

Heartbeat of Hythe

The newsletter of Hythe Pier Heritage Association



December 2024 Issue 30

Welcome

2024 has brought with it the completion of our most ambitious, as well as most costly, pier restoration project to date. Costing over £100,000, the new station, officially opened by the Duke of Gloucester in October, completed our track and platform restoration project that had begun two and a half years earlier. At the same time, restoration has continued on both the next carriage and the second tractor unit. The latter having been completed.

Over the course of the year, many individuals, groups and bodies have supported HPHA and contributed to our fundraising. We are really grateful for all their contributions. Our entry to Hythe 2000 Christmas Tree Festival celebrates the different 'Branches of the Community' who give, not only money but also their time to HPHA for restoration projects.

On behalf of all the Directors of HPHA, may I thank you for your support over the last year and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Jill Gower
Secretary and Editor



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The New Station receives a Royal Opening



On 2nd October, we were proud to have been visited by HRH the Duke of Gloucester, who kindly opened the new platform and tracks. The Duke was introduced to restoration volunteers, members of Hythe Ferry staff and local Councillors. Children from Hythe Primary school gave The Duke a very warm welcome in the pier waiting room, where a display of artwork they had created to celebrate the train and pier was on display.

There was lots of media interest in the royal visit, with radio and television interviews on the BBC and coverage by local press and national magazines.



Projects completed since August 2024

Although we are all disappointed that the ferry service is suspended, we have used this quieter time to work on a set of small improvements, as well as completing the track and platform restoration project. A few of the improvements involve the removal of all the temporary fencing, seen as you walk onto the pier, replacing it with fencing matching the new platform handrail.



At the pier end, the Perspex panels over the station were replaced, ensuring that it is drier at the platform. Unfortunately, recent storm Darragh has undone some of this work.



Lastly, the famous "short obelisk" at the foot of the pier got a makeover. It has been there since 1881 and had started to show its age. It will shortly have a plaque attached to it to commemorate the opening of the platform by HRH The Duke of Gloucester.



Carriage 2 Restoration update

The third carriage to be restored is confusingly referred to as “Carriage 2”. This is the first of the two “driving” carriages to be restored. Unlike a “normal” carriage, there are mechanisms to control the tractor unit at the rear of the train. Driving carriages are far more complicated in terms of brake and other controls and electrical connections.

Two new wheel chassis have been overhauled, and refurbished wheel sets are due to be delivered early in the New Year. The volunteers at The Shed (at the Pier) are eager to assemble Carriage 2 and see their hard work take form, following completion of their work restoring the side panels, roof and seating.



Wheels and axles from the carriage before being sent off for refurbishing.

Events 2024



Rock the Pier

Hythe Promenade was rocking as our very popular live music event 'Rock the Pier' took place on 15th June. Once again a large audience of all ages gave the event their enthusiastic support. Stone Branches opened up the event at midday and there was a full line-up of bands right through to nearly 7pm, when the always popular Soul Catchers brought the day to a close. We are grateful for all the bands who give their time for free, and to the sponsors without whose help it would not be possible to run the event. And of course a **big thank-you** to everyone who attended and those who made donations.

The event raised a total of £13,900 from sponsorship, donations, merchandise and other sales. After costs this has left £7,400 which will go into HPHA restoration projects.

Heritage Day

Heritage Day got under way with a gathering in rather 'damp' conditions at the newly refurbished station platform for the naming of the second (16302) tractor unit, its restoration now nearing completion.



Jo Shields, daughter of Edward Fort, the chairman of the Beaulieu Beaufort Foundation, cut the ribbon to officially name the unit 'Edward Fort' in his honour. Even with rain drops running down its new green livery, it was a splendid sight!

In spite of the dismal weather many hardy folk turned out to enjoy the attractions around the pier and the adjacent Hythe Shed (at the Pier).



The pier workshop was open for visitors to chat with the engineers involved in the restoration work and view displays of heritage pier railway parts.

The Shed itself was open with various display items and Shed volunteers were more than happy to talk about the railway carriage restoration work undertaken there. Historian Marc Heighway also gave a fascinating talk.

Mistletoe Fayre

We were pleased to be part of Hythe's Mistletoe Fayre on 30th November. Merchandise sales were brisk and a grand total of £704 was raised.



Eyeworth Walk Christmas Lights

This year we've helped create the Eyeworth Walk Christmas light show. ❄️🌲 The organisers of the light show are donating part of the proceeds to HPHA.



Do go along and visit this amazing display, from 4.30 – 7pm every night until 1st January.

Raffle tickets on sale too!

Change of Pier Ownership

The recent change of ownership of the pier means that there are four organisations involved in making the pier and ferry work for the Hythe community. This is a complicated arrangement and HPHA were asked to provide a clarification of the situation for our supporters. This text was written in a condensed form as it was intended to be published as a Facebook posting.

The short format is reprinted here, along with some extra notes. Here is the Facebook posting:

"Following the change of ownership, a clarification of the arrangements of the organisations working together to make the pier work:

Ownership -

- Hythe Pier Company (Ashleigh Mutimear-MacMillan) owns the pier, railway track and all the buildings.
- Red Funnel own the ferry, ferry pontoon and connecting walkway to the pier.
- Hythe Pier Heritage Association (HPHA) own the train.

Operator -

- The Hythe and Southampton Ferry Company (HSF), a Red Funnel Company, operate the ferry service, pier and train.
- All of the staff working on the pier work for HSF. The entire pier, with buildings, and the train are leased to this company (directly or indirectly) by the respective owners."

Other questions have been asked about the relationship of HPHA to these organisations. HPHA has clear principles, laid out in our Association Rules, that drive our restoration work. The relevant part of these "objects" are defined to be restoration and support of the pier, train and buildings. The ferry, ferry pontoon and walkway are excluded from our remit, so we have no involvement with them, or in the current works to repair those structures. We do, however, have an ongoing commitment to the general support and promotion of the ferry service as it benefits our community.

HPHA is not limited to the organisations we may support as long as the work undertaken supports our purposes. The change of ownership, therefore, does not alter how HPHA works and our ultimate aim is still the restoration of the whole structure to ensure it continues to deliver benefit to our community.



Board Meeting dates

If you are a member of HPHA (by owning a share in the Association) then you may attend our Board meetings as an observer. Please notify us that you wish to attend 7 days in advance of the meeting by contacting any Board member. We ask for this notice to ensure we have enough room to accommodate everyone.

The provisional dates for next year are:

Monday, 27 January 2025
Monday, 24 February 2025
Monday, 31 March 2025
Monday, 28 April 2025
Monday, 26 May 2025
Monday, 30 June 2025
Monday, 28 July 2025
Monday, 25 August 2025
Monday, 29 September 2025
Monday, 27 October 2025

Membership Of HPHA

Membership of HPHA costs £10 per annum and includes ownership of a share in the Association. Please visit our website at hythepier.org.uk and click on the “Join” link to see more information and become a member.