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ISSUE 328 January 17 –February 14, 2025

HERITAGE RAILWAY

THE COMPLETE PRESERVATION NEWS MAGAZINE

WHISTLE-UP NEWS SPECIAL: SCAN INSIDE AND LISTEN!

Resounding start to Railway 200!

CHURNET VALLEY
RUNS FIRST TRAIN TO LEEK

■ *TORNADO* TO HEADLINE EAST LANCASHIRE 'LEGENDS' GALA ■ £100K APPEAL AS OLDEST GRESLEY LOCO BACK AT NORTH NORFOLK ■ GALA ACTION FROM SEVERN VALLEY, SOUTH DEVON AND SWANAGE ■ NENE VALLEY LAUNCHES OVERTON GOODS YARD DEVELOPMENT

The Winter Cumbrian Mountain Express

Saturday 1st, 22nd February, 29th March 2025

This trip provides a wonderful opportunity to get out and about during the winter months, with the added bonus of steam haulage over the Northern Fells, including the spectacular Settle & Carlisle Railway. We have a high speed journey down the West Coast Main Line to Carnforth, hauled by a blue Class 86 electric locomotive. We then enjoy a circular steam tour outwards via Shap to Carlisle and back via the Settle and Carlisle line.

Join us from London Euston, Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby, Nuneaton, Crewe and Preston to visit Carlisle.

There are three classes available:

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The Railway Touring Company Steam Rail Day Trips 2025

The Winter Cumbrian Mountain Express
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Join us from Manchester Piccadilly, Wigan North Western and Preston to visit Carlisle.

The Valentines White Rose
Saturday 15th February
Join us from London Kings Cross, Stevenage, Huntingdon and Peterborough to visit York.

The Mancunian
Saturday 1st March
Join us from Manchester Piccadilly and Stockport to visit Llandudno Junction or Holyhead.

The Stratford Flyer
Saturday 8th March
Join us from Manchester, Stockport and Macclesfield to visit Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Cheshireman
Saturday 15th March
Join us from London Euston, Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby and Nuneaton to visit Chester.

The Whitby Flyer
Wednesday 19th March
Join us from London Kings Cross, Stevenage, Huntingdon, Peterborough and York to visit Whitby.

The Blackpool Steam Express
Saturday 22nd March
Join us from London Euston, Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby, Nuneaton and Crewe to visit Blackpool.

The Edinburgh Flyer
Saturday 29th March
Join us from York, Durham and Newcastle to visit Edinburgh.

The Worcester Steam Express
Saturday 5th April
Join us from Norwich, Thetford, March and Peterborough to visit Worcester.

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GWR wartime black Churchward 2-8-0 No. 2807 glints in the evening sun on January 3 as it arrives at Buckfastleigh during the South Devon Railway's winter steam gala. Usually resident on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, it was visiting the West Country to work 'Polar Express' services there and was 'defrocked' of the related paraphernalia in time for the post-New Year event. See pages 52/53 for the full story. ADAM ASHFORD

Whistling-Up new pride in Britain!

THE simple concept that was the January 1 Whistle-Up, as highlighted in our Headline News Special on pages 8-13, spearheaded by the Heritage Railway Association, was nothing short of a stroke of genius that will go down in history on its own account.

The event, which saw steam, diesel and electric railway locomotives big and small, plus the occasional traction engine, sounding off in unison around the UK – and indeed in continents beyond – may well have set new records in the sector for mass participation.

It was certainly a beyond-belief perfect start to Railway 200, which is celebrating one of Britain's greatest ever achievements: the reshaping of the world through the development of self-propelled traction.

Despite the murky and windy weather which battered the country on New Year's Day, many venues reported crowds turning out to watch the simple but inspirational event. I have little doubt it will encourage more ordinary members of the public to check out more of the growing catalogue of Stockton & Darlington Railway bicentennial events of all shapes and sizes which are being laid on for their entertainment, education and enlightenment throughout 2025.

Sadly, our country is now flooded to drowning point with political insults traded at national level on a daily, if not hourly, basis – a demoralising situation which has gone far beyond the pale with no sign of letting up. By sharp and dramatic contrast, the generations of volunteers who over the past three quarters of a century have built our heritage railway portfolio into today's magnificent gem can now use Railway 200 to bring their lights out from beneath the bushel – and show the rest of the world the monumental success on steel wheels that Britain has achieved and what we are really all about.

The golden days of schoolboy trainspotters of the 1950s and 1960s who went on to lay the foundations of the heritage movement have long since passed into history. However, so much remains to ooze raw positivity from every orifice of the sector, and the popular response to Whistle-Up indicated clearly that a willing public may well be ready to jump on board.

We hope that Railway 200 will become a flourishing pageantry of well-supported events, which will hopefully inspire people to take out membership subscriptions at their favourite heritage lines, donate to one of the very worthwhile restoration appeals that are currently underway, or join as volunteers to help keep our rich heritage alive for the next few generations and beyond. Indeed, over and above Railway 200, there is so much to look forward to in the year ahead, including the possible return of *Flying Scotsman*, *Tornado* and *Duke of Gloucester* to main line action and the now-regular running on heritage lines of new-builds like *Betton Grange* and *Beachy Head*, underling the core fact that Britain remains THE country of railways and, in historical terms, stands head and shoulders above the rest.

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Churchward 2-8-0 No. 2807 is reflected in the still waters of the River Dart on January 3 during the South Devon Railway winter steam gala. OWEN HAYWARD

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Leek linked!

Churnet Valley runs first train along new extension

Words and pictures By Owen Hayward

Right away: Former HM Principal Inspector of Railways and current Foxfield Railway chairman Stephen Turner gives the ceremonial green flag for the first train to depart Froghall bound for Leek on December 31, 2024.

DECEMBER 31, 2024, was a day of celebration and triumph in Staffordshire as the Churnet Valley Railway saw the first passenger train run to Leek almost 60 years to the day after the station was closed by BR. The achievement came as the result of a multi-million pound project, in the presence of supporters who were invited to travel aboard the historic service.

The market town's original station was built in 1849 for the North Staffordshire Railway and remained open until January 4, 1965, when BR ceased passenger services along the line to Uttoxeter. As with many lines, freight continued to be run for several years until this too ended in 1970. Despite attempts by preservationists to save it, the station was demolished in 1972 and the site is now home to a supermarket.

The ambition to extend towards Leek – which the railway describes as "the most important town in the Staffordshire Moorlands" – has been long-held and highly sought-after so as to give the line a town-based destination. It was not, however, something without its challenges: since the lifting of the line, not only has the original station site been built on, but the trackbed has also been criss-crossed by a myriad of services including gas mains and electricity cables. The former has been overcome thanks to the new position on land just south of the original, while the latter has involved careful planning and working with firms responsible for some of those amenities.

The project began as far back as 2009 when Moorlands & City Railways Ltd acquired a 150-year lease of the 8 ½-mile Cauldon branch, including Leekbrook junction, with a view to reopening this section as a freight route to serve the nearby stone and cement quarries. At this point, MCR had no contracts signed and the CVR was permitted to run heritage trains along it at weekends.

When ownership of the quarries changed in 2014, a plan to move freight by rail was scrapped and MCR sold the lease to the CVR, which included the junction that crucially gave the heritage line the potential to extend towards Leek without the involvement of any other party aside from the local council, which owned the final three-quarters of a mile of the trackbed from Birchall tunnel to where the new station is located. The entire project has been largely funded by grants awarded by bodies including the European Agricultural Regional Development Fund, which alone has contributed nearly £1,428,000 million towards the work involved, with the final total coming in at nearly £2 million. Other sponsors include the Garfield Weston Foundation, Bamford Charitable Trust, the Headley Trust, The North Staffordshire Railway Company (1978) Limited and countless private donors.

Day of celebration

The project has also seen the reinstatement of the Leekbrook triangle, which was lifted almost 80 years ago and now provides the railway a way of being able to turn its rolling stock. As such, the CVR has become the only heritage line the UK to boast an original triangle junction – and one over which passenger-carrying trains will soon regularly operate.

Having been granted several extensions to its deadline to complete the project to meet the grant-funding requirements, the CVR was required to run its first train by midnight on December 31, 2024, and so it was at 1.45pm that day when the train departed Froghall station for Leek. Such was the demand from supporters for a seat that the train had to be extended to eight coaches in length, with near enough every seat filled.

Motive power for the occasion saw USATC S160 2-8-0 No. 6046 responsible for working the first passenger-carrying arrival into Leek, with Class 33 No. 33102 *Sophie* assisting from the rear.

The first train was due to be ceremonially flagged off by Sybil Ralphs MBE, former leader of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC). While in office, she directed some resources in the regeneration department towards the railway's ambitious project. Sadly unable to attend on the day, the train was instead waved off by Stephen Turner, chairman of the Foxfield Railway and recently retired HM Principal Inspector of Railways.

The station site at Leek is currently still a work in progress, with much to be done; a temporary platform structure was erected for the purposes of the first train and will in time be replaced by one more suitable in design. Further land preparation work is required before more track can be put down here, which will extend the railhead a few yards closer to the site of the original station and clear

More than 400 passengers – a mix of CVR members, volunteers and supporters of the extension project – travelled aboard the train, which was extended to eight coaches in length, vastly longer than the temporary platform structure currently to be found at Leek, which will be replaced in time by a proper permanent platform.

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End of the line: USATC S160 No. 6046 had the honour of working the first passenger-carrying train along the Leek extension, stopping just short of the bufferstops that denote the current end of the line.

Success: The team behind the successful first train to Leek celebrate in front of No. 6046 shortly after arrival on New Year's Eve.

Looking to the future: There is still more to be done at the Leek site, including further panels of track to be laid in the direction of the original station and the installation of the run-round loop. This will be progressed throughout 2025 and beyond.

After a trip around the Leekbrook triangle, Class 33 No. 33102 *Sophie* became the first diesel to work a passenger-carrying train into Leek.

the way for the run-round loop to be installed.

Gregory Wilson, director of CVR (1992) Ltd, said: "The railway has had many dreams, and I am delighted that the current team which manages and operates the railway has been able to deliver phase one of our journey back into Leek.

"It will ultimately be our northern terminus and, when the station is built as part of phase two, will offer a wonderful building which we will be able to truly call our HQ.

"It will feature all that a modern heritage railway needs, as opposed to recreating parts of yesteryear which have no commercial advantage to today's heritage railway.

"This project has its roots back in 2018 when the then leader of SMDC, Sybil Ralphs MBE, and her associate regeneration team started to explore the options of a new Leek station. A proposed new housing development was planned to turn a derelict concrete works and associated storage units into a new residential development. The railway was to be part of an integrated transport/heritage scenario, with plans for a marina linking the railway with the canal and offering some nice amenities for the development.

"Like all these projects, priorities change, views and approaches are not all compatible, and ironically the first part to be completed has been the railway!

Support – and lack of!

"The project has suffered from various setbacks and has, on one occasion, brought the railway almost to its knees. Why, you wonder, did we even contemplate this in the first place? Put in simple terms, when the project was first conceived and agreements signed for the grant, we lived in a world which had not heard of Covid-19. When that hit, we were faced with a new order of running a business. The journey we embarked on today to Leek would not have happened had we been having the same discussions after the pandemic."

Greg added that while there was much support from local people for the extension, other groups and bodies were not quite as supportive which often made things difficult, in particular when it came to access the funding after a major upheaval in the local council. But in true preservation spirit, those driving the project pushed on.

"I strongly believe where there is a will, there is a way, but sadly the new order at the local authority didn't believe in the project or our management of it, which very nearly brought this project to an abrupt stop before it even started," he said. "We didn't go away, nor did the support from our funders at the Rural Development Programme England. Our project was not one which needed much imagination to see the light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, I believe that our award was the biggest in that grant programme.

"Mike Baker, our main contact at Crewe, bought into this project wholesale; he could see exactly that while the EARDF brought the first phase of the project together, it was clearly an enabler for future growth.

"Our grant application, written by Helen Pakpahan, received much praise from within the RDPE and enabled us to get an intervention rate of 80%, which is unheard of in this type of grant. Furthermore, her solid work in the application process enabled us to get a top-up to fund the extra works.

"These grants are known as defrayment grants, whereby we have to spend the money first, then claim it back – something I have always struggled with is when they are awarded to businesses that don't have that cash in the first place to carry out the improvements, hence the need for the grant!

"The original plan was for the local authority to loan us the money, pay it to the contractors, and then claim it back. Sadly, the new order at the local authority would not agree to this, despite the cash being backed by the Government. This caused substantial delays while we looked at alternative ways of securing the monies… without the help of fellow CVR directors Chris Meadowcroft and Geoff Chapman, we would not have been able to do this."

Despite these and further setbacks, the last 18 track panels were laid and connected just a few weeks before Christmas, thus enabling the train to run to Leek in time to meet the funding deadline.

In addition to the second phase, which covers the construction of the station buildings at Leek, a third phase will bring about a new visitor centre which is to be built inside the Leekbrook triangle, and which will be used to get locomotives such as flagship LMS 4F 0-6-0 No. 44422 undercover while awaiting a place in the works for overhaul.

While Leek is not yet ready to accept regular passenger trains, from February the CVR's heritage open days programme will enable members of the public to travel over the newly-laid line for a guided tour of the site, as well as to take a trip around the triangle.

Greg added: "My fellow directors and I would like to put our sincere thanks on record to everyone who has worked on this project. Without them, this exciting project would not have happened."

The Railway 200 whistling launch!

By Robin Jones

JUST as the opening of the first modern railway in 1825 reshaped global transport, so the start of the Stockton & Darlington bicentenary celebrations captured the attention and imagination of Britain and overseas.

Noon on January 1 saw the Whistle-Up event take place, in which more than 200 steam, diesel and electric locomotives at about 60 venues in the UK sounded their whistles and horns in unison to mark the start of Railway 200, an unprecedented and growing nationwide programme of celebratory and educational public events in be staged through 2025.

It was on September 27, 1825, that George Stephenson's *Locomotion No. 1* became the first steam engine to haul both passengers and freight.

The Heritage Railway Association invited venues around the UK to take part in the Whistle-Up. The focal point was the Locomotion museum in Shildon, where nearly 100 people witnessed the moment when the detached whistle of 1875-built NER 2-4-0 No. 910 sounded. Youngsters blew bright red whistles which had been distributed to the crowd.

Gateshead-built No. 910 has taken part in every Stockton & Darlington Railway anniversary celebration from 1875 to 1975. It is undergoing restoration in preparation for the anniversary celebrations.

Shildon residents Anne Hopps, who is part of the Locomotion learning team, and museum volunteer Peter Robinson were given the honour of blowing the whistle.

Peter produced a certificate from the 1975 anniversary, marking 50 years since he volunteered for that event too.

No. 910 was one of the 55 901 class 2-4-0 express passenger locomotives built to a design by Edward Fletcher between 1872 and 1882. No. 910 is the last surviving member of the class which featured a novel device that diverted exhaust steam from the blastpipe to an outlet beneath the cylinders, known as 'exhaust cocks', thereby softening the blast through the chimney when worked hard to reduce fire-throwing within the firebox.

Accordingly, the class proved economical on coal consumption.

No. 910 was withdrawn by the LNER at York in January 1925 and was externally restored to original condition. The LNER decided to save it for posterity and displayed it at its Queen Street Museum, and so it was able to participate into the Stockton & Darlington's 50th centenary and 150th celebrations.

As we will now see, each location that took part in the Whistle-Up has its own stories to tell.

Beyond our shores, other heritage railways took part in the Whistle-Up including Atlantic Rail in South Africa, Shanty Town Heritage Park in New Zealand and Veluwsche Stoomtrein in The Netherlands.

At the Volks Electric Railway in Brighton, the world's oldest working electric railway, newsreader Nicholas Owen blew the ceremonial whistle at noon. The seafront line, which was named Railway of the Year in the Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards 2024, was closed for the winter and a few hardy onlookers braved the howling wind and driving rain to glimpse the ceremony.

Visitors braved the wet conditions in Grosmont on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway to experience the Whistle-Up featuring Southern Railway V 4-4-0 No. 926 *Repton*, USATC S160 No. 2253 *Omaha* and Lambton Colliery Kitson 0-6-2T No. 29. NYMR

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NER 2-4-0 No. 901 with A3 Pacific No. 4472 *Flying Scotsman* at the landmark Shildon cavalcade held in 1975 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. JOHN TITLOW

HRA policy and communications manager Mark Pearce said: "The Whistle-Up was a perfect way to start Railway 200 and 2025. About 60 heritage railways and museums took part and they were joined by parts of the national network with well over 200 locomotive whistles and horns.

"The event went international too – even American national passenger train operator Amtrak got involved.

"Seeing so many organisations taking part was a powerful reminder of how strong the railway family is and what an impression it can make when we all pull together. It also generated fantastic coverage in broadcast media, print, and on social media platforms, really capturing the public imagination.

"But it's just the start of Railway 200. Heritage railways around the country are putting the finishing touches to scores of exciting events to celebrate, so there will be an opportunity for everyone to mark this important milestone."

Rail Minister Lord Hendy said: "The world changed forever in 1825 with the birth of the modern railway in Britain and rolled out around the globe.

"Railway 200's celebrations are a unique opportunity to honour a groundbreaking moment in our history while looking boldly towards the future.

"The Whistle-Up event marks the start of a year that will showcase how the railway continues to transform lives, connect communities, and create growth, jobs, housing and tourism."

Alan Hyde, from Railway 200, said: "The 200th anniversary of the modern railway marks a major milestone in our national life.

"In time-honoured fashion, the Whistle-Up fanfare launched what promises to be a memorable year with lots of exciting activities and events planned."

➜ For more information about Railway 200 and its events, visit https://railway200.co.uk

At Locomotion in Shildon at noon on New Years' Day, Anne Hopps and Peter Robinson sound the whistle of NER 2-4-0 No. 910, which featured in all three Stockton & Darlington anniversary events. No. 910 is set to figure in this year's bicentenary celebrations once its overhaul is completed. NRM

DID YOU MISS THE WHISTLE-UP – OR WANT TO RELIVE THIS UNIQUE CELEBRATION IN RAILWAY HISTORY?

Scan the QR code and visit the special *Heritage Railways* web page to experience the thrill of the action at noon on January 1.

A sign of the times with mobile phones held aloft to record the whistling start of Railway 200 at Bridgnorth station on January 1. JOHN TITLOW

Whistle-Up wows the modern-age crowds at Bridgnorth!

ON January 1 at precisely midday, BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75069 sounded its whistle on Platform 2 at Bridgnorth station on the Severn Valley Railway to mark the start of Railway 200, **reports John Titlow.**

Despite it being New Year's Day, the 10am service out of Kidderminster was crowded, with only a few seats available. I joined the train at Highley expecting to get a seat, but fewer passengers than is usual got off to visit the Engine House visitor centre; most headed straight for Bridgnorth to record the start of Railway 200.

Upon arrival, the headboard made especially for the event was transferred from the tender to the smokebox before running round. The locomotive then headed into the shed yard for coal and photographs of the crew on the front plate.

While the train stood in Platform 1 and after coaling, the locomotive was positioned in Platform 2, which was packed – including the footbridge overlooking the station. Driver Mick Mathews sounded the whistle as fireman Alex Robinson looked on, before No. 75069 headed off to rejoin the train in time for the 12.20pm departure.

The general reaction was one of excitement and the return train to Kidderminster was equally full. Clearly, people had decided to come out to witness this event despite the overcast weather.

The headboard will see use throughout the year but will not be used daily.

Driver Mick Matthews (left) and fireman Alex Robinson prepare to play their part in the Bridgnorth Whistle-Up. JOHN TITLOW

The Whistle-Up event at Didcot Railway Centre featured GWR prairie No. 4144 and was well-attended despite the rain. No. 4144 started the day carrying Y25, reporting numbers which were changed to 200 for the afternoon session. FRANK DUMBLETON

Across the gauges: Railway 200 team attend Whistle-Up at miniature line

THE Railway 200 year was launched at every size and gauge of railway in the UK on a wet, cold and windy New Year's Day – including the Milton Keynes-based Caldecotte Miniature Railway, which hosted the inaugural Railway 200 team members Emma Roberts, project sponsor, project manager Sharna Smith, and Phil Marsh.

LMS-liveried Achillies design 0-6-0T *Wolverton* was steamed specially for the Whistle-Up at the multi-gauge line. Owned and driven by Ben Cox for the event, following his apprenticeship at Wolverton Works commencing in 2017, he is now an engineer there.

CMR operations manager Bob James began his railway career in 1958 at Nine Elms and has only just given up driving duties at the Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway after 65 years on steam. He trained Ben as a steam driver, who in turn is training 13-year-old Jensen Warren in the art.

"A superb example of generational training," said Ben. "We are pleased to represent the miniature railway sector for such an historic event as Railway 200.

"It was a pleasure to meet Emma and Sharna, who started the Railway 200 project back in 2023.

"Having learnt to drive steam engines from ex-BR steam enginemen such as Bob James, I am now pleased to be passing down the skills to the next generation of volunteers so we can keep steam working for years to come."

One of the main aims of Railway 200 is to encourage volunteering and use those skills to help generate a route into rail via miniature, narrow gauge and standard gauge railways – and, conversely, to encourage professional railway staff to acquire wider skillsets by volunteering, therefore enhancing their career opportunities.

Left to right are Sharna Smith and daughter, Bob James, Emma Roberts, Mark Roberts, Ben Cox on the locomotive, Shane Barry and Jenson Warren at the Caldecott Miniature Railway Whistle-Up. PHIL MARSH

Heralding a tradition: Leeds councillor Paul Wray sounds the whistle on *Sir Berkeley* at the Middleton Railway on New Year's Day. SALLY CLIFFORD

World's oldest joins the show

By Sally Clifford

THE celebratory noise of whistles heralded the start of a very special occasion for the world's oldest continuously-working railway and what, in June 1960, became the first standard gauge line to be taken over and operated by volunteers.

At noon prompt on New Year's Day, Leeds councillor Paul Wray, who represents the city's Hunslet and Riverside ward, sounded the whistle to officially start Railway 200 during The Middleton Railway's annual mince pie special run at the Moor Road site.

Keeping to tradition, Leeds-built Manning Wardle's steam locomotive No. 1210 *Sir Berkeley*, which is owned the line's partner organisation, the Vintage Carriages Trust, and its young volunteer crew and driver Mark Calvert journeyed along the former quarry line to Middleton Park.

In response to *Sir Berkeley*'s whistle, the horn was sounded on the former Mersey Docks and Harbour Board workhorse Hudswell Clarke D1373 MD&HB 45.

Middleton chairman Charles Milner said: "We took part partly to commemorate the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, which was a hugely significant event and led to the rapid spread of railways throughout the UK and subsequently the world, but also to mark the contribution of the Middleton Railway and Leeds to the development of railways."

Middleton vice-president Ian Smith added: "It shows that railways in this country are not competitive – they are partners. If you want to get from one end of the country to the other on the train, you need several different railways to do it, and working together is by far the best way to achieve that."

Multiple whistling in the mountains

THE hills of Snowdonia echoed with the sound of locomotive whistles as the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway went all-out to mark the start of Railway 200 on January 1.

Passengers on the morning 'Christmas Mountain Spirit' heard the train locomotives Hunslet 2-4-0STTs *Linda* and *Blanche* sound their whistles as the service rounded the spiral at Ddualllt.

At Portmadog Harbour station, England 0-4-0STT No. 4 *Palmerston* let fly at noon, while at Dinas, Ff&WHR general manager Paul Lewin sounded the whistle of Beyer Garrett No. 143, which had been working the 'Christmas Cwellyn' service from Caernarfon.

Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway general manager Paul Lewin sounding the whistle of Garrett No. 143. Ff&WHR

In pouring rain and 486 miles from Darlington, the Helston Railway – the most southerly heritage railway in the UK and the most westerly in England – took part in the Whistle-Up with Barclay diesel *Kingswood* and general manager Colin Savage's restored 1929-built Garrett 4CD steam tractor sounding off at noon at Truthall Halt. COLIN SAVAGE

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Five steam and two diesel for Tanfield Whistle-Up

THE Whistle-Up at the Tanfield Railway featured five steam locomotives and three diesels.

General manager David Watchman said: "It's fantastic to be part of the Railway 200 Whistle-Up and to represent the North East's rich industrial railway heritage.

"Locations like Tanfield played a pivotal role in the development of the modern railways. Starting as a wooden waggonway, Tanfield soon became one of the busiest in the world, fuelling the Industrial Revolution. Railways changed the way we live, and this event marks a truly momentous occasion for us all to enjoy."

The Whistle-Up also marked the beginning of Tanfield 300, a year-long celebration of the line's tercentenary, which will include festival-style events.

Pictured at Marley Hill for the Whistle-Up are, left to right, Barclay 0-6-0ST *Horden*, RSH 0-6-0ST NCB No.49, Barclay 0-4-0ST *Stanley*, Robert Stephenson 0-6-0T No. 3 *Twizell* and RSH 0-4-0ST *Sir Cecil A. Cochrane*. DAVE WILSON

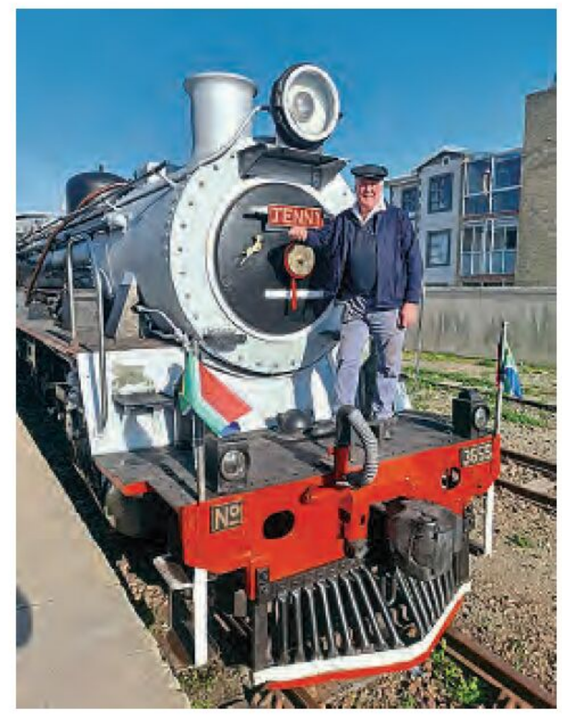
British locomotive joins in the Whistle-Up 8000 miles away!

THE UK collectively built thousands of steam locomotives for export around the world. One of these, Class 24 3ft 6in gauge 2-8-4 No. 3655 *Jenny*, was built in 1949 by the North British Locomotive Company in Glasgow. *Jenny* is now leased and maintained by Atlantic Rail, a South African main line steam charter company but owned by Cape Western Vintage Railways, and it was used to kick off the Railway 200 celebrations on January 1 – in South Africa!

The Whistle-Up was carried out as No. 3655 ran tender first, driven by Clive Holliday to Hartenbos from Grootbrakrivier, along the stunning Indian Ocean coastline in the Western Cape of South Africa where steam traction still holds firm.

Clive said: "It was a fabulous journey along the Indian Ocean in 28 degrees under blue skies... nothing beats it! And there will be more Railway 200 events this year."

Clive is a former South West Trains railway engineer at Wimbledon Depot and before that at the Mid-Hants Railway, where he oversaw the return to steam of Bullied Pacific No. 34016 *Bodmin* in time to commence Steam Dreams operations in 2000. He drives for Atlantic Rail operating tourist trains in South Africa and will be carrying a Railway 200 headboard throughout 2025.



1949-built North British Locomotive Class 24 No. 3655 *Jenny* and Clive Holliday, who organised and drove the South Africa Railway 200 Whistle-Up train. ATLANTIC RAIL

Sounding off at West Somerset

AT Bishops Lydeard, the West Somerset Railway took part in the Whistle-Up with WR 4-6-0 No. 7828 *Odney Manor* and Class 33 D6566 sounding off.

Bob and Liz Ellis, who were celebrating more than 20 years of service at the railway, pulled the whistle on No. 7828, while the line's youngest volunteer, 14-year-old Elliott Freegard, blew the horn on D6566.

The whistle sounded for a full minute in front of a large crowd.

The cast of the West Somerset Railway pantomime was also present, ready to board a train to Williton two hours later.

A service went to Williton, where the line's longest-serving volunteer, Steve Martin, was given the whistling honours on WR 2-6-0 No. 9351, celebrating 52 years of service to the day.

Volunteer Liz Ellis said: "The Whistle-Up was great fun, and it was a privilege to be involved in such an historical milestone."

WR 4-6-0 No. 7828 *Odney Manor* and Class 33 D6566 mark the start of Railway 200 at the Whistle-Up at Bishops Lydeard. LAURA STANDERWICK

Blowing their own whistles alongside *Hercules* at Sheringham on January 1. LEIGH CAUDWELL

Whistle-Up departure is a sell-out at North Norfolk Railway

VISITING from the Dartmouth Steam Railway, GWR 2-8-0T No. 4277 *Hercules* took centre stage in North Norfolk Railway's Whistle-Up event.

The departure of its scheduled noon mince pie special from Sheringham was delayed by three minutes to allow the locomotive to participate.

Volunteer driver for the day Edmund Crosthwaite is also operations manager for the Railway 200 mobile exhibition train, named *Inspiration*. As reported, the train will criss-cross the country from this summer for 12 months to promote STEM subjects and careers in the railway industry. He said: "It's great to see heritage railways like the North Norfolk leading the industry in the Whistle-Up to mark the start of Railway 200."

The train hauled by *Hercules* immediately after the event was a sell-out.

Driver Edmund Crosthwaite sounds the whistle inside *Hercules* for the great occasion. LEIGH CAUDWELL

Still very much with us…

AT noon on January 1, the crew of the Swanage Railway Trust's unique LSWR T3 4-4-0 No. 563 blew its whistle as it departed Swanage station hauling a passenger train to Norden. The young crew comprised volunteer driver Billy Johnson, from Swanage, and volunteer fireman Aidan Strand, from Poole.

"It was great to participate in the Railway 200 Whistle-Up, as was being a part of history and the legacy of railways as a whole," said Aidan. "I doubt that two centuries ago those initial entrepreneurs, or the public, would have even considered railways powered by steam locomotives still being around 200 years on."

Swanage Railway Trust chairman Frank Roberts added: "Railway 200 celebrates the past, the present, and the future of rail.

"We are delighted that our two museums – the museum in the restored goods shed at Corfe Castle station and the Purbeck Mining Museum next to Norden station – showcase the important contributions that railways, both standard gauge and narrow gauge, have made to the Isle of Purbeck across almost two centuries."

LSWR T3 4-4-0 No. 563 performs the Whistle-Up at Swanage station. ANDREW PM WRIGHT

Diminutive *Marcia* works first passenger duty in 40-plus years

DIMINUTIVE Peckett 0-4-0T *Marcia*, the Kent & East Sussex Railway's smallest locomotive, made a triumphant return in the Whistle-Up celebrations after not having hauled a passenger train for more than 40 years, writes Geoff Courtney.

The much-loved 1923-built locomotive, which was donated to the railway after its withdrawal in 1962, is now owned jointly by model train manufacturer Rapido Trains UK and the company's general manager, Andy Hardy, a volunteer KESR driver.

With a tractive effort of just 3870lb-ft, *Marcia* has limited opportunities to haul passenger trains, but on New Year's Day it joined the Whistle-Up with a two-coach set of vintage carriages and Andy on the regulator as it ran shuttles between Tenterden Town and Rolvenden stations, a return journey of three miles. The 12-ton engine was unable to provide steam heat, but passengers were advised in advance to dress warmly on a day that left those travelling with an equally warm feeling inside.

Little engine, big heart: Peckett 0-4-0 *Marcia* makes good progress up the 1-in-50 bank between Rolvenden and Tenterden Town during the Whistle-Up on January 1, with joint owner Andy Hardy on the regulator. The diminutive engine was on passenger duty for the first time in more than 40 years as part of the nationwide Railway 200 celebrations. ROBIN COOMBES

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The Whistle-Up at the Great Central Railway saw WR 4-6-0 No. 6990 *Witherslack Hall* and the line's Metro-Cammel DMU sounding off at Quorn & Woodhouse. GCR

No loco, no problem: Whistling road steam at March station

CAMPAIGNERS battling to reopen the Wisbech to March line did not have a railway locomotive present to join in the Whistle-Up but, undeterred, still managed a steam presence at March station.

Andrew Goakes and his family attended with his traction engine *Jimmy* to perform the honours at the noon sound-off organised locally by the Bramley Line Heritage Railway and the Friends of March Railway Station. Rob Able and his Friends colleagues opened their rooms up on the middle platform at March for people to view the community railway model of March station and associated sidings. Peter Wright, leader of the Cambridgeshire and Fens Group of the B17 Steam Locomotive Trust, attended on its behalf.

Traction engine *Jimmy* held the fort for Whistle-Up at March. BLHR

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The train that changed the world forever: The replica of *Locomotion No. 1*, a chaldron wagon and replica carriage *Experiment* on display inside Hopetown Darlington in January. DARLINGTON BC

First train exhibited following Railway 200's official launch

THE modern-day main line standard gauge replica of the train which opened the Stockton & Darlington Railway on September 27, 1825, became the subject of a free exhibition at the award-winning Hopetown Darlington attraction in the immediate period after Whistle-Up.

The 1975-built working replica of George Stephenson's *Locomotion No.1*, the newly-built passenger carriage *Experiment*, and three chaldron wagons were displayed in Grade II-listed Carriage Works at Hopetown on January 2-12, kicking off the celebrations for the bicentenary festival.

On January 4, Steve Davies MBE, from the International Railway Heritage Company, held a question-and-answer session about the replica.

At the climax of Railway 200, on September 26-28, the replica train will run over the S&DR route from Shildon to Stockton-on-Tees.

We were on board too!

THE Whistle-Up afforded the Chinnor & Princess Risborough Railway to thank its volunteers for their commitment, with some of the hard-working catering volunteers being invited to sound a whistle each.

Heritage Railway journalist Owen Hayward was also asked to sound a few blasts on the two-tone whistles of GWR pannier tank No. 1369 at Chinnor station at noon – all while a handful of passengers and platform staff accompanied using their own whistles brought from home.

A few minutes followed the event where members of the public were also permitted to step onto the footplate to have a go, before the train was readied for its next departure to Princes Risborough at 12.15pm.

Owen Hayward takes his turn at the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway's Whistle-Up. ANDY FREEMAN/CPRR

A lofty steam jet from rises from South Devon Railway-based GWR pannier tank No. 1369 directly into the overcast sky during the Whistle-Up at Chinnor station. OWEN HAYWARD

Signalbox fire halts train services – but not the Whistle-Up!

THE Swindon & Cricklade Railway has appealed for donations after a fire scuppered its New Year's Day plans.

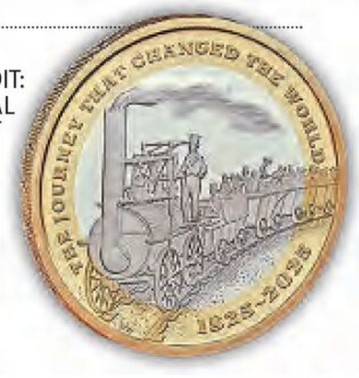
The line was forced to cancel services due to a fire on the line at the Hayes Knoll signalbox on December 28. An investigation into the cause was underway as this issue closed for press.

A railway spokesman said: "This cancellation is a significant setback for us, particularly after a busy and successful Christmas season. New Year's Day services are a vital source of income, helping to sustain the railway through the challenging winter months – a task that has only grown harder in recent years.

Donations may be made online via Paypal at www.paypal.com/GB/fundraiser/charity/3145494

Despite the closure, volunteers still participated in the Whistle-Up celebration, with three of the line's diesel shunters sounding their horns.

New £2 coin marks S&D bicentenary



CREDIT: ROYAL MINT

'THE journey that changed the world' is the inscription on the £2 coin released by the Royal Mint marking the Stockton & Darlington Railway bicentenary.

Designed by William Webb, the reverse of the new commemorative coin depicts that seminal journey in 1825. It also features the edge inscription 'Active · Locomotion No. 1' in tribute to the revolutionary locomotive's original name.

It is one of a set of five special coins issued on Dember 27, which includes designs to mark 125 years since the birth of HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother and the 350th anniversary of The Royal Observatory, Greenwich. Another design honours the Red Arrows, and one features stories of the Second World War.

The commemorative sets will be available in a range of precious metal and base proof finishes via www.royalmint.com/our-coins/ranges/annual-sets/2022-annual-coin-sets, with prices starting from £39.50. Coins will be available individually throughout 2025.

Railway 200 get-together hosted at Severn Valley

FIVE days after the Whistle-Up sounded, about 100 volunteers from 15 heritage railways and locomotive owning groups around the UK came together at the Severn Valley Railway on Sunday, January 5, to launch Railway 200.

The representatives assembled at the Engine House at Highley to witness recently-overhauled Stanier mogul No. 13268 pass shortly before 3pm carrying a specially commissioned Railway 200 headboard and whistling loudly, as depicted on this issue's cover.

It was the second day of the SVR's Winter Steam Gala, as featured on pages 42-45, which meant the whole railway was busy and operating an intensive timetable.

The HRA coordinated the Railway 200 Get Together event, and its president, Lord Faulkner of Worcester, joined the crowds to cheer on No. 13268.

"It really was quite something to see so many like-minded people gathered together," said Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster, the SVR's managing director. "We had representatives from many heritage lines, from all over the country, and we were united in our desire to give a proper heritage welcome to Railway 200.

"There's a tangible sense of anticipation for the many events that are going to take place to celebrate this momentous year, and the SVR is very excited to be a part of it."

HRA chief executive Steve Oates said: "Although we all naturally focus on the trains, it's people that really make heritage railways what they are. It's great that so many heritage railway people braved the awful weather to come together at the SVR.

"The personal stories are also what's going to make Railway 200 special: it's not all about the engineering and the 'firsts'. Railway 200 is about the ways that railways transformed the lives of everyone. From standardised time and commuting to holidays and travelling football fans, it was the railways that made them all possible and much, much more."

The Railway 200 Get Together event included representatives from the Bala Lake, Bluebell, Chinnor & Princes Risborough, East Lancashire, Ecclesbourne Valley, Gloucestershire Warwickshire, North Yorkshire Moors, Rhyl Miniature, Severn Valley, Talyllyn, Wensleydale Railway and West Somerset railways, the Moseley Railway Trust, Stanier 8F Society and the Threlkeld Quarry and Mining Museum.

A month of celebration for Tanfield 300

WHILE 2025 is the bicentenary of what is described as the 'modern' railway, it also marks the 300th anniversary of the Tanfield Railway – the oldest line in the world, dating back to 1725. Built to transport coal from collieries to the River Tyne for shipment, it was originally a horse-drawn wooden wagonway and was in continuous use right through to 1964, when it was closed after the last colliery on the line ceased production.

As part of its celebrations for this significant anniversary of the route's history, the railway will celebrate throughout May with a festival each weekend under the banner of the Great North Festival of Railways.

Each of the four weekends will showcase a different theme, offering a fresh experience every time for returning visitors.

Interactive displays and guided tours of the Marley Hill locomotive shed will be on offer, while steam and diesel locomotives will be carefully selected to showcase three centuries of railway heritage.

Visiting locomotives are also being negotiated, with guest appearances from industry experts also planned. Full details were still to be confirmed, but a railway statement said: "With a wide array of our historic railway collection in operation, there will be something for everyone to enjoy – including a few exciting surprises to be revealed along the way!"

For further details and to keep updated, visit tanfield-railway.co.uk

Oldest Gresley-designed loco back on Poppy Line

– but another £100k is needed

By Robin Jones

THE oldest-surviving locomotive built to the design of Sir Nigel Gresley returned to the North Norfolk Railway to complete its overhaul – and a new fundraiser for £100,000 has been launched by the Gresley Society, which bought 1921-built GNR N2 0-6-2T No. 1744 in September 1963.

On loan to the Poppy Line, the only surviving Gresley tank engine – which revisited King's Cross on April 5, 2016, for the unveiling of a statue of Sir Nigel – was withdrawn from traffic in late 2018 for an overhaul, which began in 2019 but was soon impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown and the war in Ukraine which affected both the timescale and costs.

"Even more significantly, once the locomotive was stripped down, it became evident that far much more work was needed than first anticipated," said a society statement. "This has meant an extensive programme of both mechanical and boiler work, leading to eventual overhaul cost of about £650,000.

"The steam test of the boiler was successfully completed on October 8 at the works of Northern Steam Engineering at Thornaby and the N2 partially reassembled for transport to the NNR's workshops at Weybourne on December 12, where the overhaul will now be completed.

"The NNR has generously agreed to initially fund this work, with the value reimbursed later through operation of the locomotive for a period without charge."

However, the society – which still faces a substantial funding shortfall to meet the final cost of returning No. 1744 to service – has launched The N2 Overhaul Completion Club to raise the required £100,000 from 100 members each donating £1000 in up to eight instalments.

Benefits for these supporters include a certificate signed by president John Cameron and chairman Philip Benham MBE, the exclusive opportunity to visit No. 1744 under overhaul at the NNR, the opportunity to buy a ticket (seat already reserved) on one of the first trains hauled by No. 1744, an exclusive limited-edition print (100 only) of No. 1744 in GNR livery by Matthew Cousins and one year's free membership of The Gresley Society Trust. The club has already raised £17,750.

Philip said: "This is really good news for the future of No. 1744. The society was created to preserve a working Gresley locomotive, and we owe it to our founders and for the benefit and education of today's generation to maintain that vision. The move to the NNR is one more step towards No. 1744's return to traffic this spring, resplendent in its distinctive GNR livery.

"I wish to thank Northern Steam Engineering, which has shown great flexibility in agreeing how its work programme on the N2 could be brought to an orderly close, and the NNR for its positive and constructive approach to the funding problem they could see we faced.

"However, the Gresley Society is not yet out of the woods financially and has therefore launched a major £100,000 financial appeal. I'd encourage all LNER lovers who want to see the class N2 paired once again with the Midland & Great Northern Society's unique set of Quad-Art carriages to get on board with our appeal."

➜ Details of how to join The N2 Overhaul Completion Club can be found at Gresley.org

Above: GNR N2 No. 1744 home safely on North Norfolk Railway metals on December 13. GRESLEY SOCIETY

Right: The boiler of No. 1744 undergoing its out-of-frames steam test at Northern Steam Engineering. GRESLEY SOCIETY

Volunteers for Settle to Carlisle line in anniversary year are sought

THE Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company is inviting people to join as volunteers as the line celebrates its 150th anniversary this year.

The first train travelled over the Ribblehead Viaduct and along the 73-mile line in August 1875, carrying goods.

The railway was saved from closure in the 1980s. Today, the Settle to Carlisle line has been named the best scenic railway route in Europe by travel publisher Lonely Planet and continues to carry passengers and freight providing a service between Carlisle and Leeds.

The Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company works in partnership with the rail industry, local businesses, community groups and organisations, including the Friends of Settle Carlisle Line and Settle Carlisle Trust to promote and encourage social and economic benefits for communities along the world-renowned line. There are many volunteering opportunities for residents and business people to get involved in supporting the line, which is both a commuter service and a tourist route.

Chairman Pete Myres said: "The Settle Carlisle line has a very special place in people's hearts.

"It is an iconic line, with the most beautiful scenery and history.

"There are many opportunities for people to get involved, and volunteers are most welcome, from supporting our community projects to becoming a board member.

"This is a special year, with Rail 200 celebrating 200 years of passenger trail worldwide, and the Settle Carlisle line marking its 150th anniversary. It is an exciting time to be part of the rail industry.

"As well as volunteering, we also provide employment for local people, including opportunities to join our refreshment trolley service."

➜ To find out more about volunteering or employment opportunities with the company, email admin@settle-carlisle.co.uk

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D6729 inside the workshops on the Blaenavon Heritage Railway on December 18, 2024, a few days after arriving from the Epping Ongar Railway. It is hoped that the required repairs will be completed in time to allow the former Stratford depot-based 'Tractor' to work services in 2025. BHR

Epping Ongar 'Tractor' joins Blaenavon locomotive pool

IT has been a popular locomotive with both visitors and crew and worked one of the first trains when the former London Underground branch reopened as a much-improved heritage venture in 2012, but on December 11, 2024, the Epping Ongar Railway bid a sad farewell to Class 37 D6729 as it set off on its journey to its new home in Wales.

A regular performer over the years, the locomotive was stopped in 2022 in need of both engine and bodywork repairs and following a review of the line's diesel fleet was put up for sale in 2024.

Managing director Wesley Tierney said: "Following a review of future requirements for diesel traction and noting the planned return of Class 25 D7523 and the return to traffic of Class 45 No. 45132, both expected in the near future, together with a requirement for locomotives to provide electric train heat during winter months, it was unlikely that repairs to D6729 would be justified had it remained at the railway."

The locomotive started its journey to its new home on December 11, a moment which was bittersweet and lamented by many as during its working life had been based nearby at Stratford depot, making it a local locomotive.

Speculation was rife as to where it was destined, and all was revealed the following day on December 12, when D6729 arrived at the Blaenavon Heritage Railway, where it is now based, having been purchased privately.

Following its arrival, the 'Tractor' was moved straight into the workshop sheds for the necessary repairs to be started and was fired up for the first time in more than two years on New Year's Day.

D6729's presence at the BHR brings the total ex-main line diesel fleet there up to four, it joining the two already-resident Class 37s – Nos. 37216 (D6916) and 37023, both of which have undergone extensive works over recent years – and Class 31 D5627, which has itself also recently returned to service.

Double Fairlie returns to historic livery for 2025

WHILE heritage railways have taken Railway 200 to heart by starting the year with the big Whistle-Up around the nation on New Year's Day, the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland team have gone a step further and repainted its flagship double Fairlie 0-4-4-0T No.10 *Merddin Emrys* in an historic colour scheme.

The sparkling green livery dates back to 70 years ago when the railway first ran trains under its new heritage era administration – and will spark happy memories for many who visited and worked on the line in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

General manager Paul Lewin said: "The work to repaint the loco for these celebrations has been carried out entirely by our volunteers.

"The FfWHR family would like to thank them for this extra effort, which is very fitting given the huge contribution volunteers have made to the railway over 70 years. As part of our Rail 200 celebrations, we will be opening our doors to new volunteers and also giving members of the public the chance to see behind the scenes at our workshop through our new guided tours.

"Thanks to this effort, we will be able to celebrate both Rail 200 and our 70th anniversary in style.

"*Merddin Emrys* and England 0-4-0STT *Prince* will carry this green livery. No. 12 *David Lloyd George* and No. 4 *Palmerston* will continue in the red liveries reflecting the 1990s. No. 5 *Welsh Pony* and No.8 *James Spooner* will continue to sport their ornately lined plum livery of recent times."

The 'new' livery will first be seen in public on the FFWHR 'Snowdonian' service in April.

Double Fairlie 0-4-4-0T No.10 *Merddin Emrys* in its new early heritage era green livery at Boston Lodge. CHRIS PARRY

Britannia heads for Nene Valley event

THE Nene Valley Railway's first Railway 200 event will feature BR Standard Class 7 4-6-2 No. 70000 *Britannia*.

It has had a long association with the NVR, being resident there when the heritage line was in its infancy, and so the line is pleased to welcome the locomotive back for a week-long programme of events titled 'Best of British.'

No. 70000 is due to arrive in Peterborough on March 11 and will feature in a NVR Wagon Group photographic charter and driving experiences. It will then haul public service trains during the weekend of March 15/16, including a 'Jolly Fisherman' fish and chips train on the Saturday evening.

For details, visit www.nvr.org.uk

Help return Beyer Peacock *Countess* to steam for 125th birthday

THE Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway has launched a £150,000 appeal to fund the restoration of one of its two original locomotives in time for its 125th anniversary.

Beyer Peacock 0-6-0T No. 823 *Countess*, which was built in 1902, was withdrawn from service in 2021 after its 10-yearly boiler certificate expired.

The railway aims to have *Countess* back in steam so it can run alongside sister No. 822 *The Earl* to celebrate their anniversaries in 2027.

A WLLR statement said: "Our engineers have already dismantled *Countess* to see what needs to be done. The cost of the overhaul has been estimated at £150,000. Our paid staff and volunteers have already started some of the work in-house and the rest will be contracted out to trusted partners.

"Little or no grant support is available for a locomotive overhaul at this time. We must rely on the generosity of the many lovers of our original Beyer Peacock locomotives in order to have them in steam together again!"

To donate, visit https://wllr.org.uk/support/donations-appeals/

Beyer Peacock 0-6-0T No. 823 *Countess* on June 1, 2019. JUAN ENRIQUE GILARDI

A light covering of snow was to be found on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway at the New Year. BR Standard 2-6-4T No. 80136 is seen heading the 'Moorlander' dining train from Grosmont to Pickering in the early afternoon sun on January 3. DAVE COLLIER

Council takes steps to make Cambrian HQ building safe

SHROPSHIRE Council has been carrying out key repairs to the Cambrian Railways headquarters building at Oswestry station in response to safety concerns.

Funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the council, the work has included fixing the exterior to prevent falling masonry – some of which has been captured by the scaffolding surrounding the building, replacing dangerous asbestos tiles with Welsh slate, and giving windows and doors a fresh coat of Cambrian Railway colours.

The Grade II-listed council-owned building is now used seasonally by the Cambrian Heritage Railway.

Dean Carroll, the council's Cabinet member for housing and assets, said: "This building holds significant cultural value for our community, and these essential repairs ensure it remains safe and usable for future generations. Since taking on its ownership last year, much progress has been made. Behind the scaffolding, we've made some of the more fragile parts of the building safe, while retaining and reinstating its historic features where necessary."

Falling corbels caught by the scaffolding. SC

Thomas TV series creator Britt Allcroft mourned

By Robin Jones

TRIBUTES have been paid around the world to Britt Allcroft, the creator of the hugely popular children's TV series Thomas & Friends, who has died aged 81 in Los Angeles on December 27.

Her death was announced by filmmaker Brannon Carty on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) on December 3.

Born Hilary Mary Allcroft in Worthing on December 14, 1943, aged 16 she changed her first name to Britt as her career in British radio and television gathered pace.

She created a series of programmes for the BBC and ITV in the 1970s and 1980s, including Moon Clue Game, Dance Crazy and Keepsakes. Mothers By Daughters, produced for Channel 4, was broadcast in the USA, and a theatrical career saw her staging shows in Drury Lane and the London Palladium.

Instant hit

While making a documentary about British steam trains in August 1979, Britt met the Rev Wilbert Awdry, author of The Railway Series, which introduced Thomas the Tank Engine.

She said: "It really didn't take me long to become intrigued by the characters, the relationships between them, and the nostalgia they invoked." Britt secured certain rights through his then publisher, Kaye & Ward.

In 1980, she co-founded Britt Allcroft Railway Productions with her husband, TV producer Angus Wright. After four years of raising the necessary finance, Britt created the first series of 26 episodes of Thomas & Friends in collaboration with director David Mitton. The first two episodes were aired on October 9, 1984, with narration by Ringo Starr and music by Mike O'Donnell and Junior Campbell.

Britt Allcroft at the premiere of An Unlikely Fandom. BRANNON CARTY

The show proved an instant hit with young audiences, instigating their interest in the UK steam era and boosting their awareness of railway heritage and its wider family appeal, and it was soon broadcast around the world. The series ran for 27 years, inspiring spin-offs, merchandise and movies, and its impact has played a major part in the popularity of Thomas events at heritage lines, a sizeable revenue earner for them.

In 1989, Britt and American producer Rick Siggelkow created Shining Time Station, a live-action children's series starring the magical character of the miniature Mr Conductor, for a US audience, boosting the popularity of Thomas across the Atlantic.

Brannon Carty, who knew Britt from the 2023 documentary he directed, An Unlikely Fandom: The Impact of Thomas the Tank Engine, posted: "The Allcroft-Wright family has asked me to bring this news to the Thomas fandom. The family is currently in mourning and asks that their privacy be respected at this time.

"Britt was an adoring mother and wife. A visionary producer. She brought so much joy and happiness to people everywhere during her time on Earth.

Enduring legacy

"Over the years of knowing Britt, we developed a close connection. It was truly a privilege to have her as both a mentor and a friend. It was an honour to have her in our documentary, and she has since remained a vocal supporter of our cause.

"While I am devastated by her passing, we can all find comfort in the certainty that her legacy will endure forever through Thomas and his fans around the world. Rest in peace."

He said that Britt's family has invited fans to make a charitable donation to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in her name.

Comments posted in reply included: "Very sad day! Britt has truly inspired many people throughout the whole entire world. Thanks for keeping this everlasting legacy going and the heartfelt tribute of this beloved childhood hero.""Heartbreaking," wrote another admirer. "I cannot express how much this woman shaped my life and helped me meet the friends I've met today. I owe my love of trains to this lady."

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Royal Scot to head to Margate as *Bittern* prepares to take flight

By Owen Hayward

IT will be a case of one in, one out in Margate as BR(M) 7P 4-6-0 No. 46100 *Royal Scot* is set to take up residence at the One:One Collection early in 2025 as its boiler certification comes to an end – with it set to take the place of streamlined A4 Pacific No. 4644 *Bittern* that begins its own journey back into service once more.

Royal Scot was last seen with an empty stock movement from Crewe to Southall on December 2, ahead of working 'The Chairman's Train' the following day, a private charter for guests of Locomotive Services Ltd's owner, Jeremy Hosking. Departing London Victoria, the trip took in a circular loop of Kent, travelling out to Dover Priory via Canterbury following the route usually associated with Belmond's Pullman services worked by Merchant Navy Pacific No. 35028 *Clan Line*.

On December 4, *Royal Scot* then returned northward to Crewe with the stock, where it has since had the fire dropped for what was understood to be the final time, with a spokesman advising that there were no plans for it to appear on any further tours ahead of the expiration of its boiler certification in March. However, once it is formally withdrawn the 7P will travel southward by road to Margate for storage in the museum being developed there, with A4 No. 4644 *Bittern* coming out to head to Crewe in readiness for its own overhaul to commence.

Last operational in November 2015, the A4's return to operational condition will be carried out in partnership with the Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Trust, which will focus on the bottom end of things at an undisclosed workshop in Yorkshire, while the boiler will be worked on at Crewe. No precise timings were given for when the work is expected to commence, nor how long the overhaul would likely last. A spokesman added: "As with any locomotive overhaul, attempting to forecast the timescale before you've taken it apart will only result in the forecast being wrong".

Making its penultimate main line appearance on December 3, No. 46100 *Royal Scot* approaches St Mary Cray in Kent with 'The Chairman's Train' to Canterbury. It then returned to London Victoria via Dover Priory and the coast, before heading back to Crewe depot the next day. OWEN HAYWARD

There are currently no plans to overhaul *Royal Scot*, which joins a queue behind current overhaul projects that includes GWR 4-6-0s No. 5029 *Nunney Castle* and No. 6024 *King Edward I*, although it is hoped that having had a comprehensive job done on it at is last overhaul, the work on *Royal Scot*'s next overhaul will not herald too many surprises.

➜ The One: One Collection in the former Hornby warehouses will be hosting an open weekend on August 2/3 in partnership with the WonderWorks museum.

The venue is set to open to the public in the future, and while no date is yet set, this is a rare opportunity to glimpse some of the rolling stock stored there that will form part of the new museum. Full details about the open event will be announced nearer the time; keep a watch on www.wonderworksmargate.co.uk for more information.

'Lost' Hunslet inches closer to preservation debut

NOT having steamed in nearly four decades, and not been publicly seen turning a wheel under its own power in more than 50 years, on December 3 the boiler for 16in Hunslet 'Fitzwilliam' 0-6-0ST No. 1589 *Newstead* was passed as fit by a boiler inspector, meaning that the locomotive could be running on the Spa Valley Railway later this year.

Withdrawn from Woolley Colliery in 1970, *Newstead* was saved from scrap by an enthusiast in 1972 who sent it to Suffolk Steam for a light overhaul, following which it was privately steamed at the workshops before it moved to a private site on the grounds of a Hertfordshire Convent, where it was ensconced in a purpose-built shed and hidden, kept a closely guarded secret from the world to the extent that by the 1990s it was presumed to have been scrapped, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 232.

Following a change of ownership in 2015 and an initial period dismantled for assessment, the full restoration of this 'lost' locomotive properly commenced in 2019 at the Spa Valley Railway, with work being undertaken by specially-formed group of volunteers combined with assistance from external contractors for some of the more specialist work. To expedite the return to steam, the boiler was sent to Road Steam UK in Wiltshire, where it was fitted with a new front tubeplate, longitudinal stays and other, more common boiler-related tasks for any locomotive overhaul, resulting in its successful steam test at the start of December. This was is the first time the boiler has been steamed since the 1970s and was a momentous milestone for the project.

The boiler has since moved closer to the Tunbridge Wells West locomotive depot and is currently being shotblasted and receiving a coat of heat-resistant protective paint before it travels the short remaining distance to be reunited with the rolling chassis.

Elsewhere, its saddle tank is having patch repairs, with the opportunity presented by the large patches of cut-out metal allowing for the interior to also be shotblast and painted before new patches are welded in.

Great care is being given to the painting and lining; the frames wear the lined purple brown colours which, according to original Hunslet documents, was what the original Fitzwilliams wore when they left the works. The top half is being finished in crimson lake, chosen by a vote of the team's volunteers.

Ready to go: The boiler for Hunslet 'Fitzwilliam' No. 1589 *Newstead* passed its out-of-frames steam test on December 3 at Road Steam UK. Volunteers restoring the 0-6-0ST hope it will work its first heritage-era trains later this year. ALEX ALDER

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Darjeeling tank restoration moves a step forward with 98% of total funding raised

By Phil Marsh

DARJEELING Locomotive Tank Trust chairman Jeremy Davey has announced that the new boiler for Sharp Stewart B class 0-4-0ST No. 19B is now complete and away for certification.

"This is a vital step forward, because once this has been certified as a safe and appropriate design, the 19B Trustees can next turn their attention to arranging the new boiler construction," he said.

Formerly owned by the late Chiltern Railways chairman Adrian Shooter CBE, on June 21, 2023, No. 19B – the only Darjeeling Himalayan Locomotive outside India – was purchased at auction for £250,000 by the trust and relocated with two matching carriages to the Statfold Barn Railway.

The boiler design has been carried out by the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways team of Bob Yates and Jon Whalley.

"The final decision outstanding was regarding whether to install mudhole doors, but we settled on installing two extra washout plugs to give much-needed access to the firebox crown," said engineering lead and newly-appointed 19B trustee Will Smith. "This assessment took a few weeks to decide which was best in the long run."

Jeremy said: "It has been an absolute pleasure working on this new boiler design, and the Ff&WHR's teams' attention to detail as we've worked through the various options together has been remarkable. We are confident we have a first-class design ready for certification. I'm so grateful to the team not only for the quality of their work, but also for the way they have worked with us to achieve a design we can all be proud of."

Ff&WHR director Paul Lewin said: "Having worked with Adrian Shooter and No. 19B for a long time, it feels very fitting to help the DTLT with this challenge. We look forward to helping with the next steps and seeing the locomotive back in steam as soon as possible."

Once certification of the design is received, the 19B team will place a contract for manufacturing the boiler, and the team now envisage seeing a return to steam for the locomotive in 2026.

'Overwhelming' support

Trustee and treasurer 'Fuzz' Jordan has given the financial approval for the boiler construction after supporters have yet again generously donated to the extent that sufficient funds are now held to fund its construction: "We have been overwhelmed by the financial support given since buying the locomotive and carriages just 18 months ago."

When the idea of acquiring No. 19B was raised in March 2023, the then embryonic team sat down and tried to establish what magnitude of funds would be necessary to buy the locomotive, plus the two replica carriages, with the knowledge that No. 19B's 10-yearly overhaul was imminent.

The team thought that the maximum cost would be about £500,000, assuming no more than £300,000 would be enough to buy the train.

This estimate proved to be accurate, and fundraising continued after the purchase in June 2023 for the overhaul, which proved invaluable given the need for the new boiler.

"After paying for the completed boiler design in December 2024, this enables a robust cost estimate to be made for the boiler construction," said Fuzz, making one more appeal for funds to complete the project. "We will still need to raise just over 2% of the original total envisaged expenditure during 2025. This is estimated at under £10,000, which will pay for the re-erection of No. 19B once the boiler has been manufactured."

The team hopes that this one last fundraising push will enable the new boiler, assumed to be ready in 12 months' time, to be immediately fitted into the frames, tested, and see No. 19B returned to steam.

Andy Savage MBE, executive director of the Railway Heritage Trust, has accepted an invitation to become vice president of the Darjeeling Tank Locomotive Trust, stepping down as a trustee, while Sarah Thompson has been appointed as a new trustee. The pair are seen (centre) With No. 19b and its team. PHIL MARSH/DTLT

Caernarfon-bound: Russell's Welsh Highland farewell outing this spring

THE sole-surviving locomotive from the original Welsh Highland Railway, Hunslet 2-6-2T *Russell,* will be withdrawn in April for overhaul after almost a decade of service, with a farewell outing scheduled to see the locomotive venture all the way to Caernarfon.

Built in 1906, *Russell* spent its working life on the WHR and neighbouring Ffestiniog Railway, receiving a cut-down cab to enable it to fit within the clearances of the latter following the FR's takeover of the WHR in 1924. In 1937 the WHR closed, and *Russell* ran the final through train before being left stored in the sheds at Dinas.

Following several years passing between owners, it first returned to steam at the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway's Gelerts Farm Works in 1987, then again in 2014. During its recent ticket, is has returned to Tywyn Wharf on the Talyllyn Railway (where it was on display between 1955 and 1965) and pulled trains over the revived WHR, returning to Beddgelert in 2018 for the first time in more than 80 years.

Early in 2024, *Russell* was stopped following the discovery of a crack in one of its coupling rods which necessitated its replacement, returning to service in September. Now, preparations are underway for a series of farewell outings before the locomotive is withdrawn again pending overhaul.

Over Saturdays April 5 and 12, *Russell* will work two round trips each day from Porthmadog to Beddgelert, with departures at 11.25am and 3pm on the first day, and 10.55am and 1.30pm on the second. On April 18, it will cover the full 25 miles of the WHR when it runs from Porthmadog to Caernarfon, setting out on its epic journey at 11.10am.

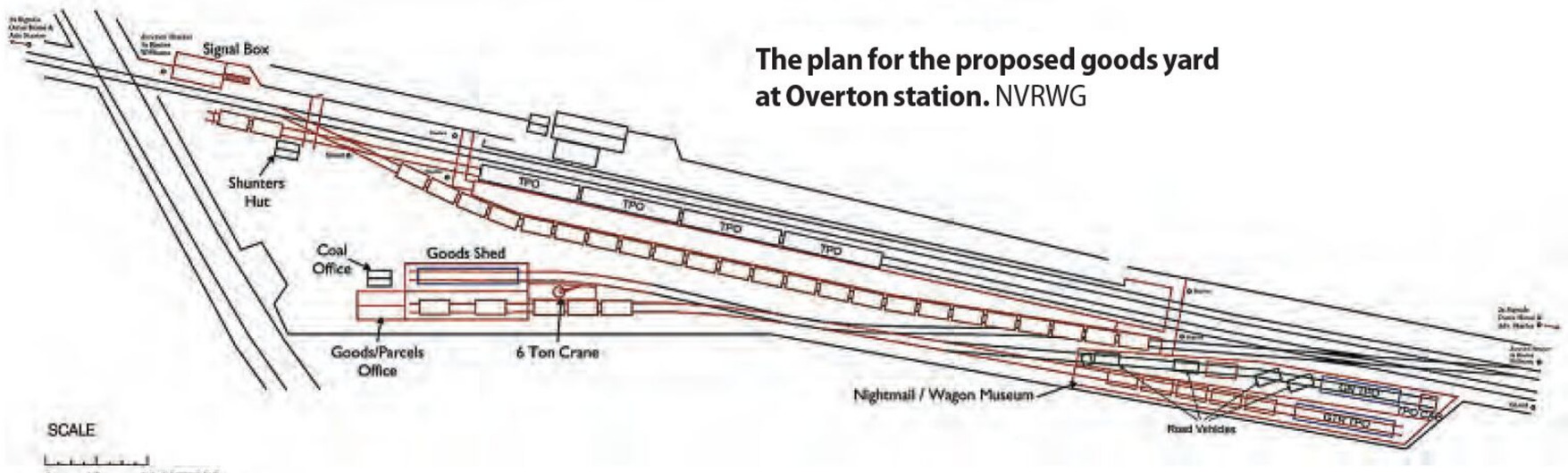
***Russell* will then enjoy one final day of operation, running trains on the WHHR demonstration line on April 19, after which it will then bow out of service to await overhaul.**

The only surviving locomotive from the Welsh Highland Railway, *Russell* will be working trips between Porthmadog and both Beddgelert and Caernarfon this April before it is withdrawn for overhaul. WHHR

➜ Full details and booking for these farewell outings will be published online at whr.co.uk

Working goods yard project for the Nene Valley Wagon Group

by Tim Hobman



The plan for the proposed goods yard at Overton station. NVRWG

THE Nene Valley Railway Wagon Group announced on New Year's Eve a new and exciting project for the group and the heritage line as a whole, with the opportunity to recreate a working goods yard at its Overton station site.

On December 29, a working party made up of NVR volunteers were on site for a session that marked the beginning of work on the Overton Goods Yard Project. The group started clearing vegetation to allow an assessment to be made of the site's potential, an area of the NVR which has been neglected for several years and is mostly used for storage of railway vehicles.

Several months of work have led up to the first working session, with the board and management of the NVR supporting a proposal put forward to develop the station site into a centre of non-passenger traffic. The plans will see a collaboration between the wagon and travelling post office (TPO) groups to create a 1950s/1960s operational goods yard and living/working museum space.

The Overton site has historically been dedicated to the TPO Nightmail Project, which sought to create a dedicated TPO museum over the whole site. The Nightmail project has stalled and stagnated in recent years and so a new proposal has been put forward which will realise some of the Nightmail objectives on a much smaller scale, while leaving space for wagon group aims to create a working space to demonstrate goods movements from rail to road. The project seeks to tidy and open up the site to provide museum and educational opportunities, while providing space for events and working demonstrations.

Initial work

The NVR board has appointed trustee Tim Hobman as project manager with its full support to move the scheme forward, and so the first working session saw members of the wagon and TPO groups start tidying the site to uncover the original LNWR wall that forms the boundary.

This preliminary stage of work will also see stock movements to relocate items that do not fit within the chosen early BR Eastern Region period.

This stage will happen over the next few months as time allows, while a fully costed and phased business plan is developed for the entire site.

The outline plan for the area shows all the usual goods yard facilities, with the creation of an LNWR-style goods shed, museum building, second platform and finally signalling.

The goods shed is planned to be a multi-use space, primarily used as restoration facilities for the wagon and TPO groups, but also an occasional undercover events space.

Similarly, the museum building has been considered as a multi-use space to tell the story of the TPOs, but also to encourage educational opportunities with visiting groups and partnership working with the NVR museum group.

Additionally, it is hoped that the development and improvement of the rest of the site will encourage more volunteers and involvement from existing departments to staff the station and yard, making Overton a vibrant and attractive destination for visitors to the NVR.

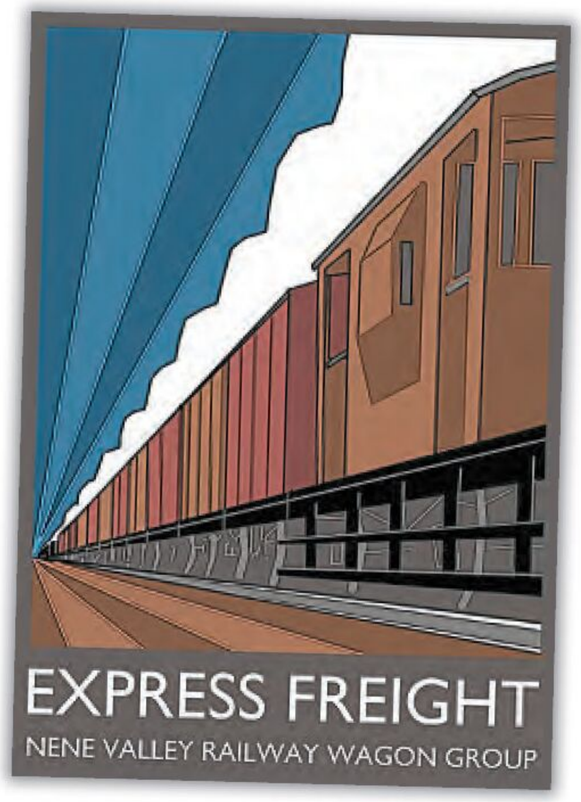
The project will naturally require significant external funding, while not detracting from other NVR objectives, and as already stated, a full business plan is currently in progress.

While still in the planning phase, it is hoped that some progress can be made during 2025 to tidy the site and relocate some current projects there.

Mr Hobman said: "Since the creation of the current wagon group in 2011, the founding members have had a desire to inform and educate with our work.

"Part of this vision was to find a location to recreate a working goods yard and thereby tell the story of freight traffic.

"This proposal seeks to turn that dream into reality, with the very welcome addition of a collaboration with the TPO group. A former TPO employee and something of an expert on the subject, Brian White, has agreed to provide material and guidance to the museum space. In doing so, it is hoped to resurrect the TPO Nightmail Project and create a shared museum and education space in which to tell the TPO story, augmented by some historic wagons and other artifacts.



More ambitions

"It is also hoped to add to the customer experience by creating a working goods office attached to the goods shed to allow visitors to see how goods and parcels were handled. Both the restoration area and goods office are intended to be open to the public.

"The eventual creation of the second platform and signalling will add to the operational flexibility of the railway and allow the goods yard to become a key area for galas and events throughout the year. There is much work to be done to get this project off the ground, but it is certainly an exciting prospect and one to watch!"

NVR chairman Michael Purcell said: "This is an immensely exciting project that seeks to create an attraction for our visitors that is both educational and immersive. With the theme of a 1950s/1960s working goods yard, there is the opportunity to building a living and working space that everyone can enjoy and benefit from. The board and management of the railway fully support Tim in seeing this vision become a reality and we look forward to regular updates on the progress."

Positive response to Nene Valley £300k appeal – but more needed!

THE Nene Valley Railway's £300,000 Back on Track appeal has raised more than £87,000 since its launch in May.

The appeal is to top up the railway's reserve funds as an essential financial security safeguard and a guarantee that it can maintain operations, undertake essential repairs and start on necessary infrastructure upgrades and restoration projects.

"We have seen donations coming in from around the world, and there have been people carrying out their own sponsored challenges to support the railway too," said an NVR statement.

"Although the initial response to our appeal has been great, we must keep the momentum going.

"Donations are just one way that people can support the Nene Valley Railway. As well as our standard travel days, we run many special events throughout the year. Tickets sold extremely well for our brand-new, never seen before Christmas experience in 2024, Christmas at the Railway, which has given us a tremendous boost in revenue.

"Thanks to a very generous donation, our gift shop now has a wide range of stock, with new lines of NVR-branded goods, Thomas toys and books, and many other new and old favourite items."

➜ For details of how to donate, visit https://nvr.org.uk/product.php/164/general-fund

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The festive visit of LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 45596 *Bahamas* to the Nene Valley Railway came to an end on a snowy Sunday, January 5, when it was seen hauling the 10am service for Peterborough. HAYDEN SHEPPARD

Heritage sector preservation powerhouses are recognised by King Charles in New Year's Honours

By Robin Jones

LEADING figures in the heritage sector have been awarded with MBEs in the King's New Year's Honours List.

Brell Ewart was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire for service to the community in Derbyshire, while Philip Benham, chairman of the Friends of the National Railway Museum, was honoured for service to railway heritage. Frank Galvin, deputy chairman of the Bahamas Locomotive Society, received the honour for his contribution to heritage in Greater Manchester, primarily for his role with Elizabeth Gaskell House, where he recently retired as chair of trustees.

Trust founder – and more

Born in Derbyshire to a working-class family, Brell Ewart's voluntary work has been central to preserving the history of the county, of which he is Deputy Lieutenant, and supporting its people for the last 50 years.

He restored Princess Royal 4-6-2 No. 6203 *Princess Margret Rose* and Princess Coronation 4-6-2 No. 6233 *Duchess of Sutherland* to working order. In 1993, he founded the Princess Royal Class Locomotive Trust (PRCLT) to ensure that the UK's railway heritage would be safeguarded and enjoyed for future generations, donating his ownership of the pair to the trust; he has also been key in securing the arrival of several nationally important historical coaches and other locomotives No. 6223 was saved for the nation in 1996 after being in danger of going to the USA. With help from a successful application which Brell managed from the Heritage Lottery Fund, it was fully restored to its former glory during a 900-day restoration project.

Additonally, he had been a voluntary member of the Ffestiniog Railway Society and the Scottish Railway Preservation Society for more than 30 years, and also led and managed the ambitious construction by PRCLT volunteers of the West Shed at the Midland Railway – Butterley in 1994. The shed became a registered museum and a self-sufficient charitable organisation.

Following a £610,000 Lottery grant a major project to extend the West Shed was completed in 2005, resulted in additional facilities including a library, archive store, improved facilities for visitors, an overhaul workshop and a viewing gallery.

Between 2014 and 2021, Brell headed a team in a voluntary capacity on large civil engineering projects for the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways at Boston Lodge and Minffordd. In 2023, he became president of the PRCLT.

Elswhere, in 2016 Brell was appointed president of the Ashbourne Royal British Legion, leading the organisation and parades on Remembrance Day, and personally ensured that the town's memorials have been restored and maintained. He has also been central to the longevity of Ashbourne's Royal Shrovetide Football Committee.

Brell Ewart, founder and president of the Princess Royal Class Locomotive Trust.

"I am honoured, thrilled and humbled to receive this award – it coming as a complete surprise," he said. "I look forward to continuing to work with the organisations I support within the county, helping and supporting them to achieve ever higher aspirations and goals."

A life in railways

Career railwayman Philip Benham started work with BR in 1968 in Derby. Born in Hillingdon, from an early age he would travel by train from King's Cross to Yorkshire to visit his grandparents, his mother coming from Wakefield.

In the 1980s, he was placed in charge of train operations first at York and then at King's Cross. Later, he became responsible for the East Coast Main Line stations from London to Scotland. From 2004 to 2015 he was general manager/managing director of the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, which posted a message of congratulations about his MBE. Chairman of the Friends of the NRM since 2012, he also heads the Gresley Society Trust.

Former North Yorkshire Moors Railway general manager Philip Benham, now an MBE, alongside A4 No. 6007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*. NYMR

Valued support

A former museum professional with Stockport Borough Council, Frank Galvin became involved in Bahamas Society affairs while acting as an advisor during its application to become a registered museum in 1997. He became a director in 2011.

"His experience was of immense benefit, in particular his support and guidance with our museum and learning activities, the latter critical in our successful bid to the National Lottery in 2012 for the overhaul of *Bahamas*, and latterly in encouraging and leading on our management governance review," said a statement.

Your finalists: Shortlist is set for biggest-ever HRA Awards

By Robin Jones

NEW-BUILD LBSCR Atlantic No. 32424 *Beachy Head*, the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway's Bridge 27 reconstruction and the flood-hit Downpatrick & County Down Railway are among more than 50 projects, people and achievements that have made the shortlist for the Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards 2025.

Two railways – the North Norfolk and Severn Valley – have been nominated in four separate categories.

Judges in the 'Oscars' of the heritage sector have whittled down the largest-ever field of entries (up 25% on 2024) to a shortlist in 12 categories covering restorations, new projects and personal achievements.

The panel, chaired by National Railway Museum senior curator Anthony Coulls, met in the York museum on December 5 to discuss the nominations and put forward those selected for the awards event at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead hotel on February 8.

'Cause for celebration'

Anthony said: "With such a strong field, it was an incredible task for the team to shortlist. In an ideal world, every one would be a winner. So many achievements and such a high bar set for future years – a real cause for celebration in the heritage railway world, whoever takes the awards on the night."

The awards recognise excellence or innovation in almost every aspect of heritage railway and tramway restoration, preservation and operation. The headline Railway of the Year category will be contested by Cornwall's Lappa Valley Railway, the Lynton & Lynmouth Cliff Railway, the North Norfolk Railway and the Vale of Rheidol Railway, a field that covers six gauges ranging from 7¼in to 4ft 8½in; plus steam, diesel, battery electric, and even water power.

The Steam Locomotive Award, sponsored by Paintman Paints, pits new-build Beachy Head from the Bluebell Railway against freshly-restored Ivatt 2MT 2-6-0 No. 46464, known as 'The Carmyllie Pilot,' Severn Valley Railway-based Stanier mogul No. 13268, Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway GWR 2-8-0 No. 3850 and 2ft gauge Bagnall 0-4-0ST Sybil. Each of them has overcome specific engineering challenges to return to steam during the last year to form the lengthiest shortlist the category has ever seen.

In the Diesel and Electric Locomotion category is Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway Class 20 No. 20228, rebuilt after service in France, Tanfield Railway-based Fowler 0-6-0DH Ribblesdale Cement, restored to original condition, The Tramway Museum Society's restoration of London County Council unique 'Bluebird' No. 1 and Seaton Tramway's rebuild of Modern Electric Tramways Car No. 23.

Everyone's a winner

The shortlist in the Morgan Award for Rolling Stock comprises the Bluebell Railway's restoration and adaptation for wheelchair access of Pullman *Car No. 54*, the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway-based restoration of 1877-built GWR royal saloon No. 8, the Bahamas Locomotive Society breakdown train at the Keighley & Worth Valley and the Ffestiniog Railway's recreated carriage truck.

The Bahamas group's crane also featured in the Bridge 27 renewal project at Haworth, which is shortlisted in the Infrastructure Award. Also shortlisted in this category are the Gwili Railway's Abergwili Junction extension project, the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway's work on Stanway viaduct, and the Vale of Rheidol Railway's new museum at Aberystwyth.

The new Achievement of the Year category, sponsored by Wrigleys Solicitors, generated the largest number

Class 52 D1062 *Western Courier* at Eardington station. DAVID BISSETT

Steam set for return at Keith & Dufftown anniversary

THE Keith & Dufftown Railway in Scotland is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year – and it is planning to run steam services in September and October to celebrate the occasion. Operating along 11 miles of what was a part of the Aberdeen-Elgin Link route, its services are normally operated by one of a fleet of resident DMUs as there is no steam locomotive onsite. However, some have visited on occasions, such as Ivatt 2MT No. 46512 from the Strathspey Railway in 2012.

The visiting locomotive for the anniversary was under negotiation as this issue went to press, but was expected to be running on September 26-28, October 3-5 and 10-13.

Carnarvon is on the way back!

THE boiler of the Worcester Locomotive Society's former Stewarts & Lloyds Kitson 0-6-0ST No. 5474 of 1934 *Carnarvon* is to be overhauled at Williton Works on the West Somerset Railway.

Bought by the society in 1969, it spent the following winter on Severn Valley Railway works trains, before moving to Bulmers Railway Centre in Hereford in 1970, and it last steamed in 1989. Now located on the South Devon Railway, Devon firm Leaky Finders is restoring the chassis.

Society chairman Michael King said that its other locomotive, GWR 0-6-0PT No. 5786 (L92), is awaiting its 10-yearly overhaul at Buckfastleigh and he looked forward to both running together again as they did at Bulmers.

With the steam heating billowing out, Class 55 No. 55019 *Royal Highland Fusilier* smokily departs in the fog from Leicester North with the 11.35am Leicester North to Loughborough service at the GCR Deltic Running Day on December 28. PAUL BIGGS

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of entries – the Downpatrick & County Down Railway for its flood recovery work, the East Lancashire Railway for its expanded Santa specials, the Northampton & Lamport Railway for its Boughton extension, and the Severn Valley Railway for its partnership with Network Rail all being shortlisted.

Also new is the Innovation of the Year category, sponsored by Railway 200 Shortlisted were the East Lancashire Railway for its tailored special educational needs and disabilities Santa specials, Lynton & Lynmouth Cliff Railway for its digital safety management work, and the North Norfolk Railway for its peer support group.

Who will be crowned?

The third new category is Station of the Year. Eardington station on the Severn Valley Railway, Lynton & Lynmouth on the cliff railway, and Weybourne station on the North Norfolk Railway made the list.

The Marketing and Communications Award, sponsored by Fox and Edwards Events, has the Central Tramway in Scarborough, the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, and the Kent & East Sussex Railway for its Mr Doodle event on its shortlist.

A third of the categories are focused on the people who make heritage rail possible. The Lord Faulkner Young Volunteer of the Year Award has a shortlist of Jack Baldwin, from the Severn Valley Railway, Elise Campbell, from the Tanfield Railway, Aodhan Kavanagh, from the Kent & East Sussex Railway, and Alex Raybould, from the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway. The Rising Star category, sponsored by PNP Events, celebrates up-and-coming staff and volunteers, with Jack Ataou, from the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway, Hannah Drury, from the North Norfolk Railway, Luke Ryan, from the Talyllyn Railway, and Seb Welsh from the West Somerset Railway in the running.

Team of the Year, sponsored by Destination, attracted huge interest. The group that reopened the Alford Valley Community Railway in Scotland, the flood recovery team at the Downpatrick & County Down Railway, the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland electrical team known as 'The E Squad', and the Watercress Line's Education and Outreach Team are listed. In addition to the 12 categories, the judging panel also agreed the Chairman's Special Award and the Manisty Award for Excellence, which will be handed to a pair of outstanding projects.

Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST No. 1638 *Wissington* and the North Norfolk Railway's train of Victorian carriages. BOB JOHNSON

Also announced on the night will be awards from four top rail publications, the *Heritage Railway* magazine Interpretation Award, *The Railway Magazine* Lifetime Achievement Award, the *Rail Express* magazine award and *Steam Railway* magazine Readers' Award. Editors from all four titles took part.

Heritage Railway Association chief executive Steve Oates said: "We have never received so many entries, despite the huge challenges being faced by heritage railways right now. It's testament to just how much brilliant work is going on, and there is a lot for the sector to be proud of.

"We have shortlisted entries from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, fom miniature railways, narrow gauge railways, tramways and funiculars to, of course, standard gauge lines. It demonstrates how important the awards have become. Shortlisting has never been so hard, so we wish all the finalists a huge congratulations for making it through to the awards ceremony in February.

"It's a special year with the Railway 200 celebrations, so this event is an absolute mustn't miss – we are expecting the biggest turnout ever."

Tickets for the night are available at www.hra.uk.com/events/event/hra-awards-2025

Sponsorship opportunities can still be reserved: see www.hra.uk.com

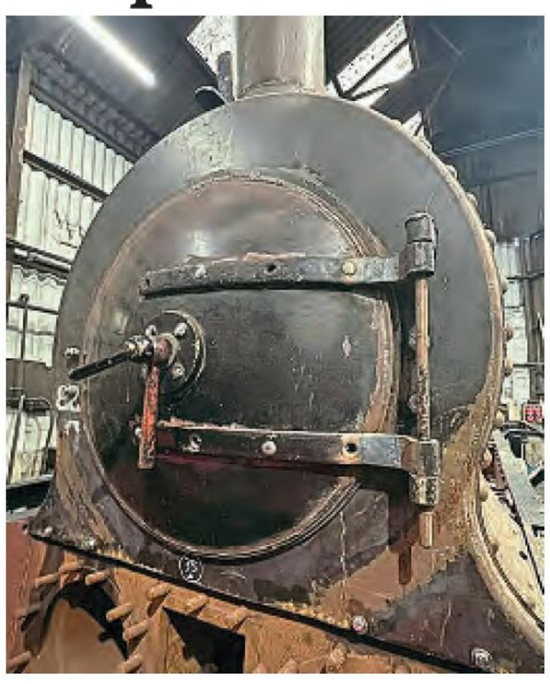
A handle on the situation: Missing locomotive component returned

VOLUNTEERS at the Nene Valley Railway received a surprising gift in the days before Christmas when an anonymous donor sent in a £10 donation towards the overhaul of Hudswell Clarke No. 1539 *Derek Crouch* – accompanied by the 0-6-0ST's original smokebox handle.

Built in 1924 for Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons, it was used by the firm on contracts such as construction of the Watford bypass and the Southampton Dock extension, before being sold into industrial use in 1940, ending up at an open-cast coal mine in Northumberland.

Withdrawn in 1970, it was stored on the outskirts of Peterborough at Eye, before being placed on permanent loan to the Peterborough Railway Society in 1972, and it was returned to steam in 1973.

As the railway grew, *Derek Crouch* became underpowered for its trains and was displayed after going out of service in 1982. However, sometime during that decade, the locomotive's smokebox handle disappeared, with volunteers presuming it had been lost around the railway's workshops. Nearly four decades later, the truth was revealed when a package was delivered to the railway's office which contained the missing part – complete with an apologetic note from the repentant 'former souvenir hunter' who had been responsible for pinching it.



Reunited: The smokebox handle refitted to Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST *Derek Crouch* following its return from an anonymous but repentant former souvenir hunter who had taken it during the 1980s. NVR

The note was amusingly addressed to the locomotive and read: "Merry Christmas… yes, it is your original. I'm afraid you lost it in the 1980s…" It gave no clues to the sender's identity, other than that they were a schoolboy at the time of their acquisition.

NVR engineer Nathan Wilson said that the railway had no hard feelings and that the theft may have actually ensured the handle's survival.

"If they had not kept such good care of it, the part could have been damaged or lost, he said. "It gave me a really good laugh when the letter appeared on the desk. We know nothing about who it was from, but we are grateful they looked after it and returned it to us. We presumed it was long gone."

Recent overhaul progress has seen work on the boiler focus on the removal of the front tubeplate, as well as sections of outer wrapper, while the front bufferbeam doubler plate has been bolted up and had the heads riveted over. As a result, the locomotive now looks the same way it originally would have when built, but if needed, this plate can easily be removed.

Douglas overhaul now underway at Talyllyn's works

THE overhaul of Andrew Barclay 0-4-0WT No. 6 *Douglas* has commenced at the Talyllyn Railway.

Last operational in January 2024, in July it was sent to the Engine House at Highley on the Severn Valley Railway for display, before then travelling to the National Festival of Railway Modelling in Birmingham on November 23/24.

The overhaul is a volunteer-led project being carried out in-house at the TR's Pendre workshops and is expected to take about two years to complete. This means it will not be operational during 2026, when the TR celebrates 75 years since the first volunteer-run services that started the volunteer-led heritage movement. However, it may mean that for a short window, all the railway's steam locomotives will be operational at once – something that has not happened since 2018, with Hughes Falcon No. 3 *Sir Haydn* the next locomotive due to be withdrawn in April 2028, which will also be its own 150th anniversary year.

Tornado set to blow into Bury for steam legends weekend

By Owen Hayward

YET to turn a wheel back on the national network since completing its overhaul, new-build A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* has already secured a third heritage line appearance following appearances at the Great Central and Nene Valley railways in 2024. It will soon head north to Bury to join an ex-NVR resident for a gala at the East Lancashire Railway.

Following the success of its March 2024 Legends of Steam weekend, the ELR is hoping for a second bite of the cherry with the event, which is kicking off its enthusiast calendar over the three-day weekend of March 14-16. *Tornado* is set to appear alongside Battle of Britain light Pacific No. 34081 *92 Squadron* which has relocated to the railway, as reported last issue.

Above: A trio which would do any main line shed proud at Wansford on December 12 are (left to right) A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado*, LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 No. 45596 all set for festive season duties and, accommodated between main line tours, A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*. PAUL ROE

Right: Seeing double: New East Lancashire resident No. 34081 *92 Squadron* (left) and 34092 *City of Wells* rub shoulders at Ramsbottom on December 22. The duo will operate alongside an A1 and a 'Black Five' at the March 14-16 Legends of Steam gala. WARREN HANNABUSS

Repairs being made

The A1 made its post-overhaul debut at the GCR on August 31/September, before heading to Wansford on the NVR to work trains there over the weekends of October 19/20 and 26/27. It had been due to visit there as early as March 28, but delays to the overhaul subsequently saw that pushed back while work and testing were completed at Loughborough.

After working its October dates at the NVR, *Tornado* has remained stabled there while The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust has been completing several jobs that came to light. *Tornado* had been booked to work a dog-friendly Santa special on December 18; unfortunately, it was failed the night before following a safety problem valve being discovered.

Repairs were being effected as this issue went to press, with no date being given for previously mooted main line running trials which are due to be undertaken out of Vintage Trains' Tyseley depot. It was understood that *Tornado* is planned to arrive there by rail via the NVR's main line connection, after which loaded test runs will aim to clock up 300 miles with at least two sections of sustained 70mph running, plus a challenging gradient, to replicate scenarios that will be faced during its railtour outings.

The ELR gala will see the recently overhauled Peppercorn A1 joined by 'Black Five' No. 45407 *The Lancashire Fusilier* – one of Ian Riley's fleet of these iconic Midland Region workhorses – and the home-based pair of Bulleid light Pacific locomotives for a weekend of superpower steam representing three different regions.

Paying tribute

On March 14, one of the SR locomotives will work a 'Golden Arrow' dining service, while *Tornado* will take charge of its own dining train the following night.

ELR chairman Mike Kelly said: "Following the outstanding success of this event in 2024, we wanted to bring another 'steam fest' in our second Legends of Steam event as we pay tribute to our much-loved express steam locomotives that were the F1 icons that transformed long-distance travel in the 1950s.

"Over the years, we have welcomed a great many iconic locomotives and are very privileged, proud and excited to make these express steam engines available to the many thousands of enthusiasts and those first-timers wishing to see, hear and ride behind them. These exciting additions to the ELR's Legends of Steam event promises to make the celebration even more special."

Hope sounded for *Una*'s comeback in time for slate museum reopening

QUARRY Hunslet 0-4-0ST No. 873 *Una* has moved to the Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge workshops for its long-stalled overhaul to be completed.

Built in 1905, *Una* worked at the Pen-Yr-Orsedd slate quarry in the Nantlle Valley, Gwynedd. Withdrawn in 1960, it was sold to the National Museum of Wales in 1977 and returned to service the following year at the National Slate Museum in Llanberis.

Having been out of service for several years, an overhaul was started but then stalled. However, with the slate museum being closed through 2025 for a major renovation of its own, the opportunity has been taken to send the locomotive away for work to be completed in the hope that it will be finished in time for the reopening in 2026. A museum statement said: "We are so excited that *Una* is finally being restored to full glory, but also that the work is being done by Ffestiniog Railway at its newly developed engineering works at Boston Lodge. The railway, like the museum, is part of Llechi Cymru – the World Heritage Site for the Slate Landscape of North West Wales – an important collaboration that brings a part of the story of slate full circle."

Meanwhile, a rail-mounter bike, one diesel and one electric shunting locomotive have also moved to the Bala Lake Railway for display during this same period.

The redevelopment of the museum, which sits opposite the main station for the Llanberis Lake Railway, is part of a transformation that will "breathe new life into the much-loved museum and will safeguard our spectacular historic buildings and globally important collections so that future

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BR driver Mel marks 53rd anniversary of Swanage closure with New Year's Day tribute

By Robin Jones

A DRIVER who took diesel trains to Swanage in the dying years of the Purbeck branch in the late 1960s and early 1970s has driven a steam train out of the terminus on the 53rd anniversary of the last BR trains to the resort.

Mel Cox started out as a teenage steam locomotive cleaner at Bournemouth station in 1964. By the end of the decade, he was driving three-car Hampshire DEMUs on the 10-mile branch from Wareham.

After a four-year battle to close the line – which opened in 1885 and was operated with steam locomotives until 1966 when diesels took over for the final five years of its operation – BR ran its last passenger trains on the single-track branch Swanage on Saturday, January 1, 1972.

On January 1, 2025, Mel, who is a Swanage Railway volunteer driver, took to the controls of LSWR T3 4-4-0 No. 563, which services between Swanage and Corfe Castle.

As the steam train pulled into Corfe Castle station, Mel was welcomed by Bob Richards, who was the last BR signalman at the village station and who signalled the last BR train through Corfe Castle on the evening of New Year's Day 1972.

At Corfe Castle, Mel and Bob were united with a special piece of Swanage branch line signalling history – an engraved steel tube that was issued by the Corfe Castle signalman to the BR train driver as the permission for the train to run on the single track from Corfe Castle down to Swanage and back.

Dating from the late 1960s, the staff, which used to prevent two trains from running on the same track, is preserved in the Swanage Railway Trust's museum housed in the restored Victorian goods shed at Corfe Castle station.

Mel said: "It doesn't seem like 53 years since the last BR trains ran from Wareham down to Corfe Castle and Swanage – driving them through the lovely Isle of Purbeck was like entering a more leisurely and friendly world.

Mel Cox (left) and Bob Richards with T3 No. 563 at Corfe Castle on New Year's Day. ANDREW PM WRIGHT

"Between trains at Swanage station, we used to nip down Station Road to the seafront and buy fish and chips before returning to the station and eating them with the train guard who had also come from Bournemouth station.

'Like family'

"It was great to meet Bob again at Corfe Castle station. Some drivers at Bournemouth didn't like branch line work, but I loved it because it was different from the hustle and bustle of the main line at Bournemouth and trains to London Waterloo. The Swanage branch staff were like a family, and it was a slower pace of life. It was very sad when the line was closed, and the tracks were lifted six months later.

"Like myself, most of the other train drivers and guards at Bournemouth never thought the Swanage Railway would or could be rebuilt because the task seemed so huge, but several generations of dedicated Swanage Railway volunteers have proved us very wrong.

"It's a privilege to be a Swanage Railway volunteer and drive stream trains though the Purbeck countryside and past the ruins of Corfe Castle. There is a wonderful camaraderie and thankfully, we have young people joining the world of the steam locomotive footplate at Swanage – just like I did at Bournemouth station back in 1964 as a teenager."

"The last days of the British Rail branch line to Swanage were sad because there was the very real prospect of a bypass being built on the redundant railway trackbed through Corfe Castle, with the glorious Purbeck stone viaduct and the Victorian station being demolished to make way for the new road," added Mel, who retired as a main line driver based at Bournemouth station in 2007 and now lives in Swanage.

Retired and living in Corfe Castle, Bob, who started his railway career as a station porter at Corfe Castle in 1962, said: "It was strange to hold that metal signalling staff that I handed to so many train drivers while I was a signalman at Corfe Castle, but it bought back many happy memories of the branch line, the railway staff, and the train drivers – including Mel, who was a real character and still is."

After the closure of the Swanage branch line in January, 1972, Bob moved to Wareham station signalbox, from where he retired in 2007 after 45 years working on the railways.

generations can experience and enjoy the incredible story of slate."

Work will be undertaken to conserve the Grade I-listed buildings on the site, as well as to improve the overall visitor experience, including better accessibility and interpretation.

Right: The dismantled components of former Pen-Yr-Orsedd Quarry Hunslet *Una* have moved to Boston Lodge for its overhaul to be completed. NATIONAL SLATE MUSEUM

GC driver retires after 55 years spent on the footplate

THE Great Central Railway has paid tribute to one of its longest-serving drivers who has retired after a lifetime on the footplate. David Thompson has reached the age of 80 and decided to hang up his overalls despite "steam being driven into my soul."

He started work for BR in 1960 at Toton, first cleaning engines, but because of a shortage of manpower, David soon found himself working as a fireman at the age of 15. From the sidings he progressed to the main line, and even after leaving BR he continued to travel far and wide as a driver for steam-hauled excursion companies.

He became a driver at the GCR nearly 30 years ago and said: "Overall, the job hasn't really changed; it's still physical and dirty." On December 28, he worked his final two passenger trains in the driver's seat, with his family joining him on the footplate.

Great Central Railway driver David Thompson retired aged 80 on December 28. TOM INGALL

GCR general manager Malcolm Holmes said: "We are sorry to see David retire. His service to Britain's railways is tremendous and his legacy is a passion for steam; he has taught a whole new generation of volunteers."

Sitting in the driver's seat of his final locomotive, BR Standard 5MT No. 73156, built only four years before he first signed on for duty, David said of his retirement: "It was my choice. I have passed the exams and the medical to continue but I wanted to make 80 and I'm going happily by my choice. I'm not as strong as I used to be."

Other long-serving GCR drivers who have retired recently include Bill Gwilt and Pete Maynard. Firemen Ron Mason and Grenville Myles have also hung up their shovels.

One of the latest pinnacles of the heritage sector following its debut in 2024, new-build GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange* rounds the curve at Congerstone on the Battlefield Line with the 11.30am Santa special on December 14, during its winter visit to the line. Following its appearance at galas both there and at the Great Central Railway in January, the locomotive is set to move to the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway for long-term residency. GRAHAM NUTTALL

Betton Grange set for long-term Cotswold residency

By Owen Hayward

THE story of the new-build 81st GWR Grange is set to come full circle, with the recent exchange of contracts meaning No. 6880 *Betton Grange* will become a long-term resident on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway – nine months after it made its public debut there.

The result of a project that started more than a quarter of a century ago, No. 6880 had been tested only on a short stretch of line at Tyseley Locomotive Works (where the construction had been completed) last April prior to its move to the GW/R ahead of the line's annual Cotswold Steam Festival, which took place over May 25-27, as highlighted in *Heritage Railway* issue 320.

The event saw more than 4500 passengers travelling on the line over three days, many travelling especially to see the latest addition to the heritage era story of the Great Western 4-6-0s, with No. 6880 being widely praised as the star of the show.

Roaming about

After subsequently visiting the West Somerset Railway, the Grange heading off to the North Norfolk Railway where it remained in regular service until the middle of November.

No. 6880 has since spent the winter at Shackerstone on the Battlefield Line, where it was set to make its final appearance at the January 11/12 Winter Steam Gala before it heads to the Great Central Railway's own January 23-26 event.

However, many have asked the question as to where the Grange would settle down for a base, with the answer coming from the Cotswold line where it made its debut. The move will also see regular operation of an example of a class that once frequented the route in its pre-preservation days.

After a meeting on December 6 between 6880 Betton Grange Society chairman Richard Cadge and representatives of the GW/R, an agreement was reached that will see No. 6880 become resident at Toddington shed for the foreseeable future, where it will arrive towards the end of February.

John Cruxon, head of the G/WR's steam department, said: "The arrival of the Grange is timely as the boiler certificate of resident No. 7820 *Dinmore Manor* expires in early January.

"We are thrilled that *Betton Grange* will be based at Toddington. Granges were, of course, regular performers over our railway in GWR and BR days and I know that our volunteers are looking forward to working with a locomotive class that was often dubbed by BR crews as 'the engineman's engine'.

"The first task for *Betton Grange* will be to work race trains for the Cheltenham Festival in March – and, in a way, this turns the clock back more than 60 years as the class were often seen heading BR's special trains to Cheltenham races in the 1950s and early 1960s."

The withdrawal for overhauls will be followed by that of Bulleid Merchant Navy Pacific No. 35006 *Peninsular & Oriental S.N. Co.* then WR 4-6-0 No. 7903 *Foremarke Hall* over the coming year, giving more work for the Grange.

Signing the agreement that GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange* will now be based on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway are, from left, 6880 Betton Grange Society chairman Richard Cadge, G/WR steam department head John Cruxon and the line's finance director Richard Winstanley. MIKE SOLLOWAY

Ideal base

Mr Cadge added: "The society's committee unanimously agreed that the G/WR is the ideal base for the locomotive.

"We are very impressed with the facilities at Toddington, both for locomotives and for volunteers with the outstanding mess facilities in The Goods Shed. Particular mention should be made of Mike Solloway and the team who really went above and beyond to ensure that the engine was carefully run-in and that remaining essential work that emerged during that process, was completed.

"The warmth of the welcome was wonderful, especially with our team being invited to join in the steam department's barbecue."

This year's Cotswold Festival of Steam will take place on May 24-26 and, as with many events across the country, will be themed around Railway 200 with hopes of locomotives representing a cross section of history joining the resident GW/R fleet.

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Take control of the world's newest steam locomotive

FOOTPLATE experiences offer a chance for those unable to commit to regular volunteering to sample life of an engineman.

Those looking for a unique experience will have such an opportunity in March as the Bluebell Railway has released a small number of taster courses aboard new-build H2 Atlantic No. 32424 *Beachy Head*.

These taster courses are designed to be an introduction to the footplate role, offering a scaled-back version of similar experiences whereby participants get control of the locomotive for an hour, and will take place within the station limits of Sheffield Park working light engine. As such, these sessions are ideal for those who are perhaps daunted by the prospect of having to brake a heavy train coupled to the locomotive.

During that time participants will get to sample both driving and firing *Beachy Head* before retiring to the Bessemer Arms for soup and a toastie.

Courses take place most weekends throughout March with some additional weekdays also available, with five timeslots available with a starting time between 9.30am and 3pm on each day. Each session is priced at £400.

For those looking to sample some of the more vintage locomotives, dates of similar courses will also run throughout February with locomotives expected to be either LBSCR A1 'Terrier' No. 72 *Fenchurch* or SECR O1 No. 65 (subject to availability on the day); courses for these locomotives are priced at £330.

To book a footplate taster course visit www.bluebell-railway.com/special/steam-footplate-tasters-2025/

An opportunity to take control of H2 Atlantic No. 32424 *Beachy Head* in March is available through footplate taster sessions. OWEN HAYWARD

Newly-passed fireman at Dartmouth – at just 18 years old!

By Robin Jones

HARRISON Smy has realised his greatest childhood dream at the age of 18 – by becoming one of the youngest firemen in the history of the Dartmouth Steam Railway.

Harrison said: "As with everyone else, my interest in railways started as a young child through television programmes and living close to the railway, where I would frequently sit and watch trains go by.

"Years later, I decided to begin volunteering at another heritage railway, the Bodmin & Wenford, where I was introduced to the world of working on steam locomotives.

"It was through this I discovered that it could be a career path that I would like to take, which I eventually acted upon, applying to the Dartmouth Steam Railway's apprenticeship scheme. I was offered the position and began my employment with the company as an engineering apprentice in autumn 2022.

"When I started, the major project within the workshop at Churston was the overhaul of WR 4-6-0 No. 7827 *Lydham Manor* which I was involved with up until it was finished roughly a year later.

"I also assisted with running repairs and any other jobs that needed doing. I am now assisting with our next project, the overhaul of GWR 2-8-0 No. 3803, which was started earlier this year.

"Roughly a year ago, after many years of wanting to be involved with the footplate, I was invited for a day out firing by a colleague, which was thoroughly enjoyable. From here, I began training as a fireman, where I completed a few turns at the end of last year before then training more intensively throughout the summer of this year.

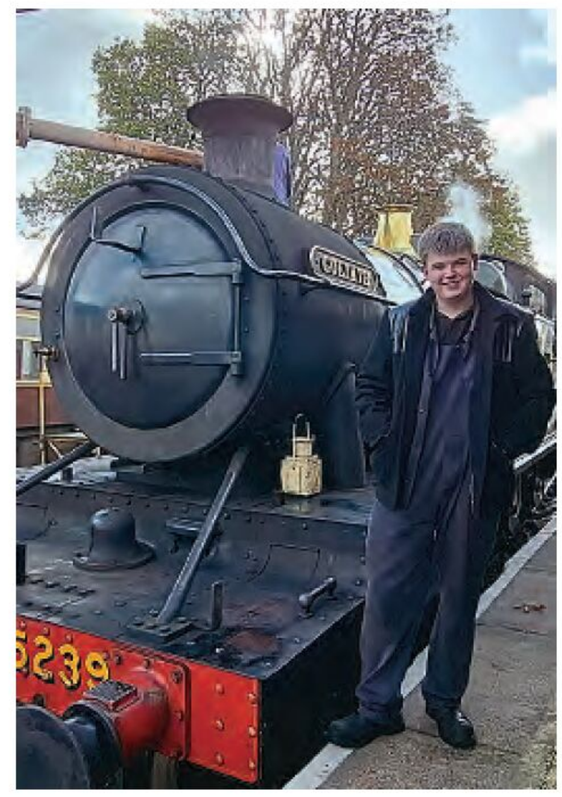
"I then undertook my rules, theory and finally practical exam in September, therefore qualifying as a fireman – a childhood dream come true."

Railway operations manager Jack Gibson said: "The apprenticeship scheme has been extremely beneficial for the operating side of the railway.

"We've had a number of apprentices train and qualify in operating roles such as fireman, guard and even duty manager. Not only does this save external recruitment for these roles but offers the apprentices career development and opportunities to learn other parts of the business.

"They can also see the benefits of their work they've done in the workshop on locomotive and carriage overhauls operating and in revenue-earning service."

Managing director John Jones said: "We were very fortunate to find Harrison as we are not looking for any one-trick ponies but staff who are multi-skilled. Harrison has shown that he is capable of many different tasks in his short time that he has been with us."



Dartmouth Steam Railway fireman Harrison Smy, who recently passed through the line's ground-breaking apprenticeship scheme, with GWR 2-8-0T No. 5239 *Goliath*. DSRRBC

Diesels to the fore for rare gala weekend on Cumbrian heritage line

WHILE the line's services are usually focused on the local tourist market, diesel enthusiasts will be afforded a rare opportunity to enjoy their traction of choice to the shore of Lake Windermere at the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway's March 29/30 diesel gala.

Although the railway has a small fleet of diesel locomotives, these have rarely seen use on public services, as these are usually entirely steam hauled. However the opportunity to use its diesels and Class 101 DMU has come about following a booking by the Branch Line Society for March 28; renowned for its 'access all areas' tours, which traverse sidings, depots and other rails not normally covered by public trains.

The BLS day will see the DMU undertake such movements – including to the bufferstops at the western end of the tunnel at Haverthwaite.

Guests will then get to explore the depot aboard brake vans worked top and tail by a pair of Class 03s 0-6-0DMs – D2072 and D2117 – with Class 20 No. 20214 starting the day with a round trip to Lakeside.

While this particular fixture is open only to members of the BLS, the weekend dates immediately following will be public running and feature the same locomotives in action along the 3.2 mile line. Additionally Class 11 No. 7120 will also be in service, with some of those in the line-up expected to be outshopped in new liveries in time for the occasion.

The DMU and all of the locomotives will be running on passengers services with a minimum of six round trips expected to take be scheduled on each day. Recently restored four-wheel Motor Rail & Tram Car Co. (later Simplex Mechanical Handling) locomotive *Rachel* will be on display in the yard at Haverthwaite, but not operating.

Further details will be published nearer to the time; see www.lakesiderailway.co.uk/diesel-gala-2025

A rare opportunity will be presented to travel behind diesel traction on the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway at a gala weekend in March which will feature Class 20 No. 20214, seen emerging from the west tunnel at Haverthwaite during a driver experience session that took place on November 5. CHRIS GEE

East Lancashire viaduct future safe thanks to grant funding

By Owen Hayward

Grant funding provided to the East Lancashire Railway will mean repairs can be carried out to Higher Woodhill viaduct near Burrs Country Park, enabling trains to continue crossing it for years to come. ELR

THE East Lancashire Railway has been awarded £1.3 million in grant aid to help carry out essential repairs to one of the bridges along the 12½ mile line, ensuring that the structure remains fit for purpose for years to come.

Built in the 19th century to carry the extension of the original East Lancashire Railway from Clifton Junction, the Higher Woodhill viaduct in the Irwell Valley sits on the edge of Burrs Country Park – one of the most photographed locations on the heritage line – and sits adjacent to the site of the former Higher Woodhill Mill.

Despite its age, the last major repair work to have been carried out on the structure was done in 1932, with the line formally closed by BR in 1982 before heritage services commenced in 1987.

Safeguarding its future

The viaduct has been the subject of regular inspections since and while there is no question as to its current safety, it was reported in early 2024 that long-term repairs would be required in order to allow for the continued use of heritage services over it at their current levels.

An appeal was launched in April while a bid for Government funding was made – and which has been successful with several grants received totalling more than £1.3million.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Community Ownership Fund awarded the ELR more than £1 million towards the work, with three local authorities from Bury, Rochdale and Rossendale contributing a further £276,000 in match funding and supporters of the railway – comprising members of the public and local businesses – adding more.

With funding secured, repair works on the structure are due to commence in the spring. The annoucment has been warmly welcomed by the railway and local MPs. James Frith, Labour MP for Bury North, said: "The news that the ELR has been successful in its Community Ownership Fund bid is a fantastic Christmas gift for our town. This vital funding will allow essential maintenance on the Woodhill Viaduct to keep the East Lancashire Railway running for years to come.

"Since being elected, I have offered my full support to the team at the railway for this bid, raising it with ministers, and even Number 10, at every opportunity.

"The ELR is a special part of our town's heritage and culture, and I know everyone in Bury will be pleased that with this funding the future of the railway is secured."

Delivery

Coun Charlotte Morris, cabinet member with responsibility for culture at Bury Council, added: "Bury Council is proud to support the ELR, and I know a lot of work has gone in from all involved in this bid. Now we move onto delivering the maintenance work, with the council and the railway working side by side on this."

ELR chairman Mike Kelly said: "There are a great many important Victorian structures along our 12 miles of railway, which thousands of our visitors travel over or under each year, but don't often see their splendour.

"This award is a major investment for the future and a massive vote of confidence for our dedicated volunteers and staff to help secure the railway's infrastructure for years to come.

"Now with this fantastic news, we are able to continue running our award-winning events and services without disruption for future generations to enjoy thanks to the generosity and support of the East Lancashire Railway Trust, our local community partners and supporters via our JustGiving page, as well as local and national politicians."

Dickens' great-great-grandson relives festive classic at Didcot with contemporary locos

A FREQUENT visitor to Didcot Railway Centre over the years, Gerald Dickens, the great-great-grandson of novelist Charles Dickens, performed his one-man adaptation of the season-defining work A Christmas Carol to a sell-out audience there on December 17.

The Victorian transfer shed at the railway centre, which displays locomotives and carriages of the period, was the fully-booked venue for the performance of the tale that introduces the immortal characters of Ebenezer Scrooge, Jacob Marley, Bob Cratchit, and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come, which many critics over the years have said reinforced the foundations of the traditional seasonal celebrations to the present day and beyond.

Gerald, who lives in Abingdon, had flown in on Monday from a tour of the USA where he had delighted audiences with shows based on Dickens novels. Gerald has also performed Charles Dickens' The Signalman ghost story at the centre.

Left: Gerald with George England 0-4-0WT *Wantage Tramway No. 5,* which was built in 1857 and which is therefore a contemporary of his great great grandfather Charles Dickens. FRANK DUMBLETON

Gerald Dickens with Brunel broad gauge 4-2-2 *Iron Duke,* a replica of an 1847 design, on loan from the National Railway Museum, and the type of locomotive which would have hauled Charles Dickens to his engagements in western England. FRANK DUMBLETON

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Mining museum volunteers celebrate accolade from Arts Council England

By Robin Jones

Volunteers of The Purbeck Mining Museum celebrated a huge increase in visitor numbers and accreditation from Arts Council England at the venue's 2024 annual review meeting held recently at the Community Hub in Commercial Road, Swanage. ANDREW PM WRIGHT

THE Purbeck Mining Museum at Norden, on the Swanage Railway, has achieved accreditation from Arts Council England for the high standard of its management and visitor engagement and the care it takes to protect and preserve local mining heritage.

The accolade comes after museum visitor numbers soared by 50% during the past year.

Museum chairman Peter Sills said: "It has been a truly exceptional year. From its conception, the museum has been entirely dependent on the enthusiasm, commitment and hard work of a dedicated and growing team of volunteers. The whole team is immensely proud to receive such recognition.

"It's all the more gratifying to be awarded accreditation in a year that has seen such a significant increase in both visitors and donations, as well as the introduction of a welfare centre for volunteers and new footpaths under construction in the surrounding woodland.

"We are certainly not resting on our laurels, though. Our exciting forward development plan will enable us to continue to shine the light on an industry that, quite literally, has shaped much of the familiar and picturesque landscape we see today on the Isle of Purbeck."

Part of the Swanage Railway Trust, the museum comprises recreated clay mine housing and an array of artefacts, mementos, models, photographs and film footage from years gone by.

Visitors are invited to descend a timber-lined and iron-arched walkway to see some of the underground workings. A large section of one of the narrow-gauge railways that served the mines for well over 100 years has also been restored, with periodic demonstrations of engine and wagon movements running alongside the Swanage Railway.

Although it is now closed to visitors for the winter, the museum remains a hive of activity as volunteers work on a myriad of maintenance and restoration projects in preparation for its reopening in spring.

Katie paving the way for 'La'al Ratty's 150th

THE Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway has pressed the rarely-used 1896 vintage 0-4-0T *Katie* into service hauling track maintenance trains in preparation for its 150th anniversary year.

Katie was built for Sir Arthur Heywood's estate railway at Eaton Hall in Cheshire and was sold to Ravenglass in 1916, when it hauled works trains.

In 1919, *Katie* was sold again to run at Southport and then at Fairbourne, and was dismantled in 1929. The remains were donated by the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn and returned to Ravenglass, where it returned to service in 2018 following a 25-year-long restoration.

Owned by the Ravenglass & Eskdale Preservation Society Trust, *Katie* is usually kept as a static display in the Ravenglass Railway's museum and is brought out and steamed only for special events.

In recent weeks it has been used to transport material along the line for track maintenance work ahead of a celebratory programme of 150th anniversary events for the railway, which began with participation in the nationwide Whistle-Up at noon on January 1,with Krauss 4-6-2 No. 12 *Whillan Beck* and Clarkson 2-8-2 No. 9 *River Mite* sounding off as they passed each other at Fisherground. The line's celebrations, which will include a steam gala with visiting engines and the unveiling of a newly refurbished electric locomotive, also coincides with Railway 200.

***Katie* joining the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway track gang.** RER

Operations manager Keith Herbert said: "The original RER, known as Owd Ratty, was under construction, before it opened in 1875. While we're not building a railway this time around, we are renewing part of the track to keep the La'al Ratty alive.

"Echoing the work of a century-and-a-half prior, *Katie* has been moving materials for this winter's track renewals in Mill Wood, scheduled to take place in January.

"The unloading of the material has been assisted greatly by some of our wonderful volunteers, who will help us reach our 150-year milestone."

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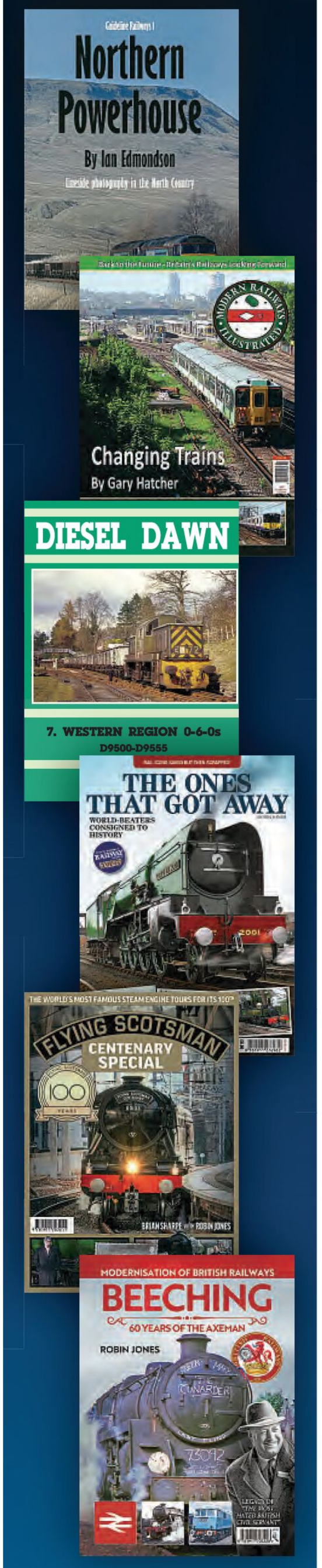

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Caledonian Railway class 812 0-6-0 No. 828 will be staying in Kent for another year following the extension of its loan to the Spa Valley Railway. Currently undergoing winter maintenance at the former 75F locomotive depot, it will return to service in the New Year and operate out of Tunbridge Wells West throughout 2025. It is pictured in its striking Caledonian livery at Lealands on October 10, shortly after departure from Groombridge. OWEN HAYWARD

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Poppy Line plans restructure to boost charitable status

By Robin Jones

THE North Norfolk Railway has announced a major restructuring of the Poppy Line's administration as it celebrates its half centenary.

On December 12, North Norfolk Railway plc announced that it will ask shareholders to approve a new governance model which will see it work more closely with its supporting charity, the Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway Society.

When much of the former Midland & Great Northern system was closed by BR in 1959, the society was formed to save part of the network. The society created the plc as a suitable body to hold the Light Railway Order that is effectively the organisation's licence to operate trains.

The two organisations have existed in parallel ever since and already work closely together; the society owns nine of the steam and diesel locomotives and several carriages and wagons that are based on the line.

The 50th anniversary of the NNR running its first passenger train takes place in 2025. As well as celebrating this milestone, the company is looking to ensure that that the popular heritage railway is sustainable for the next half-century and beyond.

The proposed new structure, which will need to be approved by shareholders at a general meeting on February 1, provides the society with 100% of the voting rights in relation to the plc while preserving existing travel benefits for shareholders.

NNR chairman Steve Allen said: "Our current structure, while expedient in the 1960s to enable the railway to be founded and operated, is now an outlier in the heritage railway movement.

"This proposal places the NNR at the heart of a charitable organisation, opening up the possibility of significant financial benefits such as Gift Aid and other tax reliefs.

"These will take a while to achieve but give the potential for savings and extra income of about £250,000 a year."

Martin Blee, the chairman of the M&GN Society's trustees, said: "Bringing the two organisations together as the NNR celebrates 50 years of running trains is absolutely the right thing to do and mirrors the structure of many other heritage lines.

"The only significant benefit to the society of this reorganisation is that it provides more financial security to the railway that hosts and operates all of its rolling stock and enables the society to provide greater support while helping to ensure the NNR's long-term sustainability.

All in one

"The results of the society's membership survey in 2023 showed that members viewed the society and the NNR as an indivisible entity that their membership is supporting.

"Feedback from passengers is that they don't differentiate between the two but visit 'the railway'."

NNR general manager Graham Hukins said: "Since the line was built in 1887 it has been operated by a number of organisations, from the Eastern & Midlands Railway, through the Midland & Great Northern Joint (which gave the line much of its character), to the LNER and BR – but the organisation that has run the line for the longest period is the North Norfolk Railway!

"So, as we approach our golden anniversary, it is fitting that we should look at how we can build on the achievements of the past five decades and ensure the line is secure for the next 50 or more years and I am therefore delighted at the prospect of even closer co-operation and collaboration with the society.

The North Norfolk Railway's opening day on July 13, 1975: Kitson 0-6-0ST No. 5470 of 1933 *Colwyn* with the suburban carriages at Weybourne. In June 1973, two years after it arrived on the line, *Colwyn* was used in the Dad's Army episode The Royal Train. The former Stewarts & Lloyds Corby steelworks was sold in 1985 and arrived at the Northampton & Lamport Railway in July 1985. NNR

"For many supporters and almost all visitors, the subtle division of responsibilities between the two organisations is unimportant.

"Passengers want a great day out enjoying the trains, stepping back to the 1930s in the railway cottage, grabbing lunch in one of the buffets, soaking up history in the museum, being enthralled by the model railways or bagging a bargain at the second-hand bookshop.

"They don't know (let alone care) that the vital ingredients for their experience are provided by two similar but distinct bodies."

A year-long series of events and activities are planned to mark the 50th anniversary.

Carriage No. 3868, the first of its type to be preserved, will revert to its 1975 livery of M&GN umber for one year only. Other vehicles used in the early days of preservation will also feature heavily, including the 1920s Quad-Art articulated teak carriage set and suburban coaches built in the 1950s.

The fondly remembered DRB railbus, E79960, which was used on off-peak services in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s is set to make a reappearance for the Rails & Ales weekend on June 13-15.

During 2025, Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway 7F 2-8-0 No. 53809 will celebrate its centenary. GWR 2-8-0T No. 4277 *Hercules,* from the Dartmouth Steam Railway, will stay for the year and GNR N2 0-6-2T No. 1744 will strengthen the home fleet if its overhaul is completed (News, page 14).

It is hoped that a handful of visiting locomotives which have graced the line during the heritage era will return for the celebrations, which will also include: the May 3-5 Classic Comedy Weekend; The Golden Years – 50th Anniversary Extravaganza, which will feature live music and classic vehicles from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, plus vintage steam and diesel trains; the August 23-28 Festival on Rails, featuring small and industrial locomotives for the first three days and an intensive service including visiting engines on the last three days of the event; the August 29-31 Summer Steam Gala with six engines in steam including visitors; and the September 20-21 Steam Back to the Forties event.

October 25 to November 2 will see the Fiftieth Finale, featuring an intensive service and special locomotives to round off the 50th anniversary celebrations for the year.

Owned by the Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway Society, Robert Riddles WD Austerity 2-10-0 No. 90775 *The Royal Norfolk Regiment* on a loaded test run on December 18 following 20 months of being sidelined for specialist boiler repairs. STEVE ALLEN

Visiting GWR 2-8-0T No. 4277 with the 'North Norfolkman' Christmas dining train on December 19. STEVE ALLEN

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Wirksworth 'Teddy Bear' makes snowy comeback

CLASS 14 D9525 returned to service at the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway in December following extensive repairs that included an engine swap from classmate D9537 *Eric*, which was withdrawn after the line's July 25-28 Diamond Jubilee gala for the class, as featured in *Heritage Railway* issue 323.

Last operational in 2009, D9525 had been close to a return to service ahead of the gala, which saw an impressive six operational examples gathered for the occasion, but during testing in April the power unit seized relegating the locomotive to static display. With *Eric* earmarked for withdrawal for overhaul, the opportunity was taken to swap the power units over to enable D9525 to return to service as cover.

This exchange was carried out on September 30, the unit was subsequently connected up, and a test run took place within the Wirksworth station area on November 6. A week later, the 'Teddy Bear' made a successful round trip to Duffield with Class 47 D1842 as a load for insurance, and only a few minor issues surfaced that were quickly rectified.

Working its first public train since 2009, D9525 stands at a snowy Wirksworth on the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway on November 23. CHRIS BAILY

Back in action

With testing completed, D9525 was passed for revenue service and hauled its first train, an EVR Santa special, on November 23, with the occasion being graced by snow on the ground that remained from a fall earlier that week.

Following two successful weekends of service, on December 8 the locomotive was sadly withdrawn again, and an investigation revealed that the generator had failed, with windings having overheated and melted and the armature blowing off at the fan end.

Thankfully, the drive of the transmission was reported to be unaffected; a spare generator is to hand and will be overhauled by a specialist before being swapped with the defective example to enable D9525 to return to service once more. Further remedial work on the 'Teddy Bear' still to be completed includes replacing the turbo and bushes on the coupling rods. Meanwhile, *Eric* has been moved into the main workshops where it has been heavily stripped for overhaul to commence, which will start once D9525 is operating reliably.

Platform at Leicester's first station receives refurbishment

By Robin Jones

A PLATFORM built to serve Leicester's first railway has been restored by the city council as part of a wider £1.8 million facelift of its locality.

The Leicester & Swannington Railway was built to link the west Leicestershire collieries to the city, where there was great industrial demand for coal, and it opened in 1832. The engineer for the railway was Robert Stephenson, with the assistance of Thomas Miles, while George Stephenson raised part of the capital for the line from businesspeople in Liverpool.

The line ran from West Bridge, in Leicester, at a location alongside the navigable River Soar, with the intention of transferring the coal to water transport.

Leicester's second line was opened by the Midland Railway in 1840 and it then acquired the L&SR in 1847. The Midland constructed a route from its main line to Burton, using part of the L&SR.

The L&SR being one of the earliest public railways and intended for carrying coal, the concept of carrying passengers had not occurred to the line's promoters. While the line mainly carried freight, some passenger carriages were attached to trains.

Facilities for buying tickets were provided at local inns or from the keepers of road crossings.

Lacking a platform at West Bridge, travellers had to disembark trains using ladders and handrails.

The original 1832 station is thought to have been the third oldest station in the world; its site is now Richard III Road. It was opened as Leicester on July 18, 1832, and was renamed Leicester West Bridge before April 26, 1833.

In 1893, the Midland built a new passenger station about 150 yards away, nearer to the houses in the then-new Tudor Road.

The original Leicester terminus of the L&SR continued in use as the West Bridge branch until passenger services were withdrawn on September 24, 1928, and freight on May 2, 1966.

The surviving platform of West Bridge, Leicester's first station. Benches have been installed to recreate its character. LCC

The station buildings were demolished in 1979 but a platform and some track and a signal remained as the area – including the site of the engine shed and the sidings at Soar Lane New Wharf – was converted into Rally Park.

"We have restored a platform at Rally Park to its former glory to celebrate the area's railway heritage," said a council statement. "We are also working on updating footpaths and cycle lanes in the area using funding from Active Travel England.

"Work is now focusing on paths in the central area of the park, and this is due to be completed in time for summer next year."

World's only steam monoloco requires £10k to run again

By Robin Jones

A £10,000 appeal to restore the world's only operating steam monoloco back to working order has been launched by the Tanat Valley Light Railway.

The 0-2-0 monoloco was invented by the late narrow-gauge collector Rich Morris, who set up the former Gloddfa Ganol museum collection, near Blaenau Ffestiniog, and also ran a miniature railway at Colwyn Bay.

Rich developed an interest in industrial monorail systems and over 30 years bought about 120 such locomotives. He acquired the manufacturing rights of Metalair Ltd of Wokingham, Britain's only commercial monorail builder, in 1983.

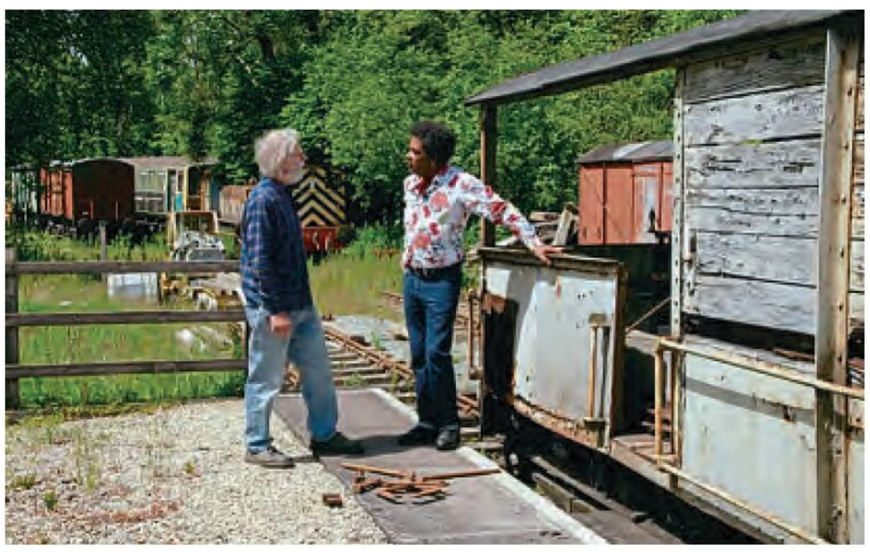
Rich drew rough sketches of his dream project, and project engineer John Vineermade several adjustments to make the monoloco a reality. Standing at 6ft high and 11ft long, it was built by the engineering company Century Millwrights on Platts Eyot, a small island in the River Thames.

On December 13, 1997, the monoloco made its maiden run over a short length of track at Sunbury-on-Thames, and then made its public debut at the International Model Railway Exhibition at Kensington Olympia a few days later.

It runs on driving wheels with double flanges which straddle a triangular section running rail an inch wide at the top of the rail, and it is fitted with outriding stabiliser wheels. In 2016 an eviction notice was served on Rich and he was given only weeks to remove his collection from the Blaenau site. A welcome home was offered by Mark Hignett, founder of the Tanat Valley Light Railway/Nant Mawr Visitor Centre, near Oswestry.

The collection is the largest of industrial monorail equipment in the UK, including more than 70 engines each of the engines carrying the name of the place where it originally operated, plus a large number of wagons. Rich died in 2019, having been unwell for several years.

The unique monoloco at the Tanat Valley Light Railway; £10,000 is needed to complete its restoration. TVLR



Tanat Valley Light Railway founder Mark Hignett (left) shows BBC Bargain Hunt presenter Danny Sebastian the line's standard gauge brake van. TVLR

The TVLR has made his monoloco the centrepiece of a complete project, with a dedicated running line and rebuilt carriages. Several major stages have already been completed, and the funding is now needed to carry out the final reassembly and to finish the carriages.

The site has been closed to the public since October to allow several other projects to progress, and it is planned to reopen it at Easter. Last autumn, Danny Sebastian, of BBC TV's Bargain Hunt series, visited the centre with a film crew and inspected the collection of monorails, including one that appeared in a villain's lair in a James Bond movie, for an episode that was broadcast on November 1, and which is available to view on BBC iPlayer.

➜ To donate to the monorail appeal, visit www.tanatvalleyrailway.co.uk/donate or made a transfer to Lloyds bank: account name TVLR; sort code 30-92-69; account number 35484660.

British new-build world-first celebrated in Japan

By Chris Bates

WHEN the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway became the first heritage line in the world to be built by enthusiasts 65 years ago, it began a global trend which has now been celebrated at a special ceremony in Japan.

The LCLR's first line at Humberston, south of Cleethorpes, was real public transport taking holidaymakers to beaches and a holiday camp, using rolling stock from the redundant potato railway across Nocton Fen, parts of which, together with the rails, had seen service in the battlefields of the First World War, as part of the War Department Light Railways.

The site closed in 1985 but reopened in 2009 in the Skegness Water Leisure Park, in Walls Lane, Ingoldmells, after years of reconstruction by a handful of dedicated enthusiasts. Its achievements have resulted in awards and grants from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund and East Lindsey District Council, and even a visit from the Princess Royal – enabling the 2ft gauge line to operate a Royal train.

Such was the success of the venture that in 1963, the world's second line to be built by enthusiasts opened in Dunedin, on New Zealand's South Island, and then in 1973, inspired by the success of British heritage railways, the Rass Chijin Railway Society was formed to create what it called "the ultimate railway scene" and build its own narrow gauge railway at Narita Yume Bokujo, in a long-established farm park popular with the public. Not only has it acquired and restored historic locomotives from Japan and Taiwan, but it also

The presentation marking the friendship between two of the world's pioneering heritage railways. Left to right are Chris Bates and John Raby, of the Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway, Skegness, and Yukihiro Tsunoda, of the Rass Chijin Railway Society. TAKURO TAKAHASHI

The group of Linesiding Club members (from the UK, Australia, Denmark, Austria and Slovakia) at the ceremony. TAKURO TAKAHASHI

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WR 4-6-0 No. 7820 passes Little Buckland after departing Broadway on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway on January 2. JOHN TITLOW

Until we meet again: *Dinmore Manor* sees out its last week at Toddington

WITH its boiler ticket expiring in early January, WR 4-6-0 No. 7820 *Dinmore Manor* performed faultlessly during its last week in service on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway.

Built in 1950, it was named *Dinmore Manor* after the Knights Hospitaller preceptory in Herefordshire and is one of nine surviving Manors from a class of 30.

Withdrawn in 1965 from Shrewsbury, it was transferred to Barry scrapyard. Saved in 1979, it moved to the Gwili Railway for restoration, but the overhaul was eventually done at the Birmingham Railway Museum, now Tyseley Locomotive Works.

Once ready, No. 7820 was transferred in 1995 to the West Somerset Railway, where it ran for nearly nine years until its first boiler ticket expired in 2004.

The previous overhaul took place at Tyseley and was completed in 2014. No. 7820 then entered service at its new and present base of Toddington on the G/WR.

During its recent boiler ticket, No. 7820 also visited several other heritage lines including the Severn Valley (running alongside sisters Nos. 7812 and 7802), the North Norfolk, Great Central, Dartmouth Steam Railway and once again the West Somerset.

Its last day of running was on January 5.

No. 7820 performed well over the last 10 years but is now going in for overhaul. It is anticipated to be a quick turnaround, with all works done at Toddington within 18 months. Due to the thorough nature of the last rebuild and continual maintenance at Toddington, it is still in very good condition and could have kept on going, save for the expiration of its ticket.

builds new steam engines. It is home to eight steam locomotives, six diesel locomotives, a wooden carriage from 1913 , a snow plough, and a foot-pedalled cycle trolley!

The ceremony took place when LCLR volunteer John Raby, from Sutton-on-Sea, led an international group of his Linesiding Club members, including fellow long-serving LCLR volunteer Chris Bates, from Horsington, near Woodhall Spa, on a tour of Japan's railways, which culminated in a visit to the line. A specially prepared greeting in Japanese and English was presented to the Japanese society, together with enamel badges of the LCLR's Peckett 0-6-0ST *Jurassic*, keyrings, leaflets and gifts from other members of the party.

The ceremony has featured on the Japanese society's website, https://rass-railway.com, and the LCLR's Facebook pages. The Japanese society members now want to visit Skegness to see the line which was in many ways their inspiration, as well as other British heritage railways.

Yume Rass No. 9, a new three-cylinder locomotive, one of several built by the Rass Chujin enthusiasts. JOHN RABY

LCLR's spokesman, John Chappell, said: "Our railway is visited by people from many parts of the world and this ceremony of friendship in Japan shows that what our pioneers have achieved, and how it has inspired others around the world to build their own lines and introduced people to the fascinating world of railway heritage. We look forward to welcoming our Japanese friends to Skegness."

The new Locomotion Railway Garden in bloom. LOCOMOTION

Biodiversity is the aim for Locomotion's latest attraction

A SCHEME to boost the natural environment at the Locomotion museum in Shildon with the creation of an extensive new garden has been boosted by a £20,000 grant from the Durham-based Banks Group.

The Locomotion Railway Garden, which has also been supported by the Northumbrian Water Branch Out Fund, will run across the length of the museum's two-thirds-of-a-mile site and will surround its new collections building, New Hall.

It will include a range of habitats designed to encourage pollinators while complementing its existing wildflower meadow and self-seeding flora.

As well as being somewhere for visitors and locals to relax and engage with nature, the new garden is designed to encourage a population of the rare Dingy Skipper butterfly, which is listed as a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, to thrive.

A garden for all

The site boundary will be planted with a new native hedgerow, expanding habitats for hedgehogs, while existing trees will be fitted with bat boxes. The garden will also create new outdoor volunteering opportunities for about 70 adults, young people and children in the first year, with family learning activities being linked to the project, including free bug hotel and seed bomb workshops.

Locomotion head Sarah Price said: "The railway revolution had a significant impact on the natural environment, with new railway routes creating a corridor in which certain plants and animals could thrive.

"The planting design for the Railway Garden draws inspiration from the self-seeded railway lines found around the UK and will be supported by interpretation to engage visitors.

"This project will deliver substantial benefits for both wildlife and the local community, transforming an area that was previously wasteland to create new volunteering and learning opportunities for local people and museum visitors."

Embsay given £111k boost to improve accessibility services

By Robin Jones

THE Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway has received £111,800 in grant aid to make its services more accessible for disabled people.

The funding follows a successful application by the line's operator, the Yorkshire Dales Railway Museum Trust, to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is administered in the county by North Yorkshire Council.

The money, combined with the railway's own funds, is enabling the renovation of two 1950s BR carriages at a total cost of more than £220,000. The coaches will be fitted out with accessible seating, widened doors and ramp access, along with other restoration work befitting of the era when they were made.

Work on one of the coaches has been completed and it entered service before Christmas as part of the railway's Polar Express services.

Services for all

EBASR finance director Rob Shaw said: "We have 15 carriages, but up to this point we have only had one that could comfortably accommodate a wheelchair. It limits how many people we can carry and, as you might expect, gets booked up straight away.

"Without these coaches we simply could not have accommodated this many people with disabilities and they would not have been able to travel with us. Either they would have been left at home while the rest of the family enjoyed a day out or the whole family would have had to have missed out.

"Grants like this are critical because without them we wouldn't have the funds to do the things we want to do. The railway pays its own way in terms of how it operates, but it does not generate enough funds to allow for capital projects such as this.

"We have had the unofficial title of 'the friendly line' for decades. Increasingly, we are becoming a bigger player. We are doing relatively well with the help of grants and our passenger numbers are increasing, but we haven't lost that ethos.

"We have lots in the pipeline. We are halfway through a project to rebuild platforms two and three at Bolton Abbey, including the erection of a historic footbridge.

"We also have longer-term desires to perhaps reach Skipton one day and connect the railway to the national network and we are minded to improve our local maintenance facilities at Embsay station."

One of the first passengers to use the new facility was Mick McKeown and his family, from Doncaster. Mick's daughter, Sarah Walker, said: "My dad was over the moon with the entire Polar Express experience. He was amazed at how well he was treated and how easy and painless everything was. If the accessible carriage had not been available, then he would not have been able to come with us on our special day out.

Coun Simon Myers sits with Mick McKeown and his granddaughter Courtney Walker on board the accessible carriage on the Polar Express. NYC

Easy experience

"He was able to be pushed up the ramp straight to the table which had no seats, so he could glide right in and put his wheelchair's brakes on. Even with places that have disabled access, it can still be a struggle to position the wheelchair without it being in the way, but there were no such problems here."

The council's executive member for culture, Coun Simon Myers, who chaired the appraisal panel for the North Yorkshire UK Shared Prosperity Fund's Building Pride In Our Places grant programme, said: "I would like to congratulate all involved for the terrific job they are doing at the railway. This is a perfect example of how this fund can be used to improve facilities for people across North Yorkshire and beyond.

"I was delighted to be able to see the railway for myself and take a seat on one of the newly restored coaches. To see all those beaming faces, both children and adults, was fantastic.

"It is important that facilities such as this are accessible to all and to be able to see Mr McKeown and his family enjoying the experience together showed what a great investment this has been."

Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway 3F 0-6-0 No. 52322, in the guise of Polar Express No. 1225, heads a festive train at Bolton Abbey station on the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway. NYC

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Peebles persistence pays off

PERSISTENCE by Peebles Community Trust, which has been planning since 2020 to restore the Grade C listed former North British Railway weighbridge building, the sole remaining part of the former Peebles station, has paid off.

After an extensive consultation process, Scottish Borders Council has agreed to transfer ownership of the 1880s-built structure to the trust, which enjoys active support from the Peebles Railway Heritage Group.

Although the trust was given the keys to the building for a peppercorn rent in 2020 on a 25-year lease and spent £7000 on roof repairs, the group was reluctant to spend more money on a building it did not own. Now, thanks to the Scottish Government's Community Asset Transfer scheme, the trust has taken full ownership and is set to press ahead with restoration to full heritage standards to ensure that what is widely regarded as an important piece of Peebles railway history is preserved and put back into use as a railway museum and, possibly, also as a tourist office.

Malcolm Bruce, of the community trust, said: "We have persevered and are delighted that, at last, the building is ours. We estimated that it will take about £30,000 to fully restore it and that is what we will now do to help keep the heritage of railways in Peebles very much alive. Anyone who would like to volunteer to join us in this work will be made very welcome."

Coun Simon Mountford, Scottish Borders Council planning and community assets portfolio holder, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for the trust to restore a local building of great historical importance. The building has been used for a variety of purposes over the years, firstly as part of the railway, until it closed in 1962, then as a coal merchant's office, and finally it was acquired by the council which recognised its historical importance."

The Peebles Railway was a company which built a line connecting Peebles to Edinburgh. Opening on July 4, 1855, it worked its own trains.

In 1860, the Peebles Railway company leased its line to the North British Railway, which operated the Galashiels and Edinburgh sections as a continuous through route.

Road transport of freight and passengers provided fierce competition in the 1950s and the line closed in 1962. No railway use is now made of the former lines.

Peebles station weighbridge office, built by the North British Railway in the 1880s, now has an assured future, having been put into the ownership of Peebles Community Trust. HUGH DOUGHERTY

Royal recognition: The Princess Royal chats to volunteers outside a vintage bus display during her visit to Amberley Museum, near Arundel, on December 5. AMBERLEY MUSEUM

Senior royal's praise for museum volunteers

By Geoff Courtney

VOLUNTEERS shared the spotlight with royalty on December 5 when the Princess Royal visited Amberley Museum, the West Sussex tourist attraction that is home to the most varied and comprehensive collection of different gauge locomotives in the country.

Princess Anne was at the working museum near Arundel to officially open a newly-restored bagging shed and loading bay, and in true royal style took the opportunity to chat to several of the museum's 350 active volunteers, including some from the railway department.

In her speech officially opening the restored building, which was the heart of the busy former chalk pit and limeworks during its Victorian and later working days, she congratulated the museum for its recent King's Award for Voluntary Service recognition and praised the role of the volunteers who she said had made the difference in terms of the museum's success.

She also toured parts of the 36-acre former quarry that was worked from 1846 to 1969, which included a standard gauge internal railway system linked to the nearby national network and had a fleet of four steam and diesel locomotives transporting such materials as chalk, coal and coke to the kilns.

Steam still survives today, providing public rides on a 2ft gauge half-mile line that has three stations, while the museum's display of more than 30 locomotives comprises steam, diesel, petrol and electric traction in 13 different gauges from 1ft 6in to 5ft 3in. There is also a collection of other vintage vehicles, including buses and a 100-year-old former West Sussex County Council steam roller that was in use until 1983.

Skills event set to help kick-start careers at London Transport Museum

YOUNG people between the ages of 16 and 25 can benefit from a helpful boost to their career ambitions on January 30 when the London Transport Museum hosts a free skills event where employers will be on hand to answer questions and offer guidance to potential future employees.

Youngsters who are seeking to embark on careers in transport, engineering and technology will be able to learn about different job opportunities within the capital's transport and infrastructure industry, and businesses offering entry-level vacancies, apprenticeships or training opportunities will be present to share information and answer questions. Companies represented will include Transport for London (TfL), ABM, Hitachi Rail, Telent, and the Mitie Foundation.

Evidence suggests that the nation's transport industry and supply chain face major engineering and green skills shortages – particularly as demand for new green skills grows, with the UK focused on hitting net zero carbon.

This Skills Late helps break down barriers for young Londoners, including those from a broad range of educational experiences and those underrepresented in these industries, showing them that careers in transport, engineering and technology can be for them.

Start of a career

The workshop forms part of LTM's Enjoyment to Employment programme, which looks beyond the short term at ways of securing the future of the transport industry by tacking this growing green skills shortage, supported by firms such as those attending this event.

Enjoyment to Employment is a unique opportunity for companies seeking to deliver meaningful corporate social responsibility and impact, as well as supporting career pathways for the next generation of transport and engineering talent.

The programme includes Route into Work, a programme helping more than 100 young people each year develop key employability skills, providing the opportunity to present what they have learned to an employer in the transport industry with live job vacancies.

Uzair Shaikh, a participant in Route into Work and now a rail engineering workshop apprentice at TfL, said: "Route into Work began by introducing me to the different apprenticeship schemes available at TfL. There were dozens of schemes to choose from, and I was able to consider which roles were best suited to me, and how my skills would allow me to excel in the different roles."

Museum director and CEO Elizabeth McKay said: "Through events like Skills Late, our museum is opening doors to life-changing careers and inspiring the next generation of young talent. This work doesn't just benefit young people; it ensures the continued growth and success of the industries that keep London and our world moving forward.

Booking open

"We are enormously grateful to our supporters who make this work possible, demonstrating their commitment to investing in the future of the transport and engineering sectors and to delivering meaningful social impact benefitting young people."

The event will take place at the Covent Garden museum between 6.30pm and 9pm. Tickets are free, but places are limited so advance booking is essential at www.ltmuseum.co.uk/whats-on/skills-late-talent-transported-2025

Local shunters reunited as new Welsh line's future boosted by grant

By Owen Hayward

Off to pastures new: Class 03 No. 03119 is readied to depart the Epping Ongar Railway on December 6, eventually bound for the Gwendraeth Valley Railway, which is restoring part of the route on which the shunter was modified to work during its BR career. MICHAEL DREW/EOR

FOUR 0-6-0DM shunters are set to be reunited in Wales – on the same line for which they received modifications to operate during their BR working lives.

Class 03 locomotives were a common sight around the UK, covering duties such as station pilot turns and shunting at the numerous yards and depots the network offered. Their short wheelbase also enabled them to work lines with tighter curves than could be handled by larger locomotives, with one such line being the Burry Port & Gwendraeth Valley line in Carmarthenshire, which connected a plethora of collieries to Burry Port. However, the route also had several low bridges, further precluding the use of full-height locomotives.

To work the branch when steam was displaced, BR modified nine of its Class 03s by reducing the cab height and therefore enabling them to fit the restrictive clearances. The steep grades and heavy loads would often mean three would be needed together to work the trains. The line gradually closed between May 1967 and March 1998 and the shunters moved on, with six of the fleet of still in existence.

New heritage venture

Part of the route is currently being restored by the Gwendaeth Railway Society for heritage services; a 99-year lease for the remaining nine-mile branch was signed with Network Rail in 2022, which owns No. 03141 – one of the locomotives that originally worked the line.

On December 6, one of its former stablemates, No. 03119, departed the Epping Ongar Railway to start its journey back to Carmarthenshire, where the pair will be reunited for the first time in several decades.

Entering preservation in 1996, No. 03119 has been resident on the EOR in Essex since 2011 but has been out of service there since 2018, with the bodywork needing substantial repairs and the gearbox having been swapped with shedmate No. 03170.

Its arrival at the GVR was delayed owing to the severe weather warnings of Storm Darragh during the weekend of December 7/8 and instead arrived at Lydney on the Dean Forest Railway on December 20 for storage pending future movement to its permanent home.

The GVR's new resident pair of 03s will be further supported by Class 08/9 Nos. 08994 *Gwendraeth* and 08995 *Kidwelly*, two of a small number of 'Gronks' that were also modified from 1984 to replace their predecessors along the route.

Grant funding

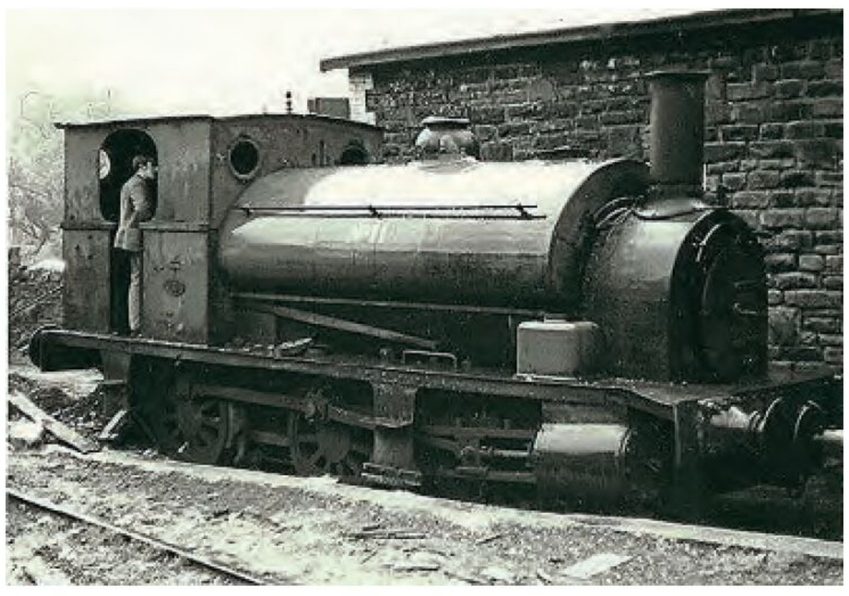
The GVR is currently in the process of purchasing the former goods shed at Kidwelly, which it intends to use as its main operating hub, with plans to convert the corrugated tin-clad building into a new visitor base, museum space and workshop; presently, the outside yard space is in use by technology firm Siemens as it carries out the West Wales resignalling project. The GVR has now benefitted from a UK Prosperity Fund £40,000 grant through Carmarthenshire County Council towards this first phase of its revival project, which will help fund the development of the new terminus station at Kidwelly.

"Following topographic surveys, options for uses of the site will be developed and consulted on to include new terminal station, platform location, and proposed track layouts," a spokesman said.

"Visitor reception facilities will be considered, together with the most suitable location to site former 1909-built GWR Churchward toplight camping coach No. 3668, which was acquired from the West Somerset Railway in 2022. The historic coach will form an attractive feature of the site, while also boosting visitor accommodation for the town.

"Part of the site will be set aside for habitat enhancement purposes and will form a key element in improving biodiversity along the former canal route through the valley."

During December, specialist railway contract firm QTS visited the Kidwelly site to erect more than 600 yards of wire-and-post fencing to safely separate it from the nearby main line, which will enable authorised personnel to access the strip of railside land for vegetation clearance. This clearance will then enable surveyors to undertake a thorough topographical inspection of the land to determine where will be best-suited for the new platform to be sited, as well as visitor parking and supporting facilities infrastructure.



Captured during its later industrial life as No. 11, Avonside No. 2 *Pontyberem* is the sole-surviving locomotive from the pre-Grouping era of the Gwendraeth Valley Railway. Yet to run in the heritage era, it moved to Bream in the Forest of Dean during the summer of 2024 for restoration to be carried out at the Flour Mill workshops. HUGH LLEWELYN/CREATIVE COMMONS

During December, a specialist contract firm was on site at Kidwelly to erect new fencing that separates the GVR land from the adjacent GWR main line, which will enable land surveys and volunteer working to safely take place. GVR

➜ **The only surviving locomotive from the pre-Grouping era of the BPGVR, Avonside 0-6-0ST No. 2 *Pontyberem*, is at the Flour Mill Workshops at Bream in the Forest of Dean for restoration. Built in 1900 as works No. 1421, it was sold off for colliery use in 1914 and withdrawn in 1970. First based at Didcot Railway Centre, it later returned to Wales at the Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway before moving to a private site in Barry in 2020.**

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Spa Valley appoints new civil engineering consultant and launches essential bridge replacement project

By Geoff Courtney and Owen Hayward

Bridging the gap: Standard Class 4MT 2-6-4T No. 80078 pilots SR Battle of Britain No. 34072 *257 Squadron* during the Spa Valley Railway's winter steam gala in February last year. The locomotives are approaching the bridge over Broom Lane, which will be a focus for the heritage line's new civil engineering consultant. NICK BURGESS

NO fewer than 11 bridges within the five-mile Spa Valley line from Tunbridge Wells West to the national network station of Eridge, coupled with numerous culverts, drainage, embankments, cuttings, retaining walls, and buildings, mean that engineering expertise is placed alongside all the other demanding requirements of running a heritage railway in the 21st century.

For 10 years, Graham Cole has been the Spa Valley's civil engineering consultant, but he has now retired, and following an request for qualified people to apply for the role, the railway confirmed on January 7 that it had appointed Alan Cudlipp, who runs Apex Rail Consultancy Ltd., as the new position-holder, bringing with him more than 43 years of experience in civil engineering and permanent way engineering, and he is a chartered engineer in both disciplines.

One of the 11 bridges on his urgent shopping list will be the structure over Broom Lane, between Tunbridge Wells and Groombridge, the railway's main intermediate station, which requires immediate repairs to ensure it remains open for rail traffic prior to its planned replacement, for which a company has already been appointed. Built in the 1890s, it is suffering from corrosion on the primary girder flanges, particularly on the web flange angles.

"We were presented with two options: repair the corroding metal work on the bridge or replace it with a brand-new one" said general manager Jonnie Pay.

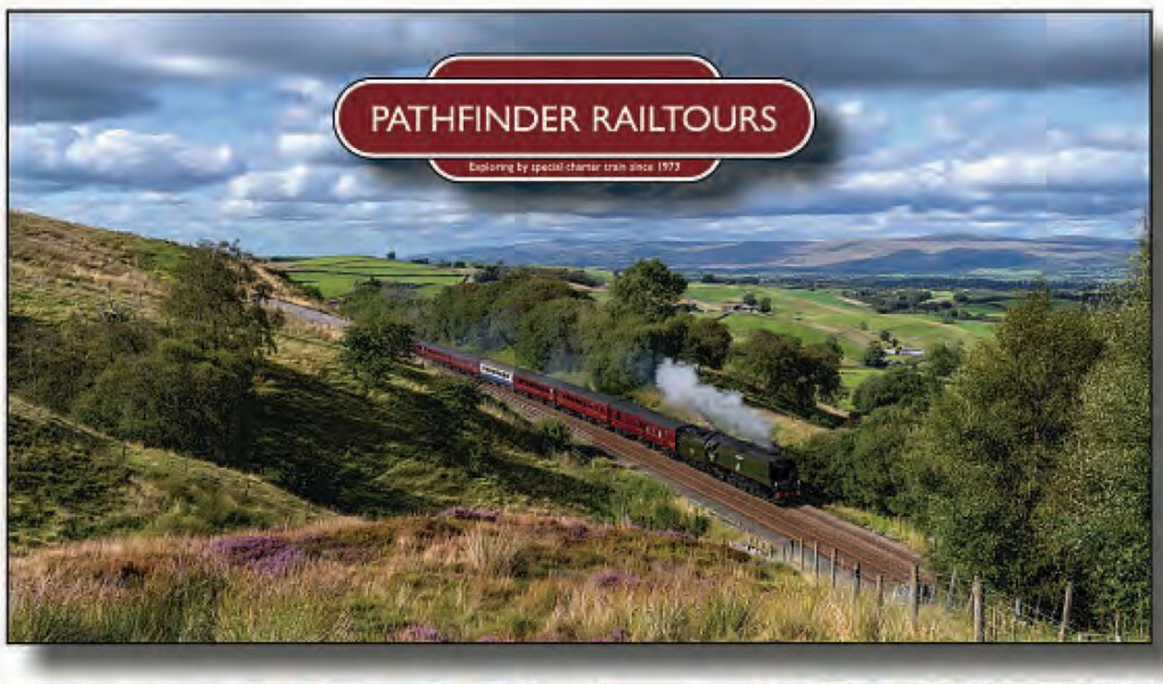
"After considering the possibilities, it became clear that replacing the bridge was the most cost-effective solution, at a cost of about £300,000.

"While repairing the affected areas is possible, it would only temporarily extend the bridge's life and potentially cost the same, if not more, than constructing a new one."

The railway has launched a £300,000 appeal to fund the urgent works, which will be carried out in three phases. The first phase will be to design the new structure, which will be followed by its construction. The third and final phase will be to remove the existing life-expired bridge and fit the replacement.

"We are appealing for people to help ensure that we can complete this enormous project and replace the bridge in 2025," Jonnie said. "We know a bridge isn't glamorous, but without it, we might not be able to run trains over the entire length of our railway."

To donate, visit justgiving.com/campaign/spvr-broomlane



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We steam through the Lune Gorge and up to the 916ft Shap Summit. Our train then heads down towards the border city of Carlisle for our lunchtime break (approximately 1240 – 1420*). Here, you can visit the cathedral or castle, or take a wander around the shops and eateries in the city centre.

After the break, with everyone back on board, we begin our return journey along the Eden Valley and over the scenic Settle and Carlisle Railway.

From Appleby, we journey high along the roof of England. Our steam locomotive will be working extremely hard through Kirkby Stephen and along a ledge on the flanks of the Wild Boar Fell, with Mallerstang Edge towering across the now diminutive river Eden.

At Ais Gill, we reach the summit with superb views of the lofty Arten Gill and Dent Head viaducts, before a panoramic view of the Three Peaks as we cross the magnificent 24 arch Ribblehead Viaduct – hopefully with a sprinkling of snow too!

There is much delight to come, as our train heads down Ribblesdale to Settle and Hellifield, across to Clitheroe, over the 48 arch Whalley Viaduct, up the hard climb to Wilpshire, then down to the cotton town of Blackburn. We then revert back to our diesel locomotive, and after a quick reversal, it will take us homeward.

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Second heritage Underground unit restoration is progressing

By Owen Hayward

Q stock driving motor car No. 4417 departs LTM's Acton depot on November 21, when it was moved to Rampart Engineering for mechanical and electrical work to be carried out. LTM

THE face of London's underground network has changed dramatically since its inception, with steam locomotives giving way to electric examples which were then displaced by units themselves.

While the 38TS unit has been the only heritage stock operating trips anywhere on the network in recent years, at the London Transport Museum's Acton depot restoration of a second heritage consist has been quietly progressing in recent years, with one of the driving trailers recently sent to a contractor for electrical work to be carried out.

The London Underground Q series was introduced in 1924 after the London Passenger Transport Board took over operation of the District Line from the District Railway in 1933. These sets comprised converted motor cars from existing units which had been upgraded to be fitted with electro-pneumatic braking and guard-controlled air-operated doors, with conversions from vehicles drawn from G, K, L, M and N stock consists.

Following an order for 183 new trailer and 25 new motor cars, the Q38 stock was introduced in 1938. The carriages had bodies with flared sides, with trains comprising a mix of older cars with American-style clerestory roofs dating from 1923, and were the last of the Underground trains to be designed in this way. Each consist would be formed with a different mix of vehicles, meaning that passengers never knew what formation they would be travelling on.

Part of daily life

They became a familiar part of daily life for Londoners and tourists travelling in and out of central London from the newly-built estates in Barking and Dagenham, and the suburbs of Ealing, Hounslow, Richmond and Wimbledon. When war broke out in 1939, under the direction of the chief executive of London Transport, Frank Pick, Q stock trains were used to aid the evacuation of children from the city.

After the Second World War, vehicles from the Q series were converted for R Stock units being introduced with some of these examples remaining in service until 1983, while the last of the pure Q stock trains ran on September 26, 1971.

In 2018, LTM announced it was launching a project to return an example of the Q Stock back into operational condition, with three surviving vehicles being centre car No. 08063 (which was converted from N stock in 1935 by Cammell of Birmingham) and driving motor cars Nos. 4416 and 4417, both built in 1938 by the Gloucester Railway Carriage & Wagon Company. Work has been carried out by both volunteers drawn from the museum's Friends group and industry experts.

The interior of the cars will be restored to reflect different periods from the Q stock's long history; one will explore life in wartime London, while the second will reflect life during the postwar years of austerity. Finally, the third will illustrate the growing optimism and prosperity of the 1950s, as well as tell a story of direct recruitment from the Caribbean.

Since the launch of the project, volunteers have been concentrating on the interiors which has involved overhauling door mechanisms and updating the electrical and lighting circuits to meet modern standards.

The next phase of this project will be to see each car lifted in turn to allow work to be carried out on the underframes, bogies and wheelsets, which LTM has contracted out to Rampart Engineering at Barrow Hill Roundhouse in Chesterfield.

On November 21, 2024, car No. 4417 was the first vehicle to be despatched there for work to commence which will include installing electrical conduit and cables, fitting of a motor alternator, installing traction motors, overhauling the braking and air systems and undertaking a testing regime to prove the safety of the cars.

More to follow

It is expected car No. 4416 will follow for the same treatment, with centre car No. 08063 planned to arrive with Rampart during the summer. Upon completion, all three will return by road to one of the Transport for London traincare depots where they will be coupled together for testing.

A LTM spokesman said: "This project could only be undertaken thanks to former transport professionals remembering the museum in their wills. This includes a generous bequest from the late Bob Greenaway, a well-respected Underground mechanical engineer, former president of the London Underground Railway Society and past editor of *Underground News*. In addition, the project is reliant on the ongoing and dedicated support of London Transport Museum Friends and volunteers."

No set date was being given for the Q stock to return to service. However, it was estimated that it would be unlikely to be in a position to carry passengers before 2026.

➜ On November 22, 20T brake van B583 returned to Acton from Rampart where it has undergone a thorough restoration. Built in 1963, it was converted into a barrier wagon to assist stock movements involving locomotives with couplings that were incompatible with LU stock, a use which it is expected to serve once more with future movements of the Q stock. A second brake van – B584 – is also at Ramparts for restoration.

The interior of the sole surviving Q stock vehicles have been the focus of restoration since the project was launched in 2018. With vehicles now moving to Ramparts in turn, the project is heading towards its conclusion. LTM

Some of the volunteers working on the restoration of the Q stock with brake van No. B583, which returned to Acton Depot on November 21 following its own restoration at Rampart. LTM

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Future's safe: Three industrial units adjacent to Llanfair Caereinion station are to be saved thanks to a grant from the UK government that will allow their repairs. Although owned by the heritage line, two of the units house separate museums which faced being made homeless had the deteriorating structures been demolished. JAMES BRETT / W&LLR

Welshpool & Llanfair offered £410k grant to save neighbouring museums

By Owen Hayward

THE Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway received a welcome early Christmas present when it was told on December 23 that it is in line to receive £410,000 in grant aid to help it save an endangered building which it owns adjacent to its Llanfair Caereinion headquarters.

The building comprises three industrial units erected by the local council in the 1970s, and which house two museums, the railway's archives and stores – all of which faced being made homeless as demolition had been considered.

Two of the units are in very poor condition, with the roof having failed leading to water ingress.

The unit housing the line's primary museum displays Llanfair Connections, which tells the story of railway heritage and world-wide links with places such as Austria, Hungary, Taiwan and Sierra Leone. Also housed is Cloverlands Model Car Museum, Wales' premier collection of motor vehicle models. Safeguarding these collections is essential to allow the organisation to educate and engage the public and help fulfil its charitable objectives.

However, demolition is now "no longer an option" as the UK Government has agreed in principle to help it rescue the structures under the Community Ownership Fund with the grant of £410,000, which will enable repairs to be carried out to the roof, improve the museums and open up space for increased community activities. It will also protect the site for future plans to develop the Llanfair Caereinion terminus including upgrading its current workshop facilities, where its historic vehicles are repaired and restored.

The railway's appeals director and vice-chairman Iain McLean said: "This is great news. Saving this building means that we can go ahead with our plans to become an Accredited Museum, can continue to host Cloverlands Model Car Museum and have a dry safe place for our engineering stores. We hope to expand our museum with a recently-donated model railway layout depicting our line, and to welcome local residents for community events.

"I thank the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for their offer, and pay tribute to our former MP Craig Williams, our current MP Steve Witherden, and Llanfair Caereinion Town Council for their support."

Model car museum chairman Andrew Charman said: "We have seen our footfall increase substantially since we moved to Llanfair Caereinion in 2022 and we would have been very sad to lose it all. This gives us the confidence to continue growing."

Steve Witherden MP said "It is great to see that all the hard work done by staff and volunteers at the W&LLR has paid off and they have been successful in obtaining this important grant funding. I know what a difference this will make and look forward to visiting in 2025 and seeing the project take shape."

A railway statement added that: "The UK Government has offered in principle up to £410,000 for building repairs and staff support. This is subject to detailed negotiations with the Community Ownership Fund team. Once these are completed, the railway will be able to share more detailed news about the project."

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The climb up Eardington Bank eases as BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75069 emerges from Knowlesands Tunnel on the Sunday.

SIX STEAM FOR SEVERN VALLEY'S

WINTRY GALA SUCCESS

For the second year in a row, the Severn Valley Railway ran its Winter Steam Gala during the first weekend in January, and the success of the event proved that it is now becoming established as the highlight of the post-Christmas enthusiast calendar, reports John Titlow in words and pictures.

For the year in which Railway 200 is celebrating the bicentenary of the world's first modern railway, the Severn Valley Railway's January 4/5 Winter Steam Gala proved itself as a great start – with much more expected. Furthermore, the event was also a magnificent way to start the SVR's 60th anniversary year.

All six locomotives in steam came from the Bridgnorth-based home fleet: recently returned to the line GWR 0-4-2T No. 1450, minus its tankside logo; GWR 0-6-0PT No. 7714; LMS Stanier mogul No.13268; BR Standard 4MT 4-6-0 No. 75069; flagship GWR 4-6-0 No. 4930 *Hagley Hall*; and GWR 4-6-0 No. 7812 *Erlestoke Manor*. A problem arose the week before the gala when the brick arch of No. 7714 collapsed, leading to fears that it would not be able to take part in the showpiece event. Undeterred staff at Bridgnorth Shed saved the day by rebuilding the arch in time.

Initially, No. 1450 was to run single-headed with two Great Western toplight coaches, but it had not covered enough miles since its recent overhaul at Bill Parker's Flour Mill workshop at Bream in the Forest of Dean and its comeback debut at the Avon Valley Railway's End of Season gala on November 2/3, as featured in *Heritage Railway* issue 326. A decision was therefore taken to run it double-headed throughout the weekend with No. 7714.

Nos. 1450 and 7714 started the gala by running light engine to Kidderminster where No. 7714 was turned. However, due to time constraints, No. 7714 piloted No. 1450.

The intention was to have No. 1450 on the front but due to it needing further settling in, it stayed as the train locomotive on the Saturday, and on the Sunday it was the pilot locomotive. The pair were the only locomotives to face north during the gala.

The Saturday trains started from Kidderminster at 9.25am, the last one rolling in at 10pm. From Bridgnorth, the first train was at 10.45am and the last arrival at 10pm. Delays were generally kept to a minimum and most time was made up. In total, there were 11 departures from each end of the line.

On the Sunday, nine return workings took place. The first train from Bridgnorth was at 10.45am, with *Hagley Hall* hauling the Great Western set. The first service from Kidderminster was much earlier, at 9.15am.

The last passenger arrival at Bridgnorth was 5.25pm, with light engine movements following later to return locomotives to sheds. The last steam arrival at Kidderminster was 7.02pm behind Nos. 1450 and 7714. There was one later arrival behind Class 40 No. 40106 to return the stock.

Services passed at Bewdley, Arley and Hampton Loade. The loops at Highley were not used because all trains travelled the full length of the line, and there were no short workings as in the spring and autumn galas. Due to the length of the trains, Eardington station was not used.

The Railway 200 headboard made an appearance over the two days. On Saturday,

GWR auto tank No. 1450 and pannier No. 7714 cross Wribbenhall Viaduct after departing Bewdley on January 5.

GWR 0-4-2T No. 1450 and 0-6-0PT No. 7714 dig in on the climb up Eardington Bank on January 5.

On a misty, murky January 4 morning, pannier No. 7714 pilots auto tank No. 1450 away from Bewdley with the first train of the gala.

The steam heating is on in the Great Western set of coaches as Severn Valley flagship GWR 4-6-0 No. 4930 drifts into Hampton Loade station on January 4.

it was on No. 75069 and Sunday No. 13268. Care was taken to match the appropriate locomotives with their correct carriages from the home fleet, although there was the odd interloper due to stock being mixed up after the Santa trains.

Five rakes of coaches were in use: the teak set, the Midland rake, Great Western set, and two different Mk.1 sets.

The weather on Saturday was cold and frosty all day, while Sunday saw the area covered with a liberal dusting of snowfall until it was washed away by the afternoon rain.

Historic meet-up

At 2.30pm on Sunday, the SVR hosted the Railway 200 Get Together, one of the biggest-ever gatherings of volunteers and representatives from many of the UK's heritage railways at Highley's Engine House visitor centre, as reported on page 13.

The meet-up, which attracted around 100 people, offered the chance to network with colleagues and discuss the many opportunities presented by Railway 200.

Managing director Jonathon 'Gus' Dunster said: "Our second Winter Steam Gala went very well indeed. Saturday was very busy, Sunday slightly less so due to the unfortunate wet weather but still well-attended.

"I'd say Nos. 1450 and 7714 running double-headed was definitely a very popular attraction.

"Overall, we are very pleased with how the event went, and it's certainly something we want to continue with.

"We had representatives attend from many heritage lines from around the country, and we were united in our desire to give a proper heritage welcome to Railway 200. It really was quite something to see so many like-minded people gathered together.

"There's a tangible sense of anticipation for the many events that are going to take place to celebrate this momentous year, and the SVR is very excited to be a part of it."

Two further steam galas will be held this year: April 18-21 will see the Spring Steam Gala and the Autumn Steam Gala will take place on September 18-21. One visitor making a welcome return for the spring gala is LMS Jubilee No. 45596 *Bahamas*, which ran at last year's autumn gala.

There will also be two diesel galas. The spring event will take place on May 15-18 and the autumn one on October 18-21.

The popular Step Back to the 1940s weekends will take place on June 7/8 and 14/15, and celebrations to mark Railway 200 will be held from June 27 to July 6. The railway will be marking its 60th anniversary on July 26/27, and August 9/10 will see the regular vintage transport extravaganza staged. All-new for the SVR is the Boogie Lights Express, creating a party atmosphere on board the trains with music and a kaleidoscope of different colours and flashing lights. These services start on February 28 and run on Friday and Saturday evenings throughout March. Two trains depart each evening at 6pm and 8pm.

The next regular running dates are the February 15- 23 half term. Services will be daily, except Monday and Friday.

For more information about the line's calendar, visit https://svr.co.uk/all-events/ HR

A great year awaits: Carrying the Railway 200 headboard, Stanier mogul no 13268 climbs towards Bewdley Tunnel with the Midland set in tow on the Sunday.

With a high River Severn in the background, GWR 4-6-0 No. 7812 *Erlestoke Manor* passes Little Rock, heading for Hampton Loade, on January 4.

Above: LMS Stanier mogul No. 13268 climbs out of Knowlesands Tunnel with the Midland set of carriages on the Saturday.

Left: With frost on the ground on the Saturday, GWR Nos. 7714 and 1450 pull away from the speed restriction past Hay Bridge.

No. 7714, with No. 1450 tucked inside, departs Bewdley for Bridgnorth on the Saturday.

Nos. 7714 and 1450 charge out of Hampton Loade en route for Bridgnorth on January 4.

A TRIP BACK IN TIME TO THE DAWN OF THE RAILWAYS

The Railway 200 team visited Network Rail's National Records Centre in York where historically-priceless original documents, including the handwritten proposal by George Stephenson for the Stockton & Darlington Railway three years before it opened in 1825, are digitised to ensure that they survive in perpetuity, as **Phil Marsh** reports.

Readers will be aware that heritage railways, railway museums and the National Archives are locations, among many others, that contain a plethora of historically priceless railway documents. Furthermore, many individuals have built up their own collections over the years which reflect their interest.

The race to digitise these is now well underway before items degrade beyond rescue. It has become clear that, as age catches up with collectors, some collections are simply thrown away.

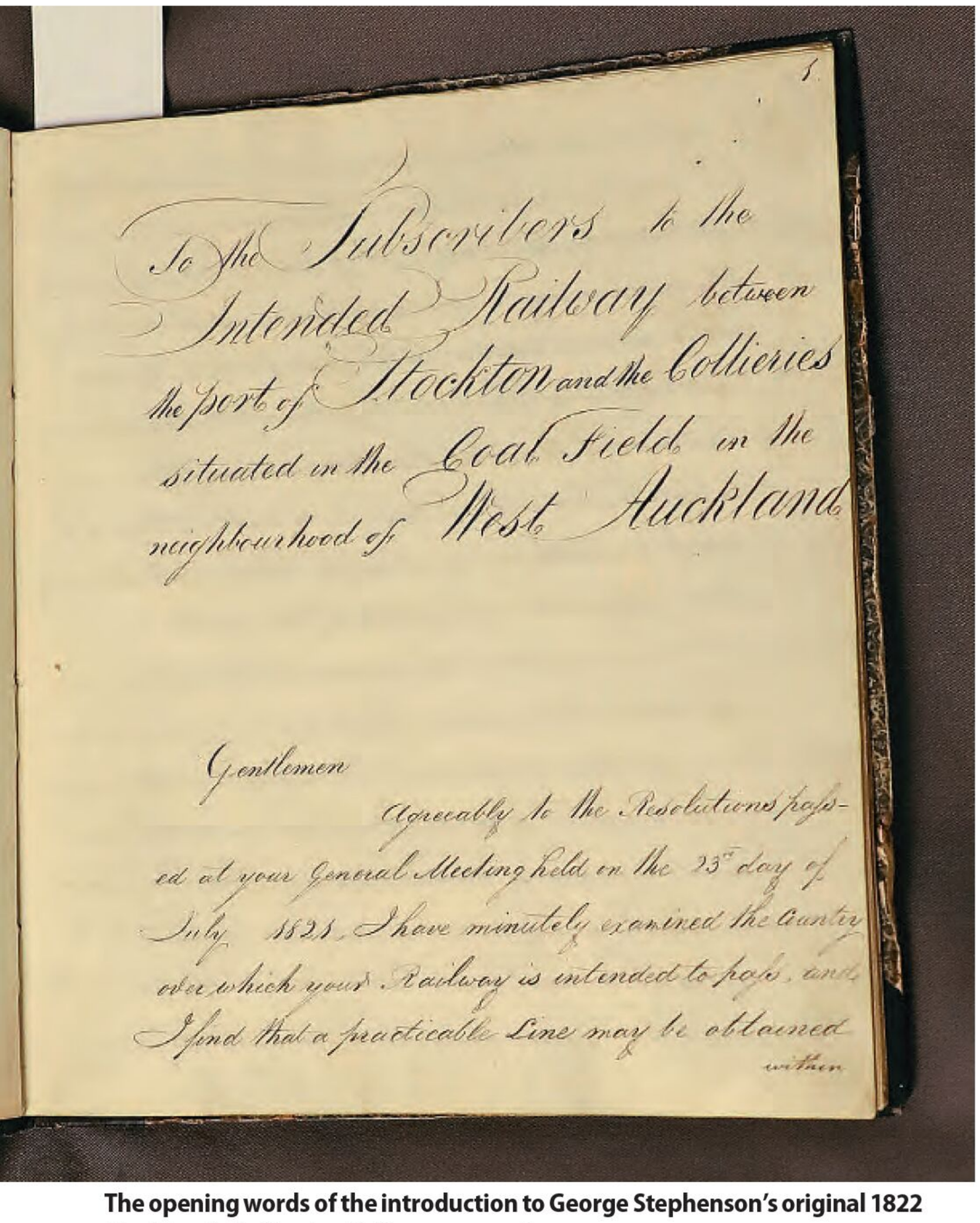
The Railway 200 team arranged a visit to the National Archives at Kew to see what railway contents may be of use for that project in 2025. The visiting team included Vicky Stretch, the highly-experienced qualified Network Rail archivist, and side discussions about her role resulted in an invitation to the National Records Centre in York.

The NRC is the centralised, highly secure Network Rail archive. It opened in 2008, when the civil and signalling engineering records and railway registry of deeds became housed in one fire-protected, temperature and humidity-controlled modern building. These records came from 11 regional former BR and Railtrack-operated record centres at locations such as York, Swindon, Manchester, Glasgow and Croydon. Property deeds from Gillingham and the Plan Arch at Waterloo were also moved to York.

What, then, was so important that this project was created? Network Rail chief executive Andrew Haines told *Heritage Railway*: "For the railway to be successful in the future, we need to understand our past, and nothing plays a more important role in that endeavour than the York archive and its team of highly skilled and committed archivists."

Seventy people work in the NRC, providing the rail industry with accurate and timely information needed to operate today's modern network, a legal requirement mandated by The Railway Heritage Act. This legislation obliges NR to keep any archive which may be required to run today's railways; indeed, the rail industry is the only industry in the country that has an Act of Parliament to protect its heritage.

Vicky has the task of identifying what records should be retained or, if no longer relevant to today's railway, ensuring they are gifted to a museum, society or county records office. And what a task

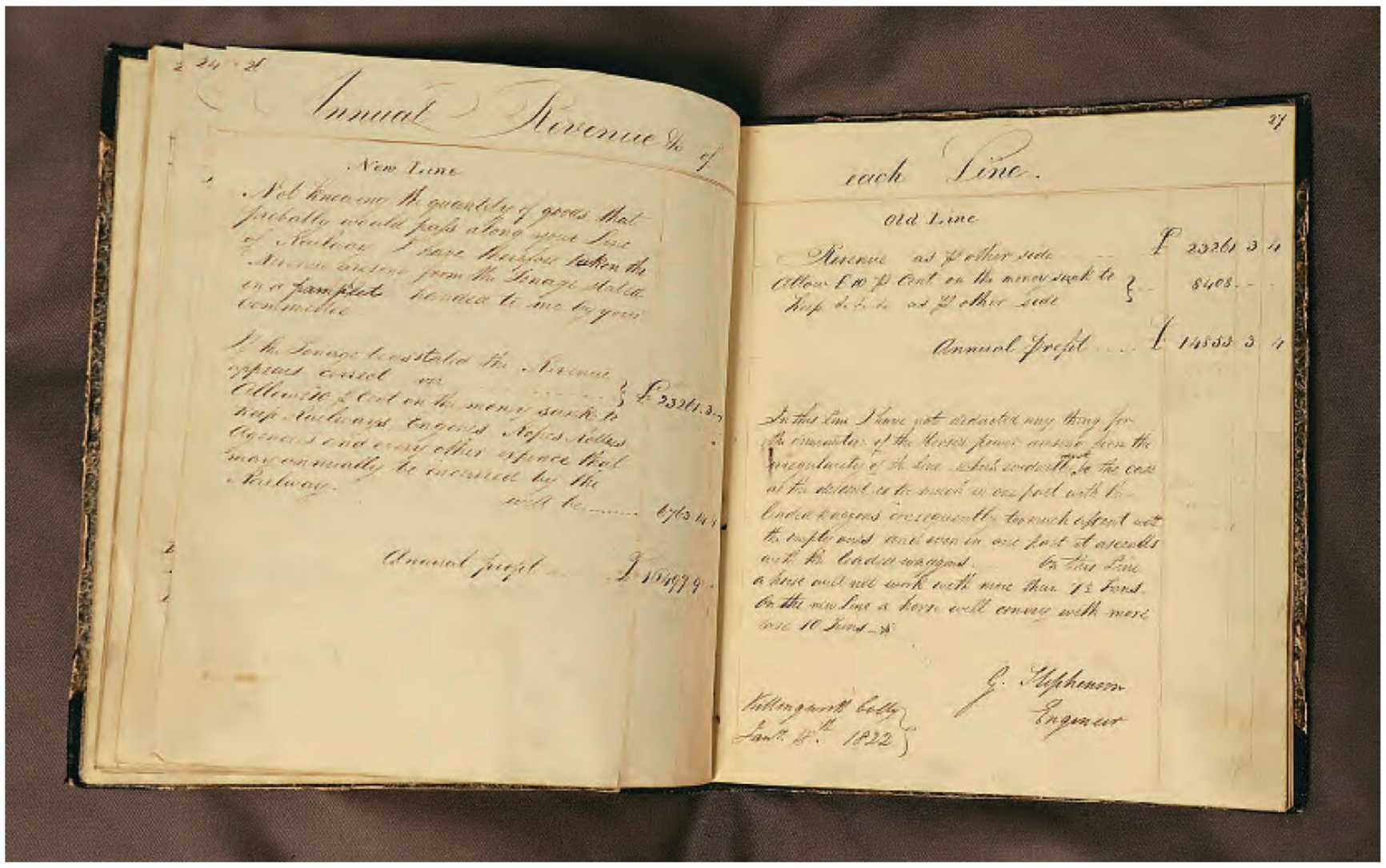


The opening words of the introduction to George Stephenson's original 1822 Stockton & Darlington Railway prospectus.

John Page, one of the researchers at Network Rail's National Records Centre in York, with the George Stephenson 1822 Stockton & Darlington prospectus.

Trevor Dawton and Vicky Stretch at the Network Rail archive centre in York.

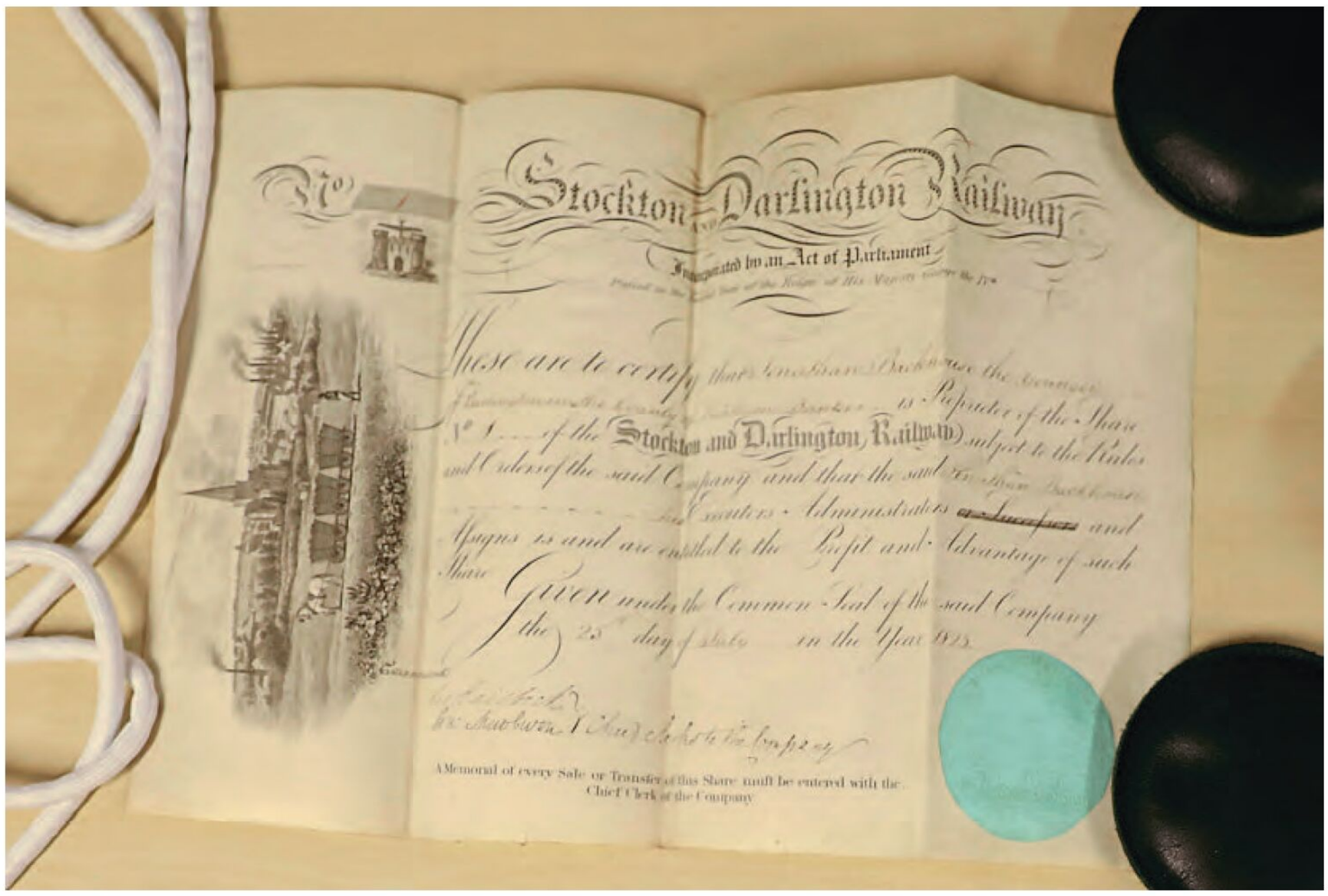
Saving priceless original documents in perpetuity in the digitisation room.



Paperwork that changed the world: George Stephenson's 1822 Stockton and Darlington prospectus revenue forecasts.

Network Rail's paper treasure chest: the archive centre's storage racking.

The Network Rail archive centre storage bay.



Stockton and Darlington Railway share certificate number one of July 7, 1823.

this is, as was demonstrated when she arranged a tour of the archives and to meet Trevor Dawton, head of corporate records management, who is in overall charge of the record-keeping.

He explained that the team deals with about 1.5 million requests for information annually. He is a time-served railway professional going back to BR days in Croydon, where he became involved in information and records management. The Corporate Archive has to identify, select and preserve important records forming the historical record of the future.

What are the archives, dating back to the 16th century, used for? Requests are commonly made concerning the deeds for land boundaries and property information. If the information exists only in paper form, it is digitised, but the original documentation is retained.

These documents are digitised by scanning or being photographed on bespoke machinery in a large reproduction room also containing industrial printers. Sometimes an actual paper version is still required, possibly for planning documentation to be submitted to relevant authorities. This room also has microfilm readers, an early form of digitisation.

Although many readers will be familiar with these forms of digitisation, research that the author has made revealed that the LNER was among the first organisations – if not the first – to digitise important archives when it publicised the completion of its Preservation of Records project in August 1942. When the Second World War broke out, the LNER realised the threat to its records from bombing. In particular, it said that thousands of documents, rate books, engineering plans and agreements "were either irreplaceable or replaceable only at great cost in time and money."

The company looked at where its records were kept, assessed which locations were at risk of enemy attack, and looked at evacuating these records, deciding the ongoing risk of destruction and no back-up was too great.

The LNER wrote: "Since the early days of the war, dusty ledgers, well-thumbed rate books and austere parchments have been brought out, dusted down and snapped, and now (August 1942) all the books of major importance have been turned into a permanent record which can be stored with security in a minute space."

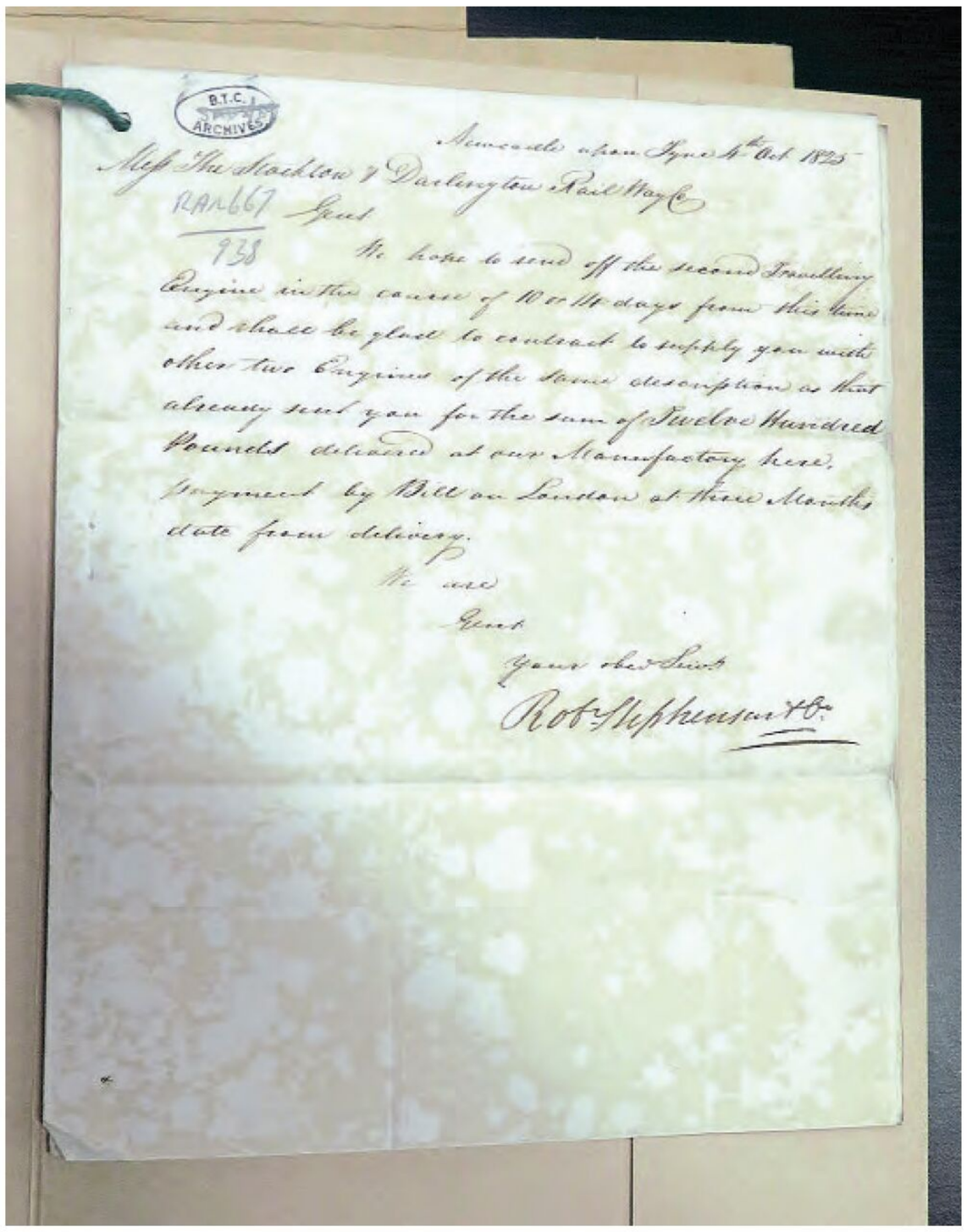
Even a large manuscript covered in small copper plated handwriting has been photographed on film "no more than 1¼in by 1in, and the detail is incredibly clear and waits only for enlargement back to its original size if required." Several documents, it was said, had been printed from this film at the original size, so the wisdom of the scheme was amply proved.

This, then, was digitisation at the end of the 1930s, and today this practice carries on in the NRC in the modern format of scanning, plus photography where special fixed photographic copying systems are in place.

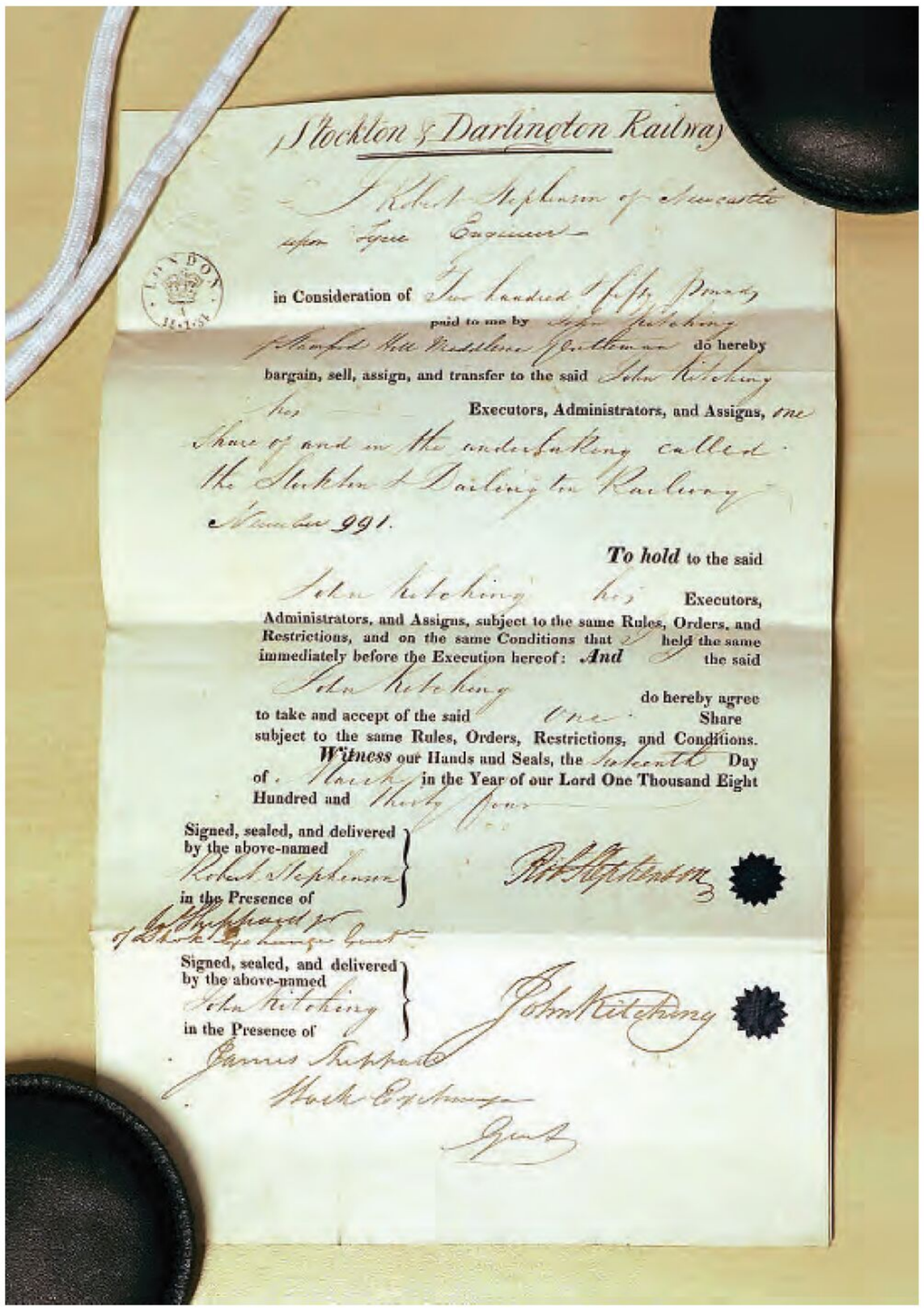
Vicky then showed this author into the inner sanctum of the historic archives, behind security doors, to meet John Page, one of the researchers.

Vicky brings decades of experience to the NRC as a qualified archivist, having worked in archives and records including a multi-national business and the National Railway Museum before joining NR in 2008.

John had prepared some examples from this historically significant collection for perusal. The oldest English language



The 1825 locomotive delivery letter and charges from Robert Stephenson in the National Archives.



Robert Stephenson's share certificate sale document of 1834.

The London Chatham & Dover Railway Faversham goods yard gates plan.

deed dates from 1603 and concerns the former freight depot at Bow, East London, now being regenerated by NR.

Archival treasures

I asked John what his most astonishing find was.

"I was somewhat taken aback six or seven years ago when a seemingly nondescript notebook came out of a folder containing deeds I had selected for investigating for a client," he said.

He then showed this book for inspection, which immediately generated a sense of history and awe. It was the original handwritten 1822 Stockton & Darlington Railway proposal signed by George Stephenson, engineer, detailing the route and costs involved.

Vicky said: "This was undoubtably the best find, but another unusual find was discovered as I unrolled a set of boring-looking drawings and out fell an A4-sized technical drawing."

It was the design for the skirting board to be installed in the Paddington GWR boardroom, dated February 7, 1852, signed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

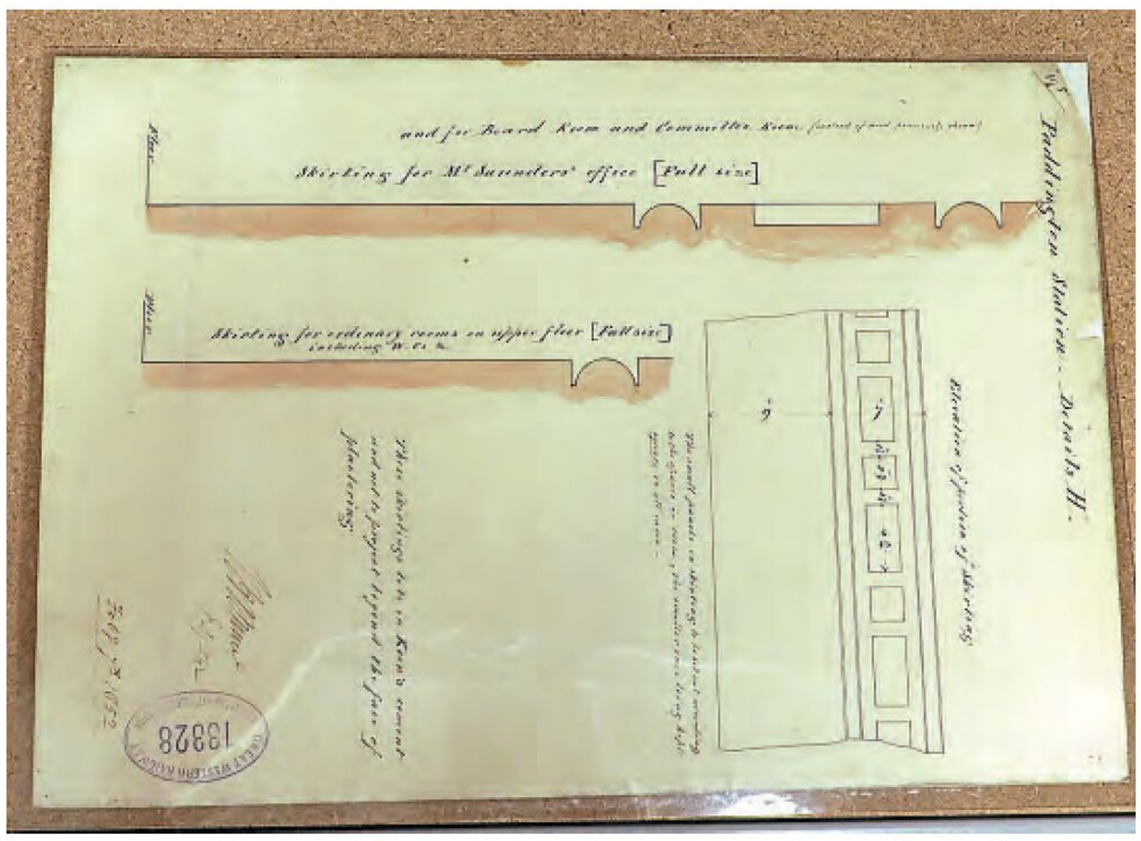
Robert Stephenson's Stockton & Darlington Railway Share certificate No. 1 was also brought out for viewing, plus the contract when he sold it for £250 in 1834.

A walk round the storage area revealed long rows of racking with rolled-up plans alongside thick books of Victorian railway construction contracts, as well as very modern archives stored on discs!

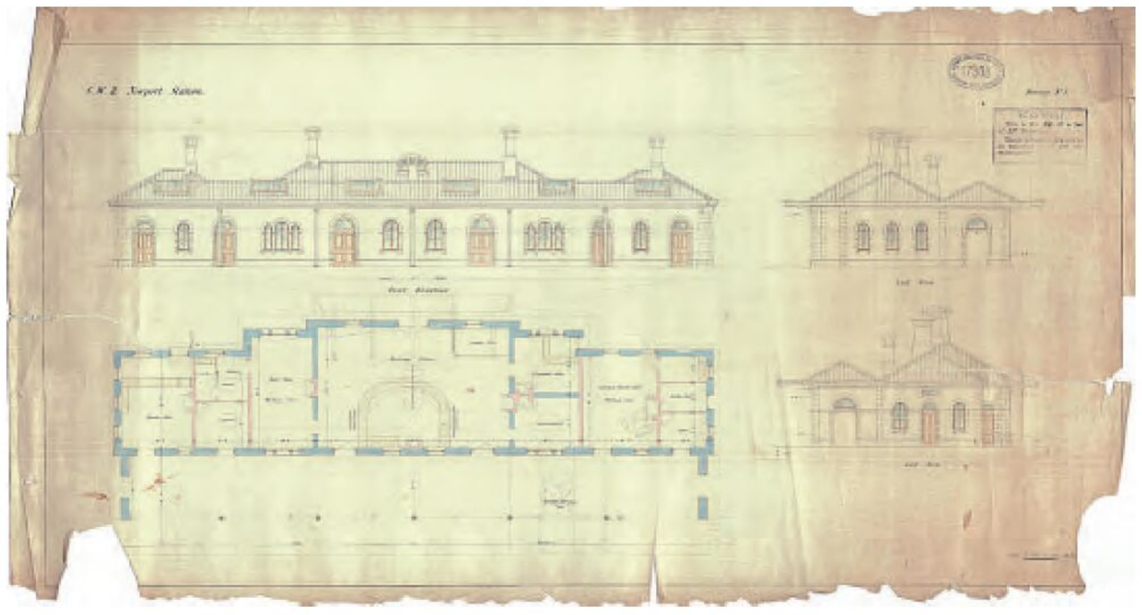
The engineering drawings such as for the London, Chatham & Dover Railway parcels gates at Faversham are used by projects understanding how renovations should be carried out – vital for listed buildings. They also show how a building had been altered throughout its history and serve as a rich source of information for archaeologists' conservation reports, useful for grant applications.

This is why the Railway Heritage Trust (RHT) has financially supported the archive operation for many years and on an ongoing basis with an annual grant for paper conservation.

RHT chairman Andy Savage told *Heritage Railway*: "The trust is acutely aware of the value of the older material in Network



Isambard Kingdom Brunel's 1852 GWR Paddington boardroom skirting board plan.



Above: The plans for the station building at Newport in Monmouthshire which date from about 1850.

Right: The St Pancras station land deed of 1895.

Rail's archive, both as items of historical interest and as records of structures that remain in use.

"The conservation and restoration of this material is essential to ensuring its ongoing availability for both study and use.

"For more than 20 years, we have been delighted to give NR a grant every year for the restoration of some of this material, with the total sum given now well exceeding £100,000.

"Having started the grants to support the archive of Brunel's material, then held at Swindon, in more recent times our grants have been used on material originating with the Stephensons and other great figures of early railway building."

Today, from time to time, disputes arise with landowners alongside the railway and the original deeds and plans can be crucial in resolving these as they show clearly rights, liabilities and ownership.

Trevor explained: "Our job is to understand the records that NR produces, identify what is important for the historical record, and make sure they are preserved."

Given records are now digital, he explained: "Unlike paper-based archives which, kept in the right environmental conditions, will still be accessible over time, we need to be astute in how digital content can be accessed over time and appropriately protected."

Given everyone is familiar with wretched software upgrades to computers, Trevor also explained how the team deals with new software.

The NRC uses digital preservation system Preservica to keep up with technology advances, which retains all records as digitised but also upgrades them to any new format that is introduced, and vital documents are also retained in the event of a compete digital wipeout.

Vicky suggested that her biggest challenge was moving paper records into the digital age and using artificial intelligence to keep track.

She commented: "Data is everywhere but nowhere; you can't get your hands on digital records to go through them, organise them, and understand them as you can with boxes of paper records.

"Instead, given the sheer volume of digital records, artificial intelligence can help us look for historically important content, identify it, and bring it into the archive for permanent preservation."

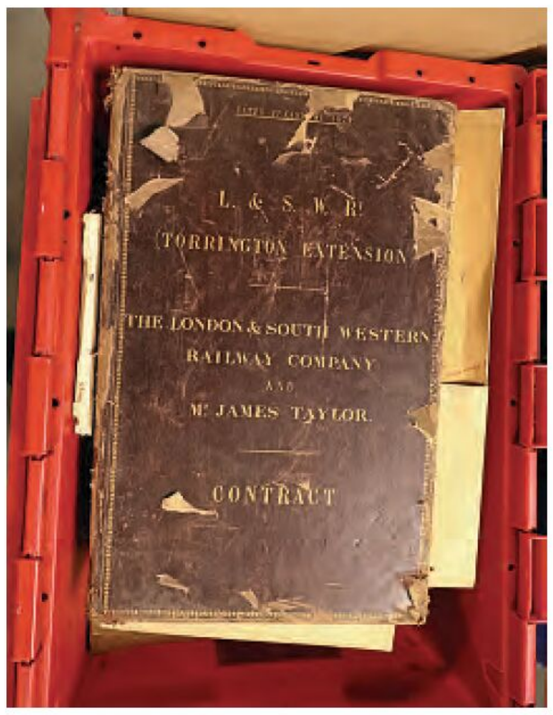
When the NRC team decides that it has no further interest or liability for an item detailed in its archives, the documentation will be offered to designated county record offices or other local archives. The team members all reckoned that the best part of their respective roles was just being among all these historical records.

Finally, the importance of the NRC brought a comment from Lord Peter Hendy, former Network Rail chairman and now Rail Minister.

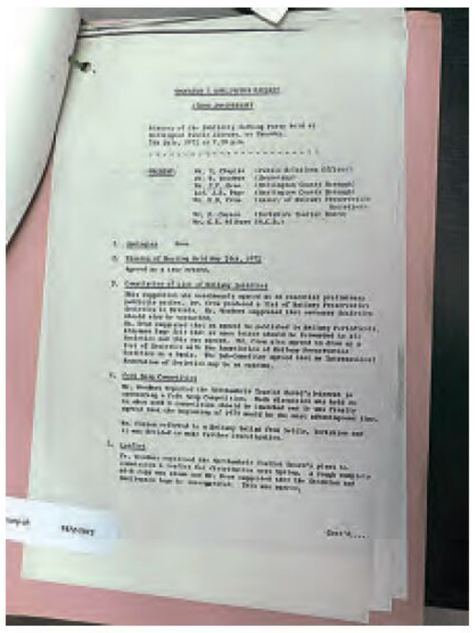
"The railway is nearly 200 years old, and thus the Network Rail archive is an essential tool for today's and tomorrow's railway.

"What our ancestors built must be maintained and modernised, and their records and drawings are essential tools. I am so pleased Phil Marsh has thrown light on this enormous resource, and it's available to everyone on the railway who needs to know about how today's railway and the land it runs on was bought, designed and built." HR

➜ This article was made possible by Network Rail in association with the Railway 200 project. It should be noted visitors are not allowed to the NRC.

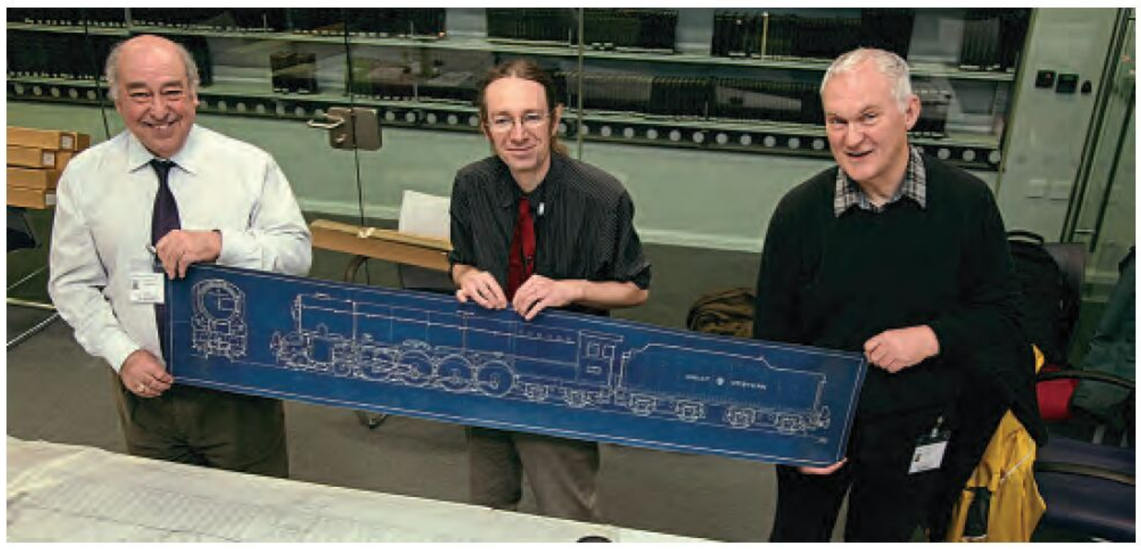


The 1871 contract book for the London & South Western railway's Torrington extension.



Last time round: British Rail's planning minutes for the 1975 Shildon 150 cavalcade marking the anniversary of the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.

A corridor at the National Records Centre in York decorated with historic prints from the Network Rail archives, as seen when the Railway 200 team visited on September 4.



The late Dennis Howells, who owned WR 0-6-0PT No. 9466 for several years, led a project at the National Railway Museum scanning and cataloguing its GWR locomotive archives. This is a GWR blueprint for 4-8-4 Uranus, which was never built, and is part of the NRM's traction and rolling stock archives. Pictured left to right on January 24, 2012, are Dennis Howells, Tim Proctor and Ivor Lewis.

HERITAGE RAILWAY

THE COMPLETE PRESERVATION NEWS MAGAZINE

Churchward 2-8-0 No. 2807, recently outshopped in GWR wartime black livery, is reflected in the still waters of the River Dart at Dartington shortly after departure from Totnes Riverside on January 3. The locomotive spent time on loan to the South Devon Railway for the 'Polar Express' services there in November and December and but a member of the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway's regular fleet. OWEN HAYWARD

SOUTH DEVON'S GALA BIDS FAREWELL TO THE AUTO TANK

Its post-New Year gala may not have gone quite to plan, but the one thing that did notchange was the final outing for the South Devon Railway's auto-fitted pannier tank, as **Owen Hayward** reports.

There was much of a Great Western flavour to its January 3-5 winter steam gala, with three different locomotives from the region covering three different liveries covering just as many eras of GW history. But the annual event at the South Devon Railway did not quite turn out as intended, with a visiting locomotive being failed at the very start of the event and sadly having to sit the whole thing out. Despite this, the railway persevered and put on a successful weekend of steam that saw its resident 0-6-0PT No. 6412 bow out of service pending overhaul.

Built at Swindon in 1934, it was withdrawn in November 1964 and arrived at Buckfastleigh with classmates Nos. 6430 and 6435. Following restoration, it hauled the then Dart Valley Railway's first train on reopening day on April 5, 1969, before transferring to the Paignton & Dartmouth Railway in the first half of 1970s. In 1976 it moved again, this time having been purchased by the West Somerset Railway, where it became one of the first ormer main line steam locomotives to work facross the revived Minehead branch.

Coming back home

By 2008, the WSR had grown to the extent that it deemed No. 6412 to be too small for its services and a sale was agreed that saw the pannier tank return to the SDR, where its preservation story had begun. An overhaul was started that saw it return to steam in 2015, following which it has been a regular performer once more on the branch between Buckfastleigh and Totnes. Being a locomotive fitted with auto train equipment, it has often been seen working with the SDR's fleet of auto coaches, and it was in this configuration that it could be found throughout the gala when it was paired with Hawksworth third No. 233 *Kingfisher*, with both locomotive and carriage wearing BR livery.

Following the event, No. 6412 was withdrawn to await overhaul; coincidentally, classmate No. 6430 also returned to Buckfastleigh in 2021, having been sold in 1989 and moved to Llangollen in 1996. Currently on loan to the Gwili Railway, it too will soon be withdrawn for overhaul, meaning that none of the surviving examples of the 6400 class will be operational, although just as many examples of the auto-fitted 1400 class 0-4-2Ts are soon to be found running in their place.

The three-day gala was also an opportunity for enthusiasts to enjoy Churchward 2800 2-8-0 No. 2807 in regular passenger use following its foray to Devon to work 'Polar Express' services, when it was fitted with a fake cowcatcher and its GWR identity temporarily replaced by No. 1225, taken from the Pere Marquette 2-8-4 that starred in the 2004 animated film. Suitably defrocked of its Americanised features, No. 2807 sports GWR wartime black, chosen specifically for this reason, with it due to return to the SDR from its home at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway for the same duty over the next few years following withdrawal of Manor 4-6-0 No. 7820 *Dinmore Manor,* which has fulfilled the role since 2021.

Deputising for the failed Peckett on the first train of the day, No. 2807 clears the Staverton outer home signal on January 3 with a pair of matching GWR Collett carriages. CALLUM WILLCOX

No. 2807 was the first 2-8-0 to run on the SDR since 2015, when No. 3803 was withdrawn from service and subsequently sold – along with the unrestored remains of No. 2873 – to the Paignton & Dartmouth in 2022.

Finally, small prairie No. 5526 rounded off the WR trio sporting unlined GWR green with Great Western lettering across its tanks. Built in 1928 and withdrawn in 1962, it was first preserved by the Project 5526 Group in 1985 and moved to the Cotswolds and the GW/R, but the facilities there at the time were insufficient for restoration work, which was later started at the Swindon Works Heritage Centre in the former DMU repair shop. No. 5526 then arrived on the SDR in 1992, where work was completed that saw restoration completed.

Problem Peckett

The gala had been due to see four steam locomotives in service. Making a rare visit away from the Bristol Harbour Railway was Peckett 0-6-0ST No. 1940 *Henbury,* which had been scheduled to work services between Buckfastleigh and Staverton. Unfortunately, during an inspection on the Friday morning, issues with washout plugs resulted in its withdrawal from service for the day. Despite the best efforts of SDR engineers, who worked closely with those from the BHR to rectify the issues, hopes for *Henbury* to make an appearance later that weekend amounted to nought, and the locomotive did not make it out of the yard at any point.

"We are, of course, disappointed to not have had *Henbury* work a passenger train on the SDR yet, and we will be looking at options in conjunction with its owners to allow it to work here in the future," a railway statement said. "We apologise for the disappointment regarding *Henbury,* which has unfortunately been outside of our control."

January 3 was plagued by further problems, with freezing overnight temperatures beforehand bringing about a loss of water supply to Totnes Riverside and damage to signalling equipment that caused delays. Combined with the late failure of the Peckett, delays were inevitable, but volunteers persevered to operate as planned, with Class 09 D3721 taking over the majority of *Henbury*'s duties.

On the frosty morning of January 3, WR 0-6-0PT No. 6412 skirts the River Dart at Caddaford as it sets off for Totnes Riverside. OWEN HAYWARD

With frost lingering on the ground, the auto train comprising No. 6412 and auto coach No. 233 *Kingfisher* slows as it approaches an ungated crossing at Nappers Halt during the afternoon of January 3. OWEN HAYWARD

The setting sun silhouettes No. 5526 as it departs Staverton for Totnes Riverside with its final working of the day on January 3. ADAM ASHFORD

Sporting its wartime GWR black livery, the morning sun shines down on No. 2807 as it approaches Buckfastleigh. RUSSELL AYRE

No. 5526 drifts towards a speed restriction at Dartington as it approaches Totnes Riverside, the train reflected in the still waters of the Dart below. OWEN HAYWARD

While Nos. 2807 and 5526 ran the full 6.64 miles of the branch, the 'Gronk' and auto train ran shuttles in opposing directions from Staverton, which often culminated in the impressive sight of four trains passing at the mid-point station, with two in the main loop and the shuttles stabled in a siding. For the remainder of the weekend, matters ran largely to time. A revised timetable was drawn up to cater for the absence of the Peckett which saw all its booked paths removed.

Despite the setbacks it faced, the railway reported that turnout for the event had been healthy and better than expected when faced with strong competition in other parts of the country, the local weather warnings in place at the time, and the general challenges of traveling to the region.

The railway had yet to publish its full events programme for the year ahead as we went to press; however, a brochure handed out with tickets during the winter outing hinted that a gala was being planned for the Easter weekend. HR

Steam to the North Wales coast

By Tim Hobman and Robin Jones

ON Saturday, March 1, the Railway Touring Company will run a tour entitled 'The Mancunian' to the North Wales coast.

Starting out steam-hauled from Manchester Piccadilly, as the title of the tour indicates, the train is planned to head via Heaton Chapel to pick up additional passengers at Stockport. After leaving Stockport, the route is expected to be through Altrincham and Northwich to Chester for a water stop.

Once the locomotive is refreshed, the train is scheduled to pass over the River Dee and into Wales on the North Wales Line. The route follows the coast, with views across the Dee Estuary and the Irish Sea as the train passes through Prestatyn, Rhyl and Colwyn Bay, to the first stop of Llandudno Junction. Here, passengers have the option of alighting for a break of just under six hours, which will allow time to catch a local train to the nearby seaside resort of Llandudno.

Final destination

Those who decide to stay on the train will continue westwards across the Conwy Estuary on Robert Stephenson's tubular bridge in the shadow of the castle, then through Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan towards Bangor. Crossing the Menai Strait on the Britannia Bridge, the tour is planned to enter the Isle of Anglesey and cross the island to the final destination of Holyhead.

At Holyhead, passengers will have just under three hours to explore the town or marina while the steam locomotive is serviced.

The journey home is expected to be steam-hauled via the same route as the outward journey, picking up passengers at Llandudno Junction and then heading via Chester back to Stockport and Manchester.

There are options of premier dining, first class and standard class tickets, with a discount for junior travellers and families.For more details, visit www.railwaytouring.net

On Saturday, May 3, Vintage Trains is to run its 'North Wales Coast Express' to the Llandudno Transport Festival.

The festival is the largest in Wales and held in conjunction with the resort's Victorian Extravaganza.

Transport showcase

Costumes, a vintage fairground and a host of attractions combine in a unique annual celebration of transport and entertainment heritage within the town.

The tour will depart from Birmingham New Street and pick up at Coleshill Parkway, Nuneaton, Tamworth, Lichfield Trent Valley, Stafford and Crewe. At Chester, diesel traction will take over for the run to Llandudno.

For more details and to book, visit https://vintagetrains.co.uk

Nick Ralls takes over at Tyseley

FORMER Severn Valley Railway general manager Nick Ralls has been appointed as managing director of Vintage Trains Charitable Trust.

Nick, who was in charge of the SVR from 2007 to 2019, has most recently worked as CEO of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust.

Taking over at Tyseley from February 1, Nick will be responsible for the development of all Vintage Trains operations and engineering.

"I am looking forward to leading the team at Vintage Trains and building on its enviable success and reputation," he said.

VT chairman Michael Whitehouse said: "We are delighted Nick is joining us. We look forward to working with him to build our team and develop our activities for the benefit of wider and more diverse audiences."

Back in the heritage railway sector: Nick Ralls is the new managing director at Tyseley-based Vintage Trains.

LNER A4 Pacific No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* heads through Leicester with Steam Dreams' 'The Christmas Cracker' tour from Colchester to Chester on December 13. ROBERT FALCONER

Pre-order Issue 329: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Bulleid Battle of Britain light Pacific No. 34067 *Tangmere* heads the return of Railway Touring Company's 'The Edinburgh Christmas Market' trip into Platform 4 at Newcastle Central station on December 21. The tour was said to be *Tangmere*'s first-ever trip to Newcastle.

The locomotive was rostered for the tour after the completion of repairs at West Coast Railways' Carnforth depot following damage to its left-side cylinder, which severed the piston rod, while running over the Settle and Carlisle line in September 2024. It will be hauling West Coast Railways tours in 2025. DAVID GILLIS

Thames Valley Class 57s 'rare tracks' tour for passengers who are ready to take a wander

By Tim Hobman

PATHFINDER Tours will take in some rare metals with the chance to ride behind two Class 57s on Saturday, March 15, on a tour titled 'The Thames Valley Wanderer.'

Making an early start from Derby with the locomotives in top-and-tail formation, the tour is expected to head south on the Cross Country Route to pick up additional passengers at Burton-on-Trent, Tamworth, Birmingham New Street, Worcestershire Parkway and Cheltenham Spa.

From there, the tour is scheduled to take the Golden Valley Line to pick up the final passengers at Stroud and Swindon. Once on the Great Western Main Line, the next destination is Didcot to visit the Appleford Freight Terminal.

Making a reverse move, then leaving the terminal, the tour is planned to take the Didcot West Curve to enter the Milton Siding. After another reversal, the train is expected to head east through Reading, Maidenhead loop, Slough Up goods loop, Langley siding, Iver Up goods loop and West Drayton Up goods poop for another reversal. The next piece of rare track is hoped to be the Colnbrook branch, which will require a further reversal to get to Dawley Up goods loop, Hayes Up goods loop and then Hanwell goods loop.

Still on the Great Western Main Line, the train is planned to pass through West Ealing, before taking the Acton-dive-under for Royal Oak sidings and then London Paddington for a short break

The return journey is proposed to be via Royal Oak sidings once again, and then into the Southall West loop for a reversal. The tour is then hoped to take the Brentford branch, before reversing to Slough and taking the Kennet passenger loop towards Reading. The final piece of rare track is the Down Festival Line, before arriving at Didcot Parkway and retracing the outward journey, dropping passengers en route.

Tickets are available in first class and standard class for this tour, with a discount for junior travellers and parties of four.

For more details and to book, visit www.pathfindertours.co.uk

GWR 4-6-0 No. 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* passes Little Fenton with the last Vintage Trains tour of 2024, 'The White Rose' from Coleshill Parkway to York and return, on December 4. ROBERT FALCONER

NRM signs agreement with *Flying Scotsman* custodian

THE National Railway Museum announced in December that it has reached agreement with *Flying Scotsman*'s custodian, Northern Steam Operations Limited, on future arrangements for the A3 and how the two parties will work together in the future.

"The agreement reflects the hard work that NSOL have put in over the past months to contract operating and promoter teams," said an NRM statement.

"NSOL has held productive conversations with various heritage railways, and *Flying Scotsman* is likely to be back in steam as early as February."

A further announcement was due to be made at the end of January once the details of *Flying Scotsman*'s schedule have been finalised.

No. 60103 is currently on display at Locomotion in Shildon.

In 2024, nearly 320,000 people viewed, climbed aboard or taken a ride on the world's most famous locomotive during its stays at the NRM in York and Locomotion.

Midland Pullman to Torbay

MIDLAND Pullman is advertising the chance to travel from Chester to Torquay or Paignton on Saturday, April 12 on the 'Torbay Riviera Pullman'.

Starting from Chester, the train is planned to pick up additional passengers at Wrexham General, Ruabon, Chirk, Gobowen, Shrewsbury, Wellington, Telford, Codsall and Wolverhampton.

From Wolverhampton, the route is likely to be via Birmingham and then south towards Bristol and on to Exeter.

Crossing the sea wall at Dawlish before diverting onto the Riviera line for the first stop of Torquay, passengers can alight there or continue on to Paignton for a break of just over three hours in each location.

The return journey is expected to be via the same route, setting down passengers at their joining stations.

Tickets are available in Pullman dining or first class non-dining for this tour. For more details and to book, visit midlandpullman.com

Bahamas set for journey over Shap to Carlisle in March

By Tim Hobman

LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 No. 45596 *Bahamas* is set to haul Vintage Trains' 'The Shap Mountaineer' to Carlisle on Saturday, March 29.

The trip is planned to start diesel-hauled from Birmingham New Street and head north along the West Coast Main Line, with additional pick-up points of Wolverhampton, Stafford, Crewe, Warrington Bank Quay and Preston.

To the north

From Preston, the train will head north, passing Lancaster before stopping at Carnforth for a locomotive exchange. Here, diesel will be exchanged for steam, ready for the run north via Oxenholme and over Shap summit to Carlisle.

Passengers will have just over three hours in Carlisle before the return journey, this time via the Settle to Carlisle route. Leaving Carlisle in the mid-afternoon, there should still be enough daylight to enjoy the scenery of the line as *Bahamas* steams southwards, passing the familiar sights of Ais Gill Summit, Dent station and the Ribblehead Viaduct.

On arrival at Settle Junction, the train is scheduled to take the Leeds-Morecambe Line to Hellifield, where steam is planned to be exchanged for diesel traction. Shortly after leaving Hellifield, the train will then take the Ribble Valley Line, via Clitheroe to Blackburn, where passengers who joined the train at Preston on the outward journey will alight.

Familiar ground

The tour is scheduled to then pick up the WCML southbound to set down passengers at their joining stations en route back to Birmingham New Street.

A VT spokesman said: "We are delighted to once again have No. 45596 *Bahamas* hauling our trains and we would like to once again thank the Bahamas Locomotive Society for allowing us the use of its fantastic locomotive.

"The Jubilees were strongly associated with the Settle and Carlisle route, hauling the 'Thames-Clyde Express,' so what better way to kick-start our 2025 programme, and our trains celebrating Railway 200, than to have *Bahamas* re-tread one of its old stomping grounds in the Settle and Carlisle route, but also take on the challenging gradient of Shap summit."

There are options of Pullman class, first class dining and tourist class tickets, with a discount for child travellers. For more details, visit vintagetrains.co.uk

LMS 'Black Five' 4-6-0 No. 44871 approaches Colton Junction with the Railway Touring Company's 'Christmas White Rose' from Kings Cross to York on November 16. RODNEY TOWERS

East Coast tour to Locomotion and Weardale with HST set

UK Railtours' tour to the Locomotion museum at Shildon and Weardale, scheduled for Saturday, May 31, will see a return to the main line of the High Speed Train set owned by the 125 Group and based at the Midland Railway – Butterley.

The trip is planned to start from King's Cross, with additional pick-up points of Potters Bar, Stevenage, St. Neots and Peterborough, from where it will head north along the East Coast Main Line.

Just north of Darlington, the train is scheduled to take the Tees Valley Line, through Heighington, to the first stop of Shildon. At Shildon, passengers will have the opportunity to alight and explore the Locomotion Museum.

Entry to the museum is free, but customers will have the option of booking a ride on a train running on its exhibition line. There is a small supplement of £5 for this experience; the rostered locomotive will be announced nearer the time.

For those choosing to stay on the train, the tour is planned to continue on to Bishop Auckland, where the HST set will transfer to Weardale Railway metals and travel the 14 miles to Stanhope.

At Stanhope, passengers can transfer onto the specially arranged Weardale Railway train, which will run back to Wolsingham, likely hauled by Class 31 locomotives. There will also be an opportunity to visit the depot complex at Wolsingham on board a DMU; all of this is included in the supplementary price of £25.

Once passengers have been returned to Stanhope, the HST set is scheduled to run back via Bishop Auckland to Shildon to collect passengers who have alighted there, then back onto the East Coast Main Line to run south to York. The route home is expected to be slightly different as the train takes the line to Sheffield, then Chesterfield, on the Cross Country route.

Diverting onto the Midland Main Line, the route is then planned to be via Toton and East Midlands Parkway to Syston Junction. Taking the line through Melton Mowbray and Stamford, the train will pick up the ECML again just north of Peterborough for the first passenger drop-off at the city.

The tour is then scheduled to run south to set down passengers at their joining stations en route back to London.

There are options of first and standard class tickets, with a supplement for the off-train activities. For more details, visit www.ukrailtours.com

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WR 4-6-0 No. 7029 *Clun Castle*, the mainstay of Vintage Trains' main line Polar Express, is seen heading through Hall Green with the 7.10pm service from Whitlocks End on December 21. MARTYN TATTAM

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Classic Great Central café in Cleethorpes to receive facelift

By Robin Jones

A LISTED former Great Central Railway waiting room is to undergo a major refurbishment in the coming months.

Dating from 1874, the Mermaid Café building on the North Promenade, Cleethorpes, was constructed for the then recently opened Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway and now forms part of the listed buildings at the seafront main line station.

Over the years the building has been used for various food and beverage businesses, and most recently as a fish and chip café and takeaway.

As part of the Discover Cleethorpes Heritage Townscape Heritage Programme, financed via the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it has been identified as one of the eligible properties to be able to bid for grant-funding to help with external restoration work. The programme has already seen several ornate balconies and shopfronts restored along Alexandra Road and in Sea View Street in the resort.

The project will see conservation work carried out to the Victorian cast-iron framework of the building, as well as full restoration and conservation of the timber elements. It will be re-roofed, and cast-iron gutters and downpipes will be replaced, and it will also be repainted in the original livery of the MSLR.

Leaseholders Charles Crawford and Craig Brown said: "This is something that we've been wanting to do for a long time, having gained planning and listed building consent back in 2021.

"Due to the complexities of the restoration, we knew that financial support would be required, and we are really pleased to get the backing of the National Lottery Heritage Fund for some of the work. We can't wait to see what the building will look like when it's restored."

Tim Hedley-Jones, of match-funder The Railway Trust, said: "We are really happy to be working collaboratively with both the leaseholders and the council, and provide this additional funding to help restore this former railway building."

The 150-year-old listed Mermaid Café building at Cleethorpes station is to be refurbished and repainted in the colours of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway, for which it was originally built as a waiting room. NELC

Coun Philip Jackson, the leader of North East Lincolnshire Council, added: "I'm pleased to see this particular building come forward as part of the Townscape Heritage Project. It's one of the key buildings that people see as they arrive in Cleethorpes on the train, and to have it restored to its former glory will be wonderful."

The work will be carried out by CAG, which has completed heritage works in other areas of the resort as part of the National Lottery-funded Townscape Heritage grant programme.

Planning permission is already in place for the work to the building, and initial internal work has begun. The aim is to complete the project before the main summer season.

Historic Ravenglass footbridge to be refurbished following halted repairs

NETWORK Rail has announced a plan to fully refurbish the historic footbridge at Ravenglass station on the Cumbrian Coast Line.

The much-loved structure, which was first constructed in 1849, was due to be repaired last autumn with the timber deck being replaced. However, when engineers started work on the bridge, they found the condition was worse than expected, and that a full refurbishment and repair was needed.

Work will start in February 2025, when the whole structure will be removed and transported to a repair facility. It will be fully repainted to how it looked in its heyday. Doing this work away from the station means that the line does not have to be closed, and services can continue to run.

The footbridge will then be reinstalled at the station, with the timber deck replaced, safety checks carried out, and then reopened to passengers and the public in May 2025.

Network Rail has worked with Cumberland Council and the Lake District Council to place pedestrian diversion routes, with signage and safety barriers so people can still access both platforms during the work. Access to the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway remains unaffected.

The historic footbridge at Ravenglass station is to be removed for refurbishment. NR

Class 40 D213 *Andania* and Class 45 No. 45118 *The Royal Artilleryman* arrive at Blaenau Ffestiniog on December 14, 2024, with Inter City's 'Y Cracyr Nadolig' ('The Christmas Cracker') from Wolverhampton. The interchange station, which is served by the 1ft 11 ½in gauge Ffestiniog Railway on the left, is dwarfed by the mountains of waste slate that were produced by the mining activity in the area. *Andania* would run round the train to work the return to Llandudno Town, with the pair then remaining in top-and-tail formation back to Wolverhapton and Crewe. GARY THOMAS

January

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 20, 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 5 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

March

1 'The East Anglian II'
Crewe, Norwich and return.
Loco: D213 *Andania*. IC

1 'Settle & Carlisle Spring Express'
Newport, Carlisle and return. Steam-hauled between Carnforth and Carlisle.
Loco: TBA. PT

1 'The Mancunian'
Manchester Piccadilly, Holyhead and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

6 The Golden Age of Travel by Steam
Circular tour from London Victoria.
Loco: 35028 *Clan Line*. BEL

8 'The Stratford Flyer'
Manchester Piccadilly, Stratford-upon-Avon and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

8 'The Seven Counties Rambler'
Circular tour from Lithinglow via Edinburgh Waverley, Carlisle, Preston, Newcastle and Morpeth.
Locos: 2x Class 20s TBC, 37403 *Isle of Mull* (+ 1x Class 37 TBC), 50050 *Fearless*. SRPS

14 'The West Highlander' (Outward)
Crewe, Fort William. Diesel-hauled.
Loco: TBA. IC

15 'The Cheshireman'
Euston, Chester and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

16 'The West Highlander' (Return)
Fort William, Crewe. Diesel-hauled.
Loco: TBA. IC

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
BEL	Belmond Pullman 0845 0772 222
BLS	Branch Line Society branchline.uk
HD	Hastings Diesels hastingsdiesels.co.uk
IC	Intercity 0800 038 5364
MP	Midland Pullman midlandpullman.com
NB	Northern Belle northernbelle.co.uk
PT	Pathfinder Tours 01453 835414
RTC	Railway Touring Company 01553 661500
SD	Steam Dreams 01483 209888
SRPS	Scottish Railway Preservation Society 0131 202 1033
SR	Statesman Rail 0345 310 2458
ST	Saphos Trains 0800 038 5320
UKRT	UK Railtours 01438 715050
VT	Vintage Trains 0121 708 4960
WCR	West Coast Railways 0333 996 6720

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European Rail and Culture Tours

Departs	Tour Name	Category
25/01/2025	PTG 25th Anniversary Tour - Spain	All
05/03/2025	Historic South-West Spain	Vintage
23/03/2025	Springtime in Sicily	Classic
04/04/2025	Railways and Paradores of Galicia	In Style
06/04/2025	Vintage Puglia	Vintage
02/05/2025	Italian Vintage	Classic
08/05/2025	Linha do Tua - Railway Ramble	Classic
06/06/2025	Portmeirion and Railways of Snowdonia	In Style
12/06/2025	Vintage Central Portugal	Vintage
14/06/2025	Rails and Lakes of the Dolomites	Classic
19/06/2025	Douro - Rail, River and Wine	Vintage
20/06/2025	The Best of Bulgaria and the Cherry Festival	Classic
20/06/2025	Southern France and the Pyrenees	Vintage
21/06/2025	The Stunning Railways of Norway	Classic
01/07/2025	Steam Denmark and Northern Germany	Classic
09/07/2025	By Train to the Midnight Sun	Vintage
03/08/2025	Mountain Railways of Trentino	Classic
05/09/2025	Hidden Slovenia	Classic
11/09/2025	Vintage Port	Vintage
12/09/2025	Berlin, Dresden and the Harz Mountains	Vintage
14/09/2025	Vintage Slovenia	Vintage
19/09/2025	Vintage Baltics	Vintage
29/09/2025	The Catalonian	General
01/10/2025	Rail Wonders of Sardinia and Corsica	Vintage
09/10/2025	The Railways Around Bilbao	Classic
11/10/2025	Classic Montenegro	Classic
19/11/2025	Naples and Sorrento	Vintage

Worldwide Rail and Culture Tours

Departs	Tour Name	Category
06/03/2025	Let's Clear Cambodia - Again	General
30/05/2024	The Canadian	Culture
June/July	Big Boy Photography Tour	Enthusiast
24/06/2025	Rail & Natural Wonders of Alaska	Grand Tour
12/09/2025	The Great Peruvian Adventure	Grand Tour
04/10/2025	Western States Rails and Parks Adventure	Grand Tour
06/11/2025	Rail and Historical Wonders of Mexico	Grand Tour

UK Rail and Culture Tours

Departs	Tour Name	Category
06/06/2025	Portmeirion and Railways of Snowdonia	In Style
08/06/2025	PTG Annual FREE trip on FR/WHR	Free
June TBC	West of England Steam, Fine Dining and NT	In Style

Railway Enthusiast Tours

Departs	Tour Name	Category
25/01/2025	PTG 25th Anniversary Tour - Spain	All
06/03/2025	Let's Clear Cambodia - Again	General
15/03/2025	Alco Reuninification Vietnam - part 1	Enthusiast
02/05/2025	Hungary Eger tour - Special charter train	Enthusiast
09/08/2025	Baltic States – Part 1 – Lithuania	Enthusiast
12/09/2025	The Great Peruvian Adventure	Grand Tour
29/09/2025	The Catalonian	General

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Stormy backcloth for GCRA as plates resist totem surge

STORM Darragh may have been venting its fury outside, but inside all was calm as Mike Soden and his fellow auctioneer Martin Quartermain led Great Central's quarterly flagship sale on December 7.

Although totem station signs put on what has now become their customary show of strength and came within sniffing distance of snatching top spot, their charge for the gold medal was thwarted by two of the old guard, steam nameplates *Kingswear Castle* and *Vivien*.

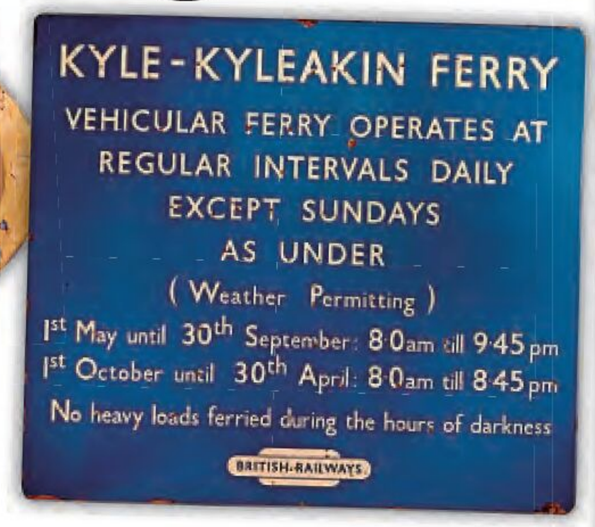
The former, from GWR No. 5015, went for £6800, and the latter, from SR Schools class No. 30748, sold for £6000. Trainspotters from the early-1960 era may recall this name, albeit not the plate, being carried by Class 5MT No. 73117 after the withdrawal of No. 30748.

Further down the nameplate selection come a GWR Hall duet comprising *Walton Hall* from No. 5918 and *Grantley Hall* from No. 6924, each of which went under the hammer for £4200. Non-sellers were *Solomon Islands* from LMS Jubilee No. 45603 and a combined name and numberplate from GWR Bulldog class No. 3335/3323 *Etona*, while *Howe* from Class 50 diesel D423/50023 also failed to find a new home. The Jubilee plate did, however, sell post-sale for £6000.

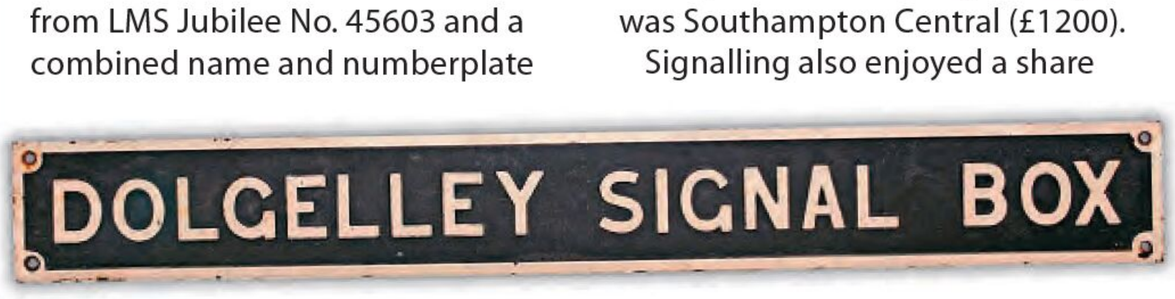
Sticking with locomotive categories for the moment, GWR cabside numberplates from No. 6003 *King George IV* and ROD 2-8-0 No. 3015 sold for £3800 and £2000 respectively, top smokebox numberplate was from No. 7019 *Fowey Castle* (£3600), and steam worksplates were headed by an LBSCR 1912 Brighton plate from I3 class 4-4-2T No. 32084 that entered traffic as No. 84 (£1600), and another from 1927 WG Bagnall-built LMS No. 47466 (works No. 2302) that fetched £1000.

Turning to the totems, top of a comprehensive selection were three BR(W) representatives, Brecon and Falmouth that shared the spoils at £5400 each, and Weston-Super-Mare General with a realisation of £3600, while the leading SR target was Southampton Central (£1200).

Signalling also enjoyed a share of the limelight, led at £4000 by a North London Railway signalbox indicator plated Skinner St, an 84-lever box which controlled access to the railway's Broad Street terminus and operated from 1892 until 1970. The indicator had two circular apertures with pivoting red/green flags, one of which was plated 'From No.2 Up line to No. 4 bay'.



Offering strong support in the category were a GWR Dolgelley Signal Box nameboard that fetched £2600, a matching pair of South Eastern & Chatham Railway Walker's sending and receiving train describers, plated with such locations as Bricklayers Arms, Cannon Street, Greenwich and Redhill, that sold for £1900 and, at £1300 each, a Caledonian Railway semaphore block instrument plated Callander West and a Tyer's No. 11 electric key token instrument.



A potpourri of items worthy of mention includes a BR(Sc) Kyle of Lochalsh station ferry operations sign to Kyleakin and an LNER seatback from the Whitby-Scarborough line station of Robin Hood's Bay, each at £3000, an SECR platform pull-bar ticket machine in working order (£1500), a Brecon & Merthyr Railway cast iron trespass notice (£1400), and from the same railway, an ex-Talyllyn Junction handlamp (£1300). Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).

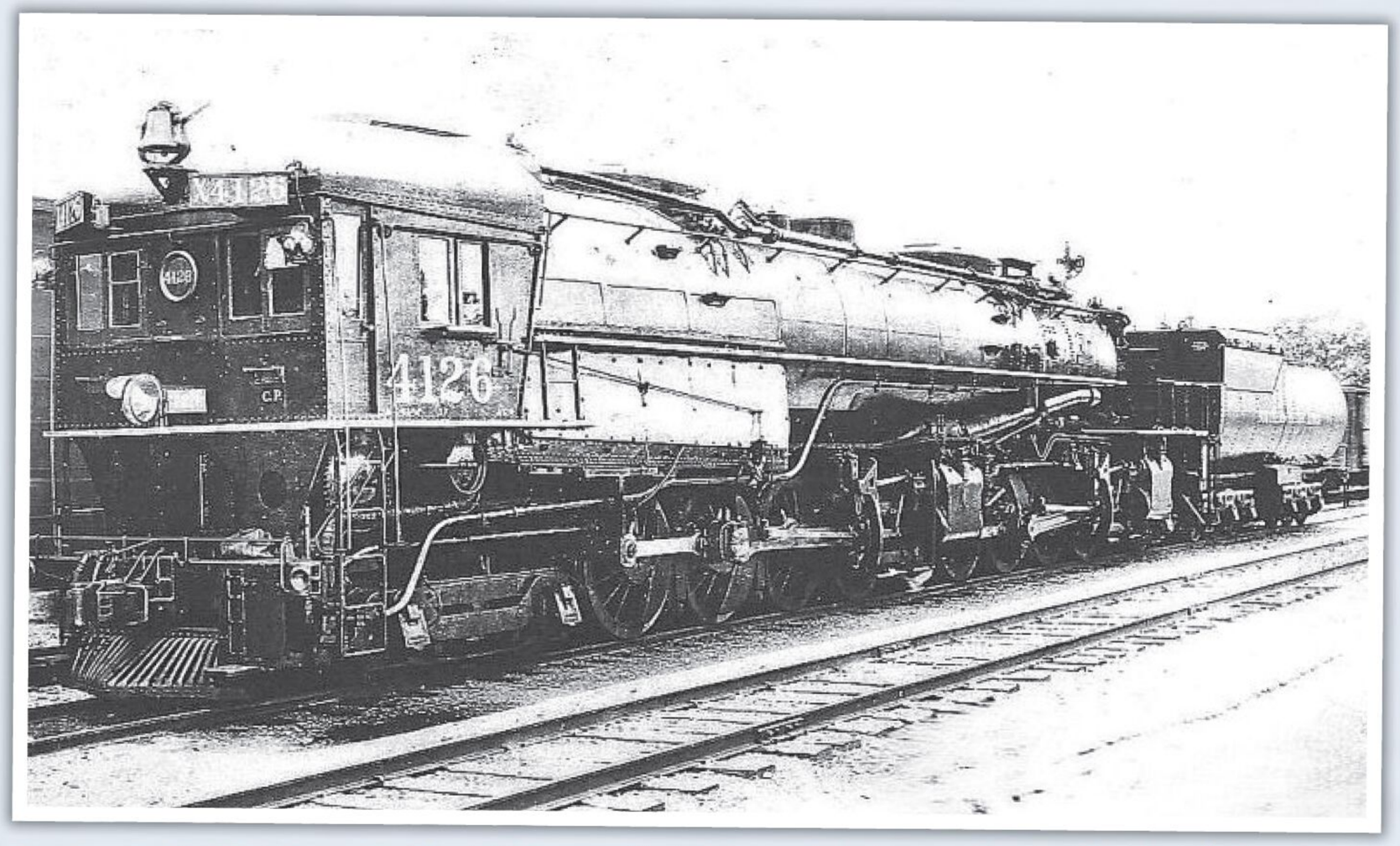
After the last of the 450 lots had gone under the hammer, Mike said: "Totems showed a resurgence for us, signalling of every aspect sold well, and so too cast iron signs. In fact, keen interest all round."

Sunshine Models shine in Vectis sale as AC-4 class moves forward to the top

THREE O-gauge models produced by Sunset Models of California were the top sellers in a Vectis sale on December 13, led by Southern Pacific 'cab forward' AC-4 class 4-8-8-2 No. 4103, one of a limited edition of only 75 models, that went under the hammer for £560.

In pursuit was another Southern Pacific locomotive, AC-6 class 4-8-8-2 No. 4138, which fetched £460. This was another 'cab forward' engine, in which the driver's cab is at the front with the fireman on the footplate at the rear with the tender. Members of the AC-6 class weighed 290 tons and had a tractive effort of 124,300lb-ft, more than three times that of any of the UK's 'Big Four' high-profile flagship express locomotives.

Completing the Sunset Models' triple success was a model of preserved Pennsylvania Railroad Class GG1 streamlined 4-6-0+0-6-4 electric locomotive No. 4800 (£440). Prices exclude buyer's premium of 22½% (+ VAT).



Southern Pacific AC-6 class 4-8-8-2 No. 4126 shows off its 'cab forward' design, in which the driver is at the front in a purpose-built cab and the fireman on the footplate at the rear with the tender. An O-gauge model of classmate No. 4138 was one of the top-sellers in a Vectis sale on December 13. CREATIVE COMMONS

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TRA spotlight on steam home and abroad

AS reported in last month's column, the top realisation in Talisman Railwayana's November 30 auction at Newark was £5700 for a Thornaby totem, trumping even the sale's nameplate selection, which peaked at £5200 for *Dante* from LNER A2 Pacific no. 60513.

This month the spotlight turns on other four figure realisations, and we start with three steam locomotive items, comprising the smokebox numberplate from Arthur Peppercorn-designed BR-built A1 Pacific No. 60157 *Great Eastern* (£3200), the chime whistle from LNER A4 No. 60031 *Golden Plover* (£2400), and from France, an 'S.N.C.F. 241.P.32' cabside numberplate from a Class P 4-8-2, which also sold for £2400.

Heritage modern traction came close behind this Gallic representative when a cabside numberplate from Class 84 electric locomotive E3045 (later No. 84010), which entered traffic in March 1961, sold for £2300, at which stage totems made a a further appearance with BR(NE) trio Garforth, Ferryhill, and West Monkseaton at £1850, £1800, and £1600 respectively.

Steam, though, was far from beaten, thanks to the smokebox numberplate from another A1 Pacific, No. 60125 *Scottish Union* selling for £1500, and a similar item from Standard Class 4MT No. 80051 for £1050, although diesel played its part with a Tinsley depot plaque from Class 47 No. 47145 (ex-D1738) that featured the Yorkshire rose (£1300) and a 1961 English Electric/Vulcan Foundry worksplate from Class 37 D6730/37030 (£1100).

The top signalling item at £1400 was a Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway diagram from Leverington Road signalbox at Wisbech, a second chime whistle, from Britannia Pacific No. 70044 *Earl Haig*, went for £1000, and the final mention goes to an enigmatic brass worksplate engraved 'No. 1871 Doncaster 1938' that sold for £1450.

This was the works number of Gresley A4 Pacific No. 4469 *Gadwall*, but bewilderingly the plate carried no LNER or any other identification, which despite research, TRA boss Roger Phipps was unable to explain, although he confirmed the plate was not a replica and had definitely been carried. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).

Railwayana Auction Calendar

- **Ends January 28**
  Paperchase
- **January 17-27**
  Great Northern Railwayana *('Alpha' sale)*
- **January 18**
  Thirsk Railwayana
- **January 28/29**
  Special Auction Services *(model trains)*
- **January 29**
  Vectis *(model trains)*

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GWRA unveils early runners in March spring meeting

EARLY declared runners in GW Railwayana's two-day spring meeting on March 15/16 comprise nameplates from all the Big Four – seven from the GWR, two from the SR, another two from the LMS, and at this stage, just one LNER entrant.

The GWR contingent features three Castles and four Halls, from the SR comes a Schools class and a West Country contender, the LMS will join the race with two Jubílees, and carrying the LNER colours is the youngest in the line-up, from a B1.

Leading the Castles is No. 5083, which started life in December 1922 as Star class No. 4063 *Bath Abbey*, was rebuilt in June 1937 as Castle class No. 5083 and carrying the same name, albeit on new plates due to a 'Castle Class' appendage having been incorporated. This rebuilt engine was withdrawn in January 1959 from Worcester (85A), making it one of the earlier members of the class to be taken out of service.

Support for No. 5083 came from two classmates – *Trematon Castle* from No. 5020, and *Lydford Castle* (No. 7006). The former entered traffic in August 1932 and ended its days in November 1962 when a resident of Llanelly (87F), while No. 7006 was outshopped by Swindon in June 1946 and taken out of service from Old Oak Common (81A) in December 1963, meaning its service life of 17½ years was not much over half of that achieved by No. 5020.

Of the Halls, two were prewar engines and two wartime products, starting chronologically with No. 4992 *Crosby Hall*, which was built in February 1931 and withdrawn from Bristol Barrow Road (82E) in April 1965. The second from the class is *Bickmarsh Hall* from No. 5967, built in March 1937 and withdrawn in June 1964 when allocated to Westbury (83C), followed by *Charfield Hall*, which was carried by No. 6904, a July 1940 wartime engine that was condemned in January 1965 off Banbury (2D).

Finally of the class quartet there is *Heatherden Hall* from No. 6946, built in December 1942 and another locomotive to have an appointment with the cutter's torch in June 1964, at which time it was part of the Pontypool Road (86G) fleet. The cabside and smokebox numberplates from this engine will also be going under the hammer.

At this juncture the charge of the GWR brigade is halted by the Southern Railway with nameplates from Schools class No. 30927 *Clifton* and West Country No. 34007 *Wadebridge*. The former, named after an independent school in Bristol, emerged from Eastleigh in June 1934 and was withdrawn from the south-west London shed of Nine Elms (70A) in January 1962, the year in which 25 of the 40-strong class were taken out of service.

The West Country Pacific was built at Brighton in August 1945 numbered 21C107, was renumbered 34007 by BR in March 1949, and after withdrawal from Salisbury (70E) in October 1965 with nearly 825,000 miles on the clock, spent 15 years languishing at Barry before being rescued for preservation in May 1981.

Moving onward to the LMS, Jubilee class pair Nos. 45691 and 45723 will enter the fray with respectively *Orion* and *Fearless*. Both of these 4-6-0s were named after Royal Navy vessels and both were built at Crewe in 1936, No. 45691 in March of that year and its classmate five months later.

The elder of the two was withdrawn in December 1962 from Blackpool Central (24E), but No. 45723 stayed the course for another 20 months before meeting its end in August 1964 when allocated to Nuneaton (5E).

Finally in this initial line-up is *Oribi* from LNER B1 No. 61014, which was outshopped by Darlington in December 1946 and withdrawn from Blyth North (52F) exactly two decades later, in December 1966. The first member of the class, No. 8301 (later No. 1000 and subsequently BR No. 61000) was also built in December 1942 and named *Springbok*, in honour of South Africa's prime minister Jan Smuts, who had visited the UK in October that year, and the LNER decided to continue the theme by naming all but one of first batch of 41 members of the class after African antelopes, and an oribi was one such animal.

The exception was No. 1036, later No. 61036, that was due to be named *Korrigum* but for reasons that are unknown, instead became *Ralph Assheton*. Research indicates this gentleman was Sir Ralph Assheton, the first Baron Clitheroe, an MP from 1934-55 and in 1942 the minister of supply in the Winston Churchill wartime government, and from 1944-46 chairman of the Conservative Party. However, this research has failed to find a connection with the LNER, nor what he thought of his name on the B1 being sandwiched between *Pronghorn* and *Jairou*.

See next month's railwayana column for further details of the auction.

Rule Britannia as *John of Gaunt* is the model winner

AN exhibition standard 5in gauge live steam model of Britannia No. 70012 *John of Gaunt* made by John Adams of Poole was the clear winner in a model trains and railwayana sale held by Special Auction Services of Newbury on December 10/11 when it went under the hammer for £8500.

Behind at £6500 was American outline clockwork 4-4-0 No. 2350 made by Carette of Germany in gauge one, while the same manufacturer also produced in gauge one a Berlin underground railway (U-Bahn) two-car three-rail electric set that sold for £3000, and also from a European manufacturer was a gauge one 'inter-urban' three-car tram set made by Twerenbold of Switzerland (£2000).

A Bing of Germany gauge one live steam continental outline 4-4-0 also weighed in with a realisation of £1200.

Moving onto home territory, the leaders of the pack were a 5in gauge live steam 4-4-0 No. 775 *Maid of Kent* based on the Southern Railway L1 class, and a Bassett-Lowke gauge two live steam North Eastern Railway 4-4-2, at £3600 and £1800 respectively, and a 3½in gauge live steam LNER 4-4-0 No. 154 also in NER livery (£1600).

Models of LMS Princess Royal class Pacifics have been popular over many years, and examples that sold in the auction included a gauge one live steam No. 6200 at £1600 and two Hornby O-gauge models of No. 6201 at £750 and £600.

Within the railwayana line-up was a selection of GWR pressure gauges, a Neath Engine Shed signalbox plate, lever leads and speed warning signs, all of which sold as a single lot for £750, and a 1963 English Electric Class 37 diesel worksplate (£600). Prices exclude buyer's premium of 20% (+ VAT).

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FREIGHT TO THE FORE AT SWANAGE WINTER GALA

The Swanage Railway's Winter Warm Up set the perfect stage for the Purbeck line's 140th anniversary celebrations this year and once again proved that the resort is one for all seasons, reports **Andrew PM Wright** in words and pictures.

The Swanage Railway's evocative Winter Warm Up weekend featuring four historic locomotives spanning from the 1890s to the 1960s saw both steam and diesel passenger trains service the Isle of Purbeck – and included the nostalgic recreation of the freight services of yesteryear.

The 1960s heritage diesel hauling some of the trains was the last locomotive to run from Poole to Broadstone and Wimborne when the Victorian line that linked Southampton with Dorchester closed to freight trains back in May 1977.

Taking place on January 4/5, the Winter Warm Up was the first Swanage Railway event to take place at the start of the nationwide Railway 200 celebrations and saw three steam locomotives and one diesel locomotive on services that were well-patronised despite indifferent weather. It was also the first event of the year that will see the LSWR branch celebrate its 140th birthday in May.

Operating to an intensive timetable, the trains ran between Norden, Corfe Castle, Harman's Cross, Herston Halt and Swanage. Making a rare and evocative sight, there was the staging of a freight train of wagons of the type that ran across the south of England – including the Swanage branch – in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

The stand-out star was again the now unique LSWR T3 4-4-0 No. 563, built in 1893, which was restored by the Swanage Railway Trust after being donated to the Isle of Purbeck heritage line by the National Railway Museum in 2017. As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 316, the T3 carried off the Chairman's Special Award at the Heritage Railway Association's Annual Awards 2024, held at the Double Tree by Hilton

Class 33 D6515 *Lt Jenny Lewis RN* approaches Harman's Cross station with a Swanage-Norden freight.

With the Purbeck Hills behind, award-winning LSWR T3 No. 563 climbs the gradient to Harman's Cross station with a service from Swanage.

Brighton Metropole Hotel on February 11 last year.

Appearing alongside the T3 was Southern Railway 1940s rebuilt Bulleid Battle of Britain light Pacific No. 34070 *Manston*. Locomotives like *Manston* hauled trains from London to Corfe Castle and Swanage from the 1940s until the end of steam trains in southern England in the summer of 1967.

The third steam locomotive featured in the Winter Warm Up weekend was late 1920s Southern Railway U class 2-6-0 No. 31806, which hauled bucket-and-spade

Rebuilt Bulleid Battle of Britain 4-6-2 No. 34070 *Manston* runs light engine into Corfe Castle to collect its freight train from the station as T3 No. 563 waits with a Norden to Swanage train.

On January 3, the day before the start of the Winter Warm Up gala, LSWR Adams T3 4-4-0 No 563 hammers along, making up time on the first train of the day at the Swanage Railway. MATTHEW TOMS

SR U 2-6-0 No. 31806 climbs to Afflington bridge with a Swanage to Norden service on January 4.

LSWR T3 4-4-0 No. 563 sweeps over the Purbeck stone viaduct at Corfe Castle with a Swanage to Norden freight.

holidaymaker trains from Basingstoke to Swanage during the 1950s.

The classic heritage diesel tasking part was 1960-built Class 33 diesel-electric D6515 *Lt Jenny Lewis RN*, which hauled London to Swanage trains during the summer of 1966.

Winter Warm Up event organiser and Swanage Railway Trust deputy chairman Alex Atkins, a volunteer driver on the heritage line, which was rebuilt from nothing since 1976, said: "Freight trains, like those we recreated during our event, ran across the south of England for decades reliably delivering goods and farm produce.

"BR stopped running freight trains to Corfe Castle and Swanage in 1965, a year before steam trains were replaced by diesel trains on the Swanage branch and six years before the line was controversially closed and demolished in 1972." HR

Southern Railway late 1920s U class No. 31806 departs Corfe with a freight for Norden while a passenger train leaves for Swanage.

Freight and passenger trains pass at Corfe Castle: Bulleid light Pacific No. 34070 *Manston* runs into Norden bound for Swanage, while U No. 31806 waits with a Swanage to Norden freight.

Bulleid Pacific No. 34070 *Manston* powers across the common at Corfe Castle with a freight to Swanage.

Single line key token exchange at Corfe Castle as No. 34070 *Manston* runs in with a train from Swanage: Signalman Jon Riding hands the Corfe Castle to Norden hooped pouch to fireman Josh Voce, who drops off the Harman's Cross to Corfe Castle counterpart.

A double-headed service from Swanage arrives at Corfe Castle with T3 No. 563 and No. 34070 *Manston* on the front.

Having deposited its freight rake in the sidings at Corfe Castle, No. 31806 prepares to depart light engine for Swanage.

Class 33 D6515 *Lt Jenny Lewis RN* leaves Corfe Castle with a service to Swanage on January 4.

No. 34051 *Winston Churchill* at Virginia Water heading to Handborough, the famous V for victory headcode clearly visible. The second vehicle behind the engine is the former corridor parcel van No. S2464 and, as may be seen, is painted in Pullman colours. ROGER MERRY-PRICE

THE GREAT LEADER'S FINAL JOURNEY

Sixty years ago in 1965, Britain's wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill died on January 24, aged 90. Former BR fireman **Dave Wilson,** who witnessed the former Prime Minister's state funeral train leaving Waterloo for Handborough six days later, recounts the events of that day and leading up to it.

The funeral of wartime leader and former Prime Minister Winston Randolph Churchill took place 60 years ago on January 30, 1965.

The gun carriage bearing Sir Winston's coffin left Westminster Hall at 9.45am and passed through crowds of mourners lining the streets to pay their respects around Whitehall, Trafalgar Square, the Strand, Fleet Street and Ludgate Hill to St Paul's Cathedral for the funeral service, as the country joined in sorrow to say farewell to the man voted the greatest-ever Briton.

By decree of Queen Elizabeth II, his body had lain in state at Westminster Hall for three days from January 26. From St Paul's Cathedral following the service, he was taken to Tower Steps and transported by water along the River Thames to Waterloo station, accompanied by military salutations. As the funeral barge travelled along the Thames, dockyard cranes lowered their gibs in respect, as if to bow.

It arrived ath Waterloo pier, and Sir Winston's coffin was then taken to the platform at Waterloo station in a hearse. That afternoon he was buried at St Martin's churchyard in Bladon, Oxfordshire, the resting place of his ancestors and his brother.

Historic occasion

Attended by representatives from 120 countries, 6000 people, and unusually Queen Elizabeth II, were joined by more than 1000 police and security personnel, involving nine military bands, 18 military battalions, 16 Royal Air Force English Electric Lightning fighter jets, as a special boat, *MV Havengore*, and a train hauled by Bulleid Battle of Britain Pacific No. 34051 *Winston Churchill* to form the largest state funeral to ever be held at that time; homage was paid by 321,360 people, and it was witnessed by more than 350 million worldwide.

"In the whole of recorded history, this was, I believe, the one occasion when one man, with one soaring imagination, with one fire burning in him, and with one unrivalled capacity for conveying it to others, won a crucial victory not only for the forces (for there were many heroes in those days), but for the spirit of human freedom. And so, on this day, we thank him, and we thank God for him," said Sir Robert Menzies, then Prime Minister of Australia.

First drawn up in 1958, Operation Hope Not – the code name of the plan for the state funeral – underwent several changes during the intervening seven years, and though it would have made operating sense for the train to start the train from Paddington, Waterloo was Churchill's choice, for no particular reason other than his 'impish

The shed gang and fitters putting the finishing touches to No. 34051 *Winston Churchill* before it goes up to Waterloo to work the funeral train. The figure in the trilby and overcoat is Mr Gilchrist, the Nine Elms shedmaster who oversaw all the preparations. ROGER MERRY-PRICE

The funeral train standby engine No. 34064 *Fighter Command* rolls towards the turntable; if you look closely, you can see the fireman in the process of filling his shovel as he gets the fire ready to run light engine to Staines. The Giesl ejector which, according to some accounts, made an improvement to its performance, can be seen just proud of the top of the smokebox cowl. For me, the jury is definitely out on the issue of whether the ejector made a real difference – in day-to-day running. DAVID IDLE/TRANSPORT TREASURE COLLECTION

Nine Elms shed on the morning of January 30, 1965, and under the watchful eyes of two local trainspotters, Battle of Britain 4-6-2 No. 34051 *Winston Churchill* waits to get onto the turntable ahead of leaving light engine to Waterloo. I believe the chap in the coat and trilby, with his back to the camera, is Mr Gilchrist, the shedmaster. The photograph was taken by David Idle; a book of David's photographs from 1960 to the end of Southern steam is planned for 2025. DAVID IDLE/TRANSPORT TREASURE COLLECTION

All cleaned up and with fresh white discs, BR Standard 2-6-4T No. 80143 stands outside Nine Elms shed awaiting departure to Clapham Carriage sidings to collect the empty stock for the funeral train. ROGER MERRY-PRICE

sense of humour,' amused by the image of de Gaulle having to walk bare-headed under the Waterloo archway that marked Britain's victory over France in the Battle of Waterloo. And this choice meant that part of that plan was, fittingly, made hauling the funeral train using his namesake No.34051 a possibility.

This was not quite as simple or easy as it might have been, however. The fly in the ointment was that in January 1965, No. 34051 *Winston Churchill* was stored out of use at Salisbury shed.

Against the clock

To give some idea of the speed of events, Churchill's death was announced on January 24. The following day, No. 34051 was steamed up at Salisbury and despatched to Nine Elms. Having been in store, it was in no fit condition to be put on the front of a state funeral train – desperately in need of a clean and a service, the helping hand of the shed's fitters would be an apt description of its condition when it arrived at Nine Elms. There were just five days during which it had to be licked into shape, ready for its part in the solemn events to follow. It was not just about the engine, though; the footplate crew had their part to play, and it was not only one crew.

When the railway stages events like these, it is always a bit 'belt and braces.' No. 34051's understudy was another Battle of Britain 4-6-2, No. 34064 *Fighter Command*, which too was bulled up by the cleaning gang and given a thorough mechanical inspection by the fitting staff.

By way of an aside, No. 34064 *Fighter Command* was fitted in 1962 with a Giesl oblong ejector in place of the standard Lemaitre multiple jet blast pipe fitted to the rest of the Bulleid Pacifics. On the day, No. 34064 *Fighter Command* was despatched to Staines but, in the eventuality, its services were not required.

The crew chosen was driver Alf Hurley and his fireman Jim Lester; on standby were drivers Jerry Sartin and George Holloway, all of them top link men. There was insufficient time for any proper road learning, so all four men were given a day's familiarisation over the section of the route they did not know between Reading spur and Handborough.

On the day of the funeral, however, footplate inspector Neal instructed driver Hurley to remain in control of the engine and the pilotman Didcot driver, Percy Talbot, was to give him instructions regarding signals and gradients.

First-hand account

Fireman Jim Lester wrote on the Nine Elms enginemen's website a very nice piece about what happened on the day. He spoke of the need for good boiler management to keep the engine quiet while waiting departure from Waterloo, the silence of the moment broken 'only by the sound of the bearer party's boots.' Equally careful boiler management was required on arrival at Handborough while the cortege and guests cleared the station.

He also recounted that, despite the plans, the on-the-minute departure and the 'guaranteed' road, a faulty distant signal approaching Twickenham caused some consternation and there was a last-minute request to pass through Oxford at 20mph so those travelling in the train might hear the bells being rung. The latter required driver Hurley to put on a little spurt so that the on-time arrival at Handborough would be kept to.

A short while after the event, Jim recalled receiving a copy of a letter sent to the general manager by the Duke of Norfolk, thanking them for their service, followed by a 15 shilling postal order (75p in today's money).

The train was made up of five Pullman cars, *Carina, Lydia, Perseus, No. 208* and *Isle of Thanet,* and the corridor bogie van

No. 34051 *Winston Churchill* and its funeral train display in the National Railway Museum in York in 2015. ROBIN JONES

On static display inside the Locomotion museum in Shildon in December 2024, No. 34051 carries an 'Atlantic Coast Express' headboard. NRM

Above: In 2023, Kitchen First *Lydia* also moved to the Kent & East Sussex Railway. More recently it has relocated to the South Devon Railway for restoration to be carried out, the line being closer to where the carriage's owner lives. KESR

Left: Parlour First *Isle of Thanet* now resides on the Kent & East Sussex Railway, where restoration to its former glory will commence once space is available in the carriage works there. KESR

No. S2464, which had been rescued from scrapping in 1961 and given an overhaul the following year. Before the funeral, it had been stored at Stewarts Lane, 'awaiting the day.' What began life as a corridor parcels van had been transformed internally into a suitable vehicle for containing the coffin of a statesman. It was also painted into Pullman livery to match the rest of the coaching stock.

The stock was worked up to Waterloo from Clapham Carriage sidings, top-and-tailed by Riddles 4MT 2-6-4Ts Nos. 80137 and 80143m which, like the Battle of Britain Pacifics Nos. 34051 and 34064, were immaculately turned out.

Although I played no part in the ceremonials and could not see the train in the platform, I was at Waterloo on the day. In the company of my regular mate Eric Saunders, we were on the footplate of one of the Riddles 3MT 2-6-2Ts over in Waterloo goods. From our vantage point, we were able to watch the departing train as it made its way out of the station and on towards Vauxhall.

A surprisingly large amount of the train and No. 34051 *Winston Churchill* have been taken into preservation of some kind or other. The former luggage van which survived via a stint on show in the USA was displayed in 2015 at the National Railway Museum in the Final Journey tableau with No.34051 *Winston Churchill* to commemorate the 50th anniversary of his death.

In 2019, Swanage Railway Trust-owned No. S2464 went on display in the One to One Collection in Margate. Car No. 208 is a grounded body in the grounds of the Glenlo Abbey Hotel in Galway, Ireland (alongside a Mk. 1 SO and GUV parcels vehicle).

After a spell in France, *Carina* was repatriated by the Venice Simplon Orient Express in 1980 and has changed hands several times since. After seven years stored at Swindon, it moved to Stewarts Lane for restoration to commence; however, it was deemed surplus to requirements in 2002 and was then sold to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. There it was determined that restoration would cost in the region of £200,000 and so the NYMR subsequently sold it to the 5-BEL Trust for its Brighton Belle project, which in 2015 swapped it with the Bluebell Railway for a vehicle more suited to its needs, before it was offered for sale once more in 2024. It is now at the Churnet Valley Railway, where it is about to undergo restoration.

Important roles

Isle of Thanet has a particularly interesting history. Not only was it used for Churchill's funeral train, but during the Second World War it was also part of General Eisenhower's personal train, where planning for D-Day is likely to have taken place.

It is another vehicle that needed repatriation, having ended up in Wisconsin in 1969 with A3 No. 4472 *Flying Scotsman* during its tour of America. It returned to the UK in November 2000 and went to Carnforth where work began, but in 2023 it was offered to the Kent & East Sussex Railway, where it arrived that December.

That line's general manager, Robin Coombes, said: "Once space is available in our carriage and wagon engineering workshop and sufficient funding is secured, restoration of *Isle of Thanet* to its full glory will be undertaken by our expert team of volunteers.

"While the car is largely complete and in reasonable condition, restoration will require painstaking reassembly of the interior – said to be one of the finest of all surviving Pullman Cars, but currently a kit of parts – and to meticulously restore its exquisite details.

"We are particularly excited to share this remarkable coach with the American market, given its significant connections to both Allied planning during the Second World War and its role in *Flying Scotsman*'s legendary tour. We look forward to the day we can serve elegant meals in this historic setting, allowing guests to experience the magic of railway heritage and its profound stories."

Privately-owned *Lydia* also went to the same line in 2023. In October 2024 it moved again, this time to the South Devon Railway, which Robin explained was because "the owner wished to take a greater hands-on role in its restoration ancomprised use than was possible given his residence in Devon. Agreement was therefore reached for *Lydia* to move to the SDR, where works to recommission the car are now underway."

Perseus is in active use as part of the Belmond Pullman - and still being hauled by a Southern Railway Pacific in the form of No. 35028 *Clan Line*.

Neither of the Riddles 2-6-4Ts survived, but several other members of the class did. No. 34051 *Winston Churchill* is part of the National Collection and is currently on display in Locomotion in Shildon.

The events of January 30, 1965, did not just comprise Churchill's final journey – his funeral train was the last one to be hauled by a steam locomotive. HR

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THE TREASURES OF KENT'S 'ONCE A YEAR LINE'

Mark Smithers reports in words and pictures on the many treasures of the well-stocked private Richmond Light Railway, which the public can visit only on its annual charity open event.

MOST of the narrow-gauge heritage railways that are frequently featured in the railway press are open to the public for a significant portion of the year. An important example, situated in rural Kent, roughly halfway between Staplehurst and Headcorn, is the Richmond Light Railway, a 2ft gauge real gem that is normally opened to the public only once a year.

The rare opening is for the annual charity gala which normally takes place on the second Saturday in August. The railway's history goes back to April 2007 when Richmond Farm, which had hitherto been used as a piggery, was acquired by Jeremy and Jenny Martin. Jeremy had always been interested in railways having grown up with his father's 7¼in gauge line (Wayside Light Railway) but for him 2ft gauge has always been the real attraction.

He likes the history associated with each engine, be in working on the War Department Light Railways of the 1914-18 conflict or hauling timber trains in South America. He works in the mining industry and as a result has travelled around the word and has been able to bring back locomotives from several different countries often finding them in their original working location. A highlight was finding a Couillet 0-4-0T in Lima, Peru.

The other real driver for Jeremy's enthusiasm is the restoration work. At Richmond the aim is to restore the locomotives to as high a standard as possible and as close to their as-built condition.

He had already decided that he wanted to lay a 2ft gauge railway on the site, but before this could be done, extensive renovations and modifications were required to the house and other buildings on the site. Thoughts could only turn to construction of the railway after the end of 2008 once the bulk of this work had been carried out.

A fledgling team was formed, and the initial task was to demolish the old pigsties and level the ground for the construction of a locomotive shed. Erection of the new shed commenced in December 2010, and it was ready to receive its first items of rolling stock in April 2011. By the following month, track had been laid in the yard area in front of the shed and connected to the main line, allowing the first item of motive power, Motor Rail 20hp diesel-mechanical works No. 7403, to enter the site.

Throughout the remainder of 2011, work continued laying down the main line and the construction of a workshop directly in front of the locomotive shed. The first steam locomotive arrived in June 2011. Matters were not totally plain sailing, however, as in January 2012, following complaints, it was realised that the whole project required planning permission. Work was then paused for eight months for this process to be successfully completed.

By the end of 2012, the railway amounted to a circuit of track, the yard and station area, a running line of approximately ⅔ of a mile. Further refinements followed with a passing loop being added at Richmond station in 2013, a pit and a water tower during the following year, and a Southernmost

***Chuquitanta* and *Sybil* on the Richmond Hill Railway main line on March 25, 2018.**

Above: *Elin* and *Sybil* on the inner curve.

Left: The Richmond Light Railway's first steam locomotive, Arnold Jung 0-4-0WT No. 3175 of 1921, *Jenny* rounding a curve.

***Lily* hailing a train on the feeder curve, inward towards the bridge.**

***Pixie* takes its train over the bridge.**

branch line extension with a new terminus, New Barn Halt, in 2015. This latter feature incorporates a bridge which is a popular spot for photographers. The railway also has a comprehensive signalling system which includes a 10-lever frame at Richmond station.

Steam locomotives

It should be stressed that Jeremy takes great pride in his dedicated team and takes much pleasure in having a bit of fun with a group of people who all share the same passion.

The first steam locomotive was Arnold Jung 0-4-0WT No. 3175 of 1921 which when it arrived bore the name *Howard* but was soon renamed *Jenny*. It is a representative of the German short wheelbase inside-framed well tank school of design that was built in numerous quantities and variations from the latter part of the 19th century and well into the 20th, having been well represented on the RLR during its period of operation.

Jenny has proved to be a stalwart at the annual charity galas and was very much in evidence during the 2023 event. The locomotive also visited the Ffestiniog Railway during its May 29-June 1 annual general meeting weekend along with Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0WT *Eigau* No. 5668 from the Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway. This latter locomotive visited the RLR for the 2019 charity gala along with Beamish Museum's Lewin-pattern 0-4-0WTG *Samson* which was constructed between 2012-16.

Three other representatives of the German well tank school of design have seen service on the RLR only to depart for pastures new. The first to be considered was Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0WT No. 3136 of 1908. Whilst on the RLR it carried the name *Susan*. This locomotive took part in the August charity galas for 2017 and 2018 but departed the line shortly after the latter, in exchange for Bagnall 0-4-0ST *Pixie*. Arnold Jung 0-4-0WT No. 2569 of 1918 *Anne-Marie* was an early arrival on the line in 2011 and, after a seven-year stint, left for the Czech Republic in 2018. In early 2021, Schwartzkopf No. 9124 of 1927 *Bronhilde* (built for the Hamburg Copper Works in Germany) formerly with Bressingham and the Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway was acquired by the RLR, but its stay was a short one as it departed, again for the Czech Republic, in the early part of 2023.

A fifth representative of this German school of design, Orenstein & Koppel No. 5745 of 1912, has been acquired more recently. This 0-4-0WT was originally supplied by the Berlin-based manufacturer to the Argentine Ministry of Public Works (Irrigation Department) in the Rio Negro province of the country but it was eventually returned to Germany for static preservation in 2005. Identified as available by the RLR in November 2022, negotiations proved successful, and the locomotive arrived during the following month, and is currently dismantled for overhaul.

The next steam locomotive to be considered is probably the most interesting from the historical point of view, as it is the oldest currently on the railway. This locomotive was supplied in in 1885 via agent Enrique Ayulo & Cie to a sugar plantation, Hacienda Chuquitanta, Vale Chilion to the east of Peru's capital, Lima. Jeremy found the locomotive on display in a restaurant in Miraflores (a suburb of Lima) in 2002 and after two years of negotiations brought *Chuqitanta* to England for restoration. *Chuqitanta* dates from a period when Decauville was reliant on outside suppliers for its locomotives and is a product of the Belgian concern Couillet (No. 810). Decauville also allocated its own works number, in this case 36. Above frame level this one-time 500mm gauge locomotive exhibits typical Couillet features of the period with its canopy, distinctive side tanks supported by prominent brackets attached directly to the mainframes, and a boiler-mounted sandbox mounted behind the dome. The locomotive is also fitted with a spark arresting chimney (a necessity in a cane field environment) and, as with most of its sister Couillet 'midget' 0-4-0T contemporaries it is outside framed. Inside framed examples were not unknown, however, and four specimens, built to the non-Decauville standard gauge of 55cm, survive in Spain, one (No. 580 of 1882) in Madrid and three (Nos. 478-9 of 1880 and 545 of 1881) in Zaragoza. After import to England, *Chuquitanta* was regauged to 2ft., which could (as with many sub-2ft gauge outside framed products of Couillet, Decauville and Fowler) be accomplished without replacing the frame stretchers.

The motion was overhauled by Crowhurst Engineering Ltd. and the boiler was virtually renewed. The locomotive entered service on the RLR in 2016 and appeared at the 2017 August charity gala. In 2018 adjustments were made to the motion and a tender, loosely inspired by Decauville practice, was constructed over a two-year period, making its public debut with the locomotive at the 2021 charity gala.

The next current resident locomotive to enter service on the RLR was of a peculiar design. *Leary* was built in Nelson in 2010 by a group of Ffestiniog Railway volunteers and incorporates a vertical water tube boiler originally intended for use in a half-scale Sentinel steam lorry. This use never happened and the boiler was ➔

***Chuquitanta* with its footplate crew.**

Former Cadeby Light Railway *Pixie* changing tokens.

eventually fitted to a steam launch. Eventually the FR members acquired both boiler and cylinders from the launch and incorporated them into *Leary*.

Leary appeared at the F.R Quirks and Curiosities event in 2010 and was sold to the RLR in 2017, accompanying *Chuquitanta* in the gala of that year. *Leary*'s transmission involves the use of a clutch and chain drive to one of its rod-coupled axles and both engine and clutch were replaced in 2018. In the 2023 gala, the locomotive was used for the 'Driver for a Fiver' duties and this arrangement continued to be the case during the 2024 gala.

The next steam locomotive due for consideration is very much a 'home grown' celebrity, namely the ex-Penrhyn Quarry 'Small Quarry' class 0-4-0ST *Elin* (Hunslet No. 705 of 1899). After four decades of work in the slate quarries, *Elin*'s boiler was worn out and it was replaced by a boiler made by traction engine builders Marshall's of Gainsborough. This necessitated a new saddle tank of rounder profile than the original and an extended footplate at the rear, giving the locomotive a distinctive appearance, much of which it retains to this day.

Withdrawn in 1954, *Elin* was sold eight years later to J Burdett of Louth, who restored and regauged it from 1ft 10 ¾ in to 2ft and took it to the original Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway in 1969. Sadly, the locomotive's three-ton axle loading proved too much for the permanent way on the LCLR and it saw little use there, passing in 1986 to the Yaxham Light Railway, situated next to Yaxham station on the Mid-Norfolk Railway.

While at Yaxham, a new longer firebox was fitted, along with rear frame extensions. Elin was acquired by the RLR in September 2012 and its return to use was a very protracted affair. By the end of March 2018 dismantling of the locomotive prior to restoration had begun. During the following month work commenced on wheels and boiler and further stripping and assessment was carried out in May, particularly on the motion. By the end of November 2018, *Elin*'s frames were ready for their first coat of new paint, the wheels had been re-profiled, and their first coats of paint applied, the axle boxes and brake gear were being cleaned and primed and work was continuing in-house on the boiler.

Four months further down the line saw the first fitting of new firebox girder stays, the fitting of a new rear frame stretcher, new bolts in the rear buffer beam, along with further work on the rear end of the locomotive and cleaning and undercoating of various components. The latter part of March 2019 saw the first layer of primer and undercoat applied to the mainframes. April 2019 saw the more paint applied to the frames and further work apace on the boiler shell, including the mudhole cover. The following May saw remedial work on various components, including cylinder and valve chest covers, the first layer of final colour paint applied to the wheels and axles, and yet more frame painting.

By the end of June 2019, the cylinders had been trial fitted and painting was still proceeding on the chassis components,

***Elin* moves off from Richmond with empty stock.**

Above: New-build vertical-boilered locomotive *Leary* on shed.

Left: Map of the private Richmond Light Railway.

including the distinctive splashers fitted to Hunslet locomotives of this dynasty. December 2019 saw the gauge glass brasses returned from the nearby Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway after overhaul, more painting on various components, including the running boards and eccentric sheaves and rods, and the boiler shell made ready for the riveting in of the foundation ring and inner firebox. This latter task was accomplished in February 2020. Three months later the new boiler tubes were delivered and by July the 2020 final stages of painting of most components were in progress, with the major work being carried out off-site. Welding-up work was being carried out on the smokebox, while preparation work was in progress on-site on the saddle tank for painting to commence. From the chassis point of view, various worn-out pins and bushes on the motion had been replaced and a new pair of expansion links and die blocks made. Work was also progressing on the slide bars and relocation of the mechanical lubricator between the mainframes. March 18, 2021 was a very significant day in the restoration process as the now fully-assembled boiler underwent its hydraulic test, with November 18 seeing the first fire lit where a pressure of 100psi was reached with only a few minor leaks present.

All the hard work was duly rewarded in March 2022 when *Elin* resplendent in its new lined-out paintwork, ran under its own steam on the RLR for the first time – a fitting tribute to the diligence and professionalism of those involved in its restoration. The locomotive has since taken part in the 2022, 2023 and 2024 charity galas raising money for Riding for the Disabled.

Elin is not the only Quarry Hunslet currently resident on the RLR as in the summer of 2021, *Sybil* arrived from the Brecon Mountain Railway. A Britomart class locomotive originally built for the Pen-Yr-Orsedd slate quarry, (No. 827 of 1903), it differs from the mainstream Alice pattern of Dinorwic Quarry evolution in that it was originally constructed as a 1ft 11 1/2in gauge entity whereas currently working ex-Dinorwic locomotives have been converted from 1ft. 10¾in.

The locomotive remained in use at Pen-Yr-Orsedd until 1959 and was sold to Tony Hills who rebuilt it over the ensuing nine years. After a period in use on the Llanberis Lake Railway and a sojourn on static display in the Welsh Slate Museum, *Sybil* was transferred to the BMR where it hauled the first trains. *Sybil* subsequently proved to be underpowered for day-to-day services on the BMR and saw little use afterwards, but it was fully restored in 2011-12 with a reconditioned boiler and new inner firebox.

On acquisition by the RLR, *Sybil* was close to the end of its 10-year boiler ticket but was able to take part in the 2021 charity gala and visit the Ffestiniog Railway for the April 30-May 2, 2022 annual general meeting weekend in company with *Elin*. *Sybil* was on display, but not in steam at the 2022 charity gala where a visiting locomotive was ex-Dinorwic 'Port2' class Hunslet No. 1429 of 1922 *Lady Joan* from the Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway.

In October 2022, *Sybil* was in the RLR workshop for lifting of the cab and saddle tank in preparation for inspection and overhaul of the boiler and regulator, also necessary remedial work on the motion to improve its timing. By March 2023 the boiler had passed its out-of-frames hydraulic test and two months later, with some fittings r-attached and a fresh coat of heat-proofed paint applied, was re-attached to the mainframes. The smokebox pipework was also reinstalled, and the lagging sheets fitted. The remaining work to complete the overhaul was finished in time for *Sybil* to play a full working role in the 2023 and 2024 charity galas.

Shortly before the 2023 gala, it was announced that the RLR had acquired a steam locomotive, in working order, from Germany. This locomotive is a Decauville 'Type 3' 0-4-0T, No. 648 of 1912, which was built for the Thessaly Railway, Volos in Greece, where it remained in service until 1939 when it was sold to a Chrome mine in Lamia.

Withdrawn from service in the 1960s, the locomotive stood derelict in the open until bought by the German Steam Locomotive Museum in Neuenmarkt Wisberg. After two further changes of ownership, it was purchased by Frankfurter Feldbahnmuseum in 1993 where it was restored to working condition and given a 'Teutonic'-pattern cab. Since its arrival on the RLR, *Lily*, as the locomotive is now named, has received some more work to make it suitable for the line's operating conditions. It made its public debut during the 2023 gala and made an interesting comparison with *Chuquitanta*. An interesting point to note is that even after Decauville had established its own design school with the 'Type 1' and succeeding types, the Paris concern continued to build specimens of the Couillet designs that it had once dealt in. Examples survive in New Caledonia (No. 251 of 1897 *Nostalgie*) and Uruguay (No. 1785 of 1906).

On July 27, 2019, the RLR announced that it had acquired Bagnall 'Namchick' 0-4-0ST *Pixie*. It is a locomotive that Jeremy was very pleased to obtain. A typical Bagnall 'Bullhead' (enlarged cylindrical) firebox narrow gauge product, it has Walschaerts' valve gear rather Baguley or Bagnall-price as this was more appropriate to its year of construction.

This 5 ½-ton locomotive with 6in by 9in cylinders was originally supplied to Staveley Minerals for construction work on Pilton quarries in Rutland, subsequently moving between Pilton and Cranford. The locomotive's celebrity status stems from the fact that in 1962 it was purchased by the Reverend Teddy Boston of Thomas the Tank Engine authorship fame for use on a narrow-gauge railway that he was building at All Saints Church Rectory in Cadeby. Over the years Boston accumulated and operated a collection of narrow-gauge locomotives and rolling stock but the Cadeby Light Railway closed in 2005 and *Pixie* was sold to a private collector who commenced a 10-year overhaul which was never completed.

After protracted negotiations, *Pixie* arrived on-site in June 2019. By this stage, some work had been undertaken on the locomotive by external contractors including the replacement of a defective wheel centre, new tyres

all round, and new axlebox castings, which required machining. By the end of 2020, *Pixie*'s boiler had been sent to David and Michelle Goddard's Road Steam Works where several tasks were undertaken including retubing, building up of wasted areas, new studs, fitting a new (riveted) smokebox, overhauling the regulator and carrying out a hydraulic test. The boiler was then returned to the RLR allow the fitting of a new chimney and smokebox door. The boiler fittings were also being overhauled at this stage with the injectors being sent away for the fitting of new cones.

Eventually, *Pixie*'s wheelsets, frames, cylinders and motion were moved to the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways' Boston Lodge for restoration to continue in Wales while boiler work progressed at the RLR By June 2022 two new test cocks had been fitted to the right-hand side of the backhead and the blow down valve overhauled. A pattern for a new steam turret was also under construction. Shortly afterwards the boiler joined the chassis components at Boston Lodge for the remainder of restoration work.

By November 2022, the motion and wheelsets had been removed from the frame assembly there to enable the individual components to be painted. The saddle tank had also been shot-blasted to enable assessment of its condition. Painting work was well advanced by January 2023. Two months later, the boiler, wheelsets and motion had been returned to the frame and cylinder assembly at Boston Lodge, but much pipework remained to fitted.

It had also been decided at this stage to order a new saddle tank to be sent down to Wales when required. The original was sold (complete with cut inspection holes) to the Bala Lake Railway which is home to earlier Bagnall 'Bullhead' saddle tank *Dorothy* (No. 1568 of 1899 and fitted with Baguley valve gear). Work on *Pixie* continued to make good progress at Boston Lodge, and was completed, including painting in Bagnall standard lined green livery, by the end of June 2024.

Given *Pixie*'s celebrity status amongst narrow-gauge steam locomotives, it was decided to depart from the 'once a year' tradition and give the locomotive a public relaunch on July 6, 2024, with a special photographic charter for enthusiasts on the previous day. *Pixie* was also in action during the 2024 charity gala.

On February 16, 2024, it was revealed that the RLR had acquired its third Quarry Hunslet 0-4-0ST in No. 704 of 1899 *Nesta,* sister to *Elin*, but unlike the latter, has retained its original-pattern boiler, albeit with a slightly enlarged water tank. This locomotive was shipped to the USA following withdrawal from service in Wales and eventually gravitated to being dumped in the open in Puerto Rico, where its condition deteriorated markedly.

Salvation came with purchase by Robert Gambrill, return to the U.K. and eventual display in unrestored condition in the Bala Lake Railway's museum. The main aim of acquisition by the RLR is to facilitate restoration of the locomotive to working order whilst retaining as many of the original components as possible. Mindful of the locomotive's original working environment in Bethesda, it was decided to work with the Ffestiniog team on the restoration in the coming years. *Nesta* was therefore transferred from the Bala Lake Railway to Boston Lodge on February 28, 2024. Jeremy said: "We are very excited to have *Nesta* joining the collection at Richmond, it was a one-off opportunity to reunite short wheelbase Penrhyn Quarry sisters *Elin* and *Nesta*. We have built a strong relationship with the team at Boston Lodge through the rebuild of *Pixie* and look forward to working up the conservation plan and restoration of Nesta to working order. *Nesta* will be the third Hunslet at Richmond and we have developed a lot of working knowledge, patterns and engineering detail from the restoration of *Elin* and the recent 10-year overhaul of *Sybil*, all of which will be valuable with the planned work on *Nesta*."

Internal combustion locomotives

As with the steam locomotives, these are all four-wheeled and as mentioned earlier, the first locomotive to arrive on the railway was No. 7, Motor Rail 'Simplex' No. 7403 of 1936. This locomotive received an overhaul in 2018 and further work to correct leakage of excess carbon from the around the piston of one of its two cylinders, and replacing two excessively-worn valve guides was necessary in the latter part of 2022.

Another early arrival on the railway is, at least as far as England is concerned, a unique survival. This is the French Campagne petrol 'Locotracteur' No. 903 of 1925. The design, designated class TS dated back to World War One and this locomotive eventually found its way to a French scrapyard.

From there, it was moved to Spain and restored by a restorer who specialised in the restoration of Bugatti cars. The work included the construction of a new petrol tank, a thorough engine overhaul and extensive repair work to the bonnet. Somewhat later, regauging from Decauville 600mm to nominal 2ft gauge took place. The restored locomotive is historically very important in filling a gap on the domestic scene, namely a French design of internal combustion narrow gauge locomotive for use on the Western Front defences.

On display with a demonstration freight during the 2020 gala was Lister Type R Railtruck No. 40407 of 1954. A major overhaul of this petrol locomotive was undertaken in 2020 including replacement wheels, axles, brake gear, main bearings and chains, along with sundry other parts, a full repaint and re-gauging to nominal 2ft gauge. Electric starting and lighting were also installed.

Other internal combustion locomotives comprise a diesel-hydraulic No. 1 (Baguley-

***Sybil* about to depart from Richmond station.**

Lister Type R Railtruck No. 40407 of 1954 with a slate wagon train.

Drewry No. 3701 of 1973), Ruston Hornsby '20DL' class No. 235654 of 1944 formerly at the Abbey Light Railway, Leeds, and Hunslet No. 3621 of 1947 (supplied via Robert Hudson). Of these the former was in use during the 2024 gala, whereas the latter two were not in service on the day and stored in the locomotive shed.

The Hudson-Hunslet locomotive was acquired by the RLR without an engine or clutch, but the railway was fortunately able to source a suitable Maclaren two-cylinder diesel engine that had originally driven a stationary water pump (its original engine was an Ailsa Craig CF2). Fitting this engine will require modifications to the chassis to allow the sump to fit and ensure true alignment with the gearbox. The engine is in generally good condition, but a new cast water-cooling elbow has been required to replace the damaged original. The clutch and flywheel assembly were missing but a suitable assembly was loaned by Amberley Museum as a pattern to enable the necessary replacement components to be made. It is intended to fit electric starting, so a starter ring will need to be fitted to the replacement flywheel/clutch assembly to engage with the motor. The overhaul of this locomotive was still in progress at the time of writing, but in May 2023 the opportunity was taken to run a cavalcade of the five other (workable) internal combustion locomotives over the line. This went to plan with even the Campagne veteran starting at the first attempt.

Rolling stock

Passenger rolling stock comprises a replica four-wheel open carriage of Penrhyn style constructed in the railway's workshops, as were the four-wheel open swing-seat Decauville carriage (a partner to Chuquitanta) and four-wheel enclosed balcony carriage (No. 3) with an Austrian flavour in its appearance.

There is also an enclosed bogie carriage (No. 4) built by the military on Hudson bogies for a visit of the late HRH The Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip, acquired from the National Railway Museum and overhauled on-site, as were two open bogie carriages with in-house bodies on Robert Hudson chasses acquired from Lydd Ranges. In its style of turnout, the closed bogie carriage appears to owe its inspiration to Ashover Light Railway practice.

The goods rolling stock is not without interest and includes examples of Ffestiniog

The 10-level frame at Richmond station.

Baguley-Drewery No. 1 on the Richmond main line.

Railway four-wheel slate trucks (one of which in flat form now carries BEARDspoon real Kentish cider barrels) originally received in poor condition from Llechwedd Quarries. The BEARDspoon wagon (restored by May 2019) has FR axleboxes but the next ex-Llechwedd restoration has the GWR logo on its axleboxes. It entered RLR service in September 2019.

Two further FR slate wagons (both with FR axleboxes) returned to the RLR in April 2021 having been restored in Wales. In summer 2020, a tub wagon was restored, involving the construction of a new oak underframe.

Four other distinctive wagons are also part of RLR stock. The first of these was a four-wheel 2ft 6in gauge RNAD four-ton covered wagon which had stood out of use on-site for eight years prior to restoration being undertaken. This involved regauging to 2ft, lowering of coupling height, reroofing and much bodywork repair before repainting in Corris brown livery for repurposing as a four-ton permanent way van in time for the 2021 charity gala.

At this stage two ex-RAF Fauld four-wheel Hudson ammunition vans were in store in poor condition at members' homes, while delivery had been taken of a bogie mines rescue vehicle which, although then covered in corrugated iron, had begun life as an RAF Fauld Hudson bogie toastrack carriage. By February 2022 it was reported work carried out on the bogie vehicle in North Wales had included stripping back the corrugated iron to reveal the original structure, re-plating the wasted areas, stripping down the bogies and turning the wheels at Boston Lodge. It entered service in time for the 2024 Gala, painted in maroon livery.

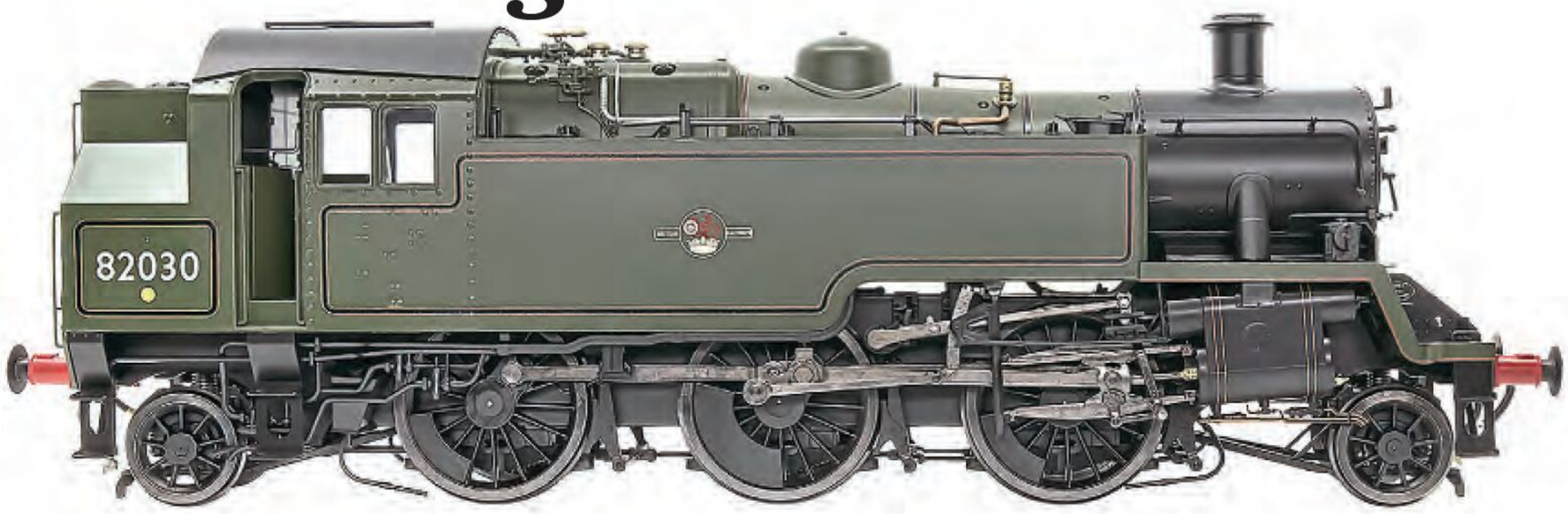
Work was also progressing on one of the two four-wheel Fauld wagons on the same site and at this stage it had included a full chassis stripdown showing that the buffer plates and other areas were badly corroded. After de-rusting, cleaning, repair welding (where necessary) repainting and the replacement of rubber pads fitted behind the buffer plates and above the axlebox, the chassis was reassembled. Following this process, the brake rodding (which had been damaged by poor lifting technique during a previous ownership) was straightened with the assistance of applied heat techniques and the rusted threads re-cut where necessary. The 'D' plate at the brakesman's end was replaced as was the floor. This consists of transverse 'U' irons sitting on the longitudinal angles which surround timber cross-members supporting longitudinal timbers, all to shield the munitions from danger. This phase of work was finished by the middle of March 2022.

The remainder of the month saw the reinstatement of the wagon's 'dropside' superstructure. This required the renewal of all timbers, along with the main hinge components, bending and refitting of the buffer plates (with their associated new rubber pads) and all the necessary painting and staining. During the intervening period, this wagon has seen passenger service during the 2023 and 2024 galas.

To conclude

The Richmond Light Railway constitutes an important facet of our homegrown 2ft gauge railway preservation scene, and it is home to some significant, and in some cases unique, locomotives and rolling stock. It is certainly well worth a visit during the annual public opening day. HR

O gauge Ivatts expands medium tank locomotive offerings as 3MTs arrive



READY-TO-RUN O gauge has flourished in recent years, with the likes of Dapol's LBSCR 'Terriers' and Ruston 4WDM variations from both Accurascale and Heljan offering handy, smaller locomotives for newcomers to the scale with space restrictions, while Ellis Clark's LMS 'Black Fives' have raised the bar for larger examples.

More recently, Lionheart Trains (a sister company to Dapol) has provided medium-sized tank engines with the GWR small prairies and the BR Standard 3MT 2-6-2Ts, the latter of which hit shelves just in time for Christmas. These cover both BR black and green variations, with lined and unlined examples of the latter. Unnumbered versions are also available for those looking to customise their newest acquisitions to suit their personal layout needs.

Keeping to the same wheel arrangement, the manufacturer has also confirmed that it is to release the LMS Ivatt Class 2 locomotives, with models already at the point of engineering samples. Designed by HG Ivatt and constructed between 1946 and 1952, this versatile class was built primarily for branch line duties for which their 'prairie' wheelbase was well-suited. Ivatt also included several labour-saving features such as self-cleaning ash pans and smokeboxes to improve operating economies.

Following an initial batch of 10 locomotives built by the LMS, BR decided to enlarge the class and a further 120 examples were built. The last member of the class was withdrawn in 1967, but four examples of this popular locomotive type have been preserved and all are presently operational, with Nos. 41298 and 41313 both on the Isle of Wight Steam railway, No. 41241 on the Keighley & Worth Valley, and No. 41312 at the Mid-Hants.

The new Lionheart model will be offered with all the quality features that have come to be expected of the manufacturer, such as full diecast metal construction (including wheels with metal tyres) working cab doors, full backhead detailing and a five-pole skew wound precision motor. Detail variations will include two different smokebox doors to cover those with extra lamp brackets which worked on the southern region. Push-pull fitted variations will also be offered.

Eight different running numbers will be on offer covering LMS plain black as worn when first introduced, along with both early and late lined BR black versions. The only preserved example to be offered in the first batch will be No. 41241, which will be presented in the KWVR-lettered crimson livery it currently wears, and which it wore when first preserved in 1967.

As with its other locomotives, unnumbered models in the LMS and BR liveries will be available but are only produced to order. Tooling samples have already been received and are currently under review, with livery artwork also presently being drawn up. Delivery is anticipated to take place in the final quarter of 2025.

The RRP is set at £621 for DCC-ready models, rising to £739.80 for DCC sound-fitted versions.

Three services, three gauges – Dapol launches wagon triplets in support of the Royal British Legion for VE Day 80

MAY 8, 2025, marks the 80th anniversary of VE Day and the end of hostilities in Europe, and Dapol has revealed a trio of wagons in N, OO and O gauges that will see a donation to the Royal British Legion made for each one sold.

Covering the air force, navy and army with imagery related to each military service, the N gauge models feature a gunpowder van, while OO models involve a ventilated box van. Finally, the option for O gauge modellers sees the different schemes applied to a GW standard ventilated van.

Each of the three models in all three scales can be bought clean or with weathering applied.

They can be bought via Dapol stockists, with prices set at £12.30, £15.20 and £57.60 for the N, OO and O gauge versions respectively in unweathered condition. Delivery is expected to take place in April 2025, meaning they should be with modellers in time for the anniversary date itself. The announcement came following the news that the manufacturer's wagons commemorating the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in 2024 had seen a donation of £1910 presented to the RBL on November 29, which Dapol production manager Samantha Jones presented to North Wales's poppy appeal manager Claire Lewis on November 29, 2024.

Send your model news to staff writer **Owen Hayward** on **OHayward@mortons.co.uk@mortons.co.uk**

Progress with Clarks Railworks' OO offerings

CLARKS Railworks, the sister firm to retailer Ellis Clark Trains, has showcased two of its highly anticipated OO gauge products, with one now due for release in the New Year and the second reaching an advanced stage of the production process.

In November 2023, it announced that it would be producing the WD Austerity 2-10-0s for its first venture into locomotives for the scale. The models were designed after studying examples on the North Norfolk and Keighley & Worth Valley railways and have now reached the engineering sample stage.

The model has been fully designed and engineered in the UK and will feature a high-quality coreless motor and a high-quality gear train, alongside catering for left and right-hand drive variants, and a range of liveries will be produced. All three of the UK-based preserved examples are included in the production run, with No. 600 *Gordon* in its Longmoor blue scheme, No. 90775 *The Royal Norfolk Regiment* in BR early crest plain black and No. 3672 *Dame Vera Lynn* in BR Brunswick green.

All models are priced at £295 for DCC-ready versions.

Meanwhile, the LNER quad-art carriages have seen decorated samples delivered to the manufacturer's Skipton offices which are under review. These have been meticulously researched and will be on offer in unpainted teak, BR crimson and BR maroon variations. Of particular interest, the teak livery has been carefully produced so that each panel on one particular set is unique and therefore not repeated on another body within the pack.

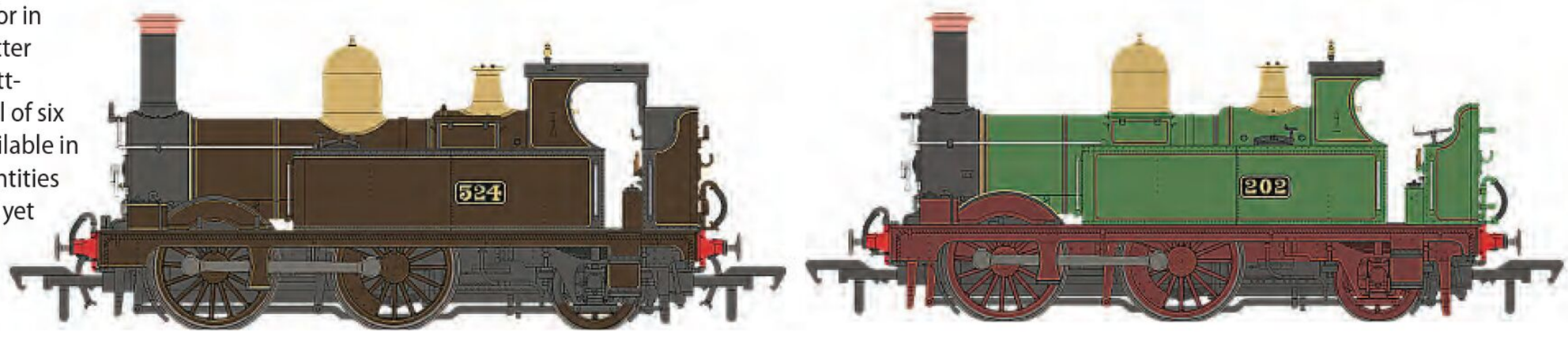
These are priced at £325 per set, with delivery expected to take place in the first quarter of 2025. However, Ellis Clark advised that some of the teak packs were proving exceedingly popular and are close to selling out to advance orders. The preserved quad-art set No. 74A, which resides on the NNR, is included in this production run, having been studied during the early development of the models.

Dapol's Autotank forerunner nears final production

Early Great Western has been a recent focus for manufacturer Dapol, and its GWR class 517 0-4-2T locomotives have recently seen tooling samples delivered to the firm's head offices for review – with artwork now revealed to tease how these forerunners to the more iconic 1400/4800 auto-fitted locomotives will be finished.

With both open and enclosed cab variations catered for in the tooling suite, the latter also catering for a Collett-designed variant, a total of six locomotives will be available in the first batch, with identities such as No. 202 in lined yet unbranded GW green with red frames, while No. 524 will carry the unusual lined chocolate colour. Closed cab versions will include No. 523 in unlined green with Great Western lettering and a numberplate mounted centrally on the side tanks, while No. 1159 will sport similar but with its own numberplate mounted at the cab end of the water tanks.

RRP is set at £140 for DCC-ready models, with delivery to retailers expected in the final months of 2025.



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Trade and industry: Worsdell's Y7

There is a plethora of industrial locomotive designs, each made for purpose. The North Eastern H (later LNER Y7) examples were certainly unusual but perfectly suited to the work for which they were intended, as **Daniel Long** explains.

Two of these 0-4-0Ts survive; No. 1310 is one of the 10 built in 1891 and represents the original NER H era. It was rescued from Watergate Colliery in 1965, where it is pictured as NCB No. 64, complete with a shorter chimney some time before purchased by the Steam Power Trust. Interestingly, the frames of this locomotive actually derive from classmate No. 900, the boiler having been swapped during a rebuild in 1950. Normally, it is the frames that determine a locomotive's identity; however, in this instance that practice was not carried over and it remained No. 1310. CHARLES MILNER COLLECTION/MIDDLETON RAILWAY

THE railways were built on trade, and while it is easy to focus on the various industries which inspired this trade, the enormous systems designed for managing its rapid and efficient dispatch are not to be ignored. Large marshalling yards would operate constantly, echoing with the clatter of loose-coupled wagons and the barks of small industrial steam engines hauling them where they were needed.

The NER was no exception. Working on the docksides in the North East were a fleet of 0-4-0STs from Manning Wardle, a popular locomotive manufacturer. These tank engines had worked hard but became worn out. It was into this environment that TW Worsdell considered the need for engines to replace those industrial types which had long been the mainstay of docks and yards.

The challenges were almost entirely unique. Worsdell's design needed to handle tight curves and poorly-laid track, it needed to run well in spite of rough handling, and in less than ideal conditions. It also needed to be able to pull heavy trains, if only over short distances. Function had to be prioritised, though as with many engines from the pre-Grouping era, an eye to form was never too low down the list of priorities.

Development

Worsdell's class H shunting locomotive was the result. Like the Manning Wardles they replaced, the H had four wheels, close together to shunt the tightest of corners. Fitted with side tanks and lined out in NER colours, they had a finesse and elegance that belayed their purpose. They would find themselves working far away from the public eye, shuffling up and down sidings. Worsdell's design incorporated a straightforward domeless boiler, which was also used on the H1 crane engines, as well as 3ft 8in wheels and a length over the buffers of 20ft. The first six engines were fitted with 13in cylinders (which were expanded to 14in in later engines). Indeed, the first batch would receive these larger cylinders from 1902.

Six were ordered in 1888 and built at Gateshead. The class quickly proved successful, capable of tackling 500 tons on the straight and level. A further batch of 10 was ordered in 1891, and one more in 1897. Nineteen locomotives proved enough for the NER's needs, and by the time of the Grouping, the class could be found at Darlington North Road Works, Heaton, Gateshead, Tyne Dock and Hull Alexandra Dock.

At the time of the Grouping, it was clear that things needed to change. The need for locomotives at Hull, to replace the time-expired Hull & Barnsley tank engines, meant that members of the H fleet were moved accordingly. To fill the gap, an additional batch of five was ordered, this time from Darlington Works. This brought the total members of the class up to 24, a credit to the durability of Worsdell's design. They were also reclassified by the LNER as the Y7. Although durable, Worsdell's design speaks to a period where enginemen were told that instead of expecting

The second of the two survivors, No. 985 saw out its most recent boiler ticket at the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, where it is pictured on September 26, 2019, during a photographic charter. LAWRIE ROSE/MSLR

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enclosed cabs, they should invest in stout coats.

Creature comforts

The large opening in the back of the cab provided excellent visibility but will surely not have been appreciated by those working on the dockside, and especially not in bad weather! In June 1948, some 60 years after the introduction of the class, the open back was filled entirely on No. 68088, but it was only a few months before it was removed. No. 68088 was also fitted with a stovepipe chimney. It was the only variation in chimney types seen on the main line, although those in industrial service would be fitted with a motley assortment.

One of the other weak spots for the Y7s was their coal capacity. The coal bunkers were discretely tucked away behind the water tanks, which limited significantly how much the locomotives could carry. Because shunting was the main aim, and the Y7s would never be found wandering across the network, this should not have been a major problem. But who wants to repeatedly go back to shed for a top-up? It was not uncommon to see coal piled atop the water tanks and even over the boiler in attempts to increase capacity.

Detail differences

The differences between the NER-built engines and the LNER-built counterparts were minimal. Perhaps most obvious was the safety valves. The NER-built engines were fitted with Ramsbottom safety valves and had the beautifully ornate brass casing to match, whereas the LNER engines were designed to use Ross pop safety valves which were more exposed. Despite parts such as boilers being mixed across various engines, only two of the class ever swapped safety valve types during their long lives.

Several of the class had their bufferbeams extended downwards to allow for the use of dumb buffers. At the outset, all of the Y7s were fitted with handle and wheel on the smokebox door. Only during the 1930s would the wheel be replaced with a second handle, and this did not apply to engines which were sold from the company which often retained the wheel and handle for many years.

Some engines had a slightly different handrail arrangement. Most examples of the class had a handrail in an arc over the smokebox door and separate handrails along each side of the boiler, stopping at the smokebox. Some, however, were fitted with a continuous rail along each side and over the doors. Such variation across the class is worth noting for modellers. Choosing a member of the class at a specific point in time means you can assure yourself of accuracy.

The Y7s lived a workmanlike existence, pottering around yards and sidings, quietly arranging trains as required. That is not to say that the class did not have occasions where they found themselves in unusual situations.

A not-so-quiet life

The versatility of the class made them perfect for hire purposes. In 1942, one member of the class was hired to the Ministry of Works and Buildings near Shrewsbury, before being loaned to the United States authorities for a time. It was later returned to Tyne Dock.

Perhaps the most unusual working for the Y7s was that of No. 986. In November 1945, it was transferred to the North Sunderland Railway. This independent line was operated by the LNER, which identified the Y7 as the perfect engine to haul the Great Eastern four-wheeled coaches along the coastline. Despite origins as a humble shunting locomotive, Darlington Works installed a vacuum ejector to operate the continuous brakes and fitted screw-link couplings to replace the three-links which were used as standard. Unsurprisingly, no carriage warming equipment was installed, although the open back was filled on the driver's side to provide some protection in reverse. It hauled the last service on the line when it was closed in 1951.

Nos. 68088 and 68089 were the last two members of the class to survive into BR ownership, and coincidentally the last built. No. 68088 was transferred into service stock and spent four years in this role. Both would be withdrawn in 1952, being sold to industrial operations like a number of their classmates. Although BR saw no use for these shunters, they would find a new lease of life in private hands.

Industrial service

The trade depression of the early 1930s brought an end to the Y7's period of leadership in the field. By November 1932, all 16 of the engines built in 1888 and 1891 were withdrawn, replaced by Sentinel shunters which promised one-man operation. Of these 16 engines, however, nine went and made new lives for themselves elsewhere. It had not been uncommon for the class to be hired out to various industrial concerns, and their popularity meant they were quickly snapped up for use.

Nos. 898 and 1302 were bought for use in stone quarries in Middleton-in-Teeside. No. 945 was bought by Stockton-on-Tees Corporation for use at their Gas Works, where it was numbered 3 and named *William Brown*. No. 984 was bought by Royal Arsenal, Woolwich after its hire, being sent to ROF Maltby and named *Bluebell*. No. 68089 was used on the Morecombe Sewage Works contract, and the rest of the engines which went into industrial use found work at various collieries.

Their use on these sites showcased the strength of the design once more. Many members of the class saw their working lives extended by roughly 20 years.

Some even soldiered on into the 1960s where they naturally caught the eye of preservationists. To survive this long in harsh conditions is no mean feat and speaks wonders of how effective the engines were.

In 2023, No. 1310 was withdrawn for overhaul at the Middleton Railway, pictured on May 7 during celebrations for the coronation of King Charles III sporting its lined NER livery. IAN SMITH/MIDDLETON RAILWAY

From the side, the Y7s have a rather quaint look with their large water tanks, tiny driving wheels and overhanging cab roof. Nevertheless, they were popular choices and easily found work wherever they were allocated.
NEVILLE STEAD COLLECTION/TRANSPORT LIBRARY

On December 4, 1948, No. 68088 could be found working at Stratford depot on departmental duties, with its open-back cab had been plated over, affording its crew some protection from the elements. TB OWEN/COLOUR RAIL

Preservation

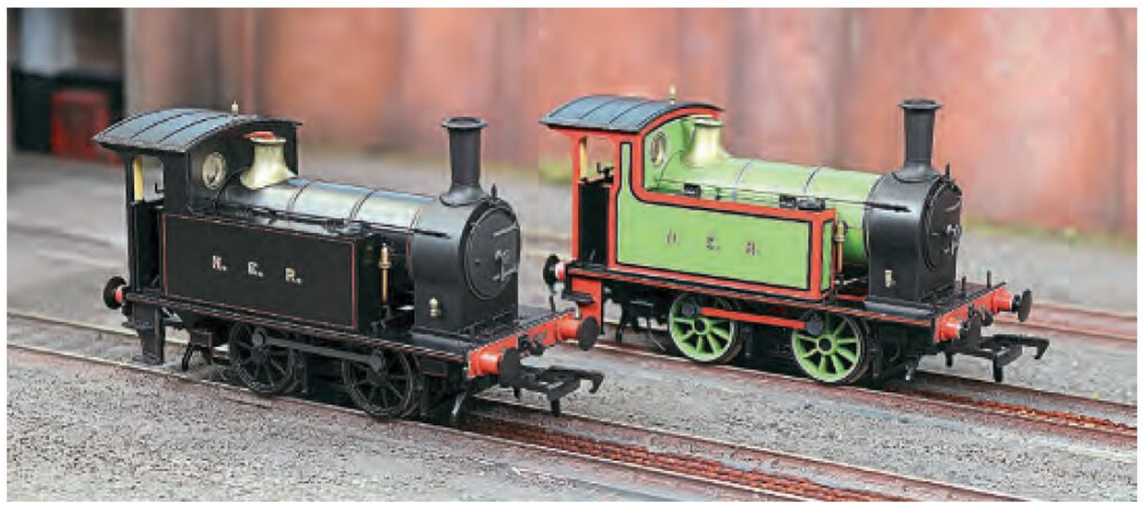
Nos. 1310 and 68088 were saved from the cutter's torch. No. 1310 has been based at the Middleton Railway and been a regular performer on the line until it was withdrawn for overhaul. This engine is an example of the

1891 batch, while No. 68088 is an example of the 1923 batch built by the LNER. The latter can currently be found at the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, also undergoing overhaul. In both cases, these quirky engines have made homes in places where larger engines would not fit.

Reminiscent of the North Sunderland Railway, it is a joy to see these spirited pre-Grouping machines trundle around with a couple of carriages in tow. My first encounter with a Y7 was at the Midland Railway Centre, where it took charge of their Victorian set. Although a shunting engine, it seemed right at home with this eclectic rake, where no two vehicles are the same. Although considerably longer than a couple of coaches, it acquitted itself very well indeed. That they survive essentially unchanged from 1888 is remarkable.

There was nothing prestigious about these engines when they were preserved. With no great achievements under their belts, save for their longevity, they were the epitome of a hard-working locomotive. With so little time in the limelight during their working lives, you would think that this would make them easy to overlook in preservation; these charming and curious machines showcase how railways used to be when shunting yards and docksides were the backbone of industry.

Beyond these industrial environments, the Y7s are something different and in many ways, more interesting than traditional main line types. The inside cylinders and elegant design gives them a grace in movement. Their simplicity makes them workhorses, and their size makes them useful in almost any heritage operation. Although designed as humble shunting engines, their survival into the 21st century allows them to tell an important part of the story of industry and trade on which the railways were built.



The models

Rapido has never been a company to produce what is expected of it. Since entering the UK market, it has curated a thoroughly idiosyncratic range, and the Y7 is a worthy addition. These popular engines, with a variety of livery options, have a unique appeal. Once you see one, it's hard not to want one of your own.

The market for small shunting engines has seemingly exploded over the last few years. At one point, options were limited to the L&Y Pug and the Austerity tank engines. Nowadays, docksides and yard scenes from all regions can bustle with a host of types from a range of manufacturers. The entry of the Y7 into this crowded market is most welcome. With inside cylinders and side tanks as opposed to saddle tanks, it looks a little different from the norm. Rapido has opted to produce models which cover the entire history of the class, from the NER green of 1888 through to how No. 1310 looks in preservation today.

Perhaps unfortunately, though prototypically, the middle period is made of a host of black liveries with the various owners of the engines represented on the tank sides. I personally think the lining of the NER liveries, both black and green, sets off the aesthetics of the Y7s perfectly.

On such a small model, detail is all, and appropriately, attention has been paid to safety valves and handrails to accurately showcase each engine. I'm particularly impressed by the cut-out in the frames, which means a nice representation of the valve gear is to be glimpsed. It's little details such as these that make all the difference.

Powering the engine is a coreless motor, fitted with a flywheel for smooth running. The gearing of the engine means that it runs beautifully slowly, and is ideally suited to shunting trains, and making occasional forays onto the main line.

A Next-18 DCC socket has been tucked neatly into one of the sidetanks for those who run their locomotives digitally. The other side tank has a pre-fitted speaker for those who wish to have their engine running with sound. A great deal has been packed into the Y7, and the results really do speak for themselves.

As ever, the standards expected from RTR models continue to build, and it is companies like Rapido that help to raise those standards.

This charming model captures the essence of this stunning shunter in miniature and has been a popular addition to many railways.

With such varied histories, and useful applications, I cannot recommend one of these highly enough. HR

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DANISH STEAM: AN OCEAN APART

The Nene Valley Railway is renowned for its eclectic mix of continental locomotives, with Frichs F 0-6-0T No. 656 returning to service in January 2024. Meanwhile, more than 400 miles away, one of its classmates was also emerging from overhaul, as **Phil Barnes** discovered during an impromptu visit to the Danish line it calls home.

The sign and emblem for the VBV at the entrance to Bryrup station. PHIL BARNES

In order to set the scene, this article is based around a quirky and unusual set of circumstances highlighted by a 'light bulb moment' while looking up some information on Danish State Railways' Frichs F class 0-6-0T No. F665, which is located at the Veteranbanen-Bryrup-Vrads (VBV), a Danish heritage line in the Bryrup region.

This was the result of a visit on July 8 last year during a cruise ship stop at Aarhus on the Jutland peninsula. Six weeks later I visited the Nene Valley Railway during a day when the rostered engine was another F - No. F656. Already there is some quirkiness in play with the numbering of these two locomotives which form a sort of numerical anagram.

Both were built to a design of Otto Busse by Frichs of Aarhus in 1949, before starting their working lives on the Danske Statsbaner (DSB) after the Second World War, a period that devasted that country's railways.

These postwar-built 0-6-0Ts were manufactured to the original drawings of Otto Busse, primarily for use as shunting locomotives. The two locomotives featured here were part of a class that once numbered 120, of which 11 are extant in both non-operational and operational condition. Both Nos. F656 and F665 fit the latter status, although only since the beginning of 2024.

When you consider that one is based at Bryrup and the other at Wansford (416 miles away as the crow flies), it is unlikely that there was ever a race to get these locomotives into traffic around the same time – it just happened by pure coincidence.

It often does not take much effort to see which locomotives are rostered at many heritage railways and seeing that No. F656 was working on the NVR on August 14 was too good an opportunity to miss. Having already visited the VBV, an opportunity to travel with No. F656 was a must.

Danish state steam

The VBV is three-mile heritage railway located about 34 miles to the west of Aarhus and is on a latitude of 56 degrees north, just a little bit 'higher' than Edinburgh on the other side of the North Sea. The current stretch of railway is a remnant of the standard gauge Horsens-Bryrup-Silkeborg line which was operational from 1929 to 1968. The Horsens to Bryrup section was first built through the late 1890s and opened in April 1899 but was originally metre gauge; this section was regauged when the Bryrup to Silkeborg section was constructed in

A pair of Danish F class 0-6-0Ts stand at Vrads station on May 26, 2024. It was on this day that the leading locomotive F665 returned to service after a 20-year absence during which the second locomotive (F658) had been responsible for the Veteranbanen-Bryrup-Vrads' steam hauled services. 400 miles away in Peterborough, another of these locomotives had also recently had an overhaul completed. SIMON MOSBJERG MORCH/VBV

On January 19, No. F656 was passed fit for use on the Nene Valley Railway after an absence from revenue-earning service of more than 40 years. PAUL ROE/NVR

On August 14, No. F656 runs round at Peterborough NVR station, passing the former Woodstone Wharf signalbox. PHIL BARNES

To run round its stock at Vrads, No. F665 had to propel the stock out of the station and reverse into the loop. The train, comprising several railcar vehicles, then brought itself back into the platform for the steam locomotive to reattach to the rear for the return to Bryrup. PHIL BARNES

the late 1920s. This railway's story is a familiar one of a route being created as one of Denmark's private railways to link local communities, but by 1968 it had become unprofitable due to the increased use of road traffic and was therefore closed. The plan was to replace the railway with buses and convert the route to a bridle path or nature trail; this did not sit well with the residents of Bryrup who wished to maintain a part of the former railway as a preserved route.

From above it is possible to see that the entire line meanders through an area of outstanding natural beauty and this railway has the accolade of being 'the most beautiful railway in Denmark'. As well as travelling through forests, the line passes three lakes – Kvindso, Kulso and Snabe Igelso.

British history

Elaborating on the Danish F class, these 120 locomotives were built over a period of 51 years between 1898 and 1949, and actually had a British pedigree; they were based on the original design of four F class tender locomotives supplied to the State Railways of Jutland-Funen in Denmark during 1873, all having been built by Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns of Newcastle which happens to be a place 'just across' the North Sea from Denmark. Ultimately those four locomotives were converted circa 1889/90 to tank locomotives and remained in service until the late 1930s, which meant they were in service at the same time as Busse's long established F class design, which was initially designated as Class F2.

The 0-6-0Ts are powered by two cylinders with a 16in bore and a 22in stroke, with Allan straight link slide valve gear to control them. The boiler is coal fired and is rated at about 170psi, giving the locomotives a tractive effort of roughly 16,896lb. This power is transmitted to the rails via 49.3in diameter wheels with the overall dry weight being 30.5 tons.

After the Second World War, and with a need for more shunting locomotives, a batch of 15 was sanctioned, all also built by Frichs, and included both Nos. 656 and 665. However, this batch had an enhanced specification by way of stronger buffer beams and buffers as well as larger coal bunkers, the latter increasing their range and flexibility. Their primary use was mainly for shunting stock on and off the various rail ferries, but class members were also employed on some light goods and passenger services.

It is worth mentioning here that a unique feature of these 1949-built F class locomotives is a pipe connection between the air brake system and the whistle steam feed system, controlled by two on/off cocks and a one-way valve. The reason for this was to enable the whistle to be air-operated at night, which gave a more subdued and controllable sound than was possible with steam, so as to avoid unduly disturbing passengers in the carriages when being shunted on and off the ferries.

Although built the year before, No. F656 was not delivered into service until early January 1950. After about 12 years' use it was overhauled in the last months of 1961 before being stored at Aarhus on the reserve list until 1969.

In March 1975, it was purchased privately for use on the NVR for 17,000 Kroner before being transported to Peterborough via the port of Esbjerg. The NVR was, at the time, a comparative newcomer to the preserved railway scene and the acquisition of No. F656 was therefore to solve the problem of there being a lack of British-built locomotives and rolling stock available. After realising that the NVR's route could easily be made to achieve the relevant loading gauge clearances, European stock started arriving and is why the railway has so many items of continental rail vehicles based there.

At this time the NVR was yet to formally open, but No. F656 was first steamed in the UK in 1976 and after the formal opening of the railway in 1977, this locomotive saw regular use on the lighter off-peak trains. However, the firebox became damaged in 1982, with one side quilted and a stay bolt wrenched out. After several unsuccessful attempts at rectification, boiler engineer Pridham was called in and declared it "beyond economical repair"– which was the case at that time, but copper welding technology has since moved on, thus enabling it to be repaired during the most recent overhaul.

Mosquito bait

In its first period of use at the NVR, No. F656 featured in an episode of the TV series Secret Army when it was shot up by a De Haviland Mosquito. For this, the locomotive carried a red and white Danish flag around its chimney, which is still present today.

After coming out of traffic, No. F656 spent many years in storage at Wansford before its overhaul started in earnest in 2002. As it was not high on the restoration list, it was to take more than 20 years in a stop/start fashion before being completed, with it not being until September 2022 that it finally moved under its own power for the first time in

No. F665 prepares to depart Bryrup on July 8, 2024, a few months after returning to service on the Veteranbanen-Bryrup-Vrads heritage line in Denmark. PHIL BARNES

The cabs of these locomotives are compact but laid out well, with everything in easy reach. PHIL BARNES

A few weeks after visiting its classmate in Denmark, a visit to the NVR brought an opportunity to enjoy Danish F class No. F656 a little closer to home. PHIL BARNES

Though numerically speaking the two locomotives are nine apart, according to their worksplates they are actually successive builds of Frichs (Aarhus) workshops, with No. F665's works number (359) coming before that of No. 656 (360). PHIL BARNES

The overhaul of No. F665 in Denmark not only involved replacing firebox stays, but also part of the copper sides – something which had previously hindered the overhaul of No. F656 on the NVR but was made possible due to advances in copper welding technology. JOHN ARMSTRONG / VBV

decades. During these years, the boiler was sent to Locomotive Maintenance Services at Loughborough for the new firebox sides to be welded in, stays and tubes replaced, and a new main steam pipe fitted.

Grey iron firebars were replaced with chromium steel and spark arrestors from mild steel to stainless, both of which are expected to benefit from extended life as a result. The boiler was also clad in ceramic fibre for improved heat-insulation. A new vacuum brake system was fitted to allow No. F656 to work with the railway's British rolling stock, the locomotive having previously been air-only and limited to hauling the continental carriages; conversely to No. F665, the original air pump could not be made to work and so was replaced by a spare the NVR had in stock.

Authentic replicas of the running lamps were made and fitted with 12-volt switchable red/white LED bulbs, the original system having used 24 volt filament bulbs.

Despite it appearing all but complete in the latter part of 2022, further work was still required meaning that it was not until January 2024 that the locomotive completed a successful loaded test run and was passed fit for service.

No. F665, meanwhile, was the last F class to ever be built and it too was delivered into service in late January 1950. As with No. F656,it was put into storage at Aarhus in mid-1962 following an overhaul before transferring to be dry stored in the depot at Skanderborg until January 1966. It was then stationed at Randers where it was used as a shunting locomotive, before going on the reserve list. No. F665 was steamed for the last time on March 30, 1969, to work a special train over the private Randers Hadsund railway which was to close the next day. After this trip, No. F665 was stored in the depot at Randers until April 1971, when it was initially leased to the VBV before finally being sold to it in July 1974.

Following many years of subsequent use, No. F665 came out of traffic in 2004 and once more spent many years in store. However, in 2019 it became the subject of an overhaul which lasted until late 2023. Sections of the lower boiler barrel were replaced as were both the front and rear tubeplates. New copper was also needed to be welded into the firebox sides, while many other of the regular overhaul jobs were carried out (including tyre turning, replacing stays and fitting new tubes). Amusingly, a replacement air pump did not work, with the locomotive's original one instead being overhauled and refitted.

> "...the entire line meanders through an area of outstanding natural beauty and this railway has the accolade of being 'the most beautiful railway in Denmark'."

On March 3, 2023, the boiler was brought up to pressure for the first time to check and set the safety valves, and it was approved by the boiler inspector 13 days later. Following reassembly, No. F665 was steamed up on September 23 for further tests and adjustments, before finally turning a wheel under its own power on October 10 when it performed a short test run along the VBV. Five days later it was lit up again and put on display for the VBV's Veteran's Day.

Further test runs followed, and it was approved for service by the relevant authorities on December 5. However it was not until May 26 – the birthday of the nation's monarch, King Frederick X – that it officially ran its first trains, just a few months after its British-based classmate.

Interestingly, by looking at the works plates on their cylinder blocks it transpires that No. F656 is works No. 360 with No. F665 being No. 359 – i.e., consecutive works numbers, albeit not in sequential order.

It is purely coincidental that a pair of these locomotives almost simultaneously returned to service yet so far apart from one another – are there any other similar instances? If so, they must surely be few and far between. Given the restrictions of the British loading gauge it could be considered quite a novelty to sample a Danish steam locomotive on one of our own heritage lines and then be able to sample the same type in its native country.

As it happens, the VBV is not just home to one of these F class locomotives, as No. F658 also operates there. Despite being purchased in 1986, it was not brought into service until 2004, replacing No.F665 when that was withdrawn.

The Danish railway's passenger stock includes M class railcar vehicles built by Triangel of Odense, some of which were built as far back as 1927, and which supplement the open-ended wood-clad four-wheel carriages (of which only two are operational).

Amusingly, during my visit, when No. F665 needed to swap ends at Vrads, the railcar was powered up and the consist was moved under diesel power into Vrads platform to allow the locomotive to run round to the Bryrup end for the return journey.

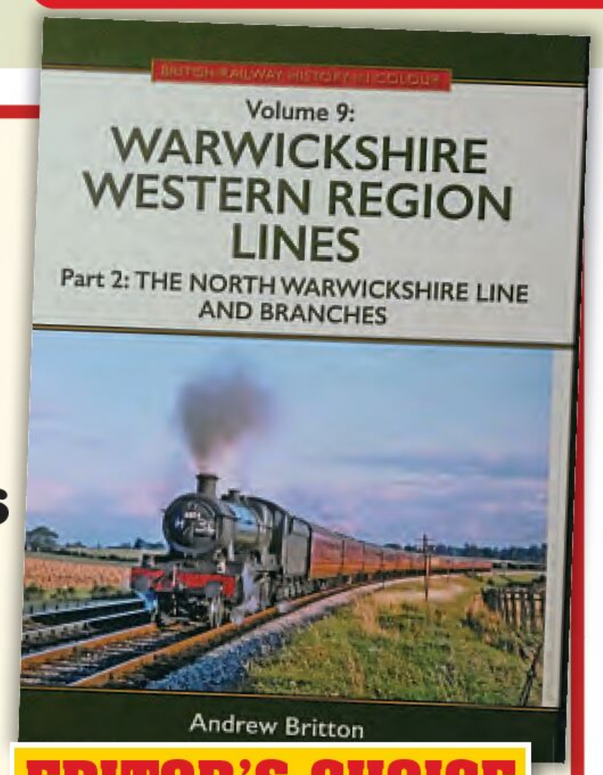
The VBV operates services at weekends between May and October, with some weekdays during July and August, with steam services tending to operate on Sundays; its 2025 calendar is yet to be confirmed. The railway is volunteer run with a members' club night every Thursday and working parties on Saturday at the depot in Byrup.

For further information on the VBV, see www.veteranbanen.dk HR

Warwickshire Western Region Lines:

Part 2: The North Warwickshire Line and Branches

By Andrew Britton (hardback, Lightmoor Press, www.lightmoor.co.uk 264pp, £35, ISBN 978-1-915069-44-3).



EDITOR'S CHOICE

THE North Warwickshire Line has, through the sterling efforts of Vintage Trains and its 'Shakespeare Express', in recent times become in effect a heritage railway by the back door, *writes Robin Jones*.

The route between Tyseley Junction and Bearley Junction, which was opened by the GWR in 1908, still retains its country stations, and many of the original buildings survive as the line passes through classic unspoiled rolling pastures and woodland of the Middle England countryside.

I hold many happy memories of the line, from my early visits as a trainspotter with my elder brother to the days when I lived a stone's throw from the summit at Earlswood Lakes.

Thankfully, the line survived two closure attempts and is now a thriving commuter corridor: A classic example of why similar routes across the country should have been spared the axe, or where possible reopened in these times of nightmare road traffic and urban gridlock.

This book is Volume 9 in the British Railway History in Colour series, and is an unsurpassed collection of classic views mainly from the Sixties and Seventies accompanied by detailed informative captions.

Separate chapters covering adjoining routes serve to place the line in context: Honeybourne to Stratford-upon-Avon, Bearley Junction to Alcester, Birmingham Moor Street station, Stratford to Hatton (which also survives) and Birmingham Snow Hill station, rightly described as a trainspotter's paradise from 1956-57.

The North Warwickshire Line became part of the GWR's alternative to the Midland Railway's main line between Birmingham and Cheltenham via the Lickey Incline, and indeed was the last main line to be opened in the UK before High Speed 1 in 2003.

The volume depicts the time when the line was busy with local stopping services, which saw steam trains replaced by DMUs from 1959, summer Saturday holiday expresses to the West Country (we see, for example, GWR 4-6-0 No. 6851 *Hurst Grange* heading a Paignton to Wolverhampton Low Level through Stratford) mixed with heavy freight.

Regrettably, following an accident which damaged the track at Winchcombe in 1976, BR closed the line south of Stratford and began lifting it three years later. I remember during a day out in 1983 seeing the early revival efforts at Toddington by the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway which blossomed into a premier heritage railway and major Cotswold tourist attraction four decades on, leaving many with deep regret that trains cannot now run through to it via Stratford.

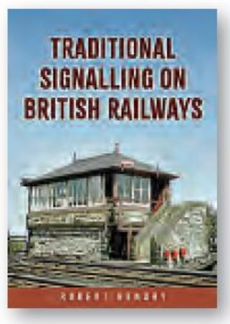
The sheer variety and superb reproduction of the colour photographs impresses in recreating the character and atmosphere on the line and its busy traffic as it was, and allows the readers to immerse themselves in a well-informed trip back in time with the turn of every page.

As well as capturing the essence of the everyday running, special occasions are also brought back to life, such as the 1960 visit of Caledonian Railway single No. 123 and GWR 4-4-0 No. 3440 *City of Truro* to Moor Street. Highly recommended.

MAGNIFICENT PICTORIAL RECORD OF A CLASSIC ROUTE IN THE LAST DAYS OF BR STEAM

Traditional Signalling on British Railways

By Robert Hendry (paperback, Amberley Publishing, www.amberley-books.com 96pp, £15.99, ISBN 978-1-3981-1397-8)



YOU would be a fool to think that our rail network has not changed in the last 200 years, but one area that has possibly seen the most evolution is its signalling, *writes Owen Hayward*. The first semaphore did not appear until 1841, introduced by C H Gregory on the London and Croydon Railway and since then this method of train protection has been gradually refined to the modern standards we see on our network today (although the principles are very much the same at heart).

I am always intrigued by personal recounts of times past and the stories that surround them. I am not familiar with Hendry's previous titles myself so am unclear as to whether he was employed as a signaller on BR, however, his knowledge and experience of such matters clearly shows in this book. Amusingly, he describes within it his first experience of using the block codes as being at the age of four in the rather unusual setting of his parents' car, whiling away time with his father (who was doctor and avid rail enthusiast) while they waited for his mother to finish shopping.

It set up his passion for such matters that eventually led to his regular invitations to numerous boxes near to where he grew up – with some signallers so confident in his understanding of matters they would even leave him to work their box while they nipped to the shops – you certainly wouldn't get away with such practices these days.

Every region had a slightly different approach to signalling – even down to way that the diagrams were presented in the box – and here Hendry shares a lot of what those were, as well as the various practices employed and the reasons for them.

It is fascinating to see how miniscule some of those variations were and how understanding them is such a challenge; one example he cites is Park Station Junction in Manchester, with its plethora of crossovers and accompanying signals.

Hendry also details how it was perhaps easier to become complacent or make mistakes than is perhaps often believed; he put into practice a lot of his learnings on his father's O-gauge model railway but despite his ability to 'communicate in block bells before (he) could even speak', he still made an error that led to a smaller scale incident mirroring the Hawes Junction collision of December 24, 1910 whereby a light engine movement was forgotten about and an express cleared into section behind it.

Hendry's script is accompanied by numerous photographs detailing many signalling related matters; from jawed token catches that were mounted to sides of locomotives to the various token instruments.

Of particular interest is a shot depicting the aftermath of a collision near Rugby Central on July 10, 1961 where a derailed van travelling north obstructed the southbound line and two minutes later was struck by a York-Swindon express. The accompanying caption details the pressures the involved signallers faced, having seen a track circuit display occupied but being uncertain as to whether or not it was an equipment failure as was common at the time and facing penalisation from bosses for any 'needless stopping of trains'.

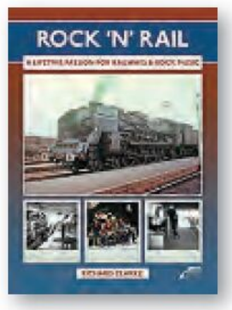
It is a stark reminder of the pressures the job faced and how signallers needed to be on the ball when it came to such situations.

There are plenty of photographs of boxes across the nation – both inside and out – including some that still survive to this day on heritage lines. It is easy to get lost in the glitz and glamour of the locomotives but, as with everything, behind it all are the true workings that keep the wheels turning.

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE COGS OF RAILWAY OPERATIONS

Rock 'n' Rail: A Lifetime Passion for Railways & Rock Music

By Richard Clarke (hardback, Gresley Books, 136pp, £22, ISBN 9781911704010)

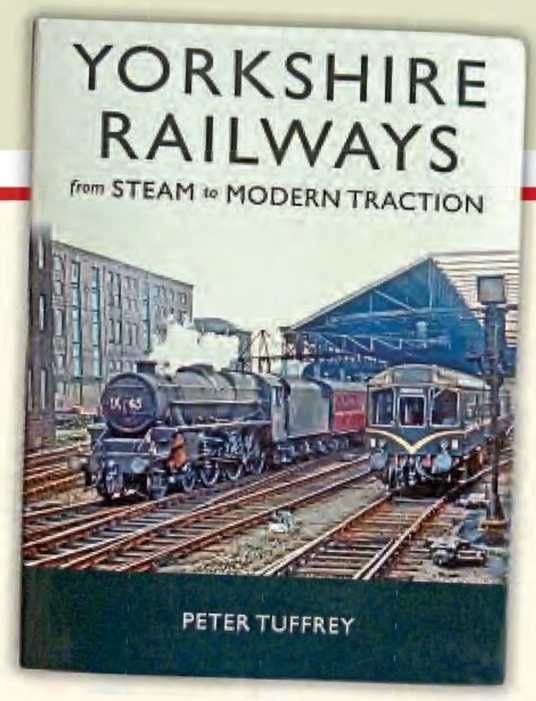


RAILWAYS and music have always been somewhat synonymous with one another (think of that classical piece Coronation Scot, or music videos such as that for The Beatles' A Hard Day's Night filmed on the West Somerset), and it is easy to see why, *writes Owen Hayward*.

What Clarke shares with us in this publication is his rather unusual

Yorkshire railways

By Peter Tuffrey (Hardback, Great Northern Books, 160pp, £22.50, ISBN 978-1-914227-70-7)



THIS book's sub-title – 'from steam to modern traction' – indicates this newcomer is one of a seemingly increasing genre of railway publications that is targeted at steam and diesel enthusiasts alike, *writes Geoff Courtney.*

I guess we steam-era trainspotters are a dwindling breed, and in any case some of the so-called modern traction can be readily placed firmly in the 'heritage' sector. Indeed, the term often used is heritage modern traction, which sounds a complete contradiction in terms but says it all. It's both heritage and modern.

This is the 29th title Peter Tuffrey, a former PR consultant to his local football club, Doncaster Rovers, has written for Great Northern Books, a prodigious output which puts my sole effort, a history of one of the UK's high-profile motor manufacturers, well and truly in the shade. I take my journalist's hat off to him.

On the subject of the book's steam and diesel alliance, the introduction describes Yorkshire as an interesting case study of the changeover from steam to diesel in the mid to late 1950s and much of the following decade, with the two forms of traction working side-by-side on the main and branch lines. One piece of information it highlights amazed me: The 20,000 locomotives in service at nationalisation in 1948 were built to nearly 450 different designs, surely a nightmare for everyone, especially engineer, driver, fireman, and shedmaster.

Much of that variety may be found in this book, which travels the familiar path of listing the county's stations in alphabetical order, so top and tailing with Alne and York. The first two images, each at Alne north-west of York, illustrate the variety; the first taken in June 1957 of J71 class 0-6-0T No. 68246, then 68 years old, and the second of Type 3 Co-Co D6769 in July 1966, at which time it was a four-year-old youngster.

This theme continues to the very end, for the final photograph in the book, taken in June 1964, features LMS 4MT 2-6-0 No. 43044 on an express freight overtaking Type 4 Co-Co D1521, also on a goods working, as they pass the closed York Racecourse station.

From Victorian-built antiquity, through the LNER, LMS and Standard eras, to state-of-the art diesel power, interspersed with DMUs, electric traction and – this being Yorkshire – colliery steam, the country's largest county provided railway variety on a large scale.

RAILWAY VARIETY TO SUIT ALL TASTES

story of childhood trainspotter, to BR signalman, to rock music producer, to signaller once more.

He starts with the days he and his friends would play truant to go trainspotting at local bridges; a common story, but where many confess to being caught out, he became quite adept at forging sick notes.

The steerage towards his career paths came out of an act of rebellion in some part, the alternative being to work at his father's ladies clothing stores ("I found the shop utterly depressing… his employees appeared 'grey' and subservient. They were ideal for the surroundings they were employed in.").

A love of music proved an escape though for the menial job he found himself in straight after school, having initially failed a medical but, following a mishap while on tour with his rock group that necessitated it, a second opportunity proved more successful.

The narrative is extensively detailed in his thoughts of the moments he shares; one wonders how many people working their first solo turn at Castle Donington box were in fear of local criminal Frank 'Mad Axeman' Mitchell bursting in? Or stepping into the cab of a Class 45 to find the driver asleep with a bottle of ale underneath his seat? Thankfully, the lesser welcome experiences are (largely) a thing of the past, while others are able to be replicated in some part on our heritage lines.

It is a fascinating read, following Clarke's decision to resign from BR to try pursuing rock once more and then, having had his fix, returned to it some years later. Initially he rejoined the ranks as a signaller, moving between boxes through the years, but interestingly his time in the music industry developed skills that actually helped transfer into a managerial role within the rail industry – unexpected indeed.

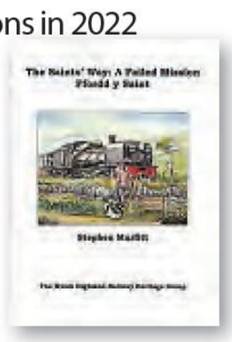
There are a mix of photographs taken by the author from his time in both industries, accompanied by some from names such as Eric Treacy to accompany the chapter of his earlier years which are largely dominated by BR(M) Jubilees with the odd Patriot thrown in.

All in all, a most intriguing read that shows just how life may not always go the way we plan, but how experiences gained in unusual places can benefit us later on when least expected.

FASCINATING TALE OF LIFE IN TWO INDUSTRIES POLES APART

The Saints' Way: A Failed Mission: Ffordd Y Sant

By Stephen Murfitt (softback, Welsh Highland Railway Heritage Group, sales@welshhighlandheritage.co.uk 20pp, £9 plus p7P, ISBN 978-0-9930821-7-7)



AS part of the celebrations in 2022 and 2023 of the centenaries of the reopening of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway from Dinas to Rhyd Ddu, and of the completion, a year later, of the Welsh Highland Railway's route from Rhyd Ddu to Porthmadog, the organisers arranged a competition for the best piece of original research on the history and background of both lines. This A4-size publication presents the winning essay, submitted by Dr Stephen Murfitt and now made available by the WHR Heritage Group.

To supporters of the Ffestiniog Railway at least, Stephen Murfitt needs little introduction. By profession a lawyer, with a particular interest in early railways, in 2017 Mr Murfitt was awarded a PhD by York University for his thesis The English Patent System and Early Railway Technology 1800-1852.

An FR volunteer for many years, since 1994 Murfitt has been honorary solicitor and clerk to the FR Company, and since 2006 a statutory director. In 2023 he published Festiniog Law, demonstrating the considerable influence of the law and its institutions on the shaping of the company.

The introductory section of the essay covers the background to its preparation, its author and to the WHR from its incorporation in 1922 and its subsequent unprofitability, leading to receivership and liquidation; WHR remaining under High Court supervision for the exceptional period of 72 years.

In the body of the essay, Murfitt examines the WHR's legal journey through those years, and why such august bodies as the National Parks Commission, the Ramblers Association and the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales sought to create a long-distance footpath – The Saints' Way/Ffordd y Sant – running from St Asaph's in North Wales to St David's in Pembrokeshire, incorporating the former WHR trackbed. This proposal failed, allowing the eventual rebirth of the WHR in its present form. The essay includes sections covering the roles of the managers and receivers, notably Colonel Stephens, the FRCo lease, and the appointment of a liquidator. The role of the National Parks Commission is examined, as well as the eventual involvement of WHLR (1964) Ltd ('the '64 Company'), Caernarvonshire (later Gwynedd) County Council, Trackbed Consolidation Ltd (TCL) and finally FRCo.

While the story behind the rebirth of the WHR has been documented by Rushton, Johnson and others, Murfitt focuses on the specifically legal aspects of the case, and the legal individuals involved.

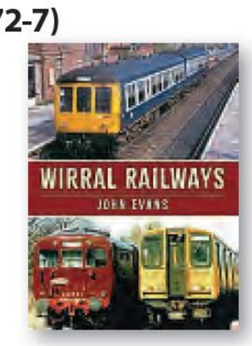
Prominent among the latter is Mr Justice Vinelott, the High Court judge who presided over the 1991 case where the liquidator sought to sell the trackbed to Gwynedd County Council.

Although concentrating upon the legal side of the story, Murfitt's text is very readable, with just the right touch of humour, and is fully referenced and well-illustrated, including maps of the NWNGR and WHR and a rather nice cover illustration, commissioned specially from the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway's resident illustrator Rebecca Whalley.

AN EXCELLENT ESSAY AND THOROUGHLY RECOMMENDED

Wirral Railways

By John Evans (softback, Amberley Publishing, www.amberley-books.com 96pp, £15.99, ISBN 978-1-398119-72-7)



USING colour photographs taken over the course of the last 50 years, this book documents the remaining railway routes and stations of the Wirral peninsula.

Broken down into chapters of varying lengths covering Birkenhead

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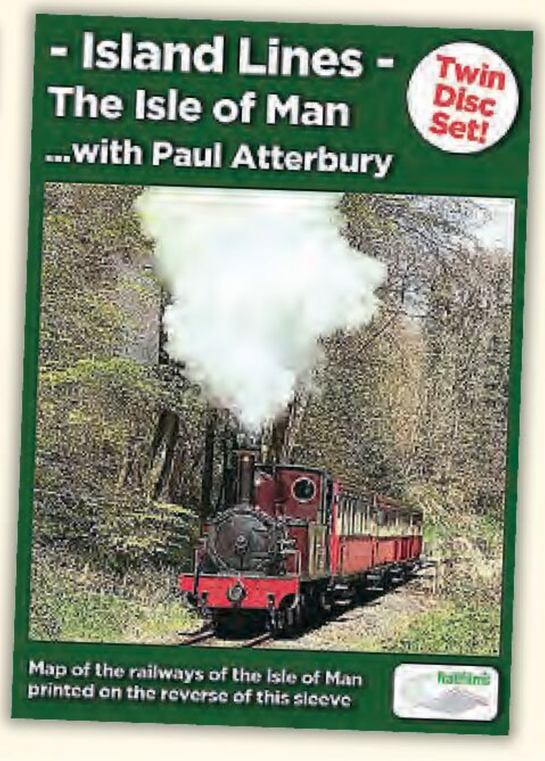
Island Lines – The Isle of Man with Paul Atterbury

(DVD, 72 mins, £30, www.telerail.co.uk)



THE heritage transport Eden that is the Isle of Man is unique for the British Isles in that its railways remain controlled by Tynwald, the Manx government.

Here Paul Atterbury, of BBC's Antiques Roadshow fame, takes us on a tour of the island across this two-disc DVD set.

Filmed during 2023's Transport Festival, which celebrated the 150th anniversary of the steam railway and 130th anniversary of the electric railway, disc one primarily takes us along the route of the steam-operated side of the network, with a look at the Beyer Peacock locomotives that operate it.

Paul also talks us through what purpose some stations served on the sections that were closed and lifted, with some rare archive footage interspersing that filmed anew. Such clips include parallel departures from St Johns, and times when the stationmaster here would use the locomotive from the first train of the day to pull out the inoperable ones from the locomotive shed for display for visiting enthusiasts.

Little music is used for this section, allowing the trains to do the talking – and they do so well with some lovely recordings of both the Peacocks and Dubs 0-6-0T *Caledonia* on both service and charter trains, the latter recreating some of the scenes once commonplace on the island.

Towards the end of the first disc, Paul also takes us onto the Manx Electric Railway asking the pivotal question: What is the difference between a tramway and an electric railway?

We conclude this first part with a look at the Groudle Glen Railway and how that particular line, built solely with tourist traffic in mind, has come back into its own after originally closing down after the island's visitor numbers decreased.

Disc two continues along the electric railway to Laxey, where we are then shown both the Snaefell Mountain and Great Laxey Mine railways, the former taking you to the highest point of the island, while the latter once served the deepest. The journey concludes on the remainder of the electric railway to Laxey, before Paul then turns his attention to the Douglas Bay Horse Tramway which runs along the promenade of the island's main hub.

Paul's historical recounts are entwined with much archive footage and interviews from some of those involved in the railway activities. Rather fittingly one of these is the late Mike Buttell, who as reported in *HR* issue 327 recently passed away following a prolonged illness. Though his on screen presence is brief, his passion for the railways shines through in what he says; a bittersweet moment knowing such a font of knowledge has been lost.

This account is very much a whistlestop tour of what the island has to offer; there is definitely much more about all of these railways than could possibly be covered in the runtime available, but as it stands this could serve as a great introduction for those who want to pick up some of the key points of history about the Manx transport network as well as enjoy the sights and sounds of it all too.

GREAT INTRODUCTION TO MANX RAILWAYS

to Chester, Hooton to Helsby, the long-closed Hooton to West Kirby line (the alignment of which now forms the Wirral Way), Birkenhead to West Kirby and New Brighton and Hawarden Bridge to Bidston.

Each starts with a paragraph or two giving some historical context, making for an informative but easy read, leading into a wide variety of images. There are 180 within the book as a whole, billed as both rare and unpublished, and these give a reminder of just how much things have changed in the last half-century, an era which not only saw the reign of the Class 503s on Wirral services come to an end, but also spans the almost complete demise of their successors and replacement with Stadler-built Class 777 EMUs.

Naturally, in-service shots of all are included, but there is plenty more to add interest – forlorn Class 503 vehicles on the scrap line (deliberately burned-out in an attempt to make the scrapping process easier), diesel locomotives on-shed at Birkenhead, first generation DMUs and 'Pacers' on Chester services in the pre-electrification days, shunters and departmental units and, of course the stations themselves, many of which have also changed considerably over the years.

ENJOYABLE BIOGRAPHY OF A PENINSULA'S LINES

The Ivo Peters collection: Volume 15: Steam in 1965

DVD (Railway Archive, 01380 871077, 52mins, £16.95)

BY the year 1965, British Railways' mainline steam operations were very much into their long twilight prior to finally finishing in August 1968. This is the last single year of the six that Ivo Peters devoted to filming UK working steam.

As one would expect, there is a mix of BR and industrial steam activity.

Especially valuable is the footage he recorded of the Cromford and High Peak line in Derbyshire – including assaults on the formidable 1-in-14 Hopton Incline. By this date, his son Julian occasionally acted as his sound recordist. Also included is his final visit to GWR Swindon Works to record the handover of Pendennis Castle for preservation.

For industrial steam operations, Ivo visited the NCB collieries at Norton Hill, Waterside and Baddesley. The only surviving standard gauge Garratt locomotive William Francis is a rare treat. Ironstone lines at Wroxton and Irchester are also featured.

Fifty different steam locomotives are recorded and, as always, the colour film quality and commentary are first rate.

Strongly recommended to all with an enthusiasm for UK steam. HR

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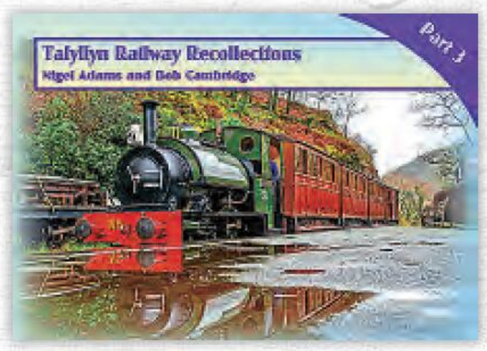

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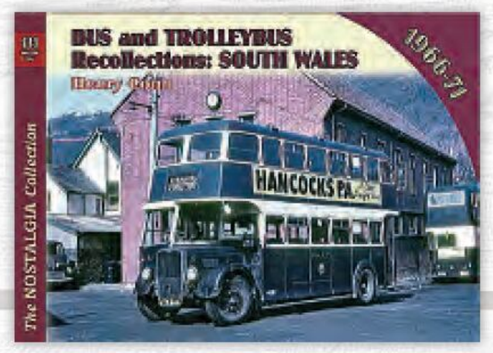

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Open: Jan 18-Feb 12, 2025.

Bluebell Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles. Sheffield Park, East Sussex TN22 2QL. Tel: 01825 720800.
Running: Feb 15-23.

Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bredgar, Sittingbourne, Kent. Tel: 01622 884254.
Running: Feb 19-21, Weds from Feb 26.

Chatham Historic Dockyard
Standard gauge, one mile. Chatham, Kent. Tel: 01634 820800.
Reopens: Feb 13.

East Kent Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. Shepherdswell, Kent. Tel: 01304 832042.
Reopens Mar 24.

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: Feb 20-23.

Kent & East Sussex Railway
Standard gauge, 10½ miles. Tenterden, Kent. Tel: 01580 765155.
Running: W/Es from Feb 1.

Lavender Line
Standard gauge, one mile. Isfield, East Sussex. Tel: 01825 750515.
Running: Feb 23, Mar 9.

Mid-Hants Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Alresford, Hants SO24 9JG. Tel: 01962 733810.
Running: Feb 15-23.

Mizens Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Woking, Surrey. Tel: 07962 400922.
Reopens: Easter.

Old Kiln Light Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Farnham, Surrey.
Reopens Mar 16.

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
15in gauge, 13½ miles. New Romney, Kent. Tel: 01797 362353.
Running: Feb 18-20.

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.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Spa Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles. Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Tel: 01892 300141.
Running: W/Es.

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.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Bodmin & Wenford Railway
Standard gauge, 6½ miles, Bodmin, Cornwall. Tel: 01208 73555.
Reopens Feb 16.

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.
Reopens Spring2025.

Devon Railway Centre
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bickleigh, Devon. Tel: 01884 855671.
Reopens Spring 2025.

East Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. Cranmore, Somerset. Tel: 01749 880417.
Running: Mar 8/9.

Gartell Light Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Yenston, Templecombe, Somerset. Tel: 01963 370752.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Helston Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Helston, Cornwall. Tel: 07901 977 597.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Lappa Valley Railway
7¼in, 10¼ and 15in gauge, one mile. Newquay, Cornwall. Tel: 01872 510317.
Open: W/Es, sch hols.

Launceston Steam Railway
1ft 11½in gauge, 2 ½ miles. Launceston, Cornwall. Tel: 01566 775665
Reopens Spring 2025.

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Woody Bay, North Devon. Tel: 01598 763487.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Moors Valley Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Ringwood, Hants. Tel: 01425 471415.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

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.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Seaton Tramway
2ft 9in gauge, three miles. Harbour Road, Seaton, Devon. Tel: 01297 20375.
Running: Feb 15-23.

Somerset & Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Midsomer Norton station, Silver Street, BA3 2EY. Tel: 01761 411221 Open: Suns.
Running resumes Spring 2025.

South Devon Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles. Buckfastleigh, Devon. Tel: 01364 644370.
Running: W/Es from Mar 22.

Swanage Railway
Standard gauge, six miles. Swanage, Dorset. Tel: 01929 425800.
Running: W/Es from Feb 15.

Swindon & Cricklade Railway
Standard gauge, three miles. Blunsdon, Wiltshire. Tel: 01793 771615.
Reopens Spring 2025.

West Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, 20 miles. Minehead, Somerset. Tel: 01643 704996.
Running: W/Es, Tues, Weds from Mar 22.

Yeovil Railway Centre
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Yeovil Junction station, Somerset. Tel: 01935 410420.
Reopens Spring 2025.

EAST ANGLIA

Bressingham Steam Museum
Narrow and standard gauge, one mile. Diss, Norfolk. Tel: 01379 686900.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Bure Valley Railway
15in gauge, nine miles. Aylsham, Norfolk. Tel: 01263 733858.
Running: Feb 15-23.

Colne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Castle Hedingham, Essex. Tel: 01787 461174.
Reopens: TBA.

East Anglian Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Wakes Colne, Essex. Tel: 01206 242524.
Open: Weds, W/Es.
Running: Feb 16, 19.

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 Spring 2025.

Mid-Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 11½ miles. Dereham, Norfolk. Tel: 01362 851723.
Running: W/Es from Mar 1.

Mid-Suffolk Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Brockford, Suffolk. Tel: 01449 766899.
Running: April 20/21.

Nene Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 7½ miles. Wansford, Peterborough, Cambs. Tel: 01780 784444.
Running: Feb 1/2, 15/16.

North Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles. Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8RA. Tel: 01263 820800.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Wells & Walsingham Railway
10¼in gauge, four miles. Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk. Tel: 01328 711630.
Reopens Mar 22.

Whitwell & Reepham Railway
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Reepham, Norfolk. Tel: 01603 871694.
Open: Tues-Suns. Running: W/Es.

HOME COUNTIES

Buckinghamshire Railway Centre
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Quainton Road, Bucks. Tel: 01296 655720
Cafe open Mon-Fri.
Running: Feb 16, 19, 23.

Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.

In February, the North Yorkshire Moors Railway will welcome the unique NER electric autocar No. 3170 set to work services between Grosmont and Goathland during the half term. With the southern end of the line closed for major signalling work to be carried out, services will mainly operate only between these two stations, with some continuing on to Whitby. The beautifully-restoredautocar, built in 1903 and returned to service in 2019 following extensive rebuilding, will operate up to four shuttles per day inbetween the steam-hauled Whitby services as it is not main line certified. Activities at the Moorsline's stations and aboard trains will be available for those visiting with families with young children. OWEN HAYWARD

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Chinnor, Oxon. Tel: 07979 055366
Running: Suns from Mar 30.

Cholsey & Wallingford Railway

Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Wallingford, Oxon. Tel: 01491 835067
Running: Mar 30.

Didcot Railway Centre

Standard gauge. Didcot, Oxon.
Tel: 01235 817200.
Open: W/Es .
Running: Feb 15/16, 19, 22/23.

Epping Ongar Railway

Standard gauge, six miles.
Ongar, Essex.
Tel: 01277 365200.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Great Whipsnade Railway

2ft 6in gauge.
Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable.
Tel: 0344 225 1826.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Hampton & Kempton Waterworks Railway

2ft gauge. Hanworth, Middlesex.
Tel: 01932 212235.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Leighton Buzzard Railway

2ft gauge, three miles. Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Tel: 01525 373888
Reopens Mar 30.

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.
Open: Daily from Feb 1.

Amerton Railway

2ft gauge, one mile. Stowe-by-Chartley, Staffs. Tel: 01889 271337.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Apedale Valley Railway

2ft gauge, ½ mile. Apedale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. Tel: 0845 094 1953.
Running: Jan 18.

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: Feb 15/16, 18/19, 22/23.

Cambrian Heritage Railways

Standard gauge, 1¾ miles (Oswestry), ¾ mile (Llynclys). Oswestry and Llynclys, Shropshire. Tel: 01691 728131.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Chasewater Railway

Standard gauge, two miles.
Walsall, West Midlands. Tel: 01543 452623.
Open: Daily.
Running resumes Spring 2025.

Churnet Valley Railway

Standard gauge, 5¼ miles.
Cheddleton, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 360522.
Running: W/Es from Feb 1.

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: Weds, W/Es from Mar 12.

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway

Standard gauge, nine miles.
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 823076.
Running resumes Feb 15.

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.
Running resumes Spring 2025.

Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway

Standard gauge, 15 miles.
Toddington, Glos.
Tel: 01242 621405.
Running: W/Es from Mar 1.

Great Central Railway

Standard gauge, eight miles.
Loughborough, Leics LE11 1RW.
Tel: 01509 632323.
www.gcrailway.co.uk
Running: W/Es + Jan 23/24.

LMS Stanier 8F No. 48305 has been announced as the first visiting locomotive booked for the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway's March 20-23 steam gala. Built at Crewe in 1943, and rescued from Dai Woodham's Barry scrapyard in 1985,the 8F is based at the Great Central Railway and has recently been undergoing maintenance in the workshops at Loughborough. The Worth Valley gala will offer double-headed and demonstration freight workings as part of an intensive timetable which will feature additional visiting locomotives yet to be announced as we closed for press, plus up to seven members from the home fleet in action on the five-mile branch. No. 48305 is pictured approaching Rothley on the GCR with the 'Windcutter' rake of mineral wagons on January 28, 2023. OWEN HAYWARD

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

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.
Reopen Spring 2025.

Midland Railway – Butterley
Standard gauge, 3½ miles. Ripley,
Derbyshire. Tel: 01773 570140.
Running: Feb 15/16, 19, 22/23.

Northampton & Lamport Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Pitsford, Northants.
Tel: 01604 820327.
Running: Mar 30.

Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Hunsbury Hill,
Northampton. Tel: 01604 702031.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Peak Rail
Standard gauge, four miles.
Matlock, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 580381.
Running: February 15/16, 29/20, 22/23..

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.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Severn Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 16 miles. Kidderminster,
Worcs DY10 1QR. Tel: 01562 757900.
Running: Feb 15/16, 18-20, 22/23.

Statfold Country Park
2ft gauge, one mile. Tamworth, Staffs B79
0BU. Tel: 01827 830389.
Reopens Spring 2025.

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.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Toddington Narrow Gauge Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Gloucestershire
Warwickshire Railway, Toddington.
Reopens Spring 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: TBA.

East Lancashire Railway
Standard gauge, 12 miles. Bury, Lancs.
Tel: 0333 320 2830.
Running: W/Es from Jan 25.

Eden Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Warcop, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 342309.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Great Laxey Mine Railway
19in gauge, ¼ mile. Laxey, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 862007/670386.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Groudle Glen Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 670453.
Reopens Spring 2025.

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.
Reopens Spring 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.
Running: March 29/30.

Manx Electric Railway and Snaefell Mountain Railway
3ft gauge, 17 miles (MER), 5½ miles (SMR).
Douglas, Isle of Man. Tel: 01624 697473.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway
15in gauge, seven miles. Ravenglass,
Cumbria. Tel: 01229 717171.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Ribble Steam Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Preston, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 728800.
Reopens Spring 2025.

South Tynedale Railway
2ft gauge, 4¾ miles. Alston, Cumbria.
Tel: 01434 338212.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Threlkeld, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 779747.
Reopens: April 5.

West Lancashire Light Railway
2ft gauge. Hesketh Bank, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 815881.
Reopens: Mar 23.

NORTH EAST

Aln Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Alnwick,
Northumberland.
Tel: 0300 030 3311.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Appleby Frodingham Railway-Scunthorpe
Standard gauge, 15 miles. British Steel

Jubilee set for first visit to West Somerset Railway

THE West Somerset Railway has announced that BR(M) Jubilee No. 45596 *Bahamas* as the first visiting locomotive for its May 2-5 Spring Steam Spectacular gala. Although Bahamas has worked railtours to the WSR before, it has always detached at Bishops Lydeard where a locomotive from the resident fleet has work such excursions to Minehead, meaning the visit will be the first time any member of the class will have worked the full length of the route.

This year's event will form a major part of the WSR's Railway 200 celebrations, with a wide range of locomotives in operation from different eras and railway companies. The event will show much of the story of steam locomotive development from the Victorian age right up to its own WR mogul No. 9351, which was built in 2004 having been converted from a large prairie 2-6-2T to provide better operational flexibility.

A WSR statement said: "*Bahamas* is usually based at the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway but is often found working mainline charter trains around the UK. It rarely appears on preserved lines away from the KWVR, especially this far South West! We are therefore grateful to the Bahamas Locomotive Society for agreeing to the visit of their flagship loco, after the successful appearance of their other operational loco – LNWR 0-6-2T Webb coal tank No.1054 - at our spring event in 2024.

"Our railway really comes to life during our gala events, with a busy timetable in operation from early morning to late evening. This will allow you to get off at as many stations as you wish, and to travel behind all of our operating locomotives. A variety of special trains will be in operation, including local passenger, parcels, demonstration goods and even some exciting non-stop express journeys. You'll also be able to travel down our rarely-opened section of line between Bishops Lydeard and Norton Fitzwarren. The turning triangle at Norton Fitzwarren and turntable at Minehead will both be in use, ensuring as many trains as possible will be facing smokebox first."

Gala organisers have promised plenty more surprises to be announced, with tickets already on sale; to book, visit www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk/events/view/spring-steam-spectacular-2025

A month beforehand, *Bahamas* will also be appearing at the Severn Valley Railway's April 18-21 Spring Steam Gala at which WR Manor No. 7802 *Bradley Manor* is expected to return to service alongside classmate No. 7812 *Erlestoke Manor*.

Bound for Minehead in May in a class first: Jubilee No. 45596 *Bahamas* is pictured on December 21, approaching Fletton Junction on the Nene Valley Railway where it had been working festive season services (see also News, page 21), before returning north to Haworth on January 7. MARTYN TATTAM

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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.
Running: Feb 15-23.

Derwent Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Murton, near York. Tel: 01904 489966.
Running: W/Es from Feb 15.

Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Embsay, North Yorks.
Tel: 01756 710614.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

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, sch hols.

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.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Middleton Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Hunslet, Leeds. Tel: 0845 680 1758.
Reopens: April 5.

North Yorkshire Moors Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles.
Grosmont, North Yorks.
Tel: 01751 472508.
Running: Feb 15-23.

Scarborough North Bay Railway
20in gauge, $^{7}/_{8}$ mile.
Scarborough, North Yorks.
Tel: 01723 368791.
Running: W/Es and sch hols from Feb 15.

Stephenson Steam Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
North Shields.
Tel: 0191 277 7135.
Open: W/Es. Running: Feb 23, 27.

Tanfield Railway
Standard gauge, three miles. Near Gateshead, Tyne & Wear.
Tel: 07508 092365.
Running: Suns from Mar 2.

Weardale Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles.
Stanhope, Co. Durham.
Running: Feb 6-8, 13/14, 19-21, 24.

Wensleydale Railway
Standard gauge, 22 miles.
Leeming Bar, North Yorkshire.
Tel: 01677 425805.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Whistlestop Valley Railway (Kirklees)
15in gauge, four miles.
Huddersfield, West Yorks.
Tel: 01484 865727.
Open: W/Es, sch hols.

Yorkshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1,000ft. Fimber, East Yorkshire. Tel: 01377 338053.
Reopens Spring 2025.

WALES

Bala Lake Railway
2ft gauge, 4½ miles. Llanuwchllyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01678 540666.
Running: Feb 15/15, 18-20, 22/23, 27.

Blaenavon's Heritage Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Blaenavon, Torfaen.
Tel: 01495 792263.
Reopens Spring 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.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Fairbourne Railway
12¼in gauge, two miles. Fairbourne, Gwynedd. Tel: 01341 250362.
Running: Feb 15-22.

Ffestiniog Railway
2ft gauge, 13½ miles. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 516000.
Reopens: Mar 29.

Gwili Railway
Standard gauge, four miles. Bronwydd Arms, Carmarthenshire.
Tel: 01267 238213.
Running: Weds, Thurs, Suns from Apr 2.

Llanberis Lake Railway
2ft gauge, three miles.
Llanberis, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01286 870549.
Running: Feb 16-28, then Tues-Thurs and Suns.

Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Cynheidre, Carmarthenshire.
Tel: 07956 082305.
Reopens: TBA.

Llangollen Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Llangollen, Denbighshire.
Tel: 01978 860979.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Rhyl Miniature Railway
15in gauge. Rhyl, North Wales.
Tel: 01352 759109.
Reopens Apr 5.

Snowdon Mountain Railway
800mm gauge, 4½ miles.
Llanberis, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01286 870223.
Running: Daily from Mar 29.

Talyllyn Railway
2ft 3in gauge, 7½ miles.
Tywyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01654 710472.
Running: Feb 21-28.

Teifi Valley Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile.
Henllan, Ceredigion, SA44 5TD.
Tel: 01559 371077.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Vale of Rheidol Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, 12 miles. Aberystwyth, Ceredigion.Tel: 01970 625819.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway
2ft gauge, one mile.
Porthmadog, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01766 513402.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Welsh Highland Railway
2ft gauge, 26 miles.
Caernarfon, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01766 516000.
Reopens: Mar 29.

Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, eight miles.
Llanfair Caereinion, Powys.
Tel: 01938 810441.
Reopens: Mar 29.

SCOTLAND

Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Bo'ness, West Lothian.
Tel: 01506 825855.
Running: Feb 8/9, 11-13, 15/16.

Caledonian Railway
Standard gauge, four miles.
Brechin, Angus. Tel: 01356 622992.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Doon Valley Railway
Standard gauge.
Dunaskin, Ayrshire.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Keith & Dufftown Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Dufftown, Banffshire. Tel: 01340 821181.
Running: 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.
Reopens Spring 2025.

Strathspey Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Aviemore, Inverness-shire.
Tel: 01479 810725.
Running: Feb 15-23.

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.
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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

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Galas and other events in the coming weeks

JANUARY
- 18 Apedale Valley Light Railway Penrhyn Quarry Railway 60th Anniversary
- 18 East Lancashire Railway Rail200 Open House Day
- 25 Spa Valley Railway Dinosaur Express

FEBRUARY
- 8 East Lancashire Railway Winter Diesel Day
- 14 Seaton Tramway Twilight Tram
- 15-23 Mid Hants Railway Magic of Locomotion
- 20 East Lancashire Railway Travel to Wonderland
- 20-23 Isle of Wight Steam Railway Winter Gala & Dark Ales Festival
- 21 Seaton Tramway Story Tram
- 22 Midland Railway Butterley Paw Patrol Visits
- 22 Spa Valley Railway Bluey Visits
- 22/23 Swanage Railway Community Weekend
- 23 Buckinghamshire Railway Centre Paddington Visits
- 23 Epping Ongar Railway Winter Bus Rally
- 27/28 East Anglian Railway Museum Beer Festival

MARCH
- 1 East Anglian Railway Museum Beer Festival
- 14-16 Bluebell Railway Branch Line Gala
- 14-16 East Lancashire Railway Legends of Steam Gala
- 15 Spa Valley Railway The Gruffalo Visits
- 20-23 Mid Hants Railway Canadian Pacific Launch
- 20-23 Keighley & Worth Valley Railway Steam Gala
- 23 Seaton Tramway Birdwatching Tram
- 28-30 Swanage Railway Spring 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

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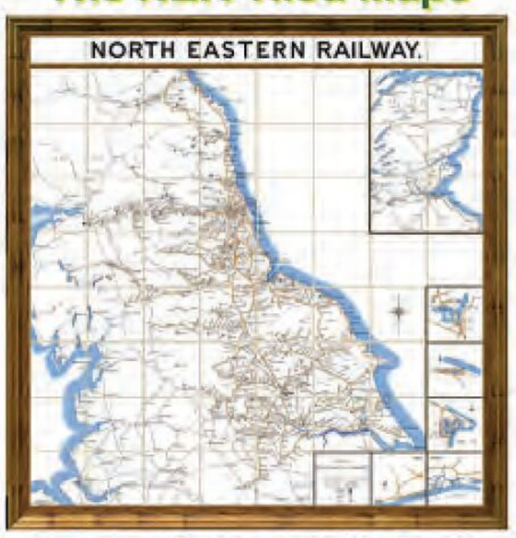

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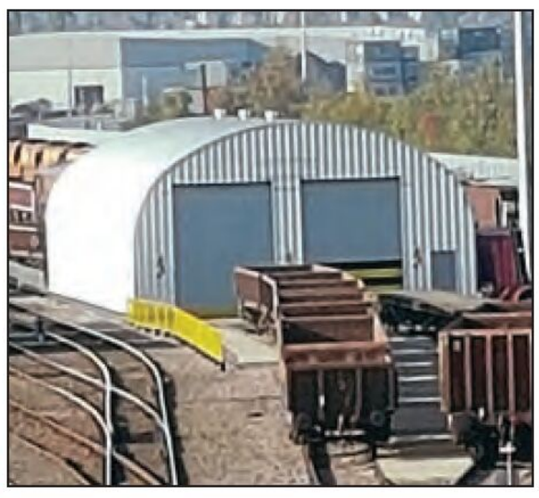

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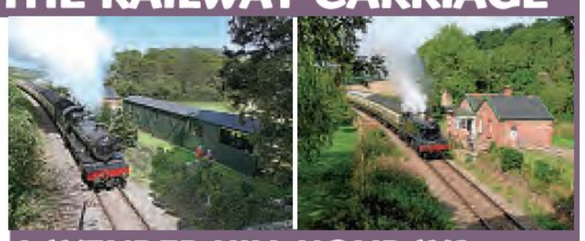

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Doubling up on an historical railway debate

By Geoff Courtney

THE *Heritage Railway* readers' letters page is a fertile landscape for opinions from two sides of every fence, and one recent letter that has caused ongoing debate concerns double-heading by heritage lines, which the correspondent who sparked it off believes aren't an accurate representation of the 1950s and 1960s.

As a trainspotter during that precise era, the debate led me to search through my logs to see how common, or otherwise, they were at that time, and thanks to the Western and London Midland regions, they certainly weren't a rarity.

One of my regular trainspotting haunts was Reading General, where on August 29, 1958, I noted four double-headed expresses in a seven-hour spell, being worked by No. 5021 *Whittington Castle* in tandem with No. 7909 *Heveningham Hall* en route to Falmouth, No. 5034 *Corfe Castle* – one of whose nameplates sold for £9100 at a GW Railwayana auction on November 16 – operating an Up Fishguard Harbour train with No. 4946 *Moseley Hall*, and Nos. 5035 *Coity Castle*/6910 *Gossington Hall*, and Nos. 4095 *Harlech Castle*/5023 *Brecon Castle*, in both cases heading Down Cheltenham Spa expresses.

I was back at the station the following day, a very busy summer Saturday, and two of the three double-headed trains were named expresses, comprising Nos. 4088 *Dartmouth Castle*/6937 *Conyngham Hall* on the Up 'Cathedrals Express,' and a pair of Halls, Nos. 5931 *Hatherley Hall*/6972 *Beningbrough Hall*, on the Up 'Cornish Riviera' – surely an unusual combination for this flagship train.

Again at Reading, on June 8, 1959, I logged during a marathon 11-hour visit the glorious pairing of No. 5074 *Hampden* and 'Brit' No. 70019 *Lightning* providing 63,775lb-ft of tractive effort on a Down Pembroke express.

To bring the curtain down on the Western Region, I witnessed the changing of the guard at Teignmouth on bank holiday August 7, 1961, by noting a steam/diesel double-header consisting of No. 5925 *Eastcote Hall* and D601 *Ark Royal* bound for Paddington on an Up express, the same diesel-hydraulic the following day at Newton Abbot coupled with No. 6922 *Burton Hall* again heading for the capital, and yet again the following day at Teignmouth on an Up express to London in tandem with No. 4934 *Hindlip Hall*.

My very last Western Region double-header was during the same holiday, when at Exeter St David's three days later, on August 12, I logged No. 4997 *Elton Hall* on a Down Kingswear working partnered with No. 92003, a Cardiff Canton (86C) Class 9F 2-10-0 that had probably been commandeered by an over-stretched shedmaster to overcome a shortage of motive power on this hectic summer Saturday.

Challenging climb

Some of these Western Region double-headers would have been due to heavy summer loadings, and some may have been to enable the transfer of a locomotive to its home shed rather than it travelling light engine, but it was more the terrain that necessitated it on parts of the London Midland Region. This is well illustrated by two logs I made in the summer of 1958 at Oxenholme on the WCML, 15 miles south of Tebay and the challenging 5½-mile climb to Shap Summit, 916 feet above sea level.

At my first visit, on Saturday, July 26, I noted seven double-headed expresses or semi-fast trains during a six-hour stay, the highlights being Jubilee pairing Nos. 45586 *Mysore* and 45624 *St Helena* heading to Manchester, and Princess Royal Pacific No. 46210 *Lady Patricia* being aided on a Down express by Class 2P 4-4-0 No. 40694. Two Royal Scot/Class 2P combinations also made appearances, both on Up London expresses, comprising Nos. 46106 *Gordon Highlander*/40679 and Nos. 46121 *Highland Light Infantry, City of Glasgow Regiment*/40600.

GWR Castle class No. 5085 *Evesham Abbey* pilots No. 6021 *King Richard II* on Rattery Bank in South Devon with the 11.30am Paddington-Plymouth express on July 11, 1956. *Heritage Railway* readers have been debating whether double-headers on heritage lines are an accurate representation of steam in the 1950s.
TRANSPORT TREASURY/RC RILEY

Two days later and during a similar period, just three double-headed expresses went into my logbook, doubtless due to lighter loaded non-Saturday trains, one of which brought a 'Brit' into play, No. 70050 *Firth of Clyde*, which teamed up with Class 2P No. 40565 on a Down working.

Visits in 1959 to the North Wales seaside town of Rhyl on August 1, 4 and 6 produced double-headers during each day; firstly, No. 45559 *British Columbia* and 'Black Five' No. 45000 on a Manchester train, on August 4 Standard Class 5MT No. 73126 and 'Black Five' No. 44740 also Manchester-bound, and on August 6 a 'Black Five' pairing of Nos. 45002 and 45088, with their sights set on Crewe.

The Eastern Region provides two double-headers in my logs but are worth mentioning as they were my first all-diesel double-headers. Both were at Ponders End, a station nearly 10 miles out of Liverpool Street on what is now called the West Anglia Main Line, a title I don't recall from my East London trainspotting days.

The first was on April 27, 1960, when I noted Type 2 (later Class 24) D5040 and D5054 on a Down freight, while the second, also a Type 2 double-header, was more than a year later, on June 27, 1961, when D5590 and D5800 (later Class 31), passed through, also on Down goods working.

So, there we have it. Whether these logs make a meaningful contribution to the 'double-headers accurate representation or not' debate is for others to decide, but they have allowed me an indulgent delve into personal railway records that started 66 summers ago.

NEXT ISSUE
Issue 329 out Feb14
Action from the Battlefield and Great Central railways' winter steam galas both featuring guest new-build GWR No. 6880 *Betton Grange*.

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