

The Potting Shed May 2023 No. 71



**Our Early Summer
Sales Day is on 27
May from 10:00am
to 4:00pm**

**Summer bedding &
vegetable plants.**

**Shrubs, herbaceous
perennials. Hanging
baskets & filled
pots.**

**Books, crafts, bric-
a-brac, cacti.**

**Refreshments. Rail-
ways.**

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Editorial

Things seem to be happening at the Nursery which are reflected in this issue. Working has been ongoing on the railway track and the foundations for the new building and concrete pouring on the latter is imminent. There is an update on the cacti from Matt. We have a slew of groups coming to work or visit the Nursery which will hopefully be reported in the next issue.

Sales Dates

The Nursery will be open on June 3, 10, 17 & 24 between 9:30am and 1:00pm

On 1 July the Nursery will open for its Buy-one-get-one-free on Summer bedding plants sale between 10:00am and 4:00pm.

Cacti



After a very difficult autumn and winter because mother's declining health with pre-leukaemia kept me away, my visits have been very infrequent. I appreciate the condolences from regular on-site volunteers

I've seen after her passing in April.

Some eagle-eyed members may have seen the trays of plants I'd left looking a bit sad because I lost the family greenhouse when my Mum's house had to be sold. These plants are now being tidied up and I'm starting a programme of inspection and re-potting. The cold weather caused a few surprising deaths with a few plants not seeing it through which had previously been fine. Perhaps there was more extended frost, this isn't necessarily derogatory for plants of Chile, Peru and Mexico can live fine through mountain snow in their habitats. However our humidity and some drips from the glass no doubt contributed to make the environment more hostile! A fine, very spiky *Eulychnia castanea* was one, luckily the rarer white tufted sister *E. saint-peana* plant ended up on my (warmer) windowsill at home, as these are all classed as endangered species in the 'wild'.

There have been some nice flowers on the plants, the saving grace for some cacti that are otherwise not necessarily very pretty looking. *Gymnocalycium bruchii* with its dwarf style small plant body had some lovely delicate pink flowers but they only last 2 or 3 days. That seems to apply to a lot of desert plants that do not receive a lot of nutri-

ents. Expending energy for flowers takes a lot out of them! I use a specialist balanced cacti feed but for many years my Dad quite successfully used a half strength mixture of 'Tomorite' three or four times per year. Hopefully we'll have some extended sunnier periods now. That of course brings its own issues with the succulents, some of whom prefer a bit of shade, especially the *Haworthias* I find. It gets rather warm in the greenhouse and a lot of the time there isn't very much breeze, which in nature helps prevent scorching. Some plants, those white fluffy bodied ones or with white or grey farinosa on the leaves have evolved to combat this, and are some of my favourite such as the *Dudleya* species and *Echeveria*. These make good sunny window houseplants.

Matt Gibbs

Railway and building work

Having a larger than usual workforce and some fairly fine weather enabled the group to replace two sleepers under the track near the turntable outside the engine shed. For some time this has been showing evidence of the track having dropped. The job was carried out over two Thursdays. Digging down, the sleeper under the track was heavily waterlogged and rotten. Two new sleepers were "worked" into place and the work site covered

over with a metal plate until the following week.

Our attempt to use standard gauge track bolts to fix the track to the sleepers was unsuccessful as the increase in diameter of the bolts near the top of the bolt resulted in the sleeper cracking. On standard gauge track this portion would hold the chair to the sleeper and not touch the sleeper. Narrow gauge track spikes were used to complete the job. After rebalancing the joint is good as any on the line. I have included a photo essay of the progress on this job later on in this newsletter.

Poppleton Station Adoption



New display case displaying Poppleton station history

We have cleared out all the old bulbs etc. and cut back some bushes so the team are ready to plant the bedding plants—which have been reserved for us by the Nursery—to give some more colour to our two platform beds—on Wednesday 24 May. We should be frost free by then.

Northern have so far not repainted the platform edge white lines yet, nor sent us our money for this year,

nor yet visited us as they promised to give us new safety jackets etc.

However they have a few problems with one day strikes having resumed and shortages of both money and staff we understand.

The new timetable begin on Sunday 21 May and I will put up summaries of departures on that morning as usually a full timetable poster does not appear immediately! Very little change this time with a good half hourly day time service in each direction continuing on our line but more annoying one minute differences on Saturdays.

We will not bother them for a little while they sort themselves out and we continue quite happily with our tasks to keep the station looking tidy.

Colin Wood, Station Adopters Team Leader.

Who runs the Nursery?

This is a question visitors and volunteers often ask.

The nursery is run by a Management Committee, consisting of our 6 Trustees/Directors¹, Publicity Officer (Lesley), Health and Safety Adviser (Jane), Publicity Adviser (Ann) and Head of the Poppleton Station Adoption Group (Colin).

The Committee meets every two months. It is chaired by Jo. The other Trustees are Paul (Horticultural)

¹ the nursery is a registered charity and also a not for profit company

tural Adviser and Minutes Secretary), Pat (Treasurer), Bob (Head of Railway Group), Richard (Deputy Station Adopter and Engineering Adviser) and Graham (Company Secretary, Grants, Insurance and admin issues).

We welcome comments and suggestions about improvements to the nursery, although we are all volunteers working in our spare time!

I hope this is useful. If so I am happy to provide more information in the form of a follow-up article or you can come and have a chat (I am usually at the nursery on Wednesdays).

Graham Collett

Co-op Local Community Fund

The nursery has benefited from its involvement in this

scheme — we received over £2600 last year. The current year's scheme is still running until November, so please ensure you nominate the nursery when you shop at the Co-op! For more information please see: <https://poppletonrailwaynursery.co.uk/helping-us/support>

We are currently applying for next year's scheme, so wish us luck!

New building foundations

Much work has been carried out on the new building foundations primarily by Geoff Rafton. The following photographs shows the progress over the last couple of months.



30 March After clearing by Network Rail group and partial infilling with rubble.



20 April After compaction with rubble.



27 April After laying concrete over rubble and tidying surround.



4 May After laying steel reinforcement ready for pouring concrete.

Replacing sleepers

The following photos show the work involved in replacing sleepers on the narrow gauge railway. Refer to the Railway and building work section above for further information.



Digging out the old sleeper. At the left hand side of the hole is a spirit level, on its right is gauging stick to ensure the distance between the rails is 600mm.



After digging out the old sleeper, two new sleepers were put in and rotated until under the rails. Two short lengths of rail were used to raise the height of the rails nearest to the camera. The left rail furthest from the camera is held down with the standard gauge bolts, the remaining fixings are narrow gauge spikes. All that remains to do is push ballast under the sleeper and fill in and tamp the hole.