

Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway

Newsletter No. 43

Website: www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk

June 2022



RMR buys surviving parts of Original Carriages from 1911

On 9th May our Trust purchased from the Windmill Farm Railway a large quantity of un-restored historic carriage components. These included all the surviving parts of the Bassett-Lowke four wheeled carriages which were in service when Rhyl Miniature Railway opened in 1911.

Photographs of the Dreamland Miniature Railway show these carriages with their ornate timber bodies,



and then later more simple timber seats mounted on the original chassis.



Now only one timber chassis survives, but additionally there is ironwork, together with axleboxes and wheelsets.

These historic parts present us with issues whether they should be conserved or restored. Probably we shall be seeking to write a museum conservation plan for them, and that will provide guidance as to what will happen to them next. If restoration is the preferred option then they would make the basis for a fine vintage train to be hauled by our original locomotive *Prince Edward of Wales*.

Rolling Stock for Miniature Railways 15" gauge

DIAGRAM OF STANDARD FOUR-WHEELED CAR

PRICE, COMPLETE, EACH £21 0 0
EXCL. NORTHAMPTON
Average cost for fitted seats on installation
Vacuum Brakes, together with all accessories and Brake
Shaft Road water control unit, £12 10 6 per Car extra.

BASSETT-LOWKE, LTD., MODEL ENGINEERS, LONDON AND NORTHAMPTON

18

There were also several crates of parts for Milnes type bogies as used on our 'cars de luxe' at the RMR. These included bogie frames, wheelsets, axleboxes and springs. The four wheeled carriage parts are from some of the oldest surviving 15in gauge vehicles; the only other examples of carriages built by Bassett Lowke being in Ravenglass Railway Museum. They have followed a long path back to Rhyl. They were sold to the Dreamland Miniature Railway in Margate in 1920, and returned to RMR ownership for the second time in 1980. Then they were sent to the Dudley Zoo Railway, and subsequently reached Austin Moss of the Windmill Farm Railway.

RMR Father Christmas Trains 2021

Another year spent waiting on news to see if there were any more lockdowns, but we still pushed ahead with our plans for running the most Santa days we had ever done. This was because of 2020 being cancelled we thought we would be busier than ever and we were right. Santa had sent us instructions on all the new extra decorations so this year there was a lot of decorations outside for the first time to set the scene as people walked in past candy canes and inflatables and then as the train left it went past 11 Christmas trees made from pallets, painted up elf green and with bases and triangles on top and had a set of lights on every one. This included 7 more that were made in the run up to Christmas.



There were also four giant snowmen as the train came back into the station and a snow shower. The biggest change this year was that there were two laps around the track for each train time. On arrival at the station each group was given a food bag containing pre packed mince pies and biscuits and cup drinks, these

went down very well as a picnic on the train with plenty of time to be enjoyed before meeting Santa. Once again everyone was assigned to a named compartment as we found this helped make sure trains were not overloaded. Then as normal once off the train it was into the full decked out museum to wait to see Santa and not the dancing one lol. Keeping with the compartments meant that there were only 8 family groups at one time so it was not over crowded. Then onto meeting the big man himself in the Grotto. With two weeks to go the first train all sets were sold out with a long list of people waiting for any cancellations.

At the end of the nine days Santa had been very busy with a new record of seeing 801 children. Once again we also entered the Rhyl Town Council Christmas window competition and once again we won a Civic award as the judges thought we were so far ahead of any other display because of the space we cover.



RMR Progress 2022

Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust took a new turn with the employment of Justin from 1st February, a step which also enables a variety of new volunteer opportunities on different days during the week.

Once New Year arrived the most important job was to relay a section of track in the south east of Marine Lake. The purpose of this relay was to eliminate some rails which were corroded due to the salt water spray in that area. In the end we dug out 40 metres of track and then re-laid it with new ballast, new sleepers, and new s10 rail. As a by-product this exercise has released enough good rail for our needs in the near future.

Central Station itself has seen attention with a new timber partition being built behind the south entrance, leading on to improved shop displays and more corners to store boxes of incoming goods.



On the locomotive front **Joan** had been in trouble during the Santa season due to severely worn valve gear on one side. As soon as new year came the relevant parts were dismantled and went away to have new die blocks and other new bearings made. During this spell the annual maintenance checks were done, and as soon as the parts came back they were reassembled and the loco tested.

Clara received the usual annual maintenance together with a cosmetic tidy-up including fitting a new cab control panel.

Test steaming of **Prince Edward of Wales** just proved that all was still well, whilst the same procedure with Cagney led on to minor problems with the water supply

and injectors, which were fixed in order that the loco could pass its annual steam test on 13th May.

Railway Queen has recently been out of service because her boiler ticket lapsed. During this spell it was decided to eliminate play in the valve gear and rocker bearings, and the new parts were delivered back to us just in time before the boiler test.

During the loco's initial restoration we never got time to line it out properly, so now the loco has been re-painted in Belle Vue Railway livery. It was tested out in time to re-enter service on 28th May, in preparation for Queens Jubilee Weekend. This now means that we can enter the main operating season with all of our working locomotive fleet in good order.



Overhaul of loco *Michael*

For 12 months *Michael* had been located at Denver Light Railway in Bloxwich, where the boiler has been re-tubed and fitted with a new smokebox.



On 18th May the locomotive arrived back at RMR, with a view to work on its overhaul continuing in our own workshops.

Farewell to -

Welsh Steam Coal – Early in 2022 supplies of Welsh steam coal ended as the last open cast mine at Ffos y Fran unexpectedly ceased supplying coal to the heritage market. Coal mining is extractive, and it had been known for some time that the mine would close, but cessation in fact came early due to failure of the grading plant used to process steam coals. This ending of Welsh coal was then closely followed by the war in Ukraine, which blocked access to coal sources in Russia. Rhyl Miniature Railway with its relatively small coal consumption is not as vulnerable to these changes as some other steam railways. We have been trying artificial coals including Ecoal (made from olive stones with some coal dust) and CPL Wildfire (made from coal, anthracite and coke), and think that we will be able to source continuing supplies of coal by some means. In the last few days we have heard that the supply of Welsh steam coal has resumed but just at a much higher price than before.

David Wothers – Our boiler inspector Dave Wothers is rationalising his customer base in the face of high customer demand and acute time pressure. He attended RMR for the last time to carry out boiler inspections in May 2022.

Dave has been an important member of our steam team for years, and we have had many adventures together. We wish Dave and son Matt all the best as they focus their work closer to their home base in Worcestershire. We look forward to welcoming Rob Houghton to carry out our future inspections.

Richard Jones – Our local machinist Richard Jones has decided to wind up his engineering company, which indirectly has been a casualty of the covid pandemic. Richard has helped us with a wide variety of engineering tasks, such as making new bearings, new loco axleboxes and new carriage wheelsets. We are fortunate that he has agreed to hold our hand for a short time to introduce us to new (to us) firms where we can get this sort of precision engineering work carried out.

Marine Lake Car Park Closure

On 20th June the public car park at Marine Lake will be closed as it will become an enclosed construction site. This possession by contractors to Welsh Water will continue for six months. Its purpose is to clear sediment from the base of the flood water storm relief tank which is underneath the car park.

Operation of RMR trains will not be affected and construction traffic will cross our line at the present crossing point. However members of the public who visit us will need to park on the opposite side of the Wellington Road to usual.

Stop Press

As this newsletter closes for press, we can tell members of the Friends that Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust has acquired a fourth 'Barnes' Atlantic, *Billie*, from Austin Moss.

This means that all but one of the six locomotives built in Rhyl will now be based in RMR Central Station (including *Billy* which is owned by Rhyl Town Council). More information about *Billie* in the Autumn Friends' Newsletter.



RHYL STEAM PRESERVATION TRUST Registered Charity No 1103953

Trustees: Les Hughes (Chairman), Carol Hughes, Louise Webster, Lucille Green, Simon Townsend (Secretary), Justin Bell. Enquiries about railway operations should be addressed to the Trust Secretary, 10 Cilnant, Mold CH7 1GG, Tel 07940 261910.

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.

Chairman of the Friends 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 Justin Bell,
Rhyl Town Council, John Myers, Andy Walton