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ISSUE 199  
JAN-FEB 2026



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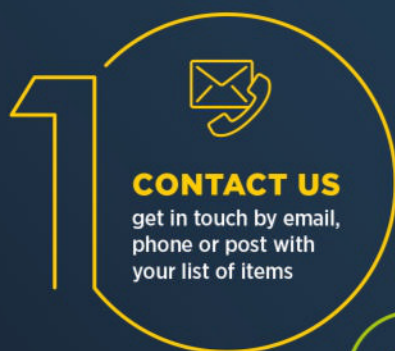
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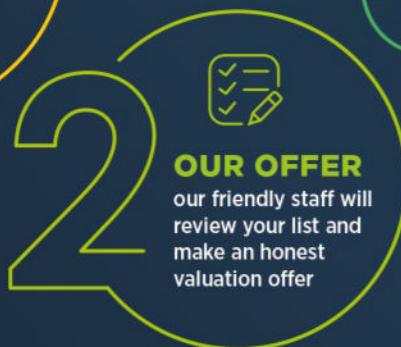
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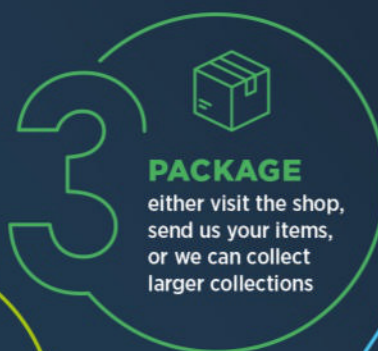
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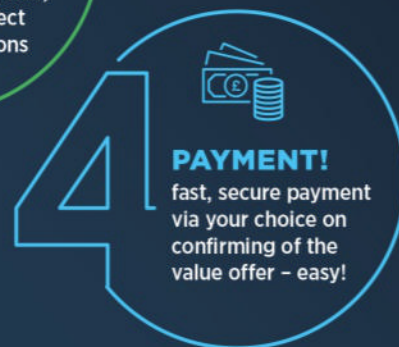
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Cover: The Brecon Mountain Railway has for a long time, for enthusiasts at least, operated a bit 'under the radar'. That could all be about to change, as you can read in the feature starting on page 34. BMR Baldwin Santa Teresa' was captured during a photo charter on 3rd November.

The inset shows a very different steam loco, the vertical-boilered Sentinel 'Nutt' – James Waite traces the history of this loco and its sisters in his *Waite's World* starting on page 20.

Photos: Andrew Simmonds and  
The Transport Library

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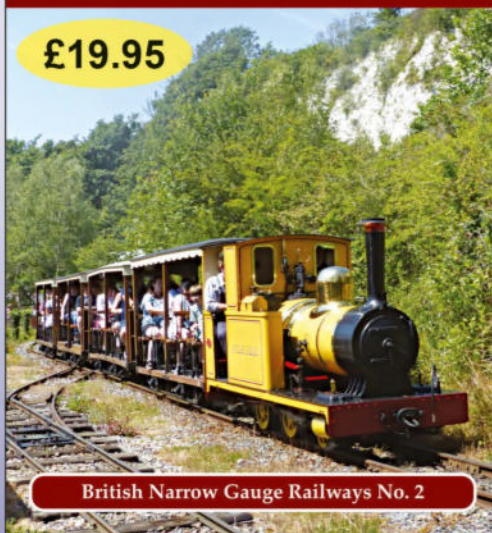


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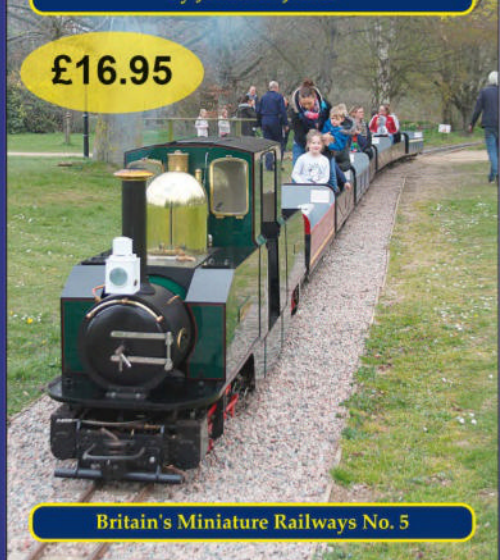


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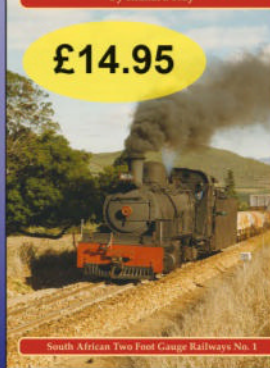


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# From one year to the next...



*"A 40-year fable became a reality as the remarkable gathering of locos emerged into the sunlight on their way to new homes..."*

Photo: The sun sets on the year as Ffestiniog Railway double-Fairlie 'David Lloyd George' arrives at the line's Porthmadog Harbour station on 14th November. Photo: Andrew Simmonds

Welcome to *NGW*199, the first edition of 2026, but of course produced in the closing days of 2025 – in fact completing this page is the final task I have before signing off the issue, and I am writing these words with Rosemary, the wonderful Mrs C, waiting patiently in the background for me to finish so she can immerse me in all of the preparation for the festive celebrations, just 11 days away.

So it's time to take a look back at 2025, and what kind a year it has been for the narrow gauge world – the first word that comes to mind is challenging. Definitely in the UK passengers and the resultant revenue have generally been just a little bit harder to come by over the past year, a symptom without doubt of the current less than easy economic times for us all.

It's a bit early for official figures but anecdotally we are hearing that many a line has seen a decline over the past 12 months, some by around 10 per cent, others more. And it's not something confined to the UK – the mood music coming out of Germany, for example, relating to that European steam icon the Harz and reported in this issue's *World News* pages, are deeply concerning and will no doubt feature more through the coming year.

This makes it all the more pleasing to visit on a wet and not very pleasant midweek day in October one of our lesser-known lines, the Brecon Mountain Railway, and see packed trains. The

BMR's traffic figures are remarkable and as you will read in our feature in this issue, once its somewhat tortuous change of ownership is completed this is a railway we are going to be hearing a lot more about in coming years.

## Heating up the pressure

Not helping the finances this past season has been the climate. We've talked previously about climate concerns putting pressure on steam railways to find less CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting alternatives to coal, which in turn has led to greater expense – whether adopting the more sustainable replacement fuel or still using coal, which is a lot more costly now as we are no longer allowed to use British coal but have to import it.

It's the weather itself, however, that has caused the big problems this year. Long dry spells have seen lines forced to leave their steam locos in the shed as they've been setting the parched countryside on fire, not helped by that less high quality foreign coal that produces more sparks than good old Welsh steam coal does. The result, more expense, from visitors put off by the lack of steam traction to insurance claims from farmers with burnt harvests. The Vale of Rheidol Railway even plans to rebuild a diesel and turn one of its locos back to oil firing to try and beat the dry spell issue.

It's not all been bad news though, honest! There's been a whole host of positive happenings this year, the Ed's favourite being the revelation

of a massive Hunslet new-build that's been underway in Somerset for two years in complete secrecy. I so enjoyed correcting certain learned friends in the industry who on seeing first news of this project on social media retorted "What a load of rubbish..." No, it's true, honest...

There's been some great events, the completion of some excellent projects – the reinterpretation of Boston Lodge works at the Ffestiniog Railway for example deserves all the praise it's getting.

## The X factor

For many perhaps 2025 will be remembered as the year of Collection X – when a 40-year fable became a reality as the remarkable gathering of locos emerged into the sunlight on their way either to Aberystwyth or new homes, setting up the prospect of lots of new scenes involving a host of different motive power in times to come.

So it certainly hasn't been dull, and we've no doubt 2026 will prove just as absorbing. Of course we will be striving to report every detail in our pages, so make sure you don't miss an edition – I know I've said it before but a subscription really is the best way to ensure that.

Enjoy your issue, and don't forget that our next one, the March-April edition, will be number 200 and a milestone issue in more ways than one – to discover just what I mean by that you will have to wait until the end of February...

*Andrew Charman*





## New Rheidol liveries are a hit

The Vale of Rheidol Railway's Steam Festival weekend on 25th-26th October proved a major success, with the highlight being the public debut of 2-6-2T locomotive no 9 'Prince of Wales' following repainting into the 'Rail Blue' livery of the late 1960s and '70s.

While controversial in period, the livery certainly proved popular with Festival visitors, more than 1600 attending over the two days where no 9 worked alongside no 7 'Owain Glyndŵr' in the lined green employed between 1957-'60 and no 8 'Llywelyn' in unlined black introduced in 1954 – the first time all three locos have worn BR colours in 44 years.

Prince of Wales appeared in a lined version of Rail Blue introduced in 1976, and last seen in 1983 when a historic liveries programme, one of the last initiatives introduced by BR before the line

was sold to the Brecon Mountain Railway in 1989, saw Owain Glyndŵr repainted into 1960s lined green.

The three locos shared services with NGG13 Garratt 'Drakensburg' while other highlights of the event included the two former Collection X Pacific locos from the Indian Gwalior Light Railway on display ahead of restoration beginning of at least one of them, and music promoter and rail enthusiast Pete Waterman's record-breaking 208ft long model railway recreating the West Coast main line between Rugby and Watford, that was displayed in the museum at Aberystwyth.

VoR general manager Stuart Williams told *NGW* that all at the railway were absolutely delighted with the turnout for the Steam Festival and Pete Waterman weekend. "Seeing all three Rheidol tanks together in their historic schemes created a

real moment for those who remember the BR Blue days," he said.

"Pete Waterman and the Making Tracks team brought an extra layer of excitement to the event, transforming the museum with the world's largest portable model railway and captivating audiences throughout the weekend. The atmosphere was fantastic, we're thrilled with the support shown for the railway at the end of the 2025 season."

## No more crossing flagging on the Leighton Buzzard

A long-established practice of flagging Leighton Buzzard Railway trains across three level crossings looks set to end after the 2ft gauge Bedfordshire line was issued with improvement notices by the Office of Rail & Road.

ORR inspectors visited the line on 23rd July 2025, and subsequently issued the identically-worded notices regarding the crossings on Hockliffe Road, Standbridge Road and Vandyke Road.

These stated that "while the duty holder (*the railway*) has risk assessments in place for the three level crossings inspected, there were no plans in place for the duty holder to improve the risk control arrangements at these crossings to account for the increase in risk from the growth of the town."

Currently at the crossings a LBR staff member halts road traffic with a flag, the train then crossing. The ORR decided that the LBR had failed to take measures to manage as reasonably practicable the risks of those operating the trains being struck by a road vehicle, and gave the line until 31st March 2027 to remedy the issue.

Housing provision in Leighton Buzzard has mushroomed in the years since the line was preserved and it now runs in an urban environment for much of its length.

*NGW* understands that the most likely solution to the issue will be the installation of flashing warning lights at each crossing.



Top: Three sides of the coin: The VoR fleet display their liveries at Aberystwyth.

Above left: Seen here leaving Aberffraw, 'Prince of Wales' in Rail Blue proved the star attraction of the festival weekend.



Left: The two Gwalior Pacific locos, extracted from Collection X, provided interesting exhibits for visitors over the weekend.

Photos: Tim Gregson





## Road steam moves out rail steam

The relocation of the late Peter Rampton's 'Collection X' by custodian the Vale of Rheidol Railway has continued, and one of the latest locomotives to leave the Surrey farm in which the collection was housed for more than 40 years departed in spectacular fashion, behind a steam road loco.

Orenstein & Koppel Luttermoller-type 0-10-0T no 11128, built in 1925 for the Ingenio San Martin Del Tabacal sugar mill in Argentina, was acquired in October by the Les Searle Group, a specialist earthworks contractor based in Horsham, Sussex, and the loco made the 15-mile trip from the farm near Dunsfold to Horsham on a trailer hauled by the 1919-built McLaren road locomotive 'Boadicea'.

The group has a heritage operation called the Horsham Traction Company, which owns what is widely regarded as the finest collection of road steam in the UK. Two engines were sent to the Surrey farm

home of Collection X, 1901-built Fowler 'The Great North' then using its winch to position the Luttermoller for loading onto the Horsham Traction Company's former Pickfords trailer, before Boadicea took over for the journey to Horsham.

At the Les Searle yard the Luttermoller joined South African Railways Hanomag NGG13 Garratt no 82 (10634/28) acquired from Collection X in the summer (*NGW*197). Plans for the Garratt are yet to be made public but the Luttermoller will form a central part of the group's road loco displays as an authentic load – companies such as Pickfords routinely employed road steam to move railway engines between manufacturer and customer.

While most of Collection X is being transferred to the Vale of Rheidol Railway to join its heritage collection, other locos heading to pastures new include Kerr, Stuart no 695 (4408/1928). Acquired from

India in 1995 where it had run on the Parlakimedi Light Railway, the 2ft 6in gauge loco was gifted to the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust, arriving in November.

An Orenstein & Koppel 700mm gauge 0-4-4-0T Mallet (3770/1909), formerly of the Kribet Baru sugar mill in Java, was sold to Hedelands Veteranbane (the Hedeland Vintage Railway), Denmark's longest narrow gauge line and left in early December.

Two First World War bogie wagon underframes, built by Pershing in America, have been sold to the Old Kiln Light Railway, based just 14 miles from the Collection X farm.

The VoR team are aiming to have the Surrey Farm completely emptied of its rail exhibits by February.

**Above: Superpower: Fowler road locomotive 'Boadicea' hauled the former Collection X Luttermoller to its new home.**

*Photo: VoR*

## New homes sought for big Collection X locomotives

As the relocation of the former Collection X moves towards its conclusion, the Vale of Rheidol Railway is still seeking new homes for two of the 2ft 6in gauge locos in the collection.

North British CC class 4-6-2 Pacific no 666 (17111/1906), built for the Bengal-Nagpur Railway in India, and Bagnall Delta class 2-6-2T AK16 (2029/1916), which also spent its working life in India, have both been designated as not fitting

into the VoR Collection and suitable for rehoming, but so far acceptable new owners have not been found.

The locos currently remain undercover in one of the barns at the farm, penning in Manning Wardle 0-6-2T 'Conqueror', which was gifted to the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway and once released will be heading to the mid-Wales line.

Parties interested in acquiring the two available locos can contact the *NGW* office

in confidence, editor@narrowgaugeworld.co.uk, and we will pass messages on. Note that these should be serious enquiries only – these are substantial locomotives, particularly the Pacific which is 46 feet (14 metres) long and 10 feet (3 metres) tall.

**Below: Indian North British Pacific 666 and Bagnall AK16, seen arriving at the Surrey home of Collection X in March 1995 and January 1997, are seeking new homes.**

*Photos: VoR*







# Wren new-build to boost young skills

A group of young Bala Lake Railway volunteers has unveiled a project to recreate the 1918-built Kerr, Stuart Wren 0-4-OST no 3114, which ran on the north Wales line in the 1980s.

While the original loco is today still operational as part of the heritage collection at the Vale of Rheidol Railway, the major aim of the project is to teach engineering skills to young volunteers, providing a skills base for future railway preservation.

Project chair Sammi Gleave, aged 19 and a trained CAD & general mechanical engineer, said that the small group of mainly under 30-year olds was inspired by the appearance of the Amerton Railway's Wren 'Jennie' at a BLR 50th anniversary weekend in 2022.

"Following a lot of research into the locomotive's history and design, myself and a few other volunteers realised that we could build a new Wren for the Bala Lake as a more fuel-efficient and reliable addition to the fleet," Sammi said.

"We spent the next three years working on the plans for the project and laying the foundations for the group at the Bala Lake."

The project launched at the BLR August Steam Gala and more than £1,000 has since been raised, most recently with a stand at the National Festival of Railway Modelling at the NEC in Birmingham.

"With this we have worked to preserve all four of the original buffers from the loco in the 1980s and also made headway towards the cutting of our frames. We hope to raise the other half of the money we need for the frames in the new year."

It is hoped to have the loco in steam by 2035. "We are open to engineering firms' offers for items such as boiler fabrication and we are working on costs for the wheelsets and cylinders."

Kerr, Stuart 3114 was built in 1918 and after a working career as a contractor's locomotive at several sites became one of

several locos saved for preservation by noted enthusiast Max Sinclair.

In 1971 Max sold the loco to fellow enthusiast Rich Morris, who originally stored it at his Kent home before in 1978 transferring it to the then-new Gloddfa Ganol Museum in Blaenau Ffestiniog. It arrived on the BLR in 1980 and was overhauled over the next two years by the line's manager George Barnes, gaining its Hunslet-style cab.

First steamed in 1982 for the railway's AGM in a 'patchwork' condition with original paintwork, the cab in red oxide primer and with no buffers, the loco was fitted with its separate buffers and painted in a blue livery in the following year.

There were plans to name it 'Dryw Bach' and nameplates were cast, but three days after they arrived in 1985 the loco was failed with a catastrophic crack in its inner firebox. The buffers, whistle and various small parts were removed and the loco returned to Gloddfa Ganol. It remained there until the 1990s, when it was sold to Peter Rampton and joined Collection X.

Anyone interested in assisting with the Wren project can contact Sammi at [volunteeringwiththewrenproject@gmail.com](mailto:volunteeringwiththewrenproject@gmail.com) or visit the group's Facebook page.

**Above: Kerr, Stuart 3114 during its short time on the Bala Lake Railway in the 1980s.**

**Below: Members of The Wren Project at the National Festival of Railway Modelling in November.** *Photos: The Wren Project*



## Kew Wren steams on rapeseed biofuel

The latest trials of a coal-replacement biofuel, made from the solid by-product created when oil is pressed from rapeseed, have proved highly encouraging.

During November, the London Museum of Water & Steam at Kew fired its Kerr, Stuart Wren 0-4-OST 'Thomas Wicksteed' on the fuel, produced by Nottinghamshire-based Phoenix Speciality Oils Ltd and now named Green Dragon.

The loco ran on the fuel for four hours during a wet and cold public steaming day on 22nd November, consuming two bags, with the footplate crew commenting that at no time were they short of pressure; "As we got used to the fuel, we were probably using it more economically by the end of the day. Smoke was minimal – there was a slight odour but not unpleasant".

Phoenix spokesman Phil Thompson thanked the museum team for their work with the fuel. "We've been developing Green Dragon for some time, using experience gained with the fuel in both narrow and standard-gauge locomotives, steamships and steam museums," he said.

"Combustion is not quite the same as coal, but the fuel gives out plenty of heat. By modifying the briquettes, we've pretty much eliminated early issues with excessive smoke."

Anyone interested in finding out more about the fuel can contact Phil at [phil.thompson@phoenixgroup.co.uk](mailto:phil.thompson@phoenixgroup.co.uk).

**Above: 'Thomas Wicksteed' performed well on the bio fuel.** *Photo: Phil Thompson, PSO Ltd*

## Corris Kerr, Stuart rebuild underway

The Corris Railway's new-build Hughes 0-4-2ST no 10 was due to take charge of the mid-Wales line's Santa Specials in December as the 10-year overhaul continues of its fellow new-build, Kerr, Stuart Tattoo 0-4-2ST no 7.

The overhaul of no 7 was begun in the last week of 2024, at the start of its 20th year on the line. The schedule has included retubing of the loco's boiler and the fitting of a new stainless-steel smokebox, other work including reprofiling of the wheels and fitting new crank pins by Alan Keef Ltd.

Reassembly has now begun with hopes that no 7 will be back in service at Easter.



# Plenty of narrow gauge on HRA Awards shortlist



The UK's narrow gauge scene again features heavily on the shortlist for the annual Heritage Railway Association (HRA) awards, the 'Oscars' of the heritage rail industry.

Two polarisingly different 2ft gauge locos are named as Steam Locomotive Award contenders, the former South African Railways NG15 2-8-2 'Kalahari' of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway (FF&WHR) competing against the tiny Telford Tram tram featured in *NGW*197.

They face stiff competition from two standard gauge finalists, Mid Hants-based Merchant Navy Pacific 'Canadian Pacific' and a Barclay fireless loco based at the West Somerset Railway.

There are two narrow gauge finalists in the Rolling Stock Award, the build of a Tallyllyn Railway gunpowder van by the line's young members group and the Bala Lake Railway's replica Penrhyn Railway saloon carriage.

The Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway's Seathorne Bank will compete for the newly introduced Station of the Year award, while the Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway's Samuel Jones is the latest member of a narrow gauge line up for the much-prized Lord

Faulkner Young Volunteer of the Year title.

Narrow gauge lines provide three of the five finalists in the Achievement of the Year category, the Seaton Tramway's new Jurassic Discovery attraction vying with the Vale of Rheidol Railway's Collection X project and the FF&WHR's restoration and reinterpretation of Boston Lodge works.

The Tallyllyn Railway's highly successful Awdry Extravaganza and the Hampton & Kempton Waterworks Railway's Railway 200 event form two of four shortlisted candidates for Event of the Year, another new award.

The Rising Star category shortlist includes the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway's event and marketing co-ordinator Rebecca Paterson, while the blue riband accolade of Railway of the Year will see regular award contender the Seaton Tramway and the Vale of Rheidol Railway taking on the Keighley & Worth Valley and Tanfield standard gauge lines.

Winners will be announced at the Awards evening in Llandudno, north Wales on 7th March – a report will appear in *NGW*201.

**Above: The Vale of Rheidol is a contender for Railway of the Year.** *Photo: Andrew Simmonds*

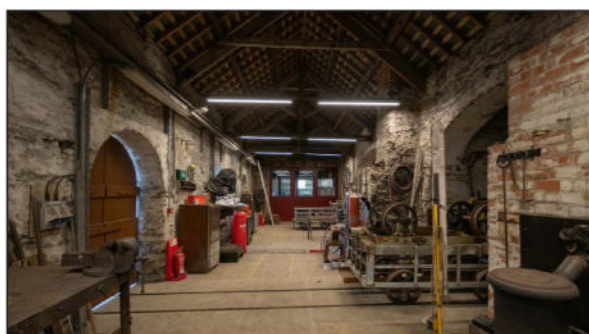
## Boston Lodge project wins heritage award

Should the redevelopment of Boston Lodge Works by the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways take an HRA Award it will be its second, the reconstruction named winners of the National Rail Heritage Awards Network Rail Award for best overall entry.

The redevelopment, featured in *NGW*187 and its most recent £5m phase of works supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Ffestiniog Railway Society and the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway Trust, has seen the conservation and recreation of many of the historic buildings on the site in addition to creating new facilities.

**The restored Boston Lodge skillfully combines heritage interpretation with modern-day operational needs.**

*Photo: Chris Parry/FFWHR*



## BRIEF LINES



### Battery locos get identities

The two battery-electric locos acquired by the Ffestiniog Railway in 2023 from the Thames Tideway project have now been given names. The first, pictured above in May 2025 before modification and repainting is now called 'Volt' and its sister 'Amp'.

*Photo: Andrew Charman*

### From Mona to museum

Former Bord na Mona peat Hunslet Wagonmaster loco LM 335 has found a new home at Two Mile Borris transport museum, a small volunteer-run operation near Thurle in Ireland. The museum has laid panels of 3ft gauge track on which to demonstrate the loco. There are now two Bord na Mona locos numbered LM 335, the other having gone to the Stradbally Woodland Railway in 2024.

### Mull loco reunion

All of the locomotives that ran on the former Isle of Mull Railway, a 10¼-inch gauge line closed in 2011, have been reunited for the first time in 15 years. Most of the fleet went to the Rudyard Lake Railway in Staffordshire and they have now been joined by 2-6-4T 'Lady of the Isles', built in 1981 for the Mull line by Roger Marsh. It will require a full overhaul before running on the Rudyard line.

### Open doors at Leighton

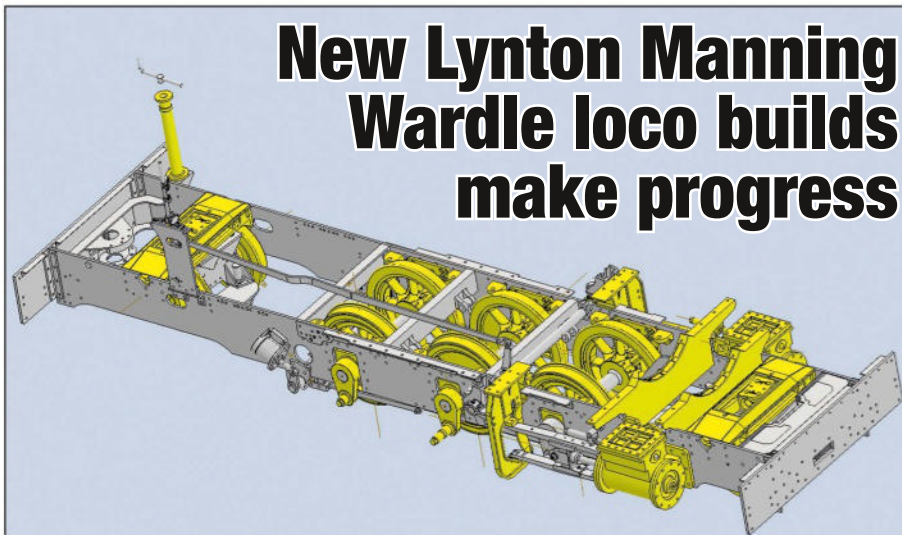
The Leighton Buzzard Railway will hold a new event on 11th October – Access all Areas will see the line's entire historic collection accessible, including many items not usually on view. Engineering workshops at both ends of the line will also be open to visitors. The 2026 events programme also includes a Diesel Gala on 7th June and the Steam Gala on 12th-13th September.

### 'Blyth' to steam in '26

The Southwold Railway Trust plans to have its Sharp-Stewart new-build 'Blyth' in steam more regularly in 2026 following a successful steam test in the Autumn and further work.



## New Lynton Manning Wardle loco builds make progress



The construction of two brand-new Manning Wardle 2-6-2Ts for the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway has made significant progress in recent months, with several major components now completed.

The project to recreate 'Yeo' and 'Exe', both scrapped on the closure of the original L&B in 1935, is being undertaken by The 762 Club, which previously built Baldwin 2-4-2T 'Lyn' which has now operated on the Devon line since 2017.

The Club has now issued a graphic (above) showing in yellow the significant quantity of components that have now been completed for both locomotives, and are now in store ready for the construction of the two to take place. One of the completed regulator valves was displayed at the L&B Autumn Gala in September.

A third of the funding needed for the first boiler has now been raised – 762 Club management were hopeful of collecting a further £10,000 before the end of 2025 which should ensure the boiler build begins this year (2026).

Next on the build list are the slide valves, the pistons and piston rods and crossheads and slide bars, while plans are also now being made to begin erection of the chassis of the first locomotive, which will be Yeo. A decision on where this will take place will form part of the planning process.

The speed of construction will depend entirely on further successful fundraising – latest news of the project and full details of how to join the 762 Club, or simply donate, can be found on the website, [www.762club.com](http://www.762club.com)

## Lynton launches appeal to fund 'Axe' overhaul

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway has launched an appeal to fund the overhaul of its Kerr, Stuart Joffre 0-6-0 'Axe' (2451/1915).

Built as one of 70 locos ordered by the French Government for First World War service, the loco worked in France until around 1945. After many years lying derelict in 1974 it was repatriated to the UK with four other Joffres, and was one of four that ended up at the Gloddfa Ganol Slate Museum at Blaenau Ffestiniog.

It was purchased by the L&B Trust in 1983 with hopes of a quick return to steam but not until 2008 was a long restoration completed. Axe then became a regular operator on the L&B line at Woody Bay, last being steamed for the Devon line's Remembrance Service in 2024, after which its boiler ticket expired.

The overhaul, expected to cost at least £50,000, will include lifting and inspecting the boiler, replacing the tubes, stripping down and refurbishing the running gear and improving pipework in the cab.

"Axe is a much loved locomotive with a long history at the L&BR and has particular historic importance give its role in World War 1," general manager Stuart Nelhams said.

The Project Axe funding page is at [www.lynton-rail.co.uk/project-axe](http://www.lynton-rail.co.uk/project-axe), with incentives on offer to larger donors.

## Austrian carriage gifted to Welshpool

The Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway has acquired a further carriage from the Zillertalbahn in Austria – but the new arrival is very different to the end-balconied four wheelers that were gifted to the mid-Wales 2ft 6in gauge line in 1968.

Carriage B4-43, dubbed the 'Glaswagen', is a high-windowed observation bogie vehicle built in the 1950s. It is now surplus to the Austrian line's requirements and so was offered for sale to the W&LLR – the two lines having enjoyed a close relationship since the 1968 donation.

The Glaswagen is mechanically well-suited to W&LLR operations, with compatible vacuum braking, and following fitting of the line's Grondana couplings and fitness-to-run inspections could enter service later this year.

Medium-term plans for the vehicle could see it undergo an interior upgrade to enable it to play a role in the line's popular on-train catering services, particularly for mobility-challenged visitors as it has wide-opening central doors.

W&LLR general manager James Brett said the line has taken a great opportunity to acquire a historic vehicle which will complement the current fleet and provide more operating capacity and flexibility.

"We would like to thank the Zillertalbahn for offering us the opportunity to purchase this carriage," James added.

Zillertalbahn CEO, Andreas Lackner described the transfer of the carriage to Wales as another milestone in the long partnership between the Zillertalbahn and the W&LLR. "With this vehicle now surplus to our requirements, we are glad it has found a home where passengers can continue to enjoy its panoramic travel experience," he added.



**New views: The former Zillertalbahn 'Glaswagen' arrives at Welshpool on 7th November.** Photo: W&LLR

## Unloved Manx diesel back on the line

Diesel locomotive no 21, which has not worked for any significant period since arriving on the Isle of Man Steam Railway in 2013, is back on its wheels after more repair works over the past year.

A Freedom of Information request to the Manx Government's Department of Infrastructure revealed that the loco has undergone gearbox repairs and replacement of a cracked axle. It has since been lifted back onto its bogies and is currently stored under canvas at Douglas shed.

More work is planned over coming months pending recommissioning, but the line's chief engineer Andrew Cowie told *Isle of Man Today* that this is a low priority, the main case for the loco being as a backup if the line's steam locos could not be used, such as in very dry summers. He also admitted that the loco was "ultimately not ideal for our needs."

No 21 was built using reconditioned components by US firm Motive Power & Equipment Solutions, which went into liquidation in 2022.

The loco cost the railway £420,000 and more than £287,000 has since been spent trying to fix its various issues.



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■ A monorail steam locomotive thought to be unique returned to action at the standard-gauge Tanat Valley Railway in Shropshire on 25th October. It was commissioned by well-known enthusiast Rich Morris in 1998 and built by Century Millwrights Engineers in Hampton, Greater London.

The 'Monoloco' joined Rich's monorail collection at his home in Blaenau Ffestiniog and following his passing eventually found its way to the Tanat Valley line in 2017. Restoration of the loco has since been carried out by the Rudyard Lake Steam Railway.

Photos: Andrew Simmonds

## Moseley tops out new museum

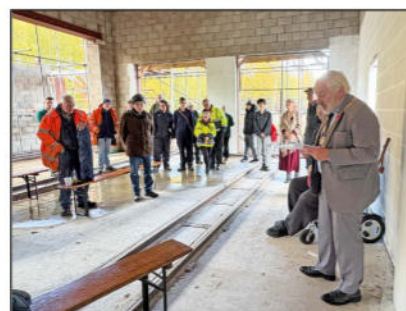
The Moseley Railway Trust passed a milestone in the construction of its new museum at the Apedale Valley Light Railway in Staffordshire on 1st November when the building was officially 'topped out', a ceremony traditionally conducted when a structure has reached its maximum vertical extent.

The ceremony was undertaken by the Mayor and Mayoress of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith and his wife Judy. Robert commented that the borough was very fortunate to have the railway; "The museum, which I believe will be world class, will be a centre of excellence for the study and display of narrow gauge railways."

Simon Lomax, acting co-chair of the Moseley Railway Trust, emphasised that much work still needs to be done before the museum is ready to open. "Some of that work is physical, but much is to harness the creativity and insights of our membership to bring this project to life," he said, adding; "We are actively seeking the support of local businesses and our local supporters to complete this transformational project".

The museum is planned to open later this year. More details of the project can be found and donations made online at [www.avlr.org.uk](http://www.avlr.org.uk).

Photo: MRT



## Evesham's Dougal heads for the Lido

The Ruislip Lido Railway Society has purchased the 1970-built Severn Lamb 0-6-2T+T locomotive 'Dougal', which for the past 21 years has been based at The Valley Railway Adventure, formerly known as the Evesham Vale Light Railway.

The loco was set to leave Evesham before Christmas for transport to a contractor for regauging from its current 15 inches to the 12 inches of the Ruislip line. It is expected in Ruislip in mid 2026, doubling the line's steam fleet working alongside the Penrhyn/Ffestiniog Hunslet-style 2-4-0ST+T 'Mad Bess' which was built by the Society for the line between 1986 and 1998.

Dougal was built in the Stratford-upon-Avon works of Severn-Lamb Ltd for the line operated at Longleat House by MiniRail Ltd, before moving to Evesham in 2004. The loco underwent a major rebuild in 2009, gaining a larger boiler and tender.

RLRS chairman Matthew Streeton said

the line had aspired to owning a second steam loco for many years. "The Ruislip Lido Railway is run entirely by volunteers and this achievement is a testament to their dedication and enthusiasm," he added.

David Nelson-Brown, owner of the Valley Railway Adventure, admitted that they were sad to see Dougal leave after so many years loyal service. "The engine has been privately owned for its entire duration of its time at Evesham – we wish we had the resources to overhaul the loco for continued use here," he said, "but recognising we didn't, we are delighted to have helped Dougal find a new home where it will be invested in and continue to provide pleasure to a new audience. We wish everyone involved well on this exciting new chapter."

Severn Lamb produced two more almost identical locos to Dougal. 'Powys', built in 1973, operated on the private Rhiw Valley Railway in mid Wales until that line closed in October 2022, and is now in a private

collection, while 'Zebedee', an 0-6-4T built in 1974, runs at the Lappa Valley Railway in Cornwall.

Below left: Dougal, pictured here at Evesham in 2013, is on its way to the metropolis.

Photo: Andrew Charman

## Mark Smithers

The *NGW* editorial team were saddened to hear of the passing on 8th November of the widely respected historian Mark Smithers.

Mark was the author of several books and a contributor to many magazines including *NGW*, on such subjects as diverse as the early products of Decauville and new-build narrow gauge locomotives. His contributions, whether features or to our letters pages, were always detailed, diligently researched and fascinating.

While his published works extended across the entire rail world and included several standard-gauge subjects, he was particularly renowned for his passion for the minimum gauge – titles such as *Sir Arthur Heywood and the 15-inch Gauge* and in particular *An Illustrated History of 18-inch Gauge Railways* have become much sought-after classic works.

Mark was a quiet man who seldom sought the limelight, instead letting the excellence of his work speak for him. He will be much missed and *NGW* sends condolences to his family and friends.







## Fairbourne and Haigh repeat carriage swap 40 years on

History has been repeated with an exchange of rolling stock between the Haigh Woodland Railway and the Fairbourne Railway.

The 15-inch gauge Haigh line, owned by Wigan Council, was built in 1984, using equipment made redundant when the Fairbourne was regauged to 12¼in by new owner John Ellerton, using his own rolling stock. It was the first refuge of Guest Engineering-built locos, 2-4-2 'Katie' and 0-6-0 diesel 'Rachel' and a significant quantity of 15-inch Fairbourne rolling stock, including two sets of articulated carriages and four wagons.

Now, the three-car articulated open set which has resided at Haigh for 40 years has been exchanged for two closed saloon carriages from Fairbourne, creating wider opportunities for both lines.

The Haigh line, which has been closed since 2020 but is currently being redeveloped following a £380,000 investment from Wigan Council, previously had no closed stock. It is planned that the revived railway will run throughout the year, requiring the availability of all-weather carriages.

The Fairbourne, being a beach railway, is always at its busiest on sunny days and the articulated carriage set will perfectly suit these requirements.

Both sets of carriages will need refurbishment and regauging before they can enter service at their new homes.

Fairbourne managing director Murray Dods has always had an ambition to acquire more open carriages; "In the peak summer season, on a sunny day you can watch a train arrive and no sooner have

passengers got out of the open, then more dive in even if it means sitting around in the sun for half an hour before the train departs! With this swap we can significantly increase the number of outside seats."

Haigh operations director Peter Hughes said that Wigan residents and beyond love the line and have been waiting for it to re-open since 2020, adding; "It's great to see the collaborative working between Haigh Woodland Railway and Fairbourne Railway, especially given the history between the two – this exchange will allow us to really progress with the work needed on the railway which will get us to opening later in the year."

**Above: Swap shop: The open articulated set has returned to Fairbourne while the Haigh line gets its first closed stock.**

*Photos: FR*

## Fairbourne loco to return to birthplace

The special guest at the Fairbourne Railway Gala over the May bank holiday will be a loco known as 'The forgotten engine.'

No 24, a 12¼-inch gauge replica of a Sandy River and Rangely Lakes 2-6-2, is the only loco built at Fairbourne, having been designed by John Ellerton not long after he took over the Welsh line.

First steamed in 1990, it only ran in Wales for a year and then moved to the Bure Valley Railway, being regauged to 15 inches, and then the Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway. The loco has been there ever since, gaining the name 'Lucy Lou'.

Another CCLR resident at the Gala will be diesel loco 'Rachel' – this loco has visited the line several times previously, most recently in 2017.

**No 24 is heading back to its Welsh birthplace.**

*Photo: CCLR*



■ The National Festival of Railway Modelling at the Birmingham NEC on 22nd-23rd November featured a full-size locomotive in the form of Phil Mason's Kerr, Stuart Sirdar 0-4-0T 'Diana'.

The loco went out of ticket in October and Phil told NGW he intends to start the overhaul soon. He is hopeful of finding no significant issues and aiming for the loco returning to steam sometime in 2027. *Photo: Andrew Charman*



■ Amberley Museum's rare Ransomes & Rapier diesel no 80, built in 1937 for scrap metal merchant George Cohen & Sons, was pictured by Phil Barnes on 22nd October, almost back together after essential repairs. A leaking radiator was discovered after the Spring Industrial Trains event in April, and repairs by a group of volunteers have been a slow and careful process due to the radiator being made up of a mass of individual tubes bolted to the upper and lower headers. These are assembled using rubber seals, each tube held in position by means of studs and nuts holding a flange to the headers, thus trapping the seals into their respective positions – a complex rebuilding operation! Many of the studs had to be drilled out and the holes re-tapped.

No 80 still has its original Ailsa Craig engine and wheelsets, unlike its heavily modified remaining sister, no 84. Whilst the loco was in bits through 2025, the opportunity was taken to repaint it in its striking red livery and reassembly will be completed during the winter months.



# Lisbon funicular in runaway disaster 'used wrong cable'

A preliminary report into the disaster on 3rd September on the Glória funicular in Lisbon (*NGW*197), in which a car ran away and crashed into a building, killing 16 people, has revealed that the cable that snapped was not certified for use in passenger transport.

The steel cable, of 32mm diameter with six sections each containing 36 steel strands of varying diameters, connects the two cars that travel over a 260-metre route on the 900mm gauge line, climbing 45 metres at an average gradient of 18%.

The report, by the Office for Air and Rail Accident Prevention and Investigation (GPIAAF), found that the cable had ruptured close to its connection point under the car at the top of the funicular, which then ran down the incline, efforts by the brakeman to apply emergency stopping having very little effect. The car finally derailed on a right-hand bend and smashed into a building at a speed between 41 and 49km/h (25-30mph).

An analysis of the cable showed that its failure had been progressive, several fractures present of varying ages. At the time of the accident it had been in use on the funicular for 337 days, having entered

## PORTUGAL

service on 1st October 2024. GPIAAF inspectors found that while the type of cable was commonly used in funicular applications and its minimum breaking load more than sufficient for that which it was subjected to on the Glória funicular, it did not comply with a specification issued in 2011 by Companhia Carris de Ferro de Lisboa (CCFL), operator of the funicular.

The manufacturer's inspection certificate also specified that the cable could not be used with a swivel mounting, the method used to attach it to the Glória cars. The swivel mount allows the cable to rotate about its axis, which on the type used can introduce stress cycles and reduce the minimum breaking load by between 40 and 60 per cent.

### Long time in use

Inspectors determined that the specification of cable had first been fitted on the Glória funicular in December 2022 and had been used without incident for 601 days before being replaced by the cable that served 337 days before the accident. Another cable of the same type was employed for 606 days

on the sister Lavra funicular, again without incident. For this reason the investigation could not currently conclude whether the use of a non-compliant cable was relevant to the accident.

The report described in detail the procedures that led to the fitment of cables that were non-compliant with multiple specification and usage restrictions, and highlighted several accumulated failures in the acquisition, acceptance, and application process by CCFL, the operator's internal organisational control mechanisms being described as insufficient or inadequate.

The report also focused on issues with the funicular's emergency braking system, including the lack of any evidence that it had been tested in a cable-breakage situation. Other areas of serious concern included the funicular's maintenance and safety procedures.

The GPIAAF intends to publish a final report with conclusions by September. But it also issued immediate recommendations, including CCFL reassessing its procedures for acquiring, fitting and maintaining components vital to vehicle safety, and the implementation of a defined safety management system.

## Alishan tests its premium train

The Alishan Forest Railway in TAIWAN ran the first test of its new premium EVI train set on 22nd October, operating from Beimen station and conducting three hours of return running.

As reported in *NGW*197, the new initiative to run a more upmarket service, alongside current workings on the Alishan's mountainous 53-mile route, has seen the initial building of a new diesel locomotive and five carriages by the Taiwan Rolling Stock Company – the full project is set to encompass five new locos and 26 carriages.

AFR spokesman Albert Wu told *NGW* that everything went smoothly on the first day of testing. "We observed significant

improvements in noise suppression, dynamic stability and emissions reduction," he said.

"Residents along the route, as well as railway enthusiasts, felt that this new generation of the Alishan train truly reflects the quality we aimed for, and there is great anticipation for its entry into service next year," Albert added.

The testing process is expected to continue until February, during which the train will be trialled in various conditions along the line, from flat running to the more mountainous areas and sharper curves, before it is approved to enter passenger service. **Photo: Albert Wu/AFR**

## Traffic surge sends Darj line out of red

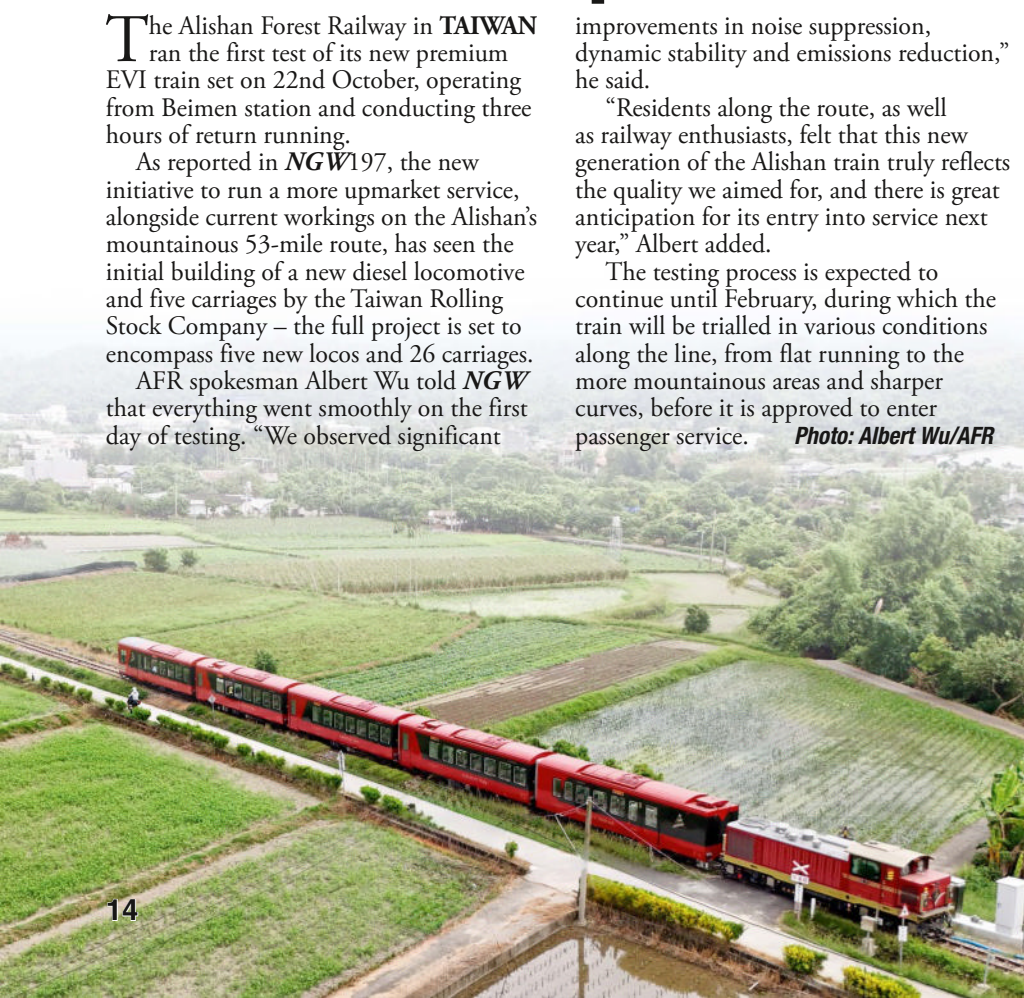
Darjeeling Himalayan Railway director Rishav Choudhary has painted an optimistic picture for the line's future, according to latest reports from UK support group the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society ([www.dhrs.org](http://www.dhrs.org)).

Speaking to the Rail Enthusiast Society India on 16th November, Mr Choudhary reported that DHR footfall and revenue was up by 20 per cent in 2025, putting the line in profit.

He added that the third of three new diesel locos for the line was due to be delivered by the end of the year and there were also outline proposals for the introduction of a pair of railbuses. Among the rolling stock 15 of the current 68-strong fleet, dating to the 1960s are to be restored as replicas of 1920s vehicles.

Further work will see the long-derelict running shed at Tindharia restored for use in steam loco maintenance, plus a two-year programme to conserve all DHR buildings to standards set by government agency the Archaeological Survey of India – Darjeeling will be the first to be tackled.

New track maintenance is also planned, the intention being to resleeper the line between Darjeeling and Ghum, replacing the current metal sleepers with concrete.





# Metal theft puts brakes on restoration

Hopes that a metre-gauge Decauville 2-6-0T currently under restoration in FRANCE could steam again in March have been wrecked by metal thieves.

A raid on the depot in Butry of the Museum of French Steam Tramways and Secondary Railways (MTVS) resulted in the theft of all of the copper and non-ferrous metal parts, along with many other essential components, of Decauville 5755. This loco, today an official French 'Monument Historique', was built in 1913, initially by Decauville with its construction completed by Orenstein & Koppel, and worked in Portugal. It is identical to locos that operated on French lines including the Vivarais.

"This significant loss, both financially and in terms of time, will significantly delay the locomotive's entry into service," MTVS spokesman Olivier Janneau stated. "It is a painful blow for our team and everyone who supports this project."

The MTVS team are currently assessing the extent of the damage done to the project and have launched a fundraiser to try and meet some of the additional costs – details (in French) are at <https://mtvs.fr/sosdecauville/>



■ In better news for the MTVS, on 6th November the body of the museum's Billard railcar was returned following a complete restoration by classic vehicle specialist B Karmann at Moselle. This included the replacement of the vehicle's sheet metal cladding.

The diesel railcar was built in 1938 for the Charentes to Deux-Sèvres route and after the line's closure in 1951 moved to the Vivarais-Lozère. This closed in 1968 but the railcar was operated on tourist trains until 1991. It was entrusted to the MTVS in 2016 and restoration began in the following year.

Photo: Olivier Janneau/MTVS

# Board paints bleak picture of Harz's future prospects

As reported in *NGW* 198 fears are growing for the future stability of the Harzer Schmalspurbahnen, following the release of a report in August suggesting that the 140km long 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.

While the report was rejected reports in Germany have stated that a meeting of the network's supervisory board and shareholders in November painted a stark picture of the situation. It was stated that the Harz motive power, particularly the 25 steam locomotives – are beyond their service life, the track network is worn out across the board, and the financial resources are insufficient, with suggestions that 800 million euros need to be found by 2045 to

## GERMANY

both keep the railway running and update it.

Enthusiasts have reported that aside from the blue-riband line from Wernigerode to the top of the Brocken mountain, a route which has been closed for maintenance in November, services on the rest of the Harz network are thinly patronised. Some reports suggest that the Brocken line accounts for 96 per cent of all Harz ticket sales.

One casualty is widely feared to be the Salketalbahn route which will close for at least five years to allow construction of a dam, which many fear will see the line's end.

Adding further concerns, the HSB's recently built new works at Wernigerode, completed in 2022 at a cost of 15 million euros, has been reported as being unfit for purpose and in need of a further major cash injection.



■ Like many heritage railways across Europe, the 750mm gauge system at Zittau in Saxony, GERMANY suspends operations every November for routine maintenance (reports Keith Chester). However the shutdown is not total and on 6th November Köf 6001 was busy shunting the carriage shed. A Gmeinder product from 1944, it was one of around 340 type HF 130 C locos built for the German army. The present running number is a false DR one – until preservation this small 0-6-0DH only saw use in industry.

## BRIEF LINES

### Timbertown shuts down

As *NGW* closed to press it was announced that the Timbertown heritage theme park in New South Wales, AUSTRALIA will close on 28th January after the owner, who intends to retire, was unable to find a buyer. The park's assets will be auctioned on 1st-3rd May, presumably including the 2km long 1ft 11½in gauge railway and Fowler 0-4-2T 'Ruby' (17881/1928).

### Hailstorm hits museum

The Queensland Museum Rail Workshops in AUSTRALIA was forced to temporarily close after a severe hailstorm on 26th October damaged the roof. The museum includes several exhibits from the state's 3ft 6in gauge railways.

### Stadler staff build zoo tram

The Knies Kinderzoo, a children's zoo in Rapperswill, SWITZERLAND, has taken delivery of a new battery railcar built for it by apprentices at rail equipment giant Stadler. The railcar will replace horse-drawn vehicles on the zoo's 600mm gauge line.

### Krauss finds new home

Krauss 0-6-2T no 6854, built in 1914 for the Palmwoods To Buderim Tramway in Queensland, AUSTRALIA, was moved to a purpose-built display plinth in Buderim village on 21st November following a 20-year long cosmetic restoration and search for a home by members of the Buderim-Palmwoods Heritage Tramway Inc. A protective glass enclosure is to be built around the loco.





■ Regular *NGW* correspondent *Michael Chapman* has been back in AUSTRALIA recently and on 21st October captured the Puffing Billy Railway's newly overhauled Baldwin NA class 2-6-2T no 6A on a load-test. The loco now displays a distinctly different element to its sister NA engines as it wears wooden cow-catchers.

## 150 up for sole survivor

The Fell Museum in Featherston, Wairarapa, NEW ZEALAND, staged a special celebration on 1st November to mark the 150th birthday of the only surviving loco built to the traction system designed by London engineer John Barraclough Fell.

H199 was one of four 3ft 6in gauge 0-4-2T Fell locos supplied by Avonside in 1875 for working between Cross Creek and Summit on the Rimutaka (now Remutaka) Incline on gradients as steep as 1 in 15.

The Fell system employed a raised centre rail gripped by four horizontally-mounted wheels underneath the locos. Unlike conventional rack railways with toothed wheels, the Fell system used smooth rails and wheels, relying on a heavy spring mechanism for grip. The system was not widely adopted though it is still in use today on the Snaefell Mountain Railway on the Isle of Man.

H199 was named 'Mount Cenis' – after a line on the French-Italian border that was the first to use the Fell system – and worked the Rimutaka incline until 1955, when it was rendered redundant by the opening of a new tunnel.

Three years later the loco was donated to the local community of Featherston and was subsequently displayed in a park until 1981, when concerns over its deterioration saw the formation of a Friends of the Fell Society which moved H199 undercover for restoration. The Fell Museum was built in 1984 and since restoration was completed in 1989 the loco has been displayed in the museum, mounted on electric rollers so it can be demonstrated moving for visitors.

The birthday celebrations on 1st November were followed over the following weekend by a heritage festival which was held at the museum.

Ben Duncan of the Fell Museum

told *NGW* that the exact build date of H199 is not known, only the year it was constructed, adding: "If any of your readers know more, we'd be delighted to hear from them."

In charge of cake-cutting duties in front of H199 on the loco's birthday were Pat Flynn, now 101 years old and the first secretary of the museum, and the new Mayor of South Wairarapa Fran Wilde.

*Photo: The Fell Museum*



Readers can send in news from overseas lines for inclusion on these pages – contact details are on page 3



## Kenneth Zadnichek

Enthusiast Kenneth Zadnichek, who built the Wales West Light Railway at Silverhill in the US state of Alabama, passed away on 21st October aged 76.

Known to many as 'Senior', Kenneth wore many hats throughout his life, including artist, property developer, architect, farmer, welder, dental technician, entrepreneur and railwayman. He built two homes and developed and managed several ventures, including a cattle/catfish farm, mobile home park, and The Eastern Shore Company, Inc.

His most enduring legacy, however, is the Wales West Light Railway and RV Resort, a unique creation that combined his love of trains, community, family, and joy into one remarkable place.

Opened in 2001, the one-mile long 2ft gauge line was designed in the style of a Welsh narrow gauge line, its prime steam loco 'Dame Ann', an 0-4-2ST built by the Exmoor Steam Railway in the style of a Penrhyn Port Class quarry Hunslet and delivered in 2004.

A passionate train enthusiast, Kenneth shared his love of railroads with his wife Ann, who he married in 1995. They traveled the world together, seeking out unique and historic trains in every corner they visited. Kenneth took great pride in owning and operating his authentic steam loco and his mission in life was to bring joy to Baldwin County families.

*NGW* sends its condolences to Kenneth's family and many friends. A celebration of his life is planned to be held at a later date in the Wales West Railway's community centre.

*Thanks to David Humphreys for supplying information for this tribute.*





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ON THE NARROW GAUGE

# Transylvanian trackwork

*David Rowbotham describes the delights of getting involved in pioneer-style railway restoration on the Sibiu Agnita Railway in Romania.*



The last week of September 2025 saw a small group from the UK head out to Sibiu in Romania for what has become a regular autumn event in recent years, spending a week volunteering on the trackwork of the Sibiu Agnita Railway.

For some years now restoration efforts on the 760mm gauge line, which formerly ran for some 36 miles from Sibiu to Agnita in the Transylvanian region of Romania, serving some 19 stations, has been aided by an enthusiastic group of

**Above: The road to Cașolt – old-style railway restoration in action.**

**Below: Most of the work is by hand, the few powered tools kept for specialist tasks (below right).**

**Photos by David Rowbotham, September 2025**

British volunteers who have come together under the name of SAR UK, and who include volunteers from the Talylyn and Ffestiniog railways amongst their number.

The original line closed in 2001. After initial plans to reopen it as a tourists route collapsed in 2006, the line and its infrastructure were designated a historic monument in 2008 to prevent it being dismantled. This led to the formation of the 'Prietenii Mocăniței' (Friends of the Narrow Gauge Railway), which began restoration efforts and in 2010 ran its first trains over a short section celebrating the line's centenary.

Since 2017 trains have been running over a 7km section from Cornățel, around 20km from Sibiu, to Hosman, in the direction of Agnita. Steam has often featured,

initially hired-in locos and more recently Manning Wardle 0-6-2T no 1877 owned by Bill Parker of the Flour Mill Workshop in the Forest of Dean, Bill having been a big supporter of the restoration project. The loco spent 18 months on the line before returning to the UK in August, being currently at the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway.

Longer-term the revivalists have plans to run their own loco – no 764158, a well tank built in 1949 by the 23rd August Works in Bucharest and based on the SAR from 1989, is under long-term restoration in Sibiu.

## Six of the best

The big push facing the autumn restoration party was to get six lengths of rails spot-resleepered and tamped on the line from Cornățel





towards Caşolt, heading back towards Sibiu. Following closure of the line in 2001 this section had suffered from metal thieves removing many of the baseplates and fishplates from the line. Fortunately the rails themselves proved too heavy to be taken away and remained unsecured on top of the sleepers except for two rails which could not be found.

The work to restore the track is almost completely manual, the exceptions being drilling and bolting the rail fixings to the sleepers and the tamping, which are carried out with powered hand tools.

The local Friends of the Sibiu Agnita Railway Association have a small supply of replacement sleepers which are being used to carry out spot-resleeping, with two used at the joints and two more used at one third and two thirds of the way along the rail length. The best of the remaining sleepers are retained in situ to give support to the reinstated rails, but many are no longer fit to accept fixings to hold the rails to gauge. The replacement sleepers are relied upon to perform this essential function.

Ballast is sourced by digging out the sleeper pits and sieving the arisings. This generates a surprising amount of good stone, certainly sufficient for securely levelling and tamping the replacement sleepers.

### Restoration – pioneer style

This work really is restoration on a shoestring, but with limited funding, resources and volunteers it does make steady progress, though it can appear rather frustrating when compared to track renovation on a typical British narrow gauge line – this is more akin to working on the Talyllyn and Ffestiniog in the 1950s!

Over six working days, with between four and six people working each day, these being a mixture of UK visitors and local volunteers, six lengths of track were reinstated. Progress was such that some of the UK group were planning to head back to Sibiu for a couple of long weekends before Christmas in order to tackle the next six lengths, which are on a curve and which take the line to an occupation crossing.

Such working trips were made possible from October by the airline Wizzair introducing direct flights from Birmingham to Sibiu with some very affordable introductory offers on the basic fares. Accommodation in Sibiu is inexpensive and a further seasonal bonus was taking in the delights of the Sibiu Christmas Market of an evening after a fulfilling day's work.

Meanwhile another major project planned for the near future is also



**Above: Romanian works train, with L12H-001 in charge – the loco was built in 2021 for the project with the aid of an EU grant.**

**Upper right: The sun shines in Romania, but the workers have suitable shade.**



**Right: The revival project has a small stock of good replacement sleepers, which are carefully employed in the track restoration.**

**Below: Happy locals and Brits, united by a desire to see trains running again to Sibiu. David Rowbotham is on the left.**

likely to centrally involve the SAR UK team, this being the building of a new depot and maintenance yard at the restoration project's headquarters at Cornăţel. **NGW**

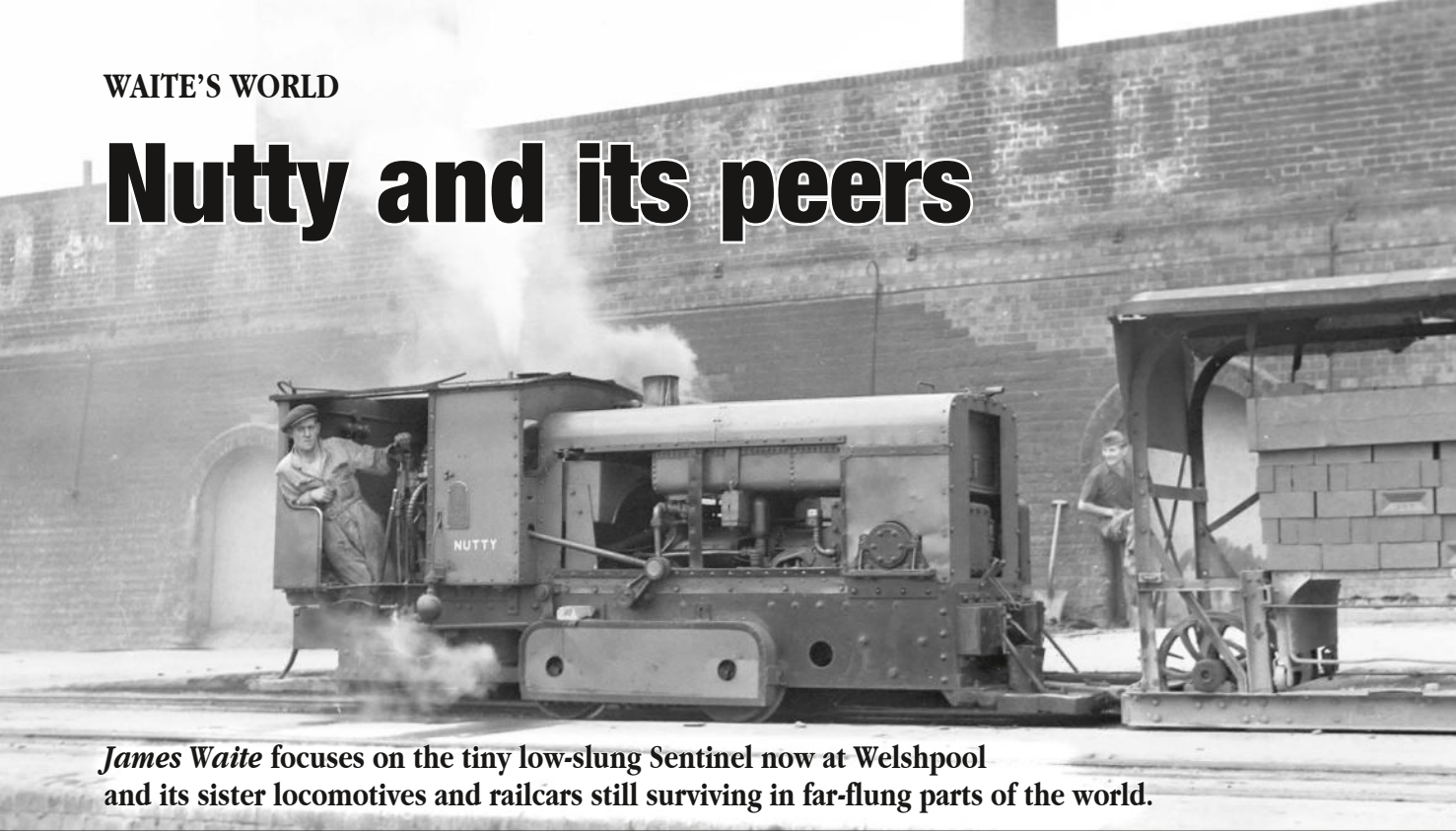
### More Information

■ SAR UK is very keen for more volunteers to join in some proper old-style railway restoration – details of the next organised trackwork week will be on the SARUK Facebook page. Alternatively for more information David Rowbotham can be contacted by email at [maespoeth@gmail.com](mailto:maespoeth@gmail.com)





# Nutty and its peers



**James Waite focuses on the tiny low-slung Sentinel now at Welshpool and its sister locomotives and railcars still surviving in far-flung parts of the world.**

During a recent visit to the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway I had a pleasant surprise. Tucked into the back of the display shed at Welshpool stood the diminutive Sentinel brickworks geared loco 'Nutty'. It was the first steam loco to run on the line in preservation after 'The Earl' and 'The Countess' from the old railway.

I've thought of Nutty as a friend ever since I first met it as a student on a sunny evening at Llanfair back in July 1969. It was standing on the headshunt, somewhat overwhelmed by a mound of hardcore in the foreground and a tired-looking Fowler steamroller which was being used to extend the platform onto what had once been the cattle dock. The Earl was being put to bed after its day's work and The Countess stood nearby; the opportunity to photograph Nutty in the midsummer sunshine was an added treat.

The Sentinel business had its origins with a forward-looking firm

named Alley and MacLellan which was founded in Bridgeton, Glasgow in 1875. Initially it manufactured compressors and other parts for steam ships, and later built complete ships which necessarily had to be constructed in sections because their factory was located some distance from the sea.

At least one of these ships still sails on Lake Malawi in Africa, named 'Chauncy Maples' after the first Anglican bishop in what was then called Nyasaland – however its old steam engines have gone and it is now diesel-powered.

Alley and MacLellan later moved to a new factory at Polmadie called the Sentinel works; its design shop was the first steel-reinforced concrete structure in Scotland and is now a Grade A listed building.

In 1905 Alley and MacLellan diversified into steam waggons (always so spelt) bearing the Sentinel name, designed around a vertical water-tube boiler mounted in the

**Above: 'Nutty' shunting at LBC's Hicks no 1 brick factory south of Peterborough, likely in the 1950s. The name painted on the cabside was by 1960 replaced by painted plates close to the bonnet front. Photo: The Transport Library**

**Below left: Nutty at Welshpool in August 2025. The diagonal casing covers the chain between the drive shaft and wheels.**

**Below: There have been conflicting figures published for Nutty's height, so James checked it out for himself at Welshpool – it measures 6ft 1in.**

cab, with chain drive to the wheels. Production moved to a new factory in Shrewsbury in 1915 – a major development saw the first Super Sentinel waggon produced in 1923, a completely revised type built on a production line copied from the Ford Model T factory in Michigan.

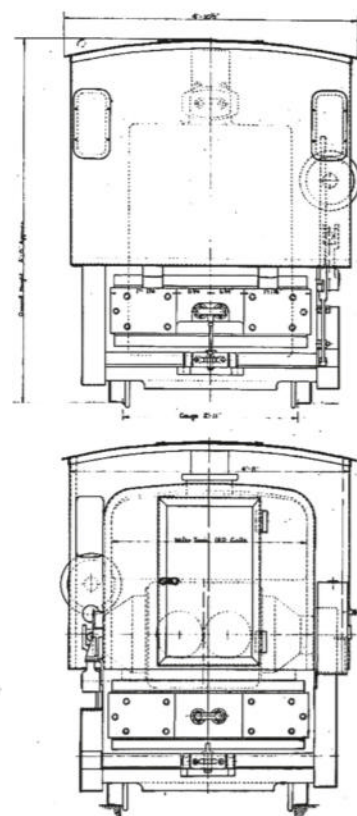
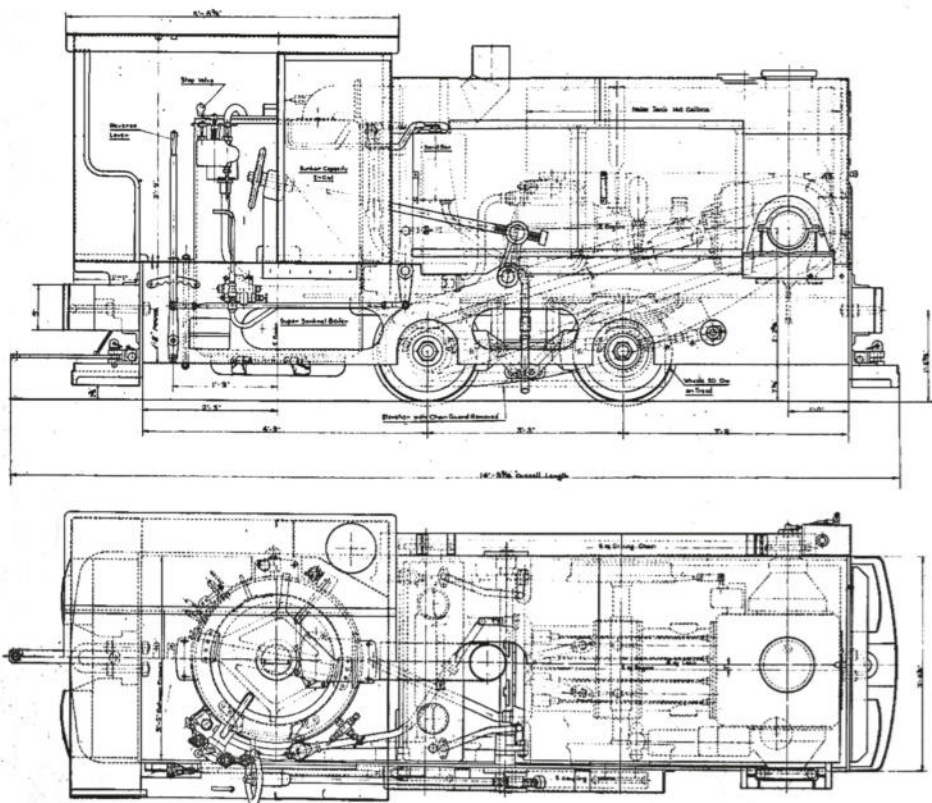
## Road to rail

An integral part of the Super Sentinel plan was that some of the waggon parts should also be used in railway locos and railcars, and construction of both began that year. The railcars used bodywork built by Cammell Laird in Nottingham, and the first to be completed, no 1863/1923, went to the 3ft 6in gauge Jersey Railway where it was appropriately named 'The Pioneer'. The line later acquired four more.

Alongside many standard gauge railcars, 79 were produced for the narrow gauge; they included nos 9553-4, two 3ft 6in ones for the Nigerian Railway in 1953, the last







railcars which Sentinel built for any gauge. Production of its 226 narrow gauge steam locos ended in 1950 with nos 9521-5, 2ft gauge machines destined for India, while the final standard gauge one was built in 1958.

### New design

The Nutty design originated with a low-height 3ft gauge four-wheel loco built for the Carrongrove Paper Company at Denny, Stirlingshire, in 1927. It was rejected as overweight, and after some modification including a larger boiler and height increase it went to the London Brick Company, which ran numerous brickworks, notably at Fletton, south of Peterborough, and in the Marston Vale near Bedford.

Both places had access to Oxford clay; with its consistent structure and high carbon content the mineral was particularly suitable for low-cost brickmaking using what became known as the Fletton process. It could be pressed into the moulds without first being mixed with water

**Top: North Borneo Railway metre gauge Sentinel no 6375/1926 at the Sabah Museum in Kota Kinabalu in May 2006.**

**Top right: 2ft 6in gauge Sentinel no 8135/1930 at the Delhi railway museum, February 2016. The large Sentinel plates were added in the museum.**

**Above: The Sentinel general arrangement drawing of Nutty and its two sisters built in 1929.**

**Right: When Nutty arrived at Llanfair it was parked on the cattle dock for reassembly and regauging. Photo: W&LLR Archive**

or processed in some other way, while the carbon ignited in the kiln and provided much of the heat required during the firing process, dramatically reducing the amount of fuel which would otherwise be required.

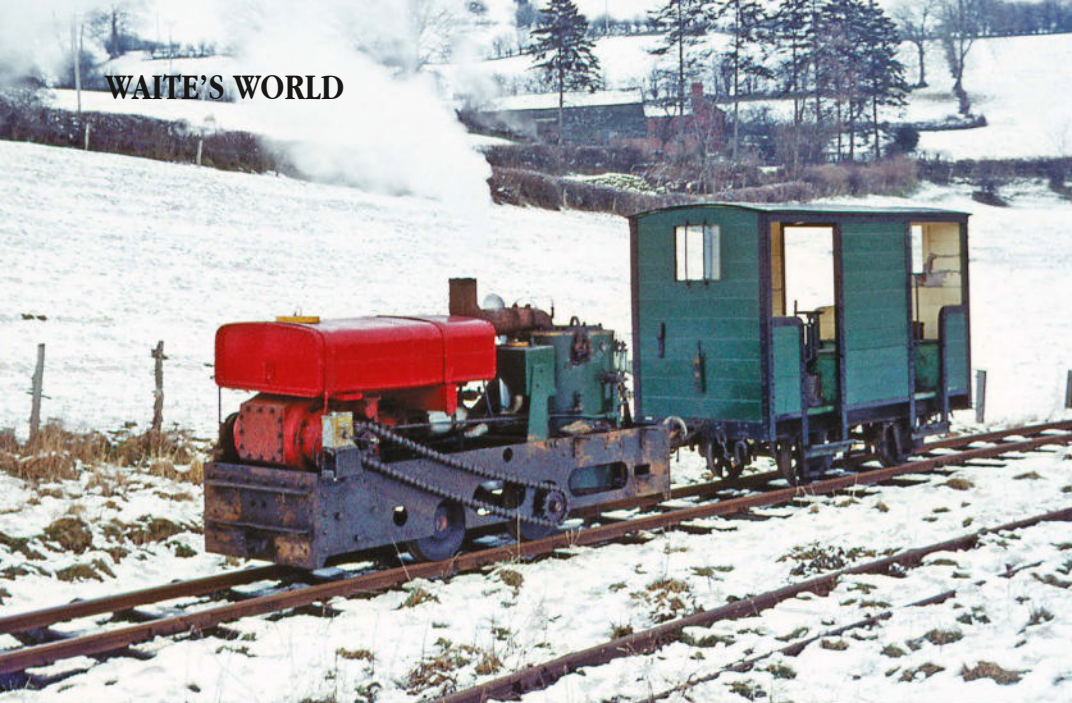
The economics of the business meant that the factories had to be close to the clay pits. Several of them used tramways built to the unusual gauge of 2ft 11in or 890mm, both to transport clay to the works and to

move trolleys of unfired and completed bricks around the kilns.

Sentinel's locos could haul 35-ton trains up a 1 in 30 gradient and on the level could reach 18mph, while at only six tons weight the design must have proved especially suitable for the lightly-laid tracks. Seven were built between 1928 and 1936 for service both at Fletton and in Bedfordshire, along with a similar 2ft 6in gauge one for an independent Bedfordshire »







works. All the locos were of similar construction – vertical boilers fed horizontal cylinders under the water tank which powered a driveshaft, connected by a chain to the rear left-hand wheel. A further chain connected the two right-hand ones.

Nutty (Sentinel 7701/1929) was one of these. It probably spent its entire working life at LBC's Hicks No 1 factory, just to the west of the East Coast Main Line near Fletton, formerly run by a firm called Hicks & Gardener which floated on the stock market in 1927. LBC acquired a controlling interest almost at once, after which the Hicks & Gardener factories were swiftly integrated into the much larger LBC operation there.

The acquisition of Nutty in 1929 was possibly a consequence of LBC's expanded business following the takeover. It was driven and maintained by a Mr Jack Rowell, always known as 'Nutty', and by the 1950s his nickname was painted on the loco's cab sides, and later on plates affixed to its bonnet. By the early 1960s, if not earlier, the loco had acquired the bright yellow paint scheme which has graced it ever since.

In the same year that Nutty was acquired a 2ft 6in gauge double-track cable-worked railway was constructed to connect Hicks no 1 with another factory to transport clay, crossing the ECML en route. There it connected with another 2ft 11in line which, by the 1960s at least, was worked by Simplex internal combustion locos. It lasted until both factories closed in 1982 and today one of its primitive wooden wagons is preserved nearby at Wansford station on the Nene Valley Railway. These cable lines were another LBC speciality and were used at several of the factories in the district. In LBC-speak they were simplistically called 'ground haulage'.

### Preservation plans

Nutty was withdrawn in 1962 and two years later was presented to the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn on the Talylyn Railway, but following a suggestion by Welshpool & Llanfair volunteer Basil Roberts, the loco went directly from Fletton to the W&LLR, where it was to run. Basil converted it to 2ft 6in gauge; conveniently these locos were adapted from a Sentinel design specifically

**Above: Nutty's first test runs on the W&LLR took place without bodywork, revealing the novel design. Photo: Basil Roberts, W&LLR archive**

**Above right: The boiler of Nutty in August 2025. Just visible in the bottom left corner is part of the bench on which the driver performed had to sit.**

**Below: Nutty at Llanfair Caereinion in July 1969. The bunker of the former Bowater's 0-4-4-0T 'Monarch' is to the right. Nutty had the honour of hauling Monarch onto W&L rails when it was delivered to the line in 1966.**

**All uncredited photos by James Waite**

providing for simple gauge changes.

Basil took exception to the painted nameplates and replaced them with cast ones, one of which is still carried – the old plates are at the museum in Tywyn. With its restricted, not to say intimate, cab Nutty did not see much use, mainly on works trains, though it handled passenger workings for a while in 1965 over the short length of line still available while the Banwy bridge was rebuilt following its partial collapse in the previous December. On one occasion the loco worked through to Welshpool.

Nutty moved to Tywyn for storage in 1971 and 20 years later was sent to Whipsnade Zoo for planned restoration and operation on its 2ft 6in gauge railway, but the work never progressed beyond initial dismantling.

The next plan was for Nutty to become a static exhibit at Railworld in Peterborough, close to where the loco spent its working life. It was reassembled and cosmetically restored by apprentices at Midas Technologies in the city under the direction of Mark Lock, 'Nutty' Rowell's grandson, who was involved in both concerns. Mark still has the second cast nameplate as a keepsake as well as his grandfather's oiling can.

Railworld could not provide the display, and in 2012 Nutty moved on to Leighton Buzzard, before returning to Welshpool in 2023 for static display. The boiler, cylinders and motion of another brickworks Sentinel were bought by the late Peter Rampton for his Collection X, but have recently been sold, possibly for reuse in a road vehicle.

### Rare survivors

Only two other narrow gauge Sentinel locos are known to survive, both in far-flung places reflecting how the company's products worked all over the world. Metre gauge





four-wheel no 6375/1926 went to the North Borneo Railway, arriving there on 21st January 1927. After teething troubles it was rebuilt two years later with an extended wheelbase and a superheated boiler, along with a tiny horizontal smokebox. Unnumbered for many years, it became no 13 in 1954, was withdrawn in 1963, and was cosmetically restored in 1980 for the Sabah Museum at Kota Kinabalu.

The chunky 2ft 6in gauge six-wheel no 8135/1930 worked on the Bankura-Damodar line in India and is now at the railway museum at Delhi. A derelict sister, no 8408/1930, survived at Katwa in West Bengal until the 1990s, but now seems to have disappeared. Along with four others built for India in the same year they were geared for passenger train working with a giddy maximum speed of 31mph. The Delhi loco lacks a chain driving the rear wheels; it is not known if this was an original feature.

Jersey Railway railcar no 6694/1927 'Brittany' was originally built for a standard gauge line on the island, and survived there for many years. It later moved to Georg Hocevar's workshop in Crisior, Romania, where it is being used as a pattern for a replica. Nine railcars built for Tasmania between 1931 and 1936 were regarded as successful but went into store as parts became scarce during World War 2. They were rebuilt as ordinary carriages soon after the war, and six have been preserved, as has the sole Western Australian example, no ASA 445 (8189/1930) which was de-engined and converted to a dynamometer car in 1954.

## Sri Lankan Sentinels

Probably the only surviving narrow gauge railcars in their original form are examples of the old Ceylon Government Railway's V2 class in Sri Lanka. Nos 331-3 were built in 1928 for the 2ft 6in gauge Kelani Valley line which ran out from Colombo into the hills. They were an upgraded version of an earlier type which used vertical cylinders and chain drive, whereas the V2s were fitted with horizontal cylinders and a cardan shaft drive that gave a smoother ride. In later years they were mostly used on the line's farthest section.

After it closed in 1976 only no 331 remained in service, and it spent its last few years working out of Dematagoda shed in Colombo before being withdrawn in the early 1980s. It was restored for use on tourist services in 1990, and when I visited Dematagoda 20 years later it was still in working order, though it hadn't steamed since 2008 because of a lack



**Above and below: Bringing the Sentinel story right up to date, these photos of the two surviving Sri Lankan railcars were taken by Harry Billmore, chair of the Narrow Gauge Sentinel Railcar Preservation Trust, on 14th November. No 331, above, is now undercover and being restored for museum display while no 332, below, remains outside while the Trust continues long negotiations to repatriate it.**

of coal. Its sister no 332 was withdrawn and donated its boiler to 331 when the latter's expired.

The shedmaster at Dematagoda, Mr Latith Fonseka, was very protective of the two and they were safely stored inside the shed along with no fewer than eight Kelani Valley 4-6-4Ts and several diesels, but after he retired everything narrow gauge was dumped outside in the long grass, 331 and 332 joining no 333 which had been abandoned there many years earlier.

No 331 is now at the site of a new museum and undercover, but years spent outside have resulted in it degenerating into an appalling state. Rasika Wickramanayaka, a Sri Lankan narrow gauge enthusiast, is leading a voluntary effort to restore 331, but this is a huge task.

There's long been a proposal by a British group, the Narrow Gauge Sentinel Railcar Preservation Trust (NGSRPT), to repatriate the other two, though its published accounts suggest recent expenditure has mostly been on visits to the island, and in

the absence of any significant activity it is not attracting many donations (*Editor's note – the chair of the Trust told me this month that while sufficient donations remain a challenge, the main issue continues to be the levels of bureaucracy in Sri Lanka that the Trust has been tortuously trying to negotiate. No 333 has now been scrapped and 332 would have gone the same way had the Trust not intervened – it is this one they hope to repatriate.*)

If the Trust does succeed the W&L would be a very suitable home for 332, and a ride in one of these fascinating vehicles would provide an experience like none other.

There is no current plan to return Nutty to working order at the W&L, and to a large extent the shunting requirement which it once fulfilled no longer exists. Despite this it would be good to think that it may return to steam one day! **NGW**

## More Information

The Narrow Gauge Sentinel Railcar Preservation Trust can be contacted at [Sentinelrailcar@gmail.com](mailto:Sentinelrailcar@gmail.com)





# No slowing at season's end...

Late-season charters and events have kept the photographers busy before the winter break.



The main season ending Gala on the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway over 18th-19th October saw three Trevor Guest-built, Ernest W. Twining-designed locos reunited. Former Fairbourne Railway 2-6-2s 'Sian' and 'Katie', seen double-heading at left on the single-track Dungeness section, today live together again at Kirklees, and they were joined by the Bure Valley Railway's 2-6-4T 'Wroxham Broad'.

Romney trains did continue on November weekends, with no 10 'Doctor Syn' pictured below accelerating its train away from Dungeness in the winter sunlight on 15th November.

*Photos: Steve Town*

Right: Running even longer has been the Talyllyn Railway, which is one of the few lines that does not turn December over to Santa Special services. On 6th December *Andrew Simmonds* caught Fletcher Jennings 0-4-2ST 'Talyllyn' on one of the day's three return services, passing through the deserted – as it is through most of the year – Cynfal halt.

Below right: Without doubt the big visual news of the last few weeks has been the repainting of Vale of Rheidol 2-6-2T 'Prince of Wales' into British Railways Rail Blue livery. *Andrew Simmonds* captured this picture on 22nd November – but for many readers it will remind them of the 1970s and early '80s...

Overleaf: Photo charters traditionally take in the Autumn and early winter as main seasons wind down, and can experience very variable weather – sometimes it can produce delightful lighting conditions, as was very much the case here on 14th November with Welsh Highland Railway Garratt no 87 on the reverse curves at Rhyd Ddu.

*Photo: Andrew Simmonds*









# NARROW GAUGE WORLD











The year is at an end, and darkness has fallen as the locos are put away for the winter. Capturing them needs the skills of a master of working with light, or virtually no light. As demonstrated here with 'Owain Glyndwr' (above) and 'Llewelyn' on the Vale of Rheidol Railway on 25th November, *Karl Heath* is one of those people.



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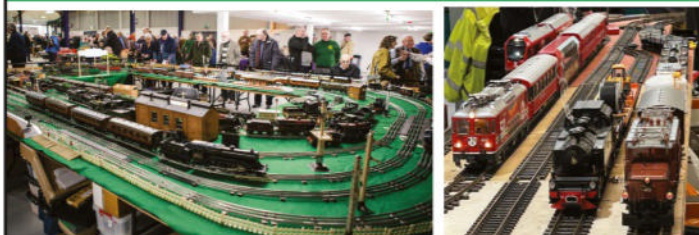
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# The Longest Rack

Donald Brooks completes a trilogy on spectacular lines serving the Swiss Jungfrau with the Wengernalpbahn, which at almost 20km claims the title of the world's longest pure rack railway.



If you visit Switzerland's Berner Oberland region there are two ways of getting from Lauterbrunnen to Grindelwald by rail, both narrow

gauge. The metre gauge Berner Oberland Bahn (BOB) provides plenty of scenic interest on its 39-minute journey, with a change at

*All uncredited photos in this feature courtesy [jungfrau.ch](http://jungfrau.ch)*

Zweilütschinen. But if you choose the more direct route, the 800mm gauge Wengernalpbahn (WAB), the journey paradoxically takes twice as long, though as compensation offers one of the most spectacular train rides in the whole of Switzerland.

The BOB opened in 1890, its line south from Interlaken dividing at Zweilütschinen into two rack and adhesion branches, the shorter one continuing south to Lauterbrunnen with the longer one heading east to Grindelwald. The two termini are respectively 796 and 1034 metres above sea level and although they are only about 11 kilometres apart in a straight line, that line involves crossing the Kleine Scheidegg pass, 2061 metres above sea level.

## Investment returned

The concession for a railway over the pass was granted in 1890 to the Wengernalp-Bahn-Gesellschaft, which lost no time in building its line at a cost of roughly CHF4,000,000 (about £52 million in today's money). Just three years later, in June 1893, the first through passenger trains ran, carrying 37,742 passengers in their opening season. The WAB pioneers could never have imagined that 125 years later the annual number would have risen to 1,819,932.

The WAB is a pure rack line and while the BOB used the Riggengbach system for its rack sections, the WAB was one of the first two lines to adopt a slightly modified version of it, Riggengbach-Pauli, which has higher teeth. More recently the WAB has been using the simpler, though compatible, Von Roll rack rail,





manufactured to a 6cm profile width. Von Roll, which lacks the side bars of Riggenbach, is cheaper to fabricate and more versatile in that it can be bent to match the radius of curves.

WAB gradients are severe, up to 25 per cent (1 in 4), and the line was initially steam-worked. All the WAB steam locomotives were built by Schweizerische Lokomotiv- und Maschinenfabrik (SLM) and were of the H2/3 or 0-4-2RT type, similar in many respects to the first Snowdon Mountain machines which came from SLM a couple of years later. Numbers 1 to 8 were built for the opening and were constructed between 1891 and 1893.

Traffic clearly lived up to expectations as numbers 9 to 12 arrived in 1895-6, with 13 and 14 following in 1898. The final two steam locomotives, 31 and 32, were built in 1905 and 1906. A new design by SLM, they were almost twice as powerful as their predecessors, earning them the nickname Doppellokomotive (Double Locomotive).

The reign of steam on the WAB did not last long after these new arrivals. Lauterbrunnen lies at the bottom of an impressively deep U-shaped valley with sheer cliffs rising dramatically from the western side. The eastern side, which the WAB uses to climb to Wengen, is less steep but the route adopted by the railway was still demanding, even with rack assistance.

In the first decade of the 20th century there were several major changes to the WAB infrastructure, including a new, longer route between Lauterbrunnen and Wengen. Instead of climbing directly to the village the second route bypasses it at a lower level, reaching the station by turning back through the Wengwald horseshoe tunnel, the gradient eased from 1 in 4 to roughly 1 in 5.5.

Despite the new route the old alignment was retained for goods traffic and emergencies for many years and was only lifted as recently as 2009 – and then only because of the instability of the terrain, the same reason that had led to the closure of the Lauterbrunnen–Grütschalp funicular on the other side of the valley three years earlier.

### Electric traction

When the new alignment opened in 1910 it was with electric traction, as the Lauterbrunnen to Kleine Scheidegg section had been electrified at 1500 volts DC in 1909, the Grindelwald side following a year later. For motive power the WAB turned again to SLM which supplied 15 boxy-looking He 2/2 locomotives,



**Heading: Snow-covered mountains block the end of the valley as 1954 railcar 107 waits at Lauterbrunnen to propel its train up the mountain to Kleine Scheidegg. One of the early He2/2 electrics sits on the siding at left. Photo: Donald Brooks, 29th May 1978**

**Left: Map of the railways and cableways of the Jungfrau, the Wengernalpbahn shown in lime green. All the lines on this map are narrow gauge and electrified. Graphic courtesy jungfrau.ch**

**Above: The Brienz Rothorn Bahn's 5 was once the WAB's 1 and is the last surviving WAB steam locomotive. It is dropping down towards Brienz with an early season train that had been unable to get higher than Planalp because of late snow. Photo: Donald Brooks, 28th May 1978**

**Right: The 3690m high Wetterhorn dominates the background as 1964 BDhe4/4 railcar 118 waits at Grindelwald station. Photo: Donald Brooks, 29th May 1978**

these being numbered 51 to 65.

The initial two were built in 1908, the first electrics from this builder to so narrow a gauge though similar metre gauge machines had preceded them. Another two followed in 1909, four in 1910, two in 1911 and three in 1912. The final two, to a different design, came considerably later with no 64 built in 1926 and 65 in 1929. As with the steam locomotives, the electrics always worked at the downhill end of their trains.

Steam was retained as a back-up for a time, with the larger two locos among the last to go, but by 1918 15 locos had been scrapped. In the end

the only survivor was number 1, SLM 690 of 1891, which was sold in 1911 to the Brienz Rothorn Bahn at the other end of Lake Brienz from Interlaken. It was renumbered 5, entering service in 1913. Today it remains a regular performer at Brienz, a living reminder of the long-gone steam era on the WAB.

Today the Wengen area is particularly renowned as a winter resort but when the WAB first opened it operated in summer only. The opening of the new alignment from Lauterbrunnen allowed the introduction of a winter seasonal service to Wengen, quickly extended »







to Wengernalp and then Kleine Scheidegg, though it was 1925 before the summer and winter seasonal services became a single year-round operation. On the other side of the pass winter seasonal trains ran from Grindelwald to Kleine Scheidegg in 1934, not becoming year-round until as late as 1960.

Although winter sports are today perhaps the key source of WAB traffic, its initial purpose was to open up the magnificent landscape of the Berner Oberland to summer visitors as well as to provide public transport to Wengen, the only settlement on the route. Shortly after its opening a new source of traffic appeared, with the 1896 start of construction on the metre gauge Jungfraubahn (JB) from Kleine Scheidegg.

The opening of the JB to Eigergletscher in 1898 and its completion to Jungfraujoch in 1912 brought an influx of passengers which has scarcely ceased to increase since. So great was the demand for travel to Jungfraujoch that in 2020 the WAB was supplemented by a new cableway,

the Eiger Express, which also improved access to the Jungfrauregion winter sports area, critically important for the JB Group. The cableway lifts visitors directly from Grindelwald to Eigergletscher, the first stop on the JB, in a fraction of the time taken by WAB trains.

Today 80 per cent of passengers to Jungfraujoch take the cableway while only 20 per cent adopt the traditional route of travelling all the way by connecting narrow gauge trains, out via Lauterbrunnen and back via Grindelwald or vice-versa. The cableway suits international visitors keen to tick Jungfraujoch off their 'to-do' list as quickly as possible while the traditional route suits visitors spending longer in the region – and of course railway enthusiasts.

Today's WAB is just over 19km long, which allows it to claim the title of the longest pure rack railway in the world. It is single track with passing loops, traffic peaks traditionally being accommodated by operating trains in more than one portion.

The line is worked in two sections

**Above: With the track of the Jungfraubahn curving away to the 4107m high Mönch, a WAB loco stands at Kleine Scheidegg having brought its train of two carriages from Lauterbrunnen.**

**Below: The Mönch again dominates the background as a two-carriage train stands in Wengernalp, the mountainside location from which the railway takes its name.**

with trains from both Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen terminating at Kleine Scheidegg and not working through. A triangle at Kleine Scheidegg, partly tunnelled into the hillside, allows trains to turn so that if through working proves necessary the loco or power car can always be at the downhill end of the train.

With few tunnels, passengers on the WAB have excellent views of the scenery throughout. From Grindelwald, contrary to what might be expected, the train runs downhill at first, soon reversing at Grindelwald Grund to climb through the meadows and then below the north face of the Eiger.

Several avalanche shelters protect the line on this section, which passes below the cables of the Eiger Express shortly before reaching Kleine Scheidegg. The climb from Lauterbrunnen is no less dramatic, with views down the valley of the cliffs and the waterfalls tumbling down them. Beyond Wengernalp the view changes to provide a close-up panorama of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, their snowy summits towering above the train.

## New rolling stock

Immediately after the Second World War the WAB started to introduce bogie railcars to power its passenger trains, with SLM BDhe4/4 101 the first of a class of 24, the last arriving in 1970. Eight have been modernised and survive on the WAB today while others have been scrapped or sold, with several moving to the forestry line at Vișeu de Sus in Romania.

In 1988 SLM delivered four two-car BDhe 4/8 sets, nos 131-4, but these were the last to come from the WAB's traditional supplier as SLM's rack division was sold to Stadler in 1998. The new builder's first contribution was to deliver ten Bhe 4/8 railcars, 141-50, equipped with a panoramic centre section and low-floor entrances, with batches arriving in 2004, 2014 and 2015.

The BOB has also recently ordered extra passenger stock from Stadler so that later this decade it can operate a 15-minute service to both Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald, in effect an Alpine Metro. With the loss of Jungfraujoch traffic to the Eiger Express the WAB is currently unlikely to need such a high frequency over the whole route – trains usually operate half-hourly – but on about 100 days a year the number of passengers between Lauterbrunnen and Wengen is enough to warrant an enhanced service.

Since 2023 this has been provided by the Wengen Shuttle, which operates from a dedicated platform at







Lauterbrunnen, departing 15 minutes after the Kleine Scheidegg train. Wengen also has a separate platform for the shuttle, but downhill it operates in convoy with the Kleine Scheidegg trains. For this service there are two sets of 2023 Stadler low-floor stock, powered by a class of three 2023 Stadler He(m) locos. A diesel generator can be fitted to any one of them, meaning that for the first time since electrification a train can run if the overhead power fails.

Wengen is a car-free village with no public road access, making it entirely dependent on the railway. To support passenger and goods traffic the Federal Government and the Canton of Bern provide an annual subsidy towards both the operational and infrastructure costs, which in 2024 amounted to CHF6,995,000 (about £6,575,000).

Between Lauterbrunnen and Wengen there are up to seven freight workings daily, transporting annually about 13,000 tonnes uphill and 8,000 tonnes down. The Wengen shuttle locomotives can be used for goods trains, along with two modern He 2/2 locos, built by SLM/Stadler in 1995. A couple of the original 1909 electrics remain in WAB service while seven more now work on the nearby Schynige Platte-Bahn.

**Above: Kleine Scheidegg, on an exposed pass well above the tree line, can be a bleak place in winter, though the driver of this train waiting to leave the station looks undaunted by the weather.**

**Above right: Representing the WAB's latest motive power, 2023-built He(m) 41 heads a Wengen Shuttle set out of Wengen station on the way back down to Lauterbrunnen.**

**This page: In winter the area round Kleine Scheidegg is a skiers' paradise. The lift leading up towards the Lauberhorn slopes is prominent in the background as three coupled sets of 1988 stock start the descent to Grindelwald.**

## Handling the traffic

Much of the extra traffic to Wengen is generated by sporting events, particularly the Lauberhorn downhill ski race, the longest run on the ski World Cup circuit. The race is held in January and presents a major logistical challenge to the WAB. In 2025 40,000 spectators, along with their equipment and luggage, were carried on the Saturday alone while goods transport for the event starts in October and finishes in March. All this requires meticulous planning and takes place when the weather is at its worst, though the WAB is well-equipped with snow-clearing machines. The September Jungfrau Marathon, a run which starts at Interlaken, 568m above sea level, and finishes at Eigergletscher, 1752m higher, presents similar challenges to the WAB albeit on a smaller scale.

For a long time, probably since the 1930s, the WAB has worked closely with the JB and BOB, latterly using the marketing tagline 'Railways of the Jungfrau Region', also including routes such as the line to Mürren.

The individual railways remained separate companies until 1994 when the WAB, JB and the Mürren line formally merged as Jungfrau Holding AG (Jungfrau Railway Group) which also owns many of the region's cableways, including the Eiger Express.

Close co-operation with the BOB Group continues through common administration by Jungfrauabahn Management AG, jointly owned by both groups with JB being the majority shareholder.

For many years the WAB was perhaps a little overlooked as just the middle stage of the journey to Jungfraujoch. Today the Eiger Express has taken much of this traffic away, returning the WAB to its origins, providing public transport to Wengen and opening up this immensely scenic region for summer and winter sports.

The WAB is a railway more than worth seeing in its own right, an ideal illustration of what can be achieved by narrow gauge railways in the 21st century. Trains are invariably smart, frequent, punctual, reliable – and profitable, the JB Group yet again posting record first-half results in 2025. For the enthusiast the only thing missing is steam, but a short distance away is Brienz, where former WAB no 1 provides a reminder of how things were in the distant days of 1893. **NGW**

## More Information

Donald is extremely grateful to Annette Fuhrer and her colleagues at the JB Group for their generous help with information and illustrations.

The previous articles in this series covered the Bergbahn Lauterbrunnen Mürren (NGW186) and the Jungfraubahn (NGW190).





# Waking a sleeping giant

Change is coming to a line that has previously generated little coverage in *NGW*. Andrew Charman previews a new era on the Brecon Mountain Railway.

This writer will admit, the Brecon Mountain Railway has never really floated my boat, and I know I'm not the only enthusiast who feels that way. It's different to the norm, its spectacular scenery traversed by American locomotives, but this 1ft 11¾in gauge line, built on a standard gauge trackbed as a pure commercial operation, with its engineering and operational headquarters contained within an impressively large but bland single building at Pant just outside Merthyr Tydfil, has always appeared rather soulless.

Now, just over 45 years after it first opened, the BMR is facing the

biggest change in its history, with a tortuous process underway to sell the line to the Vale of Rheidol Railway – reviving, rather than establishing, a link, as we will see shortly.

To learn how wide-ranging this change could be, on a damp but busy October half term weekday *NGW* paid a visit to the Brecon line for the first time in many years, for a chat with the man who as general manager will head up the new era.

Stuart Williams will be a name familiar to many *NGW* readers. Between 2017 and 2023 he served as GM at the Talylyn Railway before heading north to Orkney to head a development trust. "I always told the Talylyn I would only do five years and the Orkney post was really interesting but only ever intended to be short-term,"

Stuart told *NGW*.







"We always planned to move back closer to Sarah's (Stuart's partner) family once the right post came up. For once I've followed her instead of her following me."

The Rheidol planning to buy the BMR appeared to be just such an opportunity. "When the news broke I texted Llŷr (ap Iolo, VoR managing director) suggesting he would need someone to run the new line and he said let's have a chat."

The upshot is that Stuart is now employed by the VoR, seconded to the BMR as general manager but also spending time at Aberystwyth. He supports the commercial and marketing strategy and assists with HR and operational processes, allowing Llŷr, now CEO, to focus on the broader direction of the railways and the charity.

### The missing link

The VoR has changed beyond all recognition in recent times and it's reasonable to expect similar might happen on the BMR, but why would the Rheidol want to buy another railway? What many do not realise is that the VoR owes its transformation to the line further south.

The link is Peter Rampton, a name back in the spotlight in recent times with the publication of the biography *Narrow Gauge Enigma*. While travelling much of the world acquiring the locos that became the famed Collection X, Peter also dreamed of building his own line, and in 1975 was much taken with a proposal from Tony Hills, a fellow enthusiast who had his own small collection of locos at Gilfach Ddu, Llanberis in north Wales.

Tony proposed building a line on the trackbed of the former Brecon and Merthyr Railway. Peter provided both finance and rail for the new line which he enthusiastically got involved in, at one time planning to operate some of the Isle of Man carriages in

**Heading: A typical busy day at Pant, crowds brave the weather to watch loco no 1 being oiled round.**

**Below far left: The BMR's current steam fleet, seen here on a photo charter in October. Photo: Andrew Simmonds**

**Below left: Stuart Williams will oversee the new era. Photo: BMR**

**Above: Loco no 1 'Santa Teresa' is a powerful example of American motive power.**

**Below: Loco no 2 rests in the BMR's impressive works at Pant.**

**All photos by Andrew Charman, 21st October 2025, unless credited**

his collection on the Brecon line, and potentially even a Garratt locomotive.

Then in 1988 when British Railways put the Rheidol line up for sale, Tony Hills persuaded Peter that it would be a good investment, and the successful tender for the line was made by the Brecon Mountain Railway. Peter would spend the next 30 years pouring millions of pounds of investment into the Rheidol and for some years the two lines were effectively operated as one, VoR locos overhauled in the BMR's impressive workshops and Tony Hills managing both lines for a period.

"The VoR is a well-funded railway, Peter Rampton left it a good legacy and one of the ways in which that legacy can be honoured is to spend it on acquiring the BMR," Stuart said.

"It does tick a lot of boxes to run two railways under one umbrella. They are run in very similar ways, paid staff with no volunteers, very different catchment areas but very similar operating methods."

### Sleeping giant

Stuart regards the BMR as a sleeping giant of untapped potential. Tony Hills, who died in 2015, was an

enthusiast first and staff had even described the BMR as an engineering workshop with a five-mile test track.

"They were happy with their business, no-one pushing for growth, benefitting from a large trade each year with Santa Specials at Christmas. I'd never been here, never been interested in coming here, narrow gauge in South Wales with American stock running alongside a lake didn't do it for me. So Sarah and I had a day here – I walked in the door, around the workshop, liked that it was neat and tidy with no scrap hanging around, but thought as a whole it was very drab, no excitement, no information, but nice friendly staff.

"I thought I could do something here – I could see I could make a difference which got me quite excited. If you can't make a difference there's no point – if I went to the Rheidol now I would think what more could I do? It's also excited Llŷr because we can make something special, especially as unlike Aberystwyth, or Tywyn, here you are in a huge catchment area."

Once the legalities over the purchase are concluded the two lines »







will effectively be run as one; “It will be the VoR trading as the BMR, the bills paid by one entity, everyone employed by the VoR”.

How quickly this will happen, however, remains to be seen, the current main sticking point being land ownership. While the BMR owns all of its station sites, much of the trackbed is owned by Dŵr Cymru, Welsh Water, which granted Tony Hills a lease to run on it. He tried to renew the lease some years ago but this was never concluded.

Stuart admitted dealing with Dŵr Cymru has been challenging, adding delays; “The VoR has charitable objectives, and as such it cannot buy a company, only the assets of a company. If it bought the assets without a new lease it would not have the authority to run a railway so as a charity you would not take that risk.

“It could all change very quickly, if Dŵr Cymru puts a new lease in front of the VoR team. Until then we cannot proceed but when it happens,

we can turn on the taps – and those taps change every day...”

Stuart is chomping at the bit to make what he describes as quick wins, such as tarmacising the entire car park at Pant and putting solar panels on the roof of the building; “that would tick a lot of the right boxes and save a lot of money”.

### Capacity challenge

More significant is addressing the line’s capacity issues, a problem many other railways would like to have. “In August we ran at 97 per cent capacity for the month and on most days we were at 100 per cent. A new carriage is being built for us at Aberystwyth, but our platform at Pant is not long enough for more than six-carriage trains because of the run-round.”

When the BMR was built the original station site at Pant was not available so the new terminus was sited slightly further west, over the tunnel of the former branch to Dowlais – the tunnel ventilator

**Above: Loco no 1 pauses its train on the return trip at Pontsticill, with passengers decamping to the lakeside tearoom that was installed in a pair of former newspaper vans as a temporary measure – 40 years ago.**

**Below: Stuart regards improving the catering facilities at Pontsticill as an early priority.**

remains in the BMR car park. Currently a sharp right curve takes the line out of the station and onto the original trackbed.

Recently the opportunity arose for the BMR to acquire the parcel of land that includes the old station site. The standard gauge platforms still exist but are sadly just a bit too far away from today’s station building, but new longer platforms could be built on the land, also allowing the building of further covered stock accommodation on the current site.

Further measures would include moving the café, currently at the car park level of the two-storey building, up to platform level. “The café should be at this level, you can’t see anything downstairs. We’d keep the downstairs for interpretation, toilets and the museum and have all the retail upstairs.”

Stuart did admit that the scheme is “pie in the sky” thinking, the idea initially broached just days before NGW’s visit! “But it kind of makes sense – there is loads of room.”

The next major development area is at Pontsticill, at the southern end of the reservoir of the same name and terminus of the line when it opened in 1980. Operations were extended to Dol-y-gaer in 1995 and to today’s terminus of Torpantau in 2014, and the line has since operated in a similar way that the Tallylyn Railway uses its Abergynolwyn station.

Torpantau, like Nant Gwernol on the Tallylyn, is a terminus with no facilities located in the middle of nowhere – it only gained a small shelter in the last year thanks to a grant from Visit Wales. So trains simply run round and head back to Pontsticill where they pause for 35 minutes allowing passengers to use the café facilities.

“The café is two standard gauge newspaper wagons that were turned into a café on a temporary basis 40 years ago. They’re not fit for purpose, queuing is a perennial issue, and replacing them with a better building, probably wider, with windows overlooking the lake, is a high priority. In the summer it can be a lovely place to spend time at.”

Also at Pontsticill is the house that was Tony Hills’ home, a signal box and a building formerly used as a museum, all of which could be turned into holiday lets.

### Going further?

Finally there is Torpantau itself, which Stuart believes has great potential. First, however, the new BMR team needed to establish whether there was any prospect of further extending the line towards Talybont-on-Usk, through the





666-yard Torpantau tunnel. Famed as the highest standard gauge tunnel in Great Britain, its portal stands a few hundred yards beyond the station.

"We walked the seven miles from Torpantau to Talybont just to see what was still there. There are many culverts, little bridges and a Naval training centre for officers which is on the old trackbed and would make for an interesting access issue."

Stuart believes the route would provide an interesting run at a steady 1 in 38 gradient, but it would have to justify itself commercially. "We would do it if it made money and the only way that would happen would be if the grant-giving authorities said we want an epic groundbreaking project, here's several million. If it did happen it would likely be run not with heritage trains but Swiss-style using battery-electric traction and carriages with overhead windows for the views".

So any extension idea has been parked though Stuart did add "never say never". There is, however, a Plan B, moving the present station over the road to Talybont, onto the site of the original station, closer to the tunnel. "We own the trackbed right up to the tunnel. I'd like to resurrect two platforms, and build a nice visitor centre, toilets, café and such.

"We could open the tunnel up to walking and cycling, offer electric bike hire. The tunnel is great – it's carved straight out of stone so it's in brilliant condition and both portals are listed structures. It's currently full of water, which is just a case of sorting the drainage."

The road will present an issue. Originally it crossed under the standard gauge line via a bridge, but when the line closed Powys County Council simply rerouted it across the trackbed. While Stuart would like to install a level crossing, in today's environment he expects that a new bridge would be necessary.

"Even if we can't do that then plan C would be to put something more substantial at the existing station – it's a more natural stopping point, halfway through the return journey".

## More trains

Such developments could even result in the line operating a two-train service at certain times of the year. Currently one engine in steam is the norm, but the BMR team are acutely aware that they currently turn away visitors in the summer.

"We have only previously opened five days a week, so I'm planning in 2026 to switch to a typical five-six-seven format – five days in April and May, six from the May bank holiday and then if I can get the staff seven

for the summer before ramping back down again. Such a schedule makes it easier to recruit staff because you can give them meaningful employment".

The demand is certainly there, the BMR over its main season reporting a 15 per cent increase in passengers and 22% in revenue compared to 2024.

A two-train service would require more carriage stock. Two more chassis are available to be sent to the VoR to have bodies built on them in due course, likely to follow an idea expressed by Tony Hills of building American-style clerestory carriages.

Stuart also enviously eyes the replica of a parlour car that ran on the Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railroad in Maine, USA, built by the late Adrian Shooter for his Beeches Light Railway and today at Statfold; "I've sold £25,000 worth of afternoon and cream teas this year, but not on the train – they would be much more

attractive on the train and such a vehicle could be perfect for that."

## Stateside potential

The American theme, the BMR's USP (unique selling point) grew from the line's two service steam locos being US prototypes, and Stuart intends to more heavily market it. "We'll do an event for Independence Day. We have a cupola with its raised viewing window and we now offer rides in it – it's most uncomfortable but offers great views.

"We have box cars among our stock so why not make use of them? People would pay to ride in them. They are currently only used at Christmas and on photo charters".

What about motive power, however? For many years services relied on Orenstein & Koppel 0-6-2T 'Graf Schwerin-Löwitz' (1261/1908) but the extensions with their stiffer »

**Above: End of the line at Torpantau – a lovely spot in the right weather but with very little in the way of facilities.**

**Below: Running round the train at Torpantau – the recently installed grant-funded shelter can be seen at right.**







gradients rendered the small loco redundant and today it is displayed in the VoR's museum at Aberystwyth.

The BMR's core motive power is now a pair of Baldwin tender locos; first to enter service in 1997 was 4-6-2 61269 of 1939, built for the Eastern Province Cement Company in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

'Santa Teresa' (15511/1897), acquired in 2002 and curiously

taking no 1 in the Brecon fleet, is a 2-6-2 that spent its working life in Brazil, latterly at a sugar mill.

Surely with two-train operation a third steam loco would be desirable? Stuart is not so sure. "You would like to have a third loco for resilience but we have a quite large diesel that doesn't get used much," this being TU7 1698, a 400hp bo-bo built by Kambarka Engineering in Russia in



**Above: Very visible progress on the BMR new-build project to recreate a Forney 2-4-4T.**

**Left: The cupola offers US-style travel – not very comfortable but with excellent views from its elevated position.**

**Below: One aspect of the Brecon line maybe not always appreciated is the spectacular scenery that the line runs through, superbly captured here by Karl Heath during the October photo charters.**

1981 for a Latvian peat line and imported by the BMR in 2010.

## Future Forney

A third steam loco is, however, on the way; just about the least publicised new-build in the heritage railway movement is a 2-4-4 Forney tank loco replicating the Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railroad's no 10, scrapped in 1936.

Started by Tony Hills more than 20 years ago, the project has made major progress in recent times after being adopted by his son Matthew. Currently managing director of the BMR, Matthew intends to stay on once the VoR takes over to see the build through to completion, which Stuart reckons is around three years away. "It will be more powerful than no 1 – we are not relying on it but it will be useful when it comes."

Stuart regards the recruitment of an operations and engineering manager on day one as a key move, aware that those currently in the roles are approaching retirement. "We will be able to pay well, which is not usual in the heritage railway movement," he adds. That person will need to be carefully chosen, with the enthusiasm that Stuart regards as an essential quality amongst his team.

"Everyone that works here likes visitors to enjoy themselves – for example if someone visiting is clearly highly interested I will happily walk them round the yard. While we will never go down the volunteer route the crews are enthusiasts and we all want to be welcoming, we are very proud of our railway".

So exciting times appear to lie ahead for a line perhaps previously under-appreciated by the average *NGW* reader. But amongst all the changes coming, the role played by the BMR's founder will never be forgotten. "The amount of work Tony achieved was epic – one man's vision and single-mindedness." **NGW**



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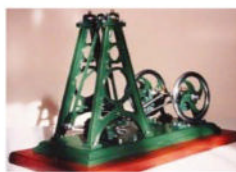
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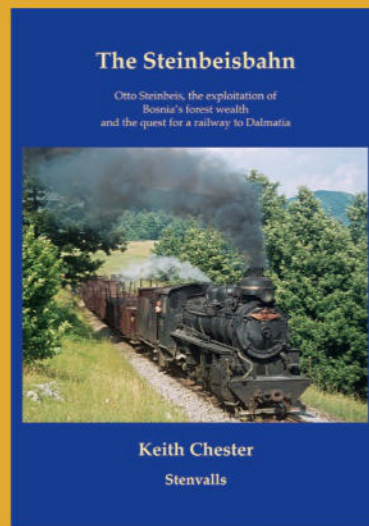
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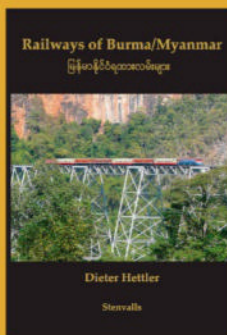
**The Steinbeisbahn**

*Otto Steinbeis, the exploitation of Bosnia's forest wealth and the quest for a railway to Dalmatia.*

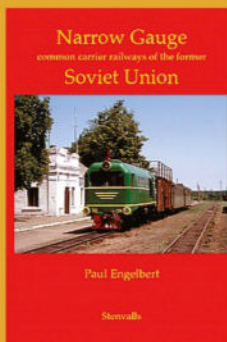
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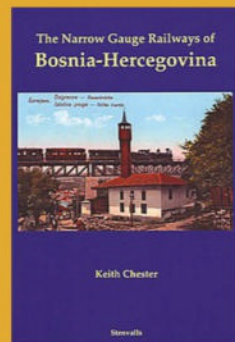


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# November at the National

A trip to the Birmingham NEC for a national model railway exhibition remains a November tradition, enjoyed again this year by *Andrew Charman*.



Having stepped in to take over the National Model Railway Exhibition at the NEC Birmingham in November 2024, after previous organisers the Warley Model Railway Club decided to step back from organising the show, Warners, publishers of *NGW*, returned for a second now renamed National Festival of Railway Modelling over the weekend of 22nd-23rd November.

Now obviously I may be slightly biased but I saw at this year's show what appeared to be definite progress on what was an

enjoyable first event 12 months earlier. Okay it was not of comparable size to the Warley Nationals of old, and in truth there likely wasn't any intention to be – they were huge shows and perhaps organising such a monster played a part in their demise.

For me a hall with some 60 layouts in it and plenty of trade support, plus advice theatres and demonstrations (providing a great excuse to take the weight off one's legs for a while) and even the return of a full-size loco in Phil Mason's Kerr, Stuart

Above: 'Filling Up' was entered in the modular layout competition organised by Peco, and described over the page. It crammed a superb amount of evocative detail into a small space.

Below left: More tabletop-sized excellence, recalling the long-lost Ashover Light Railway in 009 scale and built by David Wright.

Below: The 7mm scale Lynton & Barnstaple-inspired 'Shadows of Exmoor', built by Paul Steadman, certainly drew the crowds.

All photos by Andrew Charman







'Diana' on the Rapido Trains stand (*see the UK news pages*) provided plenty to fill a day's visit.

Back in the Warley days all of the narrow gauge layouts used to be grouped together in their own section of the hall, which was helpful but did rather keep one in a single part of the show. There was still a pleasing selection of varied narrow gauge content at the Festival, you just had to seek it out, which meant you also noticed other layouts you might not have paid attention to previously.

For this all-too occasional modeller the highlight was definitely the various entries in the Peco layout competition, detailed below and inspiring a potential restarting of the temporarily paused **NGW** project layout – watch this space!

The Festival is of just the right size and content to make for an enjoyable day out but still with plenty of space to further evolve. Next year's event, set for the 21st and 22nd November, is already entered in the diary... **NGW**

## Small objects of delight...

Back in the days of the late-lamented Expo NG exhibition a highlight was always the Dave Brewer Challenge, usually involving building a diorama in a very limited space, often in odd items such as briefcases or filing boxes.

Well model manufacturer Peco seemed to have revived that tradition with its competition as part of the Railway 200 celebrations, the finalists of which were displayed at the NEC.

The premise of the contest, launched in May, was the purchase of a laser-cut baseboard, measuring 29½ x 12 inches (750 by 305mm) and supplied by Scale Model Scenery, and then building something on it! There were under and over-16 age groups and two classes – the modular category included a piece of OO track with the intention of the entries all being joined together at the exhibition, while there was a also Standalone category of more interest to **NGW** readers, as it encouraged entries with a narrow-gauge theme.

Peco reported that some 600 entries were made and among the winners and finalists displayed at the NEC were the five narrow gauge layouts pictured here, of widely varying themes but all delightful in their own way.

Your editor has long espoused the appeal of compact model railways and these competition entries prove the point. Their builders had just three months to produce them, and have created excellent little layouts that when displayed on a shelf or cabinet at home will provide excellent talking points. All very inspiring!





Left: 'Lynnbach' was built in 2023 by Ian Arkley, who also had an entry in the Peco layout competition illustrated below. This 009 scale layout was apparently originally created to provide somewhere to run a newly-bought Heljan Manning Wardle 2-6-2T loco but "took on a life of its own".

Demonstrating excellent scenic work, the layout was featured in the November issue of NGW's sister magazine *British Railway Modelling*.

Right: More topical modelling, but in a much larger scale - 'Penrhyn Quarries', built by Bill Ferguson, superbly recalls what it was like to work in the depths of winter at the giant Welsh slate quarry, right down to a frozen waterfall.

Judging by the crowds constantly around it the 1/32nd scale (10mm to the foot) layout, stretching several feet long, impressed many visitors, especially its scratchbuilt slate buildings based on structures at the real quarry. The locos and rolling stock are 3D printed, running on 16.5mm gauge track.



Five creations, all exactly the same size, unique in their own way demonstrated both the possibilities of a compact layout and the imagination of UK railway modellers.

Top left: A finalist in the over 126 category, 'Bradshaw's Wharf - Waiting for High Tide' was created in 1:32nd scale by members of the Horsham Model Railway Club.



Centre left: Another 009 entry in the under-16 category, 'Wilmington Grammar School for Trains' was created by pupils at the school.

Below left: Simple, attractive and a great test track for locos - 'Symonds Park' in 009 scale was entered by 13-year old Harry Symonds in the Under 16 category.

Above right: Also in 009, 'Abbey Shed' perhaps recalls the lost 2ft gauge line of the same name? An over-16 category entry by Ian Arkley.

Right: The editor's favourite, the 7mm scale First World War-themed 'Filling Up', built by Kevin Harlow.







## Seen at the NEC...

Further attractions for 009 modellers at the National Festival of Railway Modelling included the prototype of the latest version of the Kerr, Stuart Sirdar from Rapido Trains UK (<http://rapidotrains.co.uk>), displayed with a cane bin mounted on the boiler, and close by the full-size Sirdar 'Diana' (see *UK News*).

Revolution Trains (<http://revolutiontrains.com>) displayed finished versions of the long-awaited Vale of Rheidol 2-6-2Ts that it is producing in conjunction with *Model Rail* magazine, with all four historic liveries on show including Rail Blue.

## Puffing Billy carriages in 7mm scale

Anyone who invested in the superb 7mm scale (On30) model of the Puffing Billy NA class loco from Taiwanese manufacturer Haskell, after we reviewed it way back in 2014 in *NGW*93, will be interested to know that there are now suitable carriages available from the same maker, though you may have to make an effort to get them...

There are four different versions of the open NBH class carriage on offer, the originals in Crimson Lake with long running boards and cream/grey blinds, mid 1950s-early/1960s red with short running boards and cream/grey blinds and a yellow stripe on the side, mid 1960s-early 2000s

in red with short running boards and green blinds, and modern preservation, Crimson Lake, short running board, green blinds.

They are only sold in packs of two and tracing them is less than simple – *NGW* correspondent Michael Chapman learnt about them while chatting in a model shop on his latest trip to Australia, but he found they were not advertised on the Haskell website. He did find them, however, at [www.facebook.com/HaskellCoTaiwan/](http://www.facebook.com/HaskellCoTaiwan/)

The cost of a twin-pack for shipping to Australia was 250 Australian dollars though it was set to rise – what price they might be to UK buyers is a question yet to be asked...



## Shock as Pecorama to stay closed in 2026

Modellers and miniature railway enthusiasts have reacted with shock to news from Peco that its Pecorama attraction at the factory in Beer, Devon, will not open in 2026.

The venue, as well as hosting an exhibition encompassing several layouts in various scales, is home to the Beer Heights Light Railway, one of the finest 7¼-inch gauge miniature lines in the UK which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2025.

Peco stated that the decision had been taken "with great sadness and after much soul-searching," and was due to the business continuing to make a loss.

"What is generally not known is that Pecorama is only profitable for about four months of the year and in the remaining months has to be supported financially – this has been the case for many years," the statement added.

"With the challenging economic climate and costs continuing to rise, the Peco parent company cannot continue to give this support each year to Pecorama. There is sincere hope that Pecorama can reopen in future in a new format which will continue to give lots of inspiration, fun and pleasure to our visitors. But, for the moment Peco will be focusing on growing the core businesses of manufacturing and publishing."

On being informed of the decision some staff members have opted for voluntary redundancy. Some activities will continue in 2026, including drive a loco experiences on the BHLR.



A sight not to be seen in 2026? Single Fairlie 'Claudine', built by the Beer Heights Light Railway in 2005, standing at Much Natter in October 2024. Photo: James Waite

**NGW** is constantly on the lookout for new material to appear in our modelling pages, including news of new products in all the modelling scales. If you have something that you think our readers will find of interest, please contact us at [editor@narrowgaugeworld.co.uk](mailto:editor@narrowgaugeworld.co.uk)

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## Amerton Railway

### Amerton events in 2026!



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**Pirates & Princesses Day : 17th May**

**Isabel Day : 7th June**

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**Teddy Bear Days : Weekends in August**

**Everything Goes Gala : 3rd - 4th October**

**Trick or Treat Trains for Halloween :**

**28th & 31st October**

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Look out for monthly Events on our website

For Updates on what's going on at Amerton please visit

[www.amertonrailway.co.uk](http://www.amertonrailway.co.uk)

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## Build your own NG7 carriages

Peco is re-introducing its injection-moulded plastic carriage kits in NG7, 7mm to the foot scale. Making up into a suitably generic four-wheeled narrow-gauge vehicle and including wheels and couplings, the kits were first launched in the earliest days of 7mm scale commercial narrow gauge under the Great Little Trains banner and supplied factory-painted. Now the latest version is supplied unpainted for the modeller to add their own livery.

Also available are a series of additional body panels and detail components allowing the modeller to create bespoke carriages, four-wheel or bogie and of varying lengths.

Produced by Peco  
Tel: 01297 626204  
E-mail: info@peco.co.uk  
Web: www.peco-uk.com  
Price: Carriage £29.95 – see website for component prices



■ This is rather different, a static model of a Deutz-design Wls40 diesel and tipper wagons, 3D printed in 1/32nd or 1/35th scale by Polish maker Nanofaktura. The website (<https://en.nanofaktura.pl>) is available in English and includes a vast range of road and rail vehicles. Prices are quoted in local currency or US dollars – the models come with printing supports that need to be removed and with international shipping this one will cost just under £100.



■ Trenarren Models, a long-established supplier to the 16mm scale branch of the hobby, has released a pair of resin kits for Penrhyn slate quarry rolling stock. Both the Fullersite wagon (above) and the runner wagon (below) boast fine moulding and also brass detail components and wheels by Slaters Finecast. Couplings are also supplied.

Both kits are available for 32mm gauge only, at £45 for the Fullersite wagon and £35 for the runner wagon, and can be ordered from [www.trenarrenmodels.co.uk](http://www.trenarrenmodels.co.uk)



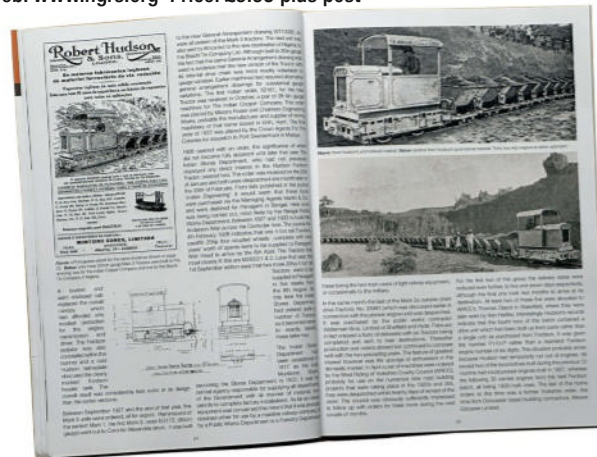
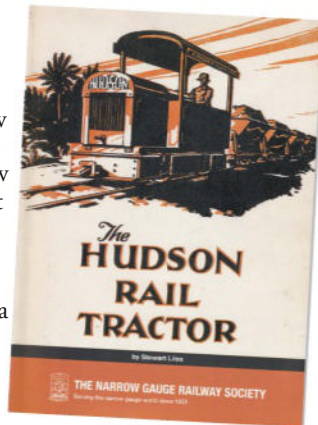
## The Hudson Rail Tractor by Stewart Liles

■ Regular readers of *NGW* will know that we constantly promote the benefits of membership of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society, and this latest publication, running to 64 pages, is one of them.

On a regular basis the quarterly members magazine (issued alongside a bi-monthly newsletter) turns into a book, usually covering a subject in impressive detail – *The Hudson Rail Tractor* follows the trend. The author has clearly heavily researched his subject – the history of these stalwart i/c locos through various evolutions is covered in depth, with a complete listing of every loco made, information on surviving examples, loads of period photos, advertisements and general arrangement drawings all included.

The book can be bought at an inexpensive price – but for £32 a year (or £20 if you choose to download copies of the magazines) you can have full membership of the NGRS and get titles like these on a regular basis, plus a lot more. *AC*

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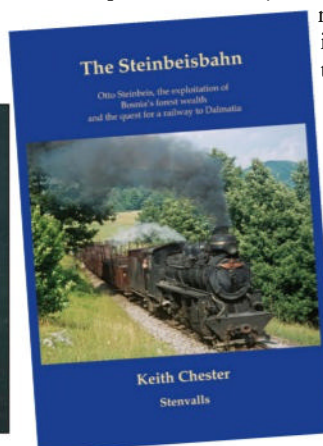
## Keith lifts lid on Bosnian forest network

From respected publisher Stenvalls in Sweden comes a new book produced by *NGW* correspondent Keith Chester on the Steinbeisbahn, a 760mm gauge network created by entrepreneur Otto Steinbeis to exploit forests in northwest Bosnia in 1893 and which by 1918 had grown in length to about 560km – the largest system of forestry railways under a single management in Europe.

Keith told us the book has been over two decades in the making. Based largely on original archival material, it is the first to describe in detail Steinbeis' railways both in Bosnia and Bavaria and explores how the system got around bitter and destructive rivalries between Vienna and Budapest in the decades before the Great War, that impacted railway building throughout the Balkans. It traces the development of forestry railways in Central Europe, with a focus on Bosnia, and is also a close study of an industrial railway operating under the extremes of wartime conditions.

The 424-page book is illustrated with nearly 500 photos, drawings and specially prepared maps. There are full locomotive and stock lists.

Cost is £45.00 or €50.00 plus post and the book can be ordered by email from [info@stenvalls.com](mailto:info@stenvalls.com)





## The Twilight Years of Taiwan's Sugar Railways

Dafydd Fell and Wang Hsiang

■ Regular *NGW* readers are likely familiar with the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway's loco 17, a yellow Diema diesel bought from the Taiwan Sugar Corporation (TSC) some 20 years ago. But they are much less likely to know anything about its previous owner, or Taiwan's sugar mill railways, if only because until now almost nothing about them has appeared in the English language.

As the authors of this fascinating new book, subtitled 'The World's Most Extraordinary Industrial Railway', explain, this was no ordinary system. At its peak, the TSC rail network stretched more than 3000km, more than three times the size of the country's state-owned railway system. And its traffic was far more than just sugar and sugar products, also carrying salt, cement, petroleum and public passengers, complete with express railcars.

The network included a north-south trunk line linking most of the mills, its heavy traffic governed by electronic train-control, civil engineering features which included a bridge more than one mile in length and running over track laid with concrete sleepers and maintained by bespoke ballast tampers. For good measure, this was on the 2ft 6in gauge, making it at one time possibly the most extensive such system in the world.

While all of this is explained by the authors, this is no conventional railway history. In the 1990s Dafydd Fell was first a language student, then a language teacher, in the southern Taiwanese city of Kaohsiung. An initial curiosity about the extensive narrow gauge lines criss-crossing the countryside was fuelled by regular visits to his then girlfriend's (now wife's) family as her father worked for TSC, and with this came the realisation that the entire system was living on borrowed time, changes in global markets and Taiwan's runaway economic growth contributing to a precipitous decline in production.

Over the best part of five years, and in a race against time, Fell made it his mission to record in photographs as much as possible of the system while it survived. His determination was impressive, requiring (very) early morning starts and lengthy bicycle rides in the tropical heat. His students suffered meanwhile from cancelled language classes when he found himself miles from anywhere after accepting an invitation to what turned out to be a long cab-ride, being detained by a security guard, or, one suspects, simply allowing his enthusiasm to get the better of him (he doesn't tell us how his students reacted).

Fellow author Wang Hsiang's objective was a little different, for realising how little of TSC's history had been recorded, he embarked on a remarkable one-man oral history project to interview as many older surviving sugar mill railway workers as possible. All were in their 80s, the oldest over 100 and some of them recalled life and work in the pre-1945 Japanese colonial era.

The resulting book combines Fell's memories, primarily in photos, with Wang's personal records, to make an absorbing

account of a remarkable railway system in its latter years. It is set out in a chronological sequence of five chapters, one for each of the milling seasons from 1994 until 1999, with a brief introduction and conclusion.

The format will be familiar to readers of other works from the same publisher – 112 pages, mainly of photos, usually two to a page and with a detailed caption accompanying each. Together, these do much to convey not just the factual aspects of the picture but also the wider context and the background of rapid political and social change in Taiwan at the time, as well as many of the details of railway operations.

The photos are all in colour, to a high standard and often containing intriguing background detail. Some of the detail can be hard to see, however, and this reviewer would have welcomed some of the photos being reproduced in a larger size to overcome this. Four maps of the network are also included but reading the detailed descriptions of complex junctions at some of the more important mills can still be confusing, and additional maps of some of these would have been helpful.

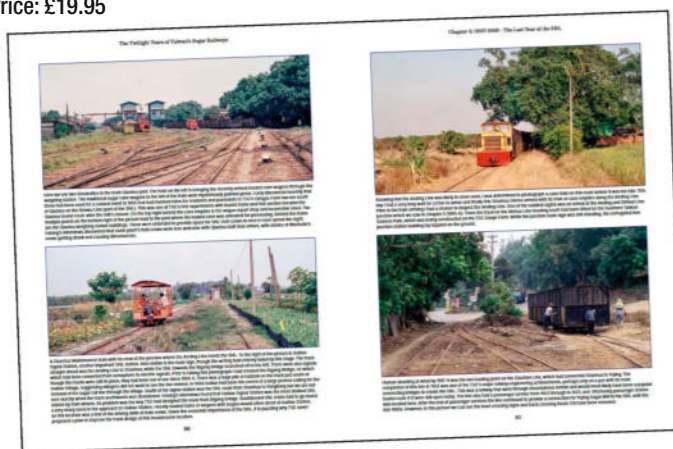
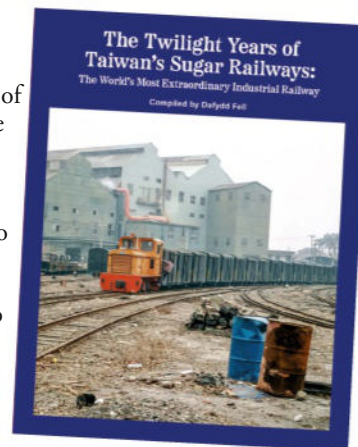
These are, however, minor quibbles that do not detract from a delightful record of a now bygone era, a pleasure to read, and a mine of useful information. It is a real bargain at the price. **MR**

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## Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Gala Days

Vol 19 (DVD)

■ The ever-dedicated Trevor Garnham continues the comprehensive coverage of Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Gala events which he has now been carrying on for more than a decade, with the very laudable aim of helping to raise money for the extension of the railway giving him more to film in future!

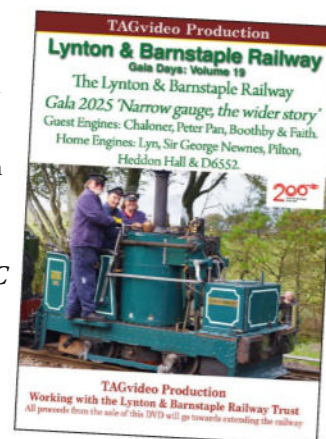
This year's Gala in September was a Railway 200-themed event, under the title 'Narrow Gauge, the Wider Story'. The four visiting locos included two steamers, the vertical-boilered De Winton 'Chaloner' from Leighton Buzzard and the well-travelled Kerr, Stuart Wren 0-4-0ST 'Peter Pan', while Baldwin 'Lyn' and Bagnall 'Sir George Newnes' led the home steam fleet.

As is typical of these productions Trevor proves a full report of every aspect of the weekend, from preparation on the Friday to the final movements on Sunday with the highlight being an 'International Parade' of 10 locos. The people essential to the event's organisation are not forgotten, while a recent innovation is

the addition of impressive aerial views of the action using a drone-mounted camera. We also get an onboard view of the line filmed from the footplate of Sir George Newnes.

Note that Trevor's DVDs are now only available directly from him at the email address below. This latest production is an excellent detailed report of a fun weekend in Devon for a bargain price, while Trevor is also enclosing a copy of the Gala programme with each order. **AC**

Produced by TAG Video Productions,  
to order email Trevor Garnham at  
[tagvideoproductions@gmail.com](mailto:tagvideoproductions@gmail.com)  
80 minutes, Price £12.00 plus post





# VIEWPOINT

## Anyone have a spare Simplex?

I am writing on behalf of the Staffordshire Regiment Museum in Whittington, which covers all aspects of the 300-year history of the Staffords ([www.armymuseums.org.uk/listing/staffordshire-regiment-museum/](http://www.armymuseums.org.uk/listing/staffordshire-regiment-museum/)). We also have a World War One trench system used for educational visits by schools, in addition to visits by the public – we are open every day plus special events.

At present, however, there is little visual evidence of the comprehensive narrow gauge railway systems which supplied the trenches. Although there is plenty of room in the museum's grounds for such a system to be constructed, this may take a while. In the meantime, as a static exhibit we would like to acquire a 2ft gauge 'bent frame' Simplex-type locomotive, which at present does not have to be in working order.

Does anyone out there have one they can sell, or better still donate to the museum? It does not have to be a genuine First World War example. A lot of these Simplex type locomotives were used in such industries as sewage works until quite recently.

If anyone can help please email [donaldhigham389@btinternet.com](mailto:donaldhigham389@btinternet.com) with a photo if possible. Thank you.

**Don Higham**

## How many Hawthorns?

In your recent news article (*NGW*198) about the Black Hawthorn loco at Statfold being evaluated for restoration, it stated that Black Hawthorn only built two narrow gauge locos. This is incorrect as I have recently been viewing a photo of 'James', a close sister to the preserved 3ft gauge example, and which was used on the Cowpe line in Rossendale, Lancashire.

There were at least five separate 3ft gauge systems in the area, some of them inheriting locomotives from the lines used in the construction of a couple of series of reservoirs further to the north.

Further information can be found in *Railways and Mineral Tramways of Rossendale*, and on the internet, *Valley of Stone* ([www.valleyofstone.org.uk](http://www.valleyofstone.org.uk)) which has a photo of James.

**Robin Madge**

*Andrew C replies:* Not being by any means a student of Black Hawthorn's output I bow to Robin's superior knowledge and blame that traditional source, duff info supplied!

## Surviving Welsh weather

The Ffestiniog Railway gravity train picture in the Gallery section of *NGW*198, from the wild and wet Bygones event in October,

***"Returning across the Cob light engine with a strong wind and high tide had anything that was not fastened to the engine trying to take off whilst waves broke across the track..."***

**Above right: The ubiquitous Motor Rail Simplex, seen here at Apedale's Tracks to the Trenches event in 2016, was a stalwart of the event and now an Army museum would like to find one to put on display – see the letter from Don Higham. Photo: Andrew Charman**

**Right: Would you like to be a member of a loco crew, or in fact any part of a railway operation, in conditions like this, eloquently described in the letter from Paul Martin? Photo: Steve Sedgwick**



says they're picking up the token for the last section. This is wrong.

The gravity train picked up the token for the Minffordd to Porthmadog section at Minffordd. The picture shows them surrendering this token to the man working the token-locked Pen Cob ground frame so he can let out the loco that propels the train to Port station (or pulls them back in to Boston Lodge).

The section is Port to Minffordd with intermediate token instruments at Boston Lodge. There are two, one in the erecting shop and one in the end of the new carriage shed. The latter was added to cut the amount of walking required once we started using the carriage shed. There are two points at Pen Cob and these have a drawer lock that requires the token to unlock them.

I drove the afternoon anti-gravity train with double-Fairlie 'David Lloyd George' and can confirm it was bleak. The hour spent at Dduallt was grim with wind-blown rain that was varying in intensity between torrential and monsoon.

Returning across the Cob light engine with a strong wind and high tide had anything that was not fastened to the engine trying to take off whilst waves broke across the track. Whilst disposing the loco it was hard to stand up and the heavy metal ramp into the ash bin took flight.

My double-headed thrash to Blaenau with 'Linda' and 'Blanche' (me on Blanche of course) was much more convivial. **Paul Martin**

*Andrew C replies:* I may be a former footplate person but I should know better than to comment on what a picture shows regarding other railways' operating procedures without checking with those that use them! In seriousness the letter from Paul, both a well-known driver on the Ffestiniog and a superb modeller through his EDM Models concern, reminds us that it can at times be quite a gruelling process providing the steam action we enthusiasts crave, and those that work to make it happen probably don't get thanked often enough.







## Delights of Irish digital archive...

Narrow gauge railways are very much to the fore in the release of films now made available for free access by Northern Ireland Screen Digital Archive (*writes Hugh Dougherty*). Featuring a mixture of news footage and quality amateur films from the 1950s and '60s, the archive has released items featuring the County Donegal Railways and the Cavan & Leitrim, as well as plenty of standard gauge-themed features.

The CDR footage was shot by an Ulster Television crew in December 1959, days before the railway closed, and sequences include diesel tractor, 'Phoenix', working over track between Lifford and Strabane which was being worked on for conversion to a road for the replacement buses and lorries as soon as the last train ran.

There are also rare views of passengers inside a railcar at Castlefinn and steam in action, while two feature films, *Old Scouts* and *A Day at the Seaside*, made by skilled amateur cameraman James Houston of Strabane, feature a railcar private hire to

take the now-grown-up scouts on a day trip to Inver. Meanwhile the whole of Strabane Presbyterian Church clammers aboard an 11-carriage steam special for Derry, on the first leg of their trip to Portrush. Both films, dating from 1953, are reminders that the narrow gauge played a key role in the communities it served and that the CDR chased all available traffic until closure.

A sequence on the Cavan & Leitrim, in all its immediate-pre-closure grime, includes action at Ballinamore and a superbly-shot item on the roadside tramway section to Arigna, making these films an excellent resource for enthusiasts, historians and modellers alike.

Evan Marshall of Northern Ireland Screen broadcast archivist wants as many *NGW* readers as possible to access the archive, saying: "We're fortunate that we have these films in our archive and that digital technology has made them accessible to all. The narrow gauge footage shows these railways doing what they did every

day, serving their communities and I'm sure that readers will thoroughly enjoy watching the footage.

"One of the UTV films we put out, *Sixties NI 5*, which largely features railways, including the narrow gauge, has been the most popular so far and shows that the public has an appetite for railway heritage."

The archive can be accessed at <https://northernirelandscreen.co.uk> – simply click on the digital archive section.

**Above left: A scene from the digital archive, showing a County Donegal class 5 loco bringing a mixed train into Lifford Station immediately before closure in December 1959.**

**Above: CDR diesel tractor 'Phoenix' runs over soon-to-be-lifted track between Lifford and Strabane as track workers prepare the road bed for conversion to a roadway for the replacement buses and lorries.**

*Both scenes copyright ITV, courtesy Northern Ireland Screen Digital Archive*

## That was the year that...

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

### From 60 years ago

#### Tallyllyn Railway

Plans for the rebuilt 'Sir Haydn' unfortunately show drastic alterations. It had been known for a long time that the plans involved cutting an entrance on the left-hand side of the cab, there having previously been an entrance on one side only. It is also realised that the cab roof was inconveniently low and made the engine very awkward to work.

Nevertheless it seems a pity that the plans involve a cab utterly different in appearance to the old, and destroy the whole proportions of the loco as it has been for many years. (*NGN, February 1966*)

*Well it seems debates on the size of cabs are by no means a recent thing. One can understand the TR's need of a left-side cab opening, seeing as its stations are all on that side. Is the cab that Sir Haydn has worn for many years so out of keeping with the loco?*

**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](http://www.ngrs.org.uk) or see the advert on page 29.**



### YouTube Watch: online NG films

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



■ We make no apologies for featuring the fabled 'Collection X' again. This short film, helmed by the ever-enthusiastic Tim Dunn, features a recent BBC news report on the collection. As well as giving a feel of what it was like to step into the secret Surrey barns, it includes brief but golden cine footage of items arriving in the 1990s when Peter Rampton was bringing together his collection. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjBEmrro-1E>



# Not a Pixie in sight...

**In the darker days of the year, it is timely for Donald Brooks to recall a winter afternoon with distinctly gothic overtones.**

Think of the Cadeby Light Railway (CLR) and the image that will almost certainly spring to mind is that of its founder, Teddy Boston, on the footplate of his Bagnall 0-4-OST 'Pixie', a locomotive almost synonymous with the line. But there were other locos at Cadeby as well and my second visit, in February 1974 when 'Pixie' was out of service, allowed me to encounter some motive power that I might otherwise have overlooked.

Arriving at Cadeby late on a February afternoon, after visits to two other railways, the loco provided for the CLR train was bow-framed Motor Rail diesel 2197. Built as a petrol machine for the War Department, its original identity remains unknown. The current works number was allotted by Motor Rail in 1923 during a rebuild after it was bought back from France in the previous year. To complicate matters further the loco was long thought to be MR3874, its real identity only being established during its time at Cadeby.

It is a sobering thought that preserved internal combustion machines can now be well over a century old and one of the most interesting times in 2197's long and varied career was right at the beginning, when it was used by the contractor McAlpine in the building of the Welsh Highland Railway during 1923. When it finally moved into preservation at Cadeby in 1965 it had been re-engined with a Dorman 2DWD diesel, which it retains today.

## Short notice

Remaining at Cadeby until 2006 when the line closed, 2197 was in very regular use for shunting and for running passenger trains at short notice or when 'Pixie' was unavailable. It was at Cadeby that 2197 acquired the 'name' '!\*!!', thought to have been applied by its owner as a joke, though Teddy Boston may not have been entirely amused. The nameplate was carried on the side of the engine cover when the loco was running in cabless form.

In 2006 the loco was bought by Simon Lomax, who has provided much of the background

**Right: Teddy Boston, who always seemed to wear his clerical collar even when working on the railway, peers pensively under the bonnet of Motor Rail 2197 in the sidings at Cadeby.**

**Below: On a winter evening O&K 7529 is seen against the background of Cadeby Church, which dates from about 1200. It seems little short of a miracle that this loco was in steam, even if only light steam, a mere three months later.**

**Photos by Donald Brooks, 21st February 1974**



information. It is now happily nameless and housed at Apedale where, sympathetically restored, it can be operated with or without its cab and has been a stalwart of the Tracks to the Trenches events.

Also at Cadeby in 1974, but stored in the open air, was 7529, a 1914 Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0WT which reached the CLR after a working life in France. The rusting locomotive, semi-silhouetted against the winter twilight, presented a slightly eerie appearance with the church looming behind. All it needed

to complete the gothic image was a few bats flittering around – and Cadeby Parish Church has a belfry.

Absolutely amazingly, just three months after seeing it in this apparently near-derelict condition, 7529 was in light steam to celebrate Teddy Boston's wedding to Audrey on 11th May 1974, though not working trains. The loco was never fully restored at Cadeby and may not have steamed much there again. In 1995 it moved to the Golden Valley Light Railway at Butterley, finally returning to service in 2022. **NGW**





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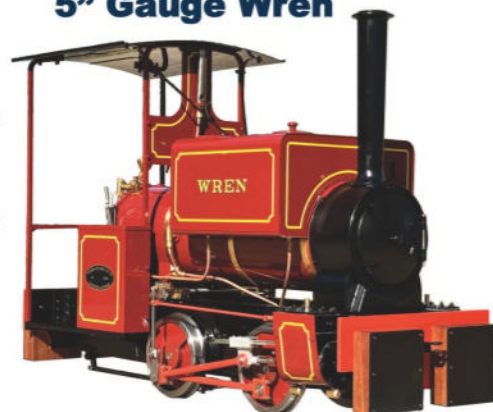


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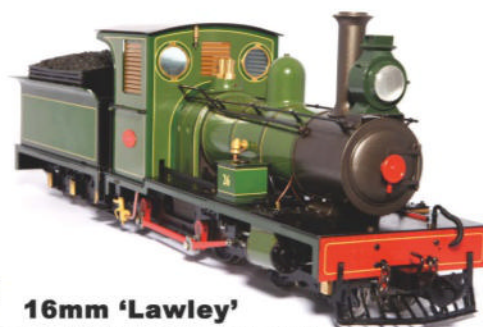
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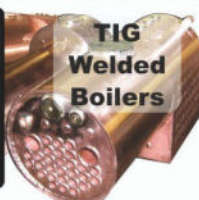
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