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The Prospectus

July 2025



Seen from SS Shieldhall at Southampton on June 6th is
RMS Queen Mary 2 about to depart for a transatlantic
crossing to New York. Photo John Billard

**FROM THE CHAIR
CZECHIA
DIESEL DETAILING
THE BEST DAY
BELL FOUNDRY
OPEN DAY**

THE VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

John Billard

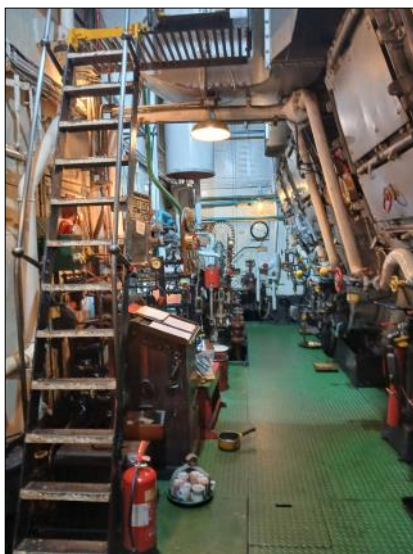
Not the usual note from the chair this time as the recent June edition has covered our last trustees meeting. So I thought I might write about some of the I have been doing and seeing both inside and outside of the club.

From a club point of view it is good to see some new members who are always welcome. We particularly encourage them whenever they can to help with the endless jobs around the site. Some amazing and tedious work, and that can be the same thing, has involved painting the railings around the ground level steaming bay. What a job that is, and visible because it is close to the entry gate. Another huge task is replacing all the sleepers on the raised track. And while that is going on another astute member has been motorising the point and signals associated with the station loop on the ground level. That will be a huge improvement that will help us manage our very busy public runnings. The June public running by the way exceeded all previous passenger numbers. Good for the club but a lot to do on the day.

Early last month I was lucky enough to be able to spend a weekend in the engine room on SS Shieldhall. This involved coming on watch early on the Friday to raise steam for the following day. The two boilers are the heart of the ship and must be treated gently. These are smoke tube and oil fired producing saturated steam at 180 psi. Each boiler has three furnaces and these can be lit independently providing some control over steam production. Today diesel fuel is used as the original heavy oil is now is now unobtainable. *See photo of the boiler room below.* There are two 800hp triple expansion engines and all the ancillaries are steam operated. Instructions from the bridge are via telegraph. It can be a busy time driving an engine particularly when manoeuvring.

This ship is unique particularly in British waters but represents a whole way of life for over a hundred years of international trade right up to the 1950s. It is in very capable hands run entirely by volunteers and do come aboard if you can. Visitors are allowed freely into the engine room and the bridge whilst the ship is underway - a unique opportunity.

Much closer to home I have been working on my Claud as occasionally described in these pages. I have come to a bit of a stop because I'm having unexpected difficulty in timing the valves. I'm receiving expert help from a friend very close to RSME and having been working on this project for over 20 years I must succeed!



This hot weather is not ideal for everyone but it has given me an opportunity to get out in our 1933 Austin 10 tourer. We have had that car for about 40 years and in the interim we gave it a ground up restoration. So now it gives much pleasure to drive. There's something about doing 40 miles an hour along quiet country lanes in a pre war car – but inevitably there is always somebody wanting to get past! Usually black and too big.

Today's pace of life have meant that I've had to deal with a defunct e-mail system and I've had to change my e-mail address. This is now johnbillard72@gmail.com. Frankly, a bit of a nightmare. But please contact me if you have an article to write for Prospectus!

WOLVERTON PUG GOES TO CZECHIA

13TH TO 23RD SEPTEMBER 2024 Part 3



Monday 16th September, having lost our itinerary of planned trips via the Alpine passes into Austria due to the floods Nigel and I decided to have a few tram rides around Prague. This included a chance to have a look at the River Vltava in spate. In order to do this, we disembarked from

route 12 Tram no. 9269-Skoda 15T Series built since 2010. The system is 600v dc. On standard gauge track. We were just short of the

river bridge, in some sort of concrete no-mans land between busy main roads and flyovers. Underneath one there lurked what appeared to have once been a small single decker bus. This was now so covered in



graffiti it was totally impossible to see any bodywork or window glass at all! Not a place to be found after dark!

We reached the river, which was indeed flowing very fast, though it had not topped the banks. We returned to Prague main station by Tram no 9410 15T4 (15T Alfa).

Our next move was to catch a train to Tabor in order to travel on the branch line to bechyne behind a centre cab electric loco, which is ex-

pected to be replaced imminently by some form of modern unit. (though it still seems to be working this week 24th May, judging by some recently posted pictures). The train left Tabor Nove Mesto at circa 14.05. The journey to the end of the line at Bechyne is



23km with 11 intermediate stops and takes 47 minutes. It is the oldest electrified railway in the Czech Republic opened on 21st June 1903 by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and is 1500v dc overhead. There are three locos available to work the two-coach train, nos 113.001,002, and 003. Only one loco is required for the service which is every two hours from Tabor and return. Our train was worked by 113.003 built by Skoda in 1973. We had been wondering why a single line branch had been electrified with 1500v dc. However, as the main line at Tabor is 25kv this line is still waiting to be converted, as it was the first line in the country to be electrified.

We could not venture far from the station at Bechyne, not that we could see there was much to look at apart from a locked shed with track leading to it. We watched the loco run round and 18 minutes after we arrived at 14.52 the train set off back to Tabor at 15.10.

The following day, Tuesday 17th, we decided to visit the historic town of Cesky Krumlov. It is well in the south of the Czech Republic towards the Austrian border, in the valley of the River Vltava between the Bavarian Forest and Moravian Hills. The town is a World Heritage site with its Gothic Renaissance, Baroque Architecture. The station is several metres above the river and town.

From Prague we changed trains at Cesky Budovice, onto a service hauled by a 'Goggle' no. 754.062. Having alighted from the train we made our way down a steep cobbled footpath through a wood. Fortunately, there was a handrail most of the way down. The River Vltava was well in spate. We found a splendid brewpub The Pivovar Cesky Krumlov and enjoyed a hearty lunch and a couple of their beers. The place had a very Bavarian feel about it, with its heavy dark wooden tables and panelling. Not surprising bearing in mind, the proximity to Austria and Germany. After the long climb back up to the station the Goggle hauled empties were just returning from the sidings with the stock of the train we arrived in which terminated here.

Returning to Cesky Budejovice we changed to another service heading south and travelling nearly into Austria where we alighted at Rybnik, with only just enough time to board another two-coach train hauled by a centre cab electric loco. Skoda built 1979/83 no. 210-055. These are more numerous than the class 113, there being 30 of them still in service on station pilot duties and occasional use in the summer on branch lines such as this one from Rybnik to Lipno. These locos and the Lipno branch are 25kv overhead.

This two vehicle train consisted of one double deck vehicle and one first class compartment vehicle with about a third of the length occupied by van space. We subsequently discovered that at weekends water sports often take place on the nearby lake at Lipno. The van space is utilised for canoes etc. Once again, the journey took about 45 minutes with 7 intermediate stops. The line was originally electrified in 1912 at 1250v dc, becoming 1500v dc in 1955 and finally 25kv in 2005.

We reached Lipno at about 17.50, as with Bechyne, the only thing of note at the station was a substantial locked gate across the siding leading from the run round loop into a substation complex, which didn't appear to have been used for a long time. This siding is not electrified. The turn round time for the return journey was not enough to wander off exploring.

Whilst we were wandering about the station a security man turned up in a small car and proceeded to drive along the platform. He parked about halfway along, got out of his car and stood around doing nothing. After a few minutes he got back in his car and drove off! We thought we were back in the STB (Statnabezpecnost) secret police era.



Returning to Rybnic, we caught an Austrian train back to Ceske Budejovice hauled by a modern Siemens ES64U2, 230kph 10,000 hp Taurus electric loco 1116-055.

The station at Ceske Budejovice has been recently completely restored. It is on the main international corridor from Prague to Linz and connects with several domestic lines. It is Neo-Renaissance completed in 1908 and has a vast frontage.



Our hotel in Ceske Budejovice was the Klika Hotel next to the River Vltava backwater and we wondered if it had been affected by the flooding. Although the rain had at last stopped in this area, the floodwaters off the local hills were still flowing downstream. Outside the hotel sandbags had been placed, with a quickly fillable gap left, just wide enough to let pedestrians and vehicles through. However the threat level had obviously subsided, as a lot of activity early the next morning, Wednesday 18th, was being caused by all the sandbags being removed.



On the way from the old town to the railway station one passes a group of seven statues, called Hu-



manoids. They were made by Michel Trpak in glass and cement in 2006/7 and are about 2m high. They depict "hurrying managers and officials-humanoid-people-machines or tools of the system-The crowd". Nearby is a glass panel engraved 1265, which is when King Ottokar II of Bohemia founded the City of Ceske Budejovice. So, there you have it- today's history and political statement! *(to be continued)*

New 5" Diesel loco—the detailing

by Terry Wood

Doing the detailing of the loco is probably the hardest part of the operation because it entails a lot of changing about to make things look right, the first thing I had to do was make the fluting on the side of the loco to match the ones on the Hornby model this I carried out by cutting squares of 1/4 " plywood and then sawing slots across them to simulate the vents on side of the engine. These I then glued in place using PVA glue after lining them all up. I then did the same for the other side.

Once this was done I started painting the whole body in gloss water based paint due to the fact I was painting inside I didn't want to use any paint that gave off any noxious fumes and this is the same kind of paint you would use for decorating, I used black all round at first as but decided it looked a bit bland so I painted the body grey and left the fluting black which made it look a bit more interesting. I had to put lots of coats of grey on to mask the black paint underneath.

The next problem was to build the cab roof which because it had some sharp curves decided to make out of 1mm sheet metal, it took me about 15 mins to cut the metal and the rest of the day to get it the right shape to follow the rear of the cab roof. Once I had achieved the correct shape it was a matter of drilling the holes to fix it to the cab and then paint it black and bolt it on. The front of the model loco has a gauze grill which looks very similar to the aluminum gauze that motorists used to fill holes in their rusty cars so I went down to Halfords and purchased a sheet of this and cut it to size then glued it to the front leaving space at the top to accommodate a horn

I then decided to make an exhaust pipe using a piece of brass tubing silver soldered to and old metal door handle cover, once cooled down I could then paint the cover and polish the brass tube to make it nice and shiny then used the three holes in the cover the screw it on to the body just in front of the cab windows

The next problem was how to make the inside of the cab look a lot more authentic although the Hornby model doesn't have a dash board I decided to make one using a copy of some diesel loco clocks I found on the internet, printed them out varnished them and glued them on to the cab. I then painted the buffer beams red and ordered some transfers on eBay to make the words DOCK AUTHORITY on the side of the loco just like the ones on the Hornby loco. I will also be putting a number on the side below the cab window when I decide which font and number to use.



The best day of my life

John Billard

I have always been interested in ships and the sea and when I was younger my dad sometimes took me on the daily regular paddle steamer trips down the Thames from Tower Pier to Southend, or even beyond. On this occasion, for a reason I have long forgotten, this adventure was postponed at the last minute to my intense disappointment.

All this however was forgotten a few weeks later when dad announced that as compensation, he was arranging to join a tour around Swindon works the following weekend. I could hardly wait.

When the day came, there we were at Paddington station, Platform 1, about to be taken to Swindon by Castle Class 5042 *Winchester Castle*. To me, this was heaven.

On arrival we had quite a walk to the works entrance which I remember was a subway, complete with ticket office for railway staff. From there we met our guide who took us around various workshops including one making nuts

and bolts and another assembling carriages including new diesel units, as I remember. Finally, after seeing a great furnace making springs we reached the huge erecting shop. My memory reveals two workers carrying a name plate to be fitted on the side of an engine,



and with a polish. I remember seeing one of the last Star class engines in a corner of the shop. I could hardly believe that engines could be so thoroughly dismantled so to just to leave their cab sides and frames and yet emerge complete.

Then we were outside and I said to my dad "There's a Dean Goods!", very much



worse for wear but awaiting attention (for the museum I think). And by the exit to the erecting shop was a Hall class engine freshly painted after overhaul. I recall looking up at the cab, and a nearby worker saying, "Go on, jump up!" and I didn't need a second chance. (*see photo overleaf*).

All too soon our guide said goodbye and it was time to walk back to the station. Once there, I could not believe it, but there was "City of Truro" 4-4-0 at the platform on a short down train. Unplanned but how thrilling! (*overleaf*)

Watching for our return train, in it came behind a very grubby No 5000 *Launceston Castle*. Once aboard we made for the restaurant car where dad treated us to an afternoon tea.

What perfection it was for a 14 year old boy. It was July 1960. Thank you, dad. *Photos Reg Billard*

A VISIT TO THE BELL FOUNDRY IN LOUGHBOROUGH

by John Spokes Part 2



Today, all of Taylors bells are tuned by turning, primarily using a Webster and Bennett 48" Vertical Turning and Boring Machine, although the tuning workshop was equipped with two other similar machines dating back over 100 years. The nameplate on the W&B machine indicates a Coventry origin, however, the company is now located in Oldbury and still sells similar vertical turning and boring machines up to 72" chuck diameter and a range of CNC machines and machine centres of various configurations.

So, we are back to computers and to reinforce this message I have to sadly relate that Taylors bell tuning has a similar ring (groan!) in that a computer is used to determine where and how much



metal has to be turned from the inside surface to obtain that perfect nominal tone and harmonics.



However; all is not lost! The Taylors' works employs many skilled craftsman and apprentices from what appeared to be a relatively young work force. Taylors can provide a complete service of bell manufacture and renovation including items such as the bell head-

stock, the wheel, the clapper and the complete bell frame. The clapper is cast iron, as is typically the headstock, although some are of welded fabrication. The wheel, constructed from eleven pieces of specially shaped wood, is assembled on an adjustable jig. Traditionally, bell wheels are constructed from three different types of wood. The spokes are made from oak,



the sole (the part of the rim on which sits the bell rope) from ash and the shrouds (the sides of the rim which contain the rope) from elm. The bell frames can be constructed or repaired using timber, usually oak, however, Taylors' usual way of creating a new frame is as a welded steel fabricated structure.

During our guided tour the sordid subject of Bitcoin did not arise, as I recollect, but as the production of bells and their accoutrements are heavily skilled labour-intensive activities, then I can imagine the cost of renovating or replacing a peal of bells probably relies largely on some rich benefactor.

As part of the visit there was the opportunity to investigate the company museum, which very proficiently outlined the history and art of bell making, together with some fine examples of the art and craftsmanship of Taylors' skilled work people throughout the years. Bell casting normally takes place on a Thursday, the day after my visit, but unfortunately the visitor's gallery for this event is relatively small and is reserved for those who have some attachment to the bell or bells being cast, probably a sponsor.

I would recommend a visit if you are in the vicinity of *Loogabarooga*, as our American cousins would say, and I point out other nearby attractions, such as the Great Central Railway, operating at a scale of twelve inches to the foot, and Leicester, where was recently buried the remains of Shakespeare's malevolent villain, King Richard III. *Photos courtesy John Spokes*

OUR OPEN DAY— John B reports.

Some time ago we decided to hold an open day but on the basis that it would require the least possible organisation. Therefore, it seemed a good idea to combine it with one of our normal club running days in June. Invitations were duly issued to clubs with the help of the Federation listings.

Although in the end our approaches were quite late, and we had no idea who was going to arrive, we were pleased to have (a) good weather and (b) a nice range of engines arrive from various clubs including Guildford and Fareham and it was also good to see Peter Harrison and family from the sun-

ny East Midlands.

Both tracks were in use together with the link between the raised steaming bays and the ground level, much appreciated. We also had many good comments about the state of our lines complementing us on the smooth quality and level riding. (A different opinion that has been expressed occasionally by some of our own members!)

Our surroundings in the park looked very inviting and pleasant and I'm sure that this is something we will again do in the future. A great thanks to all our members who were there to make it a good day for RSME.



Photos John Billard



**RSME Open Day
14 June 2025**



With thanks also to David
Scott for additional photos



DIARY

JULY 2025

Sunday	6th	Public running	Setting up from 09.30 onwards Running at 11.00
Monday	7th	Trustees meeting	19.30
Saturday	12th	Club running	10.30 onwards
Saturday	26th	Club running	10.30 onwards

AUGUST 2025

Sunday	3rd	Public running	Setting up from 09.30 onwards
Saturday	9th	Club running	10.30 onwards
Monday	11th	Trustees meeting	19.30
Saturday	23rd	Club running	10.30 onwards

Meetings are held every Thursday at 19.30 in the club house.

The Wednesday Warriors do the hard work at the club site from 09.30.

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 August is 20 July

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

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