

WESSEX TRANSPORT SOCIETY

THIRD FESTIVAL OF TRANSPORT

SUNDAY 15 AUGUST 2004

The Wessex Transport Society has been holding its popular running days now for over 15 years. We will be holding our third event since 2002 at Avon Heath Country Park, near Ringwood as the facilities were found to be satisfactory and our attendance figures doubled that of the previous year. Not only were bus enthusiasts present, but former and retired members of staff from bus companies and a good turnout from the general public.

Avon Heath Country Park welcomes its visitors to explore Dorset's important heathland and rare wildlife. It is located at St. Leonards, 2 miles west of Ringwood on the main A31 trunk road. The entrance gates are open from 9am to 7pm. It was formerly Ministry Of Defence land and its two 'North' and 'South' parks are 580 acres of full of Dorset Heath, densely surrounded by Scots Pine and Birch trees. Sign-posted trail paths are ideal for walking and cycling and guided tours are often available. The visitor centre and gift shop (run by volunteers) frequently holds wildlife exhibitions and is open from 11am to 4pm.

'The Lizard' is a climb-through tunnel for younger children descending from a large hill onto a safe park with different wood and rope type constructions to play on. There are picnic areas and a very reasonably priced transport-style café/restaurant serves a good variety of hot and cold food. There are toilets and disabled access is not to be forgotten. The on-site parking caters for approximately 60-70 cars with a small charge.

The full address is: Avon Heath Country Park, Brocks Pine, St. Leonards, Ringwood, BH24 2DA

The Warden is: Steve Davies, 01425 478470

Our Chairman, Mike Caldicott chose Avon Heath Country Park three years ago as a base for our running day because of the very good facilities mentioned previously. Behind the café and sheltered by gorse and pine, a very large grass field is found to be suitable as a static display area for our buses, coaches and commercials and the ground is very compact. It was previously used by the MOD for tanks. The 2003 Festival welcomed over 50 static display vehicles, including approximately 20 buses and coaches, over 30 cars, about 8 utility vehicles and a handful of motorcycles.

Last year some of the running buses on free services chose the field as a layover whilst the majority parked on the main concreted lorry park. This is adjacent to the free bus service departure point and in front of the café. Between the café and the visitor centre is a very wide strip of hard surface area, which is ideal for stalls.

Probably the uppermost priority inside a typical bus enthusiast's mind must be of travelling on the running vehicles and choosing their most interesting destination. So again this year the routes are linked mostly with significance to transport, although importance is given to the scenery, such as the New Forest.

Of course all routes are based on Hants & Dorset Motor Services timetables from the 1960's and 70's. The outline of routes to be operated is likely to be (in order of priority):

- 26, X27 and 38 feeder services from Poole, Bournemouth and Salisbury.
- A continuous Park & Ride service from Ringwood (free) car parks.
- X27/38 two hourly services from Bournemouth – Aviation Museum – Avon Heath Country Park.
- Regular 27 short service to Hurn Aviation Museum (reduced entry charge if our £3.00 Festival programme is purchased and shown).
- A service to Moors Valley Country Park, for the super narrow-gauge steam railway (free entry to the park).
- A short service to Burley and Holmsley (Old Station Tearooms).

Both the 13A and 130 pass through Burley and Holmsley-it is possible to alight here (on request) from one bus and catch the next one (if seats are available). Last year the longer service to Brockenhurst Station proved popular-this will run again but only if we have the entrants. If there happens (hopefully) to be a good turnout from owners and their vehicles then new routes can be presented to you. The same will apply to the previously intermediate timed services to Poole and Salisbury.

Listed below are full details of transport related destinations that the frequent timetabled free bus services will call at. These may be on an intermediate point as part of a certain route, but it is possible to alight or be picked up from buses on request.

Moors Valley Country Park (for narrow-gauge steam railway):

Until 1985, the site earmarked for the railway had been a dairy farm and some of the buildings have been utilised for the railway. There are 15 steam engines and 36 passenger vehicles to see. A typical train can consist of 12 carriages loaded with 72 passengers. At peak times up to six trains an hour can operate over the track, which is one mile long. Next to Kingsmere Station the gift shop sells books, souvenirs and toys. Entrance to Moors Valley Country Park is free but fares are payable on the train.

Burley:

A narrow, winding main street is home to the quaint shops selling antiques and gifts together with a number of tearooms. The Coven of Witches gift shop was owned by a self confessed white witch, who lived in the village in the late 1950's. Burley is home to many donkeys-they roam aimlessly up and down the main street, perhaps even deliberately slowing down the traffic!

Holmsley:

The old station at Holmsley now serves cream teas and lunches whilst its surviving platforms and former track bed are there to explore hidden amongst the trees. Thomas Elliott started the famous 'Royal Blue' stagecoach service in the 1880's well before both Bournemouth and Christchurch stations were built.

Hurn Airport and Bournemouth Aviation Museum:

You can choose to see the aircraft take off for holiday destinations at Hurn, or visit Bournemouth Aviation Museum where the latest exhibit to check out is a Vulcan Cockpit. The Museum is growing rapidly with new and exciting exhibits arriving all the time. In the hanger are several Hunters, a MIG17, BAC 1-11, Sea-Vixen, Vampires and other aircraft that were closely associated with Hurn. Ejector seats, flight recorders, cameras and piston engines are on display with a model room containing hundreds of items and also a history room. Normal admission prices are £5 (adult), child (£3.00) and family (£14.00), but if you show our Festival Programme on entry there will be £1 of all single entry fees and £2 off a family ticket.

Last year we had a problem with car parking. The site was full of parked cars (which is what we wanted) but there were no spaces left, like the previous year. We hired a field on the entrance road for £100, which only took about 20 cars for a small charge and we made a loss. It also proved to be a bit of a lengthy walk from there to the static area and as there were no enforcement cones and you could park anywhere you liked. On trying to find a solution this year, the committee have decided that there should be a continuous shuttle service from the Ringwood Long and Short Stay car parks using two buses. Presently there is no charge for parking at Ringwood on Sundays; you will have a very good choice of over a thousand parking spaces, and a free bus trip into Avon Country Park!

The feeder buses will operate as before from Poole and Salisbury although times will be slightly earlier as the new Park & Ride starts earlier with these vehicles.

Apart from the picnic site and good café facilities on the site, there are many places to eat out. The entrance road roundabout situates The Little Chef and St. Leonards Hotel for those who like their Sunday lunches. Many facilities are serviced by the regular **free bus services:**

13A Numerous tearooms and pubs (including the famous Queens Head) are situated at Burley, and the Old Station Tearooms at Holmsley serves cream teas and lunches.

27 Hurn Airport has a restaurant overlooking the main runway and Bournemouth Aviation Museum has an outside picnic area.

102 Moors Valley Country Park has a large restaurant/café and there are many pubs in Ringwood Town Centre serving meals on a Sunday.

124 The Avon Causeway Inn (Hurn Station) has a good menu (which will be displayed on our main stand), pending availability of suitable and frequent vehicles.

During the last two festivals the August heat wave was in with hardly any cloud in sight, so are we going to be third time lucky? If not and heavy rain looks to set in all day and if some entrants and visitors decide to go home, a rough emergency plan will take place. Although shelters from the rain are at the Visitor Centre and Café, it will be a good idea to allocate a double-deck bus to act as a temporary waiting room. Priority will be given (after the Ringwood Shuttle) to running services X27 and 38 to Bournemouth, then the intermediates to Poole and Salisbury. If any vehicles are left to operate, the 27 services will run, as Hurn Airport and the Aviation Museum are both under cover. If the unfortunate does happen then not all will be wasted.

You may wonder although how the Festival Of Transport is paid for. Putting an admission charge in place would be very costly and complicated and we would be breaking the law if fares or donations were taken on the bus services. Also to operate with class V vehicles and without applying for routes to the Department Of Transport is illegal and the Festival really could not therefore take place. Presently the only answer is by voluntary donations and we can do this through the sale of programmes, photographs and timetables etc. The programme contains details of all free bus services and destinations, official static entries and a reduction entry price agreed with Bournemouth aviation Museum.

It is possible to get your £3.00 programme before the day if you send a self-addressed stamped envelope of A5 size to:

Mike Caldicott
Wessex Transport Society
7 Priory Dene, 47 Cavendish Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 1RA

Avon Heath Country Park is in an ideal location on the South Coast, having the New Forest and miles of sandy beaches nearby. Have you ever thought about taking a holiday that coincides with your interest? There are numerous campsites, B&B's and hotels that you can choose from, but you may have to book well ahead for August.

Where to stay in and near Salisbury:

An accommodation list is available from the Tourist Information Office, Fish Row, Salisbury (Tel 01722 399955).

Youth Hostel, Milford Hill House, Milford Hill, Salisbury (01722 327572).

The Yew Tree Inn, Odstock (01722 329786).

The King's Arms, High Street, Downton (01725 510446).

Where to stay in and near to the New Forest:

An accommodation list is available from the Tourist Information Office, Salisbury Street, Fordingbridge, Hants, SP6 1AB (01425 654560) and The Furlong, Ringwood, Hants, BH24 3QT (01425 470896).

Red Shoot Camping Park, Linwood, near Ringwood, BH24 1AZ (01425 473789).

Sandy Balls Estate Holiday Centre (caravan and camping), Fordingbridge (01425 653042).

Original White Hart Hotel, Market Place, Ringwood, Hants, BH24 1AW (01425 472702).

We are always looking for any reliable help-all day/half day/or just a couple of hours. We need volunteers for marshalling, conductors, for programme selling and for other general duties.

Please support us if you can-make a note on the calendar for Sunday August 15th; come along to enjoy the sights, sounds and have a chat with your fellow members on the buses!