

Reading Society of Model  
Engineers  
www.prospectpark  
railway.co.uk

Charity Number 1163244

# The Prospectus

October 2019



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A happy John Spokes and Peter Harrison somewhere  
in Surrey. See page 7.

Photo John Billard

**A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR  
GOING TO POLLY  
THE SPINNEY LIGHT RAILWAY**

## **VIEW FROM THE CHAIR**

**John Billard**

I have just returned from a very pleasant RSME visit to the Spinney Railway, a private 7 ¼" line in Surrey. What a privilege! Circuits, branch lines deep tunnels and full signalling and interlocking from four boxes. The Jones brothers ran their lovely King class for a while and John Spokes, assisted by Peter Harrison, steamed his North Eastern Stumpf Uniflow 4-6-0. See photos on page 7. Thank you to Cliff Perry for setting this up and to all those at The Spinney for making us so welcome and offering such a generous afternoon tea.

The September trustees meeting was dealt with very quickly this month but much ground was covered. This included discussion on the society's web site, a membership total of 107, slightly down at the moment, a full maintenance programme continuing with work on both tracks and signals, electrical work in the club house and improvements to the raised track loading arrangements. The society's financial position remains healthy.

We asked recently for volunteers to help with raised track marshalling and we still want help with this. Perhaps it would be right to ask for volunteers from those taking engines at the public running to build up a roster? This job has to be done. Any views from members will be welcome.

## **USED TRACK FOR SALE**

Following major renewals of the 7 ¼" ground level track we have a number of used track panels surplus to requirements and we would like to offer these for sale to members before possible disposal. Please contact Peter Harrison quickly with a reasonable offer as we need the space!

### **... and on this subject Nigel Penford adds**

I wonder if a note could be put in the next issue to thank the "team of members" who helped lay over 300 ft of replacement track in the five weeks planned even after getting a rough start with the weather? Not forgetting these who removed, dismantled and packed away the old track. Another job unseen and enjoyed by the public and most club members. A well planned and executed job.

## **THE OCTOBER TALK**

**Club House 24th October 20.00**

**This month John Spokes speaks on**

### **The Wheel Rail Interface**

The contact area twixt wheel and rail is very small and the processes that take place in this space are very complex. John attempts to explain this interface in simplistic terms and expand on the monitoring and maintenance of both wheels and track which takes place and is so essential to avoid problems, some of which can lead to catastrophic results. 2

## A VISIT TO POLLY MODELS

David and Lily Scott

We have several in the club and the Young Engineers one has finally been finished and thoroughly enjoyed by many, so let's see where they are produced during our tour of the north.

You slowly get to know someone at many Exhibitions over several years, and with Peter Thomas this was the same. Especially when both of you are building the same design of model. Well he was doing two large Prairie tanks and had begun doing various computer cut out kits for them. The first being for the rear sand box in brass that folds along milled lines and you solder up. You could call it the very first of the Practical Scale items produced to quicken up a very slow build. Life continued for both of us and Bristol became our usual meeting point every year.

Many years before we discovered girls. My oldest cousin bought a very early Polly Kit which once built, lived at our house as I had welded up a garden railway in Gunnislake Cornwall. My model of a local locomotive joined her years later and still resides upon rusty industrial rails in our sitting room. Her first outing lasting until the early hours of the next morning all having drives. His Polly reversing lever working round the other way? Well us does things different on the East Cornwall Mineral Railway, usually drec'ly (Directly) regardless of size or scale.

Years later I became interested in a 517 model and contacted Malcolm Mitchell who lived fairly local to Exeter where I now worked. He popped over with his son to an open day at our campus. He dropped of a mass of works drawings which he had used for his etched kit design. I converted them to 5-inch gauge and the super 1892 version drawn in March of that year began. Lovely to hear someone is doing a version in 7 ¼ gauge using them. The design was then perfected by Neville Evans who I got to know and came out as Fair Rosamond a later version. There are about ten versions ending up with an enclosed cab. You could even do her as a saddle tank and no cab, just spectacle plate but you would get wetter when driving her in rain. Or is that driving rain? The wheel patterns are superbly Victorian in shape and elegance. CNC produced.

We found ourselves doing a mini holiday during a very hot February and typical of me involved four workshop visits and three preserved railway visits. Bury Bury nice for some! as it says in the Tram Station there on our way to the East Lancashire Railway. And of course Oldham for the Manchester Model Engineer Exhibition on our curved almost tennis racket shaped journey of the North via Wales and Lincolnshire.

Saturday afternoon saw us having a guided tour of Alan's workshop. A friend wanted him to re tyre the wheels on a B1 sat on the bench but did not like the price quoted! A familiar Myford Trilever from our teenage years came into

view. And a huge milling machine with a well thought out machining process in progress. But under the bench came a large Prairie tank, A Dean Goods built by Alan and one of his Dads many Kings. Over in the garage came the current masterpiece a Dukedog. All 7 1/4 gauge of course! A slight bias towards Swindon built locomotives but all different shades of green.

On the Sunday. Matt Thomas had invited us to pop in to Polly... So we did via Station Road Steam on Monday, and a BIG cheat on the Large Prairie Model superb as they are but far too many years in the building. 4121 was at a time at home at the Reading track so she has come back. Being built by the designer Trevor Shortland back in 1992.

Polly Models are housed in a typical workshop structure that would not look out of place on a 1950s model railway. And once inside there is a warm family atmosphere among the various machines and production lines. I discovered there are three Matt's so at tea break you only have to call one name and all will turn up! We enjoyed our teas by the packing bench as all space is used very carefully. I was reminded of my own workshop where lathes of ancient origin were set up to produce one or two items. Then there were traditional capstan lathes which still have a very useful role in small batch production. Then we passed the modern delights... A quick decision on not having enough room for the latest in CNC mill technology? Perhaps a slimmed down version. Well a Pacer does all the brass-work cutting. They being at home in many wood shops give a superb high speed range and a nice bed size. We had one at Exeter which spent most of its time carving out Fender copies for Students. Bass wood for reference and a curved rod for strength behind the Fret!

Climbing well-worn wooden stairs with Matt 2 named romantically by Julia who loves lathes and mills. And specialises in buffers she told me. There I said it was very family. Oh yes we are upstairs and avoiding the yellow roof struts. Here all the many parts live with several names on the blue bins covering the range. Sorry Grange! We pause by the 517 section and without the modern click on mouse some wheels get put in my basket! The next section houses Grange parts. Peter Thomas can also be found working with the full size reproduction and we have a bet on the year she is finally finished 6880. No. Hopefully a couple of years. 2022 sounds nice?

Down on the left side is a long bench where Matt explains they prove that parts go together before they are sent out. Several tenders are tenderly held together just to prove. I am tempted at a 3,500 gallon one for the Bulldog, but not today. A call from a customer enquiring the number of rivets in a certain tender in the Range gives us a pause. Matt says he could cut out a 3 1/2 " version as they can do Specials for people!

Bad tender joke... Of course there are 2,000 rivets in a 2,000 gallon, 3,500 in a 3,500 gallon, 4,000 in a 4,000 gallon and a Hawksworth design with its flat sides is far easier to put together and cheaper on rivets! I still think the Dean Duke tender with countersunk rivets takes some beating for reaching the knobs, levers and taps. They were built short for West Country small turntables. Upon my last count up on just how many 3/64 brass rivets in packets have been purchased to date? Stanier tenders use the same size so defecting to the LMS will not help you! 5/64 ones for buffer beams of course and do get the code right!

I admire the “to scale” cylinder castings and we go through the Great Western standard range where you can Mix and Match! And end up at the checkout with something that Swindon produced, or could have! Of course the 517 needs a dome and there is a possibility that the standard Polly one will be perfect so keeping the time to completion down. I am so tempted by a fully machined and polished one in a box.

I do like the printing section next, where they print the drawings to order and can incorporate any amendments before they go out. This cuts down on a pile getting dusty and taking up space. We pass the mass of laser cut frames and stretchers and chat about the new technology available.

Indeed! “The story that Curly Laurence gives is that down the road is a works with a metal guillotine! So that on his Titch the cut off ends were done quite quickly... I joked that he came home with the pieces and drew round them and so this is what we got for the dimensioned frames!”

Another section reminded me of Woolworth’s sweets section with a mass of horn blocks and similar brightly coloured lost wax parts making them very tempting in mini bins. My basket is getting fuller and passing ready-made stainless superheaters means that the Jinty gets closer to completion with three of them. I can’t resist four ready-made buffers says a man with 6 lathes. Now 7! So while dearest wife visits the toilet we add up the bill.

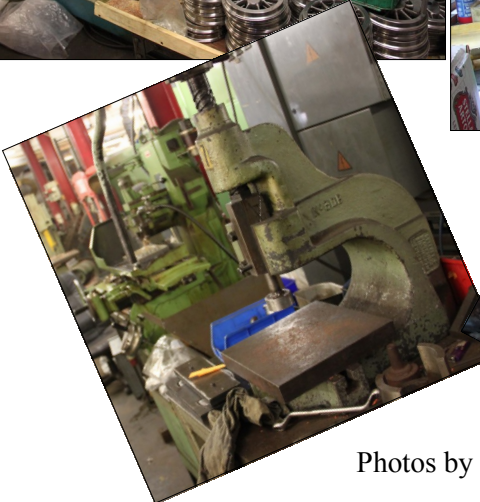
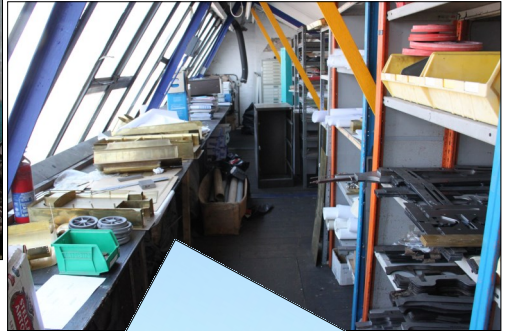
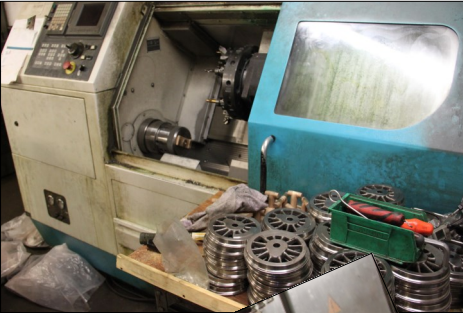
Sometimes I go down to the workshop and do lathe repair but the models don't get done. Sometimes models take over and the lathes miss out. A bit like here with many machines but if you increase the workforce the prices would have to rise, so a steady pace seems best. Another very underrated tool is the fly-press and they have two of them. Superb for pressing parts together and punching holes and forming shapes using dies and vee forming of angles etc. I saw one for sale last month, but they do take some moving so went for a 20 ton press instead. These break down into manageable pieces to move. Just.

The frame on my press gave me an idea to lift locos in the house and workshop safely due to the holes at equal spacing going up them. These got replaced in my thoughts by two short aluminium ladders which go together to form a platform.

As not everyone would want to buy a press. I blame the stop at a lovely railway tearoom on the Great Central Railway during the afternoon. Your mind wanders into useful things while diving into the coffee and walnut! Bridge decks were lifted into place using jacks so this ponder should work. In fact just up the line they are getting ready to bridge the gap to join the two railways together to make impressive. Such a shame they built a huge shed for the locomotives right in the middle of the extension. Never in their wildest dreams did they EVER consider joining up, a one day possibility.



Thankfully one of the short ladders is perfect for unloading 4121 onto a block built bench with a sheet of board. Oh, this sounds too easy... yes she spent two weeks sitting it out in the car while I sorted more bits out in the reception area of the garage. The big problem in life loving machines, is that they are on sale at the very moment you have no more room! Strange that Raglan lathe number 4221 was in the way!



Photos by David Scott



# SPINNEY RAILWAY VISIT

Pictured by John Billard



## DIARY

### OCTOBER 2019

Saturday 5th	Birthday party	11:00 to 13:30
Sunday 6th	Public Running	13:00 to 16:30
Saturday 12th	Club Running	11.00 onwards
Sunday 13th	Birthday Party	11.00 to 13.30 14:30 to 17:00
Monday 14th	Trustees Meeting	
Saturday 19th	Birthday party	11:00 to 13:30 14:30 to 17:00
Thursday 24th	Club House Talk	20.00
Saturday 26th	Young Engineers and Club Running	13.30 onwards

### NOVEMBER 2019

Sunday 3rd	Public Running	13:30 to 16:30
Saturday 8th	Club Running	11.00 onwards

**Comments by RSME members on any subject appearing in Prospectus are welcomed by the editor.**

Opinions expressed in PROSPECTUS are the personal views of the contributor and cannot be taken as reflecting the views of the club committee or editor.

**The deadline for the November issue is 18 October. This is the final date.**

Contributions may be submitted in hard or soft copy to the editor.

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