

Area Group Reports

The area Groups of the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway are vital to our work to preserve the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Group members have been hard at work all year maintaining the sites, raising awareness in the communities and putting on fantastic walks and events through the year. We are grateful to all of the members who lead these groups tirelessly and give their spare time, enthusiasm, energy and muscle through all weathers.

If you're based in one of the communities or feel a particular affinity for a specific part of the former S&DR network, please do get in touch with the secretary to learn more about or join an area group. We have been pleased to have welcomed several new groups this year including the Heighington and Teesdale area groups.

Our Groups include:

- *Etherley Incline and Witton Park Colliery*
- *West Auckland & St Helen Auckland*
- *Brusselton Incline Group*
- *Heighington Station Group*
- *Darlington Interest Group*
- *Fighting Cocks & Middleton St George*
- *Stockton Interest Group*
- *Yarm Group*
- *Teesdale Railways Group*

Please find some reports below to give you a flavour of just some of the important work our groups do.

ETHERLEY INCLINE AND WITTON PARK COLLIERY Group.

Where to start?

As a group quite a bit has been going on A very successful event on the 199th Anniversary of the coming of the railway took place on 27th September, that attracted just over 100 people, most of which were present when Dr Tom Walker give his celebrated talk on the original engine.

Earlier in the month Mary Smith was able throw her garden open for successful event back in mid-September, thank you to everyone who took time out to attend.

The group have become involved with a student from Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College about his village's involvement on the very first morning that the Industrial Revolution reached sleepy Southwest Durham. Filming has already started, this included a good clear out of Belts Gill under the North Incline out of present day Phoenix Row.



Photo
Catherine
Yates.

The group have produced a calendar of the first five miles of the line, see below. Copies are available to buy at £8.00 By emailing [jraw2883 @aol.com](mailto:jraw2883@aol.com) The ideal Christmas gift for anyone with an interest in Georgian Railways.

The next meeting of this subgroup will be taking place on Thursday 21st November from 14.30.

WEST AUCKLAND ST HELEN GROUP

Here in the old west, things are stirring, as regard to spanning the Gaunless, with advanced sub-contractors lifting (temporary) sections of the wooden-fence out get down to the river, with their theodolites and ranging poles. Leaving traffic cones for locals to find the next morning. We wish D C C well with their efforts to have the new bridge in by March.

A thank you to those folk who turned up for the celebrations in the grounds of the former Station Masters house on the 28th September. Our thanks to George and Cindy for hosting this afternoon.

The group are running a Christmas Hamper raffle once again this winter. To be drawn on New Years day. Another litter pick took place in early November. This was helped by the fact that the sub- contractors had removed a tree and cut back the grass in one riverside section. However, big thank you those volunteers who turned up on that Wednesday morning.

At the end of October, the group arranged a tour of the Pockerly Railway see photograph. All had a ride on Puffing Billy and tour of the 1825 Engine Shed, at Beamish. John Raw Hon Sec.



Photo credit Alan Kellett

BRUSSELTON INCLINE GROUP

The A G M of this group took place back on 12th October The main point was that the committee gained one new member The Chairman remains as Trevor Horner with Dave Reynolds as our Vice Chairman, John Raw as Hon Sec and Paul Harle as our Treasurer.

The group have accepted an invite from Shildon Town Council on 14th November to look at what can be reasonably achieved by the town for 2025. Also a workshop being arranged by Nicki Hallifax on 30th November. To look at fringe events in Shildon. On this same Saturday Sarah Price will be the guest speaker at the winter lecture in the former Sunday School Room Soho Street, from 10.30.

There is to be a major railway themed event spread over the last weekend in June in Shildon Railway Institute. Expect to have more details on this by the end of January. B I G will be displaying at this event. We hope you can find sometime over the three days to attend.

Below section of the walking route though the former Shildon Wagon Works. Photo credit Catherine Yates



DARLINGTON INTEREST GROUP OF THE FRIENDS OF THE STOCKTON AND DARLINGTON RAILWAY

REPORT TO AGM

9th NOVEMBER 2024

The Group began about the beginning of 2023 and has about 15 local residents, most of whom attend regularly in the recently Listed historic Railway Tavern.

They are concerned to:

- care for the historic aspects of important remains of the S&D Railway Line which runs through Darlington to maintain and enhance;
- research, establish and carry out Guided Walks of the area for the Bicentenary of the Railway in 2025;
- inform residents about the history on their doorstep;
- encourage local events for the 2025 Celebrations;
- raise funds/assist associated projects within the area.

Caring for Historic Aspects:

-repaired the wall of the old Manager's House at Haughton Road;

-removed overgrowth of bushes etc at key sites: Throstle's Nest Accommodation Bridge and Cleveland Street Railway Bridge;

-highlighted areas needing improvement like the Albert Road bridge over the Skerne, and especially the need for the Skerne Bridge masonry to be effectively maintained;

- litter picking at e.g. Throstles' Nest, Cleveland Street, Skerne Bridge, The Sidings, Tornado Way;

-installed Sleepers on Tornado Way on a site on which the Railway used to run;

-we have continued to highlight the need for attention to important historic aspects which are neglected identified by the Friends with other contacts.



The DIG team and the cleared Throstlenest Bridge

Guided Walks:

A number of Walks have been researched, created and are being tested. These will become part of the Friends Walking Festival in 2025. This has also involved training and deciding supporting aspects like insurance, risk and booking admin etc.

Inform Residents:

Our work always attracts curiosity from passers by. It is apparent that they do not know about the History on their Doorstep, or that many people may well be visiting from all over the World next year! We are working on how this need can best be met.

We had a stall at the Darlington Carnival which attracted steady interest and some sales.

We also attended a Railway themed event organised by the Council Festival Events team in the town market place which informed residents and generated some new members.

Encourage 2025 Events:

We have been engaged with the Friends plans and Council and partners plans, which are emerging, and will support local events in our area.

Raise Funds / Assist Projects:

We have helped raise funds towards the Friends Walk booklets which has involved raising awareness of local need with local councillors that serve our area.

THANKS are due to all members of the group who generously give of their time and considerable expertise, and to those who are working in the background on their own projects.

Ross Chisholm is key to all we have done through his in depth knowledge of the history, the council and planning matters. In particular he identifies the areas needing attention, and organises what is needed to be done, and most important liaises with the appropriate Council officers to assist us and keep them informed.

Yvonne Richardson

TEESDALE RAILWAY HISTORY GROUP

We are a new, local group of the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway with Town Councillor Chris Foote-Wood as Chair and Jane Hackworth-Young (who needs no introduction!) as Secretary. As yet without a treasurer, much less a bank account, we are grateful to be under the umbrella of the Friends who are taking care of our modest funds from donations and grant aid. Membership of our Group is free, but we encourage our members to join the Friends if they have not already done so.

Barnard Castle station, now sadly demolished, was the hub of four railways: a local line to Middleton-in-Teesdale; two to Darlington and Bishop Auckland and all points east, and one “over the tops” to Kirkby Stephen and all points west. From Barney you could travel by rail to anywhere in the UK! “A Ticket to Teesdale”, recently published by the North Eastern Railway Association (NERA) gives a first class account of our four railways, all lost in the 1960s. Although built some years after 1825, these lines were operated by an expanded S&DR.

With the support of Barnard Castle Town Council and Durham County Council, we have set our hand to these tasks: to hold an exhibition of railway memorabilia at the Witham in Barney in late August and early September next year with a working model railway built by one of our members, and an another much larger working model made and shown by the Cleveland Model Railway Club at Middleton Masonic Hall on September 14/15; to organise guided railway walks around Barney; to erect an authentic Railway Signal Pole at The Crossings on Harmire Road next to the crossing-keeper’s cottage as a permanent memorial to our railway history. In this last endeavour we have the support of GSK (formerly Glaxo) who own the cottage and the land next to it. The signal pole will be similar to those in place at Shildon and Romaldkirk on the Middleton line, now an established railway walk. Glaxo came to Barney at the end of WW2 to make penicillin largely because of its railways links. Longer term, we hope to establish a permanent archive of our local railway history.

Chris Foote-Wood



The Railway Signal at
Romaldkirk Station House.

With the support of GSK the
Teesdale Group aim to erect
one to mark the site of Barnard
Castle Station Crossing on
Harmire Road