

Webmaster's Report for 2017

The following table shows that the steady decline in visitor numbers continued throughout 2017, although the club's Facebook page (maintained by Nigel Nicholds) is compensating for the losses.

| Website Visitor Numbers | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Year | New Visitors | Return Visitors | Total Visitors | Comparison with Previous Year |
| 2012 | 13,207 (78%) | 3,670 (22%) | 16,877 | -6.60% |
| 2013 | 15,146 (78%) | 3,906 (22%) | 19,052 | +12.89% |
| 2014 | 15,587 (75%) | 3,573 (25%) | 14,160 | -25.68% |
| 2015 | 7,707 (74%) | 2,765 (26%) | 10,472 | -26.05% |
| 2016 | 5,469 (64%) | 3,118 (36%) | 8,587 | -18.00% |
| 2017 | 3,750 (65%) | 1,986 (35%) | 5,736 | |

| Website Costs | Term | Expires | 2016 | 2016 |
|--|----------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| Website hosting (1Gb) | 3 yrs | 31/12/2019 | £35.88 | £35.88 |
| Domain name registration with Nominet | 2 yrs | 16/11/2018 | £8.39 | £8.39 |
| Online enquiry form to prevent spam e-mails ¹ | 2 yrs | 10/08/2019 | £27.93 | £23.13 |
| Message board ^{1,2,3} | 360 days | 05/03/2018 | £88.96 | £43.24 |
| Totals | | | £161.16 | £110.64 |

Achievements

- The 2017 News page was kept up-to-date throughout the year with 115 news stories (112 in 2016).
- 5 new collections were added to the Photo Gallery (11 in 2016).
- I published the AGM Minutes online and kept the more static pages, e.g. the Home and History pages, up to date.
- Chris Jennings contributed much new material for the Photo Gallery, which is waiting to be processed and uploaded.

Problems

- My move from a modern town house in Chichester to an 1834 cottage in Devon, and its wholesale restoration, reduced the amount of time that I could devote to the website.
- I continue to receive very little ready-to-print copy; most contributions require me to précis and re-word often lengthy source material.

The Way Ahead?

Our website now looks rather old-fashioned, although not so much so as Wikipedia. We could remedy this by setting up a new website on a modern website hosting-and-development platform, such as 'MrSite'. A new website could host the more static content, e.g. the club's aims, history, membership rates, etc., while the news and photo pages (the time-consuming parts of the current website) could be separated into a linked website, retaining the existing format – which would take a very long time to modernise. The benefits of a new 'main' website would be:

1. A new public image, which would create interest and increase visitors (for a while); and
2. In-built adaptability to modern devices, such as mobile phones and iPads.

I remain willing to hand over to a new Webmaster, or to continue in post for another year if no volunteer is forthcoming. There is self-interest in this: a further edition of *Vinter's Railway Gazetteer* is possible, and the club's Webmaster is one of the first people to receive news about railway paths developments.

Jeff Vinter

14th March 2018

¹ Products purchased from US suppliers, so slightly more expensive than two year ago due to the 'Brexit effect'

² The message board costs for 2017 covered 360 days as opposed to 180 in 2016 – hence the price difference

³ I let the message board lapse in March 2018 because few members are now using it, but it remains operational as a limited free service, albeit with adverts