

Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway

Newsletter No. 34

Website: www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk

October 2017



Old and New at Rhyl Miniature Railway

During August, RMR's oldest and newest locomotive *Prince Edward of Wales* had its paintwork lined out by expert local craftsman Malcolm Morris. This brought to an end the restoration of *PEoW*, which is RMR's original locomotive, back to its 1911 appearance.

Prince Edward has been in steam regularly during the 2017 season, and has been running well. During September it made a guest appearance at the annual Gala of Kirklees Light Railway where it was paired with another Bassett Lowke Atlantic *Synolda*, built in 1912.

In the photograph above behind *Prince Edward of Wales* are the new retail units of Cei Marina, which will now be RMR's permanent backdrop in place of the old funfair and its subsequent boarded up site. Over this summer we have watched as the approach roads and car parks have been completed, and finally the first two units for Farmfoods and Poundworld have opened for business.

The largest unit, neighbouring the promenade, is believed to be for 'The Range', but at the time of writing internal fitting out of this unit has yet to begin. The builders are currently working on the smaller shop units between the two car parks, facing the railway; one of these units is believed to have been taken up by the bakery chain Greggs.

It was gratifying to see the first units on the site finally opened by 'Friends' member Councillor Alan James, who this year is Mayor of Rhyl.

The greater activity on this site opposite to the RMR cannot do the railway any harm at all, although it will be some time before we can try to measure what positive impact the new development will have upon us.



Teddy Bear's Picnic 2017



This year's Teddy Bear's Picnic event took place on 6th and 7th August. Visitors could enjoy a variety of Teddy activities and entertainment was provided by Carrots the Clown. Many children brought along teddies of their own, to join in the fun and enjoy a free train ride. Ticket sales over the two days were 1,000 adults and 500 children, a very satisfactory outcome for event organisers Pete and Liz Wright, who wrote:

“Everyone appeared to have fun at the Teddy Bear Picnic weekend at the beginning of August and the damp weather did not spoil the fun for children and parents alike.

Lots of Teddies were bought for a free child's ride on the Steam Train and there were also fun fair rides, a magician and a number of side show attractions for one and all to enjoy.

The Teddies made lots of new friends and they hope to see everyone again next year.”



Prince Edward of Wales at Kirklees Light Railway

On 2nd September the canny Yorkshiremen from Kirklees brought us back Cagney No 44, which had been to Thorpe Light Railway in County Durham, and uplifted *Prince Edward of Wales* for their railway's Gala the following weekend.



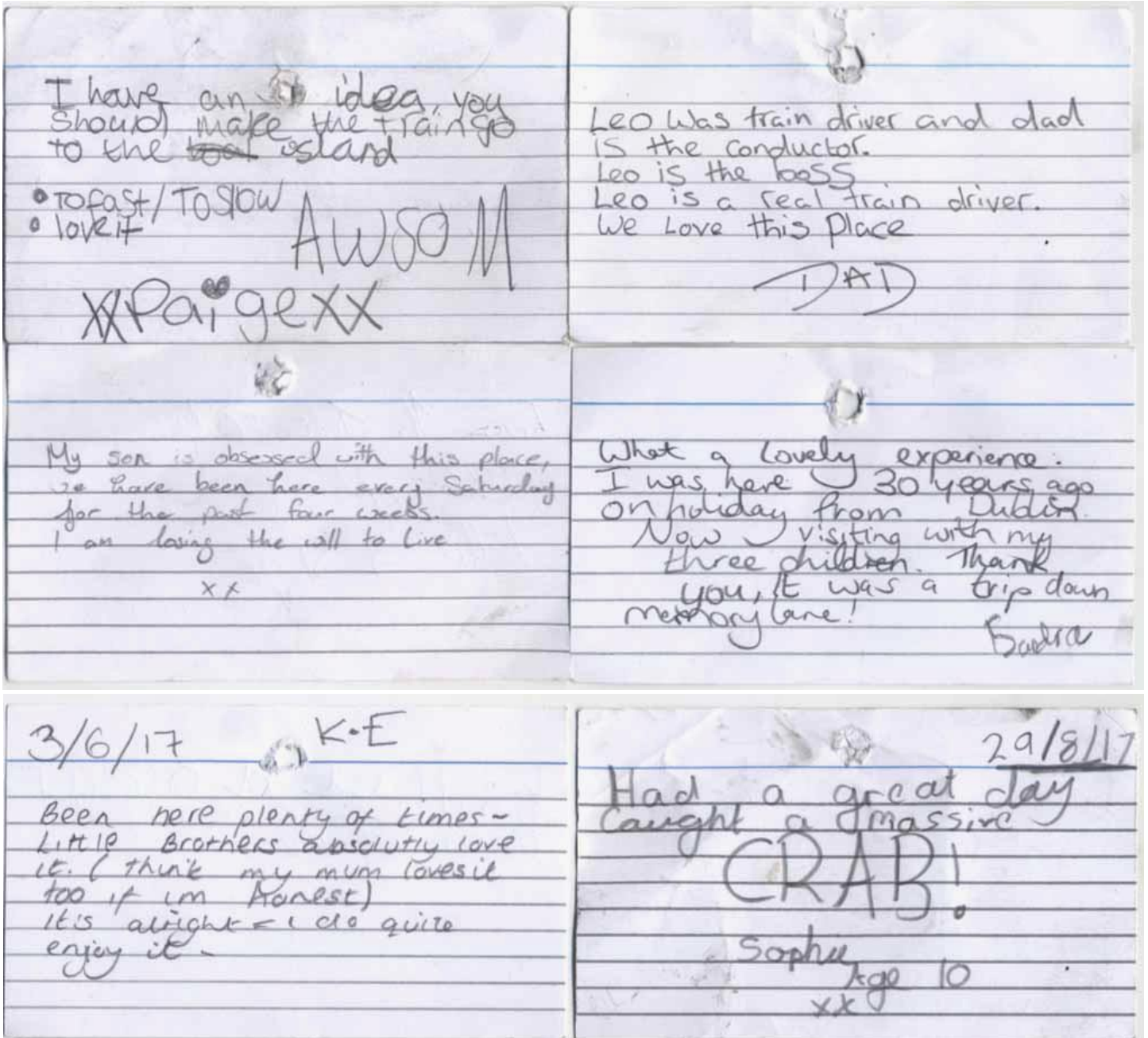
This grand event featured four of their own locomotives in steam, together with *Hurricane* and *Winston Churchill* from the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway in Kent, and *Synolda* from Ravensglass Railway Museum.

On test on 7th September, *Prince Edward* made it successfully on its own up the hill to Shelley, with a light load, on the KLR's steeply graded three mile track. During the Gala weekend itself it mainly operated shuttle trains to Skelmanthorpe, hand in hand with *Synolda*.

Whilst we provided our crews for *Prince Edward*, the KLR team worked hard behind the scenes to make the event possible. As well as collecting and returning our loco themselves, they modified the air brake equipment fitted to both vintage locos, and made bespoke couplings, as well as fitting one of their vans with a compressor unit as a source for the train brakes. The two vintage locomotives side by side drew some complimentary remarks from visiting enthusiasts, and photographs of them have subsequently appeared in much of the railway press.



Comment cards 2017



Cagney No 44 at Thorpe Light Railway

We were asked to provide support for the Friends of Thorpe Light Railway, who wanted to borrow a steam loco for their July and August running days. Due to planning restrictions this railway only opens to the public for one day per month, and even then only from midday until 4pm.

The circular line is located in the countryside near Barnard Castle, at a beauty spot adjacent to the river Tees. The track runs through woodlands and features a tunnel – something that the Cagney is not used to at the RMR! We had to repair a steam valve which for some reason broke whilst the loco was away from home, but once that was done the Cagney operated satisfactorily on the four days on which it was required to.

Railway facilities on site are as yet pretty basic, but the enthusiastic group which operates the line appreciated having some steam presence, enabling two train operation side by side with their more usual Rio Grande type diesel locomotive.



Other RMR News

Locomotive restoration: *Railway Queen*: At the moment the driving wheelsets from this locomotive are at the Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge works. The staff there have a remit to re-tyre the wheels and skim the journals and crankpins. Once this is done the wheelsets will go to R&S Sine Engineering with a view to them making new axleboxes. After this work the locomotive chassis ought to run 'square' and we hope that subsequent wear to the motion will be reduced. In the RMR workshop work continues week by week on the more menial aspects of the restoration. Recently we have attached the new boiler to the locomotive chassis and have hung the smokebox door.

The boiler's maker Terry Statham was at the RMR over the summer with his family. In the space of an hour or two he fitted an additional boss to the boiler at our request – this was an education for all of us in how knowledge and good quality tools can combine to make engineering look easy.

During the 1980s the RMR was the domain of the late Ken Dove, and *Railway Queen* was his favourite locomotive. Large parts of the valve gear he had re-bushed, and due to the poor state of the old boiler he had not been able to give the loco much use after the work had been done. We will now be the beneficiaries of this work.

By the time of the next RMR newsletter we are hopeful that *Railway Queen* will have been tried in steam. Only when we get that far will we really know how much more we will have to do before it can enter service.

RMR *Joan*: The boiler ticket for our locomotive *Joan* has now run out and its last day in service was 10th August.

We will have to see once we get nearer to *Joan*'s centenary in 2020 what opportunities arise to carry out repairs to the boiler that are now required.

Santa Specials 2017: These festive trains will run on December 16th, 17th, 23rd and 24th, and we are now taking bookings via our website. We would appreciate additional voluntary help on those dates.

New Museum Interactive: Messrs Media Vision, who made the first interactive in the RMR museum, are working on a second touch screen interactive which will provide something new for museum visitors next year. The screen will show the cab of locomotive *Billy*, in the museum, and will allow children to work key controls such as the reverser, regulator, whistle, and injectors. The museum room as a popular add-on to the train ride which we offer at the RMR. The model of Thomas in there does many miles up and down each season and the air whistles seem to be intuitively attractive to young visitors. It will be interesting next season to see how they get on once they have a new interactive to explore.

Marine Lake Happenings

Flooding; a Near Miss: On Wednesday 19th July there was a fifty year event in terms of rainfall in the Rhyl area. The gravity fed storm relief tank which is underneath the main circulation area at Marine Lake was overwhelmed. After filling the tank up the water got into the pump room next door where all the electrical gear was flooded.

This caused Welsh Water great consternation and they brought in emergency pumping equipment which they set up in a compound in the Marine Lake car park.

Rhyl Miniature Railway was unable to operate on 20th/21st July, which was no great loss as the weather was terrible.

We were grateful to the staff at Welsh Water for reducing their compound to allow trains to resume on Saturday 22nd July. Their engineers burnt midnight oil to execute the necessary repairs, which were complete by the time of our Teddy event on 6th August.

Marine Lake Users Forum: Volunteers from the Forum have created a new wildflower meadow adjacent to the RMR track on the west side of Marine Lake. This colourful area is a new addition to the Marine Lake scene.



RHYL STEAM PRESERVATION TRUST

Registered Charity No 1103953

Trustees: Les Hughes (Chairman), Carol Hughes, Louise Webster, Lucille Green, Cllr Joan Butterfield JP, Jack Butterfield, 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 £8.00 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 Liz Wright, of 6 Bryn Ithel, Abergele LL22 8QB.

Friends' Newsletter

Editor: Simon Townsend

Photographs in this issue by Simon Townsend, Patrick Kingston and Justin Bell