

# Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 83



October 2021

## “TIME TO HANG UP MY OVERALLS”

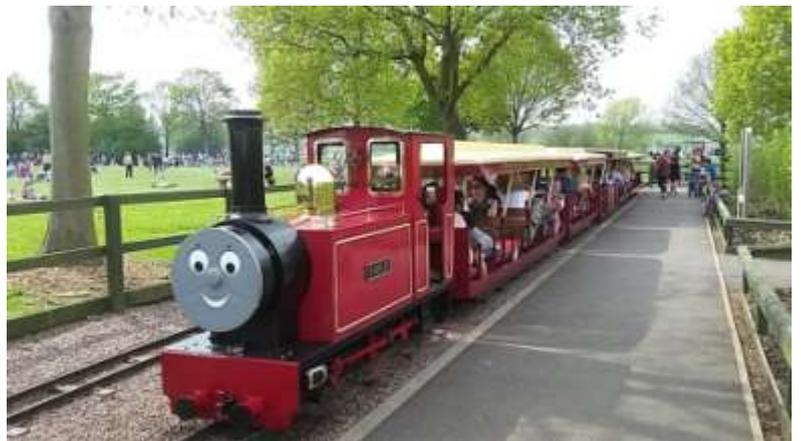
Back in the dark mists of time about fifteen years ago, we, that is Sandra and I, were out cruising on our narrow boat on the way back from Cambridge and Bedford having been out for about three weeks, it was May 2007 and we called into Ferry Meadows at Peterborough with the intention of staying a few days



before the final leg home to Northamptonshire, we had worked in Ferry Meadows for nine years running a 62 seat broad beam party boat, we had parted with that business the year before, and only popped in to see some old friends on the way home.

We woke up to a bright sunny day and after breakfast decided to take the dog out for a

couple of hours walk, on the way we met up with Terry one of the park rangers, after a brief conversation about boats, railways and life in general we parted company and went our respective ways, on returning to the boat we again found Terry, but this time he had a small piece of paper in his hand with a telephone number on it, that number belonged to the people who owned the miniature railway in the park, and so a new career was about to start, moving forward to November the same year we are now the new



owners of Ferry Meadows Miniature Railway, we knew nothing about railways but saw it as a nice little business for a few years before retiring at 65, but here we are 2021 with fourteen seasons behind us.

Hence the title “Time to hang up my overalls” I will be 73 in the new year and thought it was time to hand over the regulator to a new person, time for some young blood to carry on what was started by two friends who worked at Peterborough sugar beet factory, they had a dream to build and operate their





own railway, at that time Ferry Meadows Country Park was on the cards to open the following year in 1978, Alex approached the management team and the plans was set to lay the track in 1977 ready for the opening at Easter, along with his friend Dennis and a handful of willing helpers they had it up and running in no time at all, 95% of that layout of the track is still on the same footprint today.

So Ferry Meadow Railway is now up for sale, it is an opportunity for another person to work at and enjoy the same as we have for the past 14years, time for new ideas with a bit more energy and a

younger pair of hands to carry the batten that Alex, Dennis, Laurence Sandra and I have for 44 years.

If you think it is the job for you, then have a look at our website [www.ferrymeadowsrailway.co.uk](http://www.ferrymeadowsrailway.co.uk) and give me or Sandra a call on 01933 398889, we would love to tell you what owning our railway could do for you, we have enjoyed every minute, met some lovely people, laughed, cried had an aching back and been soaked to the skin many times, but we still love it and will miss it terribly. David & Sandra Coging [david@ferrymeadowsrailway.co.uk](mailto:david@ferrymeadowsrailway.co.uk) 01933 398 889

## **BGLR News from the Chairman**

*Dear Members*

*I hope this newsletter finds you, your members and everyone's families in good health, despite this ongoing pandemic situation. Hopefully we will be able to continue without any more full lockdowns but the numbers all seem to be creeping upwards again.*

*I hope that those of you who have managed to reopen this year have had a successful year so far, for those of you with a close down period from the end of this month good luck with your winter maintenance. Those of you who remain open then I hope the rest of your running year is successful.*

*I managed to get a couple of days away at the beginning of this month and was able to visit two railways, who are now looking to join us, one is a new member and the other is a previous member now under new management.*

*Hopefully we will be able to restart the general meetings and railway visits in the new year.*

*Good luck for the remainder of this year.*

*Iain Dinnes*

*Chairman BGLR*

## **Other News**

Ron Stanbridge, Fancott Miniature Railway wrote to me " the railway is Looking for a 20 ft container for storage of a wheelchair carriage that we have ordered. Can we ask the members if they have one for sale or donate? to the railway". Please contact Ron direct if you can help.

## 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

HRA Autumn Seminar & Management Conference 2021, in York on November 2nd and 3rd - invitation has been sent to members if you would like to attend. All details at [www.hra.uk.com](http://www.hra.uk.com).

## NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

### Go Loco Miniature Railway

We are preparing for Halloween on the Go Loco Miniature Railway - with venues seemingly being quite keen on the idea of a ghost train. Creating props has been the order of business for the last couple of weeks - I'll attach a photograph below of our spooky ghost train - we can't wait! There's also a photograph from events we've attended recently.



After the rush of summer, we have been putting in quite a bit of work on the maintenance side - there's still some work to do but hopefully we shall have everything up and running for Halloween and Christmas.

*Patrick David*

### Watford Miniature Railway

We have had a very busy summer with passenger numbers around 35% up on normal. After the annus horribilis of 2020 this has been very welcome!

Most trains this year have been diesel hauled, the two diesels on site (Conway Castle and Nikki Louise) have given hassle free service all summer. The long running rebuild of an American diesel we bought at the end of 2019 should be finished this winter, which will give us the opportunity to have Nikki Louise in for overhaul.

Steam locos Pilgrim and Marri have run around a dozen days each this season. The long wheelbase on



Pilgrim has been noticeably affecting the track on the curves and so the decision was taken to find her a new home at the end of the season - by the time the newsletter goes out she will have moved to Hastings, which has very few curves to worry about! This does mean we are in the market for another 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge steam locomotive suitable for heavy commercial use; feel free to get in touch if you know of something.

*Gala lineup - l to r 'The Empress' (from Eastleigh), Edmund Hannay (from Hastings), Pilgrim and Marri*

We restaged our 2020 gala in June after last year's attempt was flooded out. They say lightning never strikes twice, but apparently in Watford it does! The Saturday morning saw some of the railway under water following heavy rain on the Friday, fortunately it was a lower level than last year. An early start on the Sunday saw the water gone and following checks/repairs we were able to run trains later that afternoon.



Traditionally the railway runs all

*The two diesels ready for another busy summer's day*

year round, this year we have decided to close at the end of October. This will give us the opportunity to progress with some trackwork and other jobs, all a bit easier when the railway doesn't have to be running at the weekend, but we plan to reopen for the Christmas holidays.

## **Moors Valley Railway**

Since the railway re-opened in April 2021 the line has been operating with temporary COVID 19 measures in place however passenger numbers have remained very strong, with August reaching record monthly total 44,000 passengers. Sadly the decision was taken not to run a Summer Gala this year due to the continued restrictions in place; however opportunity was taken to use the time for some advance planning for the return of the Santa Specials in December. Tickets for the event went on sale in July and have already fully sold out, with 7 days of normal Santa's and 1 day for children with Special Educational Needs,

the first time this has been added to the event. The event promises to be bigger and better than ever and will hopefully provide a highlight for many children in what continues to be challenging times.



September 2021 saw the first Gala event in nearly 2 years take place with the Autumn Gala. This event saw 8 locomotives in steam each day over the Saturday and the Sunday, with the Dorset Flyer service, freight trains and the original Jim Haylock covered coaches in use, all running alongside the normal passenger service. The opportunity was taken to steam all available locomotives over the 2 days, alongside visiting engine Captain Hook.

The event was well supported by the public and also saw the full re-opening of Kingsmere station including the station shop.

The events programme for 2022 is due to be fixed shortly.

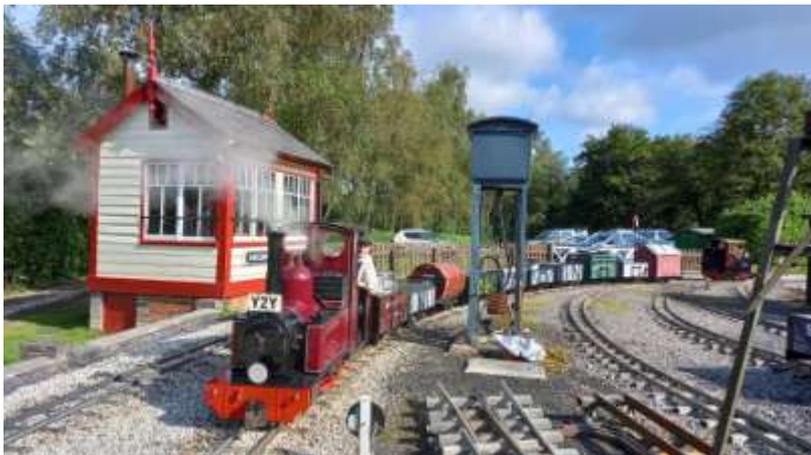
With the main summer season now ended there has been some time available to undertake some track work maintenance such as the relaying of the curve at the top of Tinkerbell Hill with new rail, plastic sleepers and an inner check rail. It is hoped this will reduce wear on the outside rail and limit the amount of rail creep that has been seen whilst using the older wooden sleepers.



Maintenance works has also been undertaken on some of the locomotives. Pioneer and Thor have received new balanced wheel sets to improve running at speed, with the opportunity being taken to undertake some other general maintenance tasks and full adjustment of the springing. Meanwhile Talos, one of the first batch of Roger Marsh built Tinkerbell locomotives dating from 1978, has received some work on the cylinders and post faces. Talos is one of a small number of MVR locos used for the Driver Experience courses so continues to perform a vital role for the railway.

Works continues on the ex Cuckoo Hill Railway 'Jupiter' and it is hoped it can be with her new owner in the very near future, complete with striking new livery. The rebuild has been an extensive one including a new

firebox in the boiler, a complete new set of valve gear, the conversion of the tender from 4 wheel to 6 wheel to provide better stability, and of course a full repaint.



All being well 2022 looks set to be a very exciting year for the railway, not only with the planned return of the Summer Gala event, but also a number of other new projects but these will have to wait for a later issue of the newsletter. *Paul Ash*

## Great Laxey Mine Railway



Normally we would have commenced our season at Easter weekend, but because of Covid restrictions, we started on the 5<sup>th</sup> June, so we have had a shortened season ( finish at the end of September), which does affect passenger numbers. The Island, being a small area, does depend on visiting tourist to swell the footfall at attractions, and this has been the case with us. Our passenger numbers were less than half what we would normally expect, But, they were twice as many as last year. We are now preparing for our annual Hop tu Naa (Halloween, to the rest of you)

spooky trains, where we will probably have as many passengers in 3 days as we have had all season.

This drop in passenger numbers made us look very hard at our finances (running at a loss it not a viable option) and one area that we looked at was insurances. After a lot of work by one of our volunteers, we managed to reduce our premiums by about a quarter, which was a great saving. The one thing that we could



not save on was the cost of re-tubing the boiler on one of the engines (BEE). This work being carried out by Keefes. At least we do not have that cost again for another 9 years.

During the season, we kept our maintenance to a fairly low level, the major item being taking off, cleaning, greasing and renewing the bolts, on all the fishplates on the line. We also re-fitted the boiler back onto the chassis and carried out all the tests ready for running. At the start of the year we purchased 2 wooden sheds for equipment storage, they soon became full, and we still seemed to have things everywhere.

Part of our rolling stock has been a set of 6 replica ore wagons. These were built 17 years ago as static displays, but were drafted into service as maintenance wagons, and have received some heavy use, which has resulted in them becoming rather worn. One of our volunteers prepared proposals to re-build the wagons over the next 2 years at a cost of approx. £4,000. A lot of improvements in the design to improve their usability and life span. A fund raising effort was started, which resulted in more than enough funds being received to pay for the project. All we need now is for the steel price to stabilise. *Colvyn Quaggin*

### **Bursledon Brickworks Miniature Railway**

The July Trains Event Day was a mixture of success and misfortune. The hot weather played havoc with the locomotives, which have thermal safety cut outs, and expanding track gauge plus a loose wheel joint. Our exhibitors saved the day with display boards and train models from 2mm to 5" (127mm) gauge, even a boat.

Whilst maintaining the current railway, work has been moving apace on the new railway. A number of track panels have been completed ready to install, the trackbed cleared and the new station buildings, benches and fences painted. The major project recently has been the construction of the level crossing (pictured as we tested it with one of our cars!) for the Traction Engine tour route. This has required the purchase of heavier duty rail bent to radius, a lot of concrete and a specially designed system for ensuring the rail remained level whilst the concrete was poured and set. Thanks must go to the Pycroft Team who helped considerably with this particular project.

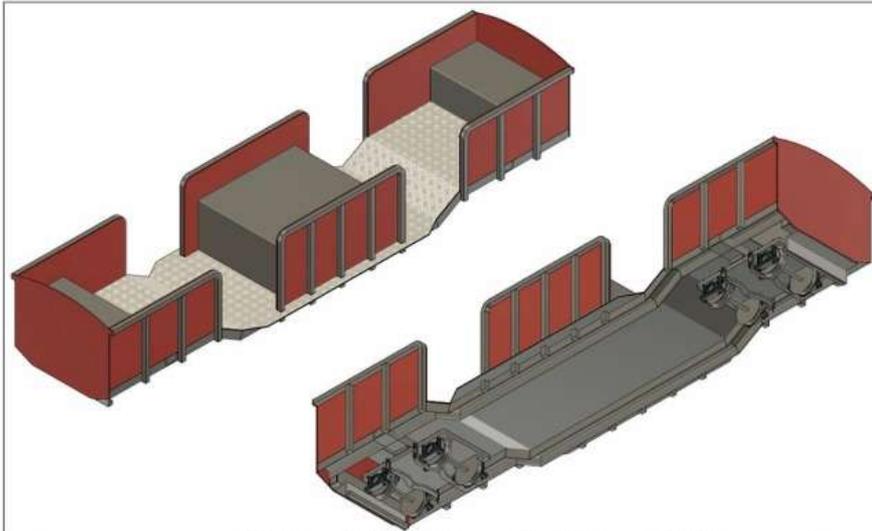


Projects underway, and making good progress, are the earthworks for the top (car park end) and bottom (Reception end) loops, the trackbed leading up from the new station to the top loop and the sidings into the new carriage shed. A sector plate and three way lead off has been constructed and installed saving the cost of two points (known as switches in American and lately Network Rail!), here the track is being built from scratch (bar with welded sleepers).

It's been great to welcome two new volunteers (thanks to Mary's efforts) to join our existing small but dedicated team. At the moment our work is hard graft and I think we're all looking forward to the day when we can just play trains! *David Hubbard*

## Fancott Miniature Railway

Since the last newsletter we have been able to run the railway most weekends, weather permitting. During the school summer holidays we put in an extra day on a Wednesday, which has allowed us to host children, families and carers from Keech Hospice Care, giving the children an additional recreational activity. To help



TITLE: Disabled Style	DRAWN BY: Kimberley Duckers	DRAWING NO.: DLR-KVD0031	DATE: 21/09/2021	SHEET NO.: 1 of 1	UNITS: mm	COMPANY: Denver Light Railway Ltd Locomotive Engineers Unit 8 Pipers Close, Bowden, Warrick, West Midlands, England, CV35 9JG 01827 438611 www.denverlightrailway.co.uk
PROJECT: 7.25 Coach	ALTERED BY:	VERSION NO.: V1	VERSION DATE:	SHEET SIZE: A3	SCALE: NOT TO SCALE	
NOTES: This drawing is the property of Denver Light Railway Ltd and is supplied in good faith that it is not loaned, copied or disclosed to a third party without our express permission.						

provide the children with easy access to the railway we decided to start fundraising for a wheelchair access carriage. The railway has donated an initial £1000 to the fund and we have also received donations from the public, local organisations and donations to our JustGiving page [https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/robert-winskell-fancott-miniature-railway-wheelchair-access-carriage?utm\\_term=QQm6EkQxz](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/robert-winskell-fancott-miniature-railway-wheelchair-access-carriage?utm_term=QQm6EkQxz)

Three fundraising events have also been held so far this year, a 60's weekend, a Teddy bear weekend and a Superhero weekend, where

children bringing their teddy bears and those dressed as Superheroes were offered discounted train fares on the day as well as free rides for key workers.

Two of our very own Super Hero railway staff dressed for the part!

The railway donated a third of the takings from these events to the wheelchair carriage fund, which has brought the total raised to date to

**FMR SUPERHERO WEEKEND!**

**COME ON DOWN ON SATURDAY 18TH AND SUNDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER FOR A FUN FILLED SUPERHERO DAY AT THE FMR!!!**

**TRAIN RIDES ARE £3 PER PERSON, OR £1 IF YOU'RE DRESSED AS A SUPERHERO!!! (SUPER TWOS GO FREE!)**

**IF YOU ARE FROM THE EMERGENCY SERVICES, YOU CAN GO ON FOR FREE, BECAUSE YOU ARE A REAL SUPERHERO!!! (MUST BRING WORK ID AS PROOF)**



just under £3000. Our goal for the total project is around £10,000 which would buy the carriage, storage container, new points and track, together with the groundwork required. And on that note .... has anybody got a 20ft shipping container in good condition for a nominal price or know of one that we can have free? Currently good used containers are rare and/ or expensive and together with transport costs to site could eat up a sizable amount of the money raised so we are trying to keep costs to a minimum.

We will also be running our spooky Halloween trains on the evening of 30<sup>th</sup> October and Santa specials on the afternoons of the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> of December. Preparations are underway to give the railway a spooky feel for Halloween where ghouls, ghosts and witches, to name but a few, will be on display trackside to keep our passengers in a state of fright! Once we have dusted off the cobwebs and sent the witches back to their boxes for another year Santa and his elves will be busy making their grotto in time for the Santa specials. As with the previous events the railway will donate a third of the takings from these two events to the wheelchair carriage fund.

The railway's last running day was the 9<sup>th</sup> of October as the weather has now turned colder, but we are regularly reviewing it just in case we get any mild and dry weekends. The railway will officially close after the Halloween trains, with the exception of the Santa trains, until Mother's day weekend in March 2022. We will be holding regular working parties over the winter period so our volunteers can continue the updating of our signalling and points control system, the aim is to eventually be able to control mainline points from the signal box together with train position monitoring. Volunteers will also carry out general maintenance of the site, rolling stock and locomotives together with the groundwork required to site the container for the wheelchair carriage.

The railway has been featured in several local newspapers and publications recently making people aware of our existence, the current fundraising activities and the need for additional volunteers. This has worked well on all three points with new passengers telling us they were visiting having seen our adverts, an increase in donations and we have attracted some new volunteers as well! One of our members is currently in the process of overhauling our YouTube channel by bringing all the videos of the railway together at the same location. (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3EqzEPXS22bSZKmbw3s6LQ>)

The railway is currently investigating obtaining legal status in one form or another by becoming a Community Incorporated Organisation (CIO), or a Community Benefit Society (CBS). We have been in touch with the Heritage Railway Association for advice, but any assistance or advice from members that have gone through this process would be appreciated.

For any additional information, offers of containers, or help on obtaining legal status we can be contacted either through our Facebook page and messenger or email [thefmr@live.co.uk](mailto:thefmr@live.co.uk)

## Hastings Miniature Railway

Like many other businesses we finally got reopen on 12th April this year after yet more lockdowns that felt like they would never end. However this extra closed period gave us time to complete much needed

repairs including new bogies under Speedy Fizzle and a new set of coaches for the railway.



With Speedy Fizzle's 10 year anniversary coming up it was decided it was the ideal time to do the necessary work. We marked the occasion on the 17th and 18th July (almost 10 years to the date) with a mini Gala and welcomed Nevada from Ropley, Gonk from Vanstone Park



And Lord Nelson from Eastleigh.

On Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th September HMR hosted its 11th annual end of season gala. We welcomed visiting locomotives Ajax and Hefty from Ropley, Florence from Eastleigh and Pendragon owned by Adam Jeffrey. Pendragon currently does not have a resident site, however anyone who knows Mr Jeffrey is urged to inform him that Ferry Meadows is up for sale! (A standing joke!)

There were various multi headed trains including several all electric triple headed trains. HMR ran 7 of its own resident fleet including newly acquired steam locomotive Firefly (formally Nellie) built by Jack Brown of Heanor. The weekend was finished up on Sunday with an 11 headed train.



The following weekend HMR visited Eastleigh lakeside Steam Railway with Firefly and Falcon, along with Tiger Lily and Phoenix from Alexandra Park. It was a great weekend in spite of the weather on Saturday and included Falcon hauling the first ever fully electric Lakes Express with Florence (Eastleigh) and Hefty (Ropley)



Now with the season drawing to an end we are getting ready for our Christmas specials. With nearly 100,000 lights to install November is going to be an illuminating time!

As some of you may already know we now have Edmund Hannay's big brother Pilgrim living on site. Whilst it has just passed it's annual boiler



inspection there is various work that needs doing to it before we run it, including repairs to the smokebox which does not seal very well and is wearing thin on the crown. It also requires various work replacing fittings and installing new injectors. Hopefully it will all be ready to go for the Christmas specials.

As have so many others we have had a good financial year, with many holiday makers staying this side of the water. It has given us a much needed boost after last year. Here's to another good year next year. *Dan Radcliffe*



## Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway

Following a very good operating season, thanks mainly to the fact that many people decided to holiday at home, it was thought fitting to hold what might be described as an impromptu Gala, on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>



October, to coincide with the visit of members from the prestigious 'Heywood Society'.

Although there was very little advance notification of the event, it was very pleasing to see that Ingfield Manor had brought down to Eastleigh, their 10¼" gauge 'Schools' class locomotive No: 905 'Tonbridge'. Throughout the day, a steady stream of passengers bought tickets to travel on the trains, take photographs and enjoy the sights and sounds of operational steam locomotives albeit in miniature.



The majority of the trains were double headed and by dint of careful planning, the two engines attached to a train complemented each other. For instance, two Bullock locos No: 2005 'Silver Jubilee' and No: 1002 'The Empress' hauled one train and two Southern locos, Schools Class No: 905 'Tonbridge' and Lord Nelson Class No: 850 'Lord Nelson' pulled another. Of course, mention must also be made of the two Romulus

engines 'Sanjo' and 'Ray' coupled together and 7¼" stalwarts, Atlantic No: 4789 'William Baker' and Northern 4-8-4 No:3 'Francis Henry Lloyd' also provided sterling service.

The highlight for many was the creation of a 'super' train of twenty coaches with the two Bullocks providing the motive power – a most impressive sight.



Of course, events such as these cannot happen without considerable work taking place behind the scenes and, clearly, the efforts of those who keep the locomotives in such superb order must not be underestimated. Undergoing significant overhauls in the workshop are, 'Sandy River', and 'Ernest Henry Upton' as well as the restoration of Bullock No: 1003 'Western Queen'.  
Lionel Kay

Picture1(top)Bullock No: 1002 'The Empress' and Schools Class No: 905 'Tonbridge' await at their turn at Parkway. Pic2 Two Southern locomotives No: 905 'Tonbridge' and No: 850 'Lord Nelson' climbing away from the tunnel. Pic3 Two Romulus engines 'Sanjo' and 'Ray' lead a train away from Parkway. Pic4 End of the day



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