

Lea Bailey Light Railway Society Newsletter No.5

23 Oct 2013



Open Day 21st September 2013



On 18th September enlarging of the car park at Lea Bailey was completed. It looked enormous! I estimated that 16 cars could comfortably be fitted in. Way too large, surely? But on Saturday 21st, it was full to overflowing, with at least 7 cars parked on the edge of the road. So the sales team on the stand at Alan Keef had obviously been very persuasive, helped no doubt by the flyer handed out to visitors to Alan Keef's site.

What did they see at Lea Bailey? The run-round loop had been finished and had been tested with both locos having used both tracks through the loop. But the show was not as exciting as we had hoped, as the Hunslet (HE7446) refused to start. One of the group, Pat, who stopped off for the day on his way home to Devon from a holiday in Scotland, spent all day working on it. He attracted quite an audience at times, particularly when he used the compressor to charge up the locos air reservoir and then the air starter to try and get the engine going. After checking over the fuel and the exhaust systems, he decided that the problem was the exhaust conditioner, which was out of water and also heavily sooted up. At least at the end of the day we knew what needed doing.

Meanwhile the Simplex was as reliable as ever, driven by Ben who was shunting wagons around. And at the end of the day the new run-round loop proved its value in enabling the loco to take wagons one or two at a time to their correct locations for the site to be secured.

While all of this activity was going on, Jen was doing a brisk trade providing refreshments, handing out leaflets, selling booklets and bricks! Several visitors were interested in some of the old bricks lying around the site (having been brought in some years ago as hardcore). So they were told that there was no charge for the bricks, but a donation to Society funds would be appreciated.

And I seemed to spend all day talking to many interesting people, telling them what we had done, what our plans and hopes were, and answering their questions. The day was so successful that, with mention of a possible visit to Lea Bailey by a small steam loco, we have started thinking of holding another open day next year before the September event. It would be organised as a Forest Narrow Gauge Experience, involving the Perrygrove Railway plus rail events at Clearwell Caves and would take place in June. Watch this space for further news!

Improved Car Parking at Lea Bailey



LBLR Society News

As a result of the open day, the society has gained 4 new members, and membership now stands at 15,

Prior to the open day, I produced a 24 page illustrated booklet, '16 months at Lea Bailey' and had it printed so that it could go on sale at the open day. So far we have sold in excess of 60 copies, and it is available from me for £2.75 if collected, or £3.50 by post (my address is on the membership application form). Of the £2.75, £1.50 goes to cover printing costs and £1.25 goes to the society (when printing costs have been covered, all £2.75 will go to the society).

The Society had public liability insurance in place before the open day, and the next stage in development will be to turn the society into a company limited by guarantee. To do this it is necessary to nominate at least 2 members as directors. Are there any members willing to put their names forward to serve as a director? Once nominated and with the society turned into a company, directors would then be subject to election at each annual general meeting of the company. As the society was first formed following the initial meeting at Littledean in April 2013, I propose that the first AGM be held in April 2014, venue to be decided.

Once organised as a company, the next logical step would be to turn the company into a charity.

Is there any member of the society prepared to take on the work of turning the society into a company limited by guarantee? And then turning the company into a charity?

Progress during September and early October

I have not put dates against the various activities listed because they have overlapped, and been progressed intermittently, as and when workers and materials were available.

Laid rails for run-round loop, fishplated and spiked the rails, then tested with hand trolley. Checked gauge in a couple of places where trolley stuck and made minor corrections. Gareth Thomas (blacksmith from Longhope) came and cut some bolt holes in rails to enable fishplating to be completed. Tested both tracks of loop with both locos and some wagons.

Collected more sleepers from tunnel at Drybrook (only 32 left in tunnel now), so we are going to have to find a source of new wooden sleepers soon.

Bought some second hand fishplates from Alan Keef (they are much cheaper than new ones, but come already coated with grease and many have bolts as well, and even though second hand they'll take a long time to wear out).

A new compressor has been purchased for charging the Hunslet before starting.

Finished concreting the RSJ uprights for the doorframe at one end of Lister section of shed (other end already done).

Cut and drilled two pieces of 2' square bar to make temporary couplings for Hunslet, then had a link welded on to each bar, which was then fitted with a D shackle.

3 ton excavator organised by Clearwell Caves and used to enlarge the car parking area at Lea Bailey so that it can now accommodate 16 cars.

Produced booklet '16 months at Lea Bailey' and had it printed for sale on open day.

Tidied up site for open day.

Since the open day discussions have been held with Perrygrove Railway and Clearwell Caves about a possible open day in June 2014, which would include railway activities at Clearwell. As a result work has started to see if the W&R loco at Clearwell can be restored to working order.

Work is in progress on making a set of points so that a second track can be laid into the loco shed.

Work has started on digging out the track to the container and replacing sleepers where necessary (which will probably be almost all of them, as the ones that we can see are all rotten and the buried ones are probably in worse condition).

The flame trap from the exhaust conditioner has been removed and cleaned in caustic soda. It had completely sooted up so that the loco would not start properly. Hence the problems that were encountered during the open day. In future the flame trap should be removed and cleaned once a month to prevent such an excessive build-up of soot occurring

Rob Needham

Constructing The Passing Loop

On 15 June we used Jack's LandRover to haul the two prefabricated Y points out of Euroclydon tunnel, where they had been rusting away propped up against one side of the tunnel. Then on 22 June Pat drove his LandRover up from Devon, on the way collecting a 2 axle trailer from my son, Chris, at Old Sodbury. With a Tirfor winch the points were hauled onto the trailer and moved to Lea Bailey (the pressed steel sleepers of the two sets of points had locked together and we could not separate them, so the two were loaded as one item!) When we had an excavator at Lea Bailey over the first weekend in July, we used it to separate the two sets of points. And then started thinking about how to use them. After some thought, a run-round loop seemed to be the best option as it would give use much improved flexibility in use of locos and wagons by being able to shunt them around without so much pushing by hand.

So in August we started building up the soil level either side of the track where we were going to lay the loop and also experimented with the jim crow from Clearwell to see how easy it would be to bend the rails required for the loop. It was easier than expected, although the 35lb/yd rails that we have are probably the heaviest we can do with the jim crow that we used. (The 35lb rails were from the stock that we unearthed earlier in the culvert by the mine site boundary.)

Then over the following two weeks we stocked up with sleepers from the stack in Euroclydon tunnel, and new bolts and second hand fishplates from Alan Keef. The point operating arms were straightened and point blades made operable. Concrete was cleaned off the points.

Finally on 24 August we started taking up the track where the loop was to be laid and put the first set of points in place. By the end of the day two pairs of straight rails had also been laid. By the 26th the second set of points was in place and one side of the loop had been laid (but not yet spiked to the sleepers or fish-plated). On 1 September the final rails were laid and we tested it with the push trolley. In a couple of places the gauge was slightly out, and was adjusted with a sledgehammer. Over the following two weeks, the rails were spiked to the sleepers and on the 12th Gareth, the blacksmith from Longhope, came and cut holes for the fish-plate bolts to enable fishplating to be completed. After a final check of the track, both tracks of loop were tested with both locos and some wagons a week before the open day. Since then one damaged and worn point blade has been replaced with a new one cut from a piece of 35lb rail (the points are otherwise slightly smaller rail section).

Now the loop is proving useful and is used almost every time we have the locos running.

Wingrove & Rogers battery electric loco

In the passageway leading to the head of the incline at the entrance to Clearwell Caves is a small battery electric locomotive. The IRS handbooks identify it as Wingrove & Rogers Type WR5 works no L1009 of 1981. Apparently it was supplied new to Wheal Concord Tin Mines Ltd, but this new mine was not successful and in mid 1983 the loco passed to Carnarvon Mining Ltd, operators of the Clogau Gold Mine in west Wales. What happened next is uncertain. However, the Clogau Mine closed and L1009 apparently went to Devon, where a miner was trying to open a copper mine near South Molton. After his death, the loco, together with an Eimco rocker shovel and 5 mine tipper wagons, was bought by Ray and Jonathan Wright and moved to Clearwell. At some point the battery in the loco failed, and in due course the battery was scrapped. Ray and I recently cleared a pile of rotten wood out of the battery compartment and found a plate which indicates that it held a 24 cell 48 volt lead acid battery. So, if it is sound, it could be powered from 4 heavy duty car batteries. Next stage is to check it out mechanically and electrically before getting 4 batteries. If it works, we will have a loco that could justifiably be named 'Gold Miner'.

There is at least one other loco of the same WR5 type that has been preserved in the UK. But it's in Cornwall, near Redruth, rather a long way to go. If anyone is going that way, would they please drop in to the Moseley Industrial Narrow Gauge Railway at Tumbly Down Farm and take some photos of L1012 'Diode'?

An appeal

Is there anyone who can undertake a survey of the Lea Bailey site? We have no accurate plan of the track, building, container, mine entrance on the site, or of the earlier mining remains, such as the plinth near the mine entrance and the 'magazine' beyond the flat area to the left of the mine entrance.

Visitors at the Open Day



Trying to get the Hunslet to start at the Open day

