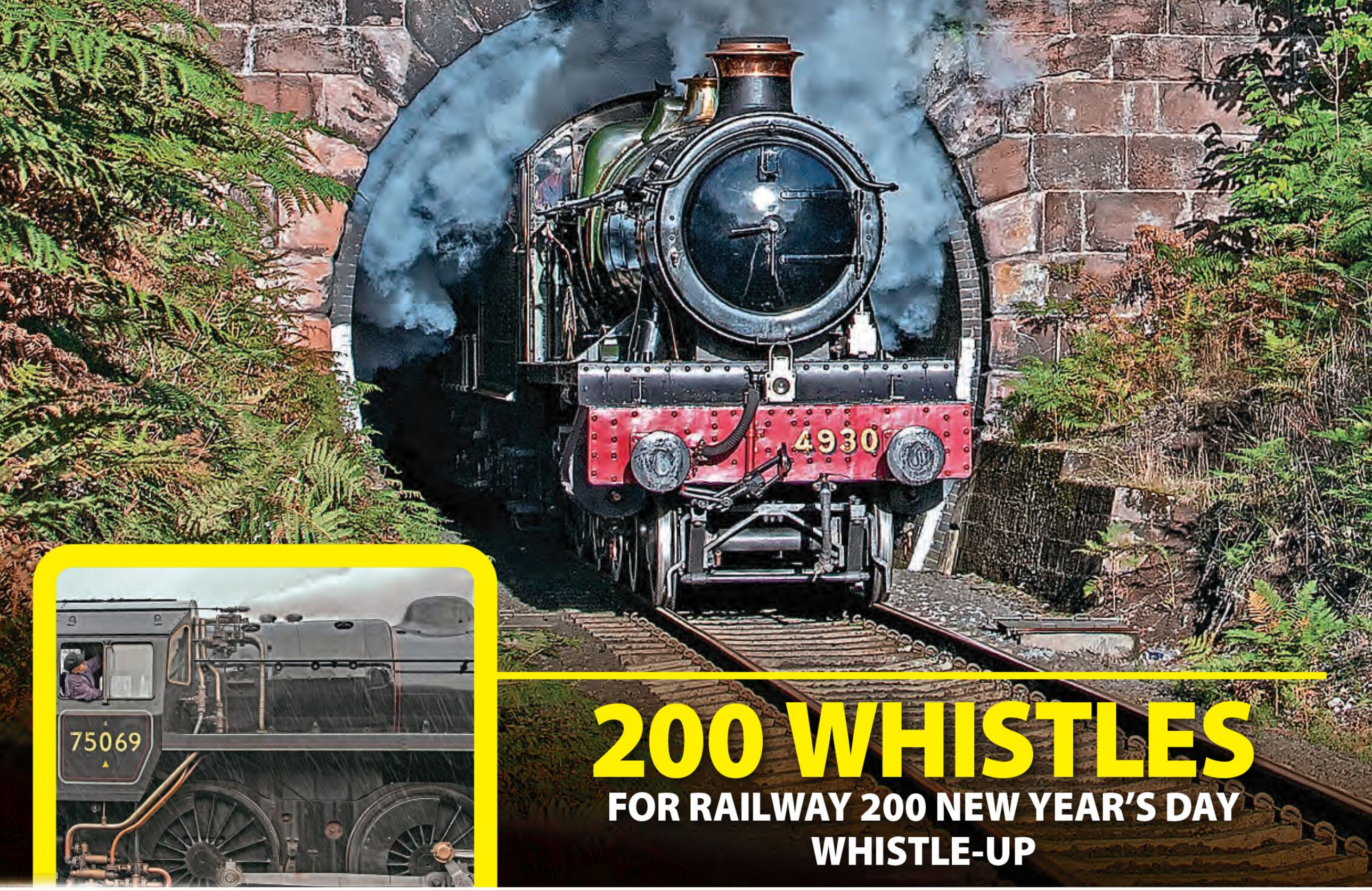
NATIONAL RAILWAY HERITAGE AWARDS WINNERS IN FULL

ISSUE 327 December 20, 2024 – January 17, 2025

HERITAGE RAILWAY

THE COMPLETE PRESERVATION NEWS MAGAZINE

Severn Valley 3-into-1 company merger plan



200 WHISTLES

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HORNBY magazine MODEL RAILWAY Awards 2023
RETAILER OF THE YEAR!



After Storm Darragh descended on the South West and Wales to wreak its havoc with force 10 to 11 gales, only one train service in the whole of Cornwall was left running over the weekend of December 7/8 – the Bodmin & Wenford Railway's Santa by Steam specials, which the heritage line announced on BBC Radio Cornwall would be running, and anyone who could safely manage a trip into Bodmin would be given a warm welcome. Railway spokesman Jimmy James said: "Amazingly people did turn up, and we ran to time without incident." Pictured at Bodmin General on November 30 is GWR prairie No. 5552 with Bagnall 0-4-0ST *Judy*. JIMMY JAMES

Awards that lay foundations for the future of our heritage

HAVING attended the 44th National Railway Heritage Awards in London, I could not fail to have been impressed not only with the high standard of the 58 entries but also the contest itself, as reported in News, pages 26-28.

The heritage railway revival movement has worked miracles over the past 75 years, the heights this year being the debuts of two standard gauge mainline type locomotives, Brighton Atlantic No. 32424 *Beachy Head* and GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange*, both filling gaps in our fleets.

However, the awards reinforce the concept that the UK's justifiably proud rail legacy is far from limited to locomotives and rolling stock, but encompasses a rich wealth of buildings too.

Sadly, the Beeching era cuts led to so many classic railway structures bulldozed without a second thought once they had been made redundant. Yet in many if not most cases, they had played a significant part in the development of the communities that they had been built to serve. Would the authorities have been so easily dismissive, for instance, of a castle, medieval bridge or manor house that some may have deemed to have outlived its original use?

The brilliance of having organisations like the NRHA is that it brings structures of historical significance firmly into the public gaze, thereby laying foundations for their survival into the foreseeable future. Such buildings are part and parcel of the jigsaw of the essential identity of a local community: Take them away and it becomes so much the poorer for it, but highlighting them serves to reinforce pride for the betterment of all.

In 2025, Railway 200 will understandably generate an endless stream of headlines, hammering home the fact that Britain not only gave the concept of the modern railway (and therefore the other forms of rapid transit that were developed in its wake) to the world, but reshaped it.

It is not just about Stockton, Darlington, Shildon and the North East, but about the impact that steam passengers railways had on our entire country and indeed further beyond.

It is vital that we seize every opportunity preserve our past for the sake of the future. In July 2021, a Grade B-listed Glasgow & South Western Railway platform building at Troon station was gutted by fire. Decades ago, the view would likely have been taken that the only course of action would be to clear the debris and replace it with a basic modern hut, if at all. Thankfully, Network Rail recognised its immense historical value and rebuilt it, deservedly winning an HRHA award – which hopefully will set an example for others to follow.

In the year of Railway 200, the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway are campaigning hard to save the humble original Heighington station, held to be the oldest in the world, as described in News, page 33. The powers that be and the public at large must back the friends' sheer determination in this bicentenary year to succeed – in terms of the impact that the S&DR had 200 years ago, nothing less can be acceptable in terms of our national heritage.

Robin Jones Editor

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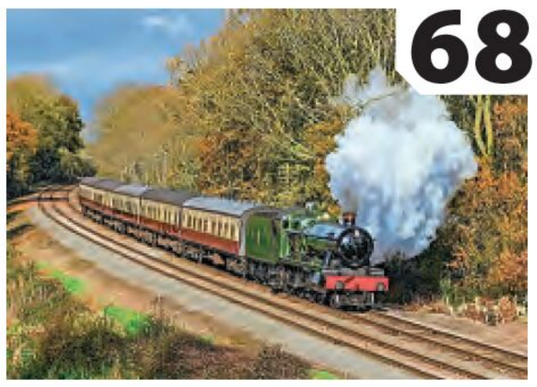
Steam sheds supreme!
Engine sheds are the beating heart of our heritage railways, but so often are the hidden jewels in their crowns. John Titlow casts his eye over some of the sheds in preservation history, include those lost, built anew, and expanded to meet the needs of the ever-changing heritage scene in words and pictures.



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OWEN HAYWARD

COVER: GWR Hall 4-6-0 No. 4930 *Hagley Hall* bursts out of Bewdley tunnel on November 11, 2024. The Severn Valley Railway has announced a plan to merge its three operating companies into one as it seeks to safeguard its long-term future: see Headline News, pages 6/7.
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Three become one in planned Severn Valley restructure

By Robin Jones

THE Severn Valley Railway has announced a radical plan to merge its three separate companies into one in a bid to build a solid foundation for the future.

Shareholders and members will be asked to approve the organisational restructure, which officials have described as a "bold and essential move" that through a stronger, more vibrant and efficient operation will bring multiple benefits to one of the UK's leading heritage lines.

Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) plc chairman Chris Walton said: "For the past two years, a working party of people who care deeply about the future of the SVR has been carrying out a strategic review of how the railway might be better organised and positioned. Its conclusion is that the SVR urgently needs a new type of company structure to ensure it's in the best possible position to survive and thrive in the years to come."

The first step of the plan as set out by the SVR would see the conversion of the company that owns and operates the railway, Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) plc, into a Charitable Community Benefit Society (CCBS).

The newly-formed CCBS would then amalgamate with the Severn Valley Railway Company Limited, the sister organisation that looks after membership and provides volunteers to help run the railway.

Charity provisions

The third member of the SVR family, the Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust, is fully supportive of the plan, but cannot commit to the process at present because it is itself in a period of transition. The plan provides for the inclusion of the SVRCT with the CCBS as soon as circumstances allow.

Chris added: "There's no doubt that what we are planning is bold, but it's something that we consider to be absolutely essential to ensure our railway survives and prospers.

"In common with others in the heritage railway sector, we have faced a long and arduous struggle over the past few years, made worse by a number of factors. We have seen huge increases in costs, falls in income because of the Covid-19 lockdown, followed by continuing reduced passenger numbers because of inflationary pressures on leisure spending, and a detrimental effect on membership and volunteering generally."

Diane Malyon, who chairs Severn Valley Railway Company Limited, said: "The tough times we've faced have highlighted significant weaknesses in our current structure that we can no longer ignore. As we look towards 2025, when we will celebrate our 60th year as a heritage railway, it's clear that this is the time to change. We are mindful of our proud past, but we need to look with confidence to the future."

Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster, the managing director of SVR (Holdings), said: "A CCBS will bring us many benefits. It should mean the SVR could claim Gift Aid on a large proportion of ticket sales. There would be significant savings in both compliance and administration costs.

"We'd be able to avoid prospectus costs on any future share issues and potentially avoid having to pay business rates. These factors add up to hundreds of thousands of pounds every year that could instead go to maintaining and improving the railway itself.

The right way forward

"The boards of SVR(H) and the SVR Company Limited are united in the belief that converting to a CCBS is the right way forward for the Severn Valley Railway. Together, we are asking for the support of our shareholders, members and volunteers to bring about this much-needed change."

The SVR has written to its 12,800 active shareholders and 9750 members to explain why it believes the changes are needed. The railway is providing an in-depth information pack on the rationale and what the implications are for all the railway's stakeholders.

A series of meetings with shareholders, members and volunteers is to be set up in early 2025 to discuss the plan. Voting on the two stages described in the railway's restructuring plan will take place at separate extraordinary general meetings of SVR (Holdings) Plc and the SVR Company Limited later in the year.





Above: One of the new worksplates fixed to *Bahamas* during its visit to the Nene Valley Railway. MIKE STEVENS

Left: *Bahamas* departs Wansford with a Nene Valley Railway Santa special on December 1. NVR

Early present for Jubilee *Bahamas* during Nene Valley visit

ON loan to the Nene Valley Railway to haul festive season services, LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 No. 45596 *Bahamas* received an early Christmas present with newly-manufactured worksplates fitted.

Boxing Day 2024 marks the 90th anniversary of when *Bahamas* was outshopped in Glasgow. The new plates show the correct build date of 1934, and correct the previous date as displayed on the first 'replica' worksplates which inadvertently displayed 1935, often stated as the year when 5596 was built. It was this information, provided by BR at the time *Bahamas* was purchased, that led Bahamas Locomotive Society member Fred Barnes to create new worksplates in 1969 in his desire to replace the 'rebuild' plates provided by the Hunslet Engine Co.

The discrepancy in the date was noted only much later.

While the LMS Engine History Card notes the date built as January 12, 1935, it was in the last months of 1934 that *Bahamas* was completed by the North British Locomotive Company and made ready for delivery on December 26, a date confirmed by Ray Towns in in his book The Jubilee 4-6-0s.

There remains some mystery regarding the original worksplates According to photographic evidence, they were removed in late 1952 or early 1953, a practice that was apparently applied to other members of the class at the time. Of the few that remained in position, these too were removed to make way for the application of the OLE warning flashes in the early 1960s.

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Double 'Spam Cans' for East Lancashire as *92 Squadron* relocates north

By Owen Hayward

BUCKLEY Wells depot on the East Lancashire Railway is now to be home to two Bulleid light Pacifics following the announcement of Battle of Britain class No. 34081 *92 Squadron*'s departure from the Nene Valley Railway to head to Bury indefinitely.

Built in 1948, *92 Squadron* arrived at Wansford on November 7, 1976. Purchased by the Battle of Britain Locomotive Society, it was originally planned for it to be based at the Dean Forest Railway for restoration, but negotiations broke down and a subsequent approach was made to the NVR. The locomotive was delivered to the sidings of the nearby British Sugar's Peterborough factory and towed to Wansford by a Barclay 0-4-0ST.

Nene Valley stalwart

After a lengthy restoration, the locomotive's first moves under its own steam came on March 9, 1998, despite a Christmas raid of the group's stores in which many non-ferrous fittings were stolen.

No. 34081 worked its first public service on May 23 and was rededicated by Pete Waterman as *92 Squadron* on September 12, with Oliver Bulleid, grandson of the locomotive's designer, present for the occasion.

92 Squadron became a mainstay of the NVR's fleet, with few visits to other railways for events. Only two visits to the Bluebell Railway, along with one appearance at the North Yorkshire Moors and Mid-Hants railways, took place before withdrawal was necessitated in 2003 with leaking firebox stays. Later returning to service at the North Norfolk Railway, it was not until 2010 that it returned to Wansford, by which time it was under heavy overhaul, returning to service there on February 25, 2017. However, further inner firebox problems saw it sent to Locomotive Maintenance Services in Loughborough in April 2021.

Following another period of repairs, *92 Squadron* returned to service in February 2024 and was booked for the Swanage Railway's June 7-9 Strictly Bulleid II gala. On June 8 a leaking superheater element was found that withdrew it again, with repair work completed at Wansford in late November.

With its next major overhaul due in two years' time, the BBLS has reviewed its current position and determined on several crucial factors that the locomotive will be based on the ELR with West Country 4-6-2 No. 34092 *City of Wells*.

"It had become apparent that it was highly unlikely that we would be able to carry out the next overhaul ourselves," said trustee Ian Bowskill. "Our volunteer numbers have dwindled considerably, and with a couple of key team members deciding that they cannot be involved in another overhaul, we were faced with the prospect of having no skilled labour at all.



***92 Squadron* poses at Wansford on the Nene Valley Railway during a Wagon Group photographic charter on June 17, 2022.** OWEN HAYWARD

Best for the future

"We also had to face the fact that with the NVR quite understandably concentrating on its own overhaul programme, there wouldn't be any workshop space available for several years to come. With the cost of a professional overhaul being greater than the funds we hold, we were facing the prospect of the loco languishing for many years out of traffic.

"Very recently, however, we received offers to have the overhaul carried out in partnership with third parties. We have given them very careful consideration and have decided to accept the offer from the ELR.

"It's not a decision we have taken lightly, but our prime aim has to be the secure future of the locomotive and the partnership we are entering into should ensure this.

"The BBLS will remain an independent organisation, but the operational management of the loco will be in the hands of the ELR. The board of the BBLS would like to place on record our thanks to the NVR for being our host for many years and allowing use of its facilities throughout the two previous overhauls and No. 34081's operation there."

ELR chairman Mike Kelly said: "We are delighted to announce that the ELR has entered into a partnership with the BBLS for the future care and operation of No. 34081. We are honoured to be entrusted with the care of this historic locomotive, and we extend our gratitude to BBLS for selecting ELR as its new home.

"This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to preserving railway heritage and ensuring the continued operation of iconic machines like No.34081."

92 Squadron was due to depart Wansford on December 10. Subject to passing the necessary fitness-to-run exams at Bury, it was hoped that it would assist with the ELR's remaining Santa specials, before running through 2025 that would see it then withdrawn for overhaul to commence.

Two hundred whistles to start Railway 200 year?

By Robin Jones

THE start of the nationwide Railway 200 celebrations of the Stockton & Darlington Railway bicentenary as the world's first modern line will, as previously reported, see a mass Whistle Up of locomotives at noon on New Year's Day. However, the event, spearheaded by the Heritage Railway Association, may now feature more than 200 locomotives – steam, diesel and electric – taking part around the UK and further afield, such has been the popular response.

As we closed for press, more than 60 lines had confirmed their participation in the event, which draws heavily on the steam-age tradition of locomotive crews sounding their whistles on January 1, and the numbers were growing on a daily basis.

With several lines committing multiple locomotives – such as the Volks Electric Railway's fleet of trams – and some lines in mainland Europe wanting to join in, the Whistle Up is anticipated to become the biggest single heritage rail event in history.

It is expected to generate extensive media coverage and is intended to showcase the heritage rail sector as a whole at the outset of Railway 200.

HRA policy and communications manager Mark Pearce said: "We want to start Railway 200 off as it should go on, by getting as many heritage railways involved as possible.

"It will be a great chance for railways to tell their visitors and stakeholders that they're a part of Railway 200.

"We've had a great level of interest so far with railways of all shapes and sizes committing to take part, from the Perrygrove Railway to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway and everyone in between."

More information about the Whistle Up event and details of how to get involved can be found online at www.hra.uk.com/railway-200-new-year-whistle-event



Severn Valley Railway volunteer fireman Alex Robinson (left) and driver Mick Mathews will be responsible for sounding the locomotive whistle at Bridgnorth at midday on January 1, 2025, to kick off Railway 200 celebrations. JOHN TITLOW

➜ **Latest Railway 200 events announced: see News, pages 10/11.**

Fourth trophy and accolade success for Hopetown Darlington attraction

By Robin Jones

THE recently-opened Hopetown Darlington has now won four awards and accolades in a row.

A week after landing the prestigious North East Culture Award for Best Museum or Cultural Venue 2024, Hopetown carried off the Visitor Economy Award at the County Durham Together Awards 2024 on December 5.

These awards followed in the wake of Hopetown's recent Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme and Welcome accolades, both bestowed by VisitEngland, which, as highlighted in *Heritage Railway* issue 323, gave the attraction top marks in a recent inspection.

The North East Culture Award recognised the impact that the venue has had in both Darlington and the wider region and is viewed as a testament to all of the staff and partners who tell the story of the town's pioneering railway heritage.

Other nominees in the category included Beamish the Living Museum of the North, Laurels and The Story. The awards, an annual celebration of the arts and cultural scene in the region, are organised by Reach plc, one of Britain's biggest newspaper groups.

The ceremony, which was headline partnered by Sunderland City Council and the University of Sunderland, and supported by Arts Council England, was held at the Fire Station venue in Sunderland.

'Jewel in the crown'

The Visitor Economy Award recognises an individual, organisation or business that plays a vital role in promoting the county as a safe and great place to visit, supporting the hospitality and tourism sector, and to help visitor economy. It was presented at the award ceremony held at Hardwick Hall.

Speaking after the North East Culture Award presentation, Coun Libby McCollom, Darlington Borough Council's cabinet member for local services, said: "I am incredibly proud of this fantastic achievement for Hopetown Darlington. This award shows that Hopetown is excelling in its mission to tell Darlington's pioneering railway heritage to all generations through playful and innovative ways.

"Hopetown Darlington is special jewel in the crown for tourism in Darlington and the wider region."

Regarding the Visitor Economy Award award triumph, a delighted Leona White-Hannant, Hopetown's development director, said: "The entire team are so grateful for this award win. Everybody across Hopetown Darlington works really hard to provide a quality visit for everyone who steps through the door. It is great to see the positive impact our hard work is having on the local community and how Hopetown is benefitting the local visitor economy in Darlington and Country Durham."

Other nominees in the Visitor Economy Award category included Bowes Museum and the Weardale Railway.

Hopetown Darlington opened on July 16 and has received funding from the borough council, Tees Valley Combined Authority, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, Historic England, the Railway Heritage Trust and Art Fund. For more details about visiting Hopetown Darlington, where admission is free, although some exhibitions, events and activities carry a separate charge, and to book online, visit hopetowndarlington.co.uk



The replica of the train that opened the Stockton & Darlington Railway on September 27, 1825, and which will be at the forefront of its bicentenary celebrations in 2025, went on public display at Hopetown Darlington for a special Christmas event which started on November 26.

The train comprises the recently-overhauled 1975-built replica of George Stephenson's *Locomotion No. 1*, the newly-built passenger carriage *Experiment* and three chaldron wagons, which were funded by Darlington Borough Council.

The replica train for the centrepiece of the Enchanted Forest Reindeer Trail inside the Grade II-listed Carriage Works which will also be open on December 24 and 27-31, between 10am and 5pm, with tickets costing £5 for children and adults free. On September 26, 27 and 28, 2025, the train – which has been equipped to modern main line standards – will run over the S&DR route from Shildon to Stockton-on-Tees via Darlington as the climax of the bicentenary celebrations. DBC



Hopetown's new time travel immersive experience is now on track. Experiment!, which is named after the Stockton & Darlington Railway's first passenger carriage, is the north east of England's only railway-themed simulator-style ride and is located on the platform at North Road Station Museum.

Each ride can accommodate nine people and takes travellers on a vivid journey through passenger rail travel, from Locomotion No.1's first steam-hauled passenger railway journey in Darlington to the Japanese bullet train and the Eurostar, highlighting the impact that Darlington's pioneering past has had on societies and cultures around the world, from 1825 to the present day and into the future. The ride involves moderate rocking and tilting motions.

Experiment! runs until December 24 and then from Tuesdays to Sundays, 10.30am-4pm, plus Mondays during Darlington's school holidays. The ride runs at approximately 20-minute intervals and the introductory offer for admission is £5 per person, all ages. DBC

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Hopetown Darlington visitor experience manager Natalie Collinston (left) with development director Leona White-Hannant after being presented with the North East Culture Award. DBC



The North East Culture Award for Best Museum or Cultural Venue. DBC



Hopetown's County Durham Together Visitor Economy Award. DBC

A tram, 'Terrier, and plenty of celebration set for sle of Wight's new winter gala

EXCLUSIVE

By Owen Hayward

THE year 2025 will contains plenty of celebrations, and the Isle of Wight Steam Railway is gearing up to kick off with a four-day gala on February 20-23 that will not only raise the curtain on its Rail 200 celebrations, but which will also mark a significant anniversary and host two debuts with the return of one of its 'Terrier' 0-6-0Ts and the first workings of the new Ryde Pier Tramcar trailer vehicle.

Built at Brighton Works in 1877 as LBSCR A1X No. 46 *Newington*, No. W8 *Freshwater* arrived on the Isle of Wight in 1913, being hired by the Freshwater, Yarmouth & Newport Railway from the LSWR which had been operating it on the Lyme Regis branch since 1903. *Freshwater* returned to the mainland on May 4, 1949, under BR ownership and saw out the majority of its final years on the Hayling Island branch line. Withdrawn on November 9, 1963, it returned to the IOW in 1979 after years on static display, initially in Droxford, Hampshire, before ending up outside a pub back on Hayling Island.

Last operational at the end of 2018, it was intended to return *Freshwater* to service much earlier; however, its overhaul was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic as the railway subsequently prioritised completing Hunslet Austerity 0-6-0ST No. WD192 *Waggoner*, which being more powerful was required to supplement the operating fleet on the IOWSR's main services. With that locomtive having returned to steam in 2022, focus was then able to shift back to the patiently waiting 'Terrier.'

On December 6, the overhauled boiler was returned to the frames in the workshop shed at Havenstreet, with assembly commencing immediately to ensure that the locomotive would be able to debut in February.

IOWSR chief executive Marc Huws said: "The overhaul of the chassis had been completed earlier, meaning that once the boiler was done, it would be a straightforward job to reassemble.

"The boiler is still relatively new, having been replaced in 1998, and we have been thorough with this recent work on it, so we are confident that *Freshwater* will make its comeback at out February event.

"The gala is also expected to feature the launch of the replica trailer vehicle for our ex-Ryde Pier tramcar following the impending completion of the project this winter."

As we closed for press, the trailer had been moved into the carriage workshops, where painting was underway. Recent work has seen



The centenary of LSWR O2 *Calbourne's* arrival on the Isle of Wight will be marked in 20215. The 0-4-4T will be in service every day of the February gala weekend. JOHN FAULKNER/IOWSR



The race is on to complete the overhaul of 'Terrier' No. W8 *Freshwater*, set to return to service at the February 20-23, 2025, gala event. On December 6 the boiler was returned to the frames as reassembly commenced. MARC HUWS



The February gala is also expected to feature the launch of the Ryde Pier tramcar trailer, which on December 10 could be found inside the carriage works being painted into SR olive green. ANDREW SUMMER/IOWSR

the exterior bodywork panelling completed and the installation of the driving end cab control panels, which Marc described as a "difficult" task due to the wiring complexities to allow it to work in tandem with the powered vehicle. "It's also a modern system, so that's taken time to work out and get right," he added. "This is expected to run on two of the gala's four days."

Calbourne's island centenary

A century since LSWR O2 04-4-T W24 *Calbourne* arrived on the island will also be celebrated in 2025. Built as No. 209 at Nine Elms in 1891, it was originally based at Fratton when new, before later being moved to Exeter. When SR decided that the Wight stock needed modernisation, it was allocated the number W24 after it was transferred there in 1925 and subsequently received its name.

It has been based on the island ever since, retained for engineering duties after the line was electrified in the 1960s before it was then sold to the Wight Locomotive Society in 1967; in 1971 it moved by rail to Havenstreet with a rake of heritage carriages destined for the IOWSR.

Calbourne will be in service every day during the February 20-22 gala, operating alongside *Freshwater* throughout the event.

"Due to our operational restrictions, we will have two trains running. One of these will be worked by the O2 across all four days, while the other will alternate motive power," Marc revealed. "This will include *Freshwater* on the push-pull carriages and our BR Hunslet Class 05 0-6-0DM D2554, which rarely puts in an appearance on passenger workings.

"I hope that if this event does well, it may become a fixture of our annual calendar. Galas here are a challenge because our signalling means we are only able to put two sets out at a time, but the combination of what's on offer – including rare diesel haulage and our first dark ales festival – I hope will entice people over for it."

Marc added that he hoped that the line's second 'Terrier,' No. W11 *Newport*, would be brought out of Train Story for static display in the yard. Withdrawn at the end of 2023, *Newport*'s overhaul is not expected to start for several years while Ivatt 2MT 2-6-2T No. 41298 takes priority, being needed to cover classmate No. 41313 when that is withdrawn in 2027. It has been hinted that *Newport* will return in a different livery to the current olive green it wears.

Further events for 2025 were still to be confirmed as this issue of *Heritage Railway* magazine went to press.

Railway's big celebration year is full steam ahead

200 Years of Train Travel 1825–2025

By Robin Jones

RAILWAY 200, the biggest-ever nationwide celebration of Britain's railways – which throughout 2025 will celebrate the bicentenary of the 1825 opening of the world's first modern railway, the Stockton & Darlington – is growing bigger by the week.

From main line and heritage railways down to local libraries, museums and history and arts groups across the UK, venues have been queuing up to add their names to the burgeoning events list for the year, which is set to boost knowledge and appreciation of the sector to an unprecedented level in modern times.

As highlighted in Headline News, page 7, the celebratory year will be kick-started by the Whistle Up event at more than 60 venues nationwide.

Whitstable Museum will be hosting a range of railway-related activities for all ages, including the mayor unveiling a railway history plaque at Whitstable station. The museum displays Robert Stephenson's *Invicta*, the eighth oldest steam locomotive in preservation, which hauled passenger trains on the nearby Canterbury & Whitstable Railway.

Insightful tours

The Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway at Sittingbourne will be holding a workshop museum guided tour on January 25 to explain the position of industrial steam in the history of the railways and the industrial revolution, while celebrating its own 50th year.

On January 18, the East Lancashire Railway will be holding an Open House day with a line-up of locomotives, shuttles between Bury Bolton Street and Summerseat and other exclusive experiences with something for enthusiasts of all ages.

Robert Stephenson and Company, Locomotive Builders: A Heritage Lecture, on the locomotives and the works of Robert Stephenson & Company, will be given by Hugh Fenwick, a career railway civil engineer, an active member of The Robert Stephenson Trust, in the Bar Convent Living Heritage Centre, 17 Blossom Street, York, on January 21.

Open to the public, booking is required at www.ticketsource.co.uk/imeche-rd-ne-centre

On February 15, Peak Rail will stage The Night shift at Rowsley South, with bardic and paraffin lamps casting a warm glow, while signalboxes, crossings and stations are lit up to recreate the 1960s atmosphere before steam-hauled demonstration freights are run under the Derbyshire night sky, with rides on brake vans with lit stoves.

From February 21 until November 2 the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum in Tywyn will be staging 1825 and all that! – a temporary exhibition marking the bicentenary with a display showing that the history of narrow gauge railways is just as long lived, and that they are equally involved in promoting engineering innovation from the beginning of the 19th century.

STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway in Swindon will additionally celebrate its own 25th birthday with a variety of activities and themed events throughout 2025, including its Railway Festival and the Great Western Brick Show 'Railway 200 Edition.'

The Llangollen Railway Trust will jointly celebrate its own 50th birthday with a series of Pioneering Engineering talks at intervals from March 15 at Abbey Road, Llangollen.

On April 12, Caroline Hardy and Niall Hammond from the Friends of the S&DR will give a public talk on The Stockton & Darlington Bicentenary Festival organised by the Railway & Canal Historical Society and held at
6 Mount Street, Manchester.

Yeovil Steam Centre will celebrate with an Easter activity weekend event on April 20/21 with Peckett 0-4-0ST *Pectin* hauling trains along the third-of-a-mile Clifton Maybank branch.

From May 2-5, the Spring Steam Spectacular at the West Somerset Railway will feature at least eight locomotives in action, with visiting examples ranging from from the 1800s to the 21st century. The timetable will include goods, express, and local workings.

Exploration

The North Eastern Railway Association is organising a 10 mile railway heritage walk from Middleton-in-Teesdale to Barnard Castle on May 3, exploring the South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway, a separate company which was driven by the S&D.

The Middleton branch was also established on the same basis. While both are now closed, they illustrate how the S&DR's success spread to a much wider area.



Photographer Jack Boskett held a private one-man charter at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway on November 26, with WR 4-6-0 No. 7903 *Foremarke Hall* in steam displaying one of two special Railway 200 headboards he had made by Procast to promote the celebration. The railway bought the headboards from him and will use them on its service trains in 2025. JACK BOSKETT

The Plym Valley Railway will be celebrating with a Heritage Transport Weekend on June 21/25, with an intensive timetable, driver experiences, vehicle displays and the miniature railway in use.

The Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway has organised a Steam and Beer Music Festival at The Wall in Sittingbourne on June 28/29.

August 30/31 will see the Battlefield Line host a gala featuring steam, diesel, electric and multiple units.

Many other venues situated several hundred miles away from the S&DR region are staging their own events to reflect the importance of what happened in 1825, such as a public exhibition about Hampshire's short-lived Bishop's Waltham branch line to be held at Bishop's Waltham Museum from May 3 to October 26.

➜ For details of all events, visit https://railway200.co.uk/

Tickets on sale for *Canadian Pacific*'s relaunch tied in with Railway 200

THE Mid Hants Railway has released tickets for its relaunch of SR Merchant Navy 4-6-2 No. 35005 *Canadian Pacific* as its 13-year restoration nears completion – a milestone aligned with Railway 200.

The Bulleid's relaunch event will run from March 20-23. Last operational in 2008, *Canadian Pacific*'s first duties will be on a series of inaugural dining trains on March 20, with breakfast, lunch and dinner options on offer. Reflecting the locomotive's number, each of these options is priced at £350.05 and offers dining for two people plus an exclusive souvenir to commemorate the first day of its operations.

March 21 will see its first public outing, with No. 35005 working three trips the full length of the MHR throughout the day. With tickets for this particularly special day priced at £55, passengers can enjoy one round trip behind *Canadian Pacific* as well as unlimited travel on a separate service running alongside behind one of the other Mid-Hants fleet members.

Tickets will be £35 per person on March 22/23, with shed and workshop tours also available throughout the weekend.

For details and to book visit watercressline.co.uk/special-days/canadian-pacific-launch/

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Visiting LMS 'Black Five' No. 45212 will be hauling mince pie specials between Leeming Bar and Leyburn on the Wensleydale Railway on December 28/29, while newly-acquired Class 47 No. 47714 will run a diesel service on December 30 (News, page 38). NIGEL COCKBURN / WR

200 years, 200 wheels: Ffestiniog on parade for society's 70th anniversary!

THE Ffestiniog Railway has confirmed that its June 20-22 70th anniversary weekend will feature "as many locomotives together in one place as possible".

There will be a cavalcade of locomotives set to run across the Cob led by a newly outshopped George England 0-4-0STT *Prince* in Garraway green!

Last operational in 2022, *Prince* has been completely stripped down and refurbished in a comprehensive overhaul that has been entirely funded by FR Society members, including a new saddle tank, with the previous example found to be life expired despite efforts to save it.

When it emerges from Boston Lodge workshops, *Prince* will carry the lined green livery that it has not been seen in since the 1980s, and which it wore when it worked the first heritage era trains on August 2, 1955 which Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways general manager Paul described as "very fitting".

He added that the June event also forms part of its Railway 200 celebrations, and would be something very special indeed: "We looked around and asked what we could do that would be different and help put not just us but North Wales as a whole on the map. We're very fortunate to be so well endowed when it comes to locomotives, but nobody ever gets to see them in one place as they're all working at different ends of the railway.



The Ffestiniog Railway's *Prince* will be outshopped in Garraway green, a livery it hasn't worn since the 1980s, when it returns to service during the railway's 70th anniversary year in 2025. FESTIPEDIA

"When you think about it, you'd need a mile of line with a clear view and scenic backdrop – which we do! So we'll be having 200 wheels across Pen Cob, all steam of course."

The parade of locomotives, led by *Prince*, will run in the order in which they have appeared in preservation.

The event will include involvement from the neighbouring Welsh Highland Heritage Railway too.

Charity fundraising drive is a major aim

RAILWAY 200 is aiming to raise £200,000 with partnerships through five charities during the year.

Four rail charities – Railway Mission, Railway Benefit Fund, Railway Children and Transport Benevolent Fund CIO – are joining forces for the first time and teaming up with Alzheimer's Research UK to hold a series of anniversary-related activities and events.

Their aim is to highlight how the rail industry's legacy extends far beyond just infrastructure, connecting people and communities while supporting its workforce. Emma Robertson, programme manager for Railway 200, said: "This coming year's bicentenary is about bringing people together to celebrate rail's role in national life and its amazing railway family.

"Nostalgia plays a big part in rail's story. We will be working with Alzheimer's Research UK and our rail charity partners to build a better future, helping to protect rail memories for everyone, forever."

Philip Dunn, executive director at Alzheimer's Research UK, said: "This is also a personally meaningful partnership for me as I was born and raised in Shildon, which is part of the Stockton & Darlington Railway route. My hometown has a strong connection to the railway, so I have many fond childhood memories that link back to it.

"Sadly, dementia puts precious memories like these at risk.

"We're working to change this and we're thankful to Railway 200 for standing with us for a cure."

To donate, visit www.justgiving.com/campaign/railway200

Whose family has the longest railway lineage?

A NATIONWIDE hunt has been launched by Railway 200 find the person with the longest-serving railway family in the UK as part of the celebrations.

The youngest representative of the UK's oldest rail family will be invited to some of the many celebratory events planned.

At the top of the UK rail family tree so far are father and son Mike and Andrew Lamport whose railway lineage dates to April, 1846.

Mike has traced his uninterrupted railway roots back to April 1846 when his great-great-grandfather Matthew Mathews joined the original South Western Railway as 'Porter No.18' at Richmond station in Surrey.

Mike, 76, from Ely enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the railway, retiring in 2008. Son Andrew, 27, from Croydon, followed in his father's footsteps and now works as a guard for South Western Railway, based at Waterloo.

Crash hero

Promotion saw Matthew move to Waterloo station to become a passenger guard on the Waterloo to Portsmouth line, via Guildford, when it opened in 1859.

Two years later, on the evening of January 28, 1861 Matthew was one of the heroes of a train crash at Epsom Junction, now known as Raynes Park. A grateful management appointed him to the role of district inspector at Bishopstoke, later renamed Eastleigh, before making him station master at the newly-opened Shawford station where he remained until he retired in April 1896. He died in 1904.

Railway 200 spokesman Alan Hyde said: "The railway is like a family, and its 300,000 people are its beating heart. There are many inter-generational railway families serving on the network today. We'd love to hear from anyone who can beat the Lamport family's impressive rail pedigree, hopefully stretching back to 1825, the birth of the modern railway, or even earlier."

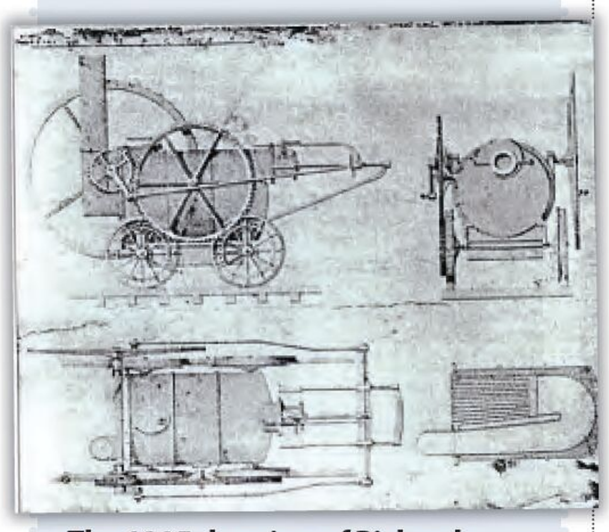
Rail staff claiming railway ancestry before April 1846 are invited to email railway200@gbrtt.co.uk with their contact details.

Celebration held near a cradle of the steam age

HOLDING the 2025 HRA Awards Evening and Dinner at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead during the year of the Railway 200 celebrations is hugely appropriate, Tyneside having a pivotal role in early railway history, with the venue for the event overlooking a street that had a key – but often missed – part to play. The area's pioneering role in the spread of wooden railway technology is well-known; however, less known is that Gateshead was home of what was arguably the first railway locomotive ever constructed.

In 1805, at John Whinfield's foundry in Pipewllegate, Gateshead, a Richard Trevithick-designed locomotive was built for use at Wylam Colliery. It is believed to have been the first steam locomotive to be built with flanged wheels for use on edge rails, as opposed to plateways – like that where the far more famous Penydarren Trevithick locomotive operated. Though tested in Gateshead, it was ultimately a failure and is not believed to have ever been sold to Wylam Colliery. However, it was recorded in two contemporary drawings.

It is said that many of the key figures who would have a role in locomotive development in the following two decades witnessed those demonstrations in Gateshead; even John Blenkinsopp, famous for his locomotives at Middleton in Leeds, was also from the Gateshead area. Converted into a stationary engine to blow the cupola at Whinfield Foundry, it was apparently not scrapped until the 1860s and deserves to be better recognised.



The 1805 drawing of Richard Trevithick's third railway locomotive built in Pipewllegate, Gateshead, by foundry owner Johnm Whitfield and his foreman John Steel.

Record entries for association awards

By Robin Jones

A RECORD number of entries have been received for the Heritage Railway Association 2025 Annual Awards.

The huge level of interest – nearly 25% up on 2024 – saw 92 submissions received, the figure being seen as a strong indication that heritage rail is fighting back strongly from the twin challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

HRA chief executive Steve Oates said: "The awards in 2024 were a record year for entries, but this eclipses it completely. We've launched a couple of very popular new categories, like Achievement of the Year, but we have seen strong interest across the board.



The Hilton Newcastle Gateshead, where the 2025 HRA Awards Evening and Dinner will take place on February 8. HRA

Rising to the challenges

"It's been a tough few years for heritage rail, but I'd like to think that this is evidence that much of the hard work that dedicated people in the sector have been doing is really paying off. The calibre of entries we have received would certainly suggest that."

New categories for 2025 also included Station of the Year, which will be awarded to the station or halt that best demonstrates excellence in restoration or maintenance, customer service, facilities and attention to detail. Achievement of the Year will be given to a railway or tramway that has delivered a significant achievement during the last 12 months.

A total of 12 categories were available to enter, including titles for restoration of steam locomotives, diesel or electric locomotives, and carriages or wagons. The awards for young volunteers and rising stars also return, as do awards for infrastructure projects and marketing.

Recognising excellence

The awards recognise excellence or innovation in almost every aspect of heritage railway and tramway restoration, preservation and operation. Recent winners have ranged from the Swanage Railway-based restoration of LSWR T3 4-4-0 No. 563 to the Llangollen Railway for its Corwen extension project and the 15in gauge Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway for its marketing.

Railway of the Year, the most prestigious award of all, was won by Brighton's unique Volks Electric Railway in 2024.

A judging panel chaired by the National Railway Museum's Anthony Coulls has produced a shortlist which will be published before the end of the year.

The 2025 HRA Awards Evening and Dinner for finalists will be held at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead on February 8 and will feature guest speakers and networking opportunities alongside a three-course meal. For more details and to book tickets, visit www.hra.uk.com

Nottingham for HRA's first conference of 2025

THE first Heritage Railway Association conference of 2025 will be held in a city with a promising future in heritage rail – Nottingham.

The Spring Conference 2025 on March 4/5 will feature a variety of high-quality speakers, networking opportunities, and the latest essential insights for everyone in the sector.

A specific focus on marketing is set to be on the agenda, intended to help heritage rail trustees, directors and managers find new inspiration for their efforts to attract visitors to their railways, tramways or museums.

Nottingham is seen as a hugely appropriate location for an HRA conference, being the focus of the Great Central Railway's ambitious reunification project to link the outskirts of Leicester and Nottingham via Loughborough, which will reconnect the two heritage lines.

HRA membership and business development manager Jo Silsbury said: "Our spring conferences are one of the biggest and most important events of the year for anyone involved in running a heritage railway. They give a great opportunity to get up to speed with everything that's important in the sector at the start of the main operating season and invaluable opportunities to network with colleagues from other heritage railways and tramways.

Central in more ways than one

"Nottingham is a great location for the conference. It's easy to get to by road or rail and, of course, it's a city at the centre of one of the most exciting heritage railway projects of the decade."

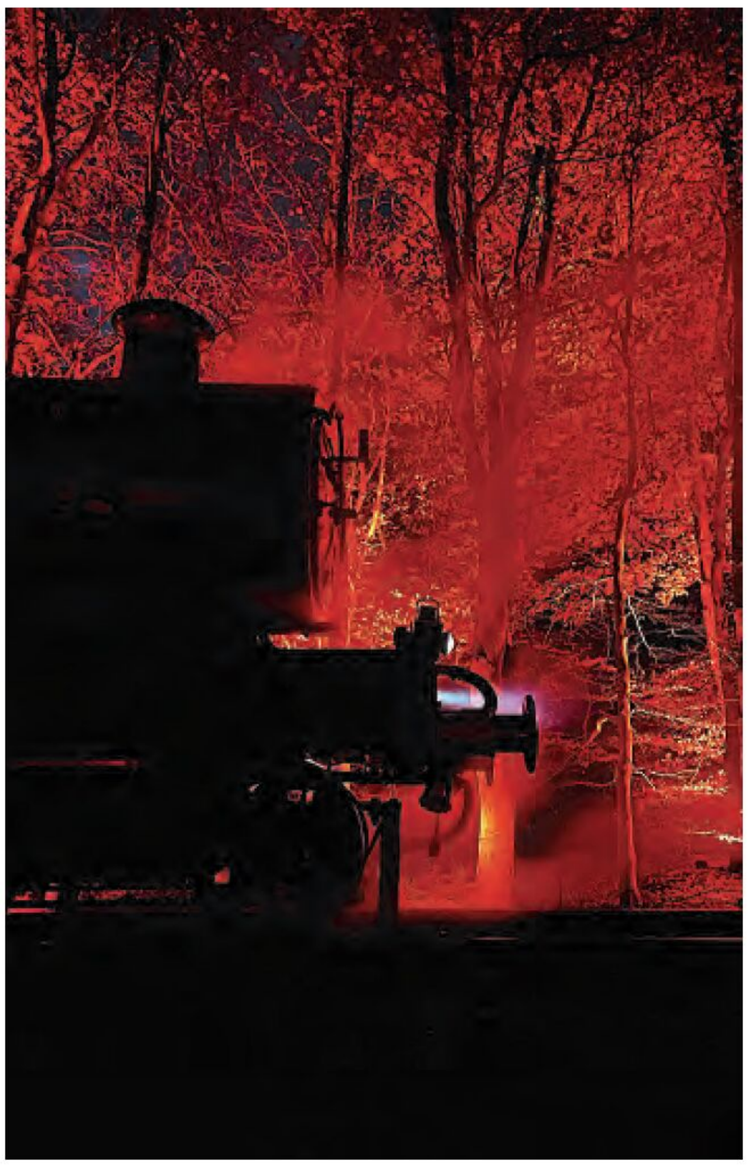
The venue for the conference will be the Crowne Plaza in Wollaton Street, close to the city centre. Bookings for the event are open now, with early bird tickets on offer for early registrations; visit the HRA's website at www.hra.uk.com

The announcement follows hot on the heels of the autumn conference in Torquay on November 5/6, which nearly 200 leading heritage rail people attended, covering key issues such as funding and safety. Speakers included representatives from the Office of Rail and Road, Rail Accident Investigation Branch, Department for Transport and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

A panel of young leaders from the sector debated the future direction of heritage rail and how railways and tramways can take advantage of the changing visitor economy climate.

One of the attendees was the Llangollen Railway's Peter Dickinson, who said: "It was my first time in attendance, and judging by how interactive, open, varied, honest and engaging the talks were, I look forward to enjoying many more in the coming years."

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GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 on a 'Norfolk Lights Express' test train on November 14. DAVID BALLARD/NNR



No. 6880 *Betton Grange* with the Battlefield Line's first 'Santa Express' of the season at Market Bosworth on November 30. GRAHAM NUTTALL

Double festive season visits for new *Betton Grange*

NEW-BUILD GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Beton Grange* has headed festive trains on two heritage lines in the build-up to Christmas.

At the conclusion of its highly successful three-month visit to the North Norfolk Railway, the 81st member of its class hauled the illuminated 'Norfolk Lights Express.'

Its last day in Poppy Line service saw it head 'The North Norfolkman' during daylight hours.

Afterwards, it moved to the Battlefield Line, where it headed its first-ever Santa special, and the line's first of the season, the 11.30am from Shackerstone to Market Bosworth, on November 30. The railway was able to sell all available seats on its Santa services before this first train ran.

As reported last issue, No. 6880 will feature in the line's Winter Warmer gala on January 11/12 alongside other guests including GWR pannier No. 1369, from the South Devon Railway.

Betton Grange will then move to the Great Central Railway for the January 23-26 Winter Steam Gala, where it will be joined by two additional Western region locomotives in 0-6-2T No. 6695, from the Swindon & Cricklade Railway, and 2-8-0 No. 3850, from the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway; see feature pages 68-71.

As we closed for press, talks were underway between the 6880 Betton Grange Society and the G/WR for the locomotive to make a return visit in the spring following its successful public service debut at the Cotswold Festival of Steam in May 2024, as featured in issue 320.

The society was also considering approaches from other heritage lines for Easter visits.

Currently running with the 3500-gallon Churchward tender borrowed from WR 4-6-0 No. 7822 *Foxcote Manor*, the society is aiming to recreate an extinct Collett 3500-gallon tender which is more appropriate for the Grange class. To donate to the Tendering to Success appeal, visit www.6880.co.uk

Right said *Fred*: Austerity's comeback for Battlefield gala

THE Battlefield Line's Winter Warmer Gala on January 11/12, 2025, will see the first appearance in almost half a century of Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 71480 *Fred* following its overhaul being completed at Tyseley Locomotive Works.

Built in 1945 by Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns, it was delivered to the Longmoor Military Railway that July but was there for only four months before being sold to Manchester Collieries. Departing Longmoor the following April, it worked at various pits before being named *Fred*. Many colliery locomotives took their names from prominent employees within the company, with this example named after Fred Hilton, a former superintendent of the Manchester Collieries railway system.

At one time, following a rebuild in 1964, *Fred* was fitted with an underfeed stoker that mechanically fed coal into the fire. Upon its withdrawal in 1969, it was purchased for preservation and moved by rail to the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, where this feature was removed prior to entering service there. The locomotive was also painted in a lined light blue livery with Worth Valley lettering and crest on the tanks.

Its operational stint at the KWVR was short and during the 1970s it was withdrawn pending overhaul. In the early 2000s it moved to Tyseley for work to commence.

By late November 2024, *Fred*'s overhaul was completed, and the locomotive was ready for testing prior to moving to Shackertsone, where it will work its first trains in almost 50 years at the gala.

It will appear alongside previously announced WR duo No. 6880 *Betton Grange* and 0-6-0PT No. 1369, with a further guest due to be announced as this issue went to press. The gala will include on-board catering, with demonstration freight workings expected to feature alongside the passenger services.

A free heritage bus service will connect Nuneaton and Hinckley national rail stations to the heritage line's Market Bosworth station, where there is also adequate free parking; visitors are advised to start their journeys from here as space is limited at Shackerstone station. For further details, see battlefieldline.co.uk/winter-gala



Austerity No. 71480 *Fred* is set to work its first passenger trains in nearly half a century when it appears at the Battlefield Line's January 11/12 gala. The locomotive has recently been overhauled at Tyseley Locomotive Works. BATTLEFIELD LINE

Festive season returns services to Rushcliffe Halt

By Robin Jones

CHRISTMAS came early for the Great Central Railway (Nottingham) on November 28 when it ran its first test passenger train over its nine-mile line since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hired from Nemesis Rail, recently-restored two-car Class 107 DMU comprising vehicles Nos. 52031 and 52005 ran over the entire line it controls from Ruddington to the junction with the Midland Main Line in Loughborough. The movement was also the first passenger stock to cross the new bridge over the A60 north of Loughborough, the southern limit of operations following the full tamping on the line in recent months.

Ready for service

The DMU had been hired to provide motive power for the Jingle Bells Express, GCR(N)'s brand new festive family event. The test train was run as an operations rehearsal for the public trains which began on November 30 to run every weekend in December and the 23rd from the Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre in Ruddington along the 2½ miles to Rushcliffe Halt.

As part of the ambitious Reunification project, which will reconnect the GCR(N) with the Great Central Railway, a new line will ultimately continue straight on to reach Loughborough Central. Andy Fillingham of the GCR(N) said: "This is another major achievement by volunteers who have invested tens of thousands of hours in the rebirth of the GCR in Nottinghamshire.

"Getting the DMU down the main line prepared us for the Jingle Bells Express running through December, but is also a statement of intent for the Reunification project.

"The GCR in Leicestershire is so close you can almost touch it. The tests went very well and we know passengers are excited about once again taking a train from Ruddington to Rushcliffe through the open countryside of south Nottinghamshire."

It is anticipated that public trains south of Rushcliffe Halt will operate in the coming year.

Top of the (children's) pops

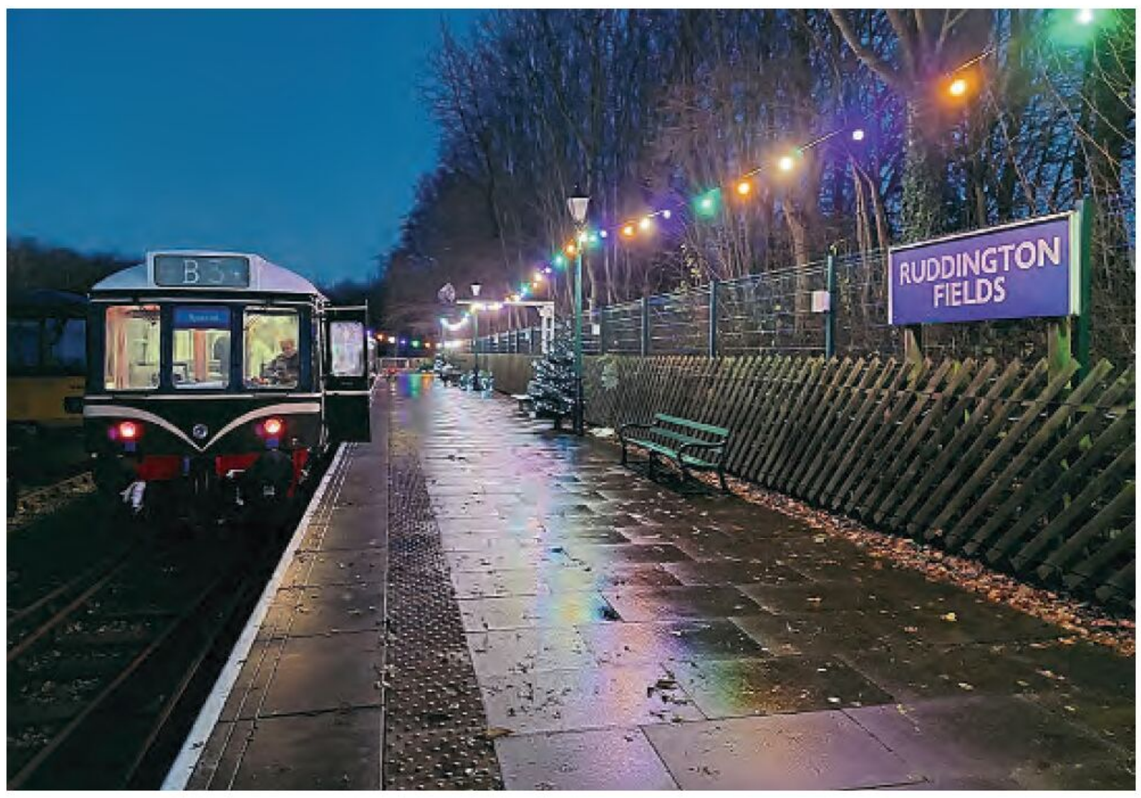
Meanwhile, the GCR(N) has hit the top of the charts with its theme tune to the Jingle Bells Express. The song has soared to number one in the UK Children's Music iTopChart – even before a single train was run.

As part of the Apple group, the site takes information such as streaming figures and online purchases from sites like iTunes, before compiling various lists showing which ones are the best and ranks them accordingly from 1 to 100.

A snippet from the GCR(N) song can be heard at https://gcrn.co.uk/node/114



The first passenger stock to move over the new bridge crossing the A60 north of Loughborough. TOM INGALL



Jingle Bells Express preparations at Ruddington on November 27. ANDY FILLINGHAM

Whitby Winter Excursions to run over festive period

THE North Yorkshire Moors Railway is to run a series of Whitby Winter Excursions from Friday, December 27 until Sunday, January 5.

Departing at 11.10am (10.15am on Sundays) from Pickering and 2.30pm from Whitby, the journey takes around one hour and 45 minutes in each direction, leaving time for visitors to explore the seaside town for over an hour and a half.

NYMR CEO Laura Strangeway said: "The Whitby Winter Excursions are a highlight of our winter calendar and a wonderful way for passengers to experience the charm of steam travel.

"This service offers a unique journey through the stunning North Yorkshire Moors to the coastal town of Whitby, making it an ideal outing for families and visitors during the festive season."

For more information and to book, visit www.nymr.co.uk/whitby-winter-excursions



A North Yorkshire Moors Railway festive special hauled by BR Standard 4MT 2-6-0 No. 76079 through the snowbound landscape in 2022. JOHN HUNT / NYMR

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Severn Valley 'Enchanted Express' wows the crowds

THE Severn Valley Railway's 'Enchanted Express' from Bridgnorth proved to be a roaring success, with all services fully sold out.

The season started at Bridgnorth on November 30 when three compartments were available on the first train only. Three returns ran to Highley over that weekend. The following weekends throughout December (and also scheduled for Christmas Eve) saw four trains daily.

Santa was on board in addition to actors in different guises to entertain children and adults alike. The inspiration came from the classic poem A visit from St Nicholas (' Twas the nght before Christmas') narrated by Dame Julie Walters.

Five GWR carriages carried the passengers with one maroon Mk.1 for Santa and his helpers, plus the Stove R on the rear as the guard's van. Motive power was 0-6-0PT No. 7714.

Starting on November 30, seven trains a day ran at weekends throughout December (plus Christmas Eve) from Kidderminster to Arley for a pantomime show, with GWR 4-6-0s Nos. 7812 *Erlstoke Manor* and 4930 *Hagley Hall* in charge, and bookings were very positive.

Furthermore, evening carol trains were sold out, with gin trains and dining trains also doing well.

Extra workings took place on November 30 from Kidderminster to Bewdley using the line's DMU for the Christmas lights switch-on in the nearby town.



GWR 0-6-0PT No. 7714 prepares for the third 'Enchanted Express' at Bridgnorth station on November 30. Note the newly-decorated Railwaymans Arms pub sign hand-painted by Ronan O'Brien. JOHN TITLOW

Cotswold charity Santa train beats the blackout!

THE Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway's 48 Santa Specials again sold out weeks in advance, and following tradition, its festive season began with a special day for children represented by local charities to visit Santa in his grotto.

Youngsters from the James Hopkins Trust, which cares for life-limited and life-threatened young people, plus Riding for the Disabled Association, enjoyed a day out with Father Christmas on November 17. The train included carriages specially adapted by the railway to provide comfortable accommodation for those confined to a wheelchair and their carers.

However, a fresh challenge was presented to volunteers when an area of Greet, where Winchcombe station is located, suffered a major power outage. Plans were quickly changed and the special trains ran to Broadway, with Santa on board handing out gifts.

Steam department volunteer Chris Blake said: "Despite the difficulty presented by the sudden change of plan, the day was wonderful, everyone enjoying the atmosphere on the train. Our charities said they enjoyed a very happy time meeting everyone involved with the railway, from station staff, locomotive crews, on-train catering and, of course, Santa and his many elves."

G/WR marketing manager Catherine Johnson said: "I'm thrilled with how our Santa specials have developed over the years to become what I firmly believe is the best traditional Christmas experience in the Cotswolds – and it is all organised and run by volunteers."



The Dartmouth Steam Railway introduced the concept of illuminated festive trains to the UK. Its award-winning Train of Lights runs on selected dates up to December 30 and tickets can be booked at www.dartmouthrailriver.co.uk/tickets/christmas-train-of-lights. CHRIS SLACK PHOTOGRAPHY

Foster families and carers treated to free Train of Lights

NEARLY 750 people from Torbay's fostering, special guardians, disability families and care-experienced young people took part in Dartmouth Steam Railway's annual Christmas Train of Lights on November 28.

The event was organised by Torbay Council's Children's Services to help create magical memories and a shared experience in the run-up to Christmas. It is one of several events that the council, working with a wide range of corporate fostering partners, offers as part of a package of support for foster carers which also includes training, local support groups and professional advice from a team comprising social workers and experienced carers as mentors.

Coun Nick Bye, Torbay's cabinet member for children's services, said: "A huge thank you to Dartmouth Steam Railway. It's an amazing generous gesture greatly appreciated by all our special children, their carers and families. It's a truly magical experience to ride the Train of Lights."

The railway's managing director John Jones said: "We really like supporting Fostering in Torbay – this is the fifth year we have done this where we give families the chance to experience Train of Lights free of charge. It's a bit of a personal thing for me as well: My parents fostered children – when I was little I didn't like it but I got over it and it was fantastic. So we're really keen to support such a good cause."

The railway is one of Torbay Council's official corporate partners for the fostering service.



Pictured left to right are Lucy and Annette from Torbay Council's fostering service, Coun Nick Bye, John Jones, Dartmouth Steam Railway managing director and Ian Jarman from Fostering South West.

Disruption abounds as Storm Darragh hits heritage lines

By Owen Hayward

VERY high winds and torrential rain battered parts of the UK over the weekend of December 7/8 as Storm Darragh blew in – and brought disruption to many heritage lines that had to cancel services as a precaution or owing to damage sustained.

With red weather warnings across the UK, heritage lines perfectly poised to face the brunt of the weather announced service suspensions rather than disappoint customers on the day.

The Talyllyn Railway confirmed on December 6 that its 'Tinsel and Turkey' services for the following day were suspended. As high winds rolled in off the coast, the railway's offices received a call advising that some of the roof cladding had been ripped off of Brynglas blockpost, and tiles dislodged from the station roof.



Complete with US-tyle headlamp and cowcatcher, GWR 2-8-0 No. 2807 on loan from the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway heads the South Devon Railway's Polar Express at Stretchford Straight with the 2pm from North to Buckfastleigh on December 6. The next day's trains were cancelled due to the Storm Darragh threat. DAVID HUNT

Submerged lines

Later inspections also revealed that a large number of trees had been brought down in several places along the line, with the worst considered to be along the mineral extension between Abergynolwyn and Nant Gwernol.

Drainage gulleys became buried and blocked, resulting in rainwater also pouring down the hills straight onto the tracks.

With the Sunday services cancelled, staff and volunteers swiftly sprung into action, steaming up Fletcher Jennings 0-4-2ST No. 1 *Talyllyn* and setting out to start rectifying the damage. By the end of the day, the rare steam-hauled engineering train had successfully reached Abergynolwyn, with manpower having made a start rectifying the damage along the line beyond. As a result, the railway's post-Christmas services were not expected to run beyond Abergynolwyn.



No. 1 *Talyllyn* stops short of a flooded section of track on December 8 when volunteers set out to start repairing storm damage. MATT JAMES / TALYLLYN RAILWAY

Bouncing back

The Llangollen Railway also extended its service suspension to Sunday after a line inspection revealed that there were blockages in several places, with the wind having also brought down a marquee being used as part of Santa's grotto.

Both the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railways cancelled Saturday's trains. Following an obstruction being cleared the next morning trains were able to depart Caernarfon and Porthmadog stations as planned on December 8.

Power outages affected several lines too, with both the Corris Railway at Maespoeth and East Somerset Railway at Cranmore both announcing that supply to their sites had been disrupted and that neither would be running their advertised trains at all over the weekend.

'Polar Express' services were cancelled at the South Devon, Vale of Rheidol and Isle of Man Steam railways.

While some lines that closed Saturday reopened Sunday, the North Yorkshire Moors Railway ran its advertised 'Santa Specials' on December 7, but with trees and flooding blocking local roads as well as station car parks vanishing under water, opted to cancel its next day's services the following morning.

The Helston Railway was forced to cancel its Christmas market and Santa grotto at Truthall after Storm Darragh brought down its marquee causing £4000 damage and the weekend's trains were also called off, with bookings, which were up on previous years, transferred to the following weekend.

Double storm hit for Brecon Mountain



The landship on November 24 after Storm Bert did its worst. BMR

THE Brecon Mountain Railway was forced to cancel its Santa services on November 24 after a landslide caused by Storm Bert washed away part of an embankment next to the line.

Workers pulled out all the stops to rectify the damage but were unable to have the line ready for running trains the following weekend, as further stabilisation was required before the track could be safely approved by its engineers.

However, while they succeeded in rectifying the damage in the days afterwards, they then had another weather event to content with.

Storm Darragh made its appearance and forced the cancellation of the December 7 festive trains. Mercifully, they were given the green light to proceed the next day after an inspection found no issues once debris had been cleared.

To accommodate those affected by cancellations, extra weekday trains were added to the Santa schedule.



Right: Happy days here again in time for Christmas! Baldwin 2-6-2 No. 1 *Santa Teresa* steams along the reopened line following the completion of repairs. BRM

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

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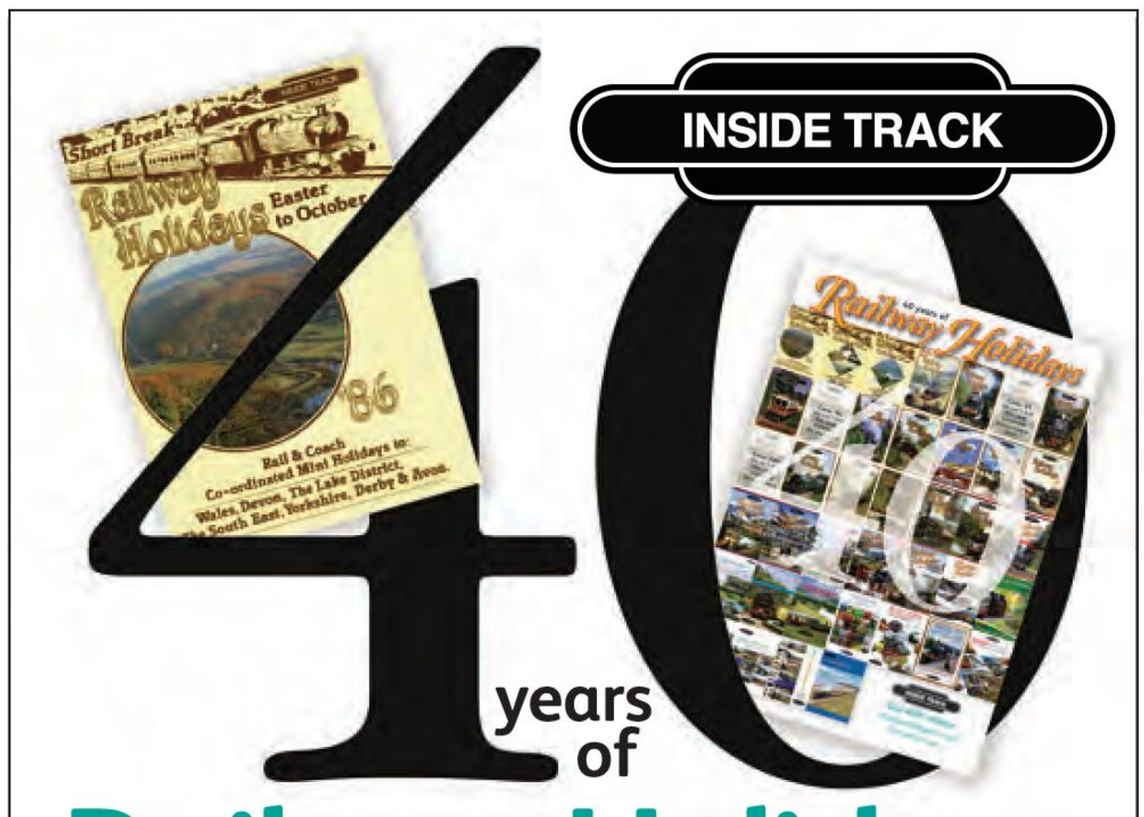
One of the hallmarks of Inside Track Railway Holidays has been its personalised approach. Every trip is more than just a sightseeing tour; it's a carefully constructed experience designed to match the unique interests of those keen on traveling by train, especially steam trains. Whether it's tracing the railways of the Scottish Highlands, exploring the palaces and vineyards of Europe, or experiencing the vast beauty of rural Ireland, Inside Track's itineraries offer unparalleled variety.

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Heritage railway journey from volunteer to chairman

By Geoff Courtney

BUSINESSMAN Derrick Bilsby, who joined the Kent & East Sussex Railway 50 years ago as a schoolboy volunteer, has been elected chairman of the Tenterden-based heritage line in succession to Simon Marsh, who stood down in November after six years in the role.

The 68-year-old boss of a company that provides revenue protection and software development services for the rail and bus industry, he said: "Heritage railways are in my DNA, but so is business, and the two need to be very much aligned if we are to steer our way through some pretty choppy waters in the coming years.

"Whether we like it or not, for the sector to continue to be something that we can all enjoy for years to come, we have to operate with commercial heads, not just enthusiast ones. It would be an unforgivable disservice to all those who have gone before us in the last 60 years of preservation if we didn't wake up to the challenges we face, meet them head on, and deliver workable solutions."

He said that his mission was to enhance the KESR's resilience and relevance as it approached the start of the £6 million construction work to extend the line by two miles to link up with the Rother Valley Railway at Robertsbridge (see news, pages 40/41).

In addition, he outlined several objectives, including continuing to refine what the railway offered in line with changing visitor expectations, employing rigorous financial planning, and increasing the impact of marketing. He also plans to undertake an operational review that focusses on the wellbeing of both staff and volunteers, who had been facing an increasing workload in recent years.

Other recent appointments include that of KESR director Andy Papworth as deputy chairman and Ian Legg as finance director following the retirement of Geoff Crouch, and two new officers have been co-opted to the Colonel Stephens Railway Enterprises Board: Patrick Favell, who is already chairman of the KESR project assessment committee; and Julie Wilkinson, a volunteer since 2022 with not-for-profit- marketing experience.

Derrick, who founded his company in 2003 after more than 30 years in a variety of BR roles, paid tribute to his predecessor, retired civil servant Simon Marsh, and to Geoff Crouch, who he said had brought the railway through a very difficult period, which included the Covid-19 pandemic. "I look forward to building on their legacy," he said.



In the chair: Derrick Bilsby in the company of 1923-built Peckett 0-4-0T *Marcia* after his election as chairman of the KESR. ROBIN COOMBES



Transcending eras: Visiting BR Standard 2-6-0 2MT No. 78019 arrives at Tenterden Town on December 29, 2023, creeping in behind an SECR luggage trolley. OWEN HAYWARD

Changing futures in store for retired BR carriages

By Owen Hayward

TWO former BR carriages are facing different futures, with one set to be converted into a community café, while the other could be retired from the same purpose for which it is currently used.

Built in 1961 as a corridor second, Mk. 1 No. 25853 was later converted for use as part of BR's travelling college train. Designed by engineer Barrie Masterton, it comprised 12 carriages that were converted for this use at the Cardiff Cathays works. It was the only train of its kind in the world and could accommodate 160 students, being operated under contract with the InterCity charter section.

The travelling college was developed following the launch of GCSE examinations which required an amount of learning to be undertaken beyond the classrooms. It was intended that this unique train would provide the means for both classroom facilities and accommodation when students were taken to external locations, thereby creating a mobile study centre. It was launched by Diana, Princess of Wales, on May 2, 1989. However, government legislation on course organisation and funding of external activities meant that the train was not available to the majority of state schools. It was therefore withdrawn in 1993, with all vehicles being purchased by the Bluebell Railway; some returned to operational use both there and on other heritage lines, while some were converted to static use or scrapped.

No. 25853 moved to the site of West Grinstead station in August 1997, now a part of the Downs Link footpath, where it has been a static feature ever since, housing a small museum dedicated to the station and the line it served. Yet its future presence is now uncertain, with West Sussex County Council saying it is "surplus to operational requirements."

Having been exposed to the elements since arrival, the carriage now requires repairs, and options are being considered as to what will be done with it. They could include selling it on, which may see the carriage depart after nearly 30 years based there, or transferring



Once part of BR's travelling college train, Mk. 1 No. 25853's future at the former West Grinstead station is now in doubt after being deemed surplus to requirements by West Sussex County Council. DAVE SPICER/ CREATIVE COMMONS

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Blackpool heritage tram fleet temporarily withdrawn

A FIXTURE of the seaside resort as far back as 1885, the sight of a heritage tram on the seafront at Blackpool will be temporarily absent following the announcement by Blackpool Transport Services on December 6 that it was reviewing such operations and had suspended its winter tours.

The heritage tram fleet has become synonymous with the town renowned for its world-famous illuminations despite being displaced from April 2012 by more modern vehicles. Several of the various types of vintage designs have been preserved and are based at the Blundell Street Tramtown depot. Many have operated the daily tours that run from spring through to December along the 11-mile tram network.

However, with depot storage space starting to prove problematic, combined with the increasing challenges of maintaining the ageing trams as well as finding paths between regular tram services, the announcement made on December 6 confirmed that the heritage fleet was to be withdrawn from operation immediately.

"Operating the heritage trams alongside our modern fleet has become increasingly challenging, with issues such as depot space, tram movements and general safety and maintenance conflicts making it difficult to continue running the service effectively," the BTS statement said. "This decision was not taken lightly, but we believe it is the most practical step to support the evolving needs of our business and maintain the overall efficiency of our operations."

Not gone for good

Following concerns that the announcement would mean the loss of one of the seaside resort's iconic attractions, managing director Jane Cole responded on December 10, adding: "I would like to reach out to everyone who has expressed their concerns about the future of the heritage tram operations. I am the biggest advocate for the preservation and future of our beautiful assets.

"I can confirm that the future of our heritage trams is safe and we aim to have them back on the promenade next year. However, before that can happen there are a number of complex operational issues that need to be addressed. Recently, we have been able to run the heritage trams out of Starr Gate depot which does not interfere with the ongoing works at Rigby Road. We are considering how this could provide a solution to some of the challenges we are currently facing.

"BTS and Blackpool Council remain committed to continue working with all our volunteers, supporters and stakeholders during this pause in the operational running of the heritage fleet."



An iconic sight which will be absent from the promenade for a while: Balloon car No. 700 pauses at the foot of Blackpool Tower on May 11, 2023. OWEN HAYWARD

Bryan Lindop, head of heritage at Blackpool Transport, added: "I wish to make it clear that Heritage Tram Tours and Tramtown are two separate divisions within BTS. The current hiatus of the tram tours therefore has no impact whatever on the major developmental plans for the Rigby Road tram shed; indeed, the present situation makes it even more imperative that our plans and our vision come to fruition."

ownership to a community group to maintain it in-situ. Local residents have aired concerns about its potential loss, with some highlighting its potential as a "very nice coffee stop for walkers or riders."

A council statement said: "The carriage is in need of restoration and the plan is to offer it to the community through the Community Asset Transfer process."

Brighter futures

Conversely to the carriage in Sussex, Mk. 2 TSO No. 5524 looks to have a much more secure future ahead, having arrived in the London borough of Stratford in November 2024, where it will be fitted out as a community space.

Built in 1969, No. 5524 was purchased in 1992 for use as a picnic space at the Eureka Children's Museum in Halifax, where it was placed on a section of track alongside Hunslet works 0-4-0 diesel No. 2641.

Both vehicles departed the museum site earlier this year, with the shunter moving to the Ribble Steam Railway and the coach was temporarily stored at the Rye Farm yard of Railway Support Services pending its final transfer to Stratford's Carpenters Estate, which takes its name from the ancient London livery firm The Worshipful Company of Carpenters that bought the land in the 19th century to provide housing for factory workers.



In November, Mk.2 TSO No. 5524 moved to Stratford's Carpenters Estate in London, where it will be converted into an inclusive café space with a focus on people who are blind and hard of hearing. POPULO LIVING

The carriage will be transformed into the Dialogue Express Café, a space where local residents and visitors can come and connect with one another. The project is being led by Populo Living, a company responsible for new housing in the borough of Newham, and Dialogue Hub, a community-based set-up that seeks to create inclusive community spaces by bridging the gaps in society.

Other spaces run by DH include a multipurpose space for sensory experience set in total darkness where visitors are led by blind tour guides, a British Sign Language cafe where customers interact with deaf and hard of hearing baristas, and an exhibition of artists with diverse backgrounds. The carriage café conversion will provide jobs and training for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals as well as encouraging interaction through British Sign Language.

Furthermore, it forms part of a wider regeneration effort in the area seeking to bring practical community benefits to the estate, which is located in the shadow of Stratford station and near to the site on which the Great Eastern Railway's workshops once stood.

Construction for RVR-KESR £6m link set for spring start

By Geoff Courtney

CONSTRUCTION work on the £6 million project that will link the heritage lines of the Kent & East Sussex Railway and the Rother Valley Railway two miles away is expected to start in the spring, with the first passenger trains over the newly-created 14-mile line provisionally set to run in 2028.

The project, which was fiercely opposed by two farming families on the route at Salehurst, was given the go-ahead in May last year in the form of a Transport & Works Act Order granted to the RVR.

It will result in trains operating from the RVR base at Robertsbridge, where a five-coach platform has been built beside the national network station, to Tenterden, and will be operated wholly by the KESR. Other facilities at Robertsbridge will include engine and carriage sheds, both of which will complement the similar KESR depots at Rolvenden.

A major part of the privately-funded project will be the construction of three level crossings, for which the supply, installation and commissioning contract has already been awarded. Work on the first, over the B2244 at Junction Road, the current western end of the KESR in the hamlet of Udiam, is due to start in the spring, thus enabling engineering trains to operate.

Construction of the second, at the RVR eastern extremity two miles away at Northbridge Street, is scheduled to start at the end of 2025 or early 2026, while work on the third and most major of the trio, across the A21 Robertsbridge bypass, is planned to start also in 2026.



On the level: Within a few years this will be the location of a level crossing once the link between the two heritage lines of the Rother Valley and Kent & East Sussex railways is completed. Although the date may change, the crossing is expected to open to passenger trains in 2028. GEOFF COURTNEY



Gala train: Climbing the 1-in-80 gradient after departing from Northiam on June 1, Hunslet Austerity No. 25 – aptly named *Northiam* – approaches Wittersham Road station during the KESR's golden jubilee gala with a train composed of vintage stock bound for Tenterden Town. The 0-6-0ST will be one of the railway's fleet bringing trains into Robertsbridge once the link with the Rother Valley Railway is open to traffic. OWEN HAYWARD

Derrick Bilsby, the KESR liaison officer with the RVR, told *Heritage Railway* that it was hoped test trains would be able to run by late 2027 and passenger services the following year.

Complex project

He did, though, stress that the timings could change and even be put back. "The building of the railway is a complex and multi-faceted project which has not only a political dimension, but also specific construction requirements driven by the Office of Rail and Road, Highways England and the Environment Agency, as well as planning conditions specified by local councils and additional compliance requirements set out in the Transport Works Order."

The original Kent and East Sussex Railway opened in 1900 and ran northwards for 21 miles between Robertsbridge and Headcorn via Tenterden. It was closed to passengers in January 1954, other than to specials such as hop-picker trains, and completely in 1961. The line was reopened by preservationists in stages from Tenterden to Bodiam between 1974 and 2000, and onward to Junction Road in 2011, although currently there is no regular service beyond Bodiam.

KESR general Robin Coombes said: "The link between us and the RVR will be an important element of our future success, so we are delighted that the start of its construction is getting ever closer. It will be an exciting time for us all, especially for the engine crews who will have a new route to learn, just like their predecessors in the days of BR and before.

"Meanwhile, we are currently working on our plans for 2025, and in this regard we are looking at not only our regular services and special events, but also one or two new ideas to keep our trains full. It will be a tough year in the current economic climate, but we think that at the beginning of every year, and thanks to our wonderful staff and volunteers, and our innovative attractions, the visitors keep coming. Complacency is never an option."

Appeal for Blue Anchor camping coach launched

A £10,000 appeal to complete the first phase of the restoration of a former Dawlish Warren camping coach for use by West Somerset Railway volunteers has been launched.

The 57ft Corridor Third toplight built under lot No. 1269 to Diagram C32 was completed by the GWR in July 1920. It was renumbered No. 3385 during 1955 and converted to a camping coach christened Hilda. Renumbered 9882 and then just 82, it is now based at Blue Anchor station.

The first phase of its restoration is to remove the asbestos from the steam pipe beneath the carriage – an essential first step before the renewal of the rest of the coach can begin in earnest. The intention is to restore it as a camping coach for the use of volunteers working at the station and elsewhere on the line.

Donations were already being made as we went to press.

➜ To contribute to the appeal, visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ba-station



The GWR Corridor Third toplight camping coach at Blue Anchor which needs to be restored as vital accommodation for volunteers working on the West Somerset Railway. WSR

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Severn Valley workhorse overhaul has begun – but £300k funding is needed

By John Titlow

WORK on restoring Severn Valley Railway stalwart GWR Churchward 2-8-0 No. 2857 at Kidderminster has begun.

No. 2857 hauled its last train on January 2, 2023, and its boiler certificate ran out soon afterwards.

Built in 1918 as one of the 84-strong 2800 class designed for heavy freight use, especially coal, from South Wales, No. 2857 was withdrawn by BR in 1964 and sent to Barry scrapyard.

Purchased from Woodham Bros in May 1974 by the 2857 Society, it was steamed for the first time in the heritage era in September 1979.

Since then it has had several overhauls, including the replacement of a cylinder block which was discovered under a pile of coke during the demolition of Briton Ferry steelworks.

Presently, No. 2857 is hidden under a cocoon at Kidderminster, where it is being stripped down. The locomotive has been separated from its tender which, as reported last issue, has gone on hire to the Erlestoke Manor Fund to run behind No. 7802 *Bradley Manor*, and the fall plate and cab floor have been removed to enable the floor area to be cleaned and undercoated to protect the metalwork. The fall plate is life-expired so will need replacing.

This work will enable the boiler inspector to access its condition without removing it from the frames at present. The next aim is to remove all the small and flue tubes.



On its last day in service, Churchward heavy freight 2-8-0 No. 2857 departs Bridgnorth through Oldbury Cutting with 10 assorted GW carriages in tow on January 2, 2023. JOHN TITLOW

A 2857 society spokesman said: "We would like to thank the SVR for being very accommodating with us, allowing us to carry out this work and providing excellent help and advice along the way".

At the society's October annual general meeting, a way forward was discussed. It intends to contract out a full bottom-end overhaul focusing on getting four quotes and then moving forward from that point.

Several anniversaries arise in the next decade and the society wishes to have the locomotive in steam to celebrate these. It will be the 60th anniversary of the formation of the original 28xx Society and the 70th anniversary of No. 2857's withdrawal from BR service.

More importantly, in 2035 it will be the Great Western's bicentenary and 50 years since No. 2857 hauled the last unfitted steam-hauled freight on Britain's main line network around Newport.

The eight driving wheel tyres are worn out and need replacing, costing about £60,000. To return 2857 to traffic for another 10 years will cost about £300,000.

➜ A full appeal for funds will be launched on January 1 with the aim of raising £150,000, along with a new website at www.2857.org.uk with full details of how to donate.

Soap stars take a trip on Saltburn tramway

STARS from ITV's soap Emmerdale took time out for a ride on the Saltburn Cliff Tramway and enjoy its breathtaking views on November 17.

The passengers who have played characters past and present in the hit programme included Zoe Henry (who plays Rhona Goskirk – pictured front left), Katherine Dow Blyton (who played Harriet Finchley – right back), Olivia Bromley (who plays Dawn Taylor, right, middle), and Emma Atkins (who plays Charity Dingle – right, front).

Tramway team leader Trevor Russell said: "The guys working said they were all absolutely lovely and enjoying their day out. They took the time to be photographed and were just really nice to everyone.

"I'm devastated I wasn't there to see them – I'm an absolutely huge fan, I never miss an episode… just my luck! But seriously, it was lovely that they came to our town and attraction to enjoy themselves."

The cliff lift at Saltburn-by-the-Sea, Britain's oldest water-balanced cliff funicular, which was built in 1883/84, was closed after an electrical fire caused significant damage on January 15. It was shut for winter maintenance when the blaze broke out. Nobody was injured, and repairs began in May with the lift reopened in late September.



The Dales heads down to the sea: Emmerdale stars ride on the Saltburn Cliff Tramway. REDCAR & CLEVELAND BC

Top tourism award for Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland

THE Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways was named Go Attraction of the Year at the 2024 Go North Wales Tourism Awards.

"We were very proud to have been nominated for two awards at this year's event, Go Attraction of the Year (sponsored by SF Parks) and Go Activity or Experience of the Year (sponsored by Snowdonia Hospitality & Leisure Ltd)," said a Ff&WHR statement.

"The Go Attraction of the Year award was recognition of our popular steam train journeys, while the Go Activity or Experience of the Year nomination was thanks to our new set of Boston Lodge Guided Tours, which were launched this summer."

The Ff&WHR was represented by Stephen Greig (visitor experience manager), Osian Hughes (marketing manager), Jim Embrey (former interpretation and Boston Lodge project staff member and current volunteer) and David Russell (current volunteer) at the awards.

The railway will now qualify for the national Visit Wales Awards, due to be held in the spring.

New 'box for the park?

THE Bluebell Railway has drawn up a plan which could see a new signalbox constructed at its main Sheffield Park terminus.

Currently, movements around the station are controlled by what was a platform-mounted groundframe introduced between the two world wars, with a cabin being built around it in the early days of preserved services.

While the construction of the new 'box is believed to be permitted under relevant development laws, the railway has applied for a certificate of lawful development to confirm this.

A spokesman confirmed that the railway was expecting the certificate to be granted before the end of the year and that further details of the proposal would be shared afterwards.

Commuter trains plan for West Somerset seeks Whitehall backing

By Robin Jones

A £137,000 bid for a plan to run regular commuter trains on the West Somerset Railway has been lodged with the Government.

Somerset Council and West Somerset Railway plc have jointly submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case to the Government, developed in conjunction with the modern-day Great Western Railway and Network Rail, to restore scheduled services between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard.

The proposal envisages developing Bishop Lydeard as a park-and-ride hub for commuters and tourists to offer easier access to train services, with a plan for a year-round service with an approximate hourly timetable, coordinated with local bus services, particularly around Taunton. There would also be the scope to run some of the services to Minehead at a later stage.

The business case, which has received strong backing from local MPs, councils, and tourism and heritage organisations in Taunton and West Somerset, supports the long-term sustainability of the heritage line. The case aligns with the council's strategic aims to improve social mobility, and access to education and employment for local communities.

Reducing congestion

A key element of the business case is the reduction in car usage as part of a wider transport strategy by promoting environmentally sustainable options that will contribute to Somerset's net zero goal.

The requested funding is to take the plan to a full business case stage, which will include local consultation on the final proposal.

Somerset Council's lead member for transport and waste services, Coun Richard Wilkins, said: "We are excited about the potential of this project to provide a significant transport link to our communities and preserve a vital piece of our heritage while doing so.

"This initiative will enhance connectivity, support our environmental goals, and contribute to the economic vitality of the region."

WSR plc chairman Jonathan Jones-Pratt said: "We are extremely grateful to the team that's developed and supported this project.

"We await the opportunity to develop the final business case, and if successful, this will play a key part in the WSR's future."

Over the years there have been several calls for the WSR to be fully connected with regular main line services. In 2019, a service linking Taunton to Bishops Lydeard was trialled. As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 323, a statement by transport campaigner David Redgewell read out at a meeting of Somerset Council said that the existing bus services between Taunton and Minehead suffered from overcrowding and called for the Taunton to Bishops Lydeard rail services to be reintroduced.

Future link

Retired Network Rail planner David Northey said that the Light Railway Order currently in place on the heritage line limited speeds to 25mph and was the main stumbling block to having regular services.

He said that a future link between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard could call at Norton Fitzwarren station, near where a developer wants to build 400 homes, but at present accessible by the WSR only on gala days.

Lineside courses return to Bluebell

ONCE, there was a time when numerous lines offered courses to the public allowing lineside access, but that number has slowly decreased.

But for those who frequent the Bluebell Railway, that opportunity is once again presenting itself, with a limited number of courses set to take place on February 15 and 22 that will permit a small number of photographers to access some of the lineside locations along the 11-mile route.

The course will teach participants the safest places to be when out along the line and the correct procedures for observing and acknowledging train movements, while additionally learning which areas of the route are off-limits. Upon completion, participants will be issued a pass allowing them access to the railway's lineside for a period of 12 months to capture passing trains from angles and vantages unavailable to the public.

Courses cost £150 and will be permit access to only the Bluebell Railway's lineside areas. For details and to book, visit https://tinyurl.com/mwwfh2na

Recurring faults sees early withdrawal conclusion for Minehead's large pannier

FOLLOWING several attempts to effect repairs throughout 2024, West Somerset Railway plc chairman Jonathan Jones-Pratt has confirmed that his WR Hawksworth 0-6-0PT No. 9466 has been withdrawn from service a full year before its boiler ticket was due to be overhauled, following failure of its cylinder block.

Built in 1952 at the Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn Ltd works in Darlington, No. 9466 was purchased by Jonathan in 2019 following the death of its previous owner, Dennis Howells. Dennis had owned the locomotive since 1977, buying it two years after it was saved from scrap, and it arrived at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre. During his tenure, he restored the locomotive to main line operating condition.

Supported by the 9466 Locomotive Group, the large pannier ran main line tours with Vintage Trains and made several appearances at the Steam on the Met specials on the London Underground.

However, recent issues with No. 9466 have centred around the cylinder block, which resulted in the pannier having to forgo its booked appearance at the Dean Forest Railway's November 2/3 autumn steam gala.

During a test run on November 21, an attempted repair was found to be unsatisfactory, with the result being that any further attempts would require the boiler to be lifted to extract the block. With only a year remaining on its boiler ticket, the level of work required has therefore resulted in its early withdrawal.



On December 1, Jonathon Jones-Pratt drove his Hawksworth pannier No. 9466 for the final time as it moved from Minehead to Williton for storage pending overhaul. It has now been withdrawn from traffic at the West Somerset Railway following issues with the cylinder block. JONATHON JONES-PRATT/WSR

"It's very sad, and I can't quite believe we are here," Jonathan said. "Owning this engine has been full of ups and downs. Those close will understand the issues that continually hit us and sadly, old repairs just keep providing continued knockbacks. The team at Williton have worked so hard, and after what we hoped was a successful repair, it's just not worked out as hoped.

"It's been a fun engine to own and operate; I know it's been a loved engine at the WSR and I am personally very sorry for those we have let down; it was booked to support other railways this winter and it's just been against us.

"We will focus on the overhaul of GWR 4-6-0 No. 4936 *Kinlet Hall*, the frames for which are returning to the WSR from Tyseley Locomotive Works soon, followed by the boiler in February which will undergo commissioning there first."

On December 1, No. 9466 moved to Williton for storage alongside GWR 0-6-0PT No. 6435, which Jonathan purchased from the Bodmin & Wenford Railway. Work on No. 9466 will start next winter, while the smaller pannier will wait until that has been completed before its own overhaul commences.

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As the weekend drew nearer, it looked like Yorkshire would be devoid of snow on November 23/24. However, snowfall on the Friday night into Saturday morning brought about a fresh covering in time for the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway's 'Elf Express' trains. 'Black Five' No. 44932 is seen awaiting departure from Keighley station on November 24. TOM MARSHALL/KWVR

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Churnet's Cheddleton signalbox assumes position



On September 27, the cabin for the Churnet Valley Railway's Cheddleton signalbox passes BR(M) 4F No. 44422 as it was relocated to a new position on the site of the original 'box demolished by BR. CVR



While the majority of snowfall on November 20 had melted away in places by the time the weekend had rolled around, enough remained at Cheddleton to add to the magic of the 'Polar Express' trains on November 23. USATC S160 2-8-0 No. 6046 runs into the station with one of the day's services; on the left is the recently repositioned signalbox. DAVE GIBSON

By Owen Hayward

THE Churnet Valley Railway has successfully relocated its signalbox at Cheddleton station, returning it to the site of one that was demolished by British Railways in the 1960s.

Until October this year, the 'box – an original North Staffordshire Railway example recovered from Elton Crossing, near Sandbach – had been situated at the south end of the station, some distance away from the gated level crossing. Discussions about the possibility of relocating it to the site of the lost structure first took place in 2021, but while grant funding would have helped finance the project, there was uncertainty around the feasibility of the proposal.

However, it resurfaced in 2023, during which it was identified that a temporary replacement system would be required to control entry and exit to the locomotive yard if it stood any chance of happening.

General manager Gregory Wilson said that what followed was "an in-depth conversation about the future of signalling at the railway."

"Having joined the railway in September 1998," he said, "it saddened me to realise that the only significant signalling project since then was Consall, overseen by our former head of signalling and telegraph, Dave Varo.

"We have a talented S&T team, full of enthusiasm and practical skills, but we must also be realistic. It's now 2024, and we are still relying on technology from more than a century ago.

"While we have plenty of visible components like signals and levers, we lack full access to the unseen parts necessary for a complete system.

"Success hinges on having the right components, spares, and skilled personnel to maintain everything.

"This concern about longevity is crucial – not just for S&T, but also for many aspects of the railway. Thus, we started thinking outside the box regarding the control of yard entry and exit at Cheddleton."

A chance conversation with a volunteer working on another project involving a gas burner sparked an idea: "If a computer could autonomously manage a gas burner, why not use one to control the yard operations?"

A team was formed to take on the project, with members attending courses and visiting other heritage lines to amass research and experience of what was required.

A partnership with signalling technology firm Frauscher also enabled the yard to be used as a test bed for axle counters. Testing on last year's 'Polar Express' trains allowed CVR volunteers to gain confidence in the new system, thus enabling it to be fully commissioned just before the railway's May 4-6 gala and subsequently the 'box to be disconnected.

The structure and frame were carefully dismantled in readiness for its relocation, which benefitted from £8000 of grant funding from the Moorlands Partnership Board. A base was built in the new location utilising Staffordshire Blue bricks that had been acquired.

Chairman of the Moorlands Partnership Board, Coun Christina Jebb, said: "Steam trains and heritage railways are popular attractions, and we are proud that the Moorlands is home to the Churnet Valley Railway.

"Restoring old railways and the infrastructure that supports them costs a significant amount of money, so the board is delighted to be able to help with this grant to meet the costs of this relocation project."

Further funding towards the £30,000 project was provided by the CVR's supporting charity, the North Staffordshire Railway Company.

To accommodate a crane which was required to lift the 'box onto the new base, a closure was arranged for the adjacent road, with the move taking place on September 27. Work now continues to fit out and reconnect the 'box.

"We are delighted to see the signalbox return to its original position opposite Cheddleton Station," Greg added. "The fact that so many people say it looks like it's always been there and has finished off that area of the site is clearly testimony to the original builders of the line."



Chesapeake & Ohio Railway 4-8-4 No. 614 passing Waldwick in New Jersey in the late 1990s. RJD AMERICA LLC

'Last' steam loco built for US passenger use to run again

By Robin Jones

AN iconic Chesapeake & Ohio Railway 4-8-4 – the last steam locomotive commercially built for main line passenger use in the USA – has been sold to a group which is set on returning it to running order.

Chesapeake & Ohio Class J-3a 'Greenbrier' No. 614, built in 1948 by the Lima Locomotive Works, is hailed as the pinnacle of steam locomotive development in the USA and celebrated for its engineering excellence and its role in American railroading.

Designed to master the Allegheny Mountains, it hauled the C&OR's premier trains including 'The George Washington' and 'The Fast Flying Virginian.' No. 614 was an instant success, enhancing railroad capacity and efficiency with its impressive performance; its ability to handle heavy loads over challenging terrains at speeds exceeding 100mph, generating about 5000 horsepower, demonstrated the technological marvel it was during its time.

However, as a result of the rapid onset of the diesel era, No. 614 was retired from active service in 1952.

In 1976, it was cosmetically restored and donated to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, recognised for its historical significance as the sole surviving 'Greenbrier' type.

States tour

Railroad enthusiast Ross E Rowland Jr, a successful New York commodities broker and occasional steam locomotive engineer, had the idea to celebrate the bicentennial of the American Revolution with a traveling exhibition of unique and representative artifacts from the 200-year history of the nation. Over a 21-month period from April 1, 1975, to December 31, 1976, the 26-car American Freedom Train, hauled by one of three enormous steam locomotives restored especially for the occasion, was visited by more than seven million Americans during its tour of all 48 contiguous states.

In 1979, Mr Rowland bought No. 614 and initiated an $1.5 million restoration lasting 18 months that returned it to steam, enhanced to operate efficiently over long distances without frequent servicing and matching the performance of the modern diesel.

It was used to haul several high-profile excursions. The only steam locomotive leased by Amtrak in its history, it pulled 'The Cardinal' through West Virginia on schedule and at speeds approaching 80mph.

During the USA's energy crisis in the early 1980s, No. 614 served as a test-bed locomotive for Energy Efficiency Testing, hauling coal trains as part of a programme to design a new generation of coal-fired locomotives. In the late 1990s, No. 614 powered a series of 180-mile round-trip 'Iron Horse Rambles' and 'Erie Limited' excursions from Hoboken, New Jersey, to Port Jervis, New York, carrying nearly 17,000 passengers, some coming from as far afield as New Zealand, Australia and Japan to experience the power of this magnificent locomotive.

In November, RJD America LLC, an organisation dedicated to preserving and promoting USA railroad heritage, which specialises in restoring and operating historic locomotives to educate and inspire future generations about the role of railroads in shaping the nation's history, took full and independent ownership of No. 614 from the American Freedom Train Foundation Inc, which was founded by Mr Rowland and is its CEO.

It will now invest substantial resources to restore the locomotive and its auxiliary tender at Strasburg Rail Road Mechanical Services in Strasburg, Pennsylvania, which will ensure the locomotive and its auxiliary tender meet contemporary operational and safety standards while retaining their historical authenticity.

'Treasured' and 'iconic'

Jason Johnson, RJD America LLC general manager and communications director , said: "Chesapeake & Ohio No. 614 is a treasured part of national history, and we are privileged to become its caretakers. Reviving No. 614 goes beyond restoring machinery; it's about reigniting the magic of steam railroading for today's and tomorrow's enthusiasts,"

Mr Rowland said: "We are extremely pleased that our iconic locomotive is now in the very capable hands of RJD America LLC, where it will receive the excellent care it deserves as America's last commercially-built main line steam locomotive.

"RJD America's commitment to fund its FRA recertification utilising the outstanding Strasburg Rail Road Mechanical Services assures that it will get a thorough and timely return to service where it can again bring the magic of steam to the public wherever it runs.

"Our congratulations are extended to RJD America, and we look forward to being trackside to welcome No. 614 back to active service very soon."

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All change at Vintage Carriages Trust

THE Vintage Carriages Trust elected a new chairman and secretary at its 2024 annual general meeting on November 9.

Former chairman Trevor England retired after 30 years in the post and has been replaced by Debbie Cross, aged 41, a museum professional.

Debbie, who graduated from the University of Bradford with a degree in archaeology in 2005, initially worked for the VCT, as well as the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway and Bahamas Locomotive Society as an audience development officer from 2014.

It was her first experience of working in the heritage railway sector. Joining the team at Ingrow West, her role was to seek new ways to engage and enthuse volunteers and visitors. She developed the Rail Story concept which encouraged joint working between the organisations. She also developed the Learning Coach, which offered new outreach and educational activities to engage with the local community and schools.

In April 2018 she joined KWVR as its heritage manager and worked with board members to develop the strategic business plan and apply for external funding, and also with station staff on plans to redevelop the water tower at Keighley into a visitor centre and the goods shed at Oakworth into an exhibit. In 2020 she was approached by Trevor to become a VCT trustee.

Debbie had previously worked for Bradford Industrial Museum and currently works for North Yorkshire Council as its heritage regeneration delivery officer for the south and west.

She said: "As a voluntary organisation, we are heading into uncertain times as retirement age rises and the cost of living increases.

"We are at a point where it is important that we work strategically and plan for the future. I believe that the skills I have developed during my career in strategic planning and museum development will help guide the organisation through this period.

"I am also very fortunate to have an incredibly strong board of trustees to support me. Trevor is leaving some incredibly large shoes to fill but I will do my absolute best and make sure that the future of this wonderful organisation is secure for the next generations. I am eternally grateful that he will be by my side over the next few years as one of my vice chairmen."

Katharine Aynge Carlton AMA, a lecturer/researcher in history, takes over as secretary.

She has professional experience of working with industrial collections at the National Coal Mining Museum for England and the Science Museum Group and since 2019 has been the secretary of The Friends of the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway. As an officer of that charity, she is responsible for administering the grants application process and also organises small-scale fundraising events such as retired volunteers' days and online talks while developing its social media presence.

As an academic, she has passed on her interest in industrial heritage, museums and archives to undergraduate students through teaching two public history modules at Huddersfield University.



Debbie Cross and Trevor England in the Vintage Carriages Trust museum at Ingrow West. VCT



Looks can be deceiving: A snowy scene on November 21 might have tricked the casual observer into thinking that GWR small prarie No. 4566 was patiently waiting to set off along the Severn Valley Railway, but in reality the locomotive had been positioned on the running line at Highley during a shunt of the Engine House, after which it was returned to sheltered confines of the display space. Built at Swindon in 1924, No. 4566 arrived on the SVR from Barry scrapyard in August 1970, returning to service for the first time in 1975. Last operational in January 2017, it now awaits overhaul. DAVID ROWBOTHAM



Holland Arms station building on the Isle of Anglesey. ISLE OF ANGLESEY CC

Amlwch branch station may become holiday lets – with bats?

A STATION building on Anglesey's mothballed Amlwch branch may be turned into holiday accommodation if planning permission is granted.

Isle of Anglesey County Council has received an application for the change of use of Holland Arms station in the village of Pentre Berw, for it to be converted into two self-contained holiday lets, together with the provision of a detached bat roost.

Opened by the Anglesey Central Railway on March 12, 1865, it was known as Holland Arms because of the well-known local hotel of the same name. It served as the junction for the Red Wharf Bay branch from when it opened in 1908.

When that branch closed to all traffic in 1950, leaving little traffic at Holland Arms, the station closed in 1952, the first on the Anglesey Central line to do so. Only one platform survives, along with the red-brick single-storey station building, which is currently vacant and was sold to the applicant in July.

Important asset

The applicant is listed as Wigan-based Matthew Adams, of Addams Family Estate Limited, via agent Gerwyn Jones, of Gaerwen, for Outline Building Solutions Cyf.

"The applicant appreciates that the building is most certainly an important part of traditional Welsh heritage and is therefore keen to retain the building's character and its features as far as possible," the application stated.

Bat surveys confirmed that the station building was "used as an occasional day and night roost for a variety of bats."

Revival group Lein Amlwch aims to reopen the 17½-mile branch which closed to passenger in 1964 as part of the Beeching Axe, while industrial freight services continued until 1993.

Lein Amlwch has a 99-year lease from Network Rail on the branch and aims to reopen it throughout from Amlwch to Gaerwen, where there is the potential for main line connections to Bangor on the mainland or even beyond.

Twelve of our very best!

Winners of the 2024 National Railway Heritage Awards

By Robin Jones

THE surviving part of one of London's lost stations has carried off a top honour in the 2024 National Railway Heritage Awards, which attracted nearly 60 entries this year.

In the charitable organisation's 44th annual awards ceremony, held at the Merchant Taylors' Hall in Threadneedle Steet in London on December 4, Bromley Council and the Friends of Crystal Palace Subway carried off the BAM Nuttall Partnership Award for the conversion of the subway at the long-closed Crystal Palace High Level station.

The subway beneath Crystal Palace Parade was designed as a pathway to provide access for first-class passengers to the relocated Crystal Palace, from the London, Chatham & Dover Railway's Crystal Palace High Level station, which opened in 1865. The Crystal Palace was originally built in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851, but was relocated to Sydenham Hill in 1865, surrounded by a pleasure ground which became Crystal Palace Park.

The Crystal Palace itself burned down in 1936. Designed by Charles Barry junior, the station closed in 1956 and was demolished five years later, but the subway survived.

Its condition deteriorated, but interest in the subway grew and between 1979 and 1994 it was opened on occasions for special events.

It was opened to the public on selected days' displays from 2013 and the campaign for its restoration grew. Ownership of the park and subway passed to the Crystal Palace Park Trust in 2023 with work on the subway's £3.5 million restoration having begun the previous year.

Sympathetic design

A new roof over the east courtyard and extensive repairs to the walls, floor, steps and entrances have taken place to ensure it is suitable for public use. The hall had lost its roof leading to deterioration of the brickwork and features, so a pitched and glazed roof of functional but sympathetic design has been installed over the renovated Portland stone floor with its starburst decoration, providing a vital events space while protecting the structure.

Announcing the awards, Railway Heritage trust executive director Tim Hedley-Jones said: "The Crystal Palace Park has never been sustainable, and this project is part of efforts to make it so, by repurposing a quite remarkable railway structure – so little known that it isn't even mentioned in Gordon Biddle's Britain's Historic Railway Buildings' despite its Grade II listing. All involved are to be congratulated on what has been achieved."

Shortlisted in the category were Southeastern for work undertaken on the façade, waiting and buffer room at Margate station, and Arriva Rail London for the heritage and community space project at Bruce Grove station.

Nearly two-thirds of the entries related to work carried out at stations, both open and closed.

Guest of honour at the ceremony who presented the awards was Ptolemy Dean OBE, a British architect, TV presenter and surveyor of the fabric of Westminster Abbey who was appointed a non-executive director of the Railway Heritage Trust in 2020.

The Network Rail Volunteers Award was won by the Ffestiniog Railway Society for the restoration of the exterior of Grade II-listed Penrhyn station.

Over the years the exterior of the station, partially constructed in wood, had deteriorated and in August 2022 volunteers from the railway started a two-year programme for its restoration.

Much of the work involved replacing timberwork, including cladding, barge boards, window frames and the platform canopy plus the replacement of three brick chimney stacks on the southern elevation. There has been a complete repaint in the FR heritage colour scheme for minor stations.

"Overall this is an excellent scheme executed to the FR's high standards and will conserve and prolong the buildings use for decades to come," said Tim.

Goathland double

Runners-up were two entries from the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, both at Goathland: The restored and fitted-out station weighbridge office and a nearby railmotor hut.

The London Underground Craft Skills Award was won by The Landmark Trust for work completed on the Italian villa-style station at Alton, which was opened by the North Staffordshire Railway in 1849, renamed Alton Towers in 1954 and closed in 1965 along with the line that it served, part of which to the west is now occupied by the Churnet Valley Railway.

Ownership of the station was transferred to the trust in 1972, and during later restoration, 2240 new traditional tiles were made to repair the damaged floor.

"This is a wonderful project which has enabled the restoration and retention of a superb early tiled floor, which should now give good service for many years to come," said Tim.

Also shortlisted were Translink for the refurbishment of the sand drying chimney at Bangor in County Down and Nexus for refurbishment of the stained glass at busy Monkseaton station on the Tyne and Wear Metro system.

The Translink Structures Restoration Award went to Network Rail for the restoration of the Grade 2* listed Barmouth Viaduct on the Cambrian Coast Line.

Inspection of the viaduct indicated that the metal sections were life-expired and required replacement rather than piecemeal repair.



Peter Milner (Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust), Simone Bailey (Greater Anglia representing the award's sponsor), Lucy Godfrey (Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust), Ptolemy Dean (guest of honour) and Andy Savage (chairman of the National Railway Heritage Awards) at the presentation of the Greater Anglia Award for the best overall entry.



Wingfield station in Derbyshire designed by Francis Thompson to Grecian style is similar in form to country estate gatehouses and predates the corporate styles employed in the following years by the Victorian railway companies.



The restored subway at London's long-closed Crystal Palace High Level station.



Lydia Lee of Bromley Council (left) and Sue Giovanni of the Friends of Crystal Palace subway received the BAM Nuttall partnership award from Chris Lawler of BAM Nuttall (centre), watched by Ptolemy Dean and Andy Savage.

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Above: Joe Kelly from IRD Kiltimagh CLG (second right) and Peter McCormack from Mayo County Council (second left) made the trip from the west of Ireland to receive their Special Commendation certificate from NRHA chairman Andy Savage (left).

Left: The bicycle made for two - or three, or four: the IRD Kiltimagh & Mayo Celtic Holidays velorail route in operation. VELORAIL



The Ffestiniog Railway's Penrhyn station which won the Network Rail Volunteers Award for its external restoration.



The restoration of the North Staffordshire Railway's Alton station paid dividends for The Landmark Trust.



Why demolish a long-redundant goods shed like this one at Newtyle near Dundee when you can convert it into six homes and retain the historic fabric of the exterior?

Following consultation, it was decided to rebuild the bridge but retain as far as possible its original appearance both in profile and detail.

Attention to detail has been far-reaching: The old structures were riveted and NF used round-headed bolts to give the appearance of rivets.

In addition, every effort was made to keep as much of the original ancillary fabric of the structure as possible, including retention of all of the deck level lever and mechanisms associated with the operation of the long disused swing bridge.

"Although the listing building consent process meant NR was left with little choice but to provide new steel structures that closely resembled the previous ones, it has done this with a great deal of thought, imagination and a lot of close attention to detail and, as a result, has produced a stunning structure," said Tim.

Shortlisted here were the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway for the stabilisation of the parapets on the iconic Stanway Viaduct, and the National Railway Museum for the relocation and restoration of the Stockton & Darlington Railway's Gaunless Bridge of 1823 from the York venue to Locomotion at Shildon – the oldest artefact entered for the awards.

The Avanti West Coast Community Award, designed to recognise the restoration, refurbishment or other improvement of a station or building either by a community group, or for a use that connects communities and promotes social inclusion, was carried off by the Llanelli Railway Goods Shed Trust for its work on the Grade II listed goods shed offices at Llanelli, which opened in 1875 and were closed along with the shed in 1965.

The offices were subsequently used by BR for operational and training purposes until the 1980s. The 18-month project to restore the redundant structure began in March 2021.

Community excellence

Shortlisted were the Turning Tides Project Community Interest Company for the renovation of the tearoom at the Grade II listed Crediton station, and the Summit Education Society and Hull City Council for work undertaken on Stepney station, Hull.

The winner of the GWR Operational Enhancement Award was the Bricket Wood Station Heritage Trust for the restoration of the Hertfordshire station building.

Runners-up in this category were the Llangollen Railway Trust for the project to create a new terminus at Corwen, and Story Contracting, MHB Consultants and Network Rail for work undertaken on Camps Viaduct between Airbles and Hamilton Central stations.

The Arch Company Urban Heritage Award, which recognises the success of a train operator, station owner or other partnership in ensuring consistently high-quality upkeep and enhancement of the environment of a significant urban station within its care, so as to perpetuate the historic ambience consistent with modern passenger requirements, was won by Network Rail for the reconstruction of the Grade B-listed building on Platform 1 at Troon station.

On July 17, 2021, the building was damaged beyond repair by a major fire that also left the overhead line equipment unusable.

It was decided to undertake the construction of a replica of the original based on the surviving elements – the eight steel beams – from the destroyed building.

Tim said: "This faithful reconstruction of the Platform 1 building and canopy at Troon station is a delight to behold and displays a fine use of materials, an outstanding quality of workmanship and a smart décor throughout. Troon station has now been restored to the glorious style and quality that James Miller bequeathed when he designed this prestigious work back in 1892."

Shortlisted were Network Rail for work undertaken both on the Grade B listed Lanark station and the restoration of Block E at Paddington, which, completed in 1881, included the GWR's London boardroom.

The Railway Heritage Trust Conservation Award for the best restored listed or historic structure to which the trust contributed funding was won by Colt Construction Limited for the restoration work undertaken to the shelter on Platform 2 at Grade II listed Market Rasen station.

Canopy success

Shortlisted was Network Rail for the restoration of the canopies at Great Malvern station and the Friends of Henley Railway Station Community Interest Company for the renovation of the station building on the North Warwickshire Line and its conversion into a community space with bar.

Sidlaw Building and Joinery Services Limited won the National Highways Award for the restoration or refurbishment or other means of bringing a building or structure no longer in railway ownership into a sustainable use.

The firm converted the disused Grade B-listed goods shed at Newtyle, north of Dundee, into six terraced houses.

Tim said: "The Dundee & Newtyle was an important pioneering railway. This scheme represents a happy outcome for a building that might otherwise have

disappeared and is a project that had community support. It has saved a building of considerable significance both in the origins of the historic railway and in the evolution of the national rail network that many had written off as beyond rescue."

Runners-up were National Highways for the restoration of the Grade C-listed Boleside Road footbridge at Galashiels and Greenways and Cycleroutes Limited for work on one of the two Windsor Hills tunnel and Bath Road and Ham wood viaducts near Shepton Mallet on the closed Somerset & Dorset line.

The Landmark Trust also came top in Southeastern Commercial Restoration Award for a project bringing into commercial use an historic railway or tramway building or structure irrespective of ownership.

A house transformed

The trust restored the Grade I-listed Station Agent's House at Liverpool Road station in Manchester.

When the station closed in 1975, the historically important site was transformed into the city's Museum of Science and Industry. The agent's house, which had been used as a corner shop in the 1970s, formed part of the museum complex but was longer required. The trust took charge of the building and by 2024 had converted it into a holiday let.

Shorlisted here were the Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust for the creation of the café and bar at Horton-in-Ribblesdale and Wild Thinking Limited for the creation of The Railway Room at Grade B-listed Kingussie station.

The Greater Anglia Award for the best overall entry was won by the Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust for the restoration of the long-disused and seriously-decayed Grade II* listed Wingfield station on the Midland Main Line between Ambergate and Clay Cross. It has national historical significance as the last remaining Midland station designed by rail pioneer and architect Francis Thompson,

The sole survivor of the original 16 stations built by the North Midland Railway to link Derby and Leeds, it dates from 1840 and saw its last passenger train in December 1966.

Amber District Council acquired the station via a compulsory purchase order in 2019 and passed it on to the trust, with emergency repairs following. The restoration project received National Lottery Heritage funding, a Historic England grant for £263,000 in 2020 and also £125,078 from the Government's Culture Recovery fund via Historic England.

Externally, both the station and the neighbouring goods shed roofs were repaired and restored, along with soffits and chimneys, and associated rainwater goods and leadwork. Doors and windows were repaired and restored, as was the stonework as required. The yard was resurfaced with limestone chipping as it was originally, while the goods platform was also repaired and restored.

Inside the station, timber boarding to walls was renovated, lime plaster was repaired and painted with breathable paint, with the former ladies' waiting room being wallpapered. The existing concrete floor was not original, so this was removed and a new limecrete floor, with glass foam aggregate insulation, was installed.



The restored Llanelli goods shed office that came top in the Avanti Community Award.



Risen from the ashes: The rebuilt Platform 1 building at Troon station.



The Station Agent's House at Manchester's Liverpool Road station won the Southeastern Commercial Restoration Award for the Landmark Trust.



The awards ceremony underway in the Merchant Taylors' Hall in London.

Local asset

Tim said: "The result of this project is that a community asset has been created out of a derelict shell that tells its own unique story of how an early country station would have looked and felt in 1840.

"The restoration has brought an historically important structure back to life and the work is exemplary at every level. This is an outstanding example of what can be achieved by local collaborative commitment. A stunning success."

A Chairman's Special Commendation was awarded to IRD Kiltimagh & Mayo Celtic Holidays for the conversion of an eight-mile stretch of the derelict Claremorris to Collooney railway route in County Mayo, centred on Kiltymagh station, into the first Velorail route in the British Isles. As highlighted in *Heritage Railway* issue 325, it has just completed its first full season after opening in 2023.

The line opened in 1895 but passenger services were withdrawn in 1963 and goods services in 1975. Despite closure, the line was left in situ.

Sixteen special rail vehicles known as railtrikes were built in South Korea and are powered by the riders pedalling. Velorail participants can travel up to four miles in either direction from Kiltimagh.

"This is a fantastic scheme which provides employment for local people as well as increasing the number of tourists to the town with consequential increased spending in local hotels, cafes and shops."

➜ **Pictures supplied by the National Railway Heritage Awards.**

Enthusiasts plan charity diesel charter behind *Royal Oak* at Great Central

A SMALL group of enthusiasts has arranged a diesel-hauled charter service at the Great Central Railway on February 22 to raise money for charity.

Traction for the day will be Network SouthEast-liveried Class 50 No. 50017 *Royal Oak*, which will work six round trips of the line starting at approximately 9.30am.

The day's services have been planned as a fundraising effort with proceeds being split between the GCR, which will receive 25% of takings, with a support charity Prostate Cancer UK benefitting from the remainder. Running costs have already been covered meaning that the full amount of money raised from ticket sales will be eligible for the split.

Tickets are a flat price of £25 per person and permit travel on as many of the trains worked by *Royal Oak* as the rider wishes to make use of, with more than 90 miles of running on offer. The train will not pick up at Quorn & Woodhouse, Rothley or Leicester North stations, with boarding therefore permitted only at Loughborough Central.

The train is expected to have no heating, therefore participants are advised to dress appropriately for the weather. Hot food and drink will be available on board.

Passengers can pay on the day, but only exact cash payments will be accepted; tickets for this charter will not be accepted on the GCR's standard services which will also be running on the same day, and vice versa. For details, email runningdayquestions@gmail.com

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International appeal launched after Sierra Leone museum hit by fire

Words and pictures by The Friends of Sierra Leone National Railway Museum



The fire next door seen from the museum windows.



The fire-ravaged warehouse opposite the museum.

THE survival of one of the world's most extraordinary railway museum collections – the Sierra Leone National Railway Museum – is under threat after a large fire in an adjacent warehouse seriously damaged its building.

The museum, housed in the former Cline Town Railway workshops in Freetown, contains 16 historic British-built colonial-era vehicles and many other smaller items – important assets for both heritage and tourism purposes, as rare reminders of the nation's once-extensive railway which closed in 1975.

The structural damage – which has seen 20% of the recently-rebuilt roof damaged, 15 large windows implode and cracks appear in one major wall – compromises the security of the collection and the safety of the staff. Smoke and water have caused cosmetic damage to every vehicle, so a full repaint of the whole collection is being urgently planned. Some displays of non-historic interpretation panels and photographs were also destroyed.

Closure of the museum, which is a very real possibility unless work is done quickly to make the building safe, would be a tragedy both locally and internationally.

Since a group of railway employees secretly hid the locomotives and carriages away to evade scrap merchants 50 years ago, they have survived against all the odds.

The gunfire of civil war battles and the workshops' time as a refugee camp have left their mark on the vehicles; since 'rediscovery' and restoration in 2004 they have formed the basis of one of Freetown's most celebrated cultural and heritage venues. Thanks to the combined work of many people and organisations including Colonel Steve Davies, former Deputy Commander of the International Military Advisory and Training Town in Freetown, the Sierra Leone Ministry of Tourism & Cultural Affairs, UK-based supporters' association the Friends of Sierra Leone National Railway Museum, museum staff, and many other supporters, the museum had become a standout success story.

Importantly, the museum has also become a popular educational experience for thousands of Freetown schoolchildren annually, as well as a tourist attraction for increasing numbers of domestic and inbound visitors. It had also gained a role as a host venue for other cultural and community events, with the large railway vehicles providing a fascinating backdrop to all.

> "It is heartbreaking to see the museum so damaged, after all the hard work that has gone into making it so wonderful, but we are not going to be defeated."

The fire was spotted in an adjacent warehouse at 1am on Monday, November 18. It was only because of the decisive actions of security guard Mohamed Turay and museum co-ordinator Abubakarr Nylander-Kargbo that the National Fire Force was able to attend the scene within an hour. Mr Turay raised the alarm immediately on seeing the industrial fire, and Mr Nylander had to drive across Freetown to alert the Fire Force (as the telephone lines had failed). Their combined actions likely saved the collection from a certain early destruction.

Once the crews were on the scene, they focused on dousing flames from the massive piles of plastics, wood and waste which had been stacked against the external wall of the museum.

Fire crews were ably assisted by museum staff and – by an extraordinary stroke of fortune – three heritage sector professionals as members of the UK-based FoSLNRM, Col Davies, Helen Ashby and Adrian Ashby were already in Freetown to assist on other projects in the museum.

Since the fire was extinguished on November 19, a massive clean-up operation has begun and there is round-the-clock security being provided to guard the collection.

Deputy Minister of Tourism & Culture Dr Kadija Grace Kamara, as well as the team from the Monuments and Relics Commission, visited the museum, while the heritage professionals of FoSLNRM worked with the local museum staff ahead of discussions with the Sierra Leone government about the future.

Helen, who chairs the FoSLNRM, said "It is heartbreaking to see the museum so damaged, after all the hard work that has gone into making it so wonderful, but we are not going to be defeated.

"The museum team, the Friends of the Museum and the teams from the Monuments and Relics Commission will work together to ensure that it rises again, better than ever."

Government support and potential repair is not guaranteed; the museum must always prove its value and significance in a country where there are many urgent demands on very limited budgets.

➜ An initial fundraising campaign to cover security and staff costs has been launched by the UK-based FoSLNRM charity, pending full structural survey results and costings for the museum's repair.

This appeal is an alarm call to all international railway enthusiasts: The team will be extremely grateful of any support that could be contributed to help make the building safe, and secure the vehicles and collection.

The fundraising page is at https://www.justgiving.com/page/helen-ashby-1733150616104

Further updates will be issued as the situation changes. The staff are resolute, and despite the damage, incredibly have managed to open up most of the museum again away from the wrecked roof and wall areas.



The damage to the museum being surveyed after the fire in the building next door.



Cleaning up in the aftermath of the fire. Cosmetic damage has been caused by smoke and water to every vehicle in the museum collection.

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Zillertal leads WLLR's resident Austrian engine No. 10 *Sir Drefaldwyn* during a photographic charter, the pair coupled to the railway's distinctive former Austrian four -wheeler balcony carriages, which were donated by the Zillertalbahn in 1968. DAVID WILLIAMS / WLLR

Welshpool bids farewell as *Zillertal* heads back to Austria after five years

THE oldest locomotive to operate services on the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway, Zillertalbahn 0-6-2T No. 2 *Zillertal,* left the line on November 27 as its five-year loan period ended and it returned to its home in Austria.

The only engine of its type ever to operate in Britain, *Zillertal* had been based on the WLLR to help cover a shortfall in motive power there, the visit a result of the Welsh line's strong relationship with the Zillertalbahn. In 1968 the independent Austrian railway also donated four of its distinctive balcony carriages to the revival efforts of the Llanfair Caereinion-Welshpool Raven Square route, with these remaining in regular service to this day.

The Zillertalbahn runs through a valley for 20 miles alongside the river Ziller in Tyrol, Austria, starting at Jenbach and terminating at Mayrhofen. While the majority of its services are operated with diesel traction, steam is used on seasonal services along with heritage rolling stock. The railway is also home to classmate No. 1 *Raimund* which is on static display at the Jenbacher Museum, greeting visitors as they arrive. The line's third steam locomotive, 0-6-2T Uv class No. 3 *Tirol* has been operating the steam services there with 0-8-2 No. 4 and 0-6-2T No. 5 *Gerlos*, both products of Krauss & Co.

One of two U class engines built in 1900 for the opening of the Zillertalbahn, No. 2 arrived on the WLLR in 2019, being launched at that August's steam gala, and has since been a regular sight on passenger trains. It predates the WLLR's resident Beyer Peacock 0-6-0T pair of Nos. 1 *The Earl* and 2 *Countess* by two years, which were outshopped in 1902 from Gorton Foundry in Manchester.

At the time of *Zillertal's* arrival, *Countess* was not far off being withdrawn from overhaul, with *The Earl* being part-way through its own and subsequently completed in 2021.

Zillertalbahn CEO Andreas Lackner said: "The operation of one of our original engines in Wales over several years was a historic opportunity and another milestone in the long partnership between the Zillertalbahn and the WLLR."

WLLR general manager James Brett added: "It has been a privilege to be able to operate *Zillertal* over the past five years, which combined with our former Austrian four-wheeler carriages has been popular with both visitors and staff. *Zillertal* has also given us much needed motive power during a period while our own steam engines *The Earl* and Société Franco-Belge 0-8-0T No. 10 *Sir Drefaldwyn* underwent major overhauls.

"I would like to thank all at the Zillertalbahn and their transport partners at the Pressnitztalbahn who have made this possible and look forward to the next stage in our partnership."



Homeward bound: On November 27, Zillertalbahn No. 2 *Zillertal* departed the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway to return to its home line in Austria, having spent the last five years on loan in mid-Wales. Its chimney was removed for the journey in order to reduce the height of the load on the lorry. PAUL WIXEY / WLLR



TV presenter Gail Porter. WOMEN IN RAIL

Women In Rail inviting entrants for 2025 awards

FEMALE staff and volunteers throughout the heritage sector are being encouraged to enter the Women In Rail Awards 2025.

Established in 2012, Women in Rail was created to improve diversity in the entire UK rail industry through providing networking opportunities and support for all women within the sector, encourage undertakings and stakeholders to adopt diversity as a business strategy and devising initiatives aimed at positioning rail as an attractive career choice for young people.

Star host

TV presenter and mental health advocate Gail Porter will be hosting the awards delivered by Nimble Media at the Roundhouse in Camden on May 15.

Born and raised in Edinburgh, Gail's career began in TV production before making a transition to presenting.

She has also been an outspoken advocate for mental health, drawing on her own experiences with alopecia totalis, and becoming a voice for resilience and inclusivity.

Women in Rail chair Marie Daly said: "We are excited to welcome her to the event, as her warmth, humour, and strength will undoubtedly contribute to an unforgettable and celebratory evening."

Three new categories have been added to the 2025 contest.

These are Best Network Group Driving Gender Equity and Intersectionality, Male Ally of the Year and Inspirational Frontline Woman of the Year.

The deadline for nominations for the awards is Friday, January 31.

For full details and to enter, visit https://womeninrail.org/awards



Winner of the 19-25 category in Young Railway Photographer of the Year 2022 was this view of LMS 'Black Five' No. 45212 crossing Glenfinnan Viaduct by Bradley Langton.

Last chance to enter young photographer competition

YOUNG RAILWAY PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

By Robin Jones

BUDDING rail photographers have just a few weeks left to enter a major competition linked to this coming year's Railway 200 celebrations.

Organised by the National Railway Museum and the Railway Photographic Society, Fujifilm UK is the latest major name to come on board as a co-sponsor of the contest, which is also supported by *Heritage Railway* magazine publisher Mortons Media, Network Rail, GB Railfreight and Network Rail and *Amateur Photographer* magazine.

But to enter, you need to act quickly, as the closing date is January 31.

Fujifilm has joined the line-up and increased the prize pot with some superb equipment. Three X-T5 Silver digital cameras with XF16-50mm lenses will be won by the overall winner, plus winners in the two age categories of 18 and under and 19-25. Other prizes include a tour on Network Rail's New Measurement Train, a GB Railfreight cab simulator experience, a behind-the-scenes tour of Boston Lodge with the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway for up to four people, tickets to ride on heritage railway lines around the UK and more.

Shortlisted entries will be displayed in exhibitions at the National Railway Museum in York and the Locomotion museum in Shildon as part of the celebrations for Railway 200 in 2025.

To enter, young photographers are invited to submit a portfolio of six pictures on the theme of Railway 200. Images may include, but are not limited to, railway and carriage design, architecture and structures, travel experiences, railway landscapes or innovation and ingenuity. It is important images capture the theme by demonstrating the entrant's unique interpretation.

The competition is open to entrants of all photographic abilities, whether amateur or professional. Any devices capable of photography are permitted, including smartphones.

The winners of the first competition were announced in 2022, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 291. Entries ranged from impressive station architecture to historic steam engines and dramatic railway landscapes. The youngest entrant was just eight years old.

Bradley Langton (then aged 20), from Driffield, was crowned overall winner of that inaugural competition with a spectacular image from King's Cross station of an LNER InterCity 225, reflected in standing water.

Andreas Georghiades, Fujifilm's UK head of marketing – imaging solutions, said: "The railways have always inspired incredible photography, whether it's the intricate details of station architecture, the dynamic power of locomotives, or the ever-changing landscapes that they pass through.

"We are excited to see the creativity of young photographers and the unique perspectives they will bring to our rich rail heritage."



Taking first place in the under-19s category last time was this view entitled The People of the Railway, by 17-year-old Sean Mattocks.



The Railway Photographic Society Special Award went to Through the gap, Old and New at Carlisle, by Gwion Clark, aged 18.

➜ **Details of how to enter are available at www.youngrailphotographeroftheyear.co.uk Entries must be received by January 31.**



Three Fujifilm X-T5 Silver digital cameras are among the prizes. FUJIFILM

Pre-order Issue 328: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

World's oldest station at heart of Railway 200 celebrations on 'at risk' list

By Robin Jones

WHAT is now believed by experts to be the world's oldest railway station – which the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway is attempting to save – has been added to Historic England's annual Heritage at Risk Register.

Heighington station on the Tees Valley line, five miles north-west of Darlington on the Bishop Auckland to Saltburn line, is owned by Network Rail and managed by Northern Trains. However, on the opposite side of the line are the Grade II*-listed original station buildings which were completed in 1827 as Aycliffe Lane, not the mid-1830s as previously thought, leading to experts now believing that it is the oldest station in the world.

Landmark moment

The original design called for a public house which would act as a waiting room. It marks the site where, in 1825, George Stephenson's *Locomotion No. 1* engine was lifted on to the rails for the inauguration of the ground-breaking Stockton & Darlington service.

The buildings no longer form part of the modern station and the pub, later called the Locomotion Number 1, closed in 2017. A cobbled area outside the pub is believed to be part of the original 1825 station platform.

Since the pub's closure, the site has become derelict and affected by vandalism and criminal damage. Rescue attempts by local authorities came to nothing and, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 317, the Friends launched a fundraising campaign for £500,000 to purchase and restore the original station – and ensure that it is not an eyesore during the S&DR bicentenary celebrations and Railway 200 next year, when visitors from home and abroad will descend on the locality.

Friends trustees chairman Niall Hammond said: "It is excellent news that Historic England has recognised the significance and condition of the world's first railway station. Being placed on the Heritage at Risk Register will help with future grants and donations from the public."

He added that the station is of prime historical importance in telling the story of the world's first modern railway because it formed the first sign that the line was not just about moving goods like coal but is about passengers, too.



The world's oldest station building at Heighington. Previously known as Aycliffe & Heighington and Aycliffe, the current name dates from September 1, 1874. THOMAS NUGENT/CREATIVE COMMONS

Ambitions

The registered listing was reported on ITV and Channel 5 news, on Radio 4 and in several national newspapers, boosting awareness of the station's plight and the campaign to save it.

Niall said that £127,000 of about £500,000 needed to buy the building and carry out initial repairs has so far been raised, and a full restoration may cost £1 million.

At the same time, the 19th-century Grade II*-listed goods shed designed by Thomas Storey – which is now part of the acclaimed and award-winning Hopetown Darlington attraction – is thought to be to be the oldest surviving building of its type and has been removed from the register because its future is now secure.

➜ To donate to the campaign or find out more about it, visit www.sdr1825.org.uk

International Early Railway Conference at S&DR 200th anniversary

THE eighth International Early Railways Conference will take place just before the exact 200th anniversary of the official opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, it has been confirmed.

The conference, conducted in English, will be similar to the successful similar events held previously; an occasional series of gatherings by people interested in the beginnings of the railway industry throughout the world.

Taking place in the Central Hall at Darlington's Dolphin Centre on September 23-26, ending the day before the 200th anniversary on September 27, a series of papers and presentations will cover topics ranging from the earliest waggonway systems through to the earliest main line and industrial systems around the world up to the 1870s.

Wide range

Among those who will be giving presentations will historian Anthony Dawson, whose topics will include unitarian networks, the Cockenzie Waggonway, and the Braithwaite & Ericsson patent boiler. Other topics being covered include the engineer Francis Swanick, the early development of railways in India, and the attitudes towards accident and safety by some of the early railway companies.

A public lecture will open the conference on September 23, presented by Niall Hammond, the chairman of trustees of the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. The evening of September 24 will see an excursion to Hopetown Darlington attraction for supper.

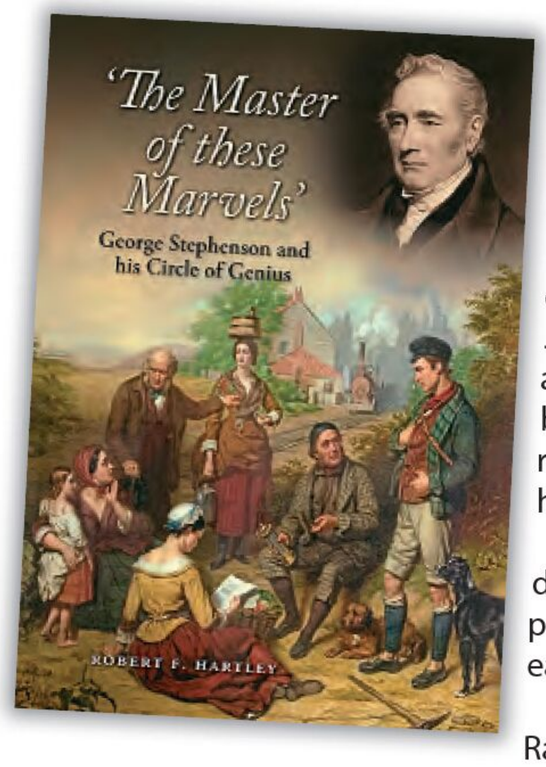
For those overseas or unable to attend in person, participation will be available using Microsoft Teams, arrangements for which are being made by Firefly Audio Visual Solutions Ltd, of Hunslet, in Leeds, on behalf of the National Railway Museum, one of the sponsors of the conference, the others being the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Newcomen Society, the Railway & Canal Historical Society, the Stephenson Locomotive Society and the Historical Metallurgy Society. Computers fitted with cameras and microphones will allow delegates to participate fully with the proceedings.

A recording of each day's events, including delegates' questions and comments, will be placed on YouTube for the benefit of overseas delegates living in different time zones around the world. Observations and questions to and from overseas delegates may be contributed to speakers via email, and responses will be circulated.

Delegates will be emailed two weeks before the conference begins with the programme. This will include the Teams invitation link.

Booking is expected to open in January, with those attending also able to benefit from reduced rates at several local hotels.

For further details and a list of papers, visit www.earlyrailways.org.uk



Meanwhile, the Railway and Canal Historical Society has published a new 400-page biography, The Master of These Marvels – George Stephenson and his Circle of Genius, taking full account of the recent research by many fellow contributors and presented to the eight successive International Early Railways Conferences.

The author has also made a detailed study of nearly 100 surveys made by Stephenson and preserved in County Record Offices. While fully respecting the work of Samuel Smiles, Stephenson's first and most famous biographer, the author has been at pains to avoid both hero worship of Smiles and the prejudices of more recent historians. Wherever possible, he has quoted the direct opinions and observations of Stephenson's contemporaries.

A life unfolds

The engineer's life is followed year by year, set against the background of national and international events, including three hectic periods of Railway Mania. The book highlights how Stephenson identified the potential in many others, and how his vision and incredible energy drew together a remarkable circle of family, friends, colleagues, investors and apprentices as he took a leading role in establishing the entire profession of mechanical engineering.

The volume has 60 illustrations and photographs, 25 in colour and 37 specially drawn maps, and costs £30 post-free to the UK. To order the book (ISBN 978-1-06868-740-2), visit www.rchs.org.uk or write to: RCHS Books, 28 Christ Church Close, Stamford PE9 1HS, enclosing a cheque payable to RCHS.



This image by Julie Fletcher, titled True LMS Locomotive Colours, won the People's Choice Award in the photography competition at the National Historic Ships UK 2024 Annual Awards. Julie, from Llandeilo, in Carmarthenshire, was walking her dogs along the Caldon Canal when she spotted the narrowboat *Delhi* passing under the Consall Forge bridge on the Churnet Valley Railway just as a train hauled by USATC S160 2-8-0 No. 6046 passed over. She later met the owners of *Delhi*, who explained the vessel's history. Built in 1930 for the LMS, *Delhi* is today painted in that company's 1930s livery. The carriages pulled that day bore a similar livery as the narrowboat.

Toddington mogul's boiler arrives in Devon for overhaul

By Owen Hayward

THE big push to see one of the few preserved BR steam locomotives that has yet to run in the heritage era debut in time for a fast-approaching anniversary has seen the boiler arrive in the West Country ready for overhaul and repair under contract.

Built at Horwich in December 1956, BR Standard 4MT 2-6-0 No. 76077 will mark its 70th birthday in two years' time, so owner the Toddington Standard Locomotive Ltd (TSLL) is making a concerted effort to complete the front half of the mogul in time, with hopes of seeing it run in its birthday year.

Although the identity of No. 76077 will be turning 70, the boiler – No. 1052 – was first fitted to classmate No. 76007 that was outshopped from the same workshop in 1953. The boiler was swapped during an intermediate overhaul at Eastleigh in 1964, with the original boiler from No. 76077 ending up on No. 76079.

Preservation slumber

Despite being saved from scrap in May 1987, No. 76077 has yet to steam in preservation, having been stored at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway ever since. It was not until 2018 that fate took a shine to the overlooked mogul and a restoration began.

In May, TSLL announced that the tender to overhaul the boiler had been won by Devon-based Leaky Finders, with the boiler being loaded and transported to the workshops there on November 22. This followed work in the intervening months where volunteers at the G/WR were trial-fitting new firehole doors, rocking grate mechanism, crinolines and cladding. These items are now in storage pending the boiler's future return to Toddington.

One of the first tasks for workshop staff at Leaky Finders will be to undertake a non-destructive test to conclusively ascertain its condition, as well as carrying out repairs on the foundation ring and removing the front parallel section of the boiler, along with the tubeplate. The latter components display significant corrosion owing to the lengthy period of outdoor storage since No. 76077 was withdrawn by BR in 1967 and therefore will be replaced by new material.

Leaky Finders director Rory Edwards said: "Following my initial inspection of the boiler, I agreed with Andrew Meredith, TSLL's engineering director that, while repairable, replacement of the barrel and tubeplate is sensible to ensure longevity of the boiler.

"We are now arranging an NDT examination to confirm the boiler inspector's initial findings and determine the continuing programme of work.

"Overall, the boiler appears to be in good condition, given that it was last overhauled at Eastleigh in 1964, just three years before No. 76077 was withdrawn. However, there is work to be done on the plates around the foundation ring and we have already started removing the rivets."





Above: At the workshops of Leaky Finders, staff have already started work with a view to seeing the mogul steam in time for its 70th birthday in 2026. RORY EDWARDS

Left: Up and away, as the boiler for BR Standard 4MT No. 76077 is loaded to begin its journey from Toddington to Devon on November 22. IAN CROWDER

Andrew added: "This was an upbeat meeting which resulted in a number of further share applications towards the boiler overhaul. We are now well past the halfway mark towards our £150,000 boiler funding target. That is hugely encouraging, particularly as we can expect some large invoices coming in as work progresses."

Anniversary target

Investments in the boiler fund can be made for as little as £240 or £20 per month, while a number of boiler components such as tubes, stays, firebox repairs or patch screws are still available for sponsorship.

Meanwhile, work on the chassis continues at the premises of Locomotive Maintenance Services in Loughborough, using a combination of professional and volunteer labour.

In another milestone, the almost completely new cab has been finished bar painting, and it will be fitted to the frames. The components for a brand-new reverser assembly, thought to be the first to be completed for a standard locomotive since 1960, have been manufactured and will shortly be assembled. They were displayed for shareholders to view at the company's annual general meeting on November 23.

Andrew concluded: "This is an exciting time for the team. Restoration of the engine must rank as one of the fastest in the UK, yet no shortcuts or compromises are being made. At the present rate of progress, we still aspire to see No. 76077 in steam for its 70th birthday on December 27, 2026."

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The memorial portrait honouring Saltburn Cliff Tramway team member Eddie O'Hara inside the lower station. RCBC

Popular Saltburn cliff tramway team member Eddie's honoured

A MEMORIAL plaque has been installed on a bench next to the Saltburn Cliff Tramway to commemorate Eddie O'Hara, a popular member of its team who died recently.

Eddie worked in Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council's tramway team at the funicular in Saltburn-by-the-Sea from 2019. He used to design and sell the tramway badges at the top station on Marine Parade.

To show their respect, love and appreciation for Eddie, his wife Fiona and other members of his family commissioned a memorial plaque for the bench opposite the tramway on Milton Street, and they gathered with his friends and colleagues on November 2 to mark the installation.

The staff, together with former colleagues, have also contributed to a portrait of Eddie working at the tramway, which is now displayed in the lower station so he will always be seen and remembered by those entering the station. The portrait was presented to the family on the same day.

Fiona said: "My family, friends and I would like to thank the Saltburn tram team, especially Trevor, the tram manager, for arranging a memorial picture to be mounted in the lower station. Following his retirement from the police, Eddie was given the opportunity to continue working with the public, which he was passionate about, as part of the tram team.

"Eddie was proud not only to be able to promote the tram as a historical attraction, but also Saltburn and surrounding areas as a beautiful place to visit, especially to many people out of the area including international visitors."

The council's cabinet member for climate change and culture, Coun Carrie Richardson, said: "It was an honour for us to allow Fiona and her family to have this plaque installed in Eddie's memory. Eddie brought so much joy to his colleagues in the Saltburn Tramway team and to our visitors and he will be missed by everyone who worked with him. "



On December 3, BR Standard 2-6-4T No. 80079 arrived at Barrow Hill Roundhouse on a store and display agreement with the Severn Valley Railway, where it had been on show inside the Engine House at Highley. The former Barry scrapyard locomotive, a veteran of the London, Tilbury and Southend line, arrived on the SVR in 1971 and returned to service six years later. It last steamed in 2002, and the intention is to eventually overhaul it at Bridgnorth. Its place in the Engine House is to be taken by Ivatt 4MT 2-6-0 No. 43106, which reached the end of its boiler ticket in January 2024. STEVE CLARK

Nuclear decommissioning financial support for Bala

By Owen Hayward

PLANS for the forthcoming extension into the namesake town by the Bala Lake Railway have been revealed to have benefitted from a financial boost from a firm responsible for the decommissioning of 10 UK nuclear power stations.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 324, following the initial rejection for planning permission in 2023 the BLR was encouraged to resubmit a revised application which was approved by Eryri national park in September. The extension will see the 2ft gauge line, which traverses a 4½ mile section of former standard gauge trackbed along the shores of the lake, lengthen by a further three quarters of a mile to a new station on the edge of the town.

At present, services terminate at what was formerly the GWR's Bala Lake Halt, with the planning extension veering away from what was once the Ruabon-Barmouth line.

Nuclear grant

The revised plans were funded in part thanks to a £36,725 award from Nuclear Restoration Services, a subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority which is responsible for the safe decommissioning of 10 first-generation nuclear sites in the UK, as well as operating the hydro-electric power station at Maentwrog 20 miles north-west of the BLR's other terminus at Llanuwchllyn.

Through the NRS, the NDA has invested more than £60 million of direct socio-economic funding in the UK over the last five years, leveraging millions of pounds of further investment from partners to support significant projects that enable permanent and sustainable change in its site communities.



Representatives from Nuclear Restoration Services and Bala Lake Railway trustees with Hunslet 0-4-0ST No. 4 *Alice*. BLR

The funding BLR received went towards revising the technical reports and carrying out additional surveys as the railway addressed concerns about the impact of phosphate levels in the nearby rivers that would have resulted from a predicted increase in visitor numbers to the region had the extension gone ahead.

NRS Trawsfynydd site director Tom Williams said: "We are committed to fostering growth, driving transformation, and ensuring sustainability. Our support for the Bala Lake Railway Trust's Red Dragon Project exemplifies our dedication to socio-economic development. We are proud to contribute to a project that not only preserves heritage, but which also promises £420,000 in annual economic growth and the creation of 20 new jobs in the region's vital tourism sector."

Valued support

Bala Lake Railway trustee Toby Watkins said: "The value of the generous help and support from NRS cannot be underestimated. We are extremely grateful for its faith in us and its understanding of the huge socio-economic impact of our project.

"Its support on several occasions is one of the best cases of NRS helping a local community. Without its valuable assistance at this crucial stage of our project, it would have taken us years to progress to where we now are – ready to extend a thriving heritage railway into Bala town."

Westminster welcomes heritage rail representatives!

By Robin Jones

IN a drive to forge stronger links with politicians, the Heritage Railway Association hosted a parliamentary reception in the House of Lords on November 13.

Attended by directors, trustees and senior managers from 60 heritage organisations including railways, tramways and funiculars, the aim of the event was to help heritage railways connect with their MPs and Lords with an interest in the sector.

It was the first opportunity to bring heritage rail representatives together in Westminster since this year's General Election. The reception was addressed by Liz Saville Roberts MP, whose North Wales constituency contains more heritage railways than any other in the UK and who co-chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail alongside HRA president Lord Faulkner.

The group's first chair, Baroness Nicky Morgan, also spoke, and the Rail Minister Lord Hendy, formerly the HRA chairman, wound up, encouraging railways to make the most of the forthcoming Railway 200 celebrations.

The reception also hosted some of the leading young volunteers and staff in heritage rail, including recent HRA award winners such as Osian Hughes, from the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways, and Sarah Taggart, of the Kent & East Sussex Railway.

HRA chief executive Steve Oates said: "Heritage railways are hugely important to the UK. Whether it's our role in the cultural heritage of the nation, our vital place in the visitor economy, or our work in supporting young people into bright futures, our sector has a lot to shout about.

"This event was a great opportunity to bring heritage rail to the attention of parliamentarians, many of whom are relatively new to Westminster. It also gave us the chance to talk about the challenges our sector faces, such as securing high quality supplies of coal, navigating legislation such as the 'Martyn's Law' counter-terrorism bill, and ensuring that heritage rail remains viable in a challenging economic climate."

Liz Saville Roberts said: "I welcome the opportunity to bring together colleagues from all sides in Parliament with their local heritage railways, which are such an important part of the tourist economy and provide local employment and skills training as well as fostering wellbeing for both volunteers and visitors.

"The need to encourage this parliamentary outreach is an important part of our work."

The event was sponsored by Fox and Edwards Events. Its director and former Lord Faulkner Young Volunteer of the Year Award winner, Olly Edwards, said: "We were very pleased to sponsor this reception to bring together so many wonderful railways, tramways and locomotive owners from around the heritage rail sector.

"We work with railways nationally to improve their visitor numbers, and it was a privilege to be joined by them, presenting our industry's case to politicians."

Present at the same reception were two volunteers from Ireland's Downpatrick & County Down Railway,



Left to right: Liz Saville Roberts and Lord Faulkner, co-chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail, with Rail Minister, Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill, Heritage Railway Association chief executive Steve Oates and Chris Austin, secretary of the group. HRA



Lord Faulkner listens as Liz Saville Roberts addresses the reception. HRA

Manchester museum's gantry crane restoration project nears completion

By Robin Jones

RESTORATION work on an iconic piece of Manchester's railway heritage has been revealed as it nears completion at the Science and Industry Museum.

More than 140 years after the towering Grade II-listed gantry outside the museum's Power Hall was built, visitors will be able to see it fully repaired in the lead-up to the reopening of Power Hall: The Law Family Gallery next summer.

The gantry in the museum's Upper Yard supported a steam-powered travelling crane which travelled back and forth across the top of the structure, controlled by an operator from a platform or cabin above, and moved heavy goods on and off railway wagons. It runs almost the full length of the Power Hall (formerly Liverpool Road station's shipping shed, which opened in 1855 to speed up the movement of goods to and from the railways) – and provides a unique sculptural feature in the city's historic Castlefield area.

During the coming weeks, museum visitors will be able to see glimpses of the essential repairs that have taken place to the 236ft long and 26ft high gantry crane. Painstaking and careful shotblasting over four months to remove historic water damage and rust, specialist conservation treatment, and paint analysis have allowed the museum to repaint it in keeping with its history.

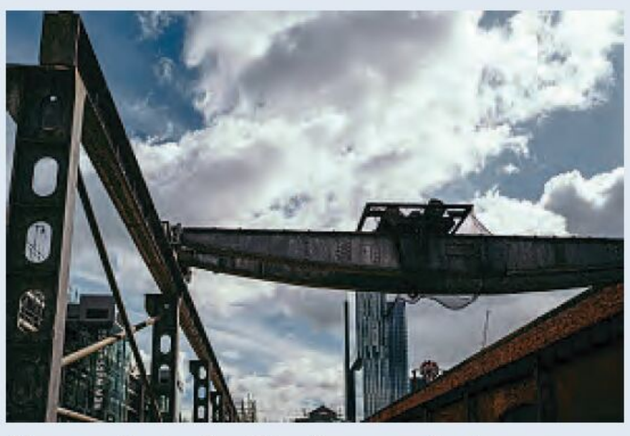
The museum's curator of engineering, Sarah Baines, said: "Working with Buttress Architects, paint samples of the gantry were analysed to determine the colour and type of paint originally used.

"Samples were taken for cross-sectional analysis which allowed us to look back though the layers of paint that had built up on the gantry through time. There were at least eight layers of paint, from the original red-brown lead oil paint to the modern dark grey oil paint. We could also see several layers of sooty deposits between the earlier 19th century layers, indicating the high levels of air pollution present in industrial Manchester.

"The earliest paint layers identified on the gantry all consist of dark red-brown ochre which we have matched as closely as possible to repaint the gantry back to its original colour."

The gantry is a vital part of the city's industrial heritage and showcases how innovative new technology installed at Liverpool Road station powered Manchester forward. The exact date of the gantry's installation is unknown, but maps indicate that it was in place by 1884.

For nearly 150 years, Liverpool Road station handled produce from all over the world, including raw cotton, live pigs, timber, and fresh fruit and vegetables, giving Manchester's manufacturers



The gantry in April before repairs began. DREW FORSYTH



Left: A microscope photograph of a cross-section of the paint layers present on the gantry. SMG

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Downpatrick & County Down volunteers Jonathan and Morgan with chairman Robert Gardiner and HRA President Lord Faulkner at the reception. DCDR

both of who had recently won prestigious awards.

Jonathan King, aged 25, had been recognised by the HRA at its February 10 awards ceremony by being awarded the UK and Ireland Young Volunteer of the Year, while Morgan Young, also 25, was named Emerging Leader of the Year at the Northern Ireland Social Enterprise Awards on November 8.

The invitation was extended to the DCDR to recognise the pair's accomplishments, as well as to acknowledge the challenges the heritage line has faced following severe flooding that occurred there last November, as reported.

Morgan, who on November 23 also celebrated qualifying as a driver on one of the DCDR's diesel locomotives, said: "It was very encouraging to hear the industry's leading figures speak so highly of the contributions young people have made to railway heritage, particularly given its reputation as a hobby for older generations.

"It was fantastic to meet young representatives from railways across the UK and Ireland to share ideas and experiences."

Jonathan, who also celebrated graduating from Trinity College Dublin with a degree in Law on November 21, added: "The event was an excellent opportunity for members of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords to hear our views and concerns about the future.

"This was particularly important for DCDR, given our recent flooding challenges and the fact that we operate within a different regulatory framework from most other heritage railways in the UK.

"My work at DCDR has provided countless unique opportunities, but I certainly didn't expect to represent the railway at Parliament when I started volunteering more than 10 years ago!"

Plym Valley gets High Speed Train power car

THE Plym Valley Railway has been gifted a Class 43 High Speed Train power car by the modern-day Great Western Railway. The class is part of local transport heritage, having been based at nearby Laira since 1979 to run Plymouth to Paddington services.

The power car, No. 43063, will undergo cosmetic restoration in the spring and then be placed on display so members of the public can visit the cab.

Its power unit has been lifted out and other important components removed so it cannot be started or driven, but it will become a static exhibit. Sister No. 43161 has also arrived, but only as a source of spares for No. 43063. Once the cab has been lifted, it will be broken up on site during the closed season, with parts being used to keep others of its class operational.

A third example, No. 43091, also arrived at Marsh Mills but stayed for just a few days prior to further onward road movement.

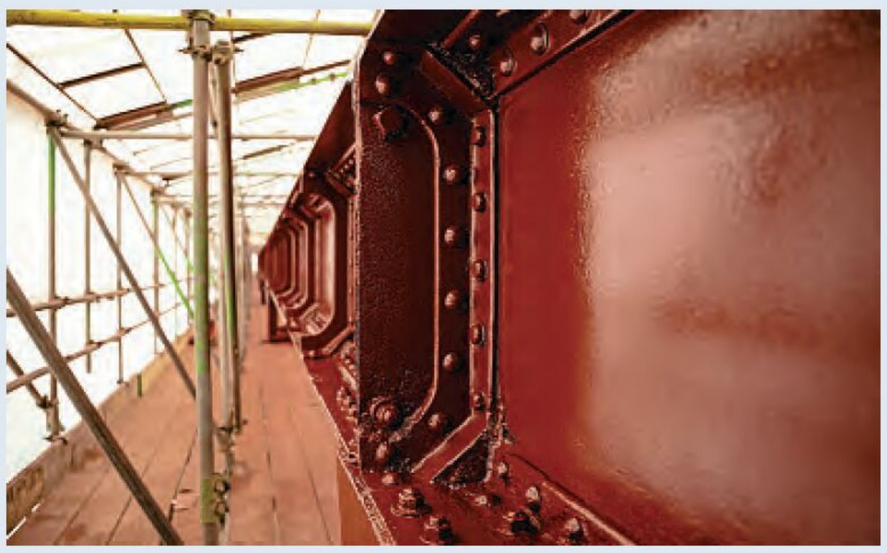
Plym Valley Railway Co Ltd chairman Daniel Phillips said: "We would like to thank our friends at GWR for this fantastic opportunity to acquire and preserve one of the most recognised locomotives in the world.

"I have wanted to preserve a power car for years and am so pleased that we have been given the opportunity. There will soon be a time when the HST is not a regular visitor to the city, so to have one preserved less than a mile from where they have been based for decades is amazing."

He invited anyone who would like to help with the restoration of the power car to get in touch. The railway can be emailed at plymvalleyrailway@gmail.com



Newly arrived on the Plym Valley Railway after a quick trip across Plymouth, Class 43 High Speed Train power car No. 43063 is to be preserved as a static exhibition on the heritage line. PVR



Left: A close-up view of the newly-restored and freshly painted gantry in October. DREW FORSYTH

easier access to a global market. The shipping shed was designed so produce and goods could be quickly unloaded from railway wagons, then collected by delivery drivers for distribution by road across the city. Goods from around the world were transferred from rail to road transport and out across the north-west, using machinery like the gantry crane.

The restoration of the gantry is part of a larger initiative to make essential repairs throughout the museum's site, including the 150-year-old roof of the New Warehouse and the 1830 viaduct and station, as well as the Power Hall, works made possible by the museum's current £14.2 million national capital funding by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to complete urgent repairs.

Established in 1988, Buttress is an AJ100 design studio based in Manchester and Leeds, operating within the heritage, residential, education, ecclesiastical, commercial and art and culture sectors.

Battery-electric green 'first' now running on Norfolk's Bure Valley

THE Bure Valley Railway has taken delivery of its new battery-electric locomotive from Clayton Equipment Ltd in Burton-upon-Trent.

As reported in issue 308, the order for the CB12 Co-Co was placed following three years of discussions which began before the Covid-19 pandemic. The 15in gauge line has already pioneered the first trials of coal alternatives for its steam locomotive fleet and is now breaking new ground with environmentally-friendly 'green' traction.

The line stated that the 13.6-tonne CB12 Co-Co is the first all-new design and build battery electric locomotive for passenger haulage on a UK statutory regulated railway of any gauge.

While having the same power as one of its steam locomotives and able to haul the nine-mile railway's longest and heaviest trains over steep gradients with ease, the new arrival is a zero tailpipe emissions alternative to its diesels and will reduce operating and maintenance costs.



The Bure Valley Railway's new CB12 battery-electric locomotive at Brompton. BVR

Track laying to start at Donegal?

By Hugh Dougherty

THE first 3ft gauge track to be laid at Donegal Railway Heritage Museum since County Donegal Railways lifted its lines through the station in 1960 following closure of the route could be on the cards if an approach to Bord na Mona to bid for track, points and two diesel locomotives goes ahead.

The materials are available following the Irish national turf producer's end of railway activities, and several other heritage lines, including the Cavan & Leitrim Railway, have made successful bids to Bord Na Mona for equipment, motive power and rolling stock.



There is sufficient space to lay a loop alongside the platform side of Donegal Railway Heritage Museum, the former Donegal Town station. Restored CDR coach No. 58 and railcar trailer are preserved under cover. HUGH DOUGHERTY

Risk of missing out

Museum manager Niall McCaughan said: "A decision will be taken soon at board level and the plan would be to approach Bord na Mona with our shopping list and budget to see what would be available within our spending limits.

"If we don't take this opportunity, especially as far as locomotive purchasing is concerned, we may miss the chance to acquire equipment entirely."

Chairman Mark McDaid said: "We have the space to lay a loop and operate trains alongside the former platform side of our building and we'd be following a well-worn road taken by many heritage railways, including several now very successful lines in the UK which had humble beginnings using industrial locomotives and rolling stock. Not only would we move forward from being a highly successful railway museum, but we would also be a railway operating one."



CDR 2-6-4T No. 5, *Drumboe* is on display under cover at the museum. Laying track would be a step towards it steaming again on home rails. HUGH DOUGHERTY

The search to recreate a section of the CDR has been an elusive one since the original preservation body in the county, the South Donegal Railway Preservation Society, was founded in 1990 with the aim of reopening a section of the CDR trackbed through the Barnesmore Gap between Donegal and Stranorlar.

Determined

A scheme for trains between Barnesmore Halt and Lough Mourne came to nothing in the early 2000s when a proposed Ballybofey bypass road would have obliterated part of the trackbed at Lough Mourne, with problems emerging near Barnesmore Halt with landowners.

A further scheme in the same decade which planned to run track north for a mile, from the museum to a park-and-ride car park, hit the buffers over planning issues the proposal to build a supermarket.

But determination to operate trains over a section of the CDR network remains high, with a reminder that County Donegal 2-6-4T No. 5, *Drumboe* on display at the museum, was restored at the Railway Preservation Society's Whitehead workshops, back to a condition which will enable it to run after final work is carried out on the boiler.

Laying track at the museum would be seen as a positive step in the direction of achieving the goal of returning *Drumboe* – which hauled the last CDR passenger train on December 31, 1959, and is now the only CDR locomotive left in County Donegal – to steaming on home rails again.

Meanwhile, the museum has negotiated a 10 year lease with Coras Iompair Eireann, which inherited the station when it took over the CDR in 1971. The lease covers the museum's stationmaster's house premises, the office accommodation still being used by Bus Eireann crews.

"We've moved from five-year leases to this new one which gives us the stability for forward planning that we need, and we're very grateful to CIE for that," said Niall. "We've also extensively revamped our website to become transactional, so that members can renew subscriptions and visitors can pre-book and visit our online shop, and donations can be made.

"We've included an interactive map of the railways of the county, the County Donegal, Lough Swilly and Great Northern; simply click on the map, select any station, and a picture and potted history will appear."

Class 47 joins Wensleydale fleet

THE Wensleydale Railway has taken delivery of Class 47 No. 47714, which it purchased from the Harry Needle Railroad Company.

Arriving at Leeming Bar on November 11, it was delivered by Class 50 No. 50008 *Thunderer* from Hanson & Hall Rail Services Solutions Limited.

The WR's Class 37 No. 37250 brought it onto its line from Castle Hills Junction at Northallerton to Leeming Bar station.

The WR's diesel traction team staff and volunteers have carried out a series of mechanical and electrical inspections and tests, and the 47 was successfully started up for the first time at the railway on November 17. Wensleydale Railway director of engineering and rolling stock, Tim Williamson, said: "The purchase of this locomotive improves our operational capabilities.

"It has electric train heating capacity, which will allow us to heat our carriages during the cold winter months.

"Our immediate focus is to get No. 47714 fully operational and available as a back-up for No. 33035, which is currently in use for this year's Polar Express services.

"We will begin bodywork repairs in the new year and aim to have it repainted for the summer." Before then, it will make its Wensleydale passenger debut on December 30.



Class 47 No. 47714 newly delivered to the Wensleydale Railway on November 11. OLIVER KIRKBY / WR

Meanwhile, The Harry Needle Railroad Company has recovered Class 20 No. 20056 from the scrap line at the British Steel site at Scunthorpe. Last used more than a decade ago within the steelworks system where it arrived in 2007, it is now set to be be returned to running order.

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GWR autotank makes a return to Severn Valley

By John Titlow

OVERHAULED recently at Bill Parker's Flour Mill workshops at Bream in the Forest of Dean, GWR autotank No. 1450 is to be based at Bridgnorth on the Severn Valley Railway for the foreseeable future.

As reported in our last issue, the Swindon 1935-built 0-4-2T made a surprise appearance at the Avon Valley Railway's end-of-season gala minus logo on the tanks on November 2/3.

Originally outshopped as No. 4850, it was one of the 4800 class. Designed by Charles Collett, 75 were built in three batches between 1932 and 1936. It was renumbered 1450 by the GWR in 1946.

Most of its working life was spent on the Abingdon branch while shedded at Oxford. In January 1951 it was moved to Slough shed, working the Bourne End to Maidenhead autocoach service.

After a return to Oxford in 1959, it was then transferred to Exeter in 1962, Taunton in 1963, Yeovil Town in 1964 and finally Exmouth Junction shed in May 1965, from where it was withdrawn after covering 823,012 miles. It was purchased by the then-Dart Valley Railway, now the South Devon Railway, and moved to Buckfastleigh to become one of the motive power mainstays in the line's early preservation years.

Last train

It then spent 10 years on the Dean Forest Railway before moving to the SVR in 2014. It is too small for the SVR's regular service trains but perfect for footplate experience duties and shorter trains on galas where it proved very popular.

The boiler ticket was to expire in early 2020 but was extended until the end of the year.

On December 9, it ran its last train coupled to autocoach No. 178 for the owners and was then withdrawn from traffic. No. 1450 left the SVR on August 4, 2021, to the Flour Mill for restoration. It passed its out-of-frames boiler test in July and the SVR completed the new slide valves at Bridgnorth. Initially, the locomotive was to undergo running-in trials on the SVR, but testing and running-in was instead done on the Bitton-based AVR.



GWR 0-4-2T No. 1450 at Highley during testing on December 10. JOHN TITLOW

No. 1450 is expected to remain based on the SVR for 2025, though it will be hired out to various other heritage railways, becoming a roving ambassador.

Incidentally, examples of the 1400 class originally worked on the Severn Valley and some members were even shedded locally at Kidderminster and Stourbridge Junction.

No. 1450 is anticipated to make its SVR debut at the winter gala on January 4/5, running alongside regulars such as LMS Stanier mogul No. 13268, BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75069, GWR 4-6-0 No. 7812 *Erlestoke Manor* and GWR panner No. 7714.

On the Saturday, trains will run from 9.15am until 10pm, with 11 departures from each end of the line, including an evening special double-headed by Nos. 1450 and 7714.

Booking open

The Sunday trains run from 9.15am until 7.45pm, with nine departures from each end of the line. All will work the full length of the line, including No. 1450 paired with the GWR Toplight carriages.

Pre-booking is recommended, and tickets are now on sale.

For more information, visit svr.co.uk/event/winter-steam-gala/

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Young admirers: One of the first photographs in The Eric Oldham Legacy Collection depicts a group of youngsters – with their dad? – admiring A4 No. 60034 *Lord Faringdon* at York as the Pacific waits for the right away with a northbound express from King's Cross.



Southern transport: King Arthur No. 30792 *Sir Hervis de Revel* brings a Waterloo-bound boat train across Canute Road in Southampton as two flag-bearers halt the traffic. One of the vehicles patiently waiting is a fine Southampton Corporation bus carrying an advertisement urging people to 'Shop at the Co-Op.' The image is from The Eric Oldham Legacy Collection.

Railway work of art from master baker, GP, and HR specialist

By Geoff Courtney

WHAT do a master baker, a GP, and a human resources specialist, have in common in the publishing world of recording the railways of yesteryear? The answer is that the trio forms the team responsible for a newly-launched tome of photographs and paintings, most of which are previously unpublished, covering the period from the 1940s to the 1980s.

The master baker is Eric Oldham, whose photographs and paintings are the beating heart of the book. The HR specialist is John Hillier, who first met Eric during his schooldays in Hyde, Cheshire, and was subsequently guided by him during his formative photographic years, and the GP is Sir John Oldham, Eric's nephew, who took his uncle's collection of 4000 negatives into safe keeping after Eric's death in 2008 at the age of 87.

Master expert

A career in art beckoned for Eric after training at college, but family circumstances dictated that he took over the family's bakery and confectioner's shop in Hyde, in which role he became a master baker. But railway photography was his passion, and in 1950 he joined the prestigious Railway Photographic Society, and he was appointed an honorary member of the Guild of Railway Artists for his work in helping to set up the organisation in 1979.

Eric and John lost touch when the latter moved away from Cheshire, but following the artist's death, John was relieved to discover after making enquiries that the photographer's collection was secure in Sir John's hands. The pair felt it deserved a larger audience, and The Eric Oldham Legacy Collection is the result.

In the book's foreword, Sir John described his uncle as a "quiet, gentle man who left a significant footprint on the sand of life though his art and photography." He also writes of walking lineside near the ECML station of Retford – Eric was an avid fan of Nigel Gresley – or visiting Crewe and Doncaster sheds with Eric during school holidays. For his part, John Hillier said that Eric was an excellent teacher who enthusiastically gave him tips and advice, and who chose his words carefully so as not to discourage a pupil so eager to learn. He also acknowledged Sir John for giving him carte blanche to compile the book as a celebration of Eric's legacy.

Skilful photographer

The tone is set for the book by the cover, which depicts a D11 class double-header of Nos. 62662 *Prince of Wales* and 62664 *Princess Mary* taking on water at Luddendenfoot troughs on the Halifax-Burnley line near Sowerby Bridge on May 12, 1956, at the head of the Ian Allan-organised 'Pennine Pullman' railtour. It takes a skilful photographer to capture such a



Western splendour: Immaculate No. 7037 *Swindon*, the last of the Castle class to be built, heads the Up 'Torbay Express' near Teignmouth in an image from The Eric Oldham Legacy Collection.



Tunnel vision: Royal Scot No. 46131 *The Royal Warwickshire Regiment* climbs a 1-in-91 rising gradient towards the 1¾-mile Dove Holes Tunnel in the Derbyshire Peak District, near Buxton, with an Up express from Manchester Central in 1958. Also in the image, from The Eric Oldham Legacy Collection, stands a lone man who appears to be sheltering from the passing train.

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scene in an unusual and almost dramatic image. As with most elite railway photographers, Eric saw, and recorded through the lens, more than purely locomotives. It was often the infrastructure, or people, that for him helped to make the image. Thus we see a large entourage of trainspotters at Manchester London Road station with humble C13 class 4-4-2T No. 67425 the centre of youthful attention, and what is surely grandmother and granddaughter peering intently at the now preserved Battle of Britain No. 34072 *257 Squadron* at the end of a London Victoria platform.

At Liverpool Lime Street, a young lad looking up admiringly at the cab of Pacific No. 46200 *The Princess Royal* caught Eric's eye, and at the opposite end of the age spectrum, a trilby hat-wearing veteran ex-LBSCR driver leans on a crooked walking stick chatting to three railwaymen at Newhaven in April 1958, with another veteran, 1872-built A1X class 'Terrier' 0-6-0T No. 32636, also now preserved, simmering in the background.

Widely travelled

Another Lime Street image includes a steam locomotive waiting for departure at the far end of a platform, but central to the photograph is an immaculate Austin Somerset saloon car parked on the adjacent road next to an unladen platform trolley, and there is a queue of passengers waiting to board the Up 'Red Rose.'

Obviously, though, locomotives are at the heart of the publication, and the contents page gives an indication of the length and breadth of Eric's travels: Platform scenes, Home ground, Holiday haunts in Southern England, Eastern meanderings, Northern routes, and Terminus. Every BR region is covered, from flagship named steam engines to DMUs, and heritage modern traction to preserved steam, interwoven with the occasional map, railway literature, newspaper cutting and examples of Eric's paintings.

The geographical spread is far and wide, and it was all achieved by a photographer who didn't drive.

➜ The Eric Oldham Legacy Collection is compiled by John Hillier and published by Silver Link Publishing (hardback, 152 pages, £35, ISBN 978-1-85794-621- 5).

South Tynedale welcomes trio of women to its qualified volunteer crew

THREE women have passed out as members of the South Tynedale Railway's volunteer train crew.

Exploring Alston soon after moving to the UK, Shanthi Adiyat took a ride on the line and said that she was instantly drawn to the beautiful scenery along the route and the friendliness of the volunteers running it. "With my airline operations background, the theme of transport felt familiar, and the next thing I knew I was training as guard!" she said.

Shanthi qualified as a guard a few years ago, and her next aim is to complete driver training which was put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic and a recent house move.

Liz Cook, the youngest daughter of a stationmaster and station announcer, has an early childhood memory of inspecting signalboxes with her dad, and remembers that family holidays were always by train.

After her husband arranged for her to have a steam driver experience day on the railway for her birthday last year, Liz decided to sign up as a volunteer and begin training as a guard.

"The sounds, the smells and the power of the engine made for a magical experience, and the glorious autumn weather couldn't help but add to the sheer joy of the day. I couldn't wait to sign up as a volunteer," said Liz, who is now qualified as a guard and has completed her first solo shift.

Natalie Tomlinson and her family moved to Alston recently, and she was delighted to find that there were plenty of opportunities for women at the railway. She signed up as a volunteer in the ticket office and then decided to pursue her long-held dream of joining the train crew.

Natalie has passed the training to become a duty operations manager (DOM), the first female volunteer at the line to do so.

She said: "I really enjoy the DOM role as I meet new people every shift, and although the role can be challenging, I love seeing a successful day completed."



Shanthi Adiyat, Liz Cook and Natalie Tomlinson are now volunteer members of the South Tynedale Railway train crew. STR

Natalie is now training to join the steam crew and has already qualified as a driver of the railway's two electrically powered locomotives.

Society chairman David Granath said: "Volunteers are the lifeblood of the South Tynedale Railway, and the arrival of Shanti, Natalie and Liz adds to the strength of our team.

"We welcome their arrival and commitment, and we hope this demonstrates there is something for everyone on our railway. Our sector can only prosper if it reaches out to everyone who can be involved.

"As a volunteer-led and managed organisation, we need even more volunteers to join us, and it's not just about driving trains. We have many volunteer teams – including gardening, track maintenance and ticket office, for example – and if you enjoy dressing up and chatting with people, why not join our events team?"

Tailte Tours 'Drumms' up business with electrifying new badge



Electrifying badge: Unit A recalls the pioneering days of the Drumm Battery trains. TAILTE TOURS

TAILTE Tours, which supports Ireland's smaller railway heritage outfits with railtour profits from its railtours, has launched a badge that railfans will surely find electrifying.

It depicts one of the Drumm Battery Trains, unit A, operated by Great Southern Railways on the Dublin to Bray and Greystones line between 1932 and 1949.

The traction batteries were the brainchild of Dr James Drumm, of University College Dublin, and were manufactured by the Drumm Battery Company.

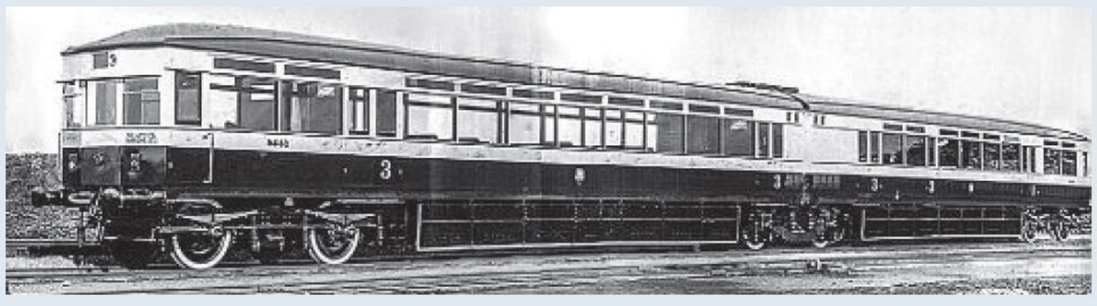
After trials with a converted Drewry petrol railcar, the GSR agreed to build a total of four units at its Inchicore Works.

Designated A to D, the trainsets successfully ran in daily service on the commuter route south out of Dublin's Westland Row station.

The Drumms were recharged at Dublin and at Bray at the end of each trip at the impressive rate of one minute for each mile travelled, with a normal service top speed of about 45mph.

They attracted international attention from railway engineers, and as they used what would now be termed 'green' energy, they were highly regarded in Ireland as items worthy of national pride.

Difficulties in sourcing raw materials and the batteries subsequently wearing out led to the withdrawal of the Drumms in 1949. Converted into conventional steam-hauled stock that remained in service until the mid-1950s, none were kept for preservation.



Drumm Battery Train at Inchicore, new in 1932, before entering service. IRISH RAILWAY RECORD SOCIETY

Niall Kelly, of Tailte Tours, said: "This year marks the 57th anniversary of the withdrawal of the Drumms and we wanted to mark it.

"Sadly, no examples survived, so we decided to bring out the badge as a reminder of these unique trains which were well ahead of their time, even with charging rates that would look good today."

The highly-quality enamel Drumm badges are available from www.tailtetours.com at Euro 10.

Proceeds are going towards running tours to support Irish railway heritage projects and museums.

Battery conversion considered as trolley trust adds to its collection

By Owen Hayward

THE Rail Trolley Trust added a plethora of personnel carrying vehicles to its collection in a successful 2024, with another three vehicles being secured in addition to those reported in the last issue of *Heritage Railway*.

In addition, the charity has said it is investigating battery power conversion for one that, if successful, could see more of the permanent way personnel carries treated to the same.

While they may not have the glitz and glamour of a full-size locomotive, rail vehicles such as these are instrumental to many permanent way teams at heritage lines, offering more economical transport to worksites plus covered protection.

Many variations were developed, but sadly many have fallen into disrepair. This is an area in which the RTT has flourished and has amassed a growing collection of trolleys which are primarily based at the Tanat Valley and Chasewater railways, but also acts as a font of knowledge and guidance for groups and individuals who are restoring examples themselves.



An original Wickham run-off as pictured at Kirkby Stephen East before the line was closed in 1962. A similar sight will soon be possible here. MARTIN TORDOFF / CUMBRIAN RAILWAYS ASSOCIATION

Battery conversion potential

Built in 1995, Works No. 023 is a Bance Alumi two-seater trolley designed for single-person operation and has been acquired from a private owner who had kept it at the Nene Valley Railway in a dismantled state for several years. Instead of a reverse gear, the lightweight trolley would instead be turned for a return journey on its self-contained pivot. To maintain its lightness its transmission also used a torque converter.

On October 5 the dismantled components were collected and moved to an undisclosed location for temporary storage pending a future move to one of the RTT's abovementioned main bases.

Trust chairman Jonathan Flood also revealed that the trust is looking at ways of replacing the petrol engine with a battery powered drive system – something that may be used on other trolleys in the collection should it prove successful. "This is primarily being developed for the trolleys which no longer have their original engines and transmissions," he said.

"Initially this system will be able to be moved between trolleys as required, but as funds allow further systems will be built, to return as many trolleys as possible to service. The trust will be also looking at suitable renewable charging options."

On October 8, a dismantled Type 17 trolley (which had subsequently been converted into a trailer) was collected from Fylingdales service station near Whitby where it had been stored since 2016. It was destined for the Stainmore Railway at Kirkby Stephen East, where some of the trust's collection also resides.

En route to this final destination, director Tim Warner and his assistant also stopped in at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway's New Bridge yard where they collected an unusual piece of trolley-related equipment – a pair of run-off rails.

Trolley scenes

Many trolleys would be stabled in dedicated sheds situated beside the line, accessed by rails running at a 90° angle to the main running tracks. Trolleys stored in these sheds would be lifted and turned on a dedicated turntable that would be assembled in-situ as and when required, allowing these permanent way vehicles to be stabled out of the way of shunting yards and the like.

On October 27, the trust was also notified of a Wickham trailer advertised for sale via online auction site eBay. Jonathon said: "I immediately contacted the seller and within a couple of hours we had agreed a deal to purchase the vehicle.

"The trust is keen to ensure that any such original Wickham items are saved, even if they can only be stripped for spares, to create a pool of parts to support our own fleet and those of other railways going forward, as obviously things such as original wheels and axles are no longer available, as Wickham ceased trading in the 1990s."

The trust, a registered charity, has now opened up membership to its ranks for those looking to be involved in or financially support the restoration of its collection. To sign up visit membermojo.co.uk/railtrolleytrust

A new appeal is due to be launched in 2025 looking at developing the facilities at the various locations where its collection is based, with a view to providing covered storage for as much of it as possible and suitable amenities for restoration activities.



The remnants of a dismantled type 17 Wickham trolley ready for transport to Kirkby Stephen East; strapped to the top are a pair of run-off rails on which these vehicles would have been stored at 90° to the running lines. RTT



Bance Alumi trolley No. 023 could be a pioneer for battery powered rail trolley conversion following its purchase from private owners at the Nene Valley Railway. RAIL TROLLEY TRUST

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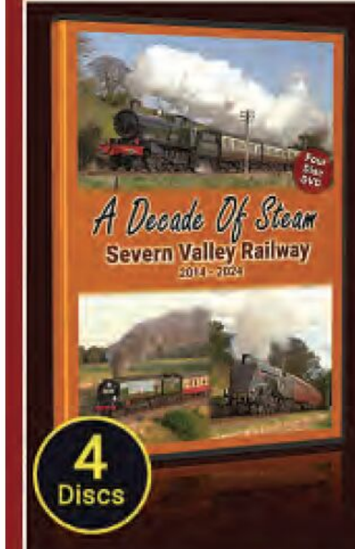


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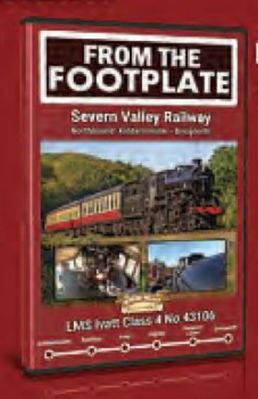


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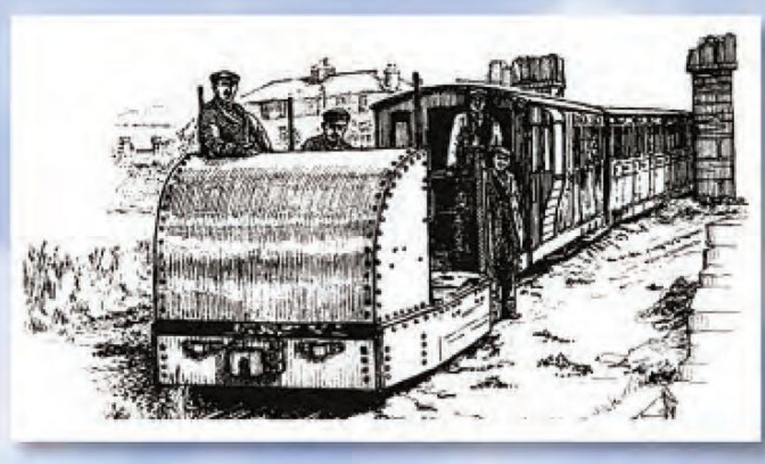
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STEAM SHEDS SUPREME!

Engine sheds are the beating heart of our heritage railways, but so often are the hidden jewels in their crowns, reports **John Titlow** in words and pictures.

Railway sheds have always held a fascination for me from a young age, days when I used to bunk King's Cross shed through a hole in the fence alongside the canal.

Another early memory was driving to Blackpool in 1968, crossing the road bridge overlooking Lostock Hall, which was full of 'Black Fives' and 8Fs. Sadly, I did not have a good camera in those days.

There is nothing more evocative than a steam shed, with locomotives either being prepared or disposed of at the end of the working day. Much of our railway heritage is disappearing and few genuine sheds are now left; many have taken on a completely new use, such as industrial workshops, garages and storage. During the heritage era, sheds have become utilitarian types of buildings similar to warehouses. These buildings, although not as aesthetically pleasing, are essential to keep historic locomotives secure from weather and vandalism, and they also provide a better working environment for volunteers and paid staff.

Sadly, health and safety regulations mean many doors and sheds have become off limits for the general public to just wander in, and permission is now essential to gain access. The easiest way to obtain it is to volunteer to help your railway.

When heritage lines have their galas, sheds and workshops are often open for the public to view progress on the work being undertaken. Occasionally, there are open days for guided tours specifically for the public to look inside. There are also several sheds throughout the country that can be photographed from public areas.

Photographic charters now give the opportunity to access some on non-public days with permission in a controlled and safe way.

Two original sheds have been turned into excellent museums which still retain their pre-1968 atmosphere, Didcot and Barrow Hill both offering plenty of photographic opportunities.

One great loss for access has to be Carnforth. In the early days of main line running of heritage steam in the 1970s, it was wonderful to arrive early before a tour to watch the locomotives being prepared for the day at sunrise. The coaling towers made a super backdrop to the photographs.

Another sad loss is Dinting, which has disappeared off the face of the earth all but completely.

The coaling tower makes a super backdrop as Southern Railway 4-6-0 No. 850 *Lord Nelson* is prepared at Carnforth on January 24, 1981.





With the new shed in the background, Midland Compound 4-4-0 No. 1000 and LNER V2 2-6-2 No. 4771 *Green Arrow* are steamed at Dinting Railway Centre before a run from Guide Bridge to York on May 26, 1979.



Long abandoned and forgotten, Dinting shed lies hidden in the undergrowth on November 21, 2024.



Beneath the classic smoke hoods inside Barrow Hill roundhouse stand Midland Compound 4-4-0 No. 41306, Ivatt 4MT mogul No. 43106 and Midland Railway 1F 0-6-0T 'half cab' No. 41708 on September 23, 2015.



Blue-liveried GWR 4-6-0 No. 6023 *King Edward II* 6023 poses inside Didcot shed on a Timeline Events charter on June 29.

Carnforth

To the general public, Carnforth's station is more famous than its shed due to the 1945 film Brief Encounter. To the enthusiast, the shed with its coaling towers is far more romantic.

The shed is on the site of the former Furness Railway depot modernised by the LMS opened in 1944. A 70ft turntable was fitted, capable of turning LMS Pacifics.

Carnforth's iconic landmarks are the two coaling towers built of reinforced concrete, with the mechanisms and chutes comprising mainly of steel. In their day they were considered state-of-the-art technology. They were Grade II-listed in 1989 in recognition of their importance to railway architecture.

The shed lasted until the end of steam on BR but finally closed on August 5, 1968. Thankfully, that was not the end of the story because Dr Peter Beet formed Steamtown Carnforth before steam had finished on the main line and steam locomotives arrived onsite from 1967 onwards.

Steamtown did indeed live up to its name. The site was then developed as a major attraction during the early 1970s, when it became a mecca for enthusiasts as steam was beginning to make inroads into returning to the main line.

Ironically, Carnforth also became home to a French Pacific No. 231K22, German Pacific 012 104-6 and DB 0-6-0T No. 80 014 – a very peculiar mix.

At the time, LNER A3 Pacific No. 4472 *Flying Scotsman* was owned by Sir William McAlpine and in 1974 he became a shareholder in the company, making Carnforth the locomotive's home. Sir William eventually acquired a controlling interest which enabled the site's purchase from BR.

Eventually, Sir William sold his interest to David Smith, who then took over Carnforth. Today, it is still a major depot and home to West Coast Railways but is now packed with more carriages than locomotives and public access is not permitted.

Dinting

In the early days of main line steam running in the 1970s, Dinting, alongside Carnforth, was centre stage and building up as an important motive power depot. Steam locomotives were being restored and tours were running through the nearby Hope Valley to Sheffield and further afield.

The original single-road red-brick shed was built in 1888 by the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway. It could be the only surviving example of a single-road locomotive shed built by the company. It had a pit but was capable only of housing a single tender locomotive.

Closed in 1954, the shed fell into disuse, but in 1968 it became established by the Bahamas Locomotive Society as the Dinting Railway Centre. The site expanded rapidly, becoming home to Royal Scot No. 46115, Jubilees Nos. 5690 *Leander* and 5596 *Bahamas*, LNWR Coal Tank No. 1054, Midland Compound No. 1000 and A2 No. 60532 *Blue Peter*, and even *Flying Scotsman* ran tours from the depot. Popular steam open weekends also took place.

A second three-road shed was built to house this growing collection. Sadly, this was not to last – after a falling-out with the landlord, Dinting Railway Centre closed in 1990, and the main collection moved to Ingrow on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway. Now, the venue has returned to nature, with only the original shed remaining almost in a wasteland. This state of affairs is a very sad end to what was once a thriving preservation site and, having been left derelict for many years, little is ever heard of it now.

Barrow Hill Roundhouse

Unique has to be the best description of Barrow Hill Roundhouse, because it is the last-surviving operational railway structure of its type in the country and therefore of great importance, hence its Grade II-listed status.

Built by the Midland Railway and completed in 1870, it was in continual use for 121 years until closure in 1991. Until 1948 it was known as Staveley Engine Shed.

Before closure, Mervyn Allcock and others could see the building was in danger of demolition so formed the Barrow Hill Engine Shed Action Group (later to become the Barrow Hill Engine Shed Society). Listing took place in 1991, and Chesterfield Borough Council became the new owner in 1996.

Finally, after many years of hard work, the roundhouse opened to the public in 1998. It is open most weekends, but if you get the opportunity join a charter, you will not be disappointed.

Barrow Hill is home to several steam and diesel locomotives, some from the National Railway Museum in York.

The Great Western Society at Didcot

There is so much that is good about Didcot Railway Centre, but the best has to be the main shed and coaling plant, which have changed little, even during the heritage era. Both still retain their steam-age atmosphere – and

long may the popular and much-visited venue continue to do so.

The shed was built in 1932 by the GWR with four tracks of 200 feet in length; each track is designed to house three tender locomotives. Three of the four smoke hoods inside are original, but one was removed by BR before the arrival of the society.

Closure came in 1965, and two years later the Great Western Society took over the site, which has expanded considerably over the years.

Cranmore

The late wildlife artist David Shepherd had the shed at Cranmore on the East Somerset Railway built in the early 1970s.

He had acquired BR Standard 9F 2-10-0 No. 92203 *Black Prince* and BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75029 *Green Knight*. Looking for a home to house them, Cranmore fitted the bill perfectly.

Built to an earlier design, the shed has two roads with an inspection pit on one. It is surrounded by a small yard, with a footpath leading from Cranmore station. Coaling and watering facilities are now onsite.

Over the years, the shed has weathered nicely and it is generally open to the public when the railway holds its March steam gala.

Bridgnorth

In steam days there was only a goods shed at Bridgnorth. Everything you see today across from the station was constructed by the Severn Valley Railway.

The main shed does not have a railway history whatsoever – that came from Portskewett, near Severn Tunnel Junction, and was completed in 1977. It was extended in 1979 utilising the BR diesel depot building from Heaton Mersey, Stockport, which was purchased in 1972. The original goods shed was incorporated into both buildings.

For photography, it can be viewed from the station footbridge overlooking the yard, and this is best done in the morning. On the opposite side alongside the car park is a footpath – best in the afternoons for sun. Keep a watchful eye for open days, when guided tours take place behind the scenes.

Rolvenden

There was originally a shed at Rolvenden on the Kent & East Sussex Railway, but it was on the opposite side of the tracks to where the present shed is. Rolvenden is the centre of the K&ESR's locomotive department, with engineering and workshop facilities for the restoration of locomotives.

As with all heritage railways, sheds' evolutions are dependent on funds; the 'new' two-road shed capable of housing four tank locomotives is on the site of the old goods siding just at the end of the platform.

From the viewing platform overlooking the yard, it is possible to see locomotives being prepared for the day's duties.

Swanage

Attempting to find exact dates of the compact engine shed at Swanage was difficult in the extreme. The line was built by the LSWR in 1885, so we assume the shed dates from that period. The original turntable outside the shed was 50 feet long. Both ends of the shed are different, with the north end retaining the original stone arch. In BR days an M7 0-4-4T overran the turntable, demolishing the original southern stone arch, and this was replaced by a straight lintel. A 70ft turntable is now installed.

Here is one of the easiest sheds to photograph, with a convenient road bridge overlooking both it and the turntable. It is a simple case of picking the right moment when a locomotive is being serviced.

Loughborough

Loughborough shed on the Great Central Railway has gone through many stages during its life. It is presently located over the original Great Central running lines.

Construction of the three-road shed started in 1973, and it is the GCR's base for locomotive restoration. The building came from RAF Langar airfield, near Nottingham

The current thinking is that the shed will have to be relocated when the line is reinstated north to link up with the Great Central Railway (Nottingham) at part of the reunification project.

Carlisle Upperby

This shed used to be a good starting point to watch steam locomotives being prepared in the 1980s working southbound over the Carlisle to Settle route. In those days, access was never a problem after asking permission.

The LMS roundhouse was demolished in 1979, as were the carriage sheds in 2016. Locomotive Services Limited now uses it as a



Left: Newly-restored BR Standard 9F No. 92203 outside Cranmore shed on October 28, 1979.

Right: Contrasting front ends on Bridgnorth shed, GWR 4-6-0 No. 6960 *Raveningham Hall*, Bulleid West Country light Pacific No. 34027 *Taw Valley* and GWR pannier No. 7714 on April 4, 2021, being prepared for the week's service.





LBSCR A1X 'Terrier' 0-6-0T No. 2678 *Knowle* being steamed in preparation for its day's work at Rolvenden shed on June 1, 2024, with a set of fire irons to the left.



GNR Stirling Single No. 1 4-2-2 in steam at Loughborough shed on May 9, 1982.



Late afternoon at Marylebone shed on October 11, 1986, with LNER Pacifics No. 4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley*, 4472 *Flying Scotsman* and 4468 *Mallard* lined up.

maintenance depot for its tours. I have many memories of attempting night shots and then early mornings while steam was raised before the day's run. By far the best was watching Midland Compound No. 1000 and Jubilee No. 5690 *Leander,* both in maroon livery, being prepped.

Marylebone

There was once a shed at Marylebone which capable only of fitting two locomotives inside. It stood on the western side of the line near where the turntable was, almost underneath Rossmore Road bridge.

On the opposite side of the line were the carriage sheds, goods platforms and milk dock. In the 1980s, when steam became a regular occurrence out of London to Stratford-upon-Avon, the milk dock and carriage shed were both used for servicing purposes.

To fund the modernisation of Marylebone station, the carriage shed and milk dock were sold off in the late 1980s for development. Little or nothing of the shed now exists.

Machynlleth

When looking through my collection, I was surprised to find pictures of this shed. It was back in 1987 when steam ran regularly on the Cambrian Coast Line to Barmouth.

Machynlleth shed was opened in 1863 by the Cambrian Railway. It was stone-built with two through roads and closed to steam in 1966. The shed still stands and is used as a cleaning facility.

Haworth

In the steam era, there was never an engine shed here. The present Haworth shed was the original goods shed, situated in the yard alongside Haworth station, dating back to the opening of the line in 1867, and now fits the bill adequately.

During the heritage era, Haworth has expanded considerably and provides storage facilities. Plus, it is a base for maintaining and overhauling locomotives for the railway. An overbridge looks down on the shed, and



Midland Compound 4-4-0 No. 1000 and LMS 4-6-0 No. 5690 *Leander* are steamed at Carlisle Upperby on February 12, 1983.



Machynlleth shed on May 27, 1987, with the crew walking away from BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75069 as it rests.



The fire is being thrown out of LMS Stanier 8F No. 8431 at Haworth Shed on January 1,1981.



WR 4-6-0 No. 7822 *Foxcote Manor* and GWR 4-6-0s No. 4936 *Kinlet Hall* and 6880 undergoing work at Tyseley on June 17, 2023.

also alongside is a convenient supermarket car park which is very useful for photography. Both provide excellent viewpoints.

Shed tours are due to return in March 2025, costing £5.

Tyseley

Tyseley Locomotive Works, home to Vintage Trains, is another site that has expanded considerably over the years. The original engine shed dating back to 1908 was built by the GWR and closed in 1966. Despite closure, it has been active since the day it was built. Considerable work is undertaken on site – not just complete locomotive restoration, but also the construction of new-builds. Many new large buildings have been erected over time.

After buying WR 4-6-0 7029 *Clun Castle*, Pat Whitehouse leased the site as a home for the locomotive. Preservation had begun at Tyseley in 1964 with the arrival of GWR 2-6-2T No. 4555 following its withdrawal from Plymouth Laira in November 1963 and its purchase by Pat Whitehouse and Pat Garland.

Tyseley is now synonymous with its GW Castles running on the main line. Open days take place and depot tours are available costing £12.

Old Oak Common

Old Oak Common is synonymously linked to Paddington and the expresses that ran down the GWR.

Designed by George Jackson Churchward, it took four years to build and was the largest depot on the entire GWR system, opening in 1906. Similar depots were constructed, Tyseley being one example.

It covered a vast area but has disappeared into history after Crossrail and High Speed 2 took over the area. Closure and demolition took place in 2017.

Sheffield Park

When the Bluebell Railway pioneers took over Sheffield Park station in 1960, there was no covered accommodation for locomotives. It was during the heritage era that the railway built its own workshops and sheds.

There was an early single-road shed which eventually made way for a larger one. The existing shed is now a museum, and the main workshop is alongside in a separate building.

Major works are undertaken inside, and many additions have taken place over the years, in particular Atlantic House, where the magnificent new Brighton Atlantic No.32424 *Beachy Head* was constructed. Whoever would have thought that a completely new locomotive would be built at Sheffield Park?



On May 31, 2024, newly completed H2 Atlantic No. 32424 *Beachy Head* warms through outside the locomotive shed at Sheffield Park on the Bluebell Railway prior to commencing testing.

Toddington

The shed at Toddington on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway is a large, modern building and there is an extensive yard outside where locomotives are prepared.

Between it and the adjacent narrow-gauge railway is a footpath where you can view the diesel and steam locomotives – something that is best done after midday when the sun is further round.

Guided tours are available for a donation on Tuesdays and Sundays at 11.45am, 12.55pm and 3.05pm. The shed is also open for viewing on gala weekends.

Wansford

No engine sheds existed when the Nene Valley Railway moved onto the site at Wansford, which was virtually a wasteland. Wansford Steam Centre opened in 1974, but much has changed over the years, with new sheds constructed capable of restoring steam locomotives. It is now the home of the NVR engineering department.

Inside is a viewing gallery which is open on running days.

The extensive yard outside has a turntable, formerly sited at nearby Bourne in Lincolnshire, alongside the car park and is good for photography at most times of the day.

Maespoeth

The Engine Shed at Maespoeth on the Corris Railway was built in 1878 when steam locomotives started working on the railway. It is still a working shed, and its importance is recognised by its Grade II listed status.

Grosmont

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway's locomotive sheds are located immediately south of Grosmont Tunnel, the first having been brought into use in 1973. These sheds have facilities for preparing, watering and coaling the locomotives.

A second tunnel dating back to 1835 is used for pedestrian access to the running shed, which is open to public for viewing. Tours cost £15.

The deviation shed, which houses locomotives and stock owned by the North Eastern Locomotive Preservation Group, is also open to the public.

There is a shed shop run by members of the locomotive department.

WR 4-6-0 No. 7903 *Foremarke Hall* and new-build GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange* await their turns as GWR Saint 4-6-09 No. 2999 *Lady of Legend* departs from Toddington shed to collect empty coaching stock, with WR 4-6-0 No. 7820 *Dinmore Manor* hiding in the steam, on May 25, 2024.

National Railway Museum, York

Today, it is often overlooked that the National Railway Museum in York was once a steam shed, and it is sad that the smoke hoods were removed.

The Great Hall as we now know it was shed No.4 out of the nine in York. It was built in 1877 and closed in 1967. It was then used as storage for steam locomotives from 1968.

After Clapham Transport Museum closed in 1973 and the exhibits moved to the famous northern city, the museum opened its doors to the public in 1975.

Sheds are great places where you can study the lines of locomotives, giving plenty of photographic opportunities. Night photography is another option.

In these days of the internet, you might have thought that researching the history of our heritage railways sheds would be an easy task. While compiling this feature, I found it much more difficult than I expected.

In conclusion, it appears that the lowly locomtive shed, which although performing a very important task, alseems surprisingly unworthy of being mentioned on many sites, the Severn Valley's website being an exception, so I hope you have enjoyed reading this feature round-up.

I end, though, with a few words of warning. Please do not go wandering around sheds without permission. It would take only one accident to cause severe damage to a heritage railway. Enjoy the atmosphere – but please be careful! HR



LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 5690 *Leander* is ready for its day's work at Grosmont shed with 'Black Five' No. 5428 behind on July 24, 1983.



The collection at the National Railway Museum in York, complete with smoke hoods, on November 26, 1989.

HERITAGE RAILWAY

THE COMPLETE PRESERVATION NEWS MAGAZINE

Returning to public running for the first time in 22 years, No. 60532 *Blue Peter* climbs towards Cowburn Tunnel on November 20 with Saphos Trains' 'Christmas White Rose' from Rugby to York, the A2 substituting for B1 No. 61306 *Mayflower*. JOHN TITLOW


60532
BLUE PETER
60532

Belmond launches the 'Britannic Explorer' with stops at heritage lines

By Tim Hobman

BELMOND has launched it latest product, a luxury sleeper train called the 'Britannic Explorer,' which is planned to debut on Friday, July 4, with a three-night tour to Cornwall.

After years of meticulous planning and design, Belmond has created a luxury train that is set to traverse the UK's scenic landscapes.

It features private cabins, exquisite fine dining and even an onboard spa, all reflecting the high standards of the world's finest hotels. There is accommodation for only 36 passengers on the entire train, making this an extremely exclusive form of travel, and each of the 18 cabins blend sophistication with comfort. Three grand suites and 15 standard suites have been carefully designed by the acclaimed London-based studio Albion Nord.

The exterior of the train is finished in silver with gold lettering, resembling that of the LNER 'Silver Jubilee' rake.

The inaugural trip on July 4 is planned to see the train depart from London Victoria and then take the route via the North Wessex Downs, through Taunton to arrive in the early evening at Bishops Lydeard on the West Somerset Railway for the night.

The next day, the train will leave Bishops Lydeard and head to Penzance, hugging the sea wall at Dawlish and skirting the Dartmoor National Park for a stop at St Erth. Customers may choose to alight at St Erth to explore St Ives or continue on to Penzance for a guided tour of the Tremenheere Sculpture Gardens and then a private Cornish wine tasting overlooking St Michael's Mount.

Customers will then rejoin the train for an overnight stay on a private siding overlooking the river.

Fowey is the destination by coach for the Sunday morning, where passengers will have the chance to explore the area and get involved in several tailored activities.

Once back on the train at Lostwithiel, the destination is Bruton in Somerset. While at Bruton, customers will visit the world-famous Hauser & Wirth contemporary art gallery for a private after-hours tour, followed by a drink's reception and an exclusive dinner. The 'Britannic Explorer' is then planned to stop overnight at the East Somerset Railway.

The next morning, breakfast is served on board the train as the tour nears an end, and the route back to London is scheduled to be via Castle Cary.

Further trips are planned following the same format, as well as alternative excursions to visit Wales and the Lake District. There are also plans for six-night excursions on board the luxury train.

For more details, visit www.belmond.com

Saphos plans 'Golden Arrow' rebirth in early spring

SAPHOS Trains will retrace the route of the 'Golden Arrow' boat train on Wednesday, March 26, behind either West Country light Pacific No. 34046 *Braunton* or BR Standard 7 No. 70000 *Britannia*.

Starting from Peterborough diesel-hauled, the tour is scheduled to head towards March and Ely for additional passengers, before stopping at Cambridge for a further pick-up, and then taking the Cambridge branch back towards the East Coast Main Line. Further passenger stops are planned for Royston, Letchworth, Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City and Potters Bar, before the train pauses in West London to exchange diesel for steam.

The train is expected to then head towards the Garden of England for a circular steam tour around the Kent coast. Passing through Ashford, the tour is bound for Canterbury for an afternoon break of just under three hours, where passengers will have the chance to explore the Roman and medieval history of the area, visit the cathedral, or take in some shopping.

Customers will be treated to views across the English Channel as the train tackles the gradients of the coastal route via Dover and Folkestone and then takes a sprint along the high-speed route via Tonbridge.

After exchanging the steam locomotive for diesel once again in West London, the train will follow the same route home, setting down passenger on route back to Peterborough.

Tickets are available in Pullman dining and First Class non-dining. For more details and to book, visit saphostrains.com



A dusting of snow covers the ground at New Mills South Junction in High Peak as B1 4-6-0 No. 61306 *Mayflower* storms through with a Saphos Trains 'White Rose' tour from Barrow in Furness to York on November 23. WARREN HANNABUSS



GWR Castle 4-6-0 No. 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* departs Derby in spectacular fashion, working Vintage Trains' 'The Christmas White Rose' to York Christmas market (1Z15 Birmingham New Street to York) on December 4, with Class 47 No. 47773 is on the rear. STEVE DONALD

Pre-order Issue 328: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.



BR Standard 7 4-6-2 No. 70000 *Britannia* passes Crofton, in Wiltshire, en route from London to Bath with Steam Dreams' 'Bath Christmas Market' tour on December 2. EDWARD J DYER

A cross-country 'Brit' to Welsh capital

STEAM Dreams will run a tour between Southend and Cardiff behind BR Standard 7 4-6-2 No. 70000 *Britannia* on Wednesday, April 16.

Starting out Shoeburyness diesel-hauled, the train is scheduled to pick up additional passengers at Southend Central, Leigh-on-Sea, Barking and Stratford, before skirting the north of the capital.

There is planned to be a brief stop in North London while the diesel traction is exchanged for steam, before the tour heads through north-west London to pick up the Great Western Main Line to reach the Severn Tunnel and the final destination of Cardiff.

Customers will have just over three hours to explore the Welsh capital before the return journey, which is expected to follow the same format as the outward trip, with *Britannia* giving way to a diesel in North London.

Passengers will then be set down at their joining stations en route back to Southend.

Tickets are available in Pullman dining and First Class non-dining. For more details and to book, visit steamdreams.co.uk

Two diesels will head 'The Emperor of the North'

INTERCITY Tours is advertising the second tour of 2025 with the chance to ride behind Class 45 No. 45118 and Class 50 No. 50050 on Friday, January 17 on a tour titled 'The Emperor of the North'.

Starting from Crewe with No. 45118 in charge, the tour will continue north on the West Coast Main Line to pick up additional passengers at Warrington Bank Quay, Wigan North Western and Preston. From here, the train continues north via Shap to Carlisle.

Following a short break at Carlisle, No. 50050 is planned to take over the train to run via the Cumbrian Coast to Carnforth and then back to Preston once more. Another break is expected before heading via Blackburn to Hellifield and on to the Settle and Carlisle Line back to Carlisle.

Once at Carlisle for the second time, No. 50050 is planned to be removed from the train, allowing No. 45118 the homeward leg back to Crewe, setting down passengers on route.

Tickets are available in First Class non-dining only for this tour. For more details and to book, visit inter-city.co.uk

Great Central pioneer Edward Watkin is honoured with Cleethorpes station plaque

By Robin Jones

A BLUE plaque honouring Edward Watkin, who created the Great Central Railway main line and which celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2024, was unveiled at Cleethorpes station on November 15 by the seaside town's MP, Melanie Onn.

Visionary Sir Edward William Watkin, 1st Baronet (September 26, 1819-April 13, 1901) presided over large-scale railway engineering projects to fulfil his business aspirations, eventually becoming chairman of nine different British Railway companies.

Among his other projects were the expansion of the Metropolitan Railway, the creation of a pleasure garden with a partially constructed iron tower at Wembley, and a failed attempt to dig the first Channel Tunnel to connect his railway empire to the French network. He brought the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway to what was then the small coastal village of Cleethorpes on April 6, 1863, after having laid the foundations for turning the nearby small port of Grimsby into the biggest fishing port in the world.

Cleethorpes station is now managed by TransPennine Express. Its customer experience transformation director, Andrew McClements, said: "This plaque is a wonderful way to remember Sir Edward Watkin, who was integral to creating the Cleethorpes we know and love today and a father of the railway in this area.

"I would like to thank everyone involved in this project to celebrate our railway's heritage."

The installation of the blue plaque was suggested by the Watkin Society, which has fought tirelessly to spread recognition of Sir Edward's work.

The society's founding chairman, Geoff Scargill, said: "TPE's generosity was rewarded with a large crowd at the ceremony. It included members of four local community groups who worked together to make possible this celebration of a great man's work in our area."



The blue plaque honouring Great Central Railway pioneer Sir Edward Watkin unveiled at Cleethorpes station. TPF

Melanie Onn said: "Sir Edward Watkin dedicated his life to serving his country, from being involved in the fight against the Corn Laws in his youth to his management of railways across the UK.

"His expansion of the railway network to Grimsby and Cleethorpes enabled the area to become the country's premier fishing port and holiday destination, rightfully earning him the nicknames of Mr Grimsby and Mr Cleethorpes.

"It is only right that we dedicate this plaque to the man who did so much for our borough be placed at Cleethorpes Railway Station, and I am honoured to have been asked to help unveil it."

‘Great Britain XVII’ itinerary set to take in rare routes for main line trips

By Robin Jones

THE itinerary for the Railway Touring Company’s‘‘Great Britain XVII’ holiday tour for 2025 has been announced.

The trip will set off steam-hauled from London Victoria on April 26, heading for Bristol Temple Meads through Weybridge, Woking, Guildford, Havant, Romsey and Salisbury for a water stop, and then onwards via Warminster, Westbury, Bradford-on-Avon and Bath.

The next day will see the tour heading via Carmarthen and Tenby to Pembroke Dock, a rare occurrence for steam-hauled trains, and on to Fishguard Harbour behind a diesel. The return to Llanelli is steam-hauled throughout, with the night spent in a Cardiff hotel.

Monday, April 28 will see the tour take the Welsh Marches route to Shrewsbury, the borders line to Chester, and then the West Coast Main Line past Morecambe Bay to Grange-over-Sands, from where passengers will be taken by road coach for an evening in the Lake District.

Into Scotland

Tuesday will see take in the Cumbrian coast via Whitehaven, Workington, Maryport, Castle, Hexham, Newcastle and Berwick-on-Treed to Edinburgh for an overnight say.

On day five, the tour will head over the Forth Bridge to Dunfermline, from where it will be diesel-hauled over the freight-only line along the banks of the Forth towards Kincardine and Alloa, an unusual route for any train. From Stirling it will take the Highland Main Line via the 1484ft summit at Druimuachdar and Aviemore to Inverness for a two-night stay. Then, Thursday, May 1 is an optional day during which guests can opt to join the ‘Great Britain’ for a diesel-hauled return trip to Wick and Thurso.

May 2 features a steam-hauled leg south over the Highland Main line back to Perth and Edinburgh. After a water stop at Perth and crossing the Forth Bridge, it will then take the East Coast Main Line to Newcastle.

A high-speed run past Durham and Darlington will start off May 3, before the tour takes the ECML to Doncaster, where it will join the Great Northern and Great Eastern Railway’s Joint route to Lincoln and on via Spalding and Peterborough before taking the fenland route through Whittlesey, March, Ely and Thetford to Norwich for the final night’s stay. Sunday, May 4 will see the tour take a route not frequented by a steam train for several years. Diesel-hauled to Great Yarmouth, the ‘Great Britain’ then runs over the direct route via Acle to Great Yarmouth before reversing to be steam-hauled to Reedham, where its reverse again for the diesel-hauled run to Lowestoft.

Final leg

From there, the trip is steam-hauled along the East Suffolk line, then over the single line through Beccles to Halesworth, the double track from there as far as Saxmundham, and over the single track to Woodbridge. It will take the new Bacon Factory curve to avoid Ipswich en route to Stowmarket and the line to Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket. After Cambridge, it will run behind steam-hauled though Royston to Hitchin to rejoin the ECML and then head south through Stevenage to King’s Cross.

Five awards in a row for RTC

THE Railway Touring Company has been named the Best Small Travel Company for Rail Holidays in the 2024 British Travel Awards.

Travelling consumers cast more than 1.2 million votes in the annual awards, and winners were announced on November 19.

It is the fifth top award in a row for Kings Lynn-based RTC, which was established in 1997. In 2019, 2022 and 2023 it was also voted Best Small Travel Company for Rail Holidays and in 2019 Best Small Specialist Interest Holiday Company (the awards were not held in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic).

RTC managing director Kelly Osborne said: “It is incredible to receive this accolade once again. Thanks to all our wonderful customers for voting for us.

“Looking ahead, 2025 is set to be another special year. It is the 200th anniversary of the modern railway and we have announced a number of steam specials to celebrate this major milestone. Our celebratory trains will be part of a year-long series of Railway 200 activities and events throughout the UK.”

British Travel Awards director of events and partnerships, Lorraine Barnes Burton, said: “RTC is to be sincerely congratulated on the achievement. Ultimately, it is the travelling public who decide the winners by voting for the travel companies they consider the best in the business.”

RTC’s 2025 rail holidays include Scotland, Ireland, Snowdonia, Yorkshire and Derbyshire. European and Scandinavian rail adventures include Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Italy and Norway, with itineraries beyond exploring Canada, India, America’s Wild West, the Rocky Mountains and Sri Lanka.

Details of these, along with the ‘Great Britain XVII,’ can be found at www.railwaytouring.net



Members of The Railway Touring Company team are (left to right) Annabelle Benjamin, Rachel Jackson, David Zemaiciunas, MD Kelly Osborne, Julia Barrett, Hollie Kimber and Jade Mott. RTC

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Hastings Diesels to host Mick Tester memorial tour

HASTINGS Diesels’ first railtour of the 2025 season will take place on Saturday, January 18 under the title of ‘The Mick Tester Memorial,’ with Winchester the destination.

The tour is named in honour of longstanding colleague Mick Tester, who died last summer. Mick is remembered by those who knew him for his attention to detail regarding the presentation of the train, ensuring the set was spotless both inside and out for customers.

Starting from Hastings, the tour is expected to follow the usual pattern in picking up passengers from St Leonards Warrior Square, West St Leonards, Crowhurst, Battle, Etchingham, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Redhill.

Following a reversal at Redhill, the tour heads to Guildford for a further passenger pick-up. After Guildford, the set will require another reversal at Woking, before running along the South Western Main Line via Basingstoke to Winchester Passengers will have about three hours to explore Winchester while the train heads to Eastleigh for servicing. The return journey is expected to follow the same route back towards London and then will set down passengers at their joining stations en route to Hastings.

Tickets are available in Standard Class or First Class for this tour, with a buffet car available on the train and at-table service for First Class passengers.

For more details and to book, visit www.hastingsdiesels.co.uk

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Two 'Christmas White Roses' pass within an hour!

ON the morning of Saturday, November 23, two steam-hauled trips under the banner of the 'The Christman White Rose' headed north to York on the East Coast Main Line well within an hour of each other.

The first was the Saphos Trains tour from St Albans, which set off diesel-hauled, running via Luton, Bedford, Kettering, Leicester, Melton Mowbray and Stamford with LNER A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*, which had been stabled at Wansford on the Nene Valley Railway, coming on at Peterborough.

After four hours in York, the train departed diesel-hauled passing Church Fenton en route to Gascoigne Wood Down loop, where it reversed, and No. 60007 led again. A diesel took over once more at Peterborough, with the train retracing its earlier route to St Albans.

LMS 'Black Five' No. 44871 hauled the Railway Touring Company's 'The Christmas White Rose' from King's Cross. It was originally scheduled to run about 10 minutes behind *Sir Nigel Gresley* at Peterborough but was delayed by about half an hour before continuing to York via Newark Northgate, Retford and Doncaster.

After nearly three hours in York, the train also left behind a diesel to Gascoigne Wood Down loop for reversing so No. 44871 could take over. It then returned to King's Cross via Doncaster, Saxilby, Metheringham, Spalding and Peterborough, where diesel traction again took over for the final leg back to King's Cross, and No. 44871 left for stabling on the NVR.



Stabled together in Wansford yard on the Nene Valley Railway on the evening of November 16 are A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* and 'Black Five' No. 44871. PAUL ROE/NVR



Right: Neck and neck with an LNER Azuma, LMS 'Black Five' No. 44871 hauls the Railway Touring Company's 'The Christmas White Rose' over Tallington level crossing at 10.28am on November 23. ROBIN JONES

Below: A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* heads over Tallington level crossing north of Peterborough at 9.56am with the Saphos Trains 'The Christmas White Rose' on November 23. ROBIN JONES



Wine and dine on a steam-hauled 'Valentines White Rose' to York

THE Railway Touring Company will run 'The Valentines White Rose', a special steam excursion to celebrate Valentines Day, on Saturday, February 15.

Starting from King's Cross behind a LMS 'Black Five,' the tour will head north on the East Coast Main Line to pick up additional passengers at Stevenage, Huntingdon and Peterborough and is expected to arrive at York just after lunchtime.

Passengers will then have around three hours to explore the city before returning to London via the same route.

The steam locomotive is expected to give way to diesel at Peterborough, setting down passengers at Huntingdon and Stevenage en route back to King's Cross. Tickets are available in Premier Dining, First Clas, and Standard Class, with a discount for junior travellers and families. For more details and to book your place on the journey, visit www.railwaytouring.net

Celebrate Railway 200 with an eight-day northern tour – by rail!

By Owen Hayward

AT THE conclusion of its 50th anniversary year, Porthmadog-based tour operator Ffestiniog Travel has its eyes firmly fixed on the Railway 200 celebrations and has announced an eight-day itinerary taking in relevant heritage in the north with travel to each by rail.

On September 27, exactly 200 years to the day after Britain's first steam-hauled passenger train ran the 26 miles between Shildon, Darlington and Stockton-on-Tees, a similar experience will run, taking travellers over much of the same route – albeit with diesel traction instead of steam. However steam will feature in destinations on the tour, with stops planned for at least six museums and heritage lines.

General manager Maria Cook said: "A lot of our customers are enthusiasts and have a keen interest in how the railways developed, so we thought a dedicated one-off tour to mark the anniversary would be of interest.

"Britain's railways movement has been significant in shaping people's everyday lives and the way they work over the past 200 years. The origins of the modern railway began in Britain, but it quickly spread across the globe. As a specialist rail tour operator that escorts travellers around the world by train, we are particularly grateful for Britain's role as a lot of the railways that are included in our tours are because of what happened in the north-east of England 200 years ago."

The celebratory trip will see guests enjoy workshop tours and a steam charter on the Middleton Railway – the world's oldest continuously operating railway – as well as a private train along the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway.

A trip is also planned to take guests to the world's oldest railway, the Tanfield Railway, which dates from 1621, while Beamish Museum will offer a glimpse of life in the 1820s through to the 1950s. Stops are also scheduled to visit both the National Railway Museum at York and its Shildon outpost Locomotion.

The eight-day tour will depart from Leeds on September 22 and costs £1945 per person, including all rail travel, excursions, coach transfers, half-baord hotel accommodation, buffet lunch and services of a knowledgeable tour leader throughout.

To see the full itinerary and book visit www.ffestiniogtravel.com

➜ **Celebrating 50 years of touring: see Owen Hayward's interview with Ffestiniog Travel founder Alan Heywood on pages 82-84.**



With the sun slowly rising and temperature two degrees below zero, West Country light Pacific No. 34046 *Braunton* (substituting for No. 70000 *Britannia*) crosses the 40-arch, Grade II*-listed Digswell Viaduct in Hertfordshire with Steam Dreams 'York Christmas Market' excursion on November 28. The crew and local signallers were clearly trying to make up for lost time, the empty stock movement having been delayed at Finsbury Park for 50 minutes on its way to King's Cross, but was able to pass through Welwyn Garden City only 35 minutes behind schedule with scheduled passing stops to wait for local services being abandoned. OWEN HAYWARD

Take 'The Snowdonian' to springtime Snowdonia

By Tim Hobman

UK Railtours is to repeat the popular tour 'The Snowdonian' on Saturday, April 5.

Starting from Euston, with additional pick-up points of Watford Junction, Milton Keynes Central, Northampton and Rugby, the train will head north along the West Coast Main Line, before diverging at Crewe and heading via Chester, along the North Wales Coast Line to Llandudno.

At Llandudno Junction there will be road coaches provided to take passengers to the first of the off-train options at Blaenau Ffestiniog. The train is then planned to continue to Bangor, where again road coaches will take passengers to the second off-train option at Caernarfon.

Both of these options will give customers the chance to travel the length of the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways. Beginning at either Blaenau Ffestiniog or Caernarfon, those who take this option will travel the full length of both lines before arriving at either Caernarfon or Blaenau Ffestiniog and being transported by coach back to the waiting train to return to London.

For those who decide not to take advantage of a trip on the narrow-gauge lines, there are the options of alighting at Llandudno, Bangor or the final destination of Holyhead and either explore the towns or take local transport to venture further afield.

At Holyhead the train will be serviced for the return journey to London, picking up passengers who have alighted at Bangor or Llandudno.

The motive power is hoped to be either Class 47 or Class 57 diesels provided by West Coast Railways.

There are options of First-Class Dining, First-Class, and Standard Class tickets, with a supplement for the off-train activity.

Visit www.ukrailtours.com

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Merchant Navy Pacific No.35028 *Clan Line* speeding through Apsley on the approach to Andover with the Railway Touring Company's 'Sherborne Christmas Carol' day trip from London to Sherborne on December 4. Passengers had the choice of alighting at Sherborne or continuing with the train to Yeovil Junction where No. 35028 was turned and serviced at Yeovil Railway Centre. PETER HOLLANDS

Heritage board marks Torre stations' 175th

A REPLICA running-in board has been erected at Torre station in Torbay to commemorate the 175th anniversary of its opening.

The coming of the railway in 1848 led to growth of the local economy and the development of Torquay as a prime tourist destination.

The Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership secured funding to create a traditional sign for Torre station, on the northbound platform where the original would have been positioned.

Coun Chris Lewis, Torbay Council's cabinet member for place development and economic growth and deputy leader, along with deputy civic mayor Coun Barbara Lewis, attended the station with members of the partnership to mark the installation of the sign.

Coun Lewis said: "The sign is a great enhancement to Torre station, a transport and heritage gateway into Torbay for locals and tourists alike.

"Torbay Council is committed to the improvement of all transport gateways to the bay, a key element of the visitor experience. People will continue to see investment right across the bay as part of our Operation Brighter Bay initiative to improve the spaces we all use and enjoy in our daily lives.

"The council's commitment to Torbay's heritage is also well established. From Victorian railways to Agatha Christie, Torbay's history acts as a magnet for tourists. The continued maintenance and enhancement of our heritage and public spaces will combine to secure Torbay's place as a destination we are proud to live in and visit."



With the new heritage running-in board on Torre station's northbound platform are, from left, Great Western Railway station manager Stephanie Chapman; Richard Burningham, manager for Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership; Adam Luscombe, service manager, strategy and project management at Torbay Council; deputy civic mayor Coun Barbara Lewis and Coun Chris Lewis, deputy leader of Torbay Council. TBC



The iconic Glenfinnan Viaduct which was built between 1897-8 by the firm of Robert McAlpine, nicknamed 'Concrete Bob' for his innovative use of mass concrete that forms the basis of the 21-arch structure. It is being refenced to stop trespass. NR

Fencing replaced to keep Glenfinnan viaduct safe

NETWORK RAIL has begun a £500,000 project to renew more than three miles of lineside fencing near the world-famous Glenfinnan Viaduct near Mallaig on the West Highland Extension.

Life-expired boundary fencing is being replaced to help keep the public safely separated from the track.

Its fame boosted by its appearances in the Harry Potter films, the viaduct is a hugely-popular tourist attraction which can cause issues with trespass.

The new fencing will be sympathetic to the scenic nature of the local area.

Tree and vegetation management around the existing boundary fence will be needed ahead of the renewal and this will also improve the public's view of the viaduct.

In addition to the new fencing, Network Rail is also currently completing a £3.5 million project to refurbish the viaduct itself, carrying out repairs to the concrete structure and improving the trackbed and drainage.

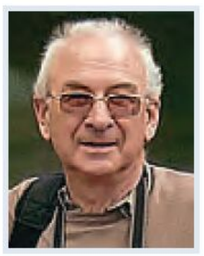
Network Rail scheme project manager Hayley Simpson said: "The investment we are making in renewing the fencing in Glenfinnan will help secure the railway and keep the public safe as they enjoy the world-famous views of the viaduct and surrounding scenery.

"The work will be delivered without disrupting train services and the fencing we will install will be sympathetic to the natural landscape through which the line runs and not affect people's enjoyment of the many walking trails and the spectacular views."

On December 20, 2008, No. 60007 storms past Alexandra Palace with the 10.18am 'Cathedrals Express' from King's Cross to Norwich. DON BENN

WITH FULL REGULATOR

LOCOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE THEN AND NOW



In his latest column, **Don Benn** looks at the work of Gresley A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* in recent times, on the Great Northern main line in 1963 and in Scotland in 1965, plus another view of Welsh coal. A rare main line run with two Class 20s is also included.

LNER A$ Pacfic No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* is an elusive beast for me, and my last main line run with it was the superb effort in 2008 with Ray Churchill driving. However, Alan Rawlings had a more recent run in 2014, the details of which are shown in Table One. Alan comments: "We were held up en route to Exeter and took 67 minutes instead of the booked 55. Kept time – i.e., 37 minutes to the water stop at Taunton so as to conserve water – and we were still 17 late away from Taunton. But from here, Bill Warriner set about gaining back time and, aided by Craig Stinchcombe, who kept the A4 on the boil, we pressed on with the route, mostly against the grade after Curry Rivell. The section from Somerton to Castle Cary was pretty swift so by the time we passed Castle Cary we had gained eight minutes on the schedule. The climb to Brewham grabbed back a further few minutes and the overall gain of about 13 minutes put us into Westbury just a few minutes down. This was Bill, Craig and *Sir Nigel Gresley* at their best."

Although I saw No. 60007 a few times at King's Cross in 1961/62, I had no run with it until Scotland in 1965, so I have taken a run from the Railway Performance Society database. This was on the 6.26pm King's Cross to Doncaster on May 2, 1963, just six weeks before steam was banned south of Peterborough. The section chosen shows the running as far as the Huntingdon stop on a

TABLE ONE: TAUNTON TO WESTBURY

Date	Saturday, April 19, 2014
Train	Dartmouth Express
Engine	Class A4 4-6-2 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*
Load	11 coaches, 399 tons tare 430 tons gross
Driver	Bill Warriner
Fireman	Craig Stinchcombe
Recorder	Alan Rawlings
Weather	Fine

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Taunton	0.00	0.00	00	00	17 late
Creech St Michael	2.91		04	31	57
Cogload Jct	4.76	9.00	06	11	64/72
Athelney	7.92	13.00	09	15	71
MP 133	9.92		11	05	64
Curry Rivell Jct	11.91		12	54	66
Langport East	13.05		14	05	62
Long Sutton	15.05		16	03	60
Somerton Tnl In	15.57		16	27	58
Somerton Tnl Out	16.17		17	06	55
Somerton	16.77	23.00	17	43	60/69
Charlton Mackrell	20.46		21	06	65
Keinton Mandeville	22.71		23	08	72/76
Alford	25.46		25	18	72/67
Castle Cary	27.57	35.00	27	05	69
MP 128	29.12		28	25	67
MP 127	30.12		29	21	63
Bruton	31.01		30	15	58
MP 124	33.12		32	30	54
Brewham Smt	34.47		34	07	44
E Somerset Jct	36.26	46.00	36	21	65/74
Blachbridge Jct	40.47	50.00	39	49	71
Fairwood Jct	45.71	58.00	45	19	36*
Westbury	47.15	62.00	49	27	4½ late

* brakes or speed restriction

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No. 60007 leaves King's Cross with a Down train on September 19, 1961 . DON BENN



Streamlined A4 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* at Stirling after arrival with the 7.10am from Aberdeen on June 4, 1965. DON BENN

TABLE TWO: KING'S CROSS TO HUNTINGDON

Date	Thursday, May 2, 1963
Train	6.26pm King's Cross to Doncaster
Engine	Class A4 4-6-2 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*
Load	11 coaches, 366 tons tare 390 tons gross
Crew	King's Cross
Recorder	R Balkwill

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
King's Cross	0.00	0.00	00	00	R/T
Finsbury Park	2.50		06	43	39
Wood Green	4.95		09	43	56/58
New Barnet	9.15		14	21	53½
MP 10	10.00				54/52½
Potters Bar	12.70	18.00	18	32	54/52
Hatfield	17.70	23.00	23	18	71/74
Welwyn Gdn City	20.30		25	34	68
Woolmer Green	23.50		28	23	62/71
Stevenage	28.55		33	04	18* pws
Hitchin	31.90	37.00	39	14	54
Three Counties	35.70		42	15	83/83½
Arlesey	37.10		43	15	80
Biggleswade	41.15		46	16	84/86
Sandy	44.15	46.00	48	22	80/82
Tempsford	47.50		50	54	80½/78
St Neots	51.75		54	05	81/82
Offord	55.95		57	26	73*/75
Huntingdon	58.85	61.00	61	00	R/T

* brakes or speed restriction
net time 57 minutes

fast schedule. The King's Cross crew put in a fine performance with load of 11 for 390 tons to keep time, despite a severe permanent way slack at Stevenage. Table Two shows the details.

A4 in Scotland

When steam finished south of Peterborough, *Sir Nigel Gresley* was reallocated to New England shed on June 16, 1963. It was then allocated to St Margarets shed until its final allocation to Aberdeen on July 20, 1964. It was from here that I recorded 368 miles behind it, including a 90mph run. On the evening of June 3, 1965, I joined the 7.30pm 'Aberdonian' from King's Cross with a friend for a day on the Aberdeen to Glasgow line. Unusually for me, it was a Thursday, probably because I wanted to be back south fresh for the series of high-speed dashes to Basingstoke from Monday, June 7, which had been rumoured on the grapevine (no internet then, of course). From King's Cross, our Deltic D9020 had an unusually heavy 16 coaches for about 580 tons and did well, reaching Grantham in 102 minutes 30 seconds.

At Doncaster, A1 Pacific No. 60146 *Peregrine* was seen standing on an Up line south of the station. This was one of the last sightings of the engine before it was stored on August 18, 1965, and withdrawn on October 4. Our train ran from York to Darlington in 37 minutes 20 seconds, with a maximum speed well into the 90s, though with sleeping cars it should have been limited to 80mph. At Edinburgh, Terry Bagworth gave me the news that the 7.40pm relief from King's Cross would be hauled forward from there by No. 60004 *William Whitelaw*, but as this was running an hour or so late and we wanted to make the 7.10am from Aberdeen, we stayed put, and although No. 60034 *Lord Farringdon* was also in the station, we were hauled by Class 40 D365 on to Aberdeen. No. 60532 *Blue Peter* was noted at Dundee on standby duties, and we hoped for our diesel to fail, but no such luck!

On Friday, June 4, 1965, the 7.10am Aberdeen to Glasgow was headed by *Sir Nigel Gresley* on the usual load of six coaches for 225 tons; Table Three shows the detail to Perth. A minute was lost

on the initial section to Stonehaven after a steady start, following which the A4 produced a fairly typical time-keeping performance. Speed in the 40s up the mainly 1-in-92/107/102 climb to just short of Carmont produced a 45½mph minimum up through this lovely, winding climb. From there it's mainly downhill to Kinnaber, maximum 79mph. After that, No. 60007 produced a very good climb of the 1-in-107/120 Farnell Road bank, minimum 58mph and 69 after Glasterlaw, before a temporary speed restriction to 23mph at Guthrie hindered progress, though the schedule to the Forfar stop was kept almost exactly. Net time from Stonehaven about 41 minutes. No. 60004 *William Whitelaw* passed us as we left Stonehaven.

TABLE THREE: ABERDEEN TO PERTH

Date	Friday, June 4, 1965
Train	7.10am Aberdeen to Glasgow
Engine	Class A4 4-6-2 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*
Load	6 coaches, 210 tons tare 225 tons gross
Crew	Ferryhill
Recorder	Don Benn
Position	Second coach of six
Weather	Dry and cloudy

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Aberdeen	0.00	0.00	00	00	½ min late
Ferryhill Jct	0.65		03	05	24
Craiginches	1.65		05	06	38½
Cove Bay	4.80		09	42	44
MP 234	7.10		12	39	50
Portleven	8.15		13	42	64½
Newtonhill	10.40		15	40	72½/68½
Muchalls	11.55		16	39	74
MP 227½	13.60		18	26	63½/72
Stonehaven	16.15	20.00	21	12	
	0.00	0.00	00	00	1½ mins late
Dunottar SB	2.70		05	11	43
MP 221¼	4.70		06	30	48/45½
Carmont SB	5.45		08	44	53½
Drumlithie	7.20		10	38	62½
Fordoun	11.10		13	52	75
Laurencekirk	14.40	16.00	16	41	70½/68
Marykirk	17.60		19	22	77½/79
Craigo	19.75		21	08	66½
Kinnaber Jct	21.85	23.00	23	05	67
Dubton Jct	23.05		24	03	73
Bridge of Dun	25.70	27.00	26	20	66½*
Farnell Road	28.85		29	03	71½
MP 194	30.95		31	03	60/58
Glasterlaw	32.15		32	16	65/69
Guthrie SB	33.95		35	03	23* tsr
Auldbar Road	36.15		37	47	55
Clocksbriggs	38.80		40	19	65½
Forfar	41.15	43.00	42	57	
	0.00	0.00	00	00	2 mins late
Forfar South Box	0.70		01	53	43½
Kirriemuir Box	2.85		04	12	64
Glamis	5.65		06	35	74
Eassie	7.85		08	18	77/79
Alyth Junction	11.90	12.00	11	27	76
Ardler Box	13.15		12	22	78
Ardler	14.20		13	13	76½
Coupar Angus	16.65		15	05	77½
Burrelton	18.85		16	51	75
Cargill	21.20		18	41	80/83
Ballathie	23.05		20	04	80
Stanley Junction	25.30	23.00	21	47	74
Strathord	27.35		23	26	79½
Luncarty	28.30		24	12	81
Almond Valley Jct	30.85		26	26	59*
Perth	32.50	32.00	29	34	½ min early

* brakes or speed restriction
Forfar to Perth start to stop average: 65.95 mph

Dash to Perth

The train left Forfar two minutes late for the dash to Perth, booked in 32 minutes for the 32.50 miles and which always produced an even time run on the occasion of my visits. It should be remembered that the overall speed limit in Scotland was 75mph, though this was largely ignored by the steam crews especially on this section and on the descent from Gleneagles to Perth. This run was no exception, and over the mainly level track across the broad valley of Strathmore from Eassie to Coupar Angus the average was 77.84mph. With no easing, the dip over the River Tay produced 83mph, before a slightly checked approach got us into Perth half a minute early in 29 minutes 34 seconds, a start-to-stop average of 65.95mph. Net time probably 29 minutes. *Sir Nigel Gresley* also gave me my only 90 in Scotland, also over the river after Cargill.

Changing crews and taking water at Perth only occupied just over six minutes, but we were still two late away and treated to a lightning start out to Hilton Junction at 56mph, which my notebook described as "fantastic start – utterly thrashed." By just after Forgandenny, speed was up to over 74mph, though there the engine was eased somewhat but still climbing to the summit just after Gleneagles at a minimum of 51mph. Relatively subdued running on to Stirling got us there nearly a minute early in just over even time in 33 minutes 17 seconds for the 33.05 miles, my fastest time in either direction for the section. Details are in Table Four.

I then adopted one of my usual one-day bash plans by returning to Gleneagles for the 10am from Dundee, with Willie Jardine driving BR 5MT No. 73149 (see HR 226) to Glasgow Buchanan Street, returning at 1pm behind Stanier 'Black Five' No. 45214 to Stirling. There I changed to another 5MT, No. 73152, on the 2pm to Dundee as far as Perth, before catching A4 No. 60006 *Sir Ralph Wedgwood* on the 1.30pm from Aberdeen back to Gleneagles to wait for the 9.25am from Crewe, a train which could produce almost anything from Carlisle Kingmoor as motive power. On this day it was 'Black Five' No. 44671 on eight vehicles for 275 tons, and this ran down to Perth in 15 minutes 48 seconds for the 15.85 miles, with a start-to-stop average of 60.19mph and a maximum of 81mph. We then had runs behind Nos. 44722 and 73149 (again) before returning south on the 9pm from Perth with D1624 (Class 47), E3077 (Class 85) and D312 (Class 40) to end what was my best single day in Scotland. No. 60007 is now back on the main line and also visited the Bluebell Railway in October. If I can find a trip with *Sir Nigel Gresley* without a dreaded diesel locomotive on the back, then I hope to have another main line trip with it.

My old friend and long-time Bluebell Railway



***Sir Nigel Gresley* approaches Horsted Keynes with the 10.30am from Sheffield Park to East Grinstead on October 11, 2024.** BRYAN BENN



On April 19, 2014, *Sir Nigel Gresley* pauses at Taunton with the 7.51am 'Dartmouth Express' from Guildford to Kingswear. ALAN RAWLINGS

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driver David Foale has sent some notes on Welsh coal which concur with Ray Churchill's view in the last Issue. He writes: "GWR locos were certainly built with the 'local' Welsh coal in mind. However, Bluebell experience suggests that it is also ideal for most of our locos. Hypothetically, if we had to choose just one type of coal out of the different sources we have used over the years, I think it would be Welsh. It has the following benefits:

- It is a high calorific value coal, which means although it can be more expensive per ton than some others, less is used with the result that it can actually cost less overall.
- It is slower to catch light, but burns steadily for longer, with the result that a more even firebox temperature is maintained. Some other coals burn instantly, provide heat quickly, and then are gone. Great care is needed, in that holes can also appear very quickly, possibly resulting in cold air being drawn on to the firebox plates. A major cost on heritage railways is boiler/firebox maintenance. One factor is the quickly fluctuating demand for steam, and the more even the firebox temperature the better.
- It makes much less smoke than many other coals. Not unimportant these days given the attention that could be drawn to steam railways and their effect on the environment."

Finally, this time, Table Five shows a run behind double-headed Class 20 diesels on September 27, timed by Sandy Smeaton. As readers will know, I have no problem with pure diesel work; it is when they intrude into the steam domain that I have an issue with. HR



Class 20 D8188 leaves Alresford with a train to Alton an September 16, 2023. DON BENN

TABLE FOUR: PERTH TO STIRLING

Date	Friday, June 4, 1965
Train	7.10 am Aberdeen to Glasgow
Engine	Class A4 4-6-2 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*
Load	6 coaches, 210 tons tare 225 tons gross
Crew	Perth
Recorder	Don Benn
Position	Second coach of six
Weather	Dry and cloudy

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed	gradient
Perth	0.00	0.00	00	00	2 mins late	L/176R
Hilton Jct	2.10	4.00	03	44	56	L/173F
Forgandenny	4.00		05	24	70½/74½	L
Forteviot	6.90		07	47	71½	280/221R
Dunning	9.65		10	12	69	434R
MP 141	10.30		10	51	64	121R
MP 140	11.30		11	50	60	121R
MP 139	12.30		12	53	58	98R
MP 138	13.30		13	57	56	100R
Auchterarder	14.80		14	22	55½	100R
MP 137	14.30		15	03	54	100R
MP 136	15.30		16	12	52½	96R
Gleneagles	15.85	19.00	16	36	53½	108R
MP 135	16.30		17	24	51	101R
Blackford	18.05		19	11	62½	375F
Carsebreck	20.30		21	16	71½/70½	163F
Greenloaning	22.30		22	54	71/72½	912F
Kinbuck	25.50		25	35	70½	L
MP 124	27.30		27	11	76	88F
Dunblane	28.15	31.00	27	58	65½*	212/88F
Bridge of Allen	30.20		29	49	70½	100F
Cornton SB	31.15		30	47	66	L/373R
Stirling	33.05	36.00	33	17	¾ min early	L

* brakes or speed restriction

"Changing crews and taking water at Perth only occupied just over six minutes but we were still two late away and treated to a lightning start out to Hilton Junction at 56mph, which my notebook described as 'fantastic start – utterly thrashed'..."

TABLE FIVE: WORCESTERSHIRE P/WAY TO CHELTENHAM SPA

Date	Friday, September 27, 2024
Train	6.34am Birmingham New Street to Bristol TM
Engine	EE Type 1, 1000hp Bo-Bo DLs, Nos. 20142+20189
Load	11 coaches, 383½ tons tare 395 tons gross
Recorder	Sandy Smeaton from fifth coach
Weather	Dry

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Worcestershire Pkway	0.00	0.00	00	00	2½ late
Abbotswood RR	0.48		01	45	34½
Wadborough LC	1.86		03	35	57
Besford OB	3.34		05	00	67
Abery Hill OB	5.18		06	33	74½
Eckington	6.41		07	35	70½/69½
Nortonside O/A	7.24		08	17	71
Meadowlane OB	8.56		09	24	73½
Bredon OB	9.11		09	52	71½
Northway LC	10.79		11	14	75
Ashchurch	11.30	12.00	11	38	75½
Fiddington OB	12.31		12	28	73/66
Tredington LC	13.38		13	24	67½
Cleeve Road OB	14.73		14	36	67½
Swindon Road LC	16.15		15	53	74
Cheltenham Spa	18.59	19.30	19	54	

Buying power keeps GWRA auctioneer Simon on red alert

IN A display of buying power that defied the fears of many long-time railwayana enthusiasts that the halcyon days of steam nameplates were over, collectors dug deep into their pockets during GW Railwayana's 1000-lot two-day live online sale on November 16/17.

Three plates sold for five-figure sums and seven others exceeded £5000, with heritage modern traction and station totem signs providing powerful support that kept everyone on their toes and auctioneer Simon Turner on red alert throughout. It was a long two days that was followed keenly throughout the movement, and left a number of collectors bemused that, contrary to what many are thinking, the hobby was very much alive and kicking.

At the very top of the tree was *King Edward VIII* from GWR No. 6029 that doubtless raised a few online eyebrows when it went for £15,000, followed by *Thames* from Duke class 3329/3291/9091 that achieved £10,500, while in third place with a realisation of £10,000 came *Western Star* from Britannia Pacific No. 70025.

The GWR kept its foot on the pedal with a trio of classmates in pursuit – *Corfe Castle* from No. 5034 (£9100), *Abergavenny Castle* from No. 5013 (£9000) and *Earl of Plymouth* (£8000) from No. 5049, which was named *Denbigh Castle* when built in 1936 but renamed the following year.

At this point, the Southern Railway got a look-in when *Lyonnesse* (King Arthur No. 30743) went to a new home for £6700, but the GWR refused to lie down and responded with *Odney Manor* from No. 7828 and *Lord Palmer* from Saint class No. 2975, which went under the hammer for £6100 and £5600 respectively. BR again entered the arena with a £5500 realisation for *Excalibur* (Class 5MT No.73081), and then it was back to the GWR with no fewer than five Hall class representatives, comprising *Mytton Hall* (No. 5996), *Enville Hall* (No. 4922), *Broughton Hall* (No. 4907), *Albrighton Hall* (No. 4984) and *Ickenham Hall* (No. 5944), all in a tightly-knit group at respectively £3600, the following two at £3200 each, and the final duo at £3000 apiece.

Bringing up the rear was *Gilwell Park* from LNER B17 No. 61646 that fetched £2500, leaving as non-sellers under the hammer *Knight of St. Patrick* (GWR Star class No. 4013), *Willington Hall* (GWR No. 7927), *Prince Albert* (LNER D11 No. 62663), and *Thomas Hardy* (BR Britannia No. 70034), although the Star, Hall and D11 plates sold after close of play for £5500, £2750, and £5100 respectively.



Another five-figure success

Crossing the divide into heritage modern traction, we find one five-figure success, *Western Thunderer* from 1962-built Class 52 diesel-hydraulic D1011, which sold with one of its cabside numberplates for £14,500, shadowed by *Defiance* (Class 50 D449/50049) at £9600 and *Howe* (Class 50 D423/50023) within striking distance at £9400.



Station totem signs are now demanding attention, but we will temporarily ignore their call to round-off the locomotive categories, starting with GWR cabside numberplates. Pride of place in this sector with a selling price of £3600 goes to 3441 that was carried by two engines, a City class 4-4-0 named *City of Winchester* and subsequently by a Bird class 4-4-0 named *Blackbird*, closely followed at £3200 by 5055 from Castle class *Earl of Eldon*, formerly named *Lydford Castle*.

Smokebox numberplates were in similar financial territory, headed by 70038 from BR Standard Britannia *Robin Hood* that fetched £3600, aided and abetted by 35024 (SR Merchant Navy Pacific *East Asiatic Company*) that was within sniffing distance with a price of £3500, and 46248 from another Pacific, LMS Princess Coronation *City of Leeds* (£3300).

Finally, the accolade for the top worksplate went to a diesel representative, a 1958 English Electric plate from Class 23 D5900 for which the winning bid was £2900.

Onward then to platform signs, and to four totems from four different regions that led a very large pack: BR(W) Caerleon and BR(NE) Whitby Town at £6700 and £6600, BR(S) Berwick (as in Berwick, east Sussex, not the one on the English/Scottish border), which fetched £4600, and BR(M) Bakewell that sold for £4500. The highest-priced SR target sign with a realisation of £4100 was Ryde St Johns on the Isle of Wight.

Still with enamels and stations, a BR(NE) 'British Transport Police' doorplate sold for £2500, and a similar item from the Eastern Region, delightfully titled 'Trainmens Relief Room,' for £2300. Signalling was topped by an LSWR ex-North Cornwall Line Tyer's No. 6 Port Isaac Road-St. Kew Highway single line tablet (£2900), timepieces by a 10in dial clock supplied in 1850 to the LBSCR that was last in railway use at the 42-lever Newhaven Harbour South signalbox that closed in 2019 (£2900), and paintings by a Don Breckon station scene of GWR 0-4-2T No. 1427 at Heathfield on the Moretonhampstead-Newton Abbot route (£2700). Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).

"It went really well, with brisk bidding, and we appear to have a market that is different from other auctions," said Simon. "I was particularly pleased with the totems, of which there were 111 in the sale. It was a big ask to sell every one, but we did so."

LMS and Midland Region top leader board

THE LMS and BR's London Midland Region took the honours in a 250-lot railwayana auction held by Arthur Johnson of Nottingham on November 8. At the top of the leader board was the smokebox numberplate from Royal Scot No. 46122 *Royal Ulster Rifleman* that went for £3400, followed by the smokebox from Jubilee No. 45554 *Ontario* that achieved £2500.

Two Midland Region direction signs for the same station of Piccadilly also shone, one with a right-pointing arrow at £2100 and the second with a left-pointing arrow for £2000, and a similar BR(M) item for Victoria station joined in with a realisation of £1250.



Totem station signs were another fertile area for the Midland Region, thanks to Romiley at £1200 and both Bollington and Oxenholme each at £1050, although this trio had to cede victory to BR(NE) Pontefract Tanshelf that sold for £2000.

On the worksplate front, a 1960 North British Locomotive Co example (works No. 27971) went for £2300 and a 1950 Metropolitan-Vickers plate for £1250, while a collection of signal and line items, including lever plates identifying such locations as Ambergate and Stanton, realised £1500, and an LMS watchman's cabin 12in dial trunk clock £850. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 25% (inc VAT).



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Totem bandwagon just keeps rolling along

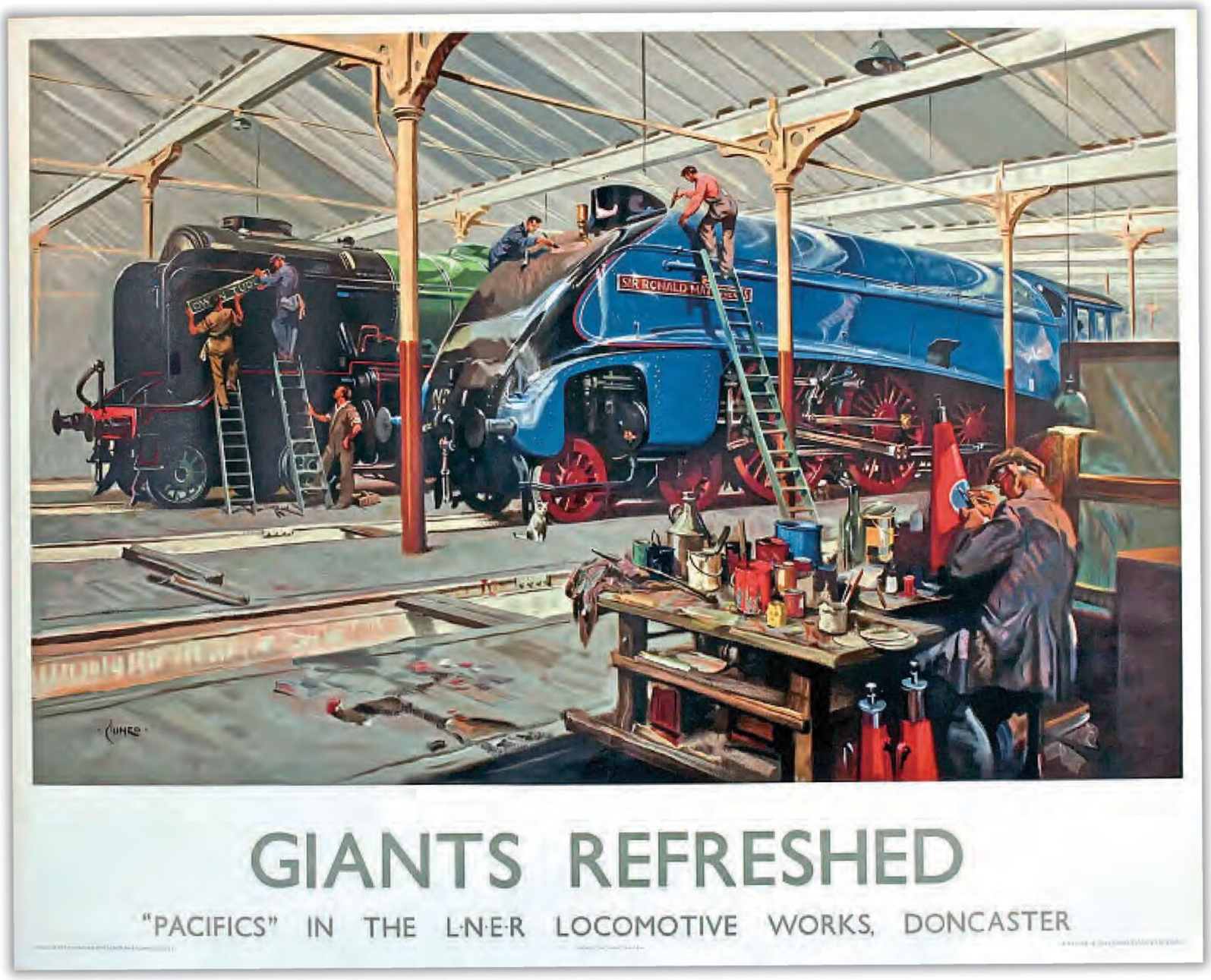
THE totem sign bandwagon – a major feature of a host of auctions recently – was in top gear at Talisman Railwayana's saleroom auction in Newark on November 30, thanks to the highest realisation of £5700 being achieved by a BR(NE) example from Thornaby. This station, between Darlington and Middlesbrough on the Tees Valley Line, was the location of shed 51L, a latecomer to the engine depot scene that opened in June 1958.

Steam nameplates that went to new homes comprised *Dante* from LNER A2 Pacific No. 60513 at £5200, *Newton Hall* (GWR No. 5909), which fetched £3100 and was followed by one of its cabsides at £800, and a second LNER representative, *Milton* from B17 No. 61635, that went under the hammer for £2500, and still in the steam category, the smokebox numberplate from LMS Princess Coronation No. 46225 *Duchess of Gloucester*, sold for £4800.

Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).

"We had a fantastic attendance and so many lovely comments," said TRA's Roger Phipps as collectors filed away from the last remaining saleroom railwayana auction.

See the Railwayana column in next month's *Heritage Railway* magazine for further details of the auction's realisations, including yet more totem prices, and for steam enthusiasts, chime whistles from two Pacifics, and a smokebox numberplate from the BR Standard era.



An iconic poster by Terence Cuneo (above) titled 'Giants Refreshed' sold for £3150 (excluding buyer's premium of 29%) at a vintage poster sale by held by Onslows on November 29. Commissioned by the LNER in 1947 and issued by BR after Nationalisation, it depicted A4 Pacific *Sir Ronald Matthews* and a second 4-6-2, brand-new A2 *Owen Tudor*, in Doncaster Works. ONSLOWS

A new year is just around the corner

It's nearly 2025, and a number of specialist railwayana auction houses have released their sale dates for the entire year, or where indicated, for just earlier in the year. They are:

January
- 14-28 Paperchase
- 17-27 Great Northern Railwayana 'Alpha' sale
- 18 Thirsk Railwayana

February
- 17-23 JustaClickago
- 22 Transport Auctions of London

March
- 1 Great Central Railwayana
- 15/16 GW Railwayana
- 27-April 6 Great Northern Railwayana *(further dates to be announced)*

April
- 12 Thirsk Railwayana
- 14-29 Paperchase

May
- 17 Talisman Railwayana
- 19-26 JustaClickAgo

June
- 7 Great Central Railwayana
- 21 Thirsk Railwayana

July
- 5 Transport Auctions of London
- 14-29 Paperchase
- 19/20 GW Railwayana

August
- 18-24 JustaClickAgo

September
- 6 Great Central Railwayana
- 20 Thirsk Railwayana

October
- 14-28 Paperchase
- 18 Talisman Railwayana
- 25 Transport Auctions of London

November
- 15/16 GW Railwayana
- 17-23 JustaClickAgo

December
- 6 Great Central Railwayana

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Models specialist heads the charts with Hall plate

A SELECTION of railwayana that went under the hammer at an auction held by Thornaby-based model trains specialist Vectis on November 28 resulted in the sale's top realisation being achieved by a nameplate from GWR No. 4954 *Plaish Hall*, which went under the hammer for £2200. The 4-6-0, named after a Grade I-listed Tudor country house in south Shropshire, was built in August 1929 and withdrawn from the Wolverhampton shed of Oxley (2B) in November 1964.

Replica cabside and smokebox numberplates were also part of the lot, but the nameplate was stamped 'L Lot 254 No. 54' on the rear, indicating it was the left-hand plate from the Hall.

The runner-up was from more familiar Vectis territory, an O-gauge model of Britannia Pacific No. 70009 *Alfred the Great* that achieved £1500, with third place going to an O-gauge LMS ex-Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway Class 7F 2-8-0 No. 53801 that fetched £500. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 22½% (+ VAT).

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Home win for heritage modern traction

A COLLECTION of 650 colour slides of five classes of diesels introduced by BR between 1957 and 1961 realised £600 in an online auction held by photographs and paperwork specialist JustaClickAgo on November 18-24.

Taken mostly in the 1980s, they were the work of published photographer Gareth Shadbolt and featured Type 1 Class 20 (originally numbered from D8000), and Type 2 Classes 25 (D5151 onwards), 26 (D5300 onwards), 27 (from D5347) and 31, the first of which was numbered D5500.

Overseas traction took over at this point, with steam to the fore. Top of this sector came 360 colour slides taken in 1989 of working steam in the sugar mills and plantations of Cuba that sold for £360, with 106 slides of Austrian steam in 1969 close behind at £350. It was then back across the Atlantic, and to 260 colour slides of working steam taken in 2001 in Cuba, Ecuador and Venezuela (£320), and then a return home, with 140 black-and-white images featuring mostly BR Southern Region steam in the 1960s that fetched £310. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 18%.

Brothers take over TAL auction house

GUY Bowden and his brother Ross have taken over Transport Auctions of London following the decision by previous principal Michael Wickham to retire after nine years and 27 auctions.

The south-east London-based brothers are the organisers of transport collectables fairs held twice a year at Elstree, and currently each works in the engineering department of a London bus operator. Guy has been running the Transport Collectables website since 2021, and they also jointly own Bowden Publishing, which specialises in bus and transport-related books.

"It will be very much business as usual with TAL, although as we settle in, we expect to make some small changes, including the feasibility of introducing timed auctions for items of smaller value, and to promote the business as certain events around the country," said Ross.

"We also expect to keep the usual mix of both London and provincial bus and transport-related items, and also railwayana. We are looking forward to the challenge of continuing and building upon what Michael has created since 2015."

After handing over the baton, Michael told *Heritage Railway* of his nine years at the TAL helm: "It has been hard work but also lots of fun, and we have enjoyed meeting so many great people and examining so many interesting items, and we are very grateful to all our customers and friends for their business and support.

"Guy and Ross are stalwarts of the transport collectables scene and will be familiar to many, and they have extensive knowledge and experience of our market. They will be worthy custodians of TAL."



Bowing out: Michael Wickham in the familiar surroundings of London Transport railwayana. He has sold his Transport Auctions of London auction house to brothers Guy and Ross Bowden. TAL

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Whiteout at Durham: snow adorns the front of LMS 'Black Five' No. 45407 *The Lancashire Fusilier* as it passes through Durham with the Railway Touring Company's excursion to the Edinburgh Christmas markets on November 23. While the adverse weather had caused travel chaos, resulting in cancellations by some of the commuter services, steam put them to shame by arriving on time despite an 18-minute delay departing Berwick-upon-Tweed. CONNOR BELL

December

21 'Thames Valley Christmas Cracker'
Rare freight lines tour departing Burton-on-Trent.
Locos: 2x Class 57s TBA. PT

21 'Edinburgh Christmas Market'
York, Edinburgh Waverley and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

21 'Santa Steam Express'
Circular tour from London Victoria.
Loco: 34046 *Braunton*. SD

30 'Bo'ness Christmas Explorer'
Bo'ness, Edinburgh Waverley and return.
Loco: 37403 *Isle of Mull*, 47712 *Lady Diana Spencer*. SRPS

January 2025

10 'The Capital's Scot'
Euston, Edinburgh, King's Cross.
Loco: 87002 *Royal Sovereign*. IC

17 'Emperor of the North'
Crewe, Carlisle and return.
***Locos: 45118 The Royal Artilleryman*, 50050 *Fearless*. IC**

18 Mick Tester Memorial Tour
Hastings, Winchester and return.
DEMU: 1001. HD

18 'The East Anglian Freighter'
Rare tracks tour from London Liverpool Street.
Locos: 2x Class 20s, Class 37 TBA. UKRT

24 'West Highland Pullman' Day 1
St Albans City, Fort William.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

25 'West Highland Pullman' Day 2
Fort William, Mallaig and return.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

26 'West Highland Pullman' Day 3
Fort William, St Albans City.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

February

1 'The Master Cutler'
Leeds, St Pancras and return.
Loco: 45118 *The Royal Artilleryman*. IC

1 'The Cumbrian Mountain Express'
Euston, Carlisle and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
Loco: TBC. RTC

8 'The Cumbrian Mountain Express'
Manchester Piccadilly, Carlisle and return. Diesel-hauled from Preston to Manchester.
Loco: TBA. RTC

8 'The Capital Highlander'
Carlisle, Inverness and return.
Locos: 37401 *Mary Queen of Scots*, 37403 *Isle of Mull*. SRPS

15 'The Verney Venturer'
Rare tracks tour from Bristol Temple Meads.
Locos: 2x Class 33s TBA. PT

15 'The Valentines White Rose'
King's Cross, York and return. Diesel-hauled from Peterborough to London.
Loco: 'Black Five' TBA. RTC

20 The Golden Age of Travel by Steam
Circular tour from London Victoria.
Loco: 35028 *Clan Line*. BEL

21 'West Highland Pullman' Day 1
Watford Junction, Fort William.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

22 'West Highland Pullman' Day 2
Fort William, Mallaig and return.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

22 'The Cumbrian Mountain Express'
Euston, Carlisle and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth (outward) and Preston (return).
Loco: TBA. RTC

22 'West Highland Pullman' Day 3
Fort William, Watford Junction.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

The information in this list was correct at the time of going to press. We strongly advise you confirm details of a particular trip with the promoter concerned.

Tour promoters

A1SLT	A1 Steam Locomotive Trust 01325 488215	RTC	Railway Touring Company 01553 661500
BEL	Belmond Pullman 0845 0772 222	SD	Steam Dreams 01483 209888
BLS	Branch Line Society branchline.uk	SRPS	Scottish Railway Preservation Society 0131 202 1033
HD	Hastings Diesels hastingsdiesels.co.uk	SR	Statesman Rail 0345 310 2458
IC	Intercity 0800 038 5364	ST	Saphos Trains 0800 038 5320
MP	Midland Pullman midlandpullman.com	UKRT	UK Railtours 01438 715050
NB	Northern Belle northernbelle.co.uk	VT	Vintage Trains 0121 708 4960
PT	Pathfinder Tours 01453 835414	WCR	West Coast Railways 0333 996 6720

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ROBIN JONES, EDITOR

New-build GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange* heads 'The North Norfolkman' daytime dining and passenger service past Sheringham golf course en route for Holt on Sunday, November 17. This was the locomotive's final day in service after a hugely successful three-month loan spell on the Poppy Line.
ALEXANDER PAYTON

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THE GREAT CENTRAL'S WINTER TONIC

The Last Hurrah has become a year-end fixture for the many who flock to Leicestershire for one final fix of steam and diesel traction before Christmas. **Owen Hayward** speaks to the Great Central Railway's general manager Malcolm Holmes to find out what lies in store for the year ahead.

The Last Hurrah could be considered a fairly low-key gala when compared to some events in the sector. Rather than bringing in swarms of visiting locomotives, it relies entirely on the Great Central Railway's home fleet. Despite this, the weekend of November 16/17 saw increased footfall over the same event 12 months previous, which has helped the railway round off a year of celebration quite nicely.

"Over the two days, we saw more than 2500 people pay to travel on services which was a significant increase on the figures for 2023," observed general manager Malcolm Holmes, adding that initially he was "anxious about the appeal of this year's event given we only had four steam locomotives out. Last year we had six running, plus the diesels, but since then BR 9F No. 92214 has been withdrawn and BR(M) 8F No. 48305 was stopped for maintenance. We also had to substitute the planned appearance of Class 45 D123 with Class 20 D8001 in the days beforehand too."

He continued: "We are fortunate that the event falls at a time when people are looking for that last hit of steam before Christmas fully takes over. The timing would appear to appeal to many. Equally, it's nice to do something with just our home fleet locomotives; we are fortunate to have what we do and that people are fond enough of our home fleet locomotives to keep coming back."

With the success clearly demonstrating a desire for events at an otherwise quiet time of year, Malcolm confirmed that a similar event will take place in March 2025. "It won't quite be The First Hurrah, given we have a gala in January, but it will still have that gala feel," he said.

Freight expectations

It goes without saying that one of the biggest draws of the GCR's galas is its ability to put out a variety of freight workings, with both the expanding tanker and award-winning van rakes putting in appearances throughout. With passenger and freight workings combined, there were up to 20 departures from

WR 4-6-0 No. 6990 *Witherslack Hall* rounds the curve at Kinchley Lane with the 11.05am from Loughborough on November 17. NICK GILLIAM





Right: BR Class 37 D6700 passes through Woodthorpe with the 12.20pm vans from Loughborough to Swithland loop. NICK GILLIAM

Left: BR 5MT No. 73156 arrives at Loughborough Central in a timeless scene captured on November 17, a moment that could be taken from the past. General manager Malcolm Holmes is hoping that the introduction of a new explorer ticket in 2025 will help visitors better learn the history of the railway during their journeys. MARTIN CREESE

Loughborough Central each day; something few other railways could achieve with similar levels of success.

It will not have gone without notice, however, that 2024 has seen what is perhaps the line's most recognisable consist – the 'Windcutters' – in absentia. Because of the wealth of wagons available, it has reached a point where it is impossible to include everything at once and so each year, one of the rakes will be sidelined. However, he upside of this absence, is that it creates a window of time to facilitate repairs and other maintenance, which is exactly what has been done to the mineral wagons.

Philip Herrick of the Windcutter working group said it has been a busy 12 months for its volunteers, and that the downtime of the rake has eased the load on the carriage and wagon department in terms of arranging the fitness-to run exams for all the wagons each year.

-We started the year with B279721 in the shed. This was refloored and finished as B114733 by May, aided by some new members who have joined the regulars. B279711 arrived in April and had a new floor welded in, as well as patch repairs to corroded bodywork, being finished as B266560 by August.

"B279723 had arrived in June and saw its wheelsets swapped with the ex-Churnet Valley Railway steam heat van, which was acquired in 2020 and had been built on a mineral wagon chassis in 1962. As with the other two wagons, it also had new metalwork welded in that has also enabled the doors to open again.

"In total, we are expecting to have completed three major overhauls and three minor overhauls and repaints by the year's end, which is a great effort by our small team."

The Windcutters will make their first appearance of 2025 at the January 23-26 Winter Steam Gala, with one of the other freight rakes takings its place 'on the bench' for the remainder of the year, though Malcolm advised as we went to press that he was not yet sure which set it would be.

Going Great Western

The January gala will see the Great Central go Great Western for a weekend, with new-build 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange* having been previously announced as the first guest. It will arrive directly from the Battlefield Line at Shackerstone, having spent the festive season working Santa specials, and where it will also appear at the January 11/12 Winter Warmer Gala.

Joining the Grange and GCR's resident WR Modified Hall class No. 6990 *Witherslack Hall* will be GWR 5600 0-6-2T No. 6695 from the Swindon & Cricklade Railway, making its fourth trip away from home in 12 months having appeared at the West Somerset, Mid-Hants and Dean Forest railways during 2024.

However, for many, the star might be 2884 class 2-8-0 No. 3850 in GWR wartime black. Having only returned to steam at the end of the summer, this will be its first visit away from its Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway base following the completion of overhaul – a rare bucking of recent trends where such locomotives normally spend a year at home before entertaining gala hires. This will not be the first time No. 3850 will have visited Leicestershire, it having appeared at the GCR's winter gala in the January of 2011, albeit wearing unlined early-crest BR livery at that time.

Furthermore, Hudswell Clarke-built Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 1752 *Robert* (currently masquerading as J94 No. 68067) will be returning to the railway for the first time since 2022, when it left on hire to the Llangollen and more recently the Embsay & Bolton Abbey railways.

"With at least four of the home locomotives operating alongside the three Western egion visitors, as well as freight running including the return of the 'Windcutters,' it's certainly going to be an attractive weekend," Malcolm said.

Reflection and the future

The success of The Last Hurrah has rounded off a year of celebration for the GCR, which in March marked the 125th anniversary of the opening of the original GCR's London extension, connecting Sheffield to the capital's Marylebone via Nottingham and Leicester.

"As a year, our first half was painful and dominated by the need for redundancies and restructuring," explained Malcolm.

"Financially, we are in a much better position, although we will still make a loss for the current financial year. Thankfully, it will not be as bad as it could have, but to have



No. 73156 runs fast through Quorn & Woodhouse station while 2MT No. 78019 waits to emerge from the siding beyond to follow the 5MT to Loughborough Central. MARTIN CREESE

got to this point we did have to go through that hard period, but that in turn has enabled us to reach these more positive times.

"As well as the success of The Last Hurrah, our Santa trains are also performing better than 2023 – so much so that we are running two sets each day to cater for demand. Our on-board dining services have also really picked up this year and they are now something we can really be proud of.

"Our driver experience courses are also doing well. I was worried about them earlier on, but uptake did improve. I think we can still achieve more with these and will be reviewing the packages offered to make sure they are the best they can be."

During 2025, the line will also continue to foster partnerships and collaborative working between the GCR, its Nottingham counterpart and the Mountsorrel branch. The latter will see use at some events during the year, as well as on most Sundays.

With reunification still very much on the horizon, there will be further joint events that connect Loughborough and Ruddington, with Malcolm confirming that two such occasions are already in the 2025 diary. One will be based around the approaching reunification of the two railways, while another in July will form part of the Railway 200 celebrations. "The relationship between the two organisations is really good at the moment, and it's something I have been really concentrating on since being appointed general manager. I'm pleased to say I don't think it has ever been stronger, and we'll keep that up as we look to becoming one in the future.

"Reunification is still in the planning application process. If that is approved, then we have to turn to the big questions such as how do we raise the funds required to manifest the project and what infrastructure is needed to deliver it all. Then there is, of course, the question of where does the locomotive shed get moved to? There's some really good momentum behind it all at the moment, but there's still a way to go."

Steaming ahead

Within that very locomotive shed, overhauls are progressing well. BR standard Class 7 4-6-2 No. 70013 *Oliver Cromwell* iscurrently on hold awaiting the return of the boiler, which is undergoing contract work nearby at Locomotive Services Ltd. Once this returns and is put in the frames, the job of reassembly can begin; no date is set for completion,although Malcolm said that with a fair wind he hoped it might be in the latter half of 2025.



No. 78019 romps away from Loughborough with a Leicester North-bound working. PAUL MAYO/GCR

While engineers take a break from No. 70013, some work has been carried out on the iconic Robinson O4 2-8-0 No. 63601. Introduced by the original GCR and built in 1912 as No. 102, this particular locomotive has been out of service since the expiration of its boiler ticket in 2012. Malcolm emphasised his keenness to see it back soon as a vital part of the GCR's story, while also acknowledging its popularity among enthusiasts. Work has recently concentrated on the bottom end with the axleboxes and journals being machined, which could ultimately see the frames lowered onto the wheels by the year's end.

"That will then free up space for the 9F (No. 92214) to move into the shed. I'm aware that visitors have missed having access to this building and I'm confident that at some point soon we will have a viewing point available again, which will include access to the cab of the 9F while it awaits its time for overhaul.

"The GCR's supporting charity (the David Clarke Railway Trust) only owns three locomotives – the 9F, Hall, and 8F. The latter is the next to go out of service, though that isn't due to be until 2029. That said, I would like to see No. 92214 overhauled in time to replace the 8F when that time comes, but like everything, there are so many factors to consider – it's not been forgotten, though."

While full shed access won't be available year-round, tours will be run by the Boscastle restoration group during events, as was done at both The Last Hurrah and autumn steam galas as a fundraising venture for the overhaul of the namesake West Country light Pacific (No. 34039). As with *Oliver Cromwell*, the boiler is at Tyseley Locomotive Works for contract overhaul, while volunteers in Loughborough have been repairing boiler cladding and making new parts to replace those stolen during a raid of a storage container in July 2022. This work has focused largely on completing the tender's braking system, such as machining a new brake shaft lever.

The overhaul of SR N15 No. 777 *Sir Lamiel* also continues under the care of the 5305 Locomotive Association, with the King Arthur



Derby lightweight railcar *Iris* continues to ply its trade on loan to the GCR, seen at Swithland Junction on November 17 with a parcels van in tow. PAUL MAYO/GCR



Substituting for Class 45 D123, Class 20 D8001 clears Swithland viaduct with the tank train on November 17. PAUL MAYO/GCR

The star of Snowdrift at Bleath Gill, BR Standard 2MT 2-6-0 No. 78018 works the 11.25am tanker train towards Quorn & Woodhouse on November 16. PAUL MAYO/GCR

class 4-6-0's frames seeing painting completed over the summer. New valve liners were cast and sent for machining, while the boiler has seen the front tubeplate repaired, ready for the fitting of new tubes. Sadly, there is still some way to go before it can return to steam, and it will almost certainly miss out on running for its centenary year in 2025.

At The Last Hurrah, the 5305LA launched an appeal to raise the £250,000 it requires to kick-start the overhaul of its LMS 'Black Five' No. 5305 *Alderman A.E. Draper*, last operational in 2021. A regular on both heritage and main lines, substantial amounts of the boiler's backhead needs replacing as does three quarters of the outer firebox wrapper. One-off donations are encouraged with offers of some merchandise for pledges of £20 and above; for details, visit 5305.onlineweb.shop

Meeting expectations

As costs continue to rise, Malcolm is looking at ways to encourage new visitors, as well as keeping things fresh for returning ones. "We will continue to focus on revenue streams and how best to maximise those," he explained. "All our events this year performed very well, but the brutal truth is that things are still expensive.

"Next year we are introducing a new explorer ticket; as a railway, we've perhaps not been the best at interpreting our story very well. As people look to get the best value for money, we need to make sure we are offering more than a train ride and steer them towards learning what we are all about, and that is where this will benefit us. In the modern world, how many people nowadays actually see and read a timetable, for example? The ticket will curate a dedicated itinerary that will tell them what to look for and where to get off to see certain things. The hope is this will keep them with us longer as they do more than a simple train ride up and down, with the potential benefit being more secondary spend.

"Overall, I'm happy with how 2024 has gone but there is still much to do. We are, however, heading in the right direction." HR



D6700 gets the road as it starts off from Swithland sidings with the award-winning van train. PAUL MAYO/GCR



While the 'Windcutter' rake has benefitted from a year off, volunteers have been carrying out further restoration of some mineral wagons and repairs on running wagons, including new floors and body metalwork. PHILIP HERRICK



The Bahamas Locomotive Society's 50-ton crane helps lighten the load during the bridge project.

BRIDGE 27 THE THIRD!

History was made during Keighley & Worth Valley Railway's recent bridge replacement project, as **Sally Clifford** reports, with pictures by **Tom Marshall**.

The completion of the latest bridge renewal scheme on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway will go down in history.

According to James Barlow, the railway's chief civil engineer, it is the KWVR's largest volunteer-led civil engineering project, involving at least 100 people ranging in age from 16 to 75, and uniting a breadth of skills and expertise.

For James, a volunteer on the KWVR whose full-time role is with Network Rail, the replacement of Bridge 27 brings to conclusion a decade of planning and preparation.

"I was a bit emotional, because over the last six months I have been working and coming home and doing Bridge 27 stuff," he said.

"Having so many people chipping in has made it much easier. The scale of the project was beyond what any of us expected. I know how hard it is, and I am really, really proud of the fact we did it with volunteers. There are many people who basically did all sorts of things and put their lives on hold," said James, who as we chatted was catching up for lost time in preparing for the arrival of his first child. He estimates that more than 6000 hours of voluntary work were undertaken during the course of the £1.25 million project which involved the removal of the bridge, built in 1889 as part of the reconstruction of an earlier structure installed in 1867 for the opening of the line.

The scheme involving designer Cass Hayward, main contractor Beaver Bridges, contractor Keller and the Environment Agency was made possible after the KWVR was awarded £1 million from the Government's Community Ownership Fund, part of the Levelling Up programme.

Work began a year ago on the bridge, which is located on the mile-long stretch between Haworth and Oxenhope on the five-mile heritage line which found international fame in the original The Railway Children movie and, more recently, in The Railway Children Return.

"We have been on and off site for about a year," said James.

Preparation and piling works were carried out at the start of the scheme, which began in May when 12 reinforced concrete pillars were installed behind the existing structure and the rail was replaced, allowing services to continue. Volunteers restored the rails, enabling the summer service to run and the engineers to start work in September.

It was after the last train passed over the bridge on Sunday, September 1 that the groundwork began in earnest, with volunteers removing the track and the old bridge ready for contractors to restart work the following day.

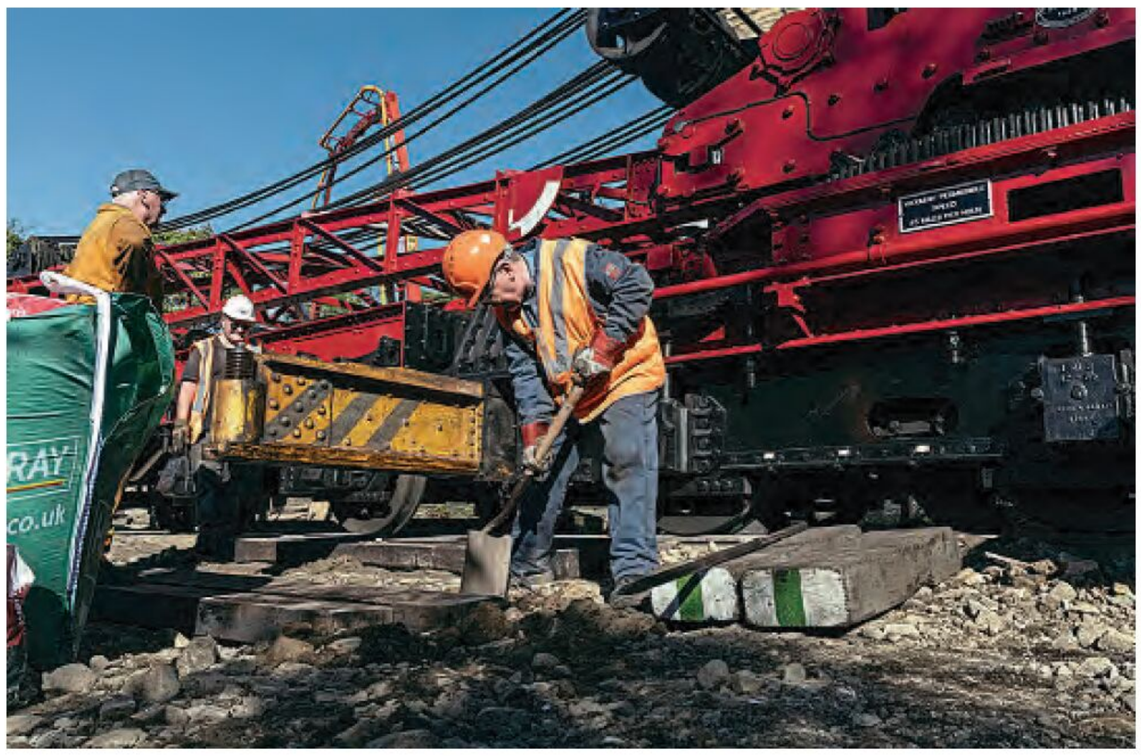
Assisting with the scheme was the Bahamas Locomotive Society's 50-ton steam crane. The railway's own 10-ton Grafton permanent way steam crane was also pressed into service lifting rails onto the replacement bridge; it had re-entered service on May 17 after a swift 10-yearly overhaul following expiration of its boiler certificate on February 5, 2023. Its last job before then was to remove old rails from the same bridge. Its overhaul had been completed in the goods shed at Oakworth and the workshop at Haworth.

Due to its size, the deck of the bridge, weighing 50 tons, was accompanied by a police escort during delivery to its destination in the car park at Wydean Weaving, ready for installation.

As well as the volunteers, James acknowledged the many others involved in this impressive scheme which gave volunteers



Volunteers set to work on the Bridge 27 project.



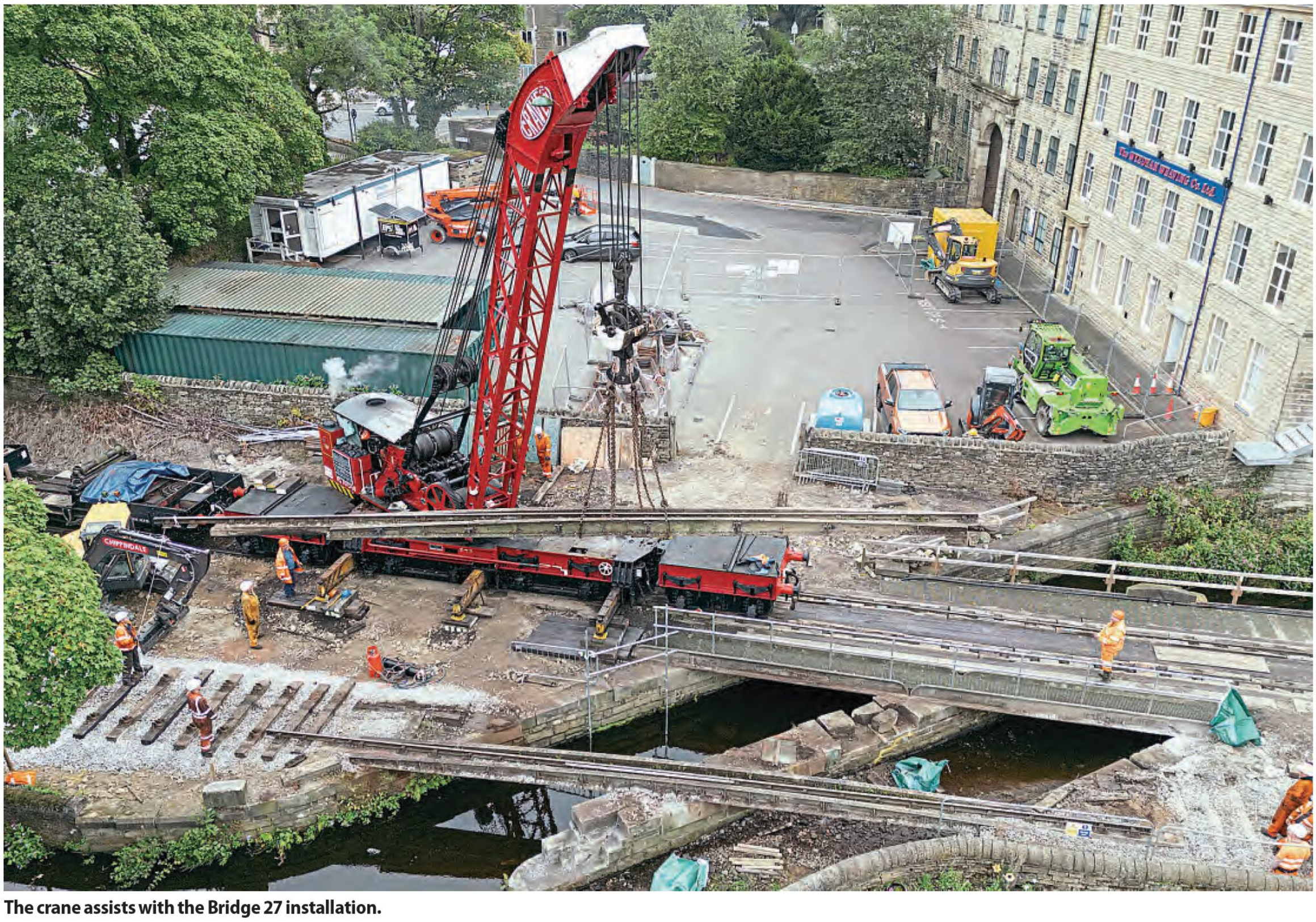
Preparations underway during the Bridge 27 scheme.



Work continues with the new bridge in place.



Spectators watch as the replacement bridge is lifted into place.



The crane assists with the Bridge 27 installation.

the opportunity to learn invaluable knowledge, as well as on the job training. "We have used it to train a lot of people," he said.

The growth in volunteers involved in the KWVR is certainly promising in securing the future of heritage railways.

"When I started here there were only two or three people under 30; now, we have 15 to 25 people under 30. We are lucky we have had the right volunteers coming through the door at the right time," James added.

Josh Monks, who began volunteering for the KWVR three years ago, was involved with the administration and system safety planning for the bridge scheme. For the 22-year-old from Haworth, this was familiar territory as his full-time day job involves rail safety solutions.

As well as preparing documents for the project, Josh also had the opportunity to get hands-on with the labouring gangs.

He said that working on the documents, and on site, has given him a greater understanding, as well as transferable skills for his day job.

"For me, it gets me out of the house, because I work from home most of the time and this helps to interact with people from all walks of life. We have people who are in the railway industry and people who aren't, so it gets you talking to all sorts of people," he said.

Volunteering was a natural progression for Josh, who hails from a family of railway enthusiasts. He was 14 when he began volunteering at the Helston Railway in Cornwall, where he grew up. Studying for his degree in High Speed Rail and Infrastructure at the National College for Advanced Transport & Infrastructure in Doncaster brought him north.

"It's keeping the story alive. One of the things I enjoy about the railway is sitting in the mess room having a brew and hearing all those stories they have," he said.

Experience and skill sharing is imperative according to the KWVR's Chief Mechanical Engineer, John Reddyhoff. A volunteer on the KWVR for 55 years, John's vast experience and knowledge was gained through a railway career that included overseeing lifting operations.

John, who helps to deliver training courses for BESTT (the Boiler and Engineering Skills Training Trust), which provides skilled training to keep steam heritage working safely and complying with regulations, said: "I have been involved with lifting operations for a number of years. I was involved with lifting operations in workshops and on site for a large part of my working career.



No. 75078 trundles over the new track.

"The scale of the project was beyond what any of us expected. I know how hard it is, and I am really, really proud of the fact we did it with volunteers. There are many people who basically did all sorts of things and put their lives on hold..."

"I built up that knowledge and, in my time, I have drawn on the knowledge from people who had done it before, so it is not just down to working with one person – it is collective input from all the people you have met in your life and, really, from their experiences as well as your own.

"In some cases they have stories about things they have done, and catching that knowledge is very important."

Working on the project, John was able to share his expertise with the volunteers. "I am keen on getting knowledge written down and explaining not just what you do but why you do it.

"At the planning stage we were documenting what we were going to do, how we were going to do it, the risks and how we manage those risks, so throughout that stage, you are passing on knowledge because you are explaining to people why you do what you do," he said. "It has been good on this project to see the large number of younger volunteers getting involved, and not just doing the physical work, although that is very important, but getting involved in the organisation because there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes to make the project effective, that we have a bridge that is designed properly, and the operation to install it is safe and efficient."

John added that the enthusiasm and commitment of the young volunteers involved in the project was infectious.

"We need to operate the KWVR so it goes on forever, and make sure that knowledge is passed on." HR



BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75078 travels along the line on September 20 bearing the special headboard to commemorate the project's completion.



The team involved in the historic bridge replacement project.

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Blazing saddles: Accurascale revives OO Austerities



PERHAPS one of the unsung heroes of preservation and even BR, the Hunslet Austerity 0-6-0ST is one of the most instantly-recognisable tank locomotives in the country, with about 485 built and nearly 60 surviving in the heritage sector.

No stranger to the model railway world, with Kitmaster introducing the first kit in 1961 and Dapol making the first ready-to-run example in 1998, the Austerity is soon to hit the shelves anew. Accurascale has revealed a new tooling suite that caters for many of the variations the class that have been missed by previous releases from other manufacturers.

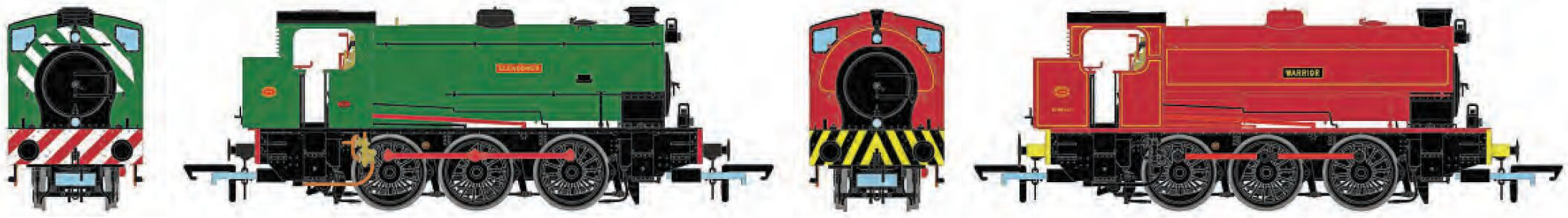
The Accurascale Austerity takes the spirit of the real locomotive; designed to move heavy trains with the minimum of fuss, a weight of nearly 250g, combined with a powerful coreless motor, ensures that these models will do just that. Backed up by an on-board stay-alive power bank, it gives the Accurascale Austerity the reliability to carry on, moving over imperfect track, while keeping the sounds playing through its pre-fitted twin speakers and the flickering firebox illuminating the highly detailed cab interior.

From the LNER modifications to the bunkers and tank steps, the NCB and Hunslet draughting changes, the cut-down cabs of the NCB locomotives working on the Philadelphia system in County Durham and even preservation era modifications, the manufacturer's tooling will have the capability of covering most modifications since the introduction of the type.



A total of six locomotives are available in the first batch, with preserved examples represented by Nos. 3810 *Glendower* (South Devon Railway) and Dean Forest Railway-based 3823 *Warrior*, both in variations of NCB schemes. These can be ordered direct from the manufacturer or its approved retailers. An Accurascale exclusive model will be announced in early 2025.

The RRP starts at £149.95 for DC-ready versions, with release expected in the second quarter of 2026.



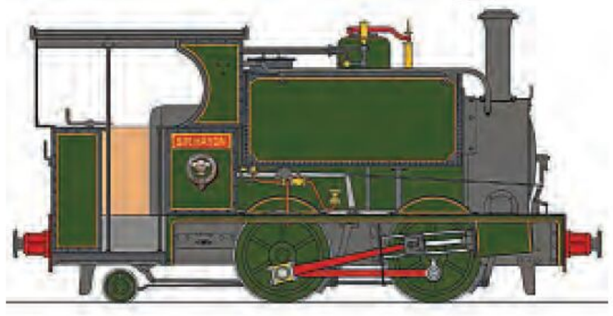
Corris Falcon for Accucraft Live Steam range

FOLLOWING the great success of the Accucraft UK Talyllyn Railway models of Fletcher Jennings duo Nos. 1 *Talyllyn* and 2 *Dolgoch*, the live steam manufacturer has aptly chosen Hughes Falcon 0-4-2ST No. 3 *Sir Haydn* to be the third 32mm model in this range.

With the 0-4-2T Hughes Falcons Nos. 3 and 10 having stolen the show at events at both its home line and the neighbouring Talyllyn Railway this summer, it was surely only a matter of time before the design would become immortalised in a smaller scale. Internally gas-fired, the cab layout will be presented similarly to that of the manufacturer's Peckett models with the gas tank across the back of the cab. This will be easily removable to extract the gas jet should it become blocked.

The standard Accucraft water filler turret on the rear of the boiler will be fitted with the water gauge visible through the right-hand cab door, while a lubricator will be situated in the left-hand side of the cab. The reverse lever is set to be conveniently located just forward of the right-hand side cab door, while the steam regulator will turn through a right angle and is to be placed in the left-hand side of the cab, which will reflect the later Corris and early preserved Talyllyn eras of the prototype.

The model will be highly detailed with rivets and castings. It is anticipated that an alternative set of buffer beams will be included, which will represent the Corris era couplings without the Talyllyn buffers. Two liveries are offered covering original CR red and TR bronze green; plain and lined black versions are being considered subject to sufficient expressions of



interest. While a final price has yet to be set, Accuracraft estimates it will be between £1875 and £1925, with pre-orders being taken now. Models will additionally be produced in 42mm to order. For full specifications and to order, visit accucraft.uk.com or call 01580 893030.

Send your model news to staff writer **Owen Hayward** on **OHayward@mortons.co.uk@mortons.co.uk**

Hornby displays surprise new Great Northern J52



At the November 23/24 National Festival of Railway Modelling, held at the National Exhibition Centre near Birmingham on what was previously the Warley Model Railway Club's annual exhibition weekend at the same venue, Hornby surprised modellers by revealing samples of a new OO gauge LNER J52 (GNR J13) model that it had been developing for some time.

While the announcement drew concerns from some regarding duplication, with Rapido Trains UK having announced it was producing the class in the same scale 12 months beforehand, it transpired that both firms had been developing their products simultaneously but unbeknownst to one another. When Rapido announced its models, Hornby reached out to initiate discussions that have seen each offering different running numbers and tooling variations.

"We are pleased to say that by working together, we have avoided there being any duplication in the initial releases," a Hornby statement said. "In fact, customers get more choice as the Rapido model covers different tooling variants and running numbers to our ones. It's a great time to be a GNR modeller!"





Hornby's models have a wealth of individually-fitted details including headlamps, with a five-pole motor, flywheel, all-wheel drive and pick-ups ensuring smooth running, setting it a mile above the standards of the previous model that dates from 1981.

RRP is set a £174.99, with delivery expected in July 2025.

Goods glory: Rapido promises yet more pre-Grouping wagon variety



VISITORS to Rapido's stall at Warley during the weekend of November 23/24 were kept guessing as designers from the firm could be seen live-producing design CADs for a surprise new wagon project, though the precise nature was kept under wraps until November 29 when it was announced alongside two more new designs!

With its range of pre-Grouping locomotives and stock establishing itself well in the market, the addition of a L&BSCR eight-ton goods van and both five and seven-plank GER open wagons is new territory.

The eight-ton van models will not only be the first van introduced by the L&BSCR to ever be modelled in OO, but as a ready-to-run product full stop. Almost 400 of the type were introduced between 1878 and 1915 and will suitably complement the manufacturer's open wagons previously released.



Nineteen different running numbers will be released in the first batch, covering the introduction by the L&BSCR to BR use, with details including axlebox variations, different hand and fitted brake types and examples with and without footsteps. These are now at the tooling stage and the RRP is set at £34.99.

The Bluebell Railway Goods Division has commissioned an exclusive version of No. 8196 in plain grey, as is currently worn by the example that resides on the Bluebell Railway; to place an advance order, visit bluebell-railway-goods-division.square.site

The GER open wagons will be Rapido's first foray into this particular company, with three designs being offered; the five-plank open represents the diagram 17 design, while the seven-plank wagon will represent the diagram 48 both as built new and converted from five planks with original and lengthened struts.

The usual wealth of detail will be incorporated into these models, complemented by GER-style eight-spoke wheels with retaining rings. Engineering samples have already been received, and the RRP is set 332.95 for all versions.

Limited editions commissioned for Ecclesbourne Bagnall

THE Bagnall Locomotive Group, which supports the operation of Bagnall-built Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 2746 *The Duke* at the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, has commissioned two coal wagons to raise funds towards the locomotive's ongoing maintenance.

The first is decorated with lettering for William Porter, Coal Merchant of Buggleskelly, drawing inspiration from the film Oh Mr Porter and complements some of the previous commissions released.

The second is lettered for Bibbington Ltd of Buxton, the operations of this company actually being based at Dove Holes, where Samuel Bibbington established a lime works and quarry.





Both are limited to 200 units and priced £16 plus UK P&P of £4.50 for up to four wagons. Cheques payable to T.J. Oaks can be sent to 13 Trenchard Drive, Buxton SK17 9JY, or PayPal via sleepermonster@yahoo.com

Show News

The 2025 Midlands Garden Rail Show will take place during the weekend of March 1/2. There will be more than 15 layouts and clubs at the event, covering numerous gauges. It will be hosted at the Warwickshire Event Centre, CV31 1XN. See www.midlandsgardenrailshow.co.uk for more details.

➜ Hosting a show? Let us know: email ohayward@mortons.co.uk

Home on the Prairies

The Great Western large prairies were a constantly evolving example of locomotive power. With the recent release of Sonic Models' new N gauge models, **Daniel Long** recounts the tale of these powerful tank engines.

UNDER the auspices of Churchward and Collett, many variations of the class came about, all based on the same underlying principles. With so many classes and subclasses as part of the story of the large prairies, it is best to start at the very beginning with George Jackson Churchward.

Churchward was a visionary and an innovator. When he took over as CME in 1902, he didn't just put his feet up. He proactively set a style which would not only apply to the Great Western Railway through his tenure, but which would also establish principles that lasted throughout nationalisation and into preservation too.

Churchward's standardisation

The key was standardisation. The GWR needed new engines quickly, and Churchward realised that the development of high-quality individual parts such as boilers, wheels and cylinders would allow for the creation of numerous locomotive designs, tailored for various parts of the network. The principles behind Churchward's work were practicality, simplicity and robustness. The results speak for themselves, with the core tenets of his designs guiding the progress of the Great Western's locomotive department for many years.

The first of Churchward's standardisation schemes saw proposals for six engines put forward using the same number of core parts, namely 18in cylinders, 8½in piston valves and 3ft 3in leading or trailing wheels. Among these were a class of 4-6-0s, which would become the Saints, a heavy goods design which developed into the long-lasting 2800 class, and a 2-6-2 which would be the first in a long line of prairie tanks for the railway.

No. 99, built in 1903, was the pioneer of the large prairies and formed the basis of the 3100 class. It had the standard No. 2 boiler and 5ft 8in driving wheels. Churchward put No. 99 through its paces, with the trial lasting for a year.

Leaving Swindon Works, the locomotivee was sent to work as a banker, before being worked vigorously to identify any issues or failings. The most notable of these was the size of the tanks, which would be increased from 1380 gallons to 2000 gallons. The tanks were given a sloping shape as a result.

Known as the 3100s, and latterly the 5100s, the class was very popular. Assigned to a range of duties across the network, it quickly became respected as a 'maid of all work' and could be found in the Great Western network. Many could be found acting as pilots and bankers in South Devon and the Cotswolds, and a number were sent to Severn Tunnel Junction to act as bankers there. When not supporting other engines, the class was given passenger and freight duties. Indeed, until the arrival of the 2800s, it was not unheard of to find the new 5100s taking trains well beyond the scope usually expected of a tank engine such as long trains of empty mineral wagons around the country for collieries in the Western valleys.

In the Wolverhampton district, the 5100s were ideal, tackling suburban passenger trains with ease. Despite their clear skill, however, it was some time until the large prairies established themselves in London. Initially, they were called upon to tackle the heavier eight and 10-coach trains running on suburban services.

Over time, the class evolved and shifted. Some engines gained superheaters and topfeeds, and all of the class were given supportive struts between the smokebox saddle and bufferbeam. The last of these was added because of the significant amount of banking work the class undertook. In all, 40 of the 5100 class were built.

To the capital

In 1906, Churchward built 10 examples with the larger standard No. 4 boiler, which increased the weight of the class and restricted its usage.

The 3150s were, however, perfect for use on heavier passenger trains. Forty were produced and ended up operating on similar duties to the 5100s. Five were eventually rebuilt by Charles Collett in 1938/9 as the 3100s (previously assigned to what had been the 5100s!), with the same boiler but smaller driving wheels as the 3150s, for banking out of Severn Tunnel Junction.

Those who followed Churchward found themselves building on the principles he had established. But when Charles Collett took over in 1922, he found himself in a very different position to Churchward, and



A timeless scene at Didcot Railway Centre on February 10, 2024, as No. 5199 simmers outside the locomotive shed with No. 4144 inside. FRANK DUMBLETON/GWS

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Above: No. 6106 runs through Sonning cutting on November 4, 1967, during its transfer from Taplow to the Didcot Railway Centre. GWS COLLECTION



Right: No. 4107 departs Grange Court Junction on October 3, 1964, less than a year before it would be withdrawn from service. M SMITH/COLOUR RAIL

so the evolution of the large prairies would follow a different path.

Collett's developments

The Great Depression forced a shift in how engineering projects were approached. There was less money to spend on new engines, even though new engines were needed across the GWR. With more financial limitations to work with than his predecessor, and war on the horizon in Europe, Charles Collett gave the order for his own update of the 5100s – the 5101s.

Construction began in 1929, with curved frame ends as standard and slightly lower cab roofs. The 5101 class became the mainstay of the Wolverhampton suburban services, as well as replacing older Churchward types throughout the region.

Like Churchward, Collett oversaw the gentle evolution of the class. Nos. 5160 onward were fitted with additional tank balancing pipes, for example. These sped up the process of taking on water, which in turn sped up suburban services. Automatic Train Control apparatus was also fitted from this point, with older members of the class later gaining this important safety technology.

The 6100s were a natural evolution from Collett, increasing the boiler pressure in the standard No. 2 boiler from 200psi to 225psi. Entering service in 1931, these engines had the much-needed grunt to work the heavy London suburban trains. All went directly to the capital, save for Nos. 6160-64, which were sent to Penzance because of a failed turntable. Although mixed traffic, these engines worked primarily with passenger services throughout their lifetimes, working tirelessly on the routes around Paddington, Reading and Oxford.

Their arrival saw the withdrawal of older engines, save for those which were autofitted. In the mid-1950s, a number of 6100s were reallocated to the large prairies' familiar stomping ground of Severn Tunnel Junction.

In 1938, Collet explored another variation on the 5100s, fitting them with smaller wheels and pushing the pressure on the Standard No. 2 boiler to 225psi to achieve faster acceleration. The plan was to use serviceable parts from older 5101s for a full production run. The resultant 8100s ended up spread around the system assigned to myriad duties. As late as 1954, consideration had been given to assigning the engines to an accelerated commuter service around Birmingham, but the class was only 10-strong, with the full order of 50 curtailed by the war.

Perhaps one of the most interesting turns the class undertook was in Wales where it hauled the 'Pembroke Coast Express' – there cannot be many examples of a 2-6-2 tank engine on a named express! No. 8100 was, in fact, the latest rebuild of the original member of the class, No. 99. Although the importance of this engine is clear with hindsight – it is key to the story of Churchward's standardisation – it was at that time just another engine.

Postwar years

Once hostilities had ended, the construction of new Large Prairies began again. Ten were ordered every year between 1946 and 1949, resulting in 40 new engines. It's clear there was a need for the motive power and that the Large Prairies, gently refined over the years, were perfect for the task.

The work for which the class was built, however, was soon to disappear. They would find their goods work taken by lorries and their passengers lessened by the advent of cars and buses. The suburban services for which many had been carefully refined and adapted would be taken over by DMUs.

As such, the Large Prairies under British Railways could often be found providing support on the main line in the form of banking and piloting trains. Although removed from frontline work in London, the 6100s worked freight services around Southall, as well as running empty coaching stock from Old Oak Common to Paddington.

The Large Prairies were an eclectic mix of engines, with variations to suit the slightly differing needs that arose over the years. What is clear is that Churchward produced a robust design and Collett refined that design in challenging circumstances. His work was cut short by war, but the principles underpinning this expansive class, one which saw work on every part of the Great Western system, were sound.

Preservation Prairies

Eleven Large Prairies were preserved: 10 5101s and one 6100. The impressive number of survivors is



On May 31, 1958, 6100 class No. 6122 is pictured near Twyford working a suburban service. T B OWEN/COLOUR RAIL



For the Epping Ongar Railway's 2013 Underground 150 gala, resident Large Prairie No. 4141 masqueraded as 6100 class No. 6141, which had been based at Old Oak Common in the 1940s and 1960s. No. 4141 is currently undergoing overhaul. OWEN HAYWARD



due in no small part to their disposal at Barry Scrapyard, which allowed preservationists to step in. Only No. 6106 was not sourced there, being bought directly out of BR service. It can now be found at Didcot Railway Centre, on static display having been a regular performer there and on various heritage railways.

The 5101 large prairies have lived varied lives. No less than six – Nos. 5164, 5199, 4110, 4141, 4144 and 4160 – have been restored to running order, with No. 4121 stored in scrapyard condition and No. 4150 under restoration at the Severn Valley Railway. No. 4115 was one of the last engines to leave Barry, and it was eventually bought by the Great Western Society for spares. While various parts will be used on its new-build 'Night Owl' project, the frames were scrapped in 2016.

No. 5193 has perhaps provided a preservation example of Swindon standardisation, having been rebuilt into a tender engine. Now running as No. 9351, the decision was made after significant tank corrosion was discovered. A running engine could be achieved more quickly through conversion. The intention to build a tender engine like this goes back as far as Churchward but first happened in preservation. The resultant engine has been a popular addition to the West Somerset Railway – new, yet thoroughly traditional – and makes an interesting contrast to No. 5199. Churchward's story of standardisation continues.

The models

Until recently, modellers of the GWR in N gauge have had to be content with Graham Farish's offering from 1977. This model, as you'd expect for something almost 50 years old, lacks fidelity both in looks and running qualities. It certainly isn't DCC-ready– not even a six-pin socket!

With a prototype so numerous as the large prairies, it seems incredible that a more modern alternative hasn't been available on the market. Sonic Models and Rails of Sheffield announced their takes on this iconic GWR design two years ago, and modellers took delivery in June 2024. Focusing on Collett's 5101 and 6100 classes specifically, the model is an impressive piece of kit.

Visually, the engine looks the part. Impressive rows of rivets elevate the detail on this stunning little locomotive. The characteristic large wheels of the prototype are seemingly effortlessly captured, with finessed valve gear and crossheads that belay the scale. This is a fine-scale model for the modern era. Front steps are included for those who want it but fitting them does limit the swing of the front wheels.

Eight different models are available, with seven liveries that cover the range of options a modeller might need, from GWR green to BR black. Each livery is crisply rendered, with details such the shades used in the Great Western lettering being particularly impressive considering the scale. Those who might want weathering included are also catered for, with these options available from Rails of Sheffield.

The chassis from the Sonic Models team is very impressive, with pick-up on all wheels, including the leading and trailing wheels. The latter clip into the chassis, meaning that if you need to take them off, there's no faffing about with small bits of wire – a nightmare in such a delicate scale. Some have commented that the springing on the pony and trailing trucks is a little stiff, which can cause slipping on gradients.

A high-quality coreless motor provides quiet but controlled power allowing for the effective recreation of shuffling around yards as well as the rapid accelerations of suburban passenger trains. The model is DCC-ready, though only six-pin. The socket can be found in the cab, which some might find a little intrusive, but I do not think thatit detracts from the charm of the overall look.

In many ways, it's incredible that N gauge modellers have not had an RTR option for the large prairies sooner.



IThere are very few modellers of the Western Region who couldn't find a home for this ubiquitous type of locomotive. After such a long time, it'd be a shame if the model did not live up to the hype. Fortunately, it was definitely worth the wait. HR



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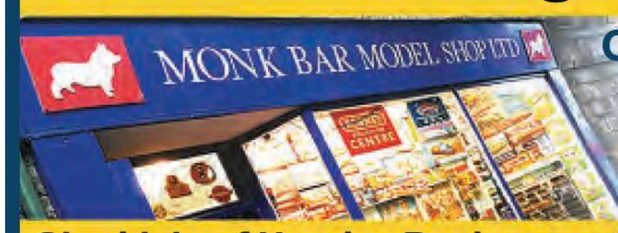
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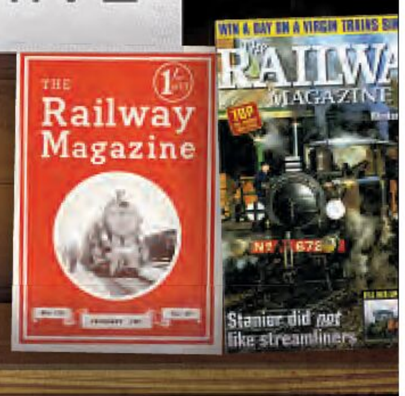
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TRAVELLING THE WORLD TO HELP WELSH STEAM

For many, holidays abroad are a chance to experience new adventures – and see new railways, with many scenic routes around the globe proving hot destinations. So how can such a holiday benefit one particular narrow gauge railway at home in North Wales? **Owen Hayward** spoke to Alan Heywood, the founder of Ffestiniog Travel, to find out.

This year has been one of celebration for many, but a particular anniversary that may have perhaps passed some by is the half centenary for a travel company based in Porthmadog, the existence of which came about in part thanks to the growth of the Ffestiniog Railway's revival and a ticketing deal with British Rail.

In 1969, Alan Heywood made the jump from a six-year-long career as an O-level teacher to being the FR's traffic commercial manager. His involvement with the burgeoning heritage endeavour actually began in 1955 when he and friends from Bury Grammar School made a day trip there that July. While many of the group returned home at the end of the day, Alan and eight others stayed on for a week of volunteering, camping in a field opposite Boston Lodge Halt and spending much of the visit assisting in the workshops.

"At school we had a railway club which certainly helped create an interest," he recalled. "After that first visit I would come down for long summers to continue volunteering, eventually working my way up to head guard.

"I also became involved with the booking offices. During the 1960s, at which time I became traffic and commercial manager, we were employed to issue BR tickets as part of its cost-cutting measures that involved closing its own offices along the Cambrian. As well as the tickets, we also took on responsibility for dealing with queries and lost property.



German steam locomotives rub shoulders at Alexisbad during a trip to Germany in October 2014 which took in the Harz Mountain Railway. JOHN ROBSON/FFESTINIOG TRAVEL

Gap in the market

"Some of our booking clerks noticed we were getting many travellers from abroad – places such as The Netherlands, for example – who wanted through tickets to get home. Unfortunately, we didn't have a licence so embarrassingly, we could only get them as far as Harwich. We therefore went



Ffestiniog Travel's Maria Cook (fourth from left) and Alan Heywood (fourth from right) with carriage workshop staff and Ffestiniog Railway managers at the launch of carriage No. 120 in 2018, the construction having been sponsored by the travel agency. FFESTINIOG TRAVEL



Switzerland has a special place in Alan's heart as it was the destination for the very first tour in 1974. During a trip in 2006, electric trains pass at Berglauenen on the Bernese Oberland Railway. FFESTINIOG TRAVEL



India's Darjeeling Himalayan Railway was one destination during an excursion in October 2008, with travel taking in one of the iconic 0-4-0ST B class locomotives. MICHAEL WHITEHOUSE/FFESTINIOG TRAVEL



A trip to Romania in 2022 took in the 760mm gauge Vaser Valley Railway, the last commercial forestry narrow gauge steam railway in Europe, with Combunatul Metalurgic Resita 0-8-0T CFF 764-493 skirting the Vaser river. MYLES MUNSEY



It's not just about the trains – trips are designed to appeal to both rail aficionados and the non-enthusiast by choosing destinations with stunning scenery, such as the Gotthard line skirting Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. FFESTINIOG TRAVEL

to apply for a licence to cover Sealinks and continental travel, which BR was understandably sceptical about. Given the costs of setting it up, it didn't believe there would be enough traffic to make it worthwhile."

Thankfully, with the FR society having a membership nearing 5000 in number, Alan was confident that support could be drummed up there to meet targets, and in 1974 BR agreed to send a small number of FR staff on the required training course that taught them about the routes available, timetables, and how to deal with point-to-point ticketing. "Then came the challenge – how do we meet the target?

"To me, it seemed BR was most interested in getting people onto its ferries. The quickest way to make up the numbers was to get a group booking for a trip to the Hook of Holland. My wife and I had taken a trip to Switzerland two years beforehand, so we thought perhaps this could be an onward destination from there with a week's tour."

The suggestion of the tour was incredibly well-supported, and Alan took the bookings he received – all 68 of them – which, when combined with the organisers, resulted in problems.

"As soon as we got on the boat, it was evident it was too many – the group ended up split between first and second class," Alan admitted. "I even had to get special dispensation to enter the first class area to check on my customers!

"We had to cross Germany and had reserved a complete carriage. However, we needed to change trains at Cologne, but when the connecting train arrived, which had started in Amsterdam, every seat was taken! We then had to encourage 72 of the already on-board passengers to give up their seats and fill those with our own travellers. It took us more than an hour to get matters sorted.

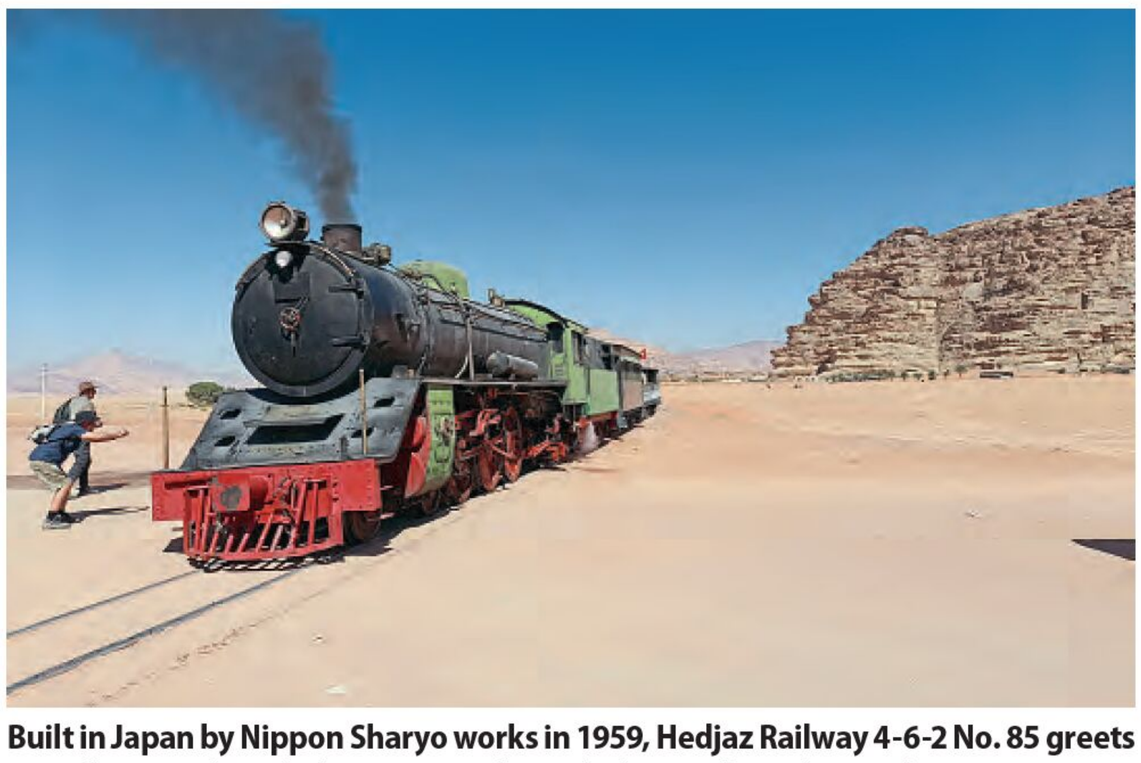
"Hotels in Switzerland were also not able to cope with such a high volume of British tourists descending all at once, so we had to split the group again. For much of the trip we were split up and toured the intended destinations with one group travelling clockwise and the other anticlockwise.

"We were really lucky. Everyone on that trip was very supportive and fully understood what we were doing. As a tour, it didn't make a huge amount financially; the main aim was to meet the target BR had set. Once we got home, I sat down and considered whether I actually wanted to do it again."

Despite those reservations, the following year further tours were organised, taking place in the spare time of the few primarily traffic department staff running them. Alan said the general manager of the time was supportive of the venture but insisted that it didn't dilute efforts to run the FR's own services – in particular, the work taking place in constructing the deviation at Ddualt. Excursions would therefore be in the shoulder months of the operating season when spare time was more plentiful.

Being run through the FR, takings were reinvested in the railway, and with little being spent on marketing the excursions, reliance was instead being placed on word of mouth. When David Pollock was appointed as general manager in 1983, his ability to look beyond the railway for ways to make money allowed Alan an opportunity to develop and grow what was becoming a promising aspect of the business.

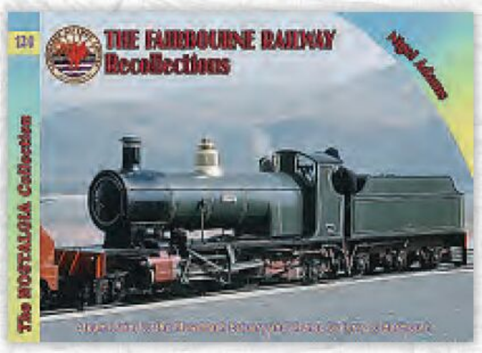
"We had to be mindful, of course, that the FR is owned by a charity, so we could not take big risks, but we were able to run



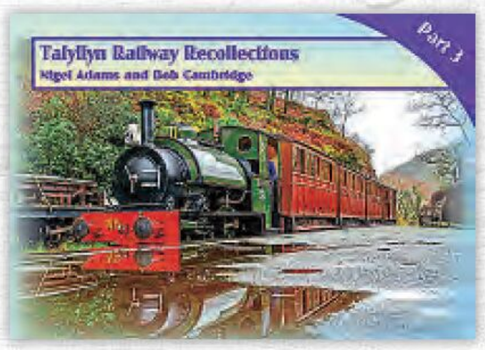
Built in Japan by Nippon Sharyo works in 1959, Hedjaz Railway 4-6-2 No. 85 greets travellers at Ad Disah during a trip through the South Jordanian desert in 2022. MYLES MUNSEY

HERITAGE RAILWAY

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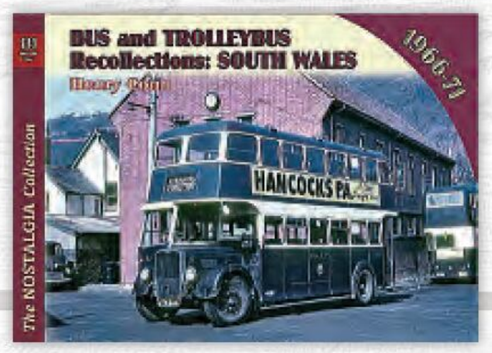
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more tours as a result of David's support. We were a department of the railway."

However, the situation changed in 1992 with the introduction of travel regulations that meant money paid for such trips had to be ringfenced from any other activities. The FR company's board of directors then concluded that it would be easier to establish Ffestiniog Travel as an independent company. Despite this, it has not stopped Alan's endeavour from financially supporting the heritage railway and since 1992 more than £1 million has been gifted.

Continued support

"Once a year we hand over a portion of the profits to the trust," Alan explained. "We are not a subsidiary of nor a subsidy for the company, but it has enabled some of the more 'heritage' projects to take place, as well as new carriages and signalling along the Welsh Highland route. Not everything has been a glamour project – when you want a new engine, it's much easier to go to the society to raise the funds, and less so when you want to revamp a toilet block. Our contributions have perhaps helped some of the less starry projects to happen quicker than they might have otherwise been."

Alan continues to arrange and lead tours around the world, with 2024 having marked 50 years since the trip that started it all off. To celebrate, history repeated itself with a return trip to the Swiss Alps, selling out. "We felt it was fitting to return to the place where it all began," Alan said. "I feel very fortunate and privileged to have been able to share my passion for rail travel with thousands of travellers who have joined me on so many wonderful train journeys around the world since 1974."

This year's trip included a steam-hauled return journey along the Rhaetian Railway (RhB) between Landquart and Davos Platz and a visit to the Landquart works, which Alan believes was the first and only occasion that a steam excursion that has operated there this year. To his amusement, the locomotive was burning Welsh steam coal from a supplier in Swansea.

Of course, the past five decades have not all been smooth sailing; on the night of September 11, 2001, two outgoing groups were disrupted when all flights were grounded following the events of that day in America.

"I'd dropped off the tour leader at Stanstead airport for a group heading to Slovenia, while another group was checking in at Heathrow for Canada. As I was heading home, I heard what had happened on the radio and realised both trips would be in trouble. The majority of the groups had checked in, but were suddenly unable to fly so we had to arrange accommodation for them while we awaited news.

"Some travellers, however, had already arrived in Canada, the excursion having been booked as part of some wider travel plans, and they now found themselves stranded there. The tour guide had all the credentials here in the UK and so we found ourselves having to arrange their holiday remotely

"We have had some less dramatic moments too, such as in 1979 when we arranged our first long-haul trip, also to Canada, which seemed an ideal place to choose as it appealed to both rail enthusiasts and those who like to travel for the scenery.

"The marketing manager of Canada's VIA Rail was an enthusiast and helped set it all up and even arranged for the exclusive use of the balcony car for our group on the return trip between Toronto and the Pacific Coast, with it being detached at our stopover points so that it would be with us on the next part of the journey.

"He had many useful contacts and facilitated visits to areas usually off-limits, including the Toronto tram depot."

Many parts of the world have yet to be touched, but Alan has ambitions to get to most of them providing political and economical situations allow for it.

Looking to the future

"We don't limit ourselves to mainstream destinations," he said. "Though countries like Switzerland do offer something new to see on every visit, we like to look for off-piste destinations and have done Montenegro, Uzbekistan, Georgia and Armenia. Not many going to Canada will think about going to the province of Labrador, but it has an interesting railway travelling through 400 miles of wilderness."

Booking for 2005 has already opened, with an eight-day September tour in North East England during the Stockton & Darlington bicentenary celebrations (Main Line Ness, page 56) on the agenda.

Looking to visit one of the world's most reliable rail networks? A14-day trip to Japan will sample the renowned Shinkansen for modern travel, plus the steam-hauled 'Yamaguchi Go' to the mountainous town of Tsuwano. For those looking closer to home, a September jaunt to Germany will take in plenty of narrow gauge steam.

As well as arranging holidays, FT can also assist with booking rail travel on the continent. For full details, visit ffestiniogtravel.com or call 01766 512400. HR



RhB G 4/5 class 2-8-0 No. 107 simmers at Klosters Platz during the Ffestiniog Travel Charter between Landquart and Davos Platz. ALAN HEYWOOD



Left: Travellers who booked onto the October anniversary tour at Davos Platz during what may have been the only steam-hauled journey along the Swiss Rhaetian Railway this year. FFESTINIOG TRAVEL

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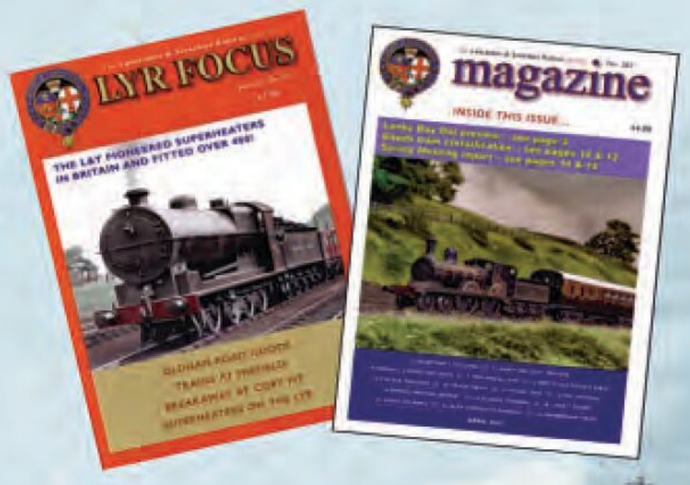
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STAR LETTER

Doon Valley extension: It's a real winner for Ayrshire!

I WAS surprised, but delighted, to read in *Heritage Railway* issue 326 of the planned extension by the Doon Valley Railway. This is quite a turnaround from the previously reported troubles at the heritage line.

I used to live in Ayrshire and during my 22 years residence in Ayr visited the railway, firstly at its base at Minnivey and latterly at Dunaskin.

Before I moved south over three years ago, I paid a trip to Dunaskin and sampled the then new extension up the hill to Laight Crossing in the LMS engineers' coach.

I always had the view that the Doon Valley was an ideal location for a heritage railway. It is connected to the main line at Dalrymple Junction and is easily accessible from the coast (Ayr) and the south (Galloway Forest tourist route attraction) by the A713. Notwithstanding, there is beautiful scenery through the valley which the line follows.

I watched with sorrow as the line became increasingly strangled by weeds which nobody took responsibility to remove.

I therefore read with interest the enterprise of Fraser Gibson to reopen the track from Dalrymple Junction to Dunaskin as a test track and to give the DVR a special interest in section from Patna to Dunaskin. If nothing else happens , this gives the DVR a nice flat line over which to run its services and also a potential boost to the local economy of Patna.

Boon to local economy

It is noted that the DVR has secured an award from Dalmellington Parish Trust towards the costs of a new stock storage shed. May I humbly suggest that both South and East Ayrshire councils should be chipping in to help finance the projected extension which should boost tourism and the economy of the area.

Building upon the successful relationship with one entrepreneur, will the DVR be creating other partnerships and collaborations locally with Ayrshire College and the University of West of Scotland to tap into their students and staff to assist in marketing the proposed project and also to provide engineering apprentices? This is not withstanding assistance from the Ayrshire Tourist Board.

Let us assume the above in some form takes place, and results in an explosion of interest in the DVR by the number of visitors to its site and the consequent offerings of rides up the Doon Valley, again in the short term from Patna, alighting at Dunaskin to the Laight Crossing.

Does the DVR have the locomotives and coaching stock to cope? I am aware that in the past it has been running its services with the Barclay 0-4-0 industrial shunter plus the LMS engineers' coach to run from Dunaskin to the Laight Crossing and back.

Again, partnership and collaboration within the Scottish heritage railway community may be the solution. How about encouraging the Scottish Railway Preservation Society to advance the restoration of the Wemyss 0-6-0 large tank which could pull two or three coaches? This is an industrial locomotive, having worked in the Fife coalfields and would fit the DVR's claim to be an industrial branch line.

Collaboration suggestions

Perhaps the SRPS could loan to the DVR some of its coaching stock. If steam is not to be the solution, how about a loan from say the Waverley Route Heritage Association of its two Pacer units, plus its restored guards van?

I realise the above suggestions may be treading on impracticable, contentious and politically delicate ground, but when one reads of such exciting news, particularly when heritage railways are under much pressure to exist sustainably, one cannot help but wish Archie Thom and his team hearty congratulations for having the foresight to create a collaboration to make the proposed extension possible.

Alan Provan, email

Was it Bank Top, not North Road, for *Locomotion No.1*?

With reference to the picture of *Locomotion No.1* in the lower photograph on page 8 of issue 325, the caption to which appears to stem from the National Railway Museum.

I beg to differ with the statement that it was 'displayed on a plinth at North Road station', as if that was true I would never have become acquainted with it, as North Road station was hardly known to us as children in the south of the town, although we knew of 'North Road Shops', the then loco works (now a supermarket) and the adjoining Stooperdale boiler shops and Faverdale wagon works .

For most of No.1's preserved life it was displayed on a plinth, not at North Road station, but actually at Darlington Bank Top station behind the terminating buffers of the Saltburn and Richmond lines, along with Derwent, a slightly later six-coupled locomotive. This siting long pre-dated the Head of Steam Museum and it was here that I began my 80-year acquaintance with *Locomotion No.1*, which we always referred to as 'No.1 Engine'.

Controversy did indeed erupt when it was claimed by Shildon's Locomotion museum as it had lived at Darlington for so long but, once the heat had died down, I suppose it had to be admitted that 'No.1' really belonged in a collection of locomotives rather than a singular item which would entail a specific visit to view it.

Peter Kirk, email

A window into the past: Unearthed time capsule from 1935 goes on display at Kemble station

A TIME capsule buried at Kemble station 90 years ago is among the prized artefacts on display at an exhibition which opened on November 26.

In 1935, stationmaster Cyril Feldwick placed a postage stamp and handwritten note commemorating King George V and Queen Mary's 25th Jubilee in an old tobacco tin which was then hidden between a wall and window overlooking the station garden.

Unearthed 10 years ago and now belonging to Cyril's granddaughter, Bronwen Dale, the time capsule forms part of a display at the station entitled Kemble Through The Ages.

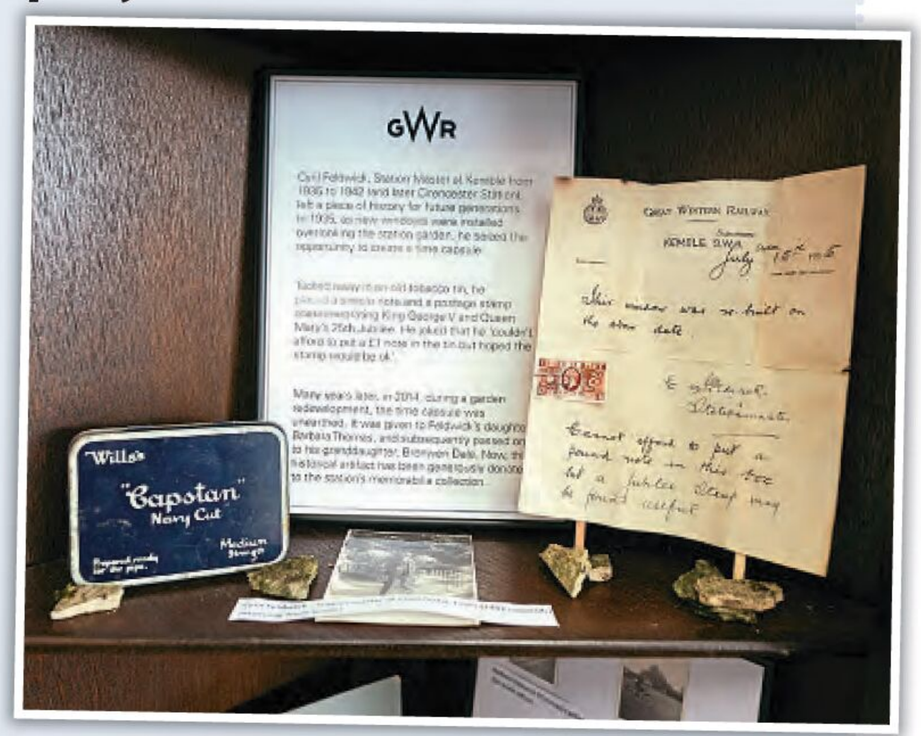
Masterminded by modern-day Great Western Railway colleagues Al Watkins and Sarah Bennet, the exhibition offers a glimpse into the rich history of the railway and surrounding community.

Al, a customer sales advisor at Kemble, said Cyril joked that he "couldn't afford to put a £1 note in the tin but hoped the Jubilee stamp would be useful.

"There's so much else to see here, too. Kemble is such a beautiful station and we're such a close-knit community. There's such a wonderful collection of historic photographs and artefacts and we wanted to put them on display."

Bronwen said: "My mum remembered her dad writing the note and placing it in the tin. When it was found 10 years ago it was handed to mum, and when she passed away, I took possession of it. Donating it to this wonderful exhibition seemed the perfect thing to do

Kemble Through The Ages features a tribute to the local Women's Institute, photos depicting village life from the 1940s to the 60s, a collection of railway memorabilia, plus a display honouring war heroes. The Swindon & Cricklade Railway also provided artefacts.



The 1935 time capsule artefacts on display in the Kemble station exhibition. GWR

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Where is the Midlands alternative to HS2?

THERE were many in the Railway fraternity who shed few tears when the High Speed 2 link link to Manchester was abandoned. Not least of all Sir James Milne might stop turning in his grave if the "problem of extra capacity" that HS2 was supposed to provide was passed back to his railway.

In 1968, the Midland route via the Peak District was, amazingly, closed as one of the more bizarre Beeching cuts as "wasteful duplication". The electrification of the West Coast Main Line via Crewe had recently been completed, and despite the usefulness of the Midland route during the electrification work, which hosted the Midland Pulman among other top trains, it had to go, or at least, again amazingly, the most picturesque section including the iconic Monsal Dale viaduct in the middle of the National Park.

Claims that as many as nearly half the population of England was within a two-hour travel time of this park did not save it.

Such a small gap

The line was singled beyond Ambergate, and pulled up north of Matlock. Peak Rail obligingly relaid the line from Matlock to Rowsley South. Tunstead quarry near Buxton remained rail-served so the total gap was a mere 14 or so miles.

Some of it had been multiple track, including the twin viaducts south of Millersdale station which had as many as five platforms, so sharing the ground with the preservationists has a few options.

This writer has seen main line track shared with steam heritage trains in Denmark. Sub-contracting the entire local service from Matlock-Buxton to Peak Rail is another. More drastic would be relocation to the Ecclesbourne Railway at Duffield, or there could be a combination. So, given some goodwill and flexibility, none of this would be a reason for not going ahead.

In the past, BR was paranoid against shared tracks, and even stations, creating "wasteful duplication" with extra stations as at Matlock, Sheringham and Aviemore, but it can change. Much of the line south of Derby is multiple track already. Electrification is creeping (too slowly) northwards, so again some flexibility is part of the solution.

Yes, we can provide some 'essential additional capacity' from the earlier 'wasteful duplication'.

No, it would not be a 200mph high speed line, but if we are really interested in net zero, we would not be contemplating any HS travel: 200mph needs four times the energy of 100mph, and there is probably hardly enough 'green' electricity to feed the existing network, something the 'bring back HS2' brigade have yet to explain.

Wesley Paxton BA (Econ), Annan, Dumfries and Galloway.

'Hullywood' mural includes a 'Black Five'

A MURAL celebrating Hull's links to Hollywood – and which includes a locomotive based on an LMS 'Black Five'– has been unveiled at the city's Paragon station to coincide with the launch of the new blockbuster movie Blitz in which it appears.

For two weeks in February 2023, Hull Paragon's Platform 2 was reimagined as Waterloo station during wartime London, complete with a steam train, old station signage and dozens of actors dressed in 1940s clothing.

Retired TransPennine Express driver Chris Cubitt from the North York Moors Railway was in charge of moving West Coast Railways' No. 44932 back and forth along the track.

TPE area customer experience manager Andy McNeil was one of the production company's main contacts while filming was taking place. He liaised with the film crew, ensuring there was no disruption to customers using the station and called the role "one of the highlights of his career" and a "once-in-a lifetime experience". Most of the filming took place overnight, meaning minimal disruption to customers.

Andy met Golden Globe award-winning actress Saoirse Ronan, who is in one of the lead roles, and Paul Weller of The Jam fame, who was making his film debut.

Andy said: "Even if Hull station is only visible for 30 seconds, we can be proud of what we have achieved, it was a huge undertaking – and we were able to help make a huge blockbuster film. It brought everyone at the station a huge amount of joy and excitement to be part of."

Directed and produced by Steve McQueen, Blitz tells the story of a young boy who is evacuated from London during the blitz but defiantly goes on an adventure to return to his mother, only to find himself in immense peril from a succession of Dickensian characters.

Blitz had its world premiere as the opening film at the London Film Festival on October 9, and was released in selected cinemas in the UK and USA on November 1, followed by a streaming release on Apple TV+ on November 22, and received generally positive reviews from critics.

Dedicated team

Hull Paragon station manager Ben Courtney said: "I truly lived and breathed this production alongside my colleagues and witnessed first-hand the dedication and hard work that went into every scene.

"Our beloved Hull Paragon station became a crucial anchor for the production, securing Hull as a primary filming location.

TPE unveiled the mural painted by Andy Pea and which pays tribute to recent film productions in Hull such as Blitz, Enola Holmes 2 and David Copperfield. He is also the artist behind the station's 175th birthday mural, which has become a cherished landmark.

Ben added: "This mural is a tribute not just to the films and the people who made them, but to the community of Hull—those who live here, work here, and open their doors to support and celebrate the arts, as part of a new digital trail."



LMS 'Black Five' No. 44932 was the inspiration for the locomotive included in the new Andy Pea mural celebrating Hull's links to the Hollywood film industry and unveiled at Hull Paragon Transpennine Express on November 13, celebrating the new blockbuster movie Blitz in which the station appears as wartime Waterloo. TPE

Following its successful launch earlier in the year by the Visit Hull and East Yorkshire visitor partnership, the 'It must be Hullywood' trail is now going digital with augmented reality through the app WhatsApp, guiding film enthusiasts to key filming locations across the city, allowing users to immerse themselves in movie scenes.

Following the unveiling on November 13, Hull Independent Cinema premiered the new film The Blitz the first of four sold-out screenings at Vue cinema in the city's Princes Quay centre.

A restored Manning Wardle K class is something to be welcomed

I WAS very interested to read in issue 326 of the long-overdue plan to cosmetically restore Manning Wardle K 0-6-0ST No. 641 of 1877 *Sharpthorn*.

The plan to place it under cover is to be commended, but for the restoration to be convincing, the original pattern of smokebox (with lift-up door) and chimney needs to be reinstated. The locomotive would then present a similar appearance to No. 890 of 1883 *Ringing Rock* which ran on the Selsey Tramway.

A working K class would also be invaluable to venues with a light railway atmosphere such as Beamish Museum or the Middleton Railway, but there is the ethical issue of how much of the fabric of the loco that we have can be salvaged in a working restoration.

I was also interested to read that the Sentinel rebuild of Manning Wardle H 0-4-0ST No. 1472 of 1900 *Gervase* has returned to its first home in preservation. It does at least contain some Manning Wardle components, but in the same year of its acquisition (1962), the Kent & East Sussex Railway rejected a much more important survival, namely the ex-Manchester Ship Canal and Wantage Railway F 0-4-0ST No. 1057 of 1888 at Cordes Steel Mills, Newport, which was scrapped in December 1963.

Even after the loss of this loco, an early H class, No. 345 of 1871 remained extant – but also perished in 1964: Two opportunities that the preservation world should have taken and which I have featured in a book on standard Manning Wardle types recently compiled for the Middleton Railway Trust.

There still exists a set of mainframes from an early H class, but these are currently incorporated into another Sentinel rebuild at Coalbrookdale, but the balance of enthusiast opinion would appear to be against sacrificing the rebuilt locomotive.

Mark Smithers, email

DOUBLE SHOP PROGRESS AT MIDDLETON – IN THE WORKS AND OVER THE COUNTER!

There's no time for standing still in the heritage sector, something which **Sally Clifford** found out when she checked out some of the latest projects going on at the world's oldest continuously-working railway, and reports in words and pictures.

To be the world's oldest continuously working railway is not just an impressive moniker.

Retaining that title means moving with the times, and Middleton Railway in Leeds is certainly keeping pace with today's fast changing society.

Of course the railway, like many preserved railways throughout the country, relies on its visitors and its workforce of volunteers to enable it to undertake projects securing its future in preservation.

While much of the important work is centred around the engine sheds where the restoration and overhaul of the locomotives is carried out, there has been plenty of activity elsewhere on site as the first of a three-phase makeover project comes to completion.

It is within the confines of the railway's newly-refurbished Moor Road shop, in a much lighter and brighter reception area, where the site's commercial manager Janet Auckland talks proudly about the project.

"We wanted to make the shop accessible to all," said Janet, referring to making it easier for visitors with disabilities, in wheelchairs and with pushchairs to navigate around the shop and café area.

At a time when the railway usually closes for maintenance it was also all-change behind the scenes as the old display units were removed and the wheeled trolleys containing second-hand books for sale were taken out and replaced with an impressive yet serviceable tailor-made bookshelf, cupboards and a display space to meet visitors' needs.

A mobile display area has provided a place for railway souvenirs.

Pens, stationery and greetings cards, designed and created by Middleton Railway volunteer Richard Stead, are just some of the saleable items which help to boost the railway's revenue and keep its trains on track.

A large collection of Big Jigs toys, a popular draw for the railway's young visitors, sit alongside the railway's newest range – a selection of honey and honeycomb from a local beekeeper, the son of a Middleton Railway volunteer.

"Everything is visible and we have new lines – locally produced – as well as some new toys," said Janet.

Middleton Railway-branded mugs, coasters and keyrings are also due to be added to the range.

The café has been painted and the children's area re-configured to provide improved playing space, although Janet explains this area is the focus for phase two of the makeover project next year. Phase three, which gets underway in 2026, will involve replacing the counter tops around the serving area.

"We are really quite excited to say this is the new shop – we had only just opened the doors and already people were coming in here," said Janet.

It's also part of that important progression – moving forward – but Janet acknowledges they could not do it without the community's support.



Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST No. 1544 *Slough Estates No. 3* under restoration in the engine workshop at Middleton Railway. Inset: The original frame stretcher from *Slough Estates No. 3*.

Leeds-built Hudswell Clark 0-6-0ST *Slough Estates No. 3* in dappled light as it entered the wooded section of the Middleton Railway on April 26, 2015. DAVID SPENCER. CREATIVE COMMONS

"Santa is our main fundraiser of the year. Obviously when people are coming in and buying tickets all the income from buying those tickets helps to run the trains. Then we raise money in the shop, for more items in the shop.

"We are a charity and we are entrusted with people's money and we have to look after that money and spend it to the best of our ability.

"It looks smarter now, it looks more like a shop and we are very proud of it," says Janet.

In today's fast-paced society there is no time for standing still. The overhaul of the railway's shop isn't the only sign of moving forward for the future.

Walking around the engine workshop, the restoration of Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST No. 1544 of 1924 *Slough Estates No. 3* is now well underway.

The original frame stretcher from the locomotive along with the original Hudswell Clarke locomotive jacks are still in use in the Middleton Railway engine workshop.

The engine worked from 1924 at the Slough Estate Trading Company hauling wagons between the factories and Slough goods yard, which was sited adjacent to the GWR main line between Paddington and Reading.

In the early 1970s the railway closed and the loco moved on, running on the Swindon & Cricklade Railway before being loaned to Middleton.

As Middleton vice chairman Ian Smith said: "It's a legacy of Leeds' locomotive building history. Those jacks were used at Hudswell Clarke – you have got a piece of Leeds' industrial loco building industry still in use."



The original Hudswell Clarke jack in use at the Middleton Railway.



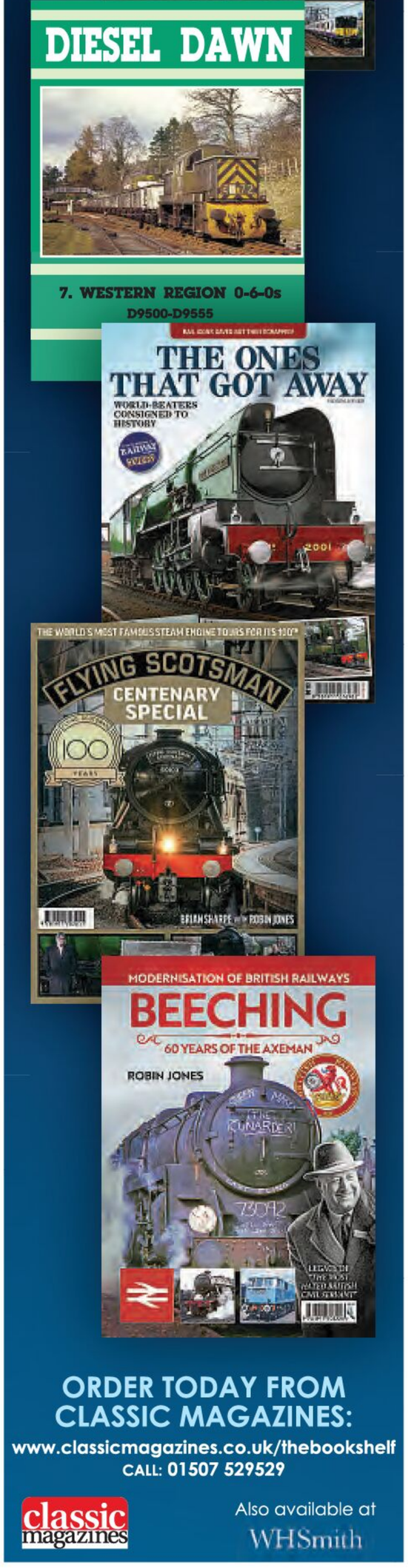
Freshly painted walls have brightened the café area.



Open for business: The newly-refurbished shop at Moor Road station. Middleton Railway commercial manager Janet Auckland is pictured with the mobile display unit.

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SAFETY FIRST

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Sally Clifford visited Tyneside's Stephenson Steam Railway to see its young volunteers trained in essential skills for the third century of steam.



When it comes to keeping heritage railways on track, there is no skimping on safety.

Gordon Newton, chairman of BESTT, a partnership of steam heritage organisations representing railways, ships and traction engines which has developed a range of training courses, stressed the importance that health and safety plays on the railways.

"Health and safety on running a railway is imperative, and the courses we run equip them with the basic knowledge and safety of steam locomotives," said Gordon.

There is, of course, another important element of learning such skills, and that is sharing them with those who will carry the baton to ensure heritage railways bring enjoyment to generations to come.

Conscious of carrying on this important legacy, David Grindley, engineering and railway operations manager at North Tyneside's Stephenson Steam Railway, which is dedicated to railway pioneers George and Robert Stephenson, set up a youth group there in 2021. There are currently 16 young volunteers involved in the group.

David, who previously worked at Beamish Museum for six years as a steam technician, recognised that skills needed to be passed on and so secured funding through The Community Foundation and The Platten Family Fund to purchase tools and provide training for three years for the railway's young volunteers.

Last October, the first cohort of young volunteers embarked on the BESTT (the Boiler and Engineering Skills Training Trust) Boiler Wash Out Course and Fitness to Run Examination. A second cohort, ranging in ages from 13 to 16, embarked on the same week-long course led by Lawrence Donaldson and Martin Staniforth during the October half-term.

"This course helps to develop a good range of skills across the board," said David.

"The first year was really successful. Volunteers who have previously completed the course now help out with steam locomotive maintenance and assist senior volunteers with boiler wash-outs on site now.

"Volunteers learn about the process of carrying out a boiler wash-out from start to finish and the importance of this. There are many different aspects to the course you wouldn't necessarily think about.

"I did the same course in 2018 on the Kent & East Sussex Railway and I have done many boiler wash-outs at Beamish when I worked there. It's important to educate and train young volunteers and for them to understand how steam engines work and how to do a job safely. They have learned many new skills and gained invaluable knowledge, and the feedback is incredible.

"I am a great believer in training is key, not only for personal development and succession planning, but for health and safety as well."

The six young volunteers who participated in the course will each receive a certificate confirming their completion.

Richie Russell, a volunteer at Stephenson Steam Railway for 20 years, said that the course was informative and interesting. "I think for young volunteers, specifically on our railway, it gives them hands-on experience early on into their careers as volunteers. You get involved with stripping the engine down and getting it ready for the wash-out."

Combined with classroom learning, the course equips young volunteers with transferable skills for future employment, whether that be on the railway or another industry.

"It is a great way to learn, because it cements it in your mind," said Richie.

His introduction to the railway came through a mutual interest in engines.

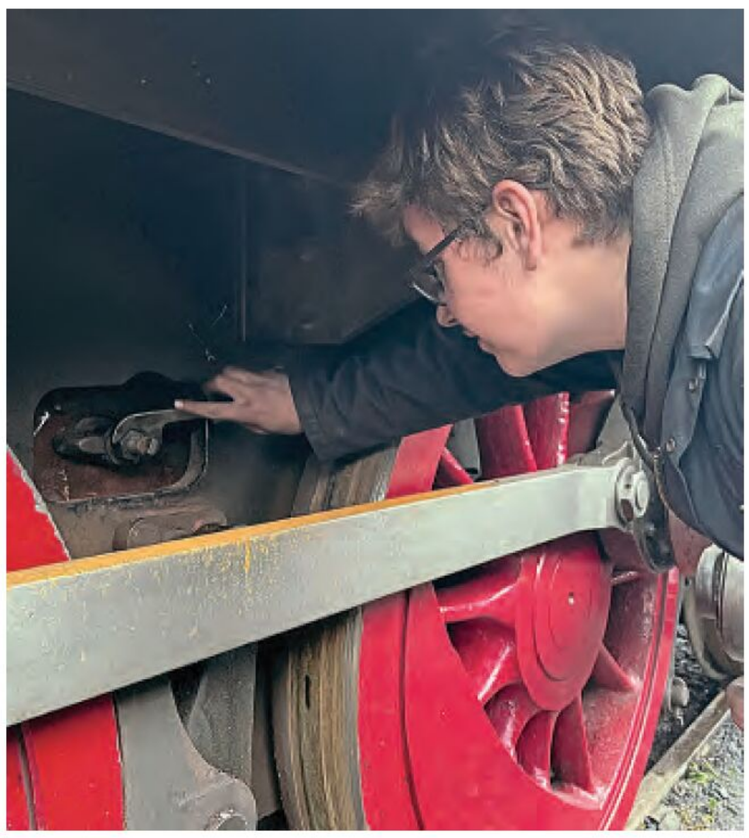
"I had just moved to high school where I met a new group of friends and discovered a mutual interest in engines,"he said. "There is something alluring about steam; this is what



Young volunteers on the latest BESTT Boiler Wash Out course at Stephenson's Railway.



A young volunteer gets involved in fitting the mudhole door.



Above: A young volunteer learns how to tighten the mudhole door.

Right: Some of the young volunteers on the footplate after the steam test.



Left: Reuben Iveson, Aidan Tewkesbury, Robert Hopper, Chad Horsman and Richard Russell took part in the latest BESTT training scheme at Stephenson Steam Railway.

draws the younger generations into the hobby. Even our railway, with its small, industrial shunters, can still be magical, and it's up to the older generations to nurture so we can keep this part of history alive."

An advocate for "knowledge not passed on is knowledge wasted," Gordon said embarking on the courses should help railways retain their young volunteers.

"It should give them some encouragement when they get older to stay on as a volunteer on the railway," he said. "It is skilling new generations to maintain Britain's greatest gift to the world."

For more information about the courses, visit https://www.bestt.org.uk. To find out more about Stephenson Steam Railway, visit https://stephensonsteamrailway.org.uk

Pictures by David Grindley.



Above: Bagnall 0-6-0ST No. 2994 of 1951 No. 401, which was built by W G Bagnall in 1951 as an 18-inch 0-6-0ST locomotive for the Steel Company of Wales, where it carried the name *Vulcan,* after the RAF bomber. A sister to No. 2996 *Victor* at the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway, it is now part of the Stephenson Steam Railway collection.

OPERATIONAL HERITAGE LINES AND MUSEUMS

SOUTH EAST

Amberley Museum
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Arundel, West Sussex. Tel: 01798 831370.
Open: Jan 18-Feb 12, 2025.

Bluebell Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles. Sheffield Park, East Sussex TN22 2QL. Tel: 01825 720800.
Running: Dec 28-31, Jan 1.

Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bredgar, Sittingbourne, Kent. Tel: 01622 884254.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Chatham Historic Dockyard
Standard gauge, one mile. Chatham, Kent. Tel: 01634 820800.
Reopens: Spring 2025.

East Kent Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. Shepherdswell, Kent. Tel: 01304 832042.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Eastleigh Lakeside Railway
10¼in & 7¼in gauge, 1¼ miles.
Running: W/Es.

Exbury Gardens & Steam Railway
12¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Exbury, Southampton. Tel: 023 8089 1203.
Reopens 2025.

Hayling Light Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Hayling Island, Hants. Tel: 07902 446340.
Running: Weds, W/Es, sch hols.

Hollycombe Steam in the Country
2ft gauge, 1½ miles. Liphook, Hants. Tel: 01428 724900.
Reopens 2025.

Isle of Wight Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Havenstreet, Isle of Wight. Tel: 01983 882204.
Running: Dec 26, Jan 1.

Kent & East Sussex Railway
Standard gauge, 10½ miles. Tenterden, Kent. Tel: 01580 765155.
Running: Dec 29-Jan 1.

Lavender Line
Standard gauge, one mile. Isfield, East Sussex. Tel: 01825 750515.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Mid-Hants Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Alresford, Hants SO24 9JG. Tel: 01962 733810.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Mizens Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Woking, Surrey. Tel: 07962 400922.
Running: Jan 1, 2025.

Old Kiln Light Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Farnham, Surrey.
Reopens 2025.

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
15in gauge, 13½ miles. New Romney, Kent. Tel: 01797 362353.
Running: Dec 28-Jan 1.

Royal Victoria Railway
10¼in gauge, one mile. Netley, Southampton. Tel: 02380 456246.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, 1¾ miles. Sittingbourne, Kent.Tel: 01795 424899.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Spa Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Tel: 01892 300141.
Running: W/Es from Dec 28.

Volk's Electric Railway
2ft 8½in gauge, one mile. Brighton.
Reopens: Spring 2025.

SOUTH WEST

Avon Valley Railway
Standard gauge, three miles. Bitton, Bristol. Tel: 0117 932 5538.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Bodmin & Wenford Railway
Standard gauge, 6½ miles, Bodmin, Cornwall. Tel: 01208 73555.
Running: Dec 29.

Bristol Harbour Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Princes Wharf, Bristol. Tel: 0117 352 6600.
M Shed Museum open Tues-Suns.

Dartmouth Steam Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles. Paignton, Devon. Tel: 01803 555872.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Devon Railway Centre
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bickleigh, Devon. Tel: 01884 855671.
Reopens 2025.

East Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. Cranmore, Somerset. Tel: 01749 880417.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Gartell Light Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Yenston, Templecombe, Somerset. Tel: 01963 370752.
Reopens 2025.

Helston Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Helston, Cornwall. Tel: 07901 977 597.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Lappa Valley Railway
7¼in, 10¼ and 15in gauge, one mile. Newquay, Cornwall. Tel: 01872 510317.
Open: W/Es + Dec 30/31.

Launceston Steam Railway
1ft 11½in gauge, 2 ½ miles. Launceston, Cornwall. Tel: 01566 775665
Reopens 2025.

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Woody Bay, North Devon. Tel: 01598 763487.
Running: Dec 28-Jan 5.

Moors Valley Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Ringwood, Hants. Tel: 01425 471415.
Running: W/Es + Dec 30-Jan 3.

North Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, 1200ft. Shillingstone, Blandford Forum, Dorset. Tel: 01258 860696.
Open: Weds, W/Es.

Plym Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Marsh Mills, Plymouth. Tel: 01752 345078.
Running: Dec 28/29.

Seaton Tramway
2ft 9in gauge, three miles. Harbour Road, Seaton, Devon. Tel: 01297 20375.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 5.

Somerset & Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Midsomer Norton station, Silver Street, BA3 2EY. Tel: 01761 411221 **Running: Jan 1.**

South Devon Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles. Buckfastleigh, Devon. Tel: 01364 644370.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 1, Jan 3-5.



The South Devon Railway will welcome Peckett 0-6-0ST No. 1940 *Henbury* for a short visit when it appears at the January 3-5 Winter Steam Gala there. Built in 1937 at the nearby works, it was bought by the Port of Bristol Authority for working on the docks before being preserved by the Bristol Industrial Museum (now M Shed). The three-day gala at the SDR will see the final appearance of WR 6400 class 0-6-0PT No. 6412, which will be withdrawn for overhaul immediately afterwards. Visit southdevonrailway.co.uk for more information. BRISTOL HARBOUR RAILWAY



Dean Forest Railway-based Peckett 0-4-0ST No. 2147 of 1952 *Uskmouth No.1* has been on loan to the Somerset & Dorset Railway at Midsomer Norton for its Santa at the Station events. It will also feature both in the steam running day on December 31 and haumince pie specials on January 1. The former Uskmouth power station locomotive, which made its initial run since overhaul on October 31 and as reported last issue, ran during the Dean Forest Railway's November 2/3 gala, is also making its first visit to another heritage line. For more information, visit sdjr.co.uk/events SDR HERITAGE TRUST

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Swanage Railway
Standard gauge, six miles. Swanage, Dorset.
Tel: 01929 425800.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 5.

Swindon & Cricklade Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Blunsdon, Wiltshire. Tel: 01793 771615.
Normal running resumes 2025.

West Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, 20 miles.
Minehead, Somerset.
Tel: 01643 704996.
Running: Dec 27-29, 31-Jan 1.

Yeovil Railway Centre
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Yeovil Junction station, Somerset. Tel: 01935 410420.
Normal running resumes 2025.

EAST ANGLIA

Bressingham Steam Museum
Narrow and standard gauge, one mile.
Diss, Norfolk. Tel: 01379 686900.
Reopens 2025.

Bure Valley Railway
15in gauge, nine miles. Aylsham, Norfolk.
Tel: 01263 733858.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 5.

Colne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Castle Hedingham, Essex. Tel: 01787 461174.
Running: Dec 28/29.

East Anglian Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Wakes Colne, Essex. Tel: 01206 242524.
Open: Weds, W/Es.
Running: Jan 1.

Ferry Meadows Railway
10¼in gauge, ½ mile.
Peterborough, Cambs. Tel: 01733 398 889.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Mangapps Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Near Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex. Tel: 01621 784898.
Reopens 2025.

Mid-Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 11½ miles. Dereham, Norfolk. Tel: 01362 851723.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Mid-Suffolk Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Brockford, Suffolk.
Tel: 01449 766899.
Running: Jan 1.



The Kent & East Sussex Railway has signed a two-year hire contract with the Diesel Electric Shunter Company that has seen BR Class 08 No. 08359 take up temporary residence there to assist with shunting and permanent way duties. Originally numbered as D3429, the loco entered traffic in March 1958 and worked for most of its life in South Wales, in and around Cardiff, Barry and Margam. Withdrawn in March 1984 when the mass closure of coal mines in South Wales, together with BR's withdrawal from vacuum-braked freight trains, made it redundant as a vacuum-braked-only shunter, it entered preservation immediately at the Midland Railway – Butterley. Purchased by DESC in 2021, it arrived from the Avon Valley Railway on October 11, having undergone an intermediate overhaul there. DESC

Nene Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 7½ miles.
Wansford, Peterborough, Cambs.
Tel: 01780 784444.
Running: Jan 4/5.

North Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles.
Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8RA.
Tel: 01263 820800.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 5.

Wells & Walsingham Railway
10¼in gauge, four miles.
Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk.
Tel: 01328 711630.
Reopens 2025.

Whitwell & Reepham Railway
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Reepham, Norfolk. Tel: 01603 871694.
Open: Tues-Suns. Running: Dec 1.

HOME COUNTIES

Buckinghamshire Railway Centre
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Quainton Road, Bucks.
Tel: 01296 655720
Cafe open Mon-Fri. Normal running resumes 2025.

Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Chinnor, Oxon. Tel: 07979 055366
Running: Dec 28/29, Jan 1.

Cholsey & Wallingford Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Wallingford, Oxon. Tel: 01491 835067
Normal running resumes 2025.

Didcot Railway Centre
Standard gauge. Didcot, Oxon.
Tel: 01235 817200.
Open: W/Es from Jan 5. Running: Jan 1.

Epping Ongar Railway
Standard gauge, six miles.
Ongar, Essex.
Tel: 01277 365200.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Great Whipsnade Railway
2ft 6in gauge.
Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable.
Tel: 0344 225 1826.
Reopens 2025.

Hampton & Kempton Waterworks Railway
2ft gauge. Hanworth, Middlesex.
Tel: 01932 212235.
Reopens 2025.

Railway Museums

Beamish
The Living Museum of the North, County Durham.
Open: Weds-Suns.
Tel: 0191 370 4000.

Coleford GWR Museum
Coleford, Gloucestershire.
Open: Fris, Sats.
Tel: 01594 832032/833569.

Colonel Stephens Railway Museum
Tenterden station, KESR.
Open on KESR operating days.
Tel: 01580 765155.

Crewe Heritage Centre
Vernon Way, Crewe.
Reopens 2025.
Tel: 01270 212130.

Donegal Railway Heritage Centre
Donegal.
Open: Daily.
Tel: 00353 (0) 749722655.

Hopetown Darlington
North Road Station, Darlington.
Open: Tues-Suns.
Tel: 01325 405060.

Irchester Narrow Gauge Railway Museum
Irchester, Northamptonshire.
Open: Suns.
Tel: 01604 675368.

Leeds Industrial Museum
Armley Mills, Leeds.
Open: Tues-Suns.
Tel: 0113 378 2097.

Locomotion: The National Railway Museum, Shildon
Co Durham.
Open: Daily.
Tel: 033 0058 0058.

London Transport Museum
Covent Garden.
Open: Daily.
Tel: 0343 222 5000.

Manchester Museum of Science & Industry
Castlefield, Manchester.
Open: Daily.
Tel: 033 0058 0058.

Museum of Scottish Railways
Bo'ness, West Lothian.
Open: Daily.
Tel: 01506 825855.

National Railway Museum
Leeman Road, York.
Open: Daily.
Tel: 033 0058 0058.

Penrhyn Castle & Railway Museum
Bangor, Gwynedd.
Open: W/Es.
Tel: 01258 353084.

Rail Story
Ingrow, West Yorks.
Open: Carriage Works daily, Engine Shed Tues-Suns.
Tel: 01535 690739 or 01535 680425.

Railworld Wildlife Haven
Peterborough.
Open: Weds, W/Es.
Tel: 01733 344420.

Riverside Museum
Glasgow.
Open: Daily.
Tel: 0141 287 2720.

STEAM – Museum of the GWR
Swindon.
Open: Daily.
Tel: 01793 466637.

Tiverton Museum
Tiverton, Devon.
Open: Tues-Sats.
Tel: 01884 256295.

West Cumberland Railway Museum
St Bees, Cumbria.
Open one week per month or by appointment for special interest groups – contact petergrooke@btinternet.com

Leighton Buzzard Railway
2ft gauge, three miles. Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Tel: 01525 373888
Running: Dec 27-29.

London Museum of Water & Steam
2ft gauge, 400 yards.
Brentford, London. Tel: 0208 568 4757.
Open: Thurs-Suns.

MIDLANDS

Abbey Pumping Station
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Corporation Road, Leicester, LE4 5PX.Tel: 0116 299 5111.
Reopens 2025.

Amerton Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Stowe-by-Chartley, Staffs. Tel: 01889 271337.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Apedale Valley Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Apedale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. Tel: 0845 094 1953.
Running: Dec 28.

Barrow Hill Roundhouse
Standard gauge. Barrow Hill, near Chesterfield. Tel: 01246 475554.
Reopens: March 2.

Battlefield Line
Standard gauge, five miles.
Shackerstone, Leics. Tel: 01827 880754.
Running: Dec 30-Jan 1.

Cambrian Heritage Railways
Standard gauge, 1¾ miles (Oswestry), ¾ mile (Llynclys). Oswestry and Llynclys, Shropshire. Tel: 01691 728131.
Running: Dec 28/29.

Chasewater Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Walsall, West Midlands. Tel: 01543 452623.
Open: Daily. Normal running resumes 2025.

Churnet Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 5¼ miles.
Cheddleton, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 360522.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Crich Tramway Village
Standard gauge, one mile.
Crich, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01773 854 321
Reopens: March 15.

Dean Forest Railway
Standard gauge, 4½ miles.
Norchard, Lydney, Glos.
Tel: 01594 845840.
Running: Dec 28/29, 31.

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, nine miles.
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 823076.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Echills Wood Railway
7¼in gauge, 1¼ miles.
Kingsbury Water Park, Sutton Coldfield.
Running: Suns.

Foxfield Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles.
Blythe Bridge, Staffs.
Tel: 01782 396210.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway
Standard gauge, 15 miles.
Toddington, Glos.
Tel: 01242 621405.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 2, Jan 4/5.

Great Central Railway
Standard gauge, eight miles.
Loughborough, Leics LE11 1RW.
Tel: 01509 632323. www.gcrailway.co.uk
Running: Dec 27-31, Jan 1, then W/Es.

Great Central Railway (Nottingham)
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Ruddington, Notts.
Tel: 0115 940 5705.
Open: W/Es.

Leek & Rudyard Railway
10¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Leek, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 269948.
Running: Dec 31/Jan 1.

Midland Railway – Butterley
Standard gauge, 3½ miles. Ripley, Derbyshire. Tel: 01773 570140.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Northampton & Lamport Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Pitsford, Northants.
Tel: 01604 820327.
Running: Jan 1.

Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Hunsbury Hill, Northampton. Tel: 01604 702031.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Peak Rail
Standard gauge, four miles.
Matlock, Derbyshire. Tel: 01629 580381.
Running: December 26, January 1.

Perrygrove Railway
15in gauge. B4228, Coleford, Gloucestershire. Tel: 01594 834991.
Open: Tues, Thurs, W/Es.

Rocks by Rail
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Cottesmore, Rutland. Tel: 07974 171068.
Reopens: April 17.

Rushden Transport Museum & Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Rushden, Northants. Tel 0300 3023 150.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Severn Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 16 miles. Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 1QR. Tel: 01562 757900.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 1, 4/5.

Statfold Country Park
2ft gauge, one mile. Tamworth, Staffs B79 0BU. Tel: 01827 830389.
Open: Dec 23, 30

Tanat Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Nantmawr, Shropshire SY10 9HW. Tel: 01691 780042.
www.tanatvalleyrailway.co.uk
Open: TBA.

Telford Steam Railway
Standard gauge, one mile. Telford, Shropshire.
Running: Dec 29.

Toddington Narrow Gauge Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, Toddington.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Valley Railway Adventure
15in gauge, 1¼ miles. A46 north of Evesham, Worcs. Tel: 01386 422282.
Running: W/Es.

NORTH WEST

Blackpool Heritage Depot & Tram Tours
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Blackpool, Lancs. Tel: 01253 209521.
www.blackpoolheritage.com
Depot: TBA.
Heritage tram tours: Dates until Dec 31.

East Lancashire Railway
Standard gauge, 12 miles. Bury, Lancs.
Tel: 0333 320 2830.
Running: Dec 26, 28/29, Jan 1, 25/26.

Eden Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Warcop, Cumbria. Tel: 01768 342309.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Great Laxey Mine Railway
19in gauge, ¼ mile. Laxey, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 862007/670386.
Reopens 2025.

Groudle Glen Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 670453.
Running: Dec 26.

Heaton Park Tramway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Manchester. Tel: 0161 740 1919.
Reopens: Spring 2025.

Isle of Man Steam Railway
3ft gauge, 15½ miles. Douglas, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 662525.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Kirkby Stephen East
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria. Tel: 01768 371700.
Open: Suns.

Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Near Ulverston, Cumbria.
Tel: 01539 531594.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Manx Electric Railway and Snaefell Mountain Railway
3ft gauge, 17 miles (MER), 5½ miles (SMR).
Douglas, Isle of Man. Tel: 01624 697473.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway
15in gauge, seven miles. Ravenglass, Cumbria. Tel: 01229 717171.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 2.

Ribble Steam Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Preston, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 728800.
Normal running resumes 2025.



On October 6, Class 142 No. 142055 worked its first trains since entering preservation in 2020. Owned by The 142055 Group, the 'Pacer' relocated from the Foxfield Railway to Cambrian Heritage Railways' (CHR) Llynclys site, south of Oswestry, in May. The unit completed a dozen return trips between Llynclys and Penygarreg Halt on its inaugural day in CHR traffic. The 142055 Group plans to return the DMU to its original BR Provincial Blue livery. GARETH EVANS

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South Tynedale Railway
2ft gauge, 4¾ miles. Alston, Cumbria.
Tel: 01434 338212.
Running: Weds & W/Es until Oct 30 + Oct 29.

Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Threlkeld, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 779747.
Normal running resumes 2025.

West Lancashire Light Railway
2ft gauge. Hesketh Bank, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 815881.
Normal running resumes 2025.

NORTH EAST

Aln Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Alnwick, Northumberland. Tel: 0300 030 3311.
Running: Dec 27-29.

Appleby Frodingham Railway-Scunthorpe
Standard gauge, 15 miles. British Steel Steelworks, Scunthorpe.
Tel: 07889 297271.
Reopens: Spring 2025.

Bowes Railway
Standard gauge, 1¾ miles. Springwell, Tyne & Wear. Tel: 07850 916484.
Open: Tues & Thurs to pre-booked groups only.

Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway
15in gauge, two miles.
Cleethorpes, North East Lincolnshire
Tel: 01472 604657.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Derwent Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Murton, near York. Tel: 01904 489966.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Embsay, North Yorks.
Tel: 01756 710614.
Running: W/Es from Jan 11.

Heatherslaw Light Railway
15in gauge, two miles.
Ford Forge, Northumberland.
Tel: 01890 820244.
Reopens: Mar 31.

Keighley & Worth Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Haworth, West Yorks, BD22 8NJ.
Tel: 01535 645214.
Running: W/Es + Dec 26/27, 30-Jan 3.

Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway
2ft gauge. Skegness, Lincs.
Tel: 07407 500884.
Reopens May 24.

Lincolnshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Ludborough, Lincolnshire.
Tel: 01507 363881.
Running: Jan 1.

Middleton Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Hunslet, Leeds. Tel: 0845 680 1758.
Reopens: Spring 2025.

North Yorkshire Moors Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles.
Grosmont, North Yorks.
Tel: 01751 472508.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 5.

Scarborough North Bay Railway
20in gauge, ⅞ mile.
Scarborough, North Yorks.
Tel: 01723 368791.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Stephenson Steam Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
North Shields.
Tel: 0191 277 7135.
Open: W/Es. Normal running resumes 2025.

Tanfield Railway
Standard gauge, three miles. Near Gateshead, Tyne & Wear.
Tel: 07508 092365.
Running: Dec 26, 29, 31.

Weardale Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles.
Stanhope, Co. Durham.
Running: Dec 29.

Wensleydale Railway
Standard gauge, 22 miles.
Leeming Bar, North Yorkshire.
Tel: 01677 425805.
Running: Dec 28-30.

Whistlestop Valley Railway (Kirklees)
15in gauge, four miles.
Huddersfield, West Yorks.
Tel: 01484 865727.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Yorkshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1,000ft. Fimber, East Yorkshire. Tel: 01377 338053.
Reopens 2025

WALES

Bala Lake Railway
2ft gauge, 4½ miles. Llanuwchllyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01678 540666.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Blaenavon's Heritage Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Blaenavon, Torfaen.
Tel: 01495 792263.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Brecon Mountain Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, five miles.
Pant, Mid-Glamorgan.
Tel: 01685 722988.
Reopens: Apr 5.

Corris Railway
2ft 3in gauge, ¾ mile.
Corris, near Machynlleth.
Tel: 01654 761701.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Fairbourne Railway
12¼in gauge, two miles. Fairbourne, Gwynedd. Tel: 01341 250362.
Reopens 2025.

Ffestiniog Railway
2ft gauge, 13½ miles. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 516000.
Running: Dec 28-Jan 1.

Gwili Railway
Standard gauge, four miles. Bronwydd Arms, Carmarthenshire. Tel: 01267 238213.
Running: December 29/30.

Llanberis Lake Railway
2ft gauge, three miles.
Llanberis, Gwynedd. Tel: 01286 870549.
Running: Tues-Thus until Dec 19.

Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Cynheidre, Carmarthenshire.
Tel: 07956 082305.
Reopens: TBA.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Galas and other events in the coming weeks

DECEMBER 2024
- 28 Apedale Valley Light Railway Winter Warmer Steam Gala
- 28 Great Central Railway Deltic Running Day
- 28/29 Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway Winter Diesel Gala
- 29 Bodmin Railway Winter Steam Up
- 31 Great Central Railway Nightrider

JANUARY 2025
- 1 Bluebell Railway New Year Steam Up
- 3-5 South Devon Railway Winter Steam Gala
- 4/5 Severn Valley Railway Winter Steam Gala
- 4/5 Swanage Railway Winter Warm Up Gala
- 11/12 Battlefield Line Winter Warmer Gala
- 18 East Lancashire Railway Rail200 Open House Day
- 23-26 Great Central Railway Winter Steam Gala

Are you organising a gala or other big event and would like it included in these listings? Let us know the details by emailing Owen Hayward at ohayward@mortons.co.uk

Llangollen Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Llangollen, Denbighshire.
Tel: 01978 860979.
Running: Dec 27-29.

Rhyl Miniature Railway
15in gauge. Rhyl, North Wales.
Tel: 01352 759109.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Snowdon Mountain Railway
800mm gauge, 4½ miles.
Llanberis, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01286 870223.
Reopens 2025.

Talyllyn Railway
2ft 3in gauge, 7½ miles.
Tywyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01654 710472.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 3.

Teifi Valley Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile.
Henllan, Ceredigion, SA44 5TD.
Tel: 01559 371077.
Reopens 2025.

Vale of Rheidol Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, 12 miles.
Aberystwyth, Ceredigion.
Tel: 01970 625819.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway
2ft gauge, one mile.
Porthmadog, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01766 513402.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Welsh Highland Railway
2ft gauge, 26 miles.
Caernarfon, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01766 516000.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, eight miles.
Llanfair Caereinion, Powys.
Tel: 01938 810441.
Running: Dec 28-30.

SCOTLAND

Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Bo'ness, West Lothian.
Tel: 01506 825855.
Running: Dec 28-31, Jan 2/3.

Caledonian Railway
Standard gauge, four miles.
Brechin, Angus. Tel: 01356 622992.
Reopens 2025.

Doon Valley Railway
Standard gauge.
Dunaskin, Ayrshire.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Keith & Dufftown Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Dufftown, Banffshire.
Tel: 01340 821181.
Running: Dec 31, Jan 25.

Lathalmond Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Scottish Vintage Bus Museum,
Lathalmond, near Dunfermline.
Tel: 07379 914801.
Reopens: Spring 2025.

Leadhills & Wanlockhead Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Leadhills, South Lanarkshire.
Reopens: Spring 2025.

Royal Deeside Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Banchory, Kincardineshire.
Tel: 01330 844416.
Normal running resumes 2025.

Strathspey Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Aviemore, Inverness-shire.
Tel: 01479 810725.
Running: Dec 28/29, Jan 1-5.

IRELAND

Cavan and Leitrim Railway
3ft gauge.
Drumod, Co. Leitrim.
Tel: +353 71 963 8599.
Reopens: Spring 2025.

Downpatrick & County Down Railway
5ft 3in gauge.
Downpatrick, Co. Down.
Tel: 028 4461 5779.
Reopens 2025.

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland
5ft 3in gauge.
Whitehead, Co. Antrim.
Tel: +44 28 9358 6200.
Museum open: Thurs-Sats.

The details in this list were correct at the time of going to press. We strongly advise that you confirm details with the venue concerned. Pre-booking is often essential.
TBA = To Be Announced

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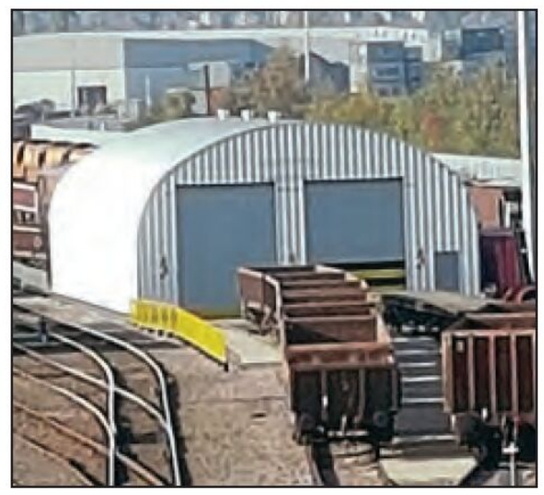
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Your lighter takes

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Love for Ffestiniog's 'old ladies' transcend all scales

THERE'S little doubt that, despite their quarrying heritage, Penrhyn main line Hunslets *Linda* and *Blanche* have become synonymous with the preserved Ffestiniog Railway in North Wales.

Both built in 1893 (along with a third locomotive, *Charles*) for the Penrhyn Quarry Railway, they started life as 0-4-0STs, gaining leading pony trucks and tenders in the years following their arrival on the FR in 1962. Despite these fairly drastic modifications to their original design, the pair have fostered a devout following amid narrow gauge enthusiasts and after a few years apart for overhauls and repairs, both have been seen in service together between Porthmadog and Blaenau Ffestiniog throughout 2024.

But the love for this pair of locomotives doesn't just stop at their full-sized counterparts; in recent years, Bachmann has modelled them in 009 scale, covering their complete life stories, while back in 1998 the design of *Blanche* inspired the Ruislip Lido Railway's 12in gauge *Mad Bess,*



Scaling up: Used to sitting at the controls of 12in gauge version *Mad Bess*, Ruislip Lido Railway volunteer Ed stands on the footplate of *Blanche* at Porthmadog during a visit to the Ffestiniog in September. FFWHR

an oil-fired 2-4-0STT that can be regauged for 15in lines too. Earlier this year, that very locomotive starred at the Fairbourne Railway's May 26/27 gala weekend, and though it may not have made it to Porthmadog to visit its larger counterpart, in the final week of September volunteers



Scaling down: On September 28, a 7 ¼in gauge version of *Blanche* and *Linda* could be found running at Barnards Miniature Railway in Essex during a visiting engine gala. OWEN HAYWARD



Penrhyn Hunslet-inspired *Mad Bess* at work on the Fairbourne Railway during its gala visit to Wales in May 2024. RUISLIP LIDO RAILWAY

Ed, John and Anne from the RLR took a trip on the FR behind the very locomotive that inspired the construction of *Mad Bess.*

Ed, a train dispatcher at London Bridge station, joined the locomotive crew on the footplate for the journey, taking the opportunity to compare the two different locomotives.

"*Blanche* is a little bigger – double the size – and is coal-fired instead of oil, but it is actually about the same inside, so *Mad Bess* is a pretty good representation," he said.

Meanwhile, over in Essex, the weekend of September 28/29 saw the Barnards Miniature Railway, in West Horndon, Essex, host its visiting engines gala – at which 7¼in gauge versions of both *Linda* and *Blanche* were to be found in service alongside several other guest locomotives.

The scale model of *Blanche* is based on the locomotive's Penrhyn appearance, sporting the PQR's lined black livery with an 0-4-0 wheelbase and with a tender designed to match for the driver to ride on. It was started in 1998 by model engineer Jon Green, who completed it in 2008. It was sold to its current owner in 2016 and is usually found at the Wythall Miniature Railway in Birmingham.

By contrast, *Linda* is representative of the preserved era locomotive, sporting the FR green colour scheme. Started as one of a batch of three at some point in the 1990s, it was never fully completed, before being acquired by its current owner in 2015. Since then, a new boiler has been built for it, and it was finished off under contract by engineer Jack Shaw. It debuted in service at Mizens Railway in Woking earlier in the spring of 2024.

Of course, with the two scaled-down Hunslets together in the same place, it was inevitable that they would be double-headed for some trips on the 1.5km running line, much to the delight of visitors to the BMR that weekend – a prelude to the FR's pair doing same over the October 4-6 Bygones Weekend. Perhaps, at future notable anniversary for the pair, all these locomotives might all come together in one place to celebrate…

NEXT ISSUE

Issue 328 out Jan 17

The Railway 200 team discover 'forgotten' documents in the National Archives including one signed by George Stephenson!

PLUS



THE GREAT LEADER'S FINAL JOURNEY

Marking 60 years since the death of Britain's wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill on January 24, 1965, Dave Wilson, a BR fireman at the time, recounts the lead-up to the state funeral train which he saw depart Waterloo.

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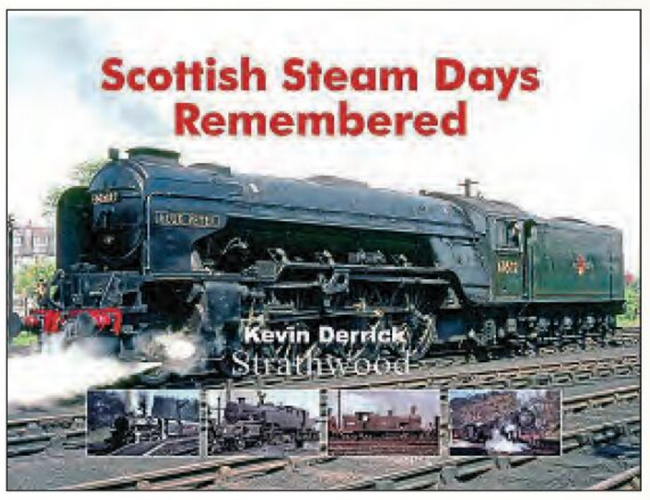
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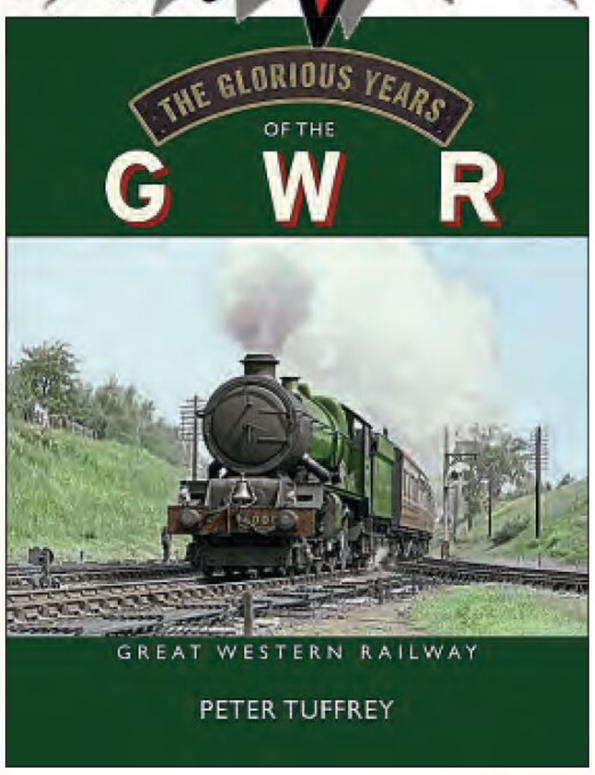
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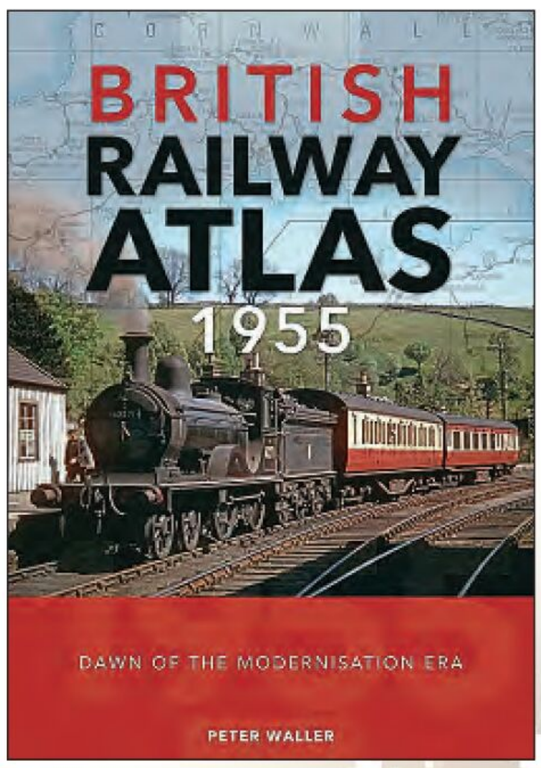
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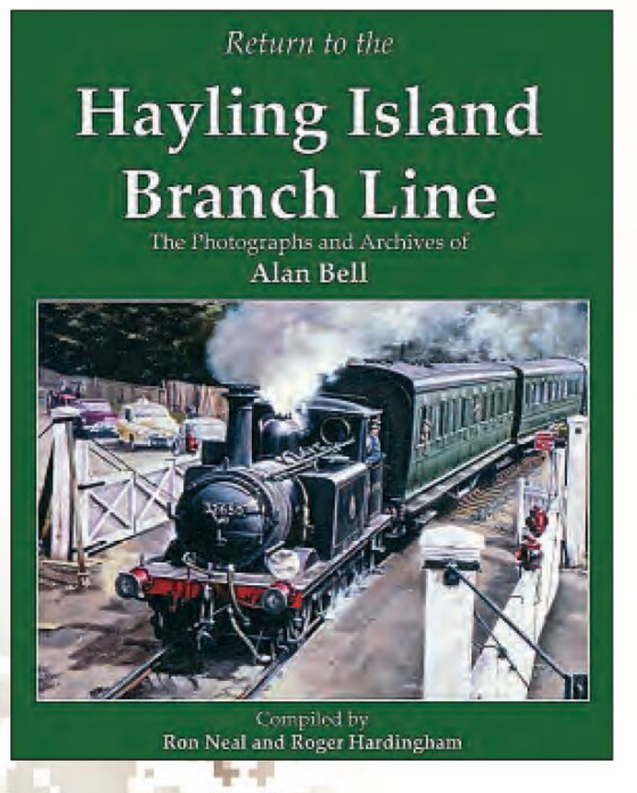
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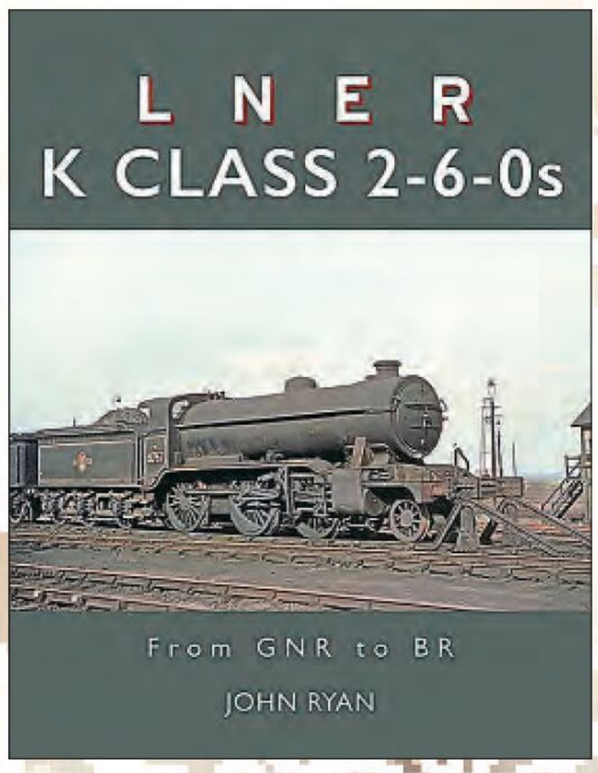


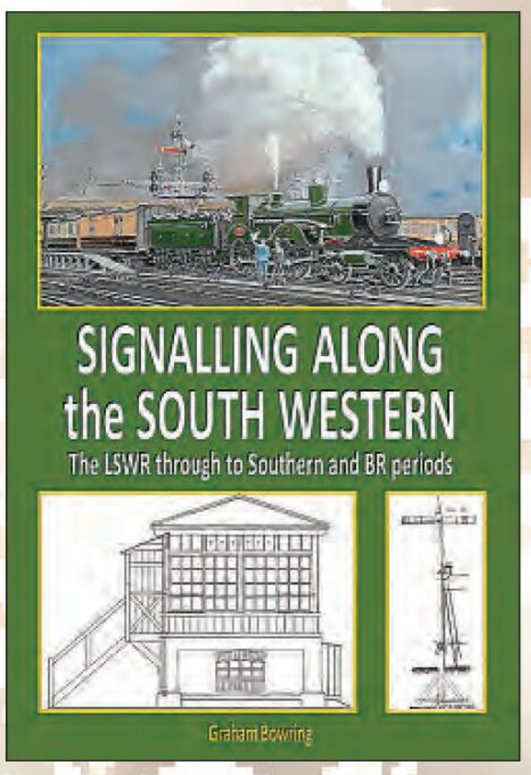


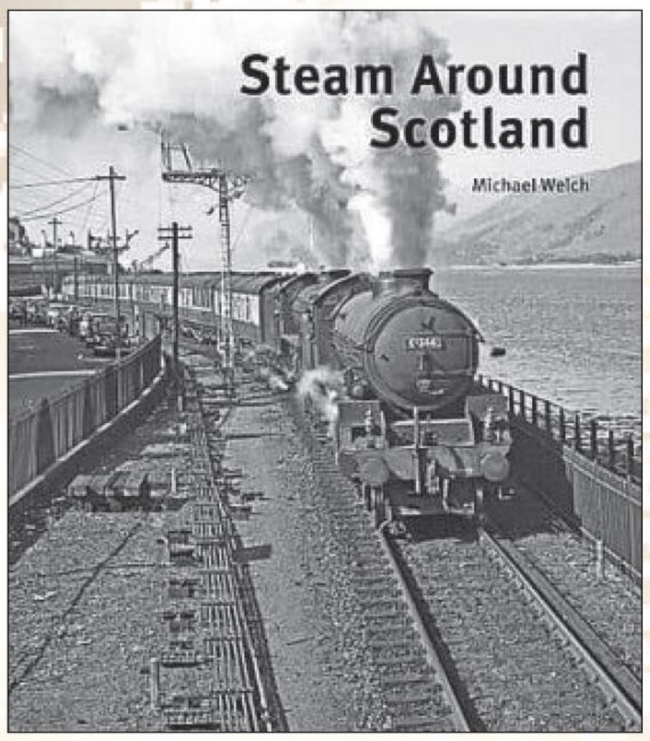












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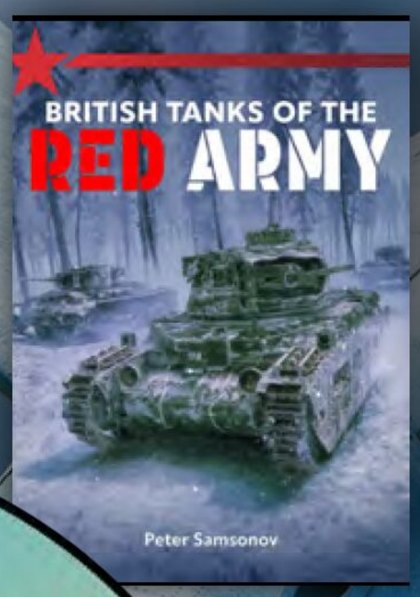
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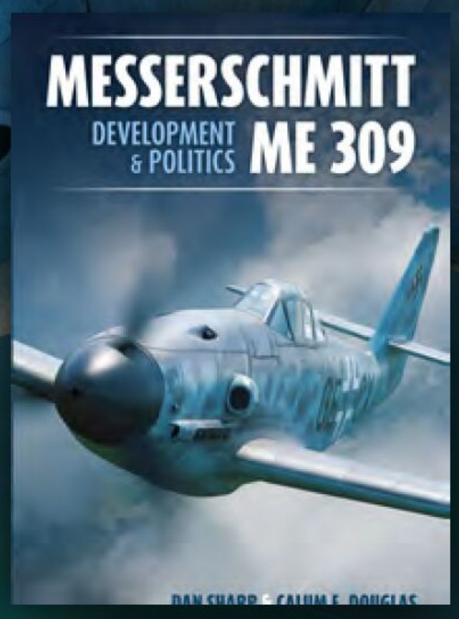


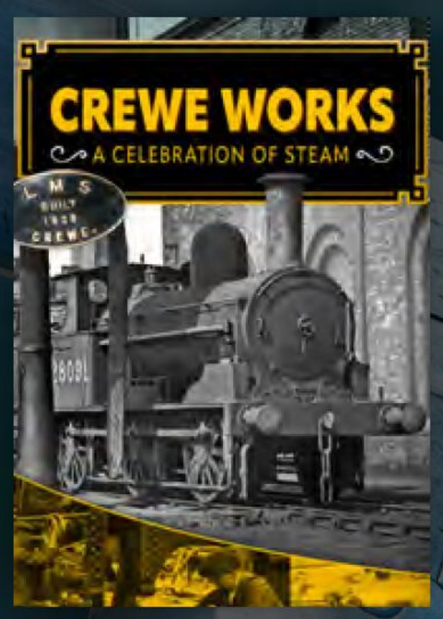
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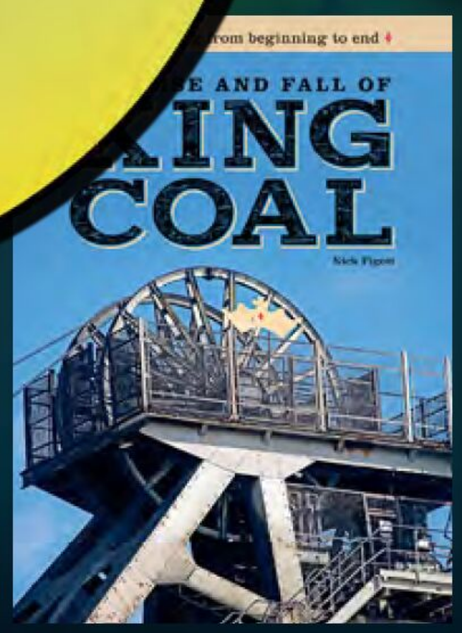
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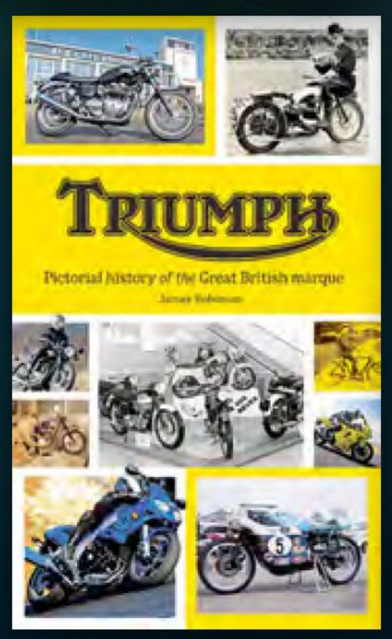
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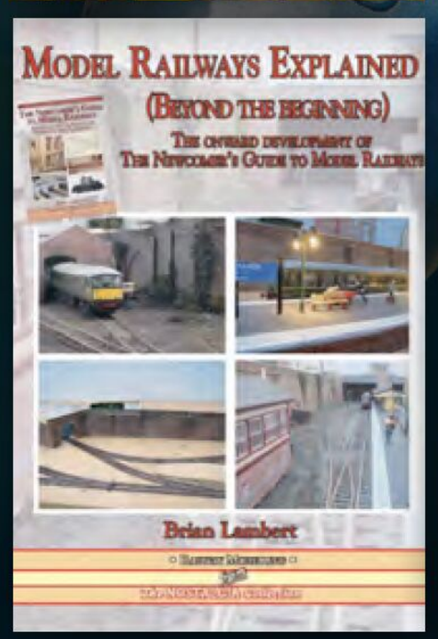


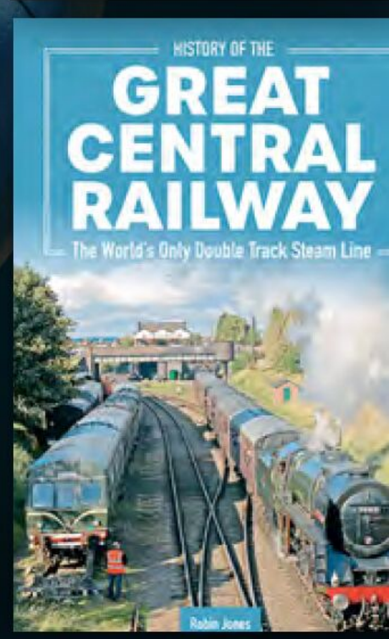












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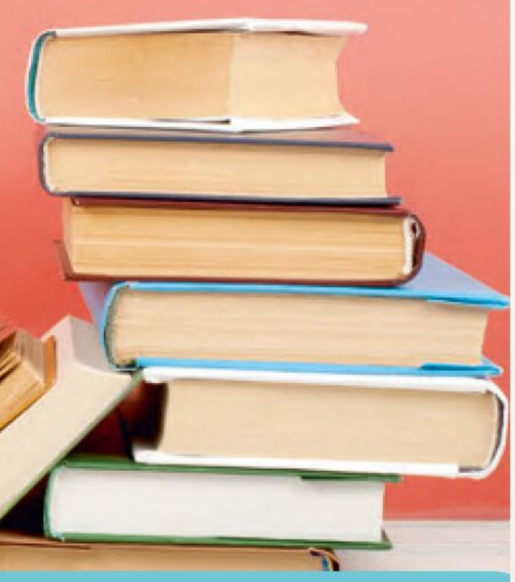
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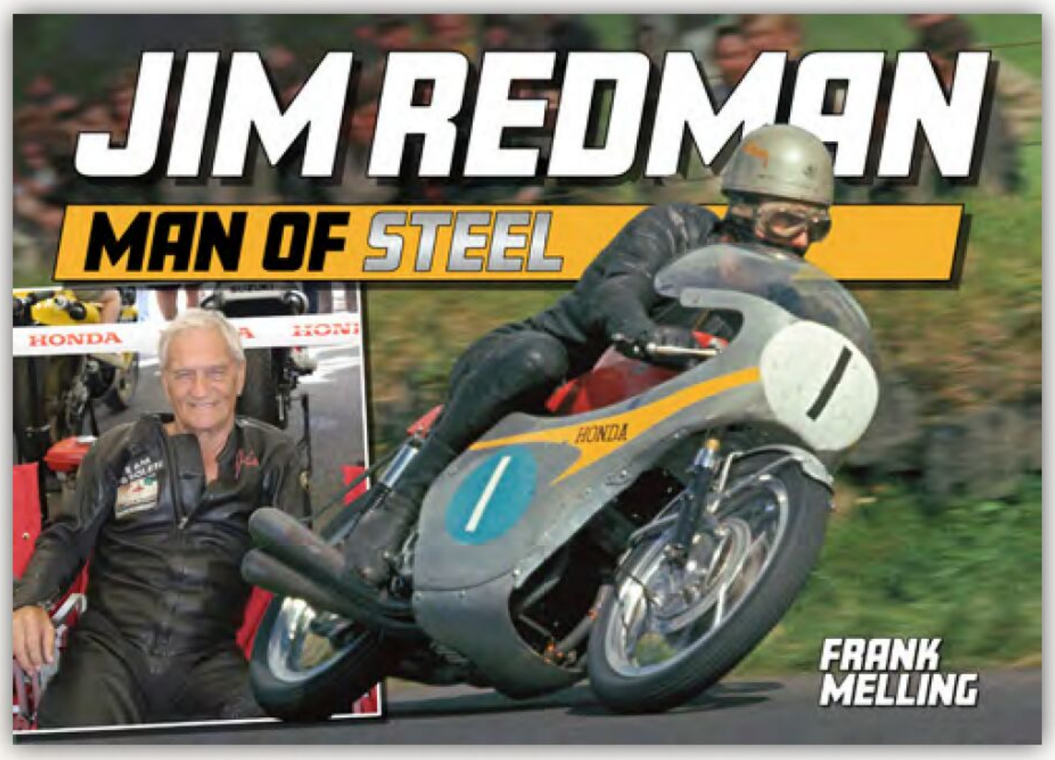


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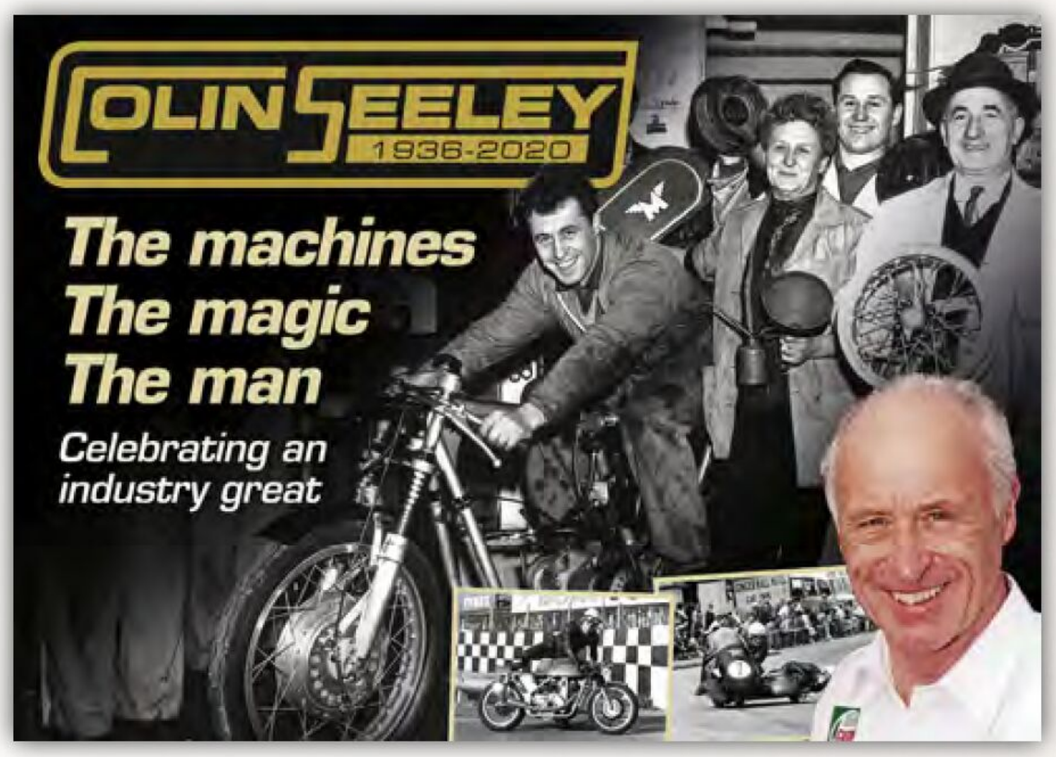
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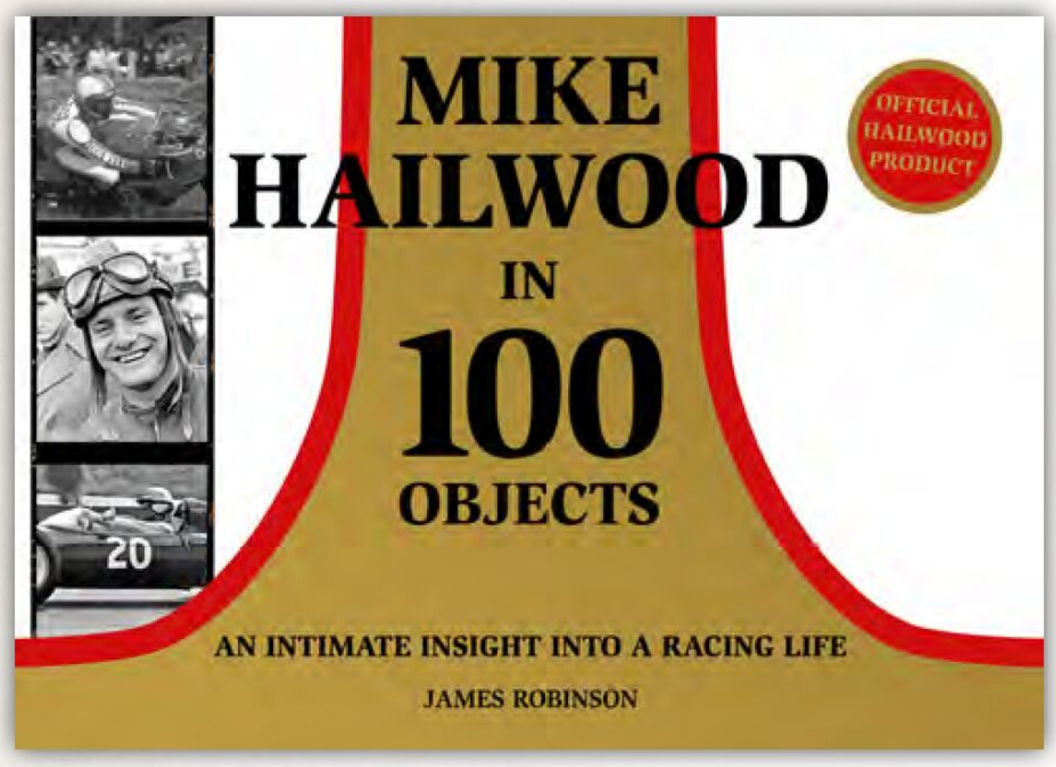
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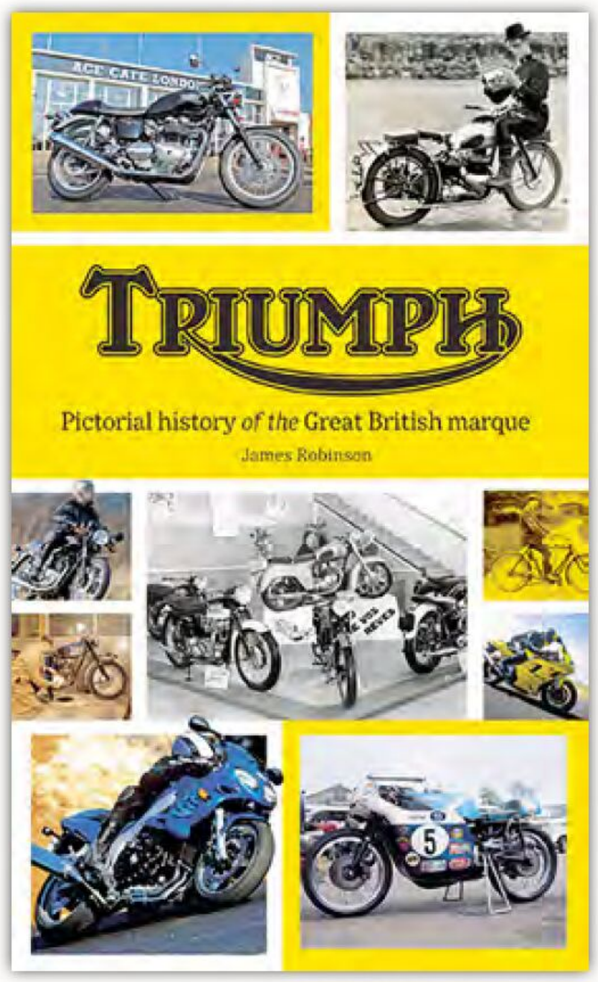
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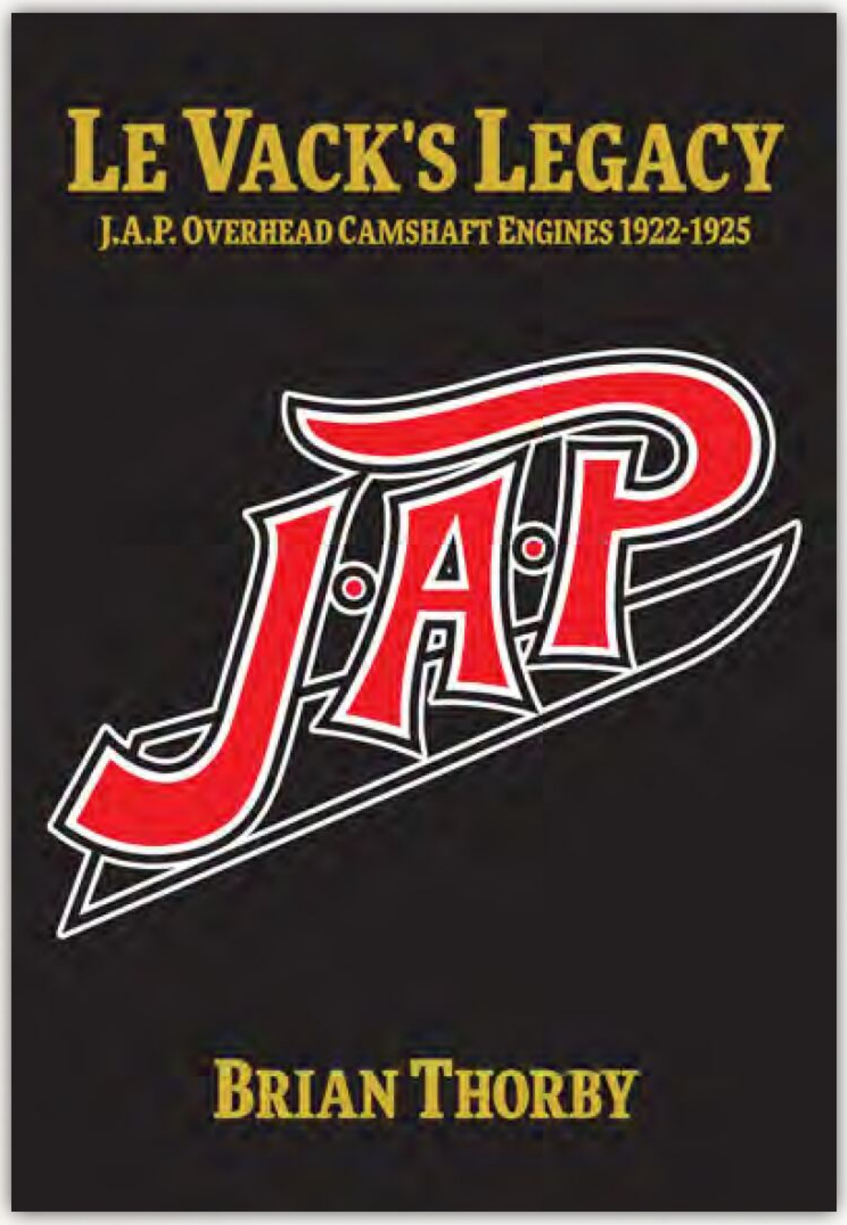
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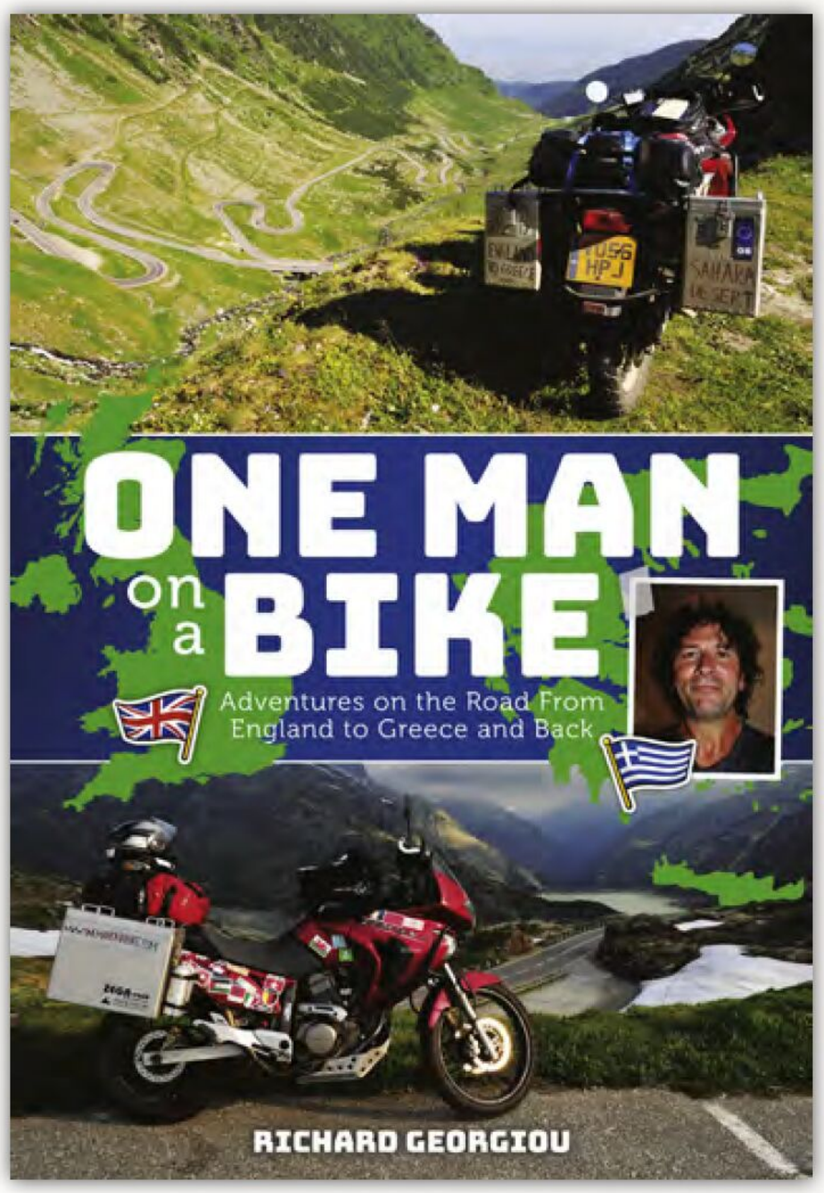
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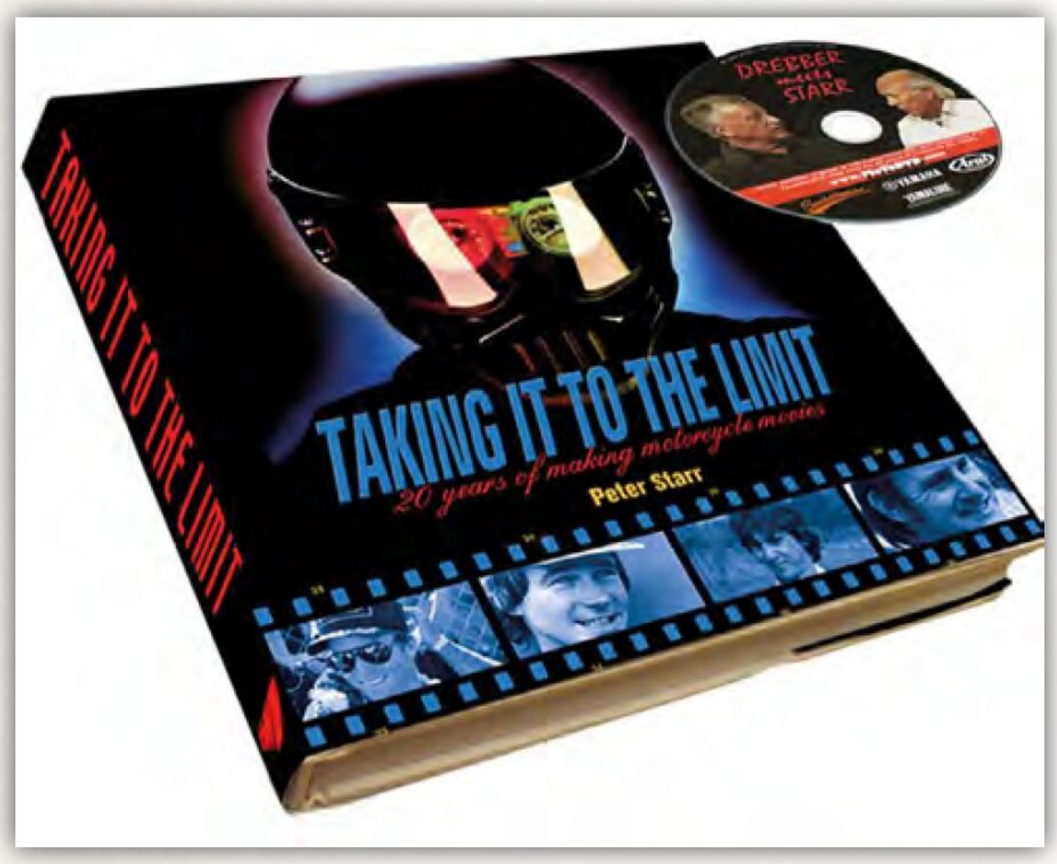
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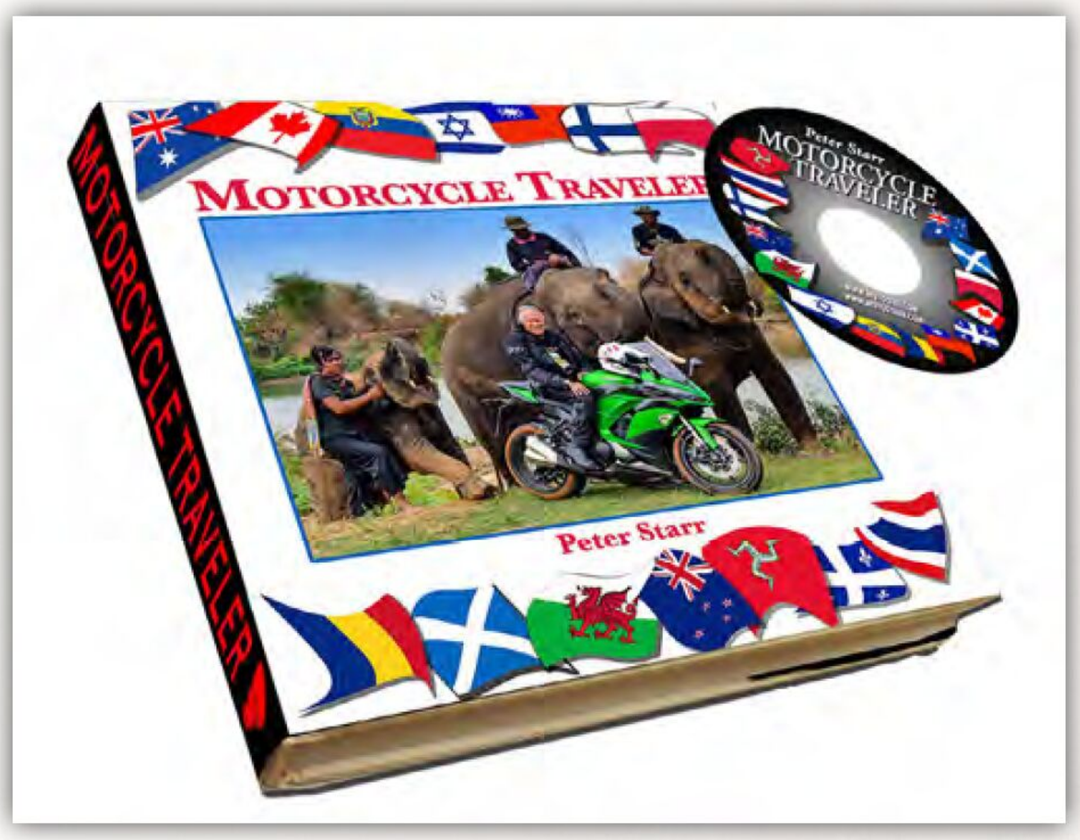
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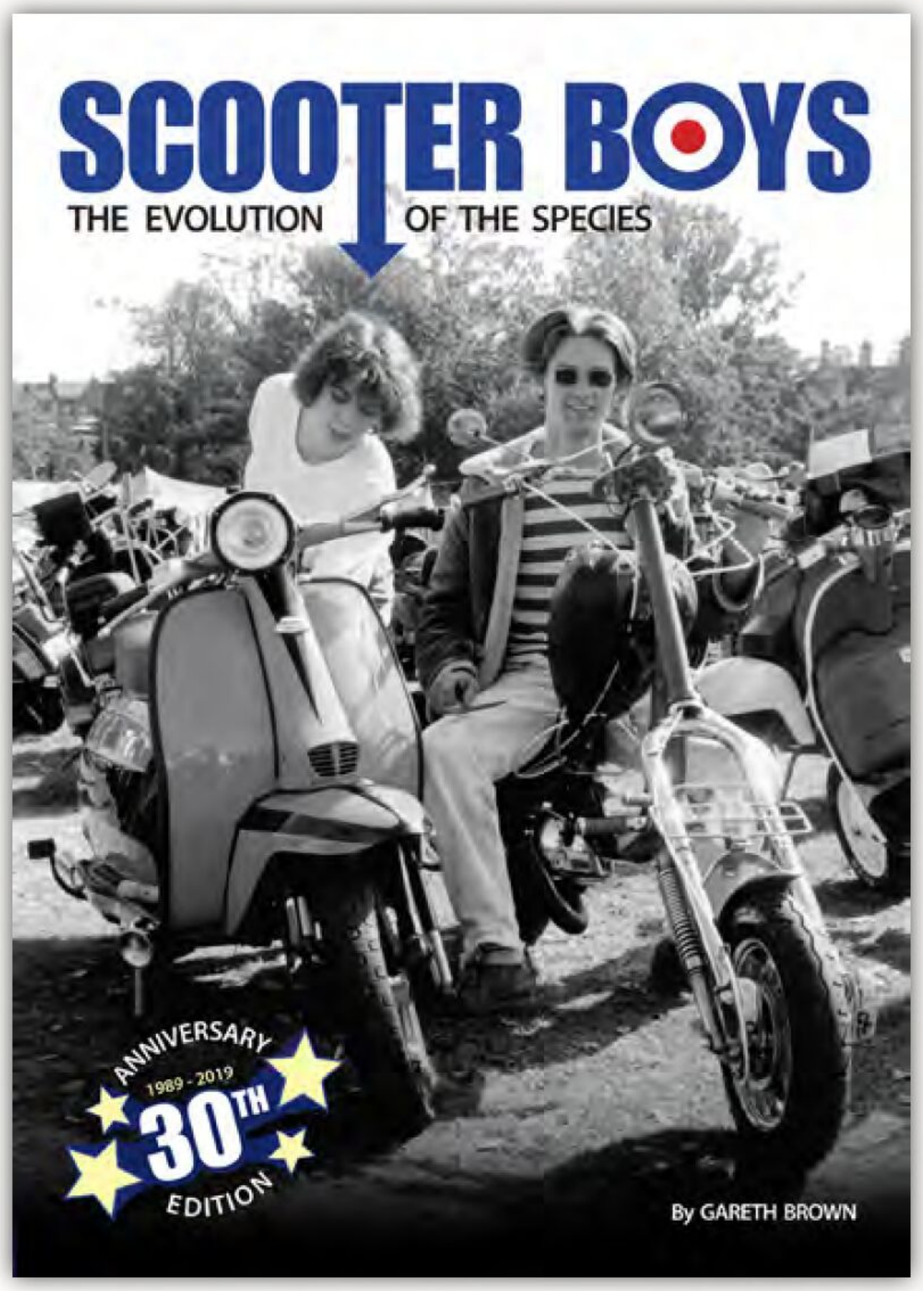
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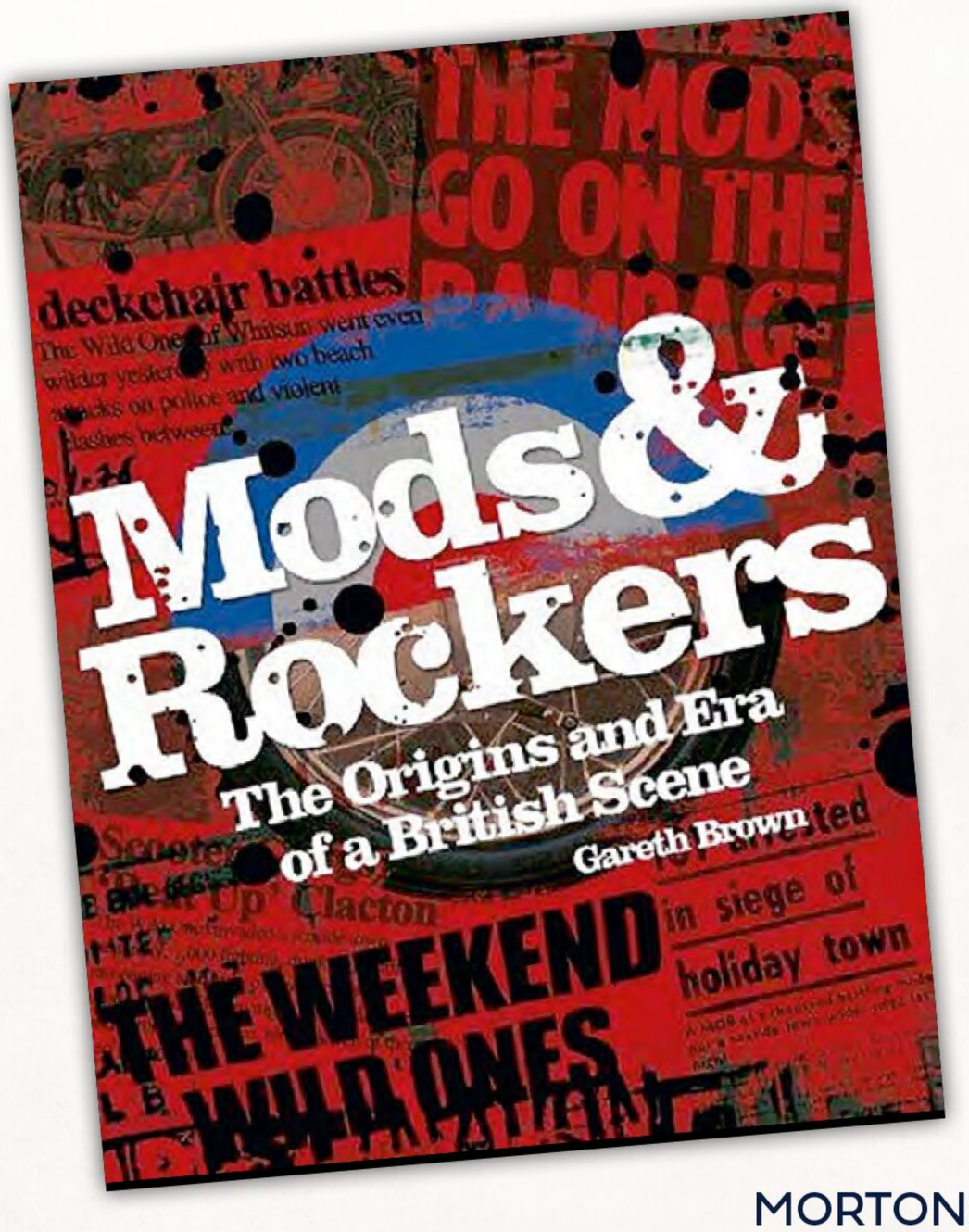
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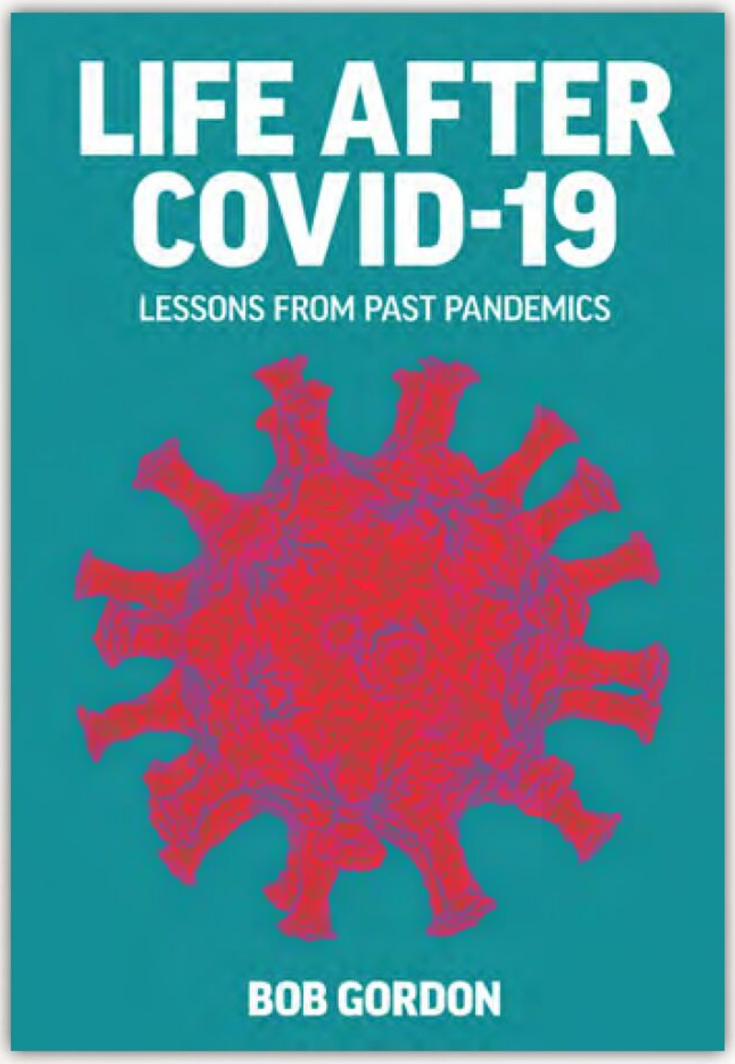
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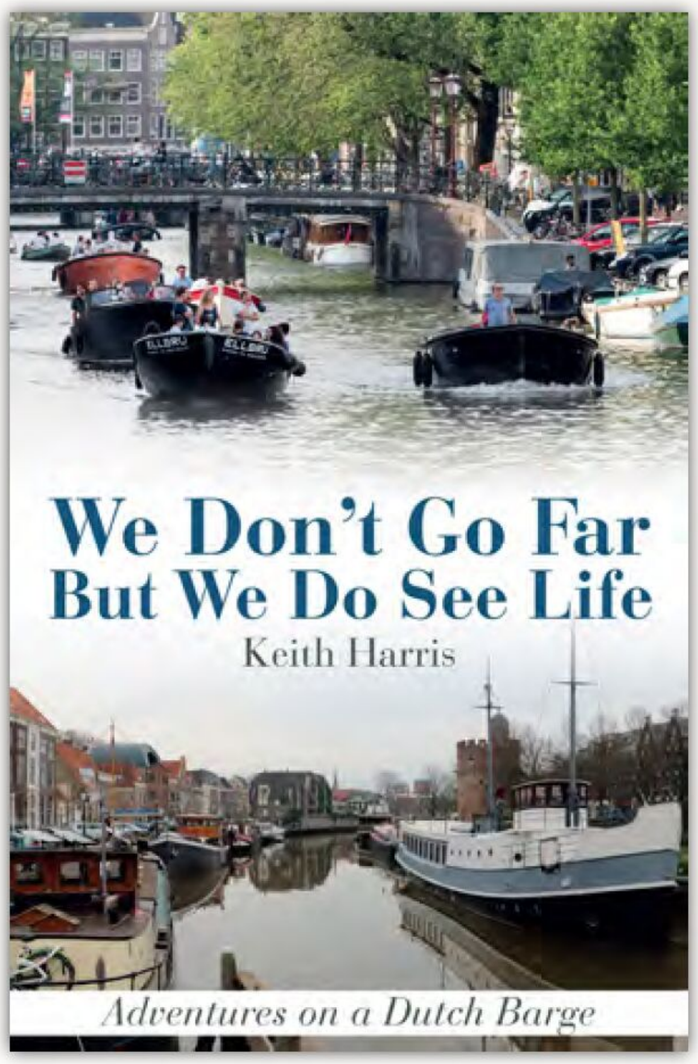
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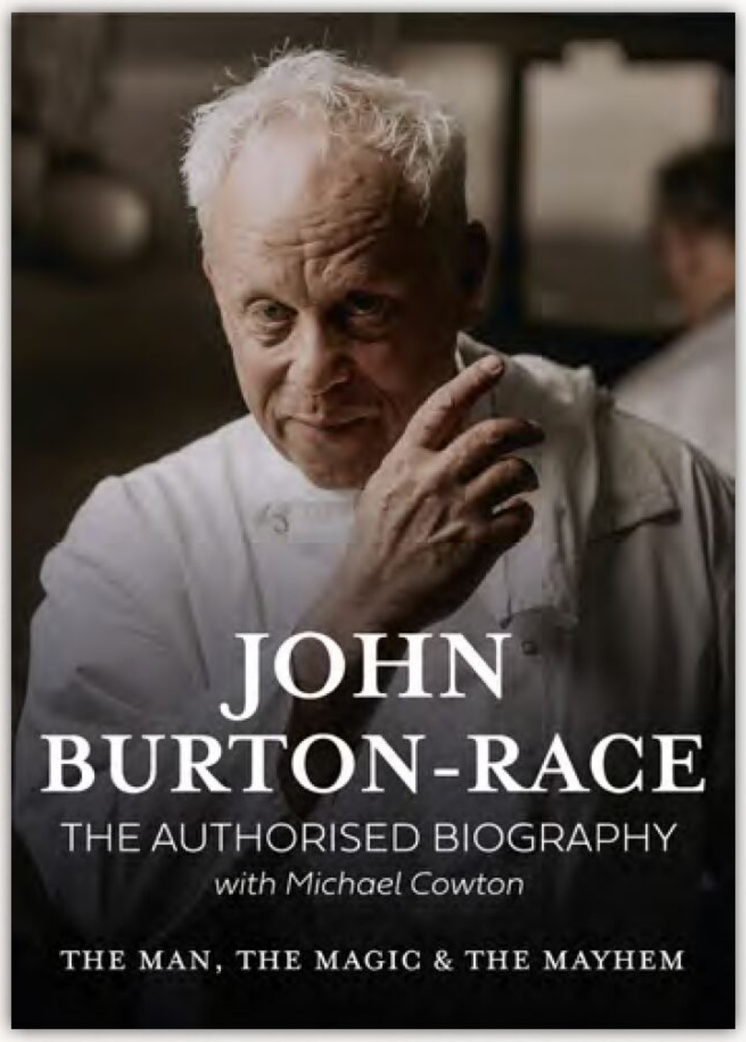
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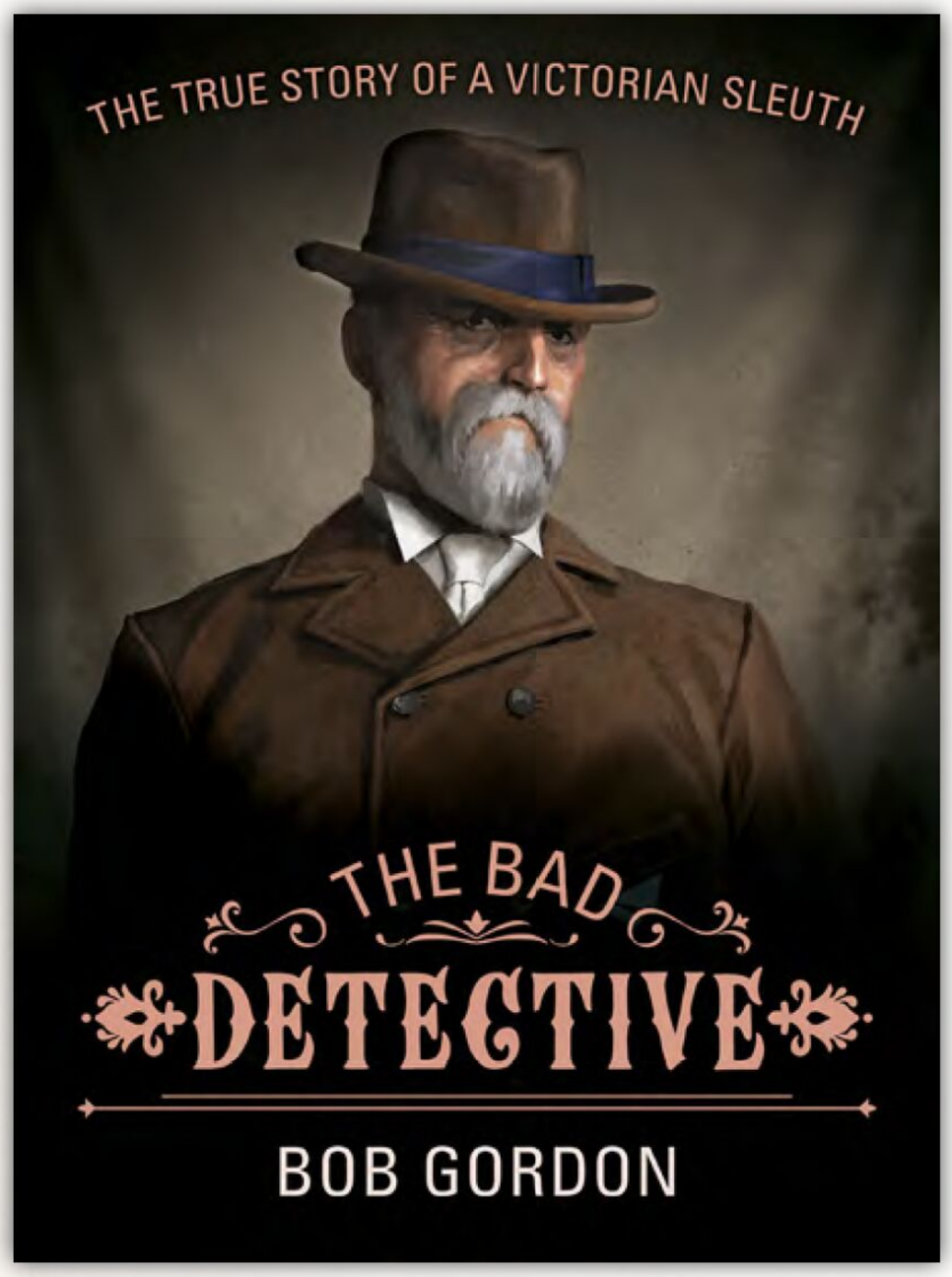
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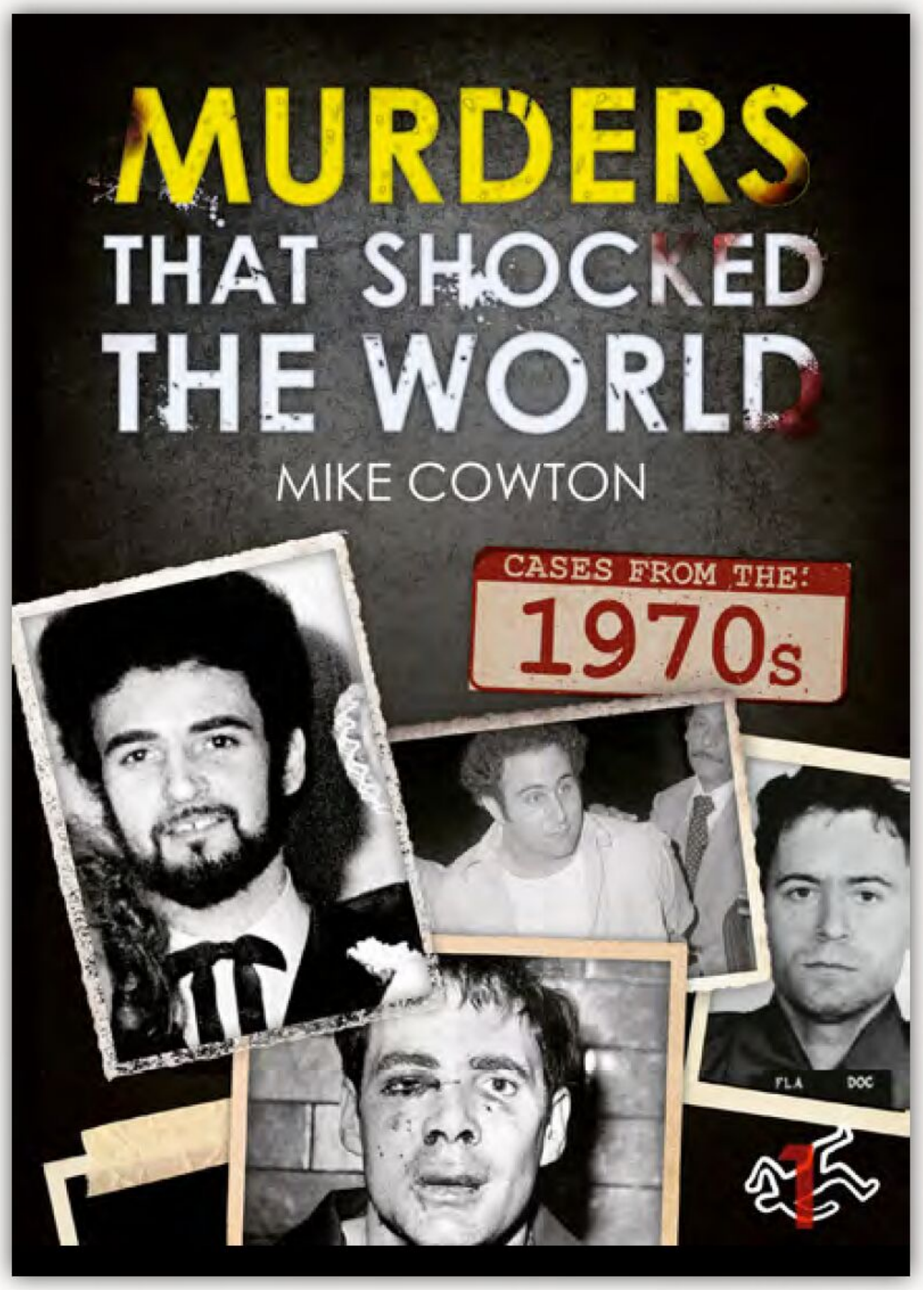
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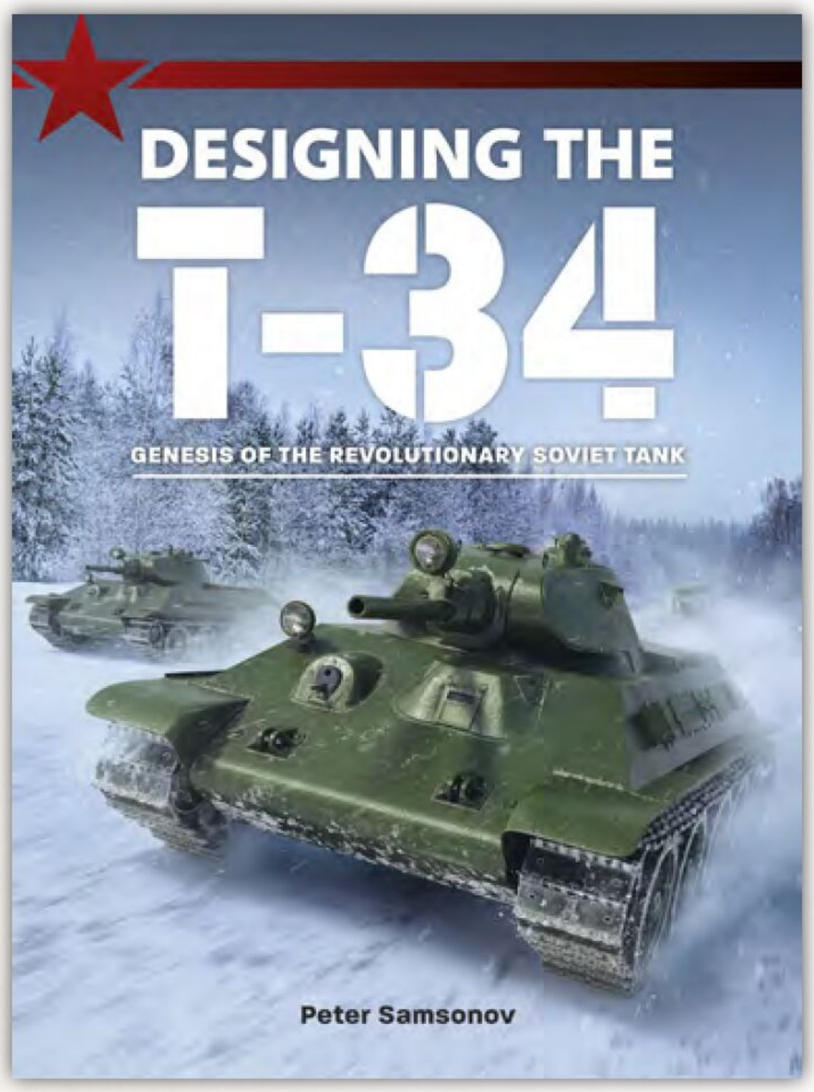
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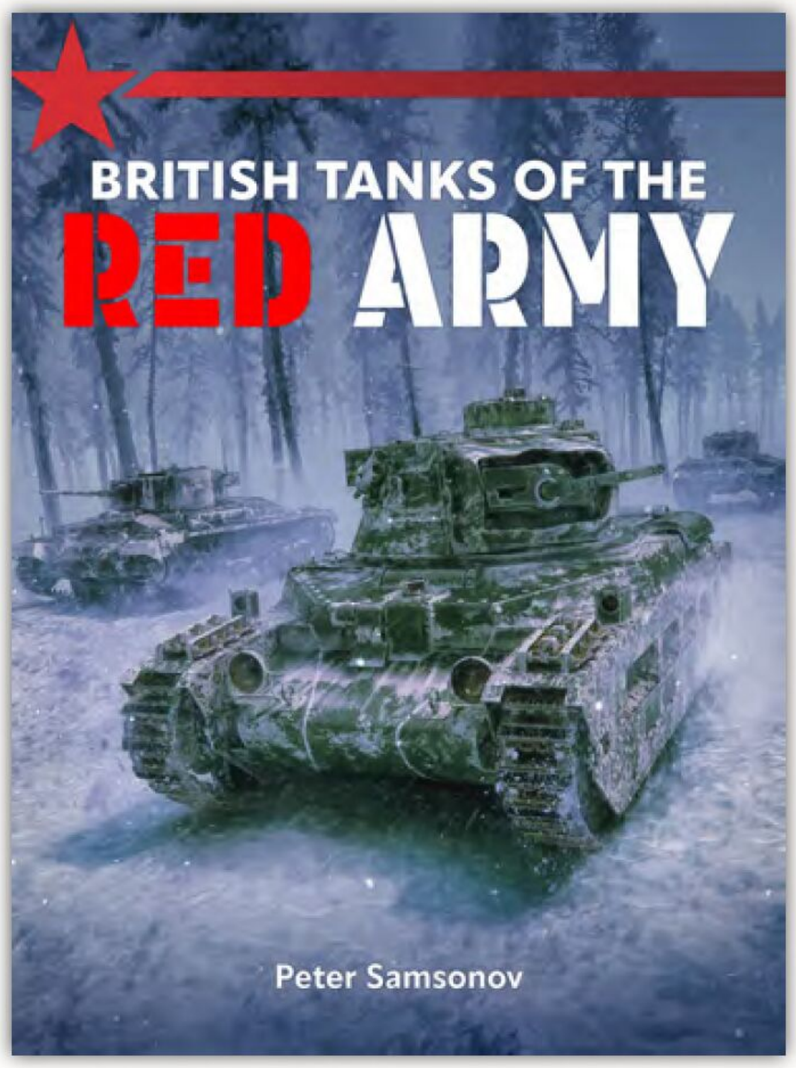
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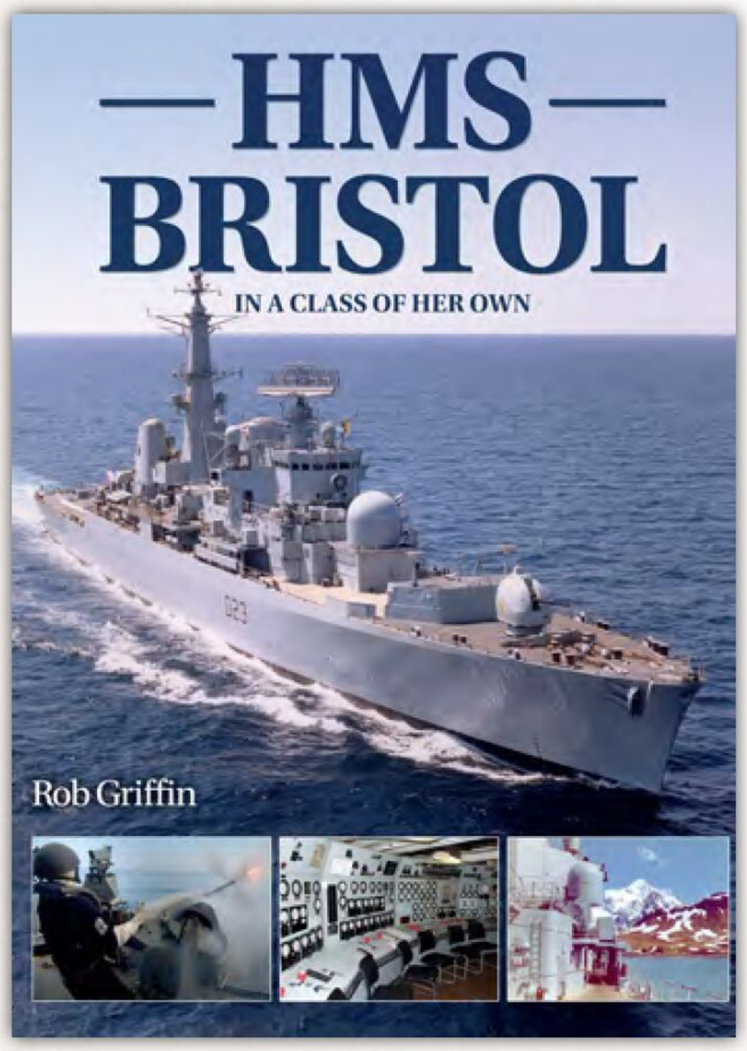
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The first encounter between British armour and the Red Army was not on friendly terms – with the British sending surplus tanks to reinforce the pro-monarchy White Army in the Russian Civil War. When the Reds won, war trophy Mark V heavy tanks as well as medium Mk.A Whippets and Mk.B Hornets entered service with the RKKA. As the political landscape changed during the 1920s, the Red Army assessed British designs available for export and a licensed copy of the Vickers Mk.E entered production in 1931 as the T-26.

During the early days of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, armour losses were huge and the Red Army once again looked abroad to acquire new fighting vehicles. A large-scale programme of military aid to the USSR began in August 1941, with the US and Britain offering help under separate terms – though not for free. A deal was struck and Convoy PQ-1 with the first 20 British tanks for the Red Army left for Arkhangelsk on September 29, 1941. These tanks arrived in time to take place in the Battle of Moscow and as shipments continued, British armoured vehicles would remain in service with the Red Army until the conclusion of the Second World War nearly four years later.

A wide range of British vehicles served under the Red flag during the war – ranging from Matildas and Valentines to Churchills and even Tetrarch light tanks.

In British Tanks of the Red Army, tank expert Peter Samsonov presents a history of British tanks in the Soviet Union and provides a detailed account of their use on the battlefield, including what the Red Army tankers thought of them.

Locomotive No 32 Tamerline became the first steam locomotive to be completed at Crewe Works on 10 March 1843. One hundred and fifteen years later BR 9F No 92250 became the 7,331st steam locomotive to be built at the Cheshire works, when completed in December 1958. This publication is a tribute to the thousands of people employed there during the steam locomotive building era.

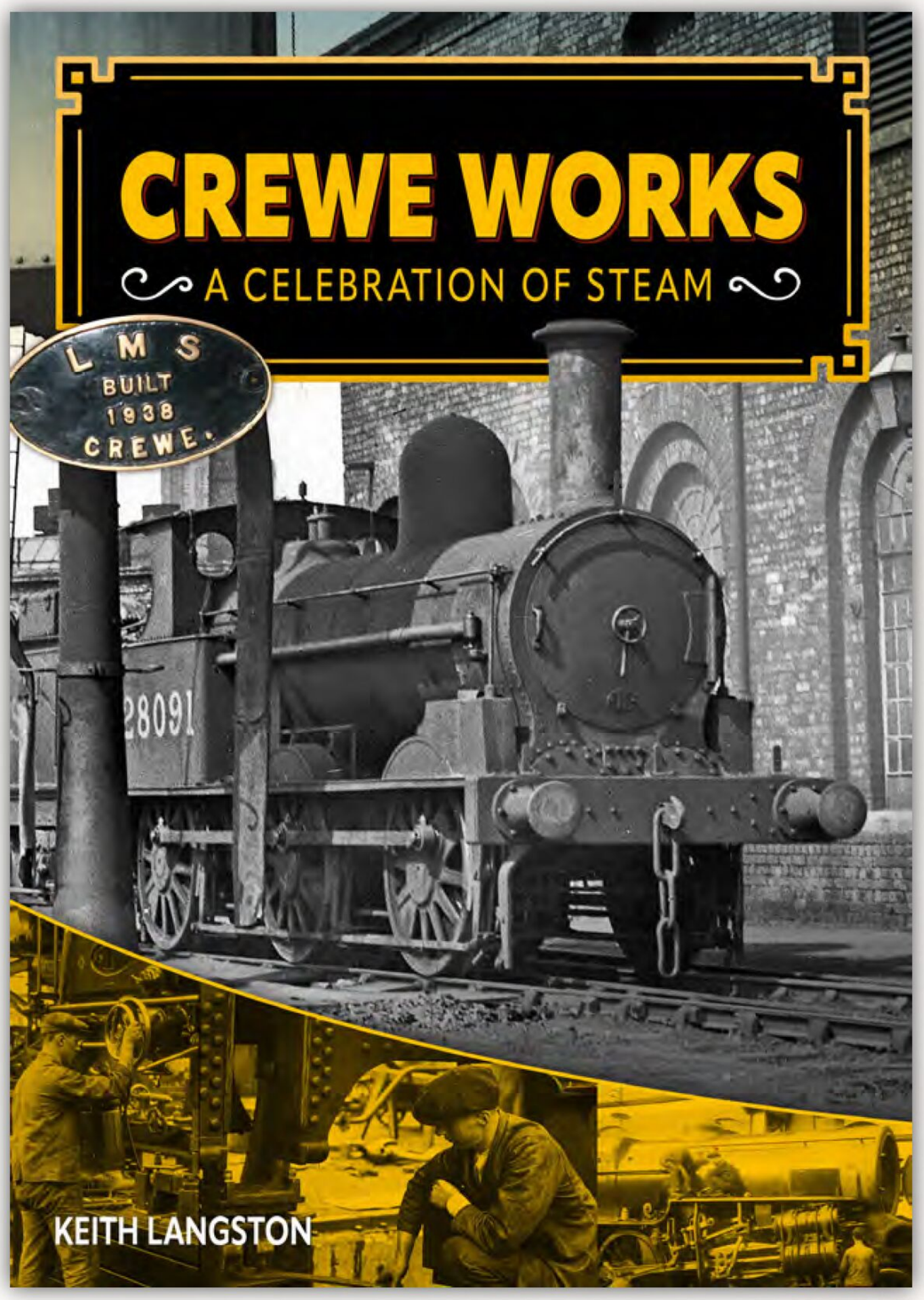
In 1913 The Railway Magazine proudly described Crewe as "the most famous railway works in the world". Indeed, railways throughout the world benefited from adopting 'best Crewe practice'. Many who worked at Crewe in its heyday, first under the London & North Western Railway and later the London Midland & Scottish Railway, held the firm belief that the works was the 'beating heart' of the Cheshire town.

Back in those days you would be hard put to find a local family without some kind of connection to that vast engineering enterprise. In earlier times the works not only provided the steadily growing town with employment, but furthermore supplied the town with both gas and domestic water. For example, the consumption of the gas produced at the works in the 1940s was assessed as 30% to the works, 20% to Rolls-Royce and 50% to the town. Those statistics are a great example of the many close ties that existed between the works and the town.

After the post-war Trasport Act, steam locomotive construction and maintenance continued under the newly created company British Railways. From 1948 under Nationalisation in addition to locomotive building, BR Crewe Works was responsible for the maintenance of some 2,779 steam locomotives. However, even as the Standard Locomotive building programme got underway plans for a future railway system without steam traction were being drawn up.

The timeline of this publication highlights those steam locomotive classes which were listed as being built by Crewe Works (in any time period) but importantly included in the BR January 1948 stock list. It also includes BR Standard class locomotives built at Crewe post 1951. Steam traction did return to the works, albeit in only a token manner during the occasion of the September 2005 Great Gathering.

Crewe Works – A Celebration of Steam by Keith Langston is not intended to be a source of detailed steam engineering practices, but is a comprehensively illustrated record of steam locomotive building and maintenance at Crewe Works. Fortunately, important engineering work was still carried out at Crewe Works in 2023. Given the reduced size of the works, and reduction in numbers employed, it would not be unfair to say that the once 'beating heart' of the town is at least a 'discernible pulse'.



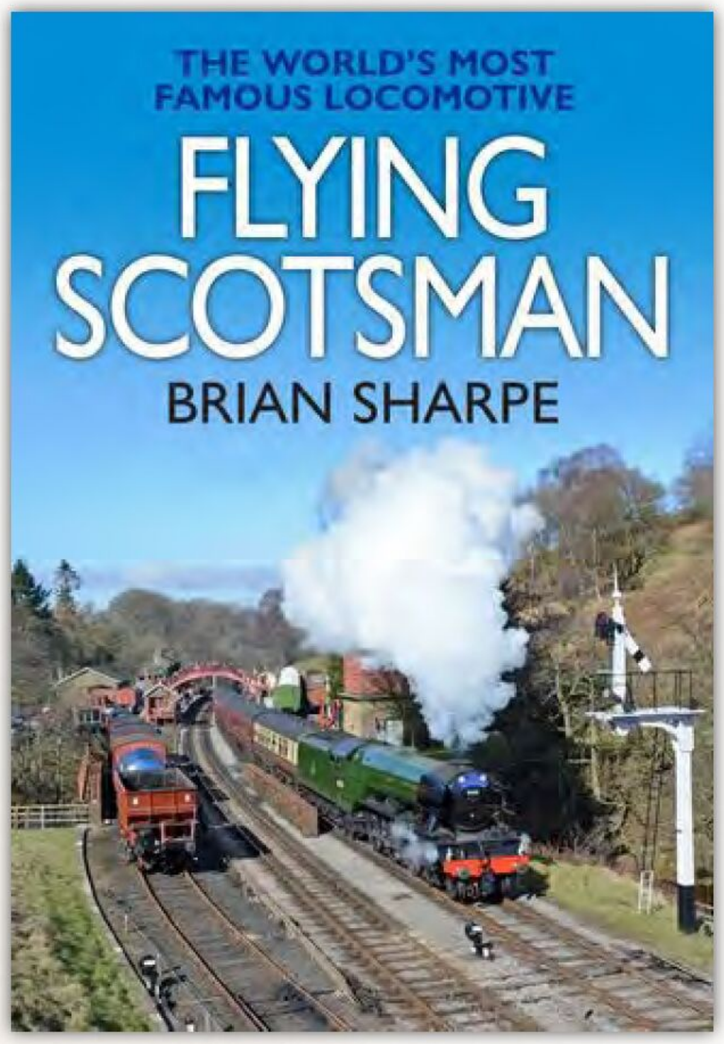
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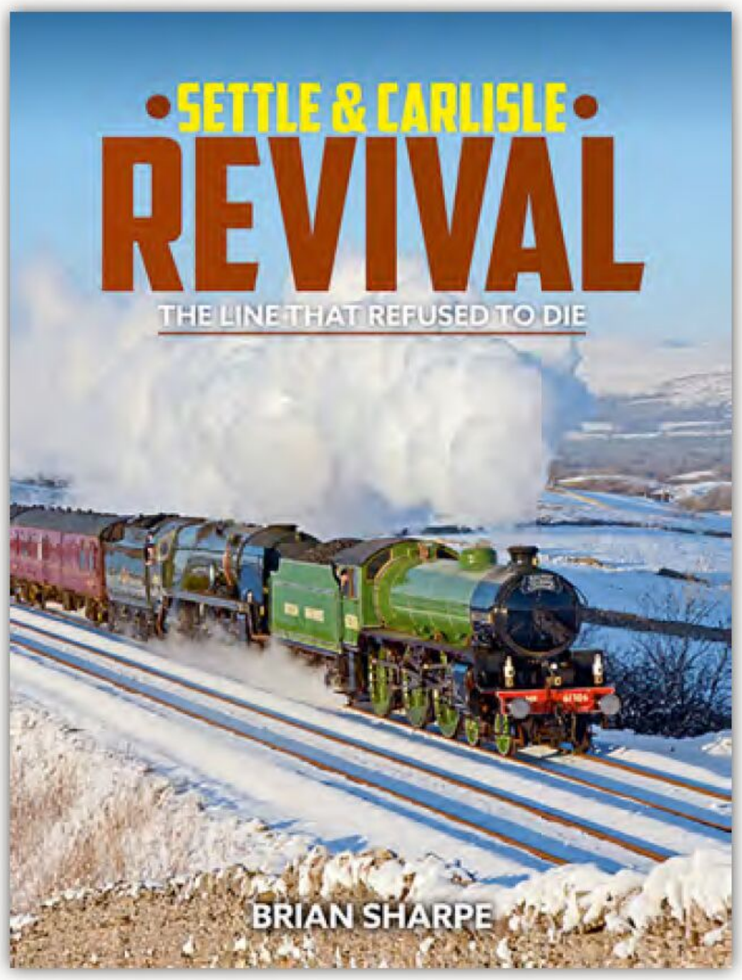
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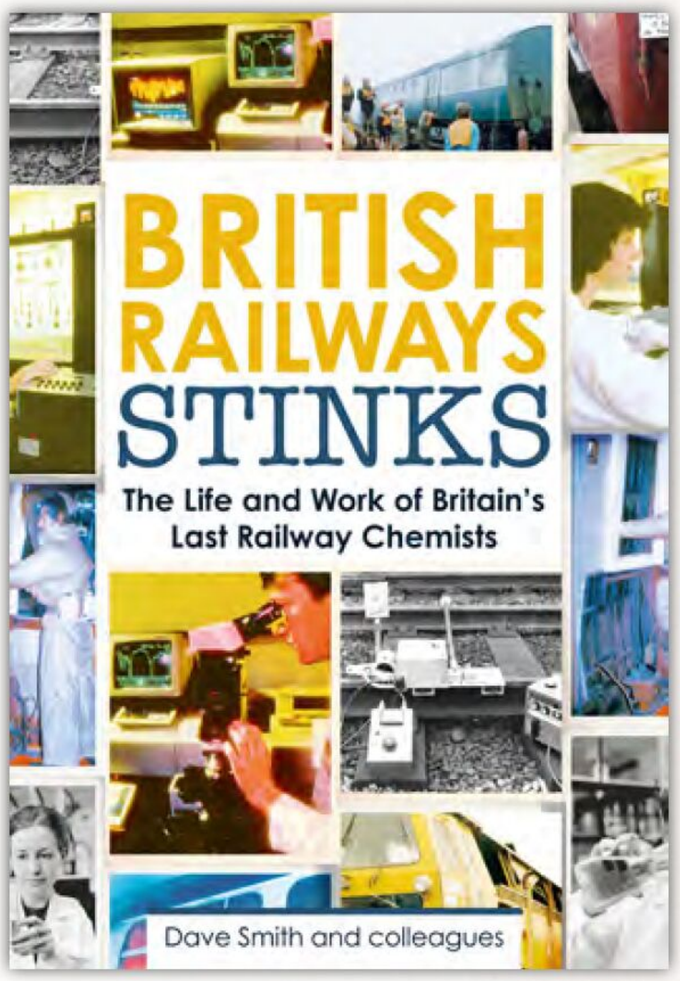
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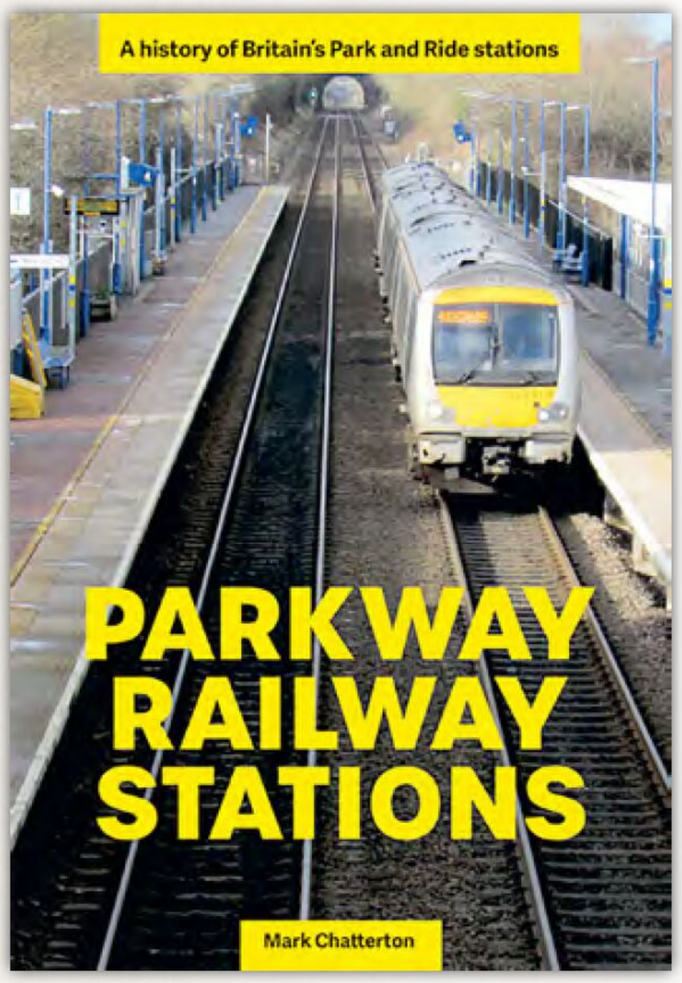
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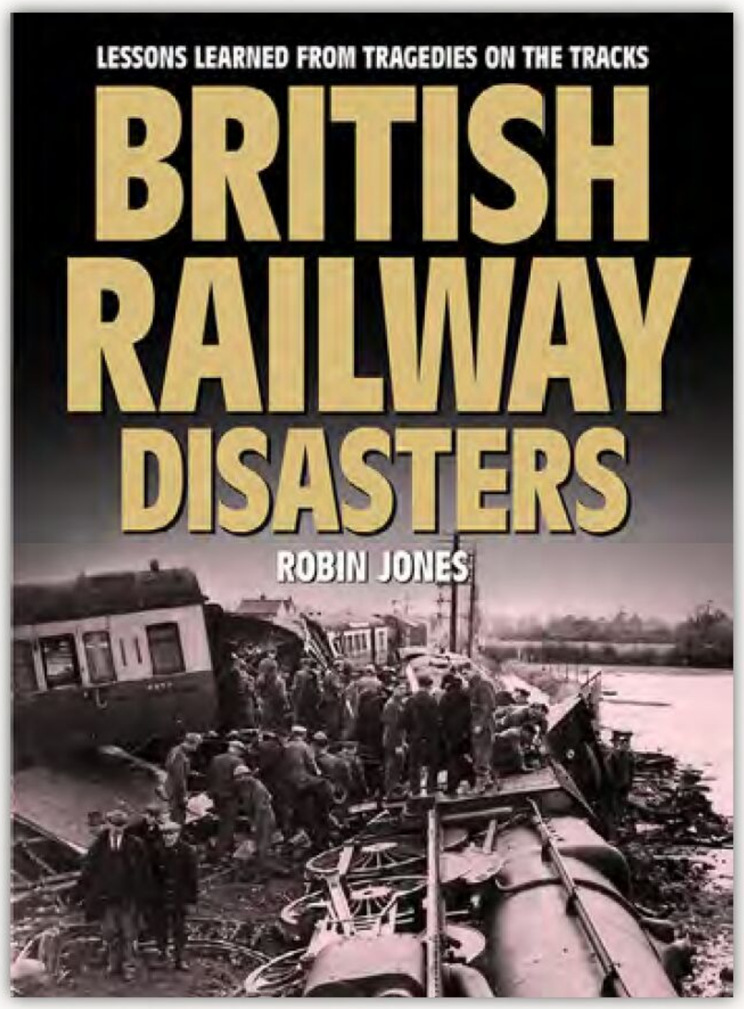
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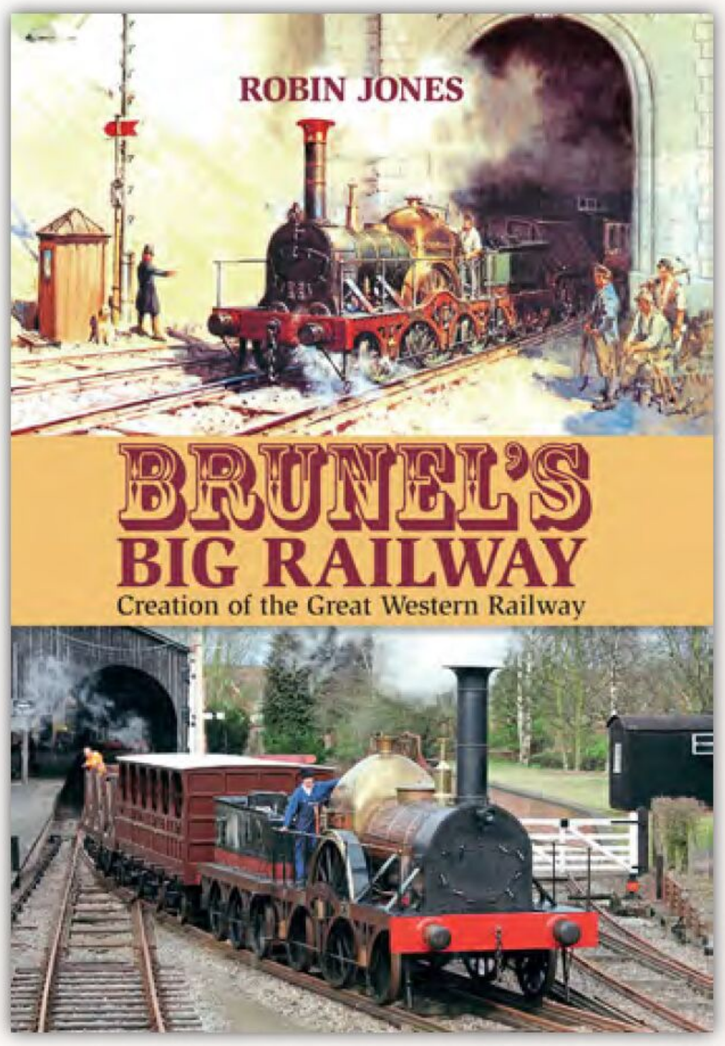
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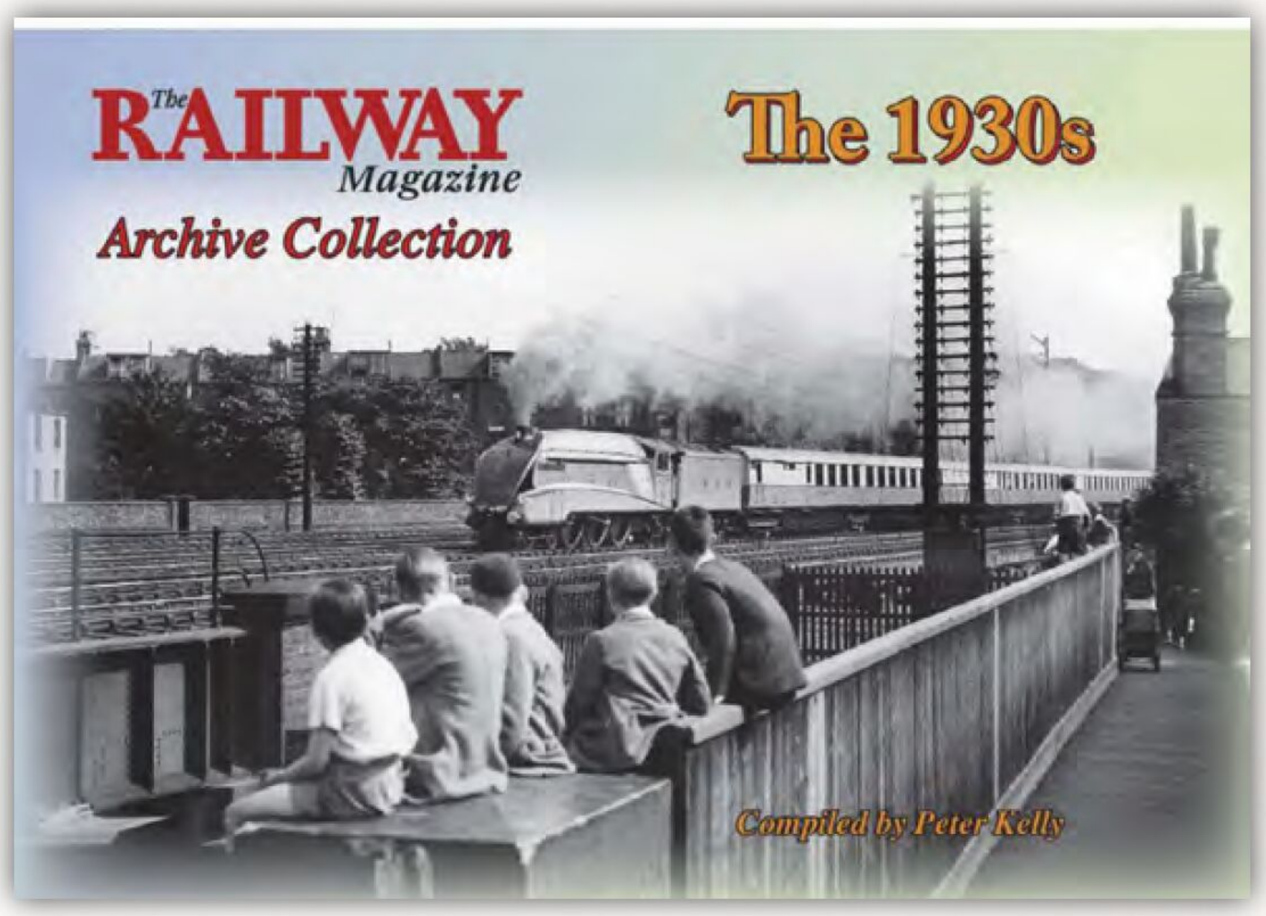
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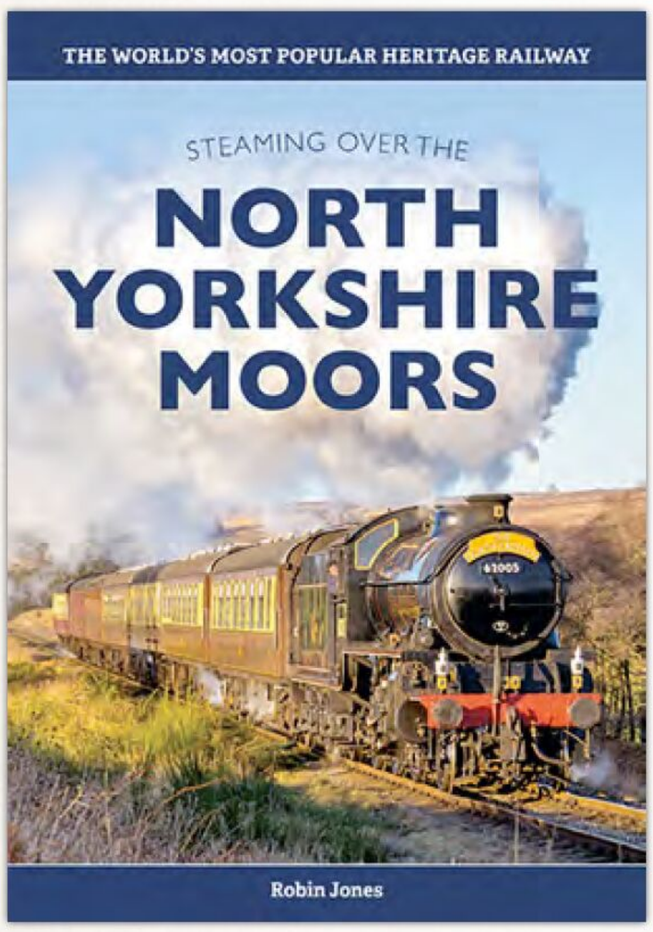
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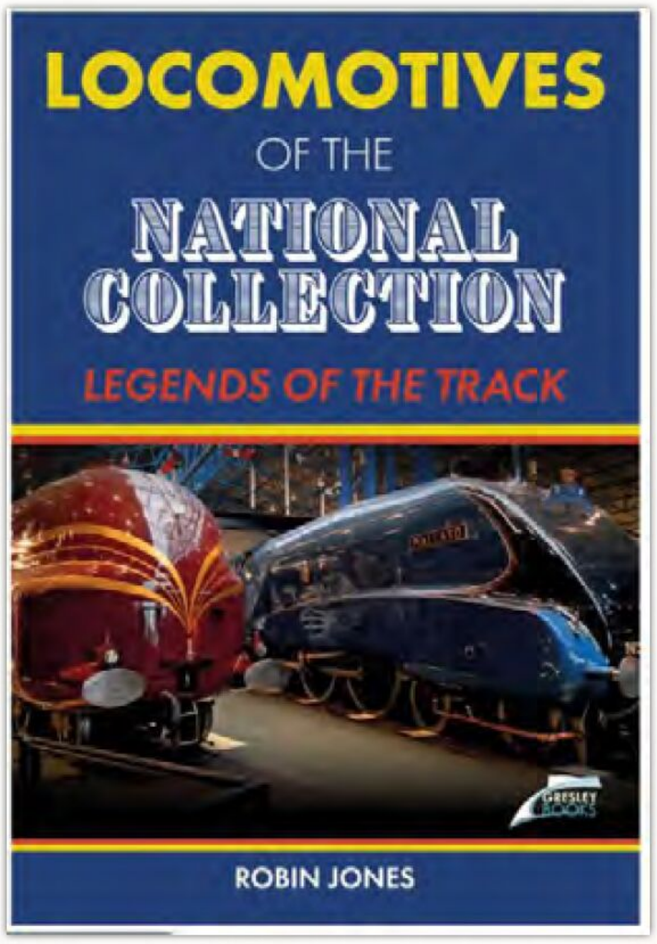
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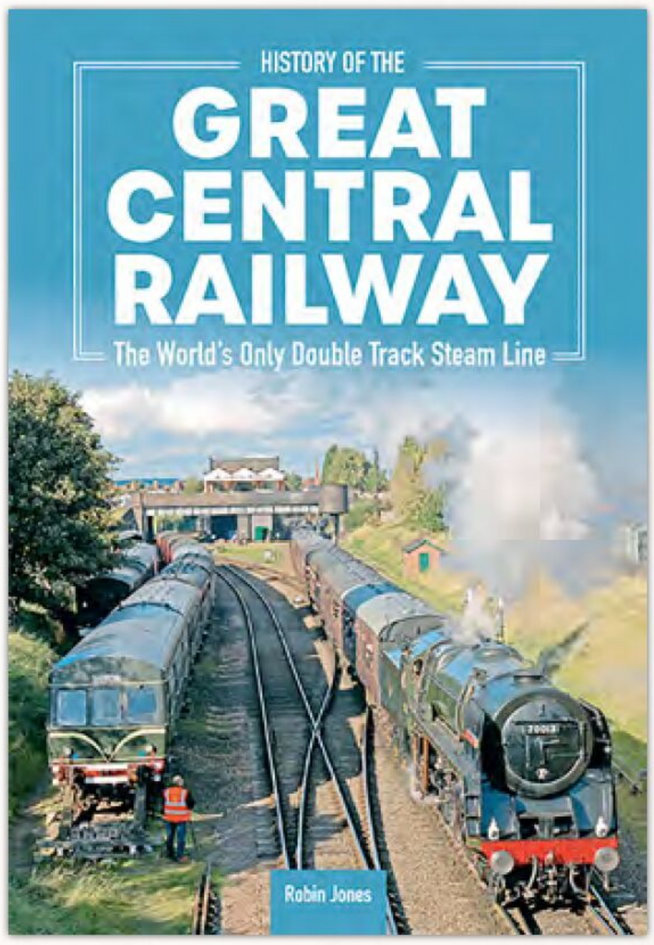
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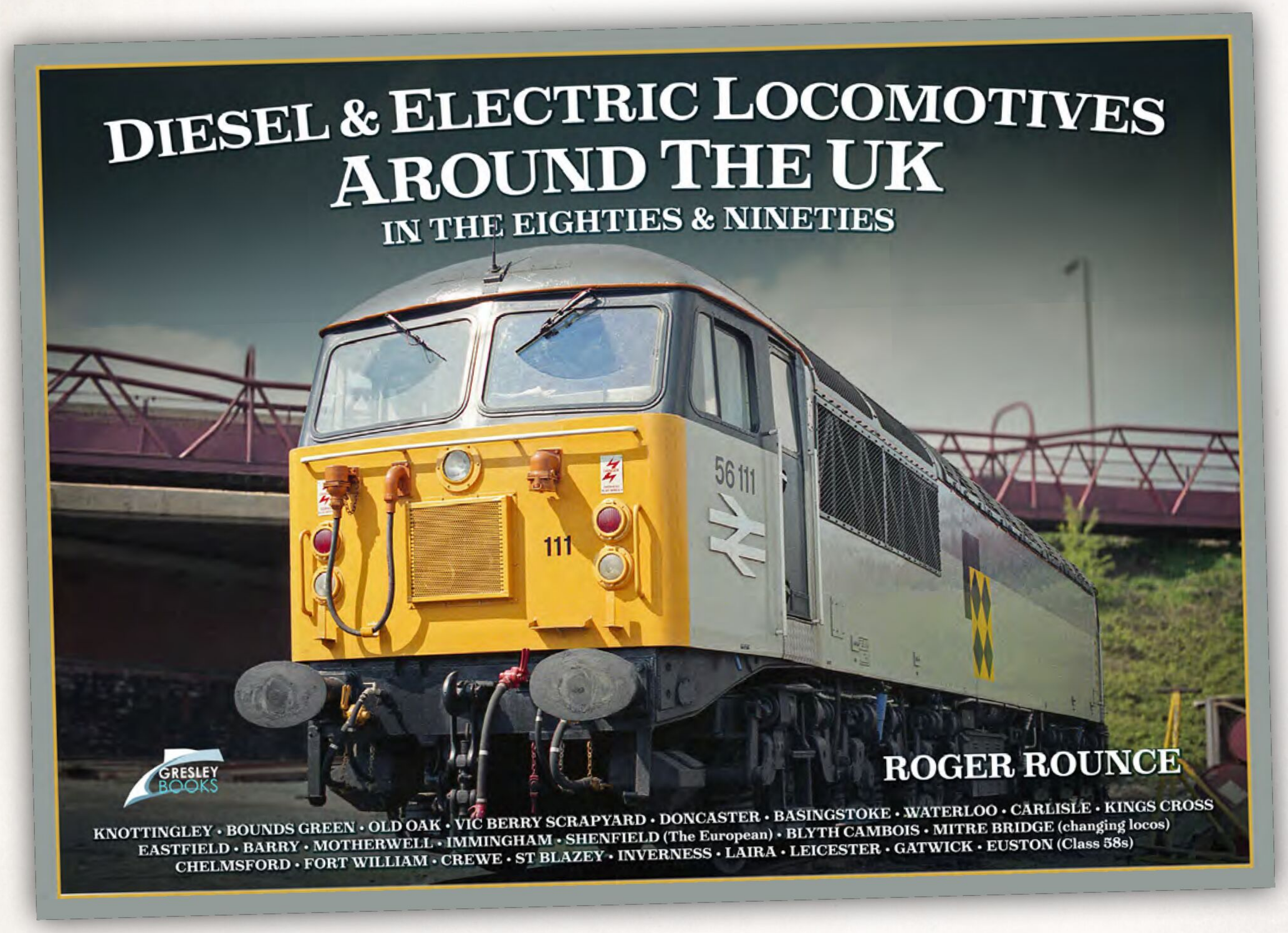
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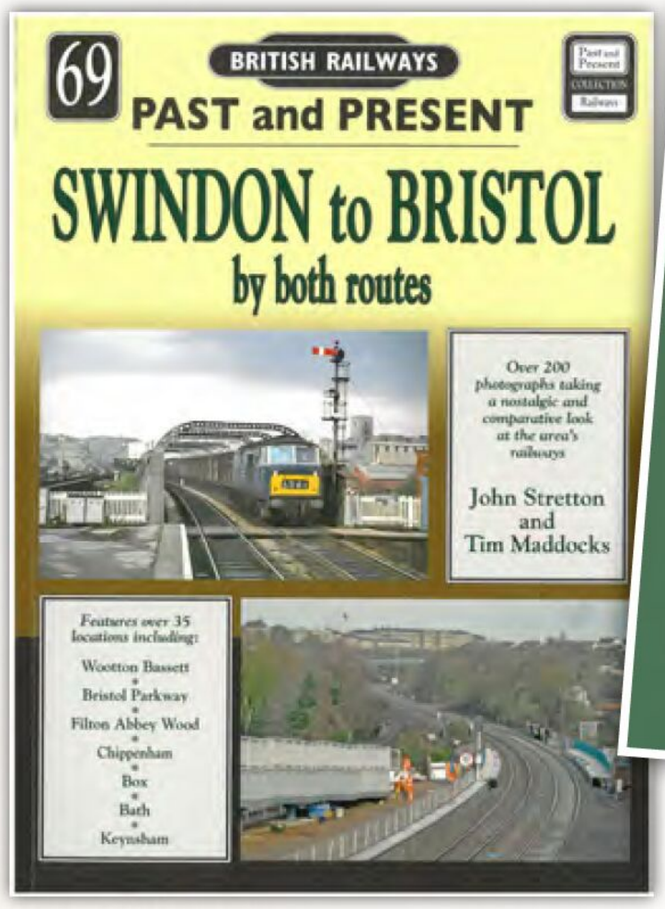
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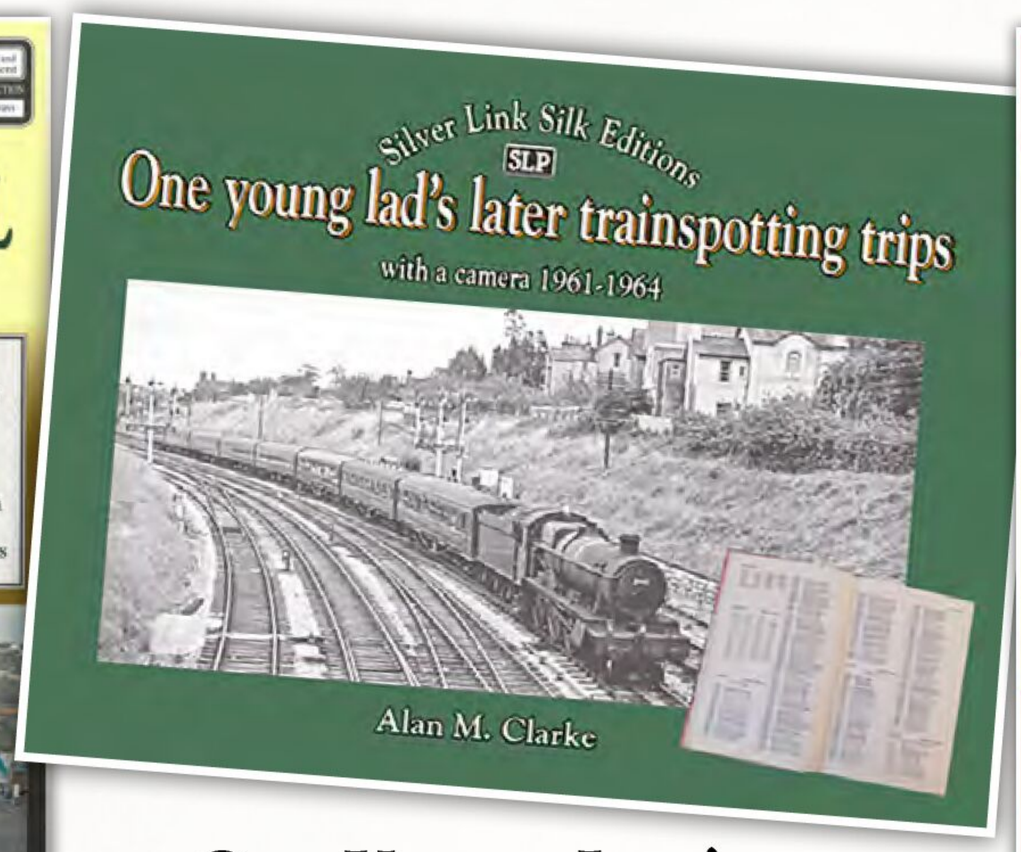
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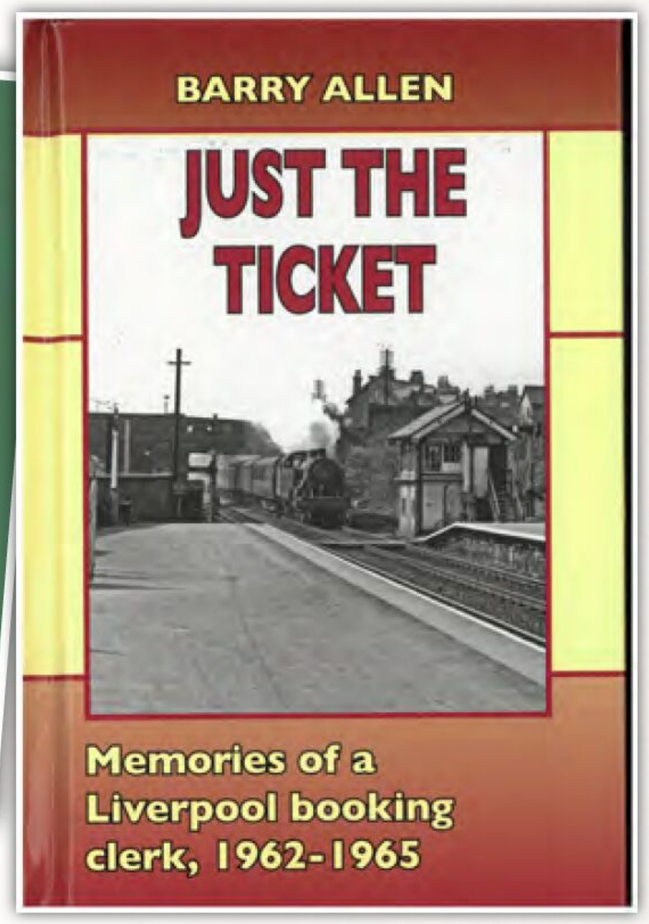
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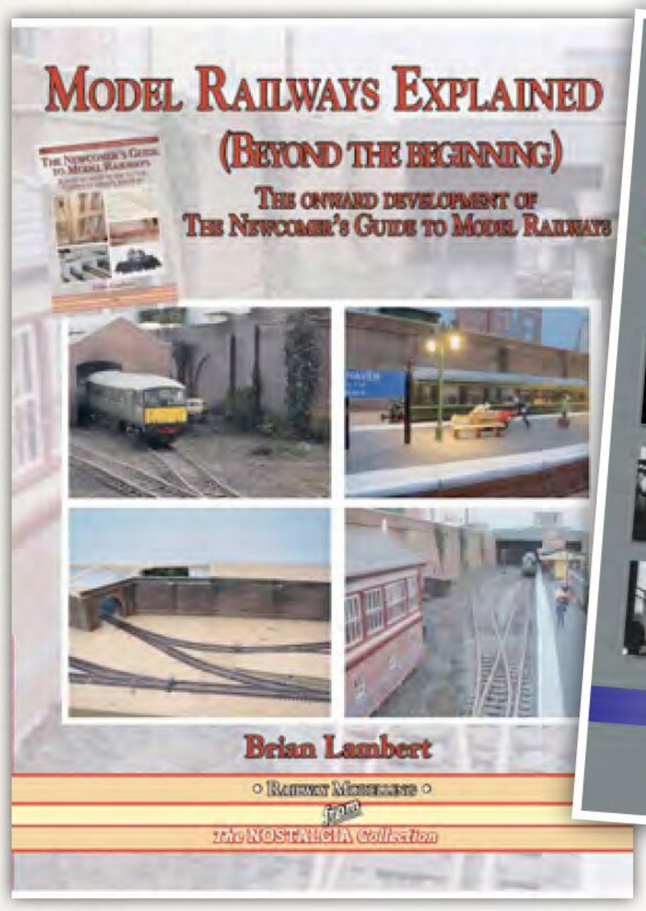
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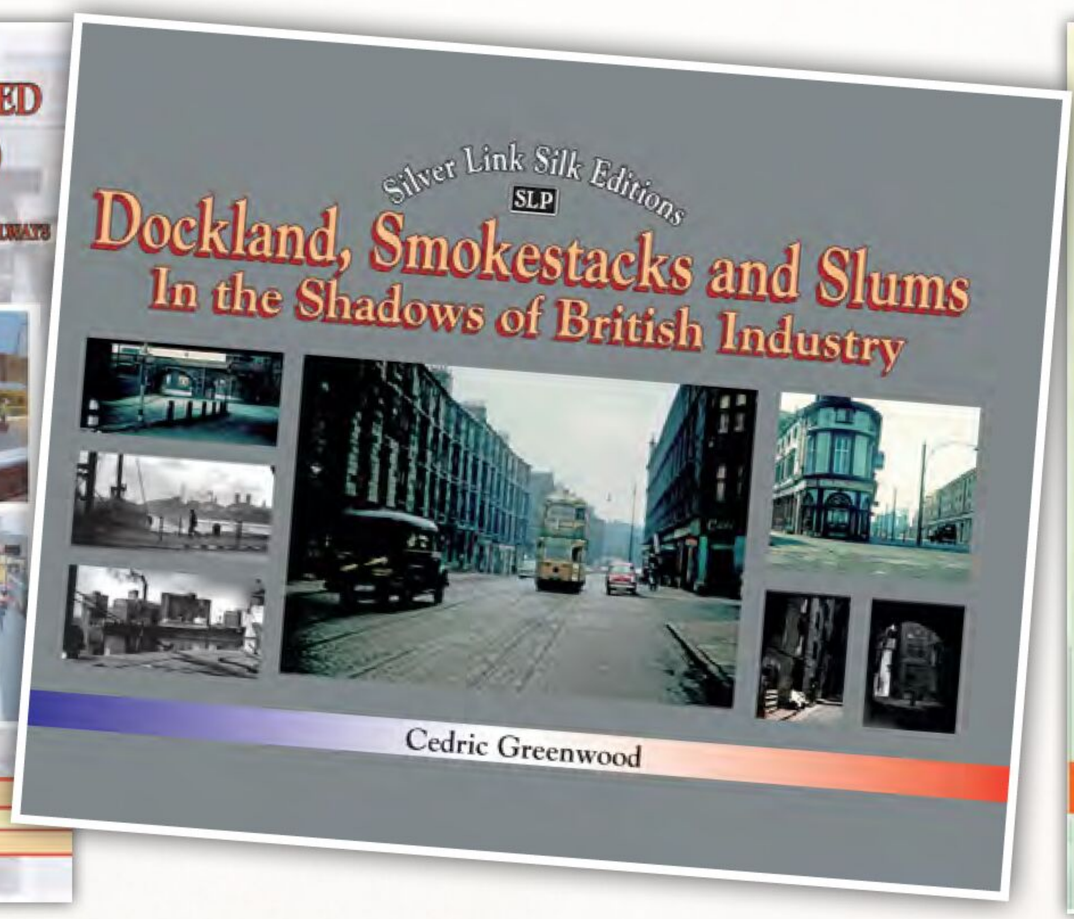
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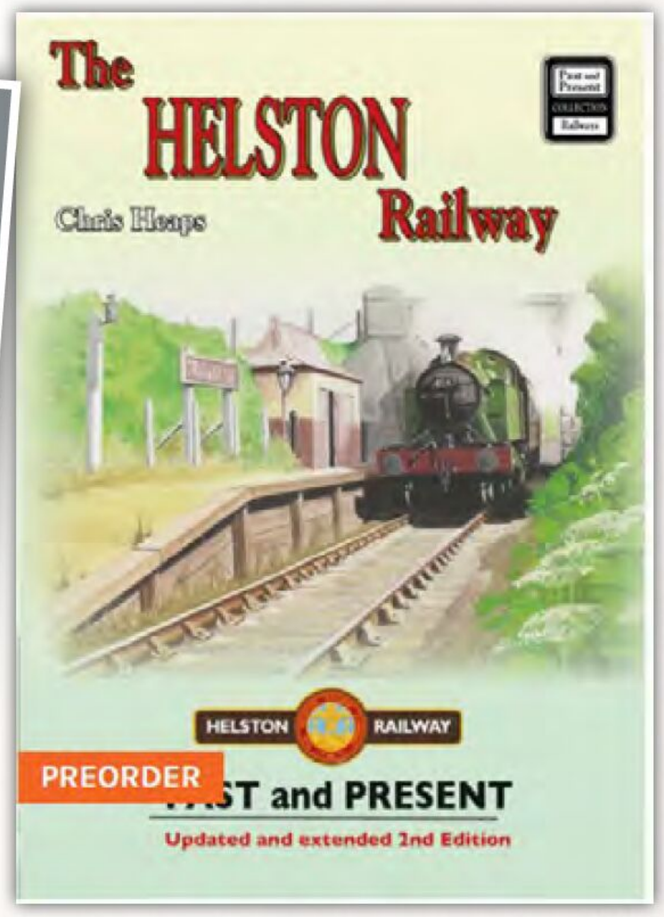
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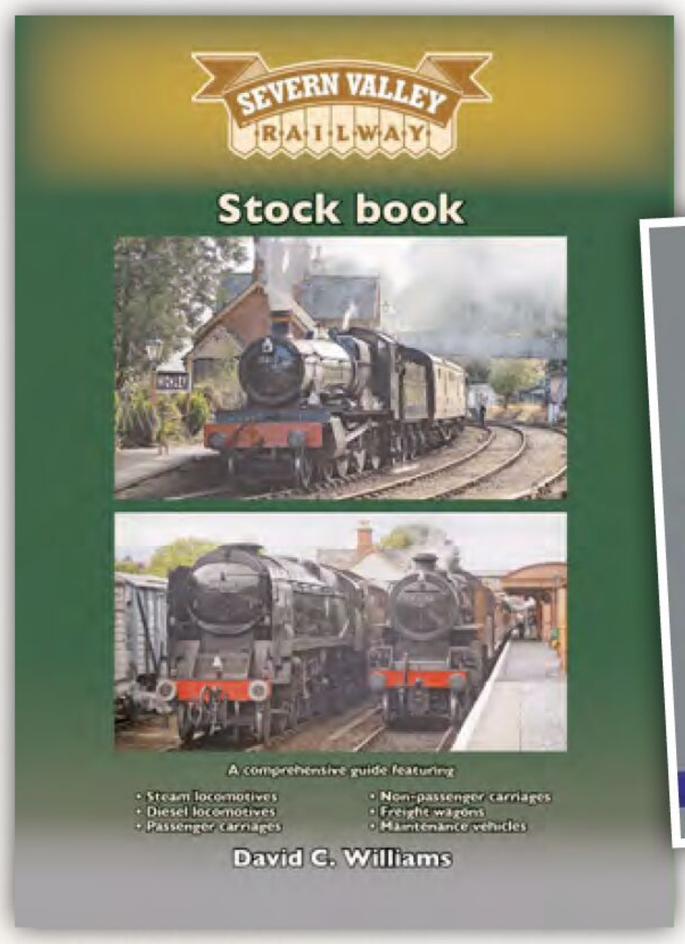
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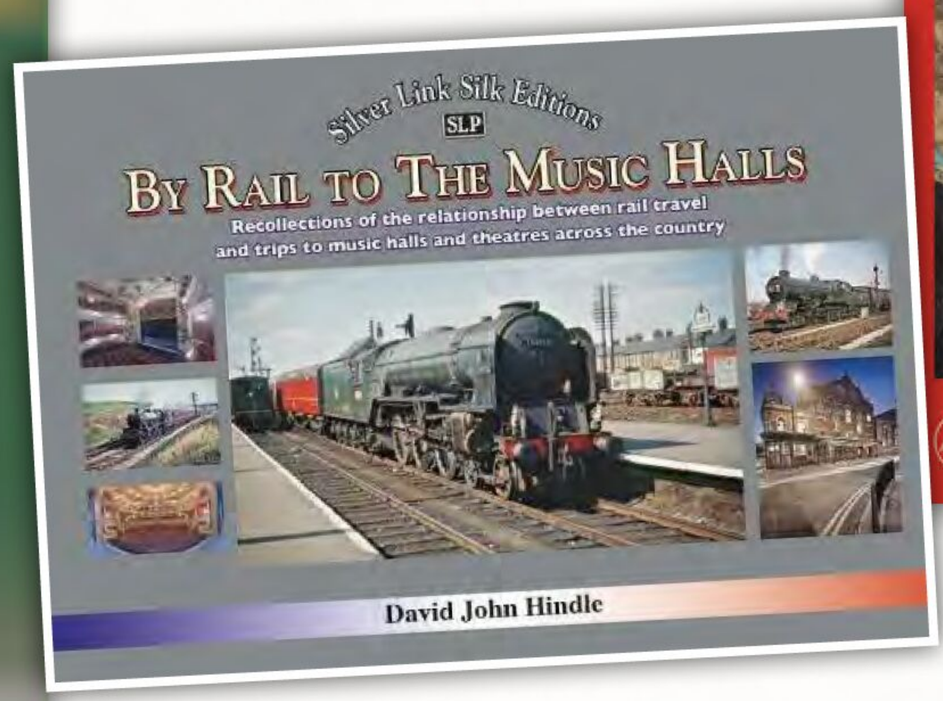
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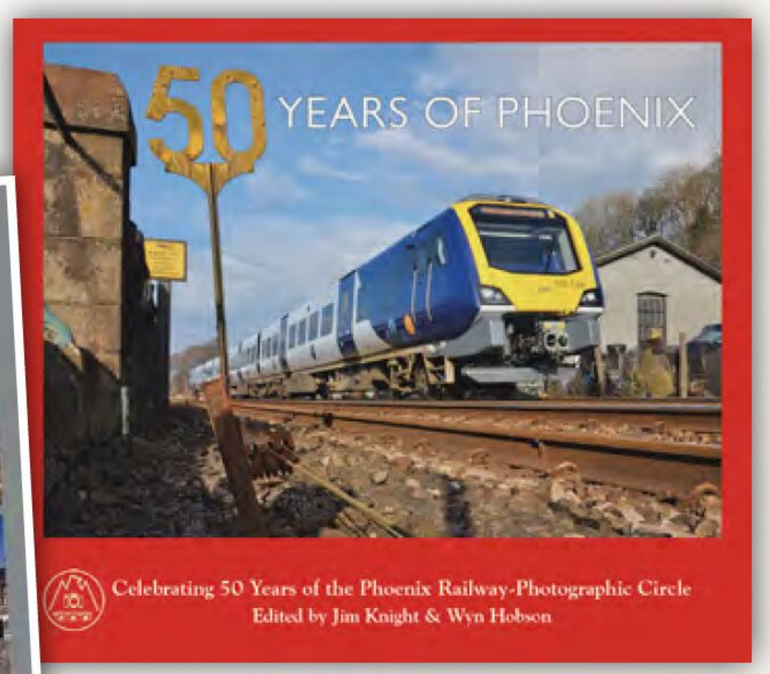
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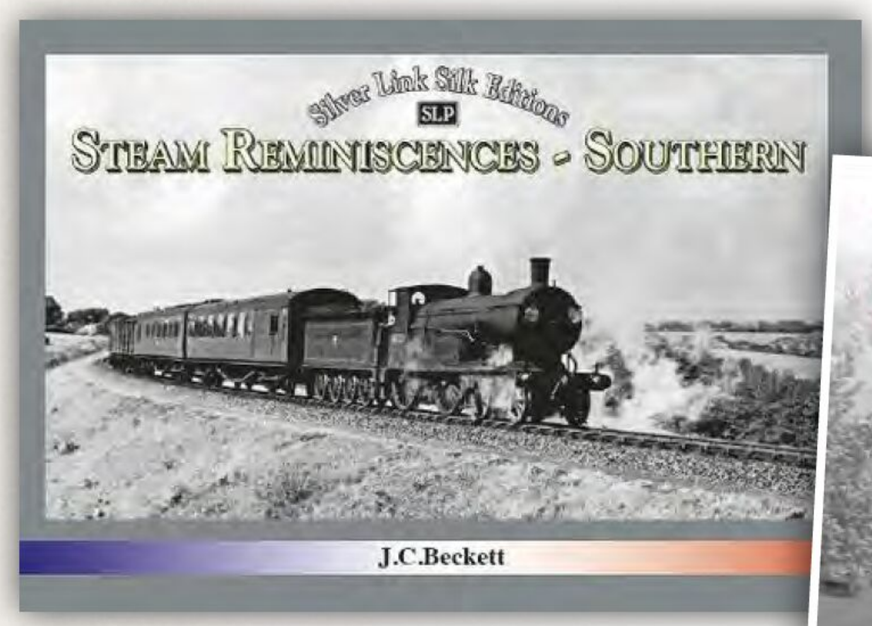
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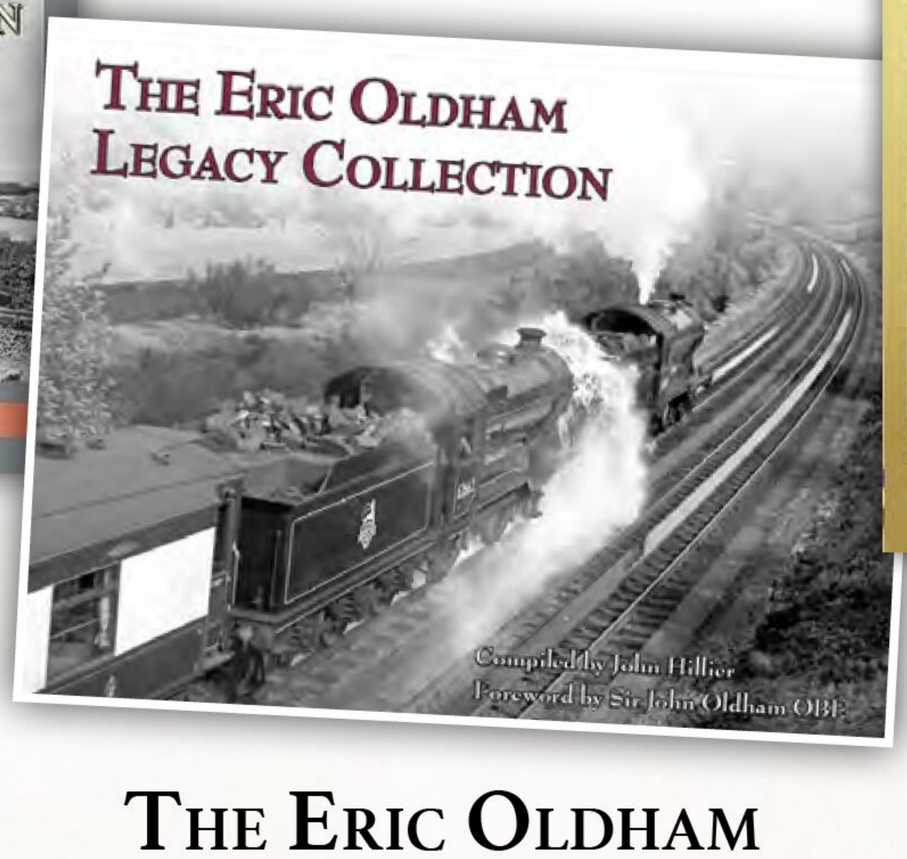
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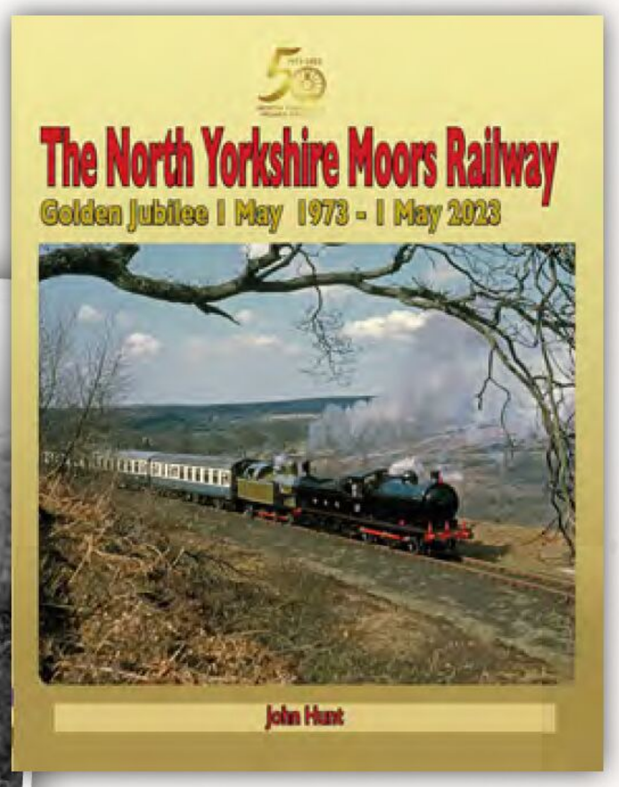
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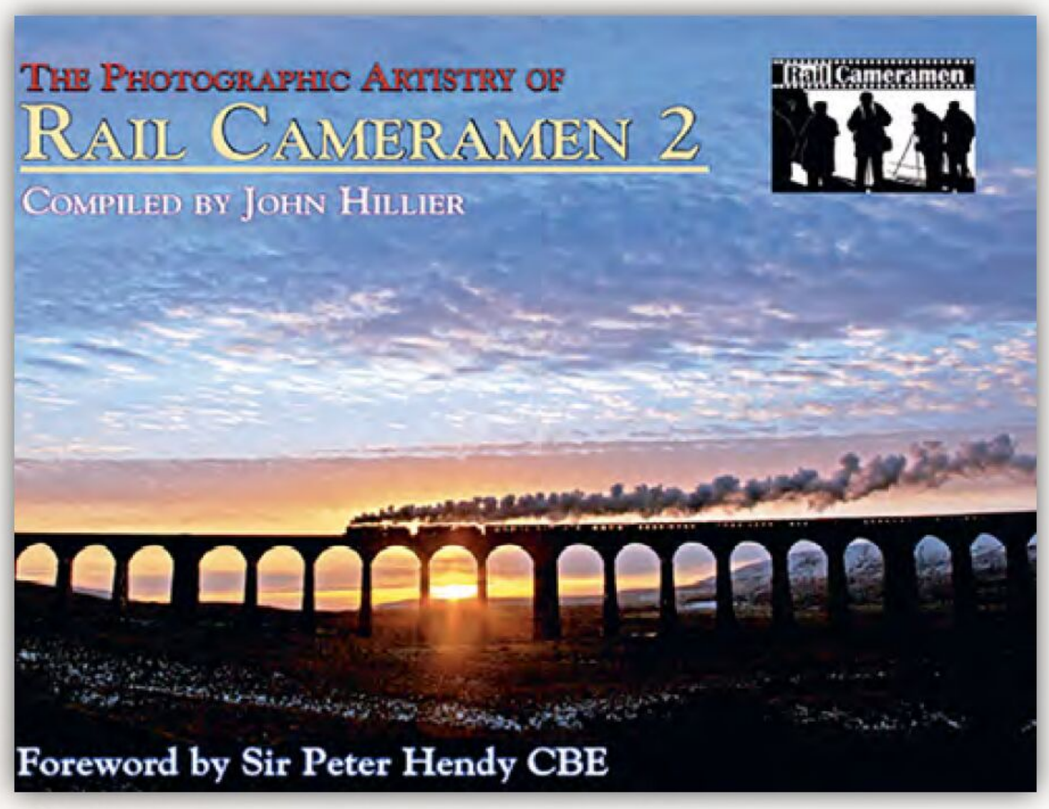
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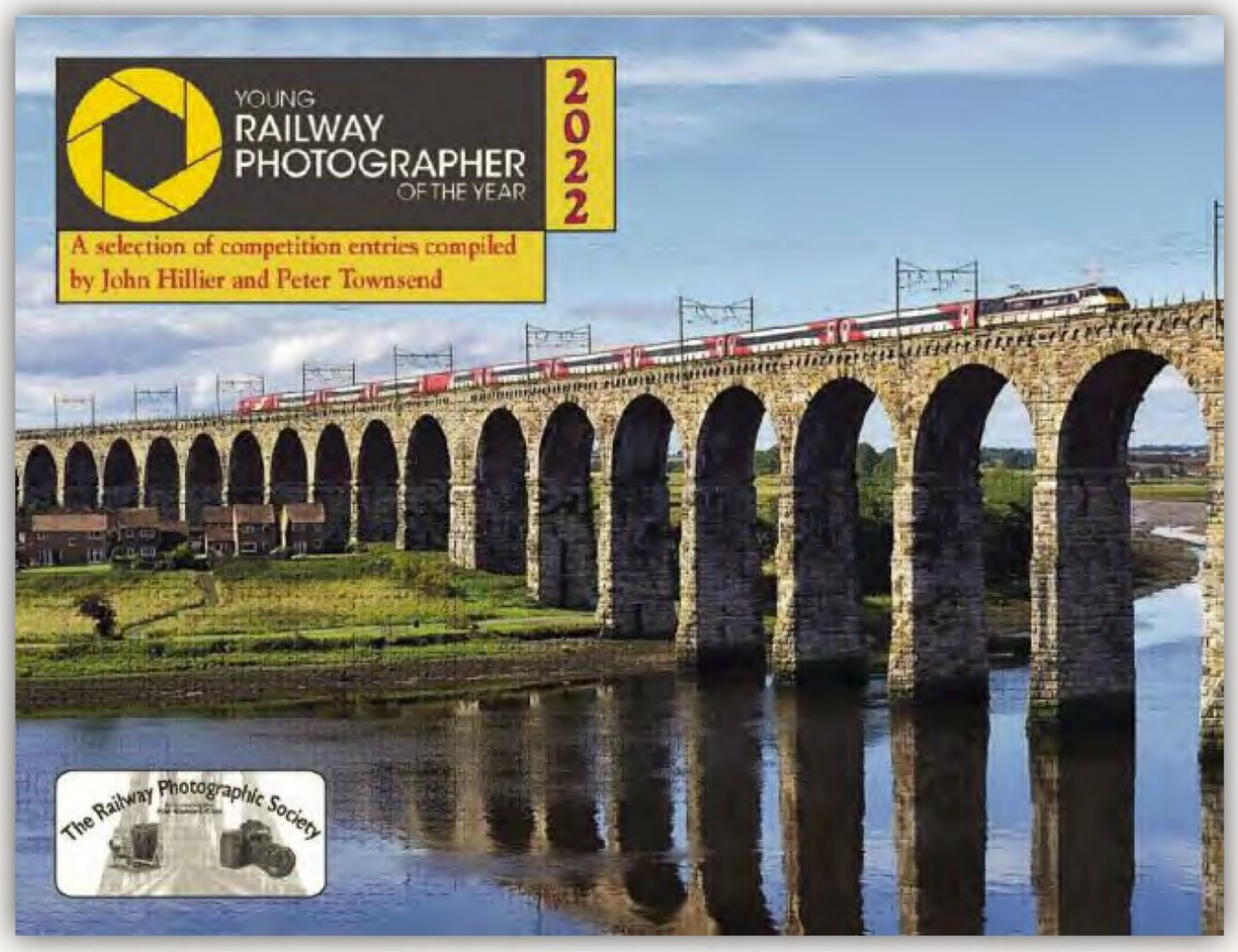
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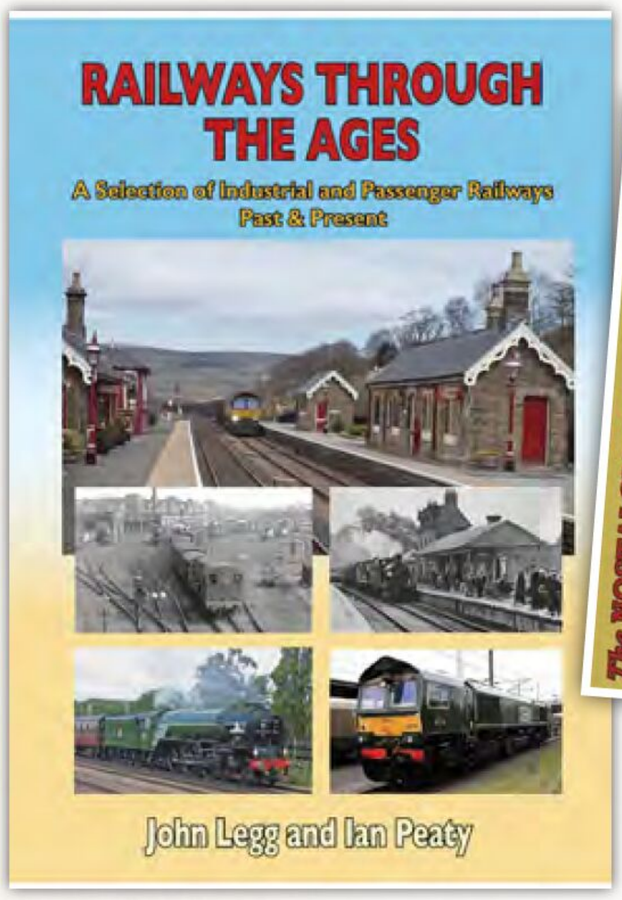
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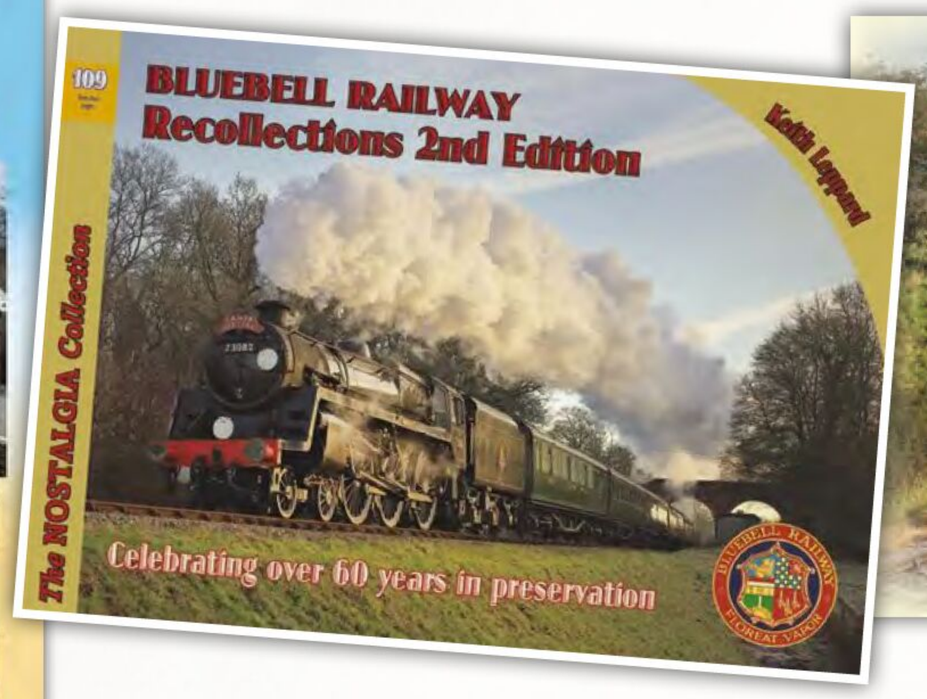
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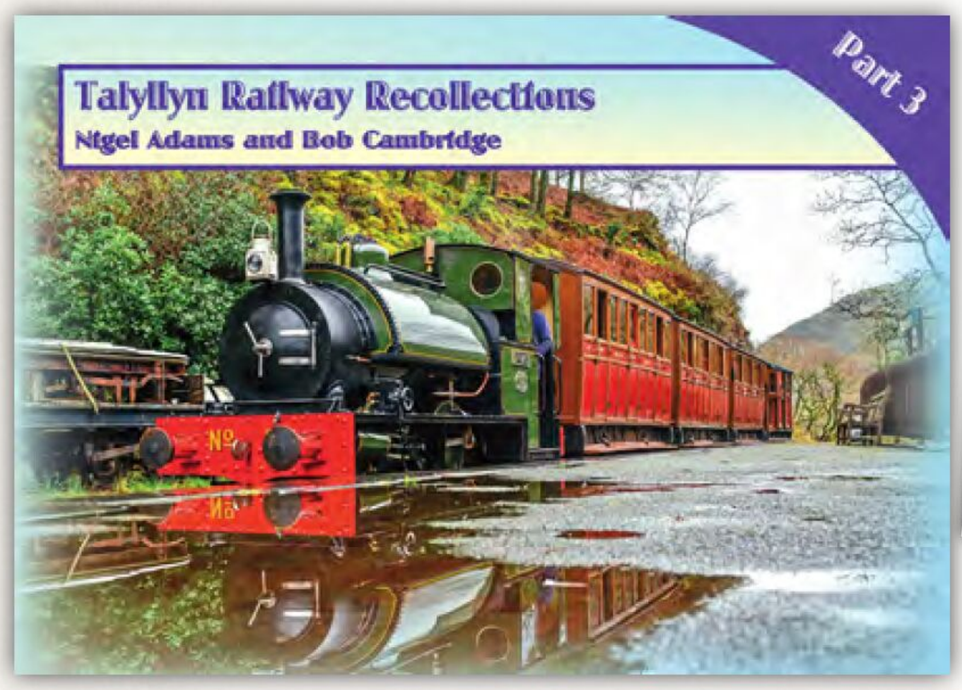
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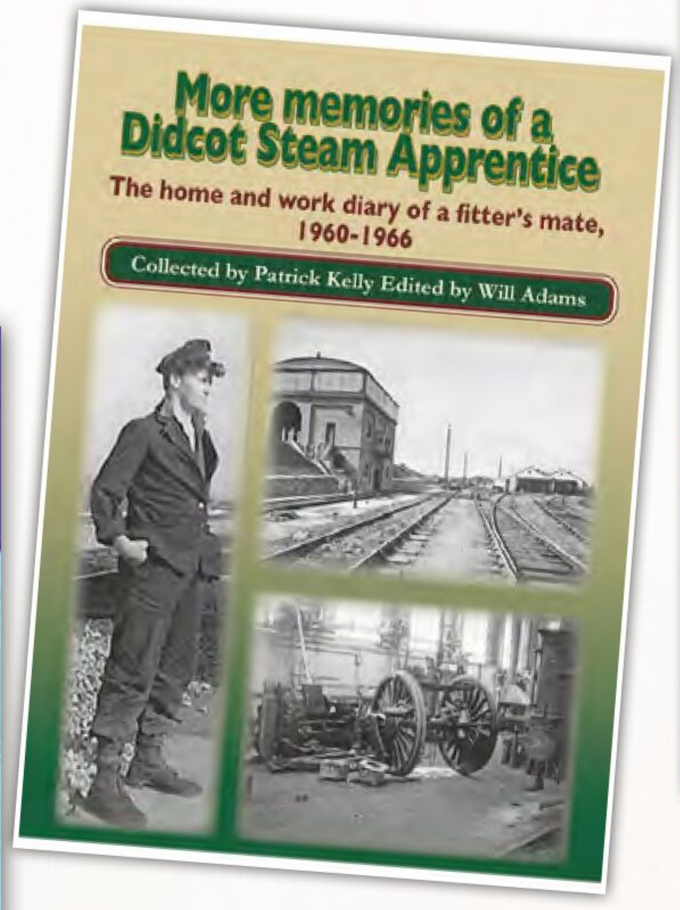
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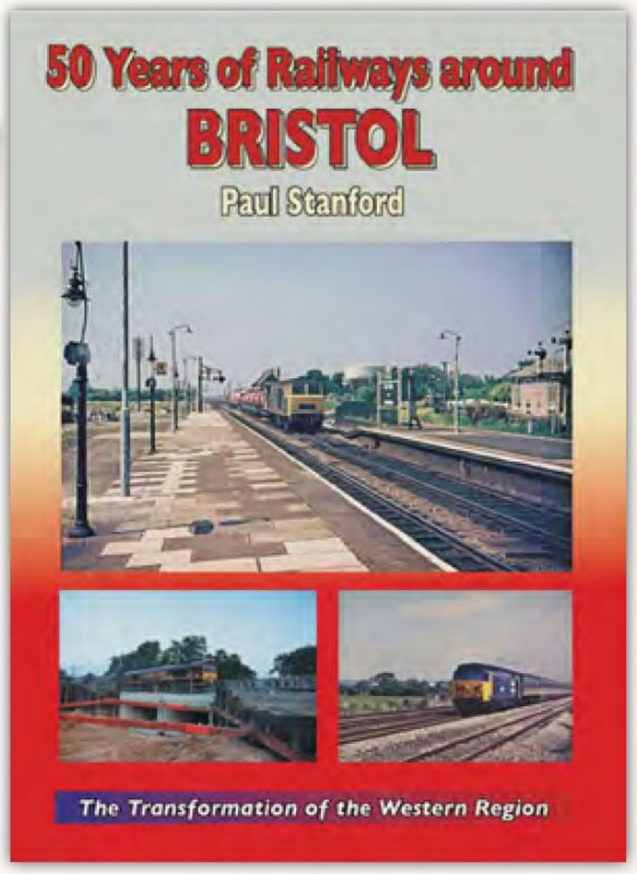
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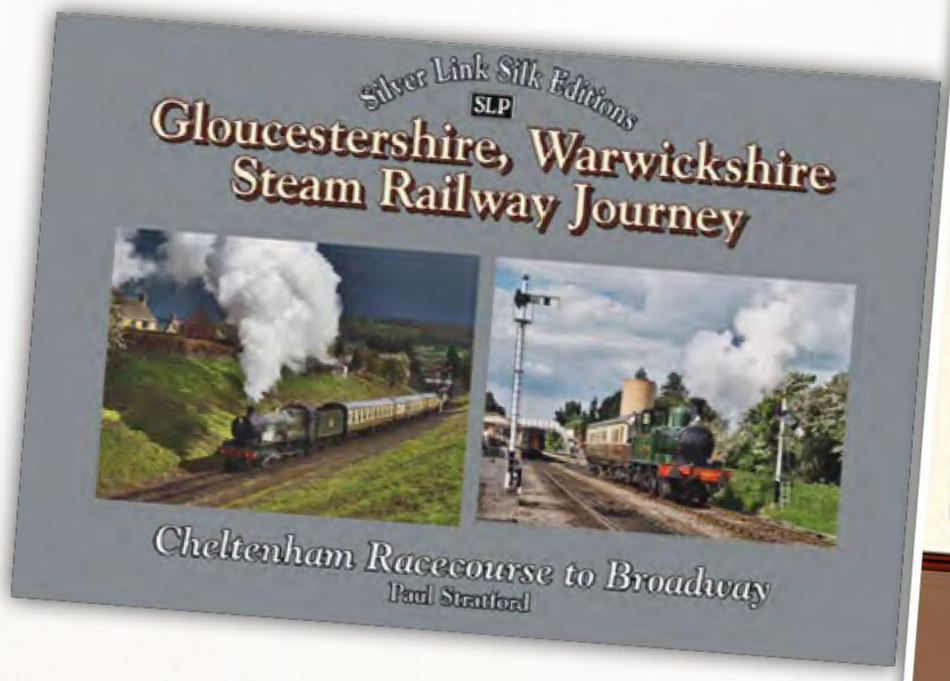
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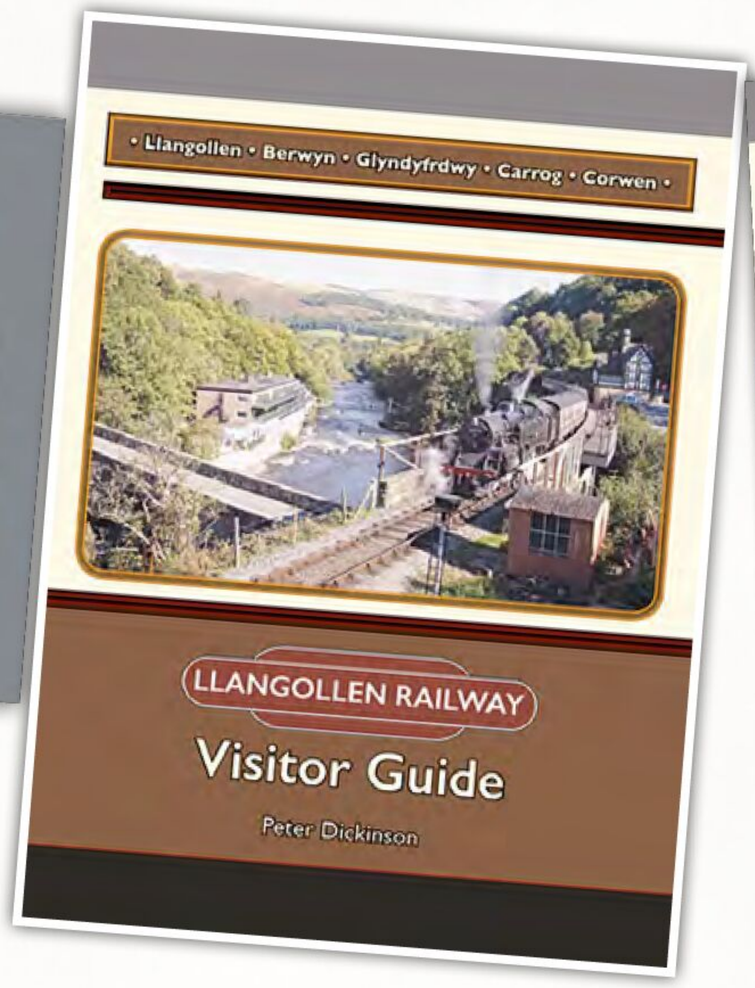
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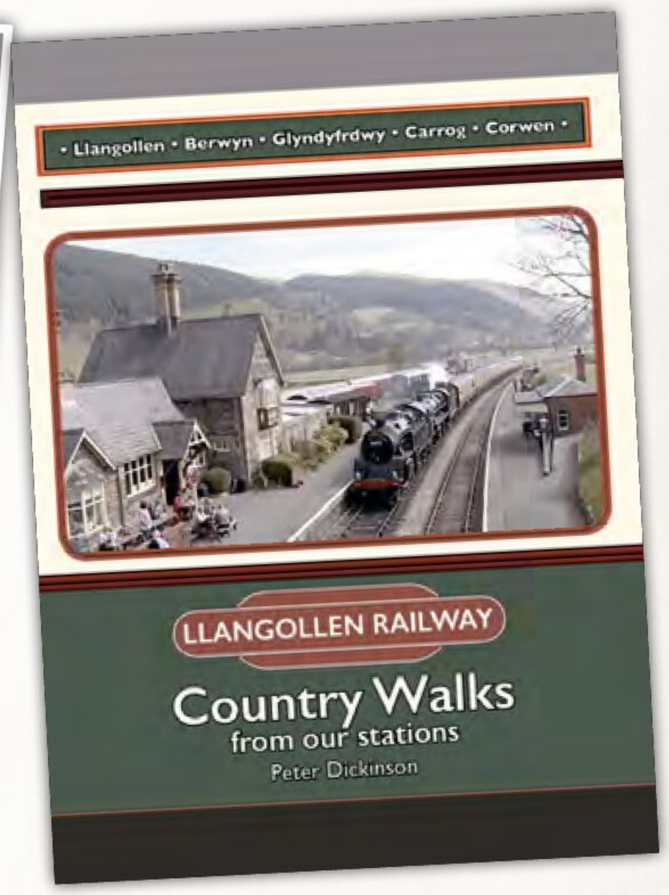
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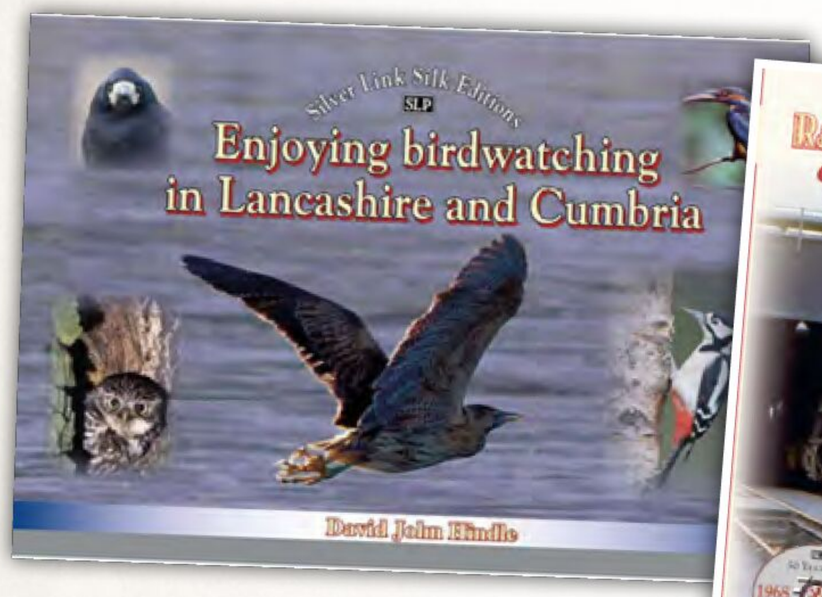
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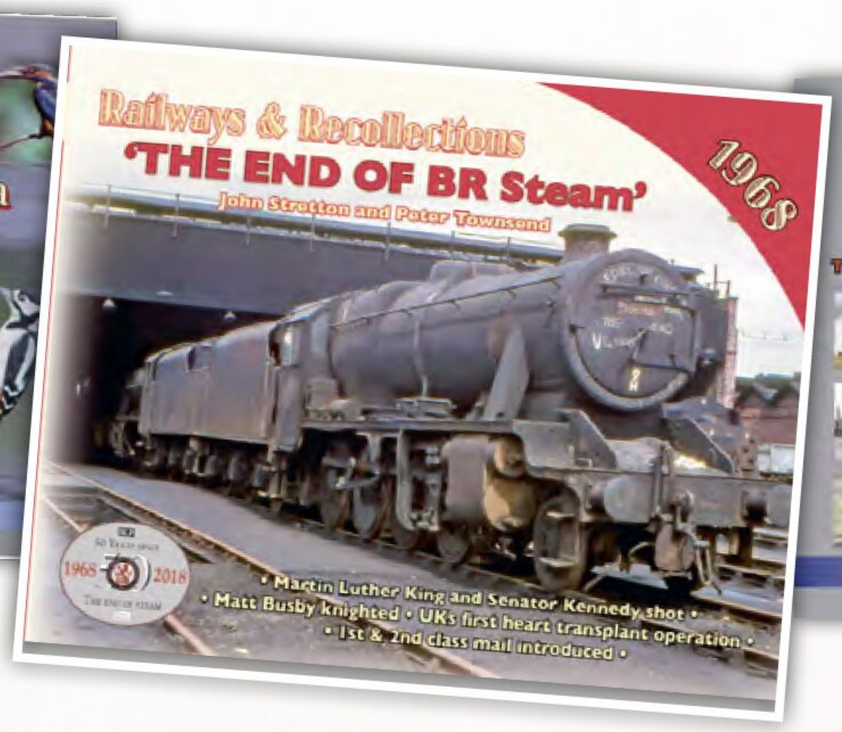
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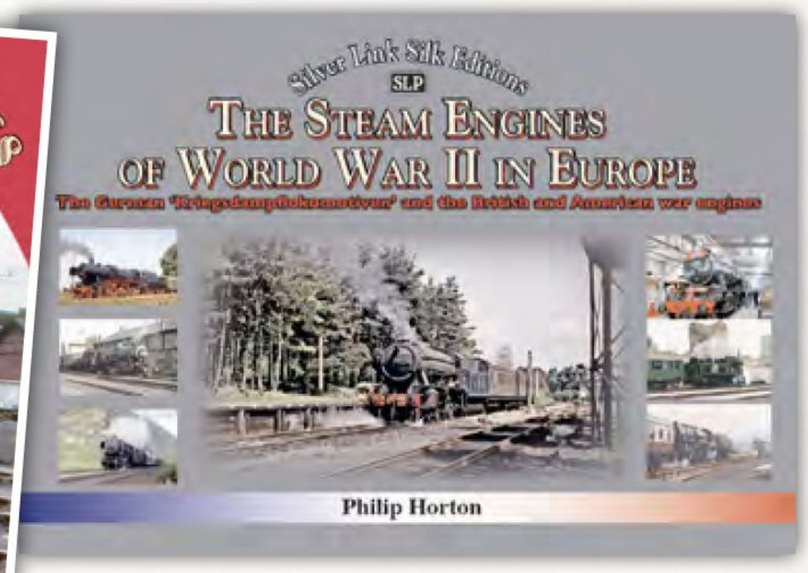
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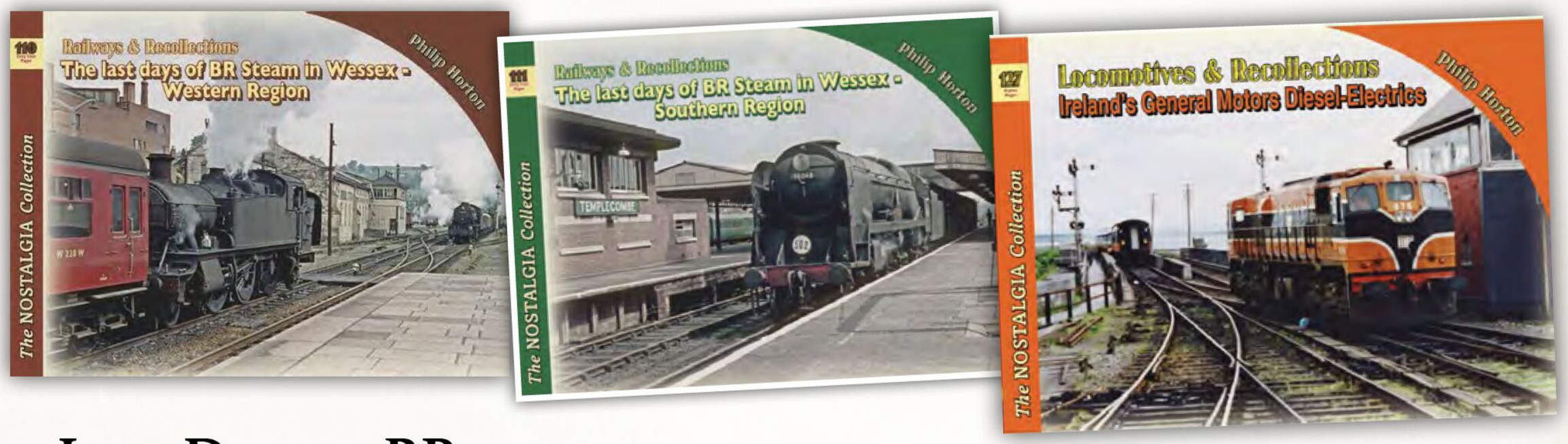
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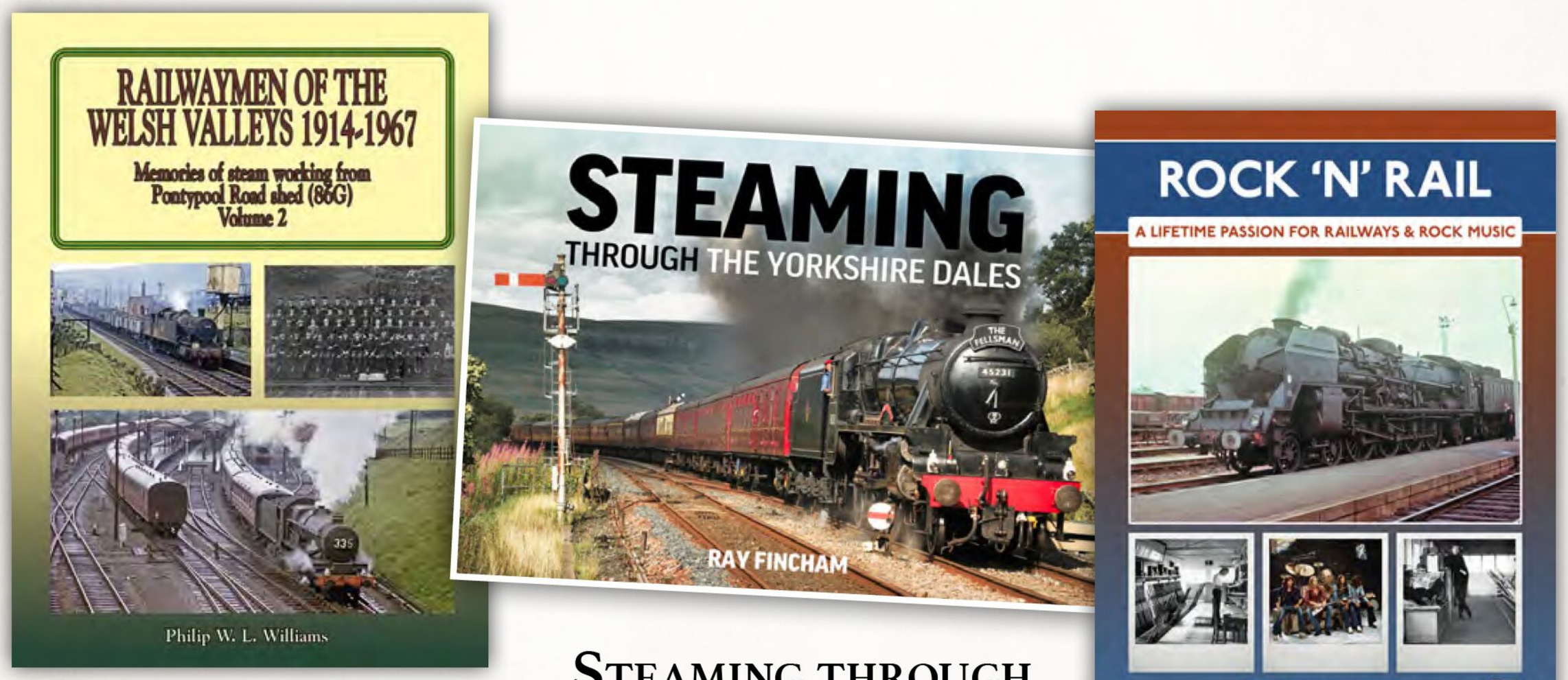
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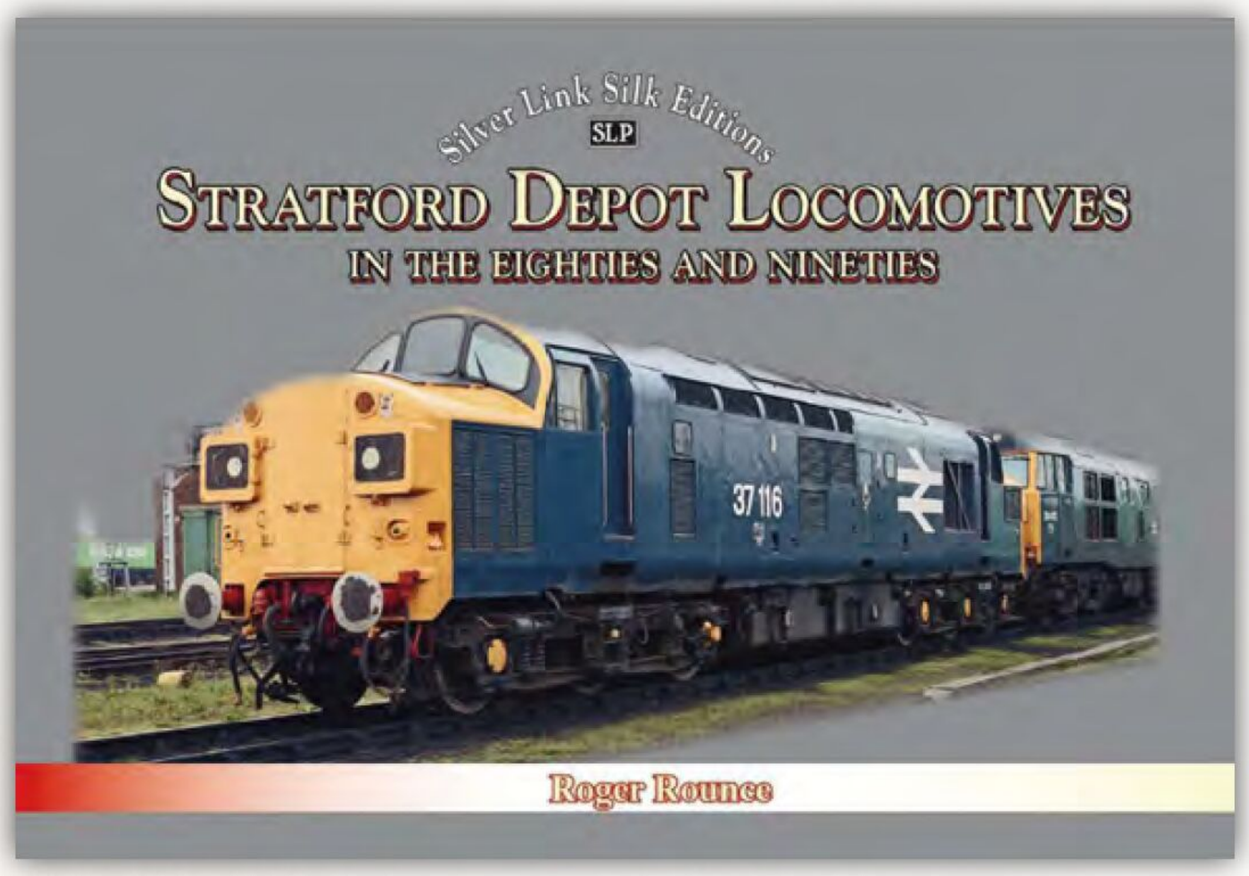
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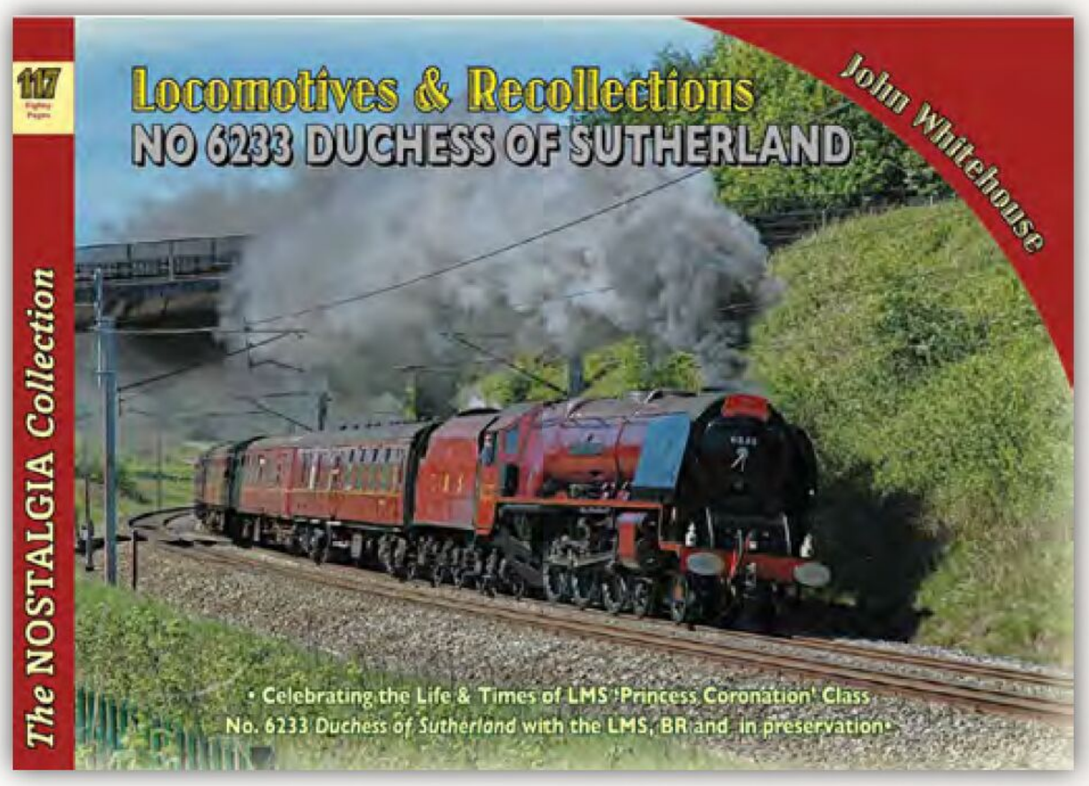
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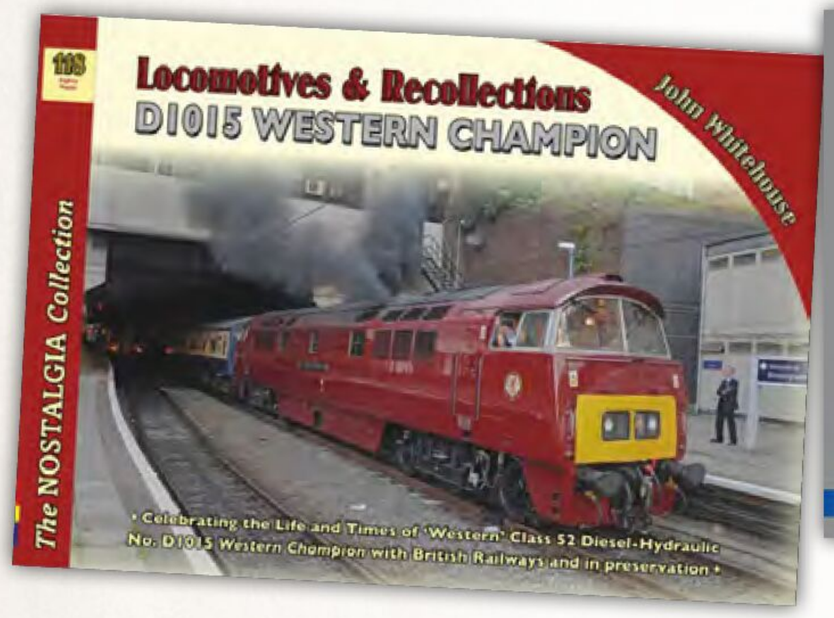
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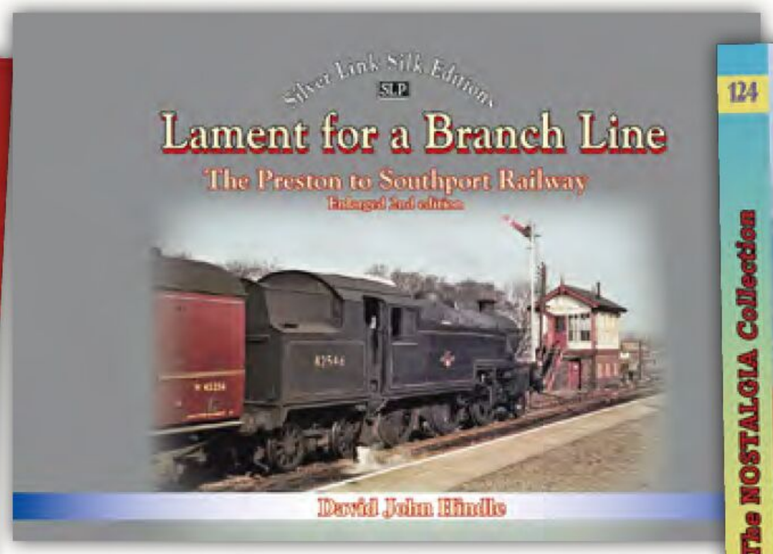
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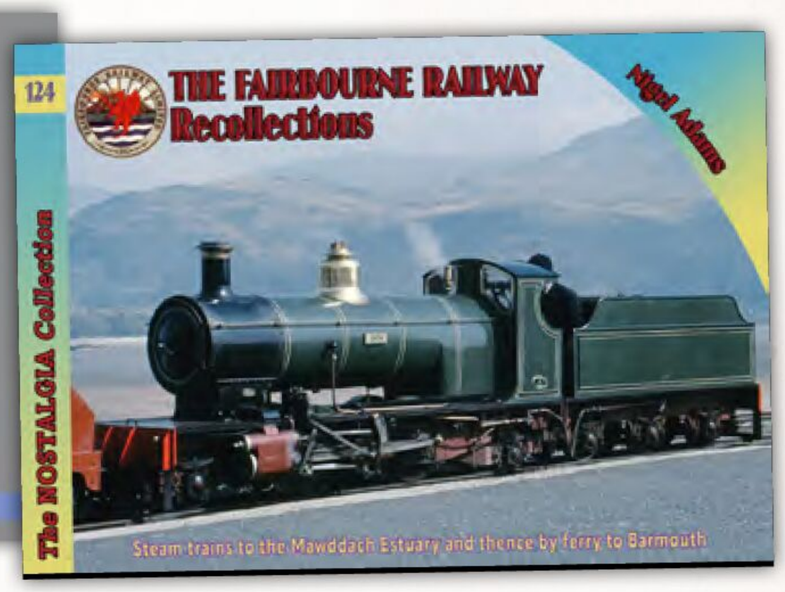
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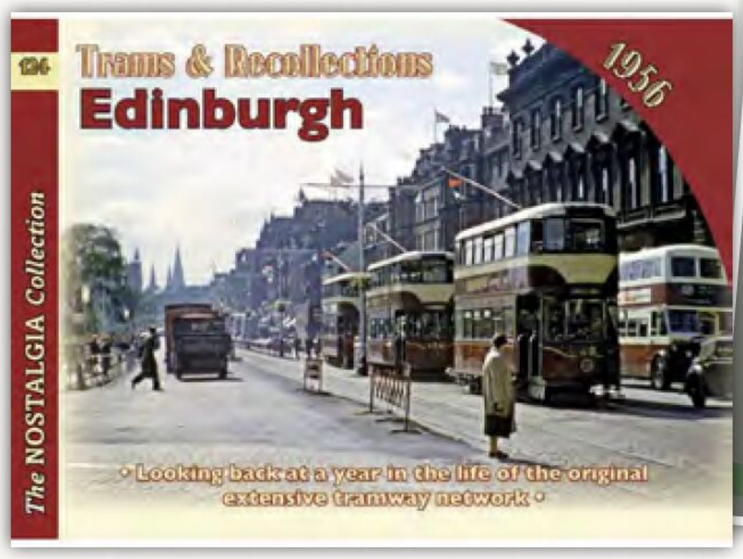
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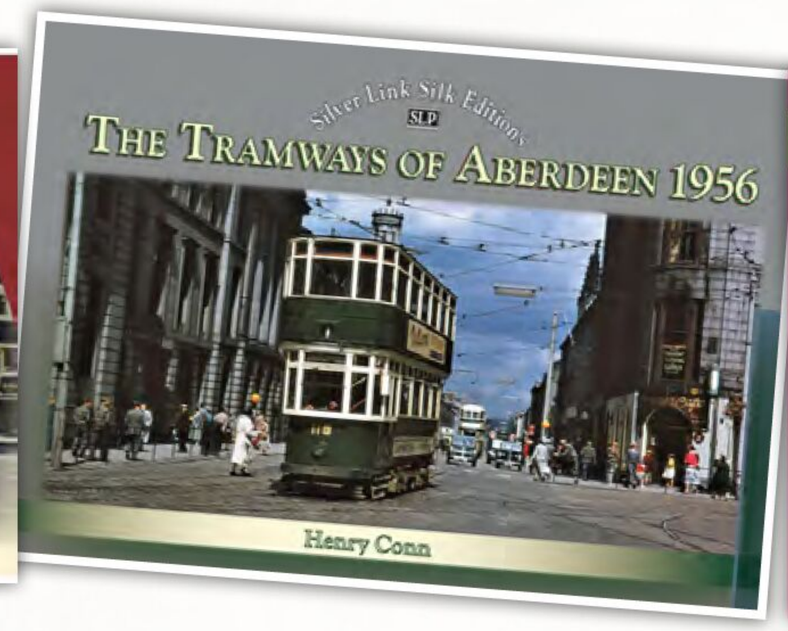
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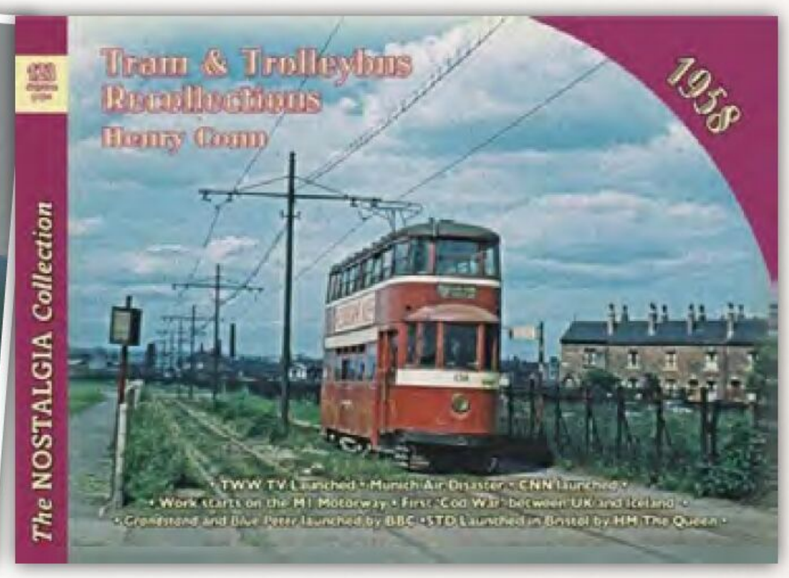
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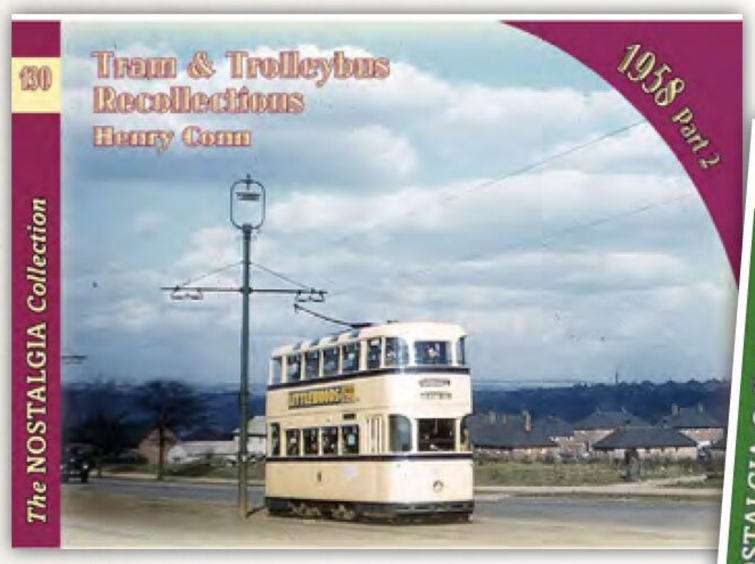
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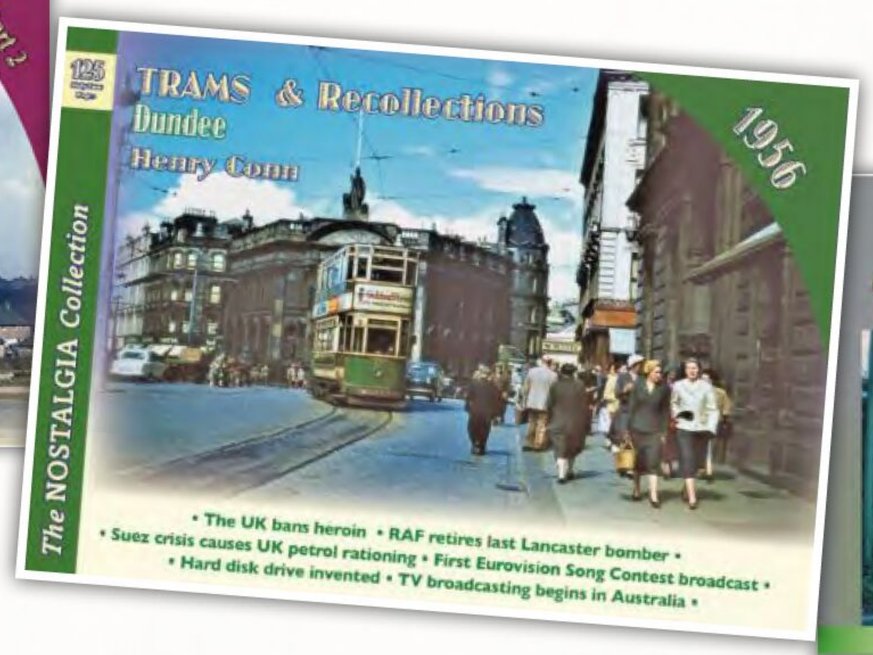
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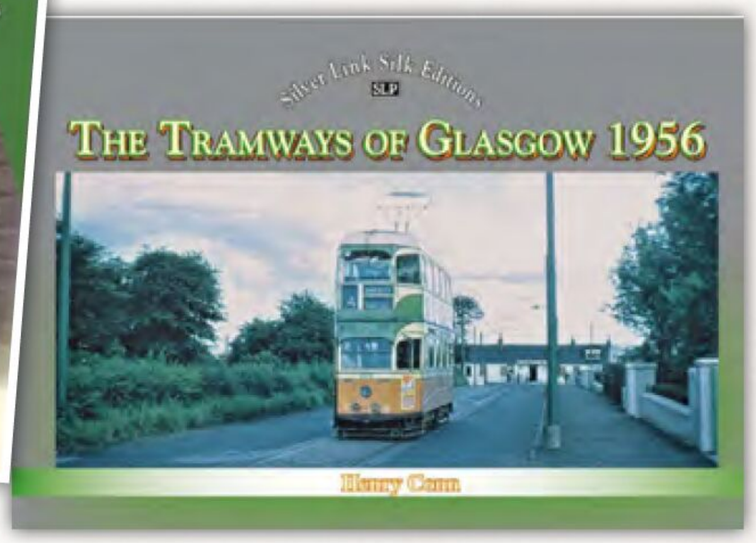
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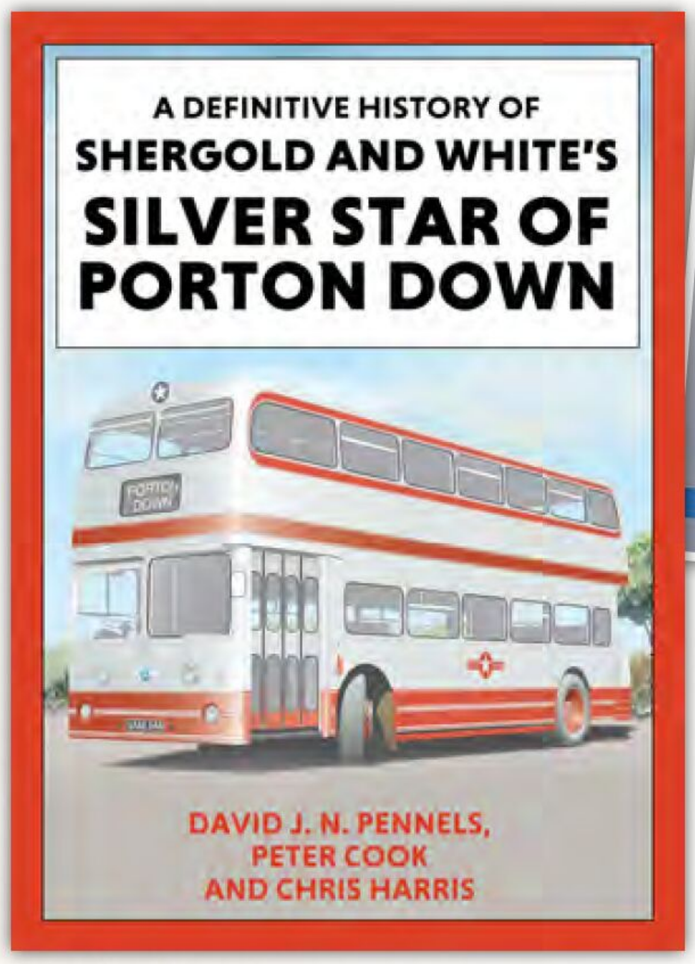
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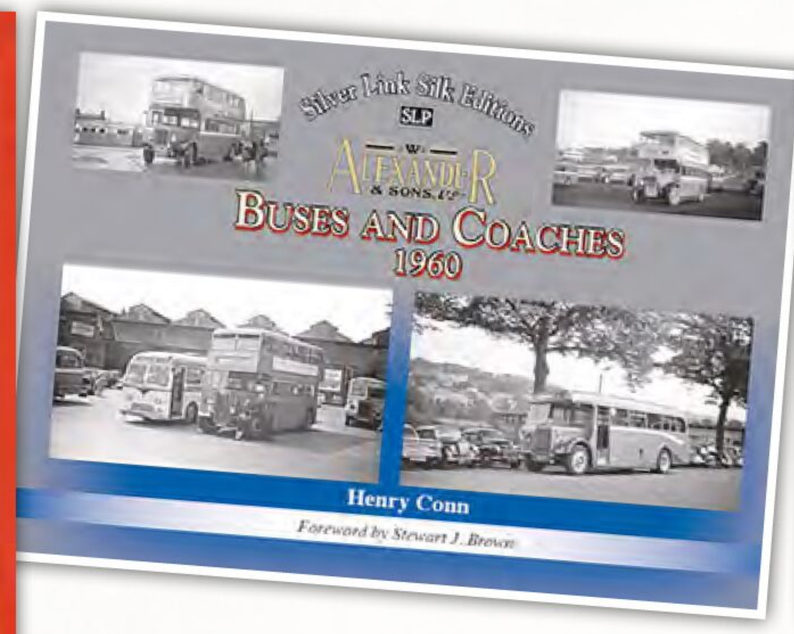
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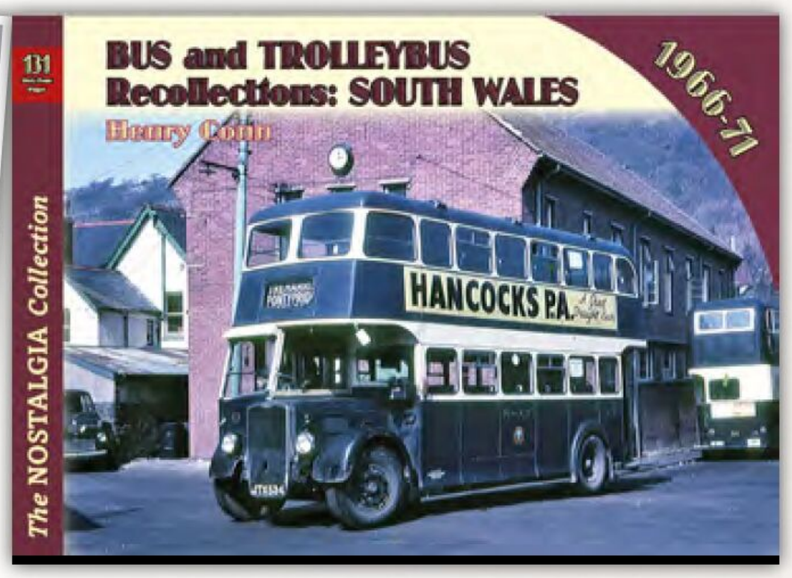
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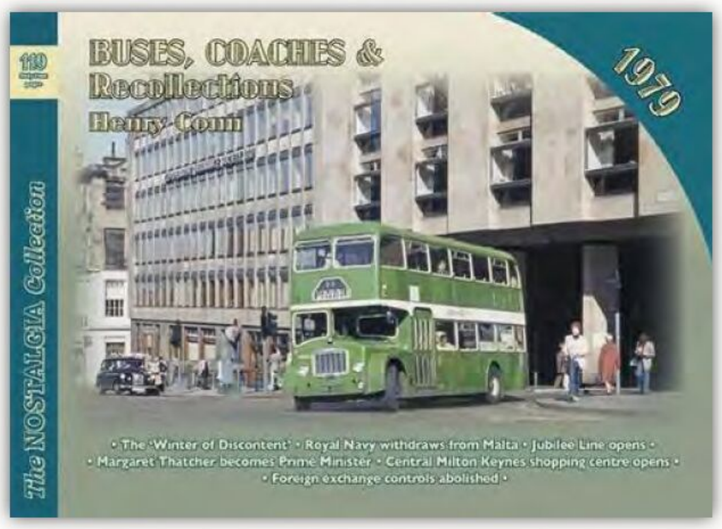
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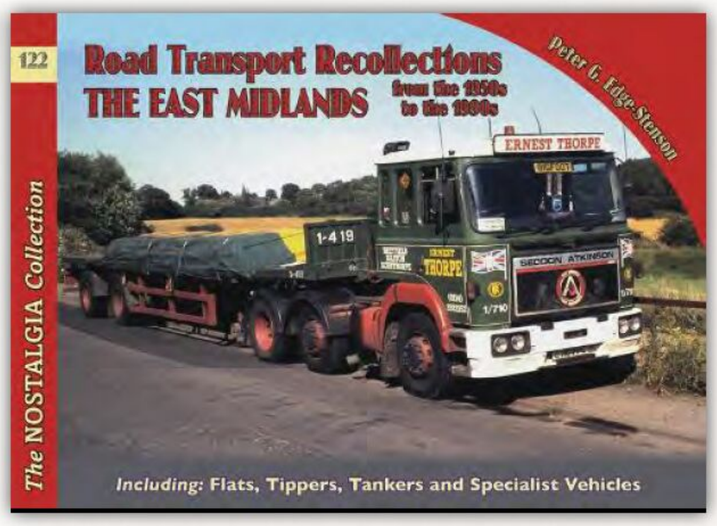
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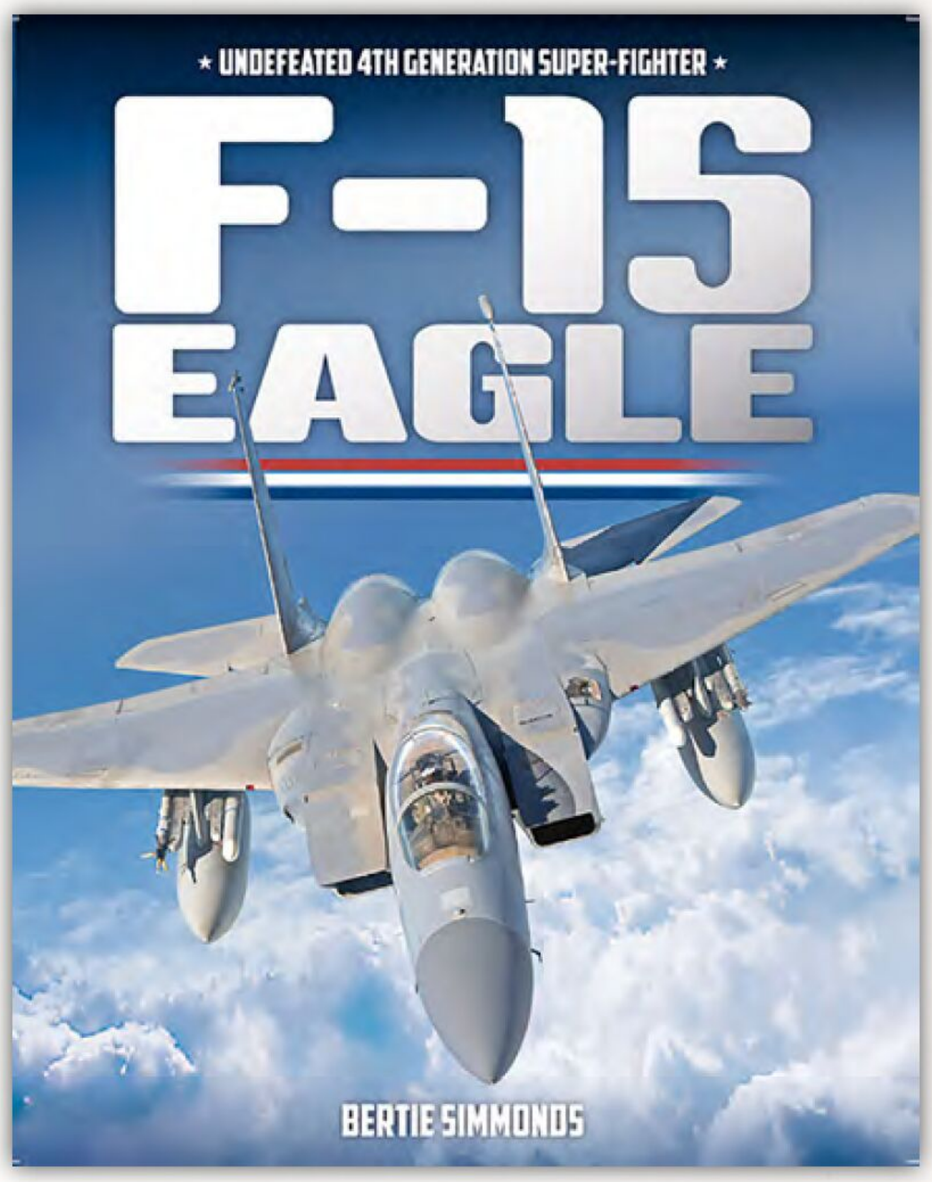


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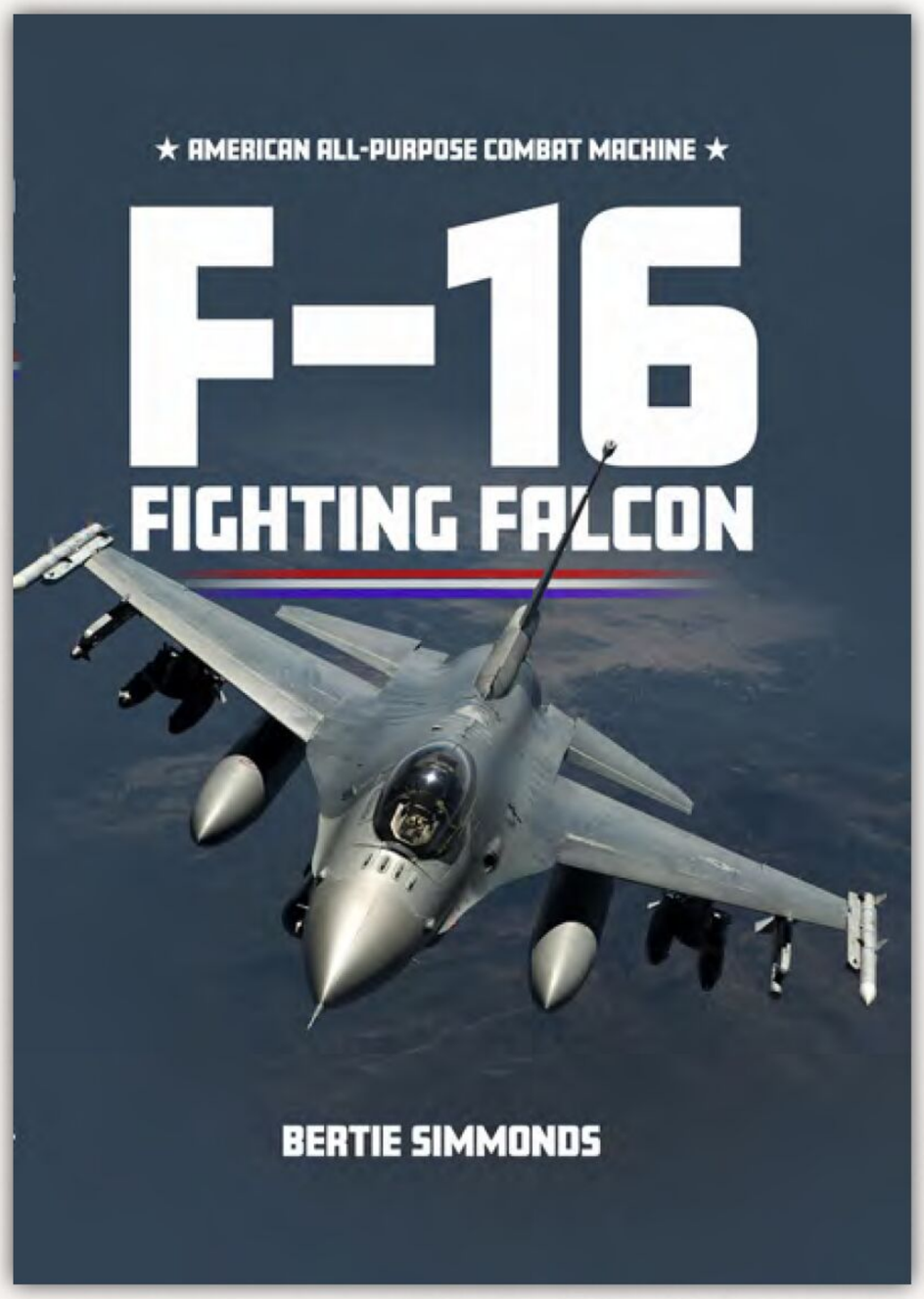


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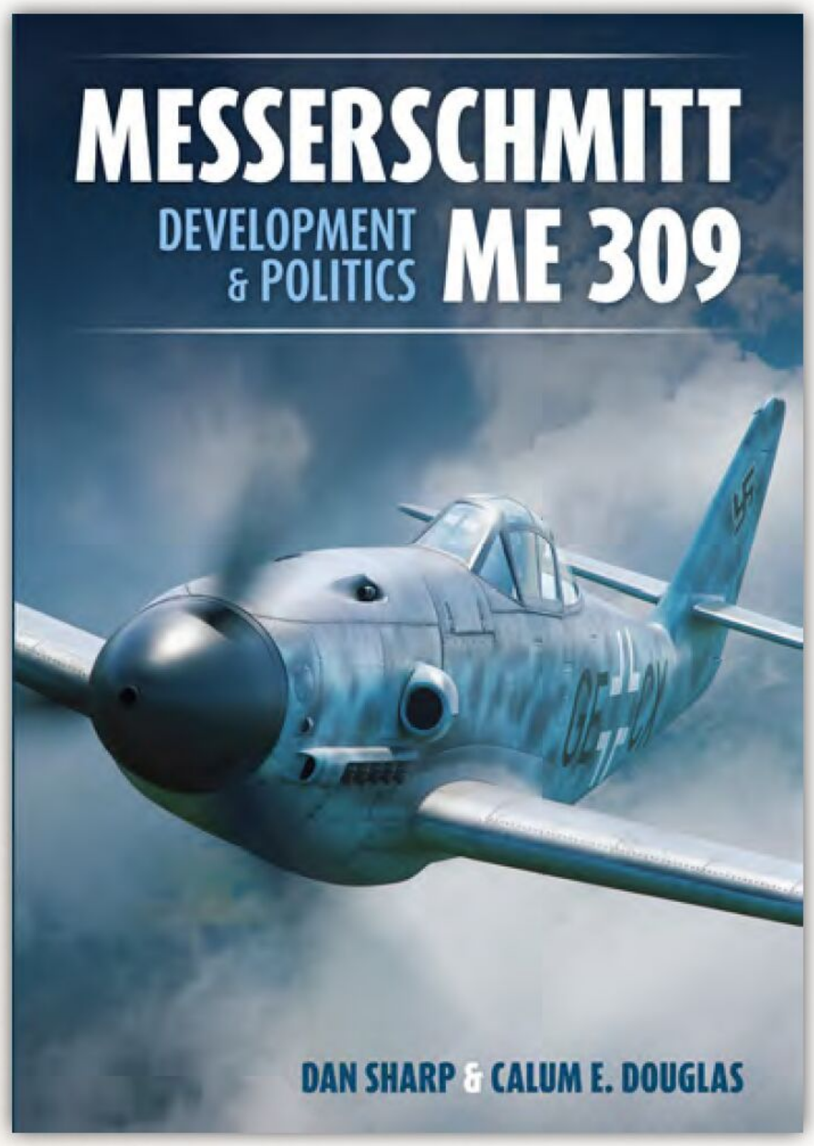
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Messerschmitt Me 309 Development & Politics

CALUM E DOUGLAS/ DAN SHARP

AVAILABLE NOW Softback **£40.00**

ISBN: 9781911658962

Chosen in 1941 to replace the Bf 109 as the Luftwaffe's standard front-line fighter, Messerschmitt's innovative Me 309 embodied a wealth of hard-won experience from the Battle of Britain. Its sturdy tricycle undercarriage would make landings safer, its capacious wings could accommodate much heavier weaponry, its retractable radiator would make it aerodynamically clean, its pressure cabin would allow high-altitude operations and its ejection seat would help preserve the Luftwaffe's most precious asset – its pilots.

All of this was made possible by a fuselage specifically tailored to accommodate Germany's newest and most powerful fighter engines: Daimler-Benz's DB 603 and Junkers' Jumo 213. Production of up to 800 Me 309s a month had been planned by May 1942 – more than all other German fighter types combined. Yet the type's advancement from prototype to full series production was reduced to a crawl, not by technical difficulties but by political in-fighting, deception and manipulation behind closed doors.

The Me 309 was set up to fail – doomed to join a lost generation of mid-war Luftwaffe combat aircraft alongside types such as Focke-Wulf's Fw 190 C and Junkers' Ju 288 – but why and by whom? Messerschmitt Me 309 Development & Politics, the first book ever written solely about this aircraft, sets out its full history – from its forerunners and commissioning to its eventual cancellation and sale to the Japanese military.

Using contemporary documents, authors Dan Sharp and Calum E. Douglas explain and explore the development and eventual failure of this fascinating 'secret project'.

The piston engines that powered Second World War fighters, the men who designed them, and the secret intelligence work carried out by both Britain and Germany would determine the outcome of the first global air war. Advanced jet engines may have been in development but every militarily significant air battle was fought by piston-engined fighters.

Whoever designed the most powerful piston engines would win air superiority and with it the ability to dictate the course of the war as a whole. This is the neverbefore- told story of a high-tech race, hidden behind the closed doors of design offices and intelligence agencies, to create the war's best fighter engine. Using the fruits of extensive research in archives around the world together with the previously unpublished memoirs of fighter engine designers, author Calum E. Douglas tells the story of a desperate contest between the world's best engineers – the Secret Horsepower Race.

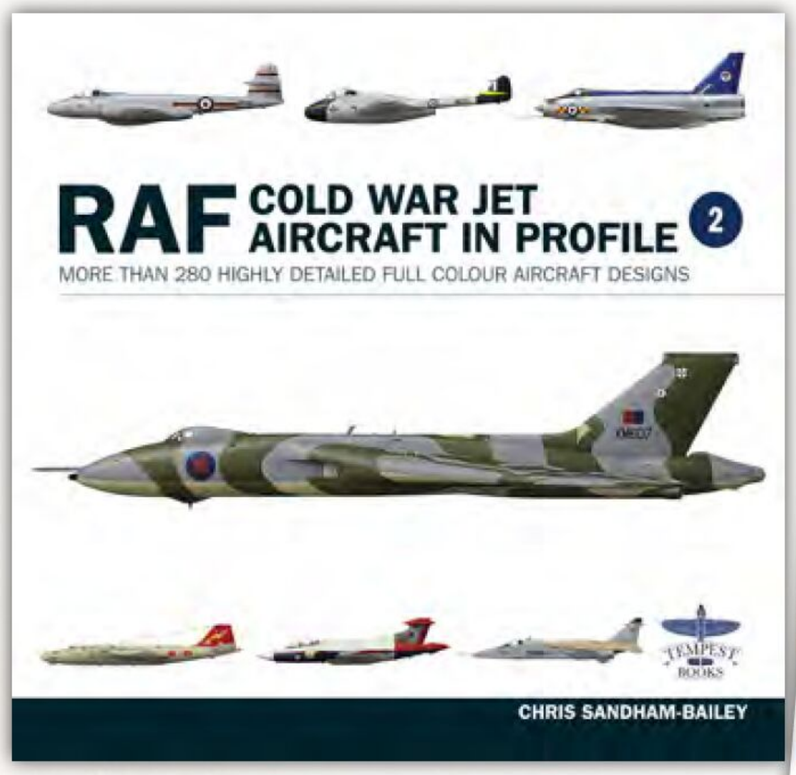


The Secret Horsepower Race

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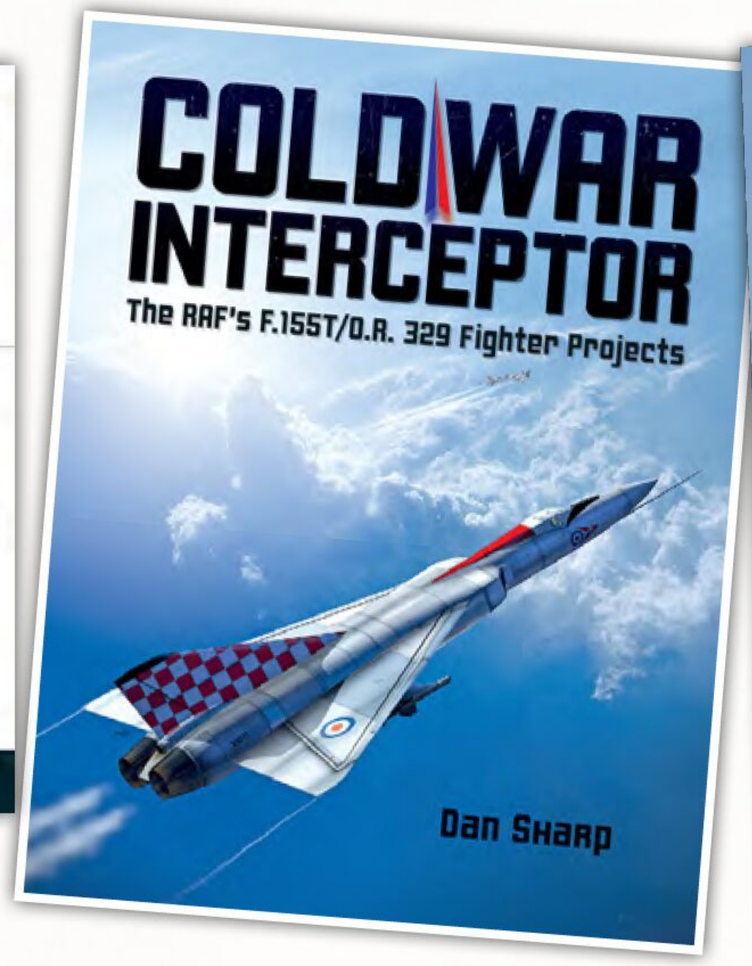
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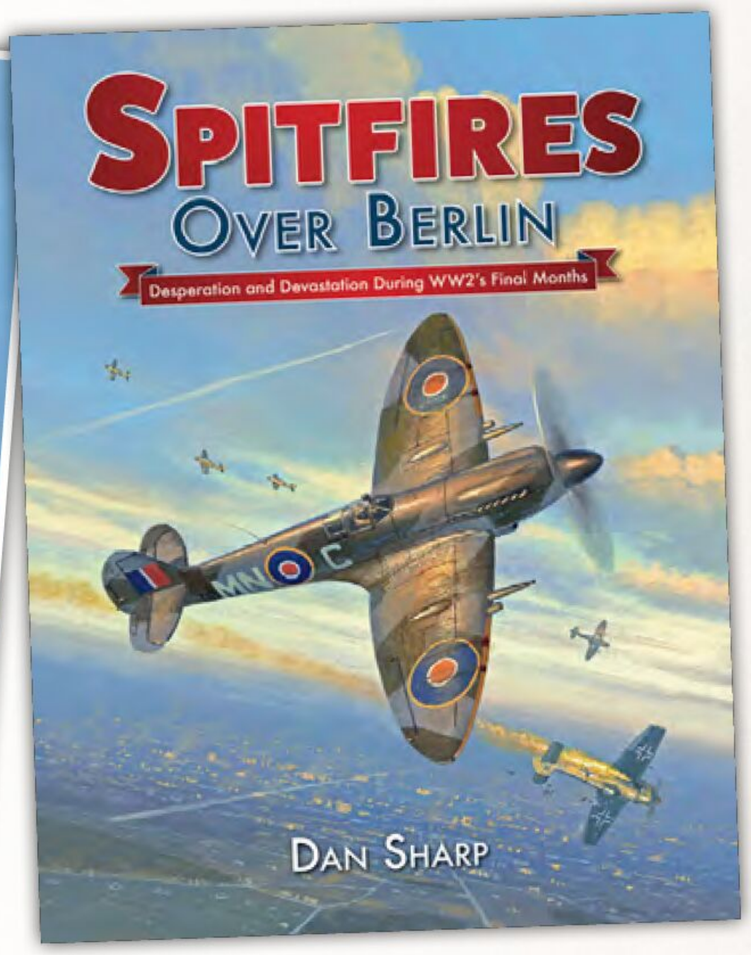
Cold War Interceptor

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Spitfires Over Berlin

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The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) is a standing reminder of the heroism and sacrifice of countless British and Commonwealth aircrew who flew and fought during the Second World War.
Formed at RAF Biggin Hill on July 11, 1957, as the Historic Aircraft Flight, today the BBMF's incredible collection of aircraft includes six Spitfires, two Hurricanes, one of only two airworthy Avro Lancaster bombers in the world, a Douglas C-47 Dakota and two de Havilland Chipmunks.
The Flight's Second World War aircraft have survived against the odds to exist in flying condition today and this book charts each of their careers over the last seven decades or more. Author and illustrator Chris Sandham-Bailey has meticulously reproduced every known paint scheme worn by each of the aircraft – as well as gathering together an unrivalled collection of photographs to show how the appearance of the aircraft has changed. Never before have all of the BBMF aircraft liveries from the war's end to the present day been catalogued and illustrated in one publication. This book is a must for anyone with an interest in the BBMF aircraft and their histories.



Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in Profile

CHRIS SANDHAM-BAILEY

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Messerschmitt Me 262: Development and Politics

DAN SHARP

AVAILABLE NOW Softback **£30.00**

ISBN: 9781911658276



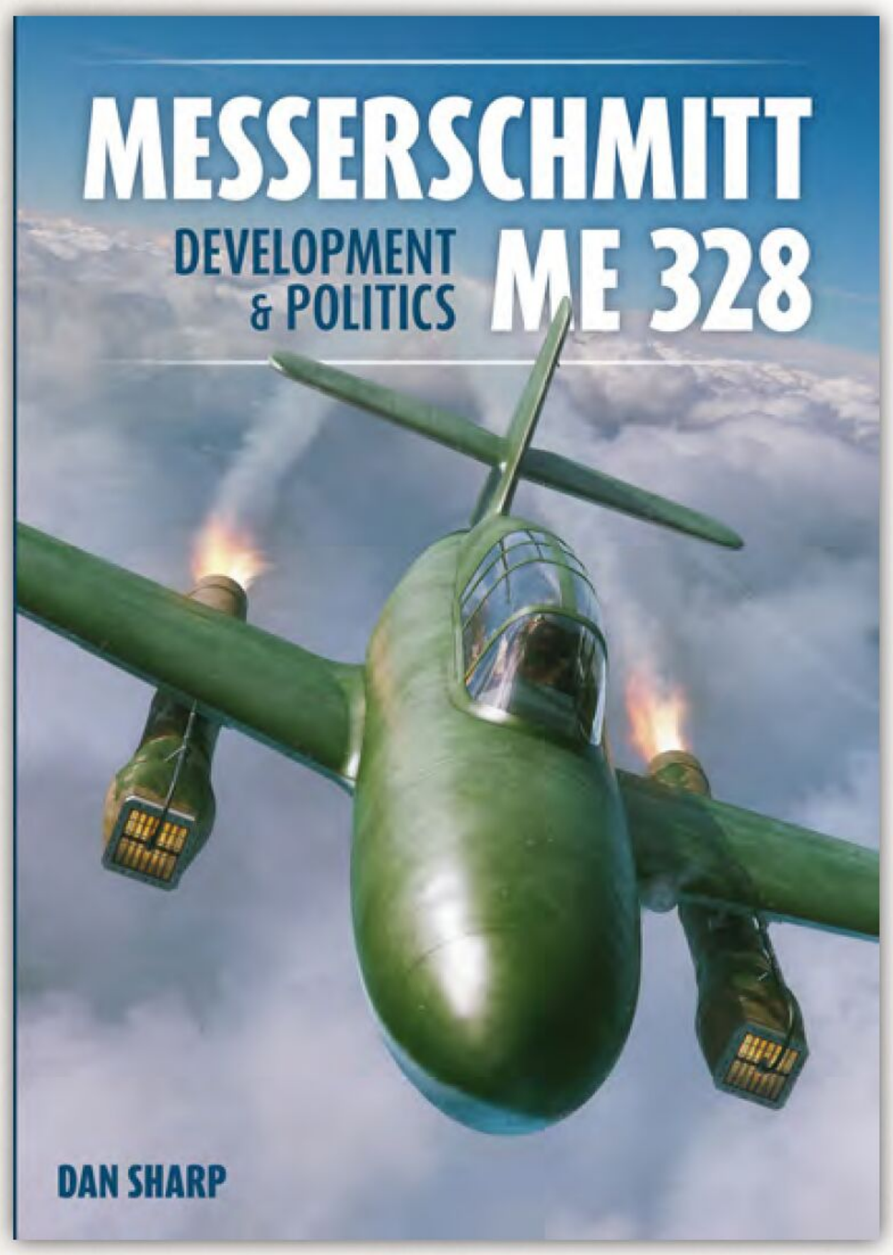
The first jet fighter to enter service and see combat anywhere in the world, the Messerschmitt Me 262 was a deadly technological marvel – yet it was also difficult to produce, dangerously unreliable and extremely vulnerable during takeoff and landing. Despite these flaws, its graceful swept wings, aggressive shark-like profile and undoubted combat abilities made it a legend. The aircraft underwent rapid development during its short front line career and numerous unusual variants were designed and produced. German Secret Projects: Messerschmitt Me 262 Versions examines unusual production models alongside one-offs and drawing board projects. More than 30 designs are detailed, including the Me 262 A-1a/U1-5, Me 262 A-1b, Me 262 A-2a/U1-2, Me 262 B-1a, Me 262 B-1a/U1, Me 262 B-2a, Me 262 C-1a-3a, Me 262 D-1, Me 262 E-1 and E-2, Me 262 HG I-III, Me 262 W, Me 262 Mistel, P 1099A-B, P 1100, Me 262 Interzeptor I-III, Aufklärer I-II and Schnellbomber I-III.

Messerschmitt Me 328 Development & Politics

DAN SHARP

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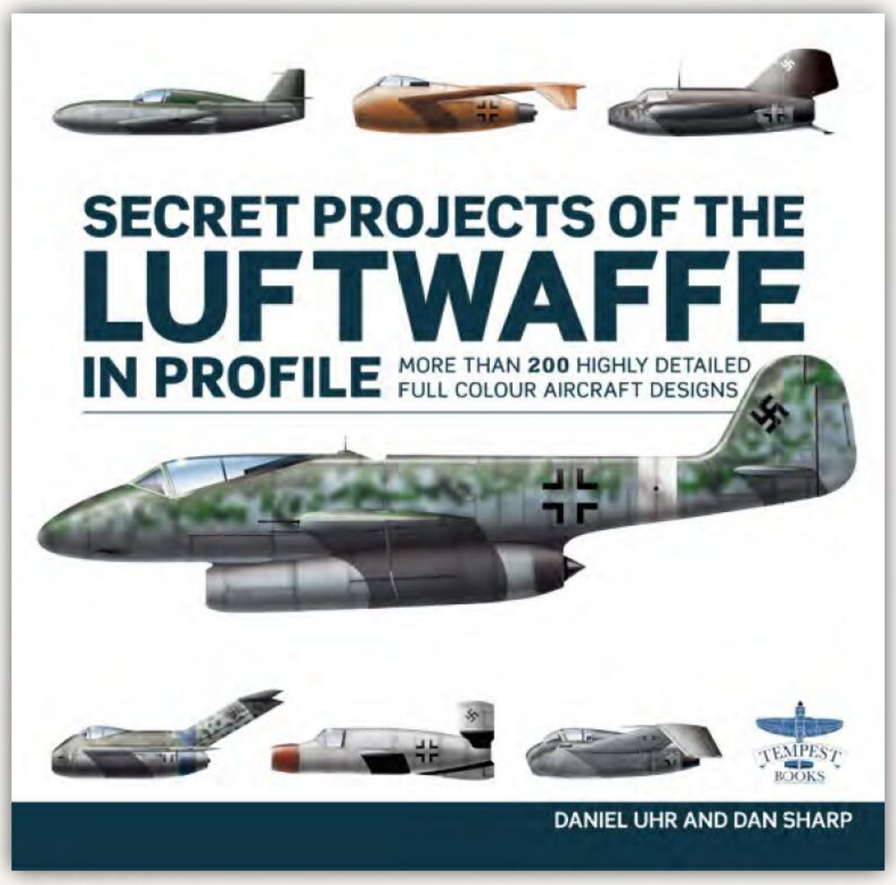
ISBN: 9781911704201



Conceived as a multirole combat aircraft based on promising early data from pulsejet tests, the Me 328 was arguably Messerschmitt's most controversial wartime project. Early projects imagined the compact machine as a fighter, a bomber, a reconnaissance platform or even a parasite aircraft – detaching from large bombers in mid-air to conduct operations before returning to the mothership. Enthusiasm was high, prototypes were built and extensively flight tested, with and without pulsejets, but it soon became clear that the airframe, the pulsejets and even the operational procedures mapped out for the Me 328 were proving far more troublesome than anticipated.

The type was cancelled – but then revived with a darker purpose: as a suicide bomber. Famous test pilot Hanna Reitsch and her cadre of fanatics chose the Me 328 as their vehicle for 'self-sacrifice' missions, where idealistic young pilots, plied with drugs to remove their inhibitions, would fly the aircraft, laden with bombs, directly into high-value Allied targets such as warships, bridges or command posts.

In Secret Projects of the Luftwaffe: Messerschmitt Me 328, German WW2 aircraft development specialist Dan Sharp presents the first ever book dedicated to the type and explores its history and purpose as far as surviving documentation allows.



Secret Projects of the Luftwaffe in Profile

DANIEL UHR AND DAN SHARP

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Secret Projects of the Luftwaffe: Blohm & Voss BV 155

DAN SHARP

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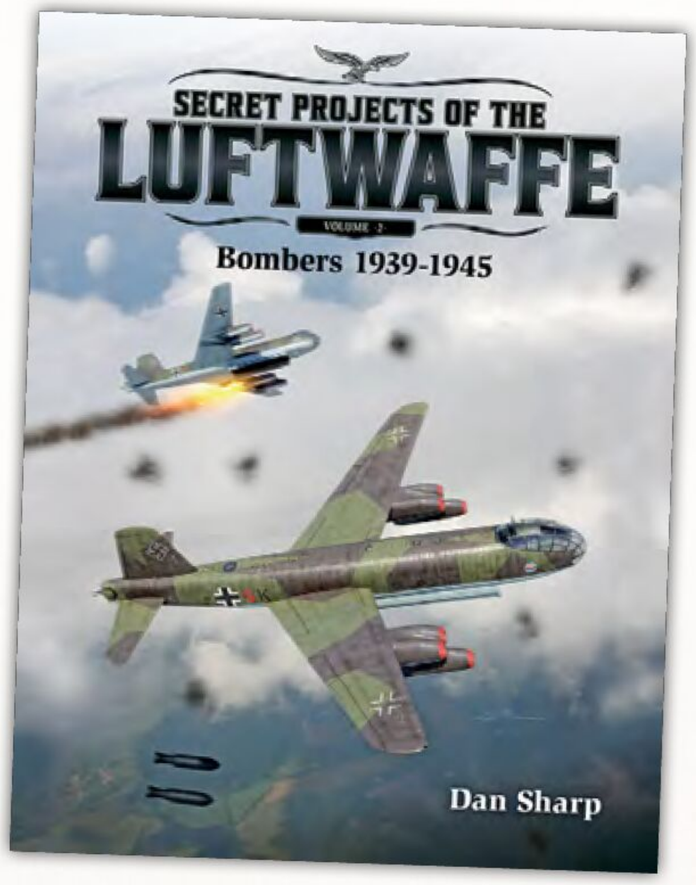
Secret Projects of the Luftwaffe: Heinkel He 162

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Secret Projects of the Luftwaffe - Vol 2 - Bombers 1939 -1945

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Secret Projects of the Luftwaffe: The Fastest Bomber

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HOTOL: Britain's Spaceplane

DAN SHARP

On sale: SEPTEMBER 27, 2024

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ISBN: 9781911704294



The start of Space Shuttle operations in 1981 marked a new era in spaceflight – with the five orbiters launching numerous satellites, interplanetary probes and the Hubble Space Telescope. But Shuttle was only partially reusable, its external fuel tank being expendable and its solid rocket boosters having to be recovered from the ocean and refurbished. Putting a satellite into orbit using a rocket was even more wasteful – with boosters such as Ariane being one-shot only. The costs were astronomical.

So when rocket scientist Alan Bond and aerospace engineer Bob Parkinson attended a British Interplanetary Society lecture on the proposed non-reusable Ariane 5 rocket in 1982, they began to discuss possible alternatives and concluded that the best solution was... an aerospaceplane.

The concept was deceptively simple – a vehicle able to take off from a conventional runway using airbreathing engines, switch to pure rocket propulsion at high altitude, fly up into space, complete its mission, then fly back down and land. Bond and Parkinson believed it could be done and HOTOL – HOrizontal Take-Off and Landing – was born.

By 1983 both British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce were backing the project. A broadcast on ITN's New at Ten in 1984 made HOTOL famous overnight, with the whole nation now aware of its existence. The Government agreed to match-fund the companies' financial commitment in 1985 and the work ramped up into high gear, with some of Britain's best engineers engaged in making this remarkable vehicle a reality.

Two years later, Minister of State of Trade and Industry Kenneth Clarke withdrew funding – signalling the beginning of the end of HOTOL, though there were attempts to revive it as an air-launched vehicle atop an Antonov An-225 as Interim HOTOL.

HOTOL: Britain's Spaceplane by Dan Sharp covers the full story of HOTOL's development in detail from beginning to end, drawing on the BAE Systems archive, the personal archives of the project's creators and extensive interviews with those involved. It includes new artwork plus hundreds of contemporary diagrams and illustrations, ranging from full colour brochures and publicity material – both used and unused – to previously unseen diagrams and schematics of HOTOL's numerous configurations.



Westland Aircraft & Rotorcraft: Secret Projects & Cutting-Edge Technology

DR RON SMITH AND JEREMY GRAHAM

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Half Century, Baby! - Fifty Years of the Grumman F-14 Tomcat

DAVID PARSONS, MADS BANGSO

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ISBN: 9781911658924



Half Century, Baby! marks the 50th anniversary of the first two Grumman F-14A fleet squadrons (VF-1 and VF-2) receiving their first Tomcats during the summer of 1973. This lavishly illustrated volume tells the story of the aircraft from the beginning to its sunset of service with the US Navy in 2006; the longest operational career of any Naval Fighter to date. Preeminent Tomcat historian and former Tomcat RIO Dave Parsons explains the history of the F-14 decade by decade through the words of the aircrew who flew it. Artist Mads Bangsø brings his superlative illustration talents to the forefront with more than 120 F-14 profiles as well as highly accurate fully rendered recreations historical events featuring the Tomcat, highlighting the interesting markings of the aircraft (including helmets) as well as other aircraft associated with the Tomcat Community. The book features pertinent colour photography throughout, interwoven with the illustrations to complement the text.

Half Century Baby Volume II

DAVID PARSONS, MADS BANGSO.

On sale: SEPTEMBER 12, 2024

Softback **£40.00**

ISBN: 9781911704232



Bomber Command Gardening Operations - The Invisible Campaign 1940-1945

JANE GULLIFORD LOWES

On sale: OCTOBER 18, 2024

Softback **£19.99** ISBN: 9781911704287



Aerial mining by RAF Bomber Command was a vital part of the Allied war effort – claiming far more tonnage of Axis shipping destroyed than direct attack by either Coastal or Bomber Command itself. Minelaying operations commenced in April 1940 and expanded dramatically as the war progressed, yet today this vital campaign and its wide-ranging achievements against Axis merchant vessels, Kriegsmarine ships and U-boats are virtually unknown. Invisible Campaigns, based on Air Ministry and Admiralty archival material, together with squadron records, veteran accounts and logbooks as well as contemporary publications and press releases, provides the most detailed account of Bomber Command's minelaying operations and their effects ever written.

Historian Jane Gulliford Lowes looks at the aims of the campaign and how it was implemented, together with the measure of its success and how it compared against the mining operations implemented by the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine. The role of Arthur 'Bomber' Harris in overseeing minelaying operations is assessed and the experiences of the men who delivered the campaign, particularly the hazards they faced, are explored.

Invisible Campaigns sheds new light on a little-discussed but important and ultimately highly successful aspect of Bomber Command and is a must-read for anyone interested the RAF's in wartime bombing operations.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in Photos

LISA HARDING

AVAILABLE NOW Softback **£39.99**

ISBN: 9781911704249

This collection of more than 150 high-quality images offers a unique perspective on the historic aircraft and hard-working personnel of the unique Battle of Britain Memorial Flight based at RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire.

Photographer Lisa Harding has spent many years photographing the flight and now presents some of her finest work – chronicling winter maintenance, when the aircraft undergo extensive checks and repairs if required; out-of-season practice displays and some spectacular 'hot starts'. Ground crew can be seen performing their duties both indoors and out while pilot training provides views rarely seen by the public.

A collection of notable displays showcases memorable moments from the past decade, including the gathering of three Lancaster bombers at East Kirkby, the last two airworthy Lancasters flying together down the Derwent Valley, the RAF100 Buckingham Palace flypast and the Dambusters 80th anniversary.

The images are presented with commentary from the author, providing both background and technical details on how the shots were taken.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in Photos offers a wealth of previously unseen views of the flight in incredible colour, detail and clarity – a must for any warbird enthusiast.



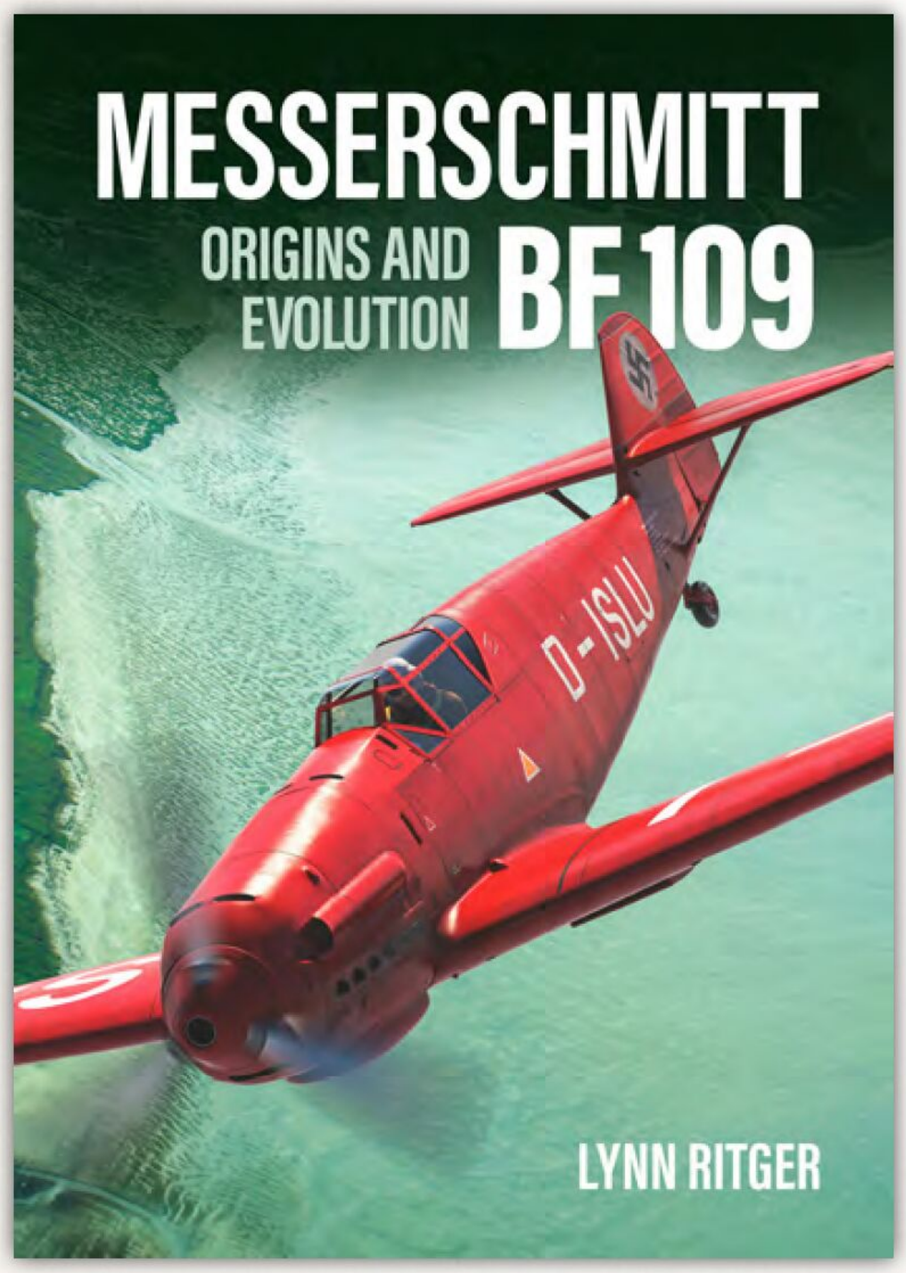
Messerschmitt Bf 109 Origins and Evolution

LYNN RITGER

On sale: SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

Softback **£39.99**

ISBN: 9781911704034



The most produced fighter aircraft in history, and arguably the single most important German aircraft of the Second World War, the Messerschmitt Bf 109 was unquestionably the most advanced fighter in the world when it first flew in May 1935. The scale of the development and production effort by Messerschmitt and its subcontractors over the next ten years to fulfil the operational needs of the Luftwaffe resulted in a seemingly endless variety of modifications to every aspect of the aircraft, from engines and weapons down to radios and tailwheels. Political gamesmanship and often heated discussions between Luftwaffe leaders and Messerschmitt company representatives, striving to keep their most successful product relevant in the face of ever-increasing Allied threats, also had a role to play in the developmental history of the Bf 109.

In Messerschmitt Bf 109 – Origins and Evolution, historian Lynn Ritger examines in detail the development of the Bf 109 family across its entire lifespan, from the first flight of the Bf 109 V1 to the last operational flight of a Spanish Hispano Ha 1112 M in 1965. Drawing upon original documentation from archival sources, including RLM meeting minutes and planning documents, intelligence reports, production records, factory handbooks, and front-line unit reports, Ritger traces the technical history of the Bf 109, illustrating prototype and service variant development, production batch differences, internal and external equipment and ordnance fitment, factory specific equipment and finish details, postwar variants developed in Czechoslovakia and Spain, and unrealised design proposals.



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Eagles of the Luftwaffe: DFS 230

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Snooperbase Waddington

MICHAEL HILEY

On sale: AUGUST 23, 2024
Softback **£16.99**
ISBN: 9781911704218



The air base at Waddington has been home to the RAF's most valuable surveillance, intelligence-gathering, communications and electronic warfare assets for more than three decades.

During the 1990s, Boeing E-3D Sentry AWACS and Hawker Siddeley Nimrod R1 signals intelligence platforms became familiar sights in the skies over Lincolnshire as ISTAR (Intelligence Surveillance Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) assets were brought together at RAF Waddington.

The Raytheon Sentinel R1 followed and more recently the base has become home to the RAF fleet of Beechcraft Shadow R1s, Boeing RC-135W Rivet Joints and General Atomics MQ-9 Reapers – as well as the Red Arrows aerobatic team and units experimenting with future drone technology.

Most recently, the base has received its first General Atomics Protector RG Mk 1s to take up the roles performed by the now 15-year-old Reaper fleet.

In Snooperbase Waddington, author and photographer Michael Hiley chronicle's the history of the RAF's ISTAR hub – including the aircraft flown, their known equipment and their operational use as far as the Official Secrets Act will allow.



Ronny Barr Profiles - British Two Seaters of the Great War

RONNY BAR

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Ronny Bar Profiles - German Fighters of the Great War Vol I

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Ronny Bar Profiles - German Fighters of the Great War Vol 2

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Supermarine's iconic Spitfire needs little introduction – its graceful lines and remarkable combat record during the Second World War speak for themselves. Rolls-Royce Merlin-powered Spitfire Mk Is fought their way through the Battle of Britain during the summer and autumn of 1940 with the Mk II, incorporating a more powerful Merlin, being introduced in the meantime.

As the war progressed, the Spitfire underwent an intensive programme of upgrades and enhancements as well as modifications to expand its capabilities. Unarmed Merlin-powered photo reconnaissance Spitfires flew hazardous missions over occupied Europe and Germany, while the Seafire, a navalised Spitfire, was operated from Royal Navy carriers in the Far East. In Europe, the Mk Is and IIs gave way to the Mk V and then the world-beating Mk IX before the last major Merlin-powered Spitfire, the Mk XVI, was introduced. While some later marks of Spitfire would receive Rolls-Royce Griffon engines, it is undoubtedly the Merlin variants that bore the brunt of the action and which are the most fondly remembered today.

In Ronny Bar Profiles – Spitfire The Merlin Variants, renowned profile artist Ronny Bar presents an exciting and colourful selection of more than 350 highly detailed artworks, most created specifically for this book, showcasing the full range of Rolls-Royce Merlin-powered variants from the original Type 300 prototype, K5054, to the late-war Seafires. Aircraft of RAF aces including Robert Stanford Tuck, Alan Deere, 'Sailor' Malan and Douglas Bader are included as well as colour schemes worn by Spitfires in service with Allied forces around the world. Bar's love of Spitfires clearly shines through in his incredible attention to historical accuracy throughout this fascinating and illuminating collection.



Ronny Bar Profiles - Spitfire the Merlin Variants

RONNY BAR

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ISBN: 9781911704164



Boeing B-47 Stratojet and B-52 Stratofortress: Origins and Evolution

SCOTT LOWTHER

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Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-31 Foxhound

SERGIO SANTANA

On sale: AUGUST 30, 2024

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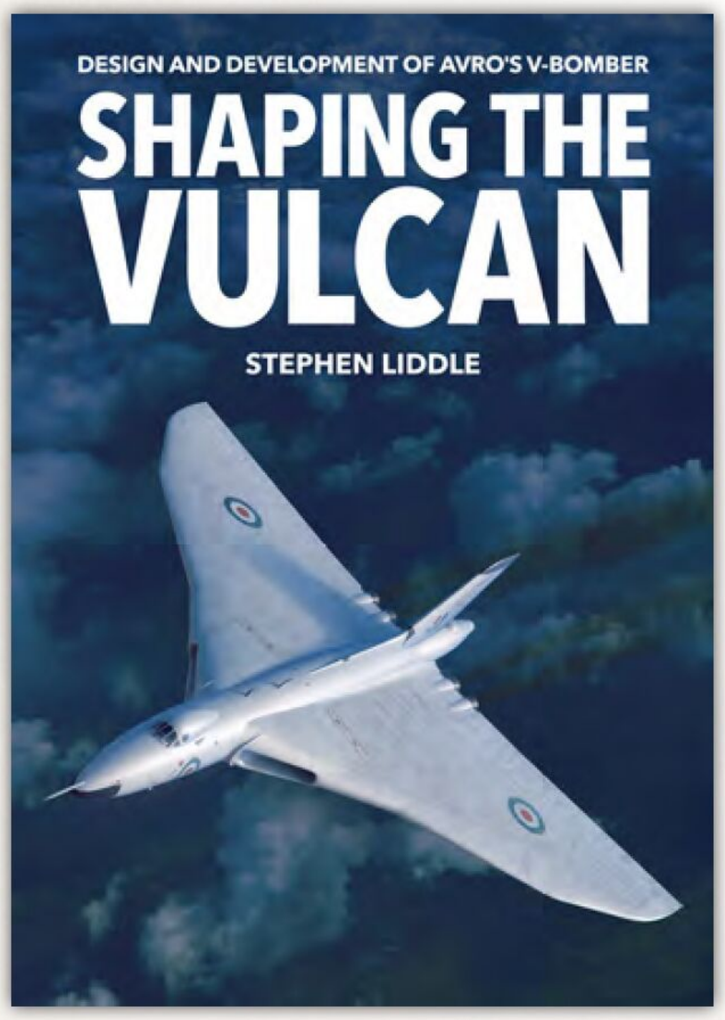
ISBN: 9781911704140

With a top speed approaching Mach 3 and equipped with both powerful sensors and air-to-air weaponry, the two-seater MiG-31 interceptor has proven to be one of the Cold War's most formidable survivors – finally coming into its own during the Ukraine War. Development began in 1975 with a design based on that of the MiG-25 Foxbat and progressed to the point where, although it bore a superficial similarly to its forebear, it was largely a new aircraft. The MiG-31, NATO reporting name Foxhound, entered service in 1981 and more than 500 were built.

Several dozen examples remain in service today with both the Russian and Kazakh air forces – and throughout 2022 and 2023 Foxhounds using R-37M long-range AAMs operated virtually unopposed against Ukrainian fighters, which lacked the speed, range, altitude and firepower to engage them. MiG-31s have also provided a valuable platform from which to launch Kh-47M2 Kinzhal hypersonic missiles against Ukraine while remaining within Russian airspace.

Author Sergio Santana details the aircraft's early development, its long operational history and its most recent operations in this all-new look at one of the world's deadliest combat aircraft.





Shaping the Vulcan

STEPHEN LIDDLE

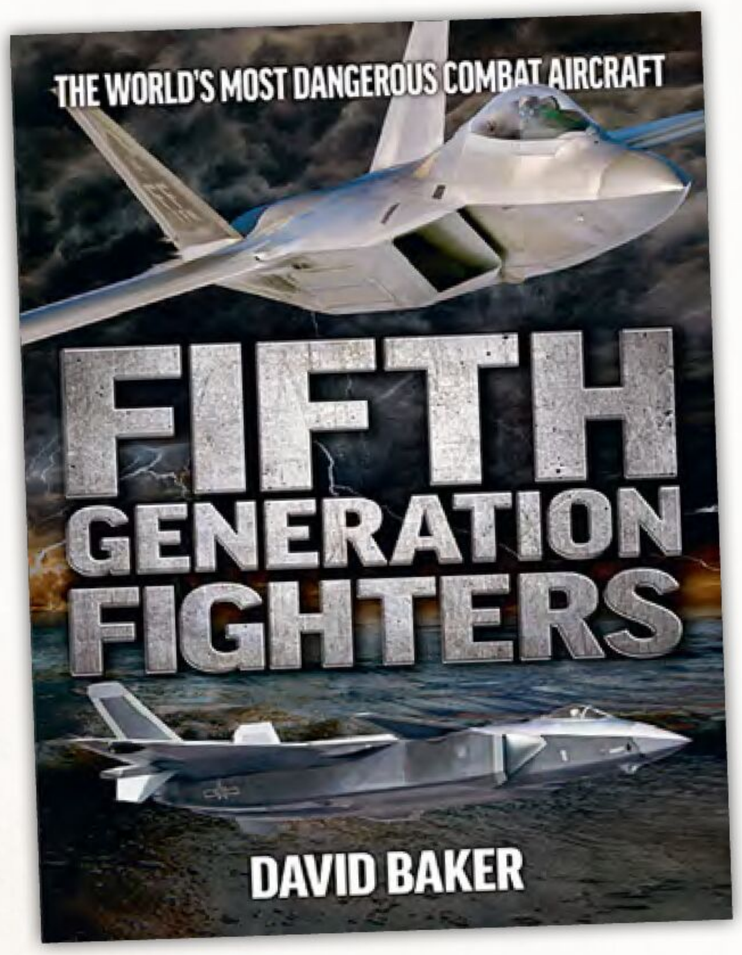
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ISBN: 9781911704072

The Avro Vulcan is one of the most striking aircraft ever made – its enormous wing stretching back from an improbably thick leading edge marked by cavernous wing root engine intakes. Perhaps even more incredible, its first flight was made just over ten years after the introduction of the piston-engined Lancaster during the Second World War. Within a decade, technology had taken a giant leap from straight-winged slow-moving conventional bombers to this vast delta designed to carry a nuclear payload.

But what led to such a radical configuration and what was the technology that enabled such an ambitious design? What possessed Avro to offer the Air Ministry such a futuristic aircraft and what prompted the Ministry to approve its development and entry into service?

Formula 1 racing team aerodynamicist and Vulcan to the Sky trustee Stephen Liddle presents a full history of the Vulcan's development and assesses the technological and engineering breakthroughs which underpinned the construction of this unparalleled aircraft.



Fifth Generation Fighters

DAVID BAKER

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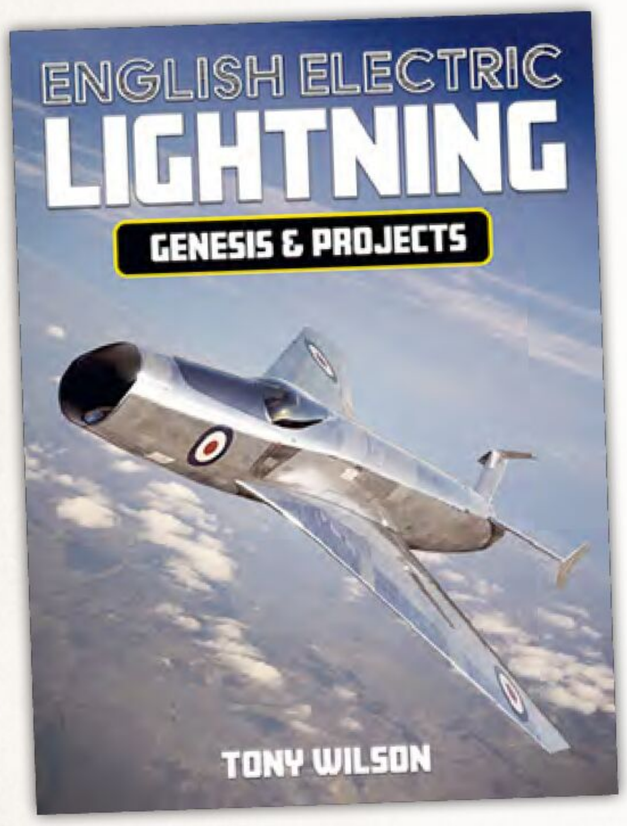


Russian Bombers

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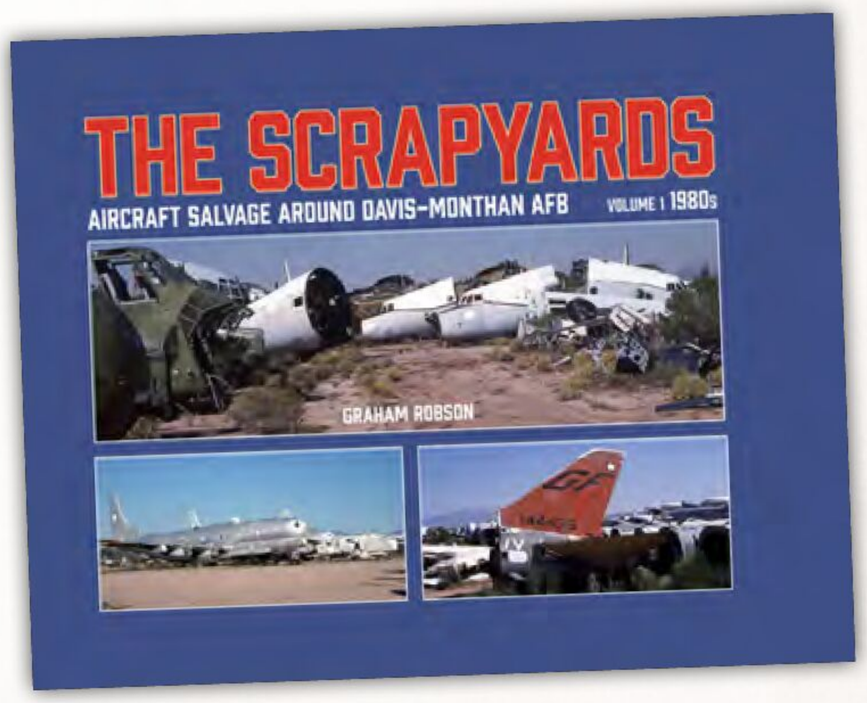
American Interceptor: US Navy Convoy Fighter Projects

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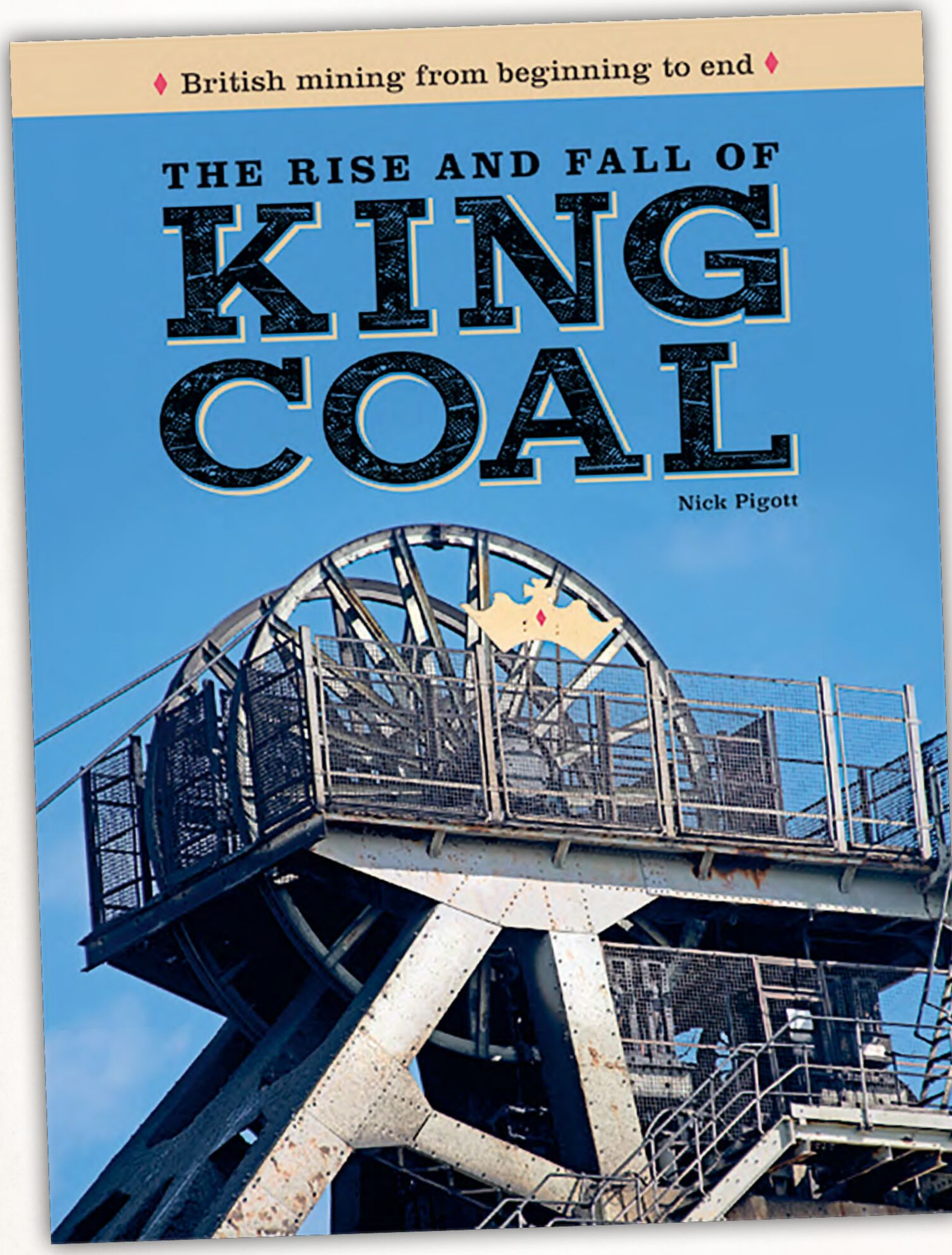
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