

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



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Free to members

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The Prospectus

January 2026



Bill Piner's engine at speed with a train of happy people
on the first Santa day, 6 December 2025

Photo Nigel Penford

**FROM THE CHAIR
WOLVERTON PUG RETURNS HOME
SANTA SPECIALS 2025
DIARY**

THE VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

John Billard

Again all good wishes to members for 2026!

The trustees haven't met in December so it has been quiet on that front. The next is on the 12th January. Also I have not been around the site because of my temporary disablement. Thankfully this is improving though this will still be a long job. I have in the last few days been able to get out to the workshop; the first job being to adjust the brakes on my walker!

Looking ahead there are a few improvements that I would really like to see at the club for the new year. The first is a bit of a moan because of the state some members have been leaving in the workshop; tools left on the bench all over the place, empty food containers and drinks cans likewise, machines not cleaned up after use, waste bin overflowing, just for examples. We spent a lot of money and time here completely stripping out the old, new benches, rewiring, installing a nearly new Myford and including plenty of storage bins so this is very disappointing for those who made a big effort to improve it. This facility is for all members to enjoy and the last thing we want to do is put some restrictions in place to keep it all looking good. Please note.

Second, while our public running and Santa days are a major success for the club (and keep the subs down) we are sometimes short of help on the stations and generally assisting the track marshal to keep things running. So do keep the dates in mind and please be there if you can.

Paddington 21 July 1963 A look at the past with 4-6-0 6841 *Marlas Grange* backing on to an RCTS special to Avonmouth and beyond. Notice the smart chaps in their ties and sports jackets. The calmness of the station on a Sunday morning, Luggage being carried and not rolled. And the seated man reading his paper on Platform 1. quite unconcerned.



6841 was built at Swindon in 1937 and was based at Southall at the time of the photo. It was withdrawn from service on 3rd June 1965 and scrapped at Cohens, Morriston.

Photo
John Billard

WOLVERTON PUG GOES TO CZECHIA

Part 6 22nd, 23rd September 2024

On Sunday morning 22nd we started the journey home via a night in Bamberg to sample some of their excellent dark and smoked beers. We caught the 07.57 Kolin to Prague h.l. Head end power consisted of 151-023, these are Skoda locos known as Gorillas. There are 14 of them converted from 150 class and were up-

rated to 160 km/h from 140 between 1996 and 2002. This hauled us to Prague h.l.



From here to Ceska Lipa we had preserved Grumpy no. T478-1215, departing at 09.01. This was followed by a DMU to Usti nad Labem departing at 11.37. then a Regional train from Usti to Cheb. This took us once again through Most,



(see page 3 in Part 5 -October Prospectus) where I managed this time to obtain a photograph of the Coal Railway with two trains of empty wagons way below us. You can just see each set is headed by the rare class 127 1500v DC electric crocodile locomotives built in 1984/85.

Leaving Cheb in a DMU at 15.40 for Hof in Bavaria, we then proceeded into Germany via a route which was closed between As and Selbe Plossberg during the cold war, as it crossed the border from Czechoslovakia into Germany.



This bit was not re-opened until 2015. The whole route, known as the Cheb Oberkotzau Railway, was built as a main line from Cheb running via Frantiskovy Lanz, As and Selbe to Oberkotzau, in the 1860's. The line was originally planned as a direct line from Cheb to Hof, but the plan was changed so that the existing Ludwig South-North Railway (Bamberg-Hof) between Oberkotzau and Hof was shared. We travelled from Cheb via As (pronounced Asch) and Selb-Plossberg to Oberkotzau. Arriving at Hof in time to board another DMU, Adtranz 2-car Regio Swinger no. 612-481 for Bamberg, our destination that day, leaving at 17.36. However due to engineering work it terminated at Lichtenfels, some two thirds of the way to



Bamburg for a transfer to the dreaded “rail replacement bus”.

A very pleasant evening then ensued sampling various dark and smoked beers, for which Bamberg is famed. We found a good brewpub, The Brauerei Special, to have a meal. This was followed by a visit to Fassla Stub'n a jazz dive bar!

Monday 23rd we began the trek back to Blighty, by boarding the 08.27 Siemens Desiro 4-car unit no 1462-545 EMU to Wuerzburg. The two intermediate cars are double deck. A journey of just under one hour. We had a half hour wait here before boarding the 09.55 ICE-3 eight-car with

power cars Nos 403 035 and 403012 to Siegburg/Bonn. Immediately next to the station was a large vineyard climbing up the south facing slope.

The ICE's have a bad reputation for unreliability, exacerbated by generally poor traffic regulation, a situation once totally unheard-of on the German rail network. So it was not long before we were running quite late. Fortunately, Nigel, who did our train-plan had allowed a good margin of nearly two hours at Brussels before our 18.52 Eurostar to London.

We ended up on another late running diverted ICE, which terminated at Cologne Messe Deutz low level. There were no signs as to where to go next. The space was fairly restricted due to work going at this level and parts fenced off. The contents of the ICE were milling around trying to find a route up to the higher-level platforms. This was eventually achieved.

The reason for all this was because, of the four spans of the Hohenzollern Bridge across the Rhine, only two were open due to engineering work. The two that were open allowed one line of the main DB route and one line of the S-Bahn. Standing on the upper platform we could see Cologne Hbf across the river bridge. We waited for the next DB main line train to take us across on the one open main line, wondering whether to cross to the open S-Bahn line.

An ICE pulled in on the adjacent platform. It was not booked to call and the doors did not open! It remained at the red signal. A DB Regional EMU then drew in beside us and after some minutes received a yellow signal. We got on and proceeded across the river into Cologne Hbf. We needed to get a train heading West to or towards Liege and Brussels. From memory the Regional train was due to call at stations on the line to Aachen. However the traincrew had no idea what was going to happen. We sat in Cologne Hbf against a red signal beyond which were a gang of orange clad workmen working on the track on which we stood. Next up an ICE pulled in alongside going to Brussels. It was very full. Fortunately, we still had time in hand. The problem was simply lack of information.

We baled off the Regional train and boarded the ICE. But not having ICE

tickets we left this at Liege to catch one of the regular trains running between Eupen and Brussels. This one was the 15.17 Eupen to Ostend (16.02 from Liege) a Push-Pull set powered by Siemens dual voltage (3000v DC/25kv AC), electric locos. No. 1859+1824 (one each end) of which 96 were built. These were ordered in 2006, but after many delays during testing did not enter traffic until 2011/12. They now work most Intercity and peak services.

We still had enough time for a glass of Belgium beer in a bar outside Brussels Midi station. The bar was decked out in Halloween spectral ghosts, mainly hanging from ceiling. We then crossed the pedestrian piazza, entering Midi station prior to catching the 18.51 Eurostar to St. Pancras, consisting of which arrived in London in good time to catch the 20.33 Kings Cross to Wakefield where I live.

The Eurostar consisted of two of original Three Capitals e300 18-car (2x9) units 3015/16. Similarly, our outward trip was 3230/29. Of the original fleet of 76, class 373s the only remaining e300s are 10 double sets which were refurbished and are retained in the Eurostar fleet. The rest have been replaced by new class 374 Siemens Velaro e320's of which there are 34 sets (2x8 cars), introduced from 2015.

The first e300s to be withdrawn were 7 sets (2x4 car sets 3301-3314), built for north of London services but never used as such. Except a number of these 3301/2, 3303/04 and 3305/06, were loaned to GNER, from 2000 to 2005 whilst their class 91s were being refurbished. They were outshopped in GNER livery and generally worked between Kings Cross and Leeds I believe. Several of the condemned vehicles were broken up at the EMR scrapyard at Kingsbury in Warwickshire.

Many thanks to Wolverton Pug for his detailed and enthralling story of his trip to Czechia. Ed.

SANTA SPECIALS 2025

The RSME Santa Specials were again a great success due to the supreme efforts put in by the group of members who run it. This year it was held on three weekends, five days in all. The weather was not unkind apart from the first day which was wet – but nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of Father Christmas, his helpers and eager children.

This cannot happen without considerable preparation. Tickets which went on sale in September were all sold off in Glastonbury fashion in a few days and that is over 700 of them. With Donald Pickett's help tickets are sold online to provide maximum information. This allows presents to be given which are all gender and age specific. For this to happen a rigorous system of timings registration and queuing has to occur together with planned shift changes for the man in red and his helpers. And then the presents are delivered ready wrapped by the pallet load and deposited in Peter Culham's gar-

age ready for delivery to the site at a time to avoid massive obstruction. By this time Santa's grotto will have been recovered and maintained some weeks before erection on the day. Because of our site surroundings this has to be dismantled at the end of each session and to be put up early on the following morning. All this went well.

Part of the preparation was ensuring that we had engines to pull the trains on both tracks on all occasions although there had to be a last minute re rostering caused by a non availability at short notice.

Also the tea bar had to be well stocked and looked after for all days. We are also grateful to Daniel Reece for putting on a good show with the 00 layout.

One problem we had was insufficient members attending to supervise the loading of trains. This is something that the trustees will have to consider at its January meeting. So every good wish to various members who were there to help undertaking duty times more than were really desirable. Nevertheless all were fortified by our staff canteen operated by Stuart on the first day and Michael thereafter.

Once again we have received many appreciative comments for we do. We stick by the notion that this is the best Santa event for miles around and this was no exception. Thanks to all, particularly Peter Culham without which this would not happen.



Left:

The down
Lapland
Express
arrives.



Right:

Condensed steam
did not help signal
sighting. Chris
Jones on his
“Wild Swan”.



Left:
Ingenuity and effort makes
a wonderful Santa's grotto.
Jenny the elf is
Santa's helper

Below
Nigel's train is loaded with
excitement.

*(Note to photographers:
make sure all subjects are
looking at the camera! Ed)*



Left:
Bill Piner's express laps
once more.

All pictures courtesy
Nogel Penford.

DIARY

JANUARY 2026

4th	Public running	Setting up from 09.30
10th	Club running	10.30 onwards
12th	Trustees meeting	19.30
24th	Club running	10.30 onwards

FEBRUARY 2026

1st	Public running	Setting up from 09.30
7th	Club running	10.30 onwards
9th	Trustees meeting	19.30
21st	Club running	10.30 onwards

Please note that Wednesday Warriors recommence on 7th January and the first Thursday evening meeting will be on 8th January 2026

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

The Wednesday Warriors continue the hard work at the club site from 09.30 Wednesdays unless notified.

A lovely member has kindly sent me some brilliant pictures of the club lunch on 4 December. Somehow they have become lost on my computer. Sorry! If they could be resent I will include them next month.

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 February issue is 20 January

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

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