Dear Member,

Another busy month, particularly with work sessions but we had time to enjoy our annual Christmas lunch. We also look forward to the additional member's running on New Year's Day – a new addition to the calendar. So come along if you are able to and have a winter's run on the tracks!

We started of this month with our annual Christmas lunch. It was nice to see some members who do not always make it to the club as well as our regulars! All who attended brought a dish to share and we had a good balance of savoury and sweets. An enjoyable interlude for all who attended!

Food all laid out ready for the off!

It soon got tucked into!

Aubyn tackling his 'monster' Pavlova!

The track gang have been busy all month on the 'up line' by the Laurels but this photo shows the start of the month with re-laying commencing.

Having recovered an washed all the ballast we could the next job was to bring round fresh ballast from the pile. This was achieved using 'Rufus' and the flat waggon carrying two barrows at a time.

Work on this continued until we had enough to form the track bed.

Levelling of the rest of the formation was carried out by our vice-chairman aided in this photo by Peter Barnett. Well done Tony!

Our chairman Rolf was then busy protecting the levelled bed with new plastic sleepers and together with Don Currie bending the rails where needed.

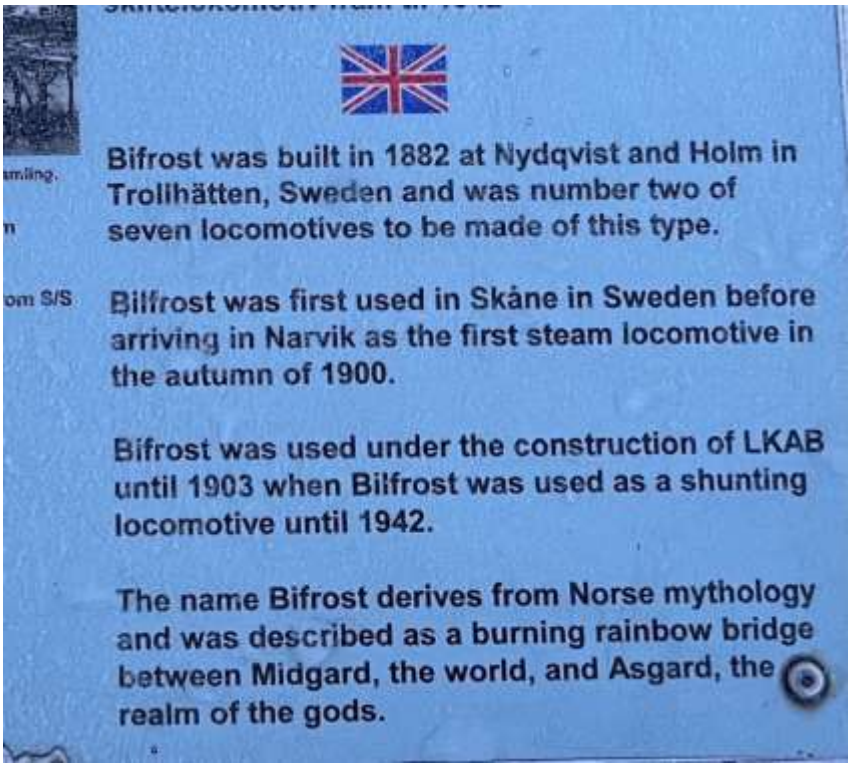
The next session saw Rolf making a start gauging and fixing the second rail down.

Work progressed well so by the Sunday before Christmas a gang of us had been gauging and fixing the second rail down leaving only the final pair of rails to be cut, drilled and fixed to connect up again.

Alain Foote has sent me info from Sweden:

We are on a cruise at the moment, whilst in Narvik, I spotted this strange looking loco. Also had a ride on the Artic train!

Photos: Alain Foote



Our woodworker's have also been busy around the site this time fixing a safety fence by CS2.

Mike Morgan and Tony Shoobridge busy as usual.

Job done!

Mid-month Geoff Broad and his gang had taken up the challenge of finding the elusive water leak at the old station! Good luck Geoff!

The latest from Peter Hill, who has been doing boiler work this month!

The tail end of November and the first few weeks of December saw a bout of flu/bad cold. I had all my jabs but did not feed too bad so spent time in the workshop pressing on with boiler making.

Both 3.5" "Maisie" and 3 cylinder " Roedean" were largely finished with the large wet header and regulator bushes to make and fit. I had to check out the regulator construction and get a body casting to make sure I could get it inside the dome bushes to assemble. An order to Reeves for these, boiler dome bushes, inner domes and round bronze bush bar set this in motion.

Meanwhile I dug out a project Chris and I found in an auction a couple of years ago, a tray of parts for a "Spencer" the tray included boiler flanged plates and drawn tube for a barrel.

This loco was a 3.5" narrow gauge 4-6-0T. The original was a 1917 Hunslet version of the US war dept design for the North French and Belgian trench railways. The same basic loco was built in hundreds by Alco and Baldwin. Many were still running after the war and one has found its way to the Welsh Highland, being recently rebuilt. Chris and I took a shine to it at the 2023 celebrations at Porthmadog. (Even got the tee shirt)

A set of Martin Evans Spencer drawings were swapped for some copper boiler barrel from a club member and the job got on with. I'll build it as a USA version the same as the one at the WHR.

As boiler making was the flavour of the month in my workshop I got on with its boiler. The flanged plates were nicely made and I cut the inner firebox and outer Belpair wrappers out of sheet copper. The outer throat plate needed some work as it had to have an additional reverse flange to fit the barrel.

Photos:
Peter Hill


Photos: Peter Hill

The barrel was soldered to the outside throat plate when shaped, first cleaning and a few rivets to secure in the correct place. Then the outer firebox wrapper was shaped and fastened to the firebox tube and fire hole plates with a few rivets. Then came the firetubes and superheater flues soldered into the firebox tube plate, the smokebox tube plate was slipped on but not soldered to keep the tubes in the right positions

The crown stays were cut from some sheet, bent up, riveted and soldered in place on the firebox.






The front foundation ring piece was riveted to the throat plate and firebox clamped to it while the outer wrapper was adjusted, clamped in position and drilled for the crown stay rivets. A steel bar held in the vice acted as an anvil to peen over the rivets and a pearl picker used to place them to rivet one at a time

Then the smokebox tube plate was soldered in after working all the tubes into their holes.

The whole assembly was then laid upside down on the hearth and the top of the firebox outer silver soldered with copious amount of flux.

This was followed by marking out and drilling for the side, cross and longitudinal stays. The cross stays were fiddly as all the holes had to line up side to side through the existing holes in the crown stays. Pilot holes were drilled to ensure they aligned and moved a bit with a small milling cutter if necessary. When correct they were opened out to the final size (3/16”)

Photos: Peter Hill

Once the stays were in, the backhead had a trial fit and adjusted. Then all soldered up. A fiddly job on the rivet stay heads inside the firebox but used the small oxy propylene burner to get in.

Then came the rest of the foundation ring and the backhead. The foundation ring material was some more reclaimed copper bus bar sawn to size with the Burgess bandsaw and a 24tpi blade. Took ages.

The bronze and gunmetal bushes were turned up and soldered in. Also the top connection for the water gauge fashioned from a gunmetal lump and screwed into the firebox with a bit of 1/4x40 threaded tube before soldering.

Photos: Peter Hill

The next job was turn up the inner dome, wet header and regulator bushes but leave out the shaft holes for the moment (act as blanking plates for the pressure test)

All boltholes were drilled tapping size using the rotary table and Chuck on the vertical miller. This got the holes very precise. Once marked off, the soldered bushes were also drilled using the covers as templates. Once done the covers were opened to clearance size.

I used a very useful hand tapping machine I made a few years ago. This is very sturdy and enables the dome bushes to be tapped easily, square and not leave any tap behind.

This boiler is now just about ready for pressure testing.

The tapping machine

The very heavy base is made from a series of 10mm plates screwed together to form “T” slots like a milling table. The column a length of 28mm round bar, base threaded for a cap screw and “T” nut.

Photos: Peter Hill

The arm a piece of 38x25 BMS. The quill I cannot remember but think just a ½” rod to take a Jacobs Chuck and T bar. Plus a couple of clamps.. I also added a spring to take the weight for very small taps.

Martins Vertical Boiler

After it's first assembly burn up last month, it was pickled and inspected, and a pressure test with an airline and sink full of water. Lots of bubbles from everywhere it seemed. Martin number punched each of the 20x rows of pipes each with two pipe and two main barrel joints, totalling 80x soldered joints. This was to aid identification, (they all look the same!), and Martin started logging the air leaks. Some were not soldered at all, others just needed the solder reflowing. The errant joints were fluxed up and I took it home to use the small oxy propylene torch. This enabled getting in between the fittings more easily.

After a day in the pickle, the boiler was cleaned up and all the suspect joints checked against Martins list to ensure all should now be sound.

Photos: Peter Hill

While copper bashing I got out the partially finished 5" LBSC Pansy boiler and decided to get that completed to use in the 2-6-0 tender loco that started out in 1972 as a second Simplex. I was disappointed at the standard Simplex lack of steam on a continuous track. So much so the first one is not quite finished even now. The Pansy boiler is a different prospect altogether, with twice as many tubes and a four element superheater, let

alone a much bigger grate. . Virtually the same design as the 3.5” Spencer and built the same way but more than twice the size.

5” and 3.5” inner domes!

More next month.

Photos: Peter Hill

The Sunday after Christmas saw a few of the track gang busy on the final re-connection. Rails were cut to length and drilled then the final section had sleepers spaced and fixed in place. Don Currie is seen fixing the last rail in place.

Today saw more progress with final alignment and top ballasting of the track.

Although a cold start the track gang were able to complete the track re-alignment. This means that the whole ground level track will be available for **member's running tomorrow!**

Please note that there is a speed restriction of 4 mph over the re-laid section until it is bedded in. Also OLD STATION the route is set for platform 1 as the water leak investigation has undermined the track on platforms 2 & 3 – please use platform 1 route only.

Now a brief lookback at 2025 at all the jobs we did:

Track Gang

Ballast washing

Track re-laying

Completed job

Geoff Broad's team

The work carried out around the Rainsbrook Building to provide seating area for visitors

Track Gang

The re-laying of platform 1 at the old station

Mike Morgan's team

The re-purposing of palling fencing from elsewhere on site to enclose the area around the new building

Mike Morgan's Team

Photos: Ben Morgan

Replacement of CS2 roof

Aubyn Mee and helpers

Photos:
Aubyn Mee

The commencement of the work on the new steaming bays for the raised track.

Ben Culling's team

Photos: Ben Culling

The finishing of the Cutting bridge

STOP PRESS:

We have just heard that RMES Life Member **David Eadon** has been awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for his services to the community. Congratulations David!

David is shown being interviewed many years ago by the BBC concerning the work he does for the Wroth Silver Ceremony.

This will be my final newsletter, as at my request, the editorship is moving to Ben & Dawn Culling from next month. This makes perfect sense, as they are kindly taking on the marketing of 'Rainsbrook Valley Railway' for us. This will see coordinated external communications with the public; whilst the newsletter will continue to be the internal communication with members.

I thank all the regular contributors for their participation over the past nine years and hope that they will support the new editors; I will certainly try to! So if you have anything of interest associated with engineering, model engineering, railways or steam in general please support the newsletter and share this with the membership. To help with this a new email has been set up for you to send photos and articles for publication – newsletter@rugbymes.co.uk

I'll leave you with the photo of the frost on the trees first thing this morning!

Note: All photos by the author unless otherwise credited.

Howard Brewer (Secretary)
31 December 2025