

Ffestiniog launches new named trains after 'huge success' of 2021 services

New Covid-secure named trains are to be introduced on the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways, against an expectation that pandemic restrictions will continue. The emphasis on online booking may also carry on beyond the pandemic, the combined FR/WHR has said.

However, tickets can still be bought at Porthmadog and Caernarfon provided space is available and the FR/WHR says the aim "is to be as flexible as possible in the light of changing Covid regulations".

New additions on the FR from late July are to be the 'Woodland Wanderer' (Porthmadog – Tanybwllch, the railway's half way point) and 'Back to Blaenau' (Porthmadog – Blaenau Ffestiniog).

On the WHR, the 'Harbourmaster' will run Porthmadog – Caernarfon, with the 'Snowdonia Star' operating Caernarfon – Porthmadog. These are in addition to existing named trains the 'Mountain Prince' (Porthmadog – Barn Cutting, near Dduallt), 'Glaslyn Venturer' (Porthmadog – Beddgelert) and 'Gelert Explorer' (Caernarfon – Beddgelert). Some of the trains run multiple times daily, with others only on certain dates.

The expansion follows the impromptu introduction of named part-line 'bubble' trains last summer. Non-corridor coaches are being used on the Ffestiniog to aid social-distancing, while Welsh Highland services use open stock fitted with screens between seating bays.

As the timetable has increased after the lines reopened in May, the FR/WHR says it is "very important for our passengers to know which train is theirs".

Headboards are carried on locomotives and, General Manager Paul Lewin says, "there is a very positive knock-on effect because passengers like to have their photos taken next to these headboards and when shared on personal media this helps to promote our services".

Unlike plans for easing of restrictions in England on 19 July, by early July there was no equivalent announcement in Wales and, Paul Lewin believes, "we can expect these Covid-secure services continuing to mid-September and I really rather suspect until the end of the season".

While the pandemic created a £5 million shortfall in income last year, the FR/WHR GM was able to paint a more positive picture to supporters in early July. Having "forecast 60% of what we would make in a normal year... I'm delighted to say that the service we planned has run with huge success thorough May and June".

"We've managed to achieve 85% of the traffic income that we achieved in June 2019... with just 60% of the timetabled mileages we ran back in 2019."

Fare box traffic income for June was £440,000. Catering however "will not rebound this year" and "we

can expect no big galas and special events; frankly we simply don't have the resources to do that in addition to what we are trying to do."



▲ Paul Lewin: "I'm delighted... the service we planned has run with huge success"

◀ Two-for-one on 19 May: A busy moment at Tanybwllch as the 'Mountain Prince' hauled by Penrhyn Hunslet 2-4-0STT *Blanche* is overtaken by George England 0-4-0STTs Nos. 4 *Palmerston* and 2 *Prince* on a rare foray (by post-Covid standards) to Blaenau Ffestiniog. Their train was a special to meet passengers arriving with a Statesman Rail charter from Hull. Both: Chris Parry



Double '50s' at Victoria... and for Stranraer, Penzance

Double-headed Class 50s are to reach both Stranraer and Penzance in September, at the head of trips for Pathfinder Tours.

Both trains put the English Electric machines back onto metals from their working days – 11 September's 'Galloway Princess' takes the 'Type 4s' north from Tame Bridge Parkway and Birmingham New Street via the West Coast

Main Line; and 18 September's 'Mazey Day Cornishman' starts at New Street with a Class 66 before changing to 1960s power at Gloucester.

The trips are expected to be hauled by Nos. 50007/50049 from the Class 50 Alliance. More details at www.pathfindertours.co.uk

● For more on the Class 50 Alliance, see page 36.



TRACKSIDE WORLD

Biggest tour, biggest system... and a 'Big Boy' expedition

'Trans-Sib': UK promoter plans 'world's biggest' steam tour

A winter foray over the Trans-Siberian Railway will be the world's longest steam excursion in more than 20 years, its British organiser has said.

Covering more than 5,750 miles from Vladivostok on Russia's eastern coast to the capital Moscow, and with side trips on top, the three-week 'Winter Wonderland by Steam' is organised by Altrincham-based Golden Eagle Luxury Trains. It is a new iteration of the company's three previous giant 'Trans-Sib' steam charters – none of which have taken place since 2000. The promoter was then known as GW Travel.

Golden Eagle founder Tim Littler told *TRACKSIDE* that the use of eight of Russia's huge 'P36' 4-8-4s on the 'main line' portion of the tour will finally realise a long-held ambition. His debut 'Trans-Sib' in 1996 had been planned to focus on the express passenger machines – but with Russia's 'strategic reserve' at that point still in existence, ended up employing around 50 'L' 2-10-0s among more than 70 engines in total.

GWT followed its original 'Trans-Sib' steam charter with further versions in 1998 and again two years later – the latter coinciding with the end of military funding for the ex-Soviet backup fleet, which at the time of disbandment still ran to thousands of locomotives. That trip also took in the then-new Baikal – Amur Main Line.

Explaining the motivation behind the 2022 revival, Mr Littler said "we've been saying for several years 'when can we take the 'P36s' on the Trans-Siberian?'"

Speaking as Golden Eagle prepared to restart its regular tours this summer, he told

TRACKSIDE the 2022 train was "an idea whose time has come".

Leaving Vladivostok on February 26, the 'Winter Wonderland' is to visit places such as Ulan Ude, Irkutsk and Yekaterinburg before steaming into Moscow on March 16. Side trips from the 'main line' include a diversion to the Mongolian capital Ulaan Baatar and a run along the shores of Lake Baikal – the world's deepest lake, which freezes over in winter. A visit to Moscow's Podmoskovnaya depot is included on the day after the train arrives. In addition, the trip is to divert from the main 'Trans-Sib' at Taishe to take the scenic Sayan Mountain route that includes a nine-mile climb and double horseshoes.

Of the 'P36s' intended to be used, one has

particular symbolism for the UK promoter: No. P36.0032 was owned by the company, before being donated to the Russian National Railway Museum in 2019. If all goes to plan, the 4-8-4 will run the entire length of the 'Trans-Sib', double-heading with different classmates *en route*. Including side trips, the total number of locomotives planned to feature is 21.

With such a massive itinerary also comes a hefty price tag: fares start at £14,695 in 'Heritage Class', based on two sharing.

Mr Littler said the 'Winter Wonderland' would be the "biggest steam trip in the world since 2000 – and the trip in 2000 has to be the longest ever".

● Golden Eagle mainly runs electric-hauled luxury tours, but the 'Winter Wonderland' is not its only planned 2022 steam itinerary: it has also scheduled a train from Moscow to Murmansk and Archangel in June.



Longest steam railway back in action

Steam returned to the whole of the 87-mile railway that runs through the Harz mountains of Germany from 1 July, after an eight-month pause. The world's largest remaining steam network had suspended all but a basic railcar service during pandemic restrictions. However, 2-10-2Ts returned to the metre-gauge system's most popular Wernigerode – Brocken route from 9 June, and steam has now followed on its Nordhausen and Quedlinburg sections. The first steam service on 'day one' was the 07.36 Gernrode – Harzgerode with 1939-built 2-6-2T No. 99.6001.

'Big Boy's' big American trip

The only working 'Big Boy' is to undertake a month-long tour around southern parts of the USA that will cover well over 3,000 miles. Union Pacific's No. 4014, which was restored in 2019 after nearly 60 years out of use, will leave its home in Cheyenne (Wyoming) on 5 August with stops for display covering Fort Worth (14 August), Houston (17 August), New Orleans (21 August), St Louis (29 August) and Denver (6 September). UP lists the 132ft-long and 536-ton 4-8-8-4 as the world's largest operating steam locomotive.

◀ **Railtours rendezvous. GBRf liveried Co-Cos Nos. 50049 Defiance and 50007 Hercules await departure with the 30th anniversary special for the Class 50 Alliance at London Victoria on 3 July. Formed of the British Pullman set, the train ran to Worcester. In the background is Carnforth-based 'Merchant Navy No. 35018 British India Line, which was being prepared for a 'Bournemouth Express' run for the Railway Touring Company.**

▶ **GBRf charter manager Paul Taylor, with wife Tracy, was rewarded for his prostate cancer charity fundraising efforts by having No. 50007 temporarily redesignated on one side as Furious – his favourite class 50 locomotive. While the 'Alliance' celebrates its 30th year, it is also the same anniversary for the scrapping of the original at Old Oak Common. All: Jack Boskett**





A classic railway scene... but these days one only made possible by special organisation. East Lancashire Railway Guards Manager Stuart McDonald loads mail sacks at Bury Bolton Street. Despite the 'Sixties feel', the picture was taken in March 2019.

Working Men's Club

People. They're who our railways are for, but how many photographers deliberately keep them out of pictures? Not so **Gordon Edgar**...

"I've taken so many pictures, I've forgotten some of them – and I certainly don't feel the need for more 'front-three-quarter' shots!"

So says Gordon Edgar, whose images frequently have little to do with 'standard' railway photography. But then what are pictures for? To be pretty? To record a scene?

Or perhaps, just like our railways themselves, to evoke the past... and give sense to a community.

It seems Gordon always had an eye for 'human interest' images. People feature "heavily", even in some of his earliest shots taken at the closing ceremony of the Longmoor Military Railway 1969, "so I obviously had an interest in this style of photography even then."

That was after he first took up a camera in the mid-1960s "but like many other people my first shots were on a Box Brownie. They weren't up to much!"

Joining the Army in 1971 and with a first posting to West Germany – then still with plenty of steam – plus a particular interest in industrial railways and their surroundings "meant I never really developed the 'standard' style".

Gordon is clearly happy seeking out something unusual away from the crowd.

However he does also take part in organised photo-events – though his results can often be very different to those of other participants. Charters, Gordon reckons "can feel pretty unnatural."

But they have an advantage in that there are fewer people around than on a normal operating day. "I seem to be more productive in the 'down time' than the organised parts of the itinerary – there's more freedom when others are taking a break.

"However, it's really about keeping an eye out for opportunities – then reacting when they come along. Just as it is with any photography."

However, it seems the big emphasis on 'people pics' really started somewhere totally different: "I went to China 13 times from 1997 onwards, mostly with just two or three mates and rarely with a guide. We'd spend days in one place, so the locals would get to know why you were there – and then it just seemed natural to include them in scenes."

So perhaps the images on these pages are actually inspired less by industrial Britain or leafy Longmoor, but rather the smog of the world's last steam paradise...



It can rain on the Settle – Carlisle trips... Gerry Garside from the 5305 Locomotive Association is caught by a downpour as he walks back from his group's charge, Stanier 4-6-0 No. 45305, at Carlisle itself. (6 August 2012).

Longer & Better?

The Lynton & Barnstaple is heading deeper into Exmoor – while also building more locomotives and carriages. Chairman **Peter Miles** outlines the ambitious plans to **Nick Brodrick**.

Woody Bay, Snapper, Chelfham, Bratton Fleming, Parracombe...

Once they were calling cards on the much-lamented Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. That was more than 80 years ago. But all are in railway hands again... and three of them are already immaculately restored.

In May, Parracombe Halt became the latest fragment of this Devonian patchwork quilt to be stitched back into place, with its purchase from private ownership. It is a symbolic moment for the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust, which now owns the 0.75 miles of trackbed beyond its temporary terminus at Killington Lane as far as the village further to the southwest. Reaching Parracombe would almost double the current line.

Elsewhere, another five miles in total are owned by the trust and a separate (but sympathetic) organisation, Exmoor Associates.

That said, the policy of buying up land as it has become available has inevitably led to today's incomplete map: reaching anywhere else, such as Blackmoor three miles further on, would need acquisition of missing sections.

The attraction of a rebuilt 'L&B' is obvious. A pre-Grouping line through Exmoor that became the Southern Railway's famous narrow-gauge peculiarity, it was unique in almost every respect – from its 'Swiss chalet' stations to its Manning Wardle 2-6-2Ts.

Perhaps it was its early closure in 1935 that helped make this 19-mile line so magical and romantic. Most of the route was ploughed over or engulfed by nature. No locomotives survived,

other than Lew – shipped to South America, seemingly never to be seen by Britons again.

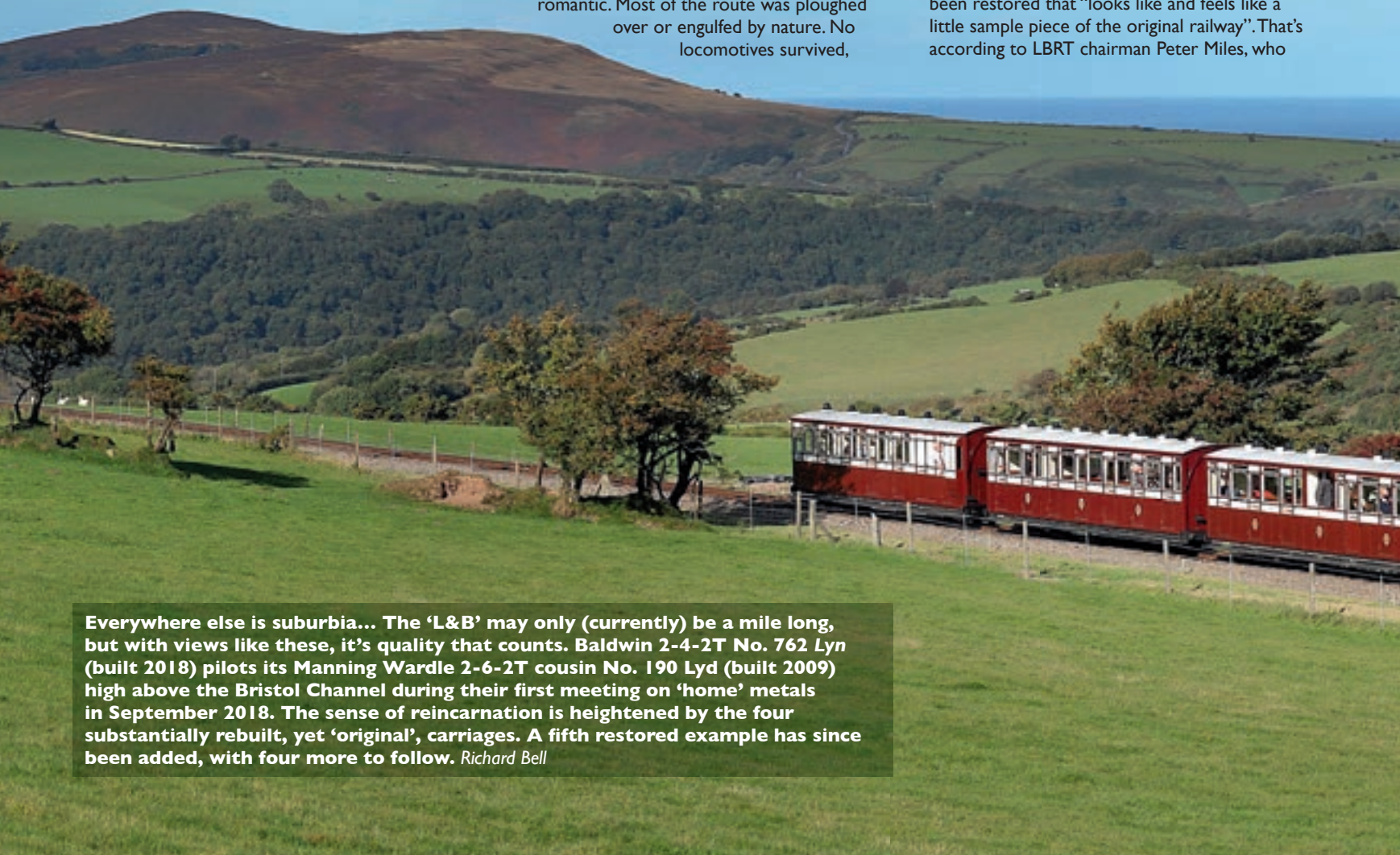
Yet stations still exist, and chunks of the carriages that weren't burnt ended up scattered around the area.

The LBRT has been restoring this famous 2ft-gauge line for a quarter-century – with the ultimate aim of rebuilding virtually the whole thing. Reuniting Lynton with Barnstaple and replacing the missing 19 miles is expected to cost around £50m. It makes this one of the biggest steam projects in the world today.

Atlantic coast impress

Currently only a fraction of the scheme has been realised. However, a part of the 'L&B' has been restored that "looks like and feels like a little sample piece of the original railway". That's according to LBRT chairman Peter Miles, who

Everywhere else is suburbia... The 'L&B' may only (currently) be a mile long, but with views like these, it's quality that counts. Baldwin 2-4-2T No. 762 Lyn (built 2018) pilots its Manning Wardle 2-6-2T cousin No. 190 Lyd (built 2009) high above the Bristol Channel during their first meeting on 'home' metals in September 2018. The sense of reincarnation is heightened by the four substantially rebuilt, yet 'original', carriages. A fifth restored example has since been added, with four more to follow. *Richard Bell*



has been at the helm of the expanding, and award winning, railway for the past 14 years (see box).

For the purchase of Parracombe is just the latest step. Over the last 17 years, the trust has run over the mile-long stretch of re-laid line, from pine tree-surrounded Woody Bay to a temporary run-round loop at Killington Lane.

While you might have been forgiven for initial scepticism, much has been achieved since those first trains ran in 2004 using ex-Thorpe Park carriages and an industrial diesel.

With rebuilt original coaches and replica locomotives, “it is much more like a little chunk of the original ‘L&B’ than it ever was years ago, when we basically ran up and down in ex-amusement park”, says Peter. “They looked quite nice, had a little engine on the front and it was fine. But it could have been a ride in anybody’s garden”.

The lesson, Peter argues, is that you do need “a guiding vision”.

“Certainly, when the revival of the ‘L&B’ started off, the idea was to get anything that was 2ft gauge and make it work. There wasn’t a lot to get and some of it was pretty hopeless.”

Instead, what “the ‘L&B’ is now doing is to reproduce what was there before... almost as if the clock is stopped in 1935”.

Creating that picture has required around £6.5 million in investment so far.

“Certainly, when the revival of the ‘L&B’ started off, the idea was to get anything that was 2ft gauge and make it work.”

► **There’s a prototype for everything! The original Lyn teams up with Lyd’s predecessor No. 760 Exe at Barnstaple Town on 5 August 1933. Two years later, the railway closed. F.E. Box**

Living & Breathing

The modest scale of operation since ‘Phase 1’ opened has meant that fixed costs are relatively low, and with on average 50,000 return trips, there’s been an annual turnover of £0.5 million – worth three times that to the local economy. That was pre-Covid.

Not having huge overheads was “a very fortunate position” during recent lockdown uncertainty. Indeed, one of the government’s zero interest loans ended up not being needed – and last summer, average passenger numbers were actually up on the previous year.

Given that, should the LBRT actually consolidate, rather than stretch out further and thereby increase its liabilities? Clearly, consolidation is not the ambition; but there are other reasons to grow too.

Says Peter: “There is definitely a feeling amongst people who have visited a few times that, really, they’ve seen and ridden that bit of railway; they stop coming because it doesn’t change very much and they’ll come back when it’s longer... frankly, we feel that as well.

“If you’re on the train, and it’s going along nicely on a sunny day, you don’t want to stop at Woody Bay. You think, ‘I want to carry on into Lynton.’”

Even so, there’s an acknowledgement that “some costs rise in direct proportion to the length of line, but some are way out of kilter”.

“When we... run down to Parracombe, Blackmoor and Wistlandpound, it will be a five-



mile railway. That changes things like train timing: how often do you actually need one train or two? And then how frequently do you need to increase that to a two or a three-train operation? If you do, where do you get your crews from? Are you going to pay them?”

“So it’s a whole new adventure. And it all comes back to... working out exactly what the demand is, because the demand has got to be there, not just from the enthusiasts, but mainly from the general public...”

“Are they going to want to see it? We are confident that they will.”

Mould and horribleness

In fact, practical quandaries are part of the logic behind extending to and through Blackmoor Gate (also known as Phase 2A); the trust has outgrown





Woody Bay both in terms of facilities for rolling stock, and passenger numbers.

Perched almost 1,000ft above sea level, on the moor above the Heddon Valley, Woody Bay doesn't lend itself to providing shelter for the increasingly valuable collection of rebuilt 'original' carriages. That's other than when they are brought inside the small shed nestled into the cutting at the station's Lynton end, for minor repairs and revarnishing.

Five coaches have now been rebuilt by volunteers and four more will follow (see panel on page 43), but "most of the time they live outside".

The railway uses tarpaulins to protect them – but you can, Peter says, "finish up with all sorts of mould and horribleness" when the covers come off again. (Main text continues on page 40) ➡➡



Here's one they made earlier... Lyd, built by 'Lewin, Evans and Whalley' ('Lew'), is providing the blueprint for the construction of at least two more Manning Wardle 2-6-2Ts. Robin Coombes

EXMOOR'S NEW PONIES

If LBRT ambitions are realised, the railway will eventually have new-build versions of the entire original fleet of five locomotives. Construction began this year of its first two 2-6-2Ts, three years after the launch of the Manning Wardle Project. This runs under the stewardship of the 762 Club, which was founded in 2009 to build new Baldwin 2-4-2T No. E762. Lyn was completed by Alan Keef Ltd in 2017.

The new versions of Nos. 759 Yeo and 760 Exe will be assembled simultaneously at a private workshop in Derbyshire (where Apedale-based War Office Hunslet 4-6-0T No. 303 was restored) and the Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge, respectively.

Although they will be the LBRT's first Manning Wardle engines, the new 2-6-2Ts will follow the Ffestiniog's own 2010-built No. E190 Lyd, which replicated the design of 'lost' No. E188 Lew.

Unlike Lyd which has a flat-backed cab as per its unique 1925 prototype, the new machines are being designed with the original curved style, but they will be otherwise almost identical to the 2010 new-build and make use of the same patterns.

From the loan of these wooden 'DNA' components, the first sample cylinder, and associated end covers, have now been made at the Cerdic Foundry in Chard. The castings are to be sent to the FR for checking and machining, and the remaining identical parts for all four eventually-planned new engines (plus a spare for Lyd) will follow directly afterwards.

Construction of Yeo and Exe is expected to take four years and cost a total of £1.1m, of which £200,000 has been raised so far. The intention is to turn them out in early Southern Railway guise: effectively 'L&B' livery but with SR name and numberplates.

The outstanding pair – Nos. 761 Taw and 188 Lew – are only planned to follow when the railway extends to Lynton and/or Barnstaple.

● To donate, visit www.762club.com

PETER MILES...

... is chairman of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust and of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Community Interest Company – the related operating organisation. He also has responsibility for 'heritage'.

A member since 1985 of what was then the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Association and a working volunteer since 2006, he has been chairman since 2007. He is also a director of the 762 Club, which has built and owns new Baldwin 2-4-2T Lyn; the current project is the construction of new Manning Wardle 2-6-2Ts starting with Yeo and Exe. Peter is also a driver.

In the 'real world' he is a quantity surveyor and project manager.



Picture: Robin Coombes

Winning Alliance!

Buying a locomotive is easy – looking after it isn't. **Jon Dunster** of the Class 50 Alliance explains to **Pip Dunn** how his organisation has kept no fewer than six 'Type 4s' running.

There's a well-known saying you'll see on car stickers from time to time: 'A dog is for life, not just for Christmas'. The same is true in railway preservation.

Buying a locomotive is the easy bit; raising the cash to acquire ownership is, all things considered, pretty risk free. You have a target, you reach it... you buy.

But then the hard work *really* starts. Get it right and you'll have years of enjoyment. Wrong, and you'll have a millstone.

Long term sustainability needs a lot more than the few thousand pounds you might pay to extract a locomotive from a scrapyard or buy it from a freight operator. Whatever the purchase cost though, expect to treble it at least before you can enjoy your locomotive at work.

You need to collect it. You need a home or a storage site – and then you need to repair it. The days of driving a newly-bought vehicle off the low-loader are pretty much gone; chances are that anything you acquire now is in need of some serious 'TLC'.

What's more, the responsibility of owning a locomotive never stops. It will be a financial drain for the rest of eternity!

To preserve a locomotive, you need one thing – but in two different forms. That thing is resource – and its different versions are money and manpower. If you only have one of them, you'll fail.

True, the more money you have the easier it is to 'buy-in' manpower, but the reality is that you need a constant supply of both.

Even established groups have found the consequences of this. Locomotives that have been preserved for 20-plus years are now being sold because the owning group no longer has one (or both) of these key resources. Meanwhile, some of the locomotives bought from BR's massive sale in the 1990s, or from the glut of motive power later disposed of by EWS, have never turned a wheel since. The sad truth is that some never will.

Don't think I'm being a doom-monger; there are many success stories. Perhaps one of the best has its home at the Severn Valley Railway, where the Class 50 Alliance (C50A) has grown from 'shaking the tin' in the 1980s with a view to buying a single Class 50, to now being responsible for six of these complicated, but popular, machines.

The C50A also has a share in the £1m purpose-built diesel Traction and Maintenance Depot (TMD) at Kidderminster that can perform all the tasks BR undertook on these locomotives at Crewe, Old Oak Common or Laira in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.



Not the 1980s West of England, but Highley. The Severn Valley Railway has shed its more typical steam-era look on 5 October 2018 as No. 50049 Defiance waits to leave for Kidderminster... though the lack of 'blue and grey' stock is one giveaway. Tom McAtee

‘Let’s see what happens’

Jon ‘Gus’ Dunster grew up with the ‘50s’ and hails from Honiton in Devon, a place that from 1980 enjoyed visits by typically six different Class 50s on at least 12 trains per day. Born in 1968, as a teenager he was understandably taken by the sight and sound of the eye-catching diesels that were by then all named after warships of the Royal Navy.

Jon went on to join the railway and is now a senior manager with Avanti West Coast.

But 33 years ago in 1988 he was approached by fellow ‘50’ enthusiast Dave Keogh – and the Fifty Fund was born. Just three years later the group

handed over a cheque to British Rail’s Network SouthEast to buy No. 50035 *Ark Royal*.

That should have been enough, but then a cheeky ‘let’s see what happens’ bid saw *Exeter* acquired for just £5,044 (corresponding to its number!) – a mere third of what the Fund had paid for No. 50035. Then, when No. 50031 *Hood* was bought privately, the Fifty Fund was asked to take that Co-Co under its wing too. It has since bought *Hood* outright.

At the time that No. 50044 was being bought, the separate Project Defiance preserved No. 50049 (you guessed it, the locomotive named *Defiance*). This was another group of

▼ **Defiance has lost its previous ‘large logo’ livery as part of a deal with freight operator GBRf. On 21 October 2019 No. 50049 is at Crediton on an Exeter – Coleford Junction route learning trip.** Tom McAtee





Winners! In 2021 the C50A became the first holders of the Heritage Railway Association's new award for diesel preservation. From left: Duncan Sealey, Jason Allen, Matthew Pakes, Phil Swallow, Gus Dunster, Mike Gibbons, James Gregory, Bob Dunn, Mark Atkinson, former Laira Depot Manager Geoff Hudson, Max Atkinson with Richard Holmes and Tony Middleton on bufferbeam. Ted Dunster

like-minded individuals, many of them close friends from the 'bashing' days of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1998 the two groups agreed to form a partnership – the Class 50 Alliance.

It didn't stop there; when No. 50007 *Hercules* (which will be remembered by some as *Sir Edward Elgar*) became available as a fully main line certified locomotive in 2017, that machine ended up as the fifth in the C50A stable. Finally, No. 50033 *Glorious* was taken into the group's care in 2018. It has been returned to working order and will remain with the Alliance for the foreseeable future.

Those six machines represent a third of the surviving members of the class – and more than 10% of the 50 English Electric 'Type 4s' ever built.

'Sensible to use a diesel'

Says Jon: "The biggest challenge at the moment is planning the priorities for the six locos. Two of them... need significant attention."

Hood, he reports, "needs an engine strip-down and inspection..."

"It has a damaged crankshaft journal and we suspect repairs will need a specialist firm to address. It's the same issue that has affected Class 40 [No.] D213 *Andania*. The other option is to rebuild the spare engine recovered from [No.] 50018 and replace it.

Meanwhile, No. 50033 "has a terminal fault on its main generator... we are currently thinking out what will be the best way to address that."

"These are both significant heavy engineering projects."

We are talking at Kidderminster during the SVR's 13-16 May 'comeback' diesel event. With all available home locomotives out, plus guests from both within preservation and from main line operators, a normal realistic attendance over the four days would be at least 3,500 visitors. But because of coronavirus restrictions, this year's event is a modified version. There are still four rakes of stock out, but there's no scope to jump from train to train. You book for one set and that's yours all day!

Adds Jon: "So when I say we have to prioritise things, we also have to include events into that, as it's galas like today – at our home – that generate revenue, but they require a lot of support."

Clearly, people can't be working to fix things if they are needed to drive trains or fulfil other roles crucial to running a gala. And yet, says Jon, "we are very lucky to have a very active volunteer force".

"We're at a high point [in volunteer numbers] and that has been the case since 2016 when the depot opened. Having a facility helps us."

Few railways can boast a proper TMD of the magnitude of that at Kidderminster. This remarkable home base has three roads, room for six locomotives and a host of equipment such as lifting gear. It was funded partly by the C50A, but also the Diesel Traction Group, the Diesel & Electric Preservation Group and the SVR itself, which has a requirement for its Class 08/09/11 diesel shunters to be maintained.

"Without those shunters the railway would grind to a halt," laughs Jon. "The railway is very realistic in knowing there are some jobs that it's sensible to use a diesel for and not steam."

They may be more modern than their coal-fired relatives, but even the '50s' have now been out of service for around three decades; Jon is now 52. Other C50A members are of a ➡



Early days on the West Coast Main Line: No. D433 – now No. 50033 *Glorious* – enters a very steam-age Preston on 8 July 1970. Electrification would soon change this scene, with the wires running all the way to Glasgow by 1974. Plus, what would today's health and safety say about the 'ganger' walking in the 'four-foot'... with no high-visibility vest? *Colour Rail*





▲ **Old Oak farewell.** Alliance locomotives played a large part in the September 2017 event at the former Western Region London depot, which has since been redeveloped for High Speed 2. Nearest the camera are the C50A's Nos. 50049 *Defiance* and 50044 *Exeter*, together with classmates Nos. 50026 *Indomitable*, 50017 *Royal Oak*, and a third Alliance machine, No. D407 (50007) *Hercules*. *Tony Streeter*

▼ **Main line operation has allowed C50A locomotives back to old haunts.** On 7 October 2017 *Hercules* and *Defiance* pass close to an historic site – that of Vulcan Foundry, Newton-le-Willows, where they were built. The train was a Euston – Glasgow special, recalling the locomotives' years on the London Midland Region before the completion of West Coast electrification. *Tom McAtee*



“ We’re at a high point – and that has been the case since 2016 ”

JON ‘GUS’ DUNSTER...

... has been an active diesel preservationist since the late 1980s when he jointly founded the Fifty Fund with Dave Keogh. He remains Chairman of Class 50 Alliance Ltd and has also been a Director of Severn Valley Railway Holdings PLC since 2010.

A career railwayman, he is currently Executive Director of Operations and Safety with Avanti West Coast.



similar age, so there's a need to welcome young blood. Jon's eldest son Ted has volunteered for several years now; he started with the SVR's young volunteer scheme. Dan Holmes, 18, is the son of Richard Holmes, another C50A diehard.

“Roland Bull [Kidderminster TMD manager for the SVR] is very good at getting the younger volunteers interested. But we have a proper programme and they learn skills under proper supervision.”

All those who have come on board “have gone on to get engineering apprenticeships”, Jon says.

“Keeping people interested is so important,” he continues. “Social media helps us in that respect. The crowdfunding for the work on [No.] 50033 was a good example.”

100mph trains

The Class 50 Alliance has been at the forefront of main line operation for nearly a quarter-century now, ever since Hood worked a Birmingham International to Plymouth charter back on 1 November 1997. Since then, Nos. 50007, 50044 and 50049 have all operated on the main line and the group has even had contracts with Valley Lines and Arriva Trains Wales, as well as working with DB Cargo, GBRf, West Coast Railways, Vintage Trains and other passenger and freight operators.

Hood is no longer main line registered, but the other three locomotives are, although Exeter has not run on Network Rail for the best part of a decade after suffering an engine failure on its last outing.

The two locomotives to be regularly out and about are Nos. 50007 and 50049, frequently on hire to GB Railfreight, which paid for them to be repainted into its livery two years ago as part of its contract.

That's proved to be a great agreement for both parties: it earns revenue for the C50A, while GBRf has two 'Type 4s' available for *ad hoc* spot hire. The pair tend to work moves of rolling stock as well as about four charters a year, “which is good”.

It helps that the C50A's Bob Dunn and Tony Middleton are both GBRf drivers. However, the deal also allows the Class 50s to do what they were built for – hauling heavy trains at up to 100mph. Indeed it's brought the sight and sound of the Vulcan Foundry machines back to pretty much everywhere they operated with BR, be it the West Coast Main Line of their early days, to later territory on the Western, Southern and London Midland Regions.

For C50A volunteers and supporters, as well as those who enjoyed '50s' in their service days, that is a great opportunity to recreate the past. It's also vital for encouraging new people to become involved.

But keeping on top of six locomotives is not easy. Jon says the big challenge is new wheelsets for Nos. 50031 and 50035, as “both are on their last legs and will need to be re-tyred”.

“But the GBRf deal – which is a ‘pay as you use them’ arrangement – has made our sustainability so much better.”

GBRf is not the only source of money: there's income from the locomotives' use at the SVR, and standing orders from members: “Some people have been giving us a fiver or a tanner a month for over 30 years now,” says Jon.

“The online sales team has transformed itself, it has kept up with the times and going online during Covid has been vital.”

This year marks the 30th anniversary of No. 50035's purchase, and the sales team has produced a range of goods to celebrate. ➡





The Western of old. Flowers, a GWR-pattern platform trolley, even a mechanical ground signal greet *Defiance* as it sweeps through Totnes on 19 August 1984. The footbridge has since been replaced – it was hit by a crane in 1987, the same year the signalbox was taken out of use. Grade II-Listed, the latter is now a cafe. Behind the station running-in board, the stone building was intended as a pneumatic engine house for Brunel's atmospheric railway, but never used as such owing to abandonment of the vacuum system. Traditionally the junction for the Ashburton Branch, Totnes was used in the 1980s by the South Devon Railway, but the heritage line has since reverted to terminating at its own nearby Totnes (Riverside) station. *Roger Siviter/Colour Rail*



BR'S 50 '50s'

Built in 1967-1968 at Vulcan Foundry, the 50 English Electric 'Type 4s' initially worked on the northern section of the West Coast Main Line until electrification caused their displacement to the Western Region in the 1970s. Named after warships from the latter part of that decade, around the same time that a refurbishment programme also started to improve reliability, the Co-Cos picked up BR's distinctive 'large logo' blue from the 1980s and in some cases Network SouthEast colours later on. The first of the 2,700bhp machines were withdrawn in 1987, the last in 1994 after a commemorative Waterloo – Penzance – Paddington railtour.

C50A locomotives have been subjected to some 'non-authentic' repaints such as two-tone green (all the '50s' were delivered in BR blue from new) or Loadhaul colours. Currently, No. 50031 is in InterCity livery – a look the Vulcan Foundry machines could have conceivably carried but never did. Then there's the GBRf pair.

However, No. 50007, which famously carried

GWR green and was renamed *Sir Edward Elgar* for 1985's 'GWR 150' event, now wears another new colour: GBRf blue.

Says Jon: "repaints are often commercially driven. All decisions are taken to continually improve these locos. We use two pack paint, that will last ten years."

The Alliance locomotives (with current liveries) are:

- 50007 *Hercules* (GBRf blue)
- 50031 *Hood* (InterCity)
- 50033 *Glorious* (BR 'large logo' blue)
- 50035 *Ark Royal* (BR blue)
- 50044 *Exeter* (BR blue)
- 50049 *Defiance* (GBRf blue)

Other surviving '50s' are Nos. 50002, 50008, 50015, 50017, 50019, 50021, 50026, 50027, 50029, 50030, 50042 and 50050.

Get involved! To join the Fifty Fund, donate or become involved with restoration, see www.fiftyfund.org.uk

◀ Repaints are part of the C50A story. *Hood* might look convincing to those who don't know their 'Type 4' history, but no '50' ever carried InterCity livery in service. The Co-Co – named after the famous battlecruiser that was sunk in 1941 – arrives at Kidderminster on 19 May 2017. *Tom McAtee*

Not just spotters

While steam engines require a ten-yearly boiler overhaul, for diesels it's different. Maintenance 'in the old days' followed a pattern that a locomotive arrived at a Works, was stripped down, repaired and rebuilt with overhauled components. But this was time-consuming and costly, so BR later moved to Component Exchange Maintenance (CEM); when a locomotive was stopped, pre-overhauled parts such as engines and bogies were swapped like-for-like to save both cost and time. Says Gus: "You can adopt the same approach with a preserved diesel and take each major component in turn."

Yet how much would it cost to overhaul a locomotive from rundown condition to runner? One that has been many years out of use "would

be £50k minimum but more towards £75k. A bogie overhaul would be another £50k."

Running costs on preserved lines are quite low, as consumables such as brake blocks wear slowly – so only fuel and lubricants plus antifreeze are needed to keep the machines active. The main line 'runners' need brake blocks every 3,000 miles – although Jon has never really worked out the cost per mile.

Unlike other groups, the C50A has never applied for grants to date; all its income is self-generated.

"We see quite widespread use at the SVR where between 15-20% of passenger mileage is now diesel operated. And then there is usually Driver Experience and ECS movements".

"The SVR is clear that diesels are attractive to

sections of the enthusiast market and also more cost effective to run compared with steam so often a one diesel/two steam timetable is used."

Kidderminster Traction Maintenance Depot (TMD) – and the SVR in general – is also open to commercial work; for example the railway hosted the initial testing of the new GBRf Class 69. It also supported DRS with its 'Northern Belle' operations until that train was sold.

The depot has recently been contracted to carry out bodywork repairs and a full repaint on Class 47 No. 47773 *The Queen Mother* for Vintage Trains, and has undertaken similar work for other preservation groups.

So how has the C50A done so well? Part of it was forethought from the beginning.

"Dave Keogh wanted the group to be taken seriously within the rail industry and not just [be] seen as a bunch of trainspotters. It helped us when we needed space, such as at Old Oak Common, Eastleigh or Cardiff Canton. We couldn't have got our locos housed at those depots [for heavy maintenance work] if it were not for our contacts.

"But being at those sites reminded us we needed to get a depot built. We had to educate the SVR management that there was a real need for diesels at the railway and we did that."

Unseen changes

Would Jon take on any more '50s'? "No, I think six is enough."

He said that at numbers four and five too... But, he adds, "we are happy to help other groups."

"For example [C50A member] Tony Middleton helped with the engine rebuilds on both [Nos.] 50002 *Superb* and 50030 *Repulse*."

And what about the long-term well-being of these machines, which are now more than 50 years old?

"We have worked hard to make them more sustainable", says Jon.

"For example, we have replaced the electronics in the controls system with a more up-to-date and fit-for-purpose version. We have engine temperature sensing that has been replaced by modified designs and improved electronic voltage regulators."

Also new is the idea of pre-heaters, fitted to the locomotives' engines to avoid having to start up completely 'cold'.

"This will reduce wear and tear... but also prevent excessive smoking on start up. We need to keep emission to a minimum."

Test locomotive for the modification is No. 50035 "and we will roll it out fleet wide."

Particularly given the increasing scarcity of ancient electrical parts, changes such as these – which do not affect the look, feel or smell of these vintage locomotives yet help their long-term well-being (and the environment) – are vital if these machines are going to outlive all of us. And that, of course, is the point... ■

◀ **Memories... blue C50A machines Nos. 50007 and 50035 together with Network SouthEast-livered No. 50017, shot through the doorway of one of Old Oak Common's doomed buildings, September 2017. Jack Boskett**





Record-breaking High Speed Train power car No. 43102 *The Journey Shrinker* is now on display at the National Railway Museum's 'Locomotion' outstation in Shildon, following its retirement from the Midland Main Line. Donated by Porterbrook, the Class 43 had been re-liveried into InterCity 'Swallow' colours earlier in the year for its last weeks in service. In 1987, the power car reached 148.5mph between Northallerton and York, breaking the world diesel speed record. It joins power car No. 43002 *Sir Kenneth Grange* and prototype No. 41001 in the national collection. NRM

equipment, followed by riveting the front and rear buffer beams into position.

Says Chief Engineer Geoff Turner: "Progress is steady rather than spectacular, but much is being achieved. We have already carried out the design review for the trailing truck and have started fundraising for its construction."

DIDCOT RAILWAY CENTRE

◆ The overhaul of 1936-built GWR 0-4-2T No. 1466 has moved to its final stages with the arrival of its chassis and boiler at the West Somerset Railway. It is still anticipated that completion will take place during the Great Western Society's 60th anniversary this year.

1014 COUNTY PROJECT

◆ Newly-overhauled pistons and rods, new crossheads (machined and assembled at the Great Central Railway), new slidebars, new coupling and connecting rods plus the vacuum pump drive bar have been delivered for new Hawksworth 4-6-0 *County of Glamorgan*. Still to arrive is the tender tank material from Goodman of Nottingham.

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY

◆ The 'final farewell' for John Cameron's 'A4' 4-6-2 No. 60009 *Union of South Africa* will be at a special event from 31 December-3 January 2022, after which its boiler certificate expires. It is not planned to overhaul the 'Pacific', but put it on static

display. 'Number Nine' is also booked to work during the 15-17 October Autumn Steam Gala and on normal service trains (plus some dining trains) on 24/25 July, 11-15 August and 1/2 September.

EMBSAY & BOLTON ABBEY STEAM RAILWAY

◆ Now in the last year of its boiler 'ticket', former Keighley Gasworks No. 2 — a 1911-built Hawthorn Leslie 0-4-OST — is visiting from the Tanfield Railway, and is being used on Stately Trains' vintage carriages.

FOXFIELD RAILWAY

◆ Outshopped in BR maroon, Mk I TSO No. 4762 has returned after contract overhaul by the Llangollen Railway PLC. The work was largely completed before

the PLC went into administration, and was completed by LR volunteers.

GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY

◆ Signalman Alan Godber (see page 62) is also an accomplished railway artist. Mounted copies of his new painting featuring a train crossing Loughborough Viaduct north of the town can be obtained for £30 via signed-for post by emailing blycett.gcr@gmail.com

All proceeds go to the GCR Reunification project.

RENAISSANCE RAILCARS

◆ Class 117 DMS No. 51396 has arrived from a private site in Redditch. Never used in preservation, it has had a number of owners and bases. It will continue to be stored while its purchase and restoration are considered.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE WARWICKSHIRE STEAM RAILWAY

◆ The 'Posters From The Steam Age' show planned for 10-11 July at Winchcombe station has been postponed to 18-19 September. An exhibition to mark the railway's 40th anniversary will take place at Winchcombe station from 20 July (Covid-restrictions permitting).

THE 2874 TRUST

◆ Restoration of GWR 2-8-0 No. 2874 remains in its early stages. It passed to the trust in 2016, since which time the wheelsets have been re-tyred, frames shotblasted, new eccentric straps bought and cab metalwork replaced. Heavily corroded frame metalwork is also being replaced. The latest step is the launch of a £4,000 appeal for a replacement dragbox casting and its machining.

GOLDEN VALLEY LIGHT RAILWAY

◆ After a 20-year restoration by owner Eddie Draper, Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0WT No. 7529 is now operational for the first time in 55 years and will work on the 2ft gauge line at Swanwick this summer.

Built in Germany in early 1914 for a sand quarry near Paris, it was bought for preservation in the UK in 1967.

GWILI RAILWAY

◆ Partly-overhauled Andrew Barclay 0-6-0T No. 1338 (latterly National Coal Board No. 17 at Waterside in Ayr), has arrived from the Llangollen Railway where it was under contract overhaul. Withdrawn by the NCB in 1978 and yet to steam in preservation, the Tanfield Railway-based engine will now be finished at the Gwili Railway.

ISLE OF MAN RAILWAYS

◆ The third new-build boiler constructed by the Severn Valley Railway for the Beyer, Peacock fleet of 2-4-0Ts — this time for No. 10 *G.H. Wood* — passed its hydraulic exam on 21 June. See separate entry for the overhaul of No. 11 at Stafold.

KEIGHLEY & WORTH VALLEY RAILWAY

◆ Having been used in recent filming of *The Railway Children* sequel, '4F' 0-6-0 No. 43924 is due to be withdrawn, with the end of its ten-year certificate.

KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY

◆ Hired from the Diesel & Electric Preservation Group for the rest of this year, BR green Class 14 No. D9526 had a 220-mile trip to Wittersham Road, Rolvenden, from Williton, Somerset on 1 July. Resident KESR-based classmate



Oldest surviving 'Black Five' No. 5025 has steamed for the first time since 1994. The £450,000 overhaul has included fitting new cylinders; the 4-6-0 has been returned to the condition of the first 50 'Black Fives', and has a domeless boiler and a chimney 2.5in taller than the later version. The 1934-built 'SMT' is now being finished in LMS black, ahead of a public launch.

Vanilla Moon Photography



Picture: George Jones

WANDERING 'TERRIER'

A scene from a long-lost Colonel Stephens light railway (right)? Not a bit of it. This is Bolton Abbey station on 28 June, with visiting Kent and East Sussex Railway-based 'Terrier' No. 2678.

The Embsay line was just one stop on the wandering 0-6-0T's far reaching itinerary in the month. It also visited the Isle of Wight Steam Railway – as seen below at Havenstreet in temporary 'island guise' as No. W4 *Bembridge*, crossing paths with classmate No. W11 (*Newport*) – its first return across the Solent since May 1936.

The Isle of Wight Steam Railway hopes to eventually lure the Terrier Trust-owned engine back to the island again after it helped draw more than 1,800 visitors to the 50th anniversary gala on 11-13 June.

General Manager Steve Backhouse told *TRACKSIDE*: "The holy grail is to reunite the four [original] island 'Terriers'. We're in no rush, but it would be a lovely thing to achieve."

Other than *Bembridge*, two are already based at Havenstreet (No. W8 *Freshwater* is under overhaul and



Picture: Liam Barnes

No. W11 is 'in ticket' until 2023), while the fourth, No. W9 *Fishbourne*, is under overhaul at Tunbridge Wells.

Bembridge (originally *Knowle*), running again in its 1940s mainland identity as No. 2678, has now moved

at short notice to the Spa Valley Railway where it will haul trains on 17/18 and 24/25 July.



Picture: John Faulkner

No. D9504, due a high-hour overhaul, is regularly used on the line.

4253 LOCOMOTIVE COMPANY

◆ Ten years after the ex-Barry condition GWR 2-8-0T arrived at Rolvenden under new ownership, the re-wheeled chassis and rebuilt cab and tanks await the completion of the boiler, under contract overhaul by Heritage Boiler Steam Services, Liverpool. The group has launched a 'Stay With Us' appeal to fund the £26,000 for the 874 boiler stays

required. New lower wrapper plates and the backplate have been welded into position. www.4253.co.uk

LEIGHTON BUZZARD RAILWAY

◆ After an extensive overhaul over the last few years, diminutive Kerr Stuart 0-4-0ST *Peter Pan* returned to service on 4 July.

LLANELLI AND MYNYDD MAWR RAILWAY

◆ Four years after its initial public event, the Carmarthenshire line held

its first post-pandemic open day at its Cynheidre headquarters on 26 June. It saw the first public use of recently-arrived Pacer No. 142006.

LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY

◆ Work continues on the new Corwen terminus with activity centred around brickwork for the waiting room.

LLANGOLLEN STANDARD 4 TRUST

◆ An initial step forward in No. 80072's overhaul by volunteers, after the expiry of its boiler 'ticket' in 2019,

has seen the worn-out bunker of the '4MT' 2-6-4T removed. It is now at Barnett Engineering, in nearby Rhoslanerchrugog, to be used as a pattern for a new one, incorporating parts that can be reused.

3802 LTD

Out of traffic since spring 2019, GWR 2-8-0 No. 3802 had its first fire lit on 14 June for a steam test and boiler inspection certification.

Later in the day it made trial runs in and out of Llangollen station, with

co-owner Nick Gilbert (pictured, left) delighted with the re-commissioning work undertaken. This included re-tying the tender wheels and fitting new brake linings.

LOCOMOTIVE SERVICES

◆ Severn Valley Railway-based 'Modified Hall' No. 6960 *Raveningham Hall* came to the end of its latest 'ticket' in early July. Its final appearance was on the first of two 'Forties Weekends' on 26/27 June.