

Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 74



January 2019

Kirklees Light Railway

As the car park gate was padlocked shut on Christmas Eve there was a very positive atmosphere at the KLR. Final passenger numbers were 58,000 which was a 7% increase on 2017. This was despite a very worrying start to the year with the various incarnations of Beast from the East keeping visitors at home. The real boost came from a number of children's based activities during the summer and October school holidays. Although colleagues on other railways have felt the blistering dry summer drove visitors away, the feeling at the KLR is that it was a benefit as people visited attractions close to home rather than sitting in cars heading to either the Yorkshire or Lancashire coasts.



2018 saw a number of developments. One of the most interesting was the reunion of the Twining Sisters Katie and Siân at the railway, with the added spice of Count Louis visiting for a period in August and September. In October we acquired two of the former Réseau Guerlédan from Austin Moss. The engine and carriage shed are quite full now!

The Santa Specials are a key part of our business. The trains run at full capacity. Through December 95 trains ran from Clayton West to the North Pole carrying 10,500 passengers. These include floodlit trains which run on Friday evenings. We have run these for Floodlit trains for 10 years now; there were a few wry smiles in the office when reading the magazines about some standard gauge railways ground breaking illuminated trains! The Santa Special operations require all carriages, four steam locomotives and the tram engine to be available. This is quite a burden on our operations staff but we managed 100% availability. The Grotto at the North Pole changes each year. This does create a lot of work but it ensures the event remains fresh. The theme this year was Santa's Ice Cave. Visitors were invited through the Artic Expedition Tent before entering the ice cave. One pleasing note was in the doom and gloom of sales news from the high street the KLR shops saw a 30% increase in sales in December!



We have reached an agreement with the Siân Project Group for the locomotive to remain at the KLR for the remainder of its boiler ticket. Special Katie and Siân weekends have been planned throughout the year where subject to availability the two sisters will be in charge of all train services. The aim is that these weekends and our Annual Steam and Diesel Gala will be the only occasions where the two locomotives will be out together.

One of the Réseau Guerlédan coaches will be receiving a Pullman standard refurbishment for private hire and afternoon tea train use.

Of further interest to enthusiasts will be the redevelopment of our "Little Train". The previous raised level club track is being replaced with a ground level 7 ¼ inch gauge track. The first phase of this will be open in March and the second loop will follow later in the year. To supplement the existing Keith Hardy battery

electric Vulcan locos the KLR has acquired a Cromar White Hymek which formerly worked at Weston Miniature Railway. Rail has been sourced from Miniature Railway Supply Company and Maxitrak.

Tracklaying is not being kept to the smaller railway either. A large section of line which used short length ex NCB mines rail is to be renewed with new 35lb yard rail. This work will include new plastic sleepers and additional granite ballast. The standard gauge size ballast that was used when the railway was rebuilt has proved not to be ideal for packing 15 inch gauge sleepers.

This work, along with a re tube of Hawk and a full special events programme that includes Day Out With Thomas certainly means that we are going to be quite busy in 2019! *Stuart Ross*

BGLR NEWS

No decision has yet been made on the venue and the date of the 2019 AGM and Spring General Meeting. As soon as a decision has been made I will email all members with the details.

The deadline for changes to the brochure and poster is Wednesday February 6th, if your subscription renewal has not been confirmed to me by that date it is unlikely that your railway will be included on them.

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 November and December issues of the HRA News are available from the HRA members section of their website which can be accessed using the log in shown above.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Thompson Park Railway

Santa made his annual visit to Thompson Park Railway on the first weekend of December and he was very pleased to see so many children. Saturday was not as busy as Sunday but every child received a small gift from Santa and at the end of the ride a new feature of our Santa Special was mince pies for all riders.

2018 was again a bumper year with total rides going past the 21000 mark.

The volunteer members of the BPMRS will be meeting on January 13th to decide who will be in charge of several projects we have lined up for 2019. The riverside track has still not been cleaned and re-ballasted since the disastrous floods of 2015. This will be a major project and may be attempted in two sections.





When we purchased 'Sir Richard' from the Brookside railway we also acquired two sit in coaches, these will want quite a lot of work before they enter service but this is another project for 2019. Our fiddle yard requires work as one of the points has been removed this is probably a project our younger members could work on.

Regular events at Thompson Park include Teddy Bears Picnic on the last Sunday in July and our Super Heroes Sunday on the last Sunday in August. This year we are adding a new regular feature on the last Sunday of April we will be holding our FREE rides Sunday. When all rides will be free.

We are looking forward to an exciting 2019. For more updated information please visit our facebook page 'Thompson Park Railway' or our website www.bpmrs.org.uk Mike Bailey.



Rhiw Valley Light Railway

Review of 2018

Working Weekends

The early monthly working weekends of 2018 were spent maintaining the locos. This enabled the volunteers to work near the house where there is shelter against the elements and regular tea/coffee and cake.

Whilst the weather in early February was particularly springlike, the 'Beast from the East' postponed the early March working weekend to later in the month. But from then on, the Montgomeryshire sun shone. Powys. The original plan was just to repaint Powys ready for the 2018 season but it was discovered early on that the boiler was leaking and needed welding by a coded welder. It was then decided to do a major overhaul and take Powys out of running for the entire season. Consequently it was stripped down, sanded and repainted. In addition, all copper pipes, eccentric arms and gauge glass frame were replaced, reversing gear and die blocks realigned, steam fountain valves refurbished. Clearly this has been a major task and we are looking forward to seeing a bright shiny Powys in 2019.



Monty is running but needs new panelling. The handbrake was stripped, reset and welded back into position. The leak in the fuel tank was fixed. *Jack's* injectors were replaced (twice) and a new blast pipe was fitted. Apart from that, Jack gave sterling service throughout the entire 2018 open season.

Permanent Way

The only work done before opening to the public in May was the replacement of some rotten sleepers near the station. However, as soon as the open season was over, the last 200m of the oldest rail not far from the station was lifted to be renewed. Local contractors were employed to dig out a trench where we had lifted the old rails and surveying commenced. The laser was set up in the middle of the track bed which made it easy to ensure a gradual 1:200 level throughout. We hope to commence ballasting in February 2019, weather permitting.

In addition, volunteers have been making up track panels.

Open Weekends 2018

We held 6 open weekends from May to October inclusive and were largely blessed with good weather which really brought in the crowds with just under 200 visitors over the September weekend which was a record for us.

In addition to riding as many times as they like, visitors can picnic on the lawn and walk by the river. We also had some special attractions:

- In August, Piers' display of an American Army Signals Unit just after D-Day (including authentic WW2 music) added extra interest



- Also in August, the Jaguar Enthusiast Club (Central region) brought an XJ6, an X300, an XK8 and an XK140 along on Saturday. On Sunday, the car park was graced by a 1938 Austin Ruby 7
- In September, Carl and Pat brought their garden railway equipment from Grimsby and set this up in the garden, much to the delight of children young and old

Thanks must go to all the volunteers who helped run the railway during all our open weekends this year. If anyone has any photos of the Open Weekends that they would like to share then please send them to me and we will get them added to the galleries on the website. There are some great photos and videos on our Facebook Page as well.

Winter Planned Improvements

Current plans are as follows:

- Carry on with rebuilding Powys with the aim to complete by the first open day in May 2019
- Ballast the new track bed and put down the 30 new track panels (consisting of about 300 sleepers)
- Finish re-varnishing the carriages
- Recover the bogies from the old carriages which Jack Woodroffe made and start a new steel-frame toast-rack style carriage. This will allow a seat to be removed to accommodate a wheelchair.
- We'll be using Monty and a flatbed track to hold the tools and track panels (to save the volunteers' energy)

All the dates for our working weekends are on the main RVLR website. We welcome as many volunteers as we can get. There is always loads to do and if anyone would like to come along and give us a hand (not applause) they would be most welcome. No special skills are needed just a love of railways is all we ask. Details of what we get up to are chronicled in Mike's Railway Diary on the RVLR website. In general we meet on the first weekend of each month.

Open Weekends in 2019

We will be opening the railway between May and October inclusive again on the following dates in 2019:

- 4/5 May
- 1/2 June
- 6/7 July
- 3/4 August
- 7/8 September
- 5/6 October

There will be a flyer on the website soon. You are welcome to download it and distribute as you think fit. We will be getting a quantity printed soon and if anyone would like some to distribute then please let me know and I will send you some. Just drop me an email mike@rvlr.co.uk Mike Woodroffe

Rhyl Miniature Railway

Rhyl Miniature Railway had a satisfactory season in 2018 with passenger numbers ending around 26,000. We participated in the dividend from the hot weather and were doing well at selling ice cream until our freezer broke (twice). Nonetheless our totals were all up on prior years.



Our publicity concentrated on giving us as wide a family appeal as possible, through putting on childrens' events, and by encouraging our visitors to try 'crabbing' – in consequence we managed to sell a colossal quantity of crab equipment including 1,500 crab lines. We extended our Santa train season to run over 5 days instead of 4.

During the summer we were invited to submit a museum accreditation return. That really did stretch us at our busiest time of year, but we got there and in November we were awarded full accreditation for another 3 years.

The highlight of the year railway-wise was the entry into service of *Railway Queen*, the last of our Trust's locomotives that we had not previously restored. We got it working in July, although there are still a few things to do and it looks like being summer 2019 before it will be completely finished. This slow pace is typical of us as there is now a big infrastructure that we look after and still relatively few skilled hands. The photo shows *RQ* along with most of our Trustees.

We loaned our Cagney loco to Thorpe Light Railway for their summer service and we sent our diesel loco over to CCLR in October to act as 'Thomas'. With the arrival of *Railway Queen* we have gone back to having four steam locos working, along with two diesel and one electric.



Having plugged away on locomotives for several years, this Autumn we have re-laid a decent length of track, and we hope to continue on trackwork also over the 2019-2020 closed season.

Although we are not able to attend BGLR meetings, we remain supportive and would like to wish other member railways a prosperous 2019 season. *Simon Townsend*

Moors Valley Railway

Our Santa Specials were a great success once again with all four dates sold out well in advance. Visitors to the Santa Specials enjoy a ride on the train from Lakeside before entering Santa's Railway Grotto and afterwards enjoying mince pies, Christmas cake and a much needed hot drink to warm up! Visitors still enjoyed themselves despite the torrential rain. Due to the popularity of this event, we have decided to add an extra date in 2019 and so run a total of five days for the first time.



Our quieter months allow for much needed maintenance to take place with Offa, Vixen and Hartfield all receiving attention in the workshop. Vixen, our diesel loco, has been stripped down to a bare chassis ready for a new engine and hydraulic pump to be fitted. Vixen will also receive two new hydraulic motors, one to be fitted directly to the



bogies to make a much stronger loco. Offa has been stripped down ready for its ten year boiler exam, the tubes removed and the shell inspected. The new tubes can now be inserted prior to a hydraulic test. We hope Offa will be back in service for Easter and our peak season. Finally, Hartfield has had its cylinders removed and new liners fitted. The valve faces have been ground flat before being refitted to the engine.



Our events for this year have been confirmed including Visiting Loco, Summer Gala and Open Weekend, all details for which can be found on our website and Facebook. We will also be continuing to run 'Sunday Specials' on selected dates throughout the year. We introduced these last year with a different theme for each one, such as a Winter Warmer

special, where visitors receive a free hot drink with a discounted day rover ticket. Events such as these are not only popular with visitors, but also our drivers, guards and signalmen as it provides a chance to run the railway in all kinds of different ways! *Sophie Freemantle*

Whitfield Light Railway

Well that's 2018 finished and so we move into our 3rd season. Since the last newsletter, the portable event railway has run 26-days for Christmas events. The first 4-days at Llandudno Christmas Fayre were a little flat but the 22-days at Rivendell Garden Centre Widnes good ... we had a circuit laid in their plant area, covering 3,722 laps, 113 train miles, over 3,100 passengers carried. That capped a pleasing 2018, with the railway running from Easter through to Christmas ... 138 operating days (all bar 1 with steam tram 'Kestrel'), covering 859 miles, carrying over 17,000 smiling passengers.



It's proving there is a market for the railway and my task is to keep it viable as a business. At present steam tram 'Kestrel', petrol loco 'Otter', and the coach are having winter maintenance ahead of the new season ... I'm thankful for Denver Light Railway allowing the use of their premises for this, as we're in the middle of a house move. I'm also thankful to the Leek and Rudyard Railway for allowing us to take 'Kestrel' on New Years Day, for load and endurance testing ... water and coal consumption were good, and speed decent. Steam capacity does need careful management. All in all, a pleasing day.

As a railway, we'll be visiting less events in 2019 and spending more time at [The Hayloft](#) (WA8 3XR), on the Warrington / St. Helens border, as we alter our strategy slightly (www.thehayloftcheshire.co.uk). The current schedule is looking like 180-operating days. Thoughts will turn to rebuilding the railway in the next couple of weeks, ahead of February half-term.

As time allows I'll build more railway track, to separate the event railway from the seasonal railway at The Hayloft. We're also obtaining further coaches, to give more space and capacity ... again, as time allows, these will be rebuilt to suit our railway and brought into service ... these are ex-7.25" gauge, so need new bogies and air-braking for our 10.25" railway. One is a wheelchair coach.





So an exciting and busy time. Let me know if you're calling by to see the railway, *Ian Whitfield*



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