

Draft release

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Oktoberfest Rail Extravaganza Billed As 'Narrow Gauge Event of the Year'

An event shaping up to be absolutely 'wunderbar' is taking over the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway between October 21 and 29, as the 15-inch gauge railway lays on a glorious Oktoberfest of German locos, food and even musical entertainment at the weekends.

The Lake District railway is billing its German-themed event as the 'narrow gauge event of the year', having already secured the visit of two German Krauss-built steam engines, Tazzelwurm from the Killesberg Railway in Stuttgart and Steam Engine no 1, from The Prater Liliputbahn, Vienna.

Tazzelwurm takes its name from a serpentine creature in Alpine folklore and arrived on the scene in 1950, to help replace two locos sent to Leipzig during World War 2. Steam Engine No 1 was built in the late 1920s, as a park 'garden train', which were all the rage at amusement parks at the time.

Other narrow gauge locos of Germanic origin heading to Ravenglass are the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch engine, The Bug.

The Bug is a modified version of the standard design of loco produced by Krupp and was used whilst the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch line was being extended to Dungeness. In 1933, the loco was sold to a Blackpool showman, who sold it on to Belle Vue Park in Belfast. The Bug was sold for scrap in the 1950s, but amazingly stayed in tact, buried beneath other scrap. It was rescued in 1972, by Sir William McAlpine, and returned to Romney, where it was restored in 1984 and overhauled in 1991. Around the engine shed, it is lovingly known as 'Basil'.

The R&ER will also be displaying some of its own narrow gauge museum engines – Synolda, Count Louis and Katie in the Railway Museum with mini rides planned with Count Louis and The Bug.

Synolda was built in 1912 for the Sand Hutton Railway and then sold on to parks in Southend and then Manchester. She was rescued from Belle Vue Zoo in 1978 in a derelict condition and restored by engineers from British Nuclear Fuels.

Katie was built by Sir Arthur Heywood in 1896, for the Duke of Westminster's Eaton Hall Railway. It went to Ravenglass in 1916 and left in 1919. During its lifetime, it spent time at a miniature railway in Southport and at the Fairbourne Railway in Wales. In 1992, the RERPS took on the mission of restoring the loco to its original condition.

Count Louis is Synolda's brother and named after the racing driver who raced 'Chitty Bang Bang' and who was a great railway enthusiast. He had ordered a loco like Synolda, and others in the style of loco Sans Pareil, from Bassett-Lowke for his own private line, the Higham Railway. After the Count's tragic death, while racing at Monza aged 29, the loco was purchased by the Fairbourne Railway in Wales and re-named Count Louis in his honour.

"The Oktoberfest event is sure to be a huge draw not only for narrow gauge enthusiasts but families who want to enjoy added value on great railway days out", says R&ER marketing manager, Lisa Braithwaite. "We shall be announcing other parts of the programme over the coming months such as exclusive photography behind the scenes event and fish supper evening double header train, in addition to the amazing German locos visiting us for our German extravaganza.

"Added to this, enthusiasts will be able to see the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway Preservation Society-owned 'Train From Spain', now called Whillan Beck, which we know has been the source of much interest within the steam world fraternity for the last few years."

Whillan Beck is another Krauss engine, built in 1929 in Munich and known then as 'Pinta'. The loco was built to work at the Ibero-American exposition, then used occasionally until 1932, before being taken out of service and stored. In the 1960s, it and its sister locos were bought to run at a Madrid-based park and then, in the 2000s, it was purchased by a group planning to open a railway in Barcelona. Plans did not come to fruition and the engine re-entered storage until being purchased by the Ravenglass and Eskdale Preservation Society in 2015, for a full restoration.

Anyone wishing to attend the Oktoberfest event will find more details about the railway at www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk

Please note, although all visiting engines have been confirmed for the event this may well change due to unforeseen circumstances. A full timetable and event programme will be published on our website.

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