

A HISTORY OF THE
**PLYMOUTH
CENTRAL PARK
MINIATURE
RAILWAY**

**A short history of a temporary
10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge railway in the late 1940s**

Peter Scott

***MINOR RAILWAY
MINI HISTORIES - M4***

PLYMOUTH CENTRAL PARK MINIATURE RAILWAY

10½" gauge. 1946 - 1948

Introduction

During the summer seasons of 1946, 1947 and 1948 a miniature railway operated in Central Park, Plymouth. This was a temporary railway - with the track being laid down each season. The gauge was 10½" and trains were hauled by a 4-6-2 steam locomotive built by Travers John Thurston from Farnborough in Hampshire. The locomotive, coaches and track were owned by Cornishman George Archibald Dingle. These notes describe this temporary railway and have been assembled using Council Minutes, contemporary newspaper reports and what little has been published elsewhere. Details are also included of the other miniature railways operated by George Dingle, together with the locomotives he owned and exhibited.

Central Park

Central Park is the largest in Plymouth and lies to the north of the city centre and immediately north of the main railway station. The Park was formed during the 1920s when Plymouth City Council acquired various pieces of land, which would be devoted to improving the health of the city's residents. At 234 acres, the design was created by architect Thomas Mawson (1861-1933) but was never completed as he envisaged, due to a shortage of funds, although the large avenues are an important feature of the original master-plan that remain today. Those portions of the Park which had been completed were officially opened during the evening of Wednesday 29th July 1931 by the Mayor, Mr J Clifford Tozer.

George Archibald Dingle

George Archibald Dingle (1895-1976) was born on 28th June 1895 in Kelly Bray near Callington in Cornwall. His father, John H Dingle, was noted in the 1901 census as a "Builder & Timber Merchant" - a business originally founded in 1882. George seems to have taken an interest in model engineering - there is a letter from him in the 10th July 1913 edition of *Model Engineer* describing a stationary horizontal steam engine and boiler, which he had built. The *Western Morning News* of Saturday 12th October 1946 stated he completed this at the age of 17 and claimed it supplied Kelly Bray with its first electric lighting system. The paper also noted he was articled to the former Plymouth, Devonport & South Western Junction Railway, serving his time under Mr F Kemp "*a well-known engineer*". He later took over his father's business and in 1949 was living in The Mill House in Kelly Bray. In the 22nd April 1954 edition of *Model Engineer* he relates that he had just overhauled a Garrett traction engine (BJ5579), of which a picture clearly shows, has "J H Dingle Builder & Contractor Kelly Bray" on its roof valance.

George Dingle seems to have first become interested in miniature railways towards the end of the Second World War. Around this time he purchased a 7½" gauge 4-6-2 locomotive and displayed it at an exhibition in Falmouth, Cornwall - passing it off as his own work. He repeated this deception a number of times over the next few years! According to the engineer and miniature locomotive builder George Woodcock he knew the renowned light railway engineer

and manager Colonel Holman Fred Stephens (1868-1931). George Dingle was no relation to the Dingle family of R Dingle & Sons, a supplier of steam and later modern road making equipment and who now operate Dingles Fairground Museum near Launceston. Around 1970 he was still living in The Mill House in Kelly Bray, but he died in 1976.

1946 Season

1946 seems to have been the first foray into the operation of a public miniature railway by George Dingle. This was still a time, immediately following the Second World War, when the majority of people were taking their holidays locally or nearby at the seaside, but certainly still within the country.

At the Wednesday 15th May 1946 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee of Plymouth City Council an application was "*submitted from G A Dingle to install a passenger carrying miniature railway in Central Park or other suitable site*". The Committee resolved that the Committee Chairman, Vice Chairman, City Surveyor and Entertainments Manager should decide whether the offer be accepted. They duly reported back to the meeting on Wednesday 10th July 1946 and the Committee decided that George Dingle's offer should be accepted to "*provide a Miniature Railway for the conveyance of passengers in Central Park during the remainder of the summer season*". The City Surveyor and Entertainments Manager were deputed to select a suitable site within Central Park. It was stated that Dingle would provide the "*track and railway and be responsible for its running and maintenance*" while the Council would receive 25% of the gross takings, out of which they would provide a ticket collector and the tickets. The *Western Morning News* of Saturday 13th July 1946 reported the Parks & Recreation Committee had given their approval for the railway, which it said was hoped to open within 2 or 3 weeks. It went on "*the track is about half a mile long and the railway will operate on weekdays until the end of the summer season*". It is not recorded anywhere exactly where in Central Park the railway was to be located.

The railway opened on Bank Holiday Monday, 5th August 1946. The *Western Morning News* of Saturday 3rd August reported "*An added attraction for the children will be the opening of the miniature passenger carrying railway in Central Park on Monday*". It added the railway was "*keenly anticipated by the children, who have seen the construction of the half mile "permanent way" and the arrival of the steam driven engine and carriages*". The *Western Morning News* of Tuesday 6th August stated there was a big rush on the opening day for rides "*One of the longest holiday queues yesterday was that formed by over 1,000 school children awaiting rides on the miniature railway which operated for the first time in Central Park, Plymouth. Long before the official opening time there was a queue nearly a quarter of a mile long and police and park attendants had a busy time at the station turnstile*". However, the opening was not without problems - the paper also noted that George Dingle had supervised the construction of the "*half mile permanent way*" - but went on "*it was discovered on a trial run Sunday night that the planned circular track was not entirely suitable, hasty last minute alterations had to be effected and the train is now running over a straight stretch of track. Skidding slightly on the wet rails, the engine could only haul three trucks, each with its complement of ten passengers. If the track dries it is anticipated it will be possible to put two further trucks into use*". Fares were reported as 6d per trip for children and 1s for adults and that the railway would operate daily except Sundays from 2pm until dusk. It appears the track was later changed back to a circuit. At their Monday 12th August 1946 meeting the Parks & Recreation Committee were informed "*that it had now been found necessary to change the*

direction of the track, and that a new oval had been laid". The railway certainly proved popular - the *Western Morning News* of Wednesday 7th August 1946 stated that, on the first day (Monday 5th August), a total of 653 passengers - 273 children and 380 adults - were carried. One wonders what happened to the 1,000 children the paper previously reported queuing for a ride that day!

To operate the 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge railway George Dingle used his new 4-6-2 locomotive, which had been built in spring 1946 by Travers John Thurston (1897-1972) of Farnborough, Hampshire. This locomotive was a freelance design and was initially un-named and un-numbered. However, the *Western Morning News* of Saturday 3rd August 1946 described the locomotive as an "*LNER Pacific type*". It seems from an earlier report in the *Western Morning News* of Tuesday 21st May 1946 George Dingle had been considering using a 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " 4-6-2 locomotive, also built by Thurston and named "*Restormel Castle*", which he owned at the time. However, he wisely chose the larger gauge. Passenger stock was sit-in wooden bodied open bogie coaches, which had originated from the Surrey Border & Camberley Railway (SBCR). Dingle probably acquired these via Charles Lane at Liphook, Hampshire. The *Western Morning News* of Saturday 3rd August 1946 stated there would be six coaches in use. However, as already mentioned above, trains had to be limited to less than that. Each coach was said to be capable of accommodating 14 children.

Although intended for children to enjoy, it seems adults also took to the railway - to the detriment of the younger prospective passengers. The *Western Morning News* of Tuesday 3rd September 1946 reported that at a meeting of the City Council the previous day a Mr J E Hatherley had "*complained that children coming from distant parts of the city were often unable to get a ride because adults were in possession*". In reply the Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Committee said the railway was "*primarily for the children*" and stated from 5th August to 31st August 21,886 passengers had paid for a ride - only 2,786 of these had been adults. The railway ran until the end of the season, probably in early September. Then the track was lifted and everything was presumably taken back to Kelly Bray for winter storage. Total income from the railway for the Council was £211 8s 0d.

1947 Season

George Dingle wasted little time in making preparations to return the railway to Central Park for the 1947 season. At the Wednesday 15th January 1947 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee the Town Clerk submitted Dingle's application "*to reinstall the passenger carrying miniature railway at Central Park on the site which was allocated last year*". The proposed period of operation was from 26th May to 31st August, with an "*extension if circumstances permit*". The Committee granted the application on the same terms as for the 1946 season. The Entertainments Manager was to confer with George Dingle as to the fares, but it was not reported what decision was made.

It had been intended to open the railway on Saturday 14th June 1947. However, the weather thought otherwise. The *Western Morning News* of Monday 16th June, under the headline "*Weather delays Plymouth Track Laying*", reported that a "*Delay in track laying, owing to the weather, caused the postponement of the opening of Plymouth's Miniature Railway at Central Park on Saturday*". It added that ten men were required to unload the "*two-ton passenger carrying locomotive*". This was the same 4-6-2 locomotive, which had been employed for the 1946 season - but now apparently named "*Tamar Queen*". The railway finally opened on

Wednesday 18th June 1947. The *Western Morning News* of that day had a photograph, the caption of which informed us something about the driver "*After 47 years an engineman on the Southern Railway, Mr E S Pike comes out of retirement to drive the graceful 35cwt locomotive Tamar Queen on the miniature railway, reopening today at Central Park*". The paper also incorrectly stated the locomotive "*was made by Mr J Dingle [sic] of Kelly Bray, Callington*". The *Western Evening Herald* of the same date had a photograph captioned "*Workmen completing the half mile section of track for the opening today of the miniature railway in Central Park*". From the above it seems the railway was located in the same position as the previous season and was the same ½ mile long circuit. At the end of the season, in early September, total income for the Council from the railway was £180 13s 4d.

1948 Season

The railway was to return again to Central Park for the 1948 season. At the Wednesday 10th March 1948 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee the Town Clerk submitted "*an application from G A Dingle to re-install the passenger carrying Miniature Railway at Central Park on the site which was allocated last year*". The Committee granted the application on the same terms as for the 1946 and 1947 seasons.

The railway duly opened on Whitsun Bank Holiday Monday, 17th May 1948. The *Western Morning News* of Tuesday 18th May reported "*The Lord Mayor of Plymouth (Ald H J Perry) was one of the first to ride on Plymouth Miniature Railway which opened its season at Central Park, yesterday*". However, it went on "*On the first run the bogy [sic] wheels of one of the carriages jumped the rails. The fault however was soon remedied and afterwards hundreds of children enjoyed themselves riding around the circuit*". The locomotive was the same 4-6-2, but it was now named "Western Queen" (having swapped names with another of Dingle's locomotives, which had been built by Bullock in 1934) with the same ex-SBCR stock as used during the previous two seasons. The Wednesday 19th May 1948 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee heard from the Entertainments Manager that the "*Miniature Railway in the Central Park was opened on the 17th instant (Whit Monday) and that the charges to the Public had been fixed as follows: Adults 9d, Children 6d*". As in previous years the railway ran until early September. Total income for the Council from the season was £140.

The 1948 season proved to be the last for the miniature railway in Central Park. The Entertainments Manager reported to the Wednesday 16th March 1949 meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee that "*Mr G Dingle did not propose to operate his miniature railway in the Central Park during the forthcoming season*". No reason was given, but George Dingle had already opened a railway on the South Pier in Lowestoft on Whitsun Bank Holiday Monday, 17th May 1948 (coincidentally the same day as the railway in Central Park). Also receipts from the railway had been falling despite longer periods of operation. Round figures were: 1946 - £211 (from about 5 weeks running), 1947 - £181 (11 weeks) & 1948 - £140 (16 weeks). However, it should be noted the adult fare in 1948 was only 9d compared to 1s in 1946; 1947 fares are unknown. By the summer of 1948 more people were beginning to travel to the seaside resorts for their holidays - the railway in Central Park had always been intended for enjoyment of the citizens of Plymouth. George Dingle sold the Thurston built 4-6-2 "Western Queen" to Harold Judd of Reading over the winter of 1948/1949 and he put it to use on a new railway, which opened on the Thames Side Promenade in Reading at Easter 1949.

Exhibitions

Apart from operating the railway in Central Park, George Dingle displayed some of the locomotives he owned at exhibitions in the West Country. Known examples are Falmouth (1945) and Plymouth (1946, 1947 & 1948). In the course of these he rather dishonestly claimed to have built the locomotives himself!

Falmouth - 1945

The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society held their 2nd annual Model Engineering Exhibition in the Polytechnic Hall in Falmouth between Monday 3rd September and Saturday 15th September 1945. There George Dingle exhibited his 7½" gauge 4-6-2 locomotive "Restormel Castle", which had been built by Travers John Thurston around 1942. The *West Briton & Cornwall Advertiser* of Thursday 6th September 1945 reported there were around 160 exhibits and a "particularly striking one was a 1½-inch scale model of 4-6-2 free-lance locomotive, of the LNER Pacific type, named Restormel Castle. This model, which is a triumph of patience and skill, was constructed by Mr G A Dingle, of Kelly Bray, Callington". The paper went on to note it was 12ft 9in in length and weighed 18 cwt and that the "maker hopes to use the model at some Cornish seaside resort". There is no evidence this ever took place. A photograph shows it was numbered 224 on the cab side and had LNER on the tender. George Dingle also exhibited a "half-inch scale model of a 4-8-4 express engine, fitted with a combustion chamber and super heater". The *West Briton & Cornwall Advertiser* of Thursday 13th September 1945 reported that George Dingle won Second Prize in the locomotives section and was also awarded a special diploma. Whether these were for "Restormel Castle" or the 4-8-4 is not stated. However, it was dishonest to present a locomotive built by someone else as his own "triumph of patience and skill" and then to win a prize for it!

Plymouth - 1946

Between Tuesday 21st May and Saturday 25th May 1946 the Plymouth Anglo-Chinese Society held an exhibition of Model Engineering and Handicrafts at Mutley Methodist Schoolroom, Plymouth in aid of China's war orphans. Here George Dingle continued to pass off other's work as his own, displaying two of his 7½" gauge locomotives. The first was "Restormel Castle", which under headline "*Clever Work of Callington Man*", the *Western Morning News* of Tuesday 21st May 1946 reported had been "made by Mr J H Dingle of Callington" - the paper getting confused with George Dingle's father. The other locomotive was GWR 4-6-0 "King George V" built by Stanley Battison (1906-1960) of Ilkeston in 1938. The *Western Morning News* noted "*this second, and perhaps even finer example of Mr Dingle's work was described by one visitor yesterday as the product of an artist in steel*". George Dingle had acquired this locomotive from Reg Lucas of Mansfield who in turn had purchased it from Stanley Battison. Apparently Reg Lucas, by chance on holiday in Looe at the time, had seen the article in the *Western Morning News* and he and Battison were none too pleased!

Plymouth - 1947

The Plymouth & District Society of Model & Experimental Engineers held an exhibition in the showrooms of the Barton Motor Company in Mutley Plain, Plymouth between Monday 21st April and Saturday 3rd May 1947. There George Dingle displayed 10¼" gauge 4-6-2 "Western Queen" built by H C S Bullock of Farnborough in 1934, which he seems to have obtained over the winter of 1946/1947. The *Western Morning News* of Tuesday 22nd April 1947 reported

that "*Western Queen, a working model locomotive, weighing two tons, made by Mr G A Dingle of Kelly Bray, near Callington, is one of the striking exhibits*". Interestingly, Reg Lucas also exhibited, the paper noting "*Outstanding are the exhibits of Reg Lucas of Mansfield*" - but unfortunately it does not tell us what these were.

Plymouth - 1948

Following their successful exhibition in 1947 the Plymouth & District Society of Model & Experimental Engineers held a second one - again in the showrooms of the Barton Motor Company in Mutley Plain - this time between Monday 10th May and Saturday 22nd May 1948. The brief report on the exhibition in the *Western Morning News* of Tuesday 11th May 1948 does not state if any locomotives were displayed, but added "*There is a miniature railway on which children can have a ride, the "train" is drawn by a model LNER express passenger locomotive*" which probably indicates use of George Dingle's 7¼" gauge locomotive "Restormel Castle".

Other Railways

It appears George Dingle had a railway on his property at Kelly Bray, near Callington in Cornwall. The *Western Morning News* of Saturday 12th October 1946 had a small piece about George Dingle and noted "*He is popular with the village children who, on special occasions, are allowed "free passes" on his railway*". Writing in the 1970s George Woodcock stated George Dingle rented a field next to his timber yard and laid the railway there. The only evidence of this railway is a couple of photographs showing his 4-6-2 locomotives "Tamar Queen" and "Western Queen" on a straight section of track in a rural setting, which would support Woodcock's assertion. This was clearly a 10¼" gauge railway, although he probably had an earlier 7¼" gauge railway on which he ran 4-6-2 "Restormel Castle".

George Dingle may have also operated a very short-lived railway in Bude, North Cornwall in the summer of 1950. Writing in October 1976 George Woodcock related how he sold a 9½" gauge USA H K Porter type 4-4-0 locomotive he had built to George Dingle. He recalled that George Dingle had "*opened a service*" at Bude with the locomotive, but in August 1950 "*his man*" had burnt out the firebox. The 4-4-0 was returned to George Woodcock for repair and afterwards, George Dingle sold it on. No evidence has been found of this very short-lived railway, but the 4-4-0 had clearly seen service somewhere.

Paignton Zoo - 1947 & 1948

George Dingle supplied a locomotive and coaches for a 10¼" gauge railway in the grounds of Paignton Zoo for the 1947 season and the early part of the 1948 season. The track was owned by the Zoo. This railway has been fully described in the author's book *A History of the Paignton Zoo Railway* (Peter Scott 2008). However, for completeness a brief description of George Dingle's involvement follows.

The railway opened in early May 1947 and the locomotive employed was 4-6-2 "Western Queen" built by H C S Bullock of Farnborough in 1934. George Dingle presumably hired this locomotive to the Zoo, which he seems to have obtained over the winter of 1946/1947. He then displayed it at an exhibition in Plymouth between 21st April and 3rd May 1947 (see above) from where it moved directly to the Zoo. Three coaches were employed and these were the

same ex-SBCR type as used in Central Park. George Dingle probably also supplied a driver. The railway ran until the end of October 1947, when the locomotive and coaches were presumably returned to Kelly Bray. The track remained in-situ as it was well laid and fully ballasted and in any case owned by the Zoo. Apparently, while running at the Zoo "Western Queen" was damaged by children putting sand down the chimney. Therefore, over the winter of 1947/1948 it was overhauled and partly rebuilt by George Woodcock in Hertford. Following this work it swapped names with the 4-6-2 Thurston locomotive and therefore became "Tamar Queen" - now numbered 224 it moved to George Dingle's new railway in Lowestoft (see below).

The Zoo railway reopened for the 1948 season on 26th March - using a GNR 4-4-2 with at least one ex-SBCR coach. This locomotive had been regauged from 9½" by George Woodcock and George Dingle probably acquired it on the Zoo's behalf. It was certainly later owned by the Zoo as they advertised it for sale in *The World's Fair* of 29th May 1948, along with three coaches. The 4-4-2 was found to be too small for the railway and it was replaced by a petrol locomotive in July 1948 before being sold and moving on to the Cleethorpes Miniature Railway.

Lowestoft South Pier - 1948-1951

Following his provision of a railway for Paignton Zoo, George Dingle operated a temporary railway on the South Pier in Lowestoft for the summer seasons of 1948 to 1951. This railway has been previously fully described in the author's book *A History of the Lowestoft Miniature Railway* (Peter Scott 2018), but a brief description follows.

In October 1947 Lowestoft Borough Council were looking to provide entertainments to attract visitors to the resort for the 1948 season. The Council's Publicity & Entertainments Manager approached George Dingle "*through a local contact*" to see if he could provide a miniature railway - explaining why someone all the way from Cornwall should operate a railway in the country's most easterly town! The Council suggested a site on the South Pier, to which Dingle agreed and he offered the same terms as he had with Plymouth City Council for the railway in Central Park - namely the Council to provide a ticket collector and receive 25% of the takings. The Council agreed to these terms and the railway opened on Whitsun Bank Holiday Monday, 17th May 1948 (thus Dingle had the distinction of opening two railways on the same day - his line in Plymouth's Central Park also opening that day). The 10¼" gauge track was laid directly onto the concrete surface of the Pier with no ballast. It was 350 yards in length with no points. Motive power was 4-6-2 "Tamar Queen" built by Bullock in 1934 - fresh from overhaul after running at Paignton Zoo during 1947. Passenger stock was three ex-SBCR coaches.

The railway ran until the end of the season in late September and was then removed and placed into storage. It returned to the South Pier for the 1949, 1950 & 1951 summer seasons, each time operated by 4-6-2 "Tamar Queen". Towards the end of the 1951 season the Council considered purchasing the railway from George Dingle and operating it themselves. In the end they decided not to proceed and asked Dingle if he would continue to operate the railway for the 1952 season on the South Pier. However, he declined and stated he was withdrawing the railway for a "*major overhaul & general refit*". This was the end of George Dingle's interest in Lowestoft. The Council then acquired and directly operated a railway on the South Pier for the 1952 season, which continued to run there until after the 1954 season. Early in 1952 George Dingle sold 4-6-2 "Tamar Queen" and some ex-SBCR coaches to Maurice Densham of North Tawton near Okehampton in Devon.

The following newspapers contained photographs of the railway in Central Park and locomotives at the exhibitions:

Central Park

Western Morning News - Saturday 3rd August 1946 p3

"Miniature Railway for Plymouth". Close up view of 4-6-2 "Tamar Queen" built by Thurston in 1946 (but not yet named) surrounded by young boys. Wooden building or fence behind locomotive. Reproduced below.

Western Morning News - Tuesday 6th August 1946 p6

"Children Queue for Railway". View from rear of a well-loaded train, which is formed of at least two ex-SBCR sit-in bogie coaches. Locomotive just visible at front of train. Lots of people watch the proceedings from behind wire fences. Caption states photograph was taken at the "terminus".

Western Evening Herald - Tuesday 6th August 1946 p3

"Hundreds of Plymouth Children". Good view of 4-6-2 "Tamar Queen" built by Thurston in 1946 at the head of a train of four or five ex-SBCR sit-in bogie coaches. Plenty of on-lookers.

Western Morning News - Wednesday 18th June 1947 p6

"Engineman's New Charge". Photograph of Mr E S Pike oiling round 4-6-2 "Tamar Queen" built by Thurston in 1946. The caption informs us that Mr Pike had been an engineman on the Southern Railway for 47 years and the locomotive was named "Tamar Queen", although no name plate is visible.

Western Evening Herald - Wednesday 18th June 1947 p3

"Banking the Curves". View showing track being packed up with timber baulks. There is a locomotive in the background, but too small to see any detail.

Western Morning News - Tuesday 18th May 1948 p3

"Children's Railway in Central Park". The Lord Mayor of Plymouth (Alderman H J Perry) examines the controls of 4-6-2 "Western Queen" (formerly "Tamar Queen") before giving the signal to start. The locomotive has a nameplate, but it is not readable. Plenty of children look on.

Exhibitions

Western Morning News - Tuesday 21st May 1946 p6

"Model that took nine years to make". At the Plymouth Anglo-Chinese Society exhibition the Deputy Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayoress are shown taking a "special interest" in the 7½" gauge 4-6-0 "King George V" built by Stanley Battison in 1938. However, the caption claims it was constructed by J W Moyse and J H Dingle.

Western Morning News - Tuesday 22nd April 1947 p6

"Cornishman's Two-Tons Model Locomotive". At the Plymouth & District Society of Model & Experimental Engineers exhibition the Lord Mayor of Plymouth, the Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, the Countess of Mount Edgcumbe and George Dingle are inspecting 4-6-2 "Western Queen" built by Bullock in 1934. The caption states the locomotive was "made by G A Dingle of Kelly Bray".

Western Evening Herald - Tuesday 22nd April 1947 p3

View of 4-6-2 "Western Queen" built by Bullock in 1934 on display at Plymouth & District Society of Model & Experimental Engineers exhibition. Three years old Geoffrey Burbidge is sitting in the driver's seat while George Dingle explains the controls of "his model", while other children look on.



Central Park 1946. This lovely view appeared in the *Western Morning News* of Saturday 3rd August 1946 and shows Thurston's 4-6-2 "Tamar Queen" (un-named at the time) prior to the opening of the railway on Bank Holiday Monday, 5th August 1946. The locomotive is surrounded by lots of young school boys sporting the dress code of the time. A tall wooden fence or building stands behind the locomotive, which had not long been completed.



Kelly Bray 1948. Here we see George Dingle's 10½" gauge railway at Kelly Bray, in a field adjacent to his yard, with his two 4-6-2s. Left is the Bullock and right the Thurston. These two photographs can be dated to 1948 - the Bullock locomotive has a raised running plate over the cylinders, altered when George Woodcock rebuilt the locomotive during winter 1947/1948. The Thurston locomotive was sold on over the winter of 1948/1949. Both locomotives have "PMR" on their tenders - presumably denoting Plymouth Miniature Railway, or Paignton Miniature Railway for the Bullock. The latter is clearly in steam.

(Author's Collection)



Falmouth Exhibition 1945. Here we see George Dingle stood alongside 7½" gauge 4-6-2 "Restormel Castle", which he obtained new from builder Travers John Thurston. He exhibited it at the 2nd annual Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Model Engineering Exhibition in the Polytechnic Hall in Falmouth, between Monday 3rd September and Saturday 15th September 1945, claiming it as his own work and seemingly winning a prize!
(Author's Collection)

Summary (Central Park)

1946 Railway

Opened: Monday 5th August

Closed: Early September

Layout & length: Circular, ½ mile

1947 Railway

Opened: Wednesday 18th June

Closed: Early September

Layout & length: Circular, ½ mile

1948 Railway

Opened: Monday 17th May

Closed: Early September

Layout & length: Circular, ½ mile

Locomotives

Central Park (10¼" gauge)

	Tamar/Western Queen	4-6-2	Travers John Thurston	1946	Freelance	1
1	From: new, by 8/1946. Renamed from Tamar Queen to Western Queen, winter 1947/1948. To: Harold Judd, Reading, winter 1948/1949.					

Other Locomotives (7¼" gauge)

224	Restormel Castle	4-6-2	Travers John Thurston	c1942	Freelance	2
6000	King George V	4-6-0	Stanley Battison	1938	GWR King	3
2	From: new, by 9/1945. To: Exhibition, Falmouth, 3/9/45 - 15/9/45. To: Exhibition, Plymouth, 21/5/46 - 25/5/46. To: Exhibition, Plymouth (?) 10/5/48 - 22/5/48. To: Charles Lane, Liphook, after 5/1948.					
3	From: Reg Lucas, by 5/1946. To: Exhibition, Plymouth, 21/5/46 - 25/5/46. To: Charles Lane, Liphook, c1948.					

Other Locomotives (9½" gauge)

	4-4-0	George Woodcock	1948	USA - H K Porter	4
4	From: George Woodcock, Hertford, c3/1950. To: Bude, Cornwall (?) summer 1950. Firebox damaged. To: Hutt, St Columb Major, Cornwall. 1951.				

Other Locomotives (10¼" gauge)

1003	Western/Tamar Queen	4-6-2	H C S Bullock	1934	Freelance	5
5	From: Charles Lane, Liphook - winter 1946/1947. To: Exhibition, Plymouth, 21/4/47 - 3/5/47. To: Paignton Zoo, 5/47- 10/1947. Renamed from Western Queen to Tamar Queen winter 1947/1948. To: Lowestoft South Pier, 17/5/48 - 9/1948. To: M Densham, North Tawton, c1952.					

References & Sources

Heywood Society Journal: No.23 p10.

A History of the Lowestoft Miniature Railway. Peter Scott 2018. ISBN 1 978 902368 46 7.

A History of the Paignton Zoo Railway. Peter Scott 2008. ISBN 978 1 902368 25 2.

A History of the Thames Side Promenade Miniature Railways. Peter Scott 2005.
ISBN 1 902368 20 7.

Model Engineer: 10th July 1913 p45, 22nd April 1954 p451, 16th May 1946 p475,
5th June 1947 p699.

Plymouth City Council Parks & Recreation Committee Minutes:
Plymouth Record Office. Ref: 2834/135 (November 1944 - April 1952).

The World's Fair: 29th May 1948 p11.

Various issues of the: **Cornwall Guardian, West Briton & Cornwall Advertiser, Western Morning News, Western Evening Herald.**

Acknowledgements

British Library (Newspapers), Plymouth Central Library, Plymouth Record Office, James Nutty.

A HISTORY OF THE PLYMOUTH CENTRAL PARK MINIATURE RAILWAY
A short history of a temporary 10½" gauge railway in the late 1940s

MINOR RAILWAY MINI HISTORIES - M4

This is an electronic only publication

Copyright © P. Scott. October 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without written permission.

Published by **Peter Scott**

93 Josephine Court, Southcote Road, Reading, RG30 2DQ

E-Mail: scott.pe@btinternet.com. Web Site: www.minorrailways.co.uk