

# Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway

Newsletter No. 10

April 2006



## New Station Building and Museum: Construction has Begun!

Construction of our new building commenced on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2006, with works scheduled to reach practical completion at the end of July. We anticipate that an official opening will take place next Easter, once our volunteers have completed installing the railway tracks and museum displays.

Funding for this phase of the project has been confirmed from the Heritage Lottery Fund (£484,500), Denbighshire EC Key Fund (£84,700), Welsh Assembly Government (£55,000), and Rhyl Town Council (£7,000).

The project was launched at a photo-call on 4<sup>th</sup> April.

**Shown above** are L to R front row: Trustees Councillor Joan Butterfield (wearing her chain as Mayor of Rhyl), Les Hughes (Trust Chairman), Louise Webster, Carol Hughes, Lucille Green; Back row Trustee Justin Bell, Dr Kevin Mason (Member, Heritage Lottery Fund Wales Committee), Ray Large (Denbighshire County Council, Rhyl Going Forward Officer), Glen Williams and Chris Wynne (Project Quantity Surveyor and Managing Director, Wynne Construction).

**At right:** Les Hughes and Kevin Mason pose for the HLF's photographer. A double celebration - it was also Les's birthday!



## Success from almost Failure

Since last October's newsletter the three most difficult obstacles facing the project have all been surmounted.

### **A lease, at last!**

During October discussions took place between lawyers acting for Denbighshire County Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, aimed at solving the impasse over longevity of the Trust's proposed lease. A suggested solution was drafted but this was itself rejected by senior officers of the Council on 15<sup>th</sup> November – a very low point for the project.

Fortunately our Trustee Councillor Joan Butterfield was able to arrange for us a face to face meeting with these officers, including the County Clerk. This meeting took place on 7<sup>th</sup> December, only 24 hours before the Heritage Lottery Fund's decision meeting which considered our Stage Two application.

After so much messing about, once we were able to discuss the right issues with the right people, agreements in principle proved relatively easy to find - sufficiently so to persuade HLF that we were 'close to a solution'.

The Trust's solicitor Shaun Owen then took over negotiations on our behalf, and, after some further nail biting, the Trust's lease and track licence were completed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006 for a term of 30 years.

### **Funding**

Despite the main earmarked sum of £484,500 from the HLF, our quantity surveyors' forecasts led to our predicting a funding shortfall, and these estimates were confirmed (and more) when actual construction tenders were opened on 22<sup>nd</sup> December.

Our friends in the Rhyl Athy Regeneration Project suggested that we should approach the Welsh Development Agency for help, and fortunately when we did this it transpired that the external works of our project would be eligible for a Town Improvement Grant. Having supported other projects in Rhyl, including the previous improvements at Marine Lake, the WDA proved willing and able to help us, resulting in a further grant to the Trust of £55,000. The WDA have now (at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006) been absorbed into the Welsh Assembly Government.

### **Timing**

We were more than grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for processing our Stage Two grant application in time for their December 2005 decision meeting, and for their positive decision.

The tender process run by our architects Denbighshire Design & Development led to the selection of Wynne Construction as our preferred contractor, and we first met with them on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006.

The positive initiative which emerged from that meeting was backed by our funders, which in turn enabled site works to commence. As a result we were able to draw down our grant from the Denbighshire EC Key Fund just in time before its expiry deadline on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006.



Gyda chymorth

**Cronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri**

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund



*On 21<sup>st</sup> February we entertained our HLF project monitor, Rod Pirie - track through the old station had been lifted by our volunteers two days before.*



*By 25<sup>th</sup> March the building site looked like this.*



*On 2<sup>nd</sup> April the first foundations had been laid.*



## New Facilities in 12 months' time

The new building will change Rhyl Miniature Railway forever.

**Greater access:** We will be aiming to open the railway to the public on 100 days each year, and to carry at least 10,000 passengers.

**More trains:** *Joan*, *Michael Railway Queen*, and the Cagney are all being donated to Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust as part of the project. Our collection will be both dry and secure, protected by dial-out fire and burglar alarms.

**Ticket office:** Gifts, teas and ice cream will be available for purchase from the counter.

**Public toilets:** Access to the new toilet block will be from the main platform.

**Museum:** We will be able to tell our story to visitors, through displays along the back of the platform and in the museum room, where we expect that the central exhibit will be Rhyl Town Council's locomotive *Billy*. Further information will be available from a touch-screen audio visual machine, and we have ideas for a hands-on exhibit to demonstrate railway signalling.

**Workshop:** Our new workshop will accommodate a steam locomotive under overhaul, and will include a pit and a lifting beam.



*Rhyl Miniature Railway in 1918*

**RMR Museum Group:** Over the next 12 months a group of our volunteers will be working on preparing the museum displays assisted by our professional consultant Rob Shorland-Ball, who is Museum Advisor to the Heritage Railway Association. We are hoping to also receive assistance from the Bassett-Lowke Society, and the London & North Western Railway Society, both of which have areas of interest in common with ours. We must ensure that they have something to appeal to everybody, no matter what age they are, or whether they prefer to see use of the Welsh language.

**Education, Education, Education!** We intend to be able to accommodate school parties, and to prepare learning materials for their use. We have been fortunate in this objective in obtaining the support of senior education officers in Denbighshire and Conwy, and have also been promised help from teachers at a local primary school.



Given its substantial size, the Trustees wanted to see the station construction contract awarded to a local firm of building contractors, and were pleased to find that winners of the tender process were Wynne Construction.



*Key members of our construction team R to L Frank Molloy (architect), Chris Wynne, Les Hughes, John Williams (site foreman), Glen Williams.*

The firm was founded eighty years ago by Charles Wynne, and now operates from new offices in Bodelwyddan, only a few miles from Rhyl Marine Lake. Wynne's undertake building projects ranging from £10,000 to £4,000,000, and work regularly with our architects Denbighshire Design & Development. They now employ over 100 skilled staff including contractors, managers, estimators and tradesmen.

Given the uncertain national reputation of construction projects at the moment, we have promised all who work on our building free train rides for life, providing that Wynne's complete their work within the contracted sum.



*Chas Wynne & Sons: the original yard and van in 1954*



### **Sorry, engine broken!**

*On 25<sup>th</sup> March we entertained Carey Williams, who was on a whistle-stop tour of the UK from his home in Chicago. Carey has recently purchased his own Cagney locomotives and coaches, in both 12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>in gauge and 15in gauge, but had to visit the UK to see our similar engine, together with its coaches which came here via Peru! On testing after the winter both of our steam locomotives ran well, but in Carey's hands the Cagney seized solidly. It transpired that the RH piston had parted company with its rod inside the cylinder. Having held on for 90 years the rod chose this of all days to give up the unequal struggle! This problem will shortly be fixed by our engineer. . .*

## **Other RMR News**

### **Railway operations 2006**

We will be operating public trains at minimum on our previous schedule during 2006, i.e. on Bank Holiday Sundays and Mondays, Sundays from 11<sup>th</sup> June to 10<sup>th</sup> September, Thursdays and Saturdays from 22<sup>nd</sup> July to 26<sup>th</sup> August.

These trains are all expected to run push-pull or top & tail fashion, from the blue arch around three sides of the Marine Lake, and then back again.

### **Pirates day 2006**

Our friends in the West Rhyl Community Company are organising this event, on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August. The visiting pirates have all been booked, and are looking forward to a busy day of family fun antics, like that held two years ago!

### **Lights go out on solar power, at least for now**

Plans for our photovoltaic installation have had to be put on hold. Despite great effort by all concerned we were unable to access a single penny of funding to enable this part of the project to take place. Even in respect of the £32,000 earmarked for us from the DTI's funding scheme we were unable to satisfy their proposed grant conditions.

Hopefully we might still be able to return to this as an add-on to our building at a later date.

## **RHYL STEAM PRESERVATION TRUST**

Registered Charity No 1103953

Trustees: Les Hughes (Chairman), Carol Hughes, Louise Webster, Lucille Green, Cllr Joan Butterfield JP, Simon Townsend (Secretary), Justin Bell.

Enquiries about railway operations should be addressed to the Trust Secretary, 10 Cilnant, Mold, CH7 1GG, Tel 01352 759109.

## **Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway**

Our group has been formed to support the Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust in its aims to preserve and operate the railway.

Membership costs £7.50 per annum and runs to 31st May each year, including newsletters due in April and September.

President of the Friends is Rev Alan Cliff, whilst its Chairman is Simon Townsend

For Subscriptions and Enquiries: Secretary of the Friends is Dave Bell, of 22 River Street, Rhyl LL18 1PT, Tel 01745 339477.

**Friends' Newsletter**  
Editor: Simon Townsend