

Accucraft Glyn Valley Tramway tram loco

by DAVID PINNIGER

A new Accucraft Glyn Valley Tramway locomotive, jointly developed by Anything Narrow Gauge and Garden Railway Specialists is reviewed by DAVID PINNIGER.

Photos by David Pinniger.



Glyn Valley Tramway locomotive fact file:
 'Dennis' and 'Sir Theodore' were 0-4-2T built by Beyer Peacock in 1888 at a cost of £1,150 each. They were fitted with tramway skirts and condensing apparatus to comply with Board of Trade roadside tramway regulations. The locomotives were also required to run cab first. The condensing apparatus was not very successful and was removed in 1921. A third locomotive 'Glyn' was built by Beyer Peacock in 1891. This was slightly larger with front cab spectacles and no condensing gear. Both 'Dennis' and 'Sir Theodore' had their cab fronts modified like 'Glyn'. All the locos were scrapped at Chirk in 1936 after the tramway closed.

There have been many models of these little locos over the years. Harvey Watkins built his 'Sir Jasper' in 1975 as an 0-4-0T meths-fired pot boiler with two conventional cylinders. The tramway outline means that you can hide a multitude of drive systems under the skirts, so the Glyn Valley Tramway (GVT) locos were ideal candidates for some early experiments with oscillating cylinders and geared drive. Probably the best known of the early locos was Robin Gosling's version, again an 0-4-0T with a meths fired pot boiler but with a single oscillating cylinder and flywheel. A distinctive feature of the production locos was a rod with bevel gear drive to each axle. He built a number of these engines in the late 1970s and early 1980s and they have become one of the iconic

heritage locos. I could never afford the price of £275 when they were new and production was very erratic. I bought my 'Sir Theodore' second-hand in 2011 in immaculate condition and it had obviously never been run very much. The Tony Sant Finescale GVT loco followed in the 1990s and there are various meths or gas fired versions of these engines which come on the second-hand market occasionally.

Joint project

I was intrigued by the proposal for a new Accucraft GVT loco as a joint project between Anything Narrow Gauge and Garden Railway Specialists and put my name down for one. It has been two years in development, but when my engine arrived recently it was well worth the wait. Once you have got through the packaging

and put the loco on the track you realise what a good model it is. It certainly captures the distinctive appearance of these Beyer Peacocks and there is a wealth of detail above the side tanks and on the boiler. The brass safety valve lever was missing from my engine when delivered, but soon came in the post. I opted for a green version as my Gosling GVT 'Sir Theodore' is black. The rivet detail is neat and although the loco is far too shiny for my taste, the lining and GVT lettering are very well done. Both 'Dennis' and 'Sir Theodore' etched nameplates are supplied and can be attached using silicone or double sided tape.

Body removal

The body is removed by pulling out the two central spring-loaded buffers and lifting the body carefully from the chassis.



The naked engine is then revealed. Although it is an 0-4-0T, the absence of a trailing truck is not visible when the body is in place and anyway I think it would make it impossible to re-rail. The chassis is based on a standard Accucraft system of two cylinders with piston valves and a valve reverse. As can be seen from the photographs, there is a gas tank and valve on the right hand side and the regulator is unusually arranged fore and aft so that both can be adjusted with the body in place. The reversing lever is on the left hand side together with the lubricator. The engine is prepared in the usual way with the body removed and there are drain plugs for water level and lubricator under the footplate. It is recommended that the gas is lit through the top aperture in the front of the boiler barrel and the gas flow adjusted before the body is replaced. It is essential not to have the gas turned up too high or it will result in the front end being cooked. Replacing the body and locating the spring spindles on the buffers into the holes on the buffer beam is quite tricky, particularly on a low level line like my AVR. To make the location easier, I have put a countersink in the hole in each bufferbeam which seems to help. It is also essential to ensure that the steam exhaust pipe is located under

the chimney aperture when the body is replaced. Once the body is back in place you realise that the cab space is very small which makes the controls rather cramped. You need quite slender fingers to operate the reversing lever.

First run

I decided to have the first run with the body removed so that I could see what was going on and access the controls more easily. Steam was raised quite quickly and after clearing the condensate, the loco ran round quite happily for 10 minutes to bed things in and then at a slower speed before the gas ran out. The next run was with the body on, but light engine without a load. The controls are quite tricky to access, but the engine seemed to ▶

Photos on this page and opposite:

- 1 - Accucraft 'Dennis' left hand side.
- 2 - Gosling 'Sir Theodore' and Accucraft 'Dennis' at Bishops Amble.
- 3 - 'Dennis' top view to show all the detail.
- 4 - 'Naked' locomotive with the body removed to show the boiler backhead and controls.

run quite steadily at low speed in both directions and self-started on the bank which is always a good sign. For the third run I decided to pull a short GVT train which had some 16mm historic interest. I built the third class closed coach from a Tenmille kit way back in the late 1970s for Dave Rowlands' Alderbrook Valley Railway. The two open coaches were scratch built from wood with aluminium roofs for the AVR at about the same time. The GVT brake van was originally built by Don Mason and has recently been repainted green in Cookham works.

Cab first

The loco was attached to the train to run cab first as the GVT locos mostly did to comply with the regulations. However, there are some photos which clearly show that some trains were hauled chimney first. It chuffed round happily with a nice plume of steam for over 20 minutes at a slow speed and self-started on the slight climb from Higher Buxton station. The most recent run on a visit to Roy Bernard's Cookham Light Railway was also very successful with 'Dennis' hauling a train of coaches borrowed from Peter Dawes.

Running the Accucraft 'Dennis' encouraged me to have a go at running the vintage Gosling 'Sir Theodore'. This ran faultlessly, as always, drifting round the track at a prototypical 12mph. Not an engine to share a track with if you want to run quicker! Comparing the two locos which were built 35 years apart is interesting. The Gosling loco is basically a black box with very little detail compared to the very well detailed Accucraft loco. However, when the two locos are viewed at a distance running round the track it is more difficult to see the difference. Comparing the dimensions of the two engines with the prototype shows that the Accucraft loco is pretty accurate and the Gosling loco is on the small side (See Table 1). However, it dispels the heritage myth that the Gosling loco is built to the scale of 14mm/ft as it scales out at just over 15mm/ft.

Conclusion

Overall I am very pleased with the new Accucraft loco. It is not the easiest loco to operate manually, but it runs very well, is very well detailed and really captures the look of the original.

NOTE: Both manual and radio control locos are available from suppliers Anything Narrow Gauge and Garden Railway Specialists. ■



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Table 1 GVT tram loco dimensions

	Prototype	16mm/ft	Accucraft	Gosling
	<i>Ft ins</i>	<i>mm</i>	<i>mm</i>	<i>mm</i>
Length over bufferbeams	15' 8"	252	257	244
Width	6' 6"	104	107	100
Height rail to chimney	9' 6"	152	155	145
Coupled Wheelbase	4' 3" [+ 5' 0"]	68 + 80	80	120

Supplier contact details

Anything Narrow Gauge,
(Simon Whenmouth)
1 Market Arcade,
Holsworthy,
Devon, EX22 6DL

Telephone: 01409 255510
Email: anythingnarrowgauge@googlemail.
Web: www.anythingnarrowgauge.co.uk

Garden Railway Specialists Ltd
Station Studio,
6 Summerleys Road,
Princes Risborough,
Buckinghamshire HP27 9DT

Telephone: 01844 345158
Email: sales@grsuk.com
Web: www.grsuk.com



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Photos on this page and opposite:

- 5 – View under the skirts to show the chassis and piston valve reverse.
- 6 – 'Dennis' visiting Roy Bernard's Cookham Light Railway.
- 7 – 'Dennis' steaming round the Ambledown Valley Railway with a short train of vintage GVT stock.
- 8 – 'Sir Theodore' trundling round the AVR at Higher Buxton.