

# The Strawberry Line Society



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## Summer Newsletter 2013

Issue 31

We don't usually have a summer newsletter and it still feels like a wintry spring today but primroses have been flowering since December on the Strawberry Line and we have a good display of cowslips. All but the oak and ash are in full leaf; I have been looking at the trees more closely and in the Winscombe area there are more ash than any other tree and hazel and hawthorn are the chief shrubs. It seems a vain hope but I hope our ash is immune to the disease they will surely catch as the east wind blows from the continent. The elm continue to have a 20 to 30 year life before the trunk gets big enough to attract the beetle carrying their disease but I have seen little evidence of Oak Die Back on the line.

Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council have saved the public toilet at Winscombe from being closed. The Strawberry Line Society very much appreciate this. Councillor Sue Kent has organised a competition in the Winscombe Primary school for a poster encouraging people to pick up litter and dog poo. I really enjoy looking at the posters which are often very funny and colourful and are found all around the village and Strawberry Line. Sue will be getting Sandford School involved as well. Dog fouling is one of the most common complaints, followed by cyclists not ringing their bells!



One of the posters from Winscombe Primary School

## Railway Pond at Fullers Lane

Was full all winter with a strange volcano like bubble under the liner that moved around the pond; is there an underground spring? Following the dry spring the pond lost most of its water and 2 or 3 holes were found in the liner; these have been mended by the Chris Ballard team and we will all keep our fingers crossed that this works. Last year the pond was used by bats, dragonflies and newts including the great crested newt so was really useful for wild life as well as labrador dogs.

## Strawberry Line Society AGM

The AGM was held in the lovely Medieval town of Axbridge and at the Oak House. I spent a lot of time looking sideways at the hole in the corner with steps going down; was it a well or a way to the cellars? This was our first AGM as the Strawberry Line Society. Les Davies gave a very interesting illustrated talk on "Mendip Hills Through the Time Tunnel" and gave us a kind write up in his column in the Mendip Times.



*Freya and James with Bella*

## Maintenance on the SLS

Chris Ballard's team removed the seat from the halfway point between Sandford and Winscombe and put it in the Woodborough Green Community Orchard. The fruit trees survived the winter bar one and the field looks very fine. They also have strimmed along the line, repaired the pond, and cleared behind the Winscombe toilet amongst other things.

Bernie and Charles have strimmed the Shute Shelve section and again restored some seats including the Douglas Kidder Picnic seat which like the Forth Bridge needs continuous upkeep

## Opening of the running in Board and the last events of Arts week at Sandford station in May

There was an official opening of the restoration of the original cast iron running in board (for those not railway experts is the name of the station on the platform). The sign had been broken into several pieces and lent to Weston Museum; it was in storage until the collection of the museum was moved. The Sandford Station Heritage Society got the board restored. It was officially opened by Trevor Smallwood who came in his vintage bus.

North Somerset Arts week at Sandford station had John Westlake and Margaret Ballard who remember as children the station and trains told their stories. 2 choirs and a solo artist sang and a story teller came. The sun shone and it was a lovely day.

## Yatton and Congresbury report (from YACWAG Newsletter)

In 2000 YACWAG sponsored the creation of a commemorative seat on the Strawberry Line and Barbara Disney worked with pupils from Yatton Junior School to create mosaic panels that depicted local wildlife. The seat had deteriorated to the point of needing refurbishment and YACWAG is grateful to the contribution from the Strawberry Line Society which has helped us to fund the artist again to go into the school and create a unique record of wildlife which will literally be set in stone. YACWAG gave a presentation in a school assembly and launched a competition whose entrants included 12 children selected to work with the artist. All the drawings demonstrated the children's interest and enthusiasm for local wildlife and may be used in the finished product. We hope to unveil the re-furbished seat later this year.

YACWAG worked with St Andrew's Schools when Trevor Riddle and John Croxton and their binoculars worked with the children for the Birdwatch and in December YACWAG volunteers and pupils planted 45 young trees as part of the Jubilee Tree Planting Project

Birds on the Strawberry Line were generally quiet because all sensible birds were in gardens on feeders. The first Spring Survey on second of April failed to find any singing chiffchaffs or blackcaps – whereas on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012 there were 17 and 6 respectively. This is of course weather related.

## Strawberry Line East

At last the Nutricia eyesore on the Glastonbury road, Wells is set to be re-developed have been given the go-ahead to build 165 homes and a 64 bed nursing home. The good news is that a cycle path will be built through the site; the bad news is that it will lead nowhere!

In spite of strong lobbying from the outset to link this to the Athletic Ground next door, allowing a direct route though to the city centre, employment site and the NCN3 Dulcote Path, the path will come to a dead –end against a hedge.

There are strong rumours that Mendip District Council want to sell the sports ground for housing and wouldn't want a path to "devalue the site" The chairman of Wells Athletic Ground is quitting due to frustration with lack of support from MDC sparking the sell-off rumour

*Bob Murrell Strawberry Line (East) 23 May 2013*

## Events on the Strawberry Line

The Strawberry Line Federation celebration on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May was to welcome the union of the two primary schools in the parish those of Sandford and Winscombe with one headmistress running both schools. The children including the under fives, walked with their packed lunches to their special area halfway between the 2 schools on the Strawberry Line. Canon Shaun Darly gave a blessing and then everyone walked to the Millennium Green. The children were so good as they listened very quietly to many speeches. It was attended by lots of bigwigs, some of whom wore their gold chains of office. The two schools wanted a special halfway area for a new Federation seat, a special tree (one of my favourites a Silver Birch) and a time capsule. It was a great event with a huge cake. Nothing stops the cyclists who passed the classes of children without comment!



## Future Events

**Date of jumble sale**      Saturday October 12<sup>th</sup> at Winscombe Community Centre.  
Please save your jumble for us and come and support us on the day.

## The last passenger train from Yatton to Cheddar commemorations

In September the 7<sup>th</sup> it will be 50 years since the last passenger train ran along the Cheddar Valley Line although there were the occasional Special trains and the stone traffic from Cheddar to Wells went on until 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1969. The very last train to Cheddar was the "The Cheddar Valley Scenic" on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. I am not a revisionist as the excellent Strawberry Line Times describes in its June edition. I think Dr. Beeching was wrong. Wrong to close so many small lines and sell off bits of the land so its almost impossible to reopen in many cases. I have been told the French just close a railway line and leave it so it is easy to restart.

There will be events along the Strawberry Line starting at Yatton station site and at Slader's Leigh LNR near the tunnel; and this is just the start; look to the press for more information or the YACWAG website [www.yacwag.org.uk](http://www.yacwag.org.uk)

## Axbridge and Cheddar report

Currently Cheddar is facing plans for a Sainsbury Superstore, a new Cheddar Reservoir and 2 housing developments adjacent to the cycleway. The Axbridge and Cheddar committee are doing all they can to make sure that the path is not harmed by any of these projects. They are negotiating with the various bodies involved to try to gain some benefit instead.

*Dulcie Dibley*

## Housekeeping News

We have a new name and a new bank. Finding Internet banking clumsy we have transferred our banking to the HSBC in the village as it is easier to pay money in and from where we get a monthly bank statement. However we have still kept our old Santander account for those who pay for their membership by direct debit or standing order and it brings in about £120 in subs and donations. Last year we persuaded a few more people to join us so our subs went up from £524/ to £665, a big jump though the donations dipped from £130 to £87 – most donations are from members rounding off their subscription. This make up the majority of our income. Our other main income is from the jumble sale and in 2012 we made a staggering £502 – we usually make something over £300. And we spend the money well; it's usually our maintenance teams – and 2012 saw a big spend as we had to buy 2 new strimmers and with petrol and accessories a grand total of £1270 but isn't it worth it when you see how tidy and well kept the Line is.

Our next big spender is Mandy Brading. She writes the newsletter that keeps us up to date. I like the chatty style with personal bits of information interspersed with nuggets of knowledge about aspects of nature. This costs us £297.

*Irene Threasher*

*Thanks for the compliment Irene – I would also add we have to pay our annual insurance. The Cheddar and Axbridge branch and the Winscombe branch pay this alternate years*

*Mandy Brading*

## Gift Aid

H.M.Revenue and Customs have made some changes o the rules governing Gift Aid. **The crux is that this society is reminding members that the total of all their gifts to all charities must be less than 4 times the amount of tax they pay.** For example, if you pay £100in tax one year, you can only ask charities to reclaim gift aid on gifts up to £400 in that year. (If your tax position involves more thanbasic rate income tax, check with your accountant!).

HMRC's wording is reproduced below in italics.

*From April 2013 , in order for a Gift Aid declaration to be valid, the charity must be able to demonstrate it has given an adequate explanation to the donor of the personal tax implications associated with making a Gift Aid donation. It has to be explained to the donor that in order for a Gift Aid declaration to be valid, he/she must be charged on amount of Income Taxand/or Capital Gains Tax, whether at the basic rate or some other rate, for the tax year in which Gift Aid donations are made at least equal to the Income Tax treated as deducted from the total of all their Gift Aid donations in the same tax year.*

*Example: A donor (Mr. P Green) who only pays £250 of Income Tax each tax year wins a prize of £10,000 in a competition. He decides to share his good fortune and makes Gift Aid donations of £800 to Charity A and £1,600 to Charity B. Charity A claims Gift Aid tax relief of £200 and Charity B, £400 – the total Gift Aid tax claimed by charities as a result of Gift Aid donations by Mr. Green in the tax year amounting to £600. However, Mr. Green only pats income tax of £250 during the 2009 - 10 tax year and so he owes a shortfall in tax of £350 (total Gift Aid tax of £600 less Income tax paid of £250) to HMRC.*

