called "The Potting Shed" will be issued at regular intervals and hopefully monthly in the future.

It should be noted that this edition is being sent to all people that have shown an interest in the nursery project since the first meeting way back in August 2006, but if there is no response from you by means of a completed membership form then this will be the last correspondence that will be sent to you.

Articles

Comments and views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Board of Directors.

Getting Involved

By Stephen Lee

Late in the summer of 2006 I came across a short article* in The Guardian, by Martin Wainwright, about a fascinating horticultural nursery in Poppleton, rare

Getting Involved (continued)

in having its own narrow gauge railway. This conjured up a vision of something between a vast landed estate's walled kitchen garden, and the acres and acres of nursery that the Bloom family keep at Bressingham, along with their steam museum and extensive narrow gauge railways. I really saw in my mind's eye acres of glasshouses with little cucumber specials (that's ordinary cucumbers, and little trains, you understand, I don't think that gherkins would be a major crop) chuffing about!

Although vertical integration in the railways was an early feature with companies having their own loco and wagon works, horse breeding and so on, including grand hotels at London termini and other principle stations it had rather petered out as a business practice following Beeching, not to speak of Thatcherisation. (I remember, for example, stopping in a lovely timewarp of an hotel, at that stage a British Transport Commission property at Turnberry, on the east coast of Scotland in the late 1960s, a vast, grandiose Victorian palace that looked out over the sea to the west, and the fabulous, eponymous golf course inland: I don't think that it had actually ever been directly served by rail, but that it had been built by a railway company to generate traffic. Although in their grander days these hotels had their own railway company supplies of vegetables and cut flowers, Poppleton Railway Nursery dates only from WW II, when hotels and restaurant cars needed salads, vegetables and cut flowers, and stations needed bedding plants. During its latter years it was run by Jarvis the rail infrastructure contractors. It closed in 2006 and Network Rail was keen to find a community friendly operator as a tenant.

Well, that article was enough for me to drive from Hull to York through a monsoon-like summer thunderstorm, and see the nursery for the first time during an open public meeting in August 2006. In the meantime other meetings have taken place, interim personnel managing the company changed and in due course I was elected to the board of directors.

Tony Nunn, one of the original members from way back in 2006, is to be congratulated for his pit-bull tenacity and application. The two and half years since those early meetings have been littered with delays, confusion, setbacks, bloody mindedness, inevitable bureaucracy, "Elf 'n' Saffey, innit?", the sheer injellitance** displayed by monolithic organisations and more.

Now at last Poppleton Community Railway Nursery has signed the lease, taken occupation of the site and is now ready for business. So what is it that will take place? Essentially our aim is to exploit the resource of the site to enable it to serve the community with horticultural and railway related projects for educational, and general beneficial aims.

A steadfast partner since the beginning of the renaissance of the nursery has been the NHS rehabilitation team that has for years used horticultural skills training as a form of therapy for adults. At Bootham Park Hospital, York,

Getting Involved (continued)

existing horticultural resources are cramped. Just as soon as initial repairs to greenhouses and shed on site are complete, the NHS team will move in, and the nursery will be back in business again.

Thereafter, in principle, anything is possible. We propose to convert the company to a registered charity as soon as possible. Poppleton Community Railway Nursery will act both as prime mover in setting up projects, and as a host providing accommodation and other resources to run community projects. These projects could be as simple as liaison with local schools, from running tallest-sunflower-from-seed competitions, through teaching horticultural propagation skills, to more terrestrial ecology projects. It could include developing a brown bin scheme in the neighbourhood to compost all green kitchen waste. Someone might put together a scheme to recycle scrap wood into window boxes and planters, or develop coppice crops to make clothesline props, hurdles, hazel fencing panels and bird tables. Who knows?

The re-development of the railway on the site will also provide skills training for local teenagers and adults.

So, if you would like to support the aims of the company, or if you wish to put together a suitable project to serve some deserving cohort, you will first need to become a member (please see Membership details elsewhere in this newsletter).

* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2006/aug/01/transportintheuk.conservationandendangeredspecies>

** http://vdare.com/pb/parkinson_review.htm

Poppleton Nursery Railway

By Bob Brook

The narrow gauge railway seems a rather strange legacy to come with such a small commercial horticultural nursery. I'll come back to the history of the installation of the railway at another time.

The railway is an important feature of the site, and attracts much interest and questions, such as: Why was it built? How was it used? Were there other railways like it? What are we going to do with it? I'll revert to those questions in future issues, but today I will attempt to answer briefly the question: What has happened to all the trucks and locos that we saw on the railway in the past?

Firstly, the nursery never actually owned any loco but did have some wagons. The first main items to leave the site were a Ruston locomotive and two large skip wagons which originally worked at Naburn Sewage works in York. These belonged to the National Railway Museum, and had been on

Poppleton Nursery Railway (continued)

load for several years. They have since been used at the RM in York and have recently been sent on loan to the Leighton Buzzard Railway.

When it looked likely that the Poppleton Nursery would close, Graham Warner, the manager, looked for ways to ensure that the railway equipment he had accumulated was secured. During his years as manager Graham brought to Poppleton a lot of equipment from other British Rail sites as they closed. Jarvis's management agreed that most of the stock that had been passed on to them from BR, could be given to the Moseley Museum Trust, which runs a site near Stoke-on-Trent devoted to narrow gauge industrial railways. Most of the wagons, bogies and some track were removed in the summer of 2005 and are now in store.

This left a few wagons, or rather chassis, in case a new owner of the site required them, and Graham's own locomotive and stock. Eventually Graham decided to sell his Simplex loco to someone who worked for GNER at York, and who, together with his father, was building a railway on private land near Castleton on North Yorkshire. This loco and stock departed in the spring of 2006.

So we now just have most of the track and a few trucks left. We will have to wait and see what the future will bring in the way of further stock and locomotion