

Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 62



January 2016

Rudyard Retrospective 2000 to 2015

Eileen and I bought the railway from Peter Hanton on 13th October 2000 and sold it to Simon Clarke and his new Leek & Rudyard Railway on 18th December 2015. Of the railway we bought in 2000 today only some of the rails, a few sleepers and the 2 internal combustion locos remain largely unchanged. All but 1 of the 13 coaches are new along with all the 4W wagon fleet and 3 Exmoor steam engines. The change can be best seen in the before and after photographs. When we started for some years we had no mains power and no telephone. A major part of this change is thanks to the efforts of a very talented group of volunteers which we developed and encouraged from day 1.



We bought the railway as something we could do together around my passion for trains so that I could drive and Eileen could guard. It never worked out like that. At the time we bought the railway we both worked full time in demanding jobs. Typically I was promoted the day we signed the contract to buy and again in 2003. When I retired from full time work in 2007 I was Director of Finance at Blackpool juggling an annual budget there approaching half a billion pounds against the constant need for just another few £1000 for improvements at Rudyard. How we both did that we have no idea and could not possibly contemplate doing it now.

In the initial period we battled against three main pressures. Firstly the need to catch up with the arrears of maintenance on the track. Secondly to improve the facilities at the railway for the public and for repairs



and maintenance. Thirdly to meet the public demand to travel as we were always short of carriages. Traffic went up 20%+ every year. Trains at that time ran every 40 minutes or every 20 minutes if two trains were running. That meant 5 minute turn rounds at Rudyard and the trains running 30 miles a day. Once we retired from our professional work in mid 2007 the railway quickly took over our lives. Traffic continued to grow and we expanded the coach fleet to match. We lost money every year up to 2008 and have made profits every year since.

We opened the Platform 2 café in 2009 and that gave a big boost to takings. The café made steady profits but we gained much more from increased ticket sales as people would now wait for a train. The main issue was it was difficult to staff on our seasonal basis. It was also a shock to find how a significant proportion of the public have a very low regard for anyone who works in a café in a way they don't for someone working on the train. It was nice from time to time to tell someone who was being particularly patronising that they were talking to the owner of the railway.

We also built up our workshop capacity at Rudyard and even more so at home in Lancashire. We are proud that every engine has run at some time every year for the last 15 years and that again at our last gala every item of rolling stock was used (10 engines 13 coaches 9 wagons). Three of the 4 Exmoor engines have had their 10 year overhaul at Rudyard in the last 2 years.

I had promised Eileen that we would retire for good when I was 65. We decided it was time to sell in early Spring 2014 when I had turned 64. We made Simon Clarke aware of this and we had some serious discussions about a sale to him. Simon had previously bought the track , rolling stock and locomotives of the former Mull railway. However in July 2014 it was clear he would not be able to proceed and he was still looking at sites in Scotland. So we put the railway on the market publically and appointed agents. There is a saga around our experiences of the sale too long for this piece but if anyone has to go down this route do contact us privately.



We had a lot of interest and most of it was a waste of time but there were a few serious people. Then in February 2015 Simon's latest site in Scotland fell apart and his circumstances changed so we did a deal in a couple of days. That was the easy part.

This year (2015) has been very difficult for us as Eileen became ill at the end of 2014 and remains so. We had agreed with Simon to run the railway to the end of 2015. But the actual sale contract was not signed until mid October. This was due Simon's desire to get planning permission for a new shed and to prevarication by our landlords Staffordshire County Council over the terms of a new lease to him. The uncertainty was very trying and we reached a point in August where we decided that if the sale to Simon went through that was great but if not we would close come what may at the end of 2015 and I lined up capacity to lift the track and clear the site.

Fortunately It was finally a happy ending with a smooth handover taking place on the 18th of December and the Leek & Rudyard Railway ran its first services on 1st- 3rd of January.

We believe over the years we did some things right:

1. If it's broken it must be fixed asap or scrapped/sold.
2. Volunteers are a major asset and should be treated as such but a formal supporters group is not a good idea.
3. The public pay the bills and services to them come first. We aimed squarely at the family market.
4. We used the internet effectively to advertise at minimal cost.
5. We never borrowed from the banks directly despite re mortgaging our house twice to fund the railway.
6. We bought our steam engines from Exmoor and they are truly excellent.

We did some things wrong:

1. Covered enclosed waiting facilities and carriages are important and should have come earlier.
2. We should have brought in ticket machines much, much earlier.
3. In the early years we developed a premium Santa experience but significantly undercharged.
4. Did not use the Press as well as we should have in later years to advertise and win friends and influence.



Hopefully the new Leek & Rudyard Railway will now move on and prosper. The railway needed some new ideas and drive and has the opportunity to become something very special as a merger of two good railways. It could become the longest of its type and it certainly has the most equipment. It's very pleasing

that the volunteers are sticking with it and indeed it will be managed by some of them on a day to day basis. I hope that in the future occasionally I will be allowed back to steam up one of the two engines we still own but for the moment we will step away whilst the new regime establishes itself.



We also hope to get about with our 7 ¼ inch engines which are back in the workshop. Finally last year I fulfilled a long held ambition and bought a cabin steam launch the LuLuJo which has already given us a lot of pleasure. The challenge of running a condensing compound steam engine is interesting and very different from railways.

Mike & Eileen Hanson

December 2015

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 Spring meeting is on the 8th and 9th of March so the AGM will be held on March 2nd to avoid this clash and give our railways plenty of time for their Easter preparations.

The new BGLR website is now fully functional at www.bglr.org. I hope that you have already checked out your entry. If you want to change anything for the 2016 season just send me the copy and photos and I will change your page.

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

The new Sidelines No, 142 and Broadlines No 51 are available from the HRA Website.

I have no other updates on HRA matters

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Thompson Park Railway

We always run our Santa Special on the first weekend in December. We decorate our locomotives and coaches ready for Santas visit. Our clubroom is decorated by junior members at the same time. On Thursday the 3rd of December we were informed by the park staff that the park was being closed because of the imminent storm. The Santa special was to be cancelled. The storm hit the park but fortunately there was no damage after the gales.

We decided to re run the Santa Special the coming weekend but again the park was shut down because of the next storm. So third time lucky it was decided to run on the last weekend before Christmas even though the football club was holding a large Christmas event nearby. Frantic calls to the local radio stations and busy fingers on social media plus a lot of text messages to people who had shown an interest in coming to the event helped us with a steady stream of visitors over the weekend our figures were about 50% down on 2014 but we ran.

We had a large amount of gifts left over and they were donated to the local Salvation Army Christmas Children's appeal. Well that was it for 2015 instead of our usual four week break it was only going to be a two week break.

We hadn't reckoned on the next storm to hit us.

Christmas day and Boxing day saw over 48 hours of continuous heavy rain in the Burnley area and the



message came through that the park had suffered its worst flooding in its 87 year history. Visiting the park on Sunday the 27th the railway was about 75% under water and our bridge had been totally submerged.

The park was again locked down for safety reasons and it would be another two days before we were allowed in to view the damage.

By the Wednesday most of the flood water had subsided and we were able to walk the track and report on what we found. Apart from a tremendous amount of silting on first viewing only about a 10 yard stretch of track near the bridge had any major damage.

We start meeting again for maintenance on the first Wednesday in January and we will take it from there. Looks like we will be cleaning up for quite a while.



Great Laxey Mines Railway

Lloyds Bank supports Black Trains rather than a Horse! The Volunteer Team at the Great Laxey Mines Railway Company Limited wish to thank colleagues at Lloyds Bank in the Isle of Man for their generous

donation and volunteer support. Colleagues at Lloyds Bank raised over £20,000 per annum through a weekly Friday dress down day when participants donate one pound to a charity fund. The Bank has a Charity Committee which allocates the funds raised to local charities. The Great Laxey Mines Railway Company Limited is always looking for funding and there was a need for new signage. The Lloyds Bank Charity Committee, headed by Kelly Taylor, very kindly offered a donation of £250 through the main Charity which is the Laxey Heritage Trust. However, on 26



September a group of Lloyds Bank volunteers joined the Railway Team for the day to weed and improve flower beds and paint fences. It was a job well done. Chairman, Alisdair Campbell commented “the Team is so grateful to these individuals who cheerfully worked very hard to improve the environment of the railway station. Our unique steam trains Ant and Bee take up much of our time and occasionally the niceties of appearance can take second place. All our thanks to the team from Lloyds Bank which gave up a Saturday to help the Railway”.

Women Power: another “first” became reality this year. Our first woman engine driver. Tanya Callow has qualified as an engine driver passing a training schedule that meets the benchmarks from an operational and safety perspective. Normally an accounting officer in the Finance Sector, Tanya changes office attire to wear her overalls on a Saturday to drive Ant and Bee, our two historic replica steam engines that delivered the mined ore from the Great Laxey Mine to the “Washing Floors (ore processing)” in Laxey village.

The GLMRCL already has woman volunteers as guards on the engines and Tanya can deliver an “all ladies” team of driver and guard. This demonstrates the opportunities for both learning and enjoyment that heritage railways can offer to the community. GLMRCL is manned by a volunteer team of all ages from A Level students to retired individuals. From a young student perspective, volunteering provides an excellent opportunity to build up a curriculum vitae that covers customer liaison, operational health and safety together with the acquisition of Victorian engineering skills. A robust cv “bedrock” for any young person looking for a career in the Island’s vibrant engineering sector or wider still.

The Hop tu Naa events on 24 October, 31 October and 1 November were the most successful ever. Over 1700 individuals attended these events which are unique to the Isle of Man although broadly are similar to Halloween but with a Celtic twist. The Volunteer Team worked flat out to accommodate such numbers which provided much needed income to support the railway. In fact our Hop tu Naa trains have become an Isle of Man tradition to complement major events such as the TT Races. The entire Team worked together including Board Directors (as it is a limited company) to make the events a memorable if not scary occasion for travellers! Special effects were provided by Pete Geddes and his mines team which maintain major historical sites such as the Great Laxey Mines.

The Railway always needs funds (likewise as many of our fellow Railways) but if fund raising permits then the Team wants to extend the railway to the Great Laxey Wheel (the largest working wooden water wheel in the World) and even take the railway underground into the mining tunnels where ore was transported from.



Fairbourne Railway

The Fairbourne Railway's 2016 'Centenary of Steam Gala' over the Spring bank Holiday 28th/29th & 30th May will see the return of iconic 15 inch gauge former residents *Count Louis* and *Katie*.

Count Louis, a Bassett-Lowke 4-4-2, was completed in 1924 for racing driver Count Louis Zborowski who at the time was building a private line at his home near Canterbury. After his death whilst competing in the Italian Grand Prix at Monza in October of that year, it was sold to the Fairbourne Railway in 1925 and was, for many years, the sole steam loco on the railway. This will be *Count Louis*' first return to the railway since the line was re-gauged to 12.25in gauge in 1986.



Katie, completed in 1956 by Trevor Guest for the Dudley Zoo Railway, and resident at Fairbourne from 1965-85 visited the Railway two years ago for a gala and operated over a short length of specially laid dual 12.25/15in gauge track. Now that dual gauge line has been extended and, equally importantly, the Railway is extending the dual gauge section back through the station to allow visiting 15in gauge locos access to the sheds and workshop meaning that they can now be stabled and serviced undercover.

To accompany the locos, the railway now has on long term loan from Windmill Farm Railway two original Fairbourne coaches, meaning that truly authentic 15in gauge era trains can be run.

The Gala will, as usual, feature an intensive service on its regular running line with all available 12.25 inch gauge locos in use, as well as a many other attractions.

A short update from Mike Bass at the **Strawberry Line Miniature Railway** - here at the strawberry line we will be celebrating 20 years since we started construction and to celebrate all fares for the 4 days 11th to the 14th of February will be at 1996 prices and I will be running all locos in the fleet inc 2 x royal livery class 67 plus 2 brand new shunting engines we will also have on display our original steam and battery locos so now on my knees praying for dry weather. *Then he sent me this!*



Needs to dry out a bit before February.

Another brief update from Steve Johnson at the **North Bay Railway** - Winter work is well underway on the railway. We will have replaced sleepers one quarter of the railway this winter with ballast to suit.

Neptune and Triton are getting minor winter overhauls after their hard work over last season. Poseidon is receiving some attention on the brake system, so Robin Hood is proving the permanent way motive power. We have also started a program of wheel replacements on our rolling stock beginning with coach B3.

Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway

We start 2016 on the back of another successful visit to New Romney by Santa Claus. He returned to great acclaim and made our end of year the best so far. Even in his busy schedule he managed to visit the railway every weekend in December and then every day in the week leading up to Christmas. Enjoyed by young and old alike he did us proud once again.

Last year in this edition of the newsletter I wrote about our acquisition of the Railway Café in Hythe. I am pleased to say that it has been a great success, with many alterations taking place during the year. The back room, unused in its former life has been transformed into a 1950 style railway tea room, with the original café being revamped with a 70s' decor and the addition of a separate coffee shop. This year will also see the total refurbishment of our restaurant in Dungeness. Major building work meant we had to close it in October, although we still ran trains down there for those who wanted to see this unique environment. All things being equal we have arranged for a grand re-opening on the 26th March, so fingers crossed for good building weather. For those of you who have visited Dungeness before, I am sure you will appreciate just what we are up against!

It just leaves me to say that the Management and Staff of the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway wish all members of the BGLR a great season, and look forward to seeing you at the next meeting in March.



Hambleton Valley Miniature Railway – Winter 2016 report

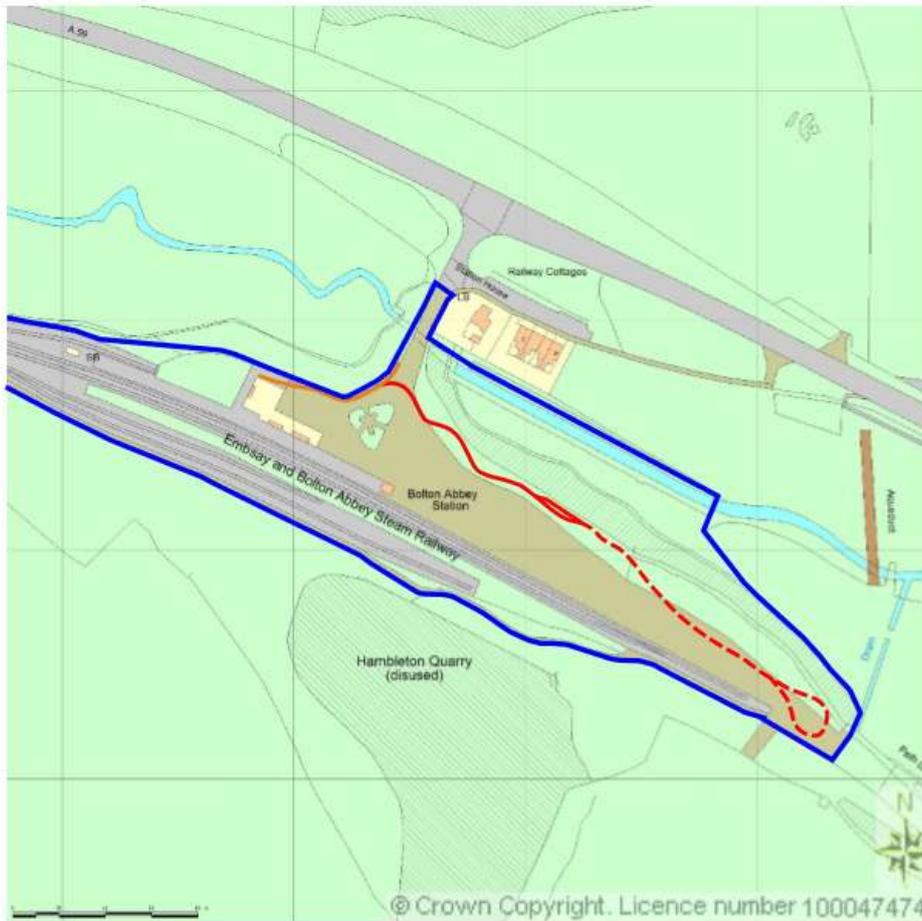
Wow, where did 2015 go???!!! Whatever happened, it certainly brought a good number of visitors (50% more than 2014!) with it. The result means that after 2 years of operating to 'King George V' (KGV), we are now in a position to push on with 'Phase 4'.

This will probably be one of the last developments (for a while) and, as per previous extensions, will be built in two parts over the next few years.

'Part A' will consist of 150 yards of track, replacement of the 'temporary' Turntable at KGV with a point to form a passing loop, and 75 yards of embankment – followed by 75 yards of cutting. The temporary 'head of steel' (somewhere near the junction for the 'Balloon Loop') will probably just receive a basic run-round facility to avoid propelling from KGV.

'Part B' will have to wait until the final ground clearance of fill material (destined for the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Railway's 'Platforms 2 & 3' project) so an accurate survey of the proposed route can be undertaken. 'Phase 4b' will include the 'Balloon Loop' which will simplify the operation significantly and 'may' even incorporate a tunnel! The below map was produced to support for our planning application and gives an idea of the final route.

HAMBLETON VALLEY MINIATURE RAILWAY



0 20 40 60 80 100
metres 1:2500 at A4

- Existing HMVR (10+ years)
- Current HMVR Development (phase 3)
- - - Future HMVR Development (phase 4)

Looking back at 2015, the highlight of the year was our 10th anniversary weekend in July.



Thursday 30th July 2015 marked 10 years of the HVMR, and to celebrate we held a mini-gala on Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th July. This weekend which chosen because it coincided with the Emsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway's 'Goods Train Day', Fish & Chip Special' and 'Diesel Running' Sunday! All 4 serviceable loco's were in traffic and we even had surprise visit by Colin Edmondson and his 'minimal gauge' loco, "Scamp"! Colin was one the first suppliers I dealt with when setting up the passenger operation so it was great to finally put a face to the name! Thanks to everyone who came and made the weekend a great success. We're already planning the next one, which might involve some new track...



Station Road Steam No. 23 "Stephen" / "Ashley", 20 189 and 10 274



Having a go on "Scamp" during a quiet moment at the Railway. The loco proved itself capable to take full 1 coach train - once the best driving technique of this Lister-inspired machine had been mastered as there's quite a few options! (Paul Lambert)



Let them eat cake! Thanks to Alison Harrison and Lynn Durrell (Phil's wife)

(Stephen Durrell)



Hopefully these pictures give an impression of the scale of earthworks required to get the track down to ground level. The top of the orange pegs represent the finished embankment level.

Best Wishes for 2016 from Will Lister

Eastleigh Lakeside Railway

Once again, the railway's 'Santa Special' events were very popular with all the trains fully loaded with eager children together with their equally excited parents and grandparents all wanting to have a chat with Santa and to tell him what they wanted on Christmas morning. Whilst the 'Santa Specials' took priority, a shuttle service operated between Parkway and Monks Brook stations offering an alternative to those passengers who wanted a ride on the train but did not want to see Santa. The Grotto, completed in early December, depicted a magical scene of snow men, white rabbits, of which Lewis Carroll would have been proud, and other wild creatures.

Unfortunately, the weather, during December, became more unsettled and although the railway remained open throughout the schools' Christmas holiday, the numbers travelling was a little disappointing, and at times, when the heavens opened, the rails disappeared under several inches of water.

The workshop was, to some extent, immune from the unseasonal weather, and the planned overhaul of 10¼" gauge 4-6-0 No: 6100 'Royal Scot' that included a re-tube, new smokebox, new exhaust pipes, a new single chimney and modifications to the ash pan was completed and the locomotive has been gently steamed around the circuit. With the new single chimney, designed and





manufactured by Simon Merritt, the engine looks more like the original Fowler version of the class that was built for the L.M.S. in the early part of the twentieth century.

Following the completion of the work on 'Royal Scot', it was found necessary to bring Bullock built 10¼" gauge 4-6-2 No: 1002 'The Empress' into the works also for a re-tube.

Radio Solent, the local B.B.C. radio station, has intimated that they might like to send a reporter to Lakeside to do an outside broadcast at some stage in the near future. This will be the second time, in the space of a few months when the railway has featured in one of the radio station's programmes since a reporter interviewed a couple of the volunteers as part of a feature on volunteering within the community. Looking further into the future, ELSR has a number of Special Events planned for 2016 which will be shown on the promotional leaflet and published on the website.



An image from Lakeside showing how the rain affected yet another of our railways during December



A word from Ron Stanbridge of the **Fancott Miniature Railway**

Many thanks to Swanley New Barn Railway who loaned us a loco and carriages so that we were able to open on July 4th following our devastating fire and to Thompson Park Miniature Railway who donated a sit in carriage to carry additional passengers. Without their generous support we could not have run at all in 2015.

In December we were able to return the loaned loco and carriages as we bought an 0-6-0 and an articulated carriage from the Lancaster and Morecombe Model Engineering Society and a Hymek from a private seller as well as two sit astride carriages from Station Road Steam. Work is in progress on the new combined loco and carriage shed which will have four roads.

The remains of the Class 47 and Herby will be picked up in February by the Hastings Miniature Railway in the hope that restoration is possible.



Editor's Note

Many thanks to all the contributors for a bumper New Year edition and I wish you all a very healthy and prosperous 2016

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And now to our serial - Part 1 of 4 from The Mortcombe Railway Society

The Chapel

For the sake of expediency the story begins some 12 years ago. We heard of this carriage not a great distance from Newbury and thus did our journey to Wantage and on to a small hamlet a few miles further on to where the carriage resided alongside its owners bungalow. We were warmly received and informed that in spite of considerable interest from a number of railways and individuals had declined it owing to its difficulty of removal. Whether this was in fact correct we do not know, whether it was cost, the logistics of removal in what was a difficult site or other factors. However we decided that with its considerable history that it would change custodianship and we would take it over and undertake the considerable chore of removal.

Prior to our visit the floor of the carriage had been removed by its then owner as over the years the floor had been suffering from fungal attack and was deteriorating and he was afraid that the fungus might have caused deterioration within the weight carrying beams that carried the weight of the carriage. One of our members, Peter Starr from Crondall near Farnham came over and "blocked out" the inside of the carriage with four inch by two inch timbers thus preventing the sides from distorting and perhaps breaking in on itself during the removal. This in itself being a challenging and sophisticated undertaking. But then Peter was an incredibly gifted person and it is a great sadness he is not with us anymore

Ann Yates, a member carried out the tidying up of it and organising much of its removal, it was now ready for its journey to Newbury. There is more, much more, but whilst not wishing to bore the reader with so much and too long a list of information we feel it better to leave the next chapter of its life 'till the next issue.

Editor's Note,

Peter sent me the history of the carriage which I have copied below. The colour reproduction of the original was not good.

See the next two pages

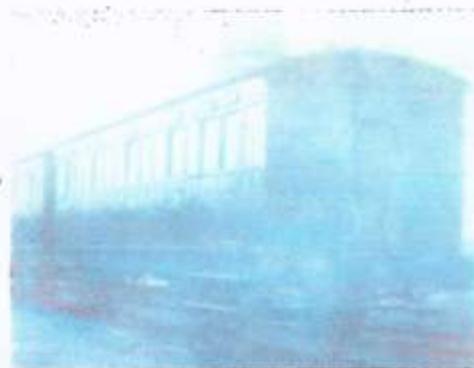
Cleobury Mortimer & Ditton Priors Light Railway Brake Third Coach No 1 or 3



The C M & D P L R, according to one source, bought four 4 wheel, 5 compartment Thirds from the North London Railway, numbers 1033, 1034, 1041 and 1043. This source, (Carriage Stock of Minor Standard Gauge Railways), states that double doors were added at one end of coaches No 1 & 3, this explains the odd spacing of the doors.

They were further altered by fixing shut the three middle compartment doors.

The opposite end door to the guards compartment became the entrance to the newly created saloon. The C M & D P L R had very low platforms or none at the halts, so two steps were added at each end under the doors. A Vestibule door was added at the saloon end.



Livery was Teak finish, with C M & D P L R on the left centre top panel and the running number on the right one. Class numbers were not carried on the lozenges.

No 1 was renumbered by the GWR on 22/7/23 as 4263, and was withdrawn on 20/2/26.

No 3 was renumbered by the GWR on 19/11/22 as 4264, and was withdrawn on 31/10/25.

The passenger service started on the 20/11/08 with the 4 ex N L R coaches,

which survived as the only coaches until the railway was taken over by the G W R. Lighting was by Gas and all coaches were fitted with the automatic vacuum brake. The two coaches were classified as Open 3rd / Combined Guards Luggage.



The number 1037 & NLR appear on a door hinge, the 7 being unclear and may be a 3 making the coach No 1033.



The GWR wasted no time in withdrawing the coaches, and they were sent to Swindon for scrapping. Word of mouth says that the coach was built by Mr Gardner, station master at Challow Station in 1938. This date is highly unlikely, 1927 or 1928 is more likely as the

coach would have been unlikely to have been saleable in 1938. The grounded coach became a Methodist Chapel and continued to be used as such until the late 1960s.



Due to its alterations, the coach would be best retained in its C M & D P L R condition.

FGAS 6/7/05.

