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ISSUE 163
JAN-FEB 2022



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Cover: The end of November traditionally means the start of Santa Specials, big revenue generators for railways and much-missed in 2020 due to Covid. The weather duly obliged for Statfold Barn on 28th November, Peckett 0-6-0ST 'Harrogate' picking its way through the white stuff. Also in this issue we go back to the Bala Lake Railway's formation 50 years ago – when at first it was intended as a miniature railway...
Photos: Joey Evans and Graham Fairhurst

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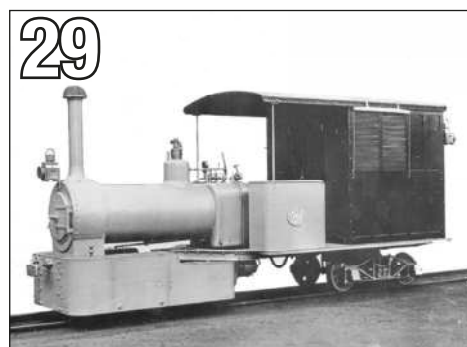


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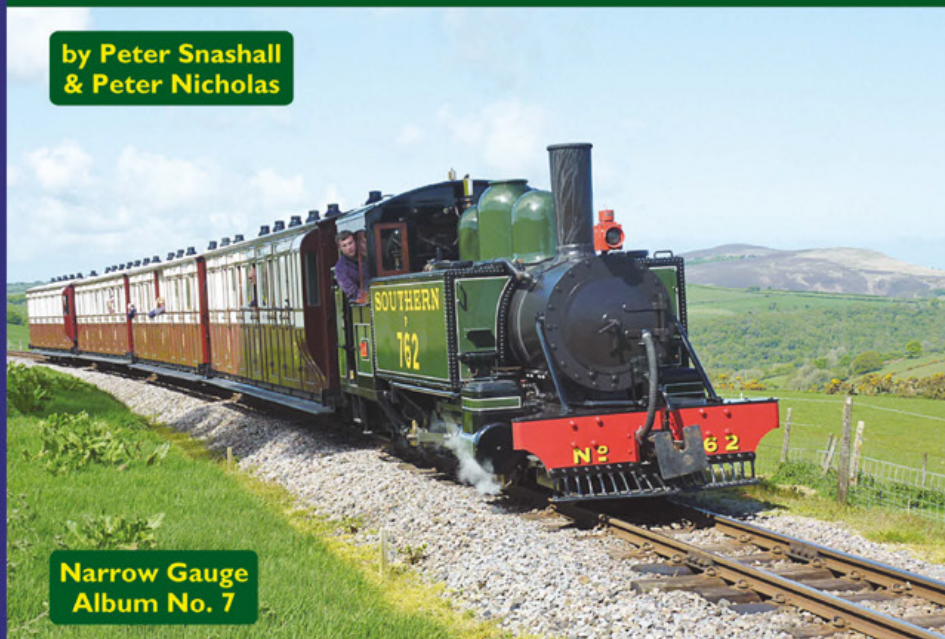
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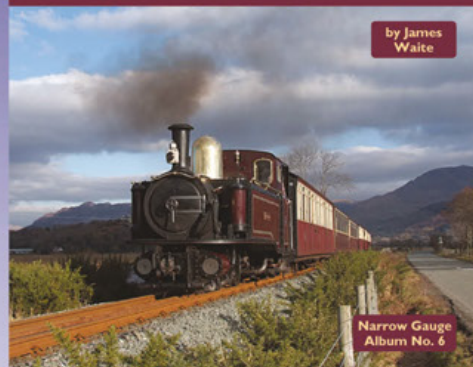


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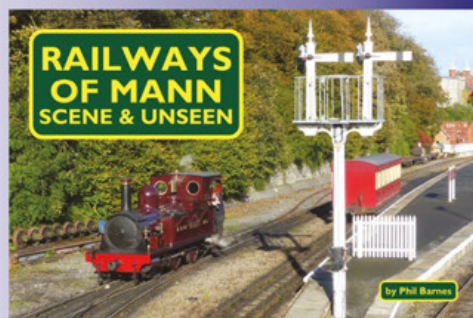
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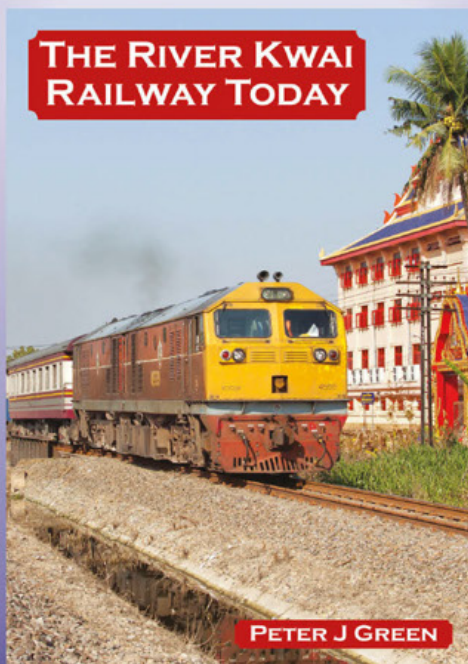


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Promise of a New Year



“A scaled-down version of a Western main-line diesel loco suddenly makes a lot more sense...”

Main photo: Some interesting times lie ahead for many lines in 2022, not least the Llanberis Lake Railway with major work connected with the Dinorwic power station scheduled along its route. Ben Bucki caught Hunslet 0-4-OST ‘Elidir’ and its train adding some colour to a very wet 29th October. The inset picture shows our editor trying to get the lowdown from Bachmann Europe managing director David Haarhaus...

Welcome to *NGW*163 and the start of another new year – as ever one that we greet with some uncertainty with Covid still far too big a part of our lives. Still, reading our news pages, there appears to be lots to look forward to in the next 12 months, with lines scheduling more and bigger events, and a host of projects making major strides, especially loco new-builds...

It’s a tradition with the end of December to make some New Year’s Resolutions. Now while I know these tend to be either forgotten about or abandoned within the first couple of weeks (days?) of January, I’d like to ask our readers to make a couple on behalf of us...

Firstly, if you know of fellow narrow-gauge enthusiasts that don’t read *NGW*, please let them know what they are missing! Yes the narrow gauge world is a specialist part of the overall railway movement, but while we have a loyal and quality reader base which we appreciate enormously, we know we don’t there are narrow gauge fans out there we don’t reach.

Like everyone else, navigating the Covid pandemic has been a major challenge, particularly for a specialist title such as *NGW*, but with foresighted publishers we’ve ensured we’re still here as we come out of a tough couple of years, when some very high profile magazines have not survived. We do need to progress, though. More readers would help us bring you more of what you like

to read, so please speak up on our behalf if you get the chance!

Secondly, please support our advertisers! Their loyalty has been crucial to our navigation of the pandemic, especially as they have been facing the same challenges. We have some quality advertisers who are really worth checking out.

Thanks in anticipation! Be assured I’m really looking forward to what we plan to bring you in the coming months? What? I hear you ask. You’ll have to wait and see...

Hug a Hunslet

The phrase above I once saw on a sticker and it can easily apply to the quarry Hunslet locomotive, as I have discovered when compiling the three-part ‘Hunslet Homes’ series that concludes in this issue. Well I say concludes – the three features have generated a pool of further memories and pictures, so much so that we will definitely be doing some follow-ups.

I hope you’ve enjoyed reading them as they have certainly been fun to put together, while producing yet more of those “well I never knew that,” moments. For example I only discovered days ago that early plans for the Bala Lake Railway envisaged it being a miniature line. Of course now that I know that, the fact that the sight that greeted me on my first visit to the line in 1973 was a scaled-down version of a Western main-line diesel loco suddenly makes a whole lot more sense...

Miniature marvels

Being a ‘shortaxe freak’ from an early age (the name, given to me by a schoolfriend who was a standard gauge fan stuck, even my social media ‘handle’ on Twitter is @shortaxe...) when I got into model railways it was of course on the narrow gauge, in 009 scale.

Back then you either had to accept foreign prototypes on your layout, put together lumpy whitmetal kits with epoxy glue (I never got on with soldering, everything melted...) or kitbash plastic models into a something approaching a UK prototype.

With such memories, I am still being totally blown away by the sheer miniature delights now being produced in 009 by the likes of Bachmann, Heljan, Peco...

This month the team at our sister magazine *British Railway Modelling* thought it was a good idea for me to do a video interview with the MD of Bachmann – I did tell them I have a great face for radio... But what this did mean was we got to take a close-up look at the firm’s brand-new 009 Double Fairlie locos, which really have to be seen to be believed – the quality of the detail is truly amazing.

The full story is in this issue and meantime I think I may be compelled to build a new 009 layout, just to justify owning some of these truly superb models...

Enjoy your *NGW*...

Andrew Charman



Left and above: Different strokes – on 9th November newly outshopped NG/G13 Garratt ‘Drakensberg’ contrasts with the last resident loco overhauled in the VoR’s workshops, 2-6-2T ‘Owain Glyndwr’ at the line’s Aberffraw station.

Photos: John R Jones/VoR – see also Gallery pages

Rheidol’s South African Garratt makes debut on photo charter

The former South African Railways Garratt locomotive acquired by the management of the Vale of Rheidol Railway in 2017 has joined the mid-Wales 2ft gauge line’s operational fleet.

Hanomag NG/G13 2-6-2+2-6-2 ‘Drakensberg’ (10551/1927) had previously been at the Schinznacher Baumschulbahn in Switzerland. Acquired by enthusiasts in 1986 after 13 years out of use in South Africa, the loco had been returned to steam in 1978 and ran on the 60cm gauge Swiss line until changes to the track layout rendered it unable to traverse the full circuit at the site.

Three years of negotiations ensued before the loco was transferred to the VoR, arriving in mid-Wales on 17th July 2017.

The Garratt was in generally excellent condition and certified to operate in Switzerland, but as it had to be dismantled for a boiler test required by UK regulations, the VoR decided to carry out a full overhaul in its Aberystwyth workshops.

The work progressed between other requirements including contracts for outside customers, and was delayed by the workshops being closed by the Covid pandemic, but finally the locomotive was able to undergo a successful light engine test and gauging operation over the full length of the line on 16th October.

A loaded test which saw the Garratt hauling seven carriages to Devil’s Bridge followed on 18th October, the loco subsequently taking a second test train with VoR Directors and Trustees aboard and then working a demonstration freight train for a photo charter on 9th November.

The overhaul included the addition of VoR-specification air braking including a steam-operated air pump. The original vacuum train braking and loco steam brake

equipment has been retained in the cab to conserve its original appearance.

The Garratt has also gained a correct early NG/G13 pattern chimney and VoR couplings and safety chains.

The railway has decided to retain the locomotive’s name of Drakensberg, which was applied while it was in Switzerland.

The name refers to an area in central Southern Africa named Drakensbergen (Dragons’ Mountains) by early Dutch settlers – with the red dragon being an iconic Welsh symbol and the VoR running from the sea into the mountains, the name is considered highly appropriate to the Garratt’s new role.

Chelfham station restoration wins national heritage award

The sympathetic restoration of Chelfham station on the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, which included the removal of additions to the main building added after the L&B closed in 1935, has seen the team responsible win the Hendy & Pendle Trust Volunteers Award at the National Railway Heritage Awards.

Sponsored by Network Rail chairman Sir Peter Hendy and Sue Pendle, the award is aimed at projects with significant volunteer input, for an historic railway or tramway building or structure in any ownership.

The award carries a cash prize and it is the

second year in succession it has been won by a narrow gauge project, going last year to the restoration of Minffordd Gweithdy on the Ffestiniog Railway – the building was converted into a volunteers’ workshop.

The presentation was made at a ceremony on 1st December – runner-up in the Hendy & Pendle Trust Award was the Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Group for its restoration of the graves of Ffestiniog pioneers the Spooners in Beddgelert.



Right: Chelfham has been superbly restored and now simply awaits a train. Photo: Trevor Garnham/L&BR

Nuclear grant fuels Bala's extension plan

Plans by the Bala Lake Railway to extend into the centre of the north Wales town have received a further boost from a second grant of £38,790 made by Magnox Ltd, which is currently decommissioning the nuclear power station at Trawsfynydd near Blaenau Ffestiniog.

The grant is part of a programme set up by Magnox in localities where the firm is working, providing socio-economic support to enhance education and skills, provision or support for local employment, economic diversification or social infrastructure.

The award will pay the fees required for the final part of the BLR's extension planning application, and for the additional engineering consultants, architects and quantity surveyors needed to move the project on to the next stage of scoping up the specification for the actual construction of the three-quarter mile extension.

"This is fantastic news and further confirmation that the belief and support in 'The Red Dragon Project' is unabated," said Bala Lake Railway Trust chairman Julian Birley. "The support we have received from Magnox has been vital to ensure the extension remains on track.

"Before a single piece of track can be laid a lengthy process involving designs and planning needs to take place and this is expensive," Julian added.

"Thanks to Magnox we can now achieve our targets to seek the respective consents needed and continue the momentum that will take us into a superb new station on Bala high street."

Hunslet Homes, Bala at its Birth, starts on page 34

Lynton joins move to plastic sleepers

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway has followed the example of several other lines in moving away from wooden sleepers to recycled plastic. A first delivery of 100 sleepers plus crossing 'timbers' have been delivered to the Devon 2ft gauge line's Woody Bay base.

As well as being more environmentally friendly by re-using plastic bottles that would otherwise go to landfill, the sleepers last significantly longer than wood equivalents and are easy to drill for fixings.

Use of them across the narrow gauge environment is gaining pace – the Ffestiniog Railway was one of the first to employ them in replacing track in its Moelwyn Tunnel in 2018 while recent users have included the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway in its replacement of a passing loop at Sylfaen Halt (see page 8).



Amerton honoured by volunteer 'MBE' award

The Amerton Railway has become the latest narrow gauge line to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service – the highest award made to volunteer organisations in the UK and considered equivalent to an MBE.

On 6th November the Lord Lieutenant for Staffordshire Ian Dudson CBE KStJ visited the 2ft gauge Staffordshire line to see the facilities and take a trip around its broadly circular 1-mile route. This was followed by a presentation of a crystal award and a certificate signed by Her Majesty the Queen to the volunteers at a ceremony held in the local village hall.

Peter Bell, Amerton chairman and chief engineer during the construction of the railway, received the crystal award and the certificate was accepted by Peter Mason, chief engineer for many years and who led the purchase of the land that the railway runs around.

The mile-long Amerton line is operated entirely by volunteers and has gained a reputation for using locomotives and

rolling stock that were mostly built or worked within Staffordshire.

The railway originated from the restoration of the 1897-built Bagnall 0-4-OST 'Isabel', which had previously been displayed on a plinth in Victoria Park, Stafford.

Current Amerton chairman Pete Gully described the presentation as "a wonderful afternoon enjoyed by all – receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is a real honour and something we are all very proud of."

Previous narrow gauge recipients of the award have included the Leighton Buzzard Railway and the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway.

Above: The Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Ian Dudson checks out the Amerton Railway's signature Bagnall 0-4-OST 'Isabel'.

Below: Amerton line personalities Pete Mason, Peter Bell and Pete Gully received the award from the Lord Lieutenant.

Photos: Tom Eivers/AR





UNESCO memorial crowns Talylllyn year

A memorial has been unveiled at the Talylllyn Railway celebrating the designation of the Slate Landscape of north-west Wales as the UK's latest World Heritage Site, as the mid-Wales 2ft 3in gauge line celebrates making a strong recovery in 2021.

The memorial at Abergynolwyn station was funded by Gwynedd Council, which led the successful bid for UNESCO World Heritage status (UK News, *NGW160*).

The TR has reported a healthy trading picture in 2021 – despite Covid restrictions forcing a late start to the season in May, the line has come close to matching revenue figures from the 2019 season, which was in itself a record-breaking year.

TR general manager Stuart Williams said that the late opening deprived the line of Easter traffic, which typically accounts for around 15 per cent of annual income.

"To be almost matching the 2019 turnover figure then is better than we could have ever envisaged, even more so when we have been having to restrict numbers of passengers on our trains," Stuart added.

From the start of the season visitors were permitted to book their own compartments to maintain social distancing. When restrictions eased in August the facility was retained as an option.

"We have been inundated with positive comments about the way we managed the services to be Covid safe – our staff and volunteers have had to be very flexible with our planning," Stuart said.

Normally closed from the end of October to the December Santa Specials, the TR has decided this year to run every weekend until the end of December, and daily between Boxing Day and 5th January.

Enquiries to local accommodation providers and hospitality owners revealed strong Autumn bookings and according to Stuart resulting passenger numbers have been comparable to weekends in May.

Above: Unveiling of the UNESCO memorial, attended by Talylllyn Railway GM Stuart Williams, local MP Liz Saville-Roberts, together with representatives of Abergynolwyn village and local councillors.

Photo: TR

February deadline set to keep Corris new-build on track

The Corris Railway has given itself a deadline of the end of February to deliver essential components to Alan Keef Ltd and ensure the line's new-build Hughes Falcon 0-4-2ST meets its planned September 2022 completion date.

Parts needed include brake components, spring balances, boiler fittings, springs for the trailing truck and draw hooks and cab windows, along with CAD design and laser-cutting files for the saddle tank.

Also required are the loco's air brake valve and mechanical lubricator and, in liaison with the Talylllyn Railway, the air pump and injectors.

Many of these components are well on the way to completion but according to Corris spokesman John Simms much still needs to be done to meet the deadline, in particular raising the finance required.

The railway hopes to receive further donations to the project through its website www.corris.co.uk – this includes a facility to sponsor boiler components.

Cheques payable to Corris Railway can also be sent to Peter Guest, 38 Underwood Close, Callow Hill, Redditch, Worcestershire, B97 5YS, while Peter is also supplying forms for anyone who might wish to take out a short-term regular standing order to help the locomotive towards completion.

The loco's boiler was recently trial-fitted to the chassis at Alan Keef's Ross-on-Wye workshops while the cab, a larger version of the original, has also been trial-fitted.



■ Project leader Richard Wiltshire became the first Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway volunteer to drive a train through the 2ft 6in gauge line's Sylfaen Halt following the reinstatement of the passing loop on 5th November. The return of the loop was funded by a donation that paid for the points and a Welsh Government tourism grant.

The W&LLR has confirmed that its end of summer Steam Gala will return to its traditional format in 2022 after a scaled-back event was held this year. There will also be an event in May celebrating the 120th anniversaries of the line's two original Beyer Peacock locomotives, while more family-themed events are also being added to what could be the line's most complex season yet.

Photo: Alan Barnes/W&LLR

Hayling diesel gets classic car overhaul

Hayling Light Railway diesel 'Edwin' has returned to the Hampshire seaside line's Eastoke Corner depot after a full engine rebuild at a classic car specialist.

Jim Stokes Motor Workshops in Waterlooville is usually concerned with restoring classic Alfa Romeo, Ferrari, Maserati, Lancia, Mercedes, Aston Martin and Jaguar racing cars.

However the team happily turned their attention to the 1969-built Ruston & Hornsby, which arrived on the Hayling Island line in 2005 after retirement from industrial service and was given the name 'Edwin', after the son of then railway owner Bob Haddock.

Edwin and 1988-built Alan Keef steam outline loco 'Jack' were set to be busy working Santa Special trains on weekends throughout December and through Christmas week.



Upmarket audience for 'Edwin' as the Hayling loco leaves the workshops of Jim Stokes.
Photo: Jim Stokes Workshops

Ffestiniog shuts to allow major work

The Ffestiniog Railway has taken the unusual decision to close completely over the winter to allow significant infrastructure work, much of which has been delayed by the Covid pandemic, to take place.

Services on the line ended on 29th October and will not restart until March, although some services will operate on the sister Welsh Highland Railway.

The major project while the line is closed is to replace track between Rhiw Goch loop and the halfway station on Tan y Bwlch, and between Boston Lodge works and Rhiwplas bridge, where the Dolgellau to Porthmadog road passes over the line.

As with recent FR relaying projects, the replaced track will employ recycled plastic sleepers, which have proven superior to wooden sleepers even before their environmental benefits are taken into account.

Meanwhile the line's signal and telegraph department are carrying out further work at Tan y Bwlch to ease run-round procedures, the station having seen much more use as a terminus for services introduced as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Improvements include installing a means to allow a safe run-round of a train without having to use a token and the installation of a 'wrong-line' departure signal, as well as improvements to the track circuiting.

Porthmadog Harbour station building has been encased in scaffolding to deal with some persistent water leaks.

Below: Some of the last 2021 trains to operate on the Ffestiniog Railway were for a five-day photo charter. Karl Heath caught England 0-4-OSTs 'Palmerston' and 'Prince' in action at Ddualt on 2nd November.



BRIEF LINES

Award for TR apprentices

Representatives of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway presented the Talyllyn Railway's first-ever apprentice, Oscar Hutchinson, and fellow staff member Chris Palmer with their NVQ qualifications in Permanent Way on 10th November. Both have now joined the TR permanent staff following the NVQ training and assessment scheme that was co-ordinated by FF&WHR Infrastructure Manager Alex Spring.

Lynton plans for extension

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway has engaged planning consultants ahead of applications for the first stage of its extension, from the present limit of operations at Killington Lane to Parracombe. The line intends to submit its application in January 2022 giving it until 7th March 2023 to start work before the permission expires.

Joint effort for WHR 100

The Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, Cymdeithas Rheilffordd Eryri (Snowdonia Railway Society), Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Group and the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway will join forces to celebrate the centenary of the Welsh Highland Railway. The line clocks up 100 years in 2023 and events, details of which are to be announced, will take place on key dates over the next two years.

Glyn Ceiriog gets a crane

The New Glyn Valley Tramway & Industrial Heritage Trust has completed the installation of a rail crane at the museum it operates at the former Tramway's station at Glyn Ceiriog. According to chairman Keith Roberts the crane has been accepted by local residents and proven quite a talking point.

Baldwin work restarts

The restoration of Baldwin 4-6-0T no 794 to represent no 590 at the Vale of Rheidol Railway, which was delayed when the line's workshops were closed by the Covid pandemic, was expected to get back underway this winter. The project is entering its final phase with major work still to be done including the purchase and installation of new steam valves and boiler fittings, installing air and braking systems and manufacturing a wooden back to the loco's cab.

Halesworth buys wagons in bulk to boost 6-wheel replica plans

The Halesworth to Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway Society has taken delivery of a fleet of wagons from Alan Keef Ltd of Ross-on-Wye.

The five complete open flat wagons and three underframes are all 30-inch gauge stock built in the 1940s for Royal Naval Armament Depots (RNAD) and sourced by Alan Keef from a Ministry of Defence site.

This type of wagon is routinely re-gauged to a nominal 24 inches (600mm) by bringing the wheels and brakes closer together, but HSR spokesman James Hewett told *NGW* that re-gauging to the group's 36-inch (914mm) gauge is a bit trickier.

"Luckily, the Society has experience in what's involved, being already in the process of re-building one from Barnstaple," James said. "The axles and brake cross-shaft must be lengthened and the frame rebuilt wider – and as it happens, higher to take account of a higher coupling setting."

One underframe will be adapted into a Southwold Railway style



curved-end open wagon, to be used at Blythburgh Station for display and freight delivery demonstrations. Another may be required for a similar display at the SR's former Halesworth station, and the remainder will be adapted into various examples typical of the railway.

The number of acquisitions will also allow the construction of vehicles long desired by the Society, notably a six-wheeled vehicle with a flexible underframe articulated on the Cleminson principle – the Southwold line made extensive use of such vehicles and the Society plans to recreate a 20ft long coal wagon.

"Apart from producing a wagon which, above all else, typifies the Victorian railway itself, this project will serve as a test-bed to prove the technology and its adaptability to continuous braking, in advance of the possible building of a 35ft-foot long balcony Cleminson composite carriage to run on the line," James added.

The HSR believes that to properly portray the historic significance of the Southwold line freight stock should be given equal attention and as new-build replicas are financially out of reach, adapting RNAD stock is the best option. The long-held ambition is to provide a heritage train, including plans to replicate 2-4-0T Sharp, Stewart locomotive 'Halesworth', built in 1879.

Above: The acquisition of the former MOD wagons opens up a range of possibilities for the Halesworth group.

Left: The Cleminson six-wheeled coal wagon is among projects the group has planned. *Photos: HSR*



■ Completion of the Southwold Railway Trust's new-build Sharp Stewart 2-4-0T 'Blyth' at the Darlington workshops of North Bay Railway Engineering has suffered some slight delays, but as this photo shows the locomotive was almost ready for delivery to the Trust's Steamworks base at the end of November. *Photo: NBRE*

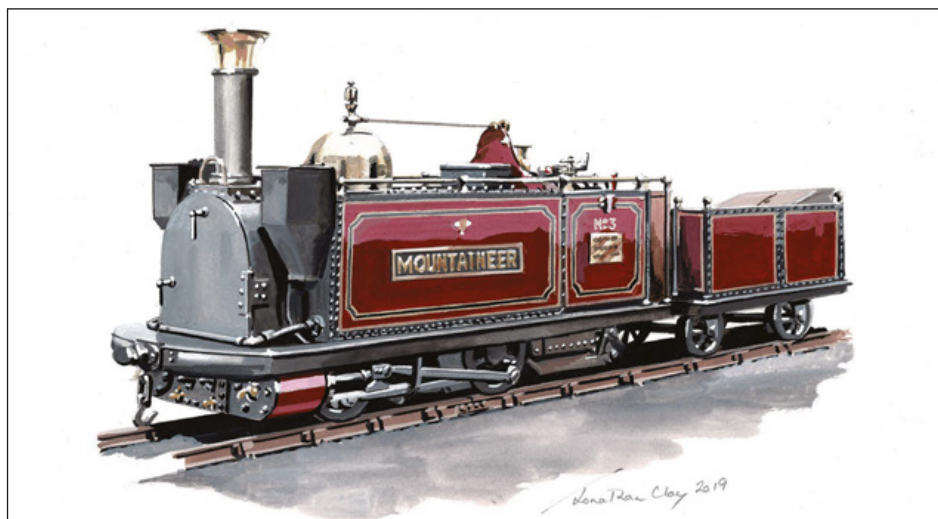
£32k grant boosts Steeple Grange recovery effort

The Steeple Grange Light Railway has won a £32,636 grant from the Tarmac Landfill Community Fund that will allow the line to complete remedial work that has prevented it reopening since the Covid pandemic.

Having been closed throughout 2020, in February 2021 the 18-inch gauge Derbyshire line suffered a rockfall in the cutting that the steeply-graded route climbs through. The new funding will allow the Darklane Quarry face at the site of the rockfall to be stabilised alongside repairs to the abutments on Porter Lane bridge, as well as dealing with other infrastructure issues along the line.

Commenting on the award a delighted Steeple Grange spokesman said the funding would secure the future of the railway for years to come.

The line recently removed several dying ash trees by rail to make possible the rock work on the quarry face.



Mountaineer project targets Easter for chassis on wheels

Rapid progress on the project to recreate an original-condition Ffestiniog Railway George England 0-4-0 locomotive could see the rolling chassis completed by Easter of this year.

The Mountaineer 1863 Project is constructing a new-build example of the FR's 'Mountaineer' – built in 1863 the loco was the only one of the four original England engines to remain in as-built condition with side tanks, and was also the only one scrapped.

Project leader David Wood told *NGW* that he is now seeking quotes for the frame material, the design work for the frames having been completed.

Machining of one of the loco's cylinders has been completed at Darlington-based North Bay Railway Engineering, which will erect the loco. Machining of the other cylinder has been slightly delayed by a faulty casting having to be remade but is scheduled to be finished shortly.

An appeal amongst supporters of the project to complete the funding of the axleboxes, which was still £2600 short in early October, rapidly hit its target and

these are now being made, while the driving wheels have been machined and only need their keyways cutting.

The loco already has a completed boiler and David said the momentum of the project is growing. "All being well we will have the rolling chassis, with its cylinders attached, in existence by Easter," he said.

Donations to the project are still being sought and can be made via the website at www.1863mountaineerloco.co.uk

A group called 'The Mountaineers' has also been set up, membership of which is open to anyone who is a financial contributor to the project – details are on the website.

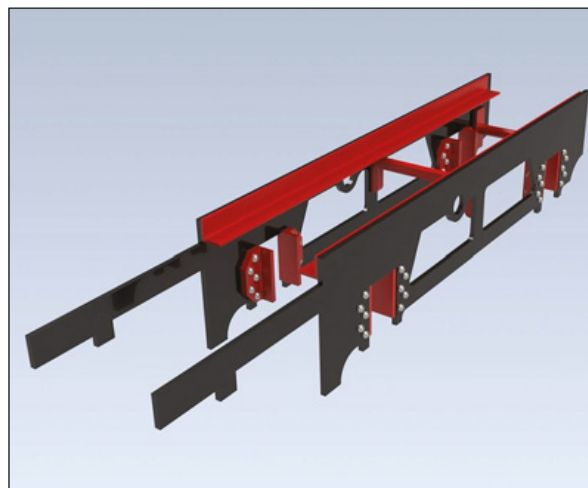
Above: Jonathan Clay's painting of 'Mountaineer' shows how the loco will be built to the original England look.

Above right: Driving wheels are complete, simply needing keyways.

Right: Drawn out: CAD designs of the frames are complete and the metal ready to be ordered.

Below: Cylinder machining is close to completion, while the boiler awaits its chassis.

Images: Mountaineer 1863 Project





Screw shortage has C&L appealing to rail industry

The Cavan and Leitrim Railway steamed resident Avonside 0-6-0T 'Nancy' (AE/1547) on 13th November in advance of its annual boiler examination in the new year. An opportunity was made to photograph the line's volunteers with bilingual Great Southern Railway style signage donated by director Darragh Connolly for the eventual terminus of the line at Clooncolry.

Track gang members have made major strides in replacing dog spikes with track screws on the C&L running line, to the point the gang ran short of screws.

An appeal to UK light rail and accessory specialist GB Rail liberated an additional

batch of screws for use on the track refurbishment project. "Brexit has had an impact in terms of inflating the cost and duty, however the railway is delighted to have received them," Darragh said.

The railway continues to appeal for funds, having been unable to operate since the end of 2019 or organise seasonal events such as Santa specials. Donations to the railway can be made online at www.cavanandleitrimrailway.com/covid

Above: Sign of the times – C&L members with the signage intended for its eventual terminus.

Photo: C&L

Donegal cranks up memories

The Donegal Railway Heritage Centre has found a new use for cranks, employing people power to make audio memories of the County Donegal Railway accessible to visitors in a truly green way (*writes Hugh Dougherty*).

The centre is now home to two audio crank-up machines, the first in use in any type of museum in Ireland, on which visitors use arm power to crank up the machine to listen to eight recordings of local people who lived and worked on the County Donegal Railway.

One machine is positioned inside the centre and a second is outside beside recently-returned 2-6-4T 'Drumboe', which is now stationed below its newly-erected platform canopy.

Centre manager Niall McCaughan said: "We have really gone green with these people-power machines which really involve visitors, and don't add to our electricity bill. The quality of the recordings is excellent and they fulfil our wish to bring the railway to life for visitors by them hearing the authentic voices of CDR passengers and staff."



Tony runs at Fairbourne

The Fairbourne Railway's bo-bo diesel locomotive 'Tony' made its first trip along the 12¼-inch gauge mid-Wales line for some years on 27th November.

Nearing the end of a long overhaul completed by Fairbourne chief engineer Harry Billmore and his team, the loco, built in 1961 originally to 15-inch gauge and regauged in 1985, displayed some braking and flywheel issues on its first test run.

Hopes are high, however, that it will be able to work winter maintenance trains and then make a full return to service in time for the start of the Fairbourne's 2022 running season on 19th February, allowing four-wheeled Hunslet diesel 'Gwrl', built in 1994, to be taken out of service for its own overhaul.

Meanwhile the planned overhaul of North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway style 0-6-4T 'Beddgelert' has received a boost after the loco's boiler shell, stripped of its tubes, was given a clean bill of health by the boiler inspector. It will now go into storage while the chassis is restored and finance for the project raised – details are at www.fairbournerrailway.com/beddgelert.html

Upper left: 'Tony' is on target for a full return to service in time for the 2022 season on the Fairbourne Railway.

Left: NGW editor Andrew Charman had the job of pressure-washing any scale out of the boiler shell of 'Beddgelert' before its successful inspection in November.

Photos: FR

End of the line for Wells Harbour

The campaign to save the Wells Harbour Railway ended in failure in November when the 10¼-inch Norfolk line was dismantled following its closure.

As reported in *NGW* 157 public anger was sparked in May after the 1200-yard long line's landlord, Holkham Estates, decided not to renew its lease, despite the line having operated on the site since 1976, taking passengers from the town centre of Wells-Next-to-the-Sea to a caravan site and the beach.

One regular visitor, Ashley Illingsworth from Nottingham, started a petition against the closure, which gained more than 52,000 signatures.

Despite this support the line ran its last train on 21st September and the stock was seen departing Wells by road on 11th November. The new owner had not been officially revealed but the equipment was believed to heading for the Lappa Valley Railway in Cornwall.

Owners Gary and Alison Brecknell issued a statement following the closure; "We wish to thank everyone who has travelled on the railway over the past 21 years while we have been operating," they said. "We are very sad that (the locomotives) 'Densil', 'Howard' and 'The Duke' won't continue in Wells, but we can assure you their journey will continue on."

Holkham Estates said it planned to have a replacement transport service in place for the 2022 visitor season – this is thought to be some form of road train.



■ The fun and games at the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway's traditional end-of-season weekend on 25th-26th October included this excess of power, an impressive seven-header, captured by *Steve Town* heading towards Dungeness.



■ The latest Bagnall 2ft gauge Sipat class 0-4-OST produced by North Bay Railway Engineering has been delivered to its new home, the Lathalmond Railway Museum in Scotland. 'Big Dave' is pictured on one of its early trial runs. *Photo: NBRE*



■ Isle of Man Transport made a bid to give its heritage lines a late-season boost with a five-day Winter Transport Festival between 27th-31st October. Oddities during the event included a rare trip outside Laxey Car Shed (above) for freight trailer no 26 (former passenger car no 10), while an evening photo shoot at the Manx Electric Railway's Derby Castle Depot proved popular. *Photos: Nick Wise*



■ Threlkeld Quarry and Mining Museum has reported a strong 2021 season with healthy visitor numbers. Work on the extension to the 2ft gauge Cumbrian line has gradually progressed with some 'fill' trains being run after regular trains ended in October. The line added five days of Santa Specials but they still sold out within eight hours, and as the picture shows the first ones attracted appropriate weather...

Photo: Threlkeld Museum



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Sandstone completes loco rescue

Sandstone Steam Trust has completed the major move of locomotives to its base in Ficksburg, an operation sparked by security concerns.

In *NGW*162 we reported how the Trust had relocated four giant 3ft 6in gauge locomotives from storage in Bloemfontein in August.

Three North British locos built in Glasgow – 4-8-2+2-8-4 GMAM class Garratt no 4114 of 1957, a 2-8-4 class 24 (3688/1949) and a class 11 2-8-2 (929/1904), plus 4-8-2 Krupp 19D class no 2654 of 1939, had spent more than two decades in the former shed as part of the South African Railways reserve museum collection, but had suffered from increasing incidents of vandalism and theft at the site.



SOUTH AFRICA

All four, along with two water tanker wagons, were transported 140 miles to the Sandstone estate in Orange Free State, the Garratt on a 152-wheel multi-axle trailer, and with this move completed in early November the museum set about moving locos it had in store at the former Germiston Steam Depot.

The locos moved included an engine formerly owned by famed UK artist David Shepherd, Class 15F 3052 'Avril', as well as a Class 25NC 3488, GMA/M Garratt 4079 with its auxiliary water tanker, former Rhodesia Railways Class DE2 diesel electric loco no 1207 and ex SAR steam crane number 578.

Specialists Fairlie Projects, Mercor Transport and Munro Transport co-ordinated the operation which required nine heavy haulage rigs – five multi-axle units and four conventional lowbed trailers totalling some 745,500kg.

Adding an extra challenge was the fact that the former Germiston Steam Depot could only be accessed by road through two very narrow and height-restricted tunnels that were originally rail tunnels.

The maximum width of three metres

allowed the trailers through but the height, to the former SAR loading gauge, caused problems as once the stock was loaded onto the trailers it measured five metres in height.

Grading the tunnel floor helped to increase the space available slightly and the stock was able to pass through with a clearance of just 100mm.

The operation also required the depot's original access road, which over several years had become an illegal dumping site and been blocked by rubbish, to be cleared and reopened. The existing access road included a tight 180-degree hairpin bend on a steep slope that the heavy transport vehicles could not negotiate.

Loading of the locomotives began on 2nd November and after they had been loaded the transporters all had to be weighed before beginning the journey to Sandstone, a distance of 400km, under full police escort.

On arrival at Sandstone the locomotives were moved to a new 3ft 6in gauge display area which has been created near the museum's security entrance. While primarily a 2ft gauge operation Sandstone is now home to a 3ft 6in gauge collection totalling 64 items, including 24 steam locomotives.

Top: Heavy transport – the Garratt heads for its new home.

Above left: Clearances in the tunnel were very tight...

Left: 3ft 6in gauge line-up at Sandstone – the loco second from right was formerly owned by artist David Shepherd.

Photos: Sandstone ST/Fairlie Projects





Puffing Billy Visitor Centre open

The Puffing Billy Railway officially opened its brand new, \$24.8 million Visitor Centre at Lakeside station on Friday 3rd December.

The centre, co-funded by the railway and a grant of \$12.7 million from the Government, is expected to see thousands of visitors each week.

It includes a museum displaying the history of the 2ft 6in gauge line by means of artifacts and an immersive multimedia experience, and also boasts a range of

AUSTRALIA

dining options featuring local produce.

A state-of-the-art function space is expected to host a range of workshops, conferences, events and school excursions.

Australian Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula, who was one of the guests performing the opening ceremony, commented that the new facilities would ensure the line continues to

attract future generations of visitors.

"The Visitor Centre gives an historic railway a very modern lift and comes on line at the right time as we open up as an economy and tourism businesses plan for a strong recovery," he said.

The Puffing Billy line restarted daily steam services on the same day as the Visitor Centre opened, moving into the Australian summer. Prior to the Covid pandemic the line was attracting annual visitor figures of more than 500,000.



Above: The new Visitor Centre includes a museum displaying artifacts from the Puffing Billy Railway's long history.

Left: The modern Visitor Centre also includes several catering options and a function space to host workshops, events and school parties.

Photos: PBR

BRIEF LINES

Incline group open again

The group seeking to reinstate the Remutaka Incline Railway near Wellington in **NEW ZEALAND** have restarted trains and workshop tours at their Maymorn base on the second Sunday of each month. The 3-mile long 3ft 6in gauge line, which ran between 1878 and 1955, climbed a 1 in 15 incline by the Fell Rail system also employed by the Snaefell Mountain Railway on the Isle of Man. Two Baldwin 2-6-2Ts used on the line are under restoration.

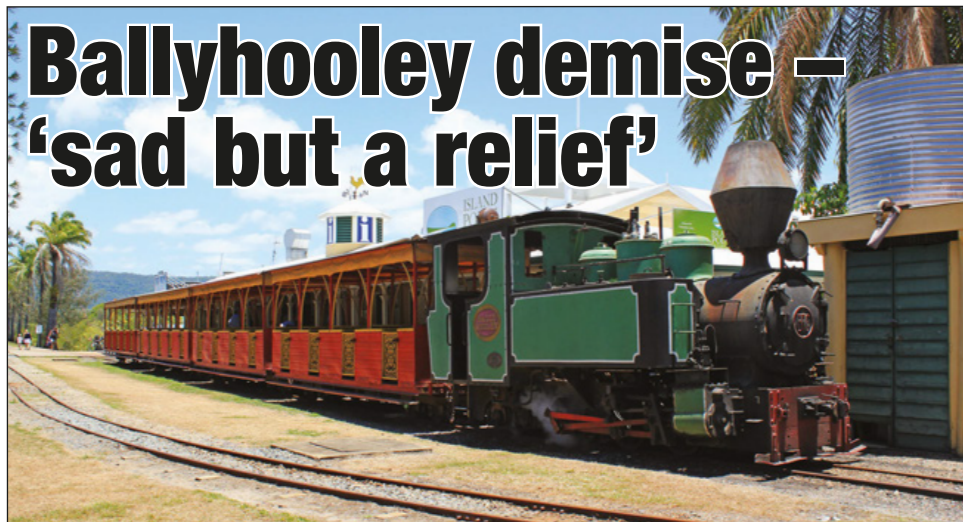
Not Madrid, Barcelona

NGW reader Mike Reynolds has pointed out that the photo of the locomotive transfer in **SPAIN** on page 15 of *NGW* 162 was more likely taken at Plaza Espa station in Barcelona, not Madrid as stated. The yellow loco (256.01) is a standard gauge dual-mode machine built by Stadler and delivered to the Barcelona Metro Railway in 2020, while the two steam locos are MTM 22 of 1926 and SEM 209 'Monistrol' of 1948. Both have been in store for many years in a tunnel within the Barcelona Metro system, and were likely en route to the existing railway museum at Mora La Nova near Tarragona.



■ Alasdair Stewart of the Signiu-Agnita Railway project's UK-based support group SAR UK took this shot as the 2ft 6in gauge line in **ROMANIA** enjoyed another successful Gala event on 11th-12th September.

Ballyhooley demise – ‘sad but a relief’



More details have emerged of the demise of the Ballyhooley Steam Railway in Port Douglas, Queensland – in *NGW* 162 we reported briefly how stock from the 2ft gauge 2.5-mile long former sugar cane line was to be converted to a dining experience.

John Morris, who purchased the line from the Mossman Central sugar mill in 2002 after early efforts by mill management to run a heritage operation, has overseen the creation of a new restaurant at its former Marina station, within which the two steam locos and carriages have become static exhibits.

Following the Ballyhooley line's final day of operation on 23rd September, the track was returned to Mossman mill for its sugar cane operations.

AUSTRALIA

Speaking to *ABC News*, 93-year-old John

said that he was delighted with the new restaurant, which was also a big relief after difficult times for the line.

“Covid put us out of action for close to 18 months and at my age I couldn't see my family continuing with it in later years when I go,” John said.

He spent two years trying to find a group to take over the line. “We sought other interested parties and there were some who after months of deliberations decided it was not possible, so we decided this was the best way to keep the trains in good shape.”

John insists the spirit of the Ballyhooley line will remain in what he describes as a family-friendly experience. “We have a smoke machine and kids can blow the horn, it will be a great experience for them.”

Former Mossman mill manager Alan Johnstone admitted that children missing out on the experience of steam in future would be a shame. “But even without Covid it was an ongoing costly operation, especially with health and safety requirements. John and his family did their best.”

John described the closure of the line as the end of an era. “But the trains are in the right spot at the station and the carriages are looking marvellous, hopefully they will stay there for ever”.

Photos from October 2014 by Rika Laporte



BRIEF LINES

Work closes Harz lines

Essential construction work saw the Harzer Schmalspurbahnen in **GERMANY** forced to suspend some lines at the start of its winter timetable on 1st November. No trains ran on the Harzquerbahn between Ilfeld and Drei Annen Hohne and on the entire Selketalbahn between 1st and 25th November with bus-replacement services in operation. Steam services to the top of the Brocken mountain were unaffected, six trains running to the summit each day.

Darj hit by new landslide

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in **INDIA** was forced to suspend services from 16th November after a new landslide between Gayasbari and Mahanadi severed the line. All trains between New Jalpaiguri Junction and Darjeeling were cancelled with only Joy Train rides at Darjeeling and the evening Jungle Safari services from Siliguri to Rangtong remaining operational. A new ‘Him Kanya’ service from Darjeeling to Kurseong and return was due to commence on weekends from 13th November.

A message to global narrow gauge railways...

Narrow Gauge World wants to report as much as possible of the global narrow gauge scene which we know is highly vibrant, but we are struggling to receive many news stories from outside the UK. If you are involved with a global narrow-gauge railway, please let us know of all the latest goings-on at your line! The address you need is; editor@narrowgaugeworld.co.uk



■ Further progress in recent weeks at the Museum of French Steam Tramways and Secondary Railways (MTVS) has seen the new concrete floor for the stock shed poured at the museum's Crévecœur-le-Grand, FRANCE, headquarters.

Meanwhile the museum has been welcoming delegations from local authorities in recent weeks, as discussions begin on the subject of a further extension of the metre-gauge running line.

Photo: Olivier Janneau/MTVS



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This DVD should be available from your usual stockist or you can obtain it directly from Julian Peters by sending £16.95 (cheque made payable to I Peters) to:

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Meeting Laura on the Chiemseebahn

James Waite enthuses over a line less than two kilometres in length and its novel tram locomotive.



Germany once possessed many steam tramways – some survive as electrified urban systems while most rural ones have closed. One of the least significant must have been the metre gauge Chiemseebahn in Bavaria, with a length of just 1.8km. When it opened who would have guessed that more than 130 years later it would be the country's last steam tramway and that it would still be operated almost entirely with its original equipment.

The line runs to the Chiemsee, the largest lake in Bavaria, which was formed about 10,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age. In 1846 the Chiemsee-Schiffahrt Ludwig Feßler

KG was founded and took over a ferry service which had started the previous year, serving the islands in the lake and the towns and villages around its shore. However traffic was sparse, tourism was in its infancy and initially the company struggled.

Things looked up when the Munich-Salzburg railway opened in 1860, with a station at Prien, close to the lakeside pier at Stock, and traffic increased again in 1878 when King Ludwig II of Bavaria began construction of the huge and opulent Herrenchiemsee palace, on the lake's largest island close to Prien. The idea was that the palace would be a bigger and better version of the one at

"Who would have guessed that more than 130 years later it would be the country's last steam tramway..."

Versailles. Feßler's ships transported huge quantities of building materials for the project.

Tourist trap

The real turning point, however, came after Ludwig died in 1886. The palace was still under construction, though the central part had been finished. His successor for practical purposes was Prince Regent Luitpold, and he opened the palace to the public within a few weeks following Ludwig's death. This was a novel idea at the time – large crowds of visitors began to flock to the island and there was serious congestion on the narrow road between Prien station and Stock.

Feßler moved quickly, buying a new paddle steamer, named the 'Luitpold', which entered service in 1887. He also set up a company to build a tramway to convey the crowds to Stock, jointly with Georg Krauss who was the founder of the Krauss loco building company. The construction contract was signed in March 1887, work began early in May, a 99-year concession was granted in June and the first train ran in July.

In its original form the new tramway began on the forecourt on the western side of Prien station, crossed the main line on the level and followed a north-westerly course to its terminus at Stock alongside the steamer pier.

Krauss supplied one of its standard class L IIV 0-4-0 tram locomotives, generally similar to several built for



Above: Krauss steam tram loco 'Laura' on the Chiemseebahn, waiting for passengers at Stock. The photo has not been reversed, the smokebox door is unusually hinged on the left.

Left: Profile view of the loco while running round at Prien.

All uncredited photos by James Waite, taken on 31st July 2013 unless stated



tramways in the Netherlands after the firm won the 1881 contest at Arnhem, and also to many in Germany. The loco has never officially carried a name but is known to one and all as 'Laura'.

By 1888 nine carriages had arrived, a first class saloon, a first/second class compo with a luggage compartment, two closed second class carriages and five semi-open ones. There were also two goods wagons, mainly to transport coal for the furnaces at the palace and at a nearby brewery (something very important in Bavaria!) as well as for the loco and the ships.

The level crossing at Prien must have caused significant operating problems, and during the winter of 1908/9 a new station was built on the eastern side of the main line with a smart new building. It included a transfer siding which became redundant after goods traffic ended in 1966 and was taken out four years later, but otherwise the station is little changed today. Even the script on the signage, modern when the station was built, has been retained.

Long service

The two wagons were scrapped, one of them as late as 1987, but the loco and the nine carriages are still in service more than 130 years later. There have only ever been two additions to the stock. One is another wagon, which was built in 1923 for the street tramway at Krefeld, moved in 1974 to the Selfkantbahn, near Aachen, and arrived at Prien in 2014. It seems to have been acquired for its historic interest and to provide a

"They tried hard to get rid of it, and nearly succeeded in 1965 when traffic was at a low ebb..."

reminder of the old coal traffic – and perhaps to atone for the destruction of the old ones.

More significantly a diesel was bought secondhand in 1982, but only to assist Laura and most definitely not to replace the steam loco. The diesel was built by Deutz in 1962 for the Halburger Hütte, a steelworks at Brebach, near Saarbrücken. Unofficially called 'Lisa', it was fitted at Stock with a copy of Laura's bodywork and ran in this form for many years, but reverted to something close to its original shape during a rebuild in 2016.

The line has not enjoyed a trouble-free career. Services were restricted during both world wars, and were suspended altogether between 1944 and 1949. By then

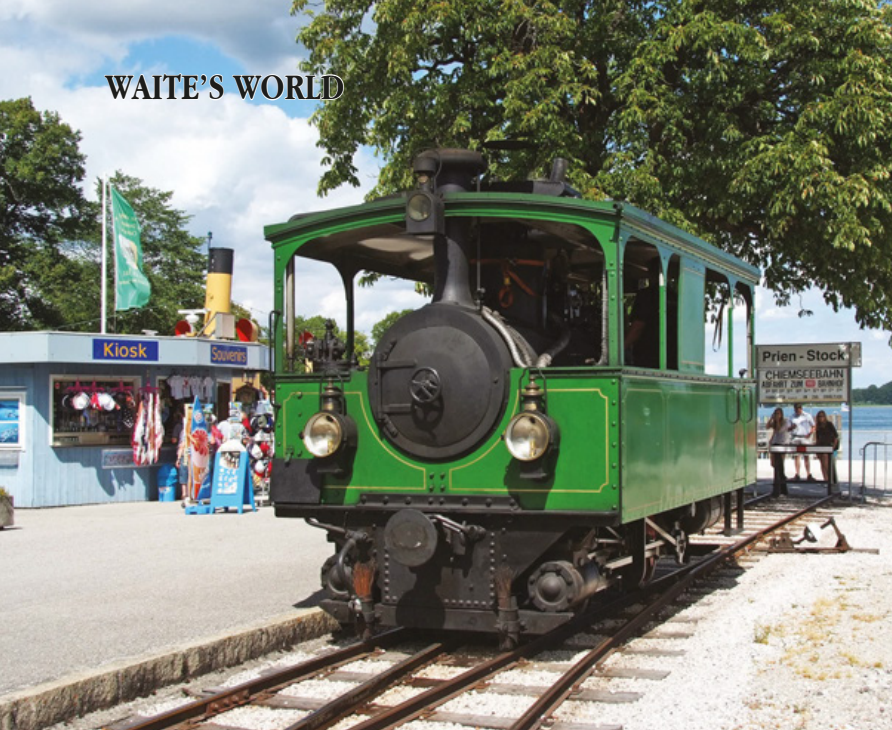
Laura's original boiler was almost worn out, and a replacement was fitted during a heavy overhaul at Arn Jung at Jungenthal over the winter of 1957/8. It was larger than the original and its smokebox projected a little beyond the front of the casing.

At that time Laura's charms were not appreciated by the hoteliers along the route who considered that the loco's dirt and smoke placed them at a disadvantage to their competitors whose premises it did not pass. They tried hard to get rid of it, and nearly succeeded in 1965 when traffic was at a low ebb and the old tramway company was wound up. Georg Krauss's successors gave up their stake and the line was taken over by the shipping company, which is now managed by Birgit and Michael »

Above: The Chiemseebahn service passes a pond just after leaving Prien station for Stock.

Right: On an earlier visit in October 2012, Laura was standing in the railway's new workshop at Stock and was about to be dismantled for winter overhaul. Note the piston and rod on the floor next to the cylinder.





"Its replacement is roomy and well equipped, but doesn't have anything like the same character..."

Left: A close-up view while running round the train at Stock station – note the funnel of the lake steamer behind the kiosk.

Below: An overhaul that was completed at Meiningen works in March 2021 was followed by a test through the streets of Wernigerode, the first steam on the Harz network since before the Covid pandemic. Laura is passing the medieval Westerntor tower landmark early on the morning of 18th March. Photo: Dirk Bahnsen/HSB

Fessler, the fifth generation of their family to be in charge.

How things have changed since the 1960s! The concession was extended until 2036, and Laura and its train are now promoted as major historic attractions, the more so since there have been no steamships on the lake for almost 50 years. The Luitpold was scrapped in 1969, though its engines were rescued and found a new home at the Deutsches Technikmuseum in Berlin.

Another former paddle steamer, the 'Ludwig Fessler' built in 1927, is still in service but in 1973 was fitted with a diesel engine. Its steam engines were also rescued and have recently been fitted to the 'PS Neuchâtel', a recently restored paddle steamer which plies the waters of the Lac de

Neuchâtel, the Bielersee and the Murtensee in north-western Switzerland and the waterways which connect them. Ironically its owners attribute the huge popularity it now enjoys to Ludwig Fessler's engines. What a shame they couldn't have been kept in their original ship!

Recent visits

My first glimpse of the Chiemseebahn was in 1971 from one of the Austrian express trains between Innsbruck and Salzburg which, then as now, took a short cut through southern Bavaria rather than the winding single track route through the mountains on the Austrian side of the border. I had always intended to go back, but the opportunity didn't arise until early October 2012, a few days after

the operating season had ended.

One major disappointment was that the delightful wooden engine and carriage shed at Stock, which dated from the opening, had been demolished the previous year. Its replacement, at the end of a short new branch, is roomy and well equipped, but doesn't have anything like the same character. The friendly engineer welcomed me in and treated me to a close look at Laura as the loco was being dismantled for its winter overhaul. He also showed the first class saloon carriage, which had been disposed of to a private collection at Marxzell in northern Germany in 1975 but was bought back in 1993.

Next to Laura stood the shell of 'Michael', originally built as a steam launch named 'Siegfried' in 1911 and converted to diesel operation in 1935. The Fesslers placed it on loan to a nautical museum on the Starnbergersee, near Munich, in 1986. Its old steam engine was discovered in a store in about 2000 and followed Siegfried there. Sadly the museum was liquidated in 2011 and they returned to the Chiemsee. The launch is now regarded as a long-term restoration project which will eventually bring steam operation back to the lake. It can only hold about 30 passengers but will be ideal for small wedding parties and other special events.

One helpful tip I was given was that Laura was generally only used midweek, when traffic was heaviest, leaving Lisa to work at weekends. I visited again on a Wednesday the following summer, and sure enough



"He had time on his hands and was busy producing live steam models of a loco and a stationary engine..."

Right: Size comparison: Laura lines up alongside the 61-tonne 700hp 'Brockenlok' Harz loco at Wernigerode. In the picture are Chiemseebahn managing director Michael Feßler and his son Martin and HSB MD Matthias Wagener. Photo: Heide Baumgärtner/HSB

Below: On home ground, Laura crosses Seestrasse on the outskirts of Prien.



was able to enjoy Laura's company during the afternoon's services.

I returned in 2019, only to find that Laura had gone. My engineer friend explained that the company had sent the loco to Meiningen works after the 2017 season for a major rebuild and to have a new boiler fitted – much against his better judgment since he believed the work could have been done more quickly and economically under his supervision in the new workshop. In its absence he had time on his hands and was busy producing live steam models of a loco and a stationary

engine – truly an enthusiast!

As things turned out Laura's overhaul was not completed until March 2021. The new boiler is the same size as the 1950s Jung one. Some years ago the loco's smokebox door was remounted with its hinge on the left-hand side, the opposite to the usual arrangement, and this has been retained.

On its way home to Bavaria the loco stopped off at Wernigerode, for testing and running in on the Harz railway. This was widely appreciated there because Laura was the first steam loco to run since the Harz's

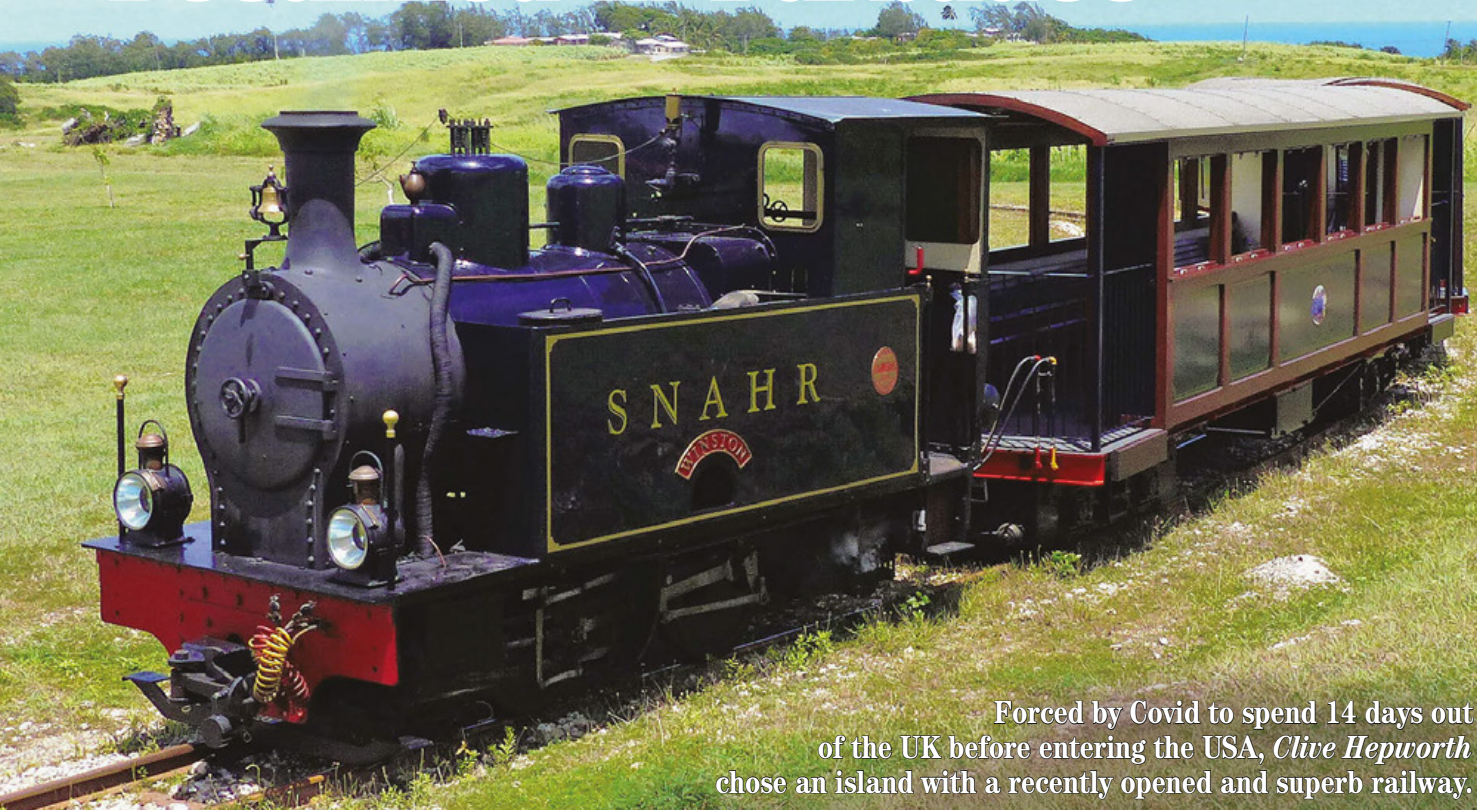
own fleet had been grounded in November 2020 due to Covid.

Laura weighs just 13.3 tonnes and develops 60hp. During its visit 2-10-2T no 99 7237, which weighs 61 tonnes and develops more than 700hp, was also steamed for testing alongside and must have provided an interesting contrast!

Laura now operates at the Chiemsee once more, but reportedly only at weekends, the opposite of its old schedule. When overseas travel becomes possible again a visit would be well worthwhile, but do first check out the loco's running dates! **NGW**



Becalmed in Barbados



Forced by Covid to spend 14 days out of the UK before entering the USA, *Clive Hepworth* chose an island with a recently opened and superb railway.

In September of 2021 I became an 'accidental tourist' in Barbados and was able to visit a magnificently engineered 2ft 6in gauge line that is only three years old. St Nicholas Abbey Heritage Railway [SNAHR] has everything – there are deep cuttings, two stations and a halt, a triangle, turntable, spectacular ocean views and, best of all, two steam locomotives that have been restored to the highest standards.

The line is a product of the dreams of the Warren family who own the Abbey, famed for its rum distillery and who when they decided

to add a railway to their attractions, worked closely with two UK specialists, narrow gauge infrastructure supplier Cromar White and Statfold Barn Engineering, which operates alongside Graham Lee's impressive narrow gauge collection in Staffordshire.

The SNAHR operates from Friday to Monday inclusive with four round trips each day at 10am, 11.30am, 1.30pm and 2.30pm. Journeys take about 50 minutes and the fares, beginning at B\$40 (£15), are incorporated with ticketing for the Abbey House and Gardens, the rum

Above: 'Winston' runs back to the main station of the St Nicholas Abbey Heritage Railway, with the blue waters of the Atlantic coast in the distance.

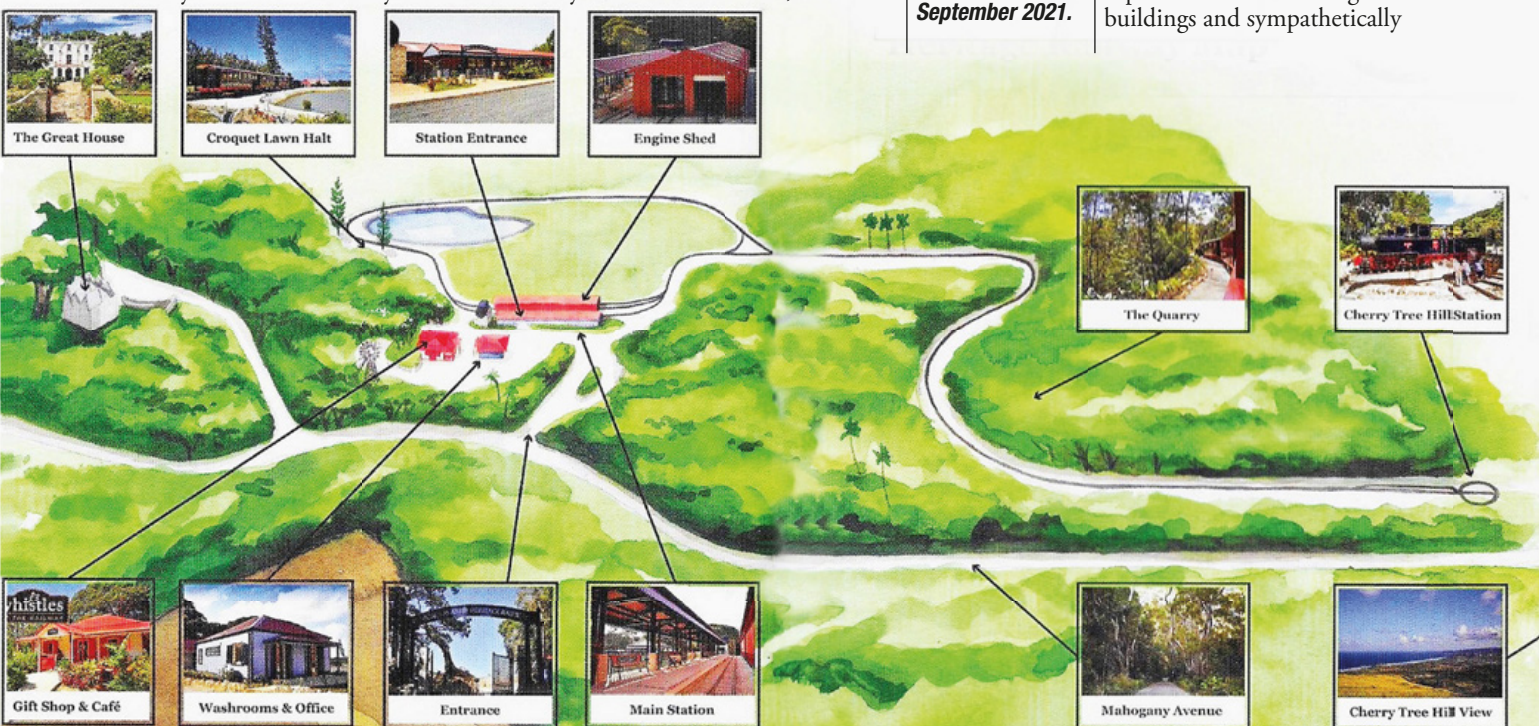
Below: Map of the current line from the railway's guide book.

Photos by Clive Hepworth, 11th-12th September 2021.

distillery and the steam mill.

This is a genuinely historic site that must be the best visitor attraction on the island. The plantation complex dates back to 1658 and the Warren family have gone to great lengths to preserve as much of the heritage as possible while still producing what is said to be the best rum in the Caribbean!

The train journey begins with a departure from the attractively designed main station complex. It is the work of Larry Warren – one of the island's foremost architects and an expert in both conserving old buildings and sympathetically



creating new ones. The three-carriage train runs round a lakeside loop to help gain elevation and then joins a single-track 1.6km long line via a triangle. It climbs through tropical vegetation and blasts through narrow cuttings to reach the terminus at Cherry Tree Hill.

Here the locos are turned before running round the train in preparation for the return trip. Passengers are able to alight and take in spectacular views of the Barbadian eastern Atlantic coast.

The return journey is a gentle run back down the grade passing through the main station and stopping at the lakeside Croquet Lawn Halt, where most passengers disembark to visit the rest of the site. Meanwhile, the train runs round the loop and uses the triangle to return to the main station. Adjacent is a 140ft two-road engine and storage shed that can house all the line's five locos and rolling stock.

Motive power

The locomotive roster includes two re-engined Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0DMs dating from 1971 and both originally working together at Shotton Steelworks until its closure. They operated all trains on the Abbey line after its opening in January 2019 until the first steam loco arrived. For track inspection there is a 4wDM Simplex 'Sludge', formerly owned by Severn Trent Water.

The real highlight is the two magnificently restored steam locos, burning the finest Pennsylvanian anthracite now that Welsh steam coal is no longer available. The operating loco is kept warm overnight with the crew arriving around 7am to clean the fire and start to raise steam again. One of the diesels seems to be used to drag the loco and carriages out of the shed to the ash pit and wood/coal store. The line was able to benefit



from the knowledge of a couple of certified boilermakers from the two sugar mills on the estate that still used steam engines for grinding the cane. Statfold Barn also provided intensive training in all aspects of the railway's operation.

The first steam loco to arrive on the line was Mallet 0-4-4-0T no 5 'Tjepper' (Jung 2279 of 1914), formerly of Ceper Baru sugar mill in Central Java. It was superbly restored by Statfold Barn and landed in Barbados on 7th February 2019.

The second loco is an 0-4-0T built by La Meuse (3243/1926), named 'Winston' and formerly working the internal rail system at SA Hoboken in Antwerp. In the Statfold Barn collection for some time and restored to the same high standards for its new life, it arrived in 2020 just before Covid lockdown and pretty much saved the railway by being able to continue steam haulage when the

Above: Outside the engine shed with La Meuse Winston in the foreground and the Mallet 'Tjepper' raising steam behind.

Below: The inspiration behind the project – Larry Warren and his railway manager Justin Corbin. The beautifully finished carriage is one of three from Statfold Barn built in 2018.

This page: Tjepper pulls out of Croquet Lawn Halt.





Mallet was out of action. This more powerful loco has a wonderful chime whistle and a real 'bark' as it climbs through the narrow cuttings.

Future plans

While the railway is already a major attraction, there is exciting expansion on the horizon. The Warrens have a

Above: The train in the impressive Corallian limestone cutting on the climb to Cherry Tree Hill terminus.

Left: Cherry Tree Hill terminus. Tjepper has run round its three carriages and is ready for the return trip.

Below: Tjepper has left Croquet Lawn Halt behind and climbs away from the lakeside.

five-year plan to extend the line for a further two kilometres using a trestle bridge to cross Cherry Tree Hill Avenue, run into the cane fields and provide views of both sides of the island. They would like to collaborate with similar railways outside the island, including the potential for organising exchange visits of locos.

This railway is an absolute delight to visit and is a magnificent tribute to the commitment, professionalism and sheer enthusiasm of all of those involved with it. **NGW**

More Information

The St Nicholas Abbey Heritage Railway has its own website at <https://snahr.com>

The author thanks Larry Warren, Simon Warren, railway manager Justin Corbin and the train crew Jamie, Tyrone and Michael for making my visit his enjoyable. Thanks also to Anna for arranging everything.



Chilled conditions, hot pictures

Winter fun as the lines close to public trains but stage photo charters, with some new participants to inspire our hardy photographers...



Above: The traditional end-of-season extravaganza on the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway over the weekend of 24th October saw the usual mix of eclectic rostering and multiple-headed trains. *Steve Town* caught the newly-overhauled Krupp Pacific 'Black Prince', built in 1937, paired with Krauss 0-4-0 'The Bug', which dates from 1926. The two locomotives share a designer in Roland Martens.

Right: The monochromatic treatment suits this wintry scene, captured by *Karl Heath* on a Ffestiniog Railway photo charter on 31st October – double Fairlie 'Merddin Emrys' is heading around the spiral at Dduallt.

Following pages: It's a Garratt in Wales, but not north but mid, not the Welsh Highland Railway but the Vale of Rheidol. Newly-outshopped NG/G13 'Drakensberg' works a demonstration freight train for a photo charter on 9th November.

Photo: John R Jones/VoR





**NARROW
GAUGE
WORLD**



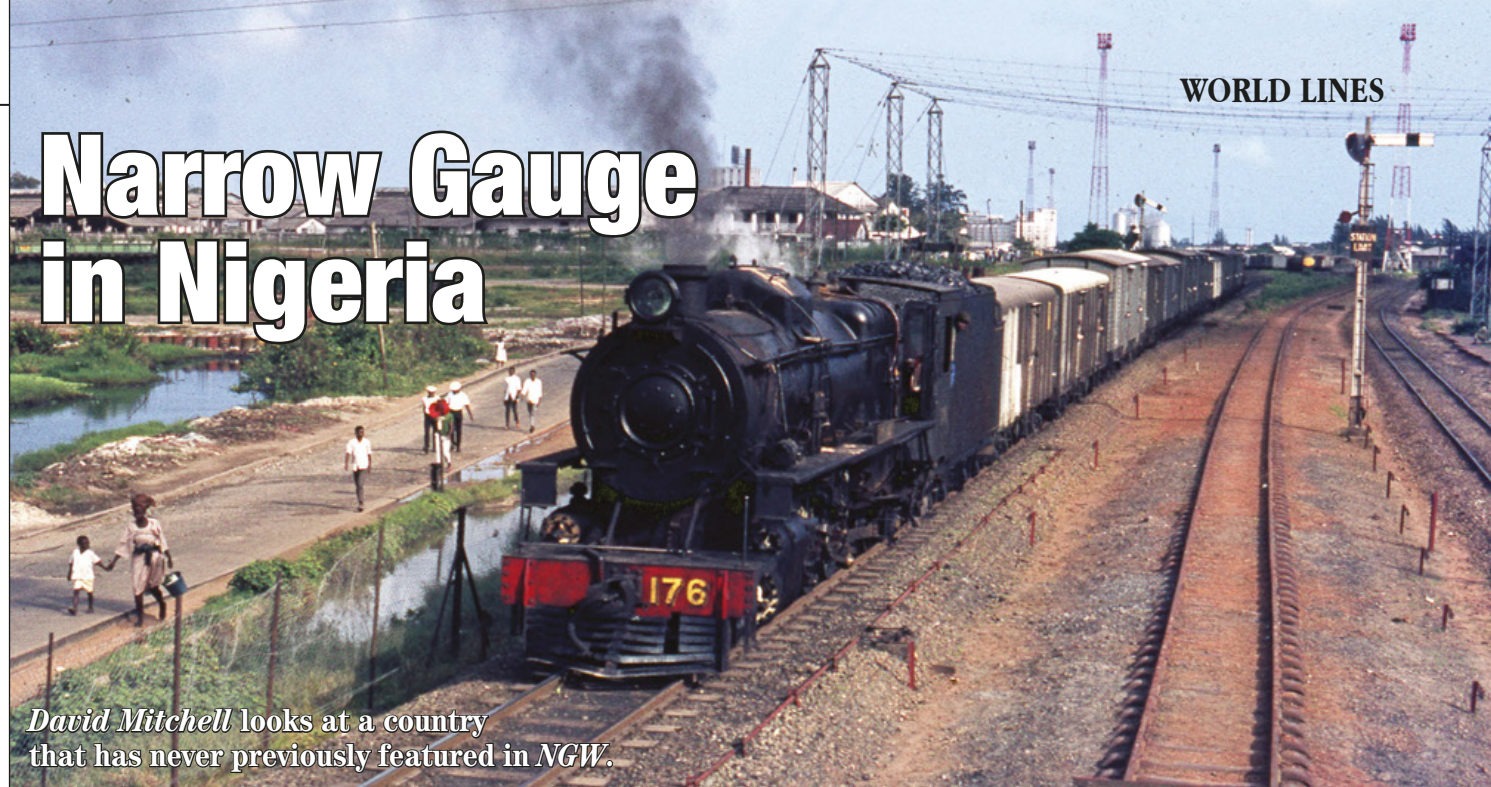


Left: That man *Karl Heath* again, this time on the Welsh Highland Railway, the final day of a five-day charter on 4th November seeing Garratt K1 back on its old stamping ground following overhaul by Statfold Barn, and paired with resident NG/G16 Garratt no 87.

Below: The Brecon Mountain Railway is not the most frequented of venues by photographers but can be a very worthwhile journey especially in Autumn – Ralph Ward captured Baldwin 2-6-2 no 1 ‘Santa Teresa’ crossing Dolygaer embankment with a charter freight train on 29th October.



Narrow Gauge in Nigeria



David Mitchell looks at a country that has never previously featured in NGW.

West Africa, the area between the Sahara and the Bight of Benin, comprises a series of countries spreading north from the coast. They vary greatly in size – some were former British colonies and some former French ones. Unlike Southern and to some extent East African countries there was no network of railways linking them.

The Francophone countries used metre gauge while the Anglophone such as Nigeria chose 3ft 6in gauge with Sierra Leone going for 2ft 6in gauge. Unlike southern and eastern Africa there was little permanent

Above: Taking photos in Nigeria in 1969 was difficult but a friendly signalman at Dockyard Road in Lagos enabled this picture to be taken from his cabin. North British 2-8-2 no 176 'River Ajali' heads up country with a freight from Apapa Docks.

Left: A page from the 1971 local timetable. Few other railways have a map quite like this one!

Below: No 134 'River Malendo', one of the 2-8-2s built by North British in 1949/50, leaves Apapa Docks with a local service. It will join the main line at Ebute Metta Junction.

Except where otherwise shown, all photos taken by David Mitchell in 1969

European settlement, partly due to the climate – not for nothing was part of the area known as the White Man's Grave. There was little tourism and the region was not much visited by railway enthusiasts. My work, however, led me to live in Nigeria on several occasions and to visit some other territories.

Nigeria is the largest country in the region, both in area and population and extends from the sea to the fringes of the Sahara desert a thousand miles north. The River Niger and its tributary the Benue provide a route to the north from its delta in the south. The Nigerian Railway was built in the form of an inverted 'V' with tracks heading inland from Lagos in the west and Port Harcourt in the east. Each leg was some 600 miles long and involved crossing the rivers Niger and Benue respectively.

The lines meet at Kaduna, an important centre in northern Nigeria. A line continued north to the ancient city of Kano and railways were subsequently built further north and east, notably the Bornu extension

to Maiduguri. The western route was built piecemeal with traffic initially using the Niger for the connection to the line north from the river to Kano.

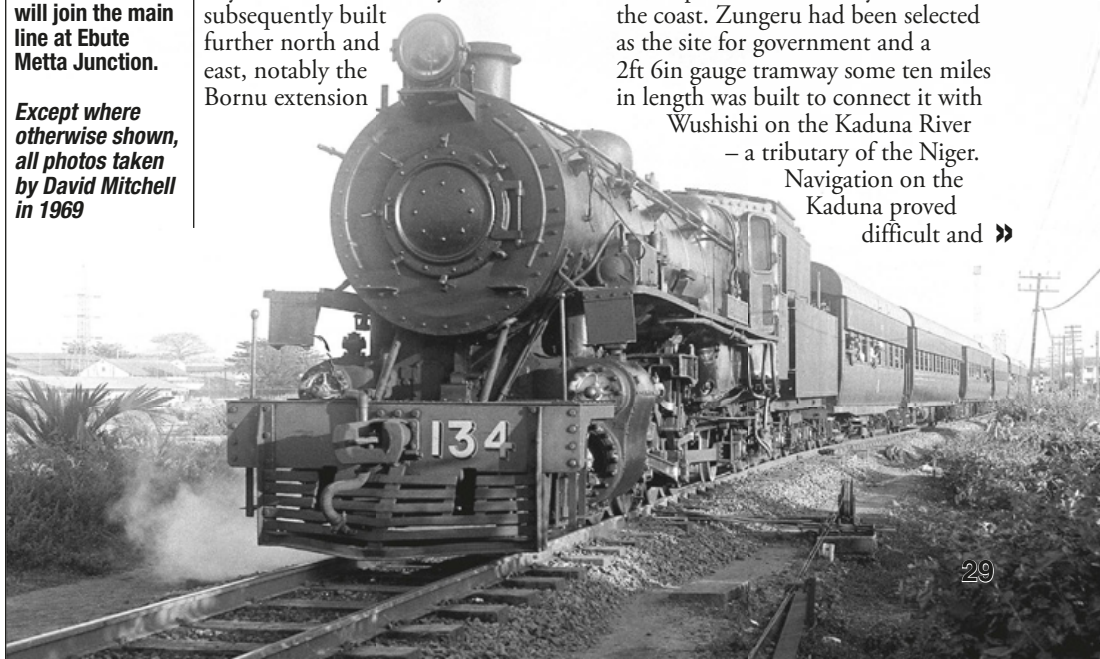
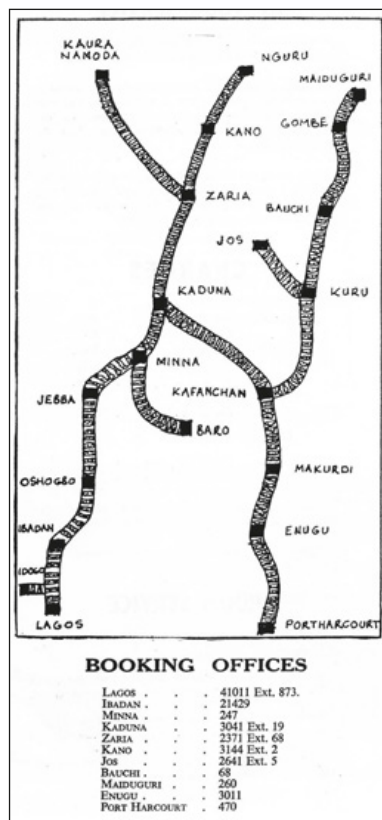
Lagos is situated on an island in the lagoon. The railway headquarters were sited at Ebute Metta, on the main line, and the railway crossed a bridge, later a causeway, to Iddo Island. Here the terminal was built at the end of the bridge linking to Lagos Island. The compound at Ebute Metta included loco sheds, workshops, the head office and staff house and social facilities. When I was working near Lagos terminus we used to go to the Railway Club for lunch. The Lagos Government Railway opened the 123 miles to Ibadan in March 1901 and gradually extended to the River Niger at Jebba by 1909.

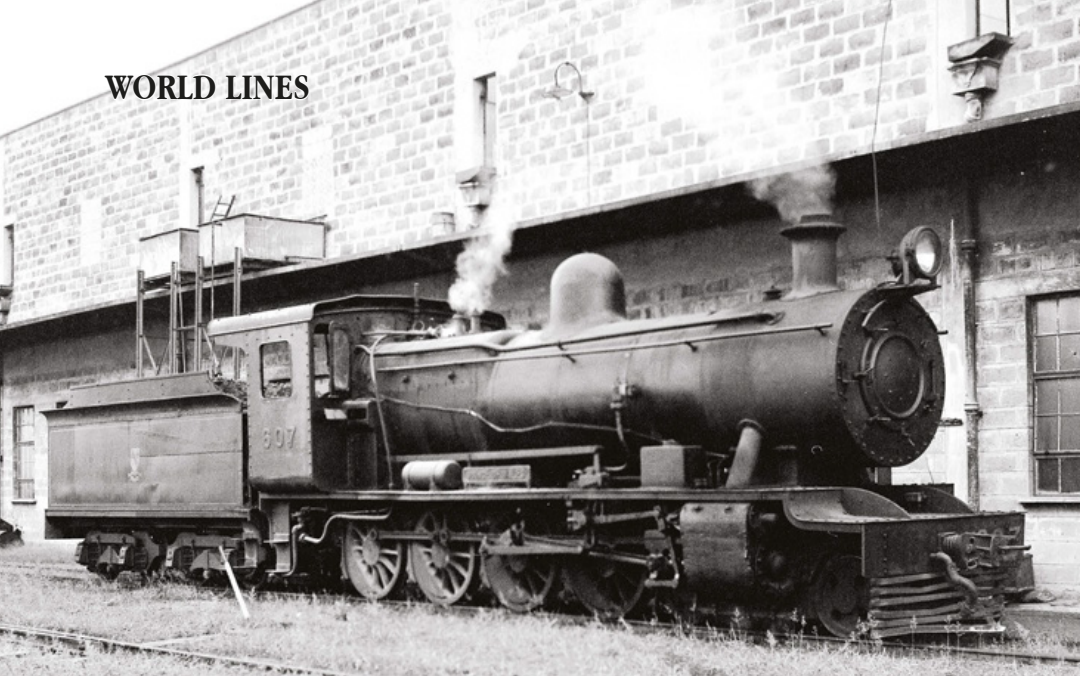
Difficult waters

Access to what was then the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was another matter. The rivers Niger and Benue provided a route by water from the coast. Zungeru had been selected as the site for government and a 2ft 6in gauge tramway some ten miles in length was built to connect it with

Wushishi on the Kaduna River – a tributary of the Niger.

Navigation on the Kaduna proved difficult and »





in December 1901 the line was extended by about 12 miles further to Barijoku where the position was somewhat better.

With continuing navigation problems and the limited capacity of the tramway, a 3ft 6in gauge line was built from Baro, a port on the Niger about 120 miles east down river of Jebba. The Baro to Kano line opened in 1911 and the tramway was closed. Its two Hunslet locomotives – an 0-6-0T of 1901 and an 0-6-2T of 1902 – were transferred to the Bauchi

Light Railway to serve as shunters. No 1, the 0-6-0T, is today preserved on the platform at Minna station.

With Jebba having been selected as the most suitable place to bridge the Niger, a line was opened from the north bank passing through Zungeru to reach Minna, between Baro and Kano. A train ferry across the river operated until the bridge over the Niger was completed in 1916, giving a through route between Lagos and Kano. The Baro to Minna section then became a branch.



Above: Nasmyth Wilson 4-8-0 no 607 of 1924 at Ebute Metta sheds in August 1972. Named 'Prince of Wales', probably because it hauled the Royal Train when HRH travelled from Lagos to Kano and back in 1925.

Left: No. 752 'Newfoundland' at Jebba shed. One of a batch of 14 2-8-2s supplied by Montreal Locomotive Works in 1947, all named after locations in Canada.

Below: Hunslet 0-8-0T no 80 of 1946 shunting a first-class carriage at Lagos terminus.

Other lines

The eastern line came later, opening from Port Harcourt in 1916 and reaching Kaduna in 1927. The already mentioned Bauchi Light Railway was a 2ft 6in gauge line from Zaria, between Kaduna and Kano, built to serve the tin mines round Jos and later connected to the eastern line at Kafanchan in 1927.

In the late 1920s branches were built to the northwest and northeast. The final development was the Borno extension to Maiduguri in the far northeast which opened throughout in 1964. Diesellisation had started in the mid-1950s, initially in the north where water supplies were a problem, and the Borno extension was built without facilities for steam.

In Lagos the problem of the railway terminus being on another island led to the building of a 2ft 6in gauge steam tramway over Carter Bridge and along the marina on the west side of Lagos Island. Opening in 1902, it was operated by some curious combined locos and box-cars with an articulated arrangement of the footplate and cabin.

Hunslet supplied three engines for the opening and two more followed in 1910. The water was carried in tanks on the sides of the footplate with seats over the top. The purpose of the cabin is not entirely clear. It may have served as a 'guard's van', or to carry parcels and valuables or to convey important people.

The whole unit weighed just under six tons and the unusual design may have been to keep the axle loads down because of weight limits on Carter Bridge. Passengers travelled in four-wheeled carriages with a roof, knifeboard seating and open sides.

To assist with the clearance of night soil from the more easterly parts of Lagos a second tram line was built in 1906 and for a period a circular service was operated. The passenger service ceased on 31st December 1913, although the night soil trains continued until 1933, using a small 0-4-0 tank that was imaginatively named 'New Sanitary'!



Changing times

My first visit to Nigeria was in June 1969 when I was sent for a four-month period to Lagos. This was during the Biafran war – travel was difficult around the country and security tight. The long-distance passenger trains, the suburban trains from Lagos terminus and much of the freight were all diesel hauled, though the branch from Ebute Metta to Apapa Docks and the shunting and trip workings were steam.

At this time the railway in east Nigeria was closed by the civil war, but by 1971 there were six long-distance trains a week, three to Kano and one each to Jos, Maiduguri and Port Harcourt. As they all went to Kaduna Junction, it enjoyed six services a week.

Both the outward and return journeys ran in the same paths between Lagos and Kaduna, leaving Lagos at 12.00 and reaching Kaduna at 14.16 the following day. The return trains were the 16.16 from Kaduna with an arrival in Lagos at 18.20, again the following day. The longest journey was to Maiduguri – 56 hours 10 minutes.

At the time of my first visit the River class 2-8-2s built by North British, Vulcan Foundry and Henschel worked much of the remaining steam-hauled traffic, with older engines doing trip working and shunting. Photography was difficult, but a friendly signalman at Dockyard Road level crossing and people in the shed and yards at Ebute Metta made some pictures possible.

For my return from Nigeria I chose to travel by train to Kaduna and fly out of Kano. A first-class compartment in the long-distance train was comfortable and converted to a sleeper for the night, and the food in the dining car was good. The train was diesel hauled throughout.

In August 1972 I had a few weeks in Lagos. There was still some steam around including a few River class locos and several older

"The water was carried in tanks on the sides of the footplate with seats over the top..."

Right: Preserved on the station platform at Minna is no 1, the 0-6-0T built by Hunslet in 1901 for the 2ft 6in gauge Wushishi Tramway.

Below right: Union Jacks and pith helmets to the fore during what is believed to be the ceremonial opening of the 2ft 6in gauge Lagos Steam Tramway on 23rd May 1902. The 0-4-4 tram engine is one of three initially supplied by Hunslet.

Photo: David Mitchell Collection

Below: Works photograph of the Lagos Government Railway's unusual loco LGR 101, built by Hunslet.

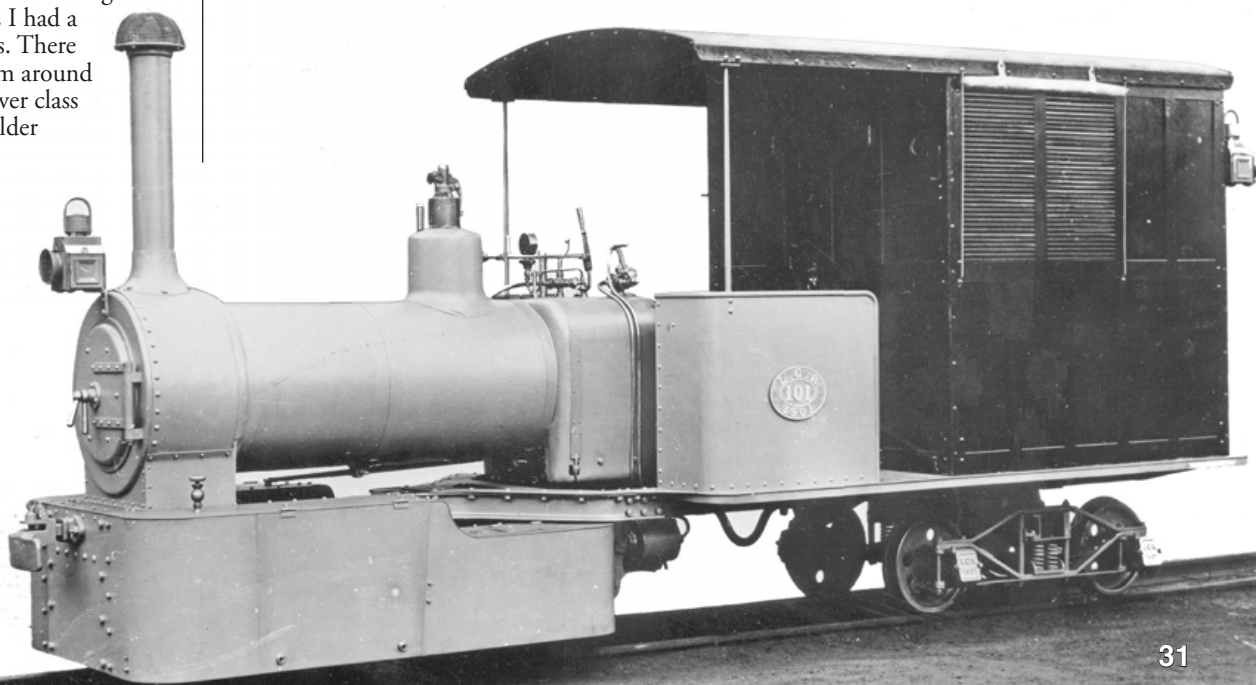
Photo: David Mitchell Collection



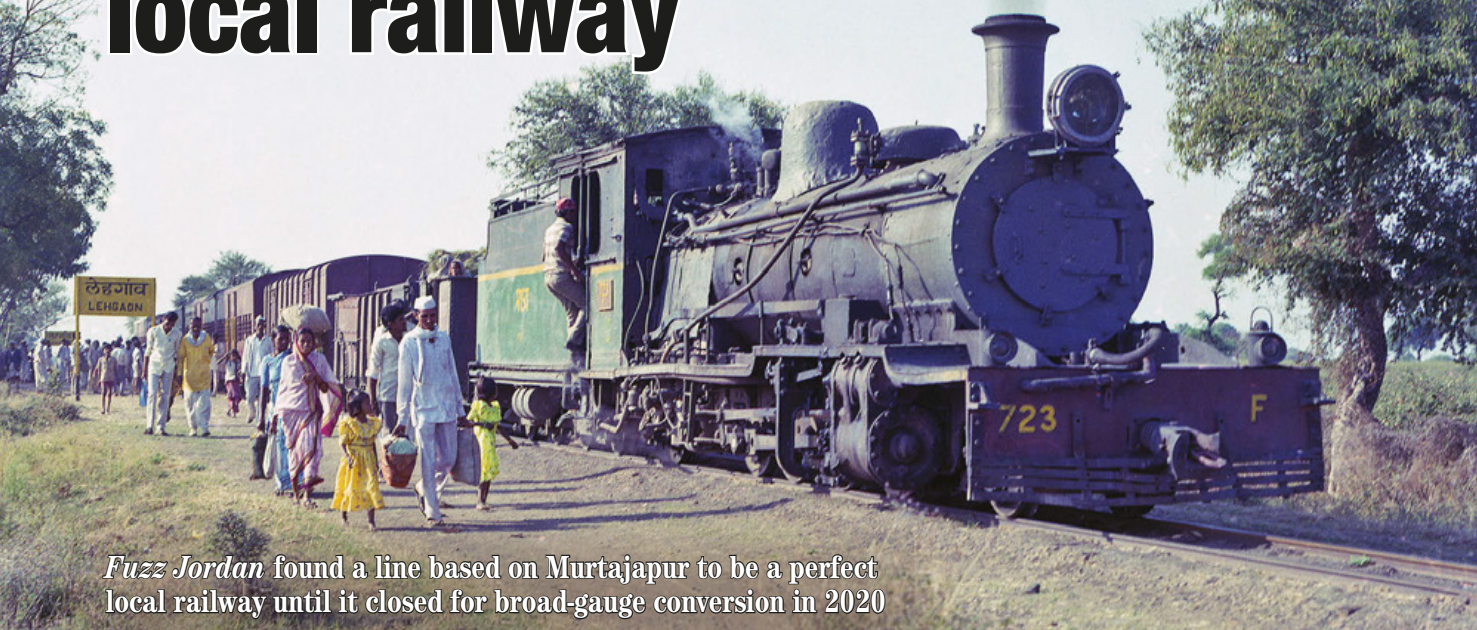
engines. I was also able to visit the sheds at Kaduna and Kano where a few older 4-8-0s were in steam.

During a longer period in 1974 there was no steam around Lagos, but a good number of derelict engines lying around. Generally the railway has since gone downhill. Currently a standard gauge line has been opened

between Kaduna and the new capital of Abuja, which was not on the 3ft 6in system. Another standard gauge line has been built between Lagos and Ibadan and will eventually link up with the Abuja line to provide a Lagos – Kano route. From reports the eastern line from Port Harcourt is out of use. **NGW**



Shakuntala – a little local railway



Fuzz Jordan found a line based on Murtajapur to be a perfect local railway until it closed for broad-gauge conversion in 2020

In central India, about 670 miles east of Delhi on the trunk route to Kolkata (Calcutta), lies the small town officially named Murtajapur. However, as it is normally known as Murtajapur even now, I'll stick with that name. This is the junction for two lines, one going south for 70 miles to Yavatmal (known as Yeotmal during the Raj period), and one north for just under 50 miles to the town of Achalpur (previously Ellichpur) which is about the size of Mansfield.

This area grew a lot of cotton, and these two 2ft 6in gauge lines, via Murtajapur, provided transport for the crops to Bombay (now Mumbai)

for eventual shipping to Manchester for processing.

In around 1910, Killick Nixon, a British-owned company based in Bombay, formed the Central Provinces Railway Company (CPR) to build (inter alia) the railway from Yavatmal through Murtajapur to Achalpur. The Murtajapur to Achalpur section opened in 1913, Yavatmal to Murtajapur in 1915. Regrettably both closed in 2020 for conversion to broad-gauge. There was also a short-lived branch line from Darwha Moti Bagh south for about 40 miles to Pulsad – this opened in 1931 but had been lifted by 1942.

Above: Nasmyth Wilson F class no 723 on an Achalpur train pauses at Lehgaon in February 1991. Photo: L Marshall

Below: Central India Railways map of 1946 – in black are the lines from Murtazapur to Ellichpur and Yeotmal, changed since Raj days to Murtajapur, Achalpur and Yavatmal.

The line, although owned by the CPR, was built and operated by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. Despite continuing to be operated by Indian Railways after nationalisation, the line remained in the ownership of the CPR, Indian Railways paying an annual rent – a transfer of ownership is only now under way to coincide with the broad-gauge conversion.

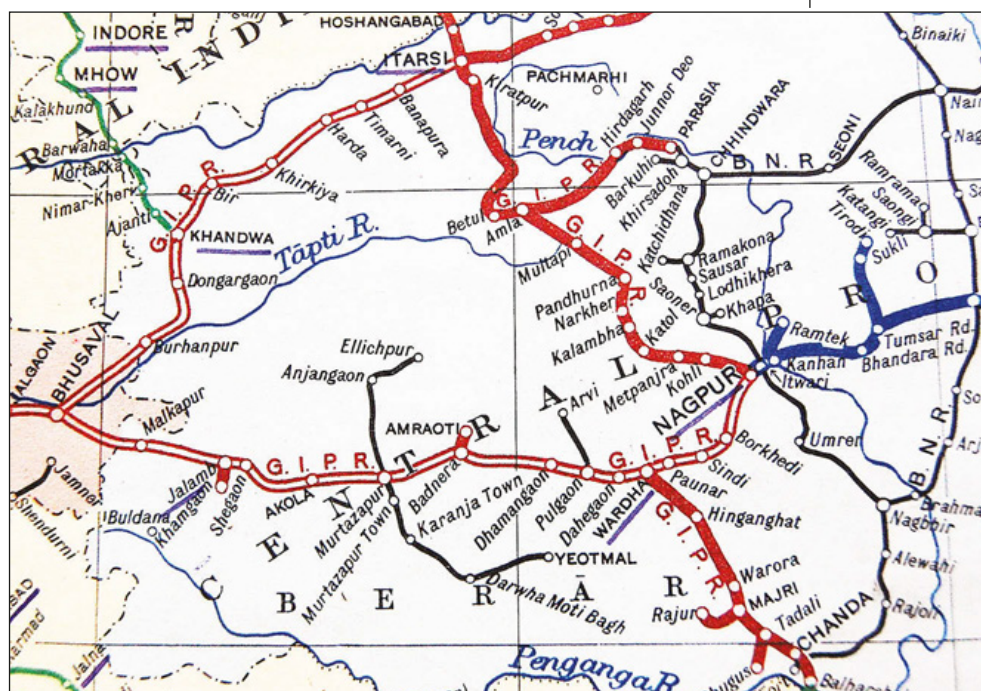
Why is the line known as the Shakuntala? From Indian mythology – Shakuntala was Dushyanta's wife, and they were the parents of Emperor Bharatta (Bharat is Hindi for India).

Motive power

The line opened with a fleet of six A/1 class 2-8-4 tanks, two of which survived into the 1980s working on the Pulgaon line, a little further east. In 1917 six B/1 class 4-8-0s arrived for 'main-line' work, all built in the UK, some by Nasmyth Wilson, others by North British.

These held the fort until the more powerful ZD class 2-8-2s arrived in 1957 – these were built in Japan by Nippon, and there were six of them. They were supplemented eventually with F class 2-8-2s from the Barsi line at Kurduwadi (Nasmyth Wilson 1949) and an odd BS/1 2-8-2 from the South Eastern Railway's Satpura system (North British 1915). Diesels arrived to take over in 1994 in the shape of a fleet of ZDM4A 700hp diesel-hydraulics built by India's Chittaranjan diesel works.

On the Achalpur section, in 1961, there were three trains each way every day, including one overnight train in both directions! By 1970 the





overnight trains had disappeared, and by 1998 there was just one train each way each day. This pattern continued until the narrow-gauge closure.

A railway backwater

These lines were the perfect picture of a little local railway, serving the local people, and seemingly staying well out of the limelight. We had a ride on the Shakuntala in early 2018 from Achalpur to Murtajapur, and it was just what a small, backwater railway should be. Until the 'down' train arrived at Achalpur, the station was deserted, apart from a handful of prospective passengers.

Half an hour was allowed for running round, and this was accomplished without rushing, as is appropriate for a rural branch line. Tickets were acquired from the 'booking office', which was a large wooden box manned by the guard in the rear coach. Progress was, very properly, leisurely, occasionally hitting the dizzy heights of 20mph.

There are a large number of level crossings on the route, and the train carried a mobile crossing keeper – at each one the train stopped short, he

Above left: Just one train a day, but mobile ice cream was on offer at Anjangaon with almost on-seat service.

Above: The ZDs were the staple power on the line. The 1957-built no 548 at Murtajapur in 1991.

Photo: L Marshall

Right: View of the on-train booking office – it's good to see Edmondson boards still in use!

Below: The morning train from Murtajapur to Achalpur runs through scenery typical of the area on the approach to Anjangaon in April 2018 with ZDM4a no 216.

Uncredited photos by Fuzz Jordan



descended, flagged the train over, reboarded and the train continued. As you might imagine, this did not do much to improve timekeeping.

Upon arrival at Anjangaon, the major intermediate station, the temperature was nudging 40 degrees centigrade and an enterprising local was selling ice-cream from a handcart! As with all local lines, the rumour mill works well, and we arrived at Murtajapur on time (well, the same day) to be welcomed by the

station-master on the platform.

As the Yavatmal line was temporarily suspended for a bridge repair, we returned the following day to chase the train back from Murtajapur to Achalpur. On this friendly line, we got a wave from the train crew at every pass! **NGW**

■ The last Nasmyth Wilson locos operating out of Murtajapur will feature in an article by Richard Pelham in a coming issue of **NGW**.



Bala at its Birth...



Andrew Charman concludes our series of three Hunslet Homes articles by documenting the birth of the Bala Lake Railway, a line celebrating 50 years of operation in 2022.

In the summer of 1973, a little under half a century ago, the 11-year-old version of your editor

was on yet another holiday in north Wales. With a railway enthusiast for a father my narrow-gauge education



Above: Ready to run its first passenger trains – the Bala Lake Railway in July 1972, one month before it opened for business. The inset shows the scene that greeted the author in 1973 – pristine loco, spartan carriages, no-one about... Photos: Graham Fairhurst and Bryan Charman

Above left: Before work began – the first signs of life are evident at Llanuwchllyn with the slate wagons stacked on the station platform.

Left: A few months later – tons of ballast has raised the trackbed and the Ruston diesel is sitting on one of the first points at the start of the run-round loop.

All uncredited photos in this feature courtesy of the Hugh Sykes Collection/Bala Lake Railway

was well underway and the Talyllyn and Vale of Rheidol Railways already familiar venues that we had visited more than once.

This time, however, dad said he had something new for us three children and my long-suffering mother – a brand-new railway, opened only the previous summer. And it was clear when we arrived at the then to me unpronounceable Llanuwchllyn station of 'Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid', the Bala Lake Railway (BLR), that this was very different to anything that I had yet seen.

Standing in the station was a bright blue bo-bo diesel, looking like a miniaturised version of what I was used to seeing on the main lines back home in Surrey. It was coupled to a pair of bogie carriages, one closed and the other the most spartan vehicle one could imagine – basically a frame and roof. The two platforms and station building looked far too big for the train, as indeed it was because it had seen its last standard-gauge working only eight years earlier. And the place was completely deserted...

After about 10 minutes we had decided the line must be closed and dad was about to drive away when someone emerged from the signal box and shouted to us; "Do you want to go for a ride?" And so we enjoyed our very own private train as far as Llangower, today halfway along the line, then its extremity.

I can't recall much about our host

but today I surmise he must have been George Barnes, the BLR's first general manager and the man that masterminded the Bala Lake Railway's creation and progress over its early years.

Beeching strikes

The seed for what became the third and final of our 'Hunslet Homes' was sown in 1965, when the Great Western Railway route from Ruabon to Barmouth on the Welsh coast was added to the many victims of the Beeching axe. Passenger services through Bala ended officially on 18th January 1965, though flooding the previous month resulted in the last services being by bus, and by 1969 the track had been lifted.

The western half of the former route would eventually reopen as the Mawddach Traill, still popular today as a bridleway, walking and cycling route. The eastern section eventually spawned two heritage lines – the standard-gauge Llangollen Railway and the BLR.

It was not very long at all before thoughts turned to reusing the trackbed. As early as October 1968 *Narrow Gauge News* (NGN), the newsletter of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society, reported that Merioneth County Council had purchased 3ft 6in gauge Bagnall 0-4-0STs 'Woto' (2133/1924) and 'Sir Tom' (2135/25) from British Insulated Cables of Erith. "They propose to lay a short tourist line somewhere near Bala on the roadbed of the BR Bala-Dolgellau line," the report credited to among others Talyllyn Railway chief engineer John Bate stated, to which the newsletter editor had added "what's the betting that it's alongside the lake?"

More reports followed, notably in April 1970 when the *Railway*



Above: Looking the other way from the previous picture – points are installed for future sidings and the line stretches towards Bala.

Above right: The first trains were turned at the limit of operations courtesy of a short siding and human power... Both photos: Graham Fairhurst



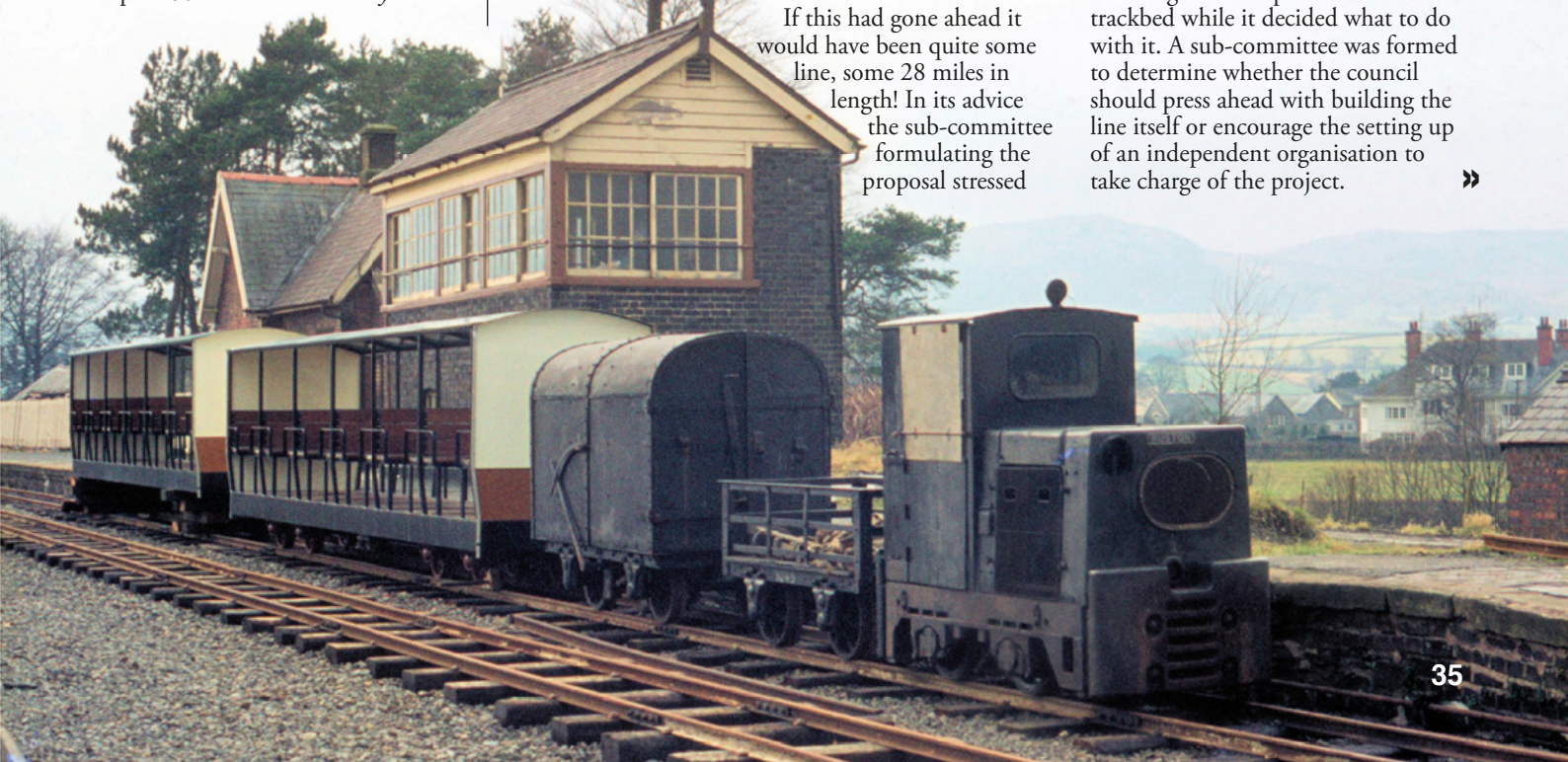
Below: The extent of BLR rolling stock in the winter of 1972. Photo: Peter Johnson Collection

Magazine stated that Merioneth County Council's finance committee had recommended the council agreeing in principle to a narrow-gauge line on the trackbed – it would run from Bala to Dolgellau and if possible on to Morfa Mawddach, if it could be accommodated alongside the proposed Dolgellau bypass which planned to make use of some of the former trackbed.

If this had gone ahead it would have been quite some line, some 28 miles in length! In its advice the sub-committee formulating the proposal stressed

that the longer the line the more advantageous it would be – very forward thinking. The *RM* was less convinced, however, mentioning the proposal in its editorial under the heading *Fool's gold in Wales...*

By November 1970 the council had scaled back its plans, settling on initially opening a 4½-mile long line between Bala and Llanuwchllyn, and retaining ownership of the rest of the trackbed while it decided what to do with it. A sub-committee was formed to determine whether the council should press ahead with building the line itself or encourage the setting up of an independent organisation to take charge of the project. »





Apathy of the people?

The latter action was recommended in a feasibility report to the council and public meetings proposed to gain support for the scheme. These were held in April in both Bala and Dolgellau and according to the June 1971 edition of *NGN* a line from Morfa Mawddach to a point near Dolgellau was back on the agenda.

"Only 29 persons turned up at Bala and 37 at Dolgellau and nobody was prepared to put up money for either scheme," the report stated, adding that committees had been formed to look into both and that a member of the Bala committee, an M Phillips, had some 2ft gauge equipment formerly of the Oakeley slate quarry in Blaenau Ffestiniog, which he had been planning to set up at Glyn Ceiriog, once the terminus of the long-closed Glyn Valley Tramway, but had run into planning problems.

There is a question over the accuracy of some of these reports, however. Certainly the sale of the Bagnall locos never went ahead – after several years in a Kent scrapyard Woto passed into the ownership of engineer Alan Keef while Sir Tom today lives at the Threlkeld Quarry museum in Cumbria – ironically both have been

regauged to the BLR's 2ft. And *NGW* reader Richard Greenhaugh gave us a very different view of the public meetings at Bala, both of which he attended.

"At Bala, there was already a group, led by George Barnes and Councillor Tom Jones, making plans to create what would become Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid (the BLR) and as a result of the meeting they set up a committee, incorporated their company in May 1972, and had the first section of line operating in August of that year," Richard told *NGW*. He added that the lack of a detailed plan for the Dolgellau line, plus proposals for the bypass that would force the line to terminate short of the town, doomed its hopes. Richard commented that had Merioneth Council been able to persuade BR to leave the track in situ, significantly cutting the cost of reinstatement, the route might have become the first standard-gauge tourist line in Wales, beating the Llangollen Railway, set up in 1975.

Prime mover

The constant factor in all this was the apparent and perhaps unusual pro-railway attitude of Merioneth Council, and the catalyst for this was George Barnes. An engineer based locally to Bala, he quickly saw the potential for a tourist railway, and

"Steam locos are envisaged as specially built 'scalish' models using the Ravenglass-pattern boiler as a basis..."

Above: Built in 1973, bo-bo diesel 'Meirionnydd' was indicative of a direction the BLR did not pursue.

Below: By the lake side, Meirionnydd and its train including one of the second batch of fully enclosed bogie carriages. Photo: Peter Johnson Collection

he convinced Tom Jones, chairman of the council's finance committee and a Llanuwchllyn resident, of the wisdom of the plans. Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid Ltd was incorporated on 22nd May 1972, immediately making a little history as the first company of any type to be registered entirely in the Welsh language.

According to the *Liverpool Daily Post* construction of the 1ft 11½-inch gauge line officially started on 5th June 1972, though *NGN* claimed the first length was laid in Llanuwchllyn yard on Whit Monday, 29th May. Tom Jones, appointed chairman of the company, told the newspaper that the Welsh Tourist Board had made a grant of £18,750 to the project, which was expected to cost £75,000 in total. Initial capital of £10,000 had already been subscribed.

Again, news reports of the time reveal some curious diversions. It has always been stated that George Barnes intended to make use of redundant north Wales quarry equipment, though as we have seen in previous episodes of Hunslet Homes the prime time for obtaining such equipment in reasonable condition had already passed.

Scaled-down ambitions?

In fact, initially the BLR planners had adopted different aspirations. In the *NGN* of October 1971, it was reported that the BLR was to be operated as a miniature railway and would have been built to 15-inch gauge, as had briefly been considered by the pioneer preservationists of the Talylyn Railway two decades earlier, had the manager of the 15-inch gauge Ravenglass & Eskdale line not suggested that 2ft gauge would be better. Tom Davies told the *Liverpool Daily Post* that two steam engines would be built as "replicas of famous GWR engines scaled to the required size," while the *NGN* report added; "Steam locos are envisaged as specially built 'scalish' models using the Ravenglass-pattern boiler as a

basis, the wider gauge giving improved stability and reduced axlebox wear over that experienced on 15-inch gauge."

The report added that wagons (obtained from the Llechwedd and Oakeley slate quarries in Blaenau Ffestiniog) were stacked on Llanuwchllyn station platform and a Ruston diesel intended only for construction purposes was being overhauled by George Barnes and his son at Pen-y-Bont farm, close to the track bed. Ruston 432652, built in 1959 had previously been at Oakeley quarry – can any *NGW* reader reveal where it is today?

Llanuwchllyn was established as headquarters of the line, ballast laid between the two platforms to raise the track level (creating as a result a 1 in 72 falling gradient to the lakeside trackbed), and a run-round loop laid alongside the north platform, initially using 25 and 30lb rail and jubilee-style sharp turnouts on standard-gauge sleepers sawn in half. The GWR station building and signal box were pressed into service for storage and accommodation.

Once tracklaying had reached Pentrepiod, around 1.5 miles from Llanuwchllyn, the railway opened without any ceremony on 13th August 1972, the first trains consisting of the Ruston and two toastrack carriages built by Severn Lamb Ltd. At the temporary end of the line was only a siding just 10ft long, so passengers alighted onto the adjacent road, the loco ran into the siding and the carriages were pushed past it ready for the return journey.

The line was an immediate success with hourly trains through August – within eight days more than 1000 journeys had been made. Meanwhile extension work continued, former BR employees assisting, and tracklaying had reached Llangower, around halfway along the lake, by the start of the 1973 season.

Perhaps indicative of the miniature plans was the brand-new loco that had been ordered for the railway from Severn Lamb Ltd – bo-bo diesel 'Meirionnydd', styled to look like a scaled-down British Railways Western Class loco, arrived in early 1973. At six tons and 100hp it was at the time the largest engine produced by the Stratford-upon-Avon builder.

Steam arrives

In the same month the line gained its first steam power, having been hunting a suitable loco since opening. Considering George Barnes's plans to use redundant quarry equipment and that today the BLR is renowned as a 'quarry Hunslet retirement home' with five in permanent residence, it's

"It's ironic that the first steam locomotive to work on the line was not from a quarry or even British..."



ironic that the first steam locomotive to work on the line was not from a quarry or even British.

Henschel Reisa class 0-4-0T 'Helen Kathryn' (28035/1948), owned by a member of the NGRS Chester group, was placed on loan to the BLR, but was soon found to be too heavy for the track, leaving Meirionnedd handling services alone. 'Trixie', an 0-4-0 built by Alan Keef Ltd, was also tried on the line in 1974 but found to be unsuitable and left to operate at Meirion Mill, 14 miles further south at Dinas Mawddwy.

The first quarry Hunslet to take up residence at the BLR was one that links all three of our Hunslet Homes stories – 'Maid Marian' arrived in March 1975, having travelled 30 miles south from the Llanberis Lake Railway, its owners the Maid Marian Locomotive Fund having finally found a satisfactory permanent home for their charge. Helen Kathryn went the other way, to Llanberis but the Maid soon had a familiar stablemate, joined by fellow former Dinorwic quarries Hunslet 'Holy War'

(779/1902). Stored since 1968 in a container at the Quainton Road Railway Centre in Buckinghamshire and occasionally steamed, the loco was acquired by author the Reverend Alan Cliff in 1975 and given a home by George Barnes. After much work Holy War entered service alongside Maid Marian in 1979.

To house this stock a two-road loco shed and workshop was built at Llanuwchllyn in 1973, while that year also saw the setting up of the supporting Bala Lake Railway Society. By early 1975 the line was being extended again towards the former Bala Junction and the terminus it still uses today at Penybont, the entire 4½-mile run completed in the winter of 1975-76 – but by then there had been a setback.

Town turn-off

The intention had always been to terminate much closer to the town itself – Penybont was, and remains today, on the opposite side of the lake with a good walk required to reach the town centre facilities. But clearly »

Above right: The line arrives at Bala, terminus of the BLR to date.

Below: 'Maid Marian', seen here at Bala, became the first steam loco, and the first of several quarry Hunslets, to work regularly at the BLR, a task the loco is still doing today.





the council's pro-rail attitude seen earlier had dimmed somewhat in the intervening period. An application to extend across a new level crossing and round the end of the lake to a terminus adjacent to a car park, close to the Loch cafe on the Bala to Dolgellau road, was rejected in the face of more than 20 objections from local people and organisations.

The BLR persisted with its hopes of a final extension for a few years but finally abandoned them early in 1981. Thereafter it settled down to a mostly quiet life, running trains up and down the lake, making few headlines but completing subtle improvements to its facilities each year – new rakes of carriages were built by local firm Gwynedd Engineering from 1976, Llangower eventually gained a passing loop and second platform, while Llanuwchllyn station was extended and in 1979 gained a smart canopy, using supports made originally by the Cambrian Railways for its station at Pwllheli and later transferred to Aberdovey.

A significant event in 1985 was

the retirement of George Barnes after 15 years at the helm of the line. The pivotal figure in the BLR's creation and growth, he was immediately made president of the Bala Lake Railway Society.

In recent years the BLR has been making rather more headlines, under progressive management and strongly supported by the Bala Lake Railway Trust led by Julian Birley – a major figure in the standard gauge North Norfolk Railway, Julian first became involved with the BLR when he purchased quarry Hunslet 'Alice'.

The line has since played an ever larger part in Julian's life and in 2012 he repatriated Penrhyn Hunslet 'Winifred' (364/1885) from the USA – the loco had been stored in the Indianapolis Speedway museum since its export from Wales in 1965.

Extension back on

Julian has also been a driving force in the revival of the BLR's ambitions to extend into Bala itself – the Red

Above: The beginnings of the quarry Hunslet retirement home as 'Holy War' joins its Dinorwic quarry compatriot Maid Marian on the BLR. The other loco visible is the well-travelled Kerr Stuart Wren 0-4-OST 'Peter Pan', which ran at the line for a short time.

Below: Today's Bala Lake Railway – the Hunslets 'Winifred' and 'Alice' with plenty of steam on a thriving line. Photo: Andrew Charman

Dragon project launched in 2010. It's a measure of how local opinions have changed that people in Bala are strongly supportive of the plans and cannot wait to have their railway running into a brand-new station very close to where it was planned to terminate in the 1980s. As this month's news pages report, major grant aid is being secured and the plans are proceeding apace.

In the meantime the line has further improved its facilities including the restoration of more locomotives and the opening of a long-desired and much-admired heritage centre at Llanuwchllyn. Heading into its golden anniversary season, the Bala Lake Railway is in its most healthy position for many years, perhaps ever, and is a thriving 21st century Hunslet Home. **NGW**

More Information

■ The BLR has many plans to celebrate its 50 years, including an anniversary booklet, and we will of course be bringing you news on the celebrations as they are announced.

Full details of 2022 train services can be found on the line's website at <https://bala-lake-railway.co.uk> while details of the Red Dragon extension project are on the Trust website at www.balalakerailwaytrust.org.uk

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this series. And watch out for a follow-up feature based on the many period photos of the three lines we have received since each article in the series was published. More are welcome!





Ulfstead Road for Mid-Sodor

Richard Awdry describes the 009 layout built in the 1960s by his grandfather, Thomas the Tank Engine creator Wilbert Awdry, and the inspiration for one of the Reverend's Railway Series children's books.

■ **NGW Editor Andrew Charman** writes: – this issue has sparked lots of memories from the Charman childhood, with the Bala Lake Railway feature and now this. Like many a 1960s child I was brought up with the *Railway Series* of books written by the Rev. W. Awdry, long before they became a TV phenomenon as *Thomas the Tank Engine*. A happy memory is of being taken to the National Model Railway Exhibition at Central Hall in Westminster by my grandfather, where I actually saw Wilbert Awdry in the flesh. He was operating a tiny rabbit-warren layout in 009 narrow gauge, further stoking my

interest in rails less than 4ft 8½ inches apart – within two years I would start building my own 009 rabbit layout.

I could not recall exactly when that exhibition was, until Phil Parker of our sister magazine *British Railway Modelling* (BRM) told me that the Reverend's layouts had all been photographed for magazine features. He sent me over the pictures of 'Ulfstead Road', the very rabbit layout I had seen at Central Hall – and an exhibitor's pass on the side revealed it was in 1974, so I was 12 at the time.

Even better, Phil told me that Wilbert Awdry's grandson was happy to tell the story of a model railway with a very special provenance in this and our next issue – over to Richard...



Top: 'Ulfstead Road', a layout that packs a lot into a small space and now looked after by Richard Awdry (left), grandson of its builder.

Above: The ticket that sparked childhood memories for our editor.

'The Duke', the layout's signature locomotive, pauses at Cas Ny Hawin.





Left: Aerial view of the layout showing both the convoluted trackplan and a quite complex fiddle yard hidden behind the scenes. Note the flip-up electric panel, necessary to let the trains pass under...

Below left: Close-up of the electrics, which were mostly fashioned from what the Reverend could get hold of at the time...

Bottom: The Duke in one of the tunnels, showing clearly the 6-inch radius curves and the stiff climb to reach the next level.

Sometime in the late 1960s my Grandfather, the Reverend Wilbert Awdry, was reworking his model railways after a house move in late 1965 from Emneth to Stroud. Continuing his series of models based on the land of Sodor (Ed's note – *Sodor, a fictional island between the Cumbrian coast and the Isle of Man, was the setting for all of the Railway Series books*), the initial plan for his new railway room was to model much of the standard-gauge Ffarquhar branch (which featured in the December 2021 issue of *BRM*).

In addition there was an idea for a 'rabbit-warren' style depiction of the Skarloey Railway (*this was the line on which the narrow-gauge engines in the stories worked, based heavily on Wilbert Awdry's experiences working as a volunteer in the early preservation years of the Talylyn Railway*).

The Skarloey idea did not materialise, however with his mind on an exhibition layout small enough to be managed on his own – Ffarquhar being too cumbersome in this regard – the idea eventually led to an easily transportable alternative and took the subject of another of Sodor's narrow-gauge railways instead. The Mid Sodor Railway also came to be the setting for much of *The Railway Series* no.25 *Duke the Lost Engine*, first published in 1970.

After Wilbert's passing in 1997 the layout, named 'Ulfstead Road', found its way to the rectory at Cadeby, former residence of Wilbert's great friend the late Reverend Teddy Boston, who was himself immortalised as the 'Fat Clergyman' who rediscovered 'Duke' (*which was based on a Ffestiniog England 0-4-0*) in the chapter *Sleeping Beauty* in the book.

By this time under the charge of Teddy's widow Audrey, there was a small museum on site at Cadeby, the former home of Teddy's 2ft gauge Cadeby Light Railway,

and the layout was displayed in static form for some years until Audrey moved on and the museum was closed. Ulfstead Road subsequently came to me via my father Christopher.

The Mid Sodor Railway

The layout is a depiction in 009 4mm/ft scale of part of the long-lost railway between Peel Godred and Arlesburgh in circa 1920-40. It features a serpentine ascent through tunnels and hillside between the halt at Cas-ny-Hawin junction with its mine branch, and the summit station and mid-point of the line at Ulfstead Road, the road bridge providing the final scenic break for trains to Peel Godred.

The feel of the model is based largely on the North Wales narrow gauge lines and leaning on the Welsh Highland/Ffestiniog (there's even a back story to explain skimping on clearances in the cuttings) in particular. I'm not sure how prototypical the semi-tunnel seen beyond the river behind Cas-Ny-Hawin could be (doubtless someone can prove me wrong!) but it does offer some visual interest and intrigue for the viewer.

Permanent Way and Control

After much experimentation ruling gradients and curve radii were decided upon but much was knowingly undertaken in trial and error. The layout was built to the dimensions of Wilbert's car boot. On discovery that said car boot tapered inwards by 1½ inches, the track bed for the upper section (above the mine branch) had to be taken up and reworked with a steeper gradient than envisaged, much to the dismay of the builders.

Unfortunately this was not the first such incident as it was then realised the river would need to be extracted from the base



before the track bed could go above too.

The main frame is constructed of 1½ x ¾-inch battens initially topped with ¾-inch insulation (Sundeala-type) board. Out of this the ascending track bed was fretted out and perched upon risers fixed into the frames, essentially creating a part-open frame. At the top level thin hardboard was used to accommodate the necessary vertical clearance and the friendliest possible gradient to the summit.

Track is a mixture of Peco and Playcraft with some scratch-built, using pieces of thin balsa wood with staples forced through and clinched in to fit and rails soldered to the top. This technique was even applied to the station throat points which had to be of non-standard radius to fit the plan.

Points on the front of the layout and the reverse loop are controlled from a small stud-and-probe mimic map tucked into the corner of the fiddle yard baseboard. The lower fiddle yard is a separate 9-inch wide board bolted to the main one and secured with hinges acting as alignment locks on each side.

Further evidence of improvisation comes from the fiddle yard point switches – essentially wire-in-tube minus the tube – the levers of which are formed from offcuts of folded-over rail which pivot on screws set onto the edge of the board.

The control panel (which may fold up for access to the sidings below, while being careful of the sidings above...) is mounted on the rear board, neatly bridging the lower fiddle yard. It houses a Scalespeed 600 controller and the switches for fiddle yard isolators and an important dead section located in the tunnel mid-climb to the summit. This allows a train to move in Ulfstead Road station independently and also gives an impression of time passing as the train on the lower section winds its way up through the contours.

All sidings in the fiddle yard have a dead zone at their ends – these are powered as required by various forms of metal strips, drawing pins and wire connected by a push of one's finger.

There are also numerous little things (such as track rubber stuck to a strip of wood and hatches at each end for track access) that hint at the little tricks and workarounds that have been required to keep the trains running smoothly.

The scenery

When the layout was constructed in the late 1960s, proprietary parts were not as plentiful as they are now and many of the materials to build, shape and operate the layout were pulled from what was easily obtainable. Various bearers were cobbled together from many shapes and sizes of wood and attached to risers and side boards to support the upper section and scenery. Where access is required, the scenery can be picked up from supporting bearers fixed to the base.

The landscape is largely built up from many layers of ½-inch expanded



The scenery was also built up from what was available at the time and includes such elements as Christmas decoration trees with their snow removed...

polystyrene sheet trimmed into shape. In some places this layering even represents the strata in the rock although Wilbert noted it would "be of great interest to geologists," due to the varying formation from one part of the layout to another.

Ulfstead Road station building is based on Esgairgeiliog on the Corris Railway and was built by a friend (Doris Stokes) in intricate detail after a personal invitation to show the layout won some light criticism for some of the scenic elements rushed in before its first exhibition.

The station scene itself, including the overbridge bedecked with a traction engine (Bill Shuvvell's) and cows (Josh Herder's – puns are aplenty in these parts) and the left-hand backscene are all one integral unit and one of four parts of the layout that can be lifted out to better access the internals.

The backdrops are part low-relief mountains cut out from softboard and some assembled from railway posters on hazy blue board. The rocky mountain features are mostly medical lint covering the basic

formation (built up from polystyrene, crumpled newspaper and assorted bits of wood) then coated with a mix of Polyfilla and sawdust. Medical lint (fluffy side up) makes up much of the grassy hillside and is suitably populated with sheep and the odd walker/angler/shepherd. The rough grass and hedges are teased-out pieces of painted carpet underfelt. The river is recessed into the frames of the board and is a hardboard base painted greeny-blue and topped with layers of crumpled cellophane.

Colouring for much of the scenery was applied with poster paints and the trees were largely looted from Ffarquhar. There are three basic types; those assembled from small twigs, sponge, glue, and carpet underlay; some of wire and green crepe paper; and some proprietary miniature Christmas trees from Woolworths trimmed to rid them of snow. **[NGW]**

■ Next month Richard concludes the tale of Ulfstead Road by describing the stock, operation and future for the layout.

The rock strata, built up from many layers of expanded polystyrene sheet, would according to Wilbert have been "of great interest to geologists..."



All photos in this feature by Phil Parker

A Fairlie large surprise...



An unexpected early Christmas present for 009 modellers courtesy of Bachmann – *Andrew Charman* checks out the new quartet of Ffestiniog Railway Double Fairlies.

It is not often that the model railway world springs a complete surprise, but Bachmann Europe certainly did that on 3rd November when the company unveiled a quartet of ready-to-run Ffestiniog Railway Double Fairlie locomotives in 009 scale.

Quite apart from the prototype chosen, equally stunning was the fact that these models were ready to go with stock already heading for dealers – reviewers had their samples delivered by courier within minutes of the announcement. This was unprecedented, considering we have been closely following the development of Bachmann's much-awaited quarry Hunslet which still haven't made the shops yet (they are not far away, we are told...).

Considering the Double Fairlie is one of the most iconic narrow gauge locos ever built, it has been until now virtually ignored by the model manufacturers – your editor remembers building a Langley Miniature Models whitmetal kit almost half a century ago, and more recently Backwoods Miniatures have offered it in kit form.

Now the arrival of these models is the clearest indication yet of the new-found popularity of British-outline ready-to-run 009. And speaking exclusively to *NGW*, Bachmann managing director David

Haarhaus told us the increased awareness of the UK narrow gauge in more recent times has made such prototypes more viable to be the subjects of models.

"These locos are the result of the passion of our R&D team for things that are new, while the improvements in production and manufacturing technology allow us to make an accurate model of something so small that is also robust and reliable," David said.

He admitted, however, that the Fairlie was also one of the first steam engines he ever saw at the age of three months. "And I've had a love affair with the Ffestiniog, ever since I stood from first thing in the morning into the evening watching the Hunslet 100 Gala in the 1980s."

Creating what are extremely accurate models would not be possible without detailed input from the Ffestiniog Railway; "They have been a great help to us, especially in terms of the accurate liveries – Fairlies have gone through a lot of changes and the FR are the ones who know about all these. They are the reason we can produce such a good-looking model today."

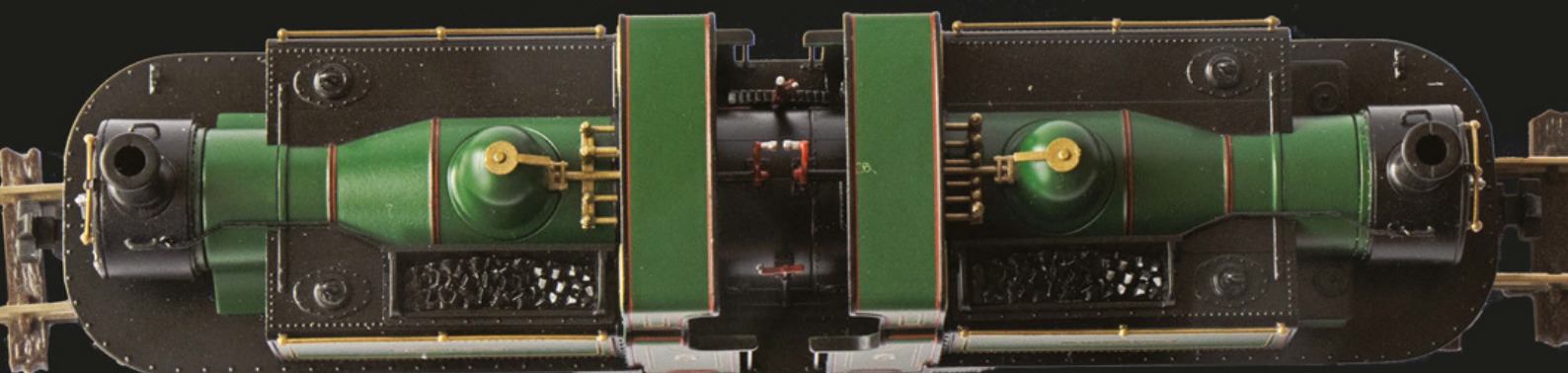
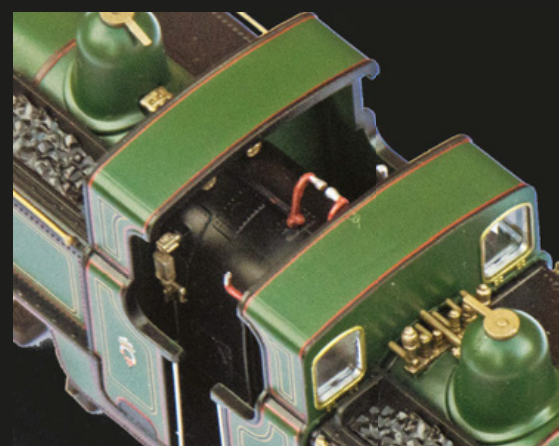
The models

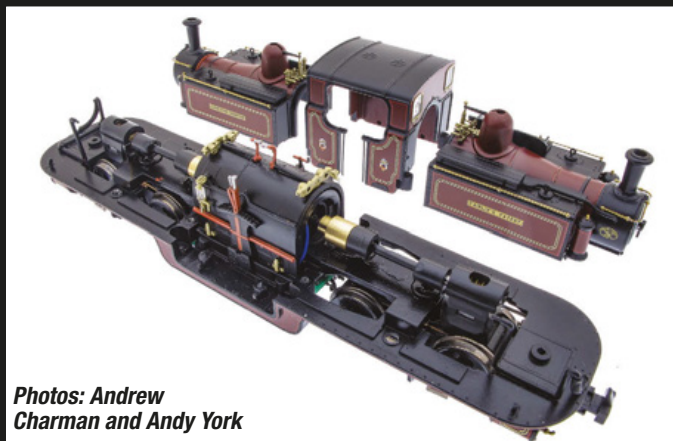
Four different versions of the Fairlie have been released, although one of them,



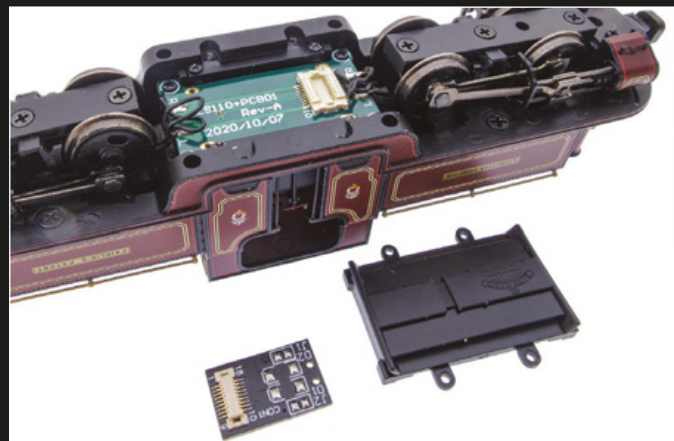
'David Lloyd George', the current youngest member of the fleet built in 1992, is only available to members of the Bachmann Collector's Club.

Our review sample is 'Merddin Emrys', the third example built to the patent in 1879 and modelled in early condition with open-topped cab, stovepipe chimney,





Photos: Andrew Charman and Andy York



square sandpots and in lined green livery.

'Livingston Thompson', built in 1886 and today in the National Railway Museum, is presented in lined brick red and with longer side tanks, vacuum brakes, a full-roofed cab and vertical sandpots.

'Earl of Merioneth' wears 1960s 'Garraway Green', named after the FR's then general manager, and such details as white-walled tyres, black boiler and domes date the model to the period before withdrawal in 1971, when it returned to its previous guise as Livingston Thompson.

Common to all is the detail, which is not only extensive but crucially accurate – our model for example includes a wealth of cab fittings such as the novel double regulators, the reversing lever with its separate notches, and so much more. There are even separate etched brass nameplates that you need a magnifier to read...

Of course plentiful detail means nothing is the model does not run well but there are no concerns in this area. The well-designed chassis combines a centrally-mounted motor (Bachmann making the most of the space provided by the Fairlie boiler running through the cab separating driver and fireman) driving the two power bogies.

These bogies are individually articulated and Bachmann has taken steps to ensure they won't be defeated by uneven track. This has caused some to gripe at the greater than scale clearance between the bogie and running plate but you only really notice this if you view the model from a very low angle with a light background behind it – something few are likely to do....

From first try on the **NGW** test track (with so many excellent new models appearing your Ed is going to have to build a proper layout...) the model ran very well with excellent slow speeds which can only further improve as it is run in. Note too that it comes with a DCC decoder socket, easily accessed through a panel on the underside of the cab, plus pre-fitted speakers on all versions. You can buy it DCC ready or with sound fitted, with a wide host of sounds available.

Quite simply these are excellent models – will they be the first of more, perhaps even the first Fairlie 'Little Wonder'? "There's certainly a possibility that we'll expand the range," David says. "I don't

think any two Fairlies are the same and the more recent ones are a lot larger than the originals, but this mechanism has been tested extensively for reliability so it could then be transposed to other members of the Fairlie class, if of course demand dictates.

"Let's see how they go – the market feedback is looking good at present. Less popular locos are now a possibility – in our OO range we are now making locos no-one has ever seen. So long as people like the look of the particular loco and can justify having it in the kingdom of their model railway, then it will work."

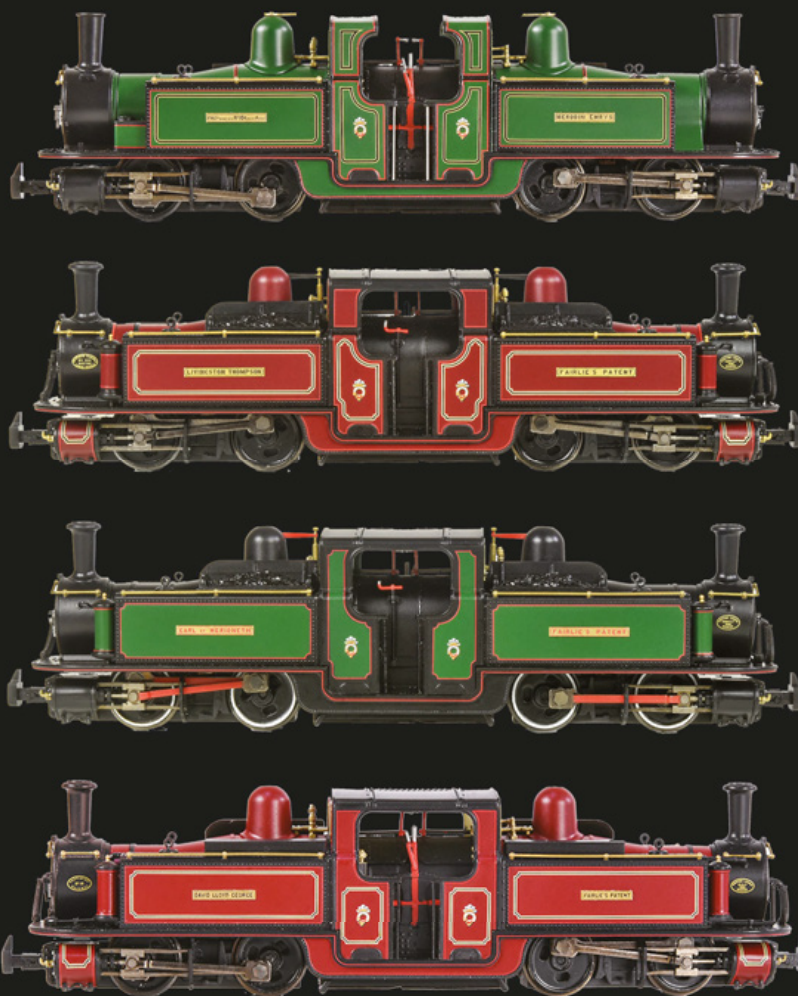
So with Bachmann releasing Fairlies and their quarry Hunslets on the way, are there more surprises to come? "Just assume we

are going to make everything – we are enthusiasts and we want to make all the models we can."

Judging by the social media reaction to these locos, David will have no problems selling his first batch – if you want one we suggest you don't delay... **NGW**

■ Andrew's full interview with David Haarhaus can be viewed online at <https://youtu.be/9G9r5UBG90o> Thanks to Andy York for additional reporting.

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FR mania as Peco Englands arrive

If you model in 009, 4mm to the foot scale, and your particular passion is the Ffestiniog Railway, then in the words of a certain 1960s Prime Minister, you never had it so good...

Not only has Bachmann surprised everyone with the arrival of its Double Fairlie locomotives detailed on the previous spread, in a masterpiece of timing finished examples have been revealed of the joint venture between Peco and Japanese manufacturer Kato to produce models of the Ffestiniog's George England 0-4-0STs, which when they started work on the north Wales line in 1863 were some of the first narrow gauge steam locos to run anywhere.

Now we haven't seen these models in the metal yet – they are not due in shops until early in 2022, but judging by the photos reproduced here they will be highly appropriate additions to the new age of finely detailed ready-to-run 009 models of British-outline narrow gauge.

The two models pictured here, which are described as initial releases, are of the original 'small England' locos no 1 'Princess' and no 2 'Prince' – Prince runs on the line today while Princess remains as a museum piece.

Both locos are modelled in their current condition with large saddle tanks – the England 0-4-0s started life as side tanks and gained their saddles partly to add adhesive weight. The pair are finished in a lined maroon livery, again as they carry today.

There is plenty of detail to enjoy, including separate handrails and pipework, and it is good to see that the motor does not intrude into the cab space.

The plastic body shells part in two sections, tanks and cab, to reveal one of Kato's highly-regarded metal chassis, with a large flywheel and worm drive to the loco's rear wheels. Kato

chassis are routinely available separately to use under scratchbuilt loco projects and this new one will be no different, on sale as a mechanism only.

Further livery versions of the Englands are expected to be available later, while Kato has also for some time been working on its own version of a Double Fairlie. Peco is also soon to release models of the Ffestiniog quarrymen's carriages and 'Bowsider' bogie vehicles, joining the existing range which already includes slate wagons and the 'Bug Box' four-wheeled carriages, while of course there are plenty of FR stock kits available from the likes of Dundas Models.

Produced by Peco/Kato

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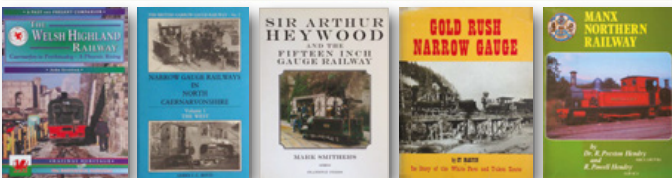
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A Year in the Life of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways 2021 (DVD/BluRay)

■ Some things in the narrow gauge world are a given, and at the end of the year this certainly includes the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways' 'Year in the Life' DVD/BluRay set, compiled by the railways' 'Moving Pictures' man John Wooden and documenting life on these most busy of UK lines. And despite the latest version commencing by reminding us that at the start of the 2021 it was not known when or if trains would run again, it turned into another busy year – so much so that the DVD version of the package runs to five separate discs!

Those who have seen previous versions of this series will know what to expect – just about everything that happened on the FF&WHR occurred in the view of John and Chris Parry's video cameras, from major trains and events, celebrity visitors, to all the behind-the-scenes maintenance that ensures the railways keep on running. As ever it's all presented through some excellent camera angles, including plentiful use of a drone, and with sub-titles rather than an irritating commentary. A film that is never dull, and one that is recommended to while away long winter days. **AC**

Published by Festiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, Tel: 01766 516034.
Web: www.festrail.co.uk/shop Price £25.00 (DVD or BluRay) including post

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Gala Days Volume 15 (DVD)

■ After an enforced year's hiatus in 2020, the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway's Gala falling victim to the Covid pandemic, the Devon line's videographer Trevor Garnham was back to normal in 2021 for the event held in September.

One always feels a little sympathy for Trevor as the Galas at present tend to follow a familiar pattern, but he always manages to find something of interest, this year topped by Hunslet 4-6-0T no 1215, special guest at the latest event.

As ever the coverage extends to every aspect of the weekend, and extras this year include a piece on the 762 Club Manning Wardle new-build project, a tapestry at Chelfham and an interesting impression of crossing the signature Chelfham viaduct.

These discs provide an excellent souvenir of a visit (especially if like our editor you finally managed to visit the Galathis year – a warning that he makes a blink and you'll miss it appearance in the film...). and of course by buying a copy you are helping to fund the L&B's future bold extension plans. **AC**

Produced by TAG Video Productions for L&B Trust, available from the railway or online at www.lynton-rail.co.uk/shop/browse Price £10.00 plus post

Twenty-Twoy Calendar – Joey Evans

■ As we briefly mentioned last month prolific photographer Joey Evans has his calendar available again this year. *NGW* readers will be familiar with Joey's excellent work which regularly features in our pages. A dozen of his best shots from another year visiting several lines are in the calendar which is to traditional A4 landscape folding out to A3 format.

The calendar costs £9.99 from Joey's website, www.joeyevansphotography.co.uk and if you want something on your wall that will be a talking point among fellow enthusiasts, we recommend it. **AC**



The Snowdon Mountain Railway by Peter Johnson

■ Peter, probably the best-known of today's narrow gauge historians, continues his tour of the Welsh lines by returning to one of his favourite subjects, the Snowdon Mountain Railway. What results is probably the most comprehensive history yet published of a line that considering its novel format, is not exactly widely covered.

Those familiar with Peter's work will know what to expect here – a highly detailed study from an author who has clearly undertaken a great deal of research, poring over archives and even tracing the final resting places of personalities from SMR history.

As well as describing the chronological history, right up to date with the arrival of the latest hybrid locomotives, the book includes more than 40 pages of appendices ranging from technical details of the locos and rolling stock to analysis of profits and expenses and even listings in recent years of incidents to the rail authorities.

The photos are a highlight, being both plentiful and including many period shots, some of which this reviewer has not previously seen. They are also used to a good size, half and even full-page reproduction being typical. And it is also good to see a book of this type including drawings of locomotives and stock.

In short this is the definitive history of a line that has long deserved a definitive history. **AC**

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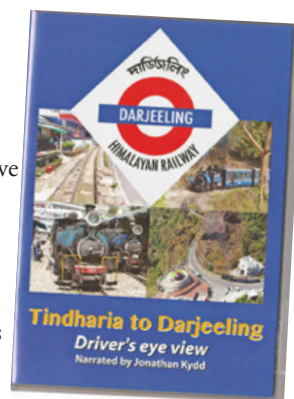
Tindharia to Darjeeling, Driver's Eye View (DVD)

■ We first saw this DVD when it was sent to us in 2020 by the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society. Now we have received a new copy from well-known visual rail producer Video125, and it is well worthy of another mention, being one of the most enjoyable films we have watched for a long time.

The premise is simple, mount cameras on one of the Darjeeling locomotives and leave them running as the train makes its way up the famed Indian 2ft gauge line from the depot at Tindharia to the upper terminus at Darjeeling. It's an all-encompassing film, showing in such implicit detail how this railway is shoehorned into its surroundings and how it fights a constant battle to stop them encroaching onto its right of way – any member of a steam locomotive crew will be amazed at what the Darjeeling crews deal with on a daily basis.

When this video was produced there was a plan to film the lower section of the line to Tindharia. This has been delayed by the Covid pandemic but let us hope it can become reality soon as this disc is compulsive viewing. **AC**

Produced by Video125
Tel: 01344 628565 Web: www.video125.com
Prices: Download £20.00, DVD £25.00, BluRay £30.00



More from Portugal

I am a great fan of James Waite and very much enjoyed his three articles on the Porto and Douro Valley narrow gauge lines (*NGW*160-162). I visited them in 1996, and though outside the steam era, there was still much to appreciate. Little seemed to have changed since James's last visit in June 1977, 20 years earlier!

Trinidade terminus in Porto was as busy as expected of a city commuter terminus. No loco-hauled trains were noted, railcar sets doing all the work. The city's primitive outdoor fish market was a sight to behold.

At Régua (terminus of the Corgo Line), broad and narrow gauge lines shared the station and yard, dual-gauge track exiting in the Pocinho direction. A heritage broad-gauge steam service ran in summer, the dual-gauge tracks diverging a couple of miles beyond the station.

On the narrow gauge Corgo Valley line the service ran as far as Vila Real and was well patronised. A footpath ran close alongside much of the track, used by locals for journeys to the fields and farms – no fencing off of the permanent way!

Services were worked by the new-build ex-Yugoslav railcars, with a number of the original series parked in the station and out at the narrow gauge loco sheds at Corgo Junction, but I never saw any in motion. Also present was a narrow gauge Alsthom Class 9021 diesel loco as at Livração and Tua.

On the Tâmega line the railcars in use were the three unique-looking Nohab vehicles referred to in *NGW*161 on page 30. Livração station, at the narrow gauge junction with the broad gauge main line, was very interesting with a manual winder-operated level crossing controlled by a signaller with a furled red flag held out in front of him military-style to clear the passing train. Crossing of broad gauge trains was controlled by yellow signal flags held out by the signalman at the eastern crossing loop points.

The narrow gauge connection was cross-platform and the trains were being well used. An Alsthom Class 9021 diesel was maintained by the loco shed for works trains and there were a few wagons in the yard. Also present in a locked shed was steam loco E162. Immediately outside Amarante station the level crossing was a simple one bar push-up pull-down unit, the task carried out by the crossing keeper.

On the Tua line, trains were all loco hauled by Alsthom Class 9021s. Again, simple manual crossing gates on the long, slow and very scenic line were operated by the station staff. At



“Though outside the steam era, there was still much to appreciate – little seemed to have changed since James’s last visit 20 years earlier..”

Above: Nohab Railcar 9102 sits outside the attractive and well-kept station of Amarante – for many years the terminus of the Tâmega line as described in the letter from Alf Cutts. Arriving as the 4.20pm from Livração, it returns at 4.34pm.

Right: Also from Alf Cutts’s letter, the very simple manual level crossing outside Amarante station on the Tâmega line harks back to another era.

Tua station there was shunting in the yard using the diesels to position and sort the coaching stock to form the varying train make-up.

Three steam locos were present – one locked up in a cage on a headshunt at the Mirandela end of the station, one out of use outside the depot at the other end and one on the far side of the broad gauge in the transfer sidings, also well out of use.

Unfortunately, I never reached Pocinho and the Sabor line – now the opportunity has gone, never to return.

Alf Cutts

Andrew C replies: Thanks to other readers who have added to the James Waite Portugal features. Due to lack of space we have had to hold several letters this month but we will try to fit them in next time.

Dinorwic detail

I enjoyed the feature in *NGW*161 on the Llanberis Lake Railway but would like to offer a couple of observations.

I have found in more than one publication a slightly incorrect reference to ‘Red Damsel’ (now ‘Elidir’) being dated as built in 1899 when in fact it should be 10 years earlier at 1889 as Hunslet works number 493, the sister engine to

‘King of the Scarlets’ (492/1889).

The David Mitchell photo of ‘Cackler’ in Gilfach Ddu yard is dated incorrectly, since Cackler was last used on 28th August 1959 and was certainly not in service in 1961, the normal bottom tramway locomotive being the Bgnall 0-4-0ST ‘Sybil’ with Hunslet ‘Velinheli’ (409/1886) as the stand-by engine used occasionally by that time.

In fact, according to the quarry loco repair registers, held in the Maid Marian Locomotive Fund collection, Cackler was substituted by ‘Elidir’ (Avonside 2071/1933) in the week prior to her last working week. This was news to me since all photos after 1957 show Elidir as out of service stored inside the repair workshop!

‘Maid Marian’ arrived back at Llanberis in October 1971, the exact date I’m not sure about, and was under repair/overhaul in the Llanberis Lake Railway workshops until early 1933 when the loco was tested and used in her quarry condition half-cab guise.

Robert Jones

Andrew C replies: Thanks to Robert – period history is a minefield and we are always happy to correct any errors in our copy!



That was the year that...

Narrow gauge news stories from the archives and their legacy...

From 50 years ago

Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway (Gauge 15in)

Plans have been submitted to Millom Rural District Council for a suggested extension of the line from Ravenglass to Muncaster Castle. The plans envisage a line of 2 miles 31 chains making end-on connection with the present line at Ravenglass and running parallel with British Railways for the first quarter-mile. A spiral of 1½ turns would be necessary in order to gain altitude (some 121ft above Ravenglass or 156ft above sea level), the summit being 1½ miles from the start. The new line would terminate close to the castle.

It must be added that this scheme is as yet only a suggestion and that no costings, negotiations for land or such have been made. (NGN, Feb 1962)

We checked and this was definitely from a February issue and not a 1st April one! Yet another bold plan from the early days when enthusiasts considered anything was possible – we would certainly have loved to see 'River Esk' and its sisters blasting up a 1½-turn spiral...

Tallylyn Railway (Gauge 2ft 3in)

Completion of the Nant Gwernol extension is envisaged by 1975 and also the possibility of four-train operation. The question being asked in the society is where next? To Aberdovey (if the coast line closes) or on to Tallylyn (if legal problems allow). (NGN, Feb 1962)



Photo: Andrew Charman

We rest our case! Our comments on the first item in this feature could almost be repeated. Suffice to say that such bold plans have never come to pass and today the Tallylyn Railway does not set off down the coast while Nant Gwernol (above) remains the upper terminus with no line to Tallylyn Lake...

City of Bradford Water Dept, Chellow Height Works (Gauge 2ft)

Tragic news from here – the Ransomes & Rapier four-wheel diesel, DL71 discovered only last year when no 80 at Brockham Museum was believed to be the only example of this manufacturer still extant, has been scrapped. In the words of the engineer in charge, Mr Bentley, "Several enthusiasts had been to visit but no-one made an offer, so we advertised in the press and it was disposed of as scrap this summer." (NGN, Feb 1962)

A cautionary tale – if you find something historically important, then don't hesitate to secure it...

Extracts from *Narrow Gauge News*, the news journal of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society – for more details of the Society and how to join up, go to www.ngrs.org.uk or see the advert elsewhere in this issue.



Diary on winter break

As is traditional the *NGW* diary of railway operating dates and events takes a break during the two winter issues as most lines are on their 'off-season'.

Note however that several lines have confirmed they will be running February 'half-term' trains in 2022, so if you fancy some narrow gauge action it is always worth checking the website of your local line.

With most lines opening for business shortly before Easter, which next year is 15th-18th April, the diary will be back in our next issue.

Unexpected Narrow Gauge...



The moving pulpit

Greg Howell finds a line on hallowed ground...

A short rope-operated railway is located in St Cuthbert's Church next to the cathedral in Carlisle city centre. An opportunity to see it arose when I rode on the Staycation Express – an HST summer-only service over the Settle-Carlisle Railway, with a two-hour layover in Carlisle.

The church has a gallery around three of its sides. To enable the preacher fully to engage with the congregation in the gallery, it was decided to replace the original pulpit with a tall and imposing wooden structure. But when in position centrally, the pulpit completely blocked the altar. Hence it was then resolved to mount the pulpit on a short railway so that it could be retracted when not in use.

The moving pulpit – presumably only the mechanism – appears to have been built locally by apprentices at Cowan Sheldon, better known for manufacturing cranes. Sources disagree slightly but it was either built in 1904 or 1905 and has been in regular use since then.

The track is unusual and appears to be U-section channel, but with both sides thick enough to bear the weight of the pulpit and flush with the floor to avoid a trip hazard. There is no way to see the wheels under the pulpit to measure the track gauge, but the distance between the inside edges of the U-channel is 98.5cm.

There appears to be a thin amount of grout between the inside edge of the channel and the floor slabs, but not next to the outside edge, perhaps indicating conventional inner-flanged wheels have been used. If these are guided along the centre of the U-channel, the gauge is 101.5cm.

The pulpit engages with the underfloor haulage rope through a central slot. In an adjacent room is a manual winch, which through two sets of gearing rotates a shaft that disappears under the church floor. A drum and rope wind the pulpit for about eight metres to the centre of the church and back to the side afterwards. It is reported that 23.5 revolutions of the winch wheel are required to move the pulpit into position. **NGW**

From a Different Age...

Colossus at Dalegarth Cottages

Tim Edmonds finds much of fascination in a historic postcard of an Eskdale scene.-

A project in progress (and reported in NGW149) is a new-build version of 'Colossus', the Bassett-Lowke 15-inch gauge 4-6-2 which is best known for its use on the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway in the first years following conversion of the 3ft gauge line.

An old postcard in my collection of railway oddments shows Colossus on the R&ER. Published by G P Abraham Ltd of Keswick, the quality of the original photograph must have been superb because the postcard print is particularly good, as evidenced by the accompanying scanned image.

Colossus had a short but interesting history. Designed by Henry Greenly and built by Bassett-Lowke at Northampton, it was completed in 1914 as the first and only example of the company's 60 or Gigantic class. The customer was Captain J E P Howey, who bought it to run on his private 15in gauge railway at Staughton Manor, near Kimbolton in what was then Huntingdonshire but is now the extreme west of Cambridgeshire.

Named 'John Anthony', it was only the second British Pacific locomotive to be built, the first being the Great Western Railway's 'The Great Bear' of 1908. Howey had considerable wealth, which he could use to finance his passions of motor sport and railways. He will be known to many because of his later indulgence, the Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway.

On the outbreak of the Great War, Howey joined the Royal Flying Corps as an observer, but in 1915 he was shot down and captured. He did not return to Britain until after the war. While he was away John Anthony was sold to the R&ER in 1916 and renamed Colossus.

Merging locomotives

A second Pacific, delivered in 1919 by Hunt of Bournemouth, was effectively a development of the class 60 with a larger boiler; it was named 'Sir Aubrey Brocklebank' after the shipping magnate who financed it and much else on the railway. Both locos were heavily used and were worn out by 1927, when they were dismantled. Their frames and wheels were incorporated into the ambitious 4-6-0+0-6-4 articulated locomotive,

***"To improve
adhesion for
handling the
stone trains,
Colossus was
fitted with
a bolted-on
extension
to the front
buffer beam
so that
sanding
equipment
could
be carried..."***

the first 'River Mite', which saw use from 1928 to 1937.

The postcard view is numbered 789, and the caption reads: 'Colossus and his train at Boot station'. The locomotive name is spelt wrongly, and the name of the station is incorrect – Boot had been the terminus of the old 3ft gauge line and was closed in 1908.

The 15in gauge line began operations in 1915 and was opened in sections from Ravenglass, reaching Boot in 1917. However, the gradients on this last part proved too steep, so Boot station was closed again at the end of the 1918 season and trains terminated at Beckfoot in 1919.

The following year services were extended to a new station beside Dalegarth Cottages, at the beginning of what had been a mineral branch to Gill Force that diverged half a mile short of Boot. It is this station, not Boot, that is on the postcard.

There were no buildings, but four cottages at the end of the terrace on the left of the photo were converted into a tearoom to offer refreshments. This station lasted until the summer of 1926, when a short extension was opened along the trackbed of the branch to a new Dalegarth station adjacent to the main road.

The loco is running tender-first for its return to Ravenglass, and the initials 'NGR' can be made out on the side of the tender. These stand for Narrow Gauge Railways Ltd, the company set up by W J Bassett-Lowke and R Proctor Mitchell which

was operating both the R&ER and the Fairbourne Railway at this time.

The company got into financial difficulties in the early 1920s and at the beginning of 1925 Brocklebank and Henry Lithgow, another shipping magnate, took it over. The middle gentleman of the three at the front of the train resembles Brocklebank, so could this be him?

The train comprises five vehicles. First is a small wagon, probably a flat with a box body, followed by a standard Bassett-Lowke open four-wheeler with a glass windscreen, a pair of Heywood open bogies and finally another open four-wheeler.

The postcard photo is undated but there are clues in it which help to narrow down when it was taken. In 1922 Brocklebank had set up a granite quarry at Beckfoot to provide traffic for the railway. To improve adhesion for handling the stone trains, Colossus was fitted with a bolted-on extension to the front buffer beam so that sanding equipment could be carried, and this is visible on the postcard.

In March 1925, this extension was destroyed in a head-on collision. The loco was returned to service at the beginning of the 1926 season and there is photographic evidence from that year showing Colossus with a different style of buffer beam.

The postcard is of a summer scene with the trees in full leaf, so the latest date that the photo could have been taken would have been the summer of 1924. **NGW**

Below: The excellent postcard produced by G P Abraham of 'Colossus' at Dalegarth. Photo: Tim Edmonds collection



Buckin' bronco

Keith Chester recalls a hair-raising experience chasing the narrow gauge in Poland.

Tuesday, 2nd January 1990, dawned very cold and very grey in Gniezno, about 50km east of Poznań in Poland. It was tempting to stay in bed but two steam-worked railways beckoned: to the north the standard gauge one to Nakło, and to the south-east a 750mm gauge freight-only line to Powidz.

Poland was once home to numerous narrow gauge railways ranging from 600mm to 1000mm wide with a great variety of locomotives. However, by the beginning of the 1990s, the PKP only regularly operated steam engines on two 750mm gauge lines, Środa-Zaniemyśl with half a dozen passenger trains a day and Gniezno-Powidz, both remnants of once larger systems.

Motive power on both railways came in the form of surviving members of the powerful-looking class Px48. These 0-8-0s, like many of the new types introduced by the PKP after 1945, were based on pre-war designs. The Px48 was essentially a modernised version of the 20-year-old Wp29 class, with very clean lines and a large, commodious cab. Between 1950 and 1955, Chrzanów erected 97 for the PKP, of which 17 were rebuilt to metre gauge between 1969 and 1974. A dozen or so went to industry and others were exported to Romania, China and Albania.

After photographing Kriegslok 2-10-0s on the Nakło line, about midday I made my way to the narrow gauge depot in Gniezno where no Px48-1758 was busily and noisily making up a train of standard gauge wagons on 750mm transporter wagons, plus an old narrow gauge bogie brake.

Working in the cold

As the time for departure approached, I found a taxi and somehow managed to convey to the driver the concept of chasing a train. This proved not so difficult as the railway followed an almost empty road (the price of petrol had quadrupled little more than 36 hours previously). With three bogie hoppers full of coal behind the tender the 0-8-0 had to work hard on the undulating line with the bark from the chimney and exhaust effects impressive on what was still a very cold and very grey day.

At Niechanowo two wagons were dropped off in a factory siding. The short train was then chased to Witkowo but with the light rapidly fading I paid off my taxi driver there. The loco crew invited me onto the footplate and I clambered aboard for the rest of the trip to Powidz.

By the time we reached our destination, it was pitch black outside. The last coal wagon was shunted, some empties picked up and the train readied for its return trip. The warmth of the enclosed cab was welcoming and I looked forward to a pleasant ride back to Gniezno. But the crew had other ideas...

With their shift almost over, they were keen to get home – the loco roared off into the night tender first. On the poorly maintained track, the 0-8-0 bucked violently from side to side as I clung on for dear life: the crew just laughed... **NGW**

Above left: Dwarfed by its train of standard gauge rolling stock on transporter wagons, Px48-1758 (Chr 2168/1952) blasts its way towards Niechanowo.

Left: The 0-8-0 stands at Powidz before bucking its way back to Gniezno.

Photos by Keith Chester, January 1990

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