

HISTORY OF THE HOLLY, ROWAN & HAWTHORN LIGHT RAILWAY

The Holly, Rowan & Hawthorn Light Railway was conceived as an identity for my original garden railway, which connected the trees named in the title, the main feature plants in the garden. Since the main product of the garden was the red berries from those trees, plus cotoneaster and honeysuckle, with lavender thrown in, it made sense that the main purpose of the railway should be the collection of these crops, delivery to a central point for processing, and delivery of the final product for consumption, cut wood and processed timber, and transport of workers (and others as required). On that basis, the first wagons built for the line were tubs for berry transport, and tank wagons for Red Berry Juice, while log bogies and open wagons for general goods, and passenger stock, was bought in surplus from other lines, along with most of the motive power.



Red Berry tank wagons



Rowanbank station and village

To give the railway a sense of identity, a crest was designed featuring the main product carried, the red berries.



LEGEND:

The legend behind the fact, to justify a garden scale railway, is that the size of the trains derives from the Forest of Boland Light Railway, created by gnomes in pre-industrial Britain, and the historical clearance of forests drove them, with their knowledge of steam and rail technology, to move North to find wilder areas, failing which in modern times to disguise themselves as ornaments, hence the appearance of garden gnomes! In parallel development, on Terry Pratchett's Discworld, gnomes learned the same technologies from humans and developed smaller scale narrow gauge versions for their own use, in spite of being able to move much faster on their own feet. The Nac Mac Feegles' ability to cross between worlds accounts for their appearance on the railway at times, and who can say they didn't originate in the wilder parts of Scotland, given their alternate title of Pictsies, and possibly explaining why the Romans found it too much trouble to subdue Scotland for any length of time!



Nac Mac Feegles at Rowanbank station!

RELOCATION:

A house move meant transferring the railway to a new location, with few berry-bearing plants, hence a diversification into general cargo and passenger carrying work, although the original functions may yet be developed.

REVISED HISTORY:

There was in fact, within living memory (shown on maps until until post 1945), a very steep, winding, standard gauge mineral railway connecting from the Edinburgh-Glasgow main line at Falkirk High station to various industries (including a brick works and sawmill) and several private coal mines, as well as the Union Canal, over the hill at Glen Village and on up into the hills at Gardrum Moss, towards the village of Slamannan 6 miles away, which historically had its own main line railway not connecting directly to Falkirk. Most of those industries were named for, and possibly owned by, Callendar Estates, the local land owner. At one time, when the canals were still active, the mineral line also connected to the Forth & Clyde canal and some local industries, running beside the canal locks under the Edinburgh-Glasgow main line to do so.

Before the standard gauge line developed, there was a tramway along part of the later route, connecting some local coal pits to the Union Canal, presumably horse powered. Separately, Gardrum Moss did in fact have a 2 foot gauge peat railway at one time, not connecting with any standard gauge lines.

In my alternative history, the tramway developed into a narrow gauge line linking the various industries along the route, feeding to the canal, supplying local farms and providing a direct link to Slamannan up in the hills, which a standard gauge line could not have managed due to the topography. The standard gauge line, by all accounts and looking at maps, could only manage short trains hauled by a small tank engine. Parts of the route can be followed on foot. The steep gradients and sharp curves will require the use of geared locomotives to overcome the problems of the route with all but the smallest loads. This will be the Slamannan Light Railway, currently under construction, to be operated by the redeployed staff and stock of the original Holly, Rowan and Hawthorn Light Railway.