

Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway

Newsletter No. 39

Website: www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk

June 2020



Coronavirus shuts down Rhyl Miniature Railway; no trains since Christmas

The railway enjoyed a busy Santa season, with trains on December 14th, 15th, 22nd, 23rd and 24th 2019. The number of children visiting Santa rivalled the record set in 2018. As usual there was a big team effort to buy and wrap all the presents, and allocate them to each individual child.

22nd December was particularly busy, with Santa seeing only 10 less children than over the two days of previous weekend. It was that busy we had to take extra time running around with the train to help Santa with his long queue. But with lots of biscuits, mince pies, and juice to help entertain the children along with things to colour in, all were kept happy waiting to meet Santa and tell him what they wanted to find under the tree on Christmas morning.

Santa brought stickers to hand out to all the boys and girls and they all loved having a sticker saying that *I saw Santa at Rhyl Miniature Railway*.

Santa's favourite locomotive this year was *Railway Queen*. On a few occasions of high winds the train took the by-pass line around Central Station and was then hauled back in by our diesel *Clara*.

Due to the Coronavirus all public trains during 2020 at the RMR have been cancelled until further notice.

It is not presently known when Welsh Government regulations will allow the railway to reopen. Volunteer work at the railway continues, and has included new screens to enable distancing if the railway is allowed to reopen.



Rhyl Miniature Railway News 2020

New Grants to help the railway

Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust was very grateful for grant support of £10,000 funded by Welsh Government through the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division; and the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales.

Les Hughes, Trust Chairman, said:

This resilience grant was assessed and paid very promptly, and will make a big difference in helping us through the troubled times caused by Covid 19.

It will put us in a better place as and when we are able to open our railway to the public again, compensating us for our direct costs during closure. It will allow us to maintain our own reserves to help pay for future projects.

Also, last December we received news from the **National Manuscripts Conservation Trust** that we had been successful in obtaining a grant from them of £3,000. This will help pay for conservation of our locomotive drawings collection to professional standards. This work has however been delayed by the virus and there will be further news in the next newsletter.

Locomotive Overhauls



The boiler for RMR **Joan** continues to make steady progress. In the photograph the new outer firebox plates are being lined up with the existing boiler barrel. Parts of the RMR **Cagney** locomotive have also departed to the Midlands for mechanical attention.



The new **Coach 12** now has its bodywork and air brake system complete. It runs satisfactorily on its all-new bogies, but presently we are awaiting the supply of cast brake shoes so that the brake gear can be fitted.



Over the winter many hours have been spent improving RMR's **track**. On the section shown above flooding caused the ballast to become contaminated with sand. We lifted the track here and Welsh Water then dug out the stone and replaced it with fresh ballast, following which the track was reinstated. The west side of our circuit is now virtually all on new sleepers, which is a great achievement.



During December we went up to the Lake District to collect **two RMR carriage bogies** which had been kindly donated to us by Stuart Jenkins and his family. These bogies are the same in pattern as those on the RMR 'cars de luxe', and had reached the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway via Dudley Zoo and Blaise Castle in Bristol. We are grateful to Peter van Zeller of the R&ER for enabling us to obtain them as spares for the RMR.

Choo Choo Train, shown at left, is an expected addition to RMR stock during 2020. We have sponsored the cost of this timber train, to be carved by local sculptor Ian Murray, which will be placed at the Lake somewhere near to the 'man in a boat' sculpture.

From the Archives

ON THE PROMENADE AT SUNNY RHYL!

Ocean Beach

GIANT

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GEMS!

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99
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Rhyl Miniature Railway in the 1970s



If you wanted to ride a train around Marine Lake during the early 1970s you would have taken this road train. Behind the train are the astraglide and other amusements which then were relatively new.



The railway as we know it now was laid by Alan Keef in 1978. Most trains this season were formed of 6 carriages, four from RMR and at the back two from Dudley Zoo. Diesel *Clara* hauled this rake anti-clockwise from the station, then *Michael* would couple on to the other end and haul it back. This was the RMR operation first seen by Simon Townsend at the age of 15, and photographed above by the late Neville Knight.



We are often asked when locomotive *Billy* last hauled trains as it is now on static display in our museum. The answer is that it last worked in 1979, 1980 and 1981. Here it is running anti clockwise around the full RMR circuit, photographed again by Neville on 26th July 1979. The last carriage was built at Longleat by Minirail.



And Finally....



In our quest to consider new events that might attract new visitors to the RMR we recently reviewed this photo of the 15in gauge railway at Breslau. We would like to hear from any of the 'Friends' who might want to be trained as stilt walkers, or to prepare method statements and risk assessments for this proposed 2021 event.



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 £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 John Myers, Justin Bell, Neville Knight and Simon Townsend