



## NEWSLETTER 105 : Jan 2022

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### **Editorial**

**Andrew Chrysler**

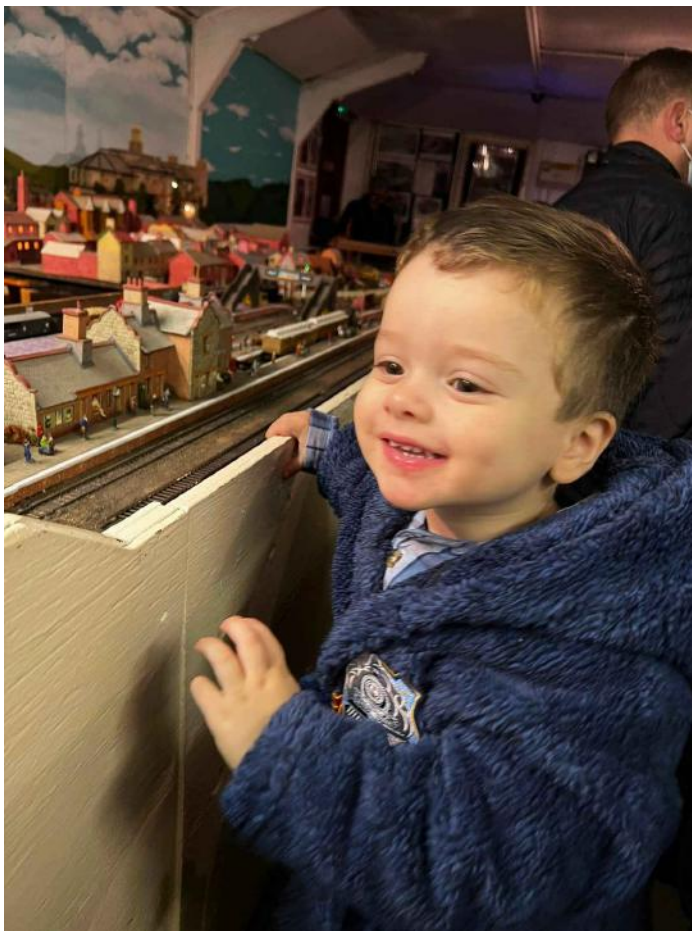
Perhaps I might need to start this month's newsletter with an apology. I had completely forgotten that in the modern world of "Insulate Britain", gender politics, cancel culture and so on, I simply hadn't appreciated the extent of the offense that my photograph last month of a Christmas tree made from empty wine bottles could cause.

I can promise that "lessons have been learned" and offer this vegan-friendly replacement tree in the sincere wish that nobody will feel the need to glue themselves to anything.



Of course, accidentally gluing one's fingers to parts of a model are, sadly, part and parcel of railway modelling, but I hope that in these circumstances, the model traffic is not unduly inconvenienced.

Many thanks to all those who responded to my appeal for newsletter articles. Keith Hick has kindly allowed another extract from his planned book, which appears below, while other contributions will feature in next month's newsletter. Please do keep the contributions coming, so that I can continue to keep filling the newsletter each month. There's nothing worse than feeling like "Old Mother Hubbard" with the cupboard (of newsletter articles) bare.



In other news, the "education" (or - to be more precise - brainwashing) of my grandson continues. After a trip on the Polar Express at Telford Steam Railway (which was a previous "Where's Andrew?" location, Alfie was mesmerised by their permanent model railway.

I'm pleased to report that the experience lived up to it's prior reputation - usually selling out within a couple of hours of tickets becoming available. It's only a small preserved railway, opening solely on Sundays, but run by a group of enthusiastic volunteers who prove that bigger isn't necessarily always better.

What a mixed year it has been. COVID restrictions meant that for the first half of the year we were effectively barred from meeting together and even when things did open up, there was some reluctance for largish groups to meet together. Over the last few months we did start to get back to some form of normality, particularly once we managed to get fully jabbed. Just as we were starting to get back on our feet, we were stunned by the premature death of our secretary, Jim. A sad, sad loss to ourselves, Fiona and family. In October we had a very successful open day and then in November an even more successful exhibition. Both of these events had been initiated by Jim and I am sure he would be proud of our efforts.

On a personal note, early in the year I had cataract operations on both eyes and once suitable glasses had been prescribed, it meant that I was actually able to get back to proper modelling (ie N gauge work).

But rather than looking back, what of the coming year? Hopefully, we will learn to live with Covid and thus get back to having more social events - talks, film shows etc. As regards modelling, it seems that we are progressing well on at least two fronts (HS9 tracklaying, and a revamped Talisker/Fishy Tales). I also hope that there will be some action on the two proposed scenic sections on the HS16.5 circuit as well as producing some painted back scenes. I believe we have enough current variety in all aspects of modelling within the club to satisfy all our members. Indeed you may be able to get some practice and tips in areas that you are weak.

Following my note to you early in December about club officers, I am making another plea for someone to step up as secretary - I know Jim's boots were pretty big to follow, but I do believe that one of you can fulfill that role in your own inimitable way. Remember SMRS is your club so please make it one of your New Year's resolutions to be more actively involved.

Finally, I wish you all the best for this coming year and to coin a phrase "*keep modelling*".

## **Where's Andrew?**

Congratulations to Tony Kuivala for identifying last month's picture. He says "You are in Barbados. The loco originated at Statfold Barn after being used on sugar plantations in Indonesia. Arnold Jung (Jungenthal) 0-4-4-0T Mallet



2279/1914 Tjepper (Ceper Baru) No. 5 built by Orenstein & Koppel in 1905. Seen here on test in March 2019 after full rebuild.

I was offered the opportunity to go with Statfold's team to Barbados for 3 months to commission the engine and train the crew. Foolishly I declined."

This month I am at a narrow-gauge railway just a couple of hours from home. But where am I?



**(Based upon the first-hand records of Southport resident, RAF Flying Officer, Cedric Marshall. Joining the RAF in 1939, F/O Marshall trained in South Africa and saw active service in the Azores until the end of the war)**

***Considering Southport's close proximity to Liverpool, Manchester and Preston, in particular the former, it is surprising the town suffered relatively lightly from the effects of the Blitz during the Second World War. From 4<sup>th</sup> September 1940 to 24<sup>th</sup> July 1941, some nine air raids were carried out over Southport. Three thousand houses were damaged, four thousand residents temporarily evacuated, seventeen killed and seventy six injured. Here, we are indebted to the records kept at the time by Cedric Marshall, a serving officer in the RAF, which detail the location of bomb strikes and the effect upon Southport residents at the time.***

During this period, there were one hundred and thirty-five air raid alerts. Twelve houses were totally destroyed, thirty five demolished due to damage sustained, one hundred and thirty one seriously damaged, one thousand four hundred and sixty seven slightly damaged and six hundred and fifty one suffering broken windows from bomb blast damage. Whilst these figures pale into comparison to the devastation wreaked upon nearby Liverpool and the other UK cities caught up in the Blitz, the effect upon the town's residents was, quite understandably, considerable.

Without doubt, the most shocking raid occurred during the night of 26<sup>th</sup> April 1941, a Saturday, when the 'Sunshine Home for Blind Babies' in Oxford Road, Birkdale, received two near direct hits, landing some sixty yards away from the home. Three Nurses lost their lives, the Matron and two Nurses were badly injured. Thankfully, of the twenty seven babies in the home that evening, none were injured. Outrage was immediate and understandable, further hardening public opinion against their foes. The after effects and memories of the raid were to linger for decades. That the nearby Cheshire Lines Railway Birkdale Palace station was the probable target, failed to pacify the outpouring of grief.

Thanks to the diligence and detailed records prepared at the time by Flying Officer Marshall, which includes a map showing the location of each bomb, complete with associated notes, it is now possible to throw some light on possible reasons why the town was targeted. Viewing the Southport town map of the time, as used by F/O Marshall and produced by Robert Johnson & Co Ltd of Southport, it becomes clear the bomb strikes are consistently close to the town's railways. The map, entitled 'Street Plan of the County Borough of Southport' contains a sub-heading in F/O Marshall's own writing, 'Bomb Plots 1939-1945'. This street map was to be redrawn in 1967 by my colleague, Arthur Camozzi, when we worked in the Southport Borough Engineer's Department.

Whilst Southport was not a primary target, the network of railways serving the town, together with the Brockhouse Engineering factory in Crossens, were likely to be of secondary importance, or for unloading unreleased bombs and parachute mines, several of which were to land on Southport. Wartime residents recall the thrum-thrum uneven sound of aircraft engines of bombers overhead with the number of air raid alerts (135) vastly outnumbering actual raids (9). By flying slightly north of Liverpool and guided by the polished railway lines either caught in the moonlight, or by the glow of fires in and around Liverpool, Southport proved a useful navigational aid to follow the railway lines and/or coastal strip to their target. F/O Marshall's notes specifically include consistent reference to the close proximity of the bomb strikes to local railways. Near misses to the railways and Brockhouse, all of which caused civilian casualties housed nearby, were recorded as follows:

- Brockhouse Engineering, Crossens. 4 bombs
- Meols Cop Electric Car Repair Works & railway triangle 2 bombs
- Birkdale station 2 bombs
- Hillside station 2 bombs
- Ainsdale station 2 bombs
- Lord Street station 1 bomb
- Birkdale Palace station 4 bombs
- Woodvale station/Wicky Dale railway bridge 1 bomb

With his intimate knowledge of aerial warfare, F/O Marshall estimated the eighteen bombs were released from an approximate height of fifteen to twenty thousand feet. Allowing for factors such as the relatively crude bomb-aiming equipment in use at the time, wind drift and height, it is clear how close, or far, from their intended targets the bombs actually struck.

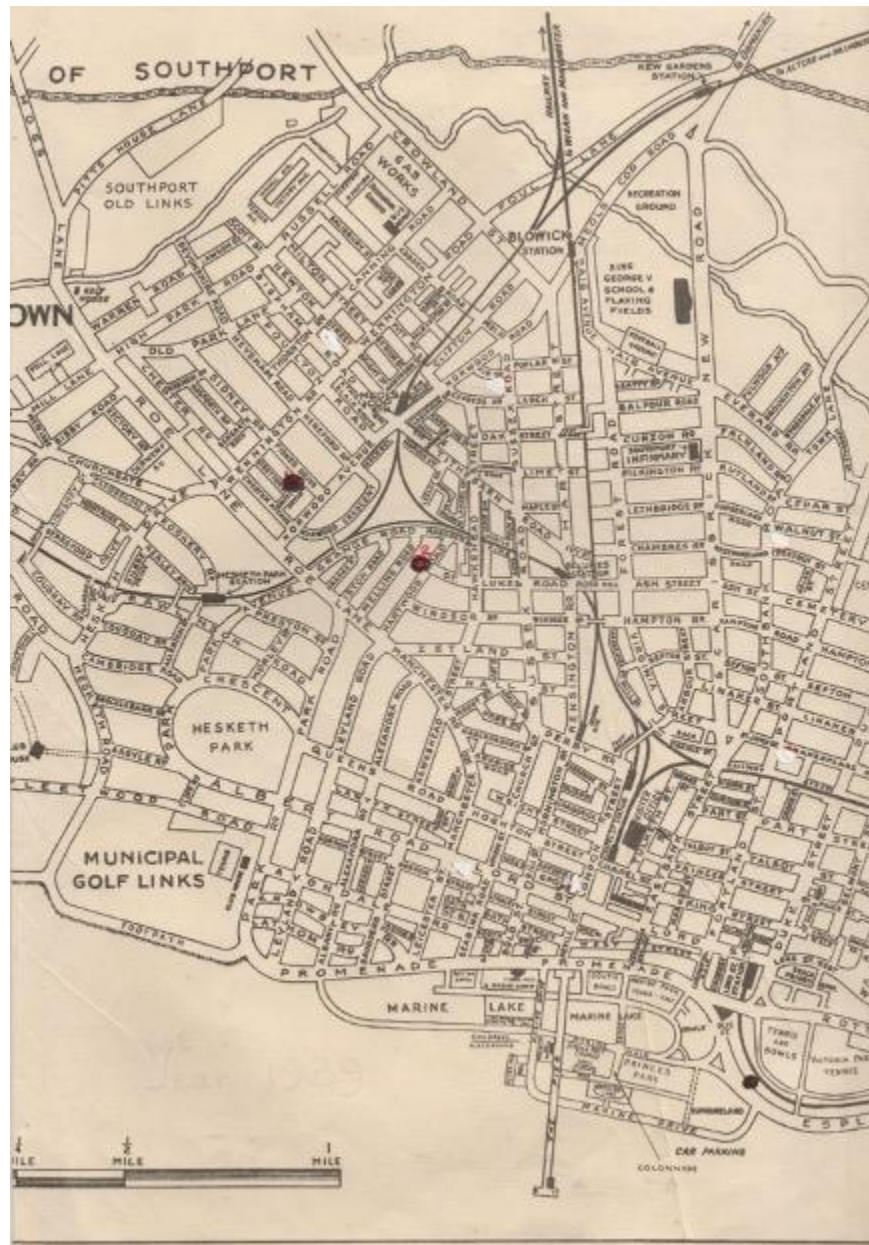
Given the intensity of the bombing campaign during the Blitz on Liverpool, it is evident Southport escaped relatively unscathed, with less than twenty high explosive and incendiary devices landing within the Borough boundary.

F/O Marshall's records are reproduced in full as follows, including the four portions of the town map used by F/O Marshall to pinpoint the bomb plots:



*Southport Town Map: Crossens, Marshside and Churchtown. Brockhouse Engineering Works was located between Rufford Road and Balmoral Drive, across the road from Crossens station*

**Raid 5 13<sup>th</sup> March 1941:** H.E.s in Crossens area. Balmoral Drive, Lexton Drive, Rufford Road. 2 houses demolished, some damage to works. UXB Battalion at Works & junction of Rufford Road and The Crescent. Incendiaries in Crossens Recreation Ground – no damage. 1 dead; 15 injured; 250 evacuated.



*Southport Town Map: Churchown, High Park, Blowick, Meols Cop, Hesketh Park, St Lukes and town centre, showing bomb plots 1 and 2*



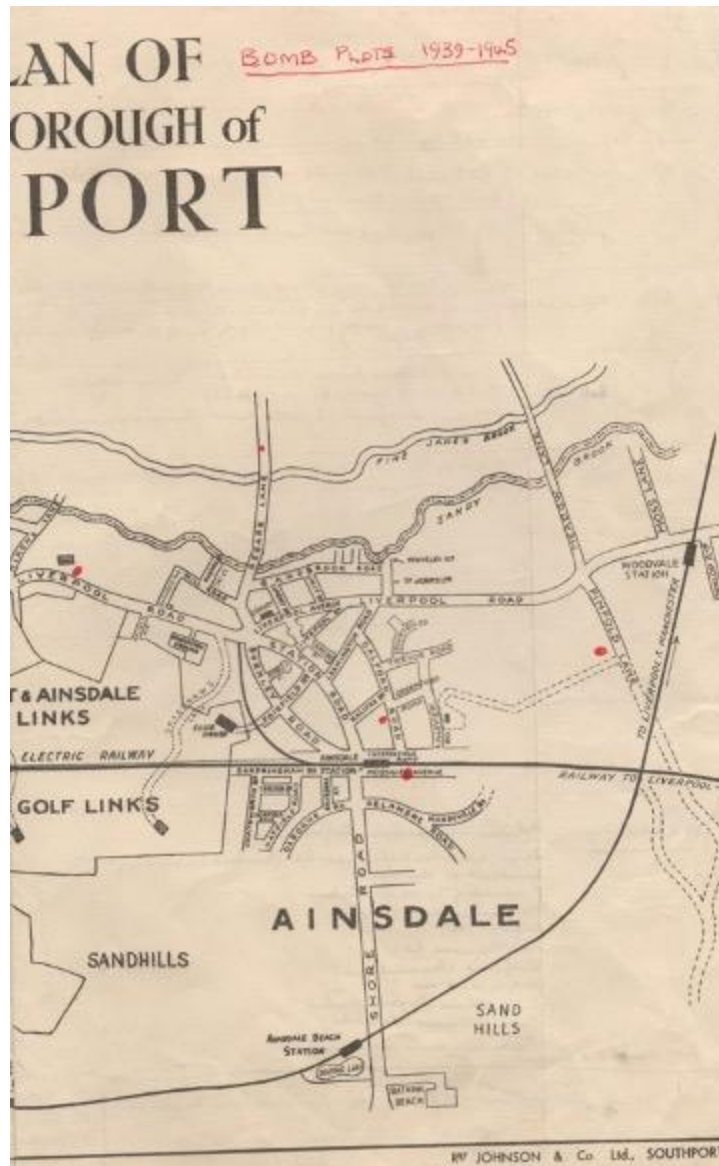
**Raid 1: 4<sup>th</sup> September 1940:** 49/51-53/55 & 57 Hartwood Road (facing St Lukes Road; error 500 feet to railway) 51 and 53 destroyed; many unexploded bombs; 5 dead, 3 injured. 1,100 evacuated. No.s 49 to 57A now stand where houses were destroyed. Bomb plot 2.

**Raid 3: 21<sup>st</sup> December 1940:** 8 and 10 Griffiths Drive on corner of Stretton Drive. (Error 800 feet to railway). Parachute mine in Stretton Drive (2 demolished; 2650 evacuated). Parachute mine at the rear of 69 Alexander Road. Bomb plot 1.

As can be seen from the map, the two bombs straddled Meols Cop railway triangle and electric repair works.



*Southport Town Map: Birkdale and Hillside showing bomb plots 3,4,5,6 and 7.*



*Southport Town Map: Ainsdale*

**Raid 2: 5<sup>th</sup> September 1940:** Incendiaries in Upper Aughton Road, Belmont Street, Kent Toad, Grove Street, Alma Road (no fires). UXB opposite Old Lifeboat House, Esplanade.

**Raid 4: 12<sup>th</sup> March 1941:** Incendiaries on Birkdale Golf Links & Cromer Road. Noone hurt.

**Raid 6: 8<sup>th</sup> April 1941:** Waterloo Road/Arundel Road. Dunbar Road/Kirklees Road. 22-24 Trafalgar Road, in front garden near road wall – opposite Smedley Hydro Hotel (approx 800 feet from Southport/Liverpool LMS electric railway). Sandon Road. Ashton Road, Hillside (Error 1600 feet to railway). 1 girl of 16 killed; 3 injured. Bomb plot 8.

**Raid 9: 24<sup>th</sup> April 1941:** H.E. demolished 2 houses in Claremont Road. 3 injured. (Facing east window in St Peter's Church (Error 1100 feet to railway). UXB in Goulders yard at 56 Everton Road. Blown up later. (Error 1150 feet to railway). No.s 37-43A now stand where houses were demolished. Now 37/39; 41/41A; 43/43A (originally 37/39; 41/43). Bomb plots 3 and 4.

**Raid 8: 26<sup>th</sup> April 1941:** 'Sunshine Blind Babies Home' Oxford Road; later rebuilt (Bomb error approx 60 yards/200 feet to railway). 27 babies uninjured. 3 Nurses killed. Matron and 2 Nurses badly injured. Midway between Palace Road and CLC railway track on south side of Birkdale Palace railway station (Bomb error approx 20 yards). Bomb plots 6 and 7. Jctn Waterloo Road/Sandon Road (Bombs and incendiary bombs). Sandhills at Hillside. Grounds of Terra Nova School. St Thomas More's School. Oxford Road. Westbourne Road. Salford Road (Parachute mines). Mosgiel Avenue. Pinfold Lane (Parachute mines). Palace Road near Palace Hotel. Parachute mines on the beach. 200 rendered homeless.

With the passage of time, nothing can be stated for certain. However, it is plausible the town's railways, together with the Brockhouse Factory in Crossens, proved tempting and obvious targets to the Luftwaffe. Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the only trace of those perilous times are the homes built in Southport to replace those destroyed during the Blitz years of 1940 and 1941.



*Southport Vulcan Works in 1924, later Brockhouse Engineering. Ideally located close to Crossens station, raw materials and end products were serviced by the railway's two goods yards. Opened immediately prior to the Great War, Southport Vulcan produced some of the*

*first cars to run in the UK before moving to the Crossens site. Ambulances, lorries and aircraft were manufactured at the works during WWI. My grandfather, Frank Harrison, was Foreman Patternmaker at Vulcan and Brockhouse from the early 1920s to his retirement in 1956, having served his Apprenticeship at Dick, Kerr, Preston. My mother, Rachel Hick, worked as an Electrician there during WWII, primarily on heavy bomber gun turrets. The long railway carriage sheds in the foreground were erected to house the pioneering L&Y electric rolling stock introduced in 1904, for services between Crossens-Southport-Liverpool. Today, a housing estate occupies the site.*



*Stanier 2-6-4T 42434 runs into Crossens station on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1955 with an early morning four coach Preston bound train. The Brockhouse Engineering clock tower shows 7.46am and the station was to see a further nine years of operation before closure in September 1964. Installation of the passenger footbridge was prompted by a fatality on the rail level crossing*

Once again, grateful thanks are due to the family of Flying Officer Cedric Marshall, for supplying his wartime records.

### ***Hitting Back: 7<sup>th</sup> April 1941***

At the height of the Blitz on Liverpool one of the German raiders was shot down and crash-landed on the marshland close to Beconsall between Crossens and Hesketh Bank.

A Junkers 88 was attacked by a Boulton Paul Defiant night fighter of 256 Squadron on the night of 7<sup>th</sup> April 1941. Based at Blackpool's Squires Gate, and piloted by D R West along with Air Gunner R T Adams, the Defiant was a single engine aircraft with an enclosed four gun turret directly behind the pilot. Originally intended as a front line fighter aircraft, with a similar appearance to the Spitfire, the Defiant had one weakness, carrying no

forward-firing machine guns. As such, its weakness soon became apparent in combat and it was withdrawn from front line action.

Of the Junkers' four man crew, one is believed to have died in the crash, another suffered a broken arm, one was uninjured and the fourth is understood to have drowned attempting to escape.



*A Boulton Paul Defiant shown attacking a Junkers 88*

On the night of 7/8 April 1941, the Defiant had been ordered to patrol the Liverpool area, defending the city and surrounding sector from enemy action. Avoiding the balloon barrage at 10,000 feet, the Defiant had reached 11,000 feet just before midnight when the Junkers was spotted. Diving below the Junkers to enable his Air Gunner comrade Sgt Adams the opportunity to bring his four machine guns to bear and closing in to about 200 yards, Pilot Officer West evaded return fire as several bursts disabled the Junkers, causing it to dive into cloud. A vivid red flash along the shore pinpointed the crash site and the Defiant flew over the blazing wreckage before returning to base.

Several pieces of wreckage are said to have been acquired by local residents. One of the engines from the Junkers was displayed in Southport's Atkinson Arts Centre during 2018, when the story was re-told in a display assembled by the Museum Curator and staff.

## **And Finally...**

There is evidently a valid reason for carrying out gauging trials.

