

# Britain's Great Little Railways

Newsletter 87



January 2023

## WHITFIELD LIGHT RAILWAY

2022 ... well I'm still here! As we try and come out of the Covid pandemic, and have some sense of normality, then the country's economic situation hits back. Less cash in family's pockets, meaning less income month on month across the year for the little railway. And at a time when all costs are going up. Anyway, enough of the negativity ... onto a summary of the little wins.

The railway was open 165-days in 2022, with no.3 'Kestrel' doing 40 of those and no.5 'Griffon' the remaining 120. No.4 'Otter' is out most days I'm at the railway, whether operating days or maintenance ones.



© photos by ianpw

The reality of steam tram 'Kestrel' is that she's now a little small for the heavier trains, so will be used for high-days and holidays. She received a set of Hetherington lamps around June to change her face a little. She was out in February for a visit of the Branch Line Society, for a buffer stop to buffer stop tour ... or to the

fallen oak tree that had fallen across the far end of the line. Petrol-electric Scamp 'Otter' took them into the shed, road by road, on the sit-aside coach.

A wheelchair coach arrived in March, ex-NRM and High Legh Railway. She was regauged and refurbished by Denver Light Railway and has provided extra capacity for the pumpkin and Christmas trains. Our 2nd tipper T26 arrived around the same time, coming via SMR (Watford).



And the big one, 0-6-0 diesel-hydraulic 'Griffon' arrived at the end of April. The chassis originated from a steam-outline tender loco that Watford Miniature Railway (SMR) had and that had been built in the 1990s. Denver Light Railway worked with us on the design, refurbishing the chassis and running gear, and building the body upwards, with a new 20hp Kubota diesel engine. She's proved her worth and has just gone in to have steel tyres fitted to the wheels. Pumpkin trains are every day for October and the Christmas trains are a full 6-cars, with up to 30 passengers.



I've stepped into celebrations this year, with the railway being available for 3 weddings and a 50th birthday through the year. I've a better idea what works and doesn't, and we've a Wedding Fayre on-site in March to showcase The Hayloft and the railway.



I've already mentioned pumpkins. It's incredibly popular whatever the weather and the railway is open every day through October. The train could do with a drive through train wash!

And Christmas was a big one this year, involving the building of 180m of railway though November, running the 16-days of Santa Experience moving everyone from the Elf Workshop to the Grotto, in the snow-ice-rain and then picking it all up again in January. All went well.

The railway still now needs rebuilding back down the field and should be a bit longer. Quite a task ahead but the aim is for reopening the tail end of February. *Ian Whitfield*

## **BGLR News**

### **Subscriptions**

The subscription round is with us again.

The subscriptions for the upcoming year are unchanged at £35 if your railway is not on the brochure and £65 if it is included. Roger Brown, our Treasurer, has requested that, if at all possible, you pay by bank transfer to **Britain's Great Little Railways, Sort Code: 09 01 54 Account No. 44041087** (Please enter railway

name as payment reference) Alternatively, if you have to pay by cheque, then it should be made payable to **Britain's Great Little Railways** and sent to Roger at 19, Kimberley Road, Chingford, London E4 6DD

## Brochure

The contents of the brochure must be finalised by the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of February. If anyone wants any changes to their information or picture, please let me know as soon as possible. By then all railways featuring on the brochure should have paid their subscriptions.

## 2023 AGM and Spring General Meeting

This meeting will be hosted by Mike Bailey, Secretary of the Burnley and Pendle Miniature Railway Society at the Thompson Park Railway, Thompson Park, Burnley, BB11 2AA. The meeting will be held on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and commence at 11.00 am. I will send out invitations and more details soon but please note this date in your diaries. This will be the first face to face meeting of BGLR since March 2020 when we held our AGM meeting at the Watford Miniature Railway just before the lockdown.

As highlighted by Ian's article above our railways are going through tough times but I hope a get together with ample opportunities for a chat amongst our members will be a welcome change and I am hoping for a good turnout, especially after the cancellation of the Autumn Meeting.

## NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

### Evesham Vale Light Railway

The 2022 season has seen a late summer boost, which has resulted in the best year we have had with 48,500 passengers carried.

Our Santa Specials were sold out by mid-November, which seems to happen earlier each year, we carried 4900 passengers over 10 days for the Santa's.

Our Facebook page which started from scratch last year, has now got 1400 followers, we also have a new Instagram page "Eveshamvalelightrailway" as well.



We have invested in a new website, which should be live later in January.

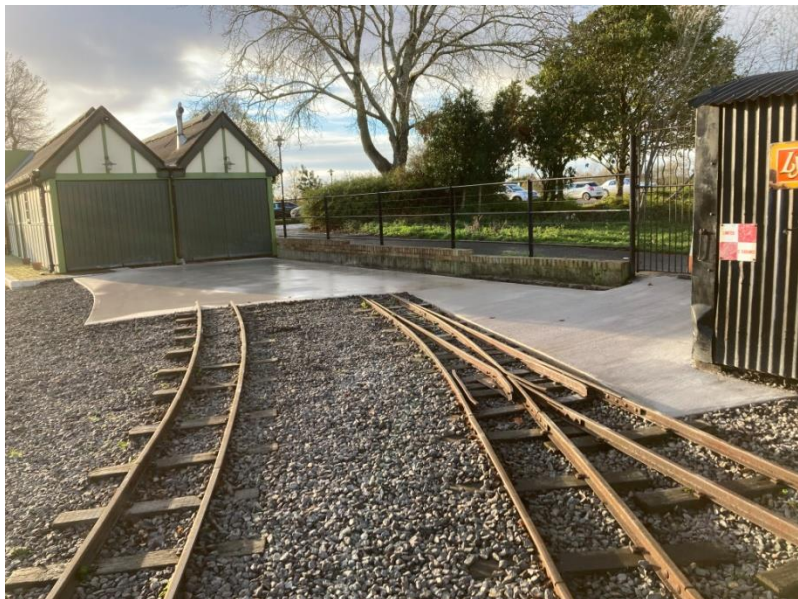
We could not obtain new rail for the planned relay until January 2023, so this has been deferred to early in the season.

To make track maintenance easier we have bought a Robelco petrol vertical tamper, this has made maintenance much easier, as previously we shovel packed the permanent way.

Dougal was withdrawn for repairs in July, and has taken longer than we thought, with new valves being manufactured along with the cylinders being surfaced ground, as the surfaces were badly worn.

We have also fitted a new Gresham injector on one side, as the buffalo injectors have been getting harder to repair.

St Egwin will be withdrawn for its 10-year overhaul in a couple of weeks' time, hopefully this will be just a retube, and since the tubes are now 20 years old they have survived well.



We have invested in a concrete apron at the front of our running shed, mainly to make loco maintenance and preparation easier, but also to allow our coal which is now delivered on pallets to go straight into our coal store.

As 10 years seem to have passed in the blink of an eye, we have decided the time has come to think about retirement and other interests, so we are going to offer the Railway for sale this year. If you are interested or know anyone who is, they can contact us on [enquiries@evlr.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@evlr.co.uk)

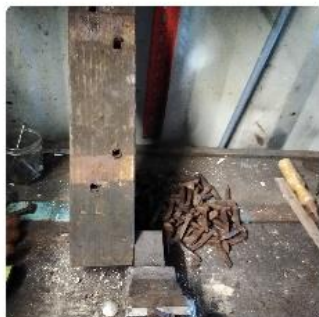
*Adrian Corke*

## Crewe Heritage Centre

When our 2022 season ended in October, we took the big decision to relay our track over the winter months. Our existing track uses sleeper nails to hold the rails in place. It isn't so easy to adjust these types of fixings when checking for gauging accuracy.

We are replacing each nail with a square washer and screw which will make a much more secure fixing between rail and sleeper.

Our plan is to get the main section between Spider Bridge and Forge End stations over which we carry passengers completed for the 2023 season opening in April. The spur from Forge End to Old works is then the second phase. The third



phase will see us relaying any track where we run around as a light engine.

If you are planning a visit in 2023, please check with us on-line at <https://www.crewehc.co.uk/chcmr> or follow us Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/crewehcmr> to ensure we have completed the work and are able to run passenger carrying trains. *Mike Lowcock*

## Brickworks Miniature Railway

Now that the new railway is operational and has proved a such a success with visitors to The Brickworks Museum. 2022 saw the line and station completed, new locos and carriages added to the stock including a steam loco and riding/tender and a grand opening.

On Sunday 25th September at the museum' Train Event open day, the BMR had its new track officially opened by the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Fareham , the Mayor of Eastleigh and Fareham Councillor Seam Woodward ( who has been a great supporter of the Brickworks Museum). There were 650 plus museum visitors and at least 300 paying passengers on the railway. Some services were double headed and there was a "Thomas" friend for photo opportunities for youngsters of all ages.



Improvement works have started to create a passing loop, new engine shed and loading/unloading facility.

The new loop will increase capacity from the current two train operation, whilst the new engine shed will provide more space for the growing loco fleet. This will also give more room in the maintenance shed with less juggling of stock.



A purpose-built loading/unloading facility will enable future invitation days to be run without the heavy lifting or use of the forklift!

2023 is looking rosy with a trial of one day per midweek in school holidays running in addition to the monthly Museum event days. The enthusiastic railway volunteers are to be congratulated on all their hard work setting up the track over COVID and we look forward to welcoming any local enthusiast who would like to help us to further develop this new project. *David Hubbard*



## Brookside Miniature Railway

Passenger figures for our Halloween weekend and Santa trains were very good.

We now have a new diesel in service to be officially named Graham after one of our volunteers who sadly passed away some time ago.

Some new coaches have also been put into service and thanks to volunteer Mike Jones they have had roofs fitted, an excellent job if I may say so, Mike.



Our paid staff and volunteers lead by Andy the Railway Manager work exceptionally well as a team and we are able to maintain the track to a high standard.

Also, the gardens are looked after by Dave Cartledge our "Head Gardener". There is a real sense of optimism that 2023 will be another successful year for us.

Finally, credit must be given to Antony who keeps the locos in good working order, thank you, Antony for all your good work. Thanks again to Keelings Amusements for their support in 2022 particularly at Halloween and when the Santa trains were running. *David Buxton*

## Rileys Miniature Railway.

We're pleased to say 2022 was a good year for Riley's Miniature Railway, although being on the site of the Lavender Line, a standard gauge heritage railway, naturally we were, and will always be only able to open on the days in which they're able to operate services for the public.



With the Lavender Line severely struggling with volunteer numbers, sadly we weren't able to open to the public as many times as we would have liked although when we were open, we did see good visitor numbers. And when those visitors, whether they be adults or children say that they've specifically come for a ride on our little 5-inch gauge railway, it always leaves us with a little smile.

Generally, we were operating our 24v Ride on Railways narrow gauge 0-4-0 "Jasper" battery electric locomotive

which has proved to be a fantastic hard working, sturdy and fault free loco. Our 24v Bexhill Model Engineering Class 33 "Robin N" also saw service but interestingly wasn't as favoured as "Jasper". Our passenger train setup consists of two passenger wagons and the drivers wagon so quite a modest affair but this does us absolutely fine for our needs. We also saw several visiting steam locomotives and other battery electrics, some seen on our passenger trains and some just run on their own in between services.

Maintenance days were carried out on selected Sundays when the Lavender Line were closed. Jobs included replacing life expired sleepers, packing ballast, trimming foliage, cutting the grass, painting, etc.

As some will know, all fares and donations collected are sent to the Evelina Children's Hospital in London, part of Guys and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. Since the railway opened back in 2011, we've charged a very reasonable 50p per person per ride. With the railway having been extended several times over the years, it has recently been discussed whether we should raise this to £1 per person per ride.

Our main priority is that we want families to enjoy their visit and don't want to put people off having a ride, but we feel this is still a very fair price, so this is likely to be introduced this year at some stage.



We hope the Lavender Line are able to resolve the volunteer issues and will be able to open more regularly this year and of course look forward to welcoming more visiting locomotives. If that's something that may be of interest, please give me a call on 07793 435428. All we ask is that steam engines should have a current boiler certificate. And if you'd rather not be part of the passenger train, we have a spare driver's wagon if you'd prefer to run on your own in between services. *Graham Lelliott*

## Thompson Park Miniature Railway

We had the possibility of 67 running days in 2022. Amazingly we managed 65. One because of bad weather and one of a lack of volunteers on another poor weather day. Our year started well on the first weekend in April and by the time our free rides Sunday arrived at the end of April we were already in front of 2021. During the year we sold two of our locomotives 'Park Ranger' and 'Swallow' both going to new homes in the south of England. Our railcar finally arrived and was duly named after one of our members who is no longer with us. **Roy Schofield**. His granddaughter Olivia who is now a member of our society got the chance to be one of the first people to drive it. One or two teething problems meant that was not in service for long, but we hope to have it up and running for 2023.

All our events during the year which include Teddy Bears Picnic and Superheroes Sunday were well attended and we are always surprised at the number of adults that still have teddy bears and are prepared to get dressed up for a free ride. All good fun. Our final weekend of the main running is always a charity weekend and this year our chosen charity was VICS. VICS is a small charity in Accrington that helps visually impaired children. Whatever we take over the weekend is donated





to our chosen charity and the society ups the takings to £1000. Santa arrived in the park on a coolish weekend on the first weekend in December and both Saturday and Sunday were a great success with over 350 rides



given. Anything that is left over from our Santa Special is donated to a local Church for distribution to local children.

Our 2023 year starts again on the first weekend in April and runs through to the last weekend in September. The special events are FREE rides SUNDAY last Sunday in April we don't charge for rides but have a donation point if riders want to donate. Our other two free rides days are the last Sunday in July when we run a Teddy Bears picnic. Bring a teddy (or another doll etc.) and get a free ride and the last Sunday in August Super hero's Sunday. Anybody in fancy dress gets a free ride.

Santa and his elves arrive on the first weekend in December. Our pricing structure for 2023 remains the same £2 adults £1 children under 16. Family ticket (2 adults 2 children) £5 Super saver (saving £2) £10. For our Santa special we charge £2 for all riders. Finally, we have come running and jumping into 2023 with the arrival of



contactless payment. WE STILL PREFER CASH. 2023 will see a new locomotive arrive at the park. You need to visit us for a ride on No.17 Excalibur 2. *Mike Bailey*

## Watford Miniature Railway

Despite a damp end to the year over the Christmas holidays, 2022 turned out to be a very successful year with passenger numbers 43% up on our budget. This was despite increasing our fares in April to keep up with the ever-rising operating costs.

Most trains in 2022 were diesel hauled, we find on busy days passengers don't mind what is on the front of the train and diesels are much easier! Our new addition Densil has proved popular with lots of customers over the year, whilst long-serving diesel Conway Castle celebrated its 50th birthday in the summer with a repaint into its original green and white livery from the 1970s. Nikki Louise has been on backup use in 2022, once the long-running rebuild of an American style diesel locomotive in the workshops is finished she will be coming in for a thorough overhaul.



Turning to steam locomotives, Chiltern Shuttle has run once or twice a month when her owners have been available, except in the autumn when she went on holiday to the Eastleigh Lakeside Railway for a month or two. Marri developed leaking tubes in her firebox in May and has been out of use since awaiting the time to fit the repairs in around everything else. Henry makes good progress under restoration at a well known contractor in the Midlands, we are getting closer to having a rolling chassis and I am told the new boiler will be completed in a batch this summer. With a fair wind (and enough passengers to keep paying the bills!) he should be back some point in 2024.

In September we dismantled a complete private railway in Sussex, the main attraction for us was there 16 sets of points! Some of these will be used to rearrange our yard this winter. We have also kept a pair of ballast wagons and a brake van which is now used as a mobile tool cupboard. The locomotive, a very nice-looking diesel hydraulic tram, went to visit the Hastings Miniature Railway for their gala weekend and is currently still there awaiting a few modifications before we make a decision on its future.

After some uncertainty over the last few years with pandemics, floods and everything else, we have restarted our attempts to replace our current sheds with a modern, fit for purpose building, along with an onsite workshop and improved welfare facilities for the staff. There has been a restructuring and change in some key personnel at the council (our landlords) so I am keeping fingers crossed this will help with being able to make some progress - time will tell! *Charles O'Mahoney*



### **South Devon Miniature Railway**

We are pleased to report that in 2022 the South Devon Miniature Railway had one of the best years in recent times with over 7000 passengers carried whilst running on 30 days. 2022 also saw the return to service of petrol hydraulic 0-6-0 Pegasus on passenger carrying service and running in turns for Kelvin's new T2 and Andrew's Sweet William steam locomotives. The South Devon Miniature Railway Society has been able to purchase the Tinkerbelle steam locomotive "Primrose" with a generous bequest and our Hunslet tank locomotive should also return to steam in 2023 in what will be the SDMR 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.



*The "New" Thomas 2 No 10 in the platform at Buckfastleigh Central with a works train*



*The Thomas 2 No 10 out on test approaching our top crossing.*



*Phoenix and Pegasus in our yard just after completion of their annual exams back in March*

Although we don't run in wintertime as the passengers and staff would get very cold and wet on most days, we will be working hard off site on finishing the rebuild the Hunslet. Also, one of the sit-astride coaches is getting a full overhaul, including vacuum brake fitment and a repaint. Vacuum brakes will be fitted on the other coaches as well to enable the steam locomotives to pull them. We also have some track work and building maintenance to complete in order to be ready for re-opening at Easter.

We are planning to operate on most Saturdays throughout the summer and whenever possible on South Devon Railway gala days. We hope to organise our own gala event to commemorate our 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. In

preparation for running a more intensive service we have already recommissioned our Riverside loop after several years of not using it. This allows us to run two trains simultaneously, crossing them over in the loop, adding interest for both staff and passengers.



*Phoenix and Pegasus at Buckfastleigh Central awaiting the days services on the "Big" railways Thomas weekend during May.*



Otter once again visited us in September for the "Big`2 railways Family Fun Weekend in September. Phoenix and Pegasus took it in turns to operate the 2<sup>nd</sup> train and act as thunderbolt loco, luckily the need never arose and all 3 locos performed faultlessly over the weekend clocking up over 70 miles between them over the 3 days.

As always opening the railway depends on the availability of our members and we would love to welcome more volunteers so we can extend our operations. Follow us on our SDMR Facebook page for updates and when we will be open. *Kelvin Stapleton, all photos are © K Stapleton*

## GREAT LAXEY MINE RAILWAY - Raad Yiarn Meain Mooar Laksey

It has been a quiet period since the last newsletter. We held our annual Hop tu Naa (Halloween) train weekends, which proved a great success. Numbers were back up to our pre-covid numbers which was gratifying. We also ran a two-day weekend at the end of November to tie in with the local village Christmas Fair, which proved a great success as well: it provides the opportunity for some of the staff to dress up in silly outfits and enjoy themselves.



We are now in the winter period carrying out essential maintenance and some improvements to the system. We are looking at having a lights system on two of the points and controlling the tunnel during Hop tu Naa. We are also planning our sleeper replacement policy; we are now considering moving over to using 'Plastic Sleepers'. We are having good feedback from our local Railway about them. The main problem is that they are considerably more expensive than the timber ones that we use at present, so we are having to go on a fund-raising drive.



Work on our engine BEE carries on: a new valve chest has been cast and received, and is ready for fitting, along with new pistons and a lot of other new bits as well. A mixture of wear and tear and poor build quality in the first place.

One of our founding fathers, Andrew Scarffe, was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) in the New Year honours list. This to recognize his work within the local community maintaining the heritage of the area. This has covered the development of

the GLMR, restoration of several carriages owned by the Manx Electric Railway, work on the history of the Great Laxey Mine (which in the 1890's was the largest lead/zinc mine in the British Isles) and the publication of many books on the topic. *Colvyn Quaggin*

## Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway.

Naturally, at the beginning of a new year, it is always a time to look back at the events of the old year and to enjoy remembering as much as possible of all that has occurred, and to this end I offer a small snapshot regarding the happenings at Eastleigh Lakeside Steam Railway.

A particular highlight was the unveiling, in early February, of 4-4-0 Atlantic No: 1908 Ernest Henry Upton resplendent in its LBSCR 1911 umber livery with gold lining and lettering. Rob Hart went to great lengths to obtain the correct shade of colour and Dan Radcliffe, from the Hastings Miniature Railway, secured the transfers for the locomotive and tender. Following its re-introduction into traffic, No: 1908 was much admired thus making all the time and effort to get everything right worthwhile.



No: 1908 *Ernest Henry Upton* in its new LBSCR umber livery 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Of course, throughout the year, the railway's workshop staff and volunteers were not under employed as normal routine maintenance and overhauls on both locomotives and rolling stock continued apace. 10¼" gauge 2-4-2 No: 7 Sandy River had its ten-year overhaul completed ahead of schedule and re-entered traffic in time for the Easter Egg Specials. Also back in traffic following a period of time in the workshop is 10¼" gauge 4-6-2 A4 Pacific No: 4498 Sir Nigel Gresley much to the delight of drivers and passengers. The passenger rolling stock is being modified using aluminium sheeting for the floors and a thick laminate for the bodywork with the first prototypes now in service. It is anticipated that the new carriages will have longer lives than the present fleet of wooden bodied carriages and will, therefore, require fewer visits to the workshop for replacement panels and floors.

Moving away from workshop related topics for the moment and looking at the permanent way, in particular rails and sleepers: in some of the lesser used areas, for example sidings, the steel rails will be replaced using aluminium whilst the whole track will benefit, overtime, from new plastic sleepers the first five hundred of which were delivered to the railway at the end of March. The railway has now entered this new phase with many of the old, life expired wooden sleepers replaced with plastic ones. Despite the increase in cost, the extended life of the plastic alternatives should, in the long run, prove to be more cost effective since fewer renewals will be needed.



Neil Simpkins Nord Pacific No : 3.1192 at Eastleigh Parkway Station.

A matter that affects many miniature and heritage railway operations is the supply of suitable fuel following the recent issues associated with coal and, in preparation for the future, the railway has trialled a number of types of ecoal with varying degrees of success – of course this topic will rumble on for some while.

ELSR is justly proud of the number and variety of special events ranging in style from Diesel Galas, Family Fun Days, Easter Egg Hunts and visiting locomotives - both large and small. Two of the special events welcomed the Simpkins family as they bought to the railway four of their superb recreations. The first was at the tribute to the 'Golden Arrow/Fleche d'Or event when Neil Simpkins' splendid Nord Pacific No: 3.1192 hauled trains alongside Eastleigh's un-rebuilt Bulleid Pacific 21C1 Channel Packet and 4-6-0 Lord Nelson, No: 850 Lord Nelson. The second event that required considerable input from them was the Great Central Weekend where they showcased three of their GC locomotives; 11F 4-4-0 Director No: 505 Ypres, class 8 4-6-0 Fish No: 181 and class 8K 2-8-0 No: 102. The popularity of all the events is clearly demonstrated by the variety of locomotives attending and the distances some of the owners are prepared to travel with some coming all the way from North Wales! No matter what distances covered, either near or far, all visitors are cordially welcomed to ELSR.





Photo top - Golden Arrow/Fleche d'Or Weekend showing 21C1 Channel Packet, No: 850 Lord Nelson and Nord Pacific No: 3.1192 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022. middle: Class 8 4-6-0 Fish No: 181 Great Central Weekend 6th August 2022. Bottom No: 10 Sir Arthur Heywood and Moors Valley No: 9 Jason double heading towards Monks Brook on the Thirtieth Anniversary Weekend 3rd September 2022. Right: Christmas Lights train Lionel Kay.

One especially significant event was the thirtieth Anniversary of the founding of the railway when the trains were hauled by the first locomotives to arrive at Lakeside plus a very special visitor in the form of No: 9 Jason from Moors Valley it being the very first locomotive to visit in 1992. I wonder whether Clive Upton and those involved with the creation of the railway ever thought that such things as ecoal or plastic sleepers would be in use thirty years on?

Of recent memory are the final events of the year, the Christmas Lights Train and Santa Specials. Despite the Christmas Lights Trains being new ventures, they and the Santa Specials were sold out in record time. The hard frosts of early December created a very seasonal atmosphere and delighted the many photographers as departing locomotives, owing to the cold, were enveloped in great clouds of steam!

Finally, members of the ELSR community offer their hearty congratulations to Amelia (Millie) Fallowfield on becoming the latest qualified steam driver. After attaining proficiency in the operation of electric and diesel locomotives, Millie embarked on an extensive training programme under the direction of the line's General Manager, Rob Hart and the CME, Simon Merritt. I wish all BGLR members and their supporters, a Happy, Successful 2023. *Lionel Kay.*





*Sandy River leaving Parkway station with a Santa Special 10th December 2022 Lionel Kay.*

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