

Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 75



May 2019

Watford Miniature Railway

Greetings from a new member!

Most of you will know of the Watford Miniature Railway and I am sure everyone knows my predecessor Jeff Price. After 38 years Jeff decided to retire from running trains to focus on his other business and sold the railway to me in June 2017. I first rode on the railway as a babe in arms so in a very strange way things have come full circle. The first two seasons have been a steep learning curve but we are still here so I must be doing something right.

The first major happening in my tenure was the return of steam after an absence of over a decade. I bought *Marri*, a 2-6-0 Baldwin style locomotive, from Jeff in early 2018 as a pile of bits. Thanks to Andy Walton at Denver Light Railway she was back in service just after Easter that year and has proved very popular since. Two of the railway's former drivers have bought another of the railway's old steam locos, *Chiltern Shuttle*, and she will be returning to us once restored to working order. *Pilgrim* (ex Wells & Walsingham) has just arrived on loan as well – she's here all this season, potentially longer dependent on her current owner's wishes.



At the end of April we held a weekend to celebrate the 60th birthday of the railway. There was a history exhibition with over 250 photos of the railway throughout the years, model railways, live music, children's entertainment, and of course a birthday cake. Despite somewhat variable weather we saw over 1000 visitors over the weekend.

Having thought that might be a one-off gala I am having my arm twisted to run another event in September/October under the broad title of 'Heritage Weekend' – there should be space for visitors if anyone is interested in bringing something.

As a spin off from the 60th weekend we have produced a book as a permanent record of the railway's history to date. Copies can be bought via <https://www.watfordrailway.co.uk/shop/>. Normal price is £12.50, but BGLR members can buy it for £10 by entering the discount code BGLR (all plus P&P). At 174 pages it should provide a few nights of bedtime reading! If anyone would like to have a small bundle to sell in their shop do get in touch. *Charles O'Mahoney*

BGLR NEWS

2019 AGM and Spring General Meeting

Many thanks to Ron Stanbridge and his team for hosting these meetings. Although the turnout was only average, thanks to the excellent cooperation of the members present I was able to distribute 25 boxes (25,000 brochures) thus reducing the postal costs nicely. The meetings went well but the day ended with some disappointment when Ron's new (to him) steamer failed due to a tube problem.



I hope that it is back up and running very soon.

Woking Miniature Railway (Mizens)

I must apologise to Roger Griffiths who, back in early April, sent me details of their Visiting Locomotive Rally which I intended to include in the April Newsletter. However the delay of the Newsletter due to Easter and school holidays meant that there was no April issue and thus by the time this Newsletter comes out the Rally on the 11th to the 13th May will have been held. Very sorry Roger but I hope that the weekend went well for all of you.

Autumn General Meeting

The Autumn GM will be held at the Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway but I am still awaiting a firm date.

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

RM³ 2019

In April this year the ORR (Office of Rail and Road) introduced the 2019 Risk Management Maturity Model. This is not mandatory for Heritage Railways but could be used to evaluate their Safety Culture. The main document has 26 criteria for main line railways but the HRA has started working on 8 criteria which would be applicable to them. They hope to complete this by November this year.

Whether any of the above will become applicable to miniature railways is unknown but best to be aware of it. The ORR document is available here: https://orr.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/2623/risk-management-maturity-model-rm3.pdf but it is a very long read.

Availability of bituminous coal

The HRA March meeting had an update on the future of coal in the UK which you can read here: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f1c5ec51a58457c01eaed0/t/5c83c44f7817f7cf02b73cb8/1552139347750/2019-03-06+HRA+Forum+Presentation+-+Steve+Oates+-+Future+of+Coal+in+UK.pdf>

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Thompson Park Railway

Considering the very strange weather we had in March it was surprising that anybody ventured into Thompson Park but as the park has had a lot of national lottery money spent on it over the last eighteen months it is becoming even more popular.

Out of the ten possible running days in March five were cancelled altogether and out of the other five two were poor days but we managed to take over 1200 rides during the month. I'm glad to say that April was totally different we had a fantastic Easter when the railway was open four consecutive days from Good Friday until Easter Monday. In those four days alone we managed over 2500 rides. April 2019 was by far the best April we have had since we started taking a note of our ride numbers. Rides were up over 15% on our previous best.

The last Sunday in April saw the start of a new regular annual feature on the railway that is FREE RIDES SUNDAY. We did one last year in September because both of our other regular events where we give free rides to children who partake were cancelled because of bad weather. We decided to do the event on the



last Sunday in April where it will become an annual event. We took well over 800 rides during the afternoon a great success. Lets hope these customers return with their friends during the year. *Mike Bailey*

North Bay Railway

We had a very positive start to this season with promising passenger numbers. The glorious weather certainly helped. We found it difficult to predict numbers with the schools being off over different weeks, but this did give us a good indication of where our visitors were coming from.

Beach loop was opened for the first time since finishing, with the track work looking great and a credit to our small track team.

We have also commenced an overhaul of 'Triton', which we hope to complete in the next month or so. The engine will be kept in LNER apple green livery with slightly different, but more accurate lining.





Poseidon, since returning from overhaul, has proven to be a valuable member of the fleet, clocking up more miles so far than any other year.

Our plans to run Georgina more, committing to most weekends, have been well received. Steam driver experiences also seem to be selling well. *Steve Johnson*

Moors Valley Railway

As we head towards the main running season we are pleased to say that we had a successful Easter holidays, the weather was generally kind to us which always helps, with Good Friday being the busiest day of the year so far.

The May bank holiday weekend also saw us host our first major event of the year. We welcomed 8 visiting locos to our 'Visiting Loco Weekend', travelling from both ends of the country. We had a brilliant weekend with a lovely selection of engines in steam over the 2 days and I think it is fair to say that all of the visitors had a great visit. Check out our Facebook page to see some of the photos taken over the weekend.



We are now only 4 weeks away from our biggest event of the year, our 'Grand Summer Gala' that will be held over the weekend of the 8th and 9th June. We expect 15 engines in steam complimented by the wide variety of attractions that we have visiting for the weekend. This could be anything from miniature traction engines, classic vehicles, steam car, to stationery engines and tractors. Come along and pay us a visit to see the railway in full steam ahead mode!

Heading quickly into the main running season, and in preparation we have some track work planned. The main focus will be on the replacement of 12 panels of rail that is situated by 'Kings Junction'. We plan to completely re-lay this section with the old panels lifted and the old track bed dug out so that we can start with a fresh bed of ballast and brand new track panels on the top. This has also allowed us to remove a facing point from the main running line and place it in a more suitable position. We will also be completing some minor drainage work in front of 'Kings Tunnel' at the same time.

In preparation for the 'Visiting loco weekend' we managed to get the run round loop commissioned in between platform 1 and platform 2. This is something that has been on the wish list for a number of years so we are pleased to now have this in place. This will help us during special events, making it easier for us to release engines from the end of the train without having to find a necessary path for them to run round utilising the main running line. See below the new points in place.

Cuckoo Hill Railway

In other news you may have read the recent article in the spring edition of Miniature Railway that covered the Cuckoo Hill Railway that is located not too far away from us at South Gorley. The railway was set up by Robert Kinnison in 1991 serving the picking fields at his nursery. At the time of its creation it is fair to say that Jim played a significant part in getting this off the ground - building the coaches and the engine 'Jupiter' that is a twin of our own 'Horton' for use at Cuckoo Hill. Unfortunately since Bob's death, the railway was rarely used and the engine, coaches and in fact the whole railway were in need of significant attention.

Following a visit to Moors Valley from a couple of volunteers that used to help Bob run the railway Jim decided that he would go and see what the situation was himself. Following a couple of phone calls, Jim agreed to purchase the whole railway and has since relocated the coaches and Jupiter back to Moors Valley. As the coaches were designed and built to the same design of ours they are already in service here and Jupiter has been completely stripped as we already knew that it required boiler re-tube, at the very least. The boiler has been delivered to Bennett's boilers for examination where it is expected to require a new fire box and some other remedial work. Jim has other plans for Jupiter so we will keep you posted on the progress that is made over the coming months. Jim has also been busy lifting the track panels on the site and we plan to go and collect the track in the coming weeks.

As a point of interest one of the points you can see in the picture of the run round is one that we recovered from Cuckoo Hill that we were able to use for this purpose with some slight modifications.

Aurora

Excitingly, after 7 years in the making, the newest addition to our fleet was officially commissioned and named in April.

The locomotive (constructed by Andrew & Stuart Webb) is based upon Robert Fairlie's articulated design and stems from the brothers' affection for Welsh railway, having spent many holidays there as children. Both long standing volunteers at the railway, Andrew joined the engineering team at Moors Valley full time in 2013 whilst Stuart is a telecommunications engineer and can be seen at the railway regularly most weekends.

The new build project started in December 2011 after many months of initial design work to combine many of the unique features of a Single Fairlie with existing MVR tank engines Hartfield & Jason. Utilising the railways standard 3 ½" cylinders and 10" driving wheels the locomotive is very capable of pulling the peak season service trains of up to 70 passengers at a time around the mile-long track.

The name 'Aurora' originates from Princess Aurora who is also known as Sleeping Beauty. This being the favourite Disney princess of Andrew's wife Jade. It also means The Goddess of Dawn in Roman mythology.

The engine has already seen plenty of use with a number of completed turns over the Easter holidays and our Visiting Loco Weekend. It is a fantastic addition to our home fleet and we look forward to seeing her in action for some time now. *James Luther*



Bentley Miniature Railway

Bentley Miniature Railway is open!

Contrary to many rumours that the railway has closed due to the temporary closure of the Wildfowl & Motor Museum last year, we are very much open. This has brought with it some positivity; now we are a standalone attraction within the site, visitors can have unrestricted access to the railway without additional admission charges.



Therefore, we are looking to host more railway-orientated events this year to promote ourselves, giving others the opportunity to join in the exciting time of change for us and enjoy our track.

These events include:

Steam Gala: 26th May,
Standard Gauge Weekend: 29th and 30th June,
Narrow Gauge Weekend: 10th and 11th August,
and
Diesel Gala: 8th September.

Bentley Miniature Railway was established 1985 as a short circuit multi gauge track running in the grounds of Bentley Wildfowl and Motor Museum. Due to demand and popularity we extended the track in 1995 to a half mile dual gauge track enabling passengers to enjoy a journey into the Glyndebourne Woods. Over the next ten years the Bentley estate developed, with other small businesses joining the grounds. This encouraged us to



upgrade further and we now host a full one-mile 7 ¼" track. Your journey now also takes you to our newest station, Bentley East. You can always try your hand at the high rope assault course in Glyndebourne Wood with our friends at "Branching Out Adventures" (additional charges apply). I would be grateful if you could share these details with your readers/members for any expression of interest.

Our site provides basic self-catering facilities, fuels and oils (including steam coal), hydraulic lifting/unloading table and, most of all, fun. We provide complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits. Visitors must be able to produce valid boiler certificate(s) where applicable and have relevant public liability insurance.

If you are interested in joining us or require further information about these events, please contact Kara on kara@bentleyrailway.co.uk. Places are limited so booking is essential.



For those wishing to travel long distances there is a camping facility on site (www.emberscamping.co.uk) or we can provide details of local caravan sites or hotels in the area if required. *Kara Tombling*