

Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 61



November 2015

Autumn General Meeting

Sixteen railways and 32 members were welcomed to Beer Heights Light Railway by John Edmunds who was acting as host as the organiser John MacDougal had sneaked in a quick holiday. The lovely autumn weather



made a quick stroll around the gardens invigorating before attending the meeting. In the absence of our chairman the meeting was chaired by Iain Dinnis who did a splendid job at such short notice. The minutes of the meeting have been distributed to all members. With Mike Hanson retiring from his position at the end of the year three key jobs needed transferring

1. Chris Phillimore has agreed to coordinate the Voluntary Inspection Scheme - Chris can be contacted at chris.phillimore@tir-ltd.co.uk if you want to join the scheme
2. I have volunteered to take on the website (see below)

3. No one has volunteered to publish the brochure and poster. Anyone out there prepared to give it a go, Mike will provide all his current files plus training.

The meeting passed quickly followed by an excellent buffet lunch and then the chance to ride on the railway. The gardens are a delight and the railway winds its way through them such that you quickly get lost in all the tunnels, cuttings etc although one thing that is ever present is the fantastic view of the bay. I am not going to comment on the model railways in the exhibition as they make my Hornby Dublo layout look very amateurish. Once again thanks to John Edmunds and all at Pecorama for a great day out.

BGLR NEWS

The BGLR AGM and Spring General Meeting will be hosted by Bruce Whalley who owns the Weston Park Railway, Weston Park, Weston under Lizard, Shifnal, Shropshire, TF11 8LE. The meeting and lunch will be held at the Bradford Arms, which is just down the road. This year the HRA meeting is on the 8th and 9th of March so I have decided to hold the AGM on March 2nd to avoid this clash and give the railways plenty of time for their Easter preparations.

Mike Hanson is retiring at the end of the year following the sale of his railway and will no longer publish the brochure and poster or be the webmaster of BGLR.org. The Autumn Meeting did not identify anyone who would take on the publishing role but I have volunteered to take on the website.

I have switched to Wordpress, a free publishing suite of software, and I will transfer the www.bglr.org domain name to it before it finally goes live. The new website is currently at <http://bglr.dublorunner.com/>

- I have focused the front page on potential visitors to our railways.
- Each railway has its name on the front page and clicking on the name takes you to the railways own page, with information, contact details and a link to their website
- I have written a page for every railway mostly taken from their current website
- This page can be whatever you want - just send me your words and pictures in Microsoft Word format and I will replace what I have written. Length is not a problem.
- I am prepared to update your railways page whenever you send material e,g special events, timetables, fares etc. Please make sure that your page is relevant to the 2016 season.
- 2 Railways do not have websites so this is their chance to get on the web
- There is an interactive map - this needs updating - please check that your railway is on it and is in the correct place
- There is a section for prospective owners/operators
- There is a members only section - the current password is Jim Haylock, which will be changed when the site goes live. NB The capitals and the space between the name are essential
- There are copies of Newsletters, Minutes, Agendas, Latest News
- The rest of the members section has been taken from Mike's website
- There is no forum and I am not inclined to add one as the current one is moribund with the last posting being on January 28th 2013
- The overall appearance is minimalist and it works OK on a smart phone but I haven't tried it on a tablet

I would ask everyone to check it out so that I can change, add and modify it prior to it going live. Please email me with your comments, changes etc and don't hold back with any criticism as I want it to be as good as possible and reflect the members wants and needs.

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 by entering the username bglr and the password kcnsy37

There is no update since the Autumn General Meeting. The latest issues of Broadlines and Sidelines is available from the HRA website – the login information is given above.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Stansted Park Railway

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE FAILED VACUUM BRAKE SYSTEM.

For many years we have been using the type of 7½ inch gauge coaches as shown on the front of the HSE document *Passenger Carrying Miniature Railways, Guidance on Safe Practice* HSG 216. The coaches are vacuum braked with a train pipe running through each coach. The coaches are connected together using rubber hose attached to ¾ inch diameter brass hose adaptors. Last year a problem arose such that there was no vacuum showing on the gauge situated in the Guard's van. Checks on the individual coaches indicated that there was a blockage in the pipe of two coaches. The fault was traced to what appeared to be clay at the ends of two hose adaptors. At the time the fault was put down to the possibility of children or pranksters applying a finger of clay. At various times coaches are disconnected for several days for reasons of service or train assembly. The obstructions were removed and no further problems occurred.



However the problem arose again this year. This time one blockage was at the fitting and was easily removed but another was some distance in the train pipe. The application of full vacuum (30ins Hg) and subsequently a pressure of 45 psi air pressure failed to remove the obstruction. The use of a flexible dispenser wire (don't ask) did remove the obstruction along with the body of a deceased yellow and black striped insect.

I can only offer the following as an explanation to the problem taken from a Reader's Digest booklet.

The female Mason Bee cleans out a hole in mortar (lazy ones find a ready-made hole), stocks it with pollen and nectar, lays an egg and then blocks up the hole with mud.

For those of you with similar vacuum braking systems, to avoid a similar problem, I would recommend that vacuum pipes remain coupled or blanks are fitted as appropriate. *Wally Pearson*

Thompson Park Railway

This is an update on the activities at Thompson Park Railway in Burnley for 2015. We have had a fantastic year with our single rides up over 24% on 2014. We have also sold over 90 super saver tickets during the year. Several special events occurred in 2015 with our 25th anniversary weekend in May seeing several

visiting locomotives including Colin Edmundson's Shed. Teddy Bears picnic in July was not it's usual success because of the poor weather but we still brought people and their Teddies into the park with over 400 people riding during the day.

August was a brilliant month for us as we took more rides than in the first year we started taking records. August ended with our very first Super Hero Sunday when anyone who turned up dressed as a super hero or in fancy dress got a free ride on the train. 500 free rides and over 300 paying customers made the day a



great success and it will now become part of our yearly calendar. This year we ended each ride by giving lollipops out to children at the end of the ride. We have gone through 9,800 lollipops and we are now known as the 'Lollipop Line'



On Wednesday 28th October one of our members delivered to the Fancott Railway our four seater coach as a donation to the railway after the fire earlier this year. We were going to sell the coach but decided that after such a successful year that we should donate it to Fancott.

The railway closes for public running on End of Season bash (Sunday 25th October) when we try to have all available locomotives ready to run and give our visitors the chance to choose which locomotive they would like to ride behind. Santa

will be visiting the railway on the first weekend in December and then we will close until March 2016. Several projects are planned for the winter and we will see what 2016 brings. Seasons greetings to all
Michael Bailey

Hollycombe celebrates Jerry M 120th birthday and stages Halloween Fairground at Night!

Hollycombe's Quarry Railway mainstay locomotive, the 1895-built Hunslet Jerry M celebrated its 120th birthday in style at Hollycombe on Sunday 20th September.

Visitors gathered with volunteers while trustee David Baldock, son of the museum's founder the late John Baldock, made a short speech, outlining something of the engine's history, both its working life at the Dinorwig Slate Quarry in north Wales, and its subsequent acquisition and restoration to working order at Hollycombe, before returning to service in 1984. It has now completed over 30 years at Hollycombe.



After his speech, David Baldock poured champagne on Jerry M's boiler, in a recreation of the day back in 1984 when his mother had christened Jerry M into Hollycombe service. A coal cake had been made for the engine to 'eat' and it was placed in the firebox by Ellie Lawrence. A more nutritious birthday cake - at least for the gathered throng - was cut into small pieces and shared around those present after the celebrations. As part of the celebrations, the opportunity was taken to recreate an old picture of Jerry M, taken not long after it arrived at the quarry, by having Sunday's train crew pose with the locomotive in similar style.

For the first time, Hollycombe actually opened on Halloween itself, Sat 31 October, for a very successful evening. Hundreds of visitors arrived in fancy dress, as the Steam Fairground, Quarry Railway and Miniature Railway all put on a spook-tacular display. The rides on the railways were arguably the highlights of the evening for many visitors, with jack-o-lanterns and ghoulish floodlit characters trackside for passengers to spot.

Hollycombe is now closed for its winter maintenance programme, but will re-open for Easter on Good Friday, 25 March 2016.



Brian Gooding from Hollycombe added:

With a different hat on, I wonder if you could let members know that we are looking for 2016 openings/events etc. for the 2016 Steam Heritage Guide which we will publish in mid March next year.

The Guide lists over 900 museums/railways/heritage/transport attractions throughout the UK as well as around 1300 events, so is a very comprehensive publication, backed up by a very busy website which gets over 250,000 hits a year, mainly from people looking for places to go www.steamheritage.co.uk/guide.

Our deadline for entries is mid January and entries can be updated online once people have registered and been approved when we can transfer control of the entry over to them. Otherwise an email to guide@steamheritage.co.uk with the details (including contact details for the public) will be fine.

All entries are free and paid for advertising, both in print and online is available. We are here to help attractions promote themselves!

End of another season on the RH&DR.

As we come to the end of another season at the 'Romney' we wonder just how much better our year would have been if it hadn't been for 'Operation Stack'? As I am sure most of you know this is the closing of the M20 variously between junction 8 and the Channel Tunnel/Dover Ferry port, in effect making passengers journey to the railway not an easy task. We have found that as soon as it comes on the news that there could be an issue in France, people change their minds on visiting the South Kent Coast and all the attractions in that area suffer from the fall out of the disputes. This has of course impacted on the railway's revenue this year but, on a positive note Santa has given us an early Christmas present, already filling most of our scheduled Santa Specials. We had been asked to add extra trains this year as it has been so popular in the past, and we are pleased to say that we have filled most of these and we are not yet into November; the outcome looks as if we will make good some of the early season shortfall.





As I write this, Halloween is in progress and we have decorated our special trains and the conservatory at New Romney in an appropriately scary manner. The staff do not need to dress up to much as they are scary enough already but with appropriate music, food and costumes we have managed to give the children and adults a great time and it is nice to see people coming back year after year.

We are in the midst of major overhauls to our fleet and numbers 2 and 5 are in for work on their boilers leaving 6 in the queue to be worked on in the new year and 11 at some time in the future. Our supporters Association has made a big appeal for funds to help us get all the original Romney fleet operable for our 90th Birthday celebrations in 2017.

We will be laying most of the others up for the winter leaving just three engines in steam plus our two diesels. These will look after the Santa Specials, p/way work and driver experiences in the closed season. Number 4 (The Bug) has the most important job of all, as usual he will be pulling Santa in his Sleigh with all the presents for the children waiting at New Romney

We at the RH&DR wish all BGLR members a Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Season.
Peter Carpenter

Fairbourne Railway

One Hundred Years of Steam

Preparations are well in hand as the Fairbourne Railway readies itself for 2016, when the line will be celebrating one hundred years of operation as a steam railway. Of course, the Fairbourne pre-dates this and held a gala this year to commemorate 120 years of history, having started in 1895 as a 2 feet gauge horse tramway hauling bricks from the works adjacent to the Cambrian Coast Line. Next year, however, celebrates the purchase of the line in 1916 by WJ Bassett-Lowke and conversion to a steam hauled 15 inch gauge line, with motive power provided by the Bassett-Lowke Little Giant Class 20 Prince Edward of Wales.

Over the last three years, the railway's May Galas have welcomed visiting 15 inch gauge locomotives, which necessitated the laying of a third rail on the Beach Road siding to enable them to run, since the railway was re-gauged to 12 ¼ inches in 1986. The Centenary of Steam Gala on May 28th to 30th, 2016,

will require visiting engines to be stabled under cover and this has meant more complex track work to be installed.



The sector plate has now been converted to dual gauge and the line continues into the loco shed via a dual gauge diamond crossing. Beyond the shed the line joins the traverser which was already dual gauge, dating from the line's conversion from 15 inches in the eighties. All of this work was done inhouse. A dual gauge point is being commissioned to link this track work with the current dual gauge running line alongside Beach Road.

In October the two glass screen ended 15 inch gauge coaches numbers 16 and 20 built in 1950 by G&S for Dudley Zoo but purchased by the Fairbourne in 1960, were delivered by road. These early arrivals for the Gala, resplendent in blue livery and sporting Fairbourne crests arrived from Windmill Farm. Owned now by Austin Moss, he has agreed for them to be resident at Fairbourne. Also delivered by the same lorry was Gwril, R20886/ 43, the Lister which ran at Fairbourne in the John Wilkins era. This has been loaned to the railway to test the newly laid dual gauge track formations in readiness for the May Gala.



Next May should see a historic train of former Fairbourne coaches hauled by iconic locos from the past on 15 inch gauge metals once again and news of the visiting engines will be revealed in due course.

Graham Billington



Eastleigh Lakeside Railway

Sunday July 19th the Lakeside Railway reverberated to the sights and sounds of fifteen steam locomotives as they operated an intensive service during the Summer Steam Gala. There were a number of unusual combinations for example 7½" gauge 4-4-2 Atlantic No: 4789 '*William Baker*' double heading with Romulus 0-4-0 '*Sanjo*'. Heading a demonstration freight train during the event was Bullock built 4-6-2 Pacific No: 1002 '*The Empress*' and, in a busy period, the train was held in the triangle at Monks Brook which gave an opportunity for some very different photographs.

On the 23rd August, the railway operated its popular 'Southern Railway Engines Day' running not only the



railway's own Southern locomotives but also guest engines from the Ingfield Light Railway in the shape of 10¼" gauge Schools Class No: 905 '*Tonbridge*' and King Arthur Class No: 771 '*Sir Sagramore*'. Also in attendance was Drummond Randall's impressive 10¼" gauge Terrier, No: 84 '*Crowborough*', heading 'The Birchley Flyer', and making light of the railway's gradients.

Although the weather was rather dismal at the start of the day, it failed to dampen the spirits of the many visitors and the sight of a Schools Class, a King Arthur Class and Lord Nelson Class,(No: 850 '*Lord Nelson*'), triple heading lifted the gloom completely especially as they made a glorious sight leaving Parkway Station shrouded in smoke and steam. As the day progressed, and the weather improved, Lakeside took on a late Summer glow and the engines in steam added a timeless quality to the scene.

The 1st September saw another film crew descend on the railway to film one of the Bullock built locomotives, No: 1001 '*The Monarch*'. Woodcut Media were filming the engine for a programme to be screened later in the year on the History Channel called, 'Combat Trains'. During the Second World War,



'The Monarch' was loaned by a previous owner, Captain Holder, to the army to train commandos in the art of de-railing and destroying locomotives, and this loan is recorded on a small plaque attached to *'The Monarch'*'s tender.

'The Monarch' left one starring role, to adopt another as '*Gordon*' at the final, and successful, 'Day Out With Thomas' event of 2015 over the weekend of 5th and 6th September.



Several visiting locomotives arrived at Lakeside for the Annual Small Engines Gala, for 7½" gauge engines, that took place on Sunday 20th September. The visitors included, on static display, 8¼" gauge No: 815 '*Carolyn*' from the nearby Bankside Miniature Railway, GWR 0-6-0T No: 1369 also from Bankside and George Shrapnell's battery electric Baguley 0-6-0 '*Criccieth Castle*' based upon the Ffestiniog Railway's P/W locomotive. Two engines making a welcome return were Stuart Duncan's GWR 4-6-0 Grange No: 6868 '*Penros Grange*', and Andrew Bury's Black Five No: 45440. Naturally, working alongside the visiting locomotives were those from Lakeside's own stable of 7½" gauge engines.

Baldwin 2-4-2 No: 7 '*Sandy River*' entered the workshops at the end of September for repairs to the main steam pipes but on thorough examination it was discovered that the left hand cylinder required new gaskets for the covers and new shut off valves were needed for the water gauge. Earlier in the Summer, as a means of reducing the oscillations and give a smoother ride, additional weights were placed on the front of '*Sandy River*'. All the works will be completed shortly, giving sufficient time for any running in, and remedial work, to be carried out in readiness for the forthcoming Santa Specials when, no doubt it will be one of the star performers.

Other visitors to the workshop have included the railway's stalwart battery electric locomotive, '*Eurostar*' which underwent a significant amount of work including the replacement of the drive chains, bushes

changed in the electric motors, brake valve replaced and new bearings in the front bogie. Following a period of running in, the locomotive has now returned to the operational fleet



The work to replace the smokebox and general overhaul on Bullock 4-6-2 Pacific No: 2006 '*Edward VIII*', was completed by the middle of July and it was steamed on the 21st July before its running in period.

Rob Hart and Simon

Merritt, from the railway, took a break away from Eastleigh Lakeside and visited the privately owned Spinney Light Railway taking with them 4-4-2 Atlantic No: 4789 '*William Baker*'.

Lakeside Railway operated throughout the half-term holiday with some very heavily loaded trains. Of course, like many other miniature railways, the number of people visiting was in direct proportion to the weather. The culmination of the week's running was the special Halloween Event when the station and café were decorated with ghostly images, incredible cobwebs and flashing lights. All the trains sported ghoulish headboards, severed body parts, a profusion of rats and staff in macabre outfits and, as each train made its approach into Parkway Station, it had to pass through the remains of a very atmospheric cemetery before entering the relative calm of the station.

A period of quiet activity now descends on the railway as preparations are made for the Santa Specials and the daily running throughout the schools' Christmas Holidays. Article and all photographs by Lionel Kay

Foxfield Miniature Railway

Editor's Note - Chris Sutton and his railway will be joining BGLR in January, here is his introduction

To those that don't know about our little railway in the heart of Staffordshire, the Foxfield miniature railway is a 7 1/4" gauge ground level railway. Work started in 2007 with almost all the work done by the junior Volunteers ranging from 10 to 18 from the FLRS site.

The Railway was funded by a grant from Staffordshire county council who kindly donated us £5500 to start the railway. The first trains moved around the railway early 2009 but passenger carrying didn't begin until 2010 when trains ran almost all weekends. Currently the railway is approximately 950 yards long. The railway has three stations, the first is based by the entrance to the FLRS site and is the main terminus of the site holding the ticket office loco shed and sidings. Then the railway turns sharply and steeply round to the right up a gradient of around 1 in 25. It then levels out on the main straight along the back of the site following the fence line to the FLRS overflow car park. At the end of the main straight there is a passing point which leads to our new extension a balloon loop that brings the trains back to the main line and to the start point.



Our season has almost come to an end as weather permitting we may have a few days left to run over the Christmas period, this year has seen our best yet with 1000+ passengers for our small line. Anyone wishing to drop by for a chat there will be staff on site every Sunday until the end of the Christmas period.

Editors Note - FLRS mentioned above is the Foxfield Light Railway www.foxfieldrailway.co.uk which is a standard gauge railway with huge gradients, running as steep as 1:19 in places and is the steepest adhesion worked standard gauge line in Britain.

Screen shot of the new website:

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Britain's Great Little Railways (BGLR) website. At the top left is the BGLR logo, which is a circular emblem featuring a steam engine and the text "BRITAIN'S GREAT LITTLE RAILWAYS". The main title "Britain's Great Little Railways" is displayed prominently at the top center. Below the title, there is a navigation bar with links for "FIND A RAILWAY", "POTENTIAL OWNERS/OPERATORS", and "MEMBERS ONLY". On the left side, there is a sidebar titled "RAILWAYS" containing a list of various miniature railways in the UK, such as Barnards Miniature Railway, Beer Heights Light Railway, Bekonscot Railway, Bentley Miniature Railway, Bickington Steam Railway, Brookside Miniature Railway, Bure Valley Railway, Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway, East Herts Miniature Railway, Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway, Echills Wood Railway, Evesham Vale Light Railway, Exbury Gardens Steam Railway, Fairbourne Railway, Fancott Miniature Railway, Ferry Meadows Railway, Foxfield Miniature Railway, Great Cockcrow Railway, Great Laxey Mine Railway, Grosvenor Park Miniature Railway, Hambleton Miniature Railway, Hollycombe Steam Museum, Hotham Park Railway, Kirklees Light Railway, and Wimborne Model Railway. At the bottom of the sidebar is a row of icons representing different operating systems and browsers. The central content area features the text "BGLR - THE UK'S BEST MINIATURE RAILWAYS" above a photograph of a steam locomotive pulling a train through a wooded area. Below the photo, a descriptive paragraph reads: "Britain's Great Little Railways (BGLR) represents the UK's leading narrow, miniature and minimum gauge steam & diesel railways." A footer banner at the bottom of the page contains the text "Our members will ensure that you have a safe journey" followed by a series of small icons.

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