



# Lea Bailey Light Railway

A narrow gauge mine railway in the Forest of Dean

- **Track Laying Progress**  
*new line extends onto mine tip*
- **1970s Simplex and Eimco Model**  
*some great photographs old and new*
- **Mine Door Makeover**  
*more secure and looks better too*
- **Wagons Roll (Again)**  
*new homes for old stock*





## Mine Door repairs



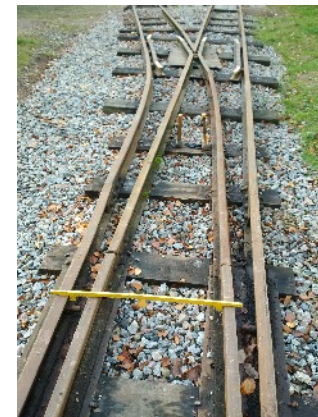
Welding a lock plate inside the mine door



Bracing the door against the rocker shovel

The doors that lead into the Bailey Level mine are kept locked for safety reasons. Wild animals, small children, and even adults without the relevant training would all be at risk if they were able to enter the underground mine workings. Certain people, however, see a locked door as a challenge, and some recent visitors took it upon themselves to enter the mine uninvited, causing damage to the doors in the process.

It was good fortune that our volunteers had been planning a welding job and had brought all the necessary equipment along. The first job — an unenviable task — was to inspect the mine to make sure that our uninvited guests were not still trapped underground. Luckily our "visitors" had left the site unscathed and work could proceed with the repairs.



Track gauged ready for welding baseplate



Welding some angle onto the outside of the door

Using the rocker shovel and a tirlor winch, the bent part of the door was straightened and a piece of angle was welded on to strengthen it. Further pieces of steel were welded on to make a strong section to lock the door. Several addition pieces of angle have been welded onto the outside to prevent crow bars and other objects from being inserted in an attempt to lever the doors open. Other measures will also be taken to make the doors secure against unauthorised entry.

The job that was planned for the welder was also carried out — welding one of the rails to the baseplate to keep the new points to the correct gauge. In early November the doors were cleaned up with scrapers and a wire wheel and given a coat of black bitumen paint.

**WordPress Shortlink:** <https://wp.me/p7tKDF-iZ>



Cleaning up the mine door with a wire wheel



The mine door with a coat of black paint



We recently received an e-mail from a new member who has expressed an interest in modelling the wagon at Clearwell Caves which was featured at the end of our previous post. As our

The wagon is roughly rectangular in shape with slightly rounded corners. The body has straight sides at the top and then they taper down to a narrower profile to match the width of the chassis. There are two dumb buffers on each end with an eye for attaching a chain or rope for haulage. A stake is driven through this eye into the ground to prevent the wagon from being moved.

**WP Shortlink:** <https://wp.me/p7tKDF-jQ>

Chairman's day job is at Milkwall just half a mile or so up the road from Clearwell, it was easy to pop down and get some measurements and extra photos.

Width at top of body: 113cm  
Length at top of body: 160cm  
Height of body: 92cm  
Distance from top of body to start of taper: 47cm  
Width over buffers: 78cm  
Buffers: 21cm wide x 15cm high  
Wheel diameter over outer tyre: 35cm  
Wheelbase between centres: 51cm  
Back-to-back inside flanges: 82cm  
Approximate rail gauge: 84.5cm (nominal 2'10")



## Narrow Gauge Enthusiasts

One of the many groups dedicated to narrow gauge railways on the social media site Facebook recently turned up these two images of 21282 at its former home, the short-lived Meirion Mill Railway at Dinas Mawddwy.



21282 at Dinas Mawddwy  
by Kevin Prince

After the railway closed, 21282 returned to Alan Keef where it was used as a hire locomotive. At some point before being bought for Lea Bailey Light Railway it was modified with a replacement engine and extra steel weights for adhesion added to the front and rear buffer beams.



21282 & Trixie at Meirion Mill, 1975  
by Malcolm Ravensdale

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/385672148111486/>

## Blue Skip Takes a Trip

Since arriving at Lea Bailey the blue skip has been in storage, but it has now been mounted on the old compressor wagon to give us a handy end-tipper. It has already been used to build up the ground level around the traverser on the old mine tip.



## Wagons Roll (Again)



Wagons off the end of the line

Since the early days of Lea Bailey Light Railway, our site has been home to a variety of wagons, some of which are more useful than others. Unfortunately as with many of the items preserved here, we don't know the history of these two wagons — they appear to have been fitted with side hoppers which had subsequently been welded up. One of the pair had been modified by our volunteers by grinding off the weld and freeing off the bolts and had seen some use as a ballast hopper. However due to a combination of the long wheelbase, thin flanges, and the fact these wagons are slightly out of gauge, they are prone to derailment (especially on points) and as such had been taken out of use.

As a temporary measure they had been parked off the end of the running line with the intention of finding a more permanent home. Sadly one wagon had sunk in the mud and the other had been pushed over by some unwelcome visitors. On a dreary day in January the decision was made to move them.

Using a Tirfor winch and a handy beech tree (no shortage of these at Lea Bailey) the downed wagon was slowly pulled upright. The Simplex was used to gently pull it along the ground towards the end of the running line and into a space previously cleared of rocks. With the Stop Board (temporarily) removed and some short pieces of rail in position, a hi-lift jack was used to get all four wheels above the track before gently lowering the wagon and allowing the Simplex to pull it along. The Hudson easy-turnout was pressed into service to place the wagon onto a side track until more volunteers were available to move it somewhere else.



First wagon sidelined



Parked up next to traverser

The second wagon was already upright but proved more difficult to move due to being up to its axles in mud. Once the Tirfor had pulled it out the Simplex was once again brought into use to get it close to the running line, with several handy rocks being used to prop the temporary rails up out of the mud. This wagon was carefully taken through the loop and down the new track onto the mine tip before being carefully moved using the traverser onto another piece of temporary track.

Once the warmer weather arrives, we are hoping to clean up and paint this wagon and display it on our mine tip, similar to the wagons on display at Clearwell Caves which are visible to drivers and passengers in vehicles passing by on the nearby road.

**WordPress Shortlink:** <https://wp.me/p7tKDF-jA>

## Whistling Pig in Miniature

Recently we received an e-mail from a railway modeller from Switzerland named Bernhard Wellinger who builds from scratch in 1:35 scale.

He included two photographs of his completed model of Eimco 401-216 “Whistling Pig” complete with driver.

I am sure readers will agree that the attention to detail is excellent and we look forward to seeing more models of this and other locomotives.



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## New Track Progress

At the end of the summer and in preparation for our Open Weekend in September, our volunteers had a final push to get the new track completed to connect up to the isolated section across the inspection pit where the Eimco 24 rocker shovel is parked.

To the Drybrook end of the mine site, past the Stop board which marks the end of the running line, a number of long and heavy rails are awaiting the day they will see trains again. They are each about 30 feet long and rather difficult to move due to their weight.

As we needed to complete a section just over 15 feet long, we decided to cut one long rail in half using the disc cutter to make a pair of 15 foot rails, with another being used to cut short pieces to fill the final gap.

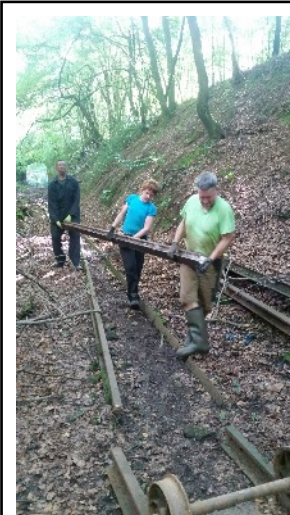
For the first stage of to journey the rails were carefully moved using iron bars as rollers before moving onto wheels for the next section. Here, some rails were placed in the early days which are fixed to approximate 2 foot gauge with metal plates underneath.

They are not part of our current running line and we think they were originally used as part of a surface railway at a coal mine somewhere in the North of England.

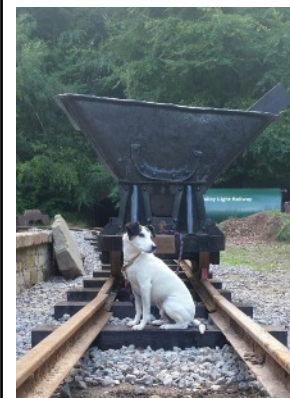
Using the spare wheelsets as rollers, the rails were slowly moved down to the end of the running line where a wagon was waiting to take them to the work site.

There are still a few holes to drill to add fishplates and bolts and of course the line across the pit will need fixing down to keep it to the correct gauge.

During the September Open Weekend a group of volunteers demonstrated the first tipper wagon of spoil across the traverser with Pat Clifford bravely stepping up to operate the Eimco 24 to make room for the wagon to get through and onto the traverser.



Moving a rail with the help of an iron bar and wheels



Boris the dog standing guard next to the Hudson skip



Looking across the pit towards the Eimco 24