



From the Chairman

I'll keep this brief as there is more than enough of me later. Plenty of good news news in this issue; the painting was hurried but finished just in time, the locomotive has been working well on service trains in Swanage and there's progress on the re-organisation of the Company's bank accounts. The loco ran easily to Eastleigh, performed there and ran back to Swanage without difficulty, it's no wonder they lasted so long in service with their various owners.

Locomotive Report

Number of days in operation to date: 27

Number of miles so far this year: 1508

Painting – '53's Access to the Goods Shed had been delayed by various events, the primary cause being the building of the new pit in the Goods Shed Road which naturally could not be used until the concrete had cured to the point where it could withstand the weight. The first task thereafter was to remove the vehicles in the Goods Shed that had been marooned there all winter. Then *Manston* had to use the pit so that it could be weighed and after that all three locos that were going to Eastleigh needed ultra-sonic axle tests... Preparation started on Monday the 18th and painting continued until Thursday. By a stroke of good luck Malcolm Munro heard from his brother of a sign writer who when approached just happened to have Thursday free! '53 had to be finished by Thursday evening as the loco was leaving for Eastleigh next morning, before the 9.50 service train departed, and had also to be turned.

Operation

Thursday:

This involved 53 being turned after being extracted from the Goods Shed as it had been its usual way round (bunker first to Wareham) whilst inside for painting.

See www.swanagerailway.co.uk/news529.htm

The big day started very early! Although I had lit a small fire and oiled round 53 on the previous evening it had to be repeated on Friday morning as a good proportion of the oil

had been absorbed by the pads due to the loco's enforced idleness and the fire had almost gone out. The grate was cleaned and a new fire lit with the idea of having enough steam to move by about 9am so that the service locomotive could have access to the pit for preparation. The steam would also be necessary during the run to operate the atomiser (or displacement lubricator) which feeds steam oil into the valve chest to lubricate the pistons and valves as they fly to and fro. Most of the oil boxes that supply the piston rods and valve spindles needed emptying and cleaning out and the trimmings strained between fore-finger and thumb to remove the old oil and accumulated gunge. Four trimmings had to be replaced as they were not up to the demands of an extended run.

The train was formed up in Swanage Platform 2 in the following order, facing Wareham: *Manston*, *Eddystone*, 53, Bogie Brake Van S56289 (QM) , Support Coach BCK 35059.

The Queen Mary (QM) and the support coach were brought out of the siding and into the Loop by a diesel; 53 followed them in, coupled up to the QM, hooked-off from the diesel, and shunted to Platform 2. The two Bulleids had been waiting on the new pit in the Goods Shed Road and backed down separately onto 53.

There was almost enough time for plenty of photographs before the starter came off and the adventure began. Given the amount of power available and the limited water capacity of the M7, it seemed prudent to allow the Bulleids to do the work of getting the train up to Corfe Castle where the tablet (SW-CC) which we had carried from Swanage was exchanged for the Motala Staff and keys which would allow us to cross Wych Farm Road. The track on the west (i.e. Wareham) side of the road is still classified as a 'construction section' and there are also two un-gated crossings therefore caution was exercised until we stopped short of the interchange (known as Motala GF). Seen in sections of www.swanagerailway.co.uk/news534.htm

There was a wait of over an hour until the Class 37 of West Coast Railways arrived from Eastleigh with driver, inspectors and guard. The formalities were observed, introductions made and the past re-visited then the 37 proceeded through the gate and was coupled-up to the front of *Manston* and the requisite head-boards applied.

We were due off Motala GF at 12:20 and headed into what was for us Swanage drivers, the 'unknown territory' of the Furzebrook Branch. The passage was very slow as the branch has not benefitted from a surfeit of maintenance, past the Furzebrook Sidings then over the Frome river bridge and to a stand at Worgret Junction. More formalities were observed and then at last we were away, up on the Down Main, to the cross-over just west of Wareham Station which put us onto the Up Main. Passing through the station it was particularly pleasing to see the booking office staff cheering us on to our next stop at Brockenhurst at 13:39. The 37 opened up and we were soon at our cruising speed of approx. 50 mph along the recently relaid stretch between Wareham and Poole. Slowly through Poole Station and over the High Street crossing, then away again, up Parkstone Bank where the 37 started to labour (I think that's what it was..) so some small assistance was rendered as we didn't want the 37 to over-reach itself and risk failure...

Whilst there were plenty of people who knew about the move of steam locomotives from Swanage to Eastleigh, there were also a goodly number for whom it came as a complete surprise. It was very easy to differentiate the two types as the train roared through station after station, with the bewildered waiting passengers out-numbered by camera-wielding visitors.

Bournemouth came and went and then the thirty-minute run across the New Forest to the stop at Brockenhurst. See www.drummondlocomotives.co.uk/page7.htm I had time to check the axle ends for heat of which there was none, they were only just warm as were the crank pins, and add some oil to the piston rod gland boxes. At 13:50 we left Brock Platform 1 but a little less enthusiastically than before as the driver on *Manston* was having a problem with the reverser indicator. We passed through Southampton Central with all three whistles blowing, so that all would know that we had returned to the area, then into the tunnel where the opportunity was taken for 53 to provide the power as it would have in the days of steam, being the train engine, even though the train was only one coach and one brake van.

On up the Slow Line through St. Denys and then there was Eastleigh! It was almost all over! Slowly through an Eastleigh Station absolutely packed with people and cameras and into the East Yard and stop. The 37 came off and ran round the train so that we could be hauled into the Works. Once there the 37 was uncoupled, the two Bulleids were each driven to their respective locations, 53 shunted the support coach into its road next to the traverser and then took the Brake Van round to the very last long road at the back where the Brake Van rides were to be given. See www.swanagerailway.co.uk/news533.htm

There then ensued a search for suitable hoses and fittings that mated with the nearby standpipe as by this time the water level in the side tanks was down to about 4inches. Once a few hundred gallons of water had been taken on, the boiler was filled to the top nut, the fire was cleaned and then banked up to last through the night. By the time that all the work was done and Malcolm and I had showered and changed, there was just enough time to get to the pub to find out that they had just stopped serving food!

On Saturday another early start was necessary to prepare 53 as it would be providing the power for Brake Van rides using the Queen Mary. There was always a queue for the rides from about 10 o'clock in the morning until after 5pm at night. The daytime watering arrangements had been sorted out and at the end of the day it was necessary only to clean the fire and bank it up for the night.

On Sunday the Beattie Well-Tank took over the Brake Van rides and the M7 was allowed to join in the fun, just posing with all the other steam locomotives!

On Monday I returned to Eastleigh where the M7 was working the Brake Van rides 'Top-and-Tail' with the Beattie 30587

Another 5 o'clock start on the Tuesday morning preceded the return to Swanage as we were due to depart the Works at 09:33, however this time the weather had changed – it was raining. I did manage to get the M7 over a pit to oil up underneath but it had about 3” of water in the bottom. The problems *Manston* had were sufficient for it to be left at Eastleigh to be lifted for attention to the bogie, but its place in the train was taken by a Class 33 diesel and the support coach remained at Eastleigh, too. This time 53 would be travelling backwards though being a tank engine its main-line maximum speeds are the same.

We left the Works on time but then sat in Eastleigh Platform 3 for a few minutes until things cleared (probably something running a little late..) then away. We were on time at Brockenhurst but stopped for only about 1 minute – just time to check the axles, which were fine, then away again. The further west we travelled the brighter the skies became until by the time we crossed into Dorset it was clear blue skies again.

The fireman and I had noticed an odd smell as we approached Brockenhurst and when we stopped briefly it was confirmed by the driver of *Eddystone* that one of its tender axle-boxes was running hot (although we were running backwards, *Eddystone* was in front, tender-first). We continued, however, and didn't stop until we reached the Furzebrook branch, though we did stop just as soon as we were clear of Worgret Junction. There followed the slow passage to Motala GF, then onto Swanage rails and down to Norden where the train was left, the Class 37 coupled to two other diesel locos which were being returned after the Swanage Beer Festival and Diesel gala, and departed. *Eddystone* was left on the Pad at Norden to cool down and our 104-year-old came back to Swanage none the worse for the adventure.

Latest Situation (as of 11th July 2009)

As if to prove that it was none the worse for its main line excursion, 53 was back pulling service trains shortly after its return until taken out for a wash-out. It should start again on Monday the 13th July and will probably continue for about fourteen days.

Thanks to:

All the photographers who have offered examples of their efforts for the benefit of the Company and the Locomotive.

James Cox for his interest, support and his efforts to ensure that 53 *would* go to the ball.

Frank Mead and Len Prills for their marvellous paint job!

The West Coast crew: Mel Cox, Martin Squibb, Ray Pooley, Tommy Farr and Phil Marsh for a job well done.

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