

ORS Visit to the STATFOLD BARN RAILWAY

We all know how easy it is to get carried away in our hobby. Imagine that you are the owner of an engineering business – in fact, one that has taken over the Hunslet Engine Company – and start out with building a two-foot gauge loop in your back garden. A steam locomotive for it would be nice, especially if you could repatriate the last Hunslet one built, and then, while you are in Java doing that, there are quite a few other interesting steam engines it would be nice to bring home... and they really a rather longer run, so you'll need to extend across your farm; and a third rail will be needed for the 30-inch gauge examples; and then a bit of standard gauge will give you some seriously complicated trackwork. Build a couple more 'Quarry Hunslet' locomotives yourself, throw in a dozen or more non-steam engines of all sorts and a few traction engines, and you have the Statfold Barn Railway – and all this has happened since the start of the 21st century.



A small group of Oxfordshire Railway Society members made the trip to Tamworth to see it on the 12th June open day. With eight engines in steam (or did I lose count?) there was an intensive but extremely well-organised service. If it were not for the very English countryside, out on the Field Railway you could have imagined yourself on some colonial line of the past, especially when one of the more exotic engines was working the demonstration freight, or when a train was pursued by a handcar (on which several ORS members were spotted) or the SBR's eccentric two-foot gauge Land-Rover. It was even possible to travel by mixed-gauge train across a triple-gauge flat crossing. Everywhere was immaculately presented, and there were no heaps of rusting iron in the brambles – obviously the philosophy is that once something's been acquired the railway sets to and restores it just as quickly as it can. The comment on every visitor's lips was that, once seen, they'd want to come back again. That is, I suppose, if you're not in a position to commission a new locomotive from them and do it yourself.



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