

NARROW GAUGE WORLD

ISSUE 168
AUG 2022



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Cover: Bagnall 0-4-0ST 'Peter' made its return to steam after an overhaul during a photo charter at Amberley on 4th July, ahead of the loco's official relaunch at the Sussex museum's annual Railway Gala later in the month. In this issue we describe Peter's former industrial home, and we also document an interesting railway in Hungary (inset), its purpose to take fish food to feed the occupants of a lake...

Photos: Joey Evans and Donald Brooks

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Acting out the scene...



That the UK's entire heritage operations make a tiny difference to emissions levels doesn't matter – in the outside world steam engines are seen as dirty...

Photo: Catching an 'argument' at Threlkeld with the crew of 'Sir Tom' pointing out that they have the right of way. Yes it's a contrived picture, but does that matter? Photo: Steve Sedgwick

Welcome to *NGW*168 and take a look at the picture above, taken by our regular contributor Steve Sedgwick at Amberley Museum, a superb venue in Sussex and home to a wide-ranging industrial narrow gauge collection, in case you've never been...

When I first saw this picture it reminded me immediately of that iconic film favourite *The Titfield Thunderbolt* – who doesn't love that movie? Especially as it was inspired by the narrow gauge, specifically the rescue and reopening of the Talylyn Railway as the world's first preservation line. Okay the loco in our picture is narrow not standard gauge, it's a tractor not a traction engine and sitting on it is not Sid James, but you get the idea...

Hurrah for Hollywood?

I then got to thinking about the photo some more – it was clearly taken at a photo charter, in this case at Threlkeld Quarry up in the Cumbrian mountains.

Those involved are obviously acting out their roles, so this is a contrived picture – but is it too contrived, and if so should magazines such as *NGW* be using it?

For several reasons I eventually concluded that, yes, we should indeed use pictures like this. Firstly the do add a little humour, and in today's world that's never a bad thing. Such incidents could easily have happened, in fact very likely did happen, in the working days of

the narrow gauge, so perhaps more of a recreation than a contrivance. And you could argue that today's entire heritage scene is acting, recreating yesteryear...

Most importantly, however, photo charters such as what produced this photo have become an important revenue generator for the railways concerned – and after the past couple of years they need every revenue boost they can get.

Such charters are not, however, easy money for the lines. I've learnt from my colleagues at the Welshpool & Llanfair that charters tend to be very long days to crew while there's also quite a lot of work to be done ensuring the photographers get what they want – such as giving the W&L's original locos a more 'industrial' or 'neglected' look by deliberately dirtying them (probably to an extent somewhat beyond they ever were in their real working lives!). It's a dirty job, but the lines do it!

So yes, there is a growing trend of adding elements of Hollywood to the menu on charters, but so long as things don't get too silly, I don't think that's a bad thing.

Don't shoot the innovator

Another packed issue of *NGW* this month, with a couple of surprises starting right over the page when we try and work out just what's going on with the Snowdon Mountain Railway's new hybrid locos. But possibly of most interest is to be

found in the *News Focus* on page 17, highlighting some very interesting ideas being explored on the other side of the world with a view to creating next-generation steam locomotives that could justify their place in today's environmentally-conscious world.

Now when the first details of the ZeroLoco were posted on social media, I knew what would happen next, and I wasn't wrong – scanning the comments below the post, they were almost all derogatory.

I think it's a great shame that when someone has the courage to seek alternatives to what we all know as the norm it appears to be the done thing to assume they are out of their mind and chastise them as a result. It's an uncomfortable truth that the steam locomotives that we love have an uncertain place in today's world. The fact that in the great scheme of things the UK's entire heritage operations make a tiny difference to emissions levels doesn't matter – in the outside world steam engines are seen as dirty, no matter what we do.

So don't decry those who think outside the box – we should be supporting them. Okay, the technology might not be the answer for steam's future – but equally it might be so we should at least give it a chance to prove itself. Rest assured *NGW* will be closely following the progress of the ZeroLoco, and hoping for its success.

Andrew Charman



Pylon plans spark fears for future of Bressingham

Bressingham Steam Museum in Norfolk has formerly objected to a plan put forward by National Grid for a 112-mile long high-voltage power line, which would see 50-metre pylons erected across land through which two of the museum's narrow gauge lines run.

Urging visitors to sign a petition against the proposals, Bressingham stated that for the museum and its 17-acre gardens the arrival of the pylons, carrying electricity from offshore wind farms, would be nothing short of a disaster.

The proposed route would cross both the 2ft gauge Fen Railway and the 15-inch gauge Waveney Railway. Passengers on the two lines would pass under the pylons up to four times, which the museum argues would not only be unattractive but presents a health and safety issue.

Bressingham believes the proposals will affect the museum's future sustainability. "As the museum does not own the surrounding land, it cannot simply reroute the railways," the Bressingham Trustees stated.

The pylon project is said to be in its early stages and those opposing it hope to attract a level of protest that persuades National Grid to come up with a new scheme siting the cables either underground or offshore.

In response to the objections of Bressingham and others National Grid stated that it felt its proposals best meet a number of licences and obligations it is governed by. However it added that it wanted to work with constituencies and businesses to develop the project.

Steeple Grange climbs hill again

The Steeple Grange Light Railway is back operating once more after more than two years of closure.

In mid May public trains resumed on the novel 18-inch gauge line, which runs for just over 0.6 of a mile on the trackbed of the former 'Killer's Branch' of the standard gauge Cromford & High Peak Railway in Derbyshire.

The line, worked by former industrial internal-combustion locomotives climbs a fearsome 1 in 27 gradient.

Closed through 2020 by the Covid-19 pandemic, the line's reopening was delayed following a serious rockfall followed by flooding after a water main burst.

Trains are now running on Sundays – details are at www.sglr.co.uk

Mystery surrounds the intended fate of two hybrid-electric locomotives that were delivered to the Snowdon Mountain Railway in July 2020 at a total cost of around £1.1 million.

Sources have told *NGW* that the two locomotives have been withdrawn, with the suggestion being that they had been found to be unsuitable for the 4.7-mile long 800mm gauge Abt rack line that climbs to the summit of the highest mountain in Wales – the line has a steepest gradient of 1 in 5.5 in several places.

Rumours suggested that the locos had been found to not regenerate sufficient energy when descending the mountain and one of them had already been returned to builder Clayton Equipment Ltd.

When contacted by *NGW* the SMR did not comment on the rumours, only providing us with a short statement as follows; "Following decisions made by both parties, it has been confirmed that the locomotives will not be put into service."

The two locos were built by Clayton, using the Staffordshire engineering company's long-proven expertise in constructing hybrid locos for mining and tunnelling use. The Snowdon locos were designed with high-torque, maintenance-free electric motors powered by traction batteries and a diesel generator.

On the downhill journey these systems were designed to pass energy regenerated from braking and pass it back into the batteries, potentially reducing the SMR's carbon emissions by up to 98 per cent.

Each loco was fitted with a driving cab

at the lower end while a 12-seat passenger pod was provided at the upper end. This increased the train capacity on the Snowdon line, which is highly popular with tourists, summer trains often selling out.

On arrival the two were given the names and numbers 14 'Glaslyn' and 15 'Moel Eilio' – they were intended to replace existing Hunslet diesels on the line and were predicted to make around 650 journeys a year each.

When the locos arrived at the line's Llanberis base in July last year SMR senior engineering manager Mike Robertshaw commented; "The proposal offered by Clayton allows us to push Snowdon Mountain Railway into a new era of fuel efficiency, emission reductions and take a radical step forward for the business."

This is not the first time the SMR has run into difficulties when adding to its original fleet of steam locomotives, some of which date back to 1895, and quartet of diesels built between 1986 and 1992.

In 1995 three diesel-electric railcars were built for the line, but problems with their speed control mechanisms saw them taken out of service after just eight years – all three were scrapped in 2010.

Above: The two Clayton hybrid electric locos after delivery to the Snowdon Mountain Railway in 2020 and following the fitting of the 12-seat passenger pods on their front ends.

Below: What has become a rare picture – one of the two Clayton locomotives on test on the lower reaches of the SMR.

Photos: Peter Johnson



New booking at Aberystwyth

The Vale of Rheidol Railway's 'Wales to the World' project has gathered pace with work starting on the construction of a new booking office at the 1ft 11¾in gauge line's Aberystwyth terminus.

The new booking office is designed to replace the structure opened in June 2019 – at the time few realised this GWR-styled building was only a temporary solution.

The permanent replacement will be significantly larger and is designed in similar style to the VoR workshop and running shed opened in 2012. It incorporates elements from VoR history and the Great Western Railway that once operated the line, including original cast-iron brackets that once supported the canopy at Gloucester station.

Meanwhile work continues on the former standard gauge loco shed, which for more than 40 years was the VoR's running shed. This will be turned into a display space for locomotives from the railway's wide-ranging heritage collection.

Following extensive cleaning the side windows have been removed for replacement, and the roof removed to be replaced by glass.

These images show the planned layout at Aberystwyth (above right) with the former standard-gauge shed at right, and a close-up of the new booking office (right). Images: VoR



Rheidol gets set for first-class travel

The Vale of Rheidol Railway has put a completely rebuilt first-class carriage into service.

Carriage 11, formerly numbered 4945 was built as a third-class vehicle by the Great Western Railway at Swindon in 1938. It was converted to a 1st/3rd in 1983.

The latest conversion, which has cost £120,000, has included the manufacture of custom-designed seating with a moquette

chosen by the VoR's late chairman Peter Rampton before his passing in 2019.

The vehicle also includes an internal roof panel painted by wildlife artist Terence Lambert, its theme the Rheidol valley including local wildlife. Each entrance has a custom mosaic in the floor, each featuring a different bird found in the valley.

The carriage was officially launched on 20th May and once it entered public

service the first couple to book it added a memorable aspect to their day by getting engaged while travelling in the carriage.

The railway has now begun restoring a second sister vehicle, no 12 (4996) for first-class travel.

Below left : The restored first-class carriage. The bespoke seating and crafted woodwork inside (below) is very obvious. Photos: VoR



Two Welsh Highlands complete safety integration for 100 event



The Welsh Highland Heritage Railway's Hunslet 2-6-2T 'Russell' operated a further test train to Beddgelert on the Welsh Highland Railway on 9th July, ahead of the loco's planned starring role in the WHR 100 event on 30th-31st July.

The test was pivotal, WHHR training officer Mark Seale explaining that following its running the WHHR operating and safety systems are now embedded within the safety management system of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways.

This means that Russell and its heritage train can now run over the entire WHR to Dinas without requiring special measures including an engineering possession.

"This achievement began many years ago when 'Gelert' first ran a brake test train up the line and a members special, then we ran Russell in 2018 and again in 2019 with two special evening trains," Mark said.

"However, the key difference for the event in July, is that we will be running our

train in and amongst the standard timetable trains – no section needs special clearance beyond the standard safety procedure."

He added that many people had been involved in making such progress possible over the years; "the achievement belongs to all of them."

During the WHR 100 event, the first in a year of celebrations marking the centenary of the extension of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways to Porthmadog and their reopening as the Welsh Highland Railway, Russell will operate heritage services between Dinas and Rhyd Ddu, the extent of the original NWNGR. Next month's issue, *NGW* 169 will carry coverage of the weekend.

Above: 'Russell' and its heritage train in the Welsh Highland Railway's Aberglaslyn Pass close to Beddgelert – a scene that happily is becoming a more frequent occurrence.

Photo: Geoff Jenkins/WHHR

Keef planning a golden opening

Specialist railway engineers Alan Keef Ltd has confirmed that its annual open day will return this year having not been held in 2020 or 2021 due to restrictions resulting from the Covid pandemic.

The event, on 24th September, will celebrate 50 years of the company trading and a major attraction is expected to be the Corris Railway's new-build Hughes Falcon 0-4-2ST, which is planned to have its first public steaming.

Resident Bagnall 0-4-0ST 'Woto' will be in steam while the vertical-boilered 'Taffy', built by Alan Keef in 1990 is expected to be in operation for the first time since 2008.

Well-travelled Kerr, Stuart Wren 0-4-0ST 'Peter Pan' will be present as will steam roller 'The Trotter of Coelford.'

The firm also plans a walk-through display recalling notable moments in its history. Admission on the day is £7.50 adults, £3 children between 11am and 4.30pm, payable at the gate.

O&K at Apedale

Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0WT 5662, built in 1912 for service in the Argentinean sugar industry, arrived at the Apedale Valley Railway on 11th May.

The locomotive, returned to the UK some years ago and initially displayed at Stafold, unusually carries a tender.

Following restoration it is in working order and is undergoing testing and familiarisation before joining the Apedale fleet. It is planned to officially launch it at the Railway Gala on 17th-18th September.

Sittingbourne's Premier to star at Welshpool Gala

The Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway's Kerr, Stuart 0-4-2ST 'Premier' is to be the guest locomotive at the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway's Steam Gala on 2nd-4th September.

As reported in last month's *NGW* the loco, one of the original engines delivered to Bowaters Paper Mill in 1905 and

passing into preservation in 1970 with the creation of the S&KLR, was returned to steam in May after more than 25 years on the sidelines.

The two 2ft 6in gauge lines already have a healthy relationship, and the S&KLR's Bagnall 0-6-2T 'Superb' guested at the W&LLR's 2017 and 2018 Galas.

This year will see the Welsh line return to its full Gala weekend after Covid forced the cancellation of the 2020 event, while a smaller-scale 'Transport Treats' event was held last year.

Premier is set to work some passenger services,

Kerr, Stuart 'Premier', seen here during its relaunch weekend at Sittingbourne in May, will spend a weekend in mid Wales.

Photo: Andrew Charman



most likely on shuttles between Llanfair Caereinion and the first passing station at Cyfronnydd, while original Beyer, Peacock 0-6-0T 'The Earl' and the on-hire Zillertalbahn 0-6-2T 'Zillertal' will share full-line workings.

Organisers intend to provide the attractions the Gala has become renowned for, including road vehicles, miniature and model railways and a Real Ale bar, plus some new ones including a Saturday afternoon air display and the Cloverlands Model Car Museum – one of the biggest collections in the UK, the museum has recently moved into the W&LLR's Llanfair Connections visitor centre.

The separate entry Garden Railway Show, held up the hill from the W&LLR's station at Llanfair Caereinion High School, is also set to return over Gala weekend having not been held since 2019.

More details of the Gala, including advance ticket booking with rover tickets available, are on the line's website at www.wllr.org.uk/annual-gala-2022/

Young FR members plan Mountaineer's return



The Ffestiniog Railway Company board has approved a proposal by a group of young members on the Welsh 1ft 11½in gauge line to return Alco 2-6-2T 'Mountaineer' to steam.

The locomotive, built in 1916 by the American Locomotive Company (works no 57156) for the British War Department Light Railways, arrived on the Ffestiniog in 1967 and quickly became a core member of the line's loco fleet.

Mountaineer worked almost continuously over the next four decades, undergoing several modifications, until its boiler ticket expired in February 2006. Since then the loco has been stored, until 2017 at the line's Glan y Pwll shed at Blaenau Ffestiniog and since 2017 at the main Boston Lodge works.

Several FR personnel have expressed a desire for Mountaineer's rebuilding and in 2012 as part of the 30th anniversary celebrations of the FR's return to Blaenau Ffestiniog the Alco was cleaned up and put on display. The FR's recent policy that aims to have all locomotives in working order raised hopes for work starting on the engine after the restoration of England 0-4-0ST 'Welsh Pony' was completed in 2020.

The new proposal plans to return Mountaineer to the specification it was in

following a rebuild in 1983, after which it proved popular with footplate crews.

Much is still to be determined – writing in the FR Society magazine 'Team Mountaineer' described the engine as "mechanically very tired" when withdrawn and suggested that modifications, alongside a return to coal firing, could extend to the tube layout in the boiler and how said boiler is attached to the frames to improve the weight distribution.

The restoration is likely to take place in the FR's under-used Glan y Pwll depot, relieving pressure on Boston Lodge which is currently undertaking several projects including building a new double Fairlie locomotive, 'James Spooner'. However the Glan y Pwll building will require some work including a new roof before restoration can begin.

A successful restoration could well result in the FR hosting two Mountaineers in future – the independent project to recreate the first Mountaineer, the only one of the FR's original 1863-built England 0-4-0s to be scrapped, is making solid progress.

Above: Young Ffestiniog members hope to see views such as this return – 'Mountaineer' working on the line in the period following its rebuild in 1983.

Photo: Peter Johnson

■ The return of Adrian Shooter's Darjeeling 0-4-0ST no 19B to its home Beeches Light Railway after the loco's starring role at Statfold Barn Railway's 'Sweet Indian Steam' event (see elsewhere in this issue) also saw the Staffordshire museum dispatch a visitor to the private Oxfordshire line in the form of Corpet-Louvet no 439. *Joey Evans* captured the loco on the Beeches line on 26th June.



BRIEF LINES

Rheidol Garratt goes public

NGG13 Garratt 'Drackensberg', recently restored by the Vale of Rheidol Railway following its acquisition from the Schinznacher Baumschulbahn in Switzerland in 2017, was due to haul its first public trains on the mid-Wales line on 19th July.

WHR Garratt on way back

The Welsh Highland Railway is hopeful that its NGG16 Garratt locomotive no 143, built by Beyer, Peacock in 1958 for South African Railways, will be back in operation before the end of the season. Reassembly of the loco, on which the boiler ticket expired in Spring 2021, is underway at Dinas, using a boiler sourced from the Puffing Billy Railway in Australia.

Sittingbourne Santa appeal

The Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway has launched an urgent appeal to raise £10,000 to replace its small exhibits building at Kemsley Down. The life-expired building plays an essential role at Christmas, the SKLR stating that the Santa Special events cannot run without it. Donations can be made at www.justgiving.com/sklr, writing 'museum' in the comments box.

Baton rides rails

The Vale of Rheidol and Talyllyn lines played a role in the Queen's Jubilee Baton Relay, part of the build-up to the Commonwealth Games, on 30th June. The baton was taken on a TR train and by runners paralleling the line, and continued to the VoR where cyclist Hawys Richards, daughter of a VoR engineer, carried it between Aberystwyth and Capel Bangor.

From wood to water at Kiln

The Old Kiln Light Railway has erected a new water tower that allows its locos to take refreshment from both the main and loop lines at the Surrey 2ft gauge line's main station. The project required the removal of a tree which was achieved by the OKLR making good use of recently recruited member Willy Field's chainsaw licence!



Photo: Willy Field/OKLR



TR's youngest members turn platinum silver

The Talyllyn Railway's youngest volunteers marked Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in unique style at the start of June, by celebrating their own Silver Jubilee.

May 1997 saw the first Talyllyn Tracksiders working weekend, formed to allow family members to work together on the line and in the process provide a means for members who might have started as younger volunteers to stay in touch with the TR while they bring up young families.

Since that first weekend more than 4,200 individual shifts have been worked by under 14-year-olds on the line over bank-holiday weeks, some Tracksider members starting as young as four but safety always being paramount.

The 25th anniversary edition included the usual mix of tasks – lineside vegetation management; fence painting; footpath maintenance and preparing the incline at Nant Gwernol for an interpretive display. The Tracksiders also spent a day working at the neighbouring Corris railway.

Just as important to the programme was the traditional mix of social activities – a picnic, a beach night, the annual putting competition and at the end a celebratory barbecue.

Trackside project leader Ian Evans described the 25 years as “a delight” saying that the line's youngest volunteers have flourished, learnt new skills and built long-term friendships.

“Many have progressed to operating duties and it was great that a Tracksider alumnus was able to drive our barbecue special – one of three ex-Tracksiders now qualified to drive steam locos on the railway,” Ian said.

Talyllyn general manager, Stuart Williams said the success of Tracksiders is demonstrated by the number of people who began their volunteering careers in the scheme.

“We have recently expanded our young person's volunteer schemes, and have developed a Training Programme for the 14-15 year-olds which provides a springboard for young people to become full-fledged volunteers when they reach 16,” Stuart added.



Top: Talyllyn future:
The Tracksiders gather during another successful working weekend on the mid-Wales line.
Photo: James Archer/TR

**Left: Still a Road to Adventure – a Tracksider recreated an iconic Talyllyn picture (above).
*Photo: Nathan Spence/TR***

■ The Ffestiniog Railway, home of the only working double-Fairlie locos, welcomed the great-great grandson of Robert Francis Fairlie, designer of the articulated engines, in July (*writes Peter Johnson*).

David Fairlie is the great-grandson of Robert George Fairlie, R. F. Fairlie's eldest son who settled in Peru. David was born in the central American nation and now lives with his family in the USA, where he is a traffic engineer. As he has three daughters, his line of the Fairlie name will not be continued.

One of David's daughters is named Josephine, who thinks it very ‘very cool’ to have a Fairlie locomotive with her name preserved in New Zealand though she was not named after it! The photo shows David Fairlie with his eldest daughter in front of ‘David Lloyd George’ on the FR.
Photo: Peter Johnson



■ Hollycombe Steam Museum in Hampshire opened for the first time in 2022 on 19th June with both diesel and steam running on the 2ft gauge line. In charge of steam services was former Dinorwic Hunslet 0-4-OST ‘Jerry M’ (638/1895) The chestnut trees that formerly grew over the line have in recent times been coppiced towards the quarry area, opening up some new vistas.
Photo: Phil Barnes

**MARKET LEADER IN LARGE
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LIVE STEAM**

INTRODUCING

"TOM ROLT" FOR 5" GAUGE



"Tom Rolt"

In 1969 the Tallylyn Railway purchased an 0-4-0 locomotive from the Bord na Mona company in Ireland to fill a need for additional motive power driven by an increase in passenger numbers. Much work was required to re-build and re-gauge the engine from 3ft to the unusual 2ft 3 inch gauge of the Tallylyn. The new engine was built in 1991 at Pendre works and emerged as an 0-4-2 named "Tom Rolt" - in tribute to the author L.T.C.Rolt who was instrumental in the preservation of the Tallylyn Railway.

A regular 5" gauge model is built to a scale of 1/11.3. Tom Rolt for 5" gauge is built to the larger scale of 1/5.4. This creates a very large and powerful model. Its relatively small wheels, combined with a near 90kg weight, delivers great traction and makes this an excellent passenger hauler. The stove enamel paintwork provides a beautiful, hardwearing, finish that will stay pristine for a good many years. As an award winning professional model maker I am delighted to have been involved in the design and testing of this fine model. An opportunity not to be missed for the narrow gauge enthusiast.

Mike Pavie



The Model

This magnificent coal-fired live steam model represents our first venture into narrow gauge and fulfils a need for a relatively simple engine that is a powerful workhorse for its size. It is sure to be a favourite at clubs offering public running. It is presented in the standard Tallylyn livery of deep bronze green with black borders and yellow lining. The model is delivered fully painted and lined and is ready-to-run "out of the box". It comes complete with a fully certificated silver soldered copper boiler, CE and UKCA marked. Every model comes with a full 12 months warranty.

Summary Specification



Overall length 41"

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 - Double feed mechanical lubricator
 - Twin boiler sight glasses
 - Mechanical cylinder drain cocks
 - Twin safety valves
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Five of six siblings reunited at Rhyl

The 15-inch gauge Rhyl Miniature Railway has fulfilled an ambition of its Trust chairman by reuniting five of the six 'Barnes Atlantic' 4-4-2 steam locomotives built in the 1920s.

On 28th June 'Billie' arrived at Rhyl, joining four locos already resident on the north Wales line – sisters 'Joan' and 'Railway Queen' are operational, 'Michael' is currently being reassembled at Rhyl following engineering work to its boiler, while the fifth, 'Billy' is owned by Rhyl Town Council and on display in the line's museum at Central Station.

Albert Barnes created his class of locomotives for use on seaside miniature lines. Billie was built for the Dreamland Miniature Railway in Margate and is thought to have been completed in 1922, thus celebrating its centenary this year. It has not hauled public trains since 1983.

The Rhyl Steam Preservation Trust, which runs the line, purchased the loco from Austin Moss of the Windmill Farm Railway in Lancashire. Austin had already carried out much of the loco's restoration which will now be completed at Rhyl.

RSPT chairman Les Hughes described the arrival of Billy as a real achievement and another chapter in his 40-year dream to bring all the Barnes Atlantic locomotives back together.

"I would like to thank everyone who has supported us during the last few years and have made this possible, in particular the passengers who ride on the trains and our team who operate the railway," Les added.

The sixth Barnes Atlantic, 'John' is in private ownership – it spent some years

based at the Evesham Vale Light Railway but is now understood to be in storage.

Above: Four Atlantics together at Rhyl – from left they are 'Railway Queen', 'Joan', the newly arrived 'Billy' and the chassis of the currently under-restoration 'Michael.' *Photo: RSPT*



■ This picture taken on 5th July represents a major achievement in the continuing cosmetic restoration of 3ft gauge Hudswell-Clarke 0-4-0ST 'Handyman', currently being carried out for the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust by the team at Workshop X in Killamarsh, Derbyshire. Years of static display and storage had certainly taken their toll on the loco and when the restoration team tried to drop out the axleboxes and wheel sets they were absolutely not moving! Eventually removing one side of the hornblocks, itself a very difficult process, proved successful after more than a week of frustrating effort by the long-suffering team. *Photo: Workshop X*



■ Residents of Douglas have been delighted to see long-awaited activity on the Isle of Man capital's Victorian Horse Tramway in recent weeks, as crews and their horses have been training for a resumption of services for the first time since late 2019.

Tramway services were interrupted not only by the Covid pandemic, but a reconstruction of Douglas promenade that has included resiting part of the tram route from the centre of the road and which has run into several delays.

There are hopes that services may resume around the end of July, though the tramway will still only run along two-thirds of its length.

The view here on Monday 4th July is at the current new terminus at Broadway/Castlemona Avenue where trams cross over the southbound road via new tram signals and start the single line section.

Photo: David Lloyd-Jones

Author points CDR closure blame at his own father

Leading Irish railway author and historian John Beaumont has confessed at a launch of a new book on the County Donegal Railways that his late father caused the first part of the 3ft gauge system to close in 1947 (*writes Hugh Dougherty*).

Speaking at the launch of *The County Donegal Railway Remembered*, by Jim McBride, at the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre on 18th June, John Beaumont revealed his father Henry Beaumont, a railway civil engineer, was asked by CDR manager Bernard Curran, to inspect the condition of the Glenties line in 1947.

"My father, who never exaggerated anything, reported that the track was in a dreadful condition, with sleepers rotten and drainage so bad that the rails were literally floating in water in some places, and recommended that the line be either completely relaid or closed," John said.

"With no money for relaying, the CDR decided to close the 24-mile line which ran from Stranorlar to Glenties, the first part of its 124-mile system to go, and replaced the trains with buses and lorries, just as it did with the rest of its lines when they closed on 31st December 1959.

John added that CDR manager Henry Forbes's focus on economic working and cost savings seems to have stopped him approaching the two owners of the system, the Great Northern Railway of Ireland and the London Midland & Scottish Railway for funds to relay track and renew structures in the 1920s and 1930s.

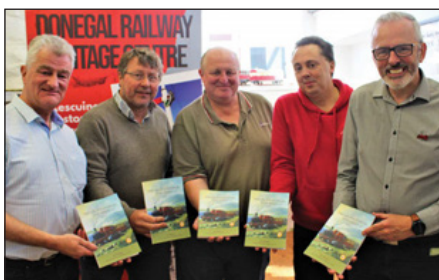
"Funds would have been forthcoming, and it was that lack of renewal which led, as with the Glenties line, to the premature end of the railway," added John who helped with production of the new book.

Commenting on the book, author Jim McBride said: "We have sought out mostly unpublished pictures from many sources... I've been amazed at just how many pictures of the CDR are still out there."

The book is available from the Donegal Railway Heritage Centre website at www.donegalrailway.com

Below: John Beaumont at left, at the launch of *The County Donegal Remembered*, with sponsor Peter Leach, author Jim McBride, heritage centre chairman Mark McDaid and centre manager Niall McCaughan.

Photo: Hugh Dougherty



■ Without doubt the most popular narrow gauge event of recent times, judging by the *NGW* photo inbox, was the 'Sweet Indian Steam' Gala held at the Statfold Barn Railway over the weekend of 11th-12th June and featuring the only Darjeeling 0-4-0ST operating away from the Indian line, Adrian Shooter's 19B. *Joey Evans* caught the loco (top) before it was garlanded for the weekend, posing with the kind of vehicle one could well imagine still being used in 19B's former surroundings...

The Statfold weekend did not just feature 19B, however, and *Matt Ditch* made the most of an opportunity (above) to compare the lines of the resident former Ryam Sugar Co Davenport 0-4-0 and the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's Tasmanian Garratt K1.



■ Two weeks later the ever-busy *Joey Evans* headed across Staffordshire to the Amerton Railway's annual Gala, which this year featured an overload of Kerr, Stuart Wren locos. This quadruple-header on 25th June featured 'Roger' from Statfold, Graham Morris's well-travelled 'Peter Pan' and Amerton residents 'Lorna Doone' (celebrating its 100th birthday) and 'Jennie' – the oddity in the group, Jennie is actually a Hunslet Wren, built at Statfold in 2008.

War-torn children's line resumes running



Welcome news emerging from Ukraine is that

the Kyiv Children's Railway, which was featured in *NGW*165 amid fears for its future following the Russian invasion, has restarted its train services.

The line posted on social media that the 750mm gauge line, which runs for 2.8km round a park in the Ukrainian capital, would resume running passenger trains from 3rd July.

On the first and last weekends of the month and on national holidays services will be hauled by steam locomotive GR-336, an 0-8-0 built in 1951 by LKW in what had once been the works of Orenstein & Koppel.

Last year GR-336 was sent for repairs at the Snovsk Locomotive Depot in the northern Ukraine city of Chernihiv Oblast, and work continued on it even while the city was occupied by invading Russian forces, who have since left.

The line will also be open on Thursdays to Sundays with a TU7-class diesel in charge of each ride – these last 30 minutes.

UKRAINE

There is also, however, less positive news from Ukraine. **James Waite**, who wrote the feature in *NGW*165, tells us that on 7th July almost the entire loco and rolling stock of the mothballed 750mm gauge Antonivka railway, in the west of the country near the border with Belarus, was moved to the Berehove line further south.

The move was ordered by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence which apparently is concerned that the Russians may be planning an imminent invasion from Belarus to open up a second front there.

There had previously been reports that the line, which is worked by diesel locomotives, might reopen to cater for the large number of refugees in the district.

The Antonivka line is also home to a volunteer heritage railway operation – its stock has not been included in the move.

Above: Being able to ride the Kyiv Children's Railway again will provide a welcome element of normality for residents of Ukraine's capital. Photo, taken in August 2010, by James Waite

Plinthed Croatian loco rescued by museum team

Members of the Korostiv Narrow Gauge Museum in Western **UKRAINE** have acquired their first steam locomotive, rescuing a 790mm gauge 0-4-0T that was on display in Dnipro in the centre of the country.

According to the latest *Eastern Star* newsletter from the New Europe Railway Heritage Trust (nerht.heritage-railways.com) the loco was built in 1942 in Slavonski Brod, Croatia for the Wiener Lokomotiv Fabrik at Floridsdorf in Austria.

It worked in the Donawitz steelworks in Austria until 1945 when it was seized by the Soviet occupiers as reparations and sent to Dnipro. Here it worked at a pipe factory until it was withdrawn and plinthed in 1976.

The loco is in poor condition but the Korostiv team intend to restore it and regauge it to 750mm to use on the museum line they are building.

Below: In need of some work – the Croatian 0-4-0 acquired by the Korostiv museum.

Photo via NEHRT



Rhaetia bids for longest record

The Rhaetian Railway (RhB) in **SWITZERLAND** is targeting an entry in the Guinness Book of World Records in October by running a train comprised of some 100 carriages.

The special 1,910-metre long train on the metre-gauge line will form part of the celebrations marking 175 years of Swiss Railways. It will run from Preda to Bergun on the Albula to Bernina route, which is designated a UNESCO World Heritage Route and includes the famed curved Landwasser viaduct.

The train will be formed from 25 Capricorn railcar sets built by Stadler, the lead of 15 supporters who are contributing part of the one million Swiss Francs (around £860,000) the project is costing. The units will use electricity completely generated by hydro power along the route.

A festival will be held alongside the record bid, for which tickets will go on sale in August.

Commenting on the bid, RhB director Renato Fasciati said that the line and its partners want to play their part in achieving a pioneering feat.

"In addition, we also want to generate long-term attention for our railways, and for the holiday region of Graubünden and Switzerland as a travel destination," he added.

Left: Focal point: The Landwasser viaduct, here being crossed by the Glacier Express, will feature in the record-length train attempt.

Photo: RhB



■ Restoration has started at the Stoomcentrum Maldegem Museum in BELGIUM of this 600mm gauge 0-4-0 built by Haine-Saint-Pierre in 1891. Owner Blicek Dieter told *NGW* that he acquired the loco from a private owner in Koekelare, West Flanders; "My aim was to own an engine that looked like a fairytale and I found it," he said. Restoration is apparently proceeding well with the aim of the loco eventually operating on the Maldegem museum's 600mm line. *Photos: Blicek Dieter*

New Harz workshop receives first customer

The new steam workshop built by the Harzer Schmalspurbahnen GmbH (HSB) in Wernigerode welcomed in its first locomotive for repairs on 17th June.

Brockenlok 2-10-2T 99 7238, built in 1954, was the initial locomotive to enter the new facility, for a heavy overhaul that will involve complete dismantling.

The loco's arrival was watched by HSB and State officials including the Minister for Economic Affairs, Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry for Saxony-Anhalt, Sven Schulze.

The three-year construction of the new workshop, the largest project in the 30-year history of the HSB, cost around 15 million Euros, with financial support of the Deutsche Bank and the Sachsen-Anhalt investment bank.

The work on 99 7238 sees the HSB carrying out its own heavy overhauls, scheduled for each locomotive every eight years, for the first time. Until now, locos had to be taken to the Thuringian works in

GERMANY

Meiningen for such attention – having its own facility will save

costs for the HSB not only in the overhauls but in no longer having to pay for expensive transport by road.

The project, described as a "milestone" for the HSB, was born both from increasing limitations on space in the HSB's existing workshop and a realisation of the increasing cost burden caused by outsourcing major locomotive overhauls.

In 2015 the HSB acquired a site near the city centre of Wernigerode and construction began in the Autumn of 2019, with the topping-out ceremony held in summer 2020.

The new facility is expected to both fulfil a workshop function and become a major tourist attraction – some work remains to be done but the first visitors are expected to be admitted early next year.

The HSB fleet comprises 25 steam locomotives built between 1897 and 1956 not all of which are operational.



First of many – 99 7238 enters the new works watched by officials including HSB managing director Matthias Wagener (left), and fourth from left Sven Schulze, Minister for Economic Affairs, Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry of the State of Saxony-Anhalt. *Photo: Viktoria Kühne/HSB*

BRIEF LINES

Landslide hits Darjeeling

Train services on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in INDIA were disrupted from 21st June following heavy rain which caused a landslide at Tindharia station. While minor compared to previous slides on the 2ft gauge line it did cause trains on the entire line to be suspended, though they were expected to resume within days.

Zig Zag gets training

The Zig Zag Railway in New South Wales, AUSTRALIA has begun running crew training a familiarisation trains ahead of its planned reopening later this year. The 3ft 6in gauge line has not operated since 2012 when operational issues were followed by severe damage from bush fires and torrential flooding.

Colorado extension close

The Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington Railway Museum in Alna, Maine, USA, is expecting to open the 1-mile extension to its 2ft gauge running line in August. Building the extension has included the erection of a new bridge over the Trout Brook and a new station with turntable.

Billy marks anniversary

The Puffing Billy Railway was set to operate a special train for volunteers and PB Preservation Society members on 28th July celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of the AUSTRALIAN 2ft 6in gauge line's return to Menzies Creek on 28th July 1962.

Frank Cooper

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Frank Cooper on 3rd May. While devoting many years to UK preservation particularly with the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway where he served as deputy general manager between 1999 and 2001, Frank was also heavily involved in wider circles notably with the New Europe Railway Heritage Trust, formed to support and raise awareness of preservation in former Soviet states of eastern Europe.

While Frank had suffered from ill-health for some years, his passing was sudden and unexpected – *NGW* sends condolences to his family and many friends.



Puffing Billy lights up holidays



The Puffing Billy Railway in **AUSTRALIA** has joined a growing trend in the heritage movement by running a 'Train of Lights'. The 2ft 6in gauge line operated the train nightly throughout the July school holidays using NGG16 Garratt no 129 (*reports Alexander McCooke*).

The train consists of 10 passenger cars plus two trucks fitted out with generators and spotlights. The open excursion cars offer passengers a great view of the projections that shine out into the bush as the train progresses – favourites have been the wombats that are projected across the valley as the train nears the top of the 1:30 climb into Gembrook station.

The train has proven a very successful innovation for the railway with the 17 nights selling out within days of going on sale. Having crewed the train on two nights and chased two others, it has been amazing to see the number of people out to see it night after night. Driving the train on the final night each level crossing had 20 or 30 cars parked up to watch the train go by.

Puffing Billy's Train of Lights pictured (top) at Gembrook – the wagon at left is loaded with firewood for the event. Above left the train is working hard up the 1:30 grade, and at left arriving back into Lakeside at the end of the evening.
Photos: Alexander McCooke



Museum celebrates success of locomotive piston renewal

Volunteers at the Museum of French Steam Tramways and Secondary Railways (MTVS) at Crèvecœur-le-Grand, north of Paris, **FRANCE** have celebrated the successful reboring of the cylinders and renewal of the pistons on the metre-gauge museum's Corpet-Louvet 0-6-0T TIV 75 (1234/1909).

Reassembly was completed on 16th June and the loco subsequently completed six round trip's on the museum's running line, a total of 44km.

Commenting on the successful work, MTVS spokesman Olivier Janneau was keen to thank everyone involved, adding; "For the MTVS it was a first and like all firsts we walked on eggshells. Personally this success put me on a small cloud 'of steam' – nothing could spoil this moment."

Latest arrivals from the former MTVS base at Butry are a standard-gauge wagon chassis which will eventually be modified to the museum's metre gauge but will also be useful for holding locomotive boilers for work when they are out of a chassis.

Above left: Steam was raised carefully in Corpet-Louvet TIV 75 after a successful piston renewal, the loco seen here with the museum's Blanc-Misseron Steam Tram.

Left: More departures from Butry to Crèvecœur of useful stock for the museum.

Photos: Olivier Janneau/MTVS



A steam replacement for diesel?

Many *NGW* readers will likely recognise the basic concept of a Garratt articulated locomotive in the image above but possibly only just! There has never been a Garratt quite like this – yet...

The image shows a 21st century steam locomotive that the specialist engineers behind its design claim will provide a more environmentally friendly and efficient replacement for current diesel traction, effectively giving steam a new lease of life outside of heritage applications.

Mackwell Locomotive Co, based in New Zealand, is targeting with its 'ZeroLoco' project the sugar cane operations of Australia, which currently employ a large fleet of diesel locomotives running on 610mm (2ft) gauge track.

Mackwell is already known for its innovative work in designing and building more efficient heat-exchanger type boilers, that complete every aspect of combustion within their confines and thus produce no smoke or sparks.

The company has been developing such units as an alternative replacement for traditional steam locomotive boilers, visually identical on the outside but able to meet the increasing efficiency and environmental demands of today's world. It has also produced boilers for agricultural use in effectively modern traction engines.

Principles of Porta

Mackwell's work follows many of the principles advocated by Argentinian engineering innovator Livo Dante Porta – engineer Shaun McMahon, who worked with Porta and was renowned for his efforts in advocating advanced steam locomotives, was advising Mackwell before his untimely death earlier this year.

The company has now unveiled the ZeroLoco, which combines the boiler technology already developed with the proven Garratt chassis to produce a powerful but sustainable 21st century steam locomotive.

The loco will be fired using solid

biofuel, which is considered effectively zero carbon – the ZeroLoco will be able to burn the lowest grades of this fuel.

The result, according to Mackwell, will be a 35 per cent reduction in operating costs compared to diesels and a 96 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions in locomotives that are four times more reliable in service; "one dollar spent refuelling ZeroLoco will transport over four times the load."

Mackwell says even the ZeroLoco's cab will be climate controlled, removing the hot, physical working environment that has been the norm for footplate crews for more than two centuries.

Working prototype

"We are working towards the completion of a working prototype, so far we have built and tested the boiler," Mackwell Locomotive Co chief mechanical engineer Sam Mackwell told *NGW*.

"The boiler is where the difference is. Boilers were the Achilles heel of traditional steam locomotives, accounting for up to 90 per cent of the maintenance costs and

causing most of the operational headaches.

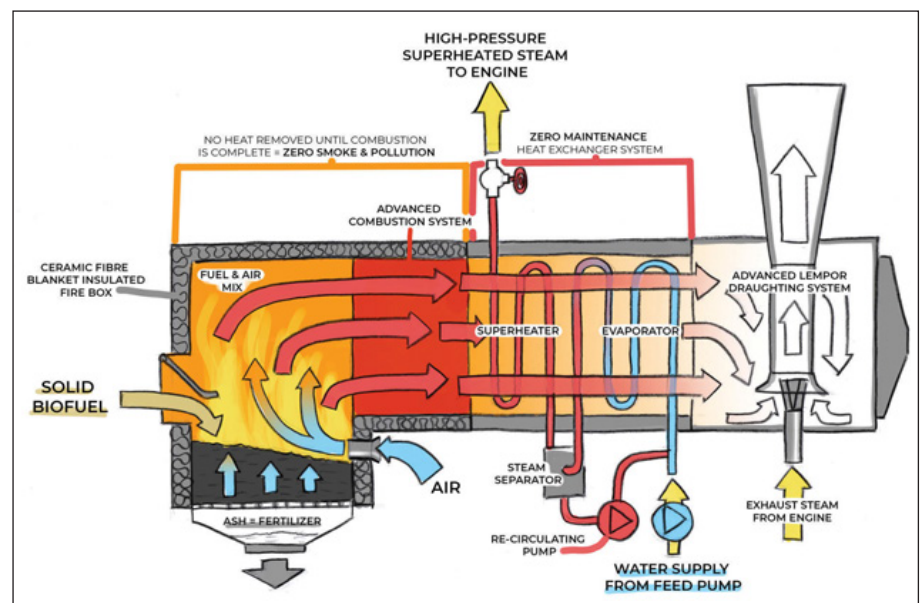
"We see our boiler developments as the key to the viability of advanced steam locomotives, but also as a drop-in replacement that heritage railways can employ to keep their historic steam locomotives alive into the future."

Mackwell is now seeking a customer partnership to help fund and test the prototype ZeroLoco. More details of the company's plans, including a downloadable brochure on the ZeroLoco are on the website at <http://mackwellloco.com> and next month we hope to bring you an in-depth feature on this technology.

Above: Could this be the future of Australian sugar cane operations? A Mackwell ZeroLoco pulling longer trains than the diesels currently employed are able to and at far less damage to the environment.

Below: This diagram shows the principles of the Mackwell heat-exchanger boiler which the company intends to employ in the ZeroLoco.

Images: Mackwell Locomotive Co



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Narrow Gauge around Mont Blanc: Le Fayet to Martigny



James Waite begins a three-part feature by profiling the line that binds together a fascinating group of railways.

Martigny, in south-western Switzerland, has for centuries been an important traffic crossroads. It lies in the Rhône valley at the point where the river's southwesterly course turns abruptly to the right before entering Lake Geneva. The road south over the Grand St Bernard Pass leads into Italy. To the west the Trient valley climbs up to the French border beyond Le Châtelard, and continues to Vallorcine and the Col des Montets, beyond which the Avre valley leads down to the important regional centre of Chamonix and on to join the Rhône near Geneva.

Thoughts turned to railways along these routes after the mainline along the Rhône valley had arrived in the town in 1859. A line towards Italy never progressed beyond Orsières,

less than halfway to the pass. In France in the early 1890s St. Germain-les-Bain-Le Fayet station, to use its full grandiose name, became the eastern railhead of the PLM (Paris-Lyon-Mediterranean) standard gauge network in Haute Savoie.

The town is at an altitude of 584 metres, the concession in its final form for the building of the railway there having been granted in 1890. It lies in the Avre valley, 20km below Chamonix which was the ultimate objective, but the unstable terrain further up the valley and the amount of civil engineering involved led to initial plans being curtailed.

In 1898 the PLM was granted a concession for a metre gauge line using third-rail 600V electrification and a Fell centre rail solely for

Above: SNCF Z850 railcar set no 55 at Le Fayet yard.

Below: Wagon no 20205 in Le Fayet yard. It is one of two old coal hoppers bought secondhand by the SNCF in 1998 from the CF de La Mure in Isère.

Facing page, above: A pair of Z600 Decauville railcars stabled in Le Fayet yard.

Photos by James Waite, July 2011

braking as on the Snaefell Mountain Railway. Construction began soon after and the line opened to Chamonix on 25th July 1901.

For many years operation was unusual in that all vehicles, whether passenger carriages, freight wagons or snow ploughs, were powered, the idea being that this would reduce the scope for runaways occurring on the steep gradients.

Work on a further section north eastwards from Chamonix as far as Argentière, at the foot of the Col des Montets, began in 1904 and soon after another further extension was underway through the Montets tunnel to Vallorcine. There it would make an end-on connection with the Swiss CF de Martigny-Châtelard, which had been authorised in 1902.

The CM's promoters had taken account of the PLM's technical standards to allow a degree of through operation, adopting the metre gauge and the third rail system, save that overhead catenary was needed through the streets between Martigny and Vernayaz, where the Trient valley joins the Rhône. The 2.4km section of its line between Vernayaz and Salvan is equipped with a Strub rack. It is pitched at 80mm, the highest on any Swiss railway, so that vehicles operating into France would clear the Fell rail with its 70mm pitch.

The MC opened through to Le Châtelard-Frontière on 18th August 1906 using two electric locos and several railcar sets. It also owned SLM-built 0-4-ORT no 1, which it had acquired initially for construction work but kept on for engineering



trains when the third rail was disconnected. The PLM line to Vallorcine from Argentière, and the MC line from Le Châtelard-Frontière both opened on 1st July 1908. The MC assumed responsibility for operation through to Vallorcine notwithstanding that it was some distance beyond the border, using electricity supplied by the PLM.

Self-sufficiency

During the First World War the SBB, Switzerland's state railway, was acutely embarrassed about its dependence on imported coal which became increasingly difficult to obtain, and services were often curtailed. Electrification, using hydro-electricity generated in the mountains, was an obvious way for them to become self-sufficient and plans were drawn up almost as soon as peace returned.

A huge power station was built at Le Châtelard, along with the associated dam in the Barberine valley high in the mountains above. They depended on the MC for their construction traffic, but the demands outstripped the capabilities of the MC's stock. So they bought their own wagons, along with two railcars, numbered 31 and 32, much larger and more powerful than the MC's own ones and capable of hauling heavily-loaded freight stock. The railcars were sold to the MC in 1926 after the dam was complete.

The PLM was a major constituent when the SNCF was formed in 1938. Modernisation of the Vallorcine line came in 1958 when Decauville supplied eight Z600-class railcars with four matching trailers, able to operate successfully without the Fell braking system. Two are still maintained for permanent way work at Le Fayet, as the standard gauge railhead is generally called, St Gervais »



Right: This self-propelled snowplough no ECNf 1, one of two built by the PLM workshops at Oullins in 1905-6, is now preserved at Le Fayet.



Below: Two trains of Z800 railcar sets working through between Le Fayet and Martigny cross at Vallorcine station, with its splendid period nameboard to the fore.





being on the hillside to the south.

New train sets also appeared on the Swiss line between 1957 and 1964, and again in 1979. Through working began in 1957, using a Swiss set for the first year and a Swiss trailer hauled by a Z600 west of Vallorcine from 1958.

Freight services on the French section ceased in 1971 and the Fell rail was removed. The line's passenger numbers were at a low ebb and it might well have closed altogether had it not served several communities with no proper road access. The SNCF tried again to close it in the 1980s, but eventually regional

subsidies resulted in modernisation instead. The third rail remains in use today, but on some sections in Switzerland it has been replaced by overhead catenary.

In 2000 the MC merged with the standard gauge Martigny-Orsières line, and the combined organisation became the Transports de Martigny et Régions. Increased traffic suggests that the route's future is now secure in both countries.

Five new rack-equipped Z800 two-car train sets were built in 1996-7, three for the SNCF and two for the MC. The SNCF bought six Z850 non-rack three-car sets in

Above: MC no 31, the ex-SBB railcar which sadly was scrapped later in 2011, in store underneath the SBB power station at Le Châtelard.

Below: A Z850 set runs west of the Montets tunnel while heading for Le Fayet. The stonework in the bridge shows how steep the gradient is here.

2005-7, and TMR the two similar but rack-equipped Z870 sets in 2011. Through operations between the two countries are now marketed as the Mont Blanc Express.

Preservation – or not

The MC withdrew its last old railcars in 1995 and an enthusiast group was formed to preserve two of them, including ex-SBB no 32. Its sister no 31 was stabled at Le Châtelard when I visited in July 2011 but, most regrettably, was scrapped after being vandalised later that year. Decauville set no Z604 was restored to its original SNCF 1950s livery in 2008 for preservation and was kept at the running shed at Le Fayet. I wasn't allowed in to view it on safety grounds though I was made welcome to roam around the yard where the third rail might, one would think, have posed a greater danger!

The long-term plan is that the railcar will become an exhibit at La Cité du Train, France's national railway museum at Mulhouse. The museum already has one of the old PLM self-propelled freight cars, though it was not on display when I visited in 2018.

Even though it has never been a steam-worked route a journey over the line provides an unforgettable experience. The entire route is immensely scenic, with many superb views over Mont Blanc and the surrounding mountains. **NGW**



Hauling stone on Cliffe Hill



Clive Hawley looks at a noted 2ft gauge line in Leicestershire – and its preserved locomotives.

“Some of the original route here suffered from inclines of up to 1 in 20...”

The Leicester & Swannington Railway is well known to standard gauge enthusiasts, as it was one of England's first railways, opened on 17th July 1832. It transported (and still does!) granite from quarries in the Charnwood Forest hills. One such quarry, near the M1 motorway at Cliffe Hill, was opened in 1891. The produce was not only crushed stone, but uniform sized setts and kerb stones.

As the market for stone increased, the Cliffe Hill Company decided to construct a 2ft gauge railway so that its product could be efficiently transhipped away to the main line, near Bardon Hill station. Work on

building the permanent way began in September 1896 – the trackbed entailed steep gradients and brimmed with sharp curves. A small cast-iron bridge had to span a ditch and a girder bridge crossed the main road near the main quarry. The line was opened in May 1897.

The railway left the quarry to follow the road before turning sharply onto the delightfully named Billa Barra Lane. This was a very tight curve, and as the trackbed also resembled a big dipper at this point, it led to locomotives and wagons regularly being derailed. Therefore in 1911, a 350yd embankment was built to cut out the right-angled turn.

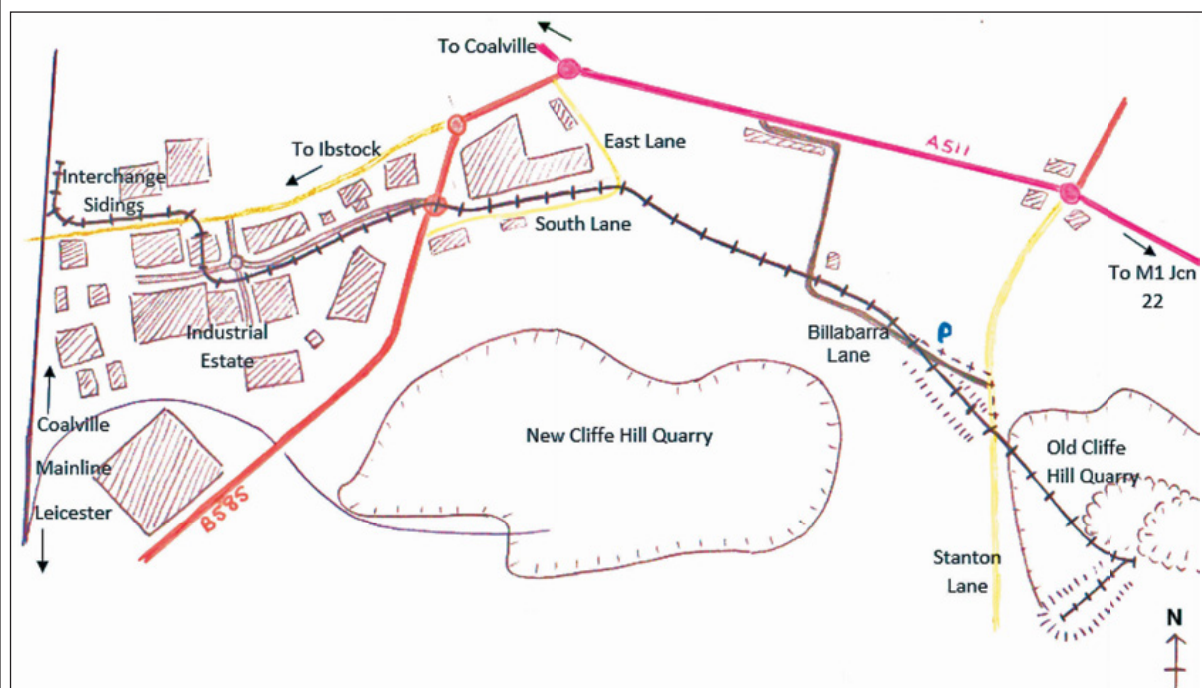
It is still very much in evidence today. At the same time a 10ft cutting was dug to level out the track. By the side of the lane, behind a thick hedge, the cutting can still be viewed together with some of the trackwork.

The railway now ran towards the evocatively named Battleflat Fields. Some of the original route here suffered from inclines of up to 1 in 20, but this was eventually lessened to 1 in 49. The site of this slope is now a public pathway. A passing loop to cater for a maximum of 24 wagons was provided near the bottom of the incline. Ever marching onwards towards Cliffe Hill Sidings, the line suffered from severe zig-zagging, »

Above: The locomotive fleet at Cliffe Hill was dominated by the products of W.G. Bagnall. 0-4-OST 'Isabel' (1491/1897), the second engine to be delivered, is preserved on the Amerton Farm Railway and is seen here heading a demonstration freight train on the Staffordshire line in June 2004.

Right: Map of the Cliffe Hill Mineral Railway by the author.

Uncredited photos by James Waite





including a turn of 90 degrees on a 60ft radius.

The trackbed is still discernible in parts today with the exception of that from below Battleflat Fields to the sidings – this area has seen considerable light industrial redevelopment. The line arrived at the sidings after about three miles. It took steam-hauled trains around 15 minutes for a single journey but one hour was allowed for the round trip so that shunting could occur at each end of the line.

Isabel and her sisters

To meet the exacting conditions of the line, good quality locomotives were essential. W.G. Bagnall offered locos, rails and turntables on “very favourable terms”. The firm could also build the requisite side-tipping wagons – Bagnall was ‘a one-stop shop’! The first locomotives to work within the quarry itself were ‘Cliffe’, an 0-4-OST delivered in late 1896, and ‘Isabel’ in early 1897. A third

loco, ‘Edith’, joined the duo in 1900.

Isabel is still in existence and in fine working order on the Amerton Farm Railway in Staffordshire. At the end of its working industrial life, the loco escaped the scrapman’s torch by being returned to its maker as a static example of one of Bagnall’s early locomotives. It was mounted on a plinth outside the works entrance from 1953 until 1963 before a change of ownership at Bagnall saw Isabel being offered to Stafford Town Council, which decided to display it as a ‘dead’ engine in one of the town’s parks. Despite cosmetic attempts to maintain the loco’s pride, the inclement weather eventually took its toll, but thankfully it suffered no vandal damage.

After several temporary moves, Isabel came under the patronage of a local businessman in 1985. During an attempt to fully restore the loco it

Above: 0-4-OST ‘Jack’ (1650/1901), seen at the quarry in about 1911, was sold in 1916 and replaced by a larger 0-4-2T that was given the same name.

Below: The second 0-4-2T on the system was ‘Mary’ (1943/1911). Captured here shortly after delivery, this locomotive was scrapped in 1957.

Both photos: Leicestershire Archive and Record Office



endured the agony of being in three places at once! The Council possessed the frames, wheels and cab, the businessman the saddle tank and valve gear, and the repairers retained the boiler.

Unfortunately this restoration attempt fell on stony ground but Isabel was saved by the Staffordshire Narrow Gauge Society, which continued restoration to as near original condition as possible. In 1991 it was delivered to Amerton and one year later began public operations on the line.

The first locomotive for the main Cliffe Hill line was a 0-4-OST named ‘The Rocket’ (1896). This was soon joined by ‘Jack’ (1901) and ‘Mary’ (1911). Jack was later replaced with a namesake in 1914.

With a 1 in 20 gradient it was estimated that a train could be loaded to 20 tons – 10 wagon loads. However, presumably after the gradient had been minimised, Mary could haul 18 wagons easily, and was observed many times pulling the maximum of 24.

The Cliffe Hill Granite Company’s fortunes continued after World War 1 with increased sales in granite aggregate. ‘Mabel’ (1920) and ‘Peter’ (1922) were bought as ex-war department stock, unused and at very competitive prices.

Peter

Starting life in 1918 as a 3ft gauge loco, Peter was re-gauged in 1922 and supplied with new frames, wheels and cylinders in order to be sold to the Cliffe Hill line. It was an unpopular loco due to its long overhang at the rear. This, together with the railway’s sharp curves, caused ‘buffer locking’ – the slipping of buffers over and onto the back of an adjacent buffer. Peter was therefore used for shunting at either end of the line where the rails were straight.

When railway operations ceased 30 years later, Peter, together with most of the other locos, was shunted onto a siding to await its fate. Eric Cope of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society visited the “impending line of doom”, and in 1954 was presented with Peter by the Cliffe Hill Company. The loco was to be at the heart of a future railway built by the NGRS, but was in a very sorry state.

For the next nine years Peter was stored in a number of locations, including a brief spell at its old home, Cliffe Hill Quarry, where it was hoped a museum would be opened. Sadly this was not to be. Peter just seemed to be too expensive to restore to working condition.

In 1965 the loco was taken to the newly established NGRS museum at



Brockham in Surrey where a collection of locomotives – steam, petrol, diesel and electric – were to be gathered. The museum soon separated from the NGRS and Peter was once again passed over for renovation, languishing within that venue for 20 years.

In 1982 the Brockham Collection was transferred to the newly opened Amberley Museum in West Sussex, and Peter was re-homed. Good news followed, as full restoration and rebuilding commenced in 1989. Return to service on freight trains took place in 1993 and on passenger services in 1994.

Peter continued to steam until 2019, when the boiler certificate expired. Boiler repairs and overhaul are now nearing completion and the loco is due to return to steam as these words are published. It would be most interesting to hear of a contemporary report from one of Peter's drivers at Amberley as to how it handles.

Changing times

Cliffe Hill Mineral Railway had a total of 14 locomotives: eight steam from Bagnall, two from Sentinel, two standard gauge (Hunslet and Hudswell Clarke), one diesel (Orenstein & Koppel) and one petrol (Baguley). The standard gauge locos worked in the quarry itself and one of these, 'Lord Mayor', still survives on static display in Ingrow sheds on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway.

After World War 2, Cliffe Hill production was in great demand. Sadly, in an attempt to modernise, transshipment of quarry material was transferred to ex-military American Mack lorries. By early 1948 all narrow gauge railway operations had ceased. The locomotives were unceremoniously left on the spoil bank outside the quarry entrance.

No 168 – Narrow Gauge World

Clear sister-like proportions of Isabel, above, and at above right 'Peter' (2067/1918), though the latter was built originally to 3ft gauge for the Ministry of Munitions. Seen here in July 2009, Peter has been preserved since 1982 at Amberley Museum, Sussex.

Right: Original track on the Cliff Hill Railway still in place in 2021 – 73 years after the last train. Photo: Clive Hawley

Below: This view at Amberley gives a good impression of the footplate and lack of a cab on Peter.



Stone is still produced. In 2003 a specially constructed half-mile tunnel with a conveyor belt was built to link Old Cliffe Hill Quarry with New Cliffe Hill Quarry. A standard gauge line connects New Cliffe Hill to the main line at a site very close to the original sidings. So, it can still be said that a Cliffe Hill railway remains in

operation, but unhappily, not as we would like to see it! **NGW**

■ The author is indebted to *The Cliffe Hill Mineral Railway* by M. H. Billington, revised by David H Smith (Plateway Press 1997). More in-depth information on this railway is in this book, which is still available online.



High summer – snapped...

As the season approaches its peak the opportunities on the railways for photographers multiply, and the results don't disappoint...





Facing page, above left: We like a bit of dereliction, caught here at Amberley Museum by *Joey Evans* on 4th July. Bagnall 2-4-0T 'Polar Bear' won't be doing this for much longer as the loco is approaching its 10-year boiler overhaul.

Facing page, left: Almost monochromatic, not very environmentally friendly admittedly, but oozing atmosphere. *Steve Sedgwick* captured a rather different view in Statfold yard during the Sweet Indian Steam Gala.

Above: Proper monochrome now and this could be in an industrial shed many years ago, but was actually taken by *Joey Evans* on 11th July at the Launceston Steam Railway, the Cornwall line a welcome returnee to the ranks of operating venues in 2022. Featured are resident quarry Hunslet 0-4-0s 'Lilian' and 'Covertcoat'.

Right: Continuing to demonstrate just how effective a good monochrome photo can be, *Joey Evans* took this shot of Bagnall 0-4-0ST 'Peter' on the loco's return to steam following overhaul at Amberley.

Overleaf: But for the quality of the photo, and the great variation in liveries, this could be an industrial concern's loco fleet at rest in another era. Actually it was taken by *Joey Evans* on the Amerton Railway when the Staffordshire line welcomed visiting Kerr, Stuart Wrens 'Peter Pan' and 'Roger' alongside its resident pairing of 'Lorna Doone' and Hunslet variant 'Jennie'.



NARROW GAUGE WORLD







Plenty of activity on the international stage too – *Michael Chapman* tells us that he used his “best GCSE German” to blagg his way into the signalbox at Bertsdorf Station on the 750mm gauge Zittau Schmalspurbahn in Germany, so he could capture this view (left) of the simultaneous departure of two trains on 4th July.

Just a day earlier *Kevin Hoggett*, who normally keeps us up to date with activities at the Stoomcentrum Maldegem museum in Belgium, was enjoying a holiday in the USA and capturing this view (below). The Georgetown Loop Railroad’s 3ft gauge, 1926-built Baldwin 2-8-0 number 111, ex International Railways of Central America, was drifting light-engine over the Devil’s Gate steel viaduct ready to take the first train of the day out of Devil’s Gate station.



The End of the Pier Railway

Donald Brooks recalls the chequered career of a seaside line at Southport.



Britain's two longest seaside piers, Southend and Southport, both had railways to their outer ends. Although trains still run along Southend pier today, with two new Severn Lamb battery-electric sets entering service in 2022, at Southport only a disused line of rails bears witness to a long history of railway operation that seems to have come to a permanent end.

Southport lies just beyond the point where the River Ribble flows into the Irish Sea. When its privately-built pier opened in August 1860 it was much like any other, starting at the promenade and running out over the sea. But silting has long been a problem around the Ribble estuary and in 1885 Southport Corporation bought the foreshore south-west of the pier, enclosing it to form a marine lake. More land was reclaimed beyond it and a new road, the Marine Drive, was built as an outer promenade. Slightly later a larger marine lake, subsequently joined to the earlier one, was created on the other side of the pier.

From the original Promenade end, Southport Pier now heads out over the Marine Lake and, very unusually, across dry land before crossing Marine Drive to finally reach the beach. Although the pier was used for shipping in its earlier years, the shifting channels made boat access increasingly difficult and no steamers

“Southport Pier now heads out over the Marine Lake and, very unusually, across dry land...”

Above: Southport Pier is today largely on land but at high tide it briefly manages to enter the sea! The UK Loco Ltd tram is pictured running along the pier in 2009. Photo: Jane Brooks

Right: The English seaside out of season. With its train in short winter formation, about 1965, ‘Silver Belle’ waits hopefully for custom alongside the spartan platform at the outer end of the pier. Photo: Graham Fairhurst

called after the 1920s. At low tide today the end of the pier can be a very considerable distance from the sea itself, marooned over a beach that is becoming increasingly colonised by grass.

In 1863 a luggage tramway with hand-propelled cars was built down the centre of the pier but although this solved the transport problem it created another difficulty, apparently getting in the way of pedestrians. The pier was subsequently widened and a new 3ft 6in gauge cable-operated tramway, for passengers as well as goods, opened in 1865.

The rails were laid along the southern edge of the pier, segregated

from the walkway by a fence. The line was converted to third-rail electric operation in 1905 and provided with new stock, which was rebodied in 1935 in a similar style to the contemporary open and closed cars on Blackpool's tramway.

Steam outline

The pier, by then owned by Southport Corporation, was taken over by the military during the Second World War, reopening to the public as soon as the war ended. »





Electric operation of the line ceased in 1950 and it was rebuilt to nominal 2ft gauge, though remaining in the same location along the side of the pier. Initially a Hunslet diesel, already owned by Southport Corporation, was given a steam-outline body to haul both open and closed stock but in 1954 the railway was supplied with a completely new train.

This was the 'Silver Belle', constructed by local engineer Harry Barlow in his Birkdale workshop. Barlow is better known for his involvement in 15-inch gauge railways and in 1945 he had taken over Southport's Lakeside Miniature Railway (LMR), which opened in 1911 as Llewelyn's Miniature Railway, named after its builder and operator. Although Rhyl's miniature line predated it by three weeks, the Lakeside claims the title of Britain's

and the world's oldest continuously operating 15in gauge line by virtue of Rhyl's years of closure in the 1970s.

The LMR runs from Pleasureland at the south-western end of the Marine Lake and originally terminated immediately to the west of the pier, where the closed and overgrown station can still be seen today. Immediately after the Second World War, Barlow extended the LMR underneath the pier and round a sharp curve to a new terminus between the pier and Marine Parade. He also built a new fleet of steam outline diesel-electric locos, very loosely based on Gresley's A4 Pacifics, starting with 'Duke of Edinburgh' in 1948. Four of these locos, along with a similar 1963-built machine, survive today at Austin Moss's Windmill Farm Railway near Burscough in Lancashire, while a fifth member of

Above: 'English Rose' waiting to leave Promenade station in April 1977 with a very lightly loaded service. Photo: Donald Brooks

Below: The last item of Barlow's Pier Railway stock to survive in service was the closed carriage used on the West Lancashire Light Railway. Here it is seen in May 1977 returning to Beconsall behind 4wDM no 8, Hunslet 4480 of 1953. Photo: Donald Brooks

the class is operational at Saltburn.

Barlow's LMR locos had a 4-6-2 wheel arrangement, with a diesel-electric generator concealed in the bogie tender driving an electric motor in the locomotive. The two he supplied for the pier railway, although very different in appearance and to a wider gauge, were similar in overall arrangement although the 'locomotive' was a 4-6-0. For the pier the whole unit was encased in two-section enclosed bodywork which, if it had any design influences, owed nothing to Gresley but perhaps a little to the Art Deco streamliners of the pre-war USA.

The two single-ended locomotives, one facing seaward and one landward, had a driving position at the front and were lettered 'Silver Belle' below the cab window. Trains of up to two closed and four open carriages were hauled one way and propelled the other by a single loco working at the end of the train appropriate to the way it faced.

A Reprieve

So things continued until October 1970 when a derailment, probably while the train was being propelled, threatened immediate closure of the line. Following protests a reprieve was granted and operations resumed for the 1971 season with just the open carriages, the West Lancashire Light Railway (WLLR) having acquired the closed ones.

The years of exposure to the sea air and sand had taken their toll on Silver Belle and a replacement train was ordered from Severn Lamb to take over from Easter 1973. With a gauge now quoted as 60cm, though presumably actually unchanged, this comprised a 4w-4 diesel-hydraulic locomotive, 'English Rose', and a closed driving trailer, also with one powered bogie, with three open trailers sandwiched between.

Once the Severn Lamb train was in service, one Barlow loco and the open carriages were retired to the Steamport railway museum in Southport's former Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway loco shed. Outside storage quickly led to further deterioration and in the 1980s they were moved to the WLLR but were ultimately scrapped.

A slightly happier fate awaited the closed carriages. One was used in regular WLLR service for some time and in the end new bodies were constructed on the frames, using replacement wheelsets in the original bogies as the wheels on the Barlow train were too small. These two carriages remain in use today.

One Barlow loco was kept on the pier as a reserve even though it was



incompatible with the Severn Lamb train and there was no other stock for it to haul. It was stored on a short siding at the landward end of the pier, this the remaining stub of track from a second platform road that once existed here, where the wooden platform was equipped with an overall roof. No similar protection was provided at the exposed outer end. The Barlow loco was ultimately declared redundant and it too fell victim to scrap.

For the next 20 years English Rose provided a reliable service and when, in 1995, the train was reported as out of use the underlying problem was nothing to do with the railway. Years of neglect and deferred maintenance had taken their toll on every aspect of the pier's structure. Since 1974 Southport had been amalgamated into the new and much larger Sefton Council, and little expenditure had been made on the resort's seaside amenities. In 1990 the condition of the pier and the potential cost of its restoration meant that a motion to demolish it was defeated by only a single vote.

Despite the appalling state of the infrastructure, English Rose ran again for the 1996 season but this proved the railway's swansong. The train was removed in 1998 and the locomotive ultimately ended up on the Lynbarn Railway at the Milky Way Adventure Park near Clovelly, where the volunteer-operated railway helped raise funds for restoration of the Lynton & Barnstaple. It still runs there today, though as an integral feature of the theme park with no longer any L&B involvement.

New look

Following a structural survey the pier itself closed in 1997 on safety grounds. But with considerable community opposition to demolition, funding was gradually put in place to finance a complete renovation and work started in 2000 on what was effectively a like-for-like replacement of the whole structure. The pier reopened in May 2002, restored to something like its original simplicity and elegance, albeit with an attractive modern pavilion at the outer end.

Rail services also returned to the pier, again recalling the early days by positioning the new line in a slightly offset position down the pedestrian deck rather than on its own fenced-off right of way.

In another nod to the 1860s the gauge was 3ft 6in and a new train was ordered from Severn Lamb, although the firm went into administration before it was completed (subsequently re-emerging to become a highly

"Despite the appalling state of the infrastructure, English Rose ran again for the 1996 season..."

Above right: With the Southport Pier Railway carriage providing the passenger accommodation, 0-4-0ST 'Irish Mail', Hunslet 823 of 1903, passes Willow Tree Halt with a West Lancashire Light Railway train from Becconsall to Delph in May 1982. Photo: Graham Whitehead

Below: The UK Loco Ltd tram at the outer end of the pier – April 2008. Here it was stabled overnight and the batteries were charged. The driver had to exercise extreme caution on the unsegregated line at busy times. Photo: Graham Whitehead



successful company today – Ed).

Fortunately the components were customer-owned and the two-car battery electric tram was completed by UK Loco Ltd of Pershore, a firm more associated with theme park rides, and delivered in 2005.

This introduced yet another form of traction to the pier railway. Battery charging took place at the stabling point by the pavilion, where access out of hours was prevented by security gates halfway down the pier. Services ran daily throughout the year – though as things turned out, not for very long.

In 2013 the discovery of cracks in the pier's supporting columns led to the suspension of rail services, with final closure following in 2015. Although the weight of the tram may have exacerbated the structural problems, cost was also cited as a

contributory factor in the closure decision. The tram was removed in 2016 for resale but is thought to have been scrapped.

Today a road train provides the service, faithfully following the line of rails along the pier, though not everyone is taken in by the illusion. A young child was heard by the author asking his mother for a ride, but was turned down. "It's not a real train," she said before pausing to add, "It would be better if it were" – a sentiment with which we would doubtless all agree. **NGW**

■ The author offers many thanks to Graham Fairhurst for additional information and photographs. Graham is compiling a comprehensive history of Southport Pier and its railway for ultimate publication in book form.



Memories of Margina

Keith Chester recalls a 1985 visit to an idyllic Romanian forestry line.



The historian Lord Acton once famously remarked that “power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. The aphorism was given flesh by Romania’s dictator Nikolei Ceaușescu, who operated one of the most repressive regimes in Communist Eastern Europe. Economic misery compounded its horrors. In the late 1970s Romania became a net importer of oil (which had to be paid for with scarce hard currency) at the same time as domestic demand was rising, driven primarily by the insatiable needs of the large and largely inefficient petrochemical industry established in

the 1970s and considered a major source of foreign currency earnings.

Exacerbating an already difficult situation, Ceaușescu embarked on an almost fanatical policy of re-paying Romania’s foreign debt at the expense of domestic consumption and also undertook a hugely expensive programme of rebuilding central Bucharest as a fitting backdrop to his vanity. The suffering of the Romanian people was great in the 1980s and the country still bears the scars.

Ceaușescu’s megalomania created enormous demands for timber both for export and for construction. This in turn halted closure of the remaining forestry railways operated by the Căile Ferate Forestiere (CFF) and the 20 or so that survived at the beginning of the 1980s now experienced a decade of booming traffic levels.

As every last drop of oil was being carefully rationed, there was no question of diesel locomotives working these lines: there were still plenty of steam engines around and they were fired with wood or (sometimes) coal, of which Romania had abundant supplies.

To ensure there was no backsliding on this revival of steam-worked forestry railways, the IUPS factory at Reghin built 12 brand-new 0-8-0Ts between 1982 and 1987. These were essentially an evolution of the 1905 designed Hungarian class 490 (see *NGW150*) and the last steam locomotives erected in Europe for non-heritage railways.

First trip

I must confess I was only vaguely aware of all of this when, together with a German friend, I made my

Above: No 764-460 (Reșița 1199/1956) heads up the valley from Petroasa in glorious light. Wood and coal for the locomotive is stored on the front bogie wagon.

Below: The first rays of the sun catch no 764-460 as it runs through the village of Petroasa, 15km from Margina.

Photos by Keith Chester, April 1985



first trip to Romania's forestry railways in Easter Week 1985. Our plan was to visit first Vișeu de Sus, and then see what happened. In the event we spent three days on this system in the north of the country. On the first we rode the Mondays only 8.00 passenger train, which was made up of five bogie carriages packed with workers heading into the forest for the week's work.

Typical of Central European narrow gauge vehicles, a wood stove at one end of the carriage provided some welcome warmth which, together with the fug of cigarette smoke, quickly became oppressive. With frequent stops to take water and clean the fire, to shunt and sometimes, it seemed, just to have a chat and a rest, the 40km journey to the terminus at Coman, hard on the border with Ukraine, took most of the morning.

Following the banks of the River Vaser, with the steep-sided slopes of the Carpathians either side, the ride was breathtaking. In some places snow still lay on the ground and at one point we saw two brown bears drinking water in the river. We repeated the experience the next day, this time in a single carriage attached to the end of a string of four-wheel trucks being taken to various loading points along the line. The return trip was made on an unsprung four-wheel draisine, a real bone-shaker but at least there was plenty of fresh air.

Trains on both days were worked by standard Reșița 0-8-0Ts, of which more than 110 (it's complicated) were delivered to the CFF between 1951 and 1958; on the Wednesday we were pleased to find a 1949-built MÁVAG 0-8-0T in action. But it was now time to move on – while we had not had any problems with taking »



“A gristly pork cutlet, chips and pickled salad for dinner...”

Above and right: Running only minutes apart, another train is headed by no 764-476 (Reșița 1284/1956).

Below: The two trains pause for much-needed refreshment at Cheia, 30km from Margina.





photographs we did not want to push our luck. Ceaușescu's Romania was a police state and stories of at times lengthy arrests were not uncommon.

West to Margina

We decided to head west. The tourist hotel we stayed in on the way epitomised the deprivations of everyday life in Romania in the

1980s: a gristly pork cutlet, chips and pickled salad for dinner, and a single 50-watt light bulb to illuminate the double room and en-suite shower.

Just after dawn on Good Friday morning we made our way to the station and adjacent CFF depot in the small village of Margina. There were no engines to be seen but the rails looked shiny and we headed off



Above: In the upper reaches of the valley no 764-476 takes water from a stream using a pulsometer and pipe. Coal can be seen in the bunker and wood fuel on top of the water tanks.

Left: Pausing at a loading point. In the best traditions of logging, many of the tree trunks had been dragged by horses for onward progress by the train.

Below: 764-476 continues deep into the forest.



down the line in the hope we could catch up the train.

After 20–25 minutes driving down the empty road which paralleled the forestry railway we saw smoke. Our spirits rose, and then some more, as we saw not one but two trains, one behind the other, standing in the middle of nowhere taking water from the River Bega. We drove on and stopped at the picturesque village of Petroasa (km 15). By now the sun was peeping over the tops of the surrounding hills and bathed the two trains, running within minutes of each other, in a glorious light as they restarted following a brief halt in the passing station there. We were in business.

The asphalt road ended on the outskirts of Petroasa but we were able to follow the trains up the valley on an unpaved forestry track. In the early morning sun and with the clean and cool air making for good steam effects, conditions were perfect. What we had not anticipated, however, was the locos being fired with a mixture of wood and coal, and at times the clag was quite impressive for a narrow gauge train.

After about an hour the two trains approached Cheia (km 30). Here there was a logging camp with an administrative building and (I think) a shop, plus sidings and a small loco shed since the 0-8-0Ts sometimes spent the night in the forest. After the exertions of the morning it was time for everyone to catch their breath, eat breakfast, smoke cigarettes and drink *tuică*, Romanian plum schnapps. Meanwhile the two standard Reșița 0-8-0Ts, now identified as nos 764-460 and 764-476 and both built in 1956, once again took water from the River Bega.

Deep in the forest

The pause in the action was used to take more photos and for a little reflection. Margina was a shorter system than that at Vișeu de Sus and the rolling hills of the Banat made for a landscape less dramatic, almost gentle; above Petroasa the Bega became more of a stream than a river. But deep in the forest with no noise save for the song of birds, cow bells and the shuffle of the steam locomotives, and with the sun filtering through the trees and playing on the waters of the river, there was a calm and peacefulness about the world, not unlike that which descended briefly in the early days of lockdown in March 2020.

The rolling stock comprised bogie flat wagons with improvised wooden stanchions instead of the classic four-wheel trucks used at Vișeu and widely found on forestry railways in

Central Europe. On the flat wagon coupled immediately behind the 0-8-0T was a supply of wood and coal, and a man was employed to throw them into the loco's bunker at regular intervals as the train climbed the valley. Drifting back down to Margina with a heavy load in the late afternoon it was enough to fill the bunker prior to leaving Cheia.

Another difference from Vişeu and other CFF lines was the absence of any passenger carriage attached to the train (though apparently this had been done in the past). During the morning journey the train crew and any forestry workers needing transport sat or stood on the flat wagons; in the afternoon they clung on wherever they could find a little space on the loco or a loaded wagon. With its timetabled passenger trains and Edmonson tickets, Vişeu de Sus seemed almost like a common carrier: there was a completely different feel to CFF Margina.

At Cheia there was the first of several branches off the 'main line'. As the forest road petered out there, we parked the car. Once the crews and locos had been refreshed, we boarded one of the trains as it headed further up the valley, passing other branches on the way. When we eventually stopped, we saw, in the best traditions of logging, horses dragging tree trunks to the loading point. Methods of working at Margina in 1985 were little different from those of 1885 when H. Munk opened the first locomotive-worked forestry railway (1100mm gauge) in the Carpathian Mountains at Maroszlátina.



"About the only place they didn't look was where we had the dollars stashed..."

Above: The loco and train crews of no 764-476 have a rest at Cheia.

Below: Another view of 764-460 in what was very attractive lighting.

The Police!

Eventually, all the work in the forest for the day was completed. By late afternoon the locos had returned to Cheia and were got ready for the return trip to Margina. At this point we started the drive back to our hotel only to be halted in Petroasa by a not very friendly looking policeman. Had he been alerted that foreigners were in the valley taking photographs of the trains? Who knows? Fortunately, he was so drunk that when we said 'Turist! Turist!', he just saluted and waved us on.

In Ceauşescu's Romania it was never clear who was informing on whom and what would happen in such incidents. The next morning we chased the two trains as far as Cheia. The crews were again friendly and there was no policeman waiting for us. But when we crossed the border into Hungary that afternoon, our car was pulled out of the queue and given the equivalent of a strip search. About

the only place they didn't look was where we had the dollars stashed...

In 1992-93 I visited most of the surviving forestry railways in Romania. On one trip in September 1992 we dropped in on Margina one afternoon. Everything looked very quiet, with just one loco, no 764-407R built by Reghin in 1985, standing cold in the yard. Probably trains were in the forest but we didn't have time to find out. The fall of Ceauşescu in December 1989 and the abrupt arrival of wild west capitalism meant that most of the forestry railways in Romania closed in the mid 1990s, with CFF Margina succumbing in 1994.

I am told that today there is virtually no trace of the line to be seen and only the memories remain. Margina fulfilled my every expectation of the classic forestry railway; idyllic rather than spectacular, it was my favourite CFF line. **NGW**



Feeding the Fishes

Donald Brooks recalls two lines in southern Hungary full of narrow gauge charm.

Industrial narrow gauge railways come in all shapes and sizes, but two of the more unusual and interesting I have come across were on Hungarian fish farms, visited in 1997 while travelling around the country by car with Austrian enthusiast Roland Beier.

Both systems were in the south, not far from Szeged. About 10km north of the city, near Sándorfalva, a turning leads to the Fehér-tó or White Lake, where development of the original saline lakes for breeding freshwater fish, primarily various species of carp, started in 1930.

The lakes are served by a network of 600mm gauge railways which extended to about 11km. Originally horse-worked, the system adopted diesel power in the 1980s, using a mix of the Hungarian four-wheel Ue-28 type, built in the 1960s by Békéscsabai Téglagyári Egyesülés

(Békéscsaba Brickworks Association), and the Romanian four-wheel LDM 45 type, built by Unio of Satu Mare.

We arrived late one evening to find that the only member of staff on duty was the night watchman, armed with an ancient rifle. LDM 45 E03-068 was standing on a siding with a train of tank wagons and as there were no objections to photography, we took a picture and retired to Szeged for the night.

Returning the next morning we found the entire staff gathered in serious discussion in the yard. There was clearly a major problem and equally clearly the manager was unable to deal with unexpected visitors barely able to speak a word of Hungarian. It was time to move on.

To the lakes

About 40km north of the Fehér-tó system is the village of Tömörkény,

Above: With its work for the day over, Romanian diesel E03-068 stands on a train of tanks at the central point of the Fehér-tó system, today operated by Szegedfish Kft.

Below: Looking rather the worse for wear, E-04 051, also numbered 3, stands in sidings at Tömörkény. Despite the loco's condition, the sheen on the rails suggest that it was working.

Photos by Donald Brooks, July 1997

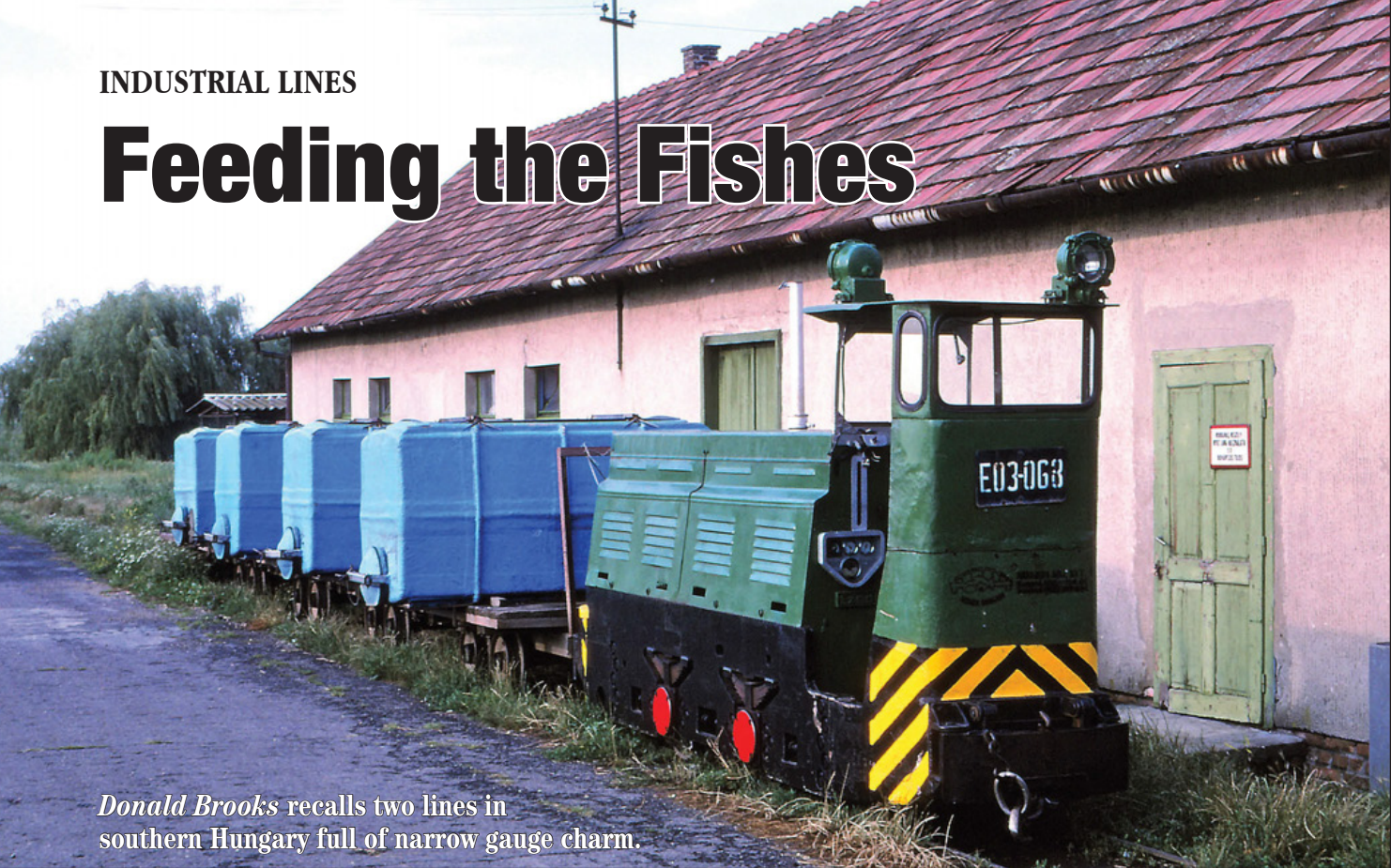
home of what was once Hungary's most extensive fish-farm railway, a 760mm gauge network built in the mid-1960s and variously reported as between 20 and 46 kilometres long.

Our maps showed lakes near the village and our suspicion that a dirt road in that direction was the right way to go proved correct when we reached a 'Tilos' (No Access) sign that also included the word 'hal' – Hungarian for fish. Passing sidings full of stock in the last stages of decrepitude and piles of new concrete sleepers which suggested a better future, we reached the focal point of the railway alongside one of the lakes.

The sole member of staff could not have been more helpful. There were no trains around, but when we indicated our interest in the railway, he set off by motorbike alongside one of the lines to return a little later pursued by a train consisting of loco no 6, an open bogie wagon and four side-tipping skips.

The locomotive was one of the ubiquitous C50s, four-wheel diesels built by MÁV's Északi Járműjavító Üzem (Northern Vehicle Repair Shop) in Budapest for a variety of light railway uses on three gauges – 600mm, 760mm and 1000mm. Well over 250 were constructed between 1952 and the late 1960s and 70 years later they remain a familiar sight on Hungarian forestry railways and the MÁV Balatonfenyves system.

No 6 was one of the earliest examples, built in 1952, and came to Tömörkény in January 1979 after working on three rural light railway



systems. Tömörkény had about eight C50s in 1997, though with numerous derelict bits and pieces in the sidings probably no more than three or four were operational. The only other one positively identified on this occasion was no 3, also numbered E-04 051, which arrived in 1976 after working on public lines at Békéscsaba and Kecskemét.

To our surprise and delight the staff indicated that we were welcome to join the train for a ride. We boarded the open wagon and trundled off along the overgrown track along the embankments between the lakes. From the little we saw the layout seemed quite complex, with several branches heading off into the undergrowth. The skips in our train were loaded with grain for feeding the growing fish and we came to a halt alongside a chute, where the grain was discharged into a waiting boat.

We watched the unloading process and were then invited to board the boat so that we could watch the grain gradually disappearing through the bottom of the vessel and into the muddy waters of the lake. It was slightly unsettling to see the pile of food very slowly going down. Even stranger was that there was no hint of any fish interested in eating it!

This process would be repeated around the other lakes as necessary. From the boat we watched our train continuing around the system until it vanished from sight, reappearing after a lengthy interval, having been joined by a second C50 in serious need of a repaint. By now it was late in the morning and both locos retired to the yard at what may well have been the end of the day's operations. As on the Fehér-tó system, there were also tank cars, presumably used for the transport of live fish.

A magical experience

Our morning at Tömörkény was a fascinating exploration of a delightful railway, full of narrow gauge charm. Despite the language barrier, the few staff we met were incredibly friendly and helpful to two unannounced visitors disrupting their morning work. Travelling on the train and



Above: The piles of new concrete sleepers promise new life for Tömörkény and the railway did indeed survive another 24 years before closure. CF50 no 6 prepares to head its train out towards the lakes.



Right: No 6 has reached the point where its cargo will be unloaded into a waiting boat. The size of the lakes is clearly apparent.

Below: The archetypal rural industrial narrow gauge scene at Tömörkény, with overgrown sidings and abrupt transitions on the curves. One of the fish ponds in the flat southern Hungarian landscape is visible to the left of no 6.

gliding round the lake under the hazy Hungarian sun was a magical experience, transporting us a short distance in space but even then back perhaps 50 years in time.

Moving forwards in time, the Tömörkény railway lasted longer than we might have expected, finally closing in March 2021. The Kiskunsági Nemzeti Park, the local national park authority, hopes to develop the lakes for eco-tourism, renovating a section of the railway for self-propelled trolley operation.

At the Fehér-tó things are even better. Under the management of Szegedfish Kft, the railway is still in industrial use for most of the year. The Kiskunsági Nemzeti Park is also involved here and annually in November, to mark the spectacular

mass crane migrations from northern Europe to Africa, organises a programme of events that includes passenger trains. Please report back to **NGW** if you travel on them as the railway cannot be visited at any other time of the year! **NGW**

■ The author thanks Ferenc Joó and Roland Beier for supplying additional information for this article.





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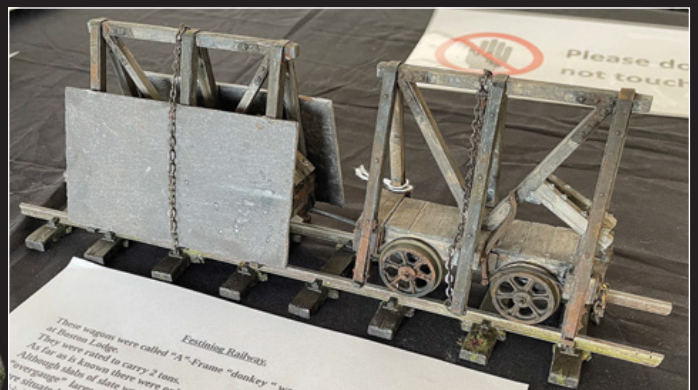
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Big in size – big on quality...

The National Garden Railway Show clearly demonstrated that realistic modelling in large scale is alive and well...



■ While most attention at the National Garden Railway Show organised by the Association of 16mm Narrow Gauge Modellers at Peterborough on 25th June was taken by new releases such as the impressive Darjeeling C-Class from Roundhouse Engineering (top), the show also proved our editor's argument that 16mm is not just about running live steamers around the lawn – it can equally be about finescale modelling.

This was very evident in the unusually small but high quality entry for the Model of the Year competition, many admiring the remarkable Tasmanian Railways Hagan's Patent 2-6-4-0T loco scratchbuilt by Steve Bell and winner of the Allcomers Trophy (upper).

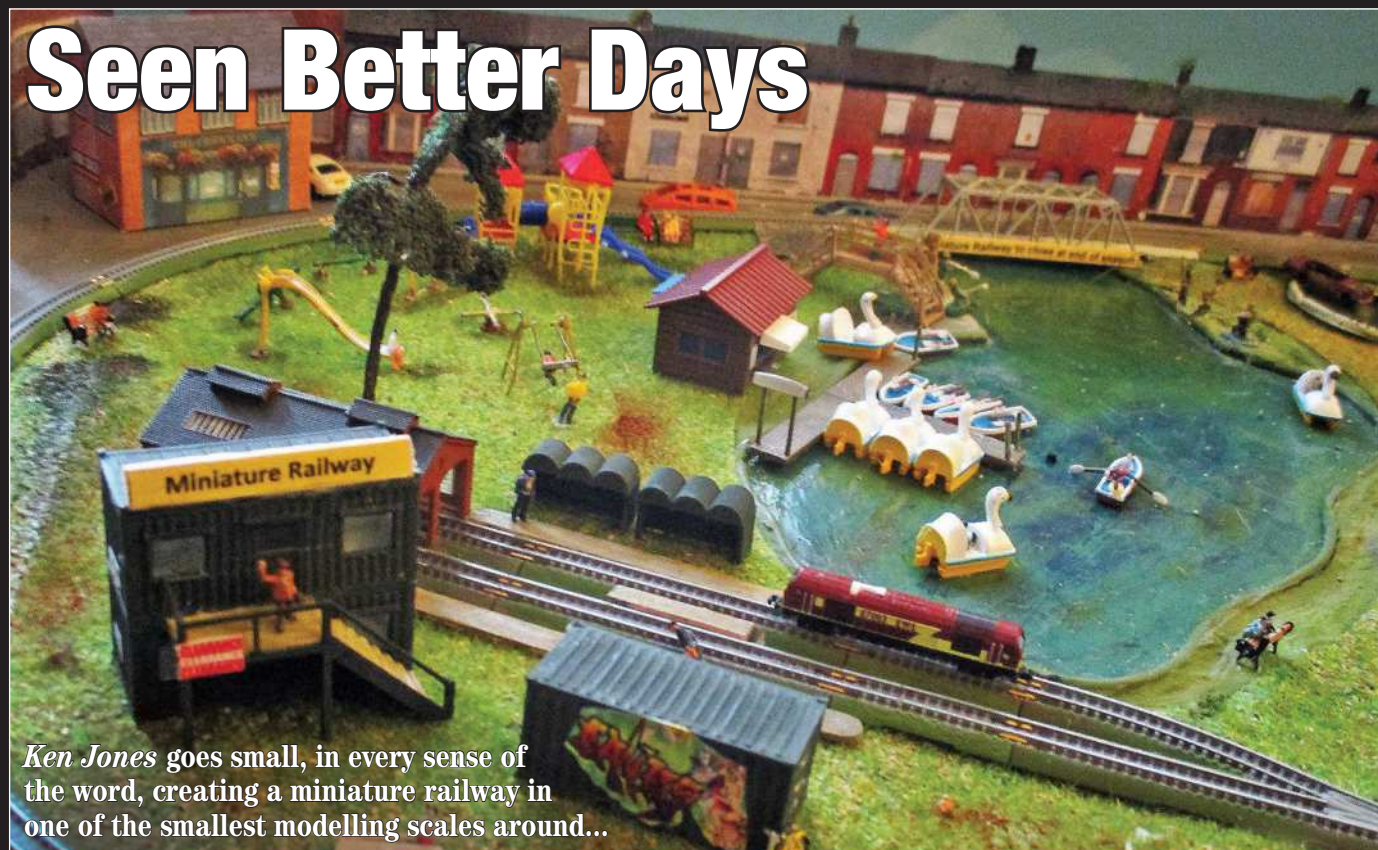
Our editor, one of the MoTY judges, was particularly taken by the pair of Ffestiniog Railway A-frame slab wagons built by Tony Hill (above) and boasting very fine detail right down to the straps on the wheels for braking.

Some of the model layouts on show emphasised the theme of realism too, not least 'Melin Llechi' ('Slate Mill', left) built by Matthew Widdop and which oozed all the atmosphere of a Welsh slate quarry – note the clever use of a mirror.

The 2023 National Garden Railway Show is set for 15th April, again in Peterborough – definitely worth putting in the diary...

Photos: Andrew Charman

Seen Better Days



Ken Jones goes small, in every sense of the word, creating a miniature railway in one of the smallest modelling scales around...

I have always fancied building a working miniature railway in an N-gauge setting (1:148, 2mm to the foot with standard-gauge models running on 9mm gauge track – Ed) using T-gauge track (described by its proponents as the smallest commercially available model railway on the world, at 1:450 scale running on track of just 3mm!).

I had previously built an O-gauge scene (7mm to the foot) in a cutlery box with working T gauge as a garden railway, named 'Anyone for T'. With several miniature railways in parks and at the seaside closing over recent years it was time to move this idea forward, using a redundant over-the-bed table. In hindsight this was not the best idea as it is unstable and easily knocked if not standing against a table or a wall. So, the legs were removed leaving just a table-top layout.

The setting

The concept would be a park which was once overlooked by families in terraced houses and small business units, but as in real life these houses get boarded up, people move away, businesses close and the park

and its amenities such as the miniature railway begin to suffer through vandalism and lack of customers. Thus 'Seen Better Days' was conceived.

What you see today is a mixture of things closed and others about to close. The local pub is still open but up for sale, whilst the railway museum, which it was hoped would bring in the visitors, has closed and is in administration.

The relatively new attraction – ride the bus – giving the people the chance to experience a runaway bus downhill via a simulator didn't last long and is waiting to be removed, and sadly the old warehouse which was hoped to regenerate the area as perhaps an antique centre is also closed and is likely to be demolished.

The miniature railway is still running but keeps no rolling stock on site. Their volunteers have a café and shop in the park, thanks to the military who have donated containers which staff have to keep repainting. The public conveniences and children's play area are still open, whilst damage around includes graffiti and a burnt-out car. The children's paddling pool

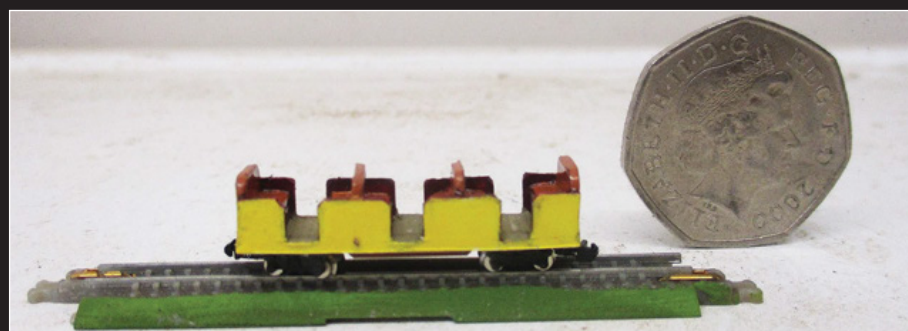
is now drained and awaiting the removal of a car, which probably will now not happen, although workmen can be seen at it.

The boating lake was once another main attraction in the park but today is mainly used by fishermen as the man who has hired out the boats for years is in the process of going out of business.

Building the layout

Initially I was going to use T-gauge flexitrack for the miniature railway but I didn't get on with it despite having built small layouts using N and Z-gauge (1:220) flexitrack, and so I reverted to T-gauge Set Track to produce one oval within the park and an area of two sidings and a servicing depot that the volunteers use.

The layout measures 59cm x 39cm (approximately 23 x 15 inches). The main grass mat is from the German company Sander. The backscene is from Marvin, the Crown Inn is a card kit, and the attraction 'Ride the Bus' is a 3D printed model from Outland Models. The shop/café/containers and skips are also 3D models obtained from DAPR3 (www.dapr3d.com) and the



Above: General view across the park, including the new children's play area.

Left: We are talking small! The first bespoke miniature carriage scratchbuilt by Malcolm Hall and mounted on a T-scale wagon chassis.

All model photos by Ken Jones

MODEL LINES

Return of Corris Model Show

The Corris Model Railway Exhibition will be held this month for the first time since 2019, Covid forcing cancellation of the last two years' planned events.

The show will be held at Y Plas, Machynlleth on 27th-28th August and organiser Bill Newton of the Corris Railway Society promises 11 layouts ranging in scale from 2mm N Gauge to 16mm, plus a static display from the Mid Wales Gauge 1 Association. Trade stands and refreshments will be available.

Admission is £4 adult, £2 child or £10 family ticket, and the Corris Railway will also be operating a full timetable over the weekend – the line's Corris base is 4.5 miles from Machynlleth.



Midlands show to go ahead

Organisers of the Midlands Model Engineering Exhibition have confirmed the show will go ahead in October despite the untimely passing of its founder and head Chris Deith. Chris, aged 76, died suddenly on 12th May while on holiday in Spain.

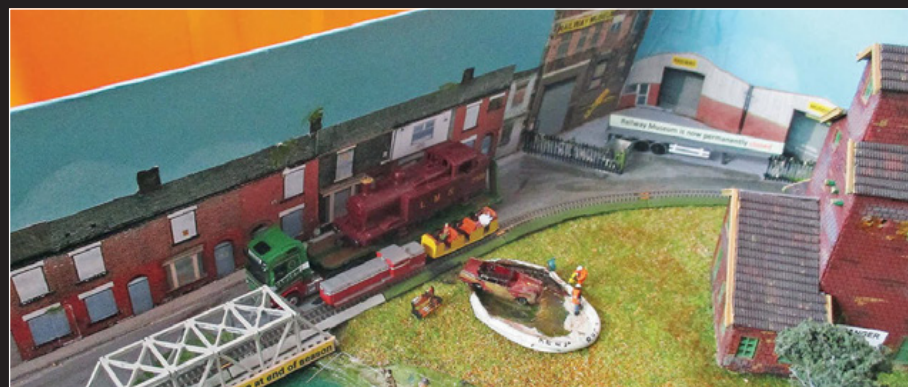
Meridienne Events, now under the leadership of Chris's daughter Avril Spence, intends that the show, from Thursday 13th and Sunday 16th October at the Warwickshire Event Centre, close to Leamington Spa, will form a tribute to its founder and his huge contribution to the model engineering movement.

The show, sponsored by our sister magazine *Engineering in Miniature*, always includes a sizable narrow gauge content amongst its displays.

Details of this year's show are online at www.midlandsmodelengineering.co.uk. The site includes advance ticket ordering facilities, visitors recommended to book their tickets ahead of the event.

For Thomas read Tallyllyn

Supplies of the latest 009 'Thomas & Friends' locos marketed in the US by Bachmann are expected to be available in the UK soon from retailers such as Dundas Models (<http://dundasmodels.co.uk>). The Skarloey Railway locos 'Skarloey', 'Rheneas' and 'Rusty' are directly inspired by the Tallyllyn Railway's Fletcher Jennings steam locos 'Tallyllyn' and 'Dolgoch' and Ruston diesel 'Midlander', and converting them using parts available from Narrow Planet (www.lightrailwaystores.co.uk) is a popular route amongst UK modellers.



Above: The miniature railway passes the last loco to leave the closed railway museum, an N-gauge standard gauge loco on a low loader.

Right: The boating lake is enjoyed mainly by fishermen these days.

Below: The Class 67 on an empty stock working passes the now closed coach simulator – Ride the Bus.



toilet block is a 3D model from Ancorton Models (www.ancortonmodels.com). The graffiti come from Dave's Decals in the USA (www.davart.net) as did other decals seen on the layout.

The boating scene is by Tomeytec and the children's playground items are from Noch and China. The fishermen are from Langley Models (www.langleymodels.co.uk), and the old warehouse is a secondhand kit produced by Heljan.

As for all the T-gauge items, they were obtained via www.Tgauge.com – track, rolling stock, engine shed and bridge, while the N-gauge footbridge is from DM toys in Germany (www.dm-toys.de).

Some elements were specially made for me – the layout name badge by my friend Vince Painter and the miniature carriages custom built by Malcolm Hall – he fitted them onto ready-to-run T-gauge chassis.

With T-gauge running on 3mm track this miniature railway is effectively 18-inch gauge in N scale.

The layout has been out to shows twice and is due out again in September to appear at the International N Gauge Show. In use coupling up stock has proven a problem since I've protected the sides from fingers of all ages, but by far the biggest problem has been getting viewers to accept the concept of a miniature railway in an N-gauge setting. Most have assumed it is a Z-gauge model.

Andrew C adds: This layout reminded me of my first model railway when having gained a passion for the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway following a childhood visit I built a 009 layout to a miniature railway theme using N-gauge locos and scratchbuilt carriages – I casually ignored the fact that in the scale it was effectively 2ft 3in gauge!

Ken's layout is certainly novel – okay it's not exactly finescale modelling but in something so small could it ever be? I don't think my sausage fingers could cope with such miniaturisation! **NGW**





Snailbeach District Railways Hopper Wagon Peco - 009 Scale

■ It clearly appears to be a time for modellers who are fans of an obscure industrial line in Shropshire, at opposite ends of the scales! Last month we detailed the new Snailbeach District Railways hopper wagons produced by Model Engineer's Laser in the 7/8ths garden scale (1:13.7, 22.5mm to the foot) – this month we've received review samples of the very same wagon but this time in 009 (1:76, 4mm to the foot) scale. The 7/8ths version could accommodate several of the Peco ones...

The SDR was a 2ft 4in gauge line built to carry lead ore from mines in the Stiperstones to Pontesbury for onwards shipment by the Great Western Railway. The 3½-mile long line opened in 1877 and closed in 1959 – over the last 12 years of its life the wagons were hauled along the rails by a road tractor, the worn-out locomotives having been cut up.

The railway had two sizes of hopper wagon and the Peco models are of the later, larger version. The excellent Pen & Sword history of the SDR by Andy Cuckson tells us that these wagons appeared on the line from around 1905 – it is thought that initially they were privately owned by the Granham's Moor Quarry tramway, which ran onto the SDR and 18 of them were bought by the latter in 1935.

The wagon manufacturer and the quantities built are not known – SDR records were notorious for a lack of information and of course many wagons were initially not owned by the railway itself. One return in 1912 lists 11 hoppers but not how many of each size.

David H. Smith has prepared an excellent 7mm scale drawing in the book but admits that with the absence of originals to work from he compiled information from a variety of sources – he says his drawing should be regarded as 'typical of the type'. A full-size wagon exists today, a body rebuild on a rotten underframe donated by the Tallylyn Railway but even this was carried out mainly from photos.

Referring to the drawing these are very accurate models, and while they might be of the larger type, they are tiny – the bodies measure a mere 30mm by 23mm at their widest point and the wheels are miniscule. The wagons are also truer to scale than most product offered in 009 as while models of a vast range of 2ft gauge prototypes are available in the scale, the 9mm gauge track they run on equates to 2ft 3in gauge – much closer to the 2ft 4in of the SDR.

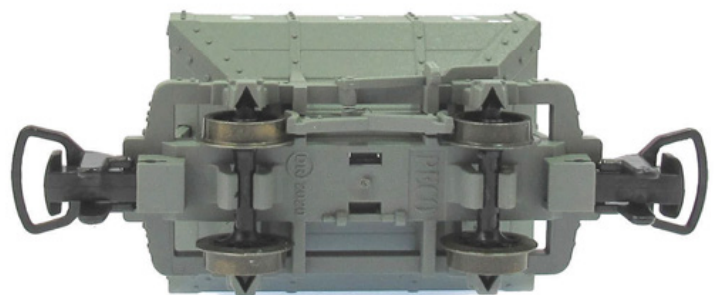
Each wagon boasts fine strapping and rivet detail, correct pattern axleboxes and faithfully reproduced brake gear. At least where fitted – not all the originals were braked and it's a measure of the accuracy that is now normal in 009 that both braked and unbraked versions are offered. Liveries include grey with S D R lettering plus plain grey or brown eminently suitable for any fictional model line.

The only potential issue could be with weight – these are very lightweight models with nowhere to fit any ballast without it showing – unless you take the easy way out of adding loads to them!

The couplings are a compromise – they look huge on these models, but it would be hard to make them any more compact and retain the ability to traverse the sharp curves of a typical layout. Overall, however, these are another excellent example of the surfeit of riches now available to modellers of British-outline 009 scale. *AC*

Produced by Peco. Tel: 01297 626204

Web: <http://peco-uk.com> Typical price: £22.00 – £24.00



Alishan Forest Railway Diesel Ame - 009/HOe scale

■ The revelation that 009/HOe scale models of these impressive Taiwanese diesels were to be made available in the UK, within days of the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway announcing that it is set to get such a diesel on loan from the Alishan Forest Railway later this year (*NGW167, UK News*) certainly sparked a lot of excitement amongst modellers, but the story is not quite so simple...

Mitsubishi built four generations of locomotive for the Alishan line while after a brief unsuccessful flirtation with German maker Orenstein & Koppel, a further two generations have since come from Nippon Sharyo. DL-34, which is set to come to Wales, is of the fourth generation of 25-tonne locos built from 1972 while these models from Taiwanese manufacturer Ame are of the sixth-generation 28-tonne engines nos DL39 to 43, the first of which was delivered in 1982.

Having said that, externally the locos all look very similar and it would not take a mildly skilled modeller much to convert their model to a convincing representation of the earlier loco.

DMG Electech has been appointed as distributor of these



models in the UK. Able to negotiate a minimum radius of 12 inches (300mm), the model loco is all-wheel drive with electrical pick-up on all wheels, a five-pole skew-wound motor and bidirectional headlamps, the light on which remains constant at all speeds.

What may initially appear a somewhat expensive purchase is justified by the very high levels of detail, including full cab interiors, scale handrails, windscreen wipers and fuel tanks with all fillers, gauges and the like.

Produced by Ame, distributed in UK by DMG Electech

Email: through website

Web: <https://dmgelectech.co.uk/product/narrow-gauge-diesel-loco/>

Price: £189.95

Hunslet 125HP Diesel Body Kit Bole Laser Craft - 16mm scale

■ Those seeking a British-outline internal combustion workhorse for their 16mm line may well be interested in this new kit for a Hunslet 125hp diesel from Bole Laser Craft. The originals were built by the Leeds firm for the African Manganese Company in two batches between 1935 and 1941.

The body is designed to fit over the Roundhouse Engineering HBK-D3 chassis, which itself comes as a kit and makes up to a powerful chassis that is gauge adjustable between 32mm and 45mm.

The main body sections abandon the wood construction that is typical in this scale for perspex sheet, which should be easier to paint to represent a metal body. Rows of pilot holes are included for some



146 rivets, while a host of neatly 3D-printed nylon components includes the very apparent louvred side panels, bonnet front with its Hunslet nameplate and radiator, and the springs and cab steps.



Produced by Bole Laser Craft

Email: info@bolelascraft.com

Web: <http://bolelascraft.com>

Chassis kit available from Roundhouse Eng Co

Web: www.roundhouse-eng.com

Price: Body kit £200.00 or £300.00 radio control Chassis £185.00

Transport Recalled - North & Mid-Wales by Martin Jenkins & Charles Roberts

■ This is one of those books where one seeks out the narrow gauge amongst a greater amount of standard-gauge content (and in this case also buses and even ships) – in this case it's certainly worth doing as the narrow gauge pictures are fascinating and in many cases unusual.

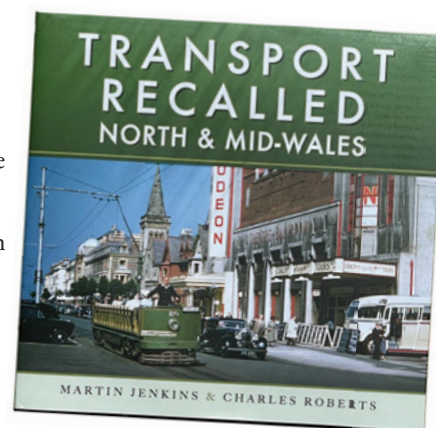
The major lines such as the Tallylyn and Ffestiniog are covered in what were their pioneer heritage years, as is the Welshpool & Llanfair in pre and post-preservation form and the pleasure lines – at Fairbourne for a change the big picture ignores steam for the diesel 'Sylvia' and train. There are several shots around Penrhyn and Dinorwic quarries, and including the 4ft gauge Padarn Railway in its last years. And they don't come more unusual than the virtually ignored Llandudno & Colwyn Bay Electric Railway, a 3ft 6in gauge tramway closed in 1956 – it gets several photos.

The narrow gauge may be the minority element but the book is worth a look – certainly those involved in the pioneer years of the 'Great Little Trains' will have many memories sparked. **AC**

Published by Pen & Sword ISBN 978-1-52678-707-1

E-mail: enquiries@pen-and-sword.co.uk Web: www.pen-and-sword.co.uk

Price: £30.00





Railcar venues recalled

With reference to the picture at the foot of page 35 in the *Remarkable Railcars* feature, *NGW167*; this was fact taken at Sernada do Vouga station in Portugal. The railcar in the platform will probably have been working on the line to Aveiro, the other one is approaching from the Espinho direction. My photo of the station building on 14th March 2003 shows how much improvement work has been done since the original photo was taken, although several recognizable features remain.

At Macinhata, just along the Aveiro line, in 2003 there was (and hopefully still is) a beautifully carved mural on a plinth, situated near to the small railway museum. I suspect it portrays a scene somewhere along the now closed line to Santa Comba Dão, though more information on its provenance would be welcome.

David Bott

Railcars in Peru...

In *NGW167* at the end of the article *Remarkable Railcars* you ask if any readers have come across these units working in Peru.

I went to Peru in 2013 and took a number of photos on the Machu

Pichu line. The enclosed picture of railcar 903 taken on 13th June 2013 is unfortunately not one of my best, however it may be of interest as it is the only one that featured the railcar.

Martin Eady

...and in Madagascar

In his recent interesting article about *Remarkable railcars* Phil Horton in the concluding paragraph mentions Class 9020 diesel locomotives operating in Madagascar and asks if anyone found them working.

We used this type on the LCGB (*Locomotive Club of Great Britain – Ed*) Tours to this country that I organised in 2012 and 2013.

Should anyone be interested pictures are online – the 2012 tour at <https://bit.ly/3ceboa9> and the 2013 one at <https://bit.ly/3P16sEh>

Adrian Palmer

Secondhand woes

Phil Horton's article on the Portuguese Class 9700 ex-Yugoslavian railcars in *NGW167* illustrates the problems of buying secondhand. Following the original purchase he relates that the units were initially unsatisfactory and some had to be re-engined. However, it seems they preformed well enough

“Some were looking sorry for themselves amongst the steam locos around the turntable but others looked perky enough to be usable...”

Above: These 2003 photos from David Bott (*Railcar venues recalled*) show how Sernada do Vouga station in Portugal has undergone improvement and the attractive carved mural at Machinhata – is it still there today we wonder?

Left: Martin Eady (*Railcars in Peru*) pictured a former Portuguese railcar set in its new South American home in 2013.



after modifications for 20 years of work – even passing on to greater things, donating their chassis to create new units, the Class 9500.

Co-incidentally, like Phil I visited the Douro lines in the late 1990s and saw a number of the original sets parked in Régua station and in the depot on the other side of the Corgo Bridge. Some were looking sorry for themselves amongst the steam locos around the turntable but others looked perky enough to be usable.

Reading this reminded me of Phil Horton's 2017 article in *NGW123* on the Digne-Nice metre gauge line (the Chemins de fer de Provence – CP). A shortage of railcars there prompted the company to purchase six sets of redundant two-car units from the Mallorcan narrow gauge network where they were being replaced by newer vehicles.

The purchase was made in October 2015 and, whilst the rest were sent off to a firm in Lille for renovation, one set arrived at the Lingostiere works of the CP for preliminary trials.

Meanwhile, media reports suggested that the Mallorcan units would be starting work from 2016 as they were outshopped. The trials unit broke down though and sat outside the depot for some time in white livery and bearing the forlorn notice 'train d'essai' (*Test Train – Ed*) on the front window.

The transfer of the rest of the sets from Lille was put back to 2017 then 2018 and for various reasons the stock never came to the line. In the end, 2020 reports indicated that they were simply being scrapped.

The proposal has since been made to purchase eight brand-new single units but apparently none are yet on order and the line soldiers on with some new(ish) and a number of elderly units.

Sadly, reports in June claimed that the line in its current form may be in »



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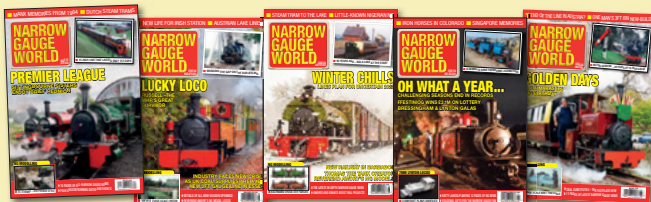
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trouble. Due to flooding and closure of the Moriez tunnel halfway along the line trains have only been operating over the southern half. A replacement bus service covers the northern half.

This problem and Covid have resulted in sharp falls in passengers and the Regional Council has proposed that the important first movements of the day – trains one and two Digne to Nice and return – should be discontinued. Additionally, works on repair of the Moriez tunnel, to enable a resumption of full line services, have been postponed from 2023 to an unspecified date.

Alf Cutts

Andrew C replies: Every so often a feature strikes a chord with a whole lot of our readership and *Remarkable Railcars* was certainly such a feature! Many thanks to the writers of the letters included here and others which insufficient space precluded us using.

Oakley memories

As well as the latest events and photos in *NGW*, it is always a

pleasure to see the early colour photos which continue to turn up. Those in *Manx Memories* (*NGW* 167, p36) are superb. Sometimes I wish that someone will publish photographs to bring to life some of my memories.

One is of a school visit to the Oakeley Slate Quarries in 1962 when, as far as I can remember, none of us had a camera. I would especially like to see a photograph of a converted slate truck of the type that was used to haul half a dozen of us up 'C' incline at a time, apparently in the days before health and safety!

I have seen photos of a specially constructed 'toast-rack seat' vehicle for taking parties on the inclines – it is pictured in J G Underwood's book *Slate from Blaenau Ffestiniog* published in 1988 but I have never seen anything like the simpler arrangement we travelled on.

Should it be of interest what follows are my original 'field week' notes, left virtually as written then, including every fact as I heard it on that day from the quarry staff.

"A visit to the Oakeley Slate Mines. Friday 20th July 1962.

Alf Cutts enclosed several photos with his most interesting letter *Secondhand Woes*. Above left on 20th September 1996 railcars 9711 and 9710 look in good condition stabled on the narrow gauge Corgo line platforms at Régua, Portugal.

Above: Two days later 9501 at right has just arrived at Régua with the 16.47 from Vila Real. Next to it stands 9502 and the set in the previous photo.

Below: On 27th April 2017 railcar X307 arrives at Lingostière in France, passing the stabled former Mallorcan railways test train.

Starting from the main office we walked down 'C' incline into a vast, crater-like, depression carved, through the years, out of the earth. This was about 600ft deep. At the bottom we were issued with lamps before we descended into the mines. We went down on a platform running on very large gauge rails. These platforms (there were two) are also used for bringing the small 1ft 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ in gauge waggons up, together with their blocks of slate.

From the bottom of this incline ('K incline') we walked along the tunnels of K level and descended by steps to L level where we saw a chamber which was about 100ft in width and height. In these [chambers] teams of workmen blast down the slate and then skillfully break it up with more charges. These pieces (of which the maximum size permitted is 3 tons) are taken by narrow gauge trucks to the inclines.

We then saw the drainage piles and pumps. The chambers are cut out so as to leave the harder rock (known as 'gwrthnant') for the roof. The mountain is honeycombed with these chambers of which about 30 are now being worked.

We returned up the steps and then went to the top of one of the inclines in the mine where empty narrow-gauge trucks were going on cables down the incline and coming up loaded. Then we returned to the main incline after seeing a further chamber and went up. Then we went back to the office level up 'C' incline in a converted slate truck which had two seats and so held six passengers.

Then we followed the way the slate blocks go to the cutting, cleaving, dressing shed. Here the blocks are split into pieces about 3ft square and a few inches thick, which are then further cut with revolving [circular] saws to about 2ft 6in by 1ft.

A cleaver then splits these to tile thicknesses and a dresser squares them on a dressing machine with



revolving blades. They are then stacked outside before being inspected and sent in trucks pulled by tiny diesel locomotives to the incline down to the Midland Region British Railways Station.

We learnt that the Oakeley Quarry now employs 200 men compared with 1000 at its greatest extent in the past. The Oakeley Quarry was opened in 1800 (the Diphwys Quarry was opened in 1755).

The previous day some of us spent a day exploring Blaenau Ffestiniog. We saw work underway on the link which would join the Conway Valley line to part of the former line to Bala. At Tan-y-Grisiau we learnt that 420 people were employed building the hydro-electric power plant, of which the power house appeared to be complete. The dams were approaching completion and the lower lake was filling up.

The workers lived in caravans and rows of huts nearby. Cementation Ltd., McAlpine and English Electric workers each had their own camp. I noted that 'it is hoped that the Ffestiniog Railway will reopen to Blaenau in the future'."

My family often visited North Wales, so 1962 was the fifth year that I had been able to ride on the FR to Tan-y-Bwlch. I still recall seeing Bessie Jones in her Welsh costume and the green lawn in front of her home only broken by the then inconspicuous rails. **David Gulliver**

Andrew C replies: Fascinating stuff from David and a trip I would like to have made – does any reader have in their collection pictures of the wagon he describes or indeed any images that might help recall his visit to the Oakley Quarry? If so please send them in to the address on page 3 and we'll use them here.

Two more Zs

I saw with interest the article in *NGW* 166 about building the South Australian Z class locomotive.

A further two of these were built by James Martin (builders numbers 134 & 135) for Western Australia in 1896 as the firm's P class, numbers 62 and 63. They differed from the South Australian examples in having larger bogie tenders.

They don't seem to have been well regarded, sold out of Government Railway service in 1912 and gone by 1929 – unlike the South Australian engines which lasted until the 1950s.

P63 achieved photographic immortality by heading the ministerial special for the opening of the Kalgoorlie railway in 1896. A picture of this event can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3c8f1yx>

Andy May

Past Present...



■ On 3rd September 1978 I took up position just west of Wernigerode station on the metre gauge Harzquerbahn in the then East Germany, to photograph 2-10-2T no 99 0235 leaving on the 16.40 to Nordhausen (*writes Keith Chester*).

As luck would have it, Reko 2-10-0 no 50 3556 at the head of a Halberstadt–Ilseburg freight was waved off at the same time.

Nearly 44 years later I returned briefly to Wernigerode. Plus ça change: the Harzquerbahn is still dedicated to transporting tourists through the Harz Mountains, whilst the locomotives and stock look much the same, just now all in super shine high gloss paint. But the level crossing has disappeared. The far busier road now burrows under the railway and pedestrians use a bridge from where the departure of no 99 7239 was conveniently witnessed on 21st May this year.



YouTube Watch: online films for the NG enthusiast

The online video site YouTube, which features clips uploaded by users, is a great source of narrow gauge items. If you've seen a clip our readers would enjoy, why not send in the link?



Nothing particularly spectacular about this film, just 12 minutes of escapism from the daily grind on the lesser-known narrow gauge line around Llanfair Caereinion in mid Wales. The privately-owned 15-inch gauge Rhiw Valley Light Railway (www.rvlr.co.uk) has returned this year to staging its monthly open days and this film from the event in May perfectly captures a relaxing day on a country railway. <https://youtu.be/JRhMV2anEpc>

That was the year that...

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

From 50 years ago

Ffestiniog Railway (1ft 11½in gauge)

'Blaster Bates', the well-known demolition expert from the north of England, has inspected Garnedd Tunnel. Whilst the actual opening up of the tunnel presents few problems for him, he feels that the spoil removal on such a cramped site would be difficult, and agrees that the simplest and easiest course of action is to divert the trackbed back on its original alignment outside the tunnel, where the improvement to the route can be done without affecting the operation of the railway. (NGN, Aug 1972)

One of those 'what ifs' from the days when heritage importance often played second fiddle to the basics of operating a steam railway! Of course no blasting out was done to improve the very restricted loading gauge of the 180ft long tunnel and the route wasn't diverted either, but in 1968 the trackbed was dug out to drop it a few inches and allow the FR's new 'Barn' carriages to pass through, making reopening to Dduallt possible. It's an interesting conundrum – today blasting the tunnel would be seen as appalling but one could argue that routing the track round it would be restoring heritage, just older heritage...

Brockham Museum Surrey

The two 'Resilient' class Fowler diesels arrived from APCM Cliffe, Kent on 8th July. These are the only 2ft gauge Fowlers in this country at present and are nos 21294 and 21295 of 1936. Their large size and weight of 6 tons necessitated the use of two low-loaders but both were well utilised as each conveyed one of the wooden-bodied tipping wagons as well as a good quantity of rail. (NGN, Aug 1972)



As the picture from the collection of the late Dave Billmore shows, the two locos were rather the worse for wear, having been dug out by hand from the bottom of a pit at the chalk quarry... One, 21295, was restored after the Brockham collection relocated to Amberley in the 1980s – it runs today as 'Peldon'. The other, 21294, went to the Great Bush Railway and then Leeds Industrial Museum where apparently it was dismantled – can anyone update us?

Sheppey Light Railway Leysdown-on-Sea, Isle of Sheppey, Kent (2ft gauge) This is the latest pleasure line to come into operation, being opened to the public during May. It is a well-constructed line with a raised platform and is a very good example of what can be done even with limited space.

Present motive power is Motor Rail 8711 which was delivered by Alan Keef... Trains consist of four open carriages on sprung skip chassis. A fare of 5p is charged for both adults and children for the ride which comprises a run out from the station, round the caravan site (which is well laid out with trees) returning to the station where there is a run-round loop for the loco. This is an attractive little line well worth a visit. (NGN, Aug 1972)

It may well have been 'an attractive little line' but clearly the Sheppey Light Railway did not last very long... Having never heard of it, the editor did an online search and could only find references to the standard-gauge Sheppey Light Railway, which was described as "perhaps Colonel Stephens' most successful light railway," but which closed in 1950. The description in NGN suggests the 2ft gauge line was inspired in name only by its standard gauge predecessor – can our ever-knowledgeable NGW readers come up with more information, even perhaps pictures, of this railway?

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 on page 45.



Diary & Special Events

■ No responsibility can be accepted for dates on these pages and anyone planning a visit for a ride or to an event should check the line's website and/or social media feeds for the latest update before travelling. Not all trains operate over full lines – on some days for example the Ffestiniog Railway only runs from Porthmadog to Tan-y-Blwch.

Special Events in August

Only events of interest to rail enthusiasts are included in this guide.

■ **Daily except Mon in Aug, Devon Railway Ctr Open Day Museum** nr Tiverton, 2ft gauge line. <http://devonrailwaycentre.co.uk>

■ **Wed to Sun in Aug, Talylyn Railway Sunset Steam Specials** Evening trains, 18.30 departure from Tywyn

■ **Every Saturday, Great Laxey Mines Railway operating;** novel 19-inch steam line on Isle of Man. www.laxeyminesrailway.im

■ **7th Aug, Apedale Valley Railway Welsh Slate Day.** Celebrating industry – ex-Penrhyn locos, passenger and demo slate trains

■ **7th Aug, Rhiw Valley Light Railway Open Weekend.** 15in gauge line close to Welshpool & Llanfair. www.rvlr.co.uk

■ **7th Aug, Apedale Valley Railway Kerr Stuart Day.** Visiting Wren 'Peter Pan', working alongside resident 'Stanhope'

■ **13th Aug, Bala Lake Railway 50th Anniversary.** Exact anniversary of opening – locos recreating original train makeup.

■ **13th Aug, Bressingham Steam in Miniature Weekend.** Miniature and model rail and road steam.

■ **27th-29th Aug, Bala Lake Railway 50th Anniversary Gala.** Visiting locos, double-heading and other attractions.

■ **27th-28th Aug, Corris Railway Model Railway Exhibition.** Y Plas, Machynlleth, various scales plus full timetable on railway.

■ **29th Aug, Apedale Valley Railway Classic Cars and Steam Trains.** Various period vehicles on show.

■ **29th Aug, Gartell Light Railway Open Day;** 2ft Somerset line, frequent timetable. 01963 370752, <http://newglr.weebly.com>

■ **2nd-4th Sept, Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway Steam Gala;** Visiting loco 'Premier' from Sittingbourne, road engines, displays

Tramways

- **Douglas Horse Tramway** www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/ Reopening training underway but date TBA – check website
- **Great Orme Tramway:** *Conwy* 01492 577877, www.greatormetramway.co.uk Open daily between 10am and 6pm-
- **Manx Electric Railway, Snaefell Mountain Railway:** *Isle of Man*, 01624 662525, www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/ Daily services
- **Seaton Tramway:** *Devon* 01297 20375, www.tram.co.uk Daily services from 10am

Miniature Railways

- **Audley End Railway** (10.25in): *Essex* 01799 541354, www.audley-end-railway.co.uk Daily services
- **Beer Heights Light Railway** (7.25in): *Devon* 01297 21542, www.pecorama.co.uk Daily services.
- **Lappa Valley Railway** (15, 10.25, 7.25in): *Cornwall* 01872 510317, www.lappavalleyrailway.co.uk Open daily.
- **Littlehampton Miniature Railway** (12.25in): *Sussex* www.littlehamptonminiaturerailway.com Daily except Mondays
- **Moors Valley Railway** (7.25in): *Hants* 01425 471415, www.moorsvalleyrailway.co.uk Daily services
- **North Bay Railway, Scarborough** (20in): *Yorks* 01723 368791, www.nbr.org.uk, Daily services
- **Rhyl Miniature Railway** (15in): *Clwyd* 01352 759109, www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk Daily services
- **South Downs Light Railway** (10.25in): *Sussex* 07518 753784, www.south-downs-railway.com Wknds, Weds, Bank Hol Gala

What's On	Mon 1st	Tue 2nd	Wed 3rd	Thu 4th	Fri 5th	Sat 6th	Sun 7th	Mon 8th	Tue 9th	Wed 10th	Thu 11th	Fri 12th	Sat 13th	Sun 14th	Mon 15th	Tue 16th	Wed 17th	Thu 18th	Fri 19th	Sat 20th	Sun 21st	Mon 22nd	Tue 23rd	Wed 24th	Thu 25th	Fri 26th	Sat 27th	Sun 28th	Mon 29th	Tue 30th	Wed 31st	
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Ravenglass & Eskdale Rly: 01229 717171 www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk																																

Open Day at Eaton Hall

James Waite had a brilliant day out at the end of June.



Sir Arthur Heywood's 15-inch gauge railways have intrigued me ever since I first came across them as a child. They were clearly conceived as working narrow gauge lines rather than miniature ones, and made railways like the Ffestiniog, then recently-revived, look positively large!

Sir Arthur was a keen enthusiast. He promoted what he described as minimum gauge railways as a practical form of transport for landed estates, mainly to bring in coal and provisions and to move agricultural machinery and produce. He built a demonstration line, the Duffield Bank Railway, at his home in Derbyshire, along with facilities to build locos and rolling stock.

He found no customers for more than 20 years until 1895, when the Duke of Westminster commissioned him to build a line more than four

miles long to connect Eaton Hall in Cheshire, his country home, with Balderton on the GWR's Birkenhead main line. In addition to freight stock there were passenger vehicles, mainly for the enjoyment of the Duke and his friends. King Edward VII travelled on the train on one occasion. 0-4-0T 'Katie' was the line's first loco, followed by two 0-6-0Ts, 'Shelagh' in 1904 and 'Ursula' in 1916, all Heywood-built.

When Ursula arrived Katie was sold to the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway, then newly converted to 15in gauge. The loco ended up at Fairbourne and was dismantled there in the 1920s, though its frames were reused as part of a wagon.

The 0-6-0Ts were scrapped when a Simplex loco took over in 1942, and the line closed four years later. The Narrow Gauge Railway Museum

"Sir Arthur promoted what he described as minimum gauge railways as a practical form of transport for landed estates..."

at Tywyn acquired the nameplates of all three of the old locos, along with the frames of Katie which later returned to Ravenglass and a new loco was built around them. James Waterfield, a Heywood expert, has built a new Ursula and carriages, but they are not on public display.

Rare events

In 1996 the Eaton Hall railway was rebuilt as a balloon loop around parkland, complete with a new Katie and passenger vehicles, so now there are two Katies! It runs for the public only occasionally when the Hall's spectacular gardens and grounds are opened as charity events. I've wanted to visit for years, but these events are often on bank holidays, not the best time for long-distance travel. Happily one in June this year was just right!

Katie and train looked splendid at the station. It's close to the original location and the old carriage shed, an ornate black-and-white building, is now home to the loco and train. The friendly staff showed us to the first class carriage, a great treat and my wife and I really enjoyed our ride.

Tickets for open days are greatly in demand and it's worth booking well in advance as they are not available on the day at the gate. There will be two further open days in 2022, on 31st July and 28th August. **NGW**

More Information

Details of Eaton Railway events are posted on the estate's website: www.grosvenor.com/rural-estates/eaton-estate/charity-hosted-events



Above: A train at the station of the Eaton Hall Railway being tended by the friendly staff.

Left: The new 'Katie' outside the old carriage shed.

Photos by James Waite, 26th June 2022

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