

# Queen's Park

A blue and red miniature steam locomotive is the central focus, moving towards the viewer on a gravel track. The locomotive has a black chimney and two bright headlights. The background is a dense, green park setting with various plants and trees.

## Miniature Railway

Chesterfield, Derbyshire

A short history

The Queen's Park Miniature Railway is located in Chesterfield, Derbyshire. This booklet describes the two miniature railways that have been built in the park since the 1970's.

## **Background to the miniature railway**

The cycle route which runs along the northern edge of the the Queen's Park was originally the trackbed of the Brampton branch off the Midland Railway main line. It served the gasworks and the factories south of Chatsworth Road. Both Park Road and Boythorpe Road had level crossings. The gates remained in place many years after the track was lifted.

Boythorpe Road was the scene of an unfortunate accident on Christmas Eve 1885 as reported below;

### **SHOCKING FATAL ACCIDENT TO A COLLIERY MANAGER**

On Christmas Eve a shocking accident occurred at Boythorpe, near Chesterfield, to Mr. John Harrison, manager of the Chesterfield and Boythorpe Colliery Company Limited, which Mr. Harrison was almost instantly killed, leaving a widow and seven small children to bewail their loss. It appears Mr. Harrison had been in Chesterfield with his wife making purchases, and about 4.30 o'clock he sent his wife and some children home in a cab and followed on foot shortly afterwards. He was accompanied part of the way by a friend who parted with him near a level crossing of the Boythorpe Colliery Line. His friend noticed that the engine had steam up, and cautioned Mr. Harrison to mind how he crossed the line, to which Mr. Harrison replied that he knew the place well. The next thing known was that a man named Bridgett observed the train pass, and immediately afterwards saw Mr. Harrison lying on the ground. He ran to him and found one arm (the left) torn from his body, and it was evident he had sustained other fearful injuries. Bridgett removed the dying man a short distance from the rails, and then ran for aid. He returned in a few moments with some other men, but Mr. Harrison expired almost instantly. The scene of the accident is only a few yards from Mr. Harrison's residence, where his wife and children were awaiting his return. The intelligence spread gloom over Chesterfield on Christmas Day.

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The extensive network of sidings south of Chatsworth Road served several enterprises and Robinsons had their own locomotive to shunt wagons.

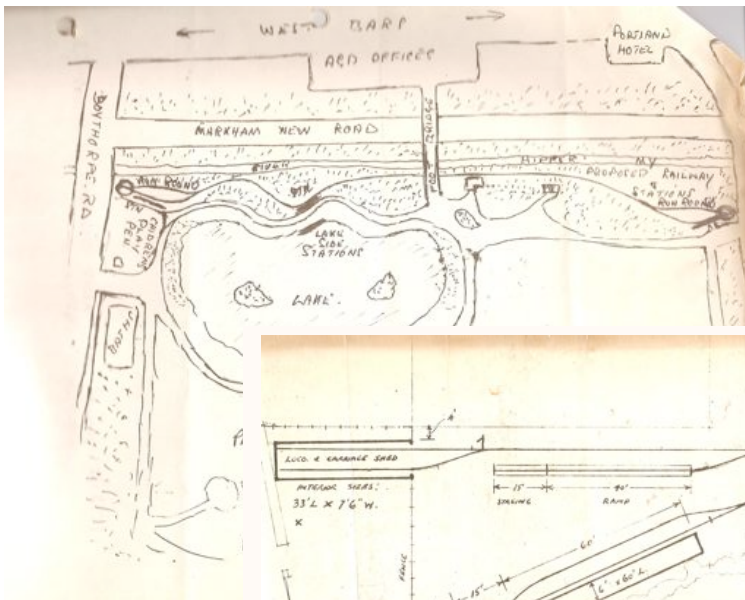


## Beginnings of an idea

As early as 1963 thoughts were turning towards leisure use of the railway line next to the park. The site of the car park to the north of the leisure centre was a childrens playground at the time. One proposal was that a main line locomotive be brought to the playground along the soon to be closed branch line as an exhibit in the playground.

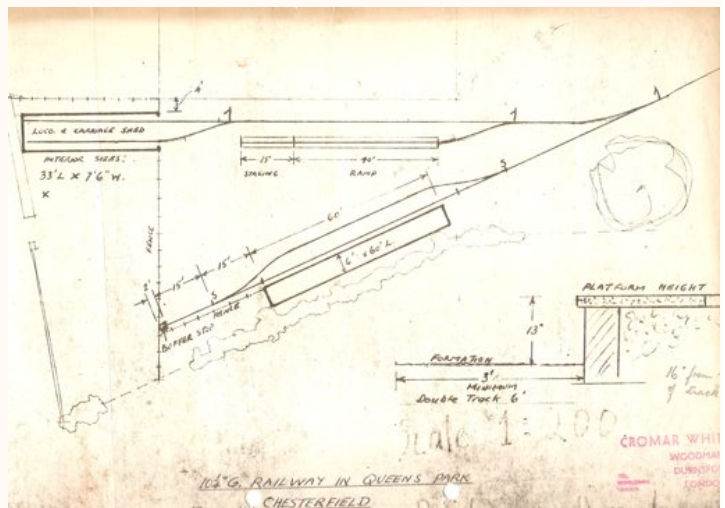
This proposal came to nothing. In 1972 the idea of a miniature railway from Boythorpe Road to Park Road was put forward.

This would have produced a line that would have had some use as a service to transport people towards the town centre but problems with steel shortage for the rail, concerns about safety passing under the footbridge from the town and potential expansion of the cricket facilities meant that the original plan was truncated. The line would start near Boythorpe Road and run out to just before the footbridge.



Left, Original idea for railway from Boythorpe Road to Park Road.

Below, Plan for Boythorpe Road station



Work started preparing for the line in 1974 with a budget of £15,000. The line was laid with aluminium rail to 101/4" gauge. Rolling stock was acquired from Cromer White and consisted of a diesel locomotive powered by a Petter 304cc engine giving 6.5 BHP. The locomotive was based on the 'Hymek' diesel hydraulic in service with the Western region of British Railways.

The line started operations on Monday 12th April 1976 operating on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, Bank holidays and school holidays.

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CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
RECREATION AND LEISURE DEPARTMENT QUEEN'S PARK CHESTERFIELD S40 2LD  
Telephone: 32088

PRESS RELEASE

Councillor Tom Wyatt, Mayor of Chesterfield, signals the inaugural journey of the train on its way around the new layout of the miniature railway which offers excellent views of the lake and wildlife in Queen's Park.

The miniature railway which was first opened in 1976 has been relocated around the lake as a result of the development works in connection with the Sports Complex being built on the fringes of Queen's Park. The track formerly 225m long has been increased to a circular track of 470m. The platform is located by the boating landing stage and tickets will be issued at 70p per person per ride and has to be the best value of its kind. Trains are scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays with additional services operating during School and Bank Holiday periods. A regular service being provided with departures beginning at 11.00 a.m. Saturdays and 2.00 p.m. on Sundays commencing Saturday 3 May 1986.

Over 10,000 passengers are anticipated this summer.

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Mr R B Rogers  
Chief Recreation and Leisure Officer  
Recreation and Leisure Department  
Queen's Park  
CHESTERFIELD

29 July 1976

Dear Sir

MINIATURE RAILWAY

Thank you for your letter dated 14 June 1976 in which you state that the attendants have been asked to use the warning horn to the minimum.

I am assured that there has been a noticeable improvement and I am grateful for your co-operation. Complaints are still received however about one attendant who persists in excessive use of the horn when the train is not turning on the loop and once more I am seeking your help in 'pouring oil on troubled waters.'

Trusting you can oblige.

Yours faithfully  
*A Brace*  
A N T BRACE

*Can Ken tone down the horn*

Operations were simply out and back with the loco running round the train at the footbridge end of the line.

Much use seems to have been made of the horn on the locomotive as this complaint from the adjacent office building shows.

In 1983 there were various ideas about different stock for the railway. There had been several maintenance issues with the diesel locomotive resulting in an exchange diesel engine being fitted and new gearbox oil seals. Steam traction was certainly considered and it was generally thought that it would provide a better attraction. Thinking of local connections the council answered an advert for a live steam 2' gauge Stephenson's Rocket and coaches and made an offer which was rejected. The well known miniature railway manufacturer Severn Lamb was engaged to inspect the Rocket in south Wales and report on the suitability of building a 10 1/4" gauge Rocket.

Severn Lamb advised the council that a small steam powered Rocket would be unsuitable and suggested a diesel powered steam outline locomotive locomotive would require less maintenance and be more suitable for the operations envisaged.

Mr Boyer  
Manager  
Kiln Park  
TENBY  
South Wales

Mr Cass  
02/03/83

9 March 1983

Dear Sir

STEPHENSON ROCKET RAILWAY OUTFIT

I refer to our visit on Friday last and telephone conversation on Monday.

The Borough Council is certainly interested in purchasing the outfit and 600 yards of rail. Bearing in mind -

- (1) the age of the stock and
- (2) the considerable outlay necessary to accommodate and refurbish the train and lay the track -

it is considered that an offer of £5,000 including the cost of transporting the equipment to Chesterfield would be fair to both parties. If this is acceptable please let me know in order that details as to payment, delivery, dates, etc., can be fixed. If the offer is not acceptable I would still appreciate a call to that effect to enable me to enquire of the Council whether they wish to re-consider the matter.

Yours faithfully

Borough Recreation and Leisure Officer

During 1984 as part of the redevelopment of the park to include the new Leisure Centre and car park it was decided to relay the track around the lake with one point and a spur line running back to the original stock shed.

The official opening by the Mayor of Chesterfield was on 15th March 1986. Normal operations commenced on 3rd May 1986 using the original locomotive and running in an anti-clockwise direction on a track now 470 metres long laid with steel rail at 12lbs per yard.



After a year of running on the new track it was decided to try to find a replacement more suited to the operations and fitting in with the Victorian nature of the park. Severn Lamb suggested that there was a suitable locomotive and three carriages available at the Trago Mills railway in Devon. It was only one year old being built in 1988 . The stock was bought in January 1989 for £32,000.

This locomotive was much larger than the original. It was a steam outline diesel hydraulic with the 2-6-0 wheel arrangement. Weight was 2 tonnes. Powered by a Perkins 4.108 diesel.



A buyer was found for the original stock. It was sold in 1989 to the Paradise Park & Woodland Zoo in Broxbourne Herts for £5000.

When the new stock arrived it was decided to run in a clockwise direction and the train continues to run that way today.

Following severe flooding in 2007 the line was given a thorough overhaul. A competition was run to name the locomotive. The winning entry was 'Puffing Billy' and the loco now carries this name.

The stock shed has two tracks, one holds two coaches and one holds one coach and the locomotive. When the train is operating the loco pulls one coach out of the shed. If the day is expected to be busy the train then reverses to couple up to the other two coaches. After maintenance checks the train moves slowly across the car park ungated level crossing, then across a pathway in the park until clear of the point on the circular track. After a circuit of the track to check all is well the first public train is ready. Passengers are given two circuits of the lake per trip. At the end of the day the train reverses back to the stock shed.



The railway operates on weekends from Easter until October half term with daily operations during school holidays.

As well as the railway there is a cafe in the park. During the summer months the lake has rowing boats for hire. The cricket pitch has matches during the season including some Derbyshire Cricket Club fixtures.



Written by Alastair Meikle with thanks to  
Sarah Poulton, Queen's Park Development  
Officer for the use of official documents

2009

For more details see

[www.chesterfield.gov.uk](http://www.chesterfield.gov.uk)

[www.friendsofqueenspark.org](http://www.friendsofqueenspark.org)