

Dear Member,

Welcome to a bumper February newsletter!

The weather may have been a bit grey, but behind the scenes at RMES there's been plenty of energy at work as we gear up for the new running season.

This month's newsletter is a jam-packed edition featuring updates from around the club including track **(p4 & 5)**, engineering **(p6 – 10)** carriage maintenance **(p11)** with great contributions from Alain Foote **(p12)** and Peter Hill **(p19 – 25)**.

We've also introduced a few new regular features we hope you like, including:

"Chairman's Line" – an update from Rolf on club plans **(p2)**.

"From the Archive" – do you remember these RMES events from Winter 2016? We're grateful to Howard, who has delved into the newsletter archives to bring us a glimpse of life at the railway back in February 2016. It's a lovely reminder of how far we've come and how much we continue to grow. **(p26 – 28)**.

"Whistle Stop" – our quick-fire Q&A to get to know a different RMES member a little better each month. We're kicking things off with our first "volunteer" Rolf... but don't be surprised if we come knocking on your door soon! **(p29 - 30)**.

"Notices" – Please take the time to read through our important notices for this month too **(p31 & 32)**.



Even in the gloomiest days there are sparks of life at the railway! The snowdrops have been beautiful around the track this month. If you have any photos or stories you'd like to share, please contact us with the details at the newsletter.

Photo Credit: Millie Culling

Chairman's Line

By the time you read this we will have made our initial presentation of the Rugby Testing Station project to our Rugby Borough Dunsmore Ward Councillors, scheduled for the 21st February. In the lead up to the event regular volunteers and visitors to site may have noticed some general tidying up has occurred, most particularly the rounding up of the stackable plastic chairs that have littered the place (I am sure they breed when we are not looking) and the plastic cones that have made the driveways look more like a bad day on the M6!

Additional ground level track temporary rail connected storage should also be arriving very soon in the shape of another 40ft container to go alongside our existing ones. We will be storing carriages in them to free up space in CS2 for workshop activities and potentially more room for members to store their locos.

We are currently exploring ways to make more rapid progress on our ground level track renewal programme. Members may know that we need to replace the rapidly rotting softwood sleepers on the main line with recycled plastic ones but if we maintain our current methods it will take 30 years to complete this work! Watch this space!

If it ever stops raining Aubyn will be able to progress the new raised track steaming bays which require a bit more excavation and the relocation of the current spoil heap. Thanks to everyone for their continued efforts.

Rolf



Councillors visiting RMES. An update on the project will be given at the AGM.

Photo credit: Mike Morgan

Help Us Bring a Lifesaving Defibrillator to our Railway

Each year, thousands of people experience cardiac arrest outside of a hospital, and sadly fewer than 10% survive. But when an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is available and used within the first few minutes, survival rates can soar to around 70%. Quick access truly saves lives.

At our miniature railway, we're powered by a wonderful team of volunteers—many of whom fall into the highest-risk group for cardiac arrest: men aged 65 and over. Alongside them, we welcome hundreds of visitors of all ages during our Public Ride Days and special events. Keeping everyone safe is at the heart of what we do.

Our Goal

We're raising £2,500 to purchase and install a publicly accessible defibrillator along with a heated, all-weather cabinet. This will ensure the device is always rescue-ready for anyone on site—volunteers, visitors, and the wider community.

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

Track update

Howard has been capturing this month's progress by the Track Gang. February has seen a continuation of their work on the steaming bay feeder siding at the end of last month and the beginning of this completing the job early in February.

Photo credits in this section: Howard Brewer



Rolf was busy with the ballast washer supported by the rest of the gang.

Don Curry was also taking a stint with the washer so it all progressed well.



Tony McGeechan did the ballast leveling ready for the track re-laying.



Sleepers in place to protect the levelled bed.

The whole gang were then involved in the final fixing of sleepers to rail.



Top ballasting and final levelling soon sorted by the gang - Job Done!

Engineering Update

All Photo Credits: Kathryn Derby and Ed Parrott

The engineering team have had a busy February preparing for the new running season. Work is continuing apace on The Shay which is coming together nicely. The focus in March is to be ready for getting back on the tracks!



Logan and John starting to descale the boiler.



Peter checking and repairing the signals.



Kathryn painting visible sections of the boiler.



John fitting steam operated drain cover to Royal Scot.



Dave machining a valve for the steam operated drain cocks.



Ed making parts for The Garrett



Martin making Baldwin frame extensions.



The Shay starting to get put back together and resemble a loco again!



Many hands make light work!



Logan, Phil and John craning and fixing the boiler back into the chassis.



George working on a repair to part of the vacuum brake system



Conor lighting a fire to assist the descaling of the boiler



Carriage Maintenance

Last week we were excited to take delivery of the new storage container. It was a fine morning, and we were pleased that everything ran smoothly as you can see below.



Setting up ready for the lift.

Photo credit: Howard Brewer



Look, single handed!

Photo credit: Howard Brewer



Nearly there, best get it square!

Photo credit: Howard Brewer



RMES Base – the container has landed!

Photo credit: Howard Brewer



Looking good in its new home!

Photo credit: Tony McGeechan

An update from Alain

Alain has been very busy working on trimming the base of the lime trees in the avenue to try to make them neater and provide better access for the lawn mowing. He commented "It's a bit of a slow job so any help would be appreciated as it needs to be done in the next few weeks". If you can help Alain out at all, please get in touch.



Before

Photo credits: Alain Foote



After - looking smart ready for the new season.

Alain has also been making progress on his new 7 1/4" gauge loco which is a model of "Liassic". This is one of the Peckett saddle tanks that operated at Southam Cement Works.



Photo credits: Alain Foote



An image of Liassic taken at Statfold after its restoration

Scribblings February 2026 by Peter Hill

This month opened with mending stuff. My trusty SIP compressor I had about 25 years ago, was not really running well. I bought it to primarily run a bead blaster that I used to clean classic car parts. The biggest compressor I could plug into a 13A socket. Twin cylinder, big tank and a cap start cap run 3hp motor. After some 18 years use and now, after moving, a few years stored in a container, it was blowing little air and finally now ran continuously with hardly a puff available

I had earlier changed the auto shut off switch but to no avail. So, after a few months hesitating, I finally took the head off to look and see what the problem was. Not being able to test run the big 5" NG Hunslet Penrhyndeudraeth on air was the trigger.



I found the blue head gasket had been blowing from the inlet to the compressed air side. It had disintegrated and sooty evidence shows that it had been doing so for some time.

I cleaned the remainder off and put a straight edge on it to discover it had warped.

I checked eBay and could get a new head for about £65, but I would have to make a gasket. The old one was quite thick and was wire reinforced.

I also discovered I could get a completely new twin cylinder compressor unit complete for about £85. Scores in the cylinder bores and silver paint coloured oil in the sump suggested this was the best option.

It looked identical in the advert but of course turns out it was not. New mounting holes were drilled and the pressure pipe to the tank was lengthened. I let in a 3" piece of copper pipe as the original had nice bell ends.

The belt guard mountings on the new pump were different so had to improvise with a few jumbo zip ties. So now all fixed and running. However, the pump is 1" taller and won't now go neatly out of the way under the workshop pallet shelving

Now to air run some locos on rolling roads, and plenty of oomph for air tools.



Repair job no2

While twisting up the drill vise to drill a small piece of brass angle the handle came off. It had fallen on the concrete floor numerous times in the past, but this proved to be the last straw!



The sintered "Oolite" bronze nut casting had disintegrated at the end of the square ACME thread shearing off at its thinnest part. You cannot weld/solder this oily stuff. Instead, I



extracted the remains of the nut/thrust bearing out of the vise and machined its diameter down to enable a length of thick wall brass tubing to be loctited/pressed over

it. I bored out the handle to fit the OD of this tubing. The original handle grub screws secured it in place. Job done working

Should have been made like this in the first place!



Repair job no3

The next repair job was a small gas fired model boat steam plant. It looked a bit peculiar with a twin barrel brass soft soldered boiler, and I guess basically assembled with some commercial parts.

The single cylinder oscillating engine was in bits. Again, I think a commercial piston/cylinder unit and shed made engine chassis. This was brought down by a neighbour who dabbles in such things but has no workshop.

Looking at it, I guess attempts at soft soldering the steam and exhaust pipework into the cylinder block had overheated everything, resulting in the whole lot becoming unsoldered.

I stripped it and finished the brass chassis components to get rid of any lead contamination. I resoldered using silver solder, keeping the crankshaft bearing holes aligned.



Before re soft soldering the port faces back on I drilled the pipe holes out in the engine chassis and tapped them 5BA, I could then screw in threaded 1/8" inlet and exhaust pipes instead of soldering.

I trued up the flywheel in the lathe, but the screw boss fell off it also being soft soldered on. I resoldered it with silver solder after cleaning all the lead solder off.

It really went well on compressed air, but it needed a blow lamp to raise steam as my Butane filler nozzle would not fit the gas tank so could not use its own burner.



3.5" LNER A4

Then it was back to making the 3.5" gauge A4 boiler. I had got the combustion chamber wrapper soldered up, and with its tube plate temporarily pressed in place started drilling for the $\frac{3}{4}$ " vertical cross water tubes.

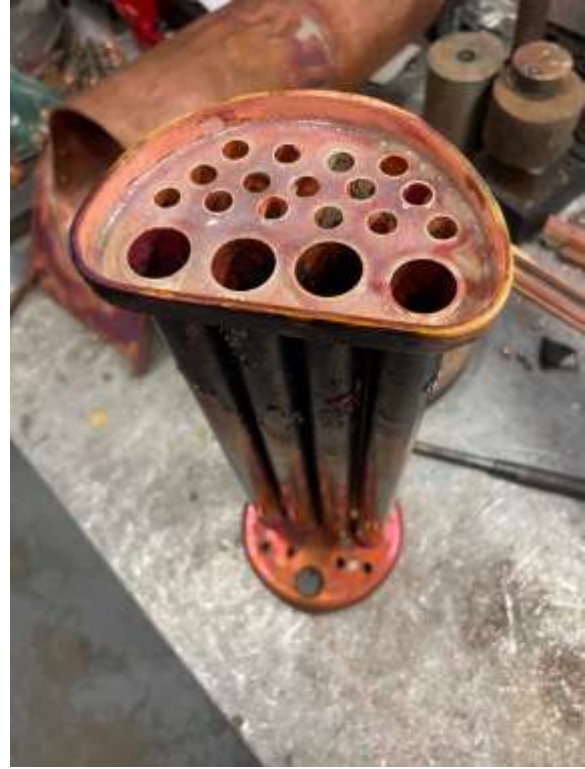
Carefully marking out I drilled six 3mm pilot holes, then, opening them to $\frac{5}{8}$ " with a step drill.

I sorted out several hand reamers that could take them out to $\frac{3}{4}$ " at the required angle.

The tubes could then be gently tapped in the holes after chamfering.



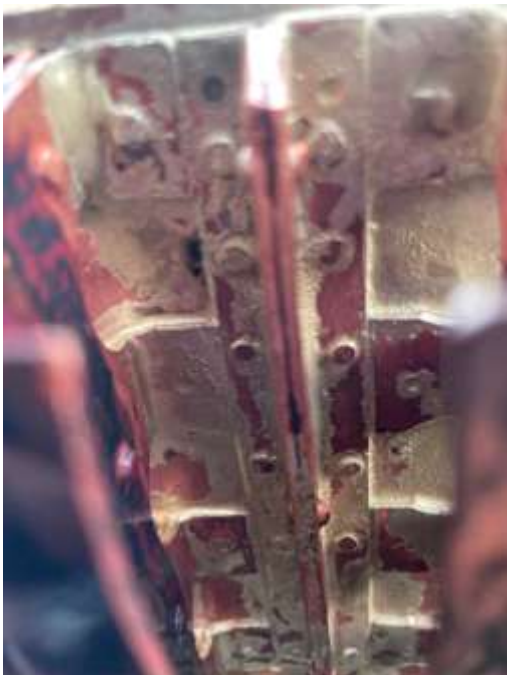
Next was soldering the main tubes into the combustion chamber tube plate. A sound job was needed as these cannot be got at once the boiler is finally assembled. I left the smokebox tube plate in place to keep them all straight.



Once satisfied with the silver soldering, I then soldered the tube plate onto the end of the combustion chamber. This was also a close dry mechanical fit.



Next was to make up and rivet on the three firebox crown stays. Finishing with a mass silver solder.



Time now to press on with the outer firebox wrapper. I drew one out on another Shreddies packet based on the "in the flat" that LBSC provides on his Heilan Lassie drawings. This and the A4 are almost identical. A few changes were scissored off or sellotaped on. When reasonably satisfied I attacked the shiny sheet of 2.5mm copper with the disc cutter roughing out the Shreddies packet template. I followed up on the



bandsaw to get it accurate.



I constructed a brick pizza oven on the brazing hearth and annealed the copper wrapper.

I managed to get the shape to match the throat plate at the front, dip $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the rear, and to the same shape as the backhead. When all aligned, I cleaned up the joints with stainless wire wool and secured with some $\frac{3}{32}$ " copper rivets.

I then silver soldered the wrapper to the throat plate and main tapered barrel checking that the backhead fits, which it does after a bit of wrestling

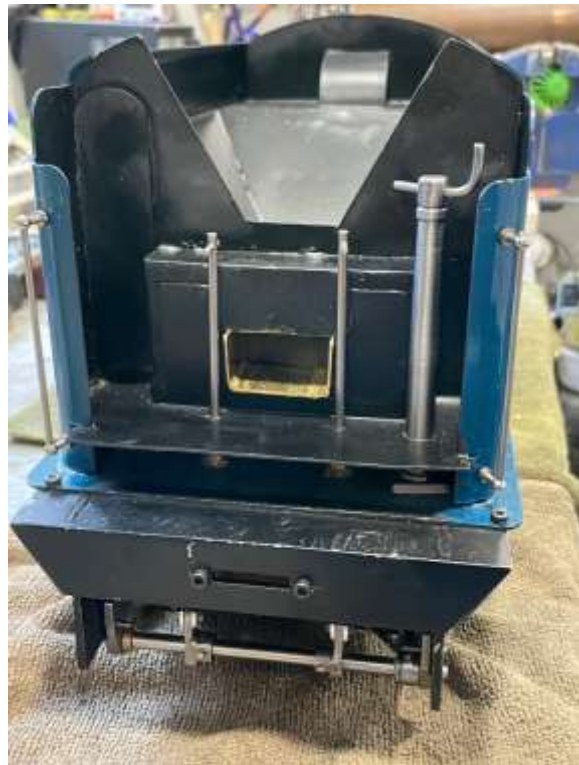


Next job is to gently air pressure test the firebox and combustion chamber to check for leaks and pinholes. I'll do that once worked out how. I have some thick rubber sheet from Martin, a tyre valve from the garage and some 6mm studding/ nuts/ washers from the local farm store.

Meanwhile I'll have to order another £150 worth of silver solder.



Main outer shell on the frames, and the finished tender completed a couple of years ago.



Martin Rose 7.25" CliShay

After a few attempts we finally got all of this boiler's 100+ silver soldered joints sound. It was immediately shell tested by the boiler inspectors and passed for service. The stainless fire space wrapper is now fitted and experimentation with the gas firing burner is on-going.



From the Archives: A Lookback to Winter 2016

In the winter of 2016, the team were busy extending the ground level track and its facilities. This included three key areas which can be seen in the photos below

New station: Work started in earnest to prepare the area for the platforms and queuing areas. We used a farmer friend of Aubyn Mee who did the original excavations for the ground level track.



This photo shows the digger preparing the whole of the platform area ready for concrete platforms. The track on the left is now platform 1.

(photo credit Aubyn Mee)

First Point: The first point on the new extension made by Bob Smith was installed in the snow. Bob had not made points before out of 6lb/yd. rail but it went together with no problems. Little was Bob to know how many more points we would ask him to make!



Mike Williams connecting the point into the circuit.

(photo credit Howard Brewer)



The finished point installed ready to serve CS2

(photo credit Howard Brewer)

Traverser: To serve the 4 roads of the newly built CS2 a traverser was required. Whilst the digger was on site opportunity was taken to dig out the required pit.



The digger hard at work watched over by Ed Parrott.

(Photo credit Aubyn Mee)



Pit all dug out and levelled.

(photo credit Howard Brewer)



Work started on the shuttering for the base of the walls.

(photo credit Howard Brewer)



The late Brian Walton and Tony Shoobridge working on the shuttering.

(photo credit Howard Brewer)



Brian putting the finishing touches ready for concrete.

(photo credit Howard Brewer)



The cast base with Brian inspecting it.

(photo credit Howard Brewer)

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

This month the tough questions are posed to **Rolf Thomas**, our Chairman.



1. Tell us about your professional background.

Most of my career was with Caterpillar, manufacturer of heavy construction and mining equipment, diesel engines and gas turbines, working with customers to optimize production at open cast mine sites and large-scale quarries. The work took me across four continents and included a number of years living in Tanzania, Saudi Arabia and Switzerland ultimately returning to the UK in 2004 from where I continued to work at customer sites as far north as Svalbard in the Arctic Circle, as far east as Siberia and as far south as South Africa.

2. How did you first get into model railway engineering?

Whilst volunteering on the Welshpool & Llanfair, initially in the workshop, then as a fireman and ultimately, a driver, the workshop foreman there encouraged me early on to reinforce both my school learned machining skills and those I was acquiring in the W&L machine shop by tackling a few simple Stuart kits. A great excuse to set up a home workshop!

3. When did you join RMES?

I joined in 2019.

4. What do you enjoy most about being part of the society

Having access to a giant model railway and spending time with like-minded people.

5. What RMES activities are you known for?

A track gang team member – although now as Chairman I probably spend more time touching base with the various other teams as they work on the many projects and things 'that just need to get done' around the site.

6. What has been your favourite locomotive experience?

Passing out as a driver on the W&L.

7. What is your preferred gauge?

That's a bit like asking which of your children is your favourite!

8. Do you have any hobbies or clubs outside RMES?

No other hobbies, no time! I am a member of the Heywood Society and the 7 ¼ inch Society.

9. Tell us about last Heritage Railway that you visited

My wife and I stay in touch with friends made at the W&L and we do walking holidays with them every year, one of which is based around the FR at Porthmadog. The FR and Welsh Highland are my absolute favourites and in my view, Boston Lodge is the epicentre of the narrow gauge railway universe!

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

I play bass guitar. Currently 'resting' !

Notices and Updates

Visitor help needed online

Rainsbrook Valley Railway is now live on both Google Reviews and TripAdvisor, and we'd love to build up a collection of genuine visitor feedback. If your family or friends have enjoyed a day with us, please encourage them to leave a review — it really helps others discover the railway.

The QR codes below link directly to our review pages. Sharing them with anyone who's visited would give us a much-appreciated boost.



Public Ride Day Tickets Are Now Live!

We're also excited to share that tickets for our first few Public Ride Days of the season are now available. If you know anyone who'd love a trip around the railway, please do pass the word along — we'd be delighted to welcome them.

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



Public Ride Days – help needed

Public Ride Days are just around the corner, especially those first few in April and May, and we urgently need more helping hands to make them possible. These days aren't just busy—they're the lifeblood of the club, providing the vital funds that keep our railway running and allow us all to enjoy the hobby and community we love.

But none of it can happen without you.

Every role, big or small, makes a real difference. Whether you're a seasoned volunteer or someone who's never helped before, there is a place for you on the team.

If you can spare even a little time, we would be truly grateful. please email rmes.sec@hotmail.co.uk if you can assist.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 21st March (2pm) – RMES AGM

Sunday 29th March – Operations / safety Briefing and Guards Training
Member's running

Sunday 5th April (pm) – Public Ride Day, help needed, please email
rmes.sec@hotmail.co.uk if you can join us

That's all for February!

We hope you have a good March, and fingers crossed for some brighter days and a re-opening of the track later in the month, keep an eye out for updates from Howard.

If you have any stories and updates to share for the March newsletter, please send them over by 15.03.26 to newsletter@rugbymes.co.uk.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed this month!

Edited by Dawn Culling
(27.02.2026)

Note: All photos by the author unless otherwise credited.