

CLEMSON — The Central Railway Museum has not only donated money to help in the refurbishment of the town's nearly 60-year-old railroad caboose, but is also donating physical labor.

Last year, the museum presented a monetary donation to the town, and for two days a week for the past two and a half months, members have been providing much-needed repairs to the interior of the caboose.

"We're completely refurbishing the inside — we rewired it completely, put all new lights in, as there were no lights in there, repaired holes in the wall and floors and are getting it cleaned up," railway museum member Tom Langdale said, adding that fellow member Harry Kelley has been working alongside him.

Langdale said the work hasn't been as bad as initially thought, but added, "Every time you turn around, there's something else you find that's got to be fixed or repaired."

The most difficult part, Langdale said, has been dealing with the heat.

Treasurer Jim Alexander said the railway museum helped secure money to paint the outside about a year ago, and members have sought to work on areas of repair with the dollars they have on hand. Both Langdale and Kelley are new members of the Central Railway Model and Historical Association and have willingly stepped up to do the work.

"They got here and asked what they could do, and we found something they could take on," Alexander said.

Alexander added that the work has been intensive.

"For a while, we couldn't even get in



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Central Railway Model and Historical Association member Tom Langdale secures a table inside the old caboose in downtown Central.

the door," Alexander said. "These two guys really tore into it and are very talented, skill-wise. They've taken pieces off, taken pieces home and repainted. It's amazing what they've done.

"We've still got a ways to go — probably a couple of more months. But the next thing is probably to paint the floor. If that doesn't work, we'll put something down. We're also trying to put some glass in there instead of Plexiglas, since it's been in for years and doesn't work well."

Alexander said the work on the caboose is being funded strictly by the Central Railway Museum. The museum received a donation from the family of a former member who died and has already spent a portion of the money on materials for the refurbishment.

Alexander said officials are still not sure what the plans are for the caboose once the work is completed.

"We have a limited number of members, so we want to figure out if we can man it once a month, because you really do have to have someone there watching it and

keeping track of what's going on," he said. "We're going to have some items we found in the original cabooses on display, and we'll probably have a train model running somewhere."

The emphasis on the repairs, Alexander pointed out, is to make it as close to what was originally used as possible. Alexander is

hopeful the caboose, like the railway museum, could be open for special events, including birthday parties.

Alexander said the support provided by the town of Central has been amazing.

"We needed some support getting some power and they took good care of us," he said. "I think (the caboose) will be more readily usable in the future, because we'll have power where we can turn a switch on rather than running a generator or something like that."

Another future goal for the caboose is improving access for older people.

"We may be able to install a handicap ramp, but we're not that far along yet," Alexander said.

In 2019, Alexander told town council that more than 1,000 people visited the railway museum on Main Street the previous year, and more than 500 people visited the caboose.

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Volunteers refurbishing caboose