

FRIENDS OF HOCKLEY VIADUCT

NEWSLETTER No. 9

Most of you will remember that in our first Newsletter we gave you a history of Blanchards of Bishops Waltham, the manufacturer of the blue coping bricks along the top of the Viaduct's walls. Well, Chris Webb, one of the remaining 2 founders of our group, has managed finally to confirm the makers of the red bricks used to build the bulk of the Viaduct. William Thomas & Co. of Wellington, the largest brickworks in the central Somerset area, opened around 1850 and finally closed in 1966. I can find little information about the Poole Brickworks, as they were called, but do know that LSWR was a regular customer. Apparently LSWR used Poole Brickworks bricks for the railway construction of the line from Fullerton to Hurstbourne. Ironically enough, the site of the Poole Brickworks is now occupied by Wyvern Waste Recycling Services – a fitting use for such a site, I'm sure you'll agree!

Well, we are now approaching the home straight as far as the Viaduct is concerned. As many of you will have read in the Hampshire Chronicle, all necessary funding is now in place – the City Council under George Beckett re-pledged its financial commitment, the County has done the same and also released some of the farm land on which the Viaduct stands for the necessary ramps at either end, and Sustrans has found the balance of the funds. Back at the beginning of the year the annual "haircut" was undertaken and as a result the coltsfoot at the Badger Farm end of the structure spread like mad and provided a bright yellow carpet for many weeks. Fallen coping stones and bricks have been gathered and work should start this summer for an official opening next year.

Your committee is negotiating to buy a LSWR lattice signal post to be welded back to the base of the original, about halfway along the Viaduct, which was removed when the line was closed. This post has spent its life up near Acton but a clearing away of old line furniture in that area means that we may be able to have at least one post again! We had hoped to find one at the York Railway Museum earlier in the year when THEY were having a massive clear-out, but our funds were not sufficient to compete with the Heritage railway lines in the south. We've also agreed with the City Council, who are project managing the Viaduct's restoration, that good information boards and a comprehensive tourist leaflet are part of the whole deal and the Friends' small pot of funds will go towards that end. As the complete width of the trackbed will need to be cleared, new drainage installed and then either

concreted or tarmacked over – I'm not sure which – it was agreed that space would be found in the immediate area of the Viaduct to replace that lost to all the plantlife currently along the trackbed. For up-to-date information why not keep your eye on the City's web page

www.winchester.gov.uk/hockleyviaduct

This will give you full details on everything and also give access to all the official reports and meeting minutes etc.

Our own website www.hockleyviaduct.hampshire.org.uk continues to change and be updated – there are some really beautiful photos – and is most ably kept by our Web Master Chris Sellen. One interesting little snippet is about the American engineer Robert Courland who published "Concrete Planet" last November – he is a great fan of the Hockley Viaduct and says lovely things about it! Click the link on our Home page to read what he says.

We also have a range of links to like-minded websites which are most interesting in their own right. These have mostly been arranged by your Committee but other groups are always keen to hear of structures and history for all those of we "buffs" around!

Like me, you're probably a bit fed up with all the rain we've had recently – yes, I know we really needed some, but hasn't the weather god gone over the top somewhat? However if you've got some "extreme weather" jackets, leggings and boots, why not take a stroll down to the Viaduct and check up on what's happening there. There's good wildlife around at this time of year and even above the ghastly roar of the M3 traffic one can hear the songbirds welcoming a brave walker!

Your Committee wishes you an enjoyable summer and some good walks over your Viaduct – this may be the last time you can use it before it's restored and has ramps at either end, creating a new life and use for it.

Contact the Secretary and Treasurer Julia Sandison on 01962 867490 with any queries or for further information or email her on julia@ntcom.co.uk