

Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway

Newsletter No. 8

May 2005



Family reunion at Rhyl Marine Lake



On 14th November 2004 we were pleased to welcome to the railway David and Geraldine Lord, together with Simon and Delys Butler. David is seen at left with his mother Joan Lord, nee Butler, after whom our engine *Joan* was named. Simon is on the left in our main picture. His father was John Butler – hence *John* the engine; his cousin James's father was Billy Butler (hence *Billy*), and his cousin

Charles's father was Michael Butler (hence *Michael*).

David Lord writes:

"My mother and I used to visit three times a year, Easter, Whitsun and August."

"The miniature railway was always the highlight of my visits to Rhyl, whether helping in the engine shed to polish the engines ready for the day's work, or riding shotgun in the cab or with the guard at the end the train. I was very privileged and did enjoy the trips around the lake racing the mainline train in the distance. I even got the opportunity as I grew older of going into the workshops and learnt a little about maintenance and fabrication, even the use of the lathes!"

"When Rhyl Amusements was sold to ENTAM (Trust House Forte Leisure that was the end of my family's business link with Rhyl – my mother Joan died in July 1969. During 1976 I joined Trust House Forte Leisure at the Belle Vue complex in Manchester. It was here that I became reacquainted with the engine that carried my mother's name, as it was being used to entertain the crowds at the zoo park much as it had in Rhyl around the lake. I spent a year in Manchester and would often wander over to the engine sheds for a cup of tea and a chat with the volunteers who looked after the locomotives. I moved to Jersey in 1977."



David at age about five, with Joan the engine

RMR 2005 season

Daily operation - hopefully

At the AGM of the 'Friends' last November we discussed plans for the 2005 season. We still periodically meet visitors who are surprised to find the railway operating at all, and several 'Friends' attributed this to our irregular days of opening. It was therefore proposed that we should try to operate in 2005 every day in August, either with steam (3 days a week as before) or diesel traction. So we have advertised this service, 'subject to availability'. New volunteers will most certainly be welcomed during this period.

Publicity and Events

We hope that 'Friends' will like the new bilingual publicity leaflet, which was designed 'in house', and printed in Rhyl by Gwasg Helygain. Thanks are due to Philip Lloyd who helped us with this project and provided the translations. Publicity spend of the Trust this year will probably finish up as double that of 2004, which will be an investment in the future, we hope. We have also come up with a modest programme of special events:

Backwards Day: 24 July – a rare opportunity to ride around our track anti-clockwise!

Gala Weekend: 13/14 August

Evening Trains: 27 August - Trains will run from 7pm to 9pm – ride in our new saloon carriage

Diesel Day - 11 September

Three visiting engines have been invited to our gala event though currently it is too early to say whether all three will come! Our gala this year will coincide with a repeat of the 'Pirates and Parrots' event – just hope that the weather is good.

Building project

There has been a lot going on behind the scenes, and we would hope to be able to be more specific in the Autumn newsletter.

At the moment the lease that will be required has still not come into place.

Jack the Station Cat



The launch of the first "Jack Station Cat" children's book to be translated into Welsh, "Jac yr Orsaf a Lladrata'r Trenau Bach" ("Jack the Station Cat and the Great Little Trains Robbery") took place on Friday February 18th at the Welsh Slate Museum, Llanberis during the Museum's annual model railway Exhibition. The translator Berwyn Prys Jones, chairman of the Association of Welsh translators and a member of the Vale of Glamorgan Railway, together with author Alan Cliff, President of the RMR Friends, had a busy time signing books. The first copy of the book was presented to Sam Jones, aged 8, son of Sarah Jones chief fundraising officer of the Hope House/Ty Gobaith Group of children's hospices. Alan Cliff is giving half his author's royalties from the Welsh version of the book to the hospices. Sam is a keen railway enthusiast and was junior railway modeller of the month August 2004 in "Railway Modeller" magazine. The cost of the book is £2.95 the same as the English version "Jack and the Great Little Trains Robbery" which is the fastest selling of the six Jack books so far published. The Rhyl Miniature Railway's "Joan" features in the book. A new book "Jack TS Cat and the Lost Kittens" is due out in May. All of Alan Cliff's books may be obtained from the booking office at the RMR station or via: www.jackthestationcat.co.uk.



A Driver's View

By Vernon Aynsough

This year the RMR is looking to running on more days, so needs the help of more operators. With this in mind, here is a trip from the driver's point of view.

The fire is made up, 100psi on the clock, blower on, 2/3 glass of water, drainers opened. Green flag, guard's whistle, signal off, pop the whistle, forward gear, gentle push on the regulator; steam jets from the drain cocks, slow forward movement. The engine picks up the coaches, 3 or 4 revolutions, close the drainers, bit more regulator, close the blower. A short straight past the childrens' play area on the right, on to a sweeping right hand curve. Whistle for the level crossing, to a straight across the top of the car park. At the end is a sharp right hand bend onto another crossing, so close regulator and whistle and dead slow over the crossing, to a sharp left hand bend, bringing the train to the edge of the lake on the right.

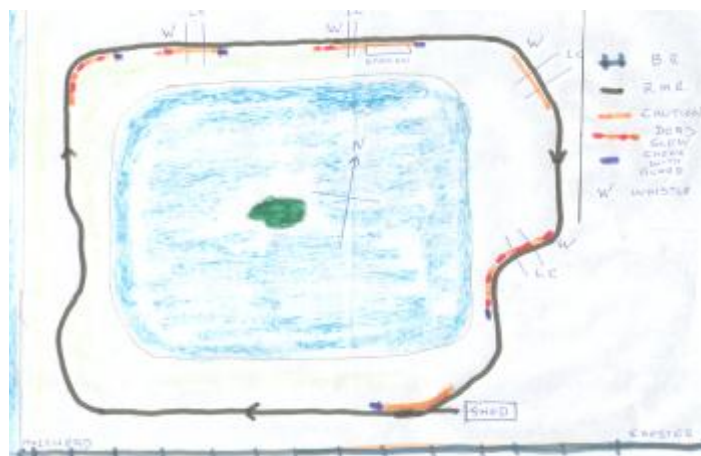
Once on the straight, open the regulator, the old sea wall is now on the left. Following is a sweeping right hand curve past the present railway shed. Clattering over the only point on the main line, there is now a long flat straight run next to the Chester/Holyhead main line. Time to check the water and fire, before eventually coming to another sweeping right hand curve; on the left is the site of the original 1911 railway sheds.

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Behind the bushes on the left is the tidal estuary of the River Clwyd, a good spot to photograph main line trains crossing the metal viaduct. Note the two stone bastions in mid-stream, which once housed a steam powered opening section. Further downstream are the abutments to the old road toll bridge; down from this is the familiar blue bridge Art Deco built in 1931, which is Grade II listed.

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Back on the train, we swing back to the lake-side, a straight then a small sharp left, into a shallow cutting.



Closing the regulator for a tight right hand curve usually makes the safety valves sizzle. Slowly round the bend, open up for a stiff climb past the pump house on the left. At the top of the climb whistle for the crossing and shut the regulator. Time to put water in the boiler, so water on, then steam on, to get the injector to pick up. Short right onto the final straight; ahead over the town of Rhyl is the steep rise of the Clwydian mountains, and the Offa's Dyke path. To the right, over the lake, can be seen the twin towers of Rhuddlan Castle, and further to the west, the spire of Bodelyyddan Marble Church. Approaching the station, slow and whistle for a crossing, then a short left-right and come to a stop in the platform. Stopping the train in the right place, no matter what the load and conditions, requires practice – and gooseberries are regularly awarded to volunteers who get it wrong. Blower on, injector off, make up fire, water in tender, talk to passengers, make ready to go again!

Other RMR News

From the Workshop

Many hours have been spent this winter on the Cagney engine. The improved valve gear bearings should enable it to run more sweetly – and to make yet more steam!



Clara's engine has been serviced and improvements made to the chain transmission. This engine is quite heavily built – as we found out when winching it onto our trailer during December.



Some progress has also been made with the new vehicle, which we hope will enter service during our Gala weekend, in its new 'Sandy River' colour scheme.

Financial Matters

We have been asked recently whether we are seeking sponsorship for any of our activities. We did also discuss at the AGM of the 'Friends' what our own funds should be used for. The following Q and A may assist.

How are present railway operations being financed? Our passenger fares represent the main income of Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust. Generally, the Trust suffers from adverse cash flow in the early part of the season when publicity, inspection and insurance costs all have to be paid for, but then recovers this during August. At the moment it looks as if our main steam locomotive *Joan* will need its boiler re-tubed over either winter 2006-2007 or a year hence. This work will be paid for by the Trust.

Why should I renew my membership of the 'friends'? Will I be making a difference? Yes you will. The 'Friends' organisation has been vital in evidencing the railway's public support and enabling everybody to be kept in touch with our progress. It has also provided a better way for us to meet up with new volunteers, something which is becoming ever more important.

How is money raised by the 'Friends' being used? So far the 'Friends' have sponsored the new station fence, which can be seen on most operating days, and also timber used for restoration of the sixth 'Milnes' coach. At the 2004 AGM we agreed that for the moment remaining funds will be accumulated towards the future projects described below.

Will extra fund raising be required if the building project takes place? Many applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund, if successful, prompt appeals to raise cash 'partnership funding'. However in our Trust's application money awarded to us from the EC Key Fund, together with donation of railway assets into the Trust, are expected to provide virtually all of the partnership funding required, should our project succeed.

The application does include an allowance for documented volunteers' hours, to be spent among other things on project management, tracklaying and making museum displays.

There are three projects which we will hope to fund internally, and it is towards these that we are presently building up our own funds:

- 1 Restoration of the locomotive *Michael*: plenty of potential for spending money on this!
- 2 Purchase of machine tools for the new workshop.
- 3 Museum displays – by way of example individual interpretative panels could be sponsored at £120 each. As a registered charity Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust would be able to claim gift aid on specific donations from taxpayers towards these causes.

For the moment though we must concentrate on our 2005 operations. We expect to be able to say more about 2006 in our next newsletter.



Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust was delighted to receive a grant of £2,000 from The Rhyl Area Partnership, part of the Community Strategy for Denbighshire. On 15th December 2004 we attended a presentation evening to receive the cheque from Cllr Meirick Davies, Chairman of Denbighshire County Council.

RHYL MINIATURE RAILWAY 2005 TIMETABLE

Trains will run on Bank Holiday Sundays and Mondays
Every Sunday from 12th June until 11th September
Every Thursday and Saturday in the summer school hols
Every other day in August, subject to availability

Special Events in 2005

Joan at Evesham Vale Light Railway: 22nd May
Cagney No 44 at Athy Waterways Festival :
28th & 29th May

RMR Enthusiasts' Gala: 13th & 14th August

RHYL STEAM PRESERVATION TRUST Registered Charity No 1103953

Trustees: Les Hughes (Chairman), Carol Hughes, Louise Hughes, 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