

Friends of Rhyl Miniature Railway

Newsletter No. 44

Website: www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk

October 2022



Billie re-joins locomotive fleet at Rhyl Miniature Railway



Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust has bought another 4-4-2 steam locomotive *Billie*, which was built by Barnes c1922 for the Dreamland Miniature Railway in Margate. It arrived back at the Rhyl Miniature Railway MR on 28th June and will now be able to steam again alongside its four sisters all built in Rhyl. During the 1920s six handsome 4-4-2 locomotives were built in Rhyl by Albert Barnes. At the moment *Joan* and *Railway Queen* are still in regular use at the railway, whilst a third loco *Michael* is being reassembled following engineering work to its boiler. In addition a fourth similar locomotive *Billy* is owned by Rhyl Town Council and is on display in the museum at Central Station.

Les Hughes, Chairman of the Trust, has supported the railway since 1980, when he first had the idea of bringing all the locos built by Albert Barnes back together.

This is a real achievement said Les *It now means that we have five of the six locomotives with us at Rhyl Miniature Railway. It is another chapter in a dream I have been following for the last forty years.*

I would like to thank everyone who has supported us during the last few years and have made this possible, in particular the passengers who ride on the trains and our team who operate the railway.

Billie is thought to be celebrating its centenary this year, but it has not hauled any public trains since 1983. RMR has purchased the loco from Austin Moss of the Windmill Farm Railway in Lancashire. Austin (seen at left) had done much work to restore the locomotive, which will now be returned to steam at Rhyl Miniature Railway.



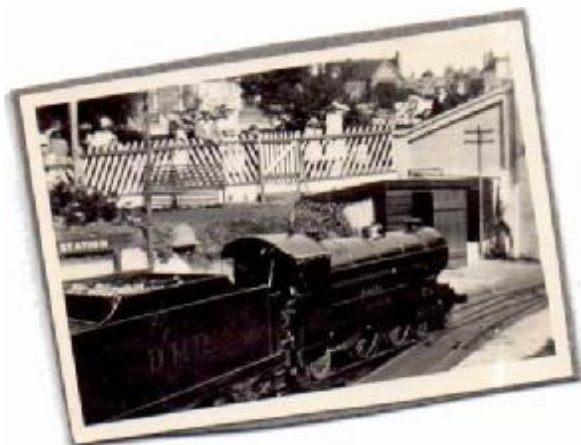
A Photographic History of *Billie*



The Dreamland Miniature Railway at Margate opened in 1920. In its original circular form it was designed by Henry Greenly and the stock was initially hired from Albert Barnes at Rhyl. This first consisted of loco Prince Edward of Wales and a train of Bassett Lowke 4 wheeled coaches.



This unusual photo was taken by Clifton R Adams who was sent to take colour photos for National Geographic magazine. Adams' photos are mostly dated 1928 but this view was in the original DMR station. Many details similar to the other Albion class locos (as built) can be made out in this photograph.



According to Kathryn Nedd Billie was named after James Gaunt Butler, always known by his nephews as Uncle Billie, he was born in 1918. Research by Peter Wilson shows that it was delivered probably during 1922, and these two photos shows it in its original condition in the original DMR station. For the 1923 season the DMR was re-laid as an out and back run, longer than the original circuit and with easier gradients. It was around this time when the railway equipment was sold to the park



The present boiler carried by Billie was made by Luggs of Billingshurst in 1970. Michael Lugg and his family made a lot of boilers for traction engine owners. Luggs placed mudhole doors on the firebox crown, which are visible here on Billie newly repainted c1971. This boiler also has the dome and safety valve mountings made massively.



Barnes Atlantic BILLIE at Margate, August 1974

© N.R. Knight

Neville Knight was Dreamland in 1974, and photographed Billie then in a light green livery. Here is the train running next to the back of the historic scenic railway, which is still there today. The front coach is still as it left Rhyl, but the other three have had plain timber added on the non-platform side.

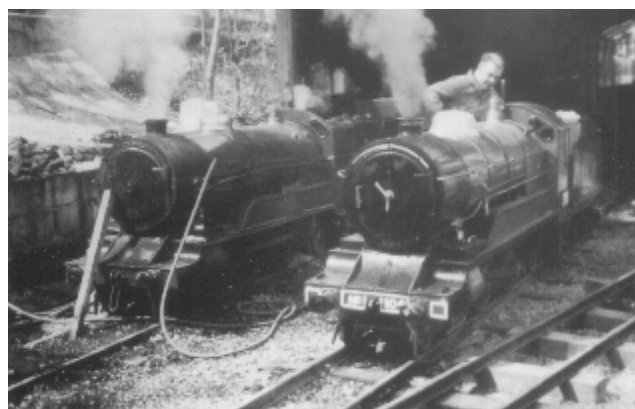


This livery seems to have been the final form of Billie in operation at Margate. The original nameplates have been attached to the smoke deflectors, which then became lost.

The boiler then had bosses welded into it to enable the injectors to deliver water at the front. This photo below is the only one to show this arrangement at Margate, so must be not long before Les Hughes bought the DMR railway equipment on 1980.



During 1980 – 1981 *Billie* was in the hands of Tony Cork, an enthusiast who lived near Mold. He stripped the loco down in his garage, and gave it a mechanical overhaul.



From there it was delivered to the Dudley Zoo Railway, where it was photographed by John K Williams on 11th April 1982. Only on a handful of occasions at DZR was it steamed at the same time as Michael, seen at left. Billie continued to operate at Dudley during 1983, the last time it was steamed in public.

Subsequently to this the boiler visited TMA Engineering in Birmingham, where new tubes were fitted, and a hydraulic test was carried out in January 1987. After that the loco was based at Rhyl where it was steamed once or twice, until June 1993 when it was sold to Michael List Brain in Kent.



Billie had been purchased for a proposed railway which was never built, but Michael List Brain did display the loco in 2005 at a rally (above), and he loaned it for display at Rhyl in 2011.

Austin Moss bought *Billie* in May 2018 and moved it to his railway at Windmill Farm, near Burscough in Lancashire. Austin identified that the loco wheels needed re-tyring and the boiler needed fettling with new bosses being added; he had that work all carried out at North Bay Railway Engineering Services in Darlington. This paved the way for the boiler to be hydraulically tested in July 2020. Since then Austin had been making regular progress with re-assembling *Billie* alongside a lot of other projects, before changing circumstances lead him to offer the loco for sale.

Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust was in the fortunate position to be able to buy *Billie* using its charitable reserves. Some 'Friends' members have made donations for which we are grateful. Since acquisition we have been buying paint (Southern Railway malachite green) and steam fittings etc for it, and friends from the Sherwood Forest Railway have generously agreed to make nameplates and a new dome cover. We think that we will be able to steam *Billie* next summer although it could be some time longer before it will be able to pull trains on its own.

Other RMR News

The 2022 season: This season was long and busy. It started on 2nd April, earlier than usual, and included two weeks of daily running around Easter weekend, and daily running from Friday 9th July all the way through to Sunday 4th September (8½ weeks). Over the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Weekend (3rd – 5th June) there was a special event at Marine Lake organised by Richard Kendrick.

Steam days were shared between *Joan* and *Railway Queen*, the latter being preferred during the very hot spell having been fitted with a wide ashpan. On a few days fire risk lead to steam trains being run using *Clara*.



The RMR shop did good business selling around 5,000 crab lines, along with plenty of new gift items including soft toy crabs and seagulls.



Welsh Water cordoned off the Marine Lake car park on 25th June and did not release it until 3rd September. However their contract works met with technical challenges and often it appeared that there was little going on (the main operations being underground). Next summer they plan to be back.

Having both passed their boiler inspections on 13th May *Prince Edward of Wales* and the *Cagney* sat out the summer until 25th September when they operated the train – successfully - double headed.

On 13th July the boiler on *Billie* had its cold inspection carried out by our new inspector Rob Houghton. This confirmed the view of Austin Moss's inspector that the boiler is serviceable for further use. This was just as well because Austin had completed final fixing of the boiler to the chassis.

Over the summer in between operations and other excitements we made progress with re-assembling *Michael*. We cut holes in the new smokebox and drilled it for attachment to the chassis – a job which we have now done several times. The motion was built back up with new clupet rings inside the cylinders. Most of the pipework has since been added and the loco is now not far from being test steamed.

Winter Projects 2022/2023



The two main projects being carried out in Autumn 2022 are shown above. At left a **new point** is being installed. This will enable greater use of the fourth track inside Central Station, and will lead on to creating better displays of the railway equipment that is not in use. At right our **tramcar** is receiving a new timber body, replacing the old body which was very tired and much too low. This extra height will make the vehicle easier for our passengers to get in and out of. The clerestory roof and the motorised bogie for electric power are both to be retained.



LOTTERY FUNDED
ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI



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,
Peter Wilson Collection (DMR).