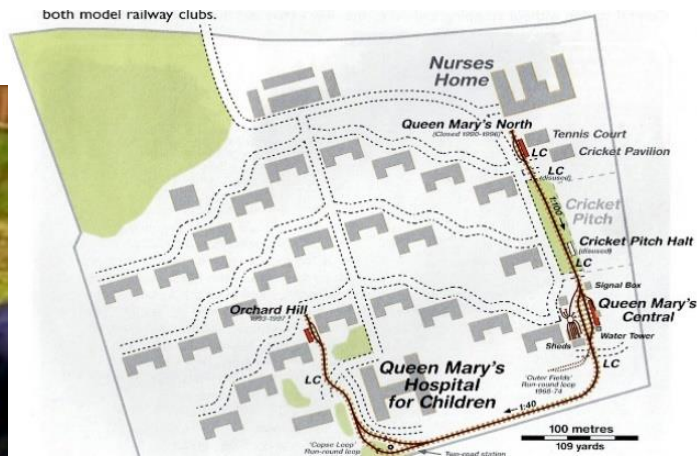


The Queen Mary's Park Miniature Railway



In 1967, as British Railways was scrapping its steam locomotives, John Fowles began building a miniature railway with steam engines to entertain children at Queen Mary's Hospital for Children. He received help from the Carshalton and Sutton Model Railway Club and the Epsom and Ewell Model Railway Club. The 10 ¼ inch gauge line ran the length of The Avenue, from the Kenny Drive entrance to where The Avenue divides. A team of forty people completed the line in six months, just in time for the 1968 Summer Fete. The railway, named The Stonecot Hill Railway, had two stations, Queen Mary North and Queen Mary Central, each with a run-around loop.

John Fowles retired to Hayling Island in 1971, and the Hospital League of Friends bought the railway, renaming it Queen Mary's Railway. Steam locomotives pulled the trains, and open-air carriages were suitable for children and adults. As John Fowles took some steam locomotives with him, the remaining ones were supplemented by Diesel engines.

In 1993, the line was extended south from Queen Mary Central, then west, parallel to Bushell's Farm, skirting the mast, and running north to a terminus station called Orchard Hill, near the current Oaks Park School. Orchard Hill also had a run-around loop, and the total length of the U-shaped line from Queen Mary North was about 1000 yards.

The railway continued operating during the hospital's life, with enthusiasts driving the locomotives and manning the stations. The last fete day was held on 24th May 1997, and with the hospital winding down, the railway closed, and the track was lifted soon after. Various owners followed, including the children's hospital in Tadworth, but eventually, it found its way to Ingfield Manor School in Sussex, a school for children with cerebral palsy.

A few scraps of the track can still be found in Queen Mary's Park, adjacent to The Avenue. Various videos of the railway can be found on YouTube, including one showing events in 1991 and 1997.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTNS3QxiFmo>,

Special thanks to Brian Jones, who wrote a history of the line for 'miniature railway' magazine.

Ray Liffen -November 2024