

View from the Bridge

Friends' Newsletter – April 2016

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The Flying Scotsman to cross the Union Bridge

Don't panic! There are no plans to install a railway track across the Bridge as part of the bicentenary repairs – as far as we are aware. No! **This Saturday (16th April)** the prestigious 700-mile *Flying Scotsman* rally is scheduled to cross the Bridge between 12 noon and 1.30pm. A spectacular cavalcade of vintage vehicles – Bentleys, Bugattis, Rolls Royces, Lagondas, Alvis, Frazer Nash to name but a few – with owners from all over the world dressed in period costume, will cross the Bridge en route from Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire to Gleneagles, with a lunch-stop at Paxton House. It promises to be an event to remember. There is ample parking at the Honey Farm, where you can also have coffee, lunch or tea in their own vintage Honey Bus Café. Further details: www.endurorally.com



The accompanying illustration is of a knitted Clifton Suspension Bridge, which gives an indication of the artistry involved in such a project.

Lord-Lieutenants to visit the Bridge



Following the historic visit of the Berwick-upon-Tweed and Berwick, Roxburgh and Peebles MPs (Anne-Marie Trevelyan and Callum Kerr) to the Bridge last August (see photo), when they pledged support for the restoration project, another historic event takes place on May 25th, when HM Lord-Lieutenants for Berwickshire (Mrs Jeanna Swan) and Northumberland (the Duchess of Northumberland) will pay a fact-finding visit to the Bridge, and then attend a Reception at Paxton House when they will be briefed on the project and view the newly-acquired portrait of the Bridge's designer, engineer and builder, Capt Sir Samuel Brown RN.

Bicentenary progress report

James Fell, Northumberland County Council's Heritage and Events Development Manager, who is steering the project towards completion in time for the 2020 Bicentenary celebrations, reports:

"Following the Aecom report (who produced a survey report in 2010) and the subsequent work by Carillion in the early part of 2016, the cost of the capital restoration remains very close to the estimated £4.3 million which was presented in the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project enquiry. (The revised restoration budget estimate is just under £4.6 million.)"

Northumberland County Council Bridge Engineer, Simon Rudman, is now able to produce the outline specification for the capital works in the Delivery Stage of the project.

Prior to that, assuming that the Stage 1 application receives approval from HLF, a Development grant will be released to fully scope all aspects of the project. Simon Rudman is also working on the detail of what will need to take place during this Development Stage to fully prepare for the actual restoration.

Consult Robinson (the County Council's HLF bid consultants) have continued to build on the community heritage activities outline and incorporated ideas put forward by the Friends of Union Chain Bridge. A meeting is scheduled to take place with Historic England to consult with them in respect of the planned specification for the capital works; Historic Scotland will be consulted when the view of Historic England is established."

Knitting the Bridge

One of the community heritage activities mentioned in James Fell's report is a quirky and fascinating project by the *Horncliffe Hookers* rug-making group, to "knit the Bridge". Jacquot Dansie writes:

We've started knitting the Chain Bridge at the Hookers which meets each Wednesday at the Fishers Arms in Horncliffe.

Fiona has made a wonderful model of the bridge from polystyrene and we have now started our knitting. We are also busy collecting wool and other ideas for background etc. Its very early stages as yet. Kate Stephenson at the Watch Tower gallery (a great admirer of the bridge) has offered to exhibit the finished article when the time comes, which is very encouraging!"

New Leaflet released

A revised visitor leaflet based on the *Project 2020* (the forerunner of the Friends) leaflet which we have used for the past two years, was published just before the Easter holiday and is now available in TICs and other visitor attractions throughout the area as well as in a dispenser at the Bridge, where – given the need for daily replenishment during the holidays – it has been well received.

Welcome to our Patrons

The Trustees are delighted to report that three long-term supporters of the Bridge have accepted invitations to become Patrons of the Trust - Gordon Miller, of Paxton, who has an unrivalled knowledge of the Bridge and an extensive archive amassed over 50 years; Professor Roland Paxton of Heriot-Watt University, whose involvement in the restoration of other historic buildings has been of invaluable assistance in establishing the Friends; and Brian Whittle of North Yorkshire, whose professional career was spent in the building, repairing and restoration of suspension bridges, and whose last project before retirement was the restoration of Capt Brown's almost identical Wellington Bridge in Aberdeen, has been supportive of the restoration. The position of Patron is honorific but we hope to continue to benefit from the knowledge and wisdom of these three gentlemen as we head towards the bicentenary.

Concerts a great success

In the last Newsletter we mentioned two Concerts planned for February – one by the music students of the Berwickshire High School and the Swinton Brass Monkeys Brass Band (comprised of brass players from the High School and local primary schools) and the other, at Paxton House, by pianists Harris Playfair and Heather Cattanach. Both were a great success, raising a net sum of approx. £700 for the Friends. We are very grateful to the School, the Brass Band, Harris and Heather for their very generous support of the Friends and we hope to maintain and foster our relationship with them in other projects before and during the bicentenary.

The Bridge from a new perspective

Paxton House boat trips have started again for the new season. The trips, which cost £6 (children £4) and include commentary, take about an hour and go from Paxton House, **under the Bridge**, and on to Horncliffe; and back. A great opportunity to see the Bridge and its environs from a new perspective. Details: www.paxtonhouse.co.uk