

The Potting Shed October 2019 No. 51



We are having **TWO**
Christmas Open Days on
Saturdays 23 November
and 7 December, 10:00am
to 3:00pm

Explore the Narrow Gauge
Railway and the last
Railway Nursery.

Sale of Christmas Wreaths
(pre-order required), Table
and Tree Decorations,
Seasonal Planters,
Hyacinths and Perennials.
Tea, Coffee and Cakes.

The AGM will be held at the
Nursery on 9 October at
1:30pm

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Company Registration number:
06211163

Editorial

In the current national climate the Nursery provides a calm location to come and relax. This is not to say that no work is being done, as this issue of the Potting Shed proves. In fact I have had so much copy that I have had to cut down on the photos for this issue. Two photos I had to include were those accompanying Bob Brook's article on the seasons which is at the end of this issue. This gives you another excuse to come to the Nursery and have a look for yourself.

Allotment

What a transformation! The 'hidden' garden at the Nursery has been transformed this year, largely due to the hard work and talents of volunteer Barry Treanor. The planning started last autumn with a redesign of the area, replacing rotten woodwork, laying pathways and installing proper raised beds. With a tonne of manure kindly donated to the Nursery, the foundations were laid for a bounteous summer!

Barry recognises the huge difference the manure has made to the yield, with fantastic crops of red and white onions, spinach, broad and climbing beans, raspberries, strawberries, potatoes, tomatoes, beetroot and courgettes as well as blooming flowers and shrubs. Lots of these plants were started from seed

in our greenhouses before being selected by Barry to make this allotment a success.

Barry's quick to acknowledge lots of support from others, including Jake for the woodwork, Sue (especially for the strawberries) and Jo who turns some of the produce into delicious chutneys, as well as the team who help keep the area watered.

With an interest in gardening spanning more than 20 years and a military background which led to him moving around during his career, Barry is happy to devote some of his spare time to this area.

'It's been really satisfying working in this garden, especially with the great soil producing such fantastic yields. It's now a lovely shared space where others can enjoy and learn from.'

The garden is near the entrance to the Nursery on the left hand side, so make sure you pop in for a look on your next visit!

Railway and building work

The Railway and Building group have carried out several small jobs. A sump with a pump has been created in one of the drains at the Harrogate end of the site. The pump is within a plastic dustbin within the drain sump. Rain water flows from various plastic tanks around the site, when

the level of water in the dustbin reaches a certain level the pump switches on and the water is pumped into the large circular tank at the Harrogate end of the site. In winter the pump can be removed to prevent frost damage and the water flows down the drain.

Paving stones have been laid in G7. Some external painting has been undertaken on the new toilet block.

The curved track near the turntable in front of the engine shed has always been a rough ride. A visit from a group from Amey successfully excavated a length of rail with removal of the two rails. Work is ongoing with rail bending, digging out and sleeper replacement to make this section a smoother ride.

Heritage Open Day

After the end of the normal Heritage open day in September at 4pm, the Nursery stayed open for 2 hours of running the narrow gauge railway. A small number of visitors enjoyed three different trains running round the site hauled by *Loweco* with *Terry Stanhope* providing a fourth train. The evening ended with the longest train (5 vehicles) we have ever run hauled by *Loweco*.



The Nursery's longest train — so far.

Grants and Donations

We have applied to the LNER Communities and Customer Fund for a grant to re-use greenhouses G8 and G9 (which are in a poor state) as a new community space. In addition, we are very grateful to have received a substantial bequest towards this project.

Work has already begun on clearing out these greenhouses, which are stacked high with pots and other nursery items and we hope to start on the initial building work next Spring.

Other donations are always very welcome and we are most grateful to a recent visitor who left us a cheque for £100.

Gardening News

The Nursery is now well into the swing of Autumn. Pan-sies are providing blocks of colour in red, yellow and blue, and cyclamen are in shades of pink, with a few white ones. Polyanthus are getting into their stride in a mix of colours.

We are beginning the countdown to Christmas: the hyacinths are under their bed of peat in the cold frames, getting ready to be put into bowls — useful Christmas presents for local friends and neighbours. Daffodils, snowdrops, grape hyacinths and narcissus are being potted up, with the popular little tulip *Red Riding Hood* to follow.

There is always something to see and buy at the Nursery. We look forward to seeing you.

Cacti at Poppleton

A successful growing year for the cacti with all the good weather.

Only a handful succumbed to our winter and seedlings have grown on well, I hope members who looked in noted the various flowers I've enjoyed this year.

In recent news I've had an approval letter from Plant Heritage accepting my proposal in outline for a National Collection status of a cactus genus and am waiting on the outcome of a September meeting for their advice on species acquisition which will be followed by site visits from their county advisor/inspector.

I'm hoping to try growing from seed next year if I can obtain the right things in order to do so, and if there is enough room!

Matt Gibbs

Volunteering groups

Over the last month we have had several groups from local businesses volunteering at the nursery. Some of the groups contact us directly but others come to us via York Cares. York Cares is a partnership of the city's leading employers committed to making York a better place through employee-volunteering. They match the skills and expertise of employers and their employees to community projects

where they can have most impact. The impact in the last month on the Nursery has been amazing.

As many of you know the further down the nursery site you travel the wilder it gets, weeds and thistles grow in abundance and far outnumber the plants and in fact I have often worried that on open days that we might actually lose someone!

We have too few volunteers during a normal week to be able to make much of a difference in these wilderness areas, so when York Cares contacted us with the offer of groups of volunteers wanting to come to the nursery 'Operation Tidy-Up' was born! Aviva were the first willing victims and their challenge was to weed and tidy up the cold frames and the plants in them, by the end of the day the area was unrecognisable. Admittedly some had to be told which plants were considered worth saving and which ones were weeds but we were really pleased with the outcome.

The following week a group from Portakabin arrived on site and their job was to tidy up and weed the area outside of the shade tunnel. We mentioned that Aviva had been the week before and had done a very good job so there was no pressure! Again they pulled out all of the stops and cleared the area, weeded it and repotted many of the plants. Some of the pots were too large for the plants but no one could fault their enthusiasm.

The third group to help

out on site was Amey and they came in two batches, on two Thursdays running. Their tasks were related to railway and maintenance jobs, they were organized by Bob and included work on the station as well as the nursery.

All of the groups really enjoyed their days and they were such fun to have on site, without enthusiastic and willing helpers like these the large jobs would be very difficult to complete by our regular team of volunteers so we really appreciate their input.



Aviva volunteers working at the Nursery.

Ten Years Ago

Issue 3 of the Potting Shed came out in August 2009. It was 4-sides of A4 without pictures. After an apology for its late appearance due to too much work, the first few months of clearing the site are detailed. The undergrowth in the car park, thistles and glass in the greenhouses, painting and roof felting of buildings and the clearing of half the railway had been undertaken. The NHS North Yorkshire and York Community and Mental Health entered into a partnership with

the Nursery and the first NHS people have been working at Poppleton. At the end of July the NHS group organised a plant sale and tea afternoon. On the railway, two more trucks had arrived and restoration of the trucks found on site was being carried out. The Nursery had a web site and a telephone.

The last two pages are very forward looking with announcements of two open days, the AGM, requests for plants, the railway group sorting out the mountains of documentation left by Jarvis over the winter and appeals for help.



Cleared track, August 2009

New Toilet Block

The new toilet block is in use and only awaits final external painting. The old toilet blocks are now not generally used.

Poppleton station adoption

We continue to work on the station, planting and watering and are well on with our painting programme for the big white planters on both platforms.

Following the Northern Rail Community Conference

at Leeds, attended by Richard Scott and Sue Barker from our small team and my recent letter to Richard Isaac at Northern Rail we are hopeful of a meeting soon with interested parties (including Mick Moxon the Line Manager and Network Rail) to help us get some of the things we need there like a boundary fence, another rain barrel, some trees cut back and a notice board in the waiting room. The latter would look bright and eye catching with some drawings from the Poppleton Ousebank Primary School on it! The conference enabled us to see some of the initiatives other stations are having a go at and in future years.

A University of York student has joined Northern Rail for the next 12 months, Charlotte Harris. We believe she is interested in Green initiatives and I have invited her along to have a look at the Nursery and Station. Poppleton is her nearest Adopted Station. I am particularly keen to see if we can get Northern interested in making the new passenger shelters greener and self-sustaining. This could be just be simple water capture (the rain just runs away presently and we continue to push our bowser on to the platform filled from the station tap—so frustrating) or all the way through to planting on the roof and wind generated electricity to illuminate it.

The Nursery has just joined the ACORP organisation, experimentally for a year, which might help us a lot in our journey to improving

our station environment a lot more.

Visit of Inspection Saloon

On 12 September the railway inspection saloon *Caroline* passed through Poppleton conveying railway personnel inspecting the railway. *Caroline* was built at Eastleigh in 1958 as a buffet car. After withdrawal in 1964 it became the Southern Region General Manger's saloon. In 1981 it was part of Prince Charles and Lady Diana's honeymoon train and the following year it conveyed Pope John Paul II on his visit to the UK. It is based in Derby and it is normally propelled [pushed] by a class 37 diesel locomotive. The train was being driven by friend of the railway group Jonathan Lloyd.



Inspection saloon Caroline propelled by 37402 Stephen Middlemore

Help required

- **Audio Typist and Sound Recordist Required** We have an audio recording of Mike Bowers, who knew the Nursery before it moved to Poppleton. We would like this transcribed either to paper or electronic

media. If you can type from an audio recording or know somebody who does, then we would be interested in hearing from you. We also require someone who can record the memories of a former Nursery worker. Contact the Nursery or pcrnsecretary@gmail.com.

- **Glazing repairs** The nursery would really benefit from someone who could take on the glazing repairs on the greenhouses. We have a large amount of glass which now needs replacing. Someone who knows how to cut glass would be ideal, but not essential. Most of the Nursery glass is bought in standard ready-cut sizes. This is an intermittent job tending to be concentrated in the late winter or spring after the bad weather. There is some working at height from a step ladder. Contact Paul on pcrn.info@yahoo.co.uk if you can help.

Aluminium collection

Ann Dixon is still collecting foil, aluminium cans and household cables for snappy. There is a box with all the other recycling boxes between the mess room and sales area at the Nursery. Snappy is a valuable resource for disabled children giving their parents much needed respite and giving the children a space in

which to try lots of activities in a safe environment. Collecting foil can become just another strand of your kerbside recycling, the only extra hassle is having to bring it to the nursery.

Jobs

There are lots of tidying jobs at the nursery — any extra help would be appreciated. There are numerous repair and maintenance jobs on-site, and we need members with DIY skills to take them on. Please do contact us.

. . . and finally

Free with this issue is the final photo supplement **PCRN — The First Ten Years** covering 2018 and also some photos which are more quirky, cover events not previously covered and more artistic shots taken in the first ten years..

The Nursery Seasons



Harvesting the field behind the nursery a few weeks ago, made me think back over 10 seasons running the Nursery as a community project.

Being surrounded on three sides by fields and hedging the change in seasons is always apparent, making it always enjoyable to see what is going on round us. To be able to take a few moments just to look and think, as well as observing the wildlife and changes to the environment about us. Each week and year there is something different to see.

This year the show of wild poppies, in the part of the field which had been left uncultivated, was lovely sight. In the first two winters the snow made a beautiful picture, but along

with dust storms and heavy rain the weather has made nursery life difficult at times.

The bird life has also changed over the years, the swallows nesting in the sheds for the first few years are no longer seen. As well as the blue tits in the nest boxes, each year has seen robins and blackbirds nesting in broken down greenhouses and buildings, as well as more rare visitors. It is perhaps a downside of making buildings more usable it cuts down on nesting locations.

So next time you walk round the nursery keep your eyes open, there is always something to see round us.



Bob Brook