

Bromyard & Linton – a brief moment in the spotlight

By Alistair Grieve

THESE days, most enthusiasts can rattle off the names of the majority of heritage railways without really trying. However, there are still one or two that slip under the radar, private railways and small lines that just quietly get on with life without most people noticing.

Just occasionally they do something out of the ordinary, something that causes people to sit up and take notice and something that makes people say "I didn't know that was there".

One such railway is the Bromyard & Linton, a narrow gauge railway in rural Herefordshire.

The line itself runs on part of the trackbed of the GWR Leominster-Worcester railway, which closed in 1962, and was dismantled in 1965.

Its main base is on the edge of the Bromyard station site, squeezed between an industrial estate and a timber yard.

Private operation

The industrial estate was the station, and the timber yard the gasworks; the siding that served the gasworks is now the B&LR.

The railway runs about a mile eastwards to the Linton industrial estate (once a tile works) where another shed is located containing non-running stock and other items.

The railway has been running since 1978, but being a private operation and wholly diesel it's slipped past most enthusiasts without anyone even noticing. Take a drive down the road, even past the Bromyard site and, unless you knew what you were looking for you'd miss it. However on March 10-11



One of the few signs of the standard gauge heritage as No. 3114 passes under a farm bridge.

that all changed, when the railway played host to two days of David Williams' photo charters with Kerr Stuart 0-4-0ST No. 3114, courtesy of the Vale of Rheidol Railway. The locomotive was en route from the VoR to the London Museum of Water & Steam (formerly the Kew Bridge Steam Museum) for the season and David took the opportunity to make use of it on the way.

No. 3114 is a sister locomotive to the Leighton-Buzzard Railway-based *Pixie*, and was built in 1918 for the Ministry of Munitions. It is believed that it worked on the dismantling of the Ashover Light Railway.

Whilst the little locomotive may have looked out of place on the VoR with its big heavyweight locomotives it looked right at home on the B&L, with four skips or the log train in tow, and the very light-weight industrial-looking nature of the track.

In most places the only parts of the track that could be seen were the rail heads, above the grass, the sleepers well hidden.

It conjured up images of all those industrial narrow gauge railways now long gone. No neatly manicured neat-looking track, just a functional, operation.



No. 3114 on shed at Bromyard and the epitome of an industrial narrow gauge shed.

Chugging through the undergrowth

Despite the fact that the trackbed was once standard gauge it is very difficult to tell, nature having taken over, leaving just enough room for the B&L to run. Along with No. 3114, Ruston L10 (No. 198241 of 1939) was also in use, which really set the scene of an industrial narrow gauge railway, chugging through the undergrowth

with a rake of logs (or skips) in tow.

With the Kerr Stuart now at Kew for the season, the B&L will slip back quietly in the undergrowth, pottering along in its own little world. Most people will pass it by without taking notice, but for two, all too brief days, it made the spotlight, and captured the hearts of all those who saw it. A little hidden gem, and a taste of days and railways long past.



No. 3114 creeping through the mud on the Bromyard & Linton Railway.



Opening the gate to let the train through.