

# North Wales Model Engineering Society



## FEBRUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER.

For the members that have been absent from construction duties at Llandudno, I shall endeavor to keep you in the picture with what has been happening.

Trevor Butterworth turned up about a fortnight ago informing us that he was due to spend a couple of weeks in a Liverpool hospital. I'm not too sure if he's home yet.

Last Saturday, those of us who were at West Shore were given the news that our Vice Chairman, - Keith Jones had been feeling a bit unwell on the Friday and was admitted to Ysbyty Gwynedd for tests. Can I, on behalf of all our members, wish you both a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing you back in the fold very soon.

We still haven't sampled tropical weather at West Shore this year, but work has carried on with our track modifications in all kinds of adverse conditions.

Having excavated an area on the upper side of the station area, the shuttering was made, steel reinforcement inserted within, then last Wednesday "Mixamate" turned up and the concrete was poured.

We were all impressed with their service and can thoroughly recommend them if you are planning any civil work involving concrete. You only pay for what you use.



Colin, Richard and Mike restoring our footpath to its original condition.

A few concrete slabs on the path up to the station area were a bit uneven and causing a tripping hazard. These have been lifted. Before replacing them, it was decided to bury a 4-inch diameter pipe under the pathway. In future if there is a need for an electrical supply on the perimeter of our site, we can push an extension cable through this duct. We can then replace the offending slabs!

### **SITE ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION.**

In the next few weeks, I've arranged with a local electrician to visit our track site to test our electrical installation and have it certified in accordance with the latest regulations.

The circuit feeding our site hut has been tripping out on the MCB recently. The circuit breaker has been changed for an equivalent one and now it seems to be alright. The real proof will be carrying out an insulation test which will be done during the installation certification shortly.

### **PENRHYN CASTLE MUSEUM.**

How sad to hear that all the non-Penrhyn Quarry artefacts have been removed and sent to various parts of Britain.

The "jewel in the crown"- Fire Queen, will be on display at what looks like a brilliant museum on the Vale of Rheidol Railway in Aberystwyth until a proper building has been built at the National Slate Museum, Gilfach Ddu, Llanberis.

The other locos that have been relocated:

Vest to the East Lanes. Railway. Hawarden to the Middleton Railway. Kettering Furnace loco to Waterford.

Beckton Gas Works loco to Bo'ness Railway.

It will be very interesting to know what happens to the material not on public display.

One of our members, Eric Lander, spent many hours working on Fire Queen. I wonder what his views are.

In future, only artefacts connected with the history of Penrhyn Quarry, and the locality will be on display. (This will include the Main Line Hunslet locomotive, - CHARLES).

I don't know what will be displayed at the proposed art gallery.

## THE FEBRUARY EVENING LECTURE.

Brian Kerens gave us a very interesting insight into the 2 ½ inch gauge Society. Along with videos, Brian displayed some 2 ½ inch gauge models, in particular "AYESHA". This loco was constructed by the locomotive designer and builder known to many as LBSC.



**LBSC'S locomotive AYESHA.**



**TONY GRAHAM giving "AYESHA" the once over!**



No matter how well any event goes, you've got to have a hiccup. This event was no different!

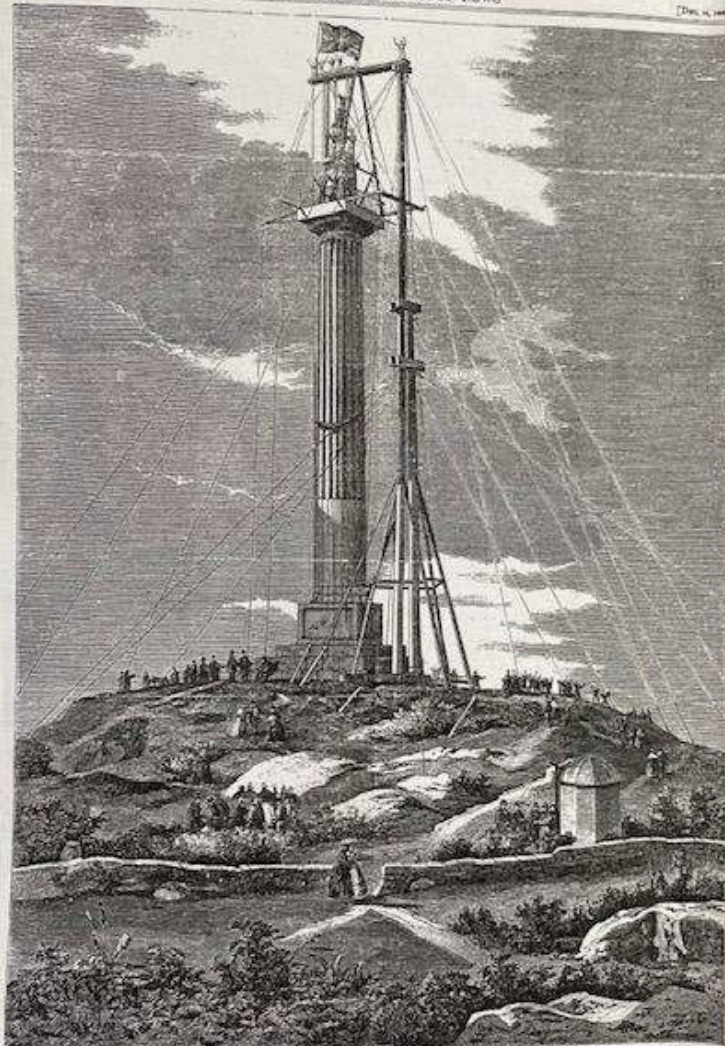


**Having used the display screen, the damn thing wouldn't retract at the end of the evening. That famous song by Trini Lopez came to mind, - "If I had a hammer"!**

An excellent evening that was enjoyed by us all. Thanks Brian.

### **THE MARQUIS OF ANGLESEY COLUMN.**

I'm sure all our members are familiar with the Marquis Column located in LLanfair PG, Anglesey. Brian Kerens showed us this print from the estate of the late Ifor Williams, one of our past members. Dated 15<sup>th</sup> December 1860 and from THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, it shows the statue of the late Marquis being raised onto the completed structure. Interestingly, I was passing this location last week, and I noticed a scaffold surrounding the upper part. I'm not sure if it will be open to the public once this work is completed. If you do get a chance to climb the column to the top it's well worth it. The view of both bridges along with Snowdonia in the background is truly magnificent. Well worth a visit.



RAISING THE AUGUSTINE STATUE TO THE TOP OF THE COLUMN ERRECTED TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE MARGUERITE DE BRUNELLETTI  
FROM A SKETCH BY MR. W. G. BAKER—SEE SUPPLEMENT THIS VOL.



## Port Penrhyn in the Second World War

There was an interesting series of events at Port Penrhyn, during World War 2, which meant that part of Port Penrhyn was declared a High Value Secret. The site was the rear part of the Loco Shed, and resulted in the Baldwin locomotive *Llandegai* being removed from there to outside the shed, from where it was sent for scrapping in 1940. The reason was concerned with the location, on Anglesey, where an aeroplane factory had been built, before the war, and to which some Catalina aircraft were posted for upgrading for the use of the Navy in seeking out German U Boats, mainly in the Atlantic.

The advantage of the Catalinas being outrigger on each of the wings, enabling the plane to land, and take off from water (provided it was not too rough), including the ocean. Initially 30 planes were purchased and were posted to Anglesey, but one of the changes was to remove the outriggers and send them to Port Penrhyn, just across the Menai Strait, where they were fitted up with an internal tank for the fuel — for additional petrol for the plane. These modifications were carried out within the rear part of the Port Loco Shed, with all the external movements to and from Anglesey being carried out at night. This change meant that the Catalinas could fly for about 13 hours continuously over the ocean, as opposed to about 4 to 5 hours as delivered from the USA, and this obviously greatly improved their useful range. In addition (in suitable weather), the plane could 'land' on the ocean for a while, and thus hide away from the submarines, and indeed watch their routine of surfacing overnight whilst the batteries were charged, and the radio transmissions to and from the mainland (i.e. France) could be intercepted. They often saw the developments of the Wolf-Packs or gatherings of several submarines and where they were, but in most circumstances they had to return to their base before the warnings could be given. To use their radios whilst at sea was extremely risky - but sometimes this risk was taken - which may explain the relatively high number of losses of the aircraft, and their crews. However the downside was that the plane could not be on water until the extra petrol tanks were empty, a period that took about 5 hours of flying time. This was only found out after the first Catalina (No.1) was so fitted with extra fuel, and left in the Menai Strait - and almost instantly sank. It is said to still be there. A lesson was learned.

The planes took off from the Menai Strait without the fuel being in the outriggers, for their usual destination. This was Lough Erne, in Northern Ireland where a secret base was built far from the madding crowd. It too had an airstrip on land for these take offs when full of fuel, as well as on the usual calm waters of the Lough for landings and other simpler take-offs. There was one oddity, as the location was such that to reach the Atlantic, required the planes to pass over a small section of Eire (or Southern Ireland), which was a neutral country during the war. There was certainly some secret agreement between London and Dublin on this — but nobody knows what this was.

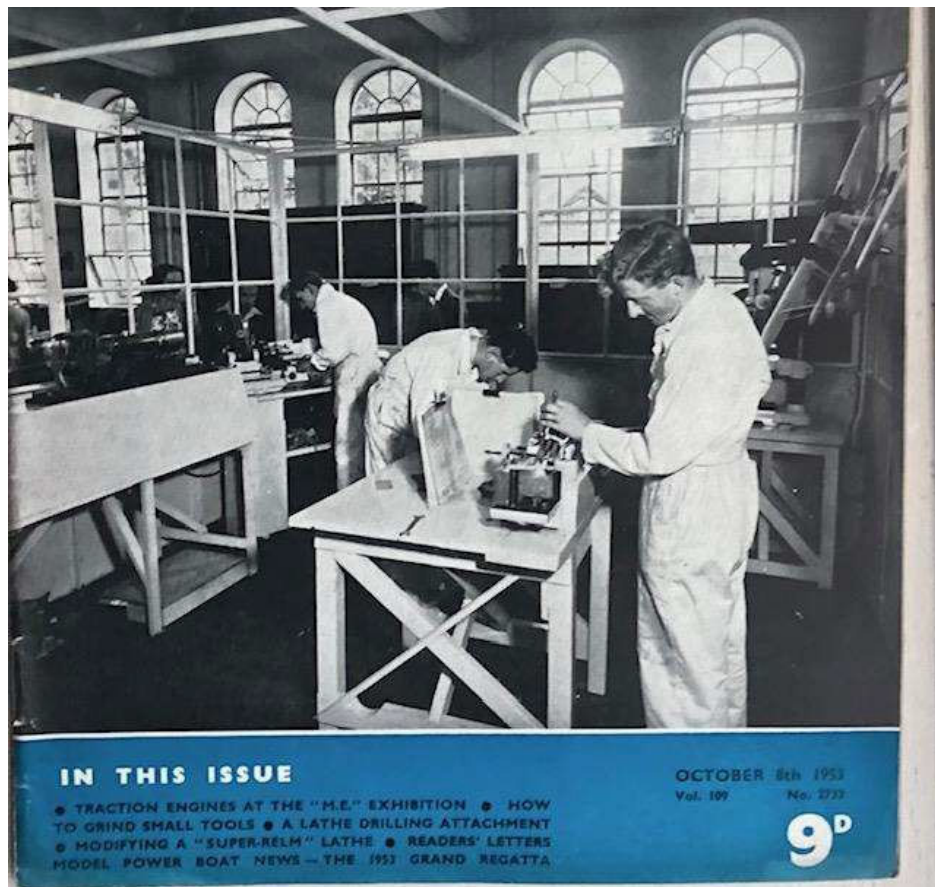
One of the Catalinas' early successes was the finding of the German Battleship "Bismarck" at sea at 10.10 am, 28th May 1941, following the sinking by her of HMS Hood two days earlier. The plane had taken off from her base on Lough Erne at 03.25 am. The person who spotted her 'coming through the mist' was actually an American Officer, Ensign Leonard B. Tuck, (USNR) there to help (with 16 others) with the training of the British Crews on how to fly the Catalinas. As the USA was strictly neutral at this time, he was the first American to take part in Active Operations in World War Two. The result of the re-discovery of the Bismarck was that it was sunk by an attack by air and sea ships later that day, and by the Navy ships at 10.39 am, Tuesday 27th May 1941.

A WW2 Catalina Flying Boat



Knowing that a few members have an interest in the "Saunders- Rowe" factory located on the banks of the Menai Straits between Beaumaris and Llangoed, I recently found this article combining this factory with Porth Penrhyn. I never knew part of the port had been classed as a High Value Secret during the war.

Again, I was reading an old copy of ME dated 8<sup>th</sup> October 1953; it showed some apprentices at an exhibition on the front cover.



Scrutiny revealed these were apprentices from Saunders-Roe Ltd. on the Isle of Wight. The apprentices could be seen constructing a 25-cc petrol engine of their own design. In addition, certain examples of other completed work were on view. These included a 2 ½ inch gauge Fayette locomotive built to LBSC's design.

Have we got any more stories about Saunders- Roe Ltd ?

### THE NEXT EVENING LECTURE.

The next lecture will be held on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> March at Craig y Don at 19:00. This should be a very interesting evening. The talk will be on the history and restoration of the Kerr Stewart diesel loco belonging to the FFestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway.

I'm not too sure if the screen will have been fixed by then. Not to worry, it's already in the service position! Nothing else to write about,

Best Regards,

Harold Jones.