

Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 69



October 2017

Autumn General Meeting

The meeting was hosted by David Humphreys at his North Bay Railway. A select band of 28 members from 16 railways attended the meeting.

The 20 inch gauge railway was opened in May 1931 using steam outline diesel engine locomotives built by Hudswell Clarke. The first locomotive, Neptune, a replica of the Flying Scotsman, was powered by a two cylinder Dorman diesel engine rated at 26 h.p, at 1,800 rpm and the transmission was via a Vickers-Coates



torque converter and shaft drive to a final reduction gearbox mounted on the leading coupled axle. It was the first locomotive in the world to incorporate this form of hydraulic transmission, which is still used for modern industrial shunting engines. Neptune was followed by Triton in 1932 and these two locos were the only ones on the NBR until 2008 - over 70 years of service.



When David formed the North Bay Railway Company in 2006 one of his objectives was to re-unite the Hudswell Clarke locos. This has been achieved with Robin Hood (built 1932) and Poseidon (originally called May Thompson and built in 1933) now on the loco roster.

Despite all that history, on the day our train was pulled by a new build steam engine, Georgina manufactured by David's engineering company and very effective it was and looked wonderful as well.



Back to the meeting, which was held in the very attractive Glass House Cafe, and was short, sharp and to the point - I hope that the members had plenty to discuss after the meeting because not much was discussed during it. The minutes have been distributed.

After the meeting a train ride behind Georgina and then to lunch. This was an excellent beef stew followed by sandwiches etc and rounded off by a selection of fantastic cakes. A tasty feast and far too many calories but I wasn't counting. Thank you, David and your excellent team for a great day at your railway.

BGLR NEWS

The AGM and Spring General Meeting will be held at the Moors Valley Railway, our Chairman's railway and all are invited. The proposed date is Wednesday March 7th at 11.00 am. Hopefully we will be distributing posters and brochures at the meeting so please ink it in your diaries for next year.

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/ by entering the username bglr and the password kcnsy37

Iain Dinnes gave an update on HRA and other matters at the meeting which were included in the minutes of the Autumn Meeting. There is nothing further to add.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway.

Following the euphoria of the 25th Anniversary Weekend, life at the railway settled down to the usual routine with visiting engines, DOWT and normal daily running.

The weekend of 19th and 20th August was celebrated in style with a 'Big Engines Visiting Weekend' when the railway welcomed several locomotives and their support crews from different organisations. The locomotives varied in style from Tinkerbelle, 'Ettie Faith', from the East Herts Railway, through to the impressive A3 No: 4472 'Flying Scotsman', from the South Downs Railway at Pulborough. A more local visitor was 'Horton' which had travelled but a relatively short distance from the nearby Moors Valley Railway. Our friends from Ingfield Manor brought along King Arthur Class No: 771 'Sir Sagramore', together with Royal Scot No: 46100 'Royal Scot' and 'Red' Black Five No: 5156 'Ayrshire Yeomanry'. All the visiting and resident locomotives put on a superb display much to the delight of the enthusiasts, both young and old, who supported the event.



Of course, the final 'Day Out With Thomas', on Saturday and Sunday 2nd and 3rd September, proved as popular as ever and, despite the slightly inclement weather on the Sunday, children and their families enjoyed seeing 'Thomas', 'Gordon' and 'Henry' haul the trains and were delighted to meet Rusty, the station cleaner, and the man in charge of the railways of Sodor, The Fat Controller.

The final event of the Summer period, was the 'Small Engines Visiting Weekend' which followed a very similar pattern to the earlier 'Big Engines'. The Bankside Miniature Rail way, being very close to Lakeside, was able to bring three of their locomotives including 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge 2-6-2T 'Carolyn' which, liberated from its usual elevated track, ran along a short piece of ground level line. Once again, Ingfield Manor Railway were present bringing along two splendid 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge 0-6-0 Terrier tank engines, No: 40 'Brighton' and No: 84 'Crowborough'. Whilst it was good to see all the steam locomotives, it was also a pleasure to observe a small battery powered diesel shunter with an impressive array of engine sounds and a 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge 'Railmotor' owned by Craig Gluyas.





Not all the traffic was one way, and three of Eastleigh's own engines A4 No: 4498 *'Sir Nigel Gresley'* Lord Nelson No: 850 *'Lord Nelson'* and Bullock built No: 1002 *'The Empress'* left Hampshire and were the guests of other railways. *'Sir Nigel Gresley'* and *'Lord Nelson'* went to Stapleford Miniature Railway for their August Bank Holiday spectacular. Although it was the first time for *'Lord Nelson'* to be at Stapleford, the A4 was returning to its former home, albeit for a short visit.

'The Empress' ventured further afield to the Rudyard Lake Steam Railway in Staffordshire for their 2017 Steam Gala on 16th and 17th September where she ran sporting *'Surrey Border and Camberley Railway'* lettering on her tender, making quite a show.

Although it is good to see trains running, we must remember that without good track none of this would be possible and, following the end of daily running, attention switched to track maintenance with worn out sleepers replaced and the track levelled and tamped.

In the workshop, the substantial overhaul of Bullock No: 2005 *'Silver Jubilee'* is entering into



its final stage and the restoration of another Bullock locomotive, the recently acquired No: 1003 *'Western Queen'* has begun, although it is quite clearly going to be a long process before it is completed. Of course, other engines will pass through the workshop in the coming months as routine maintenance is carried out.

Lionel Kay





Photographs by Lionel Kay Top to Bottom

Ingfield Manor's King Arthur class No: 771 'Sir Sagamore' Big Engines' Weekend

East Herts' 'Ettie Faith' Big Engines' Weekend

A4 4472 'Flying Scotsman' on the traverser at Parkway Big Engines' Weekend

No: 46100 'Royal Scot' and No: 5156 'Ayrshire Yeomanry' double heading Big Engines' Weekend

Battery operated diesel shunter Small Engines' Weekend

Craig Gluyas's impressive Railmotor Small Engines' Weekend

Ingfield Manor's two Terriers double heading Small Engines' Weekend

Bankside's 'Carolyn' on a short piece of 8¼" gauge track Small Engines' Weekend

Work on replacing life-expired sleepers at Monks Brook Halt

Ballasting track at Monks Brook Halt

Hollycombe Steam in the Country.

Hollycombe Steam in the Country enjoyed a busy summer season with visitors enjoying the recently refurbished Haunted House, the oldest in the world dating back to the early years of the 20th century, when it was constructed by master fairground rides manufacturers Orton and Spooner.

During intermittent dry spells over a very wet summer Hollycombe's volunteers worked on restoring and



repainting the canopy to the Quarry Railway and also a number of station buildings, plus giving a new red colour livery to the railway carriages, originally constructed for the long-closed Ramsgate Electric Tunnel Railway. Elsewhere, work continued apace throughout the 2017 season on Hollycombe's steam boats, currently in the site workshop and which should be re-introduced ahead of the 2018 season. The ride consists of six boats

driven by an overhead line shaft from a 1901 Brown and May portable engine. The riders in each boat pull a rope to control the drive and therefore the height to which their boat swings.

Unfortunately 4 out of 6 Saturday evening openings in September and October were adversely affected by



the weather, including the end-of-season finale event 'Halloween Fairground at Night.' However, this did not appear to put off hundreds of hardy souls who attended the Halloween evening in all manner of scary guises, braving the railway journey past the abandoned Quarry!

Hollycombe is actively looking for more volunteers to assist with ongoing projects across the site. Hollycombe Trustee Brian Gooding commented: 'Hollycombe couldn't open without volunteers. Keeping the rides running is our main task - we are very much a Working Museum which comes alive on open days. The smell of steam, the colour of the Fairground and the sound of the Fairground Organs combine at Hollycombe to create a scene that can't be experienced elsewhere. Whilst maintaining the Collection requires dedication and a wide range of engineering skills, we need volunteers across all areas to help Hollycombe excel once more. Hollycombe is now closed but opens for the spring season on Good Friday, 30 March 2018. *Nigel Philpott*

Moors Valley Railway

With the end of our peak season upon us, we have been able to do some much needed restoration work on the track now daily running has finished. We have renewed track outside Lakeside Station which involved making two new points and several track panels, renewing the track bed and relocating a signal. This was completed before October half term and is a great improvement.

Our Autumn Gala in September was a great success with five visiting engines: Mrs Darling, Tarn Beck, Captain Hook, Ross and Jack as well as many of our own engines in steam over the course of the weekend providing an intense passenger service as well as freight trains.

Our next event is Tank Engine Day on Sunday 5th November. Our tank engines, as well as 'Tinkerbell' class locomotives Idris and Molly, will be running the service the wrong way around the track providing visitors with a completely different ride to usual!



We have also been looking ahead to Christmas and our popular Santa Specials. With three days already sold out, limited tickets on one day remain for people to enjoy their train ride & a visit to Father Christmas who provides gifts for all as well as festive refreshments. *Sophie Freemantle*

Thompson Park Railway

Well what can we say about 2017. The first three months of the year saw the membership working very hard indeed to add a third rail and platform to our station complex. We had help on the financial side with a donation of £1000 from the Tesco bags of help. The main reason for the new platform was to cope with the great increase of passenger numbers we have experienced over the last few years. One of the things we like to do is present passengers with a gift when we reach another milestone. This year we hit three, 17000 single rides was hit





on the 17th September and because of us hosting the seven and a quarter gathering a week later we hit 18000 rides. October weather was poor and out of our potential nine running days we only managed five but towards the end of our final running day of 2017 (not forgetting our Santa Special) we hit 19000 rides for the year. A complimentary 12 ride super saver was presented to the family who purchased that ticket.

With such a lot of positives from 2017 it is sad to report that we had our clubroom broken into twice during the year and we have had three attempts at breaking into our sheds.

We have four weekends now before we run our Santa special which takes place the first weekend in December. There is no need to book just turn up between 12 noon and 2pm on either Saturday 2nd or Sunday 3rd December.

The park we operate in is having a lot of lottery heritage money spent on it during the winter and a play and display car park should be open next year right by the side of our railway. One project we have in mind is to put a canopy over the platform so we are looking for major funding to help with this. *The two pictures show a busy Sunday on our new platform and the second is a picture of the family who were our 19000 ride of the year Michael Bailey.*

Can Volunteering on Miniature Railways Help Prevent Dementia?

In the last Newsletter there was mention of my research into the dementia related benefits of volunteering on lines such as the Great Laxey Mine Railway. I thought readers may be interested in the background to this initiative.

In the past, when talking about the viability of model railway clubs, conversations often covered news of departed colleagues. Although cancers, heart problems etc. featured, dementia did not. In spring 2015, I proposed that the dementia research establishment investigate why modellers appeared to avoid the disease, find out why and how this was happening. I failed to get any useful response. At the 2015 National Model Railway Show at the NEC, I interviewed representatives of 20 UK model railway clubs, a membership of some 1,100 modellers and an average age around 65. According to the experts, my sample should have produced 40 or more cases of dementia. However, it revealed just 4 (and then only 'possible') cases.

Significant factors were that railway modelling involves a variety of handicraft skills, painting, soldering, operating etc., and concentration. The 'why' came from the late guitarist "Django" Reinhardt. He demanded his students practice to move the dexterity to play from the neocortex part of the brain to the limbic system, the brain's back office. A bit like when we learn how to tie our shoelaces! However, when modelling, the lack of continuity plus the variety of skills, meant that front office concentration was needed whenever we picked up a soldering iron or operated a point lever, or mistakes would occur. If brain cells are unused, they risk decay or atrophy. Atrophy of the neocortex is more commonly known as Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, much of the dexterity involved in modelling and operating continued to exercise the neocortex thereby preventing dementia. Also all the NEC 'subjects' were active members of model railway clubs. This interaction only happened occasionally, i.e. at weekly meetings, and thus continued to stimulate the neocortex as well as encouraging, sharing and motivating modelling skills.

Although, the NEC research only considered railway modellers, the common factors can be read across to other handicrafts and pastimes including the active engagement in miniature and heritage railway groups, and therefore, hopefully, with similar dementia prevention benefits. Restoration and operation volunteers have to be involved in a variety of dexterity and traditional handicrafts, there is intermittent application and working in groups. This message could give miniature and heritage railways significant recruiting and

membership retention arguments, particularly where the average age of volunteer teams keeps increasing.

When outlining the above, the response is often 'makes sense – why aren't 'they' taking it up?' In trying to engage the wider dementia research body, I encountered two barriers. Dementia research is dominated by pharmaceutical companies and the care home sector, neither interested in reducing potential future revenue. I called the other the academic research paradox. New research will only be considered where research is already underway! Support requires academic supervisors to sponsor the new work and related papers already published in journals which will in turn cite the new work. My new approach didn't fit with existing research pathways, experts and communities! So I am still doing my own thing!

If I am to persuade the relevant academic, medical and government bodies that dementia can be prevented, I need more hard data to get acceptance and support from the appropriate bodies. For this I now want to survey the UK's heritage and miniature railways and their active volunteers. At this stage I should point out that this is not so much a clinical trial, as referred to in the last BGLR Newsletter, but a comparative keeping healthy survey. The actual survey is still at the idea forming stage. Do we have sufficient knowledge to review what happened in the last year or do we need to start keeping records, lets say in 2018.

My idea is a comparative survey of a 12 month period with questions based on, by railway: total active membership numbers, ideally grouped in 10 year blocks to provide when added together an age profile of each railway and, collectively, the total survey. Then the sad bit (hopefully lots of nil returns) – membership lost by age and reason. For ill health or worse an indication of the type of illness. That is because in the wider population, the 'hit' levels for dementia are very similar to certain other diseases, such as heart disease. Ideally, at the end of the 12 month period survey we will be able to say that this group of (total active BGLR) volunteers are much the same as everyone else for X, Y and Z, but BGLR volunteers are avoiding dementia! Even if some operations only have a handful of members and no losses, collectively they could add up to hundreds of volunteers.

The benefits of the survey could mean stronger cards when negotiating with Lottery Funding, local planning bodies, remove VAT on hand tools etc? Moreover, increasing awareness of the dementia related benefits should not only bring in more and younger volunteers but also encourage more of the large army of armchair railway society members to join operational teams.

To achieve this, I need to ask if there are BGLR lines interested in participating in such a survey? If so please contact me at david.powell@waitrose.com. If you have ideas how participation could be made simpler for you, please let me know. Meanwhile, based on my NEC findings I will continue to nibble away at communities, organisations, opportunities as they arise, to encourage pastimes which involve dexterity, concentration and, ideally, social groups, to try and reverse the dark dementia clouds being forecast by the mainstream of dementia research. *David Powell, Princes Risborough.*

Fancott Miniature Railway

Our railway had a good season this year and closed on the 28th October following the running of the Halloween trains.

In August we celebrated 21 years of the railways operation with a visiting steam and battery engine gala. The day was very well attended with a number of visiting engines to keep them interested and a frequent train service. We also had visits from children from a local day care centre which was enjoyed by all and they will be returning next year.



Our last train of the year will be a special for a customer who requested that a train ride be provided for the people attending his wake, a somewhat sad end to the year. During the winter break the rolling stock wheelsets will be sent away for modification ready for next year's running. *Ron Stanbridge*

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And finally some Halloween pictures from Deepest, Darkest Eastleigh





All pictures by James Brace