

# Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 64



July 2016

## Fairbourne Railway - Centenary of Steam

In 1916, Bassett-Lowke revitalised the moribund 2 feet gauge horse tramway at Fairbourne and narrowed the gauge to 15 inches just as he had done the previous year at Ravenglass. A brand new Little Giant locomotive duly arrived to inaugurate steam trains on the line.



The present 12 ¼ inch gauge incarnation of the railway celebrated this milestone over the 2016 May Bank Holiday weekend with a Centenary of Steam Gala. It was the first three day gala to be held at Fairbourne and attracted record numbers of visitors. Three guest steam locos and one i/c engine from Fairbourne's past attracted the attention of the visitors.

Over the winter the 15 inch gauge line was extended and a new island platform constructed. On this dual gauge section, the trains comprised ex-Fairbourne coaches 16 and 20 and were hauled by former Fairbourne favourites, Guest no, 14 Katie and Bassett-Lowke Class 30 Little Giant Count Louis. On the



Henry Greenly and the occasion was marked with a celebratory bottle of champagne to celebrate King George's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Saturday saw the launch of a new book on the history of the railway titled The Fairbourne Railway, A Centenary of Steam, published by Mainline & Maritime.

There was also a busy scene at Barmouth Ferry, where there was steam traction in 5 inch and 7 1/4 inch gauges on the new permanent miniature railway and a marquee housing Mick Mobley's Hornby Dublo layout and the Gwernol Fach 16 mm

traverser was displayed the loco that started steam haulage on the railway in 1916, Little Giant Class 20 no.22 Prince Edward of Wales, now King George. Making cameo appearances was Lister no. 20886, Gwrlil.

On the 12 1/4 inch gauge line, service trains of eight and nine coaches were run at half hourly intervals, hauled by residents, Tony, Gwrlil, Yeo, Russell and Sherpa, sometimes double-headed. Lining the platform were stalls and traders. A miniature traction engine rally was an added attraction. Austin Moss appeared as



layout along with an intriguing excavator diorama. A classic car was displayed, being a 1961 Berkeley, the current holder of the Tom Rolt Trophy, while a fairground organ added that extra touch of atmosphere.

The sun shone and the visitors came in numbers. There were many comments along the lines of the atmosphere being just like it was in the railway's past in scenes reminiscent of the old film clips of crowded trains. It was clearly the most successful gala to date, which leaves us with the pleasant headache of how do we follow that next year!

## BGLR NEWS

The BGLR Autumn General Meeting will be held at the Fancott Miniature Railway. The Fancott, Luton Road Toddington, Bedfordshire, LU5 6HT and hosted by Ron Stanbridge on Wednesday October 12th commencing at 11.00 am. Your official invite, agenda and lunch arrangements will be sent out in September. I look forward to meeting you there.

I have checked through the BGLR website and there are problems. When I set the site up I used material and pictures from many of the members own website. This means that many of the pictures are linked to the home site, if these are changed or removed they disappear from the BGLR site. To get round this I need to post my own pictures and then all is fine.

Below is a list of railways affected. Could someone from the railway email me some pictures of your railway so that I can add them to your railway's web page.

Bickington, East Herts, Great Laxey, Hambleton Valley, Rudyard Lake, Woking

In some cases I already have pictures used in the Newsletters but these could be out of date or no longer relevant - approved pictures from the railway concerned would be best,

Does anyone have news on the Littlehampton railway? Their website has not been updated this year although their Facebook page on May 27th was upbeat there have been no further updates.

It should also be noted that Brookside is closed whilst track damage is repaired following flooding on 11th June.

## 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/](http://www.hra.uk.com/) by entering the username bglr and the password kcnsy37*

## NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

### News from the Kirklees Light Railway

So far 2016 has been extremely action packed, although many of the things that have been going on have been behind the scenes things! It might have been Ian Allan who once wrote in an article in Railway World for a railway to appear to stand still to its visitors takes an awful lot of work.

After nearly 15 months away Fox's boiler finally returned to us from the receiving attention at Israel Newton's in Derbyshire. This work was mainly involved in modifying the front firebox throat plate to try and improve water circulation around the inner firebox. As built the Brian Taylor boilers on our smaller locomotives were very angular, with relatively small but very deep grates. After some investigation it was found that heading down towards the foundation ring a steam bubble was occurring which led to overheating which ultimately shortened the life of the inner fireboxes considerably.

*Badger* has been used as a test bed for a group of Modern Steam Engineers who have been working with the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway on draughting modifications on the USATC S160. Prior to taking the test rig to the Worth Valley the equipment was brought to the KLR first. To enable the tests to take place *Badger* had various probes set up to record what was happening. This has provided the KLR operating department with some very interesting and useful data which will be used to inform future modifications to the Taylor made KLR locomotives

Visitors to the KLR will know that although the railway runs on high embankments the railway also runs in deep cuttings and through a 511 yard long tunnel. Communication with the trains for emergency use had traditionally been with aged Nokia's, which are not only indestructible but importantly pensioner friendly.

Unfortunately even Nokia's wear out eventually and although a number were kept in reserve the cost of unlocking these had risen ridiculously and the fact that there was a significant black spot of over half a mile wasn't really satisfactory. The guard either had to walk or clamber up steep rock faces to try and get a signal.

Following discussions with colleagues at the Bure Valley, Ratty and Romney investigations were made into installing a digital radio system and a GPS



tracker. Tests of this proved surprising and the shock and delight on Operations Manager, Ian Sreeton's face when he was able to sit 80 yards into the tunnel and have a conversation with the office at Clayton West is probably what sealed the deal! The company used was Nortech in Carlisle who have for many years worked on the pioneering radio system at the Ratty. The system was installed in June and the benefits are already been felt. Not only is possible to talk to the trains if needed for the majority of the journey time but their location and usefully speed is all shown on a PC in the office at Clayton West.

*Katie* of course visited the Fairbourne Centenary of Steam Gala in May. This was a truly excellent event with the locomotive meeting friends old and new. Murray and his colleagues should be very proud of the event they staged. The celebrations continue for over the weekend of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September the KLR Gala will be "Fairbourne in the Hills" with a gathering of the 15" gauge era locomotives and stock. This event should feature subject to availability *Count Louis*, *Katie*, *Sian* and diesel locomotives and coaches from Austin Moss's splendid historic Fairbourne collection at Windmill Farm.

Stuart Ross



## Bure Valley Railway

### A Railway for all ages

The crew for the steam engines today are Bure Valley Railway's newest and youngest regular volunteer steam driver, Adam, at the mere age of 21, whilst on the second engine is John, our eldest regular volunteer steam driver (50 years difference).



#### **Andrew Barnes, Managing Director said:**

"Our volunteers get involved with the many aspects of running the railway and come from all walks of life. It is great to see all ages getting involved and being able to help the railway, but more importantly, enjoying their hobby."

The Bure Valley Railway really is a family friendly attraction in North Norfolk, with over 120,000 passengers every year, catering for both the young and older enthusiast alike. With events throughout the year, our next special event will be "Strawberries & Steam", every weekend in July.

## Thompson Park Railway

### **Mike Bailey writes**

Well all I can say is that 2016 has been a strange year so far. After the devastation of the park being flooded and over half of our track being under water and covered in river silt in December and January things could only get better.

The first job was making the decision as to whether we could operate and how soon. The Milburn Loop seemed to be the least affected so work began on clearing this section first. The membership rolled up their sleeves and during late January and February we managed to clear the contaminated ballast and all the debris from the river. Our normal opening for the season is the first Saturday in March, could we do it, would we be ready, will we get any passengers?

Yes we did only half of our track was ready but we decided to run trains around this circuit twice so we could still charge our usual price. We got passengers, there were problems with passing through the station but we managed. Our rides for March and April were down about 6%. So half the track open still a tremendous amount of work to do on clearing the rest of the track but help was at hand. An email from

Burnley College asking if they could send a small group of students down to help with the renovations. Eight lads and lasses plus there tutor arrived on our Wednesday maintenance days and really made a difference. Between our three crossings we had about 40 metres of badly contaminated ballast to remove and clean then replace with new edging stones.



Easter came and went with one gang working on the renovations and others continuing to operate the railway. Finally we got there we reopened the whole track and things started to get back to normal. The rest of April and May saw a great increase in passenger numbers with us even bringing our single day high on Sunday May 29th when during the park reopening weekend we took over 1000 rides.

Rides to the end of June have now seen a 21% increase on 2015. Our new locomotive class 91' Swallow' is proving a great attraction in its original British Railways colour. The last Sunday in July sees our annual Teddy Bears Picnic when we give free rides to all children who bring their teddy bears to the party. The last Sunday in August sees our second annual Super Hero Sunday free rides to anyone who turns up in fancy dress. Both events are very well attended.



## **Exbury Gardens Steam Railway**

### **Summer Steam Up at Exbury Gardens**

Exbury on a summer evening is a pure delight, especially when you are offered a glass of Pimms or a fruit cocktail and have the opportunity to ride the steam railway!

On Friday 15th July, Exbury Gardens are opening for an exclusive '**Summer Steam Soirée**'. The evening will begin at 7pm with a welcome summer drink on the terrace at Mr Eddy's Restaurant, before boarding carriages for a two-circuit run of Exbury's '**Rhododendron Line**'. The train passes through the Summer Lane Garden, at its best with herbaceous and perennial plantings. On the second circuit, the train will ease to a stop at the American Garden, where Exbury's expert guide will lead you on a short 20 min walk back to Mr Eddy's, taking in the tranquil Jubilee Pond, mysterious Jurassic Boardwalk and the colourful Hydrangea Walk. A delicious 2-course buffet dinner will be served on the terrace of Mr Eddy's Restaurant with food sourced from Hampshire suppliers.



### **NEWS FROM EVESHAM VALE LIGHT RAILWAY**

Work has concentrated on completing the cylinder overhaul of "Dougal" which failed late last year being very off beat, the cylinders were honed and new piston rings & valves were fitted, not too bad for an engine that has clocked up 15,000 miles since its last overhaul.



Coach No.1 has been repainted, which has taken nearly 5 months, the downside being that on some occasions we have struggled with not enough closed coaches. Therefore when 2 ex. Fairbourne coaches were advertised for sale by the Bure Valley Railway we decided to make an offer for them.

The coaches, No's 123 & 125 were both originally 12 ¼" gauge first class saloons, and have not been used at the BVR for many years.

Both coaches require significant work before they enter service. Ex Blenheim 15" gauge bogies have been obtained from Alan Keef Ltd, and these will also require a full overhaul. It is hoped that the first coach will enter service during 2017.

After a successful Santa (Yes I know its not summer yet) we are going to replace our party marquee, with a log cabin, which will allow a better Santa experience, and allow year round Birthday Parties, and not having to worry about damage to the marquee in high winds.

## Ferry Meadows Railway

### Why are we building two trams?

The story starts back in 1978 when Ferry Meadows Country Park was being built, the railway was in place ready to start working, and in those days the park was run by Peterborough Development Corporation, things were much easier in those days as you sat round a table and agreed to pay so much rent each year,



POWER UNIT WITH ONE TRAM CHASSIS AND FRAMEWORK

this went on for about ten years until the whole estate was taken over by Nene Park Trust, a charitable trust with a 999 year lease, at this stage things got a little bit more official and a lease was issued, the wording in this lease said that the railway would always operate with a guard, the reason behind that was the railway operated a steam locomotive and it would be unsafe to leave it unattended.

when I bought the railway and my lease was issued, I tried to get the line removed that said we needed a guard at all time, my reason being we now run a diesel hydraulic that can be turned off and made safe, but the powers at be at the time said "NO", and for the next five years I kept trying always getting the "NO", move forward again to 2014 and I approached them with a plan to build a pair of trams with locking doors and a dead man fitted in the cab, but only if I could operate them single manned, Eureka I got a "YES" but only after they had seen and approved my plans.

Jump forward now to November 2007





We got the go ahead two days before the Engineering Show at Warwick, so off we went Laurence and I with a pocket full of cash and a shopping list, we came back with a brand new twin cylinder Kubota engine and an Eaton Model 11 Hydrostatic drive unit, the very next day we ordered the steel and work started on the drive unit, as most of us have said at one time or another "if we knew then what we know now, we wouldn't have stared" the basic chassis was made and the engine put in place followed by the Eaton drive unit, pulleys were purchased, machined and fitted followed by belts and a temporary fuel supply, a battery and radiator, time for the first start up, the engine burst into life after only a few turns fresh out of its crate, we bled all the air out of the Eaton and increased the revs, nothing happened so after a bit of head scratching and more bleeding of hydraulic oil we tried again, nothing, time to go home and consult the internet, after a few days and lots of telephone calls to both the UK and USA we came to the conclusion that the Eaton was turning the wrong way and we needed to remove the priming pump and turn a plate over to give us the correct rotation, two days later and the pump has been apart about five times but we still can't get any fluid through the pump, more telephone calls to USA with part number reveals the we have a pump built to military specification and it is designed to rotate in one direction only, the wrong direction for our tram motor, bugger where do we go from here.

Moving forward now about 4 months we have designed and built a reversing gearbox that goes between the engine and pump and our second Eureka moment happens, we start the engine and the pump sprays oil all over the workshop, after quickly fitting hoses we give it a try down the track and to our relief it worked like a dream, we then coupled it up to our main coach set and took it down the track to see how it performed under load, again it proved to be well on top of the job, and two very happy men spent an hour or two going up and down the track sitting on a plastic box operating gear and throttle with pieces of string.

main coach set and took it down the track to see how it performed under load, again it proved to be well on top of the job, and two very happy men spent an hour or two going up and down the track sitting on a plastic box operating gear and throttle with pieces of string.



We ordered wheel sets for both the bogies and the main power car and over the winter months of 2015 Laurence constructed two bogies to go under the driver end of each tram, followed by both main tram chassis and upper body framework, we are now at the stage of having one tram almost complete, it has had several coats of primer and undercoat and the handrails on the upper

decks are fitted, by the time you read this we will have made a start on the second tram bodywork.

The idea the I had, was to build a pair of trams running back to back with a power unit in the middle, as you will have read before this was to be powered by diesel hydraulic, we ruled out using electric motors very early in the design and reason behind that was neither of us know anything about electrics, other than basic wiring (auto electrics).

The trams will be approx 38 feet long by 34 inches wide, they will carry 12 people per car with one car able



to carry a wheelchair in its centre section, this will then reduce the carrying capacity of that car to eight people, one car will be fitted out as a First Class car with hardwood ceilings and soft seating while the second car (wheelchair) will be standard class with panelled ceiling and slatted seats, all doors will be electrically operated by the driver. The trams will be equipped to be driven from both ends doing away with the need to turn at the end of each trip as we do now. All the driving controls will be enabled by a foot pedal that also acts as a dead man switch, the driver will press the pedal down and at the same time turn a master switch, this will engage the throttle, hydraulic drive and brakes, if the driver takes his or her

foot off the pedal it will apply the brakes and kill the engine, once the key is removed then that end of the tram will be dead and tinker proof. The power unit in the middle is 34 inches wide by just 28 inches long, with a wheelbase of 39 inches, we kept the drive bogie as short as our tightest curve would allow, it contains the engine, hydraulic drive, reversing gearbox, diesel and hydraulic tanks, radiator, battery and air compressor, it is all very tight in there and that is by design, we wanted to keep it as compact as possible to give the illusion of two trams running back to back. The basic design of the trams is hoped to represent the period 1910 – 1920, they are double deck, but the top deck is only for show as 10 1/4" gauge would be very unstable with people up that high. We hope to have them in service by summer 2017. At this moment we do not have a colour scheme in mind, if the truth be known we keep changing our minds.

These will be the first trams in Peterborough since the closure of the Peterborough Electric Tram Company who operated from 1903 -1930

Editor's Note - the real thing



### **Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway**

**Lionel Kay brings us up to date**



Over the last couple of months, and interspersed with the usual weekend running, the railway has hosted a number of 'special events' including the Super Power Weekend on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April and the ever popular 'Day Out With Thomas' weekend at the end of May that saw the presence of Rusty with his trusty broom.

The 'Super Power Weekend' was enhanced by the welcome appearance of three locomotives, 'Athelstan', 'Thor' and 'Offa' from our very good friends at the Moors Valley Railway. It is difficult to believe that these engines are built to run on 7 1/4"



gauge track! These locomotives supplemented the motive power offered by Lakeside's own powerful engines that included the 4-6-2 Pacifics - un-rebuilt Merchant Navy No: 2ICI '*Channel Packet*' and Bullock built No: 2006 '*Edward VIII*' as well as the ever reliable 2-4-2 Baldwin style locomotive No: '*Sandy River*'.

Another of the railway's Bullock locomotives, No: 1002 '*The Empress*', made the journey from Hampshire to Leicestershire to take part in the Stapleford Miniature Railway's Models and Miniatures weekend. By all accounts, she performed faultlessly on Stapleford's arduous circuit hauling some quite heavy trains. To mark the fact that the Leicestershire line has some original Surrey Border and Camberley Railway equipment, '*The Empress*'s tender was emblazoned with the initials SBCR.

Whilst one Bullock locomotive was being used on the Super Power Weekend, and another was enjoying a short sojourn in the Midlands, a third was being prepared for an overhaul. No: 2005 '*Silver Jubilee*' which is on loan from Kerr's Miniature Railway, is in the workshops at Lakeside having been dismantled in preparation for its overhaul part of

which involves the replacement of the frames which, it has been discovered, are life expired. New frames have now been delivered to the railway and the process of reconstruction has begun.

Another item of motive power that made its way from Hampshire to Leicestershire was the petrol/electric engine constructed by engineering students from the University of Southampton. It too went to Stapleford Miniature Railway, the venue for a competition for students studying primarily railway engineering. The people involved with ELSR take a considerable amount of interest in, not to say pride, with the students from the University of Southampton since the engineering faculty has used the track at Lakeside as a testing ground for their designs. It was very pleasing to record that 'our team', from Southampton came third in the event behind some very strong opposition.

Top 2ICI '*Channel Packet*' and 2-4-2 '*Sandy River*'  
Moors Valley Locomotives '*Thor*', '*Athelstan*' and '*Offa*'  
'*Athelstan*', '*Channel Packet*' and '*Thor*' line up  
New frames for No: 2005 '*Silver Jubilee*' in the workshop  
Construction under way 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016  
Bottom The Southampton University engineering students' locomotive outside the shed



All attention, on the railway, is now focussed on preparing for the daily running which starts on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July and lasts until the early part of September as well as the other 'Special Events' that are part of the Summer scene. *All photos by L. Kay*

## STANSTED PARK LIGHT RAILWAY

In July last year I reported that we had suffered three boiler failures over a very short period of time, viz. less than six months. The root cause has never been discovered although it is curious that they were basically similar. What may be of interest is the ways in which some progress had been made to bring the boilers back in to service.

The Romulus boiler was sent away to a professional boiler manufacturer for repair. The method used was to cut off the front tube plate and barrel to gain access to the tubes which were then removed. New tubes were fitted in to a new smokebox tube plate. This resulted in the requirement to manufacture a new smokebox since the original was simply a continuation of the boiler barrel. Naturally the smokebox was then larger in diameter and required modification to the saddle. The boiler was returned fully tested but the locomotive has since been sold on.

The Ladybird boiler had leaks at the firebox end between the steel tube ends and the steel firebox tube plate interface. Tube expanders did not solve the problem and consequently the tubes had to be removed. This was accomplished by the use of a hydraulic tube removal tool hired from a commercial supplier. The tool effectively removes the tubes but destroys the tube ends and consequently they cannot be re-used. The fault was in the tube plate which had surface corrosion on the diameter of the hole. This required reaming the holes oversize. To date new tubes have not been fitted. The Baldwin locomotive, as above, had leaks at the firebox end between the copper tubes and the steel firebox tube plate. Again tube expanders would not solve the problem and the tubes were removed by using an 18mm screwed rod attached at the firebox end with a steel dolly and the smokebox end utilised a bar across the smokebox through which passed the screwed rod and an extra-long nut was used to jack out the tubes. The long nut was used since it was found that a standard nut would strip the thread. All tubes were successfully removed, with a lot of hard work, but the tubes had been shortened at the firebox end prior to extraction to prevent bell ending the tubes and although not eroded could not be re-used. The nominal 1 inch diameter holes (25.4mm) in the tube plates were reamed out to 26mm diameter to provide a corrosion free surface for the new tubes. To date new tubes have not yet been fitted.



As I stated earlier I have no means of knowing why the boilers failed. It is my suspicion however that the use of boiler cleaning substances may have removed a nominal protection of the interfaces afforded by a coating of lime scale etc. and allowing the boiling water to attack the surface of the steel tube plate, compounded by the proximity of the fire.

It will be interesting to see how our new boiler inspector perceives the situation. We have just had two other boilers stripped down for the dreaded 10 year hydraulic test, one of which has passed and the other is still in work.

*Wally Pearson, picture is of Geoff Jago removing the tubes from the Baldwin Locomotive*

## Littlehampton Heritage Railway

Chris English and a group of volunteers have taken over the Littlehampton Miniature Railway and will start running on July 23rd just in time for the school holidays.



I am sure that all our members wish them well for the future success of the railway.

Their new website is <http://www.littlehamptonminiaturerailway.com/>

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And now for our serial - but I don't have the next instalment so you will be on tenterhooks until the next issue