

Royden Park, Wirral

30th June 2012.

Noting that the weather was playing a large part in dampening major events, for example the Jubilee Weekend, it was with some trepidation that we awaited the dawn of 30th June at Royden Park, Wirral. As it turned out we had a really pleasant day with intermittent sunshine and just a dusting of drizzle around lunch time. Not enough to wet the ground! Yet six miles away there were floods.

Advance notice from Rex listed ten juniors wishing to attend the day. This was a very pleasing number and with families and friends the total number of people on site was thirty two. Quite a party. Everyone arrived before the 10.30 start time; unfortunately our friends from Leyland were unable to make it due to their car breaking down. Proceedings commenced with a welcome to everyone and the reading out of a letter received from Rex. He hoped the day would go well and thanked everyone for attending and especially the Wirral ladies who had prepared the lunch time meals.

Bronze certificates were presented to Lance and Owen Jones, who received applause from everyone. A walk around the main features of the railway enabled all juniors to see and hear about some of the features over which they would be driving, such as the 1 in 60 gradients and the need to be able to stop at the only signal we have! It wasn't long before the juniors were driving the society's two Roanoke's around, 'Royden' and 'Little Clifty'. These were the ideal way to gain experience of the track and the manoeuvres required in the station. It was pointed out to all drivers that those not stopping on the turntable and hitting the wall would have to buy everyone a bottle of refreshment. This had the desired effect!

The two Tinkerbelle type steam locomotives 'Let's Rumble' and 'Peter George' were soon in steam and, using our two wagons, adults were able to supervise the operation of the steamers around the track. All this activity brought us to lunchtime when everyone went to our premises for lunch. There was a choice of hot dishes available and this was followed by cake and biscuits all washed down with soft drinks or tea and coffee. It was surprising how quickly our juniors devoured the meal and were ready to drive again. We all adjourned to the large meadow where all the juniors had the opportunity to drive both the steam locomotives. Obviously with the youngest we had to operate some of the controls for them but all the others soon got to grips with the requirements. Following all this activity we went back to the station and the juniors spent the rest of the day driving everything that moved. Our visitors began to leave from 3.00 pm, with the last departing for a visit to Liverpool around 4.30 pm. From the kind comments received the day had gone well and the juniors had had a really good time. Thanks to all who visited, helped and made it such a memorable day.

Juniors Day at Royden Park on Saturday 30th June 2012.

The Society had offered to host this event in support of the 7.1/4" Gauge Society's initiative in gaining and encouraging the interest of the younger people who might have an interest in miniature railways like ours.

Rex Mounfield of 7.1/4" g Society, by whom entrants were collated, had advised that there would be 12 Junior entrants attending, supported by their parents. Fortunately the weather was reasonable at the early hour of 9.30 am when our first visitors arrived, Adam & William Moody from Warwickshire who had left home at 7.30am! Soon thereafter we received Charlie Martin from Echills Wood and from Wirral Charlie Powell, also Josiah & Samuel Klemperer. Also attending were our own junior members - Ben Williams, Lance & Owen Jones and Alex Birch. We later found out that Jacob & Sophie Roberts from Leyland had a car breakdown on the M6 which took over 4 hours to get attended to and had to go home.

All our visitors were greeted with tea/coffee and biscuits. After booking our visitors in everybody gathered together while Frank Stephen presented Lance & Owen with their Proficiency Bronze Certificates and their one-year membership of the 7.1/4" g Society. Ben had already taken his test earlier and received his award and 7.1/4" membership.

The event proceeded with our visitors walking the Ground Level track and given explanations of gradients, curves, signals, station and what to look out for. The two Roanokes and Ashover were available; both steamers were being commissioned which provided a lot of interest for the young ones. The first driving effort was with the diesels to get used to the characteristics of the track overseen by our members from the attached carriages - this all provided huge enjoyment to the young ones.

At midday our ladies called the proceedings to a halt by providing a lunch with a choice of 3 hot mains and a choice of sweets too. Tea, coffee and juices were also available. What was particularly noticeable and nice was that the youngsters all managed to sit at one table and it was so interesting to observe their animated discussions.

After lunch the steamers were taken down into the meadow where the youngsters, and their mentors, were able to drive them back and forth in safety under external supervision. When all had 'filled their boots' the steamers were driven to the station where the real driving began. Our two trucks were brought into play behind the steamers to enable supervision. During all the time with us our young visitors had been able to have a turn driving every loco and were keen to have the opportunity to do so.

When it was time, our visitors departed with many smiles and thanks for all they had experienced. Two of the visitors said the experience had encouraged them to try and replicate a Juniors Day at Echills Wood perhaps next year.

Many thanks must go to our members who supported this very well worthwhile but long day and to our ladies who provided such super food and drink all through the day.