

Lea Bailey Light Railway Society

Newsletter No.3

18 May 2013



The Society is born!

The public meeting held at the Littledean Community Centre on April 20th 2013 showed the support for the project but many concerns were raised over the security of tenure of the Lea Bailey site and if land agreements should be in place before society membership recruited. This really was a "Catch 22" situation as it was felt a society was needed to negotiate the land agreements. As a result people have been invited to subscribe to membership of the Lea Bailey Light Railway Society with Rob Needham as the co-ordinator. This will give the project much needed funds and hopefully recruit sufficient people to administer the development of the railway. Once the society is established it may then decide the best course of action for the railway's long term future.

Mike Ayland

Lea Bailey progress January to April 2013

I was going to type up a description of all that we have done over the last four months, but I realised that it would not fit in the newsletter. So here is an abbreviated list:-

- Moved assorted items (rail spikes, fishplates, sleepers, Hunslet loco panels) from tunnel to Lea Bailey

- Started dismantling Hunslet loco in tunnel as prelude to restoration

- Worked on Hunslet loco at Clearwell (HE7446) replacing belts and bulbs, checking pipework, greasing deadman's pedal, checking air starter and compressor

- Ongoing search for documents relating to locos and wagons

- Measured height of couplings on Hunslet locos and various wagons' coupling on HE7446 is 3" lower than all others

- Installed pair of doors in loco shed at Lea Bailey

- Continued clearing undergrowth at Lea Bailey

- Continued clearing track at Lea Bailey, replacing sleepers as necessary

- Dug most of trackbed for siding behind loco shed

- Found home for Hunslet frame and wheels (wrong gauge) and battery loco cabs with Bryn Lawson (of Alan Keef)

- Resolved starting problems with Simplex loco

- Collected point components from Clearwell

Uncovered stock of unused rail in culvert at Lea Bailey
Moved RSJs and Portakabin legs to Lea Bailey to provide steel door frames for loco shed
Cut track panels and installed in container
Started dismantling derelict Hunslet loco outside tunnel
Installed two Accroprops in loco shed to support roof until have materials for new roof
Realigned one rail in points for shed siding to prevent bogie wagon derailing (gauge was 10mm in error)
Moved portable generator from Clearwell to Lea Bailey and set it to work
Removed brass Hunslet plate and took to Cannop Foundry to get cast iron copies made
Collected tank four panels (to make another pair of doors for loco shed) and RSJs and moved to Lea Bailey
Moved flat wagon from tunnel cutting to Lea Bailey and regauged from 2' 2" to 2'
Found three ex-Princess Royal Colliery miners and discussed use of HC 0-4-0DMF locos underground
Started cleaning up large pile of bricks for re-use
Moved Simplex loco and one flat wagon into container
Moved HC 0-4-0DMF loco at Clearwell into workshop soon-to-be-vacated by HE7446
Moved HE7446 and two wagons from Clearwell to Lea Bailey
Building small ic engined compressor to use for Hunslet at Lea Bailey
Removed wheelsets and bearings from ex-mine car in tunnel cutting and took to get regauged
Meeting held in Littledean to inaugurate LBLR Society
Cut door in steel tank at Lea Bailey and fitted hinges and lock
Cleaned tank and cut drainage slots, so usable as store for tools and track fittings
Moved first ex-brickworks wagon from Clearwell to Lea Bailey and cut racks off to make hand-pushed trolley
Used generator to boil kettle and make cups of tea

Basically we seem to have undertaken a large number of assorted task and are pleased with progress. But the to-do list doesn't seem to get much shorter. So please come along and help in any way you can

Rob Needham

Move of HE7446 to Lea Bailey



Having spent the first three months of 2013 getting familiar with operation of the loco (rather different from our Simplex) and performing several maintenance tasks, such as replacing worn-out belts and reducing leaks in the compressed air system, by the beginning of April we felt that the loco was ready to be moved to Lea Bailey. However, before the move we wanted to move one of the Hudswell Clarke locos so that it could be stored under cover in the ochre workshop where previously the Hunslet had been housed. So on 6th April Jack started HE7446 and drove it up the siding towards the generator room at Clearwell. The HC 0-4-0DMF (one of DM739 or DM924, the other being just a frame and wheels in the line of wagons above the entrance to the caves from the road) had been stored outside for several years, and was missing all bodywork, driving cab, exhaust conditioner and radiator. However, the engine looked to be in reasonable condition. Using Chris's heavy chain, Jack drove the Hunslet towing the HC slowly down to the track outside the caves shop. Then it was shunted into the workshop so that it is protected from the weather until we can take it to Lea Bailey to work on it in the shed.

So now the way was clear to move HE7446 to Lea Bailey. Ray Wright had booked Ian Harrison and his lorry for the morning of Monday 8th April. Being a weekday, Jack was unable to take the time off work, so it was down to the two pensioners to get the loco started and in position for the move. We managed it! We had hoped to be able to move one of the bogie manriders to Lea Bailey as well, but the weight of the Hunslet meant that it had to be positioned in the middle of the lorry, leaving only room for a couple of smaller wagons. When the lorry left for Lea Bailey it carried the Hunslet, one flat wagon, one 4w manrider, a hoist and some rail.

Following the lorry through the lane at Lea Bailey, the thought struck me that it was probably the first loco to pass through Lea Bailey in over a hundred years. Unloading was straight forward, the lorry being close enough to the track that each item could be unloaded directly on to the rails. The Hunslet had retained air pressure in the reservoir so that within minutes of being placed on the rails it had been started.

Now the Simplex and one flat wagon are stored in the container, two flat wagons in the shed, and the Hunslet with five wagons in the mine. It will be several months before the next loco move to Lea Bailey, as we need to get the shed weather-proof and secure first so that the next loco can go straight into the shed for restoration work to start.

Since moving the Hunslet to Lea Bailey we have taken the couplings off the loco and have taken them to Alan Keef at Lea Lines. I've asked them to quote for modifying the couplings so that they are raised by about 3 inches to match the similar couplings on the other (non-working as yet) Hunslet loco plus several wagons. So at the moment we can only use the Hunslet to push wagons, not to pull them!

Rob Needham

Drybrook Road to re-open September

The difficulty in reaching Lea Bailey from the Drybrook direction looks set to continue all summer long as Highways are suggesting early September for the reopening of the road. No that is not Drybrook Road Station yet!

Locomotive MR 21282

Interesting to note that the MR 21282 loco was once at Kempston Hardwick brickworks. I worked there during my school holidays in 1967-8 period as we lived in Kempston on the outskirts of Bedford. As one of my duties, I was assigned to work with the only loco on site on a short line from the clay loading hopper near a pit to an unloader near the brickworks. Most clay came in by conveyor but there was just one loco worked line left. My job if I remember correctly was to shovel clay that failed to get from the hopper into the skips. I have faint memories of riding the train or the loco out to the loading hopper. I have stronger memories of minding the brick pressing machines inside the works on the night shift. Every now and then it would turn out misformed half-bricks which required the production line to be stopped. If you fell asleep, it could produce quite a few half bricks before someone down the line spotted it and started throwing half bricks to wake you up! Other machines provided the special finish that turned 'common' bricks into specials. There was one impressive machine prior to the brick pressing machine which was two linked geared wheels rotating in a vertical plane inside a pan rotating in a horizontal plane where the clay was worked to make sure that no flints or stones were present. Another job was to enter the hot kilns after the bricks had been removed to clean up. The dusty heat wrecked my sinuses in a very short time and I may even have some damage to this day (do you think I can claim?!). That was as a holiday job, imagine the effect on full-time workers. It's amazing to think that the loco I worked with in 1968 or 1967 could be the same loco at Lea Bailey but stranger things happen. I have no pictures of this work experience unfortunately.

John Raby

An Appeal

The two limiting factors affecting progress on the railway are people and money. We need volunteers to help with the physical tasks involved in building the railway and restoring and maintaining the locos and rolling stock. But we also need volunteers prepared to help in running the society and organising the railway. And all of these activities are dependent upon the availability of finance. First of all we need to be able to pay for insurance to cover our activities on the railway. We also need to be able to pay to set up a company limited by guarantee, or an equivalent, to minimise liability in the event of an incident beyond any insurance limits. Finally, we need to be able to pay for legal advice in reaching an agreement with Ray and Jonathan Wright for our use of the mine site and the railway equipment.

So please if you can help in any way, put your hand up and volunteer. Previous experience is not necessary, although if you do have useful experience and/or skills, we will do our best to use them. But whatever else, please join the society!

For those (the majority?) who are not railway enthusiasts, note that there are two national societies which cater for narrow gauge and industrial type railways such as that at Lea Bailey. They are the Industrial Railway Society and the Narrow Gauge Railway Society. I am a member of both and am using both as much as possible to publicise our activities at Lea Bailey and to obtain information about the ex-colliery equipment that we have available to use on the railway. Both societies are relatively small and would welcome new members. I recommend that anyone interested in the railway at Lea Bailey seriously consider joining one or both of these societies after joining our society, of course!

Rob Needham