

The Potting Shed May 2020 No. 54



Due to the Corona
Virus Outbreak All
Sales Days have been
cancelled until further
notice.

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Editorial

The Covid-19 virus has forced me to edit a slightly different Potting Shed with some of the regular features missing. Even though the Nursery is closed, a delivery service of plants has been started within the York area and the Nursery is still operating if on a skeleton basis. My aim with this issue is still to keep you informed but provide something to take your mind of the situation we find ourselves in.

When Gardeners' World came to Poppleton (and the Worth Valley)

In April 1991 Bill Pertwee, who played Warden Hodges in BBC TV's **Dad's Army**, released **The Station Now Standing**, a book about the colourful railway station gardens in Britain including the Keighley & Worth Valley railway and the Poppleton Railway Nursery. From the Nursery's diaries, on 17 April Nursery manager Graham Warner attended a presentation about the book at the National Railway Museum. The book came to the attention of BBC TV's **Gardeners' World** and I suspect that due to the BBC Birmingham Press and Publicity Officer Chris Bates being a Worth Valley Railway working member, a feature was planned about the book

filmed at the Worth Valley Railway and Poppleton which was broadcast on 9 August. Filming took place over two days, on 24 July on the Worth Valley with Bill Pertwee and presenter Dr. Stefan Buczacki, the following day Poppleton was visited with only Stefan Buczacki. It appeared alongside features on sloping gardens, creative planting and Geoff Hamilton's regular Barnsdale Diary.

By a remarkable coincidence your scribe was the guard on the Worth Valley for the 5 midweek days incorporating 24 July. The midweek service on the WVR was one steam-hauled train, but it was a timetabled service therefore filming had to be fitted in with the timetabled service. Amazingly on the same day there was another BBC TV crew with Anne Gregg filming for **Garden Party** which was a lunchtime programme. Both film crews were also timetabled so that they didn't meet!

The item opens on the Worth Valley with the train arriving at Oakworth, which was the main location for the 1970 film of **The Railway Children**, and we see Bill Pertwee (BP) riding on the train commenting on the film and its star Bernard Cribbins. Stefan Buczacki (SB) then introduces the feature as we see the train approaching and arriving at Oxenhope, the line's southern terminus. The loco-

motive used in the film, and for the whole week was LMS Black 5 5305, which was on loan from the Humberside Locomotive Preservation Group. SB comments that the line is volunteer-run as we see the pair walking down the platform admiring the hanging baskets. This was filmed before the public service started. There are shots of Brian Lee mowing the steep-sided station embankment and SB notes there is no black spot on the roses due to the sulphur present in the steam from the loco. Oxenhope station master David Whitehead is interviewed and mentions that plants do occasionally get scalded by the steam, as the loco is seen approaching the camera. The presenters comment on the mixed bed with trees behind opposite the platform while walking on the track bed, without day-glo jackets! SB picks Lupins and Yellow Loosestrife as typical railway plants.

Filming now moves to Keighley at the other end of the line as we see the train arriving, this is my only appearance in the film, although blink and you could miss it! Again the hanging baskets are commented on particularly the Petunias and Fuschias, the regular passengers can be seen behind the presenters.

SB contrasts the larger British Rail as the Worth Valley train climbs out of Keighley and filming moves to Poppleton and we see a Class 142 approaching Poppleton from Harrogate. Manager Graham Warner is introduced and in-

terviewed by SB in one of the greenhouses. Graham says that all the plants in the greenhouse are indoor plants destined for Pullman lounges, waiting rooms and travel centres. There are shots of the staff taking plants off a van and being pushed on rubber-tired trolleys. Graham explains that the Nursery dates from the 1940s, is currently the only one in the country is 2½ acres, has 8 staff and produces thousands of plants every year. There are shots of Poppleton station with the flower decked wooden barrow show the landscaping carried out by the Poppleton Nursery.

The scene moves back to the Worth Valley with the train arriving at Damems, the railway's shortest station (the platform is 1½ coach lengths long). Station master Mike Squires is seen opening the carriage door and the presenters alighting. Over shots of the train leaving Damems, SB asks BP what gave him the idea for the book; BP replies that he saw a railway porter putting out hanging baskets and after doing some research he realised there was enough material to fill a book. The feature ends with the pair discussing how people can get help for railway gardens from WIs, Round Tables, Rotary Clubs and Councils, there were no Station Adopters or Community Rail in those days. According to **Push & Pull**, the Worth Valley's magazine where much of the information for this piece originated, this episode of **Gardeners' World** had 'a good 4

million viewers'. Copyright restrictions prevent me from including images from the programme in the piece, so here's a shot of Oakworth station taken in June 2018.



I was helped with this article from the Worth Valley's quarterly magazine **Push & Pull** issue 108. The Nursery has a copy of **The Station Now Standing** in its archives and copies can be bought for a modest price second-hand. Unfortunately the K&WVR is closed due to the Covid-19 crisis but details may be found at www.kwvr.co.uk.

Allotment

Garden in Lockdown

The spring weather has been kind to veg growers as can be seen by comparing the photos of the garden from late March to early May. Despite obvious challenges of distancing and lockdown, things are coming on.



The veg patch has a selection of produce, including: broad and dwarf beans, spuds, onions, turnips, courgettes, spinach, beetroot and spring onions. I'm also trying carrots again after the failed crop of 2019.



One difference to the garden this year is Jo's idea of 'companion' planting, where we have planted bedding plants amongst the veg. This is aimed to improve pollination, reduce aphids and add colour.

Jo has also developed a 'shade garden' under the laurels where the old compost boxes used to be. Shade loving plants have been introduced, so what was a dead area is now much brighter and cheerful. I'm also trying to encourage small birds into the garden with feeders, so that they can tackle the inevitable caterpillars when they descend.

We should have some fruit later on as the strawberry, gooseberry and raspberry plants look good. We've also managed to include strawberries in some of the online orders.

This month's jobs will see herbs being sown from seed and plenty of weeding! Finally, as we're not going on holiday this summer, a bit of rain would help!!

The Garden is a super area to relax and potter in and I find it very therapeutic; hopefully, many of our members will be able to enjoy it too, when we emerge from the lockdown.

Barry and Jo

Ten Years Ago

This issue comes mid-issue as regards **The Potting Shed** ten years ago, but having a look through my photographs there was much going on at the Nursery. There was a sales day on May 8, there was a table of bric-a-brac for sale in the portacabin.



There was one of our first information displays giving a history of the Nursery.



There were plenty of plants for sale:



Outside the engine shed, the

wheels of wagon S2 can be seen on one of the flat wagons with it's undercoated frames behind.



Assembly of the wagon was swiftly carried out because it is seen on 27 May only requiring lettering before it is finished.



Poppleton station ad- option

Your correspondent is shielded with his wife being only in his own house and garden and

has not been able to even get along to see all is well.

However my colleague Richard is keeping a keen eye on his walks for us and reports everything is very quiet with a usually deserted Poppleton station, no more than a couple of passengers on a train—they are frequently completely empty, but running very well to time.

In accordance with Northern's guidelines, the waiting room is locked up and the flower beds look very unkempt.

Northern are keeping in touch with us but their strong advice is to refrain from any activity on the station and despite the excellent bedding plants available—I have had a few delivered for our own back garden—from the team we have followed this advice.

When the situation improves we will give serious thought to our next moves and our plans for the next couple of years.

Colin Wood, Adopter's Team Leader.

Jobs

Due to the Corona Virus arrangements the Nursery is closed until further notice.

... and finally



This photo, from the Nursery archives, dates from the same period as the **Gardeners' World** broadcast. A 142 Class is shown arriving from Harrogate with the A59 bridge in the background. This area is outside the area of the current Nursery and shows the two compost sidings with a truck on one of them. The point was retrieved and is the point to access the wagon shed (ex-Poppleton shelter) at the Harrogate end of the site.



As this issue is largely about Railway Gardens, here's a photo of the Poppleton-produced hanging baskets at Bolton Abbey on the Embsay Steam Railway.