

box located adjacent to the level crossing and the signal and point control systems are in the process of being updated by some of the members.



The railway resumed running passenger trains in early August after putting COVID-19 procedures in place for social distancing, sanitising and collection of fares etc in order to protect our passengers and train crews. Having been unable to open for approximately 4 months, due to the COVID-19 virus has resulted in a greatly reduced bank balance, so to make up for this we have come up with some fund raising events such as Halloween trains on 24th October and Santa Specials on 6th, 13th & 20th of December. The details of times and fares for these can be seen on the Fancott Miniature Railway page on Facebook and website. Other fund raising events are planned for 2021 so please keep a look out for those in the coming months. Our steam Loco Davanna returned to us in late July, but still has running problems when hauling passenger trains. The plan is to realign the track after the curve out of tunnel and then remove the curve on the hill, giving a straight run up to the bottom loop point. It is hoped that straightening the track run will give Davanna a greater chance of running up the gradient without reducing speed for the curve enabling her to be put back into regular working.

Preparation work has begun by clearing the lineside vegetation to make way for the new track bed and suppliers are being investigated for ballast, sleepers and fittings. The major work will commence after the 25th October, our last running day, and we are hoping it will be completed before the Santa Special's commence on 6th December.

Our last weekend running day will be the 25th of October, apart from the Santa Specials the railway will remain closed until Mother's Day 14th March 2021. *Rob Winskell*

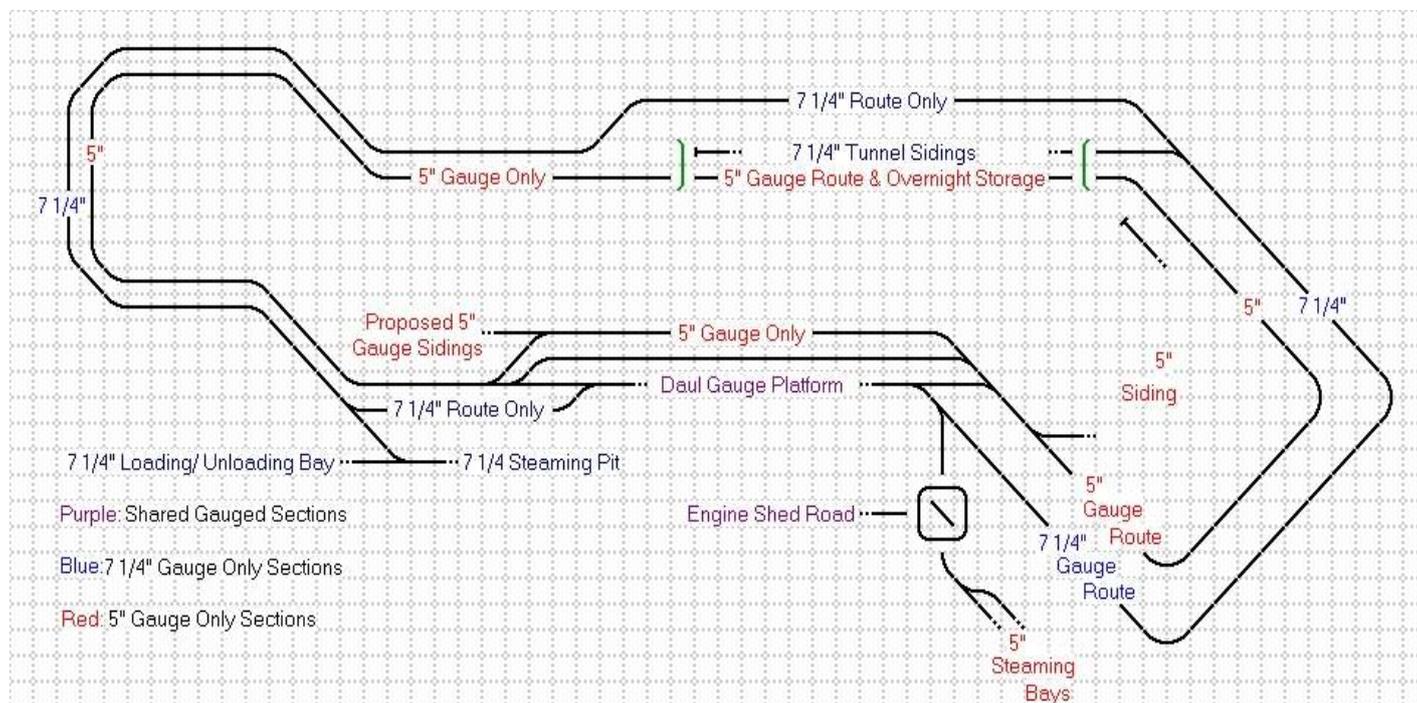
Strawberry Line Miniature Railway

Here at the strawberry line myself and the team have been very busy since July as the park opened with social distancing measures. Us at the railway added a slightly longer coupling bar (350mm) that made our standard 5" coaches 2 metres apart for the distancing, so we ran with 6 coaches with only 3 for passengers and after every trip these got sanitised for the next group. Platform also had feet sprayed every 2m to keep the queue apart. We had already decided that this winter would see us move the outer track to 7 1/4" gauge for every day running.

For after the summer holidays (and a small & social distancing gathering before the 6 rule came in) we said goodbye to the track as we knew it.

Work has started on the regauge (albeit slow) and the park started to invest in some stock. We have purchased some Vac braked coaches for large scale locomotives for delivery in late February and a second hand petrol hydraulic locomotive from Hollycombe Steam in the Country, as well as some point kits from Miniature Railways Supply Company which had now been built.

Below is the first draft of our planned layout. The outer loop becomes 7 1/4" gauge with the inner loop remaining 5" gauge with a dual platform.



Below you will find some pictures of our work so far.

This is the petrol hydraulic locomotive purchased from Hollycombe it is a 6hp electric start petrol engine with an Eaton 8 hydraulic unit all chain driven, we have had a little touch up of paint and an engine clean out along with some added electrics (Charging socket and isolator for battery and inline fuses for Vac pump and horns.



On the left is the first point kit being assembled by myself and Alex Day, once we got in the swing of it the other two were just as easy to build; we added a hand lever that may get replaced with a motor in the future.

To the right is the first bit of track that was laid. This was a portable track purchased from facebook, half will act as our storage line in the tunnel while the other half will become our unloading ramp.





To the left you'll find the first 5 track panels reguaged, tamped and levelled, this was completed in two days, the following four behind on its way to completion.



To the right is the view from the other end of the tunnel that the first point joins the main line (that will eventually join the left picture) with the storage road.

Hopefully in the next newsletter we will be on the road to completion, we do have a new facebook group should you wish to follow our progress. But for now it's happy steaming from myself & all of us @ the Strawberry Line Miniature Railway. *Chris Jones*

Rhyl Miniature Railway

What a down and up year 2020 has been.

At first it seemed like only newscasters were worried about the Coronavirus, then we were locked down and like everyone else the railway was unable to open. We were fortunate in that financially we were starting from a good place, and we were able to get two blocks of political funding from a grant pot set aside for accredited museums.

Another feature of 2020 has been a reduction in the size of our railway operating team, down in numbers by about a third compared with 2019, for various reasons. Nevertheless we have pushed on with various projects and in particular we have knocked in a lot of new sleepers, which is very pleasing.

On 5th July we held a team meeting on site, and made a plan to reopen the railway on the last two weekends of July and then run daily during August. We then turned this into a written plan as required by the ORR, and got on with the job of testing out our equipment, which had not run since Christmas.



We have run all season with a standard rake of four enclosed coaches and one open, each party travelling in their own compartment. We devised a one way system in out of our station, and made sure that we provided hand sanitiser and opportunities for our visitors to record their attendance for NHS Test and Trace.

What took us by surprise was the huge customer demand through August from people staying in the caravan parks near to us. We did help ourselves by advertising Marine Lake as a venue to go 'crabbing'. Combined with our low train fares and free car park this means that we can offer a cheap half day out; the quantity of crab lines and nets etc. that we have sold had to be seen to be believed.

Trains this year were hauled by *Clara*, *Michael*, and *Railway Queen*, with a brief appearance at the end of the season by *Prince Edward of Wales*. *Michael* is now kaput having reached the end of its ten year boiler life. The boiler from our loco *Joan* has been away all year being fitted with a new firebox.

Cagney No 44 has also been absent during 2020 but will be back next year with a new 10 year ticket and various mechanical improvements. Other railways would definitely have turned this little loco into a door stop by now, but we like it and have made a strong commitment to seeing it continue in service.

In September we entertained Michael Portillo, shooting for a future episode of *Great Railway Journeys*. We managed to get our boiler inspector to visit before filming day, so as to get two steam locos back into ticket just in time.



We have figured out a means of running Santa trains, using our compartmentalised coaches and with Santa visiting the train in the open air. We plan on a reduced capacity per day to try to ensure that different train loads of passengers do not have to mix. At the moment our website is taking bookings for these trains, but what the Wales anti virus regulations will be at the end of December nobody yet knows. At the moment we are travelling hopefully in the expectation that the trains will be able to run. If they are not able to run then we will face a

big exercise to give all our customers their money back.

Low points of 2020: uncertainties, doubts and risks around Easter time; finishing the year with only two out of five steam locos in service.

High points of 2020: A grant award which was particularly generous (the pot must have been too big); wonderful effort by the small team on site to cope with so many customers during August.

I am sure that other BGLR members will have their own roller coaster stories from 2020. *Simon Townsend*

Watford Miniature Railway

What a year!

We started 2020 by dismantling a railway at the Orchard Farm Holiday Village near Filey in Yorkshire. This 10 ¼" gauge railway opened in the mid-1990s but was now surplus to requirements. From it we gained an American bogie diesel locomotive (now nearing the end of rebuild), some rail and points for sidings, and most interestingly a 10¼" gauge single Fairlie steam locomotive – bit of a long-term project but one which should be quite good when finished. February was rather wet and windy which severely affected





takings, and then we went into March, which was going well until the uncertain global situation took over and like everyone else we were forced to shut.

Lockdown saw the railway put into basic 'care and maintenance'; we largely have paid staff (with a few occasional volunteers), so although we were able to take advantage of the Government's furlough scheme this meant that we were unable to do a huge amount on site. Towards the end of June staff started coming off furlough to prepare the railway for reopening with a rejigged station

and new way of operating.

Unfortunately, our insurance fell due for renewal before we planned to reopen in July, and as others may have found insurance has been challenging this year. Suffice to say we lost three weeks of opening whilst trying to sort out new cover and were led on quite a few wild goose chases by well known firms.

With the insurance sorted we opened on the 28th July. Initially we ran a service with alternate coaches empty to provide at least 2m social distancing between groups; unfortunately this caused issues with queuing and so we installed screens on the ends of the coaches, allowing all coaches to be used with one group per coach. Numbers were not far from what we would expect from a normal summer, and the drop was explained by a few non-Covid external factors.

At the end of September our steam locomotive 'Pilgrim' visited Hastings for their gala weekend. The weekend after we planned to follow suit, with 'Edmund Hannay' and 'Thunderbolt' from Hastings and 'The Empress' from Eastleigh arriving with us on Friday 2nd October. It was a damp day, but we thought nothing much of it until everyone arrived on Saturday morning to find a large part of the railway underwater. Although it was dry in the afternoon, further rain that night caused the level to rise so that it was over 2 feet deep in places on Sunday morning – completely unprecedented in the railway's 61 years. As the water



subsided we were able to assess the situation; fortunately things are better than first feared, but we still have quite some work to repair track, sort out the engines and coaches (some of which were almost completely underwater) and generally tidy up. The intention is to try and be up and running in some form for the Christmas holidays, Covid restrictions permitting.



Hopefully 2021 won't be so eventful! *Charles O'Mahoney*

North Bay Railway

It was possible at one stage to completely forget about any sort of virus in Scarborough. Passenger numbers were far higher over the summer than we predicted, and this lasted well into September. Our Covid steps became normal, and the cleaning crews were as slick as those you find in a formula one pit stop.

Unfortunately another lockdown looms over us, but we remain optimistic that we will be allowed to have a visit from a certain man in a red suit in December. Our Halloween events were cancelled but October half term proved fruitful.

Our plans (if at all possible to have such things at the moment!) for winter include the overhaul of Neptune, our oldest locomotive. She should emerge in time for her 90th birthday in May next year. Planned track work is minimal with most of our focus on rolling stock improvements.

I would I like to take this opportunity to thank all the



staff and volunteers this season, whose efforts ensured we made it though the other side with less pieces than we started with.

Here's to hoping 2021 brings more happiness! *Steve Johnson*

Chairman's November Letter to Members

I hope that You, Your Families and Members are all keeping well as this pandemic continues.

I know that some of you made the decision not to re-open but those of you who have managed to get running between the end of the Summer and last Thursday (in England) have managed to run you railways successfully in a COVID safe manner, I know how difficult it has been to comply with the myriad of rules and regulations that have been put in place.

At East Herts we had made the decision to re-open at the beginning of September to the public, we had a minimal crew who had been maintaining the railway, we increased the numbers on site during August to train each of our roster teams on the new ways of working.

When we did open our passengers were very happy to see us running again. What we have notice is that although we have had some very good days of between 500 and 600 passengers, we are around 50% down on September and October last year, I'm not sure if this sort of figures will be replicated across other members railways.

Hopefully this latest series of lockdowns and restrictions will be enough to control the spread of the virus and we will all be able to look forward to a successful 2021 season.

Yesterday the latest HRA newsletter came through with their legal interpretation of the current English restrictions and how that translates to all of the railways that are now closed to the public but still need to be maintained by staff and volunteers please see below.

Q We are planning to close as we did in first lockdown, including to members and volunteers, but can we still have people on site working?

A. It is quite clear that working, including volunteering is acceptable. Under the regulations, the (quite large) number of specific exceptions to the requirement to stay at home includes for work and for volunteering. The specific wording in the relevant exception within the legislation states people may leave home: *'... for the purposes of work or to provide voluntary or charitable services, where it is not reasonably possible [for the person concerned] to work, or to provide those services, from home'*

Thus, it is advised that:

- Where paid or voluntary work can be carried out at home it should be
- If the nature of work is 'reasonably necessary' then paid staff and volunteers may continue to undertake work.
- We would suggest that this might include:
 - o Monitoring, maintaining and protecting all land and property to keep it secure
 - o Maintenance of locomotives and other rolling stock to keep them in operational condition
 - o Maintenance of infrastructure, track, lineside and buildings to keep them in safe, tidy and operational condition
 - o Administration, finance and marketing work preparing for operating in December
 - o Planning, administration, finance, marketing and other office work normally undertaken at this time of year to prepare for the 2021 season
 - o Continuance of time sensitive infrastructure or rolling stock projects to meet deadlines, funders requirements and so on
 - o Maintaining competence and medical fitness to ensure operational personnel remain demonstrably competent
- Volunteers should only attend as required by managers and should not just turn-up
- As always, it should be the volunteers' choice whether they wish to volunteer and

they should not be compelled to do so by the organisation

- All personnel working must follow your organisations 'Covid-Safe' rules and procedures and all the relevant procedures on working with Coronavirus published by the Government at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

A full range of Q &A is available through their latest newsletter.

Finally to those Railways planning to open for Christmas Running / Light Festivals I wish you all the best of luck.

To everyone I wish a successful 2021 when we get there. Iain Dinnes, Chairman, BGLR

Editor's Ending

I hope that all my readers have a safe and happy Christmas and that the New Year brings more stability to the world in general and miniature railways in particular



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