



## Heritage Railway Trust

Waldersea Depot, Long Drove, Waldersea, Friday Bridge, Wisbech, PE14 0NP

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### Supporters Newsletter May 2013

First point on the agenda is the [Bramley Line Annual General Meeting](#) on [Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May at Waldersea](#). The AGM is due to start at 1400hrs, 2pm when all are welcomed and encouraged to come and see what goes on. All paid up members are able to vote on any resolutions brought forward. Prior to the meeting, volunteers will be on site from around 10am, there will be opportunity 'get your hands dirty' helping with various tasks towards the tidying of the depot area in preparation towards the creation of a heritage site. Also, why not just come along to see for yourself, and meet likeminded people who are keen to further the chances of ultimately reopening the line between Wisbech and March. If you haven't got round to renewing your membership for this year yet, why not come and renew it onsite before the AGM. Directions for anyone who has not visited Waldersea depot before are on the next page.

You will recall from previous newsletters the holding of workdays on the second Saturday of each month. Whilst we were unable to accommodate this in May, previous workdays have been very successful. Projects underway include depot yard clearance, tree and brush clearing, laying a new siding parallel to the main line, fencing and various other general maintenance jobs.



Development of the new siding – a recent load of ballast delivered on the right.



## **Forthcoming events**

We are staging a photo exhibition to mark the 130th anniversary of [The Wisbech and Upwell Tramway](#), from [July 9th](#) to [September 14](#) in the [Wisbech and Fenland Museum](#). Also, we hope to have more events on the weekend of 14/15 September to coincide with a heritage weekend including a guided tour of the old tramway route on a heritage bus. An interesting history of the Tramway, by Sue Dockett, is included in this newsletter

The [Roadshow](#) is visiting the [Manningtree](#) Vehicle Show on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June, the Essex County Car & Motorcycle Show at [Cressing Temple](#) on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July, and the [Brightlingsea](#) Car Show and Fun Day on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> September. We will also be at the National Festival of Railway Modelling at [Peterborough](#) Showground on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October.

## **Local support.**

The Wisbech to March Railway link is now becoming a frequent discussion point in the local press. As railway travel in general becomes more popular and practical, the opportunity to boost the regeneration of Wisbech as a major player in the region is rising up the popular agenda. The initial stage of the report on the possibility of reopening the line was positive, the second stage is currently looking at the economic viability of reopening. The Bramley Line Trust, both current membership and those who have gone before, have no doubt been instrumental in keeping this project alive, and will continue to do so. Our local MP is taking interest, so please continue to support the Trust through membership, volunteering, fund raising, or in any way that you feel able.

## **How do I find Waldersea depot?**

Following the A47 from Peterborough, at the first roundabout approaching Wisbech, take the third exit, Redmoor Lane, go over the railway, keep right at the next junction and a very short distance further, turn right into Belt Drove (this road is narrow and uneven), follow straight on at the next junction until you reach the crossing gates, this is Waldersea Depot.

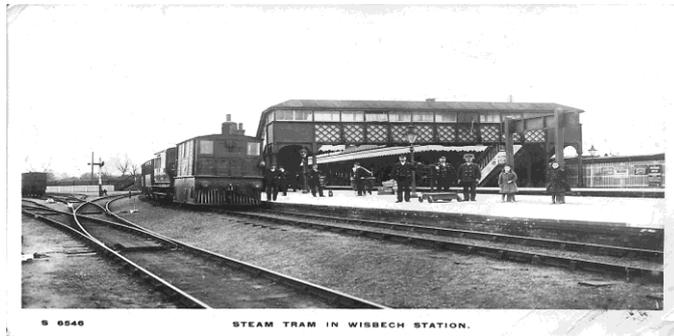
From the north, you need to come through Wisbech to the A47, from Kings Lynn also, approach the roundabout at the junction with the B198, take the Redmoor Lane exit and proceed as above.



# The Wisbech and Upwell Tramway

A railway from Wisbech to Outwell was first proposed in 1873 but the line was not started due to insufficient funds. In 1880 the Great Eastern Railway decided to use the 1870 Tramway Act as an experiment to build a standard gauge branch line with less stringent regulations and consequently less expense than a conventional railway.

The tramway opened on 20th August 1883 initially only as far as Outwell. The extension to Upwell was completed the next year, the full line opening on 8th September 1884. The tramway's uniqueness stems from the manner of its construction. Whether it was a tramway or railway has long been debated by railway enthusiasts.



For the first 12 months tramway passengers were conveyed in carriages from the former Millwall Extension Railway. There were six return journeys every weekday from Wisbech to Outwell with a flat fare of 2d Third class and 3d First class. In July 1884 two four-wheeled tramcars were delivered followed by two bogie tramcars and a luggage van in time for the opening of the extension to Upwell.

The opening of the extension to Upwell saw the end of the flat fare. A first class ticket from Upwell to Wisbech cost 4d but the fare between Boyce's Bridge and Outwell basin was reduced to 2d First class and 1d Second class. Trams would stop to pick up or set down passengers at any point along the line as well as at the depots.

For the first 30 years of its life, the tramway's passenger service

remained very popular.

Official figures for the years 1903 to 1914 show that on average 120,572 passengers a year used the line with a peak in 1905 of 140,395. By 1907 fares had risen slightly and designated stopping places were introduced. The journey time had been reduced to just 39 minutes



from 1 hour 50 minutes.

After the First World War competition from road transport saw a sharp decline in passenger numbers. Passenger services were eventually withdrawn on 31st December 1927.



### **The Wisbech and Upwell Tramway (continued)**

Following the termination of passenger services most of the coaches were moved to the Kelvedon and Tollesbury branch in Essex. Bogie tramcar number 8 survived and was used for the filming of the Titfield Thunderbolt. After filming it was sold. Found in Huntingdonshire and restored at the Rutland Railway Museum, it is now on display at Sheringham on the North Norfolk Railway.

The tramway however remained the main form of transport for bringing the fruit and vegetables to the main line at Wisbech Goods Station. During petrol rationing between 1945 and 1950 traffic was particularly heavy with frequent double headed strawberry specials. In 1952 two Drewry diesel tram locos were ordered for trials on the line, the photo below shows the first of these on arrival. The last steam tram was withdrawn in March 1953 making the tramway the first solely diesel hauled line on British Railways. The last tram ran on 20th May 1966 and the tramway officially closed on 23rd May. However the memory of the Tramway lives on in the stories of Rev Awdry about Toby the Tram Engine and Mavis which are based on the tramway locos.

Photos Sue Dockett collection and MN Bland

