The Raconteur

Issue 31, March 2016

This shows Renown at the Ashford Works open day in 1982.
Photo courtesy of Howard Fisher.

Welcome to the March 2016 issue of the Raconteur. Despite the poor weather we suffered for much of last year, work continues to progress in the project to revive Repulse, and detailed reports are presented below. The header and Photo Spot photographs in this issue are used by kind permission of two of my Facebook friends.

All photographs in this issue by me unless otherwise credited.
Andy Rowlands

Chairman's report - Mark Burrows

Firstly although I realise it is a bit late (but this is the first RAC of 2016), and I have been told it's too late to wish everyone a "Happy New Year", but I don't see why I shouldn't wish everyone all the best

for the coming year.

As you will see the sales stand has had an extremely busy period over the winter, doing our best to cash in on both the pre Christmas shopping, presents, etc, but also the post Christmas spending of the money that people have received as presents. This has been very successful, with the sales stand, website and sales made by e-mail to members/shareholders and friends of the group interested in modelling, raising a substantial sum since the last Rac was published. You will also see that Paul and Edwin have been keeping on top of membership renewals and doing their best to keep in touch with our membership, but as Paul says, to make life easier, please Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today, or at least not where RRRG membership renewal is concerned.

Something we haven't pushed for a fairly long time, that I would like to remind everyone of while on the subject of fund raising and membership is the standing order scheme that we run for purchasing shares in the loco's, this is a very successful method of fundraising, and is also relatively painless, as you can set up as small a monthly payment as you like, but even a modest £10 a month, will, over the course of a year buy a share and pay your membership (This is less than the cost of a pint of beer a week). Please also remember that as a member you get 10% off the majority of sales items, which if your into model railways means the membership can pay for itself in one purchase.

Progress has continued on the locos with working parties being held virtually every weekend, but as you'll see in the reports has inevitably been a little slow over the winter period. Rowsley isn't the warmest or driest of places even in a mild winter. Also one of our stalwart working members Ian Kemp had an unfortunate car accident in January, which although thankfully Ian and Walter are both fine, has inhibited Ian's ability to visit site. The important thing is that they are both well, and of course we look forward to seeing them both back on site when possible. The other restriction on manpower over the winter has been that I've been sitting in the warm manning the sales stand at various toyfairs quite a lot, and I can't be in two places at once, or at least that's my excuse.

The better of the two rad fan motors awaiting overhaul at Bowers.
Photo courtesy of Mark Burrows.

As I mentioned in the last RAC we are focussing efforts on moving toward a target of being able to get the engine fired up, and to this end two of the spare radiator fan motors have been moved to Sulzers in Birmingham for estimates and overhaul, and the radiators have all been prepared for removal and are now ready to be lifted out to be sent away with our spares for assessment and refurbishment of a set. The reassembly of the power unit is now almost complete and it is now able to be barred over with the added luxury of oil being pumped around it, having swallowed a not inconsiderable amount.

Ian and Dave did comment to me that they wondered where it had all gone, and kept looking underneath as they couldn't believe the amount that simply disappeared into the pipes, having pumped well over a barrel of the stuff in before any at all appeared in the sump. The oil also gives an indication that this isn't a cheap game, as it cost in excess of £600, I'm glad an oil change on my car is nothing like that!

On the 20th May last year we took delivery of the two exhausters and two traction motor blowers that had been fully overhauled by Bowers Electrical, to avoid any deterioration the machines have been moved to an offsite clean, dry, heated, secure warehouse courtesy of a very generous offer made by my employers.

Unloading of the machines at Bowers.
Photo courtesy of Mark Burrows.

The four machines are seen here shortly after arrival at their new home and make quite an impressive site lined up in their shrink wrap protection.
Photo courtesy of Mark Burrows.

A month or so later on 29th June the ETH/Auxiliary generator that we have previously had overhauled was moved to the same location. For the past few years it has been in storage courtesy of my previous employer, an arrangement which they very kindly allowed to continue after I had left, however, this year following a restructuring of their business and a change in use of the location it was at, I was asked to arrange to move it. Fortunately, when I changed jobs, I had asked my new employer about the possibility of storing it for RRRG and they had very generously offered to provide a space.

The left-hand pic below shows the ETH / Aux gen set being unloaded at its new home. Photo courtesy of Mark Burrows.

The right-hand pic above shows the gen set in its new storage location sheeted over with the exhausters and motor blowers neatly stored on the racking behind it. Photo courtesy of Mark Burrows.

Another task which we would like to do this year is to give the bodywork a bit of a refresh, this has been left for a few years now as the regular team have been focussing their efforts on work inside the loco's it would be nice if this could be done without diverting effort away from the internals, as such I would urge anyone thinking about lending a hand on site to get in touch, whether to work on the inside or to help with the bodywork, it all helps and you will be made welcome. Although someone is on site most weekends, to avoid the risk of a wasted trip it is probably best to give a us a ring first, I can be contacted on 07785 386630.

I hope you enjoy reading the rest of the Rac and find the pictures inspiring, and look forward to hearing from some of you, or maybe seeing you on site or whilst out and about with the sales stand.

We have also finally found a welder willing to work on the locos, though we are having to pay him,

and he is currently repairing the cab of 50037, so he can better understand the structure inside the cabs, and avoid cutting through pipes and conduits when he starts work on Repulse.

I'm pleased to be able to report that work parties are continuing to be held most weekends, but I would like to stress that many hands make light work, and as such any potential volunteers out there are more than welcome. If you've been thinking about, or are thinking about volunteering, please do so. Whilst work parties are held most weekends I would recommend getting in touch first so that we can ensure an appropriate welcome and induction are available, e-mail: **chairman@renownrepulse.com**

Sales report – Mark Burrows

The sales stand has had a busy period since the last magazine was issued. As it has been winter all of the stands outings have been to toyfairs where the stand is undercover! The stand has attended all of the toyfairs previously planned, and a few extras:

6th October, Alfreton Leisure centre
21st October, Burton Townhall
15th November, Kirkby in Ashfield Festival Hall
27th November, Alfreton Leisure centre
5th December, Nottingham
13th December, Stafford Showground
10th January, Stafford Showground
17th January Kirkby
20th January, Burton
24th January, Donington Park
5th February, Alfreton
27th February Nottingham

The above outings have varied significantly in their level of success, the best day being the 10th January at Stafford; £275.49 profit, the worst being Alfreton on the 16th October which only raised £11.26 profit. The overall profit from these five months worth of toyfairs has been £1403.03. This is significantly up on the figures for the 2015 summer six month period of £758, but is down on the £2523 raised by the stand in the previous winter six months. It is however, still quite a credible figure. The sales stand's general profitability has been helped immensely by the very kind and generous bequest of a large amount of model railway equipment made by RRRG member Richard Atherton.

In addition to the sales stand outings, we are continuing to sell 2nd hand model railway items via an e-mail distribution list to members and friends of the group, over the last five months 16 lists have been issued which have raised £1,314.10, which is significantly up on the £409 for the previous six months. The website has also continued to make steady sales, contributing around £170 profit in the last five months. The website has recently been running quite low on stock; as such we have recently added a fairly significant number of additional items, many of which are included on the attached sales sheet.

The coming plan as it stands is to have the sales stand out at the following toyfairs/events:

20th March, Kirkby in Ashfield
23rd March, Burton on trent,
9th and 10th April Nene Valley Railway Diesel gala
15th April, Alfreton

15th May, Kirkby in Ashfield,
18th May, Burton on Trent,
12th June, Stafford
19th June Peak Rail, Bus day
10th July, Kirkby in Ashfield
15th July, Alfreton
31st July, Burton on Trent

If you do attend any of these events, please say hello, as it's nice to meet members whilst out and about with the stand. Also if anyone is interested in any of new releases from Hornby, Corgi, or Oxford classics it's always worth getting in touch as we can normally place an order with the wholesaler and obtain such items at a favourable price, or if you are slimming your collection please think of us as we are always on the look out for additional 2nd hand stock.

For any questions, queries or further information contact Mark Burrows: e-mail sales@renownrepulse.com or phone 07785 386 630. PayPal to paypal@renownrepulse.com, bank transfers to 20-05-74 63674339 (please email sales@renownrepulse.com and copy admin@renownrepulse.com to confirm your order prior to payment).

Membership matters – Paul Sturm

On October 11th of last year I did a check of membership subscriptions that were about to expire in the months ahead. I singled out 14 members with subs expiring anywhere between November 2015 and the beginning of April 2016.

Of those 14 members, one has apparently moved from his last known address since mail sent there has been returned to me as “undeliverable”. As this member did not have email and the telephone number provided seems to have been disconnected I must conclude this man is lost to us as a member. I’ve Googled his name with no apparent result and he can’t be found on Facebook either. This goes to show the importance of keeping me informed of your moving home and/or changing emailaddress. Any changes? Please include me (p.sturm1@kpnplanet.nl) in your notifications. Thank you!

That leaves 13 members up till April 8th of 2016 to hopefully renew their subs. Not all of them have been reminded yet, I’ve only notified those who were close to their subscription expiry date and leave others to be notified closer to their respective dates.

Nine Emails and two letters sent out, including a last attempt to find this “lost” member (you never know, my letter may just be forwarded to a new address!) have so far resulted in six subscription renewals. The “lost” member has not been traced months after and consequently is regretfully stricken from the database. Another member whom I made a telephone call to as he didn’t react to multiple letters decided not to renew for financial reasons and advanced age. Three Members have been reminded multiple times by mail without result. This leaves me with a few questions:

1) Have their mails landed in a SPAM-folder?
2) Do they have alternative mailaddresses and do they forget checking their old In-box? (many people use multiple mailaddresses)
3) Have they decided not to renew but declined to let me know so?

One worry I sometime have is that people may regard an email coming from Holland as *spam*. I therefor always put the abbreviation RRRG in the subject line so as to make it clear it can be trusted to open. I’ve had a member who *delayed* payment by something like four months. Please don’t do

that as it doesn't alter the period you are paying for and it will mean your just renewed subscription then runs out in just eight months after which I am in your mailbox again begging for another renewal.

For those who renew the 2-year subscription at the attractive £25.00 is the favourite. It saves you the fuss of having to renew each year AND it saves you £5.00 over the 2-year period compared with the subscription fee for a 1-year sub. (£15.00) And it is not only Dutchmen and Scots who prefer to pay less, is it? :-)

A quick calculation revealed that two more members will be notified by me of their impending subscription expiry date between now (March 10th) and April 8th. After that date I will compile a new list of members to be notified through the summer period and autumn.

That brings me to *"the database Ghost"!* I am happy to be able to inform you that I have been able to expel the very unwelcome "entity" that kept on sending out confusing messages in my name! You may have noticed that, after paying your subscription for one year, the database was always quick to send out an "automated message" informing you of a subscription due to end in no less than two years time! This not half p****d me off and I was always quick to send out my own personal "handwritten" mail telling you the correct period and expressing our thanks for your renewal. The "ghost" has been annoying me for a little less than two years now and to make matters worse its messages were signed by a multitude of names that, at some point have been acting in the membership secretarial role, Sarah McCall (who in her time did a great job) and Edwin Fitchett (who has acted as Joint Membership Secretary with me from 2014-2015 but who is so busy running his own business that he now only acts as a UK address to send cheques to).

Thanks to Dominic Jackson's advice I have now managed to "disable" the automated email "Ghost" so any messages with regard to membership renewals will from now on originate from Holland using my private email address or alternatively I may use the database manual email option (fingers on keyboard that is!) So, anything originating from p.sturm1@kpnplanet.nl is definitely NOT spam!

Membership can be renewed through the website using your "username" and chosen "password". In case you have forgotten that one (which we all do from time to time) you can ask for a new password. It is important to type in your username exactly as it is in the database. Not sure? Mail me and I will give you the right spelling of your username by returning mail, no problem whatsoever, it is my job within RRRG and I'm only too happy to help you out! Obviously I neither know nor can I retrieve your password for you, it is your secret! Cheques may be sent to Renown Repulse Restoration Group, c/o 14 Bramble Grove, Stamford, Lincs. PB9 4BL. In an earlier report I also included Dom's address in Huddersfield, but he has since moved into his own proper house in Bury (Lancs.) so ***forget his Huddersfield address***. His email is still the same though!

A last kind request is to please act upon receipt of my expiry notification and not postpone it till "later" as this tends to be forgotten. We have a saying in Holland; "stel niet uit tot morgen wat je vandaag kunt doen" == "Dont put off till tomorrow what you can do today".

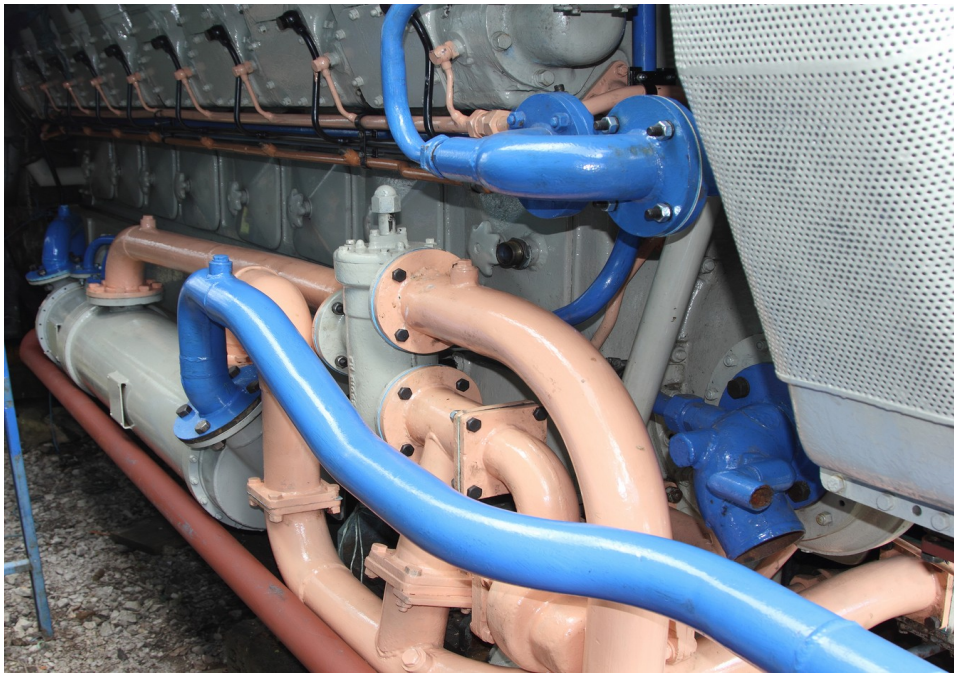
Please do come and visit us in Rowsley South yard and get your hands dirty for a change. We do badly need working members, even just for one day!

Mechanical report – Ian Kemp

For the last few months Pete, Dave and I have been cleaning, painting and refitting oil, fuel and water pipework with new gaskets etc, onto the power unit, often encountering a lot of grunting and heaving to get the various joints and flanges to line up with each other, even though the pipes originally came off this power unit.

This photo courtesy of Mark Burrows.

We have put around 300 litres of new oil into the PU and hand-pumped it round to lubricate the big end, small end, main crank and camshaft bearings, but not before having to cut down a redundant oil filter housing to make a shallow one because the sleepers under the PU are in the way of putting a complete one on. Again this doesn't sound like a lot of progress, but the pipes are often big, heavy and strange shapes, so are difficult to handle and get into their proper positions and brackets. The pipe colours are blue for water, salmon pink for oil and brown & black for fuel. Some of these oil and water pipes will have to be removed to lift the PU into Repulse, but need to be in place for now so we can pump the new oil round to lubricate everything and prevent corrosion.



This photo courtesy of Mark Burrows.

Electrical report – Andy Rowlands

Not a huge amount to report since the last Rac on the electrical front. I have continued to clean and paint the electrical cubicle frame and the covers. The cubicle front is now finished in topcoat and about 2/3 of the covers are now topcoated. The roof of the main cubicle walkway is next in line. It was undercoated some time ago but never finished.

During an inspection of one of our storage places at Rowsley, I happened to see the one piece of cable we are still missing from the cubicle in one of the bundles of cables Steve Tripp and I recovered from the spare cubicle we obtained a couple years ago; a section of screened cable that goes between the CU1 terminal board and the main gen KV10 (CU3). I had been trying to source some new screened of the type, but without success, so this will hopefully remove the need for more fruitless searching, as it needs to be a specific type that now seems almost impossible to obtain through the normal cable suppliers.

Dom and I continued to bell out the cubicle cables, and so far, everything goes to where the wiring manual says it should go. We did however, discover something odd with the battery charge diode, in that one terminal bells to both the CU1 terminal board and the main earth terminal bar. That should not be, and requires further investigation.

I have also made wooden devices that prevent the cab windows from being opened from the outside, one for each cab of both locos. As each window gap is slightly different, I marked them as to which position they go in.

Work has been completed on stripping the spare electrical cubicle of every piece of wire and component that may be of use, including the shields off the top of it and some of the clips that hold the cubicle covers in place (some of the ones on 50029 and 30 are a little bent), two of which Dave Rolfe has replaced in Repulse. What remained of the empty shell has now been sent for scrap to clear some space and of course raise some revenue. The last of the missing cubicle doors in 50029 and 50030 have been replaced meaning there is a now a complete set of decent quality doors on both locos.

Cabs report – Wes Needle

Now that the power unit rebuild is coming along nicely I decided to turn my attention to other areas of Repulse in need of repairs. Having consulted other group members, I chose to continue the restoration of the cabs of Repulse, carrying on from the excellent work already done on them. I decided that the best cab to start with was the number one end, this is mainly because it's out of the way from other work being carried out. I started off by assessing what work was still required in the cab and checking our stores to see what spares we have.

As an attempt to seal the leaky cab roof, I filled the holes in the head code box. Unfortunately as I found out at a later rainy work party a small amount of water is still getting in. A more permanent solution is planned as the cab needs to be water tight before any valuable components are refitted. I'm in the process of replacing damaged and missing pipework in the cab. So far I have replaced all of the flexible hoses that connect to the various gauge on the control desk, these were all cut off before RRRG ownership. The horn pipework on the second man's side has been fully refitted. The driver's side will need one part replacing as the end has been broken off. I have removed this section of pipe from the cab of 50037. I have removed a frost damaged pipe from behind the control desk and also removed the same good section from 50037's cab. This pipe should carry air for the brake system and was damaged before RRRG purchased the loco's, by rain water leaking into it and freezing. Now that I have the correct brazing rods my next job will be to refit both of these two pipes.

During the winter I've not ventured to Peak Rail but I have kept busy overhauling various spares

ready to fit to the cab. So far I have repaired two horn valves which will replace the two already in the cab. I will then overhaul these two ready for the number two cab. One of our spare windscreen wiper valves has been repaired, I stripped it down, cleaned and freed it off as it was seized. We need two per cab, fortunately none are missing from either cab. I have also made a start repairing the push switches, seven are required per cab and four have been done so far. I have also purchased a replacement head light switch to replace the damaged one in this cab.

Photo spot.

This is Repulse at Salisbury on 11th September 1991.
Photo courtesy of Laurence Hopkins.

The Winchcombe Derailment Mystery.

This is an article I wrote for an issue of the GWR magazine back in the 1990's, and is a heavily fictionalized account of the derailment that lead to the closure of the southern end of the North Warwicks line through Toddington to Cheltenham. It was partly my idea and partly Dad's, and he made some suggestions to make it appear more 'authentic', including the heating effects on the rails and ballast.

Several people asked me about it after it was published in the mag, and I managed to keep saying it was real as far as I had been able to discover, without smiling. In January this year, I was rather surprised to see it appear in a Facebook group, and it caused much comment and discussion. I let it go on for a while then owned up to it being mine and that it was pure fiction. Dom Jackson suggested I reproduce it here, and I hope you find it interesting.

On the night of August 25th 1976, Driver David Bowman was taking the 8V71 Toton - Severn Tunnel Junction coal southbound towards Winchcombe on the North Warwicks line, when he suddenly stiffened and peered intently ahead through the cab windows, as he saw what looked like a large helicopter shining a searchlight onto the track ahead. With power shut off and brakes partly applied, the Class 45 loco was already slowing for the speed restrictions through the Winchcombe reverse curves. Bowman frowned. There hadn’t been any

Special Notices about P-Way activity when he'd booked on.

Taking no chances, Bowman gave a blast on the horn and made a full brake application. Suddenly, the cab lit up as a beam of light stabbed down from the helicopter and all the cab gauges dropped to zero. The loco lurched and there was a tremendous vibration as the leading bogie jumped the rails, splintering sleepers and scattering ballast. As the train ground to a halt, Bowman shut down the rumbling power unit, wound on the handbrake and shakily climbed down onto the track. He immediately protected the other line with track clips, and, looking back at the train, noticed a lot of the wagons had derailed.

Walking round the nose of the loco to check the other side of the train, he saw the helicopter hovering just to one side of the track, shining its searchlight at the line just about where he had felt the impact, and several figures were silhouetted there. He began running towards them. Suddenly, a second beam of light shot out and illuminated him, making him stumble with surprise. It stayed on him as he ran. "Idiots!" he shouted, "what do you think you're doing?". They either didn't hear or chose to ignore him. As he got nearer, he became aware that the helicopter wasn't making any noise. Glancing up at it, it was difficult to make out any details with the bright light on him. He stopped about twenty feet away from the figures, feeling oddly reluctant to venture any closer, noticing they were only about four feet tall and assumed they were kids. Again he shouted; "What the hell are you doing, you've caused an accident!". One of the figures turned and walked towards him. It appeared to be wearing large dark wrap-around sunglasses. Sunglasses at night he thought, what the hell is this?

Suddenly a shiver ran down his spine as he saw that the huge almond-shaped 'sunglasses' were its eyes! They stood looking at each other for a few seconds, Bowman expecting the figure to say something by way of explanation; instead it raised a hand towards him and Bowman found himself unable to move. Petrified, he watched the figures walk into the searchlight beam and seem to vanish, and the last thing he remembered was seeing the helicopter shoot up into the sky faster than he could follow, before he passed out.

The emergency services, alerted by a man out walking his dog who heard the derailment, were soon on the scene. Bowman was found on the track, just beginning to regain consciousness. He was babbling about a helicopter and small people on the track. As he was obviously in shock, he was taken to hospital, but was released the next day apparently without suffering any ill effects.

During the accident enquiry Driver Bowman stubbornly stuck to his story, and during the clean-up operation a curious change was found in the appearance of a short length of track, which appeared to have been subjected to intense heat. For a few yards, the rails were discoloured light brown, with a blueing effect on each side, normally only found when metal is heated and cooled rapidly. Also, sleepers in the area were charred, and the ballast had disintegrated into a whiteish powder.

When the loco was subsequently inspected at its home depot, it was found that every one of the fuses in the electrical cubicle had blown and the main generator and traction motors had all flashed over. The BR accident report blamed "…track defects due to a landslip…" for the derailment, and damage to the electrical equipment on a "…major insulation failure…" and concluded an "…unexplained power surge…" had caused the marks on the track, but omitted any further explanation. A local reporter questioned how a power surge could have caused that much damage to the track without seriously damaging the loco, but never received any answer from either BR or the Ministry of Transport. After repeated goading from colleagues over his account of the incident, Driver Bowman became withdrawn and took early retirement on 'health grounds'.

Following the derailment, several unmarked helicopters were seen in the vicinity, a sudden increase in the number of 'ramblers' was noted in the area, taking an unusual interest in the track at the accident site and the local newspaper carried stories of lights in the sky over the line. After a survey was undertaken, BR announced the line would close. The explanation was that because the line was now a freight-only diversionary route, the cost of repairs was unjustified; and despite pressure from a lobby group, lifting of the track began in 1979.

One day during the rebuilding of the line by the GWR, a local man reminisced with the track gang about the closure of the line and mentioned the strange stories about the derailment. One of the gangers, with an interest in the paranormal, made enquiries and discovered the loco had been withdrawn after the accident and is still stored at a “secure location”, but found all records of the incident were ‘unavailable’, and later confided to friends that several unidentified phone callers told him the matter concerned national security and advised him not to investigate any further.

What really caused the derailment may never be known, but some local people are convinced the explanation is not completely of an earthly origin…

Train reporting number, consist and date information was provided to me by Audie Baker and Tom Cullimore of the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway.

And finally, this is the standing order mandate form

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

Please complete the form below and return it to Ian Wright, RRRG Treasurer, at the address below. Once we have received the completed form we will keep a copy and send the original standing order form to your bank so that they can process payments.

Your name & address: .....
.....
.....

RRRG membership number: .....

Your bank:
To: ..... (Bank/Building Society)
Bank's address: .....
.....
.....
.....

Your account:
Account no: ..... Sort code: .....

Please pay to Barclays Bank, sort code 20-25-85, account number 90952818 (Renown Repulse Restoration Group):

Amount (in words & figures):
The sum of £..... (figures) .....
.....(words)
on the .....day of.....(month).....(year)
and a like sum each year/quarter/month/week* until further notice. (* Delete as applicable)

Signature:
Signed:
Date:

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS REPLACES ANY PREVIOUS STANDING ORDER FORMS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL NAMED ABOVE.

Please return the completed form to Ian Wright, RRRG Treasurer, Coalbrookdale Inn, 12 Wellington Road, Coalbrookdale, TF8 7DX