

The Railway

The History

The narrow gauge railway is one of the main attractions at Peatlands Park. It has been associated with the area since 1901 when the Irish Peat Development Company purchased the land and laid down almost 8 miles of 3ft gauge track to transport cut turf from the bog to the processing plant at Maghery. From there it was taken on barges up the River Blackwater, through the Lagan Navigation System, via Lough Neagh, Moira and Lisburn to Belfast. It was then shipped on to England to be used in animal bedding and horticulture.

In the beginning, carriages were pulled by men and later horses were used until in 1907 an electrified system was introduced powered by the companies own peat-burning generating plant. The 4 locomotives collected their 500 volt D.C. current from an overhead cable suspended 3m above the ground. The turf wagons were always propelled with the locomotive travelling in the rear.



The old electrified system at Maghery



The Schoema and wagon

During the 1950's the company decided to replace its electrified network with diesel traction. In 1954 the 'Planet' diesel locomotive built by Hibberts of England was purchased. It had a Lister engine with 2 cylinders and at 1200 r.p.m. produced 21 b.h.p. giving an average speed of almost 10 m.p.h.

Two years later, the smaller 'Schoema' built by Dalberg-Glaser and Pflaum in Essen, Germany using a Mann engine, arrived. It had a single engine and, with 1500 r.p.m. produced about 14 b.h.p. giving an average speed of around 7 m.p.h. The two locomotives operated up until the mid-1960's when the company ceased its turbarry operations. They were put into storage at the factory and were forgotten about and it seem that these two little trains had literally reached the end of the line.

Then in 1981 the then Countryside and Wildlife Branch of the Department of the Environment accrued the two little trains when it purchased the site for its new Country Park development. It had been decided that the Department would have the locomotives restored as a visitor attraction and so the two little engines were sent to Omagh for a complete overhaul.

The Present



The Schoema in the derelict factory

By autumn 1988 work commenced on laying almost 2 miles of brand new line along part of the original track bed. Meanwhile, the Schoema was restored to full working order and new passenger carriages were built. The summer of 1989 saw the rebirth of the railway with thousands of visitors enjoying the delights of this little piece of history. The larger Planet arrived shortly after and became the main working engine of the Peatlands Park Railway.



The Planet in action

Increasing unreliability of the aging locomotives and the introduction of new Health and Safety at Work regulations contributed to the Department's decision to purchase a new engine purposely built for carrying passengers.



The new K40

The K40 Diesel locomotive was built specially for the DOE by Alan Keef Ltd of Herefordshire, England. It has a Perkins 3.152 engine of 42 b.h.p. at 2500 r.p.m. giving a top speed of 14 m.p.h. The transmission is a JCB torque converter/gearbox with a single lever control and shaft drive to both axles. The K40 can pull 3 carriages carrying up to 70 passengers with ease.

Opening Times

The Peatlands Railway operates daily from 2.00pm to 6.00pm during June, July and August and at Weekends and Bank Holidays only from Easter to the end of September. Please contact the park for group bookings of 12 or more.

Train Prices

Adults £1.00
Children 50p
Senior Citizens 50p
Under 5's FREE
Group Bookings (12+) 50p