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Free to members

The Prospectus

August 2016



Horse tram at Douglas, Isle of Man, on 7 July 2016. Opened on 7 August 1876 this was threatened with closure last year by the Douglas Borough Council as being unprofitable. It has since been taken over by the Isle of Man Railway to operate during its 140th anniversary. Thankfully it has been reprieved while its long term future is being investigated. Photo John Billard

DAWSON'S DIARY A CLUTTERED WORKSHOP SEARCHING THE SIDINGS

DAWSON'S DIARY

kept by the President

An early start for this month's public running was worth the efforts of members who turned out in force to help. There were many locomotives ready to run as in the park a car show was being held and a good number of visitors came to the club for a ride which gave the takings a big boost for the RSME. A very big thank you from all the trustees and special thanks for the tea ladies for their help in the club house.

Guildford MES 49th model steam rally held at Stoke Park, some members of the RSME visited the show on Saturday 2nd July. This year there were a few more traction engines steaming around the site, what trade stands there were, were busy. They seem to get less every time we attend. We were lucky with the weather. When it did rain it rained hard but we were in the model tent at the time and it didn't last too long. The railway was busy with some very nice 7¼" and 5" locomotives. Our RSME members Chris and Mike Jones brought their King and Collett 0-6-0 locos for a run. The GMES now have and running a gauge one railway, set up outside, there were some very nice locos of this gauge running throughout the day. Some of the engines are very powerful. One loco of GWR outline was seen hauling a train of twelve carriages! In the model tent there was a rather nice 5" Highland Railway Jones Goods loco that was under construction. When completed this will be a fine model, also on show a good looking D/H Moth very well finished. I guess it flies as well as it looks. There were some well-made exhibits to look at from all disciplines of our hobby.

I was very pleased to see the members who brought along their locos for a run at the recent running day were seen giving the young new members a drive of steam and electric engines. All good for the future of the RSME to encourage these young members to stay in the club. Hopefully they will get the bug to have a go at making any type of model. Well done. Keep up the good work.

I was pleased to see Cliff Perry out and about, his loco a L T & Southend tank loco. Based on a Maid of Kent loco with a trailing wheel making it a 4-4-2 Tank. This loco passed its hydraulic test with flying colours, next time out it will get its steam test, perhaps we will see Cliff running once more. David Wilkinson did very well to get his boiler blanked off ready for its test. It was a pleasure to test it with no leaks. Well done David!

A good number of members turned out to have a run, a member Bill of the Newbury branch of the RSME brought along a rather nicely finished Sweet Pea with a tender which ran well. Bill is getting used to driving the loco on our track.

Wednesday 13 July Mike Manners, Nigel Penford have made a very nice

job of finishing the block work in the standby loading ramp on the ground level track. That's another job well done. Chris Symons gang have been busy once again reballasting the 7/4" rails trying to keep the track up to scratch. Well done everyone. Thanks to Alan Thatcher and Brian Joslyn all of the ground level trollies have been fitted with the new type bogies. They run much better.

This month's club activities make it a busy one with plenty of birthday parties and visiting schools etc. The club held the 2½" gauge rally on the 17th July. Members of the 2½" Society came from Bristol, Sussex, Kent, Hampshire. In total there were 14 locos. Some for show and a good number of steam and electric engines. With nice weather and plenty of tea on the go the visitors had a good run most of the day. One visitor said our track is one of the best 2½" tracks he has run on. He came from Peacehaven in Sussex. We must thank once again Mike Manners and his wife Jan for a very nice lunch most welcome it was too.

AND YOU THOUGHT YOUR WORKSHOP WAS CLUTTERED.....

John Spokes

I thought I would conclude my two recent Greek articles with some photos of the workshop of our host in Athens.

Dimitris is a very keen modeler of radio controlled aircraft and cars and has a very fine collection of models and r/c equipment he has constructed himself over the years. This has been supplemented by some excellent ready-built stuff sourced from ebay. His workshop in his Athens apartment is a masterpiece of storage and organisation. The photos show just what you can pack-in if you need to!



Photos John Spokes



WOLVERTON PUG

(The search for new sites spreads far and wide)

No sooner had FL Heavy Haul (FLHH) won some new business and we had sorted out a site for them, Paul Smart who was their Operations Director, or David Israel the Commercial Director would be knocking on my door looking for somewhere new. This was great as I was able to use my fairly extensive knowledge of the national network.

One of these new challenges concerned a potential long term contract with McAlpines, who were in discussions with various Welsh organisations. In north Wales, particularly around Blaenau Ffestiniog there existed 150-year's worth of waste slate in large tips. In view of the tax on newly quarried stone, this would be recycling on a grand scale. The main areas then needing hardcore and aggregates within easy reach were the West Midlands and Manchester. So the hunt was on. We started with the West Midlands and on 27th December 2001, Bob Goundry the FL Company Secretary picked me up at Leamington Spa Station, as he lived not far away, and we identified a number of possibilities. Unfortunately, as was usually the case EWS held most of the still operational goods yards, such as two sites in Walsall which would have been ideal. Nevertheless, after eliminating a fair number we came up with two sites which we considered worth pursuing. The favourite of these was the now disused but very large coal loading point at Mid Cannock on the line from Walsall to Rugeley. Unfortunately, the Property Manager at UK Coal who still owned the site was always holding out for the pot of gold, which might come his way from a property development company, so would not even quote us a lease price for the site. No doubt now the site is covered with high bay warehouses and retail distribution buildings.

We then started looking more closely at the second option. To be honest it was a bit of a basket case. We had only chosen it after exhaustive consideration of the alternatives. Its advantage was that it was still rail connected, it suited the customer re its location and was old industrial land. Situated on the same line as Mid Cannock, the next place after Walsall, this was at Bloxwich. The works was then handling imported zinc, but had been a foundry since the days of the Industrial Revolution. The area of land that would be available, was barren and strewn with old foundry waste. Not only that it sloped away to the little used Wyreley and Essington Canal. It would need a lot of engineering to lay a couple of sidings and head shunt off the existing main line connection but the size of the contract justified it. So civil engineering consultants were brought in. The owners of the zinc works had their legal people working on an agreement.

We had identified a site at Guide Bridge for the Manchester traffic after several other sites had been eliminated and I had agreed a reasonable annual rent with Railtrack. At the Welsh end the Llandudno Junction to Blaenau branch was only maintained to the standard required to carry lightweight modern DMU's so to bring it up to the standard required for heavy aggregates trains was big money (£3m from memory). McAlpines were in discussion with obtaining support from the Welsh Government etc.

The environmental survey of the land covered with foundry waste revealed, would you believe, the presence of great crested newts! I don't know any land in this country that does not appear to harbour these protected animals. So add the mitigation measures for these into the mix and on we go.

Unfortunately, what killed the job was the inability to secure the necessary grant funding from the Welsh Government for upgrading the Blaenau branch. So the surplus waste slate lies in heaps there to this day.

Soon after all this FLHH had an enquiry from a fairly vociferous chap called Joe somebody. He was the influential owner of a waste recycling firm based at Gogar Bank just north of Edinburgh and was keen to develop rail transport to handle Edinburgh and other lowland waste. Now I say influential but the fellow handling waste contracts at FLHH (Pat) was also a fairly noisy Londoner. They were of a similar hue. Pat was full of enthusiasm, which is great in an emerging business, but occasionally he would let his enthusiasm cloud some of the issues. According to Pat, what Joe didn't know about Scottish waste wasn't worth knowing and he was 'plugged into' all the top movers and shakers in Scottish and Edinburgh politics. I seem to recall the comment "Joe always gets his way".

Well, you must remember that Freightliner already had a presence in Scotland at Coatbridge Glasgow. On their commercial team was a short Scottish lady with lots of experience in Scottish Rail Freight marketing and the Inter-modal business in particular. The point I make is she was Scottish. If you are to make headway in the Regions of the UK you must have a local man or woman working for you. Notice that all the BBC News correspondents for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland hark from those places. Joe was not a Scot. I forget where he came from. It might have been Liverpool but he did not have a scouse accent. He certainly did not have a Scottish accent. Our Scottish lady at Coatbridge 'phoned me and said - "beware of Joe, he has not got the influence north of the border that some might think."

This was a portent! The suggestion did not seem to worry Pat, so off we go to Scotland. Firstly, to Edinburgh. The old Freightliner Terminal at Portobello was still there including the derelict overhead crane. I think the terminal closed in about 1986. It belonged to Railtrack, as a Strategic Freight Site.

So a case had to be worked up to show Railtrack it was commercially viable, in order to draw down a lease from them. Interestingly EWS already had a contract for moving waste from Powderhall to Dunbar using Edinburgh City waste to infill the old pits at Oxwellmains Cement Works. This of course was domestic waste. Joe was looking at industrial waste, principally demolished buildings. The plan would be to load the waste at Portobello and take it to Methil, further up the east coast towards Dundee, where Joe's brother had won a contract to infill the old Methil docks.

Portobello was fairly straightforward, as most the track connections remained and part of the site was still used by the Scottish civil engineers though a lot of scrub clearance would be necessary. The fly in the ointment there was that there had been some problems at Powderhall with the EWS depot due in part to asbestos, but more particularly the development of more upmarket housing in the area, making the rail operation less acceptable locally. EWS therefore prepared their own bid for the Portobello Site. The Strategic Freight Site Rules stipulated that in cases where two freight companies bid for one Strategic Freight Site, Railtrack must accept the one that will bring the most guaranteed track access income! Well they already had the figures for the Powderhall Traffic and the waste flows were happening now! Not only that but Railtrack were fully aware of the rather "fly by night" nature of Joe and his brother, being fully advised by their man in Glasgow. There was therefore a bit of a mountain still to climb to produce a robust business plan based on tonnages of industrial waste that were pledged to the company as available for movement. Rather than just "Oh yes this will grow spectacularly there are huge amounts of material waiting to be moved!"

Next stop Methil to check that out! We parked at Thornton North Jn and proceeded to walk down the branch a little way. Everything appeared in working order with the branch points still functioning (apparently), though the branch was out of use. We then drove down to Methil Power Station (Decommissioned 2000- (Wikipedia)). It seemed to have become a collecting point for some old industrial diesel shunters and rolling stock.

The branch had only remained open to serve the power station. There was another mile and a half to the docks and the track disappeared into thick undergrowth and saplings. Onward we went to the docks. Eventually finding where the branch emerged from the undergrowth over a level crossing, the track at which point was severed.

Joe's brother's activities consisted of dump trucks and lorries ferrying rubble through an absolute sea of mud to tip into the former harbour. Needless to say nothing whatever came of the scheme!

Interestingly even EWS remained at Powderhall, so the rotting remains of Portobello FLT remain for all to see next to the ECML approaching Edinburgh to this day. *(to be continued)*



Above Portobello— old Freightliner depot -Morris crane still there.

All photos—WP





Above—Mid Cannock former coal loading site

Below—Methil power station





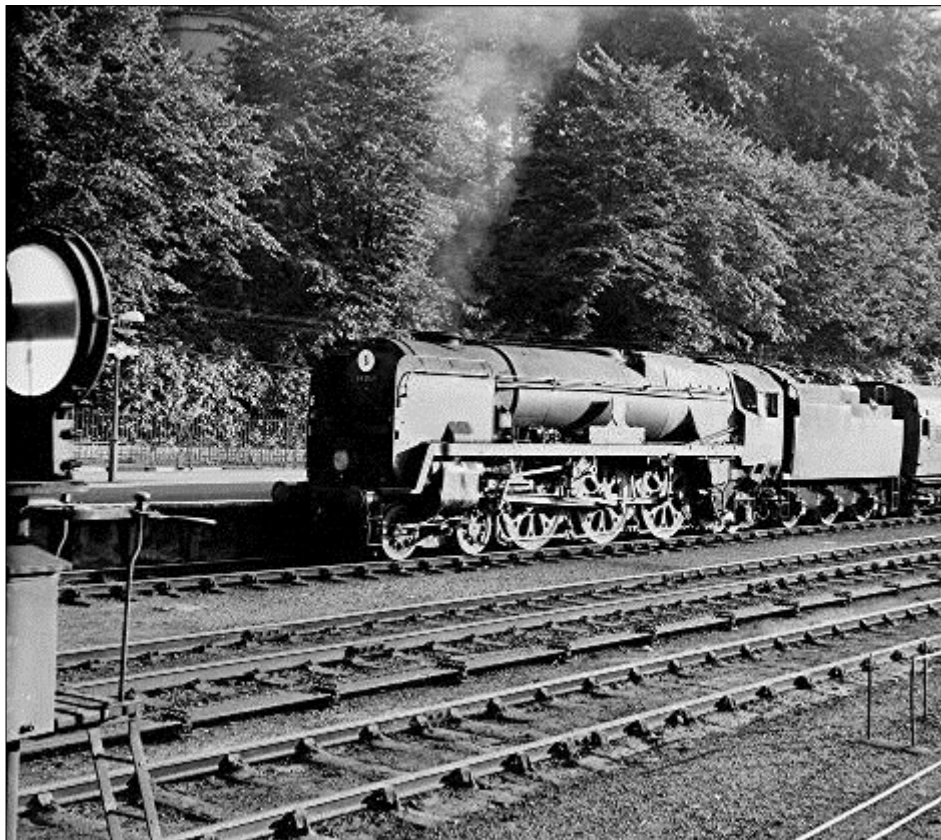
Above —Methil Power Station
Below – Looking towards the site at Portobello





Above— Blaenau Ffestiniog





Fifty years ago—"West Country" Pacific 34013 "Okehampton" basks in the sun at Exeter Central with a Plymouth train during August 1966.

Photo John Billard

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 September PROSPECTUS is
18 August. This is the final date.**

Contributions from all members are greatly welcomed
They may be submitted in hard or soft copy to the editor.
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DIARY

August 2016

| | | | |
|----------|------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Saturday | 13th | Club running | |
| Sunday | 14th | Birthday parties | 11.00-13.30 14.30-17.00 |
| Monday | 15th | Trustees meeting | |
| Tuesday | 16th | 00 gauge DCC | |
| Saturday | 20th | Birthday party | 11.00-13.30 |
| Sunday | 21st | Birthday parties | 11.00-13.30 14.30-17.00 |
| Friday | 26th | Young Engineers | 18.00-20.00 |
| Saturday | 27th | Young Engineers | 10.00-13.30 |
| | | Club running | 13.30-17.00 |
| Monday | 29th | Public running | 13.30-17.00 |

September 2016

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|----------|------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Saturday | 3rd | Birthday parties | 11.00-13.30 14.30-17.00 |
| Sunday | 4th | Public running | 13.30-17.00 |
| Tuesday | 6th | 00 gauge | |
| Saturday | 10th | Club running | 10.30 |
| Sunday | 11th | Birthday parties | 11.00-13.30 14.30-17.00 |
| Monday | 12th | Trustees meeting | |
| | | 16-18th Brooklands MEX | |
| Tuesday | 20th | 00 gauge DCC | |
| Friday | 30th | Young engineers | 18.00-20.00 |

The information contained within this publication was correct at the time of going to print.