

Lupin's Night Out



By Dave Rowlands

Illustrated by Jack Wheldon

Lupin's Night Out

Text by Dave Rowlands

Illustrations by Jack Wheldon

Text copyright 1989 by Dave Rowlands
Illustrations copyright 1989 by Jo Wheldon

Originally published by Border Counties Press, UK, 1989
This edition published by Sidestreet Bannerworks, USA, 2021
<http://www.sidestreet.info/>

This story is set in 12 pt. Lucida Bright type.
Headlines and drop caps are set in Harrington.

Foreword 1

When Dave Rowlands originally wrote this story it was called *Pooter and the Pips*. Dave sent a typed copy with Jack Wheldon's wonderful illustrations to my son Edward, when Edward was about three years old. Sadly, the story was never published, as Dave explained in his introduction to the very limited photocopied edition written in 1989, after Jack's death. I have long had a wish to make *Lupin's Night Out* available to the growing band of people interested in 16mm-scale steam heritage. Thanks to modern technology this is now possible, and Marc Horovitz and I hope you will enjoy the story as much as we do.

As a footnote to those who may not know, both *Lupin* and *Hecla* were 16mm scale, live-steam locos built by Jack Wheldon for his garden railway, The Border Counties. On Jack's untimely death in 1988 *Lupin* was given to me by Jack's wife Jo, and 33 years later *Lupin* is still steaming well and helping the mice collect hazel nuts on my Ambledown Valley Railway. —*Dave Pinniger, Cookham, 2021*



Lupin in steam, 2021. —Photo: Dave Pinniger

Foreword 2

Jack Wheldon was a significant influence in my life when it came to model railways and live-steam locomotives. I found his writings in the model-railway press of the early 1980s to be evocative, informative, elucidating, and entertaining. Jack and I struck up a correspondence after I wrote to him in response to his articles, which quickly developed into a great friendship that I cherish to this day. I have a thick file of his wonderful letters and the marginal sketches that accompanied them. After his premature passing, I was given a copy of the original *Lupin's Night Out*.

When Dave Pinniger approached me about compiling Dave Rowlands' text and Jack's charming illustrations into the form that you see here, I was more than happy to do so. I hope that this simple little story and delightful pictures will help to keep Jack's name alive in our little community, and perhaps well beyond it, too. —*Marc Horovitz, Denver, 2021*



Jack Wheldon with Lupin on his Border Counties Railway. —Photo: Dave Pinniger

Preface

When I first saw Jack Wheldon’s scraperboard artwork in the earliest Archangel catalogues, its chunkiness and style seemed to crystallise exactly the feel of the live-steam garden railway. In 1980-1, Jack and I got our heads together on a children’s story about a garden railway: a story that would discover a hidden, small railway in a wild, secret garden.

Alas, we found (as we had already suspected) that “innocent” children’s literature was viewed as “dated” and that children’s writers were expected to manifest socio-political awareness...far to the Left, of course. We toyed with recasting our effort to involve a socially deprived, underprivileged mouse from an ethnic minority that could go around the garden railways of the privileged bourgeoisie and smash them up; but in the end our natural dilatoriness prevailed and we shelved the project.

Now Jack is no longer with us and, on coming across the folder the other night, I have been moved to resurrect the original tale and, in particular, the artwork, for the pleasure (I hope) of Jack’s friends. This is a final collaboration, with my thanks for many magic moments and a record of another facet of his many talents. —*Dave Rowlands, Iver, 1989*

Lupin's Night Out



In a faraway corner of England there is a funny little railway which travels a long way just to finish back where it started. It is very small and runs around the garden of Mr. Pinn, who built it for his model trains.

There are two engines and both work by steam. One is a tram engine called Hecla. The other is short and dumpy, and is called Lupin. They are not big enough to ride on, but Mr. Pinn doesn't mind because he thinks they look fine just chuffling along by themselves. He will sit happily in a deck chair or rest on his spade and watch the engines puff right round the garden, with toys as passengers in the trucks and coaches. In fact the engines are just big enough that a mouse might ride in them.



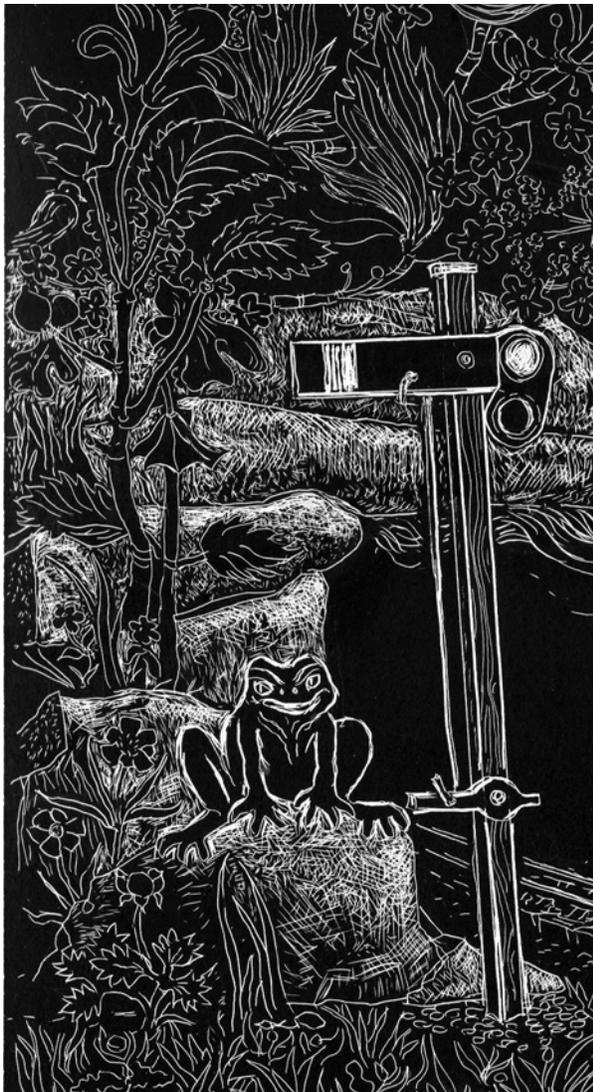
The rails start from just inside the house and go out into the garden, through the rockery, down the side of the lawn and past the vegetable patch to a wild hedge where sparrows nest, with much bickering and noise. Here there is a station, which Mr. Pinn calls Gooseberry Junction, with platforms and seats and little buildings. There are signals too, which tell the train when to stop and when to go again. The sparrows think the signals are fun to perch upon.

Mr. Pinn doesn't know that a family of wood-mice live in the station, because he has never looked through the windows. In the daytime they are all asleep and they only wake when the train comes into the station. Then they keep very still and quiet until it has gone.

The line then crosses the bottom of the garden beside a bramble

hedge and on into an orchard of cherry trees. It is quite dark between the trees and Mr. Pinn always blows the whistle in case there are snails or beetles on the track. Then the rails go down the other side of the lawn, past a big beech tree. Some owls live in the tree and they stir sleepily as Hecla puffs past. The hedgehog who lives beneath the tree goes on snoring. He will only wake to warn the mice and other little animals when the owls are hungry.

There is a tunnel through the shrubbery that is long and dark, with a signal beside it. The Toad lives all by himself in the tunnel. He gets cross when the trains run through his home and crawls off grumpily into the grass. The signal should tell him if a train is coming, but the blackbirds who live in the shrubbery often perch on the signal and break it because they are too heavy. Trains have to stop if the signal is broken, until Mr. Pinn mends it. “Those naughty birds,” he says crossly. “Why, the engine won’t know when it is safe to go through the tunnel.”



With the signal mended, the train can continue through the tunnel and out the other end to



cross a little bridge over the tadpole pond, where the frogs are splashing about. They jump from the bridge into the water as the engine approaches and think it fun. After this a train may continue going round the garden until it runs out of steam; or it can go back to the house and into the workshop where the trains are kept.

This is where Mr. Pinn builds the engines and coaches and trucks or makes repairs. He also goes there to read his paper if Mrs. Pinn has jobs for him to do in the house.

When Autumn comes, the mice at Gooseberry Junction are thinking about stocking their larders for winter. They are very fond of cherry stones that the blackbirds and starlings drop in the orchard after eating

all Mr. Pinn's cherries. There are hundreds and hundreds of them lying in the grass beneath the trees, but it is a long way to carry them back to the station where they live. They have to gather them quickly too, for other animals want the stones, especially the grey squirrels from over the fence and the rats from the farm.

* * *

One night, Walter mouse from Gooseberry Junction and his son, Albert, had gone out with a wheelbarrow and a glow-worm lantern to gather up the stones.



“We’ll have to make about a hundred trips,” groaned young Albert, puffing as he lifted cherry stones into the barrow, “and I’m tired already!”

They set off with their first barrow load, going between the dandelion clocks, which made Albert sneeze. “Shh!” said Walter. “The owls will hear, or the rats will come and steal our load”. It seemed a long way back to the station and onto the platform, where the mouse family were gathered to help unload. Albert started swinging the lantern about and looking beyond the station.

“Where does that go?” he asked his father pointing to a siding.

“Oh, that’s all overgrown,” said Walter. “Mr. Pinn has forgotten about it.”

“Aren’t those two old wagons on it?” asked Albert, screwing up his eyes.

“Yes, Mr. Pinn shunted them there ages ago: he must have forgotten

them too. I think some snails live in them now,” said his father. “Why?”

“Well, I was just thinking,” said Albert slowly. “They’d hold a lot of cherry stones wouldn’t they?”

Albert and his Dad walked down the old branch line to where the wagons were. One of them was open, the other had a roof, and both were empty but for one snail, who was just going out.

“Do you mind if we borrow your wagons for a while?” asked Walter politely.

“Help yourselves,” fizzed the snail, “but bring them back before morning or we shall have to come and live under your roof.” He slithered off, frothily.

Albert pushed the two wagons, but they didn’t move.

“Take the brakes off, silly,” said his Dad, climbing into the open truck. “That’s right! Now, Push!”

Slowly, with much creaking and complaining, the wagons rolled along. Walter jumped down and ran ahead.

“We must change the points,” he said.

The lever was rusty and stiff, but he managed, and then helped Albert to push the wagons on to the main line. “It’s downhill now to the orchard,” he panted. “They’ll run themselves,” which is what the wagons did, speeding away and just missing a worm who was crossing over the line. The two mice were soon left behind.

The runaway wagons stopped among the cherry trees, bumping over stones that were on the track.

“Couldn’t be better,” said Walter. “We’ll put the brakes on again and they’ll be safe.” Propping up his lantern against the wagon, he climbed

up. “You throw the cherry stones up to me, Albert, and I’ll stack them; then we’ll change jobs for the second wagon-full.”

So that is what they did, and in about an hour they had most of the stones gathered up and loaded in the wagons.

“Enough to last us all winter” said Walter, pleased. “We’ll lever a few out for the squirrels though. Won’t they be cross when they find out!” and they both laughed heartily.

Then they got a shock! *How* were they going to move the wagons? They couldn’t push them back uphill because they were far too heavy; and it was much too far to push them all round the garden in the other direction!

“What we need is an engine,” said Albert, crossly.

“What a good idea,” said Walter. “I’ve always wanted to drive an engine!”

* * *

While all this was going on in the garden, Mr. Pinn was busy in his workshop. Lupin had not been behaving properly that afternoon and Mr. Pinn had taken him to pieces to find out what was wrong. He was just putting Lupin together again as the two mice crept into the workshop, along the railway from outdoors, and hid in the shadows. Mr. Pinn did not see the mice and had forgotten it was supper time, and that Mrs. Pinn got angry if he was late.

He put Lupin back on the track. “Now,” he said, patting the boiler, “We’ll just fire you up for a run and see that all is well.”

He put water in the boiler and carefully filled the fuel tank. He had just lit the fire with a match and was watching the tiny blue flame lick



around the boiler, when a very cross Mrs. Pinn arrived in the doorway.

“Your supper is getting cold!” she announced. “Come along!”

* * *

Walter ran up the line to Lupin, pulling Albert behind him.

“What luck!” he said. “Come on.” The water in Lupin’s boiler was sizzling. Walter climbed into the cab with a lantern: the needle was creeping round the pressure gauge: Steam was UP! He leaned out and called to Albert who was walking round, looking at Lupin.

“We need a headlight to see where we are going.”

“There’s one at the front,” said Albert, but it doesn’t light.”

“Go and find a glow-worm, then,” said his father. “They’ve nothing to do except crawl up and down grass stems all night.”

By the time Albert returned with an obliging glow-worm and put her



inside the headlamp, the boiler was singing merrily and wisps of steam were appearing from all sorts of places. Both mice jumped suddenly as the safety valve on the boiler released the steam pressure with a “*WHOOSH!*”

“Time we were off,” said Walter, helping Albert into the cab and reaching for the regulator handle. Lupin started forward with a splutter and some rude water noises. In the glow of the headlamp they could see the rails ahead through the wall, as he puffed out into the garden. They soon reached the main line and began to chuffle up toward the orchard. The bridge rattled as they crossed the pond, but all the frogs were asleep in the mud. The poor Toad just couldn’t believe his eyes as an engine appeared in his tunnel. He shuffled out just ahead of Lupin and feeling very disturbed.

Then, as they left the shrubbery, they had a nasty fright! An owl saw the little engine rolling along and swooped low from the beech tree to see what it was! Lucky for the mice, the safety valve blew out a jet of steam and frightened the owl away.

Albert was so pleased that he pulled the whistle cord. “Twoo-hoo,” went Lupin’s mellow hooter. “Twoo-hoo,” came an answer from another owl, high up in the tree.

“Stop it!” said Walter, afraid. “You’ll get all the owls down here in a minute, you silly boy!”

Just before they reached the orchard, they were glad of the headlamp, for it showed Bloggs, the hedgehog, out hunting for beetles, standing in the middle of the track.

“The silly old fool,” said Walter, as Bloggs rolled into a ball. “We shall have to push him off the line.” He slowed Lupin down until the buffers were just touching Bloggs. Lupin pushed past, ever so gently, and the hedgehog rolled off the track and down the embankment. At the bottom he uncurled and stood looking about, wondering how he had got there, before he ambled off back home.

At last they came to the wagons of cherry stones, and only just in time: for a rat was coming to investigate! Albert pulled the whistle cord again: “Whoo-hoo,” and the rat thought the owls were hunting the orchard and fled back to the farm. Gently, so as not to spill the precious load, Lupin pushed the two wagons uphill toward Gooseberry Junction, where Walter brought the train to a halt at the platform. The mouse family were amazed to see the engine and wanted to hear about their adventures.

“We must get unloaded first,” said Walter. “Everyone must help!” This was done more quickly than he expected, for when the door of the covered van was opened all the cherry stones rolled out on top of him! He had just struggled free, when he realised that Lupin was no longer sizzling: the blue flames around his boiler were dying away. “Golly,” he said, “The fire is going out. We shall have no steam left in a minute.”

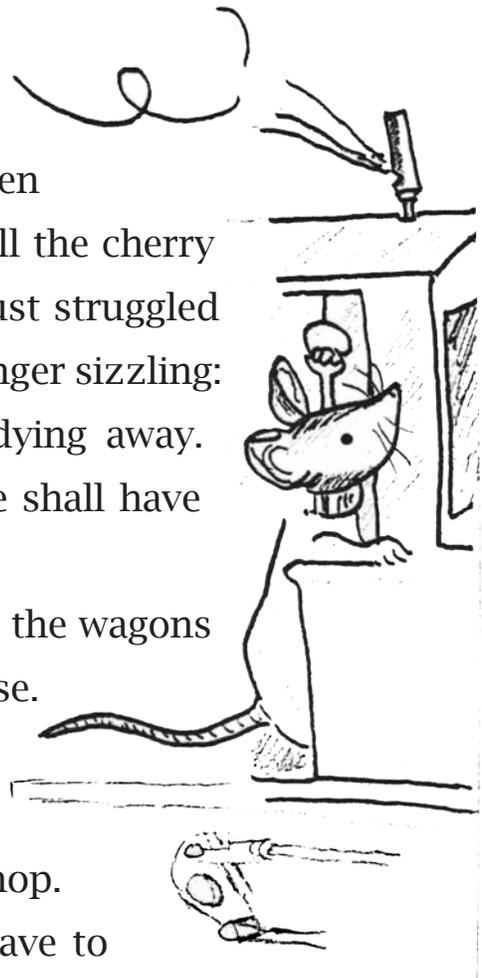
So they quickly reversed Lupin, leaving the wagons at the station and sped back to the house. Lupin was going slower and slower and his chuffing was becoming wheezy, until he stopped altogether just outside the workshop.

“Bother,” said Albert. “Now we shall have to push him inside”. But try as they might, they couldn’t move the heavy engine.

“We shall have to leave him here, then,” said Walter. “Won’t Mr. Pinn be surprised?” Chuckling at this thought, they lifted the glow-worm down from the headlamp, and thanked her for her light. Then they ran back across the lawn to the station where the family were still hard at work.

* * *

Back at the house, Mr. Pinn had remembered his engine and hurried from the supper table. Imagine his amazement that Lupin was not there! Of course, he found him sitting just outside: his boiler



getting cold and with cherry leaves on his footplate.

Scratching his head in puzzlement, Mr. Pinn carried Lupin into the workshop. “You must have decided to test yourself, Lupin,” he said, and laughed as he went back into the dining room to sit by the fire with his magazine, *Nuts and Bolts*.

“Your cocoa has got cold!” said Mrs. Pinn from the kitchen.

* * *

Down at Gooseberry Junction, the cherry stones were all stowed away in the Porter’s Room.

“We’ll have to leave the wagons at the platform,” said Albert sleepily. “I’m too tired to push them back to the branch-line. I want my supper.”

“So do I,” said his father. “I hope the snails won’t mind...but wasn’t it fun? We shall have to borrow Lupin again next year.”

