



Local History Collection

21 - History of Deep Meadows - Part 2

Winter 2024

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For more than 40 years David and Patricia Buck have developed their 'hobby' of steam trains at Deep Meadows from a miniature railway to a standard gauge to a five foot gauge with stations named Fifield Central and Fifield Junction, sheds for housing engines and carriages and more than half a mile of railway track.

There is a trusty band of family and volunteers together with a full time engineer, Michael Patterson, who has been instrumental in the recent restoration of Lady Patricia and is currently undertaking a major overhaul on the line's first engine, Hornpipe, which will be completed in time for this year's Fun Day.



Hornpipe

In the previous OGAFCA magazine article I explained that the miniature gauge railway was constructed in 1983 and by 1985 the first full size engine (Hornpipe) for standard gauge track was purchased and 100 yards of standard gauge track was laid in the same year for the first steaming. Hornpipe, 0-4-0 ST No.1756, was built in 1928 by Peckett & Sons who built small industrial and shunting engines at their factory near Bristol for nearly 100 years, it was originally purchased by a cement works in Kent, who used it for 43 years moving chalk from the pits along their own railway. It spent a few years in storage and being restored before re-entering service at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre in 1980. They were long lasting locomotives and many still survive on Heritage Railways around the world today. In fact, during the Summer of 2012, Hornpipe had a little excursion to the Mid Suffolk Railway Gala via the Ipswich Docks.

In 1986 the Great Western Railway Toad brake van was acquired, its role was a safety brake on the end of goods trains and its name 'Toad' was derived from the GWR's telegraphic code for a brake van.

By 1990 the standard gauge track had been extended from 100 to 200 yards and in 1995 Fifield Junction was built and a 100 yard branch line laid. The platform at Fifield Junction was built in 2005 and 2006 saw the new engine shed built and a Track Rat bought (a 1998 prototype 2-2w DHR design, diesel powered with hydraulic drive) as well as a Bance engineering No. 062 in 2007 (a 1998 diesel powered, mechanical drive).

During 2007 the ex-Jackfield Sidings signal box was rebuilt - see reference to David Buck's restoration here - https://www.svrwiki.com/Jackfield_sidings - scroll down to the bottom of the page to "Other Surviving Relics".



Sir Vincent

2008 saw Fifield Central platform being built and signalling installed as well as the purchase of the rare and unusual standard gauge locomotive Sir Vincent 4wWT No.8800 built in Rochester, Kent in 1917 at Aveling and Porter. Thomas Aveling is regarded as the 'Father of the Traction Engine' and although the company supplied around 70% of the British market for road rollers in the early 20th century they also made ploughing engines, steam wagons and tramway locomotives. Sir Vincent is a traction engine on wheels with geared drive and compound cylinders with enclosed cab, steam brake and flywheel. It was originally purchased by Vickers Ltd, armaments manufacturers in Kent, and named after their Chief Financier. By 1932 it was sold to British Oil and Cake Mills (one of the earliest companies that crushed oilseeds to make vegetable oil and soaps) and eventually withdrawn from service in 1966, sold to Commander Baldock in 1975 and restored. The restoration was completed in 1993.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollycombe_Steam_Collection

Between 1998 and 2003 Sir Vincent was based at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quainton. The one claim to fame about Sir Vincent is that in April 2020 (during covid-19 lockdown), it was the only standard gauge steam locomotive to have run during the whole month (all heritage lines were shut) when David and Patricia Buck ran it around their half mile private track.

The following year the standard gauge track was extended to a total of 500 yards and in 2009 the GWR 5 plank open wagon was bought. These wagons were mainly used for carrying goods and a tarpaulin sheet could be attached if the goods required some protection. Many of these wagons were used in WW1 for military purposes overseas.



Lady Patricia

In the same year a 5 foot gauge Finnish Pacific locomotive was acquired. Built by Tampella Ab, Tampere Finland in 1955 works no. 946 numbered 1016 of class HR1 by the Finnish Railways. There were only 25 members of the class built between 1938 and 1957 and these locomotives were used for main line passenger work up until the end of steam, with HR1 being the last Pacific locomotives to operate in Europe. The locomotive was then kept in strategic reserve before being purchased by Nigel Sill in 1995 and moved to England, then stored for 3 years at Acton Suffolk, after which it was displayed at Southbury station until 2009. Tampella 1016 was moved to Deep Meadows in 2009 and its restoration began. It was named Lady Patricia in 2010 by Sir William McAlpine and by 2012 the boiler hydraulic test was successful and its first steaming in 42 years took place on 1st December 2012. Lady Patricia's first movement under its own power was on 29th June 2013 and it is now the largest operational steam locomotive in the U.K.

(Note: it was always rumoured that this steam engine was a gift for David from his wife Patricia, however it is reckoned to be a gift from David to Patricia...in place of a diamond ring!!).

The day the locomotive was delivered by lorry to Fifield from Southbury Station near Enfield was quite a story. Because of its height, it was 12 inches lower than motorway bridges, it had to be transported overnight with a police escort on a special low-loader which just managed to clear the bridge spans. Turning 90 degrees off the Fifield Road into Deep Meadows was a major challenge and managed to block the road for rather longer than anticipated! The next challenge was moving the engine a further 90 degrees on to the track. Unfortunately it was raining heavily and the low loader sank into the mud. It took a further week to extricate the engine. Needless to say, there are no plans to ever move it again!



Lady Patricia arriving in Fifield

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK6A_dXOxSQ

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pr- _zs_ps

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4p0uy06rzSs>

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1569521/railway-fanatic-puts-40-ton-steam-engine-in-his-back-garden-without-telling-his-misses/>

Also in 2009 David purchased the standard gauge Barclay diesel locomotive No.352 built in 1941 as part of a batch for the Ministry of Munitions fitted with a 80hp Gardner 6LW diesel engine. Weight 14.5 tons, 19'6" over buffers, 16'6" over buffer beams with 2'3" wheels on 5' wheelbase with outside rods. It has a Borg and Beck gearbox with 3,5,6, 9,6, and 12.5 mph speeds and was delivered new to Puriton Ordnance factory in Somerset. Rebuilt in the 1950's and transferred to the Royal Ordnance factory in Birtley, Co. Durham. It was registered as 1790 with British Transport Commission to allow running on British Rail and sold to North Eastern Iron Refining co., Durham in 1962. It was purchased in 1980 by Peter and Simon Layfield as a Loco shed shunter and used occasionally at the Rutland Railway Museum until the main bearings failed. Eventually restoration began in 2007 when new bearings, straightened rods, side panels, clutch, cab floor etc were fitted by RRM. The Loco left RRM on 8th April 2009 for Deep Meadows and by 24th July 2009 after an engine rebuild, the Barclay ran for the first time in 25 years.

A year later the standard gauge ½ mile loop was completed and in 2012 David went shopping again and purchase the Fawley Directors Saloon and in 2013 a Baguley 'Fire Engine' formerly used at MOD Bramley.

https://www.industrial-loco.org.uk/Baguley%20Catalogue_compressed.pdf

Since 2013 the local Community Association (OGAFCA) has held an annual Fifield Fun Day, for many years this has been held at Deep Meadows and David and Patricia Buck have generously hosted this on their land and run the steam trains to raise funds for the charities being supported by the local community. If you'd like to see the Loco stock and track then please do visit the Fun Day usually held on the 1st Sunday in August every year (check the OGAFCA website for confirmation).

Footnote by the author : *It is usually accepted that 'Ladies' like to shop and may even on occasion 'hide' their purchases to be brought out at a future date to be able to comment 'oh, I've had this for ages'. It has to be said that after writing this historical piece, David likes to shop ... but is unable to hide his purchases for very long!*