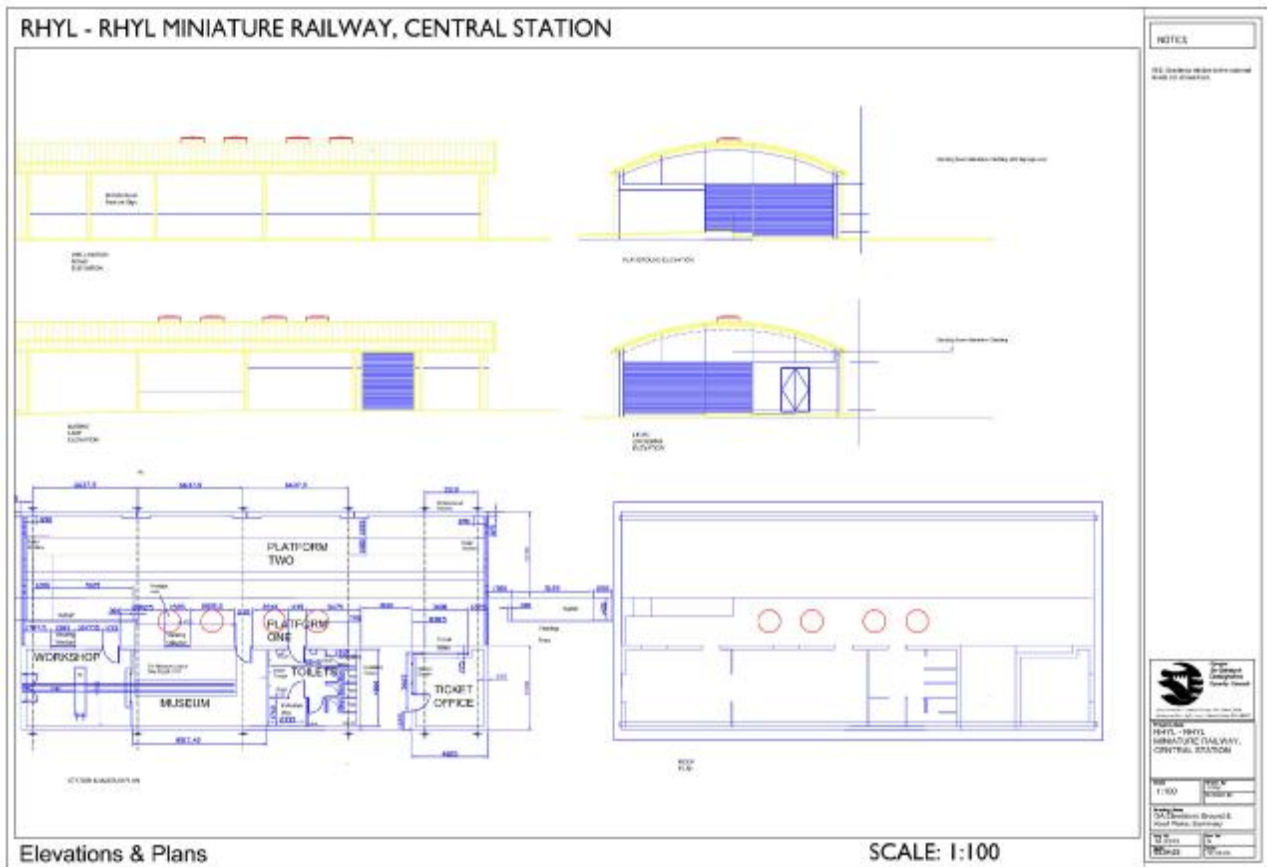


Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway

Newsletter No. 9

October 2005



New Station Building and Museum: Detailed Design Work Completed

It was a major breakthrough for the railway when our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund received Stage One approval last September. The wide-ranging support for our project, and good advice we had received, all seemed to have paid off.

Moreover, in their press release dated 13th May 2005 the HLF announced that they had positively earmarked £485,000 towards construction of the building, subject to success of our Stage Two grant application.

At the moment (October 2005) this design work is just being completed. The project has been led by architect Frank Molloy RIBA of Denbighshire Design & Development, assisted by Consulting Engineers Veryards Opus Ltd, Quantity Surveyors Youdan Briggs Ltd, and Mechanical and Electrical Engineers Atkins. Other team members have included Ian Farmer Associates, who came on site to carry out a geotechnical survey, and 'PV Systems' (Energy Equipment Testing Service Ltd) who successfully tendered for design and installation of the proposed system of solar panels.

Work on Stage One of the project is expected to have cost £57,500, which has been financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund (£31,500), EC Key Fund (£15,300), Rhyl Town Council (£3,000), Communities First Trust Fund (£3,000), and Rhyl Area Partnership (£2,000).



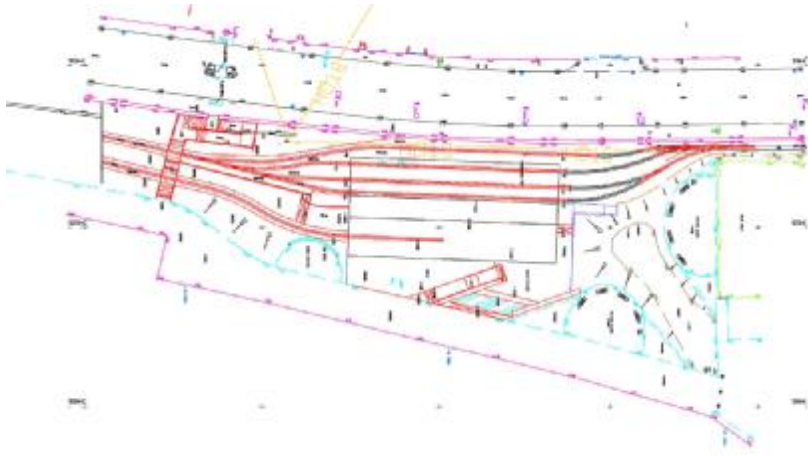
Frank Molloy



Design enhancements

The building design has evolved somewhat during the detailed work

- Following advice from our Heritage Lottery Fund Project Monitor, the museum room has been lengthened to give more space, particularly around the locomotive that will be displayed.
- The mechanical and electrical engineers have produced a high specification of electrical fittings, including three phase in the workshop, three channel CCTV, public address, three induction loops, and dial-out burglar and fire alarms.



Drawing of proposed external works, showing ground levels, and approach paths compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.

- Extra storage space has been added above the museum, workshop and toilets.
- Best possible facilities have been squeezed into the toilet block
- We had advised our architects that the relationships of levels would be complicated, involving the surrounding landscape and also railway maximum gradients. Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act has meant various clever ramps on the three pedestrian access routes into the building (visible on the external works diagram). The route in from the Wellington Road was particularly difficult to design.



Drilling in progress to establish ground conditions, on 11th July. This work alone cost £6,000.

Construction phase hangs in the Balance

At the moment the Trustees are concerned about three major issues, and unless all three are resolved then the RMR station building project will terminate at the design stage, at least for now.

Lease negotiations

Since March last year we have been awaiting the promised thirty-year lease from Denbighshire County Council for the land required by our building. So far we have been issued with two sets of draft documents, both of which have been rejected by the Heritage Lottery Fund as a basis for funding. The remaining disagreement concerns a 'forfeiture clause'; DCC are apparently very reluctant to give us a lease which will run for 30 years come what may, as required by the HLF.

DCC are also seeking to renew their own lease of land at Marine Lake from the freeholder Network Rail (this relates to land alongside the NR main line). This issue also now needs to be resolved urgently in order that we can be given 30-year rights to operate our own railway. Given the longevity of our railway and the wide support for our project it is hard to believe that these legal matters could be difficult, but apparently they are. If solutions are not found soon then our scheme will fail.

Timing

Last June we were awarded £100,000 from the Denbighshire EC Key Fund. The offer letter requires the full sum to be spent by 31st March 2006. We will shortly be discussing with the Heritage Lottery Fund what programme of timing we can adopt to make this possible, revolving around HLF's December decision meeting.

Funding shortfall

Over the last 18 months construction costs have risen ahead of general inflation. Together with the design enhancements described above this has led our quantity surveyors to predict a funding shortfall even after the HLF's 'earmarked' sum of £484,500. The Trustees are considering how this shortfall can be addressed, or whether we can send out invitations to tender so as to establish a definite cost. Depending on the assumptions made, the shortfall would seem to be in the region of £30,000 - £50,000.

So what if the project does not proceed now?

The scheme will be 'shelved' pending a time when circumstances might be more acceptable, as regards funding, and the legal requirements from our landlords Denbighshire County Council.

The 2005 season

We can look back on a successful season,

- Trains ran daily in August and on 50 days in total, halfway towards our post project target of 100 days per year.
- Our publicity effort was much greater though with the fare still at £1 there was a definite risk of spending more than we gained.
- We ran a series of special events, though our Gala weekend was jinxed by rain.

Passenger totals

We carried 5,670 passengers in 2005, a small increase over 2004, on 14 more days. We would have easily achieved over 6,000 had not the weather been against us on several key days.

Gala Weekend

We worked with our friends at the West Rhyl Community Company, who decided to make Saturday a repeat of the successful pirates event from last year. Our visiting engine *Effie* from Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway arrived as planned, and operated trouble-free in our care for several days. Our aim was to carry 1,000 passengers that weekend, but the dismal weather on Saturday morning meant that we ended up closer to 350. Try again next year.

Other events

'Backwards Day' was an interesting one for the operating team, but was also wet at times. Evening trains were another new experience for us and the sparks emitting from the Cagney's chimney after dark were certainly memorable. Both of these events will probably be repeated.

A present from Colombia

At the beginning of 2005 several railways were finding good coal supplies difficult to find. All of our coal this year was mined in Colombia – it burned well, but most of our drivers couldn't avoid producing prodigious smoke effects! Interestingly *Effie*, with its marine firebox and long chimney, made a better job of burning this fuel than did either of our own locomotives.

We are just buying a supply of coal for 2006, which is Russian!

Marine Lake matters

Our landlords, Denbighshire Leisure Services, have made significant improvements to Marine Lake this year. Landscape maintenance and grass cutting has been much better, and on many days a full time site warden was in attendance. Up to Easter a series of popular water sport training courses was organised.

Unfortunately during May a problem arose with water quality in the lake, and this led to a complete ban on water sport activity. Even this year's pirates were unable to set sail on water!

Below the surface the water had turned opaque, like soup, and in the end this was attributed to the growth of



Effie working trains on 13th August, and (below) about to depart on the 18th.



'Backwards Day', 24th July.

micro-organisms which had flourished due to the water being continually topped up but never refreshed. Eventually permission was gained from the Environment Agency for the water to be discharged and renewed. This took place at the end of August, following which water activities were resumed.

Since August the Marine Lake car park has been closed - this was due to the threat of travellers occupying the site. We understand that a new height barrier is to be erected, following which the car park will be reopened.

Irish Adventure



On 28th/29th May Trust volunteers offered steam train rides at the Athy Waterways Festival in Co Kildare, Ireland. We did this in support of Rhyl Athy Regeneration, an EU 'Interreg' funded project - the RAR project manager, Andrew Rainsford, was a great help to us when we were preparing our big HLF grant application.

The thought of taking a steam train to Athy was first raised in October 2003. Portable railways of 15in gauge are unusual because of the hard labour involved in transporting such heavy equipment, let alone to a foreign country. Even so we said yes maybe, knowing that we had certain advantages,

- Cagney No 44 and its little coach, both built almost 100 years ago with just such portable operations in mind.
- Our own modular track, fabricated by Arthur Jones from old BR point rodding, used initially at his Wrexham workshop.

So it was that we set out on Thursday 26th, Arthur with Austin Griffiths towing the locomotive, and Simon with Ray Rogers in a hired van towing the track. Also inside this van was the carriage, bags of coal and timber, oil, and all manner of sundry tools 'just in case'.

The first discovery was the rather grand nature of our accommodation – not booked by us!



On Friday morning we set to and laid the track out in the position previously agreed, along a footpath by the side of the River Barrow. The engine was steamed up and the whole arrangement thoroughly tested. The Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (the event organisers) provided a big trailer-mounted water container, the last requirement not brought with us.



The event brochure advertised train rides on Saturday from 10am to 6pm and on Sunday from 9am to 6pm! This was a bit optimistic, given that the locomotive and coach had to be brought to site and ramped off/on, but we did manage to get in steam by 10.30am on both days, and by 1pm people were definitely finding us! The Waterways Festival was a very diverse event including a South African market and a Viking display as well as heritage boats and a raft race. The IWAI volunteers worked hard to stage it and we found them very friendly and helpful throughout.

Besides ourselves there was an entire bus-load of other attendees from Rhyl, including Trustee Joan Butterfield, who is currently the Town Mayor.

The railway was located well outside the centre of festival activities in the town square but we still attracted in total over 350 passengers over both days – not bad for our single coach train. Most trains steamed up and down the track twice!

All four volunteer railwaymen were weary by the time we unloaded the locomotive and coach at Rhyl on Monday, where RMR Team B were running trains for the bank holiday crowds.



Solar Powered Train Rides

Members of the 'Friends' may have read in the press about our plans to equip the building with a system of solar panels. Messrs PV Systems tendered successfully for this part of the project, offering to supply and fit a system of Photowatt panels producing at maximum 11kw.

Against heavy competition we were successful in obtaining £32,000 towards this from the Department of Trade and Industry Major Photovoltaic Demonstration Scheme, administered by the Energy Saving Trust. We won this funding because of our potential for demonstrating PV technology in an unusual context. By charging the batteries in our new electric tramcar we could give rides using our own solar energy – potentially a unique selling point. We are fortunate in having this versatile vehicle, which is powered by a milk float motor. It only needs new batteries to be able to operate successfully in its own right, as it did at Blaise Castle (in Bristol) for over ten years before coming to us. Sadly the photovoltaic part of the scheme is also in difficulties, mainly because the funder to whom we applied to finance the balance required for the PV installation (£40,000) turned us down. Recently we have been exploring alternative funding channels – watch this space for further developments, if the building is able to proceed.



Back at Rhyl the Cagney has lately been paired with our new executive saloon tramcar, now in its 'USA Pullman' livery.

Joan's Springtime Tour



We took Joan over to Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway on 29th April to participate in their 'Sea Steam 100' gala event. The original seaside locomotive Little Giant, built in 1905, was present on loan from the National Railway Museum, and trains were operated continuously for 100 hours. We helped to run some busy services, along with the CCLR fleet and fellow visitors Red Dragon (from Windmill Farm) and Smokey Joe (from the Sherwood Forest Railway). A splendid weekend!

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 Cilniant, 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.



We then rolled Joan to the Evesham Vale Light Railway, where she operated for two weekends. She was more successful than expected over the steep gradients here, which bodes well for when Jim and Helen Shackell restore their own locomotive, John.

Friends' Newsletter
Editor: Simon Townsend