

Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway

Newsletter No. 2

April 2002



Easter was early this year, and we had to prepare our steam engine in time for the annual boiler inspection, which took place on Sunday 24th March. L to R Justin, Alan, Dave, Arthur, John (boiler inspector), Frank, Vernon. We put the cab, splashers and dome cover back on the following Saturday, in time to open for business on Sunday 31st March.

Marine Lake Improvements

At a meeting of the Marine Lake Users' Forum on 30th July 2001 it was announced that the Marine Lake may benefit from substantial improvements funded by the Welsh Development Agency.

In November TACP Architects were appointed to prepare a five year management plan and prepare proposals for capital improvements. After public consultation a scheme was drawn up for replacement of the wall adjacent to the Wellington road, improvement of the site entrance from the Voryd bridge (including relaying the level crossing), and landscaping works along the north side of the site. The plans incorporate a space for our new station building, and a formal entrance to the site not far from our present platform, from the market area opposite us. The architects certainly believe that these works will create a much brighter perspective to the site. There have been difficulties in letting the contract for the works, and at the moment construction has not yet begun.

Holidays in Southport

Joan, our steam engine, will be going on her Spring holidays next month to the Lakeside Miniature Railway at Southport. Intended operating days at Southport will be May 18th/19th, 25th/26th.

The Lakeside Miniature Railway first opened three weeks later than the RMR, at Whitsun 1911, and has been operating trains more or less ever since. Most of its present equipment was built from the 1940s by the railway's then owner Harry Barlow. Last year the line was purchased by Don Clark and friends.

The original steam locomotives are long since gone, but a memorable one-off enthusiast event was held in March 1983 when three 'Little Giants', *George the Fifth*, *Princess Elizabeth* and *Synolda* were all in steam at Southport. A chance remark at this event led to the salvage of some parts from another Class 10 'Little Giant', and around these was built a new steam locomotive *Red Dragon*. On May 18th it is hoped to have both *Joan* and *Red Dragon* operating trains, in conjunction with a visit by the Heywood Society.

RMR Winter Work Programme 2001/2002

Joan

Most of our winter work has been on the steam locomotive, and relatively little of it will be immediately visible. Suffice it to say that over the last 5 years we have now tackled virtually every part of the engine. The front valve gear linkages, rockers and valve rods had become very worn. We turned for help to Roger Hine of the Bala Lake Railway who helped us to dismantle it, and took two buckets of bits to his workshop at Llanuwchllyn. These returned to us with new valve rods and other parts, following which Frank Humphreys and Arthur Jones took over, made new rocker bearings, and reassembled it all. Further intrigue followed to set the valves, but it now all works perfectly, and 'full gear' is more 'full' than it has been before in recent times.

We took the tender running gear apart principally to clean it all up and free the brake gear properly. This revealed not only muck aplenty, but all six brake shoes were locked solidly to the hangers, one wheel was loose on its axle, and one wheel bearing excessively worn. Now it is all back together as the maker intended, with new bearings in place.

The very observant will also notice that the inside of the cab has been painted, and more shiny brasswork has broken out in various places. Frank promises to have harsh words with any drivers who do not keep it all clean!

Lister

The starter handle has been fixed, the seat and gas linkages repaired, and the locomotive fitted with a new clockwork start mechanism.

KD1

Plans to exchange this machine directly for more 'heritage' equipment were put on hold when we received a cash offer for it. Unfortunately the offer has not yet been matched by cash; the offeror tells us that funding for his scheme is expected to arrive from Hong Kong. In the meantime the unit has had its cables disconnected pending transportation. It is highly unlikely that it will operate on our track again.

Air brake project

Some brake hangers have been cut out, and new brake shoes cast. This will hopefully be the focus of our attention next winter.

Station Improvements

We spent most of the Friends' subscription money buying timber for the new station fence panels. They slot into sockets behind the platform. When the bulk of the panels and two benches became clear we found that a special vehicle would be needed to carry them to and from our shed each day. Justin therefore made a new van, which utilises two small bogies.

Track

Some new sleepers were put in by Oakland Avenue. This work uses up all our spare energy, and will be ongoing for some years yet.

Publicity

Our new leaflet is presently at the printers. Currently, uncertainty about the timing and impact of the WDA/TACP works means that we will probably focus publicity on the school holiday season, when (hopefully) we will be certain of being able to operate on the advertised days.



The new van being painted.



Our station looks much smarter than it did before, with the new fencing and bench, Easter Monday 2002.



The Cagney is Coming

Now being restored in a workshop near Wrexham is Simon Townsend's little 4-4-0 Cagney engine, which he purchased in February 1999 at an auction in North Carolina.

The Cagney brothers were enterprising Irish Americans, based in New York, who were the first to spot the amusement value of riding on little trains. 'Cagney' locomotives operated on the earliest 15in gauge pleasure railways in this country, from 1901. Sources differ as to when our example was built, but it is likely to have been around 1910. It is definitely among the oldest 15in gauge engines in this country.

From the 1940s until the 1980s our locomotive worked with two other Cagneys on the 16in gauge Lancaster and Chester Railway in Springs Park, Fort Mill, South Carolina, where it was numbered 44. The little L&C railway was the brainchild of Colonel Elliott Springs, who owned huge textile mills nearby, which were served by the full sized L&C 'short line'. #44 was purchased 'disassembled', which transpired to mean that the tender and other important parts were missing.

Since the locomotive arrived in this country much work has been done by Steve Bell, including the construction of a brand new tender, to the original Cagney dimensions. A new boiler has been manufactured by Messrs Franklin & Bell.

A fair number of parts still need to be made and fitted, but work is progressing as each week goes by.

1,300 of these engines were built, so we are assured that it is of a successful design, even if not intended for tracks as long as ours at Rhyl. Once complete we hope that Cagney #44 will spend time both with us and with our friends at the Windmill Farm Railway. And at other places, including the R&ER and RH&DR, if they will have us!

Congratulations

Congratulations to our friends at Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway who have recently acquired locomotives, stock and buildings from the former Sutton Miniature Railway, which closed in 1962. Their project received substantial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which should be an encouraging example for us. We understand that restoration is also planned for the SMR's third steam locomotive, Bassett-Lowke 4-4-2 *Mighty Atom*, which last steamed in 1953. We will watch this project with particular interest, because *Mighty Atom* (built in 1908) is very similar to our railway's two original locomotives *Prince Edward of Wales* (1911) and *George the Fifth* (1912).

Trust Building Proposal

On 10th September 2001 the Trustees met with four firms of architects, following which we asked Denbighshire Design Services to act for us. It was pleasing to find that all four firms expressed great interest in our ideas, and were obviously confident that the project is feasible.

We have recently seen first proposals for the design, and will be sure to keep 'Friends' in touch with our progress.

RHYL STEAM PRESERVATION TRUST

Trustees: Les Hughes (Chairman), Carol Hughes, 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 £5.00 per annum and runs to 31st May each year, including newsletters issued in April and September.

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

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

Friends' Newsletter: We hope that future issues will include features on the long history of our railway, as well as topical items. Any contributions for publication should be sent to Simon Townsend.

Rhyl Miniature Railway

Marine Lake, Rhyl



2002 TIMETABLE

BANK HOLIDAY SUNDAYS AND MONDAYS

31 March, 1 April; 5 & 6 May; 3 & 4 June; 25 & 26 August

EVERY SUNDAY FROM 16 JUNE TO 8 SEPTEMBER

EVERY THURSDAY FROM 25 JULY TO 22 AUGUST

Steam trains will operate from 1pm until 5pm on all of the above dates, weather permitting.

Diesel trains may also operate during the peak season, subject to demand and availability, from 11.30am on Sundays, and from 2pm on most days during the summer school holidays

Find us behind the Ocean Beach funfair. Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust offers a mile long ride on our historic fifteen inch gauge railway, now operated entirely by volunteers.

Enquiries: Telephone 01352 759109

www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk