

NARROW GAUGE WORLD

ISSUE 198
NOV-DEC 2025



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PUBLISHER
Steve Cole
stevec@warnersgroup.co.uk

EDITOR
Andrew Charman
12 Maes Gwyn, Llanfair Caereinion, Powys, SY21
0BD. Tel: 01938 810592
Email: editor@narrowgaugeworld.co.uk

FEATURES EDITOR
David Joy
Email: dawjoy1@gmail.com

DESIGN & PRODUCTION
Andrew Charman

MULTIMEDIA SALES MANAGER
Sarah Jarman
Tel: 01778 392055
Email: sarah.jarman@warnersgroup.co.uk

AD PRODUCTION
Allison Mould
Tel: 01778 395002
Email: allison.mould@warnersgroup.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Cover: Fletcher Jennings 0-4-0WT 'Dolgoch' bursts out from under the bridge at Rhydyronen on the Talylyn Railway on 13th October. The Talylyn is entering a year of celebration for both the railway and railway preservation as a whole, which began 75 years ago in 1950 – we were exclusively invited to join the first of the planned events, which we describe in this issue.

The inset shows two of the locos on one of the newest and least-known lines on the UK heritage scene, the Gunpowder Railway at Waltham Abbey – also described in the pages of this issue.

Photos: Andrew Simmonds and Nick Turner

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Not villains but heroes



"The full extent of what Peter saved is becoming clear – without his efforts few, if any, of these locos would likely still exist..."

Above: Taken from *Narrow Gauge Enigma*, a small part of Collection X as removal from the Surrey farm began in 2023, with the Couillet 0-6-0T 'Sahelices No. 2' to the fore. The inset shows Peter Rampton on a rare public appearance at the Vale of Rheidol Railway in 2014.

Main photo courtesy Stephen Phillips/VoR. Inset Andrew Charman

Welcome to *NGW*198 and I must start this issue with a note of congratulation – to the team responsible for the latest and most jaw-dropping new-build project we've seen for some time.

As you will read over the page, a private group is recreating a Hunslet NA/5 2-8-4 pannier tank, as built for the Dholpur State Railway in India – a truly monster loco which when finished has an agreement to run on the Welsh Highland Railway.

Remarkably this project has been underway for some three years, reaching the stage of a rolling chassis with cylinders cast and the boiler under construction, with virtually no-one outside the small team doing the build knowing about it – well done to them for completely evading the prying eyes of journos such as myself. They reckon in three years it could be running, which will certainly be a sight...

Don't let me be...

Misunderstood... this issue features two names that such a phrase could be applied to, firstly Peter Rampton, who many readers will recognise as the man behind 'Collection X', one of the largest narrow gauge mysteries of the past 50 years.

The Collection X title came from the fact that Peter gathered a huge variety of narrow gauge locos from around the world and stored them on his Surrey farm, out of public gaze with outsiders firmly refused access – something earning criticism from enthusiasts over many years.

Peter died in 2019 and now the full story of a man who truly was a narrow gauge enigma has been told in an excellent new book, which we review on page 44. I reckon reading this will lead many to re-assess his actions and to appreciate his role in narrow gauge preservation.

The heyday of his collecting was in the 1970s and '80s, mostly of locos outside the UK that then attracted little attention with much to occupy enthusiasts on the British scene. Had he not acted then, a host of notable locos, many from British builders, would have gone for scrap.

Peter was a private man and the attitude of secrecy was stoked by early episodes with one or two so-called enthusiasts – we all know such people exist among our ranks. Author Stephen Phillips also suggests that a strong desire to return every item to working order was accompanied by both a quest for perfectionism and some naivety at what is involved in loco restoration. And he was also heavily distracted by the Vale of Rheidol Railway, which over many years he quietly poured massive investment into, transforming it from a run-down BR branch to the superb line it is today.

Collection X is now emerging into public gaze and the full extent of what Peter saved becoming clear – without his efforts few, if any, of these locos would likely still exist.

No doubting Thomas

The second of our heroes is Thomas the Tank Engine – yes honestly.

The little blue loco and the massive corporate giant that today lies behind him wins few friends among enthusiasts, who wince at the thought of smiley faces hung on the front of their favourite locomotives in the cause of family entertainment.

No doubt such enthusiasts will be horrified that the Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum Trust has gone down this route, but as you can read in this issue, they shouldn't be – in fact they should be welcoming it.

Without Thomas most children today would have no idea what a steam loco is, until they see one on a heritage railway – those born when steam ended on British Railways in 1968 are today in their late fifties.

Today's children would likely be less taken with heritage steam, if they hadn't been enthused by Thomas and his friends at a very young, impressionable age. That's vital because that first wave of enthusiasts from the pioneer days of preservation are lessening in number every year – and for our railways to survive they will need to be replaced.

Just as importantly, those lines won't be there to draw in young enthusiasts if they cannot afford to survive in today's ever more expensive world – Thomas weekends are one of the most effective ways of generating the revenue and exposure that railways need more than ever.

So please don't flick past pages 22 to 24 because they feature engines with faces – the message contained on them is pertinent to all of us...

Andrew Charman

Monster Hunslet new-build set to run on Welsh Highland



Indian ZA/5 pannier tank recreation already at rolling chassis stage with boiler construction underway.

A new-build version of one of the largest Hunslet narrow gauge locomotives ever built is set to operate on the Welsh Highland Railway (WHR), and could enter service in as early as 2028.

On 13th September, hours after a small ceremony for the former South African Railway NG15 2-8-2 recently returned to service on the WHR saw it officially given the name 'Kalahari', members of the Welsh

Highland Railway Society attending the group's AGM were given details of the new-build project.

A small independent team in Somerset is constructing an 'improved' version of a Hunslet ZA/5 class 2-8-4 pannier tank, the final two of which were built in 1959 for the Dholpur State Railway in India.

Remarkably the build has been going on for some three years in complete secrecy, construction of the chassis taking place in an outbuilding at a private home. Already the loco is at the stage of a rolling chassis with wheelsets fitted and rods attached, the cylinders cast and building of the boiler well underway.

Project founder Jon Banfield and his friend Matt Fairweather have a long history in the 7¼-inch gauge miniature locomotive community, but have been keen to undertake a project in 2ft gauge, and having ridden on and been wowed by the Welsh Highland Railway they were equally keen that the loco would find a use on the north Wales line.

On searching for a suitable prototype both were taken with the enormous Hunslet ZA/5 locos that ran on the 43-mile long Indian 2ft 6in gauge line, these being an evolution of a design originally built by



Top: A very big pannier tank – Hunslet ZA/5 no 809 on the Dholpur State Railway on 7th November 1978. *Photo: Donald Brooks*

Above left: Proof that NGW is not trying to April fool its readers in the wrong month! Alan, Roger and Stuart, three of the volunteers who work on the project each Monday, with the completed rolling chassis.

Left: The motion has been fitted up and tested with the centre wheelset on a rolling road.

Photos: Jon Banfield, ZA/6 project

Kerr, Stuart before the Stoke-on-Trent company was absorbed by its Leeds rival.

There were five iterations of the ZA class, the final ZA5s switching from side to pannier tanks and weighing in at some 38 tons. They operated until the 1980s before being replaced by diesels – the line itself closed in 2023 despite plans to convert it to the Indian broad gauge of 5ft 6in.

Jon and Matt were able to access full working drawings for the loco from the Hunslet Archive which is now housed at the Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum Trust. From this they were able to redesign the loco to 2ft gauge and determine that it would fit the WHR loading gauge and be able to run satisfactorily on the line – the success of the eight-coupled NG15 Kalahari helped confirm this.

At this point Jon consulted Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway general manager Paul Lewin, to ask that if the loco was built, it could operate on the WHR. With a positive response from Paul, the build began in 2022, with FF&WHR chief mechanical engineer Jon Whalley also getting involved.

Advanced tech

The project has made plentiful use of new technology, one example being 3D printing of many casting patterns including for the wheels, while the overall design has incorporated advances made in locomotive engineering over the years. As a result the new loco will be designated a ZA/6 and will be numbered 815, the last steam loco ordered for the line being numbered 814.

“Basically we want to take the best aspects of steam locomotive design, such as long-travel piston valves, lempor exhausts and such, and mount them on the 2-8-4 chassis,” Jon told *NGW*. “The result should be a very efficient tank loco that might also have a turn of speed.”

Heading for Wales

While the project is already a long way in, Jon emphasised there is still a great deal to do. Despite this, if no significant delays are experienced it is hoped that the completed running chassis will be transported to the FFWHR's Boston Lodge works in the Autumn of next year, where it will receive the boiler being built for it. The Somerset team will then concentrate on building the long pannier tanks and the cab, for mating with the chassis in late 2027.

If all goes to plan it has tentatively been suggested that the locomotive could first move under its own steam in the winter of 2027-28, with a potential entry into service on the WHR in 2028, though not surprisingly this is not a certainty.

NGW will of course follow the build closely and we plan to bring readers an in-depth feature on the ZA/6 new-build project in a forthcoming issue. Meanwhile the project has launched a website for the build at www.za6.co.uk – Jon added that there is little on the site

yet but it will be updated as the build

FR's Bygones weekend overcomes Storm Amy



The Ffestiniog Railway was the venue for another successful Bygones weekend on 3rd-5th October, despite the best efforts of the weather to disrupt the event.

The weekend which traditionally sees the line celebrating its heritage with the likes of Victorian-era train sets and staff and visitors in period wear, neatly coincided with the arrival in the UK of Storm Amy – the first storm of the winter season in Europe and a record-breaking cyclone that caused major damage and left three people dead in France and Ireland.

Regular *NGW* correspondent Steve Sedgwick attended the Bygones event and described the weather as extreme. “Winds exceeded 50mph and the rain at times was horizontal,” he said. “Unsurprisingly, conditions were very uncomfortable for FR staff and volunteers – it was painful to be shotblasted in the face by such rain.”

One of the gravity trains that have long been a feature of the Bygones weekend had to be cancelled on Saturday morning, having run on Friday. “Conditions for the crew were very harsh with heavy rain and high winds blowing in against them from the west – even without the weather, it is a hard ride on the unsprung, loose-coupled slate wagons,” Steve said.

The railway also had to temporarily close its Victorian shopping village on Saturday due to fears for the marquees within which it was located at Porthmadog Harbour station.

Also feeling the worst of the conditions were the team manning the guest loco, the Stephen Lewin replica ‘Samson’ from Beamish Museum. Despite the weather and its lack of any cab the tiny loco, which is at the FR for the retubing of its boiler, did manage a trip up the line to Rhiw Goch.

The weather on Saturday proved slightly tamer, but according to Steve only just, but it did improve significantly on Sunday with milder conditions.

■ See also Gallery pages.

Above: The winds reached a peak on the afternoon of 3rd October – the double Fairlie ‘James Spooner’ was returning across the Cob with a short train of Victorian stock. Steve explained that the low visibility was not mist, but rain driven into a white horizontal frenzy by winds blowing at over 50mph.

Below: The crew of Beamish Museum’s Stephen Lewin replica ‘Samson’ appeared to not be greatly enjoying themselves on the Friday of the event.

Photos: Steve Sedgwick





Horsepower drives TR heritage weekend

New horsepower came to the Talyllyn Railway on 13th-14th September when the line focused its annual Heritage Weekend on its slate history.

For the first time since 1946, the event saw a TR slate waggon moved by horse – this was a common sight in the days of the Bryn Eglwys quarry, horses being used to pull waggons along the level sections of the line's mineral section, such as between the Alltwyllt and Cantrybedd inclines.

Local company Carnog Working Horses, which has previously undertaken horse logging work in the area, supplied working horse Molly which hauled the wagon along a section of temporary track laid in the field below Abergynolwyn station.

Saturday's trains focused on the Talyllyn and Corris Railways in the pre-preservation era, employing original carriages from both railways and waggons from the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum, along with the newly recreated Gunpowder van built by the Talyllyn's Young Members Group

(NGW197). The Group also conducted waggon hand-shunting demonstrations at Tywyn Wharf Station across the weekend.

Sunday was themed around the early preservation years of the TR including Corris Railway locos pulling Talyllyn original carriages, a diesel loco taking tipper wagons up the line as seen during the extension of the passenger line to Nant Gwernol in the 1960s and '70s, and a typical 1950s works train used when relaying the then poor condition track.

The event was also supported by Amgueddfa Lechi Cymri, the National Slate Museum as part of its 'Museum on the Move' programme, bringing staff, collections and stories to locations at the heart of the slate story communities. TR volunteers also presented talks on the Friday and Saturday evenings.

Above: TR volunteer David Rowbotham let Molly the horse provide the pulling power during the heritage event. Photo: Luke Ryan/TR

Talyllyn to celebrate preservation's 75th

The Talyllyn Railway will stage a three-day Gala next year to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the mid-Wales 2ft 3in gauge line's first year as a heritage railway, which marked the birth of the railway preservation movement.



The Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society was formed at a meeting in Birmingham on 11th October 1950, five days after the line operated what was widely expected to be its final service following the death of owner Sir Henry Haydn Jones that July.

The TRPS aimed to preserve and run the railway for future generations and on 14th May 1951 operated its first public train, in the process kick-starting the global railway preservation movement.

That first train will be commemorated on 14th May 2026 by the running of a special service for invited representatives from various heritage railways, followed on 15th-17th May by a Gala described by organiser Luke Ryan as "A bumper event where the toys come out to play".

Themed as 'TR Best Hits' from across the years, each day of the Gala will feature recreations of iconic moments from across the TR's post-preservation era; Friday for the 1950s and 1960s, Saturday for the 1970s and 1980s and Sunday for the 1990s through to the present day.

The Saturday will also see the return of Overnight Steam to the Talyllyn for the first time in 11 years, steam-hauled services running throughout the night and straight through into Sunday morning.

The line will announce further details of the celebrations in the months leading up to the event.

The end that became a beginning – see page 38



Woody Bay is listed

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway's Woody Bay station is among seven rail structures that have been given Grade II listed status by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as part of the Railway 200 celebrations.

The Woody Bay listing covers the station building, former stable block and signal cabin, excluding its lever frame which is not original. The L&B now has two listed sites, Woody Bay and the Chelfham viaduct.

A spokesman for the L&B described the listing as testament to the foresight and dedication of the line's volunteers, supporters and staff over the last few decades. "We are also pleased that Historic England have acknowledged the role that narrow-gauge railways played in the development of the railways more widely across the UK," he added.

Left: Woody Bay, photographed here by Dave Hallett in 2015, now has the protection of listed status.

Three bow out but with hopes of swift returns



The end of the 2025 operating season sees three core steam locomotives reaching the end of their 10-year boiler tickets and being withdrawn for overhaul. However the Leighton Buzzard Railway-based Baldwin 4-6-0T No.778, the Ffestiniog Railway's double Fairlie 'Merddin Emrys' and Phil Mason's Amerton-based Kerr, Stuart 0-4-0T 'Diana' are not expected to be out of use for an extended period.

The 1917-built Baldwin, which was returned to steam at Leighton Buzzard in 2007, was set to make a final appearance before expiry of its ticket on 30th November during a special 26th October event at the Bedfordshire line. As part of the LBR's Halloween celebrations the day was expected to also feature vertical-boilered locos 'Taffy', visiting from Alan Keef Ltd and resident De Winton 'Chaloner', together with Kerr Stuart Wren 0-4-0ST 'Peter Pan', back from its latest exploits in Belgium (see page 15).

"We aim to ensure the overhaul of No. 778 is undertaken as rapidly as possible," commented Cliff Thomas, chairman of the Greensand Railway Museum Trust that owns the Baldwin. "Our loco has been pulling LBR trains since 2007 and the trustees hope the required overhaul can be completed as quickly as possible to enable that to resume."

Finance could cause some delays to the

overhaul and the Trust is welcoming contributions – these can be sent to the GRMT c/o Pages Park station at the Leighton Buzzard Railway, to be paid into a GRMT 778 restricted fund held by the railway.

Diana returned from its summer tour of heritage lines, featured in our previous two issues, in time for the mid-September Gala at the Amerton Railway where the loco is based. It too was due to have its final official day in steam on 26th October shortly before the expiry of its ticket.

Owner Phil Mason expressed hopes that the loco would not be out of action for long; "A year, maybe two, depending on what we find," he said.

Merddin Emrys, built by the Ffestiniog Railway in 1879, played its part in the line's weather-affected Bygones weekend on 3rd-5th October (see page 7) and worked a final train for staff and volunteers on Sunday evening before its withdrawal for overhaul, which began on the following day.

Above: Baldwin 778 has played a major role in events recalling War Department Light Railways.

Photo: LBR

Below: Double Fairlie 'Merddin Emrys' worked through less than ideal weather at the Ffestiniog Railway's Bygones event.

Photo: Karl Heath



BRIEF LINES

Manx carriage on wheels

Restoration of former Manx Northern Railway carriage F37 passed a milestone on 16th October when the body of the carriage was reunited with its chassis at Stanegate Restorations in Haltwhistle, Northumbria. F37 was saved from scrapping by enthusiast Peter Rampton in 1974 to become part of his Collection X, and was sold back to the Isle of Man in 2022. It is expected to return to the island in the near future.

Festival dates set

The 2026 version of the highly popular Manx Heritage Transport Festival, which involves all of the island's heritage lines, will take place from 28th July to 2nd August. Among the specific attractions next year will be celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Douglas Bay Horse Tramway.

Mountaineer progress

Recent progress on the project to restore the Ffestiniog Railway's Alco 2-6-2T 'Mountaineer' has seen the boiler transferred from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Boston Lodge so that remedial work can start in due course. The chassis is also now at Boston Lodge for repairs and modifications to begin.

Romney visitors

Sister locos 'Sian' and 'Katie', today based at Kirklees, and 'Wroxham Broad' from the Bure Valley Railway were set to join in the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway's traditional Autumn Gala on 18th-19th October, this year named as a Railway 200 event. Wroxham Broad has just returned from overhaul.

More Mona disappears

More of the former Bord na Mona 3ft gauge network in Ireland is steadily disappearing following the end of peat extraction. The branch to Clonbullogue Ash Repository became the latest to go, being lifted over the summer.

Iain in the hot seat

NGW sends congratulations to Iain McCall, known to many readers as the man behind transport publisher Mainline & Maritime, who has been appointed editor of the long-established and much-respected Ffestiniog Railway Society magazine.



Radio plug sparks confusion over watercress loco status

A BBC radio programme appears to have sparked some controversy over the status of a locomotive currently working at a watercress farm in Dorset.

An edition of *Secret Dorset* broadcast in September on BBC Radio Solent highlighted the line at Dodding's Farm, in Bere Regis, Dorset. Transport writer David Henshaw had contacted the programme to tell them about the railway and its petrol locomotive, called 'The Watercress Queen.' Mr Henshaw stated that he had last visited the farm in 2023 and the railway was then operational, adding that it has just reached its hundredth birthday.

BBC reporter Patrick Hughes visited the farm and concluded the loco had been out of action for a while, saying: "the inside was full of cobwebs." He interviewed farm manager Kelvin Dutton who stated "It's not in its best state at the moment."

Mr Dutton, who has worked at the farm for two years, was quoted as saying the days of the railway were probably over and there had been enquiries from enthusiasts wanting to buy the loco. On the programme Mr Henshaw expressed fears

that the locomotive might go for scrap, urging that it be saved.

However *NGW* has since received a letter, which we have printed on page 48, stating that the loco, built locally in 1948, is neither for sale or a former First World War trench loco as stated on the BBC website. "The loco is a four-wheel petrol hydraulic, with a Honda engine... considered an integral part of the railway," the letter stated, adding that it is used regularly during the season to transfer cress from the beds to store sheds, serviced annually locally and stored safely in a barn during the winter.

The BBC story also suggested that the Dodding's Farm line might be the last working agricultural railway in the UK, and a unique line – the former may be true, but it was until recently not the only watercress line. In *NGW* 195 Steve Sedgwick described the hand-worked Nine Wells Farm line in Herefordshire, which was working in its centenary year of 2018 but on a recent visit appeared to be redundant.

Working or not? 'The Watercress Queen' and its line in Dorset. Photo: Anthony Heale-Barton

Blythburgh group's running line plan rejected by council

Attempts to build a running line by the group that has established a heritage centre at the former Blythburgh station of the Southwold Railway in Suffolk have been rejected by local councillors.

The Halesworth to Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway Society applied to extend its existing trackwork, which runs through the platform at Blythburgh, halfway along the 3ft gauge line that closed in 1929.

The plan sought to lay a further 250 metres of line on the existing trackbed along a pathway known as the Church Path. The track would be tramway style to maintain access for both pedestrians and vehicles – on train operating days vehicle access would be suspended and a fence erected to maintain the footpath.

However after receiving 14 letters of objection East Suffolk council threw out the plans. It stated that Suffolk County Council was investigating whether Church Path constitutes a public right of way, and if it does the track would obstruct it.

Attempts to revive the Southwold Railway have faced consistent local opposition. The separate Southwold Railway Trust, which has established its Steamworks Centre in Southwold, failed in 2007 to gain permission for a line along the trackbed from the coastal town.

More stock cover at the Gunpowder line

Volunteers at the Gunpowder Railway at Waltham Abbey in Essex are making significant progress towards housing more of the 2ft 6in gauge line's heritage stock under cover, after completing the construction of a steel building frame.

Components for the frame were discovered in undergrowth around the edge of the railway yard, and despite likely dating back to the Second World War era, were found to be in near perfect condition. "It required only cleaning and red oxide treatment before being reassembled rather in the manner of a large Meccano set – but without instructions!" the line's Nick Turner told *NGW*.

When complete the shed will measure 11 metres long by four metres wide.

■ A feature on the Gunpowder Railway starts on page 28.



■ "Clear as far as I can see..." While based at the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway (see page 7), Beamish museum's Stephen Lewis replica 'Samson' joined in the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway's Gala on 13th-14th September, seen here crossing the Cambrian main line at Cae Pawb.

Photo: Michael Chapman



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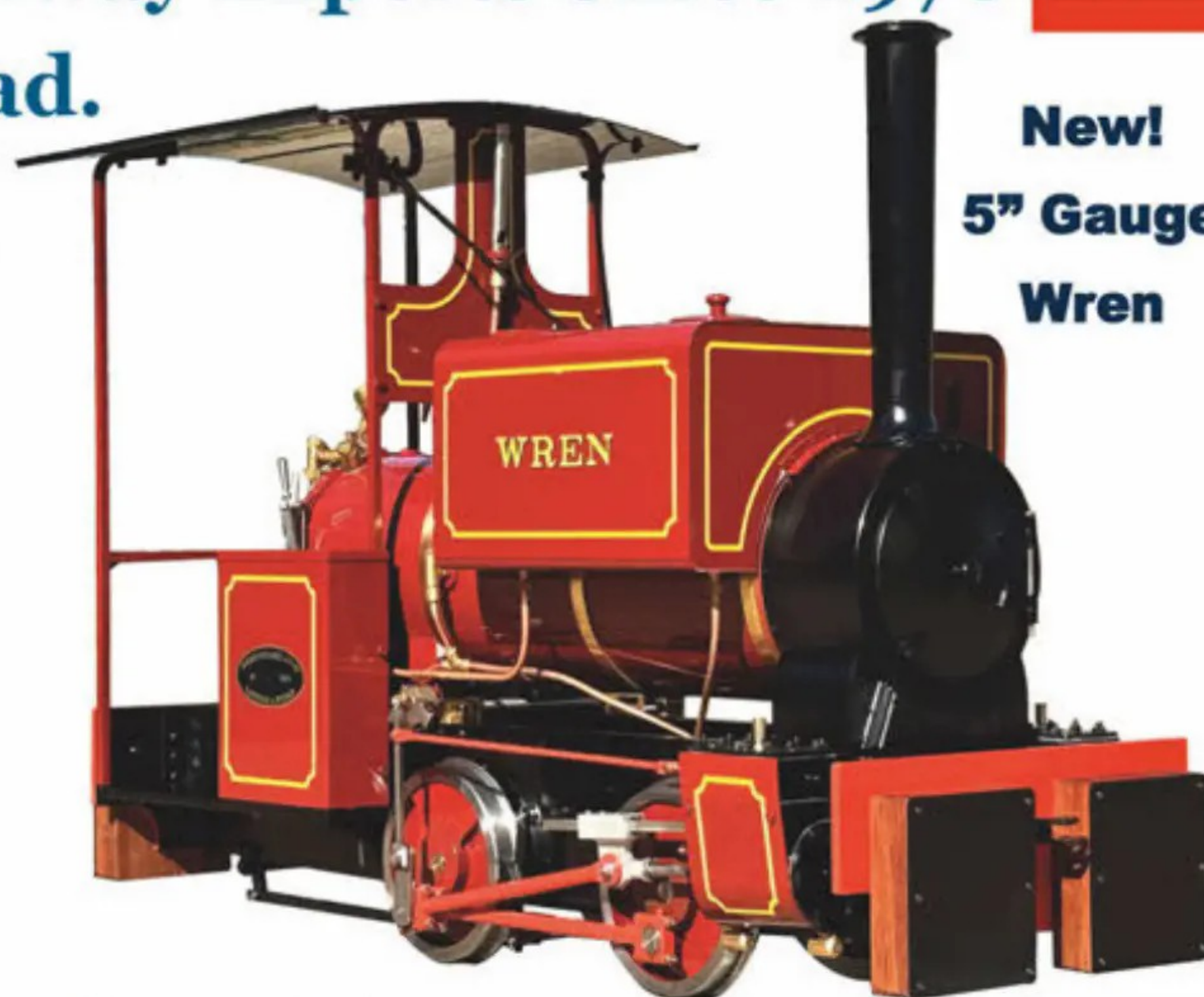


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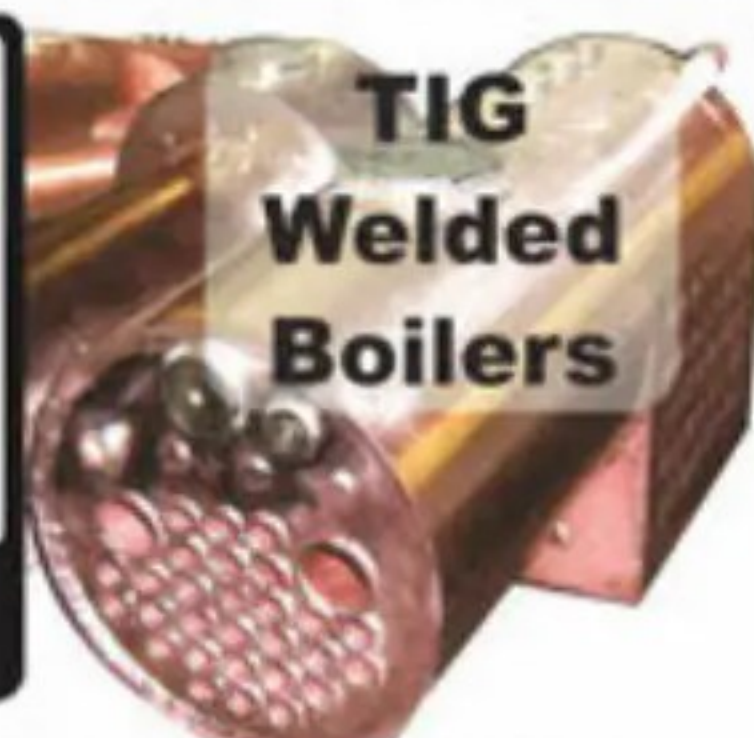
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New boiler needed for Statfold's Black Hawthorn

Dismantling has been completed of the most recent arrival at the Derbyshire 'Workshop X' restoration facility, which has been commissioned by the Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum Trust to restore Black Hawthorn 0-4-0ST no 748.

Completed in 1883 for a copper mine in southern Spain and named 'Portuguesa', the 640mm gauge loco was one of only two narrow gauge steam engines built by the Gateshead company. The other was the 3ft gauge 'Kettering Furnaces No.3', displayed for many years at the Penrhyn Castle Industrial Museum but now being returned to working order at Northern Heritage Engineering in Darlington for the Waterford Suir Valley Railway in Ireland.

No 748 underwent many changes during its working life included being renamed 'Escucha' and having side tanks added either side of its saddle tank. Analysis by the Workshop X team has concluded, however, that a reported regauging to 600mm never took place, the loco running satisfactorily on narrower gauge track due to extreme wheel wear. It will be regauged as part of the restoration.

The loco returned to the UK in 1984 following closure of its final workplace at Utrillas in Spain, purchased by enthusiast

Eric Maxwell who intended to restore it and moved it to the Tanfield Railway in Gateshead, close to where it was built.

Following Eric's death, the loco passed into the care of the Hawthorn Locomotive & Carriage Trust which placed it on long-term loan at Statfold.

Restoration will present the Workshop X team with major challenges, the loco described as "in a partially dismantled state, in very poor condition, with many parts considerably altered over the years. Unlike most of the restoration and new build work carried out here at the workshop there are no original drawings surviving, not even a photograph of what it looked like when new".

In addition to the new boiler, work required will include welding major cracks in the frames, refurbishing the axleboxes, cylinder and motion and building a new cab and saddle tank from scratch. The funding for the boiler is currently being determined with all the other work being funded by Statfold.

Above: Black Hawthorn 748 on display at Statfold in 2024, showing that it may be a small locomotive but it needs a large amount of work to return to steam.

Photo: Andrew Charman



■ On display for visitors to the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway's end-of-season Gala on 26th-27th September was the complete former Ministry of Defence train recently purchased by the line, consisting of Clayton battery electric loco B0483 of 1976 and three 'clam-shell' wagons. The railway intends to use the acquisitions for both shunting purposes and on permanent way trains.

Photo: Phil Barnes

Corris plans to bridge culvert on extension south

The Corris Railway has decided to bridge a culvert that will need to be traversed on the route of the mid-Wales line's southern extension.

Originally it was considered that the Pont y Goedwig culvert could be crossed on a retaining wall but the Highways Authority, which owns the structure alongside the A487 trunk road, expressed concern over the extra weight pressure on the existing culvert.

The railway has shared a video showing that it now plans to cross over the culvert at height on a girder bridge – work is underway to design the bridge and undertake the detailed preparation work that will be needed to install the structure with minimal disruption and without damaging the surrounding environment.

Readers can view the video at the following link; bit.ly/4opuZEj

CLR makes progress on BnM Hunslet

The Cavan and Leitrim Railway Museum enjoyed a successful final steaming day of the 2025 season on 28th September, the museum's Dromod Centre seeing plenty of visitors keen to take a ride behind resident former Stanton Ironworks Avonside 0-6-0T 'Nancy' (1547/1908).

With the site now closed for the winter, in addition to maintenance work the overhaul of Hunslet Hydraulic loco LM384 will continue – the loco, that once operated on hire to the Tralee and Blennerville railway, was obtained from the Bord na Mona peat operation following its closure.

■ The museum has clarified information provided for *NGW*'s story last month on the rescue of the remains of two railcar saloons built in the 1950s for the West Clare sections of the 3ft gauge CIE network and recently stored at the West Clare operation, closed since 2022. The saloons were rescued by the Cavan and Leitrim Railway Museum, not the Tralee and Dingle Railway as stated.

Below: Overhaul of the former Bord na Mona Hunslet continues.

Photo: CLRM





Remote line recalled in path

A five-mile section of the former Letterkenny & Burtonport Extension Railway has been opened to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders under the title of the Muckish Railway Walk, recalling a wild and remote section of the Northern Irish 3ft gauge line in the shadow of Muckish Mountain (*reports Hugh Dougherty*).

The walk, which includes refurbished cuttings, culverts, embankments and the L&BER's characteristic round stone gateposts, re-opens a part of the county inaccessible since the closure of the line in 1947, as no public roads penetrate the area.

A two-mile length of the trackbed has been surfaced – the remaining three miles to Falcarragh Station is passable, but still to be brought up to full standards. Local groups and Donegal County Council plan to reinstate the whole 50-mile route from Letterkenny to Burtonport as a greenway.

On the Muckish Railway Walk, safety fences have been installed along raised embankments. Walkers and cyclists also tackle the steep 1-in-50 gradients taking the line to its summit at Lough Agher. Information boards show pictures of the line in action, featuring the Lough Swilly's massive 4-8-0 tender and 4-8-4 tank locos.

Closed between Burtonport and Gweedore in 1940, the remaining section between Gweedore and Letterkenny was revived during World War II as the replacement buses were short of fuel. Final closure came in 1947, with the track lifted in 1949, and the trackbed lying derelict until its current restoration.

Donegal County Council Heritage Officer, Dr Joe Gallagher said the new walk celebrates the heritage of the railway. "Visitors will get an impression of just how remote this railway was amidst the grandeur of Donegal mountain scenery and it's easy to imagine the trains, dwarfed by Muckish Mountain itself, battling their way up the gradients to and from Burtonport."

Photos: Hugh Dougherty



■ In the second example of a UK heritage line adopting more traditional horsepower in recent weeks (see page 8), the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway operated its first horse-drawn service on 20th-21st September as part of the line's successful World War One Weekend.

'Trixie', from the private Silverleaf Poplar Light Railway, close to the LCLR at Old Leake, hauled a class P ration wagon, recreating the manner in which supplies were moved around the trenches of the battlefields. Other attractions included demonstrations by a farrier and members of the living history group Hull Rifles in correct period uniforms travelling in the railway's stock, most of which dates back to the First World War.

Photo: Dave Enefer/LCLR



■ The Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway's end-of-season Gala on 26th-27th September featured some unusual passenger workings by the line's internal-combustion fleet alongside the usual steam offerings. Hudson-Hunslet 4wDM 'Victor' (4182/1953) is seen here on the line's signature concrete viaduct, with the first two carriage vehicles built for the Lodge Hill & Upnor naval line, once located close to the Sittingbourne operation.

Photo: Phil Barnes



■ The visiting motive power at the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway's Autumn Gala on 27th-28th September combined to operate this unusual double-headed goods train with some additional banking. Vertical-boilered De Winton 'Chaloner' and Kerr, Stuart Wren 'Peter Pan', both normally based at the Leighton Buzzard Railway, were assisted by the diminutive 0-4-2T 'Faith', built some years ago by L&B engineer John Uphill.

Photo: Joshua Brinsford



Floods shut Durango after tropical storm

The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad in Colorado was forced to suspend operations for two days on 11th October due to damage caused by a tropical rain storm.

Heavy rain that swept through southwest Colorado over the weekend caused significant flooding in the San Juan Mountains through which the 45-mile long 3ft gauge line runs.

The first Saturday train from Durango reached Silverton safely, but railroad manager Jeff Johnson told local media that it was deemed safer to return passengers to Durango by bus, and two later trains had to be turned round early as the weather deteriorated. A diesel service was dispatched with local emergency services to rescue stranded hikers – “then we found ourselves unable to operate for two days, in

USA

any capacity,” Johnson said.

On Saturday evening railroad staff discovered washed-out track north of Needleton, 13 miles from Silverton – local media reported that the river had risen some three feet in a single day, then another foot in following days, while its flow rate, normally between 300 and 500 cubic feet per second, peaked at 5840 cfs on Tuesday.

More track damage was discovered by D&SNGR permanent way teams on the Monday north of Rockwood, 18 miles from Durango, and further damage around Needleton on Tuesday.

Train services were able to resume over half of the line on that day as repairs began on the affected sections – D&SNGR officials were expecting the full line to be reopened within a week.

Photo: D&SNGR



■ The German reunification holiday on 3rd October proved to be the last day of operation in 2025 for the 600mm gauge Britzer Parkbahn in Berlin, GERMANY, reports **Dominic Emery**. A driver on the line said that the early end to the season was due to a lack of operating staff, who have to travel to Berlin from Saxony or Thuringia.

Next year the line is set to be taken over by a new operating company – ZossenRail, based closer to the German capital, will be renting the extant diesel locomotives and rolling stock.

Crashed car cuts charter



The Sibiu to Agnita Railway in ROMANIA had to cancel one of its recently arranged regular charter train services last month, when the train rounded a bend to find a crashed car abandoned on the track ahead.

According to David Rowbotham of the line's British-based support group SAR UK, the local police were aware of the incident, but assumed the railway was closed and so had not notified anyone.

Future development on the railway is focusing on extending the currently 7km long operating section of the line between Hosman and Cornăţel further towards Sibiu, which will involve reinstating a run-round loop at the next station on the route at Caşolt.

SARUK members will work on this project and also the planned building of a new depot and maintenance shed at Cornăţel. Both will make use of trackwork that was purchased at scrap value from the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway in Wales, the rail no longer fit for purpose on the demanding route of the Welsh line but suitable for the lesser demands of the SAR.

SAR UK recently completed a successful tracklaying week on the line – a full report will be in the next issue of *NGW*.

Above: The sight that greeted the charter train crew and forced its cancellation.

Photo: Horia Dinu, via SAR UK

Harz under threat of cutbacks?

As *NGW* went to press news surfaced from GERMANY of a ‘Beeching-style’ report presented on the Harzer Schmalspurbahnen, suggesting that the metre-gauge system should be reduced to only the popular tourist route to the top of the Brocken mountain and the line between Nordhausen and Ilfeld.

The report was rejected but measures set to happen include the closing of the Selketalbahn line for some five years due to construction of a dam, which enthusiasts fear could mean the end of the line or at least steam services on it.

We hope to have more detail on these proposals in our next issue.

Krauss Pacifics celebrate centenary

The German Transport Exhibition held in Munich in June 1925 saw the use of three brand-new 15-inch gauge 4-6-2 Pacific locomotives built in the city by Krauss (*reports Christian Jummrich*) and 100 years on Leipzig and Dresden hosted centenary celebrations for the 'Liliputloks'.

Most of the 15 locos eventually built in this series, as well as three almost identical Krupp locos, have been preserved. Some are still in operation today on various park railways in Europe, the three oldest running in the Grosser Garten in Dresden and on the railway at Auensee in Leipzig.

The Leipzig-based second loco built, works no 8352, set off by road to Dresden on 3rd September where over the weekend of 6th-7th September it featured in a varied programme on the 5.6km long park railway in the Grosser Garten, running with the two other original Liliputs, 'Lisa' (8351) and 'Moritz' (8353).

Highlights included a loco parade and parallel runs between the Straßburger Platz and Zoo stations, all three locos working trains and visitors also allowed behind-the-scenes tours of the operating facilities.

The Leipzig Lilliput also worked regular timetabled services on the Dresden line on 13th-14th September, before returning to Leipzig, accompanied by Lisa. The pioneer loco was chosen as Moritz had previously visited Leipzig in 2011 and 2016. Two passenger cars from Dresden were also taken to reinforce the Leipzig vehicle fleet.



After testing of the Dresden locomotive on the 1.9km Leipzig circuit around a lake in the northwest of the city, the two engines operated an extensive service over the 20th-21st and 27th-28th September, sometimes working together.

The class of Krauss Liliputs include four in the UK – 8457, built in 1929 now runs on the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway as 'Whillan Beck', while 1662 and 1663 are today at Bressingham Museum

as 'Rosenkavalier' and 'Männertrau', and 1664 runs on the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway as 'Black Prince' – all three locos built in 1937.

Above The three pioneer Krauss locos line up in Dresden, residents 'Lisa' (left) and 'Moritz' framing their visitor from Leipzig.

Below: All three locos worked together over the Dresden celebration weekend.

Photos: Christian Jummrich



10-strong loco cavalcade for line's 10th birthday

As briefly mentioned last month the Pairi Daiza Railway, a 600mm gauge line based in a zoological park in Western **BELGIUM**, celebrated its 10th anniversary on 13th-14th September with a 10-strong cavalcade of locomotives (*reports Guy Tyteca*).

The line, which UK narrow gauge engineer Alan Keef Ltd was heavily involved in the building of, consists of a 2km loop running between animal enclosures in the 75-hectare park, passing among others kangaroos, gorillas, hippos, rhinos, giraffes and elephants.

For the 10th birthday event a 10-strong 'reunion' was organised with six visiting locos. Four came from France, the P'tit Train de la Haute Somme sending 1925-built Vulcan 0-8-0+T no 8, from the Chemin de Fer de la Vallée de l'Ouche the 1910 Couillet 0-6-0T 'Burgonde', from Pithiviers Le Meuse 2-6-0T 'Les Fontenelles' of 1938, and from the Chemin de Fer à Vapeur de la Scarpe 1911-built Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0WT 'Pistache'.

They were joined by Graham Morris's well-travelled Kerr, Stuart Wren 0-4-0ST 'Peter Pan' from the UK, and from Czechia a 2014-built replica of an Orenstein & Koppel 0-6-0T.

The sextet made for an impressive cavalcade alongside the four residents, two 0-6-0Ts built by LAS in Poland in 1954 and '57 and a pair of Henschels both built in 1917, an 0-6-0T and an 0-8-0T Brigadelok. Also on show was a fifth loco that will join the Pairi Daiza – under restoration in Czechia, the 1900-built Couillet 0-6-0T was formerly part of Peter Rampton's 'Collection X' in the UK.

All ten steam locos followed each other on the 2km loop layout through the park and then three passenger trains were operated, each double-headed by a resident and a visiting loco.



Above: The line-up of locos impressed visiting enthusiasts.

CFVO Couillet 0-6-0T 'Burgonde' to the fore amongst the varied fleet of home and guest locos.

Photos: Guy Tyteca





Sardinian Tourist trains hanging on

Correspondent **Mick Bass** recently rode the 'Green Train' tourist train service between Luras and Tempio on the Mediterranean island of **SARDINIA**.

The route is one of those operated under the title of 'Trenino Verde', used since 1984 to describe former secondary routes on Sardinia now used for tourist services – the name, meaning little green train, is linked to the rich vegetation which can be viewed from the trains.

Currently 251 miles of the Sardinian network are used for the Trenio Verde services with a range of trains available to visitors, though Mick described the station at Luras as "looking completely abandoned when you first arrive".

He added however, that the rail journey

was highly enjoyable through vineyards and flagged level crossings; "The station at Tempio doubles as a bus terminal and there is a small museum with a small tank engine and fully equipped workshop still with its

Victorian overhead belt driven machinery".

Mick concluded, however, that the current trains represent "a sad remnant of what must have been a fascinating and scenic system across the country".

Above: The 'little green train' waits to depart from a less than busy Tempio.

Above right: The small museum at Tempio houses this tank loco.

Right: Railcars stored at Tempio have been struck by vandals.

Photos by Mick Bass, September 2025



■ Following the story in *NGW197* detailing the celebrations planned for October in GERMANY by the 'Molli', celebrating the 30th anniversary since privatisation of the 900mm gauge line that runs between Bad Doberan, Heiligendamm and Kühlungsborn on the Baltic Sea coast in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, **Tony Nicholson** sent in this photo. Taken on 13th June, it clearly demonstrates the unique appeal of the tram rights in Bad Doberan that the line has retained since its opening in 1896. As can be seen these allow the large narrow gauge trains to make their way down the streets – Tony tells us that the cafe at left proved a great place to have lunch between trains!

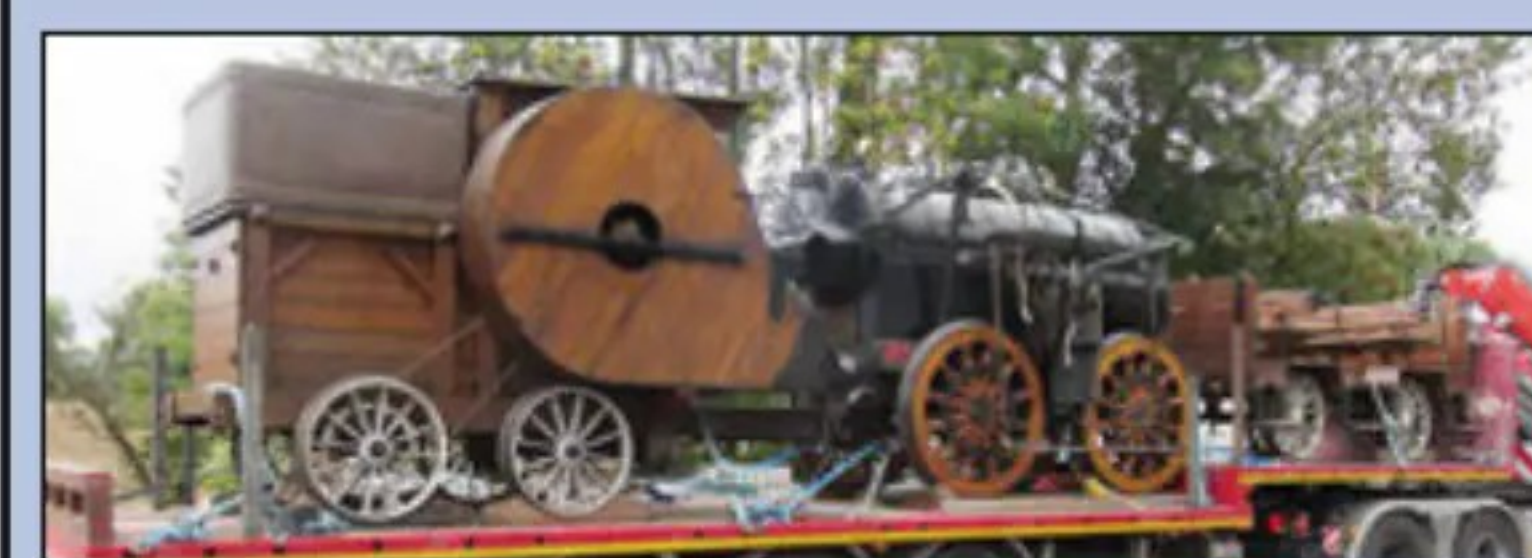
BRIEF LINES

Timbertown goes up for sale

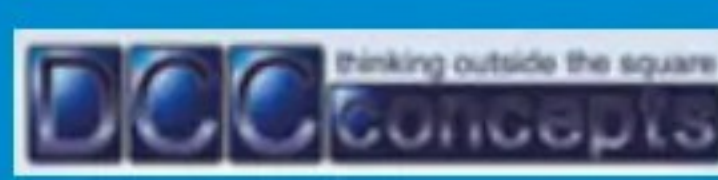
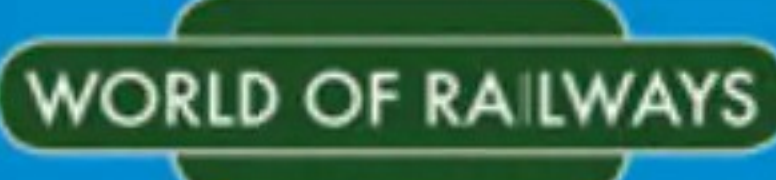
The owner of the Timbertown theme park in New South Wales, **AUSTRALIA** has announced plans to retire and put the attraction up for sale. The park, depicting a Colonial-era sawmillers' village, includes a 2km long 1ft 11½in gauge railway, worked by former South Johnstone Mill Fowler 0-4-2T 'Ruby' (17881/1928).

MTVS event for pioneer loco

Members of the Museum of French Steam Tramways and Secondary Railways (MTVS) at Crèvecœur-le-Grand, **FRANCE** made their own contribution to 'Railway 200' at the end of September with a celebratory event which featured a replica of pioneer standard gauge locomotive 'Marc Seguin' running on temporary track. The original loco of 1829 was the first steam engine to employ a multi-tube boiler. **Photo: MTVS**



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First Look at the Narrow Gauge

David Joy sets the scene for James Waite's portrayal of the Eastwell ironstone railway and its locally preserved 'Lord Granby'.

As features editor of *NGW*, I always look forward to receiving the *Waite's World* text for each issue. Yet this time it induced a sense that was not quite decrepitude, but definitely one of being less young.

It was the reference to an enjoyable open day this August at the Eastwell Heritage Centre in Leicestershire – home to Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0ST 'Lord Granby' (633/1902). It proved just too tempting to do some mental arithmetic, leading to the unavoidable conclusion that 66 years had elapsed since I last saw this locomotive at the nearby 3ft gauge Eastwell ironstone system. It was shut in a shed, awaiting its fate along with five other engines on a line clearly on its last legs.

Quite what took me to Eastwell on 21st September 1959 was mentioned in passing in *NGW* 188, when I wrote a postscript to Clive

Hawley's article on the neighbouring Waltham Quarry Railway. While the two lines were seen on the same day, this metre gauge system definitely took second place. It was both shorter and completely closed. Above all, there was one personal reason why it could not compete with Eastwell – the first narrow gauge railway I ever visited, if only by a few hours!

In an age of no instant communication there was one way a schoolboy living in York could discover if it was still operating. I had a bike, which could be put on any train, and a map showed that Eastwell was only ten miles from Grantham station. So off I set, not having the remotest idea of what I would find.

It was a demanding uphill pedal before finally reaching the centre of Eastwell ironstone operations. There was no steam but it could have been

"The railway was in a state of suspended animation with nothing to disturb the rural calm..."



much worse. The railway was in a state of suspended animation with nothing to disturb the rural calm and magnificent views across the Vale of Belvoir. Not a soul was in sight. The 'Marie Celeste' feeling was heightened by tubs loaded with ironstone clipped to the cable-worked incline as if about to start the long descent to the tipping stage far below.

Six from five

Yet six different locomotives by five different builders could be seen. Outside a repair shop was out-of-use 'Underbank', a Peckett 0-4-0ST of 1900, and 'Belvoir', a massive Hunslet 0-6-0ST built in 1936. Peering through the windows showed that languishing inside was not only Lord Granby but also 'Mountaineer', a Bagnall 0-6-0ST of 1923. Its sister engine 'Pioneer', built in 1913, was over in the running shed, as was Avonside 0-6-0T 'Nancy' dating from 1908, but neither was in steam.

It transpired that the railway had briefly struggled into action a week earlier and one final day of operation was likely before it was superseded by road haulage. The cable-worked incline would be no more and the fate of the locomotives was uncertain.

After briefly visiting the Waltham line and then free-wheeling on the bike most of the way back down to Grantham, I wondered if any might possibly be preserved. What has happened since, with particular reference to 'Lord Granby', is taken up by James in the following pages.

Above: The small size of the ironstone tubs at Eastwell is clearly apparent in this 1948 photo by J.M. Jarvis of Bagnall 0-6-0ST 'Mountaineer' bringing in a loaded train.

Left: Looking down the incline to where the line ends at a loading dock far below.

Photo: David Joy.



Eastwell and 'Lord Granby'

James Waite relates his fascination with the ironstone line and a recent visit to an open day at its museum.



It is sometimes said that the Ironstone quarries in the Midlands came and went without becoming etched into the collective memories of the communities nearby, in contrast for instance to many coal mining communities which continue to be defined by the industry long after the mines closed down.

It's true that many villages in places such as South Wales were built solely to house the colliery workers, whereas in the Midlands ironstone fields they were there long before quarrying began, and the industry only ever employed a relatively small proportion of their residents.

One such old-established village is Eastwell in Leicestershire, perched at the top of the marlstone escarpment 80 metres above the Vale of Belvoir, close to the county's borders with Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland. For more than 80 years until the 1960s it was at the heart of an ironstone quarrying district, but agriculture and cheese-making have also been dominant activities.

Above: Eastwell Ironstone in a state of suspended animation – 21st September 1959. Peckett 0-4-OST 'Underbank' reposes outside the repair shop in front of Hunslet 0-6-OST 'Belvoir'.

Below: The repair shop is on the left of the 'sausage' water tank and the running shed on the right.

Photos taken in September 1959 by David Joy. All other photos by James Waite

The huge dairy factories at Long Clawson and Cropwell Bishop, only a few miles away, supply much of the Stilton cheese on sale in supermarkets throughout the UK, and there are many other equally delicious products which can only be found locally. However, Eastwell has not forgotten its quarrying past, thanks to the Eastwell History Group – widely supported locally it is dedicated to preserving its heritage, notably the remains from its ironstone industry.

More ore

The Eastwell quarries, and the neighbouring operation at Waltham, were controlled by the company which ran the Staveley ironworks, between Chesterfield and Killamarsh in north Derbyshire. In the 1870s and 1880s it was actively looking out for new sources of ore to feed its expanding business, often operating in partnership with other concerns.

Staveley allowed the quarries a large measure of independence which seemingly extended to the choice of

gauge for the railways essential for transporting the stone on the first part of its journey to be smelted. Waltham, with its metre gauge line and its two locos that had spent earlier lives in France, was described in detail in Clive Hawley's excellent article in *NGW*188.

Eastwell's 3ft system was the subject of another superb feature in *NGW*97 by Graham Doyle, at a time when 'Lord Granby', its first conventional loco after the vertical-cylindereed ones built by Staveley for both Eastwell and Waltham, had just been rescued by the history group. By then the 1902-built Hudswell Clarke had been deteriorating for many years in open-air storage at Leeds, and the group was about to begin a cosmetic restoration. Graham was a key member of the small restoration team.

I'd been fascinated by the Midlands ironstone railways ever since being taken to see one of the lines as a small child in 1957 by a kindly uncle who lived in Northampton; we never saw any

»





trains, and I don't know for sure which line it was, but it was my first introduction to a working narrow gauge railway. Two years later David Joy was better informed than me with his first narrow gauge encounter when he pedalled up the long hill after Grantham station to visit Eastwell and Waltham.

Even though the Waltham system had already closed and no trains were running at Eastwell that day, David brought back several excellent photos, some in colour, which accompany this feature. They show the engine shed and workshops complex, and the well-known cable incline just a short distance away which was used to lower the primitive steel wagons down the escarpment to Stathern Ironstone Sidings on the former GNR/LNWR joint line between Bottesford Junction and Melton Mowbray. There the stone would be loaded into BR wagons for onward transit to Staveley.

New museum

Early in 2023 I asked the group about progress with 'Lord Granby'. Back came a prompt reply from

Graham, reporting that they had generously been given the use of a fully equipped engineering shop at Stathern but soon needed to move out. The restoration of Lord Granby was almost complete and the loco would soon take up residence at a new museum at Eastwell. He kindly invited me to come and inspect progress. Six weeks later the museum building was ready, and I went to watch the venerable loco make its journey over the Grantham Canal and up the escarpment to its new home (NGW175).

The museum is at Crossroads Farm, the home of Alan and Jane Hewson on the edge of the village and just a stone's throw from the old quarry line. Alan is a trustee of the history group. His grandfather began to farm there back in 1937, mostly on land which was restored for agriculture after the ironstone had been quarried. For many years it was a dairy farm, but the diminishing yield from milk production led the Hewsons to set up the Belvoir Ridge Creamery to produce artisan cheese.

Colwick, in Nottingham's suburbs, is perhaps best known by many

Above: The head of the incline in 1959 with loaded tubs on the left of two rows of empties. They are coated with the distinct ochre of ironstone dust.

Below: 'Lord Granby' in the engineering shop at Stathern on 19th March 2023.

Facing page, far right: Lord Granby basks in the sunshine outside the museum. On the left the flowers stand in the remains of the old water tank, 10th August 2025.

enthusiasts for its Great Northern Railway engine shed, which remained a steam bastion as late as December 1966. However for many in the city the name still conjures up happy memories of the distinctive Colwick soft cheese.

Commercial production of this local delight ceased in 1993 – reputedly because the high cost of manufacture to serve just a small market was unviable. Jane comes from Nottingham, and the Hewsons delighted many of the city's residents when they began to make it again in 2013. Sadly the cheese has again become just a memory now that they have retired. The least attractive buildings at the farm have been replaced by housing – and the railway museum. In place of their old cheese shop and café premises different operators now run a delicatessen.

Next to the museum building is the surviving part of a water tank – rescued by the Hewsons, it now forms an unusual flower bed. It may have been part of a pair of tanks known as 'the Pulsometer' after the maker of the pump that supplied it. The system used condensing steam to create a vacuum to lift water into one of the tanks, the alternating process using steam to force water out of one tank while creating another vacuum in the other to draw up more water. This pulsating action gave the system its name. It's now thought more likely, however to have come from a replacement tank close to Crossroads Farm. Both were used in preference to the tank at the engine shed since the water there was dirty, and fit only for washing out the locos' boilers.

Return visit

I made a third visit for one of the museum's occasional open days in August 2025. Lord Granby had been drawn out to bask in the sunshine, and looked very happy at its new home. It has been joined by the only survivor of the hundreds of Eastwell wagons, built to an unusual design used on several Staveley railways in the district.

Adorning a wall was a nameboard from the signalbox at the exchange sidings on the old joint line, and nameplates from four Eastwell and Waltham locos were arranged on the loco's running plate. They were rescued by Mr Eli Coy, the manager of the two quarries, when scrapping began in 1960.

Other plates were presented to the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at the Tallylyn Railway, where those on display include 'The Scot', an identical Hudswell Clarke to Lord Granby (776/1906). It was scrapped in 1957 but its wheelsets, and



probably other parts, were fitted to Lord Granby after the loco entered the workshop in 1958 for a final overhaul that was never completed.

The nameplates that went to the Talyllyn were accompanied by 'Cambrai', one of Waltham's French 0-6-0Ts. After spending many years displayed outside the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum the loco is now on loan to the Irchester ironstone railway museum. Its typically French headlamp, quite unlike anything on the UK's narrow gauge, stayed behind in Tywyn and is still on display. The Talyllyn also benefitted from 200 tons of Eastwell rail.

The Eastwell quarry line was unusual in being partially signaled at the junction with a branch close to the workshops, which suffered from restricted visibility because of cuttings and a sharp bend. These were no ordinary signals but full somersault ones, reputedly designed with input from a GNR engineer, though the mechanisms were likely unique. The branch signal is on show at Tywyn.

More survivors

Beyond Crossroads Farm there are few relics left at Eastwell, though parts of the route are still marked by hedgerows. Elsewhere two other locos with Eastwell connections have survived. 'Nancy' arrived there in 1950, along with 'Belvoir' which makes a cameo appearance in one of David's photos. Nancy worked the last train ten years later, and now runs on the restored section of the Cavan & Leitrim Railway in Ireland, painted in an approximation of its old Eastwell paint scheme.

Peckett 0-6-0ST 'Scaldwell' spent most of its working life on the ironstone system after which it was named, but was at Eastwell on loan helping out between 1947 and 1950. Initially acquired for preservation by the Brockham Museum and displayed for many years at Amberley, it now

Above: The open day at Crossroads Farm on 10th August 2025 included four nameplates, displayed on the running plate of Lord Granby. 'Dreadnought' was a Waltham Manning Wardle (1757/1910), which ran with 'Cambrai' until the line closed in 1958. The other three are from Eastwell locos.

Above right: The preserved Eastwell wagon at Crossroads Farm.

Below: The somersault signal from the Beech Grove branch at the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn, 22nd August 2025. The loco nameplates to the right include Eastwell's 'The Scot'.



shares a shed at the Southwold Railway Trust with the replica 2-4-0T 'Blyth', and is awaiting restoration.

Worthy though both locos are, Lord Granby has a special appeal now

that it has returned to its old Leicestershire home. The Eastwell museum only holds occasional open days but it's well worth paying a visit when one takes place. **NGW**



Really Useful Engines

Andrew Charman visits the Statfold Barn Railway to learn why enthusiasts should celebrate, rather than condemn, Thomas the Tank Engine.



For your editor and many a reader of *NGW*, a new season effectively begins with the first enthusiast day of the year at the Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum Trust. Anyone who has been to any of these events at the museum near Tamworth (and if you read this magazine and haven't, why on earth not?) will know that there is always plenty of action from multiple steam locos, and always something new to see.

So back in March off I went, and this time among those new things was the former Rustenberg platinum mine Bagnall 0-4-2T 'Isaac', reliveried in a very fetching shade of Caledonian blue. The loco was working its train of two Darjeeling carriages into an equally new and very wide platform at Oak Tree Halt, on the opposite side of the track to the existing platform and with a large wooden shed built upon it.

"Oh yes, we are going to display

'Handy Man' in there," Statfold's Henry Noon told me, referring to the former Burton Ironstone Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0ST recently cosmetically restored for Statfold by Workshop X in Derbyshire. "And it will be the reception area and platform for our Thomas weekends".

Now as a Trustee of a preserved railway, it immediately made sense to me that Statfold might run a weekend based around the children's favourite that is Thomas the Tank engine. What began as a series of stories created for his children by the Reverend Wilbert Awdry in the 1940s has since first being televised in 1984 become a massive global phenomenon – today Thomas is a hugely successful global brand, with more than 200 million books sold along with toys and other merchandise. Today owned by US toy giant Mattel, the franchise has grossed well over \$9 billion.

Above: Bagnall 'Isaac' in its role as 'Thomas', heads back towards Oak Tree Halt with another load of happy young visitors. The bunting graphics on the loco were applied at the request of Thomas franchise owner Mattel, marking 80 years of the books.

Photo: Joey Evans/SNGMT

Below: The new platform and covered waiting area built at Oak Tree Halt.

Photo: Andrew Charman, 8th March 2025

I also immediately knew, however, that among likely more than half of my fellow enthusiasts that day, mentioning Statfold and Thomas the Tank engine in the same sentence would produce immediate reactions of horror and condemnation of another major heritage operation going down such a route.

So how, and more pertinently why, has Thomas come to Statfold? In early September I sat down to get the full story with Henry and the man who over the years has put together what is now without doubt the most important narrow gauge collection in the UK, Statfold founder Graham Lee.

Standards to meet

First comes the how, and an immediate demonstration of Statfold's overriding concern for the protection of its heritage assets. Thomas franchise owner Mattel



closely guards its product and any organisation wanting to stage a Thomas weekend has to meet strict criteria, not least that the engines look the part – simply hanging a crude painted face on a loco, such as was done for the early Thomas weekends in the 1990s, is no longer even close to acceptable.

As a result many standard gauge lines have hired in one of a couple of 0-6-0 tank locos that have been converted to resemble Thomas over the years, but being a 2ft gauge operation Statfold did not have that option, and in any case it planned to offer much more of an experience for visitors than simply a ride behind a blue engine.

With Isaac taking on the title role, Peckett 0-6-0ST 'Harrogate' and Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0 'Fiji' were also selected for the character treatment, the green saddle tank Harrogate assuming the guise of the cheeky tank loco 'Percy' and with its red livery and tender, Fiji adopting the identity of 'James the red engine'.

Visual not physical

Henry explained that the aim was to get the locos looking as much like their characters as possible, "without doing anything radical, chopping them around". The plastic three-dimensional faces are made on site by a specialist, and the overall effect achieved by the use of false splashers, buffers and buckets, together with livery and lining which make use of top quality magnetic graphics.

"The lining makes a massive difference, being magnetic as are the numbers, they don't damage the paintwork," Henry said, pointing out extra bunting graphics applied to the tanks of Isaac, marking the 80th anniversary of the Thomas books in 2025. "That was Mattel's choice – everything we do has to be approved by Mattel but they've really liked what we have done."

According to Henry the changes to Isaac have caused the most comment among enthusiasts; "But the loco was not in its original colour when it arrived here anyway, and I'd say we've had as many compliments as we have complaints over the livery. This is the one exception in the collection – we normally restore locos to the condition that they came out of the factory and the condition is the same with this one, the only difference the paint job."

Having three character locos enables Statfold to offer a Thomas experience traditional railways cannot match, as Graham detailed; "We've had to develop our Thomas – in the UK it's built around standard gauge engines so we are quite unique. We've

"The family events we run here pay the bills, and fundamentally we are doing it to secure Graham's world-class collection of locomotives..."

Above right: As well as providing shelter for visitors to the Thomas weekends and other events, the new shed also plays a heritage role, housing the cosmetically restored Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0 loco 'Handy Man'.
Photo: Joey Evans

Right: Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0 'Fiji' plays the role of 'James the red engine' with added magnetic graphics, false splashers, buffers and a large 'brass' dome – all the additions are temporary and can be removed in short order leaving no effect on the loco.
Photo: Rhianne Newton/SNGMT



given Mattel a bigger Thomas experience here as when we put a show on we can have three or four characters outside, not one. Visitors can ride behind Thomas, then Percy... at the next one we're introducing Trevor the traction engine."

The new platform at Oak Tree Halt gathers visitors for their ride up and around the return loop behind Thomas, while on the opposite platform one of the other two locos takes trains the other way up to Statfold Junction, while the 15-inch gauge Mease Valley Light Railway also plays a role in the day. "What we can do here that most railways can't is have a lot going on in a relatively small space because we've got three lines we can use," Henry said.

Plenty of time is built into the operation for visitors to take photos and careful planning ensures that they can often capture at least two of the character engines in one picture; "Mattel loves that," commented Graham's son, also named Graham, adding that the franchise owner had taken several steps to ensure that Statfold could put on a suitable event. "Mattel looks at everything –

toilets, food facilities. They sent some people under cover to one of our open days, and then felt confident that we could do what we said we would. We have very efficient ways of handling quite big numbers of people, which they understood".

Successfully organising Thomas events in today's market has clearly required a great deal of effort and investment on the part of Statfold, so what have been the benefits for this heritage centre?

Wider effect

Clearly there is a revenue benefit, not just ticket sales but particularly upsell – refreshments and merchandise. "We make a margin, but we also do a huge amount of upsell because we give the people who come here more than a four-hour experience and during that four hours they will eat and drink," Graham senior said. "It's a combination of exposure, margin and probably the biggest aspect being upsell – we come close to selling out in the shops at our events."

Statfold gains major customer awareness from a Thomas event, some visitors travelling from quite

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long distances. Events produce a major social media reach and for Henry the marketing value is all-important. “The financial result is the be-all and end-all but for me the biggest thing is the exposure to people who wouldn’t already have known us. It’s a win-win – we put on a show that people love and in the process we will get more people to come and see Statfold outside of that.

“We are fulfilling a need and in the process earning a bit of money out of it – I don’t think anyone would put a Thomas event on for fun because it would cost too much to make it work properly.”

Henry has also noticed another less-obvious benefit from the events, also seen by the Tayllyn Railway at its own highly successful ‘Awdry Experience’ weekends; “it’s interesting, at the first event we did we had a fair number of neuro-divergent adults there, who perhaps wouldn’t feel safe at some of the events at traditional railways – at such events they feel uncomfortable because they are different.”

While all the above can be seen as thoroughly viable reasons for Statfold staging Thomas events, the main reason is the one that all *NGW* readers should applaud – providing

the means to maintain and enhance the Statfold collection, which until the formation of the Trust in 2017 belonged to Graham and had been gathered by him over many years.

“The family events we run here pay the bills, and fundamentally we are doing it to secure Graham’s world-class collection of locomotives – everything else is built on that,” Henry said.

Future proofing

“Everything is a means to an end,” Graham added. “I need to leave a sustainable legacy beyond my lifetime to keep this collection going. And to do that you need an engine at the back of it that will produce money.

“Without the (formation of the) Trust and the activities, my family would have had to sell three parts of the collection to pay the taxes and it would have been broken up. Ultimately I had to give it all away to a Trust, but I am happy because it will give people here, young people, unimaginable joy for years to come. I see children come here every week, thrilled to bits with the events that we put on.”

Statfold has now established its Thomas programme at four events a year, including a Christmas-themed

programme which is a new direction for Mattel and has apparently delighted the franchise owner. Next year the number of weekends will stay at four to ensure the appeal of each is not diluted.

Meanwhile neither Henry or Graham has much time for those who argue heritage organisations shouldn’t be staging such events. They point to a factor many heritage railways are now discovering, that in today’s market a steam train ride is not enough for visitors while at the same time costs are multiplying at a frightening rate. Organisations need more than one product to survive.

“We here have a number of products which look after each other,” Graham said. “Wages are increasing but the biggest challenge now is the (cost of) management of the equipment. Everything is going up – a bearing we might have bought two years ago for £12 is now £55. For boiler repairs and the like we do, the costs are now massive.”

Henry added that a Thomas weekend should not upset anyone; “We are purists like anyone else, while bringing in the revenue to ensure we can still maintain the collection. People need to understand the appeal of Thomas to the next generation. My three-year old grandson absolutely loves Thomas, he’s reading the Thomas books I was reading when I was his age. It’s fantastic because they are the next generation, who once they get over the Thomas stage may well think actually they quite like steam engines, and they will come here and to other places like this.”

So as a narrow gauge enthusiast by all means don’t go near a Thomas weekend at Statfold or anywhere else – but don’t condemn them either. Such events should instead be celebrated, as they bring in the essential funding that will ensure heritage assets such as the remarkable Statfold collection remain to be enjoyed by us enthusiasts – for many years to come. **NGW**

Above: Peckett ‘Harrogate’ makes for a convincing ‘Percy the Small engine’ in the eyes of younger visitors to the Thomas events. Photo: Rhianne Newton/SNGMT

Below: What it’s all about – the Thomas events provide Statfold with major revenue and exposure to protect the future of this superb collection. Photo: Andrew Charman



Blowing a hoooley outside...

Storm Amy's best efforts were not enough to prevent our photographers getting great shots at the month's big event on the Ffestiniog Railway – in fact the weather added to the atmosphere...

Right: *Steve Sedgwick*, whose work regularly appears in our pages, definitely made the right decision at this year's Ffestiniog Bygones Gala, securing special permission for a before dawn visit to Boston Lodge works to document the locos being lit up for the day's work. Being on the footplate of the single Fairlie 'Taliesin' as the match went in was both dry and warm...

Below: The rain relented a little to allow the team preparing Taliesin a more comfortable environment in which to give the loco a proper spit and polish.





Above: *Steve Sedgwick* did venture out into the weather on the Friday, and as he stated, the body language in this shot says it all. The gravity slate train was passing Boston Lodge where it picked up the token for the final section to Porthmadog Harbour station – conditions for the crew were very harsh with heavy rain and high winds blowing in against them from the west.

Below: *Karl Heath* added a somewhat appropriate monochromatic tone to this picture on Sunday morning, showing the 'Penrhyn ladies' 'Linda' and 'Blanche' heading onto the Cob as 'Prince' awaited its next turn of duty.





Above: On the Saturday the impacts of Storm Amy were very much in evidence with a swollen river Glaslyn and flooded fields as Taliesin worked over the river bridge at Pont Croesor with a shuttle from Beddgelert.

Below: Back at Porthmadog, some of that much desired autumn lighting made a sadly brief appearance as Prince powered across the Cob at the head of the 17:30 train.
Photos: Karl Heath – for more News Gallery images see page 37



The Gunpowder Railway

Nick Turner and Simon Auger portray a 2ft 6in gauge line tucked away in woodland on the flanks of the Royal Gunpowder Mills at Waltham Abbey in Essex.



Above: The Gunpowder line's 70hp Baguley Drewry 0-4-0DH 'John H. Bowles' (3755/ 1981) with brake van and carriages all converted from goods vans formerly at the RNAD Trecwn site.

Centre left: The passenger vehicles are gloriously typical narrow gauge – converted for goods stock, they are just a little basic. Photo: Mike Tedstone

Left A recreation of a ROF Bishopton cordite train and its man-rider, hauled by Hunslet 0-4-0DH 'Chris H' (8819/1979), during a visit to the museum by the Narrow Gauge Railway Society in April 2025.

All uncredited photos by Nick Turner, all taken July 2025 except where stated

The manufacture of gunpowder was first recorded at Waltham Abbey, Essex in the early 17th century and production expanded rapidly over the next hundred years. All raw material and finished product was moved by barge, via canals on the site and then down the River Lea to the River Thames.

Railways first appeared on site in the late 1850s to move the increased amounts of coal, raw materials and manufactured product that resulted from the introduction of steam-powered mills. These early tramways were of 2ft 3in gauge, and used wooden rails to eliminate the risk of sparks, with all the wagons being propelled by hand.

Over the next 40 years the site doubled in size to more than 400 acres in extent and an extensive network of 18-inch gauge tramways was laid down to serve almost every building and processing site, totally replacing the previous 2ft 3in system.

The adoption of 18in gauge provided useful compatibility with the tramways at the Woolwich Arsenal, Chatham Dockyard and Chattenden. Rails were now steel, but wagons were fitted with phosphor-bronze tyres on their wheels, again to prevent sparks. As before, all rail traffic was propelled by hand.

Locomotives only made an appearance during the First World War, by which time the site was concentrating on the manufacture of guncotton and cordite rather than

'black powder'. The first locomotives were four petrol/paraffin engine units built by Ruston Proctor of Lincoln, which seem to have been used predominantly on the 'main line' whilst a growing number of battery electric units moved the wagons to and from the individual buildings.

The Ruston Proctor locomotives were all disposed of by 1925 and more powerful battery electric units took over their duties. Indeed battery electric locomotives were built for the site up until 1941, when a final batch of ten were delivered by Greenwood and Batley of Leeds.

Sadly these locos only had a fairly short service life, as the Royal Gunpowder Mills site was closed for explosive and propellant manufacture in 1943 and re-opened the following year as a Research and Development facility. The railways across the site went into decline after this date and the last section was closed in 1954, with everything going for scrap by the end of that decade. The whole site was wound down over the following two decades and finally closed during the 1990s

Railway revival

When the 177 acres of the Royal Gunpowder Mills North Site was reopened as a heritage and museum site in the late 1990s, it was agreed that the provision of a narrow gauge railway would portray an integral part of the site's history as well as being a visitor attraction in its own right. At the same time the Bicton Woodland Railway in Devon was modernising its rolling stock, and therefore the Mills was able to purchase two 18in gauge locomotives and a selection of carriages and wagons, mostly of Woolwich Arsenal origin, with the intention of creating a line at Waltham Abbey.

For various reasons, including the designation of the area where the new line was proposed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, plus the amount of work needed on the stock to make it operational again, this plan never materialised and eventually the Woolwich locomotives moved to the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust, where they remain today.

And then, in 2003, a locomotive with a selection of wagons and some track became available from the redundant 2ft 6in gauge system at the Royal Ordnance Factory at Bishopton in Scotland, and travelled down to Essex to form the nucleus of what is now the Gunpowder Railway.

The railway today

Since those first arrivals on site, a small but dedicated team of volunteers has quietly built an entire »



Above: Hunslet 0-4-ODM 'Gilbert' (8828/1979), ex-NCB Nantgarw, on left and on right Chris H, ex-ROF Bishopton, prepare to extract a rake of restored wagons from the museum/display shed.

Right: A replica created in 2023/24 of an 18in gauge Greenwood and Batley 0-4-OBE (1671/1941) used on the original Royal Gunpowder Mills internal rail system until 1954.

Below: 140HP Ruhrthaler 0-4-ODH 'Il Tuono Blu' (3920/1969), ex-Rome Public Works Company, restored to working order in June 2024 after 15 years in open storage.





railway, which now has a three-quarter mile main running line for passenger trains, plus an extensive yard with workshops, running and stock storage sheds. There is also an ongoing project to create a covered museum area to display a selection of restored wagons specifically designed around the various stages of the manufacture of cordite.

Four-strong fleet

The line currently has four working locomotives, with the pride of the fleet being RNAD Baguley Drewry DH8-88, the prototype for the recent Bachmann 009 scale model. The most unusual of the four is a German Ruhrthaler machine that was first used in Italy, working on the tunneling contract for Rome's metro line 'A'.

Recently completed is a static replica of one of the 1941-built 18in gauge Greenwood and Batley battery electric locomotives originally used on the Waltham Abbey site. It is displayed on a low-bed transporter wagon and highlights the difference in size between the original and current rolling stock.

The wagon fleet all originally worked at Royal Naval Armament Depot and Royal Ordnance Factory sites, and includes examples of a waste burning wagon, dough wagon, Clarkson case carrier and cordite rack drying van, as well as the more familiar RNAD sliding-roof ordnance vans. All are subject to an ongoing meticulous restoration programme which is designed to inform visitors about the range of railway vehicles used exclusively on these formerly 'closed' sites. **NGW**

More Information

For more information on the railway, visit www.royalgunpowdermills.com/the-gunpowder-railway

Hidden Gem

A visiting Narrow Gauge Railway Society group recently described the Gunpowder Railway as 'something of a hidden gem'. It is a view shared by NGW contributor Mike Tedstone, who was there on Sunday, 10th August:

The Gunpowder Mills site is about a half-hour walk from Waltham Cross station, served from Stratford on Sundays by Anglia. The platform for Gunpowder Railway departures is a considerable walk from the main entrance and by no means obvious to find.

There were really very few visitors to the Gunpowder Mills on this day, and even fewer to the narrow gauge railway part of the venue. When we arrived, we had no idea when a train would run, nor could we see where to go!

Thankfully, a phone call to the train-crew meant that the circa 1400

departure was held for my companion and myself. There were already about nine or ten on board, and we just about filled the two carriages and van consist.

The terminus of the line was reached after about five minutes. The loco run-round took place in the platform, Powdermill Cut, and we returned after a brake test.

We left the railway at about 14.45, as did everybody else, as it was by no means clear if there would actually be another departure at nominally 15.00, it was so quiet.

It was all very friendly, but distinctly off the beaten track, if I can put it kindly that way, and certainly fascinating as an example of 2ft 6in gauge in the UK using ex-MOD rolling stock.

Without **NGW**, I am not sure I would even have known that this line existed...

"It was distinctly off the beaten track and certainly fascinating..."

Above: John H Bowles works another RNAD demonstration train out of Powdermill Cut during the NGRS visit in April 2025.

Below: Gilbert and the restored RNAD armaments wagons outside the museum/display shed.



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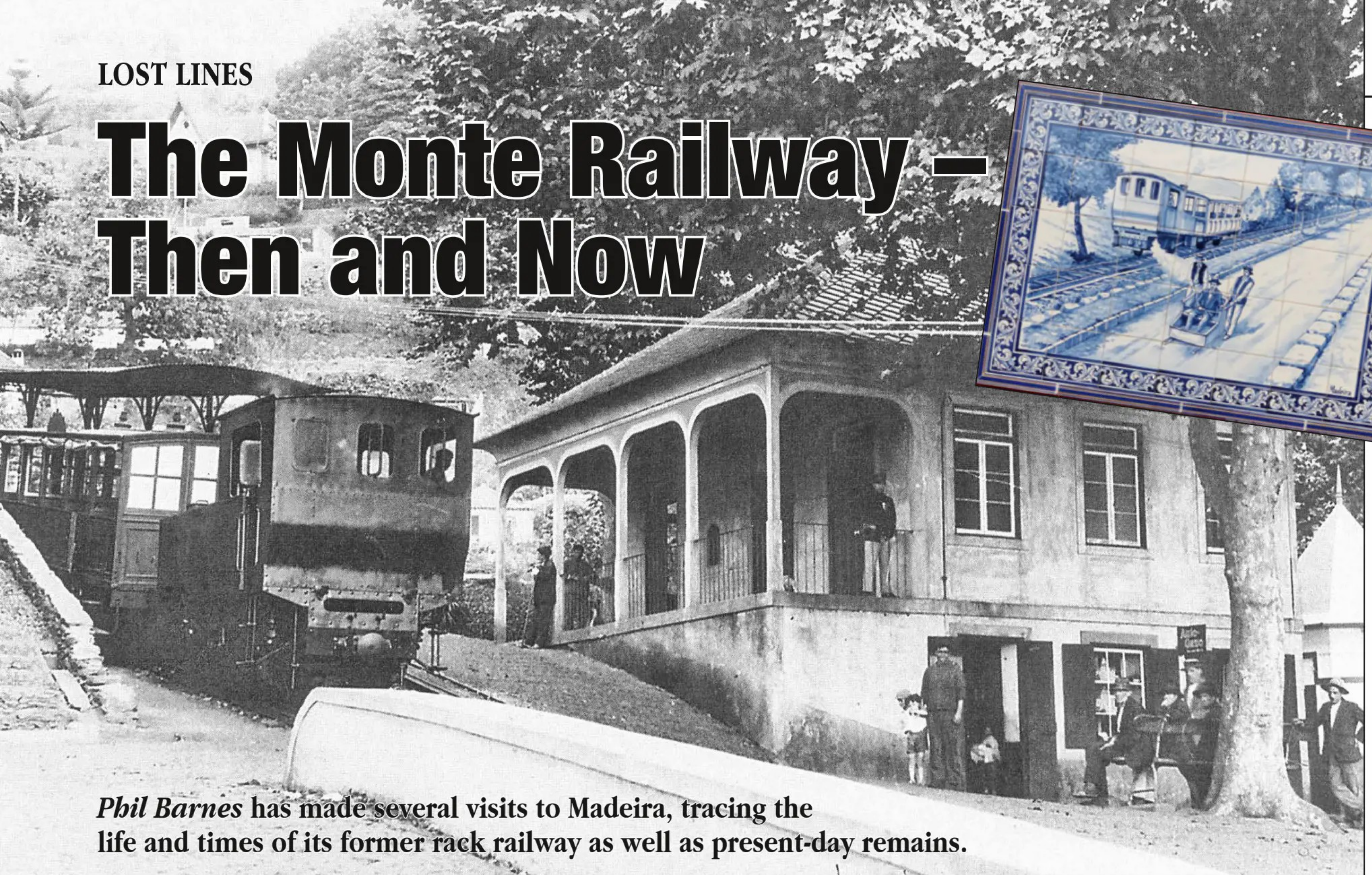
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The Monte Railway – Then and Now



Phil Barnes has made several visits to Madeira, tracing the life and times of its former rack railway as well as present-day remains.

The idea for a railway on the Portuguese islands of Madeira came from Antonio Joaquim Marques of Lisbon, who obtained a concession from Funchal City Council to build a line. There were several reasons for this scheme, although a main one was that people needed to get to the pilgrimage church of Nossa Senhora do Monte, built in the highlands of Funchal island. Once the railway was built, they were able to do so in large numbers. Additionally, Monte was an area for tourism and recuperation, and many of Funchal's richest families lived there, so a reliable means of transport was needed.

The concession was granted in 1887 when the Portuguese engineer Raoul Mesnier du Ponsard, who was of French parentage and also an ex-apprentice of Gustav Eiffel, was engaged to design the metre-gauge railway. He had previously designed three street funiculars in Lisbon, so was a known quantity in this field. After the costing and planning of how the railway would be built, the local council approved the project in January 1891. Du Ponsard was appointed supervising engineer, but a little while previously, in July 1890, the concession had been transferred to Captain Manuel Alexandre de Sousa of Madeira.

Above: A postcard purchased in a souvenir shop shows a train calling at Monte station. The inset shows on a house behind Monte station one of several 'Azulejos' – distinctive blue coloured tiles depicting the line and the famous wicker sledges. May 2024.

Photos by Phil Barnes except where stated

The initial political and planning issues were sorted in true Anglo-Portuguese style at a time when many of Portugal's railway needs were satisfied by English companies. The Monte Railway, as it became known, was a British-owned company, registered as the Mount Railway Co Ltd of 24-25 Fenchurch Street, London EC3. Locally it was termed the Caminho de Ferro do Monte.

The building phase started in 1891 and the line would not be completed to its full length of just under four kilometres until 1912. Ultimately there were three main stations, five secondary stations and five halts along the route. The base station at Pombal was built through 1891 and the line had reached Levada de Santa Luzia by July 1893 when this section was then opened.

Work progressed 'up-hill' and by August 1894 had extended to Atalhinto in the parish of Monte. This station remained the terminus until 1912 when the line finally reached Terreiro da Luta, 850 metres above sea level. Here a 'panoramic restaurant' was created for tourists and the area designated a viewpoint. Most of the tourists were ship's passengers from Union Castle or Royal Mail Line vessels which had anchored at Funchal for re-victualling and coaling purposes.

Rolling stock and operation

The line used the Riggenbach rack and pinion system. The first four locomotives were 0-4-0RTs (rack





tanks) built by Maschinenfabrik Esslingen and carrying the numbers 1 to 4; they were delivered in 1893, 1894, 1903 and 1912 with works numbers 2568, 2654, 3524 and 3668 respectively. Each time a loco was delivered, a passenger car with a capacity for 60 came with it.

Over the years the railway endured problems, principally financial issues and poor maintenance, and these came to a head in September 1919 when the boiler of locomotive no 4 exploded, resulting in four deaths. This caused a lack of confidence in the railway, further compounding its problems, but still a fifth loco was obtained in 1925. The 0-4-2RT was supplied by SLM of Winterthur (works number 3120) and also came with a carriage.

Some sources suggest that the damaged no 4 and one of the original 1890s-built pair were dismantled and their parts used to build a sixth loco 'in house' on the island, but information about this is sketchy.

In typical mountain railway style, such as on the Snowdon Mountain Railway, carriages on the Monte were always pushed up the hill and never connected to the loco. Once the railway was fully open, trains were crossed at Livra Mento and Monte where there were loops. These were signaled by switch indicators that rotated and therefore showed the way the track was set.

The railway carried on making few headlines until 1932, when another accident in the form of a derailment further dented confidence in the line among potential visitors.

Through the 1930s, both tourists and locals cut back on using the line, which further added to the financial pressures and maintenance issues. Additional competition from the expanding road network led to operation ceasing in 1939. With the onset of the Second World War and a lack of visitors/passengers, the railway was forced to declare bankruptcy and

the last train operated in 1943.

The line and its rolling stock were dismantled and scrapped, the Monte Railway being consigned to the history books. But this was not the end of the story, because the company still existed 20 years later, with an office and manager to administer the company's properties.

Still to be seen

Reminders of the line to this day include Pombal station, the viaduct at Monte along with the station/museum and the site of the basic station at Terreiro da Luta, with the now closed hotel and 'panoramic restaurant' still perched above this former terminus.

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Facing page, bottom left: A panoramic view of Monte station, May 2022. The railway ran up the hill from left to right behind the building – opposite the two red cars was a station yard.

Above: A photo displayed in the Monte Station Museum (MSM) shows 0-4-2RT no 5 and carriage on Monte viaduct in the 1930s.

Above right: The viaduct in May 2024 seen from the winding road that passes the station. Clearly apparent is the height of the structure with the house and garden dwarfed below.

Centre right: A train arriving at Pombal in the first decade of the 20th century. At bottom right, one of the carriages is in the station yard.

Photo: MSM

Right: The rack plunging down to Pombal, Funchal spread out below and much activity at sea.

Photo: MSM





The station at Pombal is located on the corner of the Rua do Pombal and the aptly named Rua do Comboio (train street). This building

looks very complete, albeit a bit run down and once housed the railway's office upstairs with the ticket office and waiting room downstairs. Next



Above: Looking down on the site of the former terminus at Terreiro da Luta with the now closed hotel above it on the right. The railway curved up to the station from the direction of Funchal, seen far below. June 2025.



Upper left: The former Pombal station, looking slightly the worse for wear, at the bottom of the Rua do Comboio, June 2025.

Centre left: The museum displays include this model of the Monte train, also slightly the worse for wear.



Left: Despite the railway being long gone, it has not been forgotten and featured as part of the May 2022 flower festival in central Funchal. The train was made of wooden boards with 'C F M' denoting the Caminho de Ferro do Monte.

to it is the former workshop which became a garage, and next to that a small yard now has a palm-tree growing on it.

Looking up the road, it is clearly evident that it was once the course of a railway. This uphill route can be traced all the way to Monte, passing the sites of the stations at Santa Luzia and a halt for the Grand Hotel Belmont (which wasn't constructed until 1926), prior to crossing the viaduct topped with a cobbled road and reaching the station at Monte. The five-arched viaduct can be easily seen from both sides and these days spans a garden.

Museum opened

The former station at Monte lay derelict until 2016, when it was acquired and refurbished by Funchal City Council. It became a museum and interpretation centre on 24th June 2021, exactly 109 years to the day since opening of the station and the railway up to Terreiro da Luta.

Monte's station and viaduct are adjacent to a 180-degree bend in the main road, which has bus stops nearby as testament to one of today's means of transport to the area. Also nearby is the Nosa Senhora do Monte church, starting point of the famous wicker sledge run, and a bit beyond them are the Palace Gardens and top station of the cable car (teleferico).

On the subject of stations, I found the one at Terreiro da Luta by walking along the road from the war memorial statue courtesy of a stop on a coach tour I was doing at the time. It was then possible to look down onto the site of the station and photograph it.

Reverting to the station/museum at Monte, this is free to enter and is open between 10am to 5pm on Tuesdays to Saturdays. The museum's displays consist mainly of boards with old photos, maps, diagrams and timetables on them and there is also a cabinet with documents, badges and tickets in it; these are all primarily upstairs. Downstairs is a desk and typewriter plus the headlamp of loco no 5 and there is also a model of the former train. The museum has an attendant and a short video shows the railway at work.

Additionally, around the Funchal area can be found azulejos – blue tile-based pictures showing the railway. During my first visit to Madeira in 2022, it was the time of the flower festival and in the Avenue Arriaga (central Funchal), was a mock-up of the train – in a flower bed! This railway may have only had a 50-year life span, but there still remain plenty of reminders of its former existence. **NGW**

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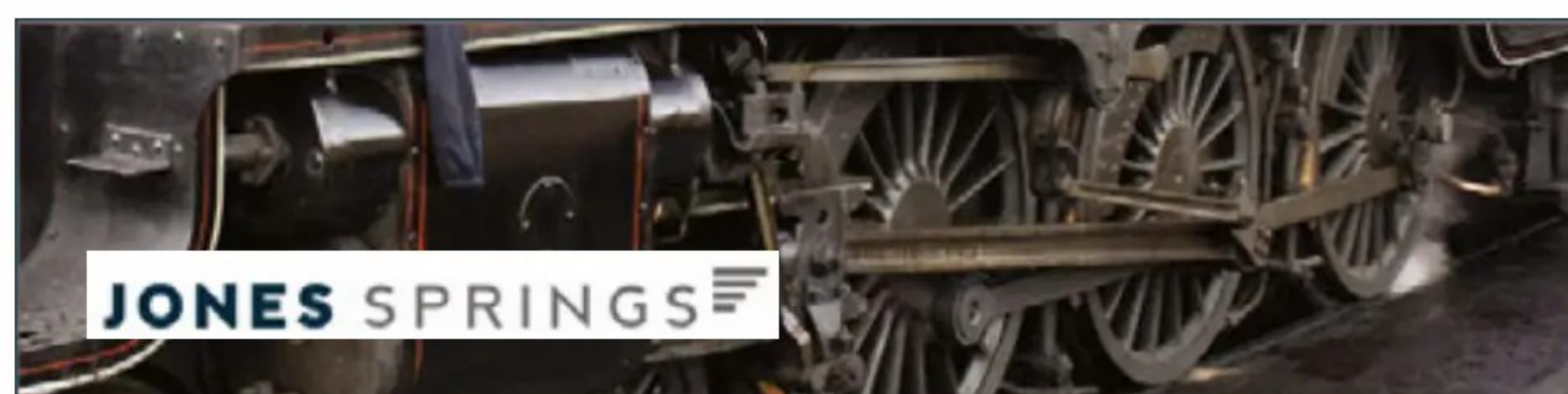


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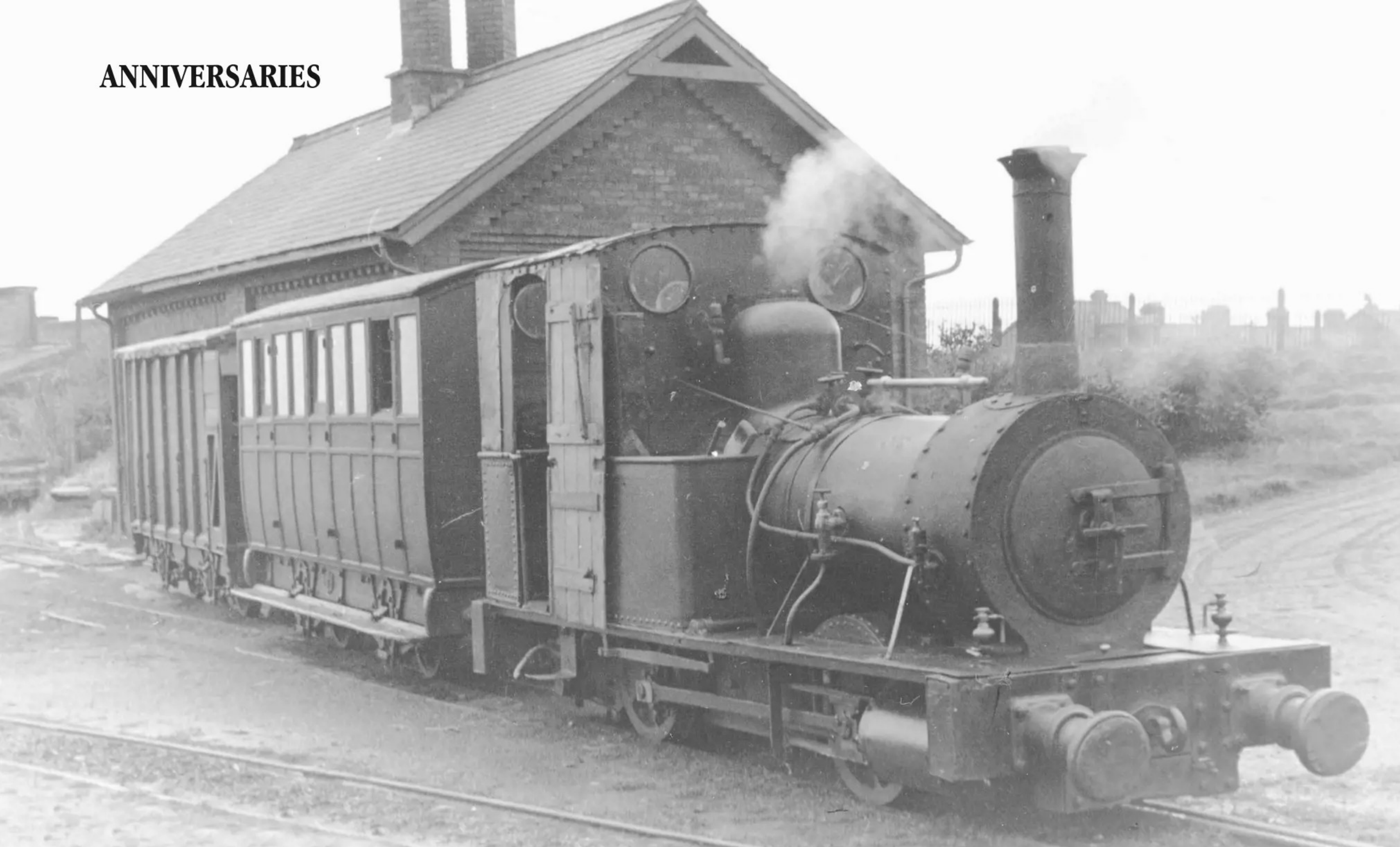
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Above: It hasn't all been about the Ffestiniog Railway's Bygones event, illustrated on our centre pages, in October! Traditionally the month also means photo charters and on 13th October *Andrew Simmonds* caught this splendid shot of the Talylyn Railway's 'Dolgoch' accelerating past the old watering point at Ty Dwr – since its restoration this spot has become a favourite for photographs of the pioneer line.

Below: *Stuart Avery*, meanwhile, went rather further afield, to California, where on 6th October he captured Roaring Camp & Big Trees Narrow Gauge Railroad no 1 'Dixiana' blowing down to clear the boiler of impurities on the approach to Felton with an afternoon train from Bear Mountain. The Class B Shay was built by the Lima Locomotive works in 1912 for the W.M Ritter Lumber Company – there is nothing quite like a Shay...





The end that was a beginning

A low-key celebration on the Talyllyn Railway last month saw the running of a special train to commemorate a very important 75th anniversary, and *Andrew Charman* was there.

The approaching end to the year also brings to a close celebrations of Railway 200, the bicentenary of the opening of what is generally regarded to be the world's first public railway, the Stockton & Darlington. The year has seen several major events including the 'Greatest Gathering' in Derby, the journey of the replica of the S&D locomotive 'Locomotion' from Stockton to Darlington in September and for narrow gauge enthusiasts the remarkable event at the Ffestiniog Railway in June which saw '200 wheels on The Cob'.

On 6th October, however, there

was another, much more low-key commemoration, of an event much more recent than 200 years but of equal importance to both the narrow gauge and railway preservation as a whole. On 6th October 1950, 75 years ago, the last train of the Sir Henry Haydn Jones era ran on the Talyllyn Railway in mid-Wales.

Haydn Jones, owner of the railway since 1911, had promised to keep the 2ft 3in gauge line running for his lifetime, despite the quarry that it was built to serve having ceased operations in 1946. Following his death in July 1950 his widow agreed that the

Exactly 75 years lie between the two photos on this page, taken on 6th October 1950 and 2025, at almost the same spot on Tywyn Wharf station – original loco 'Dolgoch', carriage no 1 and brake van no 5. Photo above: TR archive. All other photos by Andrew Charman unless credited

Talyllyn should see out the season but after that it was widely expected to close and be taken up for scrap.

Of course very few enthusiasts are unaware of what actually happened – a group of Midlands enthusiasts, led by author and canal enthusiast Tom Rolt, took over the line and it reopened in May 1951 as the world's first preserved railway, creating the heritage railway movement.

It was David Mitchell, former President of the Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society, who highlighted the significance of the approaching anniversary and suggested that it



should be properly commemorated. Remarkably, the railway was able to roster the complete train set from that day in 1950 for the special run on 6th October – the exact 75th anniversary of that last train. Fletcher Jennings 0-4-0WT ‘Dolgoch’ headed four-wheeled carriage no 1 and the unique four-wheeled brake van and travelling booking office.

One of the reasons for a low-key celebration was the very limited accommodation – aside from the two loco crew and guard Luke Ryan, there was space for 12 in the carriage and *NGW*'s editor was very honoured to be invited to join the event.

Eras in history

Others in this select party included David Mitchell and personalities effectively marking the earliest days, mid-period and present of Tallyllyn preservation. Current TR chair David Ventry represented the present, with the early days of preservation marked by the well-known rail transport professional and enthusiast Michael Whitehouse – a man who holds directorship roles at several heritage organisations, Michael is the son of Pat Whitehouse, one of the original pioneers that got the preservation of the Tallyllyn off the ground. And also present was Dan Poulson, great grandson of Sir Henry Haydn Jones, providing an essential link with the Tallyllyn's pre-preservation history.

Not surprisingly with such a knowledgeable party the conversation proved fascinating to this media imposter, including such gems as the fact that there was briefly a scheme to extend the railway further south to the larger coastal port of Aberdovey, and a general consensus that the Bryn

Above: Apart from the significantly improved look of the train and platform this scene replicates that witnessed by passengers in October 1950.

Below: The Haydn Jones and early preservation eras of the Tallyllyn represented by Dan Poulson and Michael Whitehouse.

Below right: The train conformed to historical accuracy, the loco replenished from the old Dolgoch water column.

Eglwys slate quarry, that the TR was opened to serve in 1865, was never a large enough undertaking to justify having its own railway.

Events soon proved this – through the decade after opening the quarry's annual output reached nowhere near the expectations of its owners and financial problems abounded. As early as 1879 quarry workers found themselves working a four-day week due to excessive stocks.

William McConnel, of the family who had built the railway, took over the slate company in 1881 but while a new market in tourism steadily grew, the fortunes of Bryn Eglwys did not and in 1909 quarrying was stopped, with plans soon being made to close the railway.

At this point a saviour appeared in the form of Henry Haydn Jones, newly elected as the Liberal MP for Merionethshire in which the TR ran.

In 1911 he bought both quarry and railway and restarted slate production, services on the Tallyllyn continuing as if nothing had happened.

Investment but decline

Apart a brief closure in 1920 during a dispute with the North Wales Quarrymen's Union, the next four decades passed in mid Wales with few headlines around the Tallyllyn. Haydn Jones did regularly invest in measures to keep the line operational, but it equally became a millstone around his neck as slate demand declined and the rise of road transport ate into the line's passenger numbers.

The outbreak of the Second World War exacerbated the situation and by 1945 the railway was struggling to survive. Loco no 1 ‘Tallyllyn’ was out of service needing heavy repairs and Haydn Jones paid for Dolgoch to have an overhaul at the Atlas Foundry »





in Shrewsbury. Then on Boxing Day 1946 a major rock fall in the quarry finally ended slate production.

Not surprisingly the Talyllyn was not included in the nationalisation of British railways in 1948 – some maps even showed the line as disused. But despite all this Haydn Jones had vowed to keep the railway running through his lifetime and he fulfilled his promise, reputedly even trying to find a family member to take it on after his passing.

Haydn Jones's death at the age of 86 on 2nd July 1950 left the future of the railway in the hands of his widow, who instructed the TR manager Edward Thomas to complete the season, the final train running on 6th October. After that the future looked bleak but behind the scenes a rescue plan had been underway for some time.

Tom Rolt had first visited the line during the war and after some false starts, including a proposal to rip up the 2ft 3in gauge rails and replace them with a 15-inch gauge tourist railway, a public meeting in

Birmingham on 11th October resulted in the formation of the Talyllyn Railway Preservation Society. The TR's 1951 season started as planned and the rest, as we know, has become a pivotal part of heritage railway history...

Caught on film

Many discussions and in some cases memories from those early years made for an interesting trip to Abergynolwyn, where while the participants enjoyed a specially prepared 1950s-style buffet, the train was remmarshalled to place the brake van at the rear for the return journey, just as had happened in 1950. There is but one known photo of this train, which appears at the start of this feature, but remarkably there is also a film of it in existence, made by a traveller on the train who persuaded the crew to carry out the shunt so he could film out of the brake van's rear window during the down journey.

Your editor thoroughly enjoyed his unusual day out at the Talyllyn and a glimpse into past history, along with speculation as to what might have been. It's hard to believe that the Talyllyn would have evaded the scrap men without the arrival of the pioneering preservation movement.

"I should have run it without any of your help..."

Above: Time for reflection on the return journey at Brynglas – again a scene little changed from the original.

Below: A new era begins – the first Preservation Society Chairman, Bill Trinder, cuts a tape to mark the start of services on 14th May 1951. Photo: TR Archive

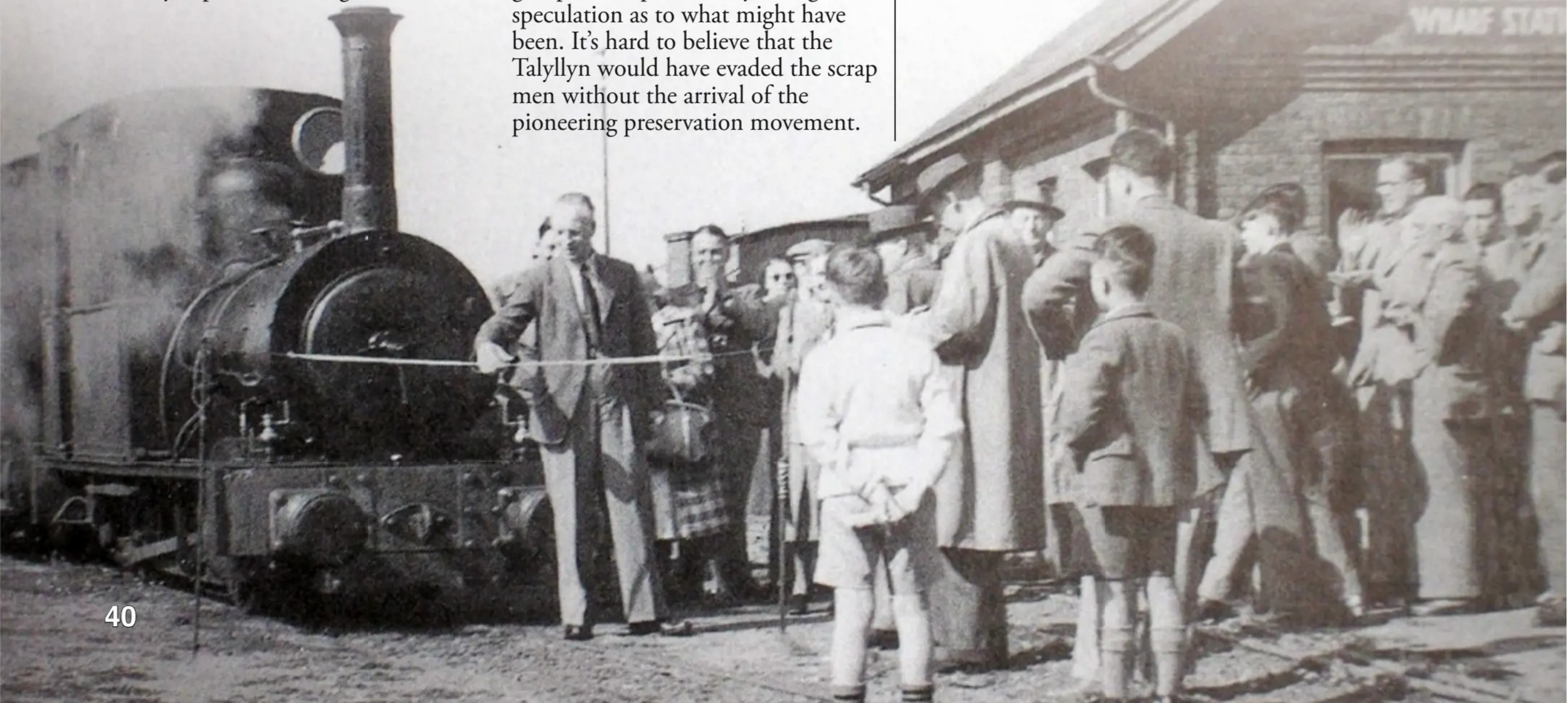
A comment, however, from Edward Thomas (like Haydn Jones commemorated in the names of ex-Corris Railway locos nos 3 and 4 which have been on the Talyllyn since 1951), suggests that the line still might have defied the odds, especially as Lady Haydn was known to be keen to see it survive.

The comment came during an early example of clashes of opinions that all democratic heritage organisations who rely on volunteers will be familiar with, documented in *Railway Adventure*, Rolt's book describing his role as General Manager in the first two preservation seasons and a must-read for all narrow gauge enthusiasts.

The fledgling TRPS had marked the traditional opening of the season on Whit Monday in mid-May 1951, with effectively shuttle trains between Tywyn and the intermediate station of Rhydyronen to allow essential track repairs on the rest of the line. The intention was, however, to run over the full route to Abergynolwyn in the main season starting a couple of weeks later.

A few days before the scheduled start of services some members of the TRPS committee decided running over the full line would be too high a risk and that initially trains should only go to Rhydyronen.

Rolt argued strongly that such a move would doom the whole venture, but as he wrote; "It was Mr Edward Thomas who, in the event, really clinched matters. I shall never forget his contribution to this 11th hour meeting. It was characteristically brief and to the point. 'I think you are taking things much too seriously, gentlemen,' he said. 'Let me tell you that if Lady Haydn had asked me to run the railway this year I should have run it without any of your help.'" **NGW**



Going large...

The latest Midlands Model Engineering Exhibition showed the major influence of the narrow gauge in the largest model scales, as *Andrew Charman* reports.

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In this issue we take narrow gauge modelling to its ceiling... To the point where modelling becomes model engineering, with model locomotives large enough and powerful enough to pull their owner and in many cases a train load of passengers around a track.

The occasion stimulating this feature is the Midlands Model Engineering Exhibition, held every October at the Warwickshire Exhibition Centre. I've been attending this show for many years, and one aspect I know I will always enjoy are the many narrow gauge examples that always feature among the models.

Narrow gauge prototypes produce much 'chunker' models and today have a major influence whichever of the three popular track gauges one adopts – 3½-inch gauge, mainly for raised track, 5-inch gauge which can be practically employed on a ground-level line and is popular among those with limited space, and 7¼-inch gauge, large enough for 'professional' passenger carrying – there are a number of such lines

Above: The ultimate in miniature steam – this 7¼-inch gauge 2-4-2, one of two sister locos built and known as the River class, has run at the public Moors Valley Railway but spends most of its time running round the (admittedly rather large) garden of a private house.

Right: This Feldbahn 0-6-0 from Station Road Steam is typical of the kit-build locos today offered in both 5 and 7¼-inch gauges.

All photos by Andrew Charman unless stated

operating at clubs, in garden centres and parks around the country.

Owning a 'proper' steam loco has great appeal, a true miniature representation of the real thing that one can travel behind. And while in many cases that means joining a club with a purpose-built track, it doesn't have to. Many miniature railways have been built in the gardens of private houses, and while one might think such things are the preserve of wealthy souls with huge houses and equally huge gardens, again they don't have to be. There are numerous examples of lines running around quite small semi-detached homes, the only real requirement the approval of whoever in the family does the gardening – just as in the smaller non-passenger

carrying scales such as 16mm, there is a lot to be said for explaining how a small rail embankment will give flow to a garden, purpose to those flower beds... honestly!

Budget to suit

One obvious aspect when you consider getting into this aspect of the hobby is that you will need some serious investment – well you may do is probably a more accurate description. Back when I edited the now sadly closed *Engineering in Miniature* magazine, I described how two friends built a pair of effective battery locos for less than £500 each, and how another enthusiast constructed a 7¼-inch gauge line round his garden, scrounging track materials at a cost of just £7 a yard and

»





building himself a battery loco for £400...

Proper steam in this scale will indeed cost. Most of the locomotives displayed at shows such as the Midlands event have been built by model engineers in their home workshops over many years, using commercially available components such as castings or making their own. Of course such locos do regularly come up for sale – a glance at a well-known dealer's site while writing this feature revealed a 5-inch gauge battery loco at £975, a 5-inch gauge 0-6-0ST to the popular 'Metre Maid' design at £2750, and a 7¼-inch gauge Kerr, Stuart Wren style 0-4-2ST for £4,500.

More recent times have seen the growth of professional companies, such as the likes of Maxitrak and Station Road Steam, offering locos either ready-built or as machined kits for the buyer to bolt together at their own pace – a great way to get to know one's loco is to build it. Now we are talking on average around £15,000 here, but for such an investment the buyer gets a top-quality locomotive.

What a scamp

Something much cheaper, and without the intensive looking after a steam loco requires, is the 'Scamp', a 7¼-inch petrol locomotive that in standard form really is a shrunk version of the Lister auto truck, well-known in narrow gauge industry. Made by a company called CMD Engineering, it again

comes as a simple kit at prices starting from £2,900 – as the picture at left shows, once built it's a whole lot of fun...

Just as in the smaller scales, there is a whole cottage industry offering just about everything needed to build one's own miniature railway – while traditional model engineering has declined in recent decades, there has been a resurgence in those desiring their own miniature railways and several companies now provide the components and materials to make turning dreams into reality as simple a process as possible. There's also a highly active community to support one's activities, both in terms of model engineering clubs and organisations such as the 7¼-inch Gauge Society (www.sevenandaquarter.org)

Track, for example – once it was a case of securing lengths of steel or aluminium bars and cutting up strips of wood and creosoting them to build one's own. Today one can buy ready-made lengths of track in the same way as for indoor small scales, this combining aluminum rail with the correct profile and sleepers made from recycled plastic – something heritage railways are increasingly adopting in the full-size world.

So yes, in general having your own railway in the garden with locomotives you can ride behind is not going to come cheap – but the rewards in terms of sheer enjoyment of a hobby are not to be dismissed lightly... **NGW**



Left: just as in other scales the quarry Hunslet is perennially popular. This 5-inch gauge version is modelled on the Llanberis Lake Railway's 'Elidir'.

Below: 3ft gauge prototypes, such as this under construction Isle of Man Railway 'Peverill', make for more compact models.



Far left: Tracklaying is easy with the products available today – and even full-size lines used recycled plastic sleepers these days.

Left: A fine accurate model of a Glyn Valley Tramway granite wagon, but also an excellent driving truck for running directly behind one's loco.

Centre left: The owner of this 7¼-inch gauge Ruston-style battery loco built it for a mere £400. *Photo: Simon Mace*

Below left: Andrew on a 'Scamp' – easy and relatively cheap to build, great fun to drive.

Photo: Megan Charman

Right: There's a prototype for everything in model engineering, and when you build them in 7¼-inch gauge pretty big models can result. This De Winton vertical-boiler loco has one major departure from the full-size original in the cause of practicality, the firebox fed from a door above the footplate rather than from a chute below.



■ Regular *NGW* correspondent Dave Pinniger was among many who attended the Gala on the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway over the weekend of 26th-27th September, and he took both his 16mm and 7/8ths scale live steam De Winton vertical boiler locomotives to run on the layout at Woody Bay station, 'Woody Gate'.

With the Gala attractions including visiting full-size De Winton loco 'Chaloner' from the Leighton Buzzard Railway, Dave grabbed the opportunity to pose his 7/8ths loco 'Vron' on its full-size inspiration. *Photos: Dave Pinniger*



MODEL LINES

March date up north

An early entry for those brand-new diaries is the Narrow Gauge North model show. The 2026 edition of this popular event will be held on Saturday 14th March at its usual venue of the Civic Hall in Pudsey, Leeds, from 10:30am to 4:30pm.

The venue, just five minutes walk from Pudsey station, has a large free car park. Disabled access will be available to all areas except the stage and hot and cold refreshments will be on offer.

Details of the layouts appearing are to be confirmed but there is bound to be much to enjoy – the 2025 show attracted more than 20 layouts along with a host of traders. Details will be posted on the website, narrowgaugenorth.org.uk and on [facebook.com/ngnorth](https://www.facebook.com/ngnorth).

Garden rail show date

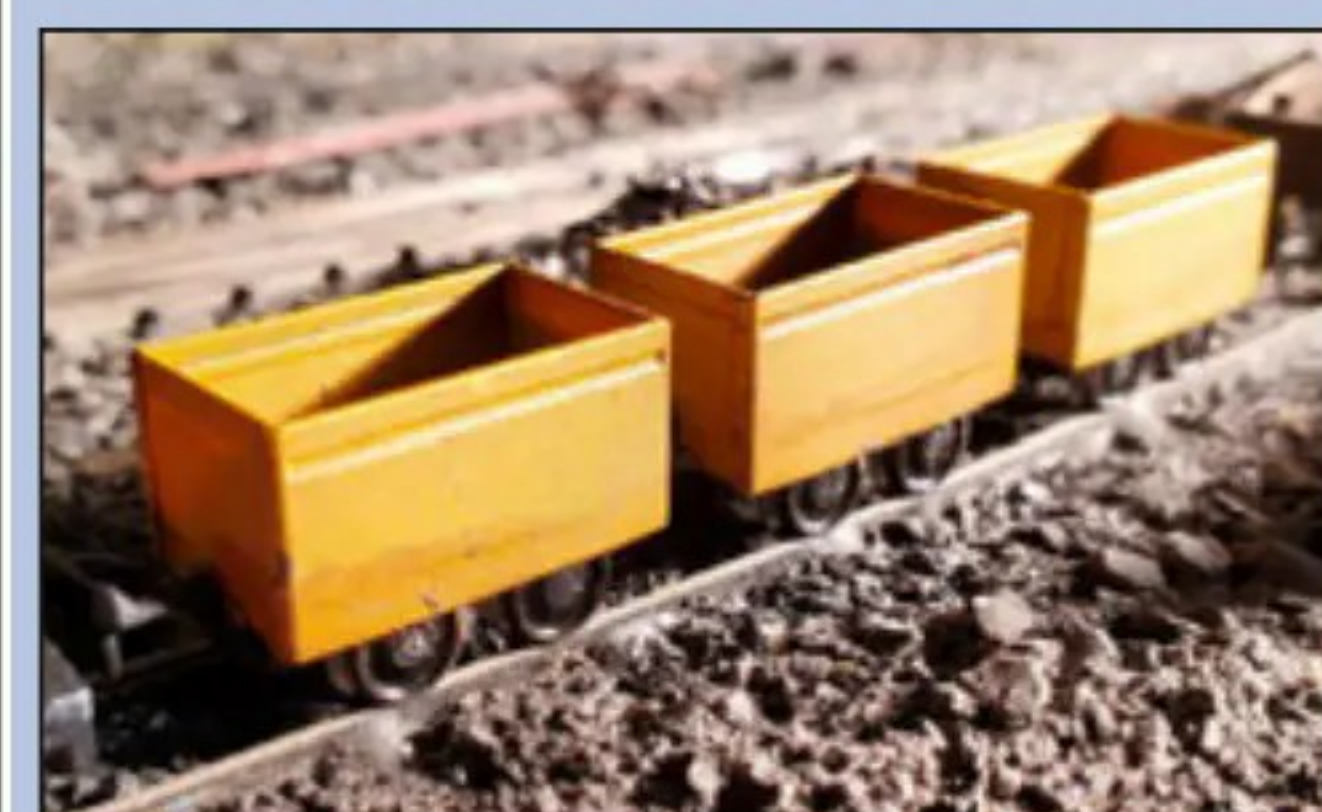
While you have those diaries out, the 2026 Midlands Garden Rail Show will be held on Saturday 28th February and Sunday 1st March at its usual venue of the Warwickshire Event Centre near Leamington Spa.

Organisers promise plenty of inspiration for anyone planning a garden railway be it live steam, gas or coal fired, battery or electric, with at least 15 layouts in the larger gauges and scales including Gauge 1, O Gauge, 16mm and G Scale and more, along with a wide selection of traders.

Details of the exhibition and suppliers attending will be updated over the coming months on the www.midlandsgardenrailshow.co.uk website and on the Meridienne Exhibitions Ltd Facebook page. Advance tickets can already be ordered through the website.

Tubby time...

Latest in the ever-growing range of 009 rolling stock from Brooks 3D are these useful little mine tubs. They are supplied as simple kits for three wagons at £13 per kit. Brooks can also supply versions to run on 6.5mm (Z gauge) track, to represent typical 18-inch gauge mine lines. More details can be had at www.brooks3dmodels.com



Narrow Gauge Enigma – The Story of Peter Rampton and his Collection X

Stephen Phillips

Very rarely, a new book appears on the narrow gauge scene which is considered a milestone publication – the two-volume *Iron Sherpa* production on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway springs immediately to mind. *Narrow Gauge Enigma* certainly qualifies for this status.

Peter Rampton's name will not be nearly as familiar to many a narrow gauge enthusiast as will 'Collection X', a half-century mystery of a stack of locomotives stored on a farm somewhere in Surrey beyond the prying eyes of enthusiasts. Now the full story of the collection and the man who created it has been documented.

Peter Rampton acquired his first loco in 1968, a Couillet 0-6-0T found in Spain. He went on to travel the world in search of redundant narrow gauge locos, eventually amassing around 50 of them, together with other artefacts such as bogie carriages from the Isle of Man.

All were stored in barns at Peter's farm in Surrey, and after a couple of early open days and encounters with less than honest enthusiasts they were kept in complete secrecy, the farm very much off limits and even home-made booby traps set up amongst the collection to deter intruders.

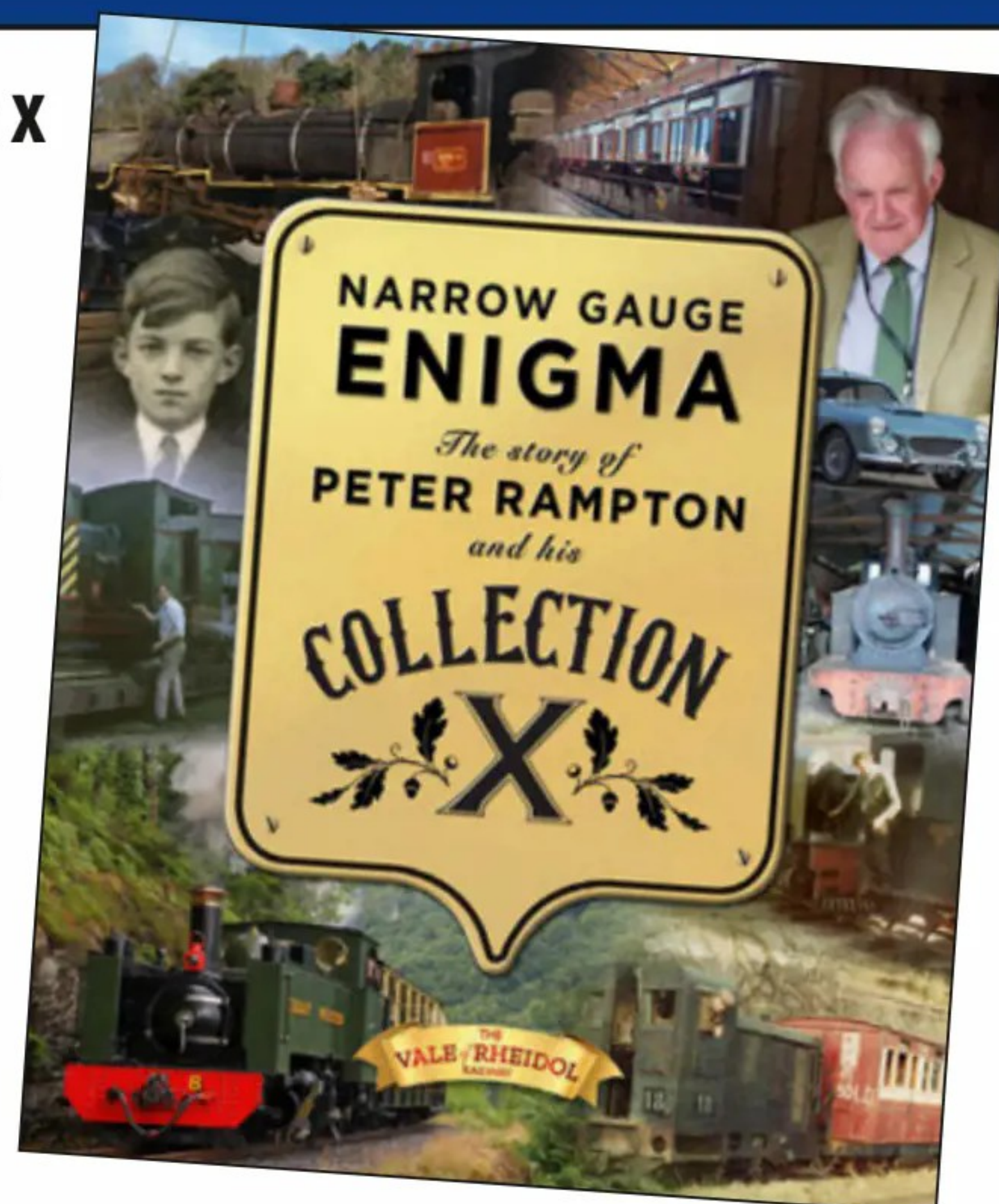
Peter had every intention of restoring everything, setting up a museum and running on his own narrow gauge line – the trackbed of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway and

the Bridport branch in Devon were early sites considered and rejected. He played a pivotal role in the setting up of the Brecon Mountain Railway by his friend Tony Hills, and eventually bought the Vale of Rheidol Railway when it was sold off by British Railways, then providing consistent major investment to turn it into the world-class line it is today, and intending it to be the home of his museum.

Peter died in 2019 and since then VoR general manager Llŷr ap Iolo has led a project to document his life, with the book's author Stephen Phillips spending years delving into the private Rampton archives, surveying and drawing the locomotives and carriages in the collection.

The result is a sumptuous hardback running to 416 pages, following the precedent of previous VoR publications of being printed on top-quality glossy paper, and with content of equal quality.

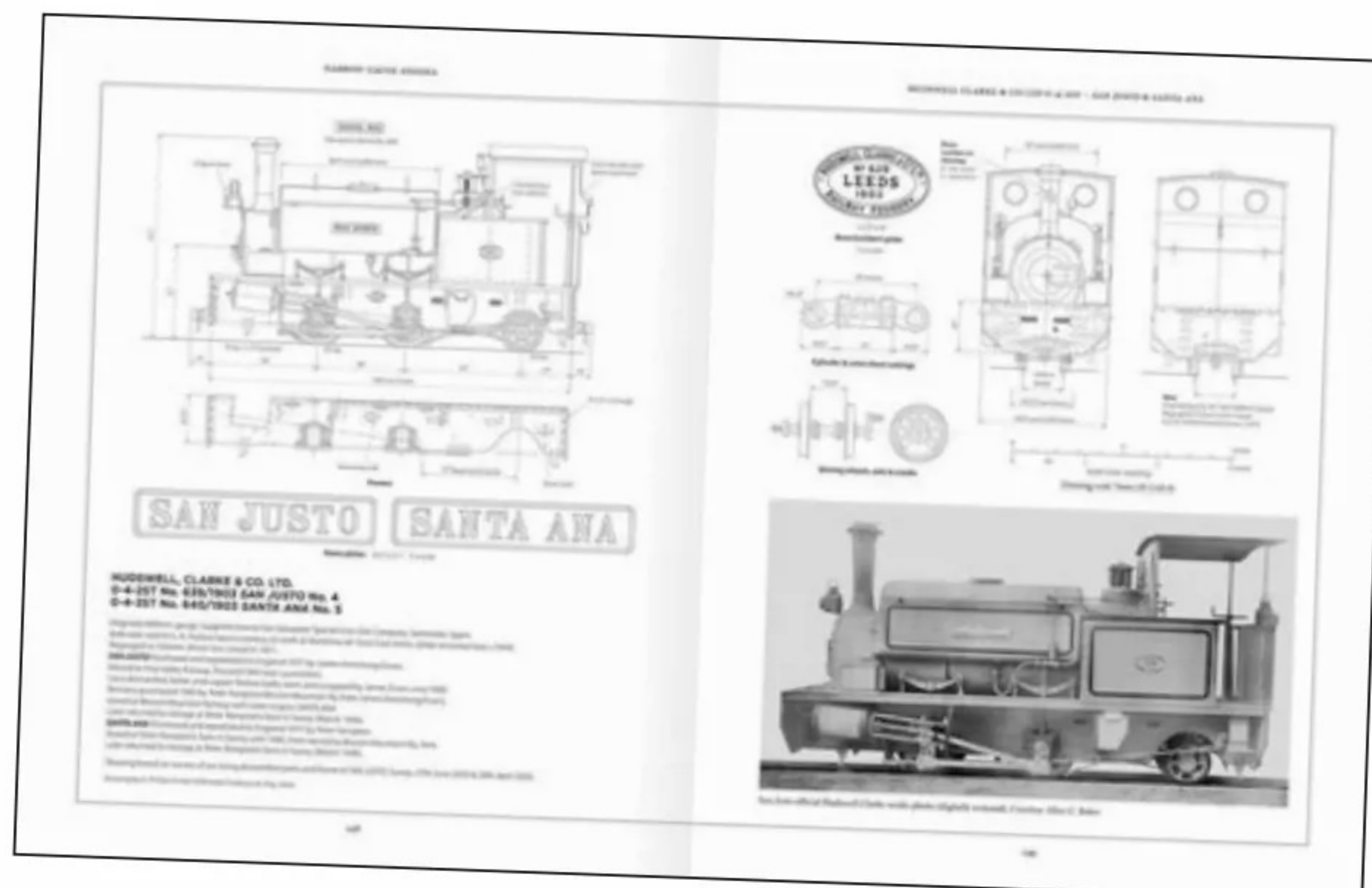
Peter's story is told in full, including beyond his railway interest such as his passion for AC cars. *NGW* readers, however, will be most enthused by the full descriptions of each item in the collection, including hundreds of pictures of locos in their original environments, and at the Surrey farm. Modellers will find particular fascination in the highly detailed general arrangement drawings of each item, meticulously reproduced in 7mm scale.



This is the kind of book that one can read in detail but also dip into, choosing a particular item in the collection to read about. Many pages bring surprises – such as the fact that Peter was still collecting just a few years before he passed away – in a book that is without doubt the definitive story of Collection X, lifting the lid fully on one of the greatest narrow gauge mysteries.

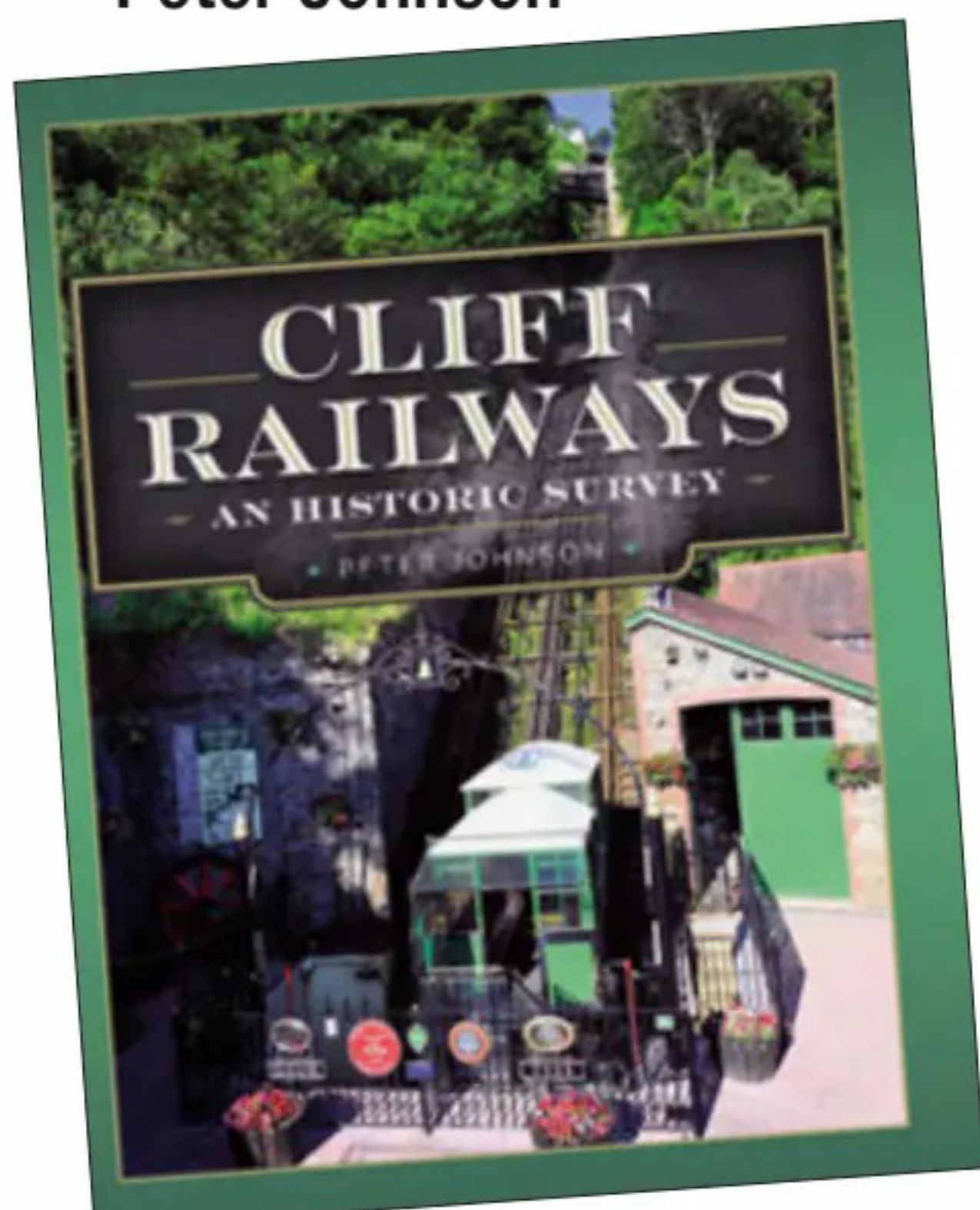
Family asking what you would like for Christmas? We highly recommend pointing them at this book... *AC*

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Cliff Railways – An Historic Survey

Peter Johnson



Well-known narrow gauge author Peter Johnson again steps into the wider rail sector, focusing on an interesting and unusual subject. Many readers may not realise that a number of cliff railways were built to narrow gauge, mostly between the 3ft 8in to 4ft range. Ten of the 30 locations featured in the book are such lines, from familiar ones that have featured in our pages such as between Lynton and Lynmouth in Devon and at Saltburn-by-the-Sea in North Yorkshire, to lesser-known facilities that did not survive, prime examples being on the Isle of Man and the Clifton Rocks Railway in Bristol.

The author is renowned for his thorough research and that shows here – the descriptions of all the lines, narrow, standard and broad, make for fascinating reading and the book benefits immensely from the plentiful period images Peter has found to compliment his own photos taken

while travelling the UK documenting the lines that remain today. *AC*

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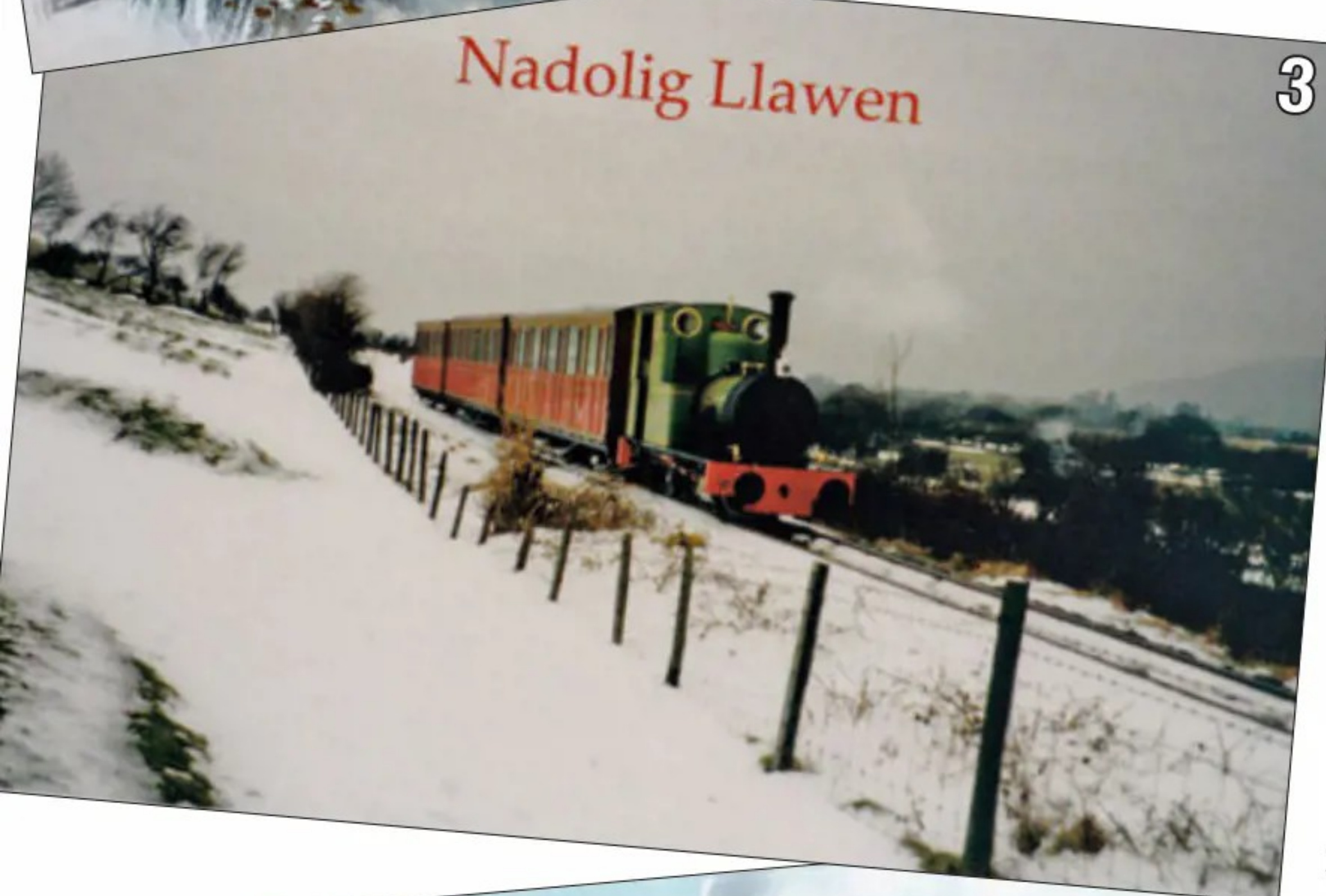
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Festive scenes to bring n



■ We at **NGW** are always keen to showcase the Christmas cards and calendars that some of our heritage railways offer for sale at this time of year, simply because all the proceeds from such sales go directly towards helping to keep those railways operating, instead of into the coffers of some retail giant.

Buying some of these cards is a great way of meeting those expectations placed on us all in the festive season while also helping our railways – sending something more individual and satisfying than the general masses on sale at places such as supermarkets.

The Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway traditionally produces two new card designs each year, one for each of the two railways, and they are always very attractive. This year's pairing, again the work of artist Rebecca Kitchen, show Tasmanian Garratt K1 rushing through a snowy Welsh Highland landscape (*pic 1*) and a double-headed quarry Hunslet and England 0-4-0 train working across the Ffestiniog's Cob sea wall with some slightly suspect looking loco crews! (*pic 2*).

The greetings inside are in Welsh and English and the cards cost £8.50 per pack of 10 cards plus postage, each pack containing five of each design. They are available from the railway's shops, by phone from 01766 516022 or online at www.festrail.co.uk/shop.

The Talylyn Railway's 2025 Christmas card is photo-based, featuring original Fletcher Jennings 0-4-0WT 'Dolgoch' and train in a snow-covered landscape near Brynglas (*pic 3*). Again the festive message inside is in Welsh and English and a pack of five cards costs £3.99 from the railway's shops or plus £3.95 UK postage – orders can be taken over the phone at 01654 711012 and on the TR website at www.talylyn.co.uk

A festive photo adorns the Fairbourne Railway Christmas card (*pic 4*), featuring a Santa Special train on the 12¼-inch gauge line. The cards cost £7.50 per pack of 12, including UK postage, and can be obtained via the railway's website, www.fairbournerrailway.com, or from the FR stand at the National Festival of Railway Modelling which is being held at the NEC Birmingham on 22nd-23rd November.

The Corris Railway's 2025 card is an artistic design combining monochrome and colour as Santa

watches a train departing from the line's Maespoeth Junction station (*pic 5*). The cards are offered as packs of five at a cost of £5 per pack plus £1 postage or post free for four packs or more, from John A Knight, 40 Fladgate Road, Leytonstone, London E11 1LY – cheques made payable to Corris Railway. Current and previous year cards are also available from the Corris web shop at www.corris.co.uk/products/christmas-cards

Finally in our card offering we have the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway cards, featuring designs by renowned transport artist Jonathan Clay, headlined this year by a seasonal scene showing Beyer, Peacock 0-6-0T 'The Earl' and its Pickering carriages at Cyfronydd (*pic 6*).

This and other designs, all with greetings in English and Welsh, are available through the W&LLR website www.wllr.org.uk, in packs of five at £2.50 plus £2.95 UK postage on the total order (overseas £6). Orders of four packs will receive an extra pack free. Orders can also be made by post, with a cheque made payable to W&L Sales, from W&LLR Cards (NGW), 7 Sutherland Grove, Perton, South Staffs WV6 7PA.

We've been sent three calendars to choose from this year – firstly from the FF&WHR (*pic 7*) which follows the usual format of landscape A4 folding down to A3 to reveal a high quality image from the railway and plenty of space for writing appointments in the date boxes. Cost is £8.95, ordered in similar way to the cards.

The Talylyn calendar (*pic 8*) is to a similar size and format, though with extra little snippets of information alongside the calendar dates. The pictures are all of interest, ranging from a recreation at Nant Gwernol of a journey made by the railway's owners in 1895 to loco no 3 'Sir Handel' on the wharf at Tywyn with

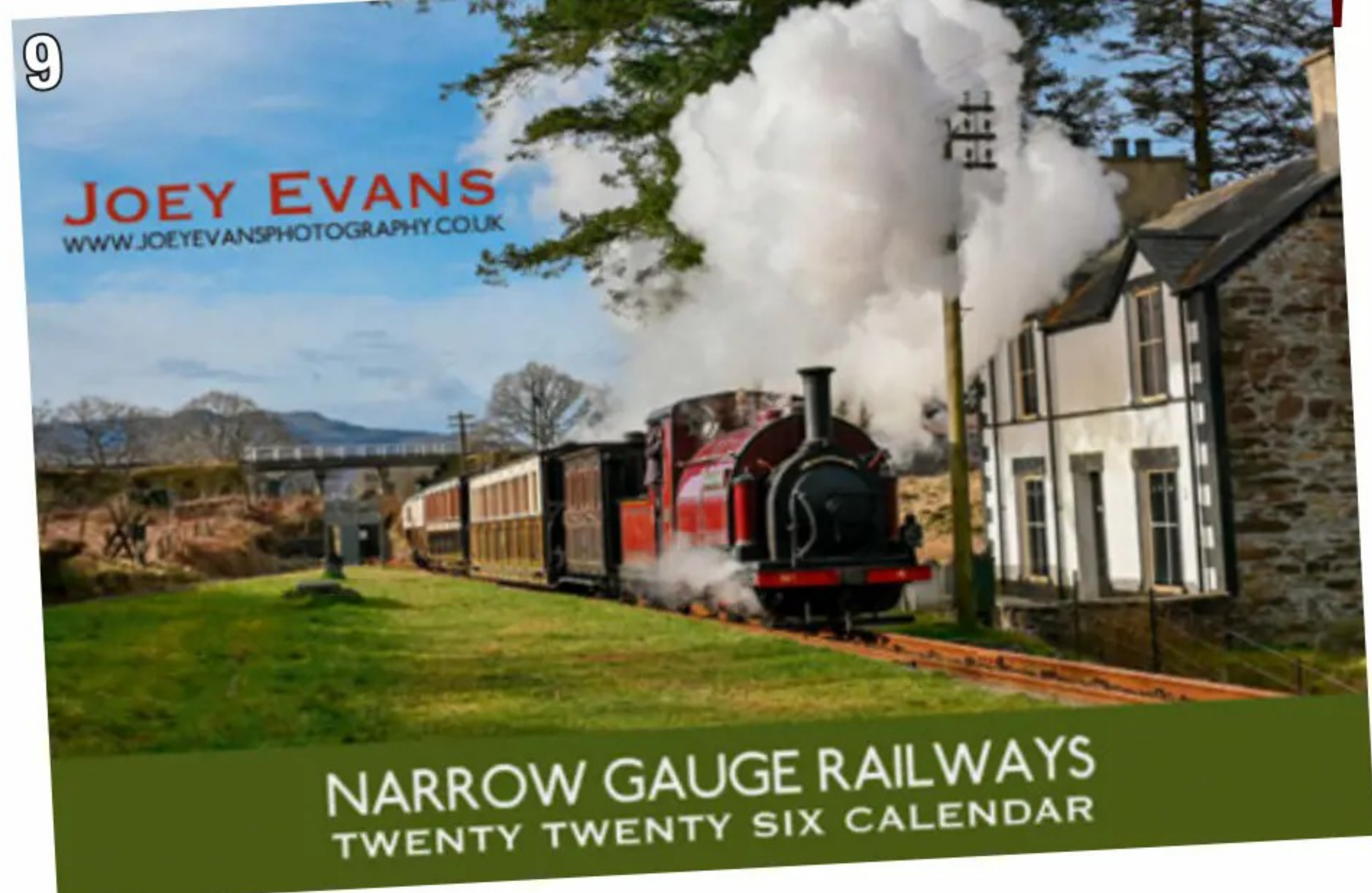


arrow gauge cheer

bright yellow main line class 37 diesel 'Rheilffordd Talyllyn Railway' alongside. The calendar costs £8.00 plus £3.95 post, and again can be ordered from the same outlets as for the cards.

Finally we always look forward to the calendar from one of our most regular contributors, Joey Evans. His 2026 calendar (pic 9) is

to the popular A4 folding out to A3 format, each spread featuring one of the excellent photos showing why we publish his work so often! Copies of the calendar can be ordered via Joey's website, www.joeyevansphotography.co.uk and cost £9.99 plus post and packing.



ON THE MODEL SHELF



■ While 16mm scale models of the Talyllyn Railway's rolling stock are plentiful, this from Coach & Wagon Works is one of the most detailed yet. It's also something new as bogie carriage no 24 is one of three built for the TR by the Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge Works from 2023.

The kit has a birch-faced ply body and includes everything needed to complete the carriage. The bogies and wheels are metal and there are the TR's signature sprung side buffers, brass door handles and all the decals.

Inside detail extends to fabrics, carpets, pictures and even mirrors, all visible as the roof is removable and interior lighting supplied.

The kit comes with 32mm gauge wheels – 45mm versions are not an

option, but also on offer is a 'Premium' body kit only – no wheels, bogies, buffers, hooks or decals, allowing the builder to build to their own desires.

Produced by Coach & Wagon Works
Web: www.coachandwagonworks.co.uk
Price: Deluxe kit £295, Premium £195



■ Bachmann Europe is steadily adding to its Scenecraft range of ready-built and hand-painted resin structures for NG7, 7mm to the foot narrow gauge. Latest additions, arriving in shops around now, are this corrugated iron engine shed (above), of the kind found on many an industrial line, and a water tower with chain (right).

The recommended retail price for the shed is £89.95, the tower £49.95, and more details of these and other structures in the growing range for NG7 can be found online at www.bachmann.co.uk



VIEWPOINT

Glyn Valley new-build

I can't have been the only *NGW* reader who did an excited double-take of the news headline in issue 197, 'Glyn Valley plans new-build loco', and at a further glance saw the 0-4-2 wheel arrangement. Was this at last a plan to resurrect one of the Beyer, Peacock tram locomotives, tragically all culled following the line's demise in 1935? (*Sadly not, as the new story relates the project will see the building of a Kerr, Stuart 0-4-2ST following the donation of a completed set of frames – Ed*).

Surely (the GVT tram loco) is the next obvious new-build project in the world of narrow gauge? The Glyn Valley Tramway Trust's publicity images showing a tram loco at Chirk strongly suggests this is the vision.

The GVT trams were a unique design, some way between one of Beyer, Peacock's road steam trams and a typical narrow-gauge loco. Far from being a forgotten design, they have been a popular prototype for modellers for many years in 16mm, and more recently in 009 scale, and run with rakes of quarry wagons and the GVT's simple carriage designs on many superb layouts, recreating the spirit of the tramway.

Of course, any news of a new-build is welcome, and shows the amazing progress the GVT has made. I visited Chirk in April 2019 when the station site was still being cleared of woodland; now track and station foundations are in place. So to have been donated a new-build loco project is a fantastic step forward, bringing the prospect of steam again at Chirk closer to reality.

Paul Linnell

Andrew C replies: I can understand how that headline could have been misinterpreted! Will a Glyn Valley tram loco ever be the subject of a new-build project? Well on the evidence of this month's news pages, where we carry news of the building of a lost monster Hunslet class, the answer has to be never say never..

Cut up over Cress loco

There has been much hyperbole and misleading information, generated by a BBC South West radio programme, *Secret Dorset*, regarding Dorset's last agricultural railway (*the line serving a watercress farm – Ed*).

To clarify the line's loco, built locally in 1948, is **not** for sale. Neither is it an ex World War One trench loco.

It is known as 'The Watercress Queen' and is the fourth loco to work the line. The loco is a four-wheel petrol hydraulic, with a Honda engine, and the line is 1ft 6in gauge.

"Surely the Glyn Valley Tramway loco is the next obvious new-build in the world of narrow gauge?..."

Above right: No tram loco this time (see the letter from Paul Linnell) – the donated set of Kerr, Stuart Tattoo class frames at the Glyn Valley Tramway Trust's site in Chirk.

Photo: GVT

Right: 'The Watercress Queen' – an industrial locomotive still very much in use on a watercress farm in Dorset, according to the letter this month from Anthony Heale-Barton.

Below right: Keith Chester sent in this photo showing what he describes as one of the more attractive narrow gauge steam locos preserved in Germany. Former DB no 99 253, built by Krauss in 1908 (5929), was the last of a trio of 0-6-2Ts delivered by the Munich factory to the metre gauge Walhallabahn in Bavaria between 1902 and 1908.

First opened in 1889, the 23km-long line closed to passengers in 1960 and freight in 1968. 99 253 has been plinthed in Regensburg since 1976 and is well protected against the elements.



The loco is considered an integral part of the railway, it is used regularly during the season to transfer cress from the beds to the store sheds. It is serviced annually locally and kept stored safely in the on-site barn during the winter months.

Please note this is a working railway, please ask permission to visit. My thanks to the on-site staff for the information and permission to use photographs of the loco.

Anthony Heale-Barton

Andrew C replies: We report further on this subject in this issue's news pages – watercress lines do seem to generate a lot of interest despite being some of the most obscure examples of narrow gauge industry...

The editor welcomes letters on any narrow gauge subject for potential use on this page. Letters may be shortened or edited. Send to editor@narrowgaugeworld.co.uk or 12 Maes Gwyn, Llanfair Caereinion, Powys SY21 0BD



That was the year that...

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

From 60 years ago

Narrow Gauge down the M1

On the morning of Saturday 21st August, a 2ft gauge Bagnall locomotive could have been seen travelling down the M1 to London from Leicestershire at up to 50mph! This does not herald the arrival of a narrow gauge main line in Great Britain, but was, of course, the moving of our locomotive 'Peter', an 0-4-0ST of 1917 from the Cliffe Hill Granite Co Ltd, to our site at Brockham, where it is proposed to make this the first loco in steam regularly at the museum.

The actual loading had taken place the previous evening and had been no easy task, even though the engine weighed only 3½ tons... The company's breakdown lorry, a massive American vehicle, backed up to Peter, but the construction of the vehicle prevented it lifting the engine more than about a foot off the ground, and even this lifted the front wheels of the lorry.

The jib was brought in a little and this time the lorry could move without the front wheels lifting, but it was judged unsafe to drive up a steep slope to a derrick where a full lift could be made. It was therefore decided to carry the loco swinging from the back of the lorry about a mile down the road into the bottom of the main pit where another derrick could be used. This was accomplished with our lorry trailing behind it.

Peter was soon swinging high above our lorry and was lowered onto its deck, but proved about three inches too long for the tailboard to be brought up, so only one side could be secured. The lorry deck is steel so no chocks could be laid down, the loco brakes could not be applied as the brake column is missing, and the fixing chain passing round the chassis of both vehicles was able to slide several inches.

So we watched the lorry start up the slope with considerable misgivings. These feelings were justified when Peter suddenly moved back and the tailboard lurched alarmingly, but the top of the slope was successfully reached.

On returning at 7am the next day, I was disheartened to see that the centre buffer of the loco was protruding through the front board of the lorry deck, though this did mean we could now secure the tailboard properly! We started off, and the thump on the back of the cab now and again restrained Bill Suffolk, the driver, from braking too sharply. With about nine inches of unavoidable free movement, Peter rolled back and forth disconcertingly...

(NGN, December 1965)

We make no apologies for featuring Brockham for a second successive issue – what a tale! It's also a demonstration how different times were in those days, imagine the response if a loco move was attempted in such a manner today...

Peter never did steam at Brockham – we believe the only loco to do so was the 3ft gauge Peckett 'Scaldwell' and then only briefly to move it into a shed. But after transferring with the rest of the Brockham collection to Amberley Museum Peter was fully restored and is a regular performer on the museum's running line today, most recently returning from overhaul in 2022 as seen below.



Photo: Andrew Charman

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



Penrhyn Quarries Ltd, Bethesda, Caernarvonshire (sic)

Mr Sydney Moir of the Transvaal has written with further news, about the six Penrhyn locos sent to Mufreesboro, Tennessee. They duly arrived in the USA about 20th August. On 5th September 'Winifred' and 'Nesta' were still on the pier where they had been unloaded. The others had gone to Tennessee by road, two at a time.

They had all been purchased by an antique dealer and were to be sold by auction on 15th September. Presumably the dealer hoped to make money out of the current boom for 'tourist' railroads in parks etc, in the USA, but as our correspondent remarks "of course he has completely overlooked the need for spare parts" (though the purchase of these engines in pairs of the same type may well permit eventual cannibalisation).

(NGN, December 1965)

None of the six ever worked in the USA, which we should be grateful for as none of them were cannibalised either! Instead they disappeared into storage, Winifred at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway museum (below). Attempts at repatriation failed until in 2012 Julian Birley and friends brought home Winifred, Barclay 0-4-0 'Glyder' and Avonside 0-4-0 'Ogwen'.



Photo: Julian Birley

YouTube Watch: online NG films

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



■ Building a narrow gauge model railway and need some inspiration? This will do it... 'Brong Hebog' is a 25ft long 009 layout portraying the area around Beddgelert on the Welsh Highland Railway, with superb scenic sections some seven feet deep – it's a superb model that has delighted many a model railway exhibition visitor, as this video shows. bit.ly/46QnHUd

Coming Up with the Goods

Donald Brooks recalls a 1979 visit to a line in the suburbs of Dresden still carrying heavy freight in transporter wagons.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the two parts of Germany were subsequently reunited, virtually every aspect of life changed for the people of the DDR (East Germany). The country's narrow gauge steam railways were rare exceptions, happily surviving intact. As Keith Chester remarked in the text accompanying his evocative 1978 pictures of Wernigerode in *NGW* 190, almost exactly the same photos could be taken half a century later.

In some respects this should not be a surprise. Even in the 1970s most of 750mm and 1000mm gauge lines in the DDR were under state heritage protection, Denkmalschutz. Apart from the Pressnitztalbahn, closed in 1984, the long-term result has been that today the same stock still works the same routes as it did in the late 1970s.

Above: 2-10-2T 99 1788-1, built in 1955 by the Karl Marx works (formerly Orenstein & Koppel) at Babelsberg, runs over Schmiedeberg Viaduct on the upper half of the line, on the 14.28 mixed from Freital-Hainsberg to Kipsdorf.

Below: 99 1788-1 waits to leave Dippoldiswalde on an impressively long goods train for Freital-Hainsberg. Sister 99 1794-9 stands alongside in one of the platform roads.

Photos by Donald Brooks, May 1979

But while in some senses nothing has changed, in other respects almost everything has. In 1979 I discovered the Weisseritztalbahn, a 750mm gauge line, built in the early 1880s and which runs for 26.3km from Freital-Hainsberg to Kurort Kipsdorf. Despite being located in the suburbs of Dresden, a mere 10km or 15 minutes by S-Bahn from the city centre, this line never seems to have proven particularly popular with British enthusiasts.

In 1979 the Weisseritztalbahn, like all the other DDR narrow gauge lines, was part of the Deutsche Reichsbahn, the state railway operator, and an integral part of the country's transport network, for goods as well as passengers. The weekday passenger timetable was tailored to the needs of the local workers and students, with heavy leisure traffic at weekends.

On Mondays to Fridays six return trips ran over the whole line, with a few short workings, though likely few enthusiasts saw the first train of the day, the 04.00 from Dippoldiswalde, the major intermediate station – or the last train back, which arrived at 23.29.

Mixed trains daily

The line had fine scenery throughout, climbing 351 metres on gradients as steep as 1 in 33. But even more remarkable was the heavy goods traffic, with several freight or mixed trains daily, serving half a dozen industrial sites as well as the line's own yards. Much of this was conveyed in standard gauge wagons on transporters (Rollwagen) reminiscent of the Manifold Valley. The long trains made an impressive sight, quite dwarfing the narrow gauge 2-10-2Ts that hauled them.

Today a single passenger train set makes just two return workings over the complete line, with a further trip halfway, and the timetable starts at the altogether more civilised hour of 09.25, finishing by 18.47. The railway is now purely a tourist line, funded by the local authorities.

As the chill winds of economic reality blow over Saxony there have been recent threats to steam railway budgets, despite the massive amount of infrastructure expenditure on rebuilding the Weisseritztalbahn after the devastating floods of 2002.

And goods traffic has of course long since ceased, gone along with the industries it supported. As Keith said, you can still take the photos today but the atmosphere is not the same. We were lucky to have seen the real thing in the 1970s. **NGW**





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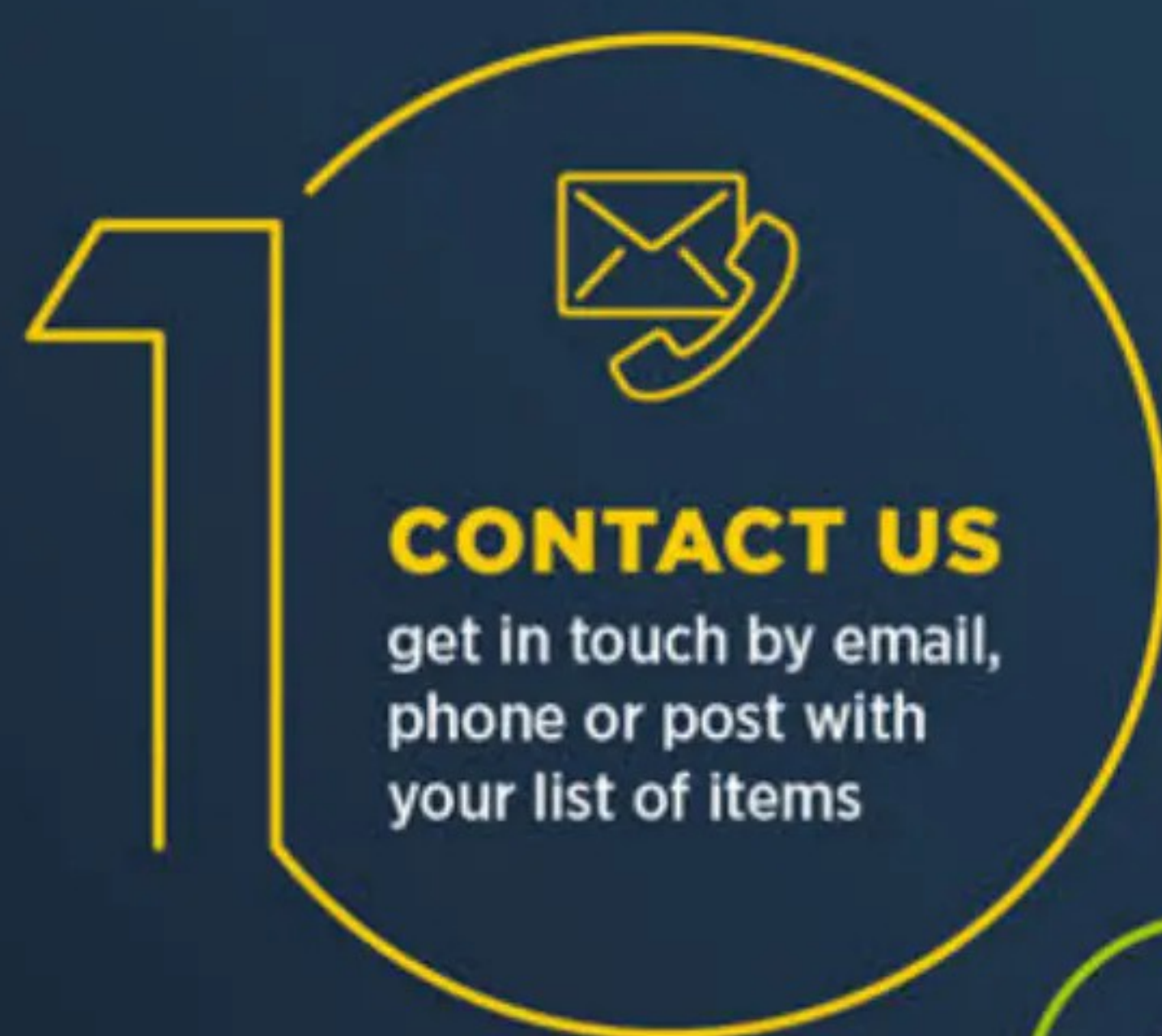
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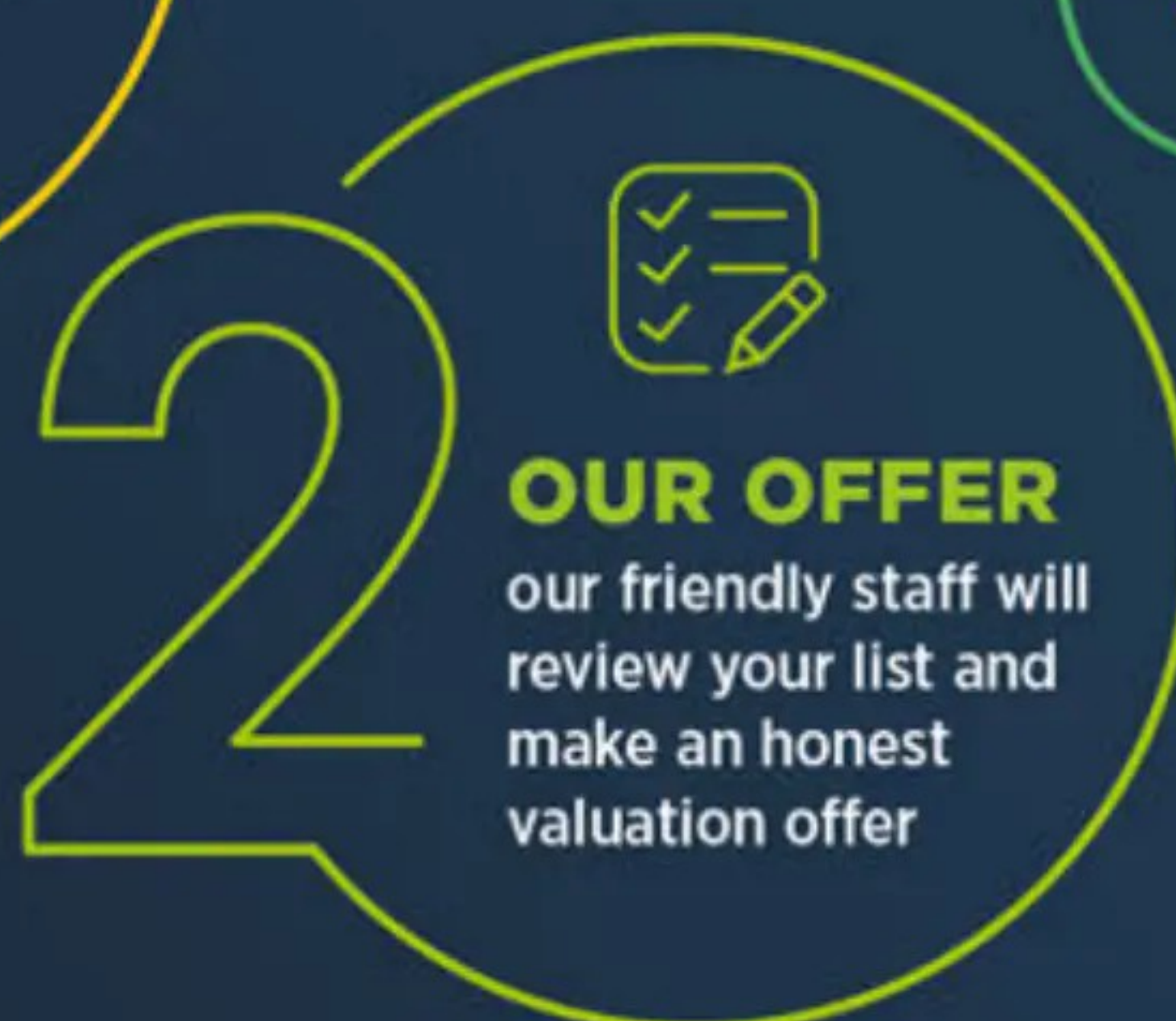
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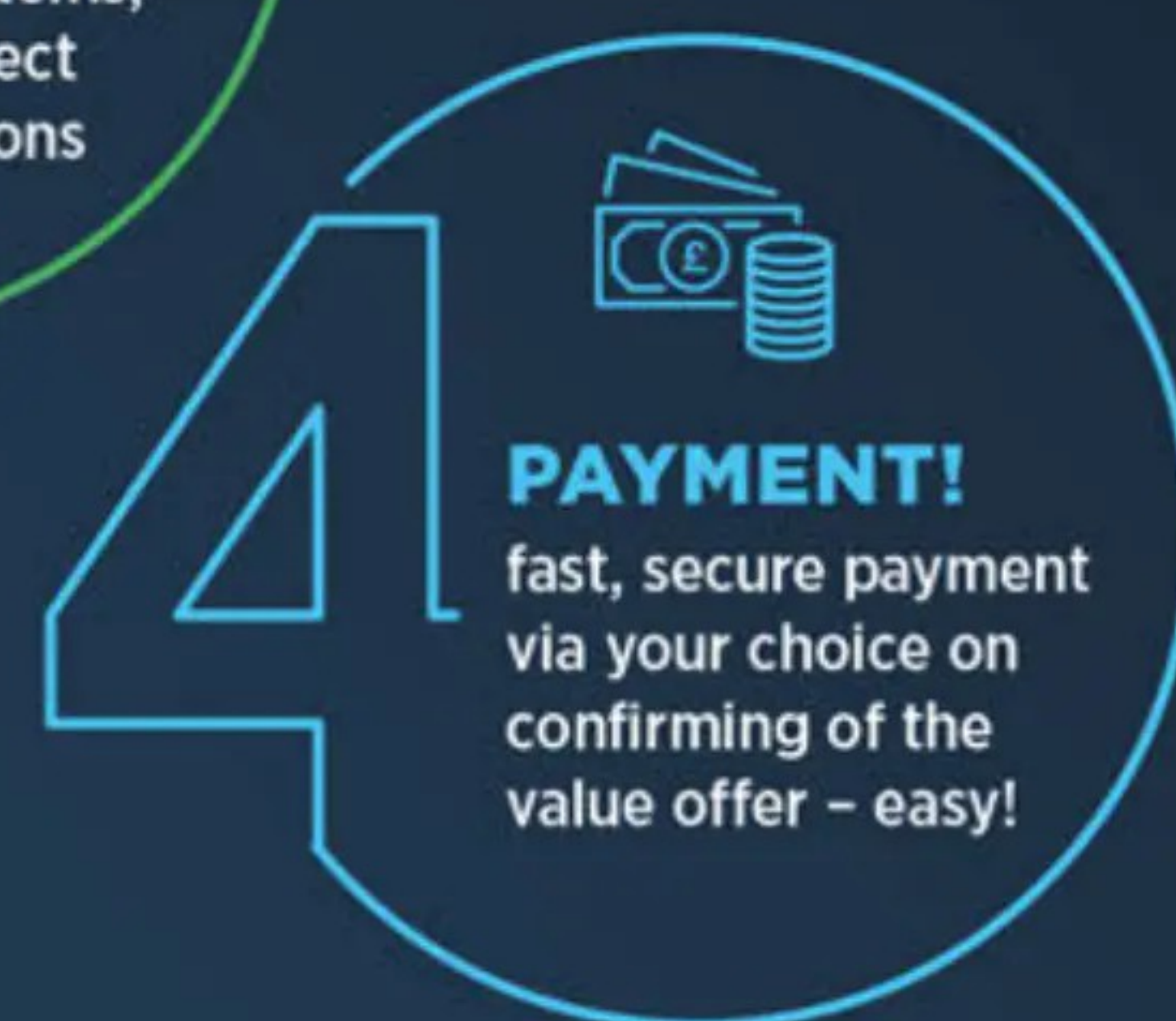
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