

**Reading Society
of Model
Engineers
Charity Number
1163244**

The Prospectus

March 2024



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225**



A reflective moment with Mick Strain and Andy Midwinter at a club running in March. Photo John Billard

**A PROSPECT PARK RAILWAY IN 1953
STOKE ROW RALLY 2025
FLANGING COPPER
MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE THIS
MONTH**

THE VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

John Billard

February is a short month so here we go again! The trustees met on the 12th. It turned out to be quite a long agenda and this is a summary. It was reported that the installation of a defibrillator continues as we are seeking training to go with it. We discussed the risk of a train coupling breaking resulting in a runaway. The conclusion was that current arrangements were successful and in particular the use of vacuum braked stuck on the ground level meant the risk was mitigated. We shall be moving to club running on two Saturdays per month commencing on 23rd of March.

Club finances remained satisfactory and the February public running set a record for revenue. We now have 102 members and after consultation with the membership secretary we are dispensing with an application form for renewing members as a trial to see how it goes. See page 7.

We were pleased to hear that work to secure the clubhouse against squirrel entry he is now complete. This was an arduous job and thanks to all those concerned in it. Building works are now commencing on the workshop refurbishment. Maintenance or renewals is required on both tracks. Ideally it was thought that a working group should be formed composed of members who are regular users of the racetrack with the aim of carrying out a maintenance programme.

Issues remain with the inconsistent for performance of raised track carriages. In busy times at public running, it is desirable to run two carriages on each train. This being the objective a new maintenance regime was discussed with a particular member taking the lead. The aim is to have a standard design which is free running and with effective brakes.

There has been a recent private party which was very busy and volunteers are required for the next special needs party on the 4th of April.

Planning for the June 8th and 9th Stoke Row Rally has to be started and it was agreed that administration of entries will be through John Billard in conjunction with the rally organisers. A club visit is being organised for the Fawley Railway invitation day which is already well subscribed.

Away from the trustees meeting we have had a series of interesting speakers recently, Bill Richardson from the High Wycombe club talking about the Parson's turbine and what a genius that man was in all sorts of fields. And last month Jon Willis came from Crofton on the subject of the engines there; 210 years old and still capable of doing the job they were designed to do. This month on the 21st we have Simon Guppy from the Narrow Gauge Railway Society. April will be a must because we will be hearing about some Scottish 4-6-0s to include some unpublished material that no one has seen before.

After that, for May onwards, I am looking for more speakers. Any subject of interest, doesn't always have to be trains or even engineering! Don't hesitate to contact me! We pay £50 to cover our visitor's expenses.

STOKE ROW RALLY 2024

John Billard

This year's rally falls on June 8th and 9th and following comments from the organisers this is notice of changes we would like to make for members who wish to exhibit and to help run the stand.

The rally is a major showcase for RSME and it is important that we are shown in the best possible light. This year's exhibition stand will be smaller but also feature a working workshop with small machines demonstrated. It will be accompanied by members exhibits including, we hope, those under construction and finished models. As before, we would also like to see engines in steam or working outside the model tent. Other themes may be featured in future years.

To help our planning, which has now started, following a notice on the club notice board we would like members to complete a simple form setting out the nature of their exhibit and a brief history. This will be administered by me on behalf of the club, and I will then be issuing passes for rally entry etc. We would like exhibitors and other members to be part of a rota to accompany our stand and to help present RSME to visitors and deal with their questions.

I hope all this will be acceptable to everyone and do contact me if you have any questions.

The following article is taken, with acknowledgement, from
Thames Side Promenade Railways - Chapter Seven: Other Miniature Railways in Reading by Peter Scott.

This publication is no longer in print.

SUMMER 1952 - A 7 ¼" RAILWAY IN PROSPECT PARK

Prospect Park is Reading's largest open space and lies on the north side of the Bath Road (A4), around 2 miles west of the town centre. The estate of Prospect Hill had once been a farm belonging to the Kendrick family. A small house was built in the woods there in 1759 by Benjamin Child, widower of Frances Kendrick. After his death the house was occupied by his daughter and her husband, but around 1800 it was purchased by John Engelbert Liebenrood. He enlarged the house, and his colonnaded mansion is still the focal point of the park. Liebenrood also gave his name to the road running along the eastern edge of the park. Prospect Park was acquired by the Council as a public open space in 1901.

On 15th July 1952, the Borough Surveyor received a letter from a Mr Bertram Lewis of 35 Mansfield Road, Reading who was seeking permission to operate a 7¼" gauge railway in Prospect Park during August and September that year. Mr Lewis stated he had a steam locomotive and 150 yards of track available. The Borough Surveyor suggested a site "on the grass near the

drinking fountain in the approach road from Tilehurst Road' (approx SU691729). Mr Lewis was prepared to pay the Council £10 for the right to operate the railway from 1st August to 30th September, and if successful, again from 1st May to 30th September 1953. At their meeting on 18th July 1952, the Parks Committee discussed the offer and resolved it be accepted, subject to Mr Lewis entering into a suitable agreement and the Borough Surveyor being satisfied about the siting of the railway.

It seems the railway started running on 23rd August 1952. In his report to the Parks Committee of 19th September 1952, the Borough Surveyor stated "Mr Lewis, the promoter, was unable to commence operation of the railway until 23rd August and he has paid the sum of £5 in respect of the right to operate the railway for one month. If the weather is favourable, he desires to continue until the end of September and I recommend that the agreement be extended as required and the appropriate fee charged on a pro-rata basis".

At the Parks Committee meeting on 19th September 1952, consent was given to Mr Lewis to continue to operate the railway from 23 to 30 September subject to the payment of £1 5s 0d and during 1953 the sum of £5 for each month the railway was to run. The opening of the railway was not covered in the local papers, although both the Reading Standard and the Berkshire Chronicle of Friday 5th September 1952, carried slightly different pictures of the railway. The picture in the Reading Standard was captioned "Model railways are always popular and Prospect Park falls into line with this latest attraction". It showed a LSWR Urie H15 4-6-0 locomotive in Southern livery, hauling two small sit-in coaches, each seating four children. The track appears to be ballasted. The view in the Berkshire Chronicle shows a small wooden shed in the background, with a single track running out to what was presumably the "station" - although there is no platform visible.

The locomotive, numbered 486 on the tender, was built by Mr Ernest Cooper of Eastleigh in 1924. It was purchased from Mr Cooper by Mr J Lillington from Andover, just after the Second World War. He then ran it on a number of temporary lines at fetes and the like. One example being a garden fete held on Saturday 11th June 1949 at "Highlands", Spencers Wood by the Shinfield & Grazeley Conservative Association. A picture appeared in the *Reading Standard* of Friday 17th June 1949, showing the prospective Conservative candidate aboard the train. Another was during the Pangbourne Gala of August Bank Holiday 1950. There was around 250 feet of track and four coaches. No.486 and the equipment was then purchased by Mr Lewis, who in the early 1950s ran a gentlemen's outfitters shop (B Lewis & Sons) in Reading at 3 Duke Street, opposite The Ship Hotel.

It would appear the railway only ran between 23rd August and 30th September 1952. In his report to the Parks Committee of 20th February 1953, the Borough Surveyor stated he had received a letter from Mr Lewis dated 11th February. Mr Lewis had moved away from Reading and he was offering to

THE MODEL ENGINEER



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Prospect Park's 7 1/4" railway as depicted in 1954. *Courtesy ME Editor*

sell the railway to the Council for £350. The Surveyor noted " *There are practical difficulties in operating the Miniature Railway by direct administration and I recommend that the offer be not accepted*". The Parks Committee agreed and turned down the offer at their meeting on 20th February 1953. After that nothing more appeared in the Council minutes about the railway presumably Mr Lewis removed the track, stock and shed and this short lived railway was no more. Today the drinking fountain has also gone, its location being on the opposite (eastern side) of the path from the present children's playground.

Before Bertram Lewis got permission for his line in Prospect Park, he had applied to Havant & Waterloo Urban District Council for a site on Hayling Island. The General Purposes Committee heard at their meeting on 13th June 1952, that Mr Lewis had made enquiries about a site for a miniature railway on the Beachlands immediately east of the Butlin's Fun Fair. However, his offer was declined and he turned his attention to Reading instead.

I am sorry that I have been unable to contact Mr Scott about the use of this article but due acknowledgement is given. Ed.

A NEW BOILER FOR THE SPIRIT LOCO by Terry Wood

The spirit loco now requires a new boiler and Nigel Penford kindly gave me the copper material to make a start on building it. This consisted of a piece of 2 1/2 inch copper pipe 1.6 mm thick and a piece of copper sheet 3mm thick for the ends.

All I had to cut the copper sheet was a jigsaw and cutting the copper sheet for the ends of the boiler was a bit tricky with a jig saw because the diameter was quite small even though the diameter was much bigger than the diameter of the pipe so you had to cut a slot around the circle in a straight line then cut a wider slot in order to turn the blade to the correct angle to follow the marking of the circle.



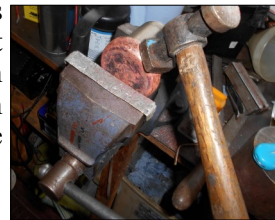
The copper sheet also had to be firmly clamped to the work mate using G clamps and not those modern sliding clamps which keep coming loose when using a jig saw cutting metal you also need a scrap piece of ali to protect the copper whilst being clamped. The circles had to be bigger in diameter than the pipe in order to curve the edges over so that they fitted inside the ends of the pipe.

Once the ends had been cut it was a matter of filing the edges smooth ready for annealing and the hammering over the edges using a metal former to make the two ends of the boiler. This took some time because you had to hammer the edges over a little at a time then anneal the copper again then



hammer over some more then anneal again and so on it didn't help that I had a dodgy right arm and I'm right handed so hammering the copper over with my left arm meant I was not spot on and would sometimes miss the copper end altogether and hit the vice instead. In fact at one time I was hitting the vice more times than the copper. After hammering the ends over the former they were still

too big so I had to machine it down a bit and seeing as it was made of stainless steel meant it would blunt all my usual lathe tools so I chose a right hand cutting tool that I don't use that often so it wouldn't matter too much if it got blunt in the process. Eventually I machined the former down low enough to carry on hammering and annealing the boiler ends in order that they fitted inside the copper.



The workshop refurbishment continues. The big stuff has been shifted as Mike Manners, right, shows.

“There’s so much rubbish”, one said, “that if it was pinched, we’d thank them!”

Photos Nigel Penford



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 2024/5

Please remember that your membership at RSME has to be renewed from the end of this month (March).

As before, the subs remains at £20.00 for all members. Juniors (16 and younger) have free membership but must be sponsored by an adult member, preferably a family member.

For this year it will not be necessary for existing members to complete a new membership form. However please make sure that all payments go to the membership secretary Mike Manners or to a Trustee, and that your contact details are kept up to date. If payment is being made by BACS then please let Mike know payment has been made. Name, amount paid and date payment was made please. Mike’s contact details are as follows :- Mike Manners, 257 Loddon Bridge Road, Woodley, Reading, Berks, RG5 4BL. Email:- michael.manners2@ntlworld.com Mobile:- 07817-271981.

DIARY

MARCH 2023

Sunday	3rd	Public running	Setting up from 09.30 onwards
Thursday	7th	On the Bench Night	19.30
Saturday	9th	Club running	10.30 onwards
Monday	11th	Trustees meeting	19.30
Thursday	21st	Club Night Talk The Narrow Gauge Railway Society By Simon Guppy	20.00
Saturday	23rd	Club running	10.30 onwards
APRIL 2024			
Sunday	7th	Public running	Setting up from 0930 onwards
Thursday	11th	On the Bench Night	19.30
Saturday	13th	Club running	10.30 onwards
Monday	15th	Trustees meeting	19.30
Thursday	25th	Club Night Talk The Desk by Peter Venn	20.00
Saturday	27th	Club running	10.30 onwards

Note from the Editor. Please provide photographs as separate files and not embedded into the text. No pdf files please.

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

The deadline for the April issue is 20 April

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

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Please write for Prospectus. Photos welcomed.
Comments by RSME members on any subject appearing in
Prospectus are welcomed by the editor.