

# Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 56



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## AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

The classic mini, a British motoring icon produced in their millions for fifty years at the well-known Cowley plant in Oxford, has been used as the basis for many hundreds of 'custom' cars, as well as the famous Mini Moke.

Possibly, the most original adaptation of a mini to date though, is that being undertaken by Engineer John Macdougall in the workshop of the one-third full size Beer Heights Light Railway, an award winning steam Railway within the grounds of the well-known tourist attraction of Pecorama.

Here a 40 year old mini engine, transmission and other parts, have been used as the basis for a brand new Railway Locomotive. Designed and constructed over a two year period, this unique machine has recently been undergoing trials on the one mile long highly scenic line at Beer. Fabrication of the body panels is due to start shortly with an expected completion date towards the end of the summer season.

The engine will be converted to run on L.P.G, giving it cleaner, greener credentials and making it the first for a passenger hauling commercial railway in the UK.





## BGLR NEWS

The Autumn General meeting will be held at the Mizens Railway off Barrs Lane, Knaphill, near Woking, Surrey, GU21 2JW on Wednesday October 15<sup>th</sup> at 11.00 am. There will be coffee available before the meeting and a buffet lunch after it. The inclusive cost will be £10 payable on the day. A formal invitation and agenda will be sent to all members nearer to the date of the meeting. Trains will be running especially for members.

I have featured the railway in a later article to give you more information on what to expect.

## HRA, LEGISLATION, & SAFETY REPORT

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

Not seen much from the HRA other than that in Sidelines and Broadlines that have already been circulated, also most of the recent RAIB reports are based around Level Crossing incidents, although there is also the one that details the accident involving Tangmere, where the issue may have been caused by different style parts being used to secure the cotter pins for the connecting rods, this and some of the other comments around maintenance practices and authorisation may be of some use to our members. Go here for information on the RAIB reports.

[http://www.raib.gov.uk/publications/investigation\\_reports/reports\\_2014.cfm](http://www.raib.gov.uk/publications/investigation_reports/reports_2014.cfm)

I will be attending the HRA Meeting in Northern Ireland in September so hopefully more info direct from that meeting.

## NEW MEMBER

### Thompson Park Railway

Thompson Park is in Omeroid Road, Burnley and attractions include a large boating lake and well laid out gardens. The railway is situated in the north side of the park and is 1009 metres in length. We are 7 and a quarter gauge. Motive power includes steam internal combustion and electric. We offer three tickets Single rides all classes £1. Day Rover wristband (ride the trains all day) £5 and a super saver 12 rides for £10. Parking is not available in the park but a large car park is close by off Queen Victoria Road. Sorry but dogs are not allowed in the park. You can check us out on facebook for rostered locos and special events. Normal running days are Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays from April until September plus Wednesdays during school holidays. Normal running times are from 12 noon until 4pm.



## NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

### Mizens Railway

I often refer to it as the Woking Miniature Railway but its really called the Mizens Railway and will be the venue for the Autumn General Meeting.



Most people will probably know the Mizens Miniature Railway in Barrs Lane at Knaphill, but here's just a little reminder of its history. The Woking Miniature Railway Society (WMRS) was set up at Mizens Farm just outside Woking in 1989, and it kept its name when it was relocated to Knaphill in 2000 to make way for the McLaren Technology Centre.

The railway has more than 100 volunteers working on the site on a regular basis to build, maintain and ride the engines. Apart from the Santa Specials around Christmas, the site is open to the public on Sunday afternoons from Easter to September from 2pm to 5pm. It is also open on Thursday afternoons in August and additional special events are shown on our website link below.



On a really busy day up to six trains will carry around 600 passengers. One of our busiest days is of course the day of the Knaphill Village Show which is held on the Mizens site, this year on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July.

The opening of this year's season at Easter saw the unveiling of a new section of track and a new engine. The new line, the Highland Loop, which has taken 5 years to build, climbs a 7-foot embankment at the centre of the track to give an impressive view across the society's 10-acre woodland site.



This will be a challenging route, both for the drivers and the engines. Speaking of which, there is a new addition to the Mizens fleet, modelled on an 1890s design and built by volunteer Ian Rough. Ian believes it is the largest miniature tank engine in the country, weighing in at more than a ton. It can travel at

up to 25 mph, although with passengers it will proceed at a more sedate 5mph.

All in all, WMRS has a fleet of 20 trains built by volunteers – eleven steamers, nine diesels and five electric engines. The steamers are replicas of steam trains from the 1850s to the 1950s, although the railway buildings all have a 1930s design, this being the period that rail enthusiasts agree was the "golden age" of steam.



## Man Triumphs Over Machine at the Kirklees Light Railway

Every June since 2006 the Kirklees Light Railway has held a “Race the Train” evening. Each year the railway challenges the athletes of the Denby Dale Travellers Running Club to “Beat Badger”. The race takes place between Shelley and Clayton West. Badger of course follows the railway over a journey of 3.5 miles and descends 220 feet with the gradient in favour all the way. The runners have a slightly tougher challenge and run along footpaths and bridalways which run parallel to the railway. This creates a slightly longer route of nearly 3.75 miles and actually has nearly 136 feet of climbing. The KLR trains are timetabled to take 22 minutes for the journey. Over the years the event has



grown considerably and now attracts nearly 80 runners from several running clubs in the Huddersfield and Wakefield area. All runners make a donation to take part with funds raised been given to Cancer Research UK. This year the race was won by a Kevin Jackson of Denby Dale Travellers with a time of 22 minutes and 23 Seconds. Badger came to a stand in 23:28 seconds. In the eight years the event has taken place the train has only won twice. The fastest time recorded by a runner over the years was 21:04 seconds. There have been some close finishes down the years. The total amount raised for Cancer Research in 2014 was £300.00. The KLR provide its facilities free of charge for the evening.

## Ferry Meadows Railway

### The New Coaches by David Coging

We bought FMR back in November 2007 in a very rundown and dilapidated state, the only item in good condition was the Keef loco, at that time only seven years old.



Over the following three months we laid sleepers, tightened fish plates, fitted brakes to the bogies and painted the coaches, although not yet in the best

condition we started running in the February half term holidays of 2008. Over the following twelve months we replaced both platforms the main crossing between the engine shed and turntable, all the fencing on both platforms and rebuilt both turntables (for the first time) the turntables were later rebuilt two years ago to accept heavier locomotives.

After all the above work was completed we decided to update the rolling stock, and bought four ex Drayton Manor Park coaches and the Rio Grande locomotive,

Once again all in a pretty bad state of repair, the Rio is still in the workshop waiting for us to make a start on it, hopefully this year.

So back to the main story, the rebuild of the Drayton Manor coaches, we bought them and the Rio about three years ago from a man near Southampton along with approx 300 yards of 25lb rail and four sets of points, also in 25lb. he kept them at his premise's until we had built our coach store at the end of 2011.

Once the coaches were delivered we set about removing the bogies, the idea being to spend the winter months striping them out, replacing the bearings, fitting brakes (Not sure how DMP managed to run without brakes, some were fitted but didn't work) repaint them and have them ready for refitting in the spring, all was going fine until I went away on holiday, it was during this week that the metal thieves moved in and took the whole lot, the only two they didn't get were the ones in the workshop, that started a long drawn out claim from our insurance company, they wouldn't pay the full price of replacements from Seven Lamb because the bogies were outside, even though they were chained to the track



they went on to say they wouldn't entertain any other claim if the bogies were not under the coaches, so if you do remove any for maintenance or repainting make sure you keep them in the workshop.

We set about getting new bogies made and settled on LTM engineering owned by Mike Hanson of Rudyard Lake Steam Railway, the bogies have now completed 10 months running and we are very pleased with both the bogies and the service from LTM, we think they are better than



the two surviving Severn Lamb bogies.



We decided at the start of the rebuild that we would articulate the coaches into one complete set, when they were supplied to DMP each coach had two bogies, so off came the ends from number one coach, reinforcements were made to take the plates that sit

on the bogies and every thing was going well until we took it down the track, being a 16 seat coach it was far to long for our tight curves and we feared they would fall into the corners, after speaking to Helen and Jim at Evesham Vale Light Railway and having a very quick lesson in coach geometry we returned to the workshop and removed four seats and turned number one into a 12 seat coach, bingo next time down the track it ran like a Swiss watch so we had a rethink and decided to leave the end coaches with the lead bogies in their original place under

the seats between compartments one and two, the setup now is coach one 16 seats coaches two and three are 12 seat and coach four 16 seat, it turned out to be the right choice as the complete set now run beautifully together, on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2014 we introduced coach five into the set, this fits nicely in the middle and was designed to carry two wheelchairs and accompanying passengers, we built this one in the same style as the other four but with a higher roofline to allow wheelchair users easy access. The refurbishment of the four coaches went very well after cutting and shutting the fibre glass roofs we



completely stripped of the seats the floors and about 90% of the old black paint, the seats went through the overhead planer removing about .5mm and they now look brand new, 18mm ply floors went in and three coats of maroon and cream paint ( Blood and custard) finished the whole job off nicely, the last job was fitting the new pelmets around the roofs, it took the best part of 8 months but we are really pleased with the end result, and more importantly the customer love them so in the end it was worth all the effort.

Looking back over the last two years we would do things very differently if we started again, we wouldn't refurbish old coaches we would built new ones to our own design, as I said above "a lot of effort" but it would have been quicker to build from scratch.

Since finishing the coaches we have decided to build another set over the coming winter, but these will be open coaches that look like coal trucks with opening doors and fold up seats to allow wheelchair access and storage for prams and bikes etc.

## **Exbury Gardens Railway**

### **Carole Allen's career takes a turn – along a railway track!**

Carole Allen's career has taken a further turn for the good – or rather many gentle turns - after qualifying as an Engine Driver at Exbury Gardens Railway in the New Forest. Carole, from Hythe, has worked at Exbury for some six years, but it has only been in the last six months that she has trained as a driver. She joins Elaine Munday, Cathy Baldock and Mary Hall as part of Railway Foreman Ian Wilson's team of 'Wonder Women.' 'I'm very proud of Carole' said Ian. 'She really grew in confidence over the period of her training and passed her driving test with flying colours. Carole is living proof that you can change career direction at any





stage in life. I doubt if you asked Carole when she started work at Exbury that she would one day be driving the train, but enthusiasm, commitment and hard work have helped her with this achievement. There must be many people who are very envious of her new career direction’.

Carole’s move to the Railway only came about after a period working with the Exbury Gate Reception team, where she discovered she had an unusual and unfortunate allergy – rhododendrons! ‘It was only when we put rhododendrons on display in the confined reception area that I found out I was allergic to the plant’ said Carole. ‘Welcoming visitors to arguably the finest rhododendron garden in Europe probably wasn’t the best thing for me to be doing! Fortunately I’m not affected in the open air, and there are fewer rhododendrons in the Railway Garden, which passes through its own landscape area planted with summer flowering exotics and perennials.

Spending her time now as a joint railway driver and guard, Carole is welcoming visitors from all over the world. ‘I have been complimented on my driving skills from guests from Japan, Russia and America – there is still an element of surprise when they see me emerge from the footplate with bib, cap and gloves, hair full of soot and fingernails black with coal dust. I have to spend a bit longer in the bathroom when I get home, but I wouldn’t have it any other way!’

This summer has also seen the introduction of a raised flower bed at Exbury Gardens Railway. Overseen by Assistant Foreman John Lane, who also tends Exbury’s colourful hanging baskets which brighten the station, the flowerbed features hundreds of white and red begonias spelling out the railway initials EGR.

John has also been assisting Ian Wilson on a project to build a Maintenance Pit, which when completed will give the team greater flexibility to undertake routine work on the Railways engines – Mariloo, Rosemary and Naomi – and diesel Eddy. ‘We hope to have the pit ready for the autumn – it’s been 11 years in the making!’ said Ian. ‘Day-to-day greasing; oiling, re-aligning of springs and adjusting of chains for the compressor will all become much simpler to perform.’



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