

# Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 70



January 2018

Introducing a new member for 2018

## South Devon Miniature Railway

The SDMR was formed towards the end of 1992 and saw its first public trains run in the Spring of '93; at this stage the line was only a few hundred yards long and entailed an end-to-end operation with propelling in one direction from the station beside the shed.

However, the site at Buckfastleigh has boasted miniature railways of different gauges in the past before its current existence, starting back in the late 1970s when the Manning Wardle locomotive Yeo ran around a 7 1/4 gauge line. Evidence of this previous history can be seen at one of the foot crossings near the Rose Garden, where there is another rail embedded in the crossing laid to 10 1/4 gauge.

A journey today lasts between 8-10 minutes and takes passengers on a 1/2 mile trip around the award-winning grounds of Buckfastleigh station on the South Devon Railway.



*No 3 Pheonix waiting for the days services to start at Buckfastleigh Junction Station*

Departing from Buckfastleigh Junction station we pass through the Patio Garden where friends & family wave good-bye, then traversing the level crossing and running parallel to the River Dart for a short distance before entering Riverside Tunnel; on certain days we are joined by the Riverside Shuttle running alongside us as far as Otter Halt. Beyond the tunnel, crews have to work their engines hard to climb the steep



gradient to Dartbridge, one of the highest parts of the line, thrown into this is a fearsome S-bend which really tests both engines and their crews.

As we reach the half-way point, to the left is the SDR's new carriage shed built in 2017, this is lost to view as we now turn south again to head back to the Junction. It is at this point we reach the newest part of the line, Dartbridge Loop, which was

completed during the winter of 2016-17, and enables the SDMR to run two trains in opposite directions simultaneously and allows us to run more trains at busy times. Should we pass another train here, keep an eye out for the crews exchanging tokens to allow them to proceed onto the next section of the line. With the loop behind us, another climb ensues to allow the line to cross over the top of Riverside Tunnel; if timed right when two trains are running you will see the

second train disappear into the tunnel as we cross over it.

The train now has a brief view of the shed yard across the car park as we head towards the level crossing, with the all-clear from the crossing keeper it is time to descend back into the gardens one of our steepest gradients, passing the junction to the Shed Branch and entering Garden Cutting and finally rounding the curve back into Buckfastleigh Junction Station and journey's end.



*Top: Here we can see No 3 Pheonix running in the opposite direction through the tunnel. If you look closely you can make out the Tram, just about to go over the top of the tunnel Middle: No 3 Pheonix on a test train shortly after the loop was commissioned Bottom Left: On certain special events we have visiting guest locos. Here we can see the Tram and Otter posing for the camera Bottom Right: The Tram can be seen here on the Riverside Branch just outside Buckfastleigh Junction Station, on a demonstration freight. Article and photographs by Kelvin Stapleton*

Traction on the line has always been varied, ranging from steam to diesel/petrol by means of electric and even pedal-power! At present the two operational locos are both petrol powered, No.3 'Phoenix', the stalwart of the fleet, and a tram engine built by one of our members. Waiting to return to traffic are resident Hunslet No.8 'Idrys' & petrol powered No.2, alongside two new build locos, a Class 25 & a T2 steam loco.

## **BGLR NEWS**

The AGM and Spring General Meeting will be held at the Moors Valley Railway, Horton Road, Ashley Heath, BH24 2ET and all are invited. The date is Wednesday March 7th at 11.00 am. and we will be distributing posters and brochures at the meeting so please ink it in your diaries, the more people who attend the less we have to pay for deliveries.

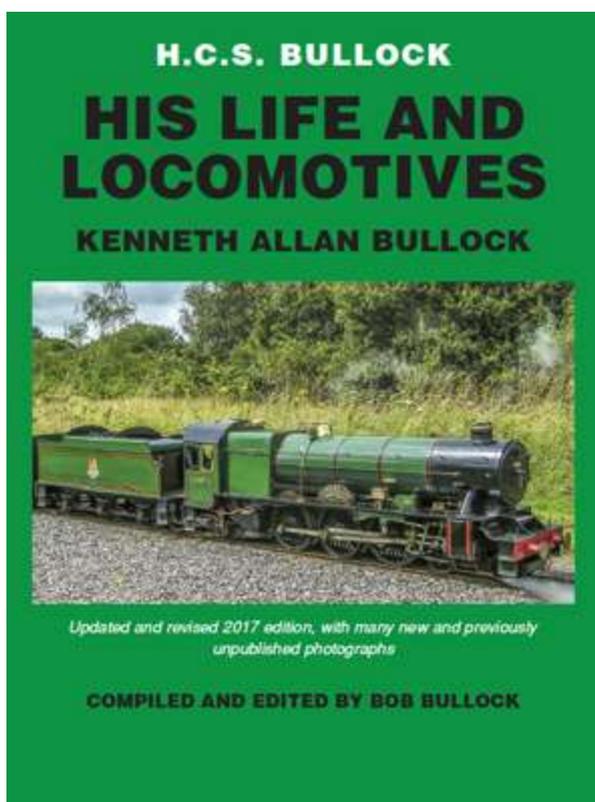
## **HRA, LEGISLATION, & SAFETY REPORT**

*BGLR is a corporate member of the Heritage Railway Association. Members can read HRA "members only" publications on [www.hra.uk.com/](http://www.hra.uk.com/) by entering the username bglr and the password kcnsy37*

The December edition of the Heritage Railway News, incorporating the old Sidelines and Broadlines, can be downloaded from the HRA members only site using the login and password above. Back in May 2017 the HRA issued a Guidance Note on Emergency Planning which is worth a read to ensure that its key components are included in your own railway's Emergency Plan and if you don't have one this could act as a template for it.

## **NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS**

### **H C S Bullock: His Life and Locomotives**



Eighty years ago, in 1937, miniature locomotive engineer H C S Bullock died in tragic circumstances. Fifty years later, his son Kenneth was encouraged to write a book on his father's life and work – principally his impressive 10.25-inch miniature locomotives.

#### **A Tribute to a Great Engineer**

In 2017, as a tribute to father and son, Bob Bullock has brought together new photographs. Many of these are previously unseen – and some are in colour – to produce a second edition to Ken's 1987 book. The update has twice as many pages and is packed with new information, with new maps of the Foxhill Miniature Railway, based on the latest research. They give a vivid new insight into this fascinating and at times heartbreaking story.

Available from the Miniature Railway Magazine Price: £11.95

Bob is still a member of BGLR through his association with Eastleigh Lakeside Railway.

## Great Laxey Mine Railway

The story continues.

Tempus fugit or time flies and the volunteer team suddenly found the end of our standard operating season upon us on 30 September. It has been business as usual since our last contribution to BGLR Newsletter 68.

The Isle of Man Government held a themed weekend over 18 to 20 August named "Island at War." The photograph shows the potential firepower of the Great Laxey Mine Railway!

So October was dedicated to preparing the Railway for our Hop-tu-Naa events on 22, 28 and 29 of the month. Hop-tu-Naa is a Celtic Festival held in the Isle of Man on 31 October. Predating Halloween, Hop-tu-Naa is the celebration of the original New Year's Eve (Oie Houney in Manx Gaelic) and Hop-tu-Naa is thought to be the oldest unbroken tradition in the Isle of Man. Hop-tu-Naa has been considered to the beginning of the Celtic New Year marking the end of the summer and the beginning of winter. This Festival is now



unique to the Isle of Man.

Every year the volunteer team celebrates Hop-tu-Naa by running themed steam train rides offering an "out of this world" experience to all. These rides provide an opportunity to adapt the Railway into a Celtic and ghostly theme park. The volunteers all wear appropriate outfits to enhance the experience and generate screams from the passengers.

The Railway volunteers were supported by the Laxey Mines Research Group which



provided the technical effects and lighting

which was very much appreciated. (The group has an excellent and interesting website ([www.manxmines.com](http://www.manxmines.com))).

The rides are very much an Island affair and very well supported with well over 1200 passengers over the three days.





However one setback was the plight of “Bee” which as mentioned in our last contribution to the newsletter was being rebuilt following the return of the chassis after an excellent job by Alan Keefe Limited at Ross-on-Wye. Unfortunately during the rebuild, the fusible plug in the boiler sheared leaving part of the plug seized in place in its screw threads. Mindful of the potential to damage the boiler, the volunteer team engineers have been working carefully to clear the blockage. The fusible plug has resisted every attempt to remove it so the team is basically chipping out the brass from the

plug which has seized into the thread with a specialist chisel in very confined working conditions. However nearly there! Therefore our battery operated engine “Wasp” had to be “scared up” for Hop-tu-Naa but he stood in for Bee as a natural apart from the lack of smoke! His batteries were tested over the three days though! So all ended well.

Now it is back to winter work days with track renewal in the tunnel planned and works on the whole site scheduled across spring.

The team was pleased to be featured in the November Edition of Current Archaeology which has a membership of 45000. The Publication has an “Odd SOcS” feature and the editorial team was interested in the history of The Great Laxey Mines and the two small steam engines that transported so much ore (at one stage in the 1870s, 50% all the zinc production in the British Isles came from the Great Laxey Mine) to the washing floors for processing. The article featured Ant and Bee past and present.

In December, the Volunteers provided a “one-off” Christmas special evening to support a local Laxey Business, J Js, which had organised a community event. Father Christmas manned the carriage and proved very popular with both children and adults alike! While it was a cold night, the rain and sleet held and the evening was enjoyed by everyone.



The Volunteers’ overalls are red so combined with Santa hats it seemed that there had been an invasion of Christmas cheer for the evening! The Company Secretary, alias Scrouge, arrived dressed in low visibility attire so was allocated “snow patrol” but enjoyed spraying everywhere with fake snow. As usual one of the Railway’s committed photographers, Andrew Scarffe, was there to record another enjoyable event.

Our story will continue but in the meantime Blein Vie Noa (Manx for a Happy New Year).

*Tony Wild Company Secretary and Director with photographs from supporter Sue Jones and as usual Andrew Scarffe.*

## NBR Engineering Services Limited – Darlington (NBRES)

NBRES is the Engineering side of North Bay Railway in Scarborough. It was formed 4 years ago by David Humphreys with the help of the Heritage Lottery funded 'Heritage Skills Initiative' and two apprentices were taken on and then employed – Richard Robinson and Callum Darragh.



Other members of the team, Mark Ashton and Stephen Watson travelled daily from Middlesbrough and two other Welders were employed, both full time and on an as and when basis.

In November 2017, the opportunity to move to premises in Darlington was taken as it is an easier journey for Mark and Steve – 15 miles each way instead of a 100-mile daily round trip and to be at the centre of what is becoming the new build and centre of excellence in the railway historic town. A1 Trust, NELPG Darlington RPS, G5 is at Shildon – 8 miles away and Northern Boiler is at Stockton 9 miles away.

As to recently completed and current work, the Baguley for Groudle Glen was returned early in December 2017 and has run for 5 days on their Santa and Mince Pie Specials, the new build 2' gauge Decauville for John Sutton is on target for finishing during February. The 2' Sipat is ready to have its boiler made in house and a number of other miniature locomotives are being finished/rebuilt. Boiler work is being undertaken on the DRPS Peckett too.

NBRS offers the following services:

- Turning up to 28" diameter over the gap and 19" over the bed .
- Vertical milling up to 1/4 ton
- Slotting
- Keyway cutting
- Shaping
- We can produce 2 foot gauge + most standard gauge motion etc.
- We will look at anything on the machining side
- We will consider fabrication and boiler work in any gauge of metal and offer coded MIg , TIg and Stick welding for ferrous/stainless steels and silver soldering for non ferrous.



- Experience on past new build projects include manufacture of the full size G5 boiler , 2ft gauge Hunslet boiler , 2ft gauge Decauville boiler, 20" gauge Sipat boiler various traction engine boilers and fireboxes along with the A1 'Tornado' ash pan.
- We will look at any restoration projects/work with a view to quotation or an hourly rate for impossible to quantify jobs. We have patched boilers at NYMR .

The first point of contact is David Humphreys on 07787 967694 – [david@nbr.org.uk](mailto:david@nbr.org.uk) *David Humphreys*

## Thompson Park Railway

It is surprising how quickly two years can fly by. In November 2015 we were approached to host the gala and AGM of the seven and a quarter society. This happened in September 2017 and was a great success.

The Christmas New year period of 2015/16 saw the park devastated by the floods and major damage to the railway. A great deal of hard work by the membership and help from the local college saw us open to the public on a restricted basis. In 2016 we started building a third platform at the station and a run off track into the shed area both these projects were finished in time for the gala.



In 2017 we carried over 19000 passengers between March and October. Two years on we ran our Santa Special over the first weekend of December 2017 and it was the most successful Santa Special so far. Saturday and Sunday saw an increase in passengers and the weather was kind during the running.

We are looking forward to 2018 with far less work to do on the track and rolling stock. Our usual events are taking place Teddy Bears Picnic on the

last Sunday in July and Super Heroes Sunday on the last Sunday in August on both these events we give free rides to children (check our facebook and website for more details). We will also this year in September be donating a full days takings to the Pendleside Hospice when they hold their annual colour fun run in the park.

One of our major aims this year is to have our railcar updated made into a three car unit and back running again. We open to the public again on the first Saturday in March look forward to seeing you. *Mike Bailey*

## Swanley New Barn Railway

### Winter News Update

The SNBR held its annual Charity event on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, utilising 7 steam engines, our 4 working home fleet engines 'Prince Sheian', 'Aneirin', 'Suisaidh' and the new one 'Mrs Darling'. These were augmented by two visiting engines from East Herts 'Peter N Brown' and 'Ettie Faith' and one from Moors Valley 'Horton'.

We raised over £1300 for Alzheimer's from the event, possibly the best attending charity event we have ever held despite the weather.

A few pics from the event:



Over the winter we will be replacing the long downhill straight with an s-bend. This will be the first time our council landlords have allowed us to use diggers and other useful tools for track work in the park. The track in places will be on a new alignment 3 metres away from the present track bed.

We have also have a range of other projects underway, including upgrading the last coaches to the new brake system, plus a new to us lathe being installed in the workshop. *Peter Jackson*

## **Fairbourne Railway**

### **All change at Barmouth Ferry**

It was literally all change at Barmouth Ferry when, over the winter, the track layout at the Fairbourne's farther terminus began a complete rebuilding. The track at the Ferry was in need of replacing and the opportunity was seized to redesign the track formation. The platform predated the 12 ¼ inch gauge

operation and after the re-gauging over the winter of 1985/6, the running line nearest the platform was



abandoned and the new one was further out, with the loco run round line on a new formation nearer the estuary. After the last train of the 2017 season, the track gang set to work and all of the track at the Ferry was removed. A quantity of new rails and sleepers was obtained for the relaying and work began on relocating the running line along the platform edge. Eventually enough rail had been laid to test the new formation and at 15.30 on the 14<sup>th</sup> December, hauled by Russell, the first train since 1985 arrived alongside the platform edge where the 15 inch gauge trains used to run. The new layout will see the run round loop laid where the running line had been, leaving room for a siding alongside the estuary. At this stage, the point had been laid at the station throat with just a short length of track to start the loop. This was to allow Santa Specials to run. A shunting operation involving diesel Gwril in the short loop, permitted the steam hauled Santas to be turned. After Christmas, work was to continue with the aim of allowing normal operation for the February re-opening.



More changes in the Autumn had seen evening trains return with the re-introduction of the Halloween train and a Barmouth Bridge Anniversary Special. Both were great successes, the latter involving two locos and every serviceable coach, after it became apparent that one train would not suffice. The 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the viaduct was celebrated in great style with fireworks and the Fairbourne played its part, with our

passengers the lucky ones. They had a grandstand view from Barmouth Ferry and were spared the unprecedented traffic jams at the end of the evening.

Another change will occur when our annual gala weekend changes from May to the new dates of 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July. For the first time in a number of years there will be a visiting 12 ¼ inch gauge loco. This will be Naomi, an 0-6-2T from the Exbury Gardens Railway. On the 15 inch gauge line the visiting steam loco will be St. Egwin from the Evesham Vale Railway, while this year's former Fairbourne visitor will be Rachel, recently acquired from Haigh Hall by Austin Moss and making her first return to Fairbourne since her departure for Wigan. This will be the seventh ex-Fairbourne 15 inch gauge engine to visit since the dual gauge track was installed. Now if only we could get Ernest W. Twining back from Japan! *Graham Billington*

## North Bay Railway

We are happy to report our Santa trains this year have been our most successful to date, for both passenger numbers and comments.



Our staff and volunteers have completed relaying two lengths of track at the top of Scalby Mills bank. Sleepers were replaced around the station and a few dropped joints lifted. Some slack rails have also been tightened.

The design stage for the two new points at Beach passing loop is complete, with the manufacturing stage beginning soon. 4 lengths of track have been levelled and hand packed, commencing our '4 a day' target.

Coach NBR 12 has been in for winter maintenance. Packing blocks have been removed as they are no longer required, and a plan developed to improve couplings between coaches. Whilst out, the bogies have been inspected and all moving areas lubricated. It was found that a pivot pin required machining, so that is currently off site being made smooth and shiny once again.

Several new beams have been delivered to replace the life expired ones on the Water Chute.

Season planning has also begun, with event dates set and timetable tweaking discussed.

2018 is going to be a year of big improvements all around for the railway and other attractions. *Steve Johnson*

## Exbury Gardens & Steam Railway

The end of the year was very successful with over 10,000 visitors coming to enjoy the gardens, railway and Christmas offerings that took place over the first 3 weekends in December. The first weekend saw the very successful New Forest Christmas Fair host their event at Exbury which attracted a huge number of new visitors to the gardens; a large proportion of which rode the railway.

The subsequent two weekends were dedicated to the 'Christmas Postal Express' and we were delighted to welcome so many families to Exbury.

We are also very pleased to announce that we will be holding a Model Railway Expo here for Father's Day on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June. Entry to the expo will be included in the entrance fee to the gardens and Dads can also expect other railway-related treats – it will definitely be a day not to be missed! *Susie James*

## **Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway**

This year, a decision was made to celebrate the Christmas Season a little differently. Instead of the usual 'Santa Specials', it was agreed that the railway would run 'Mince Pie Specials' where all passengers would be given mince pies with adults treated to non-alcoholic ginger punch. Although it was a slightly more low key



celebration, there were plenty of opportunities for members of our railway family to try and impress unsuspecting passengers with their Christmas Cracker Jokes, and the events proved to be very popular with a large number of visitors catered for.

The railway operated daily throughout the schools' Christmas Holiday and despite some inclement weather, carried an impressive number of passengers. Sadly, the poor weather caused some damage to the track and emergency work had to be carried out.

However, although the railway continues to run at weekends, attention has now switched to the workshop where major works that had been side-lined are being completed.



One of the major tasks that has been completed is the overhaul of Bullock built No: 2005 'Silver Jubilee'. This locomotive was withdrawn from the operational fleet in January 2015 when it was failed owing to worn out axle boxes and loose frame stretchers. Little was done until 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016 when a start was made in stripping down the locomotive and, three days later, 'Silver Jubilee' was simply a kit of parts. It was realised during this dismantling that repair would not be purely an overhaul but more akin to a rebuild. The main frames and stretchers were replaced along with the firebox frames and the rear drag beam. The horn guides were repaired, machined and then re-fitted into the new frames and, following this, all the driving wheels were re-tyred and axles renewed.

A re-assembled 'Silver Jubilee' was run on air on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in readiness for a steam test which proved successful. Following this, a programme of 'running in' was instigated. The locomotive is now ready to return to the list of available motive power and will star in the proposed 'Surrey Border and Camberley Railway' event later this year.



Simon Merritt, the railway's CME, has started restoration work on the recently acquired Bullock locomotive, No: 1003 'Western Queen' with the intention that it will be available for exhibition at the 'Surrey Border' event. *Lionel Kay. Photographs by Lionel Kay Top: No:7 'Sandy River' on a Mince Pie Special. Middle: 4-6-2 Pacific No: 70055 'Rob Roy' on another Mince Pie Special. Bottom No: 2005 'Silver Jubilee' running in.*

## Moors Valley Railway

The tail end of 2017 saw our successful Tank Engine Day return for the final time. Resident engines, Hartfield, Talos, Medea and Hestia as well as visiting engines Tertius, Idris and Molly ran the service the opposite way round to usual. This gave our passengers a different view of the railway as well as keeping the signalmen on their toes! Replacing Tank Engine days from this year are a selection of 'Sunday Specials', with a different theme and activities for each one. The first of these on January 28<sup>th</sup> will include reverse running, special double trips for Day Rover ticket holders, and free hot drinks for these passengers. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for more information regarding these special days with special Day Rover tickets available.

Our final event of last year was our Santa Specials, which were immensely popular with all four days being sold out well in advance. Visitors enjoyed a ride on the train, a journey through the Railway Grotto to see Father Christmas, as well as festive refreshments. The whole event ran smoothly, despite a power cut for one of the mornings and torrential rain, we received plenty of positive feedback from visitors who return year after year.



2018 promises to be a busy year for Moors Valley Railway. Plans are already in place for our 'Tinkerbell 50' weekend on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September with around twenty visiting Tinkerbell locos scheduled to be running. These include Tinkerbell's original five sister locos: Talos, Susan Jane, Sir Robert, Adam & Gurkha, alongside Tinkerbell herself following her overhaul.

Jason is also nearing completion with the whistle and safety valve recently being fitted. The pipework is nearly completed, as is the manufacturing and installation of the steam brake and associated valves. *Sophie Freemantle*

## **Whitfield Light Railway**

Well that's 2017 finished ... 12-months ago, our railway was just a dream and I was employed in the corporate world ... but dreams can happen and the railway is now a reality!

The idea for a portable railway firmed-up in early April, took our first booking for the end of June, and in fact carried out our first event over the Whit Bank Holiday weekend. So, it's been a busy 9-months - sourcing the loco & coach, building track, purchasing many bits & bobs, finding events to attend, building more track, building another loco ... 24 workshop days.

Since we started in May ... 25 events, over 63 operating days, with 1 steam tram, covering 417 miles, carrying over 9,000 smiling passengers. 27 of these days were Christmas-related, including December in a garden centre on our new curved track panels.



This month has been very much ensuring 'Kestrel' our steam tram is ready for the new season - while steel tyres have been fitted to the soft cast iron wheels, the loco has been stripped down to check and service all the components. That'll all be completed shortly, with a final steam test.

Alongside that is the admin, in particular seeking bookings for the February to May period. The railway broadly stays within the North West and requires plenty of young families to enjoy a ride and create a memory.



## Barnards Miniature Railway

Our Santa Specials went extremely well despite the blizzard conditions on the last day. With the help of the conductor and elves, every train ran on time.

As it's that time of year again we have an extensive maintenance program before we open back up for Easter. *Glen Dowd*





## **BGLR Brochure and Poster 2018**

The deadline for inclusion in the 2018 Brochure and Poster is that your subscription (£65) has been paid by January 31st, if you miss the deadline your railway will not be included on them but can remain a member at the reduced rate of £35.

Changes to the brochure and poster have been made by:

Great Cockcrow - new picture;  
Hastings - New picture  
Littlehampton - new picture and updated information;  
Moors Valley - new picture  
South Devon - new member, picture and details;  
Swanley New Barn - New picture;  
Whitfield - new to brochure, picture and details;  
Woking - get the position on the map correct;

If your change is not included contact me, if you want to make a change make it by the end of the month.

## **BGLR Stop Press**

I have been informed by Jim Haylock that after 20+ years as Chairman of BGLR he would like to stand down as soon as a new Chairman can be appointed. I am in shock! Come to the AGM to find out more.

### **Newsletter prepared and circulated by**

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