

News from **Swanley New Barn Railway**

The SNBR held its Summer Gala on 22 and 23rd July. Which was even bigger than our 30th event last year. In the main park was 3 miniature traction engines, 3 red buses, an Owl stall where you could handle owls, second chance animal centre as well as surprise visit from Kent Fire brigade (who were lovely) and a face painter. On the track we had our first ever locomotive calvacade where 12 locomotives run, including a



An Owl on the tender!

lovely class 10 miniature that visited. Tess from Holycombe visited Sunday, and a Lister visited on the Saturday.

Despite the weather it was a great weekend, and we hope to do a slightly bigger one next year (from Acorns an oak tree will grow). *Peter Jackson*

Thompson Park Railway

A good year so far at Thompson Park Burnley during the last few months we have almost finished our new third platform and it seems to be working well. A grant from Tesco 'Bags of help' has gone towards new railings and a swing gate at the departure end of platform 1.

Even though the weather has been a little hit and miss our rides in 2017 are up over 16%. We have just installed a new platform sign which indicates which platform is being used and some of our younger members are working on a signal system that will operate with blue tooth. A new fiddle yard in the shed area is almost complete this will give us an extra 48' of sidings.



Our Teddy Bears Picnic went down well with over 150 free rides given to children who brought their teddies to the party. we even had some adults turn up with teddy bears. Two future events our very popular Super Hero Sunday takes place on the last Sunday in August when again we give free rides to anyone who turns up in fancy dress.

The big event of the year though happens between the 22nd and 24th of September when we host the annual GALA and AGM of the seven and a quarter society. With our stock of locomotives we should have over 40 engines on the track during the weekend. The event is open to all with free admission to the park and still only £1 per ride. I must point out that dogs are not allowed in Thompson Park. *Michael Bailey*

WHITFIELD LIGHT RAILWAY

Our newest member introduces himself



Tension between my employment and long-term care for my chronically ill wife came to a head in April. This coincided with the opportunity to purchase a vertical-boilered steam tram in 10.25" gauge, a nice stocky loco on 4 driven wheels - so Whitfield Light Railway was formed. A portable steam miniature railway in 10.25" gauge, comprising 200' or 60m of track, and an ex-7.25" gauge sit-astride coach in L&B livery. A trainset on a trailer, available for events, fetes, festivals and the like. A chance to live in a different way and see whether an income could be earned, so that the venture was viable.

The steam tram 'Kestrel' freely steams on small nut welsh steam coal, the boiler being from 1973 of Coleby-Simkins-Vere heritage and certified for 100psi. Power is via a 1906 Locomobile twin-cylinder steam car engine to a drive-axle, then chain-driven to the driving wheels. Lubrication is via a displacement lubricator of 'Detroit' origins. The exhaust passes to a condenser, to drop onto the ground, limiting emissions covering the driver and passengers.

The track is in nominally 10' panels of 25mm box section, metal strip cut to gauge, and 20mm box section acting as panel connectors. Marine ply sleepers are attached, to distribute the weight on grass. After some fettling, it can be put together by one person quite easily.



We've run for the last 8 weekends and at the start of August, have the next 6 weekends booked in. The best so far have been the transport festivals in town sites, where those visiting the railway don't typically visit a coal-fired steam railway - in Fleetwood at 'Tram Sunday' we carried nearly 700 passengers, on 160 trips, covering 12 miles through the day - not bad for a vertical-boilered loco and one coach, on 200' of track. And that was on a closed public road, set-up starting at 7am, and all up and ready to leave by 6pm. The obvious opposite side to that story are the weekends when weather, location, or the event mean no or little custom. We will learn as we move forward - hopefully quickly. Our events have to-date been in the North West - Cheshire, Lancashire, Shropshire. In the next period, that'll include Merseyside, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire.



Bookings have been reasonable going forward, with currently 2 free weekends in each of September, October and November. December is booked up for a garden centre, which leads to other developments - curved track, better event gazebo and signage, small petrol 'thunderbird' loco, and potentially an additional coach. A step-wise approach going forward, so we aren't out of our depth too quickly. 2018 bookings are now coming in.

Details can be found on our Facebook page, as follows, and with a website in due course - <https://www.facebook.com/WhitfieldLightRly/> *Ian Whitfield*

Full Steam Ahead for Exbury Gardens Railway Extension

Exbury Gardens Railway has welcomed many famous guests in its 16 year history – including HM The Queen, HRH The Prince of Wales, The Duchess of Cornwall, Princess Anne and on Tuesday 11th April, the historian Dan Snow was added to the list when he opened the new railway extension.



Since opening, the railway has proved extremely popular with thousands of visitors hopping aboard so Railway Manager, Ian Wilson, had an idea in 2015 to extend the track to take visitors round the other side of the lake and enhance the experience.

Work started in December 2016 to deviate the existing route round North Lake to extend it to over 1.5 miles (it was previously 1.25) and the work was undertaken in-house by Railway Manager Ian Wilson and his team. It has opened up a whole new area of the gardens that the public have never seen before, including a dragonfly pond and a halt on the journey for visitors to alight and see the wildlife. Landscaping of the new area will be aided by the Exbury team of volunteers.

At the official unveiling, Marie-Louise Agius, great-granddaughter of Lionel de Rothschild who started the



gardens, drove the train in a fitting tribute to her great-uncle who built it. Mr Leopold de Rothschild's nephew, Lionel de Rothschild, welcomed everyone and thanked those concerned with the extension and Dan Snow praised Exbury for their continued investment into Britain's heritage of steam railways before unveiling the new Dragonfly Halt sign.

The extension has proved to be a great addition to the railway and has been extremely popular since it opened. *Susie James*

Moors Valley Railway

We began our summer season with our Grand Summer Gala and Model Railway Weekend, both of which saw the railway as a hive of activity and proved to be a great success.

Preparations for our Autumn Gala on 16th and 17th September are well underway. There will be an



intensive passenger and freight service throughout the weekend. Our 'Dorset Flyer' special will be operating once again along a more unusual route, available exclusively to Day Rover ticket holders. We are looking forward to embracing the Christmas spirit here at the railway too, with Santa Special tickets having gone on sale at the beginning of August. 20% of our tickets sold out within the first week! Father



Christmas will be visiting the railway over four days: 9th, 10th, 16th and 17th of December. Please take a look on our website or Facebook for more information or to book.

The engineering side of the railway is also keeping busy. Nearly fifty years since she was built, our oldest and most famous locomotive 'Tinkerbell' is receiving her first major overhaul ready for her 50th celebratory gala in September 2018. If you own a Tinkerbell-class locomotive and are interested in attending the event next autumn, please contact us for more information.

'Jason', the first engine to be built in our workshops in 1989, is currently undergoing a major overhaul, with the aim of returning the locomotive to service later this year. This work has included a new boiler and new valve gear, as well as a change of livery to Southern Railway Maunsell Dark Olive. Meanwhile 'Vixen', one of our diesel locomotives, is also in the workshop receiving a new hydraulic pump and motor, and will be ready to return to service soon.

Swanley New Barn Railway's 'Sir Goss' is awaiting a major overhaul with us, with particular focus on her cylinders and valve gear. 'Aelfred' and our Garratt locomotive 'William Rufus' are also in the queue awaiting attention in our workshop.

We are now able to supply fibreglass moulded domes in a variety of sizes. Please contact us for more information regarding the supply of these. *Sophie*

www.bglr.org

The BGLR website continues to be well attended with an average of 120 page views per day but this average disguises the pre-weekend and weekends when this number trebles as people look for somewhere to go at the weekend.

Every railway has its own page and what you have on it is your choice, a link to its webpage and facebook page and a link to a video of the railway. In this day and age being on the web and facebook is essential to drive customers to your railway so please make sure that your page is up to date. Just contact me with any changes and I will update your page.

The Whitfield Light Railway has been added to the BGLR website but needs a video link.

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