



NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER 2024

A NEW ERA.

Following our annual general meeting yesterday we now have a new chairman to guide us all. Can I take this opportunity of welcoming David Jones and wish him all the best.

Our departing chairman gave all the members a lovely speech thanking the members for making his work so enjoyable. Looking back since Gary took over the reins, our society has prospered. His experience in engineering is second to none, and this showed whilst completing various projects at our track. On behalf of all the members, Diolch yn fawr iawn,- Thanks for everything.

We're not losing his wit and experience as he is now our vice chairman. I must also thank our departing vice chairman- Keith Jones for all of his contribution.

WEST SHORE TRAM SHELTER.

The Friends of West Shore approached our members on how to repair this historic building located at the end of Gloddaeth Avenue. Gary and Mike Brown came up with a solution and were asked if they could complete the work themselves. The friends would prefer paying our society in preference to any Joe Bloggs that had no engineering know how. I can confirm the task has been completed with complete satisfaction, benefitting our society's bank account. If I've missed out on any other members involved, - apologies.

BOILER TESTING.

The latest locomotives to be tested were my 3 1/2-inch gauge LBSC County Class loco, and the late Owen Francis's Rob Roy. Both required hydraulic tests before the steam tests. These steam tests will be conducted in the near future. Rob Roy was constructed to the original drawings and has no boiler blow down valve. I've decided to add this so I've removed the frame stay located directly behind the firebox, cut out a section to facilitate the valve then replace.

To remove the stay required drilling eight countersunk 6BA screws. A couple of screws snapped my drills, but everything is now starting to look good. The original design for this loco was for a competition in Model Engineer, I believe in 1962. The improvements which included a blowdown valve were printed in ME in 1986. That's what I call progress. Thanks for your help, Martin.

RE- CYCLED RAILWAY TUNNELS.

This month's Railway Magazine has an article on the 1¾ mile long Catesby Tunnel located on the former Great Central Railway near Charlwelton, Northamptonshire.

The tunnel been repurposed as the world's longest indoor vehicle test track. To enable vehicles to make a swift return journey during tests, mechanised turntables are installed at both ends.

The fastest vehicle so far is an Aston Martin Valkyrie with a max. speed of 260 KPH or 162 MPH in my language. You could say it went like a missile.

The next venue I want to mention is the twin bore tunnel on the former Bangor to Caernarfon railway track located on the Vaynol Estate between Menai Bridge and Port Dinorwic (Felinheli) railway stations.

My friend Alan from Chirk asked me if I could show him the portals of the now dis-used tunnel. I knew of their locations but I also knew one end was being used for a new purpose.

Last Friday we both went to have a look at the tunnel portals and were pleasantly surprised to see the gate unlocked and a few cars in the car park. We could see a building had been constructed across the twin bores of the tunnel so what do we do?

Finally, we met one of the gentlemen walking towards his car, so we approached him to explain why we were there. He made us very welcome and offered to take us both into the tunnel. He was one of the members of the local gun club who uses the tunnel as a shooting range. They had just finished having an early morning "Shoot".



The tunnel is immaculate inside. All the ballast having been removed and replaced with rolled slate waste. The brick work was immaculate with no evidence of grime from steam locomotives. The targets were up to 100 metres maximum from the members but seemed much farther. During my visit, members were keeping their guns, each checking one and other's guns to make sure no ammunition was present. Safety was most definitely evident.

Network Rail still own the land, even though the track closed following the re build of the Britannia Bridge. I can most certainly confirm the objects travelling through this tunnel were missiles!!

I did ask permission to write about our escapade and to print the photo in our newsletter. Many thanks to the members present.

Interestingly before departing, I asked why the building had two ventilation fans located in the roof as I wasn't aware of the bullets creating much smoke. The answer was easy. Some members have black powder guns. I'm not sure if these are long guns (Rifles?) or pistols and these definitely create smoke.

WEST SHORE MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES.

The back room as we call it has received another tidy up. Peter has managed to locate some excellent shelving. The light fitting gave up the ghost, so a new double LED batten has been fitted. This room is immaculate at the moment, let's hope it keeps this way.

Peter and Gary encountered a rather large boulder whilst mowing the rough area in the middle of the track. Here they are getting rid of this obstacle.



Gary's last duty as a Chairman ably assisted by Peter.

RYEDALE GROUND LEVEL TRACK.

Although I've never been to this track, I'm quite familiar with the layout having watched it on YouTube. Richard Stoddart speaks so passionately about these events it's very obvious this is his favourite location as regards running his locomotive. He takes his locomotive here three or four times an year for the perfect steaming week end. The two photos were taken off the TV. Quality not perfect but the photos give an idea of what he gets up to.



Any colour as long as it's black!

Richard was also given the chance to drive a WD locomotive during the week-end. I don't know if it was a 2- 8- 0 or 2- 10- 0. No doubt Richard will give me more information about his latest adventure. When completed I can't wait to see his Merchant Navy on this track.

DESIGN ENGINEERS.

On my way to the track last Saturday, I was passed by one of the Avanti West Coast Azumas travelling along the coast near Penmaenmawr. I must admit I was very impressed by this very sleek train as compared to the previous models the Avanti Voyagers. Although every model looks very similar these days, I'd like to know what makes one model more attractive than the other. My son in law travels from Cardiff to Paddington on GWR Azumas very often and reckons the seating is very hard as compared to the previous HSTs.



I've got to admit who ever designed these Stadler Class 231 for TFW photographed at Dinas Powys was having a bad day at the office when this design was thought of.

When it comes to cars. How do you improve on the design of an SUV? To be honest the shape hasn't really changed from the humble Vauxhall Chevette Hatchback.

Last Saturday we were all admiring a nice white car parked close to our entrance gate at West Shore. No one was sure who the manufacturer could have been so Keith and I went over to have a closer look. Keith was convinced it was an Aston Martin but we could not identify the badge on the bonnet. The owner finally came on the scene so Keith started talking to him and saying he liked his Aston. The owner said it's not an Aston but a Korean built Genesis, based on a Hyundai. This was the first one I had ever seen. When will we see a dramatic change in car designs?

URMSTON MES DVD.

I've been scratching my head as regards a DVD I've found at home. Produced in 1993 it shows the society running for seven days continuous. It shows locomotives coming from all corners of the UK running on the 3 1/2 and 5inch elevated track. The highlight for me was Standard Class 8, Duke of Gloucester with working Capprotti rotary valve gear. By the end of the week the locomotives had ran almost the distance from King's Cross to Aberdeen. Although copied from a video the quality is excellent and is called "A little bit more steam".

I told Richard Stoddart about this event and he reckons they've carried out this type of event more than once. This DVD could be a contender for our video evening!

FFESTINIOG 150th EXHIBITION.

Reading a 1986 model engineer magazine recently I came across an article on The Festiniog 150 Models Exhibition. For me there were two very interesting photos.

The first was one of Britomart with 3 slate wagons constructed by my good friend the late Steve Coulson. I always knew Steve as Mr. Britomart but I never knew he had built a model Hunslet. Does any member know if it was one of the smaller gauges or was it 3 ½ or 5 inch gauge.

The second photo shows a 2 ½ inch gauge Greenly type Single Fairlie. A 2-10-4T built for Henry Greenly by Jackson Rigby.

Features are a Fairlie power bogie and a Kraus-Helmholz truck. The first and fifth coupled axles were in Lutermoler trucks and a four coupled Bethlehem booster unit was fitted.

I can't see any coupling rods onto the fifth axle so I'm assuming the first axle could be also uncoupled. Could that make this loco a 2-2-6-2-4T loco.

I don't know where I stand printing the photos without permission of ME first. The magazine is Number 3780. (4th July 1986).

I know we have members who knew Steve Coulson well, and I also know one of our members is in the 2 ½" Gauge society. I look forward to any information on these locos or anything else as always. I gave West Shore a miss this morning as I was going to start on my Newsletter, it is now 20:40 and hopefully I'm on the home straight.

John and Jan's 7¼ inch gauge Railway.

Located on North Anglesey I've promised John that I would do my best to promote a visit to this very interesting 7 ¼" track. As we are still public running on Saturdays at the moment, the visit would have to be on a Sunday.

Any member who owns a 7 ¼ loco I'm sure would be welcome to run during this visit. As I haven't had a date off John at the moment, I think we should let John give details of the date, location etc. via the member's page. Then interested parties can contact John with their intentions.

Best Regards,

Harold Jones.