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Cover: Well-known loco, new location. Manning Wardle 0-6-2T no 1877, previously known as 'Chevallier' and a loco that has run at various locations around the UK, is now in Romania on the Sibiu to Agnita line. In this issue Fairbourne Railway chief engineer Harry Billmore describes the unique appeal of footplate duties on a Romanian preservation project. The inset shows a train on the Isle of Man Railway – this month we dissect a far-reaching report on the future of the Manx railways.

Photos: David Rowbotham
and Joey Evans

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Good things come in...



"In a vibrant but challenging heritage railway environment the Volk's has been doing its thing for more than 140 years..."

Photo: It's not big, nor spectacular, but the Volk's Electric Railway is unique, a pioneering line and an important part of narrow gauge history, operated today by a small but enthusiastic team – its HRA Railway of the Year award was well deserved. Photo: Fraser Hay/VER

Welcome to *NGW* 182 and what a couple of months it's been for the narrow gauge! Traditionally at this time of year I worry how I am going to fit all the latest news in what is the last of the winter bi-monthly issues before we make our usual and welcome transition to monthly publication for the summer, and this year those thoughts are very pertinent...

This is the final page of the issue to be put together and these words are being written particularly late on press deadline day, as I've just returned to mid-Wales from the south coast and my first-ever attendance at the HRA – Heritage Railway Association – Awards, a very enjoyable evening.

Officially I was there in my role as a Welshpool & Llanfair Trustee, supporting our member Daisy Shennan who was shortlisted for the Young Volunteer of the Year Award. Daisy came away with a Highly Commended certificate from a category which the judges said was always hard to judge and this year exceptionally so. Lord Faulkner, in whose name the award is presented, urged everyone at the event to read the citations of the four shortlisted candidates in the official programme. "They are our future, and they are inspiring," he said.

Making their mark

Of course being present I also had my *NGW* notepad out (well the Notes app on my phone!) to report first-hand on what was

another exceptional year for the narrow gauge. As we detail on page 10 projects and personalities were nominated and won Awards, beating some of the largest and most prominent standard-gauge projects.

While it was perhaps no surprise that the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's new-build Double Fairlie 'James Spooner' win the engineering award, it was good to see another young personality, the FF&WHR's Osian Hughes, take the Rising Star Award, marketing and environmental accolades for respectively the Ravenglass & Eskdale Reailway and Seaton Tramway, and particularly pleasing to see the Talyllyn's highly innovative Tracksiders win Team of the Year – the TR initiative gets the youngest of enthusiasts involved in hands-on volunteering virtually before they even realise they are enthusiasts.

Friends Electric

The highlight was the much-prized award of Railway of the Year. From an all-narrow gauge shortlist (how often does that happen?) the Award went to Brighton's own Volk's Electric Railway.

Earlier in the day a party of Awards attendees, including me, had enjoyed a highly interesting behind-the-scenes tour of the Volk's line. Brought up in Horley, close to Gatwick Airport, your Editor has very fond personal memories of the Volk's – when I was a child my grandparents used to take me on days out which consisted of a main-

line train to Brighton, walk down to the seafront and always a ride on the Volk's. This was usually followed by a present and the best was one day when they bought me a live-steam Mamod model traction engine!

Talking to the Volk's team this weekend I emphasised to them that to *NGW* their railway is just as important as the most well-known lines running through the delights of Snowdonia – it was great to see that the HRA had the same view.

The Volk's is a tiny railway with only a dozen or so people looking after it. It is also a superb example of co-operation as Brighton Council owns and runs it while the volunteers of the Volk's Electric Railway Association (VERA), maintain the track and on occasions get to operate the trains over a weekend, as they did on this one.

In a vibrant but challenging heritage railway environment the Volk's has been doing its thing for more than 140 years, giving daytrippers a Victorian travel experience in a prime seaside location, and as such it is a very worthy winner of the HRA's Railway of the Year.

As I write these words many railways are coming to life for the first time in 2024 to run trains over the February half-term. As you'll see from our news pages, we have a whole lot of good stuff to look forward to over the coming season. Enjoy your *NGW*, and see you back here next month!

Andrew Charman



Fire Queen leads loco exodus from Penrhyn

A leading contender for the title of oldest narrow-gauge locomotive has been moved to a temporary new home at the Vale of Rheidol Railway.

'Fire Queen', built by Horlock & Co in 1848 for the 4ft gauge Padarn Railway, arrived at the VoR's new museum, created in the former standard-gauge shed at Aberystwyth, in late January. The loco had been transferred from the Penrhyn Castle in North Wales, where it has been displayed for more than half a century.

When the museum opens at the start of the VoR's operating season on 23rd March, the loco will be on display along with the former Padarn Railway Director's Carriage, which was also transferred from Penrhyn.

Fire Queen worked on the Padarn line until 1886, taking slate from Dinorwic Quarry to the sea at Port Dinorwic. After withdrawal sister loco 'Jenny Lind' was scrapped but Fire Queen was stored in its shed at Gilfach Ddu, Llanberis, eventually being bricked up in it.

After the closure of Dinorwic quarry in 1969 the loco was purchased and loaned to the museum that had been set up in the stable block of Penrhyn Castle.

The castle, built in the 19th century by the owner of Penrhyn Quarry, Dinorwic's great rival in the slate trade, is now owned by the National Trust – according to the VoR press release the on-loan loco and carriage were accepted in lieu of tax by HM Treasury in 2021.

The castle museum is being re-themed to reflect quarrying at Penrhyn, centred on Hunslet 0-4-0ST 'Charles'. Items unrelated to Penrhyn are being disposed of, including 3ft gauge Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0 'Kettering Furnaces No.3' (see story at right).

Fire Queen and the Director's carriage

will remain at Aberystwyth throughout 2024 but the eventual plan is for the loco to return home to Gilfach Ddu, now the National Slate Museum, where its original shed is under restoration with the aid of UK Government Levelling Up funding.

The Director's Coach will eventually go to the slate-themed heritage centre established at the Bala Lake Railway. VoR managing director Llŷr ap Iolo paid tribute to Julian Birley, chairman of the Bala Lake Railway Trust, for both offering the Director's Coach for short-term display until the BLR is ready to exhibit it, and for

recommending the VoR to the county council Cyngor Gwynedd as a possible temporary home for Fire Queen.

"It is good that the public can continue to enjoy it, rather than it going into temporary storage behind closed doors," Llŷr said. "We are really happy to have Fire Queen on public display, until it returns home to where it belongs at Gilfach Ddu".

Above: In late January 'Fire Queen' and the Padarn Railway Director's Coach were established in their new and rather more spacious temporary home. Photo: VoR

Kettering ironstone loco to return to steam in Ireland

The new direction being undertaken by the National Trust at Penrhyn Castle Industrial Museum has required rehoming six locomotives – *NGW* understands these are four standard gauge engines, 'Fire Queen' and 3ft gauge Black Hawthorn 0-4-0ST 'Kettering Furnaces No. 3', which is heading for Ireland and a return to steam.

Built in 1885 to serve ironstone quarries near Kettering in Northamptonshire, the loco has resided in the Penrhyn museum since the quarry ceased operations in 1962.

Now it will be restored to run on the Waterford & Suir Valley Railway, which has had ambitions to own a steam loco for some time. The restoration will be undertaken by an as-yet unnamed workshop in the north of England.

The W&SVR has launched a 250,000 Euro appeal to raise the funds to restore the loco and make infrastructure changes to enable steam operation. The final cost will

not be able to be estimated until the loco is dismantled – it is complete with no components missing but it is suspected that a new boiler will be required.

Below: 'Kettering Furnaces No. 3' in the cramped conditions of the museum at Penrhyn. Now it is to return to steam.

Photo: Tom Parnell/Wikipedia Commons



Stuart returns as manager of Brecon line

The pull of the narrow gauge has proven too strong for former Talylyn Railway general manager Stuart Williams – only a year after leaving the mid-Wales line to manage a project promoting the Orkney Islands, Stuart will return to Wales this summer to take over as manager of the Brecon Mountain Railway.

Based in Merthyr Tydfil, south Wales, the 2ft gauge Brecon line is in the process of being merged with the Vale of Rheidol Railway. VoR managing director Llŷr ap Iolo told *NGW* that he is very excited to have appointed Stuart. “We are fortunate to have recruited such an experienced and capable person to fill the role – we are looking forward to working with him to develop plans to expand the visitor experience in the future, as we continue the good work of the Brecon Mountain Railway,” Llŷr said.

Before taking up his role at the Talylyn in 2017 Stuart was a volunteer and director at the Dean Forest Railway from 2010 to 2017, as well as being a director of the Heritage Railway Association from 2020 to 2023. He remains a stakeholder in County Marquees, a company which he co-founded back in the 1990s.

Stuart said he was thrilled to be taking up his new post. “My experience in Orkney has proven instrumental in gaining experience in effective collaboration with funders, community development, and the essential transition to Net Zero skills that will undoubtedly contribute to the success of my new role,” he said. “The Brecon Mountain Railway boasts immense potential, and I eagerly anticipate collaborating with the existing staff, as well as partnering with Llŷr and his team at the Vale of Rheidol Railway”.

Both the Brecon and Rheidol lines will commence their 2024 operating seasons on 23rd March.

Below: Stuart Williams, heading back to Wales.
Photo: Andrew Charman



Palmerston back to VoR for overhaul and festival



Ffestiniog Railway England 0-4-0ST ‘Palmerston’ is to return to the Vale of Rheidol Railway for display, overhaul and then a starring role at the line’s August Steam Festival.

The agreement to send the 1864-built loco south is the result of an increasing collaboration between the two railways as they both develop new visitor experiences. The VoR will open its new visitor centre and museum in the former standard-gauge loco shed at Aberystwyth from 23rd March, while the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway is developing a behind-the-scenes tour at its Boston Lodge Works in Porthmadog – this will open later in 2024.

Palmerston was due to be transferred to the VoR in late February. The loco will be displayed in the Aberystwyth museum until July, when it will enter the line’s workshops for work to return it to traffic.

Palmerston will then be a star attraction at the Rheidol Steam Festival. This event, being held over the August bank holiday weekend of 24th-26th August, will feature a number of attractions including an intensive timetable.

Palmerston will be hauling trains to Devil’s Bridge during the Festival, and after the conclusion of the event will return to Porthmadog in time to play its part in the

Ffestiniog’s traditional Bygones Weekend on 4th-6th October.

This will be Palmerston’s fourth visit to the Rheidol. The loco worked on the mid-Wales line in 1914-15 and 1921-22, and returned in September 2014, the oldest surviving engine to run on the line.

VoR managing director Llŷr ap Iolo said all at the line were looking forward to the loco running at the August event, adding: “It has been ten years since its last visit to Aberystwyth, so it will be great to have it here again for all to experience once more”.

FF&WHR general manager Paul Lewin highlighted the visitor experiences that both railways are developing. “We have invested heavily in interpretation and conservation of the historic loco works at Boston Lodge – rather than simply catching a fleeting glimpse of our locos and workshops, we will invite our visitors right in to the heart of the place.”

“Similarly, the Rheidol team are making their impressive collection openly available for the first time – this is all great news for visitors, and it makes so much sense for us to work together.”

Above: ‘Palmerston’ last ran on the Vale of Rheidol in 2014, seen here alongside resident 2-6-2T ‘Llywelyn’.
Photo: David Mitchell



■ The Great Whipsnade Railway reopens for 2024 over weekends in March with daily running from April. The Berkshire zoo line enjoyed its best-ever season in 2022 – more than 200,000 passengers made it very likely the busiest narrow gauge steam railway in the UK. The busiest UK narrow gauge railway of all is without doubt the 4ft gauge Glasgow Underground, carrying 8 million passengers a year! *Photo: James Kindred*



Dougal off to Kent – and a return to steam

The Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway's smallest steam locomotive is to be returned to steam – in Kent.

The W&LLR has agreed a four-year loan of Barclay 0-4-0T 'Dougal' (2207/1946) with fellow 2ft 6in gauge line the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway.

Built originally for the Provan gasworks in Glasgow and acquired in 1967 by then W&LLR general manager Ralph Russell, Dougal has been out of service since 2014 awaiting boiler repairs.

The diminutive loco is not suitable to work passenger services on the challenging Welshpool line and so was not a priority for overhaul. But the agreement with the S&KLR will see the Kent line carry out the work needed to return Dougal to steam alongside locally-based W&LLR volunteers, and then operate it over the four-year period, the loco returning to the W&LLR for special events.

The relationship between the two lines has grown closer in recent years with S&K locos 'Superb' and 'Premier' appearing at W&LLR Galas, along with one of the former Chattenden & Upnor bogie acquired from the Welsh line in 1978.

Commenting on the agreement W&LLR Chairman Steve Clews thanked the S&KLR

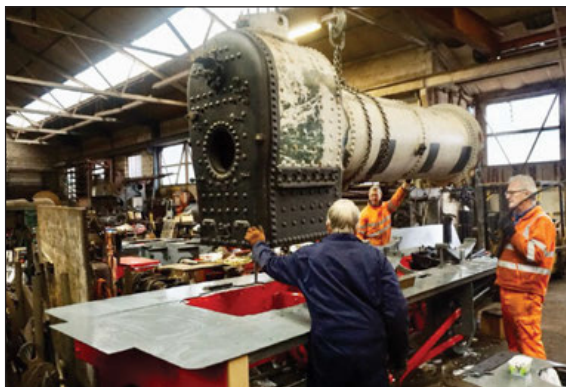
for its generous offer to have the Welsh line's volunteers involved in the overhaul. "It represents a great opportunity for us to work more closely with our friends at Sittingbourne whilst returning to service a much loved locomotive for both railways to make the most of," Steve said.

SKLR Chairman Liz Fuller is pleased to have enabled south-east based W&L volunteers to work on one of the line's locos without having the long journey to Wales. "Sharing the engine shed and facilities with our volunteers can only strengthen the relationship between the two railways as well as sharing specialist skills," Liz said.

■ Dougal was last steamed, at reduced pressure, in early 2019 in Taiwan as part of a twinning agreement between the W&LLR and the Taiwan Sugar Co, which has turned some of its former sugar lines into heritage operations. *NGW* editor Andrew Charman, attending the event in his role as a W&LLR Trustee, said that Dougal created enormous media interest, extending to appearances on a number of national TV news reports.

Above: 'Dougal' was last steamed in early 2019 on the other side of the world to Wales, proving a national star on a visit to Taiwan.

Photo: Nai-Yi Hsu via W&LLR



■ The team working on the cosmetic restoration of Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0ST 'Handyman' at Workshop X in Killamarsh, Cumbria made a trial fit of the boiler into the restored frames on 23rd January. Work is proceeding rapidly on the locomotive, which is now owned by the Stafford Narrow Gauge Trust. Once restored it will be displayed in the Trust's Roundhouse Museum near Tamworth in Staffordshire.

Photo: Mike Lynskey/Workshop X

Decauville pair for FR event

The oldest and the youngest working Decauville locomotives will be heading for the Ffestiniog Railway's Friends event in May.

Both 'Chuquitanta', (36/1885) and 'Lily' (648/ 1912) are owned by the Richmond Light Railway in Kent. Chuquitanta, a Couillet-built engine is the oldest surviving operational Decauville in the world, supplied to the Rodriguez sugar cane plantation in Peru and acquired for restoration by the Richmond line in 2004.

Lily, a Type 3 Decauville and the youngest of its type currently in operation, was delivered new to the Thessaly Railway in Volos, Greece and acquired by the Richmond Light Railway in 2023.

The Friends weekend on 4th-5th May centres around the Ffestiniog Railway Society's AGM and consists of a variety of special workings, workshop tours and displays arranged for Society members.

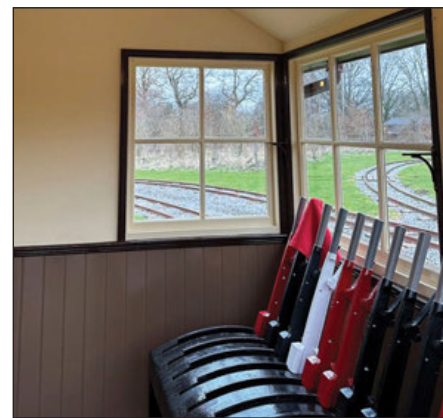
On the Richmond line recent work has included the construction of a new signal box and overhaul of a 10-lever frame which has been installed in the box. It will control all of the points in the Richmond station area – two are mechanical and the balance electric with new point motors designed for the line.

Trackwork underway includes the relaying of the engine shed yard, replacing the life-expired timber sleepers with a combination of steel and plastic sleepers and adding a new ashpit on the main entry line to the shed. Additionally the New Barn branch line is to be lifted and relaid with all-new steel sleepers.

The star of the RLR's annual charity Steam Fair on 10th August will be Bagnall 0-4-OST 'Pixie'. Restoration of the loco has recently been completed and it has been undergoing running-in trials on the Ffestiniog Railway – watch for more on this loco in a coming issue of *NGW*.

Tickets for the Steam Fair go on sale on 1st March from <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/rlr> or via the line's Facebook page.

Below: The new signal box will control operations on the Kent line. *Photo: RLR*





Busy Richmond line puts Hudswell loco up for sale

The private Richmond Light Railway has decided to offer its 2ft gauge Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0, works no 1653, for sale following a review of its collection which now extends to some 14 steam locomotives.

"We had always had plans to restore the Hudswell and keep it at either the Ffestiniog or the Welsh Highland Railway because it's too large to run at Richmond," RLR owner Jeremy Martin told *NGW*.

"However after a review of the collection and the number of engines still to restore we have decided that giving someone else the opportunity would be the most prudent decision – we have seven steam engines in operating condition with another six or seven to restore so we have a full workload.

Jeremy described the Hudswell as "a lovely engine – it's essentially the same as 'Fiji' at Statfold Barn but with a larger boiler and 10-inch diameter cylinders, so it has lots of power and would be ideal for a public or private railway."

The locomotive is described as essentially complete but in a fully stripped condition for assessment, while it will require a complete new tender. Serious enquirers can obtain more details from Jeremy at j.martin@xmine.co.uk or by calling 07748 687366.

Above: The Hudswell loco will require restoration and a new tender.

Photo: John Browning Collection/RLR

Society funds Covid-delayed overhaul

The Ffestiniog Railway's former Penrhyn Quarries Hunslet 2-4-0 'Linda' has returned to service following the completion of a delayed overhaul.

The loco, sister to 'Blanche' also on the FR and 'Charles' in the Penrhyn Castle Museum, was withdrawn from service in 2019 for a ten-year overhaul. The boiler work was completed quickly but the Covid pandemic stalled work on the chassis, at a time when the staff at the FR's Boston Lodge works were also overhauling double-Fairlie 'David Lloyd George' and constructing the new Fairlie 'James Spooner'. As a result Linda's return to traffic was delayed beyond an intended celebration of the loco's 60 years of service on the FR in 2022.

The comprehensive overhaul has included a heavy rebuild of the tender and inevitable work on the smokebox caused by ten years of high-mileage use. Linda made running-in turns on winter shuttle trains between Porthmadog and Minffordd before heading into the paint shop ahead of an anticipated full return to traffic in March.

The cost of the overhaul was more than £80,000, funded by members of the

Ffestiniog Railway Society. "We are eternally grateful to them for their support," said FR general manager Paul Lewin. "Despite the recent years being financially challenging for everyone, the members have continued to dig deep – I can't emphasise enough how grateful we all are."

Society members have also funded patterns for a new pair of replacement cylinders that will be required for Linda before long. While Blanche was converted to piston vales many years ago, Linda will retain its slide valves.

Photo: Chris Parry/FR (see also Gallery pages)



BRIEF LINES



The Manx diesel has seldom been seen outside the shed.

Photo in 2014 by James Waite

£249K white elephant?

The Manx Government has spent £249,000 on attempted repairs to the Isle of Man Steam Railway's diesel locomotive no 21, which has worked on just 31 days since being acquired for £400,000 in 2013. Responding to a Freedom of Information request the Government's Department of Infrastructure estimated that the loco will need another £40,000 of work to make it fit for service.

Fire damages Cliff Lift

The historic Saltburn Cliff Lift suffered what was described as "extensive damage" to its lower station in a fire on 15th January. The blaze at the 4ft 2½in gauge North Yorkshire lift, which dates from 1884, was thought to have been caused by an electrical fault.

Donegal rebrands

Donegal Railway Heritage Centre is rebranding itself and swapping its Centre tag, in use since its 1995 opening in the former Donegal Town railway station, for the title of museum. The move follows the popular enthusiast and tourist attraction's journey towards full museum status, which it will be pursuing during 2024.

SLR carriage back

Former Sierra Leone Government Railways bogie carriage no 1066 was returned to the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway on 15th December following extensive refurbishment at Statfold Engineering. The work carried out has included converting the interior from 3rd to 2nd class format, replacing the longitudinal bench seating with traditional seats and tables and converting the former guard's compartment and toilet into a small servery – this will allow use of the carriage for the railway's on-train catering services.



Volk's tops night of narrow gauge success

The Volk's Electric Railway proved the big winner in the 2024 HRA Awards, on a night where a host of narrow-gauge projects and people were successful despite being ranged against very high-profile standard-gauge opposition.

Organised by the Heritage Railway Association and colloquially known as the heritage rail 'Oscars', this year's event was held on 10th February in the Sussex seaside city of Brighton, home to the Volk's line.

The 140-year old 2ft 8½-inch gauge line took the Railway of the Year title, emerging from a remarkable all-narrow gauge shortlist which also included the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway and Seaton Tramway.

The award citation stated that the Volk's line's "friendly staff and impeccably preserved cars offer visitors a unique and unparalleled Victorian seaside experience."

It also highlighted the line's commitment to sustainability, extending to preserving its natural surroundings – "they are environmental pioneers," the citation read.

The Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's construction of new-build double-Fairlie locomotive 'James Spooner' won the Coiley Award for Steam Locomotive Engineering, beating the Richmond Light Railway's restoration of Bagnall 0-4-0ST 'Pixie' and the overhaul of main-line A4 Pacific 'Sir Nigel Gresley'.

The Seaton Tramway was triumphant in

the Environmental Innovation Award for its 'Natural Seaton' Festival which highlights the natural and cultural heritage of the tramway's surroundings.

Winning for its marketing and communications was the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway. And staying in marketing, the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's Osian Hughes was named the movement's 2024 Rising Star for bringing a fresh but informed perspective to the way the Welsh line carries out its marketing.

Finally one of the most popular awards of the evening was taken by the Talylyn Railway's Tracksiders. This innovative programme, started on the Welsh line in 1997, has seen under-14s given the chance to carry out hands-on volunteering on the line, at the same time keeping their parents involved at a time when many railways lose volunteers for a period of several years while they bring up their families.

Over the years Tracksiders have carried out 4,200 days of volunteering and seven members who took part in the 1998 event are still on the line some 24 years later.

Above: Volk's Electric Railway members and staff celebrate their Railway of the Year accolade on the night. Photo: Andrew Charman

Below: 'James Spooner' beat an A4 Pacific to the engineering award.

Photo: Chris Parry/FFWHR

Tweeddale piles up panels ready for tracklaying

Hopes that the planned Tweeddale Heritage Railway would be able to start laying track on its Scottish borders site in 2023 were thwarted by planning and landowner negotiations taking longer than expected (*reports Hugh Dougherty*).

Volunteers on what is set to become Scotland's newest narrow gauge railway have, however, used their time to stockpile more than 1,000 yards of track to allow laying to start as soon as possible – once all hurdles have been cleared.

The railway has acquired a stock of 2ft gauge track panels from the former peat extraction railways of Wm Sinclair & Company at Ryflat, near Carnwath, and Auchencoch at Penicuik.

Tweeddale members plan to regauge the track panels to the 2ft 6in gauge of the fledgling line's locomotives, using 40 and 30lb to the yard rails on the running line and 25lb rail in sidings. Included with the rails are fishplates and some steel sleepers.

According to the railway's founding member, Jim O'Neill, the THR is now well prepared to make history by getting its first track down near Broughton.

"We were disappointed that planning and land negotiations have lasted longer than we would have expected or wanted, but we're quite certain that all will soon be well and that we'll be able to start laying the line and crucially, reveal the railway's location which we're not able to identify while negotiations continue," Jim said.

"Stockpiling the track as it became available made eminent sense while we've also been working on overhauling our diesel locomotives over the winter. We're looking forward to later this year when, we're very hopeful, that the Tweeddale Heritage Railway will take to the tracks."

Below: Track panels in store awaiting regauging and laying at the THR's yard and workshop near Broughton. Photo: THR





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Hope for original boiler as Darj overhaul begins

The overhaul of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway 0-4-0ST B-Class No. 19 began on 8th January in the workshops of the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust where the loco now resides.

The Darjeeling Tank Locomotive Trust (DTLT), which was successful in acquiring the loco last year following the death of former owner Adrian Shooter, decided not to have one last steaming before the boiler ticket expired in February but to get the overhaul underway with the hope of having 19B back in steam for the summer.

The first major task was to dismantle the loco so that the boiler could be lifted for analysis. The Trust hopes that no major repairs will be required as any fundamental issues would require a new boiler to be built at an estimated cost of £150,000.

The boiler was lifted, taken into the workshop and the tubes extracted, followed by many hours of work removing scale, sludge and all other contaminants.

DTLT Chair Jeremy Davey commented that the great fear was to find a catastrophic fault; "Newer boilers can be given a replacement barrel or inner firebox, but not with this one. It is so original it would simply be wrong to Trigger's broom it!"

The only non-original components in the boiler are the front tubeplate and a patch behind it, the tubes, some stays, the washout bosses, and some patches in the firebox. "Everything else is 135 years old," Jeremy said.

"With the boiler removed, you can see the remains of the studs for the original boilermaker's plate – this loco has patina and history in spades."

DTLT treasurer 'Fuzz' Jordan confirmed some work will be needed. "We need to replace pieces of plating on the lower sides of the outer firebox where it has sat between the frames and the outside has suffered corrosion."

As *NGW* went to press, however, there were hopes that the overhaul would be a

straightforward repair with no major work needed identified so far. This could change after shotblasting and the mandatory Non Destructive Testing but boilermith John Glaze said to Jeremy; "I'm confident we can give this boiler another 10 years."

The DTLT will hold a second Supporters Day at Statfold in early April, with progress on the overhaul on view and future plans to be discussed.

The Trust is also looking to boost its volunteer team; "especially those that enjoy hands-on engineering getting their hands dirty – there's a lot of work to do on the chassis, frames and other loco parts with no special skills required."

More details of the Trust's work are on the website at www.darjeelingtank.org.uk

Above: Darjeeling 19B's boiler in the Statfold workshop, with hopes it still has plenty of life in it. Photo: DTLT



The availability of the Ruislip tamper greatly pleased the Fairbourne's winter track gang.
Photo: Harry Billmore/FR

Loco swap at Ruislip and Fairbourne

The 12¼-inch gauge Fairbourne Railway and the 12-inch gauge Ruislip Lido Railway will be swapping locomotives for their respective Galas over the next couple of months.

The Welsh line's Darjeeling-style 0-4-0 'Sherpa' will be heading for Greater London to be the star guest at the Ruislip line's May bank holiday Gala on 4th-6th May. Then at the end of the month Ruislip's Penrhyn Hunslet style 2-4-0ST 'Mad Bess' will head to mid Wales with Sherpa to be the guest at the Fairbourne Gala over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend of 25th-27th May.

The two lines have been enjoying closer co-operation in recent times and the Fairbourne recently made use of the Ruislip line's tamping machine for winter trackwork, a move which delighted the Welsh line's track gang.

Details of both gala events are on the lines' websites (see page 48).

Connemara heads east with temporary 3ft line

The Connemara Railway project in Galway, Ireland has made significant progress on tracklaying, reaching 1km east of its Maam Cross station base in the direction of Oughterard, the next station towards Galway (*writes Hugh Dougherty*). A temporary railhead has been established using 3ft gauge track, and a test train has run as a prelude to passenger operations.

Chairman Jim Deegan said that the trackbed that had not been disturbed since closure of the line in 1935 was cleared. "(We) laid our narrow gauge track which will remain in place as a temporary measure until we lay our permanent 5ft 3in gauge track in the future."

"The narrow gauge will allow us to start passenger services from Maam Cross in the summer – the relaid track is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers in the heart of the wildest Connemara bogs in the middle of a harsh winter!"

The line's replica signal cabin at the west end of Maam Cross Station has been completed and fully fitted out with a lever frame, rescued from Ennis South cabin thanks to Iarnrod Eireann co-operation.

"We're still looking for funds and more volunteers to help us make our dream come true," said Jim. "If anyone can help, either with a donation, hands-on or in-kind assistance, please e-mail us at info@connemararailway.ie". Photo: Jim Deegan/CR





Redundant Glasgow subway cars on offer

Two brand-new trains made their service debut on the 4ft gauge tracks of the Glasgow Subway on 11th December (reports *Hugh Dougherty*).

The Stadler-built trains will be phased into service to run alongside the 44-year-old Metro Cammell sets which will be withdrawn as more new units come on stream. Once station works including fitting platform doors are complete the Stadler sets will work in driverless mode.

The older trains, built between 1977 and 1979 to replace the original subway rolling stock of 1896, will be surplus to requirements and Subway operator Strathclyde Partnership for Transport is putting out a call to preservationists and museums to put in bids for the stock.

Project director Mark Toner is keen to see the 1979-built stock go to good homes as part of SPT valuing the heritage of the railway. "We are aware that the gauge is not a common one but much of the equipment would be of interest and of use to preserved electric traction groups, perhaps in the heritage tramway field," he said.

The withdrawn trains have traditional Westinghouse compressors and GEC traction motors and contactors. An earlier call in 2016, in the belief that the new trains would be in service by 2020, sparked interest from preservation groups and museums. Glasgow Riverside Museum, which already houses original Subway carriages, is very likely to accept a train.

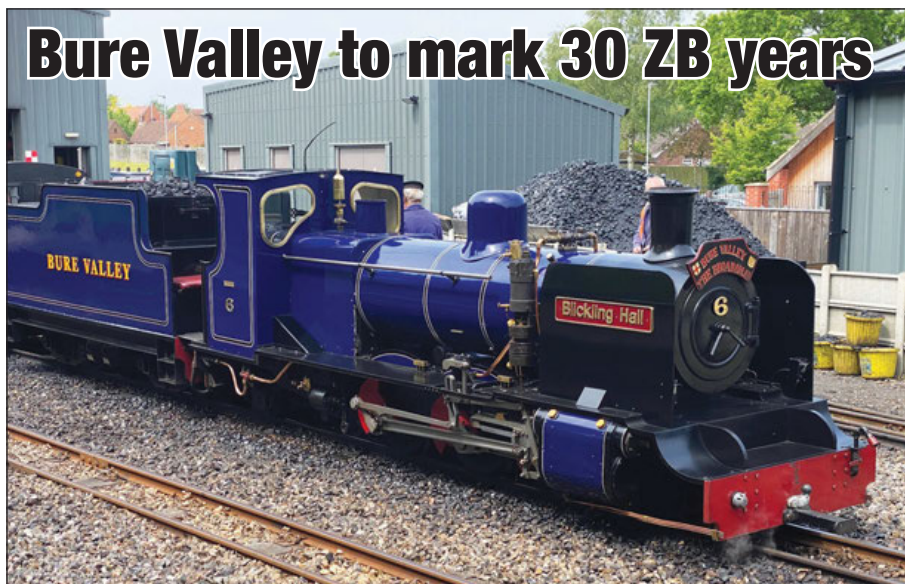
SPT is aware that circumstances may have changed for many groups in the interim, and is renewing the call for interest in complete trains, motor coaches, trailers and equipment. Enquiries can be made to SPT via enquiry@spt.co.uk

Arrival of the new stock (above) means the old cars (below) need new homes.

Photos: SPT/Hugh Dougherty



Bure Valley to mark 30 ZB years



The Bure Valley Railway will stage a celebration on 27th April marking the 30th anniversary of two locomotives specially designed for the line.

When the Norfolk 15-inch gauge line opened in 1990 it had no steam locomotives of its own so locos were hired from the Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway in Kent. These were found unsuitable for the undulating route of the line and following their return to Kent in 1991 locos purchased by the BVR proved equally unsuited to the line.

In 1994 two new steam locomotives were designed specifically for the Bure Valley, the two loosely based upon the Indian Railways 2ft 6in gauge ZB class – the term ZB was immediately adopted at

the line when referring to these locos.

Once initial faults were ironed out the two, 'Blickling Hall' and 'Spitfire' transformed the railway with their capabilities. They have since been rebuilt and improved over the years and are regarded by BVR staff as reliable and powerful locos, capable of hauling the heaviest of trains along the line unassisted.

The design proved so successful that the line subsequently had two tank engine versions built – 'John of Gaunt' and 'Mark Timothy' entered service in 1997 and 2004.

The anniversary day is planned to feature all four locomotives in service and a number of trains double headed. Visitors will have unlimited travel on the day for the same price as a return fare. *Photo: BVR*

Astbury reaches end of the line

The 10¼-inch gauge Astbury Light Railway ran its last weekend of services on 20th-21st January after admitting defeat in a battle with the local council for permanent planning permission.

The line had been laid down over a 700-yard route at Glebe Farm in Astbury, near Congleton in Cheshire in 2017 and was described as the "steepest adhesion-worked railway in Britain" with a climb out of the farm claimed to be at 1 in 9.

Owner Adam Jeffrey's continued efforts to obtain permanent planning permission, enabling him to build a stock shed, were rejected by the local council on the basis of the line being laid on Green Belt land.

Stock operated on the line prior to its closure included Exmoor Steam Railway-built 'Pendragon', 2-6-0 'Norfolk Pioneer' built in 2011 by the chief engineer of the Wells & Walsingham Railway in Norfolk, and most recently a bo-bo diesel that was built in 1960 for the Shillingstone

Light Railway of Sir Thomas Salt, the first chairman of the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway in the preservation era.

At the time of going to press there was no indication of any future home for the Astbury line's stock.

■ *Exmoor on the 10¼ – see page 20.*

Below: Last train: Exmoor-built 'Pendragon' and the bo-bo top-and-tail the final working up the 1 in 9 gradient of the Astbury Light Railway on 21st January.

Photo: Donald Brooks



Review calls for investment in railways but fears remain



A review into the Government-operated railways and tramways on the Isle of Man, which sparked fears of both the Manx Electric Railway (MER) and the Isle of Man Steam Railway (IOMSR) being reduced in length, has instead recommended against any cutting back of lines and concluded that the lines need a 10-to-15-year investment strategy to make better use of them as an asset to the island's economy.

The findings have, however, failed to dispel fears among enthusiasts that there is an ongoing effort to cut heritage services, with evidence already that the Manx Government is attempting to distance itself from the findings of the report.

The Isle of Man Government appointed transport consultants SYSTRA in April 2023 to look into the operation of the IOMSR, MER, Snaefell Mountain Railway and Douglas Bay Horse Tramway.

SYSTRA was set the task of evaluating the effectiveness of the railways but the language of some of its terms of reference rang alarm bells with railway supporters, particularly the reference to "consideration of the alternative use of any railway assets found to be no longer required".

Rumours quickly grew that there were plans to effectively cut the 17-mile long MER in half by closing the section between Laxey and the northern terminus of Ramsey, and to reduce the IOMSR by more than four miles by axing the section between Castletown and Port Erin.

These fears were multiplied when a Freedom of Information Request revealed that in November the Government had asked SYSTRA to look again at the findings of its draft report before it was published, including consideration of replacing sections of closed line with a cycle path.

However when finally published on 9th January the report found that cutting the Castletown to Port Erin section of the IOMSR would cause "disbenefits" for cost savings described as "relatively small".

Visitors would stay away

The study admitted that closing the Laxey to Ramsey route, which it recognised as "the most scenic section" of the MER, would have a small benefit but only if the impact of visitor spending was not taken into account. The demand for cycle rides was smaller than that for train travel and

withdrawing services would result in a fall in visitor numbers to the island.

"If a strategy of immediate reduction in subvention (*subsidy*) is sought, this truncation would offer significant cost saving," the report stated. "However, if a long-term strategy of more closely aligning the railway with the visitor economy was decided on this could be undermined by closure of a substantial portion of easily-maintainable good quality track."

The report also looked at a strategy of converting the current twin lines of the Laxey to Ramsey section to single track with passing loops and laying a parallel cycle track. But it concluded that the conversion would not be value for money unless 475 cycle trips per day could be guaranteed, and with the seasonal nature of Isle of Man tourism the proposal was not viable unless significant cost savings could be made.

A further consideration was running a commuter tram service between Douglas and Ramsey by introducing two morning and two evening services, including measures at the Derby Castle terminus in Douglas to allow the services to run closer



to the centre of the island's capital. The study concluded that 88 passengers per day would be needed to make the service viable, which was described as "ambitious but plausible."

Lack of vision

The first of 13 recommendations suggested a development strategy for the railways running to 2040, the report highlighting what it described as "the lack of a clear vision for the railways" which is needed to show how they could be developed and what this would mean for the economy of the island. It was also stated that since 2010 the railways had been "in a protracted period of recovery from sustained under-investment." The strategy would help a move towards understanding what is needed to increase revenue and passenger numbers.

Co-ordination and engagement between the island's tourist organisations came in for criticism, the report stating that this was not a specific issue relating to the railways but a wider one across the island, which the organisations are aware of and trying to address. (Editor's note: This has been an issue for some time – in 2011 myself and the editor of *Steam Railway* magazine were invited to the island by the tourist authority to travel on all the railways, but no-one actually checked with the Groudle and Laxey lines as to whether they were open, which they were not, or alerted them to our presence, in which case they might have entertained us anyway...).

Digital marketing was also highlighted as a major issue with the current online presence described as "a non-descript web page which forms part of the Bus Vannin website". It was said to compare very poorly to the websites of many other heritage railways which go beyond providing information to instead actively market their services. SYSTRA recognised that railway management plan to address this issue but added that it should be brought forward as soon as possible.

Overall the report concluded that the railways were generally in good shape, all four having benefited from almost complete renewal of their permanent way over the past 20 years. They were also

Top left: Beyer Peacock 2-4-0T 'Maitland' leaves Port St Mary station in July 2023. Cutting back the Isle of Man Steam Railway would have seen this station closed.

Photo: Joey Evans

Left: This view at the Manx Electric Railway's Ramsey terminus in 2011 would also have become history had some suggested cutbacks been approved.

Photo: Andrew Charman

Top: Volunteers run the Groudle Glen Railway but there would not be enough on the island to have a viable role on the Government lines.

Photo: GGR

Right: Much more could be done to promote the Manx railway heritage, particularly online.

Photo: Joey Evans



bringing major financial benefits to the island; "Our analysis of the wider economic impacts of the heritage railways has shown that for every £1 spent in subvention and capital investment there is a benefit to the economy of £2.88. The direct and indirect impacts on the economy total around £17m each year."

Wishful thinking?

Relief at the results of the report among enthusiasts proved short-lived, however – within days of its publication infrastructure minister Tim Crookhall described its recommendations as "wishful thinking," adding "Our job now is to examine the recommendations, consider each in turn and establish next steps. Whether it's a strategy to 2040 will have to be seen, probably over five years to start with – small steps."

The reaction of many Manx residents speaking to the island's media on the report also suggested little faith in the Government taking any of the report's recommendations significantly into account when planning any future investment in the heritage lines.

Other highlights from the report

- The report found that there was a clear strategic case for restoring the cut-back section of the Douglas Bay Horse Tramway to the island's sea ferry terminal, but a very large increase in passengers would be needed to avoid an increase in Government subsidy.
- SYSTRA looked at whether there was a role for major volunteer input into the lines as in the UK and also consulted the independent, volunteer-operated Groudle Glen Railway on the island. However it was concluded that with the Isle of Man having more than 50 times the length of heritage line per person compared to the UK, even in the most optimistic scenario the number of volunteers available to the railways would be wholly insufficient to operate even a small proportion of current services.
- The report stated; "On the Isle of Man it is important to see the railways as an asset to the economy as well as an important cultural and historic asset."



More new diesels for Darjeeling

INDIA

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is planning to add to its diesel locomotive fleet after enjoying a strong finish to 2023 (*writes Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society vice-chairman Paul Whittle*).

The Darjeeling to Ghum 'Joy Trains' proved very popular and Christmas Day saw the DHR set a new passenger carrying record with almost 1,000 tourists riding the 12 services – eight diesel-hauled and four by the iconic B-class 0-4-0ST steam locos.

There are now plans for three new diesel locos, similar to the existing six NDM6 units, to be assembled from parts supplied by the original manufacturers, SAN Engineering of Bangalore.

Six wooden-bodied heritage carriages will also be restored at Siliguri Junction and returned to service, the extra capacity helping to expand services on the Ghum-New Jalpaiguri section of the DHR. This currently sees only one pair of trains each day, despite traversing the most attractive scenery and the unique engineering of the line's three loops and six reverses.

Recent heritage conservation has seen the welcome removal of commercial advertising from walls, stations and rolling stock (see story below) with the original blue and white DHR livery restored.

A respected heritage consultant has been tasked to audit the line's many UNESCO-listed buildings, while the disused turntable at Darjeeling is being restored to use. Significant funding has also been secured for major track works to improve ride quality and prevent subsidence at two critical points on the line.

Meanwhile the UK-based DHRS continues to offer engineering support to help improve the performance and reliability of the Darjeeling line's 12-strong steam fleet. Further information on the Society and its wide-ranging work can be found at www.dhrs.org



Above: NDM Diesel No 601, pictured at Siliguri Junction depot, will soon be gaining some more stablemates.

Photo: Paul Whittle, DHRS

Right: Darjeeling winter services, whether diesel or as here steam hauled, have been producing record passenger numbers.

Photo: DHRS



Carriage-side advertising sparks legal row

Efforts by the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway to increase its income by advertising have landed the line in court.

Having set plans for privatisation aside, in early 2022 Indian Railways ordered the narrow gauge hill railways to improve their financial position by exploring new forms of income generation. On the Darjeeling line this resulted in an urgent drive for commercial advertising, and in due course vinyl adverts started to appear on the side of the line's passenger carriages.

This led to protests over the visual effects of this advertising on the line's World Heritage image, and in late 2023 a management edict was issued to remove all the adverts on the carriages and at stations. However, no sooner had this process begun than the advertising agency involved started a legal challenge.

The upshot was a hearing at the High Court in Kolkata, resulting in an interim ruling that adverts already removed would not be put back, but those remaining would stay where they were, at least for the time being.



NGW's correspondent understands that there will be a full court hearing on the issue in early February – we hope to bring more news when it's available.



Eight locos in steam for Society's half-century

The Rasuchijin Tetsudo Kyokai (Rasuchijin Railway Society), known as the Rass, celebrated 50 years since it was founded and 30 years of its activities at the Narita Dream Dairy Farm on 17th December, with an impressive steaming of eight locomotives.

The Society was able to run all but one of its own 2ft gauge locomotives at the event, the exception being the chain-driven 'Injun Joe', which was one of two vertical-boilered engines present on the day.

The eighth loco in steam was a new-build being constructed by Rass for Sekisui Kinzoku, the man behind model railway manufacturer Kato. He is building a railway around a 'fun park' which is under construction at the Kato factory in Saitama.

The locomotives at Narita, all thought to be Japanese built, provided a somewhat eclectic mix. As well as the Kato engine two other Rass new-builds were in action. Two locos formerly worked on a coal mine line in Wudu near Keelung in Taiwan, another is officially listed as "manufacturer unknown" but appears to have been constructed in the style of a French Decauville or Couillet loco, while two more were constructed from parts of ship's steam derricks!

The Rass line at Narita Dream Dairy Farm, an agricultural theme park close to Tokyo

JAPAN

Narita airport, is a continuous run in a broadly triangular configuration totalling around 500 metres.

Top: The eight-strong roster raising steam ahead of forming a cavalcade celebrating the Golden Anniversary (above).

Below: No 3 and behind it no 6 are both Kusuki 0-4-0Ts, thought to have been built in 1939 for a coal mine in Taiwan and returned to Japan in 1972 and 1978 respectively.

Photos and report courtesy Takahide Yamamoto. Additional information via John Raby (see also Gallery pages)



Preßnitztalbahn extension hopes gain support

Hopes that the entire Preßnitztalbahn in Saxony, GERMANY could be reopened over its 25km former length have risen with the ceremonial signing of a declaration of intent by Mayors of communities along the route.

Opened in 1892 the 750mm gauge line ran through the valley of the River Preßnitz, from Wolkenstein to Jöhstadt.

The line became the last Saxon narrow gauge route to survive, but in 1984 passenger services were ended by the East German Government – freight workings followed in 1986 and by 1989 the line had been dismantled.

A Society to preserve what artifacts remained of the line was formed in 1988 and in 1990 began reconstruction in Jöhstadt. Since 2000 it has restored 8kms and operated heritage trains.

During an event marking the 40th anniversary of the line's closure on 12th January Mayors of four towns along the remaining route signed an agreement to keep the railway line clear of development. The first aim is to extend a further 2km to Oberschmiedeberg by 2030.

Abbey pours concrete for extension bridge



The project to extend the railway at the St Nicholas Abbey rum distillery took a significant step forward in December with the first concrete pour of the major civil engineering feature of the route, a 300ft long bridge.

The 2ft 6in gauge line, opened in 2018 and using stock either restored or built for it by Statfold Engineering, is extending into the Cherry Tree Valley adjacent to the distillery, bringing the likelihood of freight workings transporting cut sugar cane.

The bridge will be designed in the style of a Victorian structure but fully galvanised to protect it against the salt-laden environment. The concrete pours were for the first two of

BARBADOS

20 cassion foundations, in places 30 feet deep.

St Nicolas Abbey owner Larry Warren said that a major aim when designing the bridge was that passengers on the train would be able to view the canopy of the trees, some 45 feet above ground level.

The bridge itself is expected to be installed in May with the aim being to complete the project by the end of the year.

Above: The foundations for what will be significant parapets being dug out on the hillside.

Below: Artist's impression of the completed Victorian-style bridge.

Illustrations courtesy St Nicolas Abbey



Ukraine NG tour planned for April

In a determined statement of 'situation normal', a narrow gauge photo tour is being planned for **UKRAINE** on 26-30th April.

The tour will be based around the steam festival weekend at the narrow gauge railway at Haivoron in central Ukraine in April.

NGW correspondent **James Waite** tells us that the railway here is the small remaining part of what was once a huge 750mm gauge network stretching into eastern Moldova. Since the war began Haivoron has become a refugee

centre for large numbers of people displaced from territories occupied by Russia, and from war zones such as Odesa on the coast.

Ukrainian Railways is making great efforts to operate a heritage steam operation, and public steaming days of one sort or another are becoming increasingly frequent.

The tour is expected to cost around €1500 travelling from Przemyśl in Poland – the organiser is Dmitry Babarika, for more details contact him on dmitry@babarika.com

Czech line set to be sold off

Hopes are growing that the Jindřichohradecké, the Jindřich to Hradec Railway in the **CZECH REPUBLIC**, could be reopened following its sudden closure and bankruptcy that have resulted in trains not running on the 760mm gauge line since 2nd October 2022.

The former operating company has now been declared insolvent which should result in the line being sold to a new owner, though this is expected to take some time. However the permits required are being processed to allow the return of trains to the line as soon as possible.

The line's workshop in Jindřichov Hradec has continued operating while other employees have been regularly inspecting and maintaining the track and all buildings to help make any return to services possible.

Line extension makes progress

Members of the Museum of French Steam Tramways and Secondary Railways (MTVS) have started the new year in determined fashion progressing the extension of the running line at their Crèvecœur-le-Grand, **FRANCE** base.

The line is tracklaying beyond Rotangy, the current terminus 2.2 miles from Crèvecœur-le-Grand on a former SNCF route taken over in 2013. The eventual aim is to reach the town of Saint-Omer-en-Chaussée, 7.4 miles from Crèvecœur.

Working parties in early February managed to lay a further 150 metres of track while clearing more of the route, the priority being to complete clearance before the bird-nesting season restricts operations.

One setback to the efforts was the discovery of the theft of 34 pairs of fishplates and three cans of track bolts from the work site.

Photo: MTVS





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On the ten and a quarter

In the second of his three-part feature on the locomotive output of the Exmoor Steam Railway, *James Waite* visits lines in West Sussex, Staffordshire and Cheshire.



Last month I described the prolific Locomotive output of the Exmoor Steam Railway in Devon, a business run by the Stirland family for more than 30 years. This month I've been travelling to three lines, all users of Exmoor's very much narrow gauge products on one of the narrowest of gauges, 10¼ inches.

South Downs Light Railway

There has been a small railway at the Pulborough Garden Centre in Sussex for many years. At first a 7¼in-gauge line, it was run by a succession of operators. Its future seemed assured when it was relaid with new rail in

1997 and 1998, but by the following year it was facing closure.

Enter a group of enthusiasts led by Barry Metcalf. He conducted model railway engineering workshop sessions at Christ's Hospital, the charitable school near Horsham whose purpose is to provide for deserving children who would benefit from the distinctive form of education which it offers. He and his friends needed insurance for their activities and their collection of model locos. They formed a society in order to join the Southern Federation of Miniature Engineering Societies which offers suitable insurance.

Above: On the South Downs Light Railway, 'Pulborough' awaits custom at Stopham Road station in August 2023.

Below: 'Peggy' at Stopham Road with the garden centre forming a backdrop.

Photos by James Waite, September 2023 except where stated

A chance visit to Pulborough led to them agreeing terms with the garden centre to take over the line. One obvious problem was that their locos and stock were of 10¼in gauge. They had to regauge the line and open to the public in just eight weeks – thanks to extensive fundraising and enormous volunteer input they completed the work in time, albeit initially over just part of the route, and the South Downs Light Railway was born.

Extensions followed, involving steep gradients on account of the hilly site. There's a tunnel beneath the highest point, as well as a short-cut which avoids it. But the society's locos were miniatures, and it wasn't long before more powerful motive power was required.

In 2004 Exmoor built no 319, its first 10¼in 0-4-2T, and it proved highly suitable. Named 'Pulborough', it has always been painted in Stroudley's yellow ochre livery, to reflect the town's location on the old London, Brighton & Soast Coast Railway main line to Chichester, Bognor Regis and Portsmouth.

Three years later a group of members bought no 334 'Peggy', a generally similar 0-4-2T. It is painted in the old Great Eastern's dark blue livery carried in the 1950s by J69 class 0-6-0T no 68619, the Liverpool Street shunter, which the lady whose name it carries greatly admired.

Pulborough and Peggy have been the mainstay of operations ever since

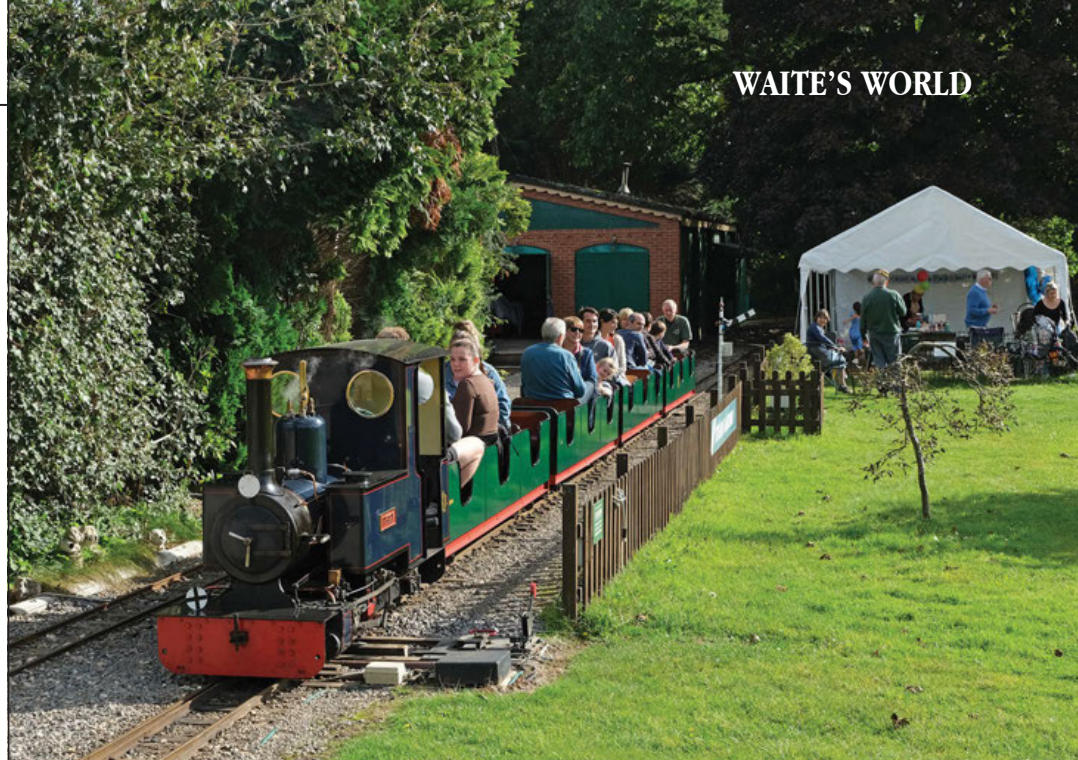


but in 2016 they were joined by 0-4-2 no 341/2016 'Arun', one of Exmoor's few diesels. It finds use on engineering trains and in 2023 was in charge of midweek operations during the school summer holidays. The growing number of miniature locos now generally run only on the first Sunday of each month, marketed as 'South Down Belle' days.

The principal station at Stopham Road boasts an overall roof and a fine building which incorporates the waiting room windows from the LB&SCR's Christ's Hospital station on the Chichester line. The general waiting room one is in clear glass apart from the etched lettering, while the ladies' room required a frosted window to protect its occupants' modesty, something very important in the late Victorian and Edwardian era! The school partly financed the construction of the old station when it moved from London to Horsham in 1902, and the design matched its elaborate architecture.

Christ's Hospital was described by the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner as "West Sussex's only memorable railway station... one of the best examples in southern England of an unaltered late Victorian railway building," and "a better building than the hospital itself" which combined "a perfect anthology of railway forms". But this wasn't enough to prevent British Rail from demolishing it in 1972, despite widespread protests. It's good that these little reminders of such a fine building, as well as the society's early connections with the school, can still be enjoyed.

After more than 20 years' operation the South Downs line continues to be a valued local asset, and is still run by a committed and helpful group of volunteers. Conversations overheard in the car park suggested that a considerable number of the customers had actually come for the railway, with a visit to



the garden centre and its café as an add-on. It specialises in children's birthday parties which are held in a sizeable marquee alongside the engine shed, with rides on the train as a high point of the festivities. This is a really enterprising operation which is well worth visiting.

Leek and Rudyard Railway

Lake Rudyard is a reservoir built under the direction of the engineer John Rennie in 1797 to provide water to the Caldon Canal, a part of the Trent & Mersey system. It is fed by a tributary of the River Churnet and lies in a scenic location to the northwest of Leek. The canals came into the ownership of the North Staffordshire Railway and its line between Macclesfield, Leek and Uttoxeter, opened in 1850, ran along the lake's eastern shore.

The NSR energetically promoted the district's tourist potential, with considerable success. The author Rudyard Kipling was named after the lake because his parents became engaged there. The railway closed to passengers in 1960 and to freight in 1964, and was lifted soon afterwards.

Brian Nicholson was an avid enthusiast and the headmaster of the

"This is a really enterprising operation which is well worth visiting..."

Above: Peggy passing the engine shed and marquee.

Below left: Stopham Road station building showing the old windows from Christ's Hospital station.

Below: After the last train of the day, Pulborough rests at the water tower. August 2023.

school at Waterhouses, once the junction for the 2ft 6in gauge Leek & Manifold Valley Light Railway. In the early 1970s he tried to build a miniature railway along part of its trackbed, but sadly his ambitions were thwarted. He then turned his attention to the lake, and between 1976 and 1978 operated a short 10¼in gauge line on the far shore from the NSR route.

Brian's railway moved on and eventually became settled at the Trago Mills retail complex near Newton Abbot in Devon. It is now run by his son David, and is still home to a superb miniature of the Manifold Valley's loco 'ER Calthrop' which Brian commissioned for his project back in 1974.

Next on the scene was Peter Hanton from Congleton, who between 1984 and 1993 built what is now the Leek and Rudyard Railway along the old NSR trackbed. At first two internal-combustion locos handled most trains. There was also a historic steam 4-4-0 built as long ago as 1937 that Peter had bought back in 1954.

In 1993 he bought his first Exmoor loco, 2-4-2T no 294 which was converted for him from 12¼in »





gauge. It was at first named 'River Churnet', and later became 'Excalibur' after an Arthurian theme was adopted for the locos' names. It was a twin of no 293 'Exmoor' which has now returned to its builders after many years on a private railway in Surrey, the two locos having been built together.

Peter retired in 2000 and sold the line to Mike and Eileen Hanson, who

Above: In the engine shed at Rudyard, from left to right, 2-4-2T 'Merlin', 2-4-2T 'Victoria' and 0-6-2T 'King Arthur' – the latter notably larger than any other loco on the Leek & Rudyard line.

continued to be loyal Exmoor customers. A 2-4-2T, no 296/1998 'Merlin' followed in April 2001 – it looked quite different since by the time it was built Exmoor was producing locos which were not constrained by any concept of being scale models. Merlin was originally another 12¼in loco, intended for a venture in Germany which never got off the ground. It remained at Exmoor until being regauged and sold to the Hansons.

After public services at Exmoor ended in 2001 the Hansons bought three of its carriages and a brake van. In 2003 they ordered no 324 'King Arthur', a huge 0-6-2T, far larger than any previous loco on the line and specifically designed to handle the heavy trains required for increasing numbers of passengers. King Arthur arrived on 25th July 2005 and has been the line's most powerful loco ever since.

By then Excalibur had run about 20,000 miles - during an overhaul it was enlarged and reboilered and now resembles Merlin. In 2007 a fourth Exmoor loco, 2-4-2T 297/1994 'Pendragon' arrived secondhand. It was built for the Ashorne Light Railway in Warwickshire, and again began life as a 12¼in machine.

In 2015 the railway was bought by a group that had rescued the locos and stock from the much-loved Isle of Mull Railway after the Scottish line closed in 2011, notably 2-6-2T 'Victoria'. It was a miniature of the Victorian Railways' NA class 2-6-2T that ran on the Puffing Billy Railway near Melbourne. Like the Hansons the new owners actively encourage and recruit volunteers.

Astbury Light Railway

The Hansons retained ownership of two locos and the old Exmoor rolling stock. In 2017 they sold Pendragon and the three carriages to Adam Jeffrey, who went on to operate them at his nascent Astbury Light Railway, close to Congleton just over the county border in Cheshire – they also loaned him the Exmoor brake van.

I found the ALR to be a lovely little line, just 700 metres long and close to an established farm with a range of modern agricultural buildings and stored equipment and a degree of out-of-town retail development. The railway climbed steeply to a viewpoint looking out over the fields towards the Peak District and the hills through which the old Manifold Valley line once ran. It would otherwise be difficult for the public to access.

Adam obtained the track from a variety of sources. Some came from the much-loved railway at Paignton Zoo in Devon – one of the UK's oldest 10¼in gauge lines, it was closed because it wasn't fully accessible to disabled people and this failing didn't fit in with its owners' ethos. In 2019 he bought a second steam loco, 2-6-0 'Norfolk Pioneer'. This was completed in 2011 by Tony Martin, the chief engineer of the Wells & Walsingham Light Railway in, as the loco's name suggests, Norfolk. It was based there for eight years, although it always belonged to Tony and was only used occasionally.

In October 2023 Adam acquired a historic Bo-Bo i/c loco, constructed in 1960 by Trevor Guest for the late Sir Thomas Salt, whose grandfather and father had been chairman and a director of the NSR. In his childhood Sir Thomas sometimes drove on the Manifold Valley line, but he is perhaps best remembered as the first chairman of the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway. He personally handled negotiations for the line's rescue following the BR closure and arranged the emergency army-led reconstruction of the Banwy bridge in 1964 and 1965.

Sir Thomas farmed at Shillingstone in Dorset, and was on a mission to show that 10¼in gauge railways could have a role in efficiently-run agriculture, just as Sir Arthur Heywood had promoted the 15in gauge 80 years earlier. The loco was at first named 'Cyclops' after the one-eyed giant of ancient Greek mythology, on account of its single headlamp at each end. It was soon extensively rebuilt by Sir Thomas, fitted with more lights and renamed 'Ulysses'. As he explained it was Ulysses who put out the Cyclops's eye!

After his death in 1965 Lady Salt



ran the Shillingstone railway for a further ten years, after which the loco moved to the Crowlas Woodland Railway near Penzance. There it was renamed 'Sir Humphry Davy' after one of the town's most noted sons. More recently it ran at Beale Park in Berkshire, where it was rebuilt as a US-style machine. Adam intended to restore it to its condition as rebuilt by Sir Thomas.

Sadly Adam had always faced a planning battle to keep his railway alive. The local council argued that it detracted from the openness of this Green Belt land, though how anyone can fairly say that a tiny 10¼in railway running close to established hedgelines can possibly have any meaningful impact upon its openness quite escapes me. Green Belt policy isn't just about controlling built development – equally importantly it is supposed to encourage public access to the countryside for recreation, vital in a society where there is no right to roam. It is hard to think of a more appropriate way of achieving this at Astbury than Adam's inoffensive little line, and surely the benefit it brought to the public must have greatly outweighed any possible effect on the Green Belt.

Sadly, however, Adam's efforts to secure permanent planning permission failed, and as our news pages report on 20th-21st January, just four months after my visit, the Astbury Light Railway ran its final trains. What will become of its stock is yet to be revealed. **NGW**

■ A final feature on Exmoor Steam Railway locomotives in **NGW** 183 will look at three very different lines – the Lappa Valley (15in gauge), Exbury (12¼in) and Barnard's Farm and Pugneys (both 7¼in).



Facing page left: 2-4-2T 'Excalibur', the first Exmoor loco to run on the Rudyard line, stands at the back of the shed while its boiler was out for overhaul.

Above: On the Astbury Light railway, alpacas form unusual admirers for 2-4-2T 'Pendragon' as it runs round at the upper station.

Right: 'Norfolk Hero' stands in the container which served as a temporary engine shed at Astbury.

Below: Pendragon on the climb to the upper station. The carriage was repainted yellow as a nod to the lost Manifold Valley line.



In the bleak midwinter...

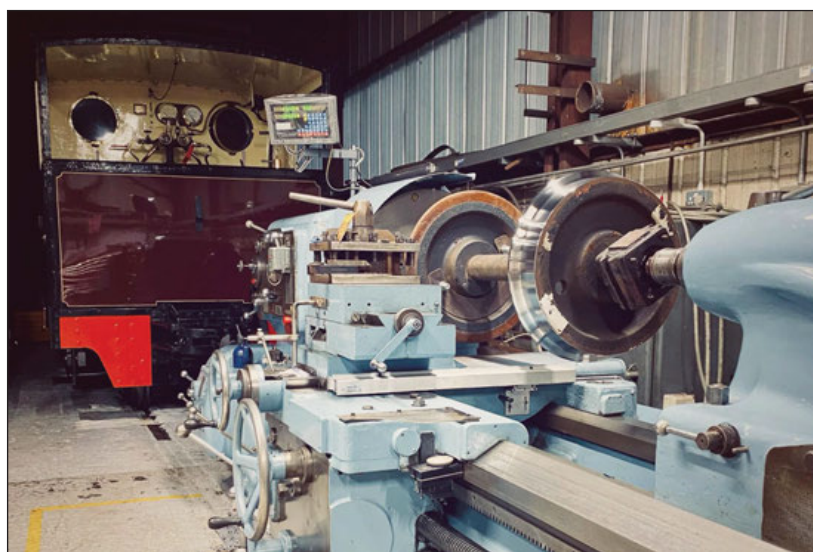
Do railways hibernate between the end of a season and the start of a new one? Not a bit of it – some of the hardest work is done in winter, in the worst conditions....



Above: Volunteers definitely worthy of special praise at this time of year are the track gangs. Major track renewals can only be done in the winter when there are no trains wanting to use the line, and that generally means coping with the very worst weather conditions.

The weather was unusually benign when this view of the Welshpool & Llanfair track gang was captured on 30th January as they replaced a life-expired point at the line's Cyfrondd station. Within a day or so the rain was torrential, and the gang still working...

Photo: Alan Barnes/W&LLR



Left: Workshops that double as loco sheds, as here on the Great Whipsnade Railway, are very hard to keep warm at the best of times, and especially at this time of year. Even the sparks generated by turning wheels on a lathe don't help much...

Photo: Kevin Edwins/GWR

Below left: A reasonably warm workshop is essential to maintain the steady hand required for lining out, but a Corris Railway member seems to have done a good job on the line's new-build Falcon 0-4-2ST no 10 – it's looking very smart...

Photo: CR



Below: Major painting is very difficult in the winter too, normally only possible on the milder days. The question is in this shot, is the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway's Eisteddfod Carriage in undercoat, or is a certain double-arrow symbol going to be added to British Railways blue?

Photo: Michael Chapman/WHHR



Not a soul was stirring...

The depths of winter and the railways are quiet – well mostly, and they won't be for long....

Right: The kind of view out front any footplate man likes to see – clear blue sky, clear line and clear exhaust... The Great Whipsnade Railway's Kerr Stuart 0-6-2T 'Superior' was out on a winter test train.

Photo: Kevin Edwins/GWR

Below: This impressive scene was captured by *Takahide Yamamoto* during the anniversary celebrations in December of the Rasuchijin Railway Society in Japan, reported in our *World News* pages. The locomotive is the Society's number 1, recently reboilered and its actual manufacturer unknown.

Overleaf: Sisters at dusk. First duty for the Ffestiniog Railway Hunslet 2-4-0T 'Linda' after completion of a delayed 10-year overhaul (see the *UK news* pages) was to top-and-tail with sister 'Blanche' on winter shuttle trains to Minffordd.

Photo: Chris Parry/FR







Polish Narrow Gauge in the 1990s

Phil Horton concludes his two-part feature describing the varied rail systems across the Central European nation.

Last month I began this feature by documenting some of the more significant narrow gauge lines I encountered during three visits to Poland in 1990, 1991 and 1993. I conclude the article this month by describing how I sought out five 750mm gauge lines and some industrial systems.

Przeworsk Waski – Dynow

My first encounter with a PKP narrow-gauge line was on 11th March 1990 during a TEFS organised tour of Poland. We had arrived at Przeworsk in the East of the country from where standard-gauge steam-hauled trains ran north-east to Belzac near to the border with the USSR (Ukraine at the time of writing).

Adjacent to the main station I discovered a small platform, Przeworsk Waski. Here passengers were boarding a train about to depart

for Jawornik headed by Class Lxd2 diesel no Lyd2.251. A yard and small engine shed were visible a little further up the narrow-gauge line.

The history and recent developments on this line were described in the article *Polish Revival* in *NGW*180. In essence, it was built early in the 20th century to the 760mm gauge as this part of Poland was then ruled by Austria.

The line extended southwards for 46km to Dynow. It was taken over by PKP after World War I and converted to 750mm gauge. It was notable as having the only tunnel on a narrow-gauge railway in Poland – this was 602 metres long and situated south of the town of Jawornik.

Although some freight was carried in standard-gauge wagons on 'Rollwagens' these were too large for the tunnel and so had to terminate at Jawornik. No goods traffic was in evidence at the time of my visit. A

Above: Operations among the weeds on the Krotoszyn to Pleszew Miasto line. Lyd1 no 252 has run round its train and waits for the guard to board it before drawing back into the rudimentary Pleszew Wask station on 2nd August 1993.

Below: Lxd2 diesel-hydraulic no 251 stands at Przeworsk Waski with an afternoon train to Jawornik, 11th March 1990.

Photos by Phil Horton except where stated

year later the line was registered as a historic monument paving the way for today's tourist services.

Traffic on the line was suspended in 2020 due to flood damage but restoration had been completed by November 2023. In 2024 services will operate from both Przeworsk and Dynów to Jawornik Polski.

Trzebnica – Sulmierzyce

This line has quite a complex history. The Breslau-Trebnitz-Prausnitzer Kleinbahn opened during 1998 in what was then part of Germany, running from a suburban station in Breslau (Wrocław) to Trebnitz (Trzebnica) and Prausnitz (Prusice) (25km and 36km from Breslau). It later used mixed-gauge track and street running to reach the centre of the city.

Once under Polish control the line was merged with the nearby Trachenberg – Militscher Kreisbahn to form the Wrocław Suburban Railway – Trachenberg is now the Polish town of Zmigrod, situated some 11km north of Prusice. The merger allowed running beyond Prusice to Milicz and Sulmierzyce (75km and 100km from Wrocław) deep in the Polish countryside. The section south of Trzebnica closed in May 1967, the rest in September 1991.

The section north of Trzebnica retained a passenger service until final closure. A railcar was working an evening train towards Trzebnica when we travelled on the adjacent main road from Poznan to Wrocław in July 1991. Two years later we visited the depot at Trzebnica where the track



and turntable were still in place while 0-8-0 Class Px49-1791 (Chrzanow, 1949) was found abandoned among the weeds at Milicz station.

Krotoszyn – Pleszew Miasto

Opened in 1900 was the 40km line from Pleszew Miasto to Krotoszyn, the junction for standard-gauge lines to Jaracin, Ostrow, Milicz and Koblin. A further 10km long 750mm gauge section opened from Pleszew to Broniszewice in the north after World War 2. This extension lasted only until 1972 while the line to Krotoszyn closed around 1987.

By 1993 only the 4km long line from Pleszew Wask to Pleszew Miasto was still operating. Pleszew is on the standard-gauge Jaracin to Ostrow line while that on to Pleszew Miasto is mixed-gauge. All passenger traffic was carried on the 750mm gauge, goods traffic using the standard-gauge.

On our way to Pleszew in July 1993 we called at the closed Krotoszyn Wask station. Here we found 0-8-0 Class Px48-1764 (Chrzanow, 1952) and some 750mm-gauge stock preserved behind a fence.

The shuttle service to Pleszew Miasto comprised two Romanian-built carriages and 0-6-0 diesel-mechanical Lyd1-252. This class introduced in 1960 was mostly supplied by Chrzanow, although no 252 was one of the later units built by Zastal in Poland in 1971.

We travelled on the train from Pleszew Miasto to Pleszew Wask, where facilities were very basic with passengers having to walk across a weed-covered forecourt to reach the main-line station. Our train then ran forward on 750mm gauge track so that the loco could run round.

This line was host to the last PKP narrow gauge service in Poland, carrying a headboard and the Polish flag. It ran on 9th June 2001 using Romanian built railcar MBxd2-216. Remarkably this was not the end as on 17th September SKPL took over the line and started running 750mm gauge trains.

SKPL Cargo (Polish Short lines) had been established to operate both freight and passenger services abandoned by the PKP. These lasted until December 2012 when they were withdrawn. They resumed in May 2015 and in 2020 the route was noted as the only narrow-gauge line in Poland running a passenger service throughout the year. Pleszew Wask is now known as Kowalew.

Gniezno – Anastazewo

Built in the 1890s for sugar beet traffic the network of narrow-gauge railways running east of Gniezno, on the main line between Poznan and

“Facilities were very basic with passengers having to walk across a weed-covered forecourt...”

Above right: On the Trzebnica – Sulmierzyce line Px49-1792, an 0-8-0 which once worked from Trzebnica, was found preserved among the undergrowth at Milicz Waski station on 2nd August 1993.

Below: While the track on the Krotoszyn to Pleszew Miasto line between Pleszew Wask and Pleszew Miasto is mixed standard/750mm-gauge, all passenger traffic uses the narrow gauge track. On 2nd August 1993 these trains were being worked by diesel-mechanical 0-6-0 Lyd1-252 (Zastal, 1971) and two Romanian-built carriages, seen here about to depart from Pleszew Miasto.



Mogilno, was once very extensive. At different times sections have been both 900mm and 600mm gauge before standardisation at 750mm by the PKP in the early 1950s. By 1990 the passenger service had been withdrawn and only the 38km between Gniezno, Niechanowo and Anastazewo remained open for freight. Most trains ran only as far as Witkowa (16km) or Powidz (28km) carrying coal to two military facilities.

On my visit on 26th July 1991 we found that no trains were running but several Px48s were on shed. Keith Chester was more fortunate in spring 1990 and was able to photograph working trains behind both Px48.1758 and 1928 (Chrzanow, 1953 and 1950). From reports in *World Steam* it appears that things continued much the same until autumn 1999 when diesel-hydraulic Lxd2-313 arrived at Gniezno.

Latterly the active steam loco was no 1754 with 1919 (Chrzanow, 1956) as spare. Steam-hauled tourist trains running as far as Anastazewo were introduced by the local authority in 1999 and were later promoted by the ‘Wolsztyn Experience’ which from March 2000

advertised travel by steam and driver-training on the line. For a time the ‘Experience’ continued to claim that freights remained steam-hauled, although other visitors found only the diesel.

The last workings on this line I can find on the internet were in 2015 when trains between Gniezno and Ostrowa had to be cancelled as track fittings had been stolen. Locos then reported on the line were Px48 1785 and 1919. It is still possible that services may be reinstated.

Sroda and Zaniemysl

The last of the lines visited was also the best. It was hardly believable to UK enthusiasts who had followed the demise of narrow-gauge steam in Europe that in 1991 a 750mm gauge line still existed carrying both passenger and freight traffic and was still 100 per cent steam-worked.

Again the remaining line between Sroda and Zaniemysl was once part of a much larger 1000mm gauge system which was extended as far as Poznan, 50km from Sroda. Known as the Sroda District Railway it opened in 1902 while the 14km section from Sroda to Zaniemysl opened in 1909. As elsewhere in Poland in 1950 the PKP converted it all to 750mm gauge. The system remained intact in 1959 but by 1989 only the Sroda and Zaniemysl section survived.

I was fortunate »





enough to visit and travel on the line twice on 26th July 1991 and 2nd August 1993. In 1991 our train was worked by Px48.1907 (Chrzanow, 1955) and comprised two PKP bogie carriages and a luggage van. Three more Class Px48 engines were in the shed – nos 1726, 1756 and 1920 (Chrzanow, 1950, 1953 and 1955).

At Zaniemyśl no 1907 ran round, coupled up and drew the train forward to reverse onto two 'Rollwagens' carrying standard gauge wagons. The whole train was then hauled out of the siding and returned to the station.

Two years later, no 1907 was stored in the yard. This time we were able to photograph no 1920 leaving Sroda Miasto with the 13.39 to Zaniemyśl and then follow it to its destination. Here four long-wheelbase covered wagons were standing on Rollwagens. No 1920 however ignored them, ran round its train and eventually returned it to Sroda.

We later caught the 16.36 back to Zaniemyśl where no 1920 performed the same manoeuvres to collect three of the standard gauge wagons and return the whole to the station. The train made a strange sight with the wagons towering over the small 750mm gauge carriages and loco.

The line remained entirely steam-worked until around the turn of the century despite moves to close it. Early in 1999 it was reported that

diesel Lyd1-210 had arrived at Sroda but, it seems, was little used. The same year also saw the local authority intervene and summer tourist trains ran at weekends using special brightly coloured carriages.

Mixed trains still ran steam-hauled during the week using mainly no 1920 with 1902 as standby. Finally in September, Romanian-built railcar MBxd2-229 took over the regular passenger service. Steam was still called on if a mixed train was required and the Wolsztyn Experience also promoted steam specials on the line. The service was finally withdrawn on 8th June 2001 with the last train operated by the railcar.

In August 2009 the local authority reintroduced summer tourist trains using refurbished Px48 1756. By May 2014 it required an overhaul and a diesel was hired in but in 2015 no suitable locos were available and the service was suspended.

A year later the Society of Friends of the Średzka Railway 'BANA' resumed running trains to Zaniemyśl and by autumn 2017 no 1756 was available again. Both steam and diesel-hauled trains ran each weekend

during 2023 with just one day's working in both November and December. A second engine, Px48 1920, is also now working and appeared on the Przeworsk Waski to Dynow line in summer 2023 (see www.sredzkakolej.pl).

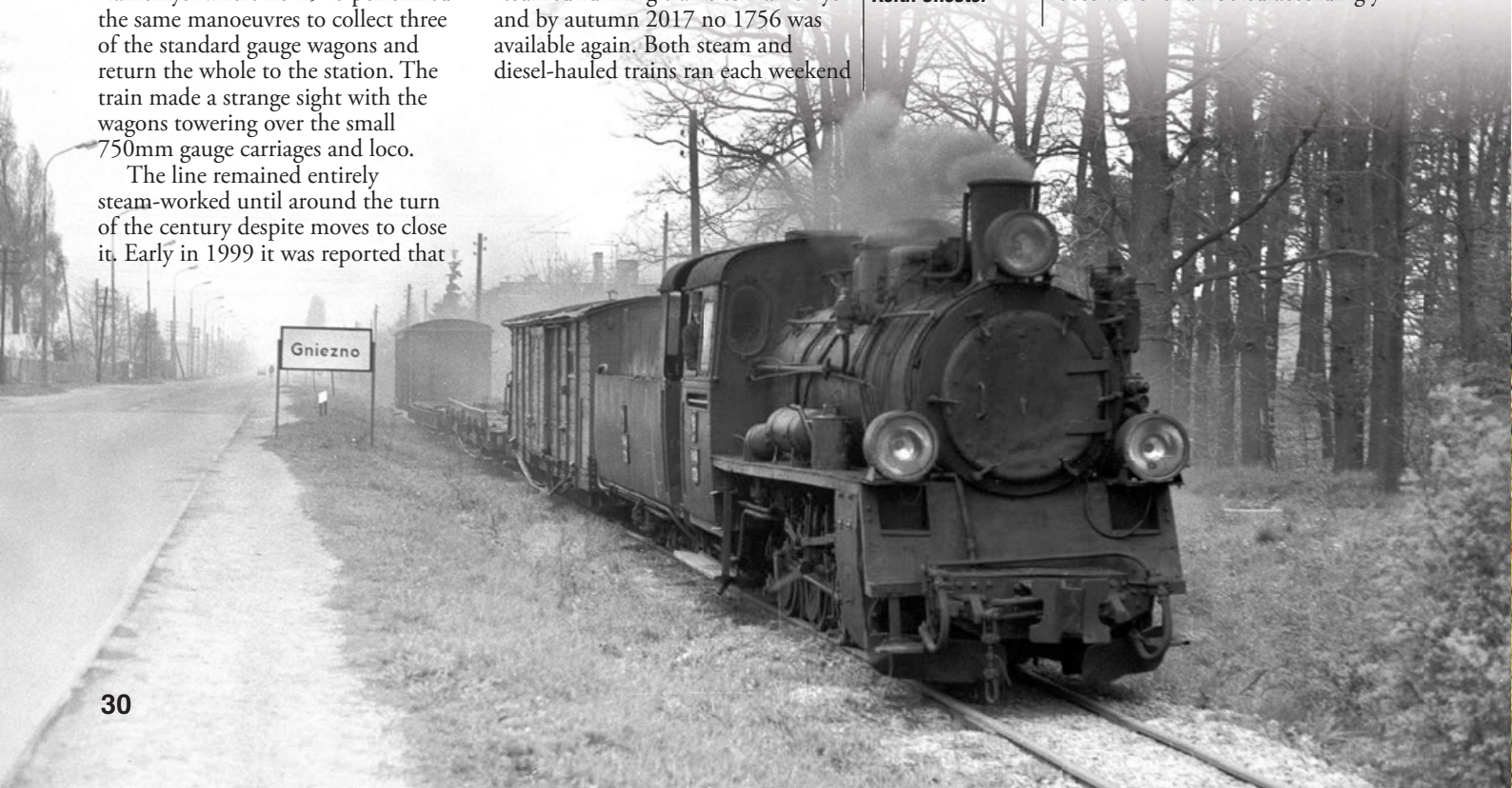
Bytom, Silesia

This extensive network of industrial lines opened as early as 1854 when Silesia was part of Prussia. They were built to the unusual gauge of 785mm, equivalent to 30 Prussian 'Zoll' inches. The lines were originally built by the German Oberschlesische Schmalspurbahnen (Upper Silesian Narrow-Gauge Railways).

After World War 1 the mineral-rich area of Upper Silesia was split between Germany and Poland, while after 1945 the whole district was ceded to Poland, the German town of Beuthen becoming Bytom. In each case the railways within Poland were taken over by the PKP which retained the 785mm gauge. The existing steam locos were renumbered accordingly

Above: Px48-1758 pulls away from Gniezno with three standard-gauge wagons on 'Rollwagens' on 2nd January 1990. They are loaded with coal for the military base at Witkowo. Photo: Keith Chester

Below: A short train of 750mm gauge wagons headed by Px48-1728 leaves Gniezno bound for Niechanowo, 19th April 1990. Photo: Keith Chester



but during World War 2 the surviving engines were all renumbered in the German (DR) system.

In the 1950s the PKP took over some 188km of track, of which 162km remained in 1986. Mainly operated as a freight line, the only passenger service between Gliwice, Rudy and Raciborz was withdrawn in 1991. Three Class Px48 0-8-0s were built for the line but these were soon replaced by more powerful 0-10-0s Tw47 and Tw53. Lxd2 B-B diesel-hydraulics arrived in 1968.

We had spent 4th August 1993 in the area looking for standard-gauge industrial steam. After a successful day we went to Bytom 785mm-gauge depot where four Lyd2 diesels were visible outside the shed while alongside was preserved 0-10-0 tank Tw53-2566. The last recorded steam working on the system, by a Class 53 loco, occurred on 21st June 1991.

All freight traffic ended in the spring of 2001, but summer passenger trains continued to run operated by the Upper Silesian Narrow Gauge Association. Both steam and diesel-hauled trains were advertised for the summer of 2023 running some 20km between Bytom Wask and Miasteczko Slaskie Wask. The steam trains, which only ran on Sundays, were hauled by an ex-industrial Ryś 0-4-0 tank Tkb27-2002 (Chrzanow, 1950). **NGW**



Above: Px48-1920 waits to leave Sroda Miasto station with the 13.38 to Zaniemysl on 2nd August 1993. The passengers included schoolchildren on their way to a summer camp – there were no other enthusiasts there that day.

Below: The connection between a 750mm luggage van and two Rollwagens at Zaniemysl station – 26th July 1991.

Bottom: An extensive network of narrow gauge, mainly freight, lines once radiated from Bytom in Silesia. During the evening of 4th August 1993 four of its 16 Lxd diesel-hydraulics nos 365, 368, 352 and 351 stand outside the shed at Bytom. To the right is preserved 0-10-0 tank Tw53-2566.



Acknowledgements/More Information

Phil would particularly like to acknowledge the help of Keith Chester whose book *East European Narrow Gauge*, published in 1994 by Channel View Publications, includes much information about the Bytom system. Keith has also kindly allowed the use of two of his photos of steam-hauled freights from Gniezno. Steam workings from both Gniezno and Sroda in the 1990s are chronicled in contemporary editions of the subscription magazine *World Steam*. Local authorities succeeded in running heritage trains on several lines and at least four are still running in summer. More information is available on their websites.

Phil adds that in addition to the lines he visited in the 1990s there are many other narrow-gauge lines still operating in Poland. Two examples include a length of the 785mm gauge Upper Silesian Narrow Gauge Railway at Rudy and the 600mm gauge Maltanka Park railway at Poznan. It would be interesting to hear from any **NGW** readers who have encountered them recently.

Many of the steam locos described have survived into preservation, some as far away from Poland as Sweden and Spain. Further details are given on the www.steamlocomotive.info website. Several UK travel companies such as the Railway Touring Company include visits to Polish working narrow-gauge lines in their European programmes.

Phil would also like to thank Pawel Niemczuk of the Upper Silesian Narrow Gauge Railway for the information he provided and Steve Edge for once again producing a map for the first part of the article published last month. Readers can obtain a digital or printed copy of this issue from <https://www.world-of-railways.co.uk/Store/Back-Issues/narrow-gauge-world>



Last Railway in Donegal

Hugh Dougherty has never forgotten a line he first glimpsed more than 60 years ago.



Back in 1962 we took a house just outside Glenties in Ireland for the summer holidays. The closed County Donegal Railways station soon caught my attention, as did the company's buses and lorries that had replaced the trains once serving the town.

Just along the road from the house at Kilraine townland, I had caught sight of what looked like a still active railway as we passed in the family car. What could this be? I was puzzled, for hadn't the lines all closed in 1959? In those pre-internet days, given that I was only 11 and quite convinced I was the only railway enthusiast in Donegal(!), it was hard to fathom exactly what was going on.

It turned out to be the 2ft gauge Glenties turf railway, running daily over two miles of track to transport men and materials to the bog and bring the machine-cut sods back to base for transport elsewhere. This was something that I just had to explore!

It wasn't until 1969, however, armed with enough courage to ask for a site visit, that I made it to Bord na Mona na Gleannta. It turned out that the manager, Mannix Boyle, was the brother of Danny Boyle, one of the clerks whom I knew well at the County Donegal Railways Stranorlar HQ, where they still managed the buses and lorries that had replaced the trains. An introduction to

"I did a quick sketch of the layout at the terminus and then walked off along the track into the wilderness..."

Mannix via Danny opened the line up to me.

By 1969 the last public line in Donegal, in the shape of the former Great Northern Railway of Ireland running through Carrigans and St Johnstone between Strabane and Derry, had closed. Its demise in 1965 conferred on the 2ft gauge Glenties turf line the accolade of the very last railway in Donegal.

Railway adventure

What a line it was! Starting from a series of maintenance sheds and a wagon tippler at the Ardara Road end, the track headed out enticingly into the fastness of the Glenties bog. It then crossed the Owenea River, which had given its name to one of the County Donegal Railways 4-6-4 Baltic tanks. The rickety girder bridge was complete with railed walkway. This was adventurous railwaying as late as 1969!

I did a quick sketch of the layout at the terminus and then walked off along the track into the wilderness, reflecting on what the Boyle brothers had told me. The line had been opened in 1940 as part of a national drive to solve the fuel shortage in Ireland during 'The Emergency', as the Second World War was known in the Republic.

Cut at the bog and delivered by 2ft gauge wagons to the Kilraine end of the line, the turf was taken by cart and lorry to the CDR's Glenties station for transport onwards to Strabane. There it was transferred by



a squad known as the Tonnage Gang from the 3ft gauge CDR wagons to GNR (I) broad gauge trains and sent down to Dublin to keep the capital's home fires burning. A modern logistics specialist would be horrified!

Danny Boyle, who was the last stationmaster at Glenties before moving to the headquarters office, told me; "There was a plan during the war to extend the Donegal Railway track from Glenties station to the turf line terminus, so that the turf could be loaded directly into 3ft gauge wagons. The route, which would have been about a mile-and-a-half long, was surveyed and the proposal considered very seriously but never activated, so the turf line remained isolated."

The thought of mixed 2ft and 3ft gauge tracks at Kilraine if the extension had been built was quite intriguing, but echoes of the CDR were still clear as I walked out along the track. At several joints, and across the Owenea River bridge, the usual metal sleepers had been replaced with what I was told were secondhand CDR sleepers from the closed Glenties branch. It was an attempt to keep the track level but in many places the rails were only just showing above the moss!

Passenger special

The view ahead was stunning with the bog, a small lough and distant hills giving a feeling of real remoteness. The silence was broken by the rasp of a diesel engine and the clatter of railway wheels on joints coming my way, as the last passenger train in Donegal hove into view. This was a worker transport special, with one of the line's three Rustons hauling a corrugated-iron hut on wheels as well as an open turf wagon. Out of both, work-stained faces were grinning and arms waving as I made way by stepping off the rails.

"How ye doin'," the driver called, as they rollicked past at around 15mph and disappeared towards Kilraine and civilisation. I marvelled at the fact that rail passenger transport was not yet dead in Donegal.

Further on, there was a lonely siding, with a flat wagon carrying a water tank, and the track continued to wend its way out to the turf workings. Here the rails found a way through the bobbing-headed bog cotton to where machines were winning the turf.

This was a railway full of atmosphere and the odd man out in the Bord na Mona empire, which had 3ft gauge between its rails rather than the narrower Glenties gauge. Just as Donegal favoured the 3ft over the 5ft 3in gauge of other Irish counties for

"Out of both, work-stained faces were grinning and arms waving as I made way by stepping off the rails..."

Heading: Last passenger line in Donegal – the road ahead toward the hills with LM20A taking a trip up the line to collect some loaded wagons.

Facing page, below: Owenea River bridge showing the walkway and former CDR sleepers in use under the rails.

Top right: Ruston LM263 at Glenties after bringing the men home for the day.

Below: The 'passenger' train makes its way homewards across the bog with both open and closed accommodation (!), and a Ruston in charge.



its public railways, so even its Bord na Mona line followed the tradition by being narrower.

Up until 1992 the Glenties turf railway functioned as vigorously as ever under Bord na Mona. As a non-standard line in the board's portfolio, its engines, wagons, unique passenger stock, track and workshops were then sold off as a going concern to the locally run Glenties Turf Company. It continued to cut turf and run the line until 2005, when the operation was abandoned owing to changed market conditions for sod turf and the bog being worked out.

By that time the Fintown Railway was running on the restored trackbed of the Glenties branch, thus picking up the title of the last railway in Donegal. Even if the turf line had survived longer, it would by now have gone the way of so much of the Bord na Mona empire, killed off by the government's ban on turf burning on environmental grounds.

But not all is lost from this unique

line. One of the Rustons is on display in the courtyard at St Connell's Museum in Glenties. Part of the trackbed, including the Owenea river bridge, has been incorporated into a walking and cycling path. Another Ruston has dug in at the Cavan & Leitrim Railway at Dromod.

I'm glad that I finally did find what 11 year-old me wondered was behind the gates at Bord na Mona na Gleannta and saw the line in full working order. It did exactly what the industrial narrow gauge is designed to do, with the maximum of character and the minimum of sophistication and expensive equipment.

In this case, it was keeping the home fires burning, while ensuring that the narrow gauge continued to run in Donegal long after the county's rather more sophisticated 3ft gauge lines had hit the buffers. What a pity it didn't survive until today as a tourist line taking visitors back in time and out into the fastness of the Glenties bog. **NGW**





Adventures on Romanian rails

Fairbourne Railway engineer and Welshpool driver *Harry Billmore* enjoys a very different footplate experience on the Sibiu to Agnita Railway.

The Mocănița Văii Hârtibaciului, literally the narrow gauge railway in the valley of the Hârtibaciu river, is the impressive heritage railway that has been developed from very small beginnings by Mihai Blotor, with help from a very enthusiastic young band of Romanian volunteers and regular assistance and advice from a band of British enthusiasts including Bill Parker, owner of The Flour Mill works in the Forest of Dean.

The heritage railway runs on a 7km section of the Sibiu to Sighișoara 760mm gauge line which was finally closed in 2001 with most of the permanent way left in place. The history of this railway and the surrounding area is fascinating and deserves its own article written by someone far more knowledgeable than I, but as a quick introduction the line was started in 1895 from Sighișoara, reaching Agnita by 1898 and Sibiu (a total of 109km, 68miles) in 1910. The line was originally within Hungary and was operated by the Hungarian State Railway until

1919, when Transylvania became part of Romania. It continued in operation until 1965 when the original section to Agnita closed – the Vurpăr branch then closed in 1993 with the rest following in 2001.

There have been several attempts over the years to reopen the line – the Societatea Feroviară de Tourism (SFT) originally planned to operate it as a tourist route but the plans were shelved in 2006. After threats that the track would be lifted by Romanian state railways (CFR) all of the rail infrastructure gained protection as a Historic Monument in 2008.

The current effort, headed by Mihai, is called Asociația Prietenii Mocăniței (friends of the narrow gauge railway) and operates tourist trains over the section of the line from Hosman to Cornățel. Their normal motive power is a new-build diesel loco built by CFI hauling a beautiful collection of carriages – these comprise one of the original carriages from the line (more are either under overhaul or awaiting

Above: Manning Wardle 1877 and train during the open weekend. With so many passengers despite the cold the open-sided summer carriage, its body mounted on a six-wheel clemenson wagon underframe, was put into service. Photo of Harry by Alasdair Stewart

Below: Harry's first view of Cornatal yard – at left is L12H-001, built for the Sibiu project by C.F.I.S.R.L in Crisior in 2021 with EU grant funding.

Photos by Harry Billmore unless stated.

their turn), an ex-Zurich tramcar complete with route information inside, a six-wheel clemenson wagon with an open body built on top and another ex-Swiss carriage, from the Waldenburgerbahn near Basel and previously used on another Romanian railway at Moldovița.

Occasionally however, steam specials have been run using locos hired in from Georg Hocoever, including some of the same class that ran on the line in its original guise.

Too good to refuse

As reported previously in *NGW*, Bill Parker has taken Manning Wardle number 1877, the 0-6-2T previously called 'Chevallier' that was built in 1905 for the Chattenden & Upnor Railway and which later worked for Bowaters Paper at Sittingbourne, over to be based at the Sibiu line. I was approached to see if I would like to go over to help run the loco and train local crews as none of the Romanian volunteers have had any experience of crewing steam locos.



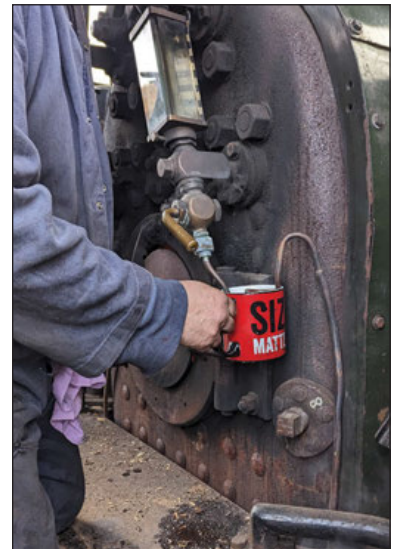


Above left: First fire lit in 1877 on the evening of Wednesday.

Above: A dawn sky and a loco coming to life.

Right: Frozen pipes needed a quick solution.

Far right: First tea of the day – the pipe going into and out of the cup is not using boiler water, it is a steam coil being used to heat the water in the cup.



Below left: When a loco is fired on wood, you need a lot of it...

Below: Returning from Hosman on the first train of the day, with snow on the Carpathian Mountains in the distance.

weighbridge, then on the other side of the four tracks the large water tower stands next to the well that supplies it. All of this nestles in the bottom of the wide valley with the southern Carpathian mountains providing a truly stunning backdrop.

Evoking the pioneers

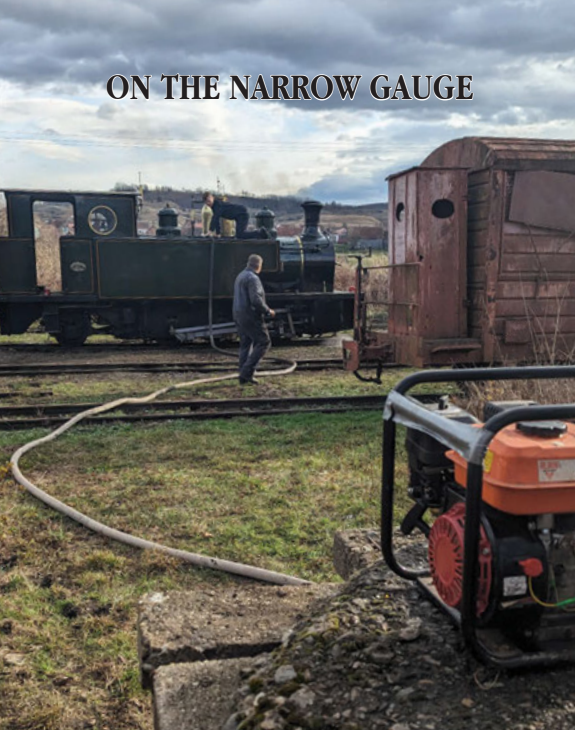
I was introduced to Sebi and Mihai and we quickly set off for Hosman in

the diesel to collect 1877 and the rolling stock for the National Day celebration weekend. This was my first look at the permanent way which I had been warned was not up to UK preservation standards yet. It both looked and felt like I imagine that the pioneering days of the Talylyn or Welshpool lines must have been as the volunteers scraped together the resources to get

»



ON THE NARROW GAUGE



everything into a runable condition.

There was evidence of the activities of the Mocăniței volunteers all along the route with fresh ballast, new sleepers and some significant work on the final approach to Hosman – the ambition, drive and determination of the group of preservationists was evident to me from the start.

We picked up the stock and loco just in time for the sun to set and returned to Cornățel in the dark. As it was already getting cold and the temperature was set to drop further overnight we prepped the engine in the dark and lit a warming fire to keep it as heated as was practical for the morning. We then retired to the stationmaster's house for some warming beer and talk of what we'd be doing over the next few days.

The time of 06.30 soon appeared on the Thursday morning and I rolled out of bed, put another log on the stove in the bedroom to keep it alight and wandered out to the loco. Sebi then prepped 1877 for lighting up while Geoff took me round it to re-familiarise me with it. I had not been on this engine as crew since it had run at the Welshpool and Llanfair Light Railway's Gala some years previously, but thankfully not much had changed so it was soon brought into steam and oiled round.

Logging on

One very interesting thing which I had to adjust to was that the loco was being run on wood, old sleepers and trees that had been cleared from the next sections of the route being prepared for possible extension of the running line. This caused me to dredge up some memories from 15 years before of a trip to the Jokioisten Railway in Finland and being taught to fire on wood there.

With the engine coming round and the sun coming up it really was an absolutely stunning scene on a lovely crisp morning. That crispness however did come with its issues, frozen pipework on the injectors being the main issue. A fire in an old saucepan was quickly made and put under the offending pipes and worked its magic.

As the normal running day volunteers started to arrive a fantastic buzz built up around the station – lots of happy enthusiastic and friendly faces came up and introduced themselves, all the while preparing the railway for the visitors to come as they were used to.

As it was approaching departure time, we ran around, took water from a pump sucking water from the well (the old water tower had been disconnected and the water cranes gassed off in the past) then proceeded

Above left: Filling the tanks from the well at Cornățel – plans and parts are in place to reinstate one of the water columns and return the water tower to full use again.

Above: The jacket potatoes cooked in the smokebox apparently tasted a lot better than they looked...

Photo: Dave Rowbotham

Below: Familiar livestock to Welshpool driver Harry, a shepherd and his dogs herd sheep through the station as 1877 rests between its duties.

to stack as much wood on the footplate as possible – every surface had a pile of timber stacked on it.

Geoff drove and I fired for the first trip, with Sebi as pilotman. It was a steep learning curve for me as I started off trying to conserve wood by not putting as much on, which of course allows more cold air through the fire and is counter-productive. Once I recalled some of the advice from Finland, I built a much thicker fire more carefully and enjoyed far better firing trips from then on!

Thankfully the section of line that is currently used is not too steep, though there are some deceptive long gradients as the line wanders down the valley next to the river – this has beavers and other delights that appear during the summer, the whole area being a national park.

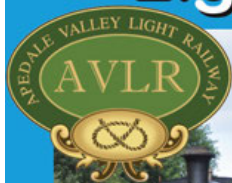
Changing scenery

The views from the train continued to impress, with shepherds tending to their flocks in the fields close to the railway, the river and the trees in the bottom of the valley and the changing vista of the Carpathians to back it up. Then the spire of the church in Hosman wound into view through the trees and the old town was revealed nestling on the other side of the river. I unfortunately did not get a chance to explore Hosman on this trip but I am assured it is a beautiful town. The station is like some of those in the UK, about a mile out of the town itself to convenience the railway builders.

After a couple of well-filled round trips completed with lots of happy families travelling behind us, we were treated to some fantastic lunch – a traditional soup, local bread and various home-made pickles were devoured in short order. The hospitality of the railway's volunteers



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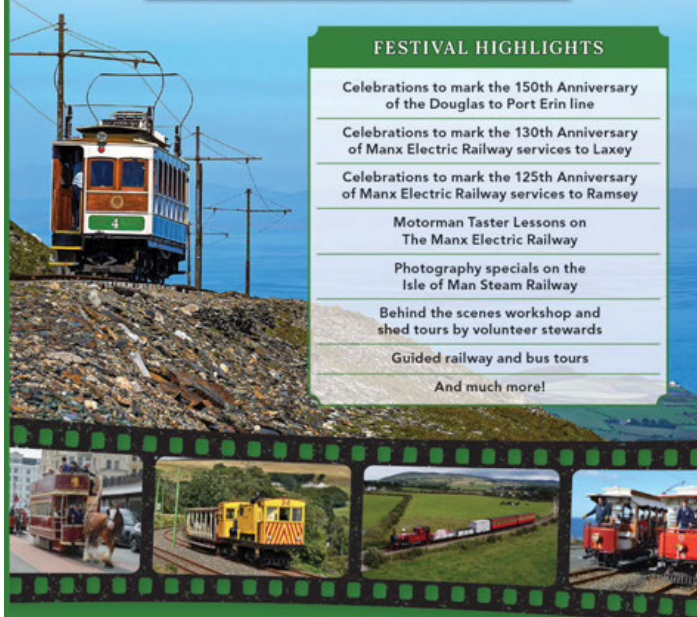
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was absolutely fantastic!

Then it was off for another return trip before disposing the engine and settling down for another evening of tall tales over a couple of beers and some interesting local liquor which I cannot remember the name of now!

The next couple of days followed the same pattern, but with the arrival of the SARUK as well there were even more happy people around, which also led to cooking experiments on the loco, baked potatoes in the smokebox and bacon on the shovel.

There was much discussion about the best way to assist the railway and encourage more people from the UK to travel to this fascinating line, either to ride on it or even better to help improve the line. If anyone is interested in joining in, contact details for SARUK are at the end of this feature.

Friday 1st December was also the Romanian National day, which was one of the reasons for having 1877 running. The trains were absolutely packed out, there was a band on the platform at Cornăţel along with other celebrations going on that I did not manage to experience thanks to having an engine to look after. It was incredibly nice to see so many people out and enjoying this wonderful narrow gauge railway.

Winter's end

After the final journey, we prepped 1877 for winter, draining down as much water as we could – tanks, balance pipe, injector pipework and drain plugs removed from various strategic points that couldn't be drained just by opening a valve. We left Sebi to drain the boiler itself after the loco had cooled down over the next few days. We then had one last evening in the stationmaster's house before heading into Sibiu on the following day.

A long hot shower was most welcome at Mihai's house before he gave us a guided tour of the narrow gauge depot in Sibiu where the roof has just been rebuilt by an association that looks after historic monuments. This has allowed a lot of indoor work to be completed, including the refurbishment of water column components to replace the ones lost at Cornăţel, the rebuild of a Drasine that looks like it will be a lot of fun once it is completed and the main project, which has been the stripping and engineering assessment of steam loco number 764158.

This engine is a well tank built by the 23rd August Works in Bucharest in 1949 and formerly operated by CFR at Târgu Mureş before being transferred to the Sibiu to Agnita Railway in 1989. Once the rebuild of



it is completed that the SAR will have its own steam loco and can run a complete train original to the line over its metals.

Mihai then gave us a tour around the open-air museum at Sibiu which contains some fascinating exhibits of several gauges, with plenty of narrow gauge displays from around the country. We then had a quick tour around Sibiu itself, with the central old town looking like something from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in its elegant and beautiful architecture, places such as the bridge of lies having some fabulous stories behind them.

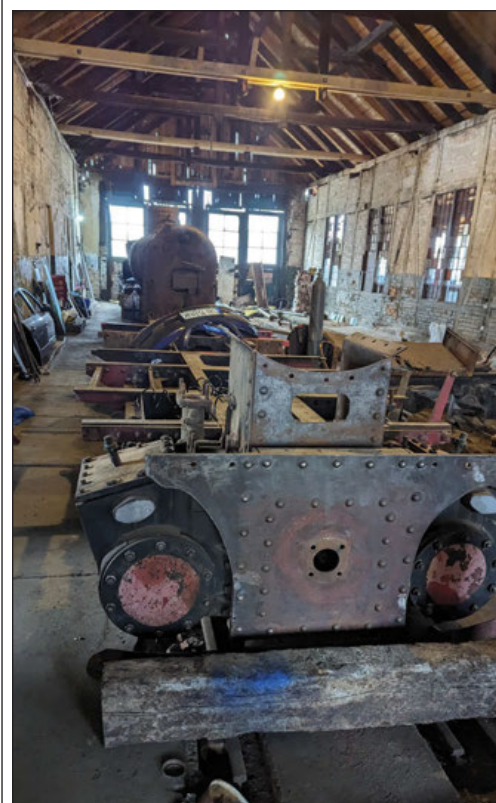
Then all too soon it was time to head to the airport and back to the UK, though it will not be the last time I am out in Romania! **NGW**

■ SAR UK would be very pleased to hear from **NGW** readers who would like to lend a hand to this very worthwhile restoration project. The group can be found on Facebook or can be contacted via email to stewart_alasdair@hotmail.com

Above: A happy crew of Romanian and UK volunteers all playing their part in reviving the Sibiu to Agnita Railway. Photo via David Rowbotham

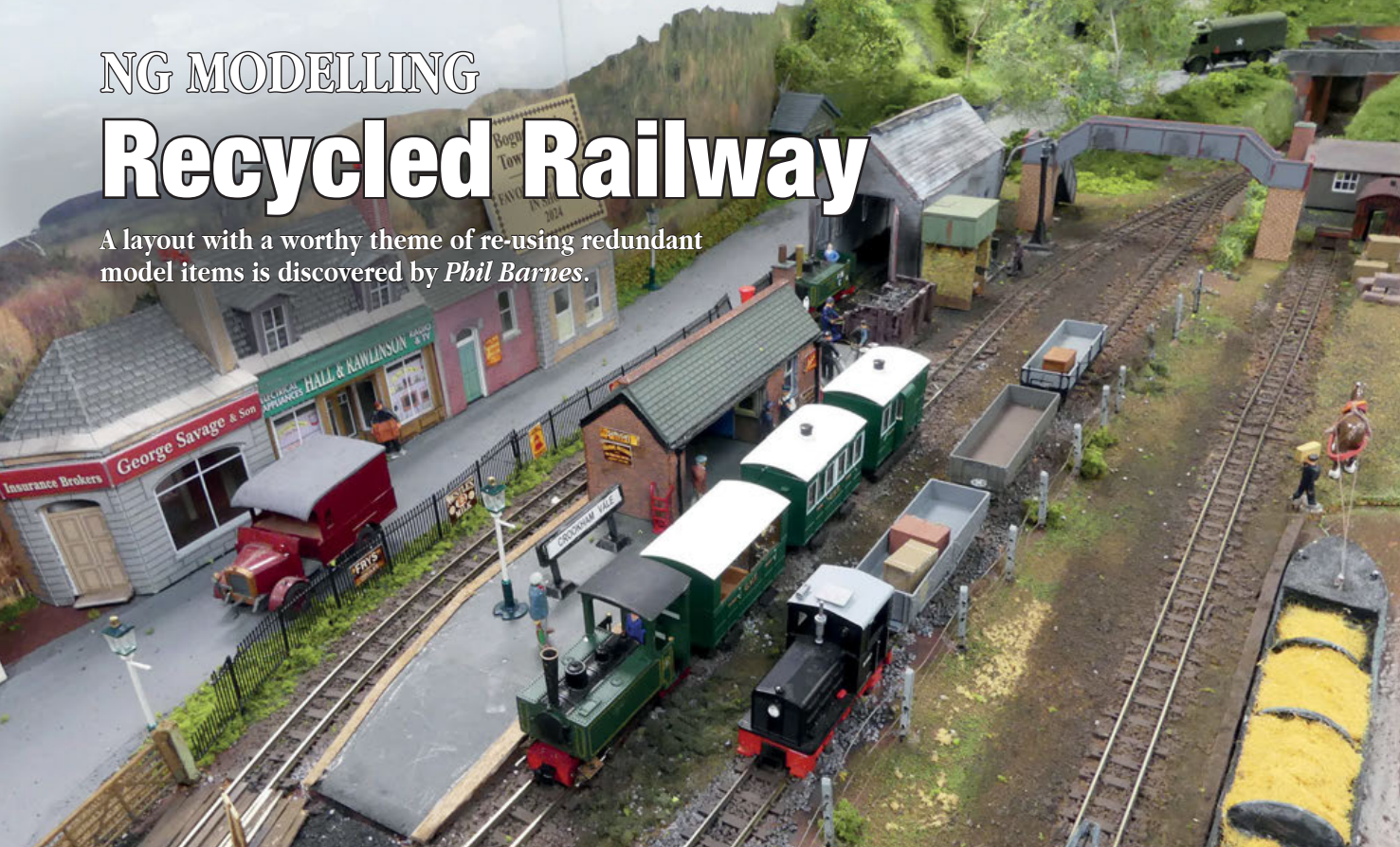
Right: The chassis of the line's former SAR resident 764158 sits inside the works in Sibiu awaiting work – behind it is the loco's boiler.

Below: At the Sibiu railway museum, next to the station in the mainline depot, more of the locos from the SAR are on display.



Recycled Railway

A layout with a worthy theme of re-using redundant model items is discovered by *Phil Barnes*.



We at *Narrow Gauge World* have a particular liking for modelling with an interesting story behind it, a purpose that adds an extra element to what on the surface looks like an excellent recreation of a miniature scene but nothing more. Just such an example was recently discovered by our roving reader with a camera, regular *NGW* contributor Phil Barnes.

On 14th January Phil popped along to the Bognor Model Railway Club exhibition in the Sussex seaside town and his eye fell upon the 009 layout 'Crookham Vale' illustrated on these pages, which was making its debut at the exhibition.

On the face of it this is a fine but unremarkable 009 layout – set during the Second World War, the theme is of a typical Berkshire village close to sand and gravel

pits, which have been served for many years by a narrow gauge railway – this line carries the product from the pits to both the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Great Western Railway main line at Thatcham.

In the 1930s the company's fortunes had declined and the railway been under threat of closure, but wartime has brought a surge in demand for sand and aggregates resulting in the line being busier than ever before. As well as the mineral traffic morning and afternoon passenger trains run between Crookham and Thatcham, as does a twice-weekly freight working.

So a nice little story giving plenty of inspiration for the modelling, but on talking to the team operating the layout Phil discovered the story of its creation was just as interesting and praiseworthy.

Second use

It seems the layout was built by a group of both male and female members who have joined the Bognor club more recently, and what they did was to go delving into the club's store or 'junk' cupboard and to extract from it items that had seen previous use on other layouts, but which were now effectively redundant.

So Crookham Vale is a very good example of that subject very much in all of our lives these days, recycling! And building the layout this way had another advantage in that it all came together very quickly – started in February 2023, the final touches were added in the week before the exhibition (*NGW* editor looks somewhat embarrassingly at his project layout, still far from being anywhere near completion, as you can read below...).

Certainly this is an excellent little layout (at the show it earned a 'Favourite Layout' award from the Bognor Regis Town Mayor) and yet another demonstration that narrow gauge model railways do not have to be time-consuming or expensive... NGW

■ The Editor must issue another abject apology for the lack of an update in this issue on the scenery for the *NGW* project layout. A rookie error at an early stage of creation required a restart and then a sudden time-critical project in AC's working life outside the magazine resulted in him simply running out of time. The next feature will definitely appear in *NGW*183 – that's a promise...

All photos of Crookham Vale by *Phil Barnes*. Phil apologises for including no low-angle shots but says he was prevented from doing so by a perspex frontage to the layout. "Mind you it did make a good camera rest," he said!



MODEL LINES

South show set for April

In *NGW*181 we brought you details of the forthcoming Narrow Gauge North Show in March, but those at the bottom end of the country need not feel left out as 27th April will see the holding of the Narrow Gauge South show.

Organised by the Wessex Narrow Gauge Modellers the bi-annual event will be held at Barton Peveril College, Eastleigh near Southampton. Already 25 layouts are confirmed in scales ranging from 3.5mm HOe up to 1/34th, 9mm scale on 16.5mm gauge, and including a dozen 009 layouts. Several traders and preservation societies are also attending.

The show will be open between 10am and 5pm, and entry is £10 for adults, accompanied under 16s for £3 with family tickets available at £23. There will also be impressive catering facilities courtesy of the college, ranging up to full lunchtime meals. Full details can be found on the Wessex NG Modellers website at www.narrowgaugesouth.org.uk

Final prep for NG North

A reminder too that the Narrow Gauge North show is on 9th March at Pudsey Civic Hall, Leeds, with more than 20 layouts signed up along with trade support. Full details of this event are at www.narrowgaugenorth.org.uk

Warley becomes a Festival

One show that we thought would not be happening in 2024 was the Warley National Model Railway Exhibition at the Birmingham NEC. Traditionally held in November the show has always included a major narrow gauge presence, often added to by full-size NG locos, and has been covered extensively in our pages.

The Warley club made national headlines when it announced that it would not stage a 2024 event, on the basis of the voluntary organising team's ability to deliver the show in current market conditions. But now the show has been rescued by *NGW* publisher the Warners Group, which already organises several major model railway exhibitions. The show will take place on 23rd-24th November under the new title of the National Festival of Railway Modelling.

Garden show at Stoneleigh

Modellers of larger-scale narrow gauge may need a reminder that the National Garden Railway Show, organised by the Association of 16mm Narrow Gauge Modellers, will be held this year on 27th April, not in Peterborough but at its previous home of Stoneleigh Park near Warwick. Full details of this usually very good show, which features a large element of live steam, can be found at www.nationalgardenrailwayshow.org.uk



■ In *NGW*181 we described the large-scale (16mm) laser-cut models of Talylyn stock being put together on a stand at the Warley show. Well Leamington and Warwick Model Railway Society member David Brookes-Howells has been in touch, firstly to identify himself as who we described as “the fellow building the model” and to share a photo of the finished item. “It was a proud moment when I finished the model after about 11 hours working on it, over two days,” David told us, adding that a few days later back at the Clubhouse the train was cheekily posed on the O-gauge exhibition layout ‘Kimble’, selecting backdrops carefully to disguise the difference in scale from the usual stock. We think it looks rather effective!

Baguleys and buildings from Bachmann



Just as this issue closed for press Bachmann Europe made its spring new product announcements – in terms of rolling stock there was nothing truly new for 009 fans to get excited about, though additional livery options for the much-anticipated Baguley-Drewery 70hp diesel locos, which are due in shops in the next couple of months, are likely to find some fans.

The locos are being offered in a preservation-inspired livery of lined crimson plus two accurate industrial liveries, the orange and grey of ICI and the white of British Industrial Sands. These will go on sale alongside the already announced general green finish and the yellow worn by locos working at the Royal Naval depot at Dean Hill. All versions carry a recommended price of £119.95.

Very likely to appeal to those modelling to a Welsh theme is another Ffestiniog-inspired building in the Scenecraft range, the blacksmith's and wagon repair shop from Boston Lodge works. This resin model is available with either red or green doors and very finely detailed, though this comes at a cost, the recommended price being £114.95.

Produced by Bachmann Europe Web: www.bachmann.co.uk
E-mail: customer.services@bachmann-europe.co.uk



LGB releases Harz Mallet in G-Scale

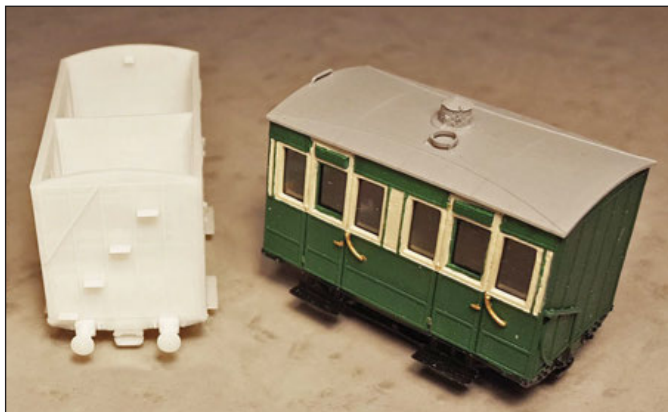
The latest release from LGB is a very fine model of one of the 12 Mallet locomotives built between 1897 and 1900 for the Nordhausen-Wernigerode Railroad Company.

Nine of these engines were built by Jung and proved both powerful and highly reliable. Six were lost to military service in the First World War and one was damaged beyond repair in an accident. Five were taken over by the German DR Railways in 1949 and two were later scrapped. Two worked the Selketal Railroad for a period and all three survivors are now on the Harz roster but none currently operational, stored at Wernigerode.

The loco is a member of what LGB describes as its High-End range and this is obvious from the level of detail. It carries a DCC decoder that provides a host of sound and light functions including head, cab and running-gear lighting and a range of sounds that also work with the loco in analogue form. A whistle and a bell are activated by reed switches and a built-in smoke generator is synchronised with the wheels, cylinder and activation of the whistle.

Power comes from a pair of motors driving both wheelsets, and the loco includes digitally-controlled couplers. But remember we stated high-end? Available in green or black, the guide price is £3,790 Euros, so just over £3,200!

Produced by LGB Web: www.lgb.com



Glyn Valley and Corris new from Brooks 3D

The latest releases from the prolific Brooks 3D Models further extend the now vast variety of Welsh prototype rolling stock available to the 4mm scale 009 modeller.

The neat moulding for the Glyn Valley Tramway carriage is based on a first-class vehicle as used on the mid-Wales line, but also included are a set of buffers and extra-long couplings so one can model the restored vehicle in the form it is in use today on the Talyllyn Railway.

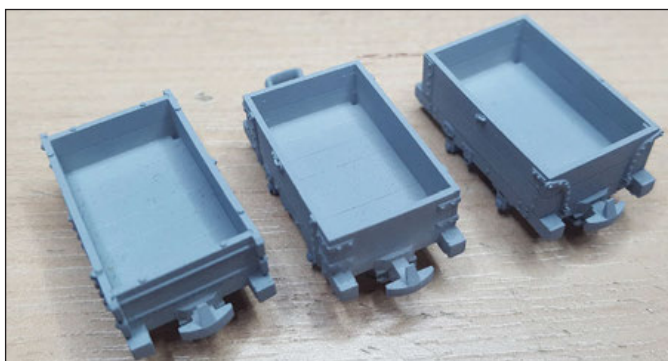
Other neat detail includes handles and rails, end wall steps and the roof ventilator. The models cost £13 each or two for £22.

Nigel Brooks is very grateful to the Corris Railway for its help with his research and the result is three different types of four-wheel wagon – tie-rod, two-plank and end-door. And they really are all different with bespoke chassis lengths, wheelbases, brakes and other details.

Each comes with a pair of brake levers, each slightly different as per the prototypes and each also has a set of optional overlays representing the clover-leaf axleboxes used on the line, and optional Quarry Plates on some. The end door is a separate part, so can be left off or modelled to be open.

The wagons are supplied with slate loads at a price of £13 for three or £24 for six.

Produced by Brooks 3D Web: www.brooks3Dmodels.com
E-mail: brooks3Dmodels@gmail.com



THE IVO PETERS COLLECTION

VOLUME FOURTEEN

Ivo first visited the Isle of Man in 1961, and those of you who have Volume Nine of the Collection will know that he intended to return. This DVD is entirely devoted to Ivo's second visit in the first week of July 1963.

We see preparations for the day's running in Douglas, and then depart on the southern route towards Port Erin, followed by the northern routes towards Peel and Ramsey via St John's. A total of seven of the twelve remaining 2-4-0T Beyer Peacock locomotives appear in steam, along with a wide range of the railway's coaching and freight stock.

This enchanting 3 foot narrow gauge railway was not only a tourist attraction in 1963, but a well-used means of transport around the green and picturesque island.

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

The Ivo Peters Collection,
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The Ballycastle Railway Remembered

Jim McBride

■ The Donegal Railway Heritage Museum has broken new ground, going east to County Antrim to take in the Ballycastle Railway, a 16-mile-long 3ft gauge delight which ran from Ballymoney to the seaside town of Ballycastle, between 1880 and 1950.

Author Jim McBride has discovered hitherto unknown pictures unearthed from local sources around the area the line served, as well as including shots from well-known photographers. The locomotives and rolling stock of the original Ballycastle Railway Company share room on the pages with those of the London Midland & Scottish Railway Northern Counties Committee, which rescued and re-opened the line in 1924, following the original company's bankruptcy.

All black-and-white, apart from a colour shot on the back cover of a last-day working, the pictures well illustrate a line that, had it survived the Ulster Transport Authority axe in 1950, along with its iconic 2-4-2 compound tank engines, would have been a real asset to Ballycastle's tourist trade today. A flavour of the railway in its last week comes from a reprint of an article from the *Meccano Magazine* of July 1951, written by well-known Irish narrow gauge historian, the late Edward M Patterson.

Full of detail for railway modellers, this book is packed with atmospheric shots of the little trains and the people who ran them and travelled on them. And it has a direct connection with the Donegal Railway Heritage Museum, for former Ballycastle Railway coach 318, the last surviving piece of the line's rolling stock is on display in its later guise as County Donegal Railway coach 58. **HD**

Published by County Donegal Railway Heritage Museum
ISBN 978-1-874518-11-2 Tel: 00353 74 9722655
Web: www.donegalrailway.com Price: £13.00



Alan Cliff's station cat returns

■ Many *NGW* readers will know of the Reverend Alan Cliff, who was Vice-President of the Bala Lake Railway for many years and also responsible with the railway's then chief engineer George Barnes for bringing together the various parts of 'Alice' – the last Dinorwic Quarry Hunslet which had been stranded high on one of the galleries when the quarry closed. Thanks to Alan's foresight Alice was eventually fully restored and runs today on the Bala line in the ownership of Julian Birley.

Alan wrote a series of much-enjoyed children's books on the theme of *Jack the Station Cat*. Now his son Nigel has managed to buy the rights to the series and finish the book that Alan was writing at the time of his death in 2020. *Jack the Station Cat Sorts it Out* is now available, along with the other 12 titles in the series, for just £2.95 each from www.gwasg.com/shop/ – an excellent way to spark railway interest among the young...

Tottering into print

■ Mainline & Maritime, well known for its narrow gauge titles, is in the process of filling a gap in the market with a history of the Far Tottering & Oyster Creek Railway, the 15-inch gauge line inspired by the work of cartoonist Roland Emmet which debuted at the Festival of Britain in 1951 – we will review it in *NGW* 183.

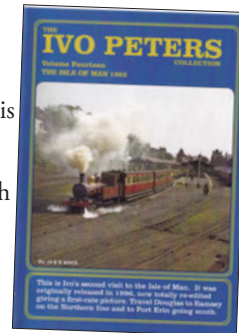
Ivo Peters Collection Vol 14 – Isle of Man 1963 (DVD)

■ With due deference to Michael Field in a clutch of new DVDs received this month this is likely to be the highlight. Few *NGW* readers will be unaware of the photographer and videographer the late Ivo Peters, who did much to document the last days of the working narrow gauge and the efforts of the pioneer preservationists. Ivo's son Julian has been steadily re-releasing the video collection in DVD, and this latest is bound to prove highly popular as it focuses on a week spent on the Isle of Man in 1963.

At a time when the future of the Manx railways has been under a perceived threat this film emphasises what we have already lost – as well as encompassing all three of the lines then extant, including the western and northern routes to Peel and Ramsey, it brims with evocative scenes – three Beyer Peacocks raising steam together outside Douglas shed with full-canopied station platforms behind; fly-shunting... of carriages; crossing the high viaduct on the route to Ramsey and the superb double departure from St Johns as two trains to different destinations appeared to race each other.

The film lasts just 48 minutes but is worth every penny – Manx railway especially and many enthusiasts generally will savour it. **AC**

Produced by Julian Peters, available from video stockists or by sending a cheque for £16.95 made payable to I Peters to: The Ivo Peters Collection, 2 Dark Lane, Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 6EY



Bala Lake Railway 2023 Gala (DVD)

■ Michael Field is back doing what he's long been known for, documenting the best of the narrow gauge events around. His latest pair of discs focuses on two of the more enjoyable UK Galas from the 2024 season, the first being filmed at the 'Quarry Hunslet Retirement Home' of the Bala Lake Railway.

When Michael films a Gala he doesn't just pop in – this film features all three days of the August Bank Holiday gathering, from locos being prepared early on the Saturday morning to the final departure on Monday, and along the length of the five-mile line. The filming angles are varied, not just the obvious spots, and even include sequences from the opposite side of the lake from the line.

Starring not only the Bala line's resident quintet of these highly popular locos but also the visitor in the form of the Ffestiniog Railway's 'Britomart', and including passenger and slate wagon workings, this will provide a highly enjoyable hour's watching especially for quarry Hunslet fans. **AC**

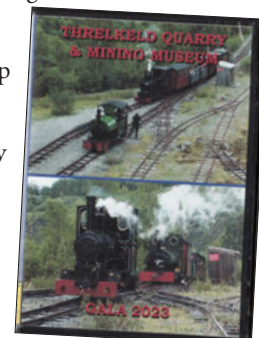
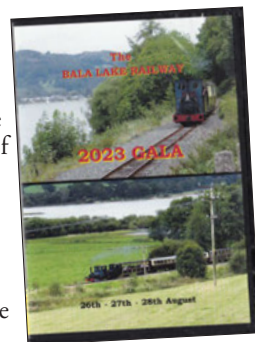
Produced by MFVP, The Rowans, Bishop Kinkell, Conon Bridge, Ross-shire IV7 8AW Tel: 01349 861129 E-mail: m.fieldvideo@googlemail.com
Price £15.95 plus £2.50 UK post and packing

Threlkeld Gala 2023 (DVD)

■ The second film from MFVP documents the 2023 Gala at Threlkeld quarry in Cumbria. The July event here is always highly visual with resident and visiting locos in an appropriate quarry setting, and this film again captures it all, including visitors from Statfold, 'Liassic' and 'Cegin'.

The hour's worth of action includes the highlights from the event in challengingly damp weather, including some great overhead views from atop the quarry, plus a couple of notable sequences, a cab ride on Cegin and the recovery of some wagons following a derailment on the previous day. As ever it's all enjoyable stuff and makes your Ed even more desperate to actually make it to Threlkeld! **AC**

Produced by MFVP, see above. Price £15.95 plus post



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Michael Field Video
New. Bala Lake Railway STEAM GALA 2023
The DVD covers all of the action over the 3 days in August.
Five of the the railways locos plus Britomart from the
Ffestiniog were working with many double headers.
R.T. approx. 61 mins. DVD £15. 95

**New. Threlkeld Quarry Mining Museum
2023 STEAM GALA**
With 'LIASSIC & CEGIN' visiting from Statfold Barn
R.T. approx. 61 mins. DVD £15. 95

Cheques to **MICHAEL FIELD** (No cards) U.K. P&P £2. 50 per DVD
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MFVP The Rowans, Bishop Kinkell, Conon Bridge,
Ross-shire. IV7 8AW. 01349-861129 m.fieldvideo@gmail.com

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Exmoor steam and Lady Ann

I read James Waite's article on the Exmoor Steam Railway in *NGW* 181 with great interest. I also remember driving past what I now know to be Cape of Good Hope Farm on the way to Woody Bay and getting a tantalizing glimpse of some South African 2ft steam locos.

Exmoor Steam have built some very attractive locos, but I think my favourite is Steve Bell's 'St Egwin' (212/2003) and I was fortunate to have a footplate ride with Steve at Evesham some years ago.

However, the item that really jogged my memory was James mentioning 'Dame Ann', the Exmoor 'Hunslet' built in 2004 for a customer in the USA. I visited the Diamondhead Annual Steam up in Mississippi in 2005 and joined an excursion to Wales West at Silverhill in Alabama, in a hired coach organised by Jerry Reshew.

After quite a long trip we arrived at what still seemed to be a building site with a large train shed and 2ft gauge track. Dame Ann was in steam, a very attractive 0-4-2ST, then very new, albeit a little surprising in a bright yellow paint scheme.

The party piled into a short train of open-sided four-wheeled carriages and we had a few trips around the line which was about a mile in length. Some of us were lucky enough to get footplate rides and John Shawe, who is a driver on the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railways, also had a spell driving the loco. The railway was intended to be the main attraction for an extensive RV (*recreational vehicle, or motorhome in UK parlance!* Ed) park then under construction and Dame Ann has been regularly operating in the park since then.

David Pinniger

Andrew C replies: Many thanks to David for his fascinating letter and photos, clear evidence that the influence of Exmoor extends far beyond the UK narrow gauge!



"Accidents did occur... they seemed to bounce quite a bit..."

Above and right: 'Dame Ann' is an Exmoor loco working well away from its birthplace in Mississippi, USA – see the letter at left from David Pinniger

Below: Dick Johnson has memories of former Naval rolling stock being given a new lift in preservation on the Welshpool & Llanfair.



Brain fade one...

Can I be at least the one hundredth person to point out that the Dick Kerr loco pictured on page 32 of *NGW* 181 is actually a 2ft gauge petrol electric loco, not standard gauge as stated!

On a less critical note, it was good to read about the Stirlands and Exmoor steam works. I helped collect a 7¼-inch loco from them in 2004 for a private railway in Kent – the loco now resides with three others at Barnards Farm in Essex.

We were privileged to be invited back around ten years ago for a private steaming of 'Lorna Doone' and several trips around the fine Exmoor railway.

The NGG13 Garratt no 77 was in similar condition to as it is now. We were told all it needed was pipework, but as that would be a heavy investment in copper it would have to wait until there was somewhere to run it.

John Downes

...and brain fade two

G'day Andrew – just received the Jan/Feb issue (*NGW* 182) down-under. It gets here a lot quicker when one has a direct subscription!

Now, blimey-Charlie, I have to take you to task again and must insist that you put on the dunce's cap and stand in the corner. With a photo in *NGW* to prove it! The alternative is 1,000 lines, hand written, no



cut-and-paste on your computer.

On page 15, bottom right – 'Table turned into art'. What is the basic narrow gauge for the Queensland canefield tramways?

All the best for the New Year.

Peter Neve OAM, Pete's Hobby Rly

Andrew C replies: Here we have two instances of basic incompetence on my part because I fully knew what gauge the Dick Kerr loco was when photographing it (and remarkably John was the only one to point out my error!). And I have learnt through bitter experience that Queensland cane railways are truly 2ft gauge, in other words 610mm, not 600. Doh! Perhaps it proves how overworked I am, said he, desperately looking for an excuse...

Memories of naval stock

With regard to the recent feature on military stock that was left to heritage railways (NGW180), going through my photo collection I came across the enclosed, when we at the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway had the rolling stock from the (Navy's) Chattenden & Upnor Railway.

Amongst the stock were vehicles 212 and 213 – 212 was an open-sided brake van and 213 was a breakdown van. They arrived in a shade of apple green.

We cut a window in the side opposite the door of 213 and also used this as a brake van as both of them had cast-iron weights inside.

The riding of these vehicles was something to experience with the short wheelbase and the poor track at the time. And accidents did occur as can be seen with the picture of 'The Boat' with its broken axle. They used to bounce quite a bit! **Dick Johnson**

Andrew C replies: Many thanks to Dick for these interesting pictures – one of the many aspects of the narrow gauge I love is the sheer variety of its rolling stock... Dick is a Welshpool & Llanfair member who was there right at the start of the line's preservation and incidentally the person with the pained expression in the second photo is another notable personality in both Welshpool and Ffestiniog circles, Bob Harris. Among Bob's claims to fame is being one of the trio of W&LLR members who saved 3ft gauge Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0 'Handyman' from the scrapman – this loco is currently under cosmetic restoration at Workshop X at Killmarsh for display at the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust.

Who What Where – an answer...



In NGW182 we carried a picture of a typical Bagnall 0-4-OST at what appeared to be a preservation location, taken by the late Alan Gibson, with a hope that its location might jog the memory of a reader. It certainly did for Anthony Coulls, well known to many readers as Senior Curator at the National Railway Museum. Anthony tells the highly interesting tale of this loco.

The picture prompted me to write as it is an engine and location I know well. The photo was taken on 16th July 1966 at the first Hockley Heath Steam Rally, a one-day event in that year. The engine is Bagnall 2088, then named 'Lady Luxborough' and owned by Arthur and Hylbert Smith of Oldberrow Rectory in Warwickshire; they had bought it in 1961 from Birmingham Water Board, Minworth Sewage Works.

The brothers operated the Oldberrow Light Railway, which was often a track laid alongside a paddock at home, but during the 1960s, they also took the railway on tour to local fetes, events and steam rallies. It became known unofficially as 'The Largest Portable Railway in the World' and attended the Shakespeare 400 celebrations in Stratford on Avon on grounds across the river from the Bancroft Gardens. The Smith brothers were helped by local steam enthusiasts, including Trevor Daw, Doug Kempton, the late Rodney Weaver and my father, Peter Coulls.

The railway was at Hockley Heath Rally for several years, and was always number one in the programme, and film exists of the Bagnall being winched into position across the field on a track panel by local resident Jack Marshall, using his Ransomes traction engine 'The Countryman'. The Bagnall's name, Lady Luxborough was carried on a small nameplate fixed to the saddle tank, and was derived from Henrietta Knight, Lady Luxborough, who was a poet and gardener, banished from Court to the nearby Barrells Hall in Warwickshire for a romantic indiscretion!

After the end of the 1960s, the loco ceased to tour and was stored at Oldberrow Rectory throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s and I recall it there almost in a hedgerow.

In around 1988 it passed to Doug Kempton, who kept the frame and wheels at his house in Leek Wootton and the boiler at the Echills Wood Railway at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire. In 1991, Doug sold the engine to the Best Brothers at Bredgar, and it now runs as 'Armistice' on the Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway. The name is said to have been what it was intended to have called the engine when new, but it never carried a name until entering preservation.

A fascinating small chapter in the byways of preservation, and happy memories of family friends for me.

Photo of 'Armistice' at Bredgar by Andrew Charman

That was the year that...

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

From 60 years ago

Hunslet locos for Bord na Mona

The initial order for 25 locos was completed in January and Bord na Mona have placed another order for a further 28. This means big developments on the 3ft gauge systems as the locos will be able to handle much heavier trains of milled peat off the bogs to the various power stations. The locos are considerably bigger than the normal narrow gauge diesel loco... the large cab seats the driver and three passengers, and is fitted with electric head and tail lights, and windscreen wipers. Very large sandboxes have been fitted to cope with the often poor rail conditions. (NGN, March 1964)

Six decades on the Bord na Mona story is at an end, with tracks being taken up...

From 25 years ago

Vale of Rheidol Railway (1ft 11½in gauge)

A new side tank has been fitted to no 8 'Owain Glyndwr', the manufacture of which was undertaken by Chester MPD. The old leaky tank is available for sale – it is however 14ft long! (NGN, April 1974)

That would be some talking point – wonder if anyone bought it?

Extracts from Narrow Gauge

News, news journal of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society – to join the Society go to www.ngrs.org.uk or see the advert on page 38.



What's On

■ No responsibility accepted for dates on these pages – check line's website and/or social media before travelling.

Special Events

Only events of interest to rail enthusiasts listed in this guide.

■ **16th-17th March, Statfold Spectacle of Steam.** Many locos in steam, museum, miniature line, works open www.statfold.com/spectacleofsteam.

■ **30th March, Talyllyn Railway**
Behind the Scenes. Chance
 to see beyond public areas of
 railway – details on website.

■ **6th April, Apedale Valley Light Railway New Members Day.** Aimed at prospective volunteers, see behind scenes.

■ **13th April, Talyllyn Railway Diesel Day.** Three diesels on passenger trains, 'interesting' timetable, trolley rides.

■ **14th April, Amberley Musm**
Spring Industrial Trains. Wide
range of locos in action, steam
trains, Wickham railcar rides.

■ **14th April, Sittingbourne & Kemsley Railway Behind the Scenes Day.** See non public areas of line and learn how it is operated.

■ **20th April, Ffestiniog/Welsh Highland Railway Snowdonian.** Train over both railways, multiple locos, pre-booked only.

■ 20th-21st April, Welshpool & Llanfair Lt Rly Vintage Wknd. Choice of Austrian or GWR mixed set, shunting at termini.

Tramways

■ **Douglas Horse Tramway**
www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/
Daily from 28th Mar except 15th-16th, 22nd-23rd, 29th-30th Apr

■ **Great Orme Tramway:**
Conwy 01492 577877, www.greatormetramway.co.uk *Daily from 'early April' - check website*

■ **Manx Electric, Snaefell**
Mountain Rly: Isle of Man, 01624
 662525, www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/
 12th-13th (MER only), 16th-17th (MER only), 19th-20th, 23rd-24th Mar. Daily from 26th Mar except 15th, 22nd, 29th April

■ **Seaton Tramway:** *Devon* 01297 20375, www.tram.co.uk
Weekends, daily from 23rd March

Miniatures

■ **Lappa Valley Railway** (15, 10.25, 7.25in): *Cornwall* 01872 510317, www.lappavalley.co.uk *Thur to Sun in March, Daily in April*

■ **Littlehampton Miniature Railway (12.25in):** *Sussex*
www.littlehamptonminiaturerailway.com *Opening dates tba, see website*

■ **North Bay Railway, (20in):** Yorks
01723 368791, www.nbr.org.uk,
Opening dates tba, see website

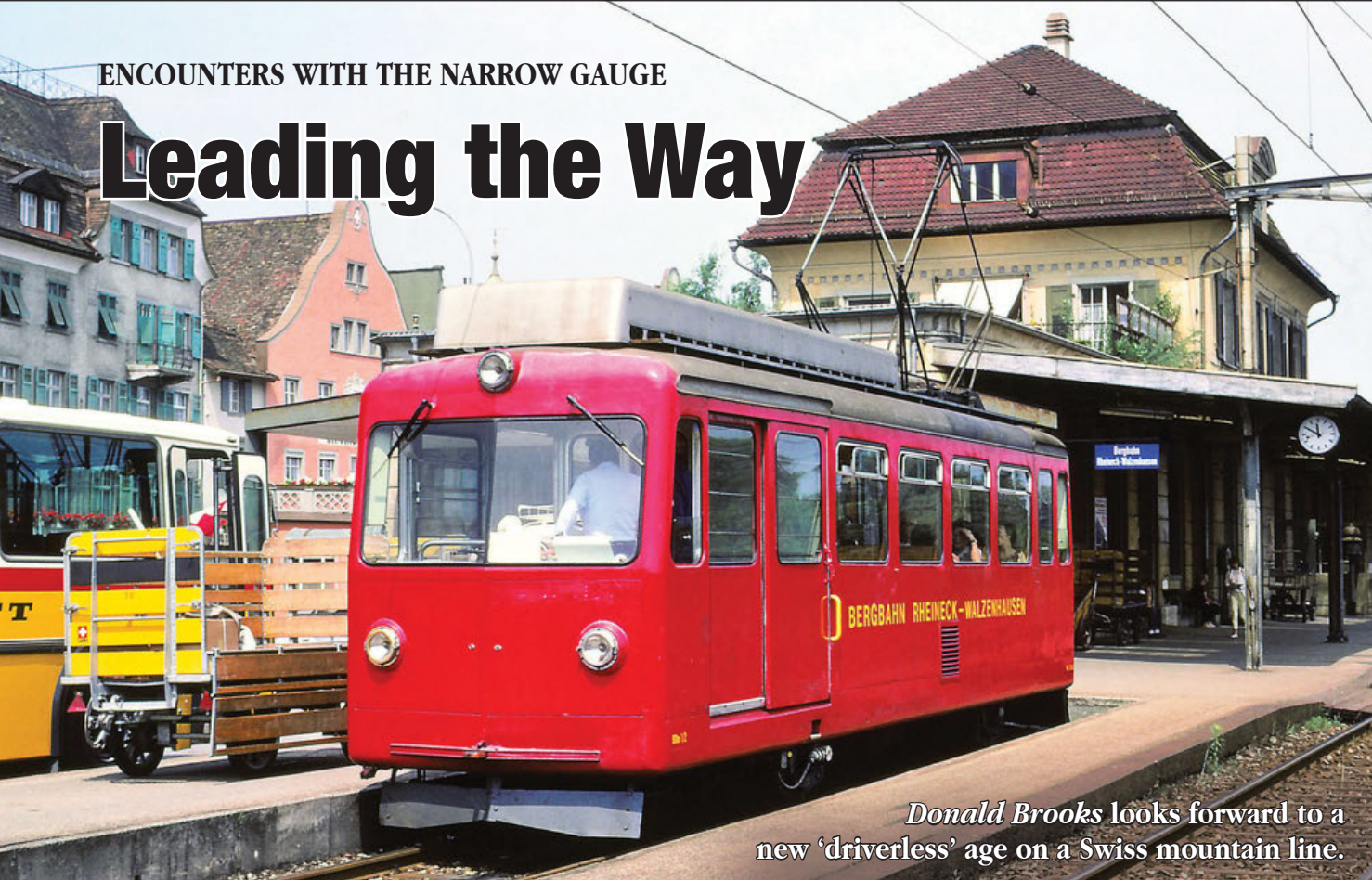
■ **Rhyl Miniature Railway (15in):**
Clwyd 01352 759109,
www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk
23rd Mar-14th Apr then weekends

■ **South Downs Light Railway**
(10.25in): *Sussex* 07518 753784,
www.south-downs-railway.com
Weekends from 2nd March

[illegible]

	Mon 25th	Tue 26th	Wed 27th	Thu 28th	Fri 29th	Sat 30th	Sun 31st	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	
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Leading the Way



Donald Brooks looks forward to a new 'driverless' age on a Swiss mountain line.

Driverless or autonomous trains are nothing new. In London the Docklands Light Railway has been operating automatically since 1987, albeit on standard gauge, and similar networks are common around the world. More likely to be narrow gauge are driverless funiculars, with major builders such as Doppelmayr or Poma offering fully automated systems.

These examples run on completely

Above: Car 1 at the end of the line in Rheineck station, with its typically Swiss architecture.

Below left: Train 67, the 11.54 for Walzenhausen, heads away from Rheineck. The line was equipped with light but modern overhead, while at 1200mm the track scarcely looks to be narrow gauge.

Photos by Donald Brooks, 2nd July 1985



segregated routes, but much more challenging is the operation of autonomous trains on open or unfenced track through the countryside. Among the earliest recipients of this technology on public passenger trains will be an obscure narrow gauge railway in the north east of Switzerland.

The Bergbahn Rheineck – Walzenhausen (RhW) is just under 2km long and operates on the rare gauge of 1200mm, connecting the town of Rheineck, not far from the Bodensee or Lake Constance, with the hill resort of Walzenhausen, roughly 270 metres higher up. When the line first opened in 1896 it was as a 1.2km long water-powered funicular down from Walzenhausen to Ruderbach, just south of Rheineck, with a short connecting tramway into the town following in 1909.

By the late 1950s both infrastructure and rolling stock were life-expired and the line closed for reconstruction on 1st May 1958. When it reopened it was as a single combined rack-and-adhesion railway, electrified throughout at 600 volts DC and using Riggenbach rack on the previously cable-worked section. Operation was by a single 28-seat BDeh1/2 car supplied by SLM.

Service suspended

A railway with only one item of motive power runs the risk that any problem can lead to a suspension of service. And so it proved when I encountered the line on my sole visit

in 1985. I arrived at Rheineck intending to take the 11.10 to Walzenhausen, only to find a minibus instead of a narrow gauge train. Wondering whether the train might make the downward journey, I took the minibus to the top where my hopes were realised. The railcar was being prepared to re-enter service and duly left on time at 11.40.

Just about the only change to affect the railway between 1958 and the present day was in 2008, when Appenzeller Bahnen (AB) took over responsibility for the line even though only the top section is in Appenzell Ausserrhoden half-canton, with Rheineck itself in St Gallen. Otherwise the world seemed to pass the RhW by, with SLM car 1 providing the service unaided for well over 60 years.

All good things come to an end and in 2022 AB signed a contract with Stadler for the supply of an entirely autonomous replacement railcar to enter service in 2026, using the highest level of the company's Communication-Based Train Control system. The railcar will shuttle up and down the line with no staff presence whatsoever, though the AB control room in distant Herisau will monitor operations and will be able to intervene remotely if necessary.

Stadler products have an excellent reputation for quality, but it will be interesting to see if this example of cutting-edge technology lasts as long in service as its relatively obscure predecessor has managed. **NGW**

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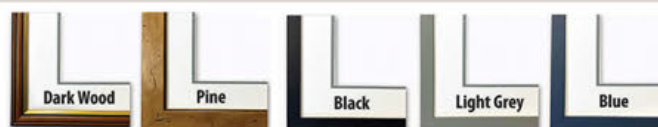
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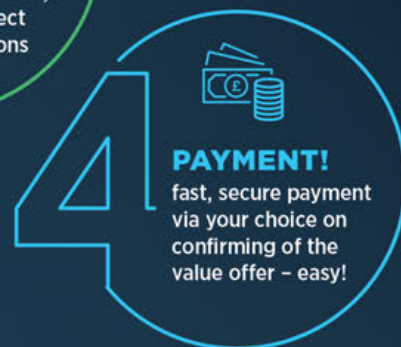
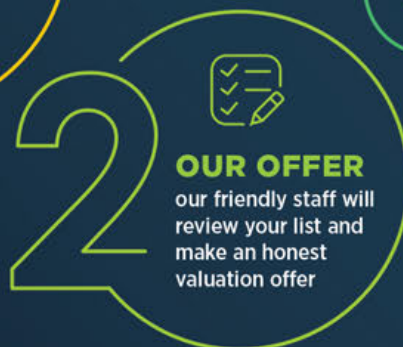
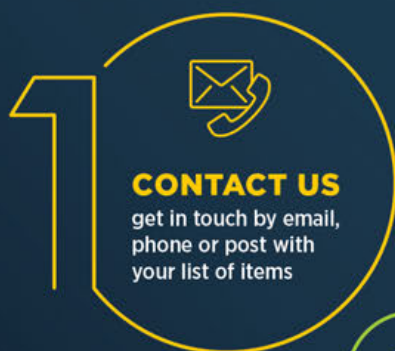
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