

Tetbury Rail Land Regeneration Trust

Friends of the Goods Shed Newsletter No 44 – September 2021



Community, Creativity, Culture

What's New?



Tidying Up. We hope that all regulars will see that there has been a tidying up exercise around the Goods Shed. Roz Goodwin recently led a small team to do some very necessary weeding, clearing away of rubbish and laying of Cotswold chippings on the paths and grass-free areas. The platform needs frequent attention to keep the weeds down and we are grateful to John Rees for his regular work.

Replacement Marquee and Bar. As autumn approaches the Trustees are conscious that we need some form of replacement for the old marquee that failed to survive the winter. A project is underway to find a more robust and aesthetic structure, however, expect to see an interim solution very soon. At the same time a solution is being sought for a more permanent bar for use by Goods Shed audiences. Use of the inside café counter always proved an obstacle to the free flow of people and having temporary bars in the main hall requires more movement of bar stock and running around than our volunteers could reasonably be expected to manage. We look forward to some solutions before too long.

Goods Shed Events

The Goods Shed's Covid-limited programme of events has continued through July and August. On the 17th July one of our favourite Goods Shed artistes, Clare Hammond, gave a piano recital which included some études of Hélène de Montgerault, six piano pieces by Brahms, the Bells by William Grant Still and Rachmaninov's Piano Sonata No 2. Clare was her magnificent usual self and there was music for all tastes. On 21st July the Goods Shed was finally able to put on an outdoor performance using the old



Clare Hammond plays piano.

cattle-loading platform, King Arthur performed by The Last Baguette. This was a family event and families were able to sit on the grass, have a picnic and enjoy the fun of a retelling of the ancient legend. On the 24th Keith James returned to the Goods Shed, this time in the guise of Cat Stevens. At the end of the month we had another fabulous performance by Le Swing taking us back to the atmosphere of the old night clubs. August entertainment was rather sparse but the month ended with a sell-out performance by James Morton and his band Porkchop.



The Piano Club is now settling into its new spot of the last Wednesday of the month and has continued to prove popular. If you know of someone who could probably not sit happily through a formal concert but likes music and going out, why not offer to take them to a Piano Club afternoon session?

Left: An idyllic family day of picnic and entertainment provided by The last baguette's "King Arthur"

Cinema

The cinema is still struggling to get audiences despite the variety of interesting films laid on. An experiment in bringing back the classics of Casablanca and Psycho was appreciated by their small audiences. The innovative JoJo Rabbit, despite critical and popular acclaim, drew only 8 people. Sadly Minari, another multiaward-winning film about a Korean-American family trying to make a living from agriculture, was also poorly attended. Other films shown included Misbehaviour, Life of Pi as well as some children's films. In mid-August the film Nomadland finally pulled in a good audience. In multiple questionnaires since the idea of converting the old Goods Shed was first mooted back in the mid1990s, the number one request from across the community has been to show films. The good films are there, do please come and see them.

Other Offerings

Following on from an earlier talk in May on Jan Vermeer, on 25 August Fiona James gave an interesting lecture on "A Closer Look at Dieppe". Just Jive have continued their swing jive lessons throughout the summer period when they would normally have been on holiday. Full marks to Jimmy and Sarah for keeping things going.

200 Club – Grand Draw

The sixth and seventh draws of the 200 Club took place on 1 August and 1 September. The winner for August was John Rees with a further £180 going to 2 lucky runners up. Two September winners, Richard Warrington and Pat Gardner both generously donated their prize money back to the Goods Shed. Go to the Goods Shed website and follow the instructions for joining the 200 Club or email me if you prefer.

U3A Restarts

On 10th August the Tetbury branch of U3A held an open day at the Goods Shed to signal the restart of activities following virtual closure for 15 months due to the pandemic. The day was very well attended with people keen to get out and about again and making the most of life, be it by going on visits to historic buildings or famous gardens, playing indoor and outdoor games, walking or tackling something more academic. Go to the group's website if you would like to lead a more fulfilling life.



Cafe & Parkrun

The café continues to provide great food and drinks while providing the Arts Centre with the money it needs to help maintain its lively programme of arts events. There have been several changes of staff but Sasha continues to manage the café and at the same time create a banquet of tasty cakes and snacks. The Parkrun has returned to holding its weekly Saturday event so it might be best to leave it till about 11 am on Saturdays before strolling down. You will then also be able to stock up with fresh vegetables from Ros's stall with produce picked earlier that day at Addie's Farm.




The Tetbury Parkrun recommenced in August.

Greening Tetbury

In support of Greening Tetbury the Newsletter brings you its latest tip.



Tip of the Month
The joy of houseplants



- ✓ Bring the outdoor indoors
- ✓ Improve your mood and wellbeing
- ✓ Reduce pollutants by up to 20%
- ✓ Fix carbon
- ✓ Increase humidity: help your skin and breathing

Best buys: Spider Plant, Anthurium, Ivy, Prayer Plant, Snake Plant

For more ideas, see:
www.greeningtetbury.org

Greening Tetbury

Signal Box & Signal Post

The signal box project continues to make steady progress. The dwarf walls are now completed and the floor joists to go on top have been cut. By September we hope to raise the frames of the signal box onto the base. The roof rafters will need some repair work but it should not be too long before we can put the slates back on the roof. The dwarf walls will be covered with feather boarding to match the walls of the signal box. Finally, we shall need to repaint the box in its GWR colours of cream and stone. Many thanks to Rob and Margaret Gibbs for helping to make the project possible.

John Turton has very kindly brought the signal post from Steve Randolph's garden in Derbyshire to Tetbury in the back of his van on 16th August. A couple of days later 4 strong men, John, David Roberts, my son William and I, managed to unload it; It was very, very heavy. The signal post is about 12 ft high and there is a single stop semaphore board on it. We are now looking for someone to lead a team to reinstall it close to the signal box. Any volunteers?



Under ganger John Turton the heavy mob move the signal post.

From the Archive

Life in a Signal Box



Above: Not a typical signal box! The Tetbury signal box when in Steve Randolph's garden with the railway equipment he has accumulated including telegraph signalling machines.

Most railway employees started their careers at age 14 at the very bottom of the ladder as messenger boys, carrying and fetching anything that their seniors wanted, as well as making tea, cleaning, polishing, filling up the oil lamps, emptying the chemical toilets found around the railway and anything else that needed doing. Despite their young age they would work a 48-hour week (by an agreement of 1 Feb 1919), the same as all other railway workers. Needless to say, many of the boys were treated badly, undergoing

bizarre initiation rights and a lot of ribbing. A standard jape would be to tell them to go and get green and red oil for the signal lamps. Those

who wanted to become signal men would then progress to being telegraph lads. Telegraph lads learned how the block instruments worked, including the bells and visual indicators that signal men used to offer and accept trains into their block. A busy mainline signal might typically have 8 bells each with its own tone that the messenger lads and signalmen had to recognise so that they could respond correctly to the specific signal box that was offering the train. The lads also had to learn how to log the passage of every train that passed the signal box. The train registration book required from 8 to 10 separate details for each entry. For a busy mainline, a day's worth of logging could be 4 pages, each of 40 lines and each with 10 items. It was also essential to learn the layout of each signal box frame as no two were alike. Learning which levers needed pulling was one thing but being able to pull them was not easy for a young lad. To turn a distant signal on or off involved considerable strength and technique as it was all mechanical with up to half a mile of cabling or rodding as well as the signal arm itself.

Before becoming a qualified signalman, the telegraph lad would be given a comprehensive test. It would be unusual for a new signalman to be posted immediately to a mainline box, more likely to a branch line and then, like at Tetbury, because there was very little signalling to be done, the appointment was "signalman porter". In other words, the man had to earn his keep as a porter as well as doing the signalling.

Whether busy or not, a normal signalman was confined to his box for the length of his shift which was usually 12 hours starting at 6am or 6pm. Being late or leaving the box for any reason other than for duty was a very serious offence. The railway companies had a similar obsession to the Army and Royal Navy for cleanliness, spit and polish. The levers had to be black-leaded once a week, all the brass had to be shiny including all the knobs, dials, nuts and bolts on the block instrument. The wood floor needed to be scraped white. Being confined to the signal box meant that all signalmen cooked their meals in the box, and some were so adept that this could include a full Sunday roast on the sabbath.

Right: Did you know that Tetbury's signal box is so famous that a cardboard model OO kit of it is one of the Victoria and Albert Museum's most prized possessions? Well, not exactly, but it is there.

