

Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 76



November 2019

Autumn General Meeting

A small but enthusiastic bunch of members attended the Autumn General Meeting held at the Cleethorpes Coast Light railway. The meeting was hosted by John Kerr and Peter Bryant and they put on a very good show with an excellent hot and cold buffet lunch along with a ride on their train and a very good wander around the engine and carriage sheds. Special thanks to them for a great day out and to Nick Skelton for his photos as I had no camera and had left my phone in the car.



John and Peter have made many improvements to the railway in the 5 or so years that they have been running it but underpinning these improvements and the continued upgrade of locomotives and rolling stock is the income generated from the non railway events. A larger and modern cafe, the Signal Box Inn (the Smallest Pub on the Planet), special events, rail ale and steam, summer extravaganza, birthday parties, Santa Specials and many more ensure that the railway has sufficient income to operate successfully and safely.

The minutes of the meeting have been distributed and uploaded to the members only section of the website.



BGLR NEWS - Stop Press News also on the last page

Subscriptions for 2020

The 2020 Subscription round starts in November and ends at the end of January. Your £65 subscription includes your entry on the brochure and poster but unless you join by the end of January I will not be able to add your railway and you will miss out. I am sure that Peter Jackson our Treasurer will be sending renewal forms to all his contacts but to get things under way I have added a renewal form as an attachment. Renewal forms are also available in the members only section of the website under Latest BGLR News for download.

Members who pay by electronic bank transfer do not need to fill in the form or send it back just make sure that when you make the transfer you mention 1) the railway name and 2) receipt wanted or not. BGLR bank details are Sort Code: 09 01 54 Account No: 44041087

Brookside Miniature Railway did rejoin last year and will be on the brochure this year, In addition we already have a subscription from the Riverside Miniature Railway, and intent to join from Lappa Valley Steam Railway and the North Weald and District Miniature Railway which could mean that membership could exceed 50 railways in 2020.

Meeting Venues and Dates

Watford Miniature Railway have agreed to host the 2020 AGM and Spring GM with a provisional date of Wednesday March 11th, If anyone knows of any clashes with that date please let me know.

Barnards Railway will be the venue for the Autumn General meeting on Wednesday October 14th - a firm date in their diary.

We have definitive invitations from Hastings MR, Bentley MR and Thompson Park MR for the meetings in 2021

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 Autumn GM Minutes had comprehensive updates on HRA Coal, HRA Young Peoples and HSG 216 and there is nothing more to add.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway

Where has the time gone? Summer has simply flown by and now we are looking at preparations for another Christmas period when, following a brief break, we shall be running a number of the perennially popular Santa Special trains.



Looking back over the last few months, the railway has hosted a Diesel Gala, when all train services were handed over to the more modern looking motive power both resident and visiting engines. Although the term diesel was used, many of the locomotives were battery electric but had diesel outlines, a slight piece of poetic licence perhaps?

There was, in July, the 'Small Engines Visiting Weekend' when an incredible fifteen locomotives visited over the weekend. In the main, these engines were of 7¼" gauge but there were at least two exceptions and these were 'Carolyn' an 8¼" gauge 2-6-2T from our near neighbours at Bankside Miniature Railway, and a 10¼" gauge inspection trolley from the relatively new Ropley Miniature Railway.

Following the 'Big Engines Visiting Weekend' the passengers and volunteers were entertained by the folk group, 'Crossing the Line' with a mixture of folk and blues. The railway station at Parkway provided a very different venue from the 'Royal Oak' at Fritham, one of their usual haunts, but Iain Heys one of the members of the group is also a volunteer at Lakeside.

Several new events were tried out this year including Evening Running with associated Disco and BBQ and a Family Fun Weekend when alongside the trains, magicians, story tellers and musicians entertained the crowds. An innovation this year was the introduction of daily running, outside the school holidays, from the end of May until the end of September. This proved to be very popular with grand-parents and mothers with pre-school age children.





Another of the railway's volunteers, Ian Hine-Saunders, pulled off a remarkable coup by persuading the Simpkins family to bring down to Eastleigh their three Great Central Railway locomotives and run them together for the very first time. Ian had got to know Andy Simpkins on the East Lancs Railway and discovered the family connection with model engineering and the Great Central Railway. A particular highlight of the weekend, apart from all three locomotives being together, was a rake of coal wagons made up into a formation to resemble the famous 'Windcutter' trains of the Great Central mainline.



The Halloween Special provided a good excuse, if one is really needed, for many of the younger volunteers to dress up in ghoulish costumes, decorate the trees at Monks Brook with ghostly lights and create an eerie, atmospheric tunnel with lots of coloured lights, lasers and theatrical smoke. A magician provided a more sedate form of entertainment on the platform at Parkway and the café provided vast quantities of Hallowe'en themed food. Once again, a very talented volunteer, Matthew Thompsett, produced metallic covers for the signals in the shape of bats, spiders' webs and pumpkins to enhance the overall effect of a ghostly railway.



The workshop is a buzz with maintenance and servicing of the resident fleet of locomotives, with a growing number of engines awaiting major, i.e. ten year, overhauls and the most recent of these being 10¼" gauge A4 No: 4498 'Sir Nigel Gresley'. The engineering department also took on the mammoth task of overhauling 0-4-2 'Edmund Hannay' from the Hastings Miniature Railway.

With the railway now entering into a semi quiet period before the Christmas Holidays, those minor, but very important jobs – painting, wood cutting and tidying up may be carried out in preparation for another interesting year. *Lionel Kay Photographs by Lionel Kay*

Thompson Park Railway

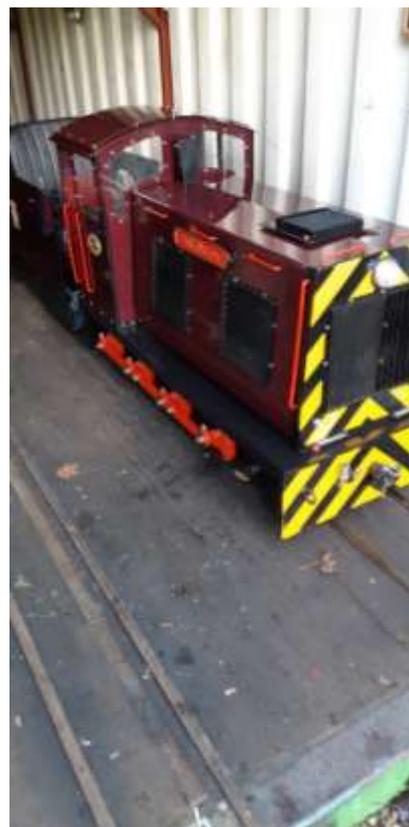


It never rains but it pours at Thompson Park. Out of a possible 82 running days this year we have lost 15 to the weather. We have also had a birthday party cancelled for the first time. Our rides because of the cancelled days are down over 3000 this year but considering that the year has been good.

One of our best loved locomotives Titan moved on to pastures new in September and can now

been seen in Cheltenham. We are also in the process of selling Park Ranger which has been a very good work horse since it arrived at the park many years ago. The reason we have sold these two locomotives is because we are in the process of bringing back into service Swallow our class 91 which has had a major service and overall this year. We are also working on railcar which has been out of action for three years a complete rewire and new paint should see this emerge next year as a

class 150. We also purchased a new locomotive in September Sgt Murpy and this should be ready for service in 2020.



We run three events during the year where we give free rides Teddy Bears Picnic where any child with a teddy bear gets a free ride Super Hero Sunday when we give free rides to anyone who turns up in fancy dress and free rides Sunday in April when all passengers get free rides. We managed two of these this year having to cancel Teddy Bears. Free rides Sunday was a great success when we managed over 700 free rides and because the park rangers held an event on Super Hero Sunday this also was a great success. As you can see from the picture the band enjoyed a ride as well.

The railway shuts down after the last Sunday in October and re opens for our Santa Special which takes place this year on Saturday the 7th and Sunday the 8th of December. We re open to the public in 2020 on Saturday 7th March *Michael Bailey*

Fancott Miniature Railway

Halloween was a successful night despite it being very wet, it also was the last running day of the railway season.

A joint team from the Fancott and Riverside Miniature Railway appeared on the Channel 5 Great Model Railway Challenge in Episode 1 of the second series. The theme for the show was the Restless Earth. (If anyone want to see Ron and his team at work it's available here - <https://www.my5.tv/the-great-model-railway-challenge/season-2/episode-1>)



Back at the miniature railway, where the big news is that after 30 years the pub is changing its owner. The new owners are keen to keep the railway running and have sent in their own Health and Safety Inspectors. The inspectors seemed well aware of the needs for running a railway and checked the locos, track, carriages and the signalling over the course of a long day but I am pleased to report that we received a clean bill of health.

Over the Winter we will be upgrading all of the signals and points so that the new signal box can be commissioned ready for the start of the new season.

Our steam loco will be going to the Denver Light Railway next year so that some upgrades can be fitted.

If we get the OK from the new owners we are going to put a new track in so that the railway will have two track running from just outside the tunnel to the steaming bay wall. this will require two new points which we will build on site. *Ron Stanbridge*

Littlehampton Miniature Railway

Sherpa's Christmas Visit

The railway closed for winter maintenance at the end of October after a successful summer, but we will be running trains again from mid-December during the festive season.

We are pleased to announce that following its successful visit to our 70th anniversary gala last year, *Sherpa* from the Fairbourne Railway, will be visiting us again for the Christmas period.

In addition to our popular - and





fully booked - Santa Specials on the 14th and 15th December, which will be steam hauled this year, *Sherpa* will be pulling trains on the following dates:

Mince Pie Specials on the 21st & 22nd December - no booking required - plus normal service trains on the 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th December and 1st January.

Dirk Shephard Photos of Sherpa by Julian Clark

EVESHAM VALE LIGHT RAILWAY

The highlight of the year so far was the visit of Katie and Owl from the Kirklees Light Railway, both worked faultlessly and helped to make our gala a massive success with over 1500 journeys over the weekend. Katie proved very popular with visitors who remembered her from both Dudley Zoo and Fairbourne visiting, She spent most of the weekend with our Fairbourne articulated coaches which she last hauled in the 1980's.

In one of our earlier reports we confirmed we had bought 2 ex Fairbourne Coaches from the Bure Valley Railway, these were closed saloon bogie coaches. Built c1978 for Reseau Guerledan Railway in Brittany. Transferred to the Fairbourne Railway in 1984 and then to Bure Valley Railway, Norfolk. As coach 123 along with coach 125.



Both were acquired by us in 2016, minus bogies. Originally they had doors in just one side, therefore one side taken from donor Fairbourne coach 125. The coach has been completely refurbished between 2016 and 2019. And has now entered service at EVLR in October 2019.

The bogies built by Uerdingen Waggon-Fabrik AG in 1937. Withdrawn from the Blenheim Palace Railway (originally under scrapped coaches) and had complete new wheelsets fitted.

The body was stripped completely to its original hardwood frame and repaired as required. New marine grade plywood panels fitted. Doors refurbished using original hardwood frames and marine ply panels with droplight windows.

Original fibreglass roofs removed and replaced with 16mm tongued & grooved softwood match boarding, covered with canvas sheet waterproofed with white bitumastic paint, it has been painted in Leather brown with LMS Crimson Lake panels and white roof. Gold leaf numbering on side. *Adrian Corke*

Whitfield Light Railway

Well since the last newsletter in May, its largely been a wet one! Business went really well with the carnivals through June but has been somewhat flatter across the summer proper, with most days having rain at some point.

I've just finished 20-days running through October for pumpkin picking on The Hayloft site. Numbers matched last year, which was good, although in much more challenging conditions. We had 36-hours of rain at one point, leaving the railway underwater at the 'field-end' ... the following morning a



2-hour rebuild, checking the entire line, and back-up and running.

Christmas now beckons ... the Llandudno Christmas Fayre 14-17 November, then back at The Hayloft (Warrington / St. Helens border) as part of their Christmas 'Santa Experience' event from the 30 November, including the build of a Christmas branch line. At that stage, I'll have the more relaxed curves and the rebuilt 4 artic coaches from High Legh Railway.

And a request:

It'd be good to have a standby loco to support steam tram Kestrel, so if anyone thinks they can help, please message through the railways Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WhitfieldLightRly/> or call on 07852 186328 to discuss. The railway is on 10.25" gauge box section track, 50' radius curves, the points will be to the narrow gauge standard, anticipate a slight grade (when the Christmas branch is built), the train will be 5 cars carrying 25 people, and container storage will be in place.

Exbury Gardens Steam Railway

This October half term Exbury Gardens & Steam Railway put on a frightfully fun ghost train that delighted more than 3,500 people. All carried by trains headed by Marie Lou which was back in service after its 10 yr overhaul at Trevor Stirland's workshop - looking and running better than ever.



Classic Exbury ghost train characters Batty and Boney welcomed passengers onto the train, entertaining them with comedic performances that included audience participation (shouting "WAKE UP BATTY" to get the vampire out of his coffin), singing ('Together Again' from the musical Young Frankenstein) and oodles of ridiculous jokes and puns.

Gruesome decorations lined the tracks on Exbury's 1 ½ mile journey through the gardens including pirate skeleton heads hanging from trees and amputated limbs on bridges. Passengers were also asked to SCREAM as they travelled through Exbury's tunnel which was full of smoke, lights and ghastly skeletons and zombies.



Frankenstein, witches, clowns and other scary characters were waiting by the tracks to frighten passengers. But all the frightful activity was made lighter by hilarious dancing to Halloween party classics 'Monster Mash', 'Thriller' and many more.

Visitors to Exbury also enjoyed a spooky trail through Exbury's Rock Garden, which was made to look like a graveyard and included a cobweb tunnel, mechanised spooky props and parts of an amputated skeleton that children were asked to help us put together. And on top of all this, visitors could also take part in pumpkin carving, Halloween-inspired crafts and face painting.

All in all, it was a fantastic family fright fest that delighted children and adults alike. *Celise Galloway*

Watford Miniature Railway

We have continued our 60th anniversary season at Watford with a variety of engines appearing – having been fairly empty over the last few years the engine shed has started looking a little more full!

In July the diesel *Rhuddlan Castle* came to visit us for the summer. This is the twin to our own diesel *Conway Castle* but is in largely original condition so an interesting contrast. *Pilgrim* entered service in August following the fitting of a new regulator, giving the first opportunity for a two-steam service at Watford in nearly 20 years. Unfortunately, on a visit to Hastings in the autumn *Pilgrim* developed a leaking tube so is now out of action again for a short while.



At the end of September we had an 'Anything Goes' gala weekend with all four resident engines running plus *Rhuddlan Castle*. This was well received so we are planning a gala for next autumn – 3 & 4 October, hopefully *Chiltern Shuttle* will be back from overhaul then so we will have 3 resident engines in steam plus visitors.

We are starting to get the ball rolling on the development of the railway. As those of you who come to the spring BGLR meeting will see, our facilities are currently rather basic. The intention is to replace the current sheds with modern fit-for-purpose facilities, which will make life much easier (and give us facilities to make tea!). There are also plans to improve the station, provide some covered coaches for inclement weather, and work on the museum/educational side of the railway with the development of a supporting charitable trust.



News hot off the press is that we have just had a weekend visit of *Ernest Henry Upton* from Eastleigh (via Hastings!). Despite poor weather on the Saturday the public seemed to enjoy the spectacle of two steam operation on the Sunday, and the visitor was very popular – not least with all our drivers who had a go and said "can we get one of these?"! *Charles O'Mahoney*



BGLR News - Stop Press

Great Laxey Mine Railway.

I was informed late in October that Tony Wild, my contact at this railway, passed away suddenly at the end of October. Great Laxey has been a member for many years and although very keen Tony was never able to make it to one of our meetings. His many articles for the Newsletter kept members abreast of the always interesting happenings at the railway. I will miss his contributions and my sympathies go out to his family and friends.

Ian Smith will be our immediate contact with the railway until they sort something out.

HRA Rail Passes

Peter Jackson informs me that the HRA rail passes have increased to £35 for 2020. These are available to members by contacting Peter. snbrailway@yahoo.co.uk

Informal Survey

I received an e-mail from John MacDougall:

Hi Tony, is there any possibility of doing an informal email survey of members for feedback on how the season has been, numbers of visitors-wise? Just a thought.

We struggle to get honest and reliable information from other attractions local to us.

Our season has not been great and it would be good to compare with others to see if we're doing something wrong or whether it is a general trend. Could an appeal in the next "News" be the way to go?

The HRA do a very detailed annual survey but we do not participate as there is clearly a difference between miniature and full size railways which would make comparisons difficult. Surveys like this are always difficult as no one really likes their personal and private information made generally available, but it might be useful to our members. I was thinking along the lines of a pretty general survey with just ticking the appropriate box

Passengers carried	>-10%	-10%	-5%	Similar	+ 5%	+10%	>10%
2019 vs 2018							
2018 vs 2017							
General 5 year Trend							

Approximate number of passengers carried in 2018 (optional)

Comments (optional)

My role would be:

- To agree and circulate the survey
- Collate the results
- Anonymise the results and delete all incoming relevant emails

- Circulate the results

For information - I do not own or operate a railway I am just a driver at Exbury and my input will be totally impartial.

Given the go ahead I would intend to send out the survey in January. This circulation will be to the principle contact at each railway not the normal Newsletter one. Could members with doubts, concerns or improvements please contact me.

Footnote



Newsletter prepared and circulated by

Tony Davies, Short Acres, Tiptoe Road, Wootton, New Milton, Hants, BH25 5SJ
Tel No – 01425 616622.
e-mail – dublorunner@gmail.com

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