

Dear Member,

Welcome to our Bumper April Newsletter!

What a lovely month at RMES! It has been great to be back with our two first Public Ride Days of 2026.

Our Easter Sunday public opening was a real treat and the perfect way to blow away those winter cobwebs. Both sessions were fully booked, with families enjoying the sunshine, the trains, and of course the Easter trail. The children especially loved hunting for clues – and the chocolate bunny waiting for them at the end. A big thank you to **Mike** for organising everything so brilliantly – including our beautiful new “locos running today” boards!

Our second Public Ride Day on **26th April** brought even more smiles, with visitors enjoying a sunny, cheerful day around the site, see pictures of these events on **p12 & 13**.

This month there has also been plenty happening behind the scenes at RMES. Updates from around the site can be found **p4 - 8**. We also have a lovely article from Steve Bouchard on **p25 - 28** and our regular contributions from Peter Hill (**p14 - 20**) and Howard’s archive (**p21 - 24**).

Regular features can also be found:

“**Chairman’s Line**” – an update from Rolf on club plans (**p2 & 3**).

“**Whistle Stop**” – this month our quick-fire Q&A is with committee member Phil Hart (**p29 & 30**).

“**Notices**” – Please take the time to read through our important notices for this month too (**p32 & 33**).



With brighter days, beautiful bluebells and everyone’s hard work, the RMES site is looking stunning at the moment.

Photo Credit: Millie Culling

Chairman's Line

The storage roads inside the new container carriage shed for the ground level track have been installed and several alternate ways of connecting them to the spur from the main line have been investigated, all designed around the concept of symmetrical lift-out sections to avoid having to construct a potentially complicated fixed three-way point.

Our 300 series carriages, the stock to be stored in this new facility, did not, however, want to cooperate with us on this idea, finding the compound curve radii too tight.

Step forward member John Wildblood with his sectional portable track pieces! Using these it was possible to demonstrate a potential solution with 50 ft radii which the 300 series carriages can accommodate. The downside, however, is that we will, in the end, have to construct a new fixed point, but of the left-hand tandem variety.

As this is new territory for us we have enlisted the help of AI and now have a 22 page detailed design and construction guide for our specific requirement.

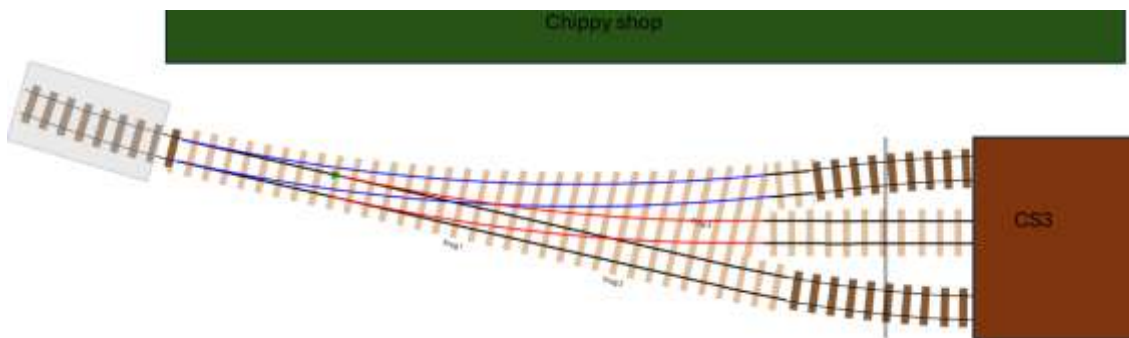


Diagram to show connection from the main line



Another new arrival on site is a 1 tonne mini excavator which will be a key player in the track renewal programme which should get under way later in the season. This machine is small enough to reach all areas of the ground level track formation, unlike its larger cousin which has been available to undertake excavation work at the club for several years now thanks to the generosity of a member. The new machine is on site under a similar arrangement.

Rolf

Photo Credit: Rolf Thomas

Track update summary

Photo credits in this section: Howard Brewer



Track gang sorting out a "hump" in the track by the 5" container. Good use was also made to check track with our roiling Track Gauge.



Geoff Broad and his team making a start on the Ballast Washing plant near the cutting. With the Footings now excavated and ready to receive concrete.

The track gang were diverted to complete all the shuttering for the next delivery of concrete on the new Raised Track Steaming Bays. Shuttering now all in place ready for "the big pour"!



Ballast washing update in more detail

This month the team have been busy making great progress on Ballast washing plant.



The Ballast Washing Plant footings ready for concrete – Pete, John & John Geoff and Bernard in attendance.



John Powell delivering concrete for the footings by rail on 22nd April.

Photo Credits on this page: Peter Featherstone

Update from Alain Foote

John Lewis and Alain Foote have been busy at work tidying up near the old clubhouse — sweeping the steaming bay area, clearing the hard standing inside the gate, and trimming back the brambles to keep the grounds looking smart and welcoming.



Photo Credits on this page: Alain Foote

High track traverser update in more detail

This month the focus has been on creating the new off/on line that will go to the new steaming bays. Wednesday 29th saw "the big pour" to lay the concrete in the new bays.

All photos in this section credited to Aubyn Mee and Howard Brewer





The post bases were concreted in the ground ready for the track support posts.

The team working on concrete delivery aka "the big pour"



Engineering Update

Photo Credits in this section: Kathryn Derby and Ed Parrott

April has been busy ensuring the locos are in tip top condition for our Public Ride Days, here is a picture round-up of what's been going on...



John firing up The Princess ready for her steam test.



Logan cleaning the boiler tubes in The Garratt, prepping for Public Running.



Logan topping up the lubricant in The Garratt.



Skye and Erica doing a fantastic job, cleaning The Garratt in preparation for the first public Ride Day.



Pipework being reconnected on The Shay



Connor teaching Logan how to anneal pipework so that it can be shaped, and then reconnected to The Shay.



John working on new pipework connectors to the injectors on The Royal Scot. This work will mean that future service work on the injectors will be more accessible and less time consuming.



Phil and Martin busy in the workshop. Phil is working on the upgrades to the carriage bogeys. 10 down, 3 to go!!



Work and discussions continuing on The Shay – dodging the showers in the shed! The reverser was refitted, boiler valves taken out and cleaned up, pipework reworked and refitted.



John annealing pipework for the Royal Scot.

April Public Ride Days

There were lots of lovely smiles at our Public Ride days on Easter Sunday and April 26th as the photos below show. Thanks so much to all the volunteers who helped to make these afternoons possible. One lovely Facebook comment said: "Had a fantastic time, grandson loved it. Very well organised. Highly recommend a visit 😊"

Photo credits in this section: Millie Culling and Steven Byatt





Scribblings for April 2026

By Peter Hill (including all photo credits)

The weather has improved and so we can get on with outside work, meaning time in the workshop is limited to repairing stuff.

When we were putting in the FWD of our house we had to dig down 9ft to reach Severn Trent's public sewer. Backfilling was in layers rammed down but a section of the front/side block paved path has since sunk up to 120mm in places. This took a week on the knees to dig up level out and relay the blocks on dry mix. Looks so much better, maybe should have done it sooner. There's anti crack steel in the concrete edge retaining strip, so had to relay the paving blocks exactly as they were before. More concrete was cast on top of the strip to get it level for a guide., rawlplugs and big-headed screws tied the new layer to the old before casting the fresh concrete



The next job was to renew the downstairs cloak room, forming a walk-in shower, a new hand basin with storage and an easy clean loo. The limestone slabs that were originally put on the floor had to be partially dug up to provide a sloping floor within the shower area.

The original shower was a cabinet type put in so we could live in the house as we finished building it.

However, we decided to future proof it with easy to clean porcelain floor and wall tiles, storage and a walk-in shower we can put a chair in.



One of the problems was that the slot drain bottle trap was over the sewer pipe, so some sideways digging with the Kango was needed but there are floor heating pipes in the concrete to be avoided at all costs.



However, we finally got it in at the correct levels and fall, then filled round with wettish dry mix tamped down.

Ready for self-levelling screed next, although on a slight drainage slope!

Enough on' my knees' work for a few days!

Signals

The Public Running session showed up some signalling problems, but plentiful use of the red signal reset gizmos ensured smooth running

Ground level 7.25"

Afterwards we identified a number of connections with rusty nuts and washers. Also 24/12v inverters outputs low. After a Saturday session John and I had them all sorted.

In the 7.25" signal box there is an additional track signalling switch for signal 4. Two positions, position one to the left on yellow/red. This isolates the old station for those wanting to stop there on club days,

Position 2 towards the right for trains running through the station on green/yellow/red during Public Running.

The gold resistor hanging out is temporary. Will be screwed up soon. May be hot!



The raised track.

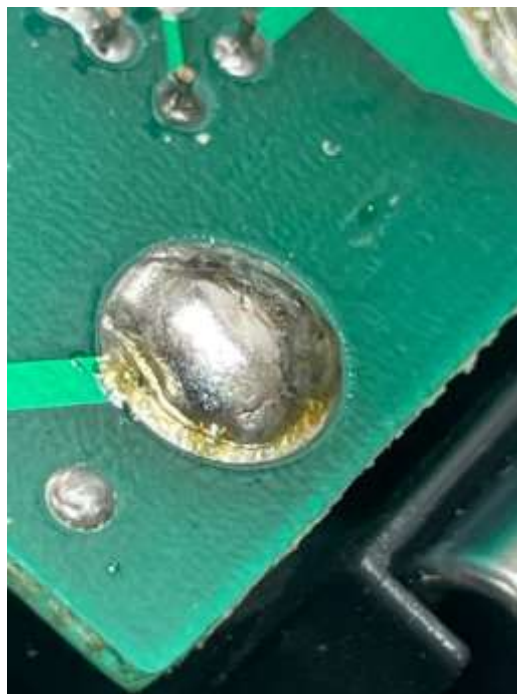
This showed incorrect sequencing around the 5" container section. We have now found one dead head and one with a low 24/12 inverter, these have now been temporarily replaced with ground level track spares while they are repaired. Also, one insulated joint was shorting to the next rail. This was quickly fixed running a thin grinder cutting disc through the rail joint, then re fixing the insulating tufnol fishplates. All now seems to work ok.

Rolf has handed me a bag of signal post number discs, so we will be fitting them in due course. Start at no.50 by the new station

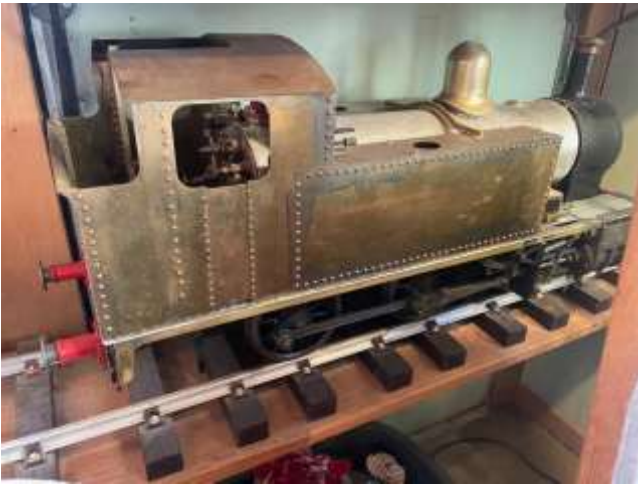
3.15mm drills and M4 spiral taps on order.

More repairs.

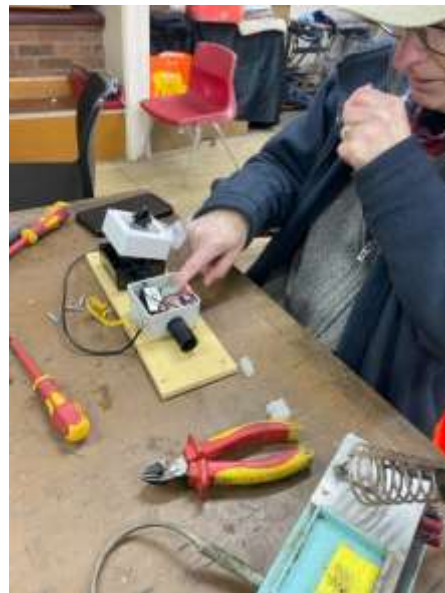
Before getting on with the signal fault diagnosis I had to repair my meter. I bought it in the 1980's so it doesn't owe me anything, but I had a go anyway. The intermittent lead connection was found to be a poor soldered joint where the plug receptacle is fastened to the circuit board. Reflowing some fresh solder over it and the three others cured the problem. Soldiers on for a bit longer.



I started the Simplex in 1972 when I bought a new Myford S7, so I ought to get on with it. The silver insulation is metallised glass fibre blanket used for turbo insulation. Good for 500C and can be cut and glued in place.



I have also enjoyed taking a few snaps when I have been on site, here is my round up from the month!





From the Archives: A Lookback to Spring 2016

There was lots of activity on site. Firstly, the traverser installation:



Walling going in around the traverser pit overseen by Aubyn, Tony and Geoff.



Temporary track going in so carriages can move in and out over the pit.



Aubyn and Edward make a start on the fabric of the traverser.



Bottom tracks in for the traverser to run on.



The main structure of the moving base completed.

The Track Gang were also very busy:



Loading the ballast truck from the Dumper - at this point we were working on the inner loop of the extension.



The motorised bogie on the truck (courtesy of Mike Williams) which powered the truck around the track



Ballast was being used on the diamond crossing on the 'short route'.



Getting ready to install another point into the main line.



Point installed - but at this stage they were not powered.



Our point builders Bob Smith and the Late Maurice Everton busy on another turnout.

Carriage building:



CS2 was used to build new carriages and had a long bench for assembling bogies.



Geoff Broad and Tony Shoobridge busy on this work.



CS2 was also used by the woodworkers to fabricate the wooden top and ends of the carriages (the late Brian Walton is working on an end panel).



Geoff Broad is putting the finishing touches to carriage 302 using numbering transfers.

The new station was underway:



Weed suppressant is placed over the excavated area in readiness for work on the platforms.



Tony McGeechan and Geoff Broad are just doing final tidying up having laid the whole area - we used a lot of blocks and bricks to hold the suppressant down as can be seen.

All photo credits in this article: Howard Brewer

From the members – something slightly different from Steve Bouchard

Hi folks! - Alex and I are now less able to attend at Rainsbrook anything like we used to. To make amends, I would like occasionally to contribute potential items of interest for inclusion in your RMES newsletter. I've started in a big way!

My offering relates to a six year voluntary stint in aircraft restoration/preservation, starting 33 years ago. At Cranfield airport, two decommissioned Mk.T5 English Electric/BAC Lightning jets were saved after standing for seven years in the scrap line. They were purchased (at scrap value) by a family friend, hence the chance of a lifetime to be invited to join a small team of avgas-heads! At Cranfield presently, is the second example that we worked on, Serial Number XS458. The first one, XS452, was sold in the late 90's to 'Thunder City' in Cape Town S.A. where it once again took to the sky. The twin seated aircraft were methodically worked upon until all systems were once again fully functioning. The first job was the removal of the ejection seat and cockpit canopy explosive cartridges; the 2 seats, plus the canopy had a total of 11 cartridges. We borrowed an RAF technician to safely do that for us.

Our eldest lad Scott became the team's junior member at the age of eleven. Several years of experience with gas turbines and their control systems set him on course to a career with Rolls Royce Energy, now Siemens Energy. In between times, he refurbished an old Astra GTE, and took this iconic photograph. Happy days!



I must say that the trend at RMES, of parents attending with their youngsters, is a pleasure to witness. As we have seen, such early experience can turn engineering as a hobby into an enjoyable career.

As with our lad, also it is the social interaction with older team members that gives greater self confidence when venturing out into the workplace/big wide world.

The link below explains the reason that I couldn't attend the RMES Christmas buffet - that Saturday clashed with the 60th anniversary celebration of XS458's first flight.

As part of the original team, Scott and I were invited to attend the anniversary event by the current operators. It had been many years since I had been to Cranfield, so it was quite a thrill to clamber over the old bird once again. The picture below of Scott and myself sat in the 'bang' seats says it all!



This aircraft is unique in Britain, in that it is the only twin seat version left in ground running condition. The Civil Aviation Authority will not allow such an old and complex Mach 2(+) machine to fly.

In earlier days of the project, occasionally we'd have a pilot come along to give the plane a blast (with full reheat engaged) down the runway. 0-100 mph in ~4.5 seconds, burning 14 gallons of fuel per second, producing 32,000 lbs of thrust - *Wow : the noise !* Having 2 seats, one of our team, or a guest, would join the pilot in the 'office'. We threw the required switches then pressed the engine start buttons, taxied out, experienced the reheat kick in the back, then were given the responsibility of pulling the brake chute handle at the right time! It all happened so fast. Despite the brake parachute, slowing the 15 ton beast from 100+ mph took it's toll on the wheel brakes and tyres, especially on the relatively short Cranfield main runway. These runs depended on the serviceability of the aircraft, the availability of ex. Lightning pilots, spare parts, and by no means least, how much kerosene our leader could afford!

Regarding the noise, a lady in Newport Pagnell (around 5 miles away) rang the airport to complain! Luckily, the management loved these runs, as all that they normally saw all day long were Cessna 152s, and if *very* lucky, a Cessna 182!

The anniversary day was advertised as a photo shoot session for a limited number of lucky applicants. One of these was a guy associated with the 'Corgi' toys company. He runs a web site, to which he added his images of that day, along with an extensive and really interesting write-up with facts and history, regarding the jet. Click on this link :

<https://uk.corgi.co.uk/community/blog-and-news/aerodrome/rare-lightning-t5-marks-anniversary-cranfield>

Way back on my first day with the project, I was handed a torch. "But it's daylight" I said. "Not in there" said the boss. I was promptly sent 'down the bullet', as demonstrated more recently by Scott below. Of course, when I had (after a struggle) succeeded in squeezing past the radar housing (a.k.a. the "bullet"), I was down to my vest and was *many* kilos lighter! The brief was to crawl along the air inlet ducts to manually turn the two engines, before attempting to run them on another occasion. With that test successfully accomplished, I then had to get out. Once I had managed to turn round, either I had expanded, or the bullet had! The annular gap is only around 9", so when the rib cage got stuck, two colleagues grabbed my pleading hands, gave a great tug, and out I popped. There's not many civvy folk been down there! Legend has it, that when an engineer had to go inside, they very wisely removed and pocketed the 2 fuses from the engine start equipment.



This next link is to Scott's web site. Over many years, various engineering and electrical projects have been added. One of the Lightning videos therein shows what it is like down the air intakes . . . please excuse the darkness! Scott had squeezed in through a small hatch in the bottom of the fuselage, in front of the lower RR 'Avon' engine. There was enough light there to allow removal of the starter from the front of the engine. The fuselage's front annular air inlet blanking disc was still in place. That is why it was so dark inside. With only his phone light, Scott decided to record the 'great crawl' experience. The bottom engine face is approximately 16 feet back from the fuselage front, with the top engine a further 7 or so feet behind. Click on this link :

<https://scottbouch.com/xs458-preservation.htm>

See the last video 'Exploring the air intakes' which plays the film described above. If you've never been in there before, never mind, Scott gives a fairly informed narrative. Turn it up, watch it again!

Now: Forget all that tame Lightning stuff, **this** is much more thrilling! In the 'Articles' section, select 'Jet Lawnmower'. But before watching, bear in mind that what you will see took place in a back garden in a quiet cul-de-sac, in the sleepy village of Sharnford. I was hoping to tell you it was on a peaceful Sunday afternoon, but alas, according to AI copilot, it was a Friday. The Steve in the film isn't me! He unfortunately is no longer with us.

This is all just a taste of what was achieved, basically by self-taught enthusiasts. The crew worked on all manner of tasks, from 9 'til 5 every Saturday all year round, in all weathers! There is a new generation carrying on with what we started. Students from the on-site Aerospace and Aeronautics University are happily invited to gain hands-on experience.

This unique project is still very much alive and further updating (*if you can stand any more*) is to be found on : Lightning T5 Facebook Group. Click on this link : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/165442950141967/posts/26175546022038304/>

"Low on fuel now . . . 458 Out"

All photo credits in this article: Steve Bouchard

The Whistle Stop: A monthly Q&A with one of our members

This month the tough questions are posed to committee member Phil Hart.

Tell us about your professional background.

50 years in the construction industry and two years owning a narrow gauge steam railway.

How did you first get into model railway engineering?

Never really been into Railways, my passion is race cars!

When did you join RMES?

2022

What do you enjoy most about being part of the society

A chance to give something back for free and a chance to meet up with people who have similar interests.

What RMES activities are you known for?

Station Control, Guarding and taking ownership of the landscaping along with Greg Winton.

What has been your favourite locomotive experience?

SEND days are the most joyful.

What is your preferred gauge?

Two foot.

Do you have any hobbies or clubs outside RMES?

Yes restoration of classic and racing cars and racing them.

Tell us about last Heritage Railway that you visited

Statfold Barn, lots of great exhibits but the track is a bit short for two foot

Please tell us one thing about you that no-one at RMES would know

I'm not a railway enthusiast!



August 2020, 3rd place in race one and a win in race two 😊

"I took 1st place on the last corner of the race, the car still has the scrape down the side where I made my way past the leader!!"

Phil has been racing since his mid-twenties, with the early days in karts and then various single seater and sports racing cars. In addition, he has rebuilt around twenty race cars in the past 25 years returning lost or unloved vehicles to the track.



"That's me ploughing through the gravel at Croft (near Darlington) in my Clubmans formula car."



Brands Hatch in 2020. First time out in a car I built from a bag of bits that was in someone's shed for about 20 years, a 1971 Mallock 11B formula ford 1600.

Photo credits in this article: Phil Hart

Notices and Updates

Help needed to support our online activities

Please don't forget to share the QR codes below to get friends and family to review us.



Public Ride Day Tickets

Tell your family and friends, tickets are available for the Public Ride days in May and June.

Sessions can be booked quickly and easily by following the QR code below, which will take you straight to our ticket page.



Defibrillator Appeal Update

We are now over half-way to our defibrillator appeal target

Thanks to everyone's kind donations, we are now over half-way to our defibrillator appeal target. We just need a final push to reach our fundraising goal which will allow us to install a lifesaving Defibrillator on site.

If you're able to support this important project, your donation will help us protect the people who make our railway such a special place.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/rainsbrook-valley-railway-defibrillator-appeal>

Thank you for your generosity and continued support

Party bookings

There have already been a number of parties at RVR this year with everyone having a lovely time. Thanks so much to the whole team for making these days so special. We still have some spaces throughout the summer, so if you know anyone (family, friends or groups) who might like to come and join us for a fun afternoon celebrating something special, please do ask them to get in touch with Sandra.



Photo credit: Gill Nelson

Dates for your diary

Saturday 2nd May (pm) – Children’s party, please let Sandra know if you can help

Sunday 3rd May – Member’s running

Saturday 9th May (pm) – Children’s party, please let Sandra know if you can help

Sunday 17th May (pm) - Public Ride Day, help needed, please email rmes.sec@hotmail.co.uk if you can join us

Wednesday 27th May (pm) - Public Ride Day, help needed, please email rmes.sec@hotmail.co.uk if you can join us

GWR 15xx Build notes

A colleague of Peter Featherstone is building his first 5" loco, a GWR 15xx, from a Kingscale kit. He is producing detail step by step notes throughout the build and these can be made available to any member of may be interested. Please get in touch via newsletter@rugbymes.co.uk if you would like a copy.

That’s all for April

It’s great to be able to share everyone’s stories and anecdotes, so if you have something to share from a holiday, visit or from your own projects please get in touch. We are very happy to help with writing up to a final article. Please send contributions over by 20.05.26 to newsletter@rugbymes.co.uk.

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed to create this month’s newsletter, we hope you enjoy the read!

Edited by Dawn Culling
(30.04.2026)

Note: All photos by the author unless otherwise credited.