FENCHURCH RETURNS TO LONDON FOR FIRST-EVER LADY MAYOR'S SHOW

ISSUE 339 November 21 – December 19, 2025

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CHRISTMAS GIFTS GUIDE



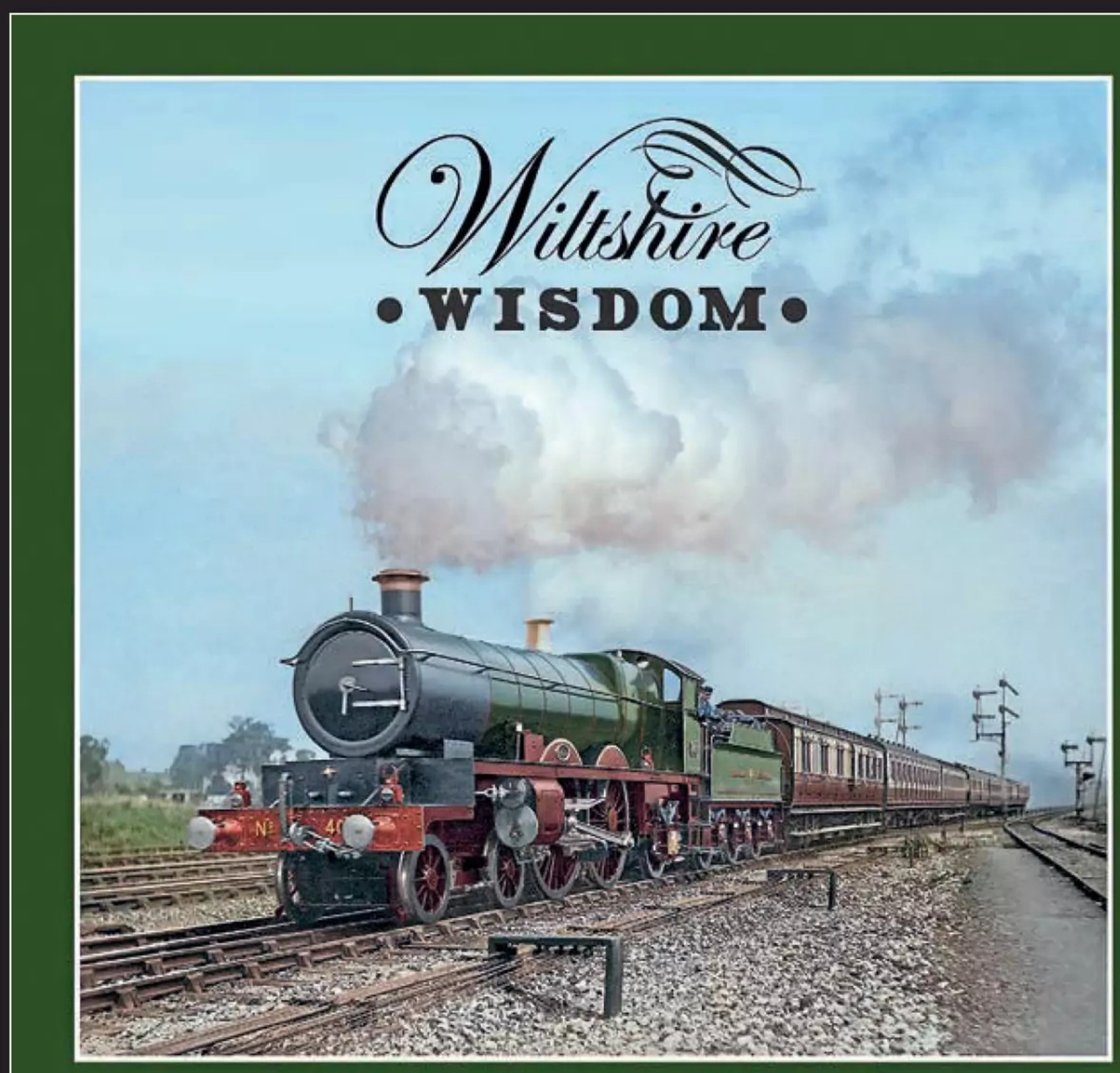
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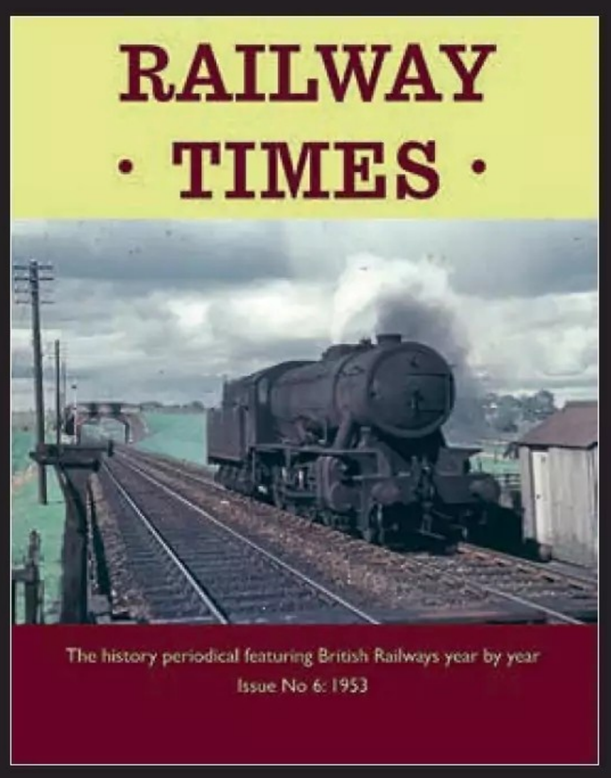
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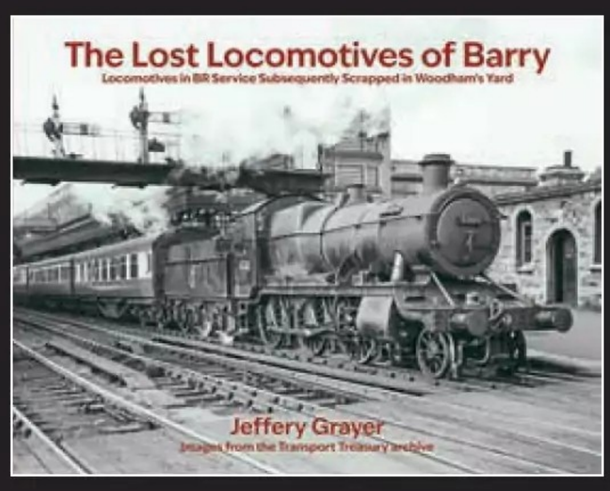
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Stanier mogul No. 13268 climbs through Burrs Country Park on the East Lancashire Railway with an LMS goods train during a 3P20 photo charter on October 27. JOHN TITLOW

EDITORIAL
Editor Robin Jones
robin.jones@kelsey.co.uk
Sta˜ writer Owen Hayward
owen.hayward@kelsey.co.uk
Senior news and railwayana contributor
Geo˜ Courtney
Senior contributor
John Titlow
Contributors
Don Benn, Sally Cli˜ ord, Martin Creese, Hugh Dougherty, Tim Hobman
Designer Tim Pipes
Production editor Lucy Wood
Publisher Tim Hartley
Editorial address
Heritage Railway magazine, Kelsey Media Ltd, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6LZ
Website
www.heritagerailway.co.uk

ADVERTISING
Advertising representatives
Andy Bruce 01507 529455
andy.bruce@kelsey.co.uk
Connor Crowley 01507 529411
connor.crowley@kelsey.co.uk
Group advertising manager
Sue Keily sue.keily@kelsey.co.uk

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Kevin McCormick
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Claire Aspinall
Publishing director
Dan Savage

ARCHIVE
Enquiries Jane Skayman
01507 529423
jane.skayman@kelsey.co.uk

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Darlington is already World Heritage Site in all but name

MOVES to have the original route of the Stockton & Darlington Railway designated as a fully-fledged UNESCO World Heritage Site have been started – and must succeed if the label is to have any real kudos.

As reported in Headline News pages 6/7, local MP Alan Strickland proposed the idea in a House of Commons debate following the phenomenal success of not only the S&DR200 Festival in County Durham, but also that of the Railway 200 programme nationwide.

The Railway 200 year has restored pride in Britain right across the board, enlightening millions of people both at home and overseas about the immense and positive part that Britain played in sowing the seeds in 1825 for a global transport revolution.

Hopetown Darlington has developed into one of the finest multi-faceted railway museums to be found anywhere and, as highlighted in issue 329, it won the Heritage Railway Association's Interpretation Award 2025, sponsored by this magazine.

We reported last issue that more than 100,000 people turned out for the festival, and UNESCO bestowing the coveted World Heritage Site status could work miracles for the locality's tourist trade for decades to come.

Railway 200, however, goes far deeper. The impact of the multitude of individual events has reinvigorated the sector's volunteer armies with an increased willingness by ordinary people to help out. At a time when daily news bulletins are filled by depressingly negative reports of politicians at endless loggerheads with their opponents, Railway 200 has restored pride in Britain. Despite our stumbling economy, the heritage sector continues to blossom and bloom, going from strength to strength: look, for example, at the attendances at the magnificent autumn galas covered in this issue.

The events on the S&DR in September 200 years ago were defining watershed moments, but the steam railway revolution by no means started there.

At the Ironbridge Gorge Museum's Blists Hill Victorian Town, a replica of the steam railway locomotive built by Cornish mining engineer Richard Trevithick at Coalbrookdale in 1802 has just started running in public again following the successful completion of an 18-month restoration programme. The original is believed to have been the first steam-powered locomotive to work on a track.

While Trevithick had built many stationary engines to power tine and copper mine engine houses in his native duchy, he came to Shropshire to experiment with technology at a far higher pressure. It worked – and in 1804, Trevithick gave the first public display of a steam railway locomotive on the Penydarren Tramroad, near Merthyr Tydfil.

In the days before the advent of a national rail network, let alone telephone, radio or television, communication of its success took time to filter through, let alone convince – and many small steps had to be trodden before George Stephenson produced and drove *Locomotion No.1* across Skerne Bridge.

September 27, 1825, was still 21 years into the future – a future that would never be the same again after that. Indeed, this was a defining moment in world heritage if ever there was one.

Good luck, Alan – we're behind you all the way.

RobinJones Editor

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Steam icons come together at Pickering as No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* passes the replica of *Locomotion No. 1* outside the North Yorkshire Moors Railway's southern terminus on November 5. KENNY FELSTEAD



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COVER: **On November 1, WR Castle 4-6-0 No. 7029 *Clun Castle* recreated the 1965 'Farewell to Steam' excursion, which in 1965 was the last timetabled steam-hauled working out of Paddington. The anniversary recreation is pictured at Taplow, near Maidenhead, on its way to Bristol Temple Meads. For the full story, see pages 52/53.** EDWARD J DYER

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The David Buck Collection: private railway treasure trove for sale

By Robin Jones

ONE of the UK's most distinctive private railway collections assembled over four decades by the late David Buck is now being offered for sale, representing an exceptional opportunity for preservationists, collectors, and heritage operators.

The collection, based near Windsor, includes three operational steam locomotives including the largest in the UK, meticulously restored and maintained for use on his dual-gauge garden railway. It reflects a lifetime of passion and commitment to steam heritage by David, who died in August 2024 at the age of 80.

At the heart of the collection is Hr1 No. 1016 *Lady Patricia*, a striking 5ft gauge Pacific built by Tampella for the Finnish State Railways in 1955.

Imported to the UK in the 1990s and acquired by David in 2009, the locomotive was restored to working order in time for his daughter Sophie's wedding in 2013 before a full overhaul was completed in 2023.

It remains the only operational Finnish steam engine in the UK and the largest working steam locomotive in the country.

Named in honour of David's wife, it is a commanding presence and a jewel of the collection.

The sale also includes:

- Peckett 0-4-0ST No. 1756 of 1928 *Hornpipe,* which was supplied to Holborough Cement on the River Medway in Kent. Preserved since 1972 and in David's care since 1985, it remains in excellent working order with a current 10-year boiler certificate.
- Aveling & Porter flywheel-driven 0-4-0 compound locomotive No. 8880 of 1917 *Sir Vincent*, built for Vickers in Kent. Essentially a traction engine on rails and a rare survivor. It was preserved in the 1960s and restored and maintained by David since 1993.
- Barclay 0-4-0DM 80hp diesel shunter D352 built in 1941 for the Ministry of Munitions and later used in County Durham. It was restored in 2009 and remains fully operational.
- A range of rolling stock, including a GWR Toad brake van in original condition, other brake vans and wagons adapted for passenger use, and an LMS/BR saloon.
- Track and infrastructure, comprising about 30 panels of standard gauge track, 16 panels of 5ft gauge track for *Lady Patricia*, points, sleepers, and a range of workshop equipment.



Taller and wider than UK Pacifics including *Flying Scotsman* and *Mallard*, Finnish Hr1 No. 1016 *Lady Pacific* in steam on June 24, 2023. ROBIN JONES



Aveling & Porter *Sir Vincent* running on the garden railway. BUCK COLLECTION

"The collection has been lovingly built and maintained by our father over the past 40 years as his lifetime passion," said David's daughter, Sophie Bancroft.

"It brought joy not only to the Buck family, but also to friends, charity groups, and the local community.

"We have made the difficult decision to offer the collection for sale, in the hope that it finds a new custodian who will continue to care for and share the engines."

David's dedication to railway preservation was legendary. An enthusiast from childhood, he went on to establish a successful business career which gave him the means to acquire and restore these historic locomotives.

In 1981, he bought a home with 12 acres of flat land near Windsor and set about building not just a miniature line, but a standard gauge private railway – a rarity in this country.

His first locomotive, *Hornpipe*, arrived in 1985, followed by *Sir Vincent*, and later the mighty *Lady Patricia*.

The family is inviting expressions of interest for the locomotives, rolling stock and associated equipment. Initial interest has already been shown by a potential buyer of *Lady Patricia*, who plans to create a private garden railway.

In addition to the core collection, selected items of original railwayana – including authentic nameplates and station totems – were offered by GW Railwayana Auctions on November 15/16.

This is a truly unique offering, combining industrial, geared, mainline, and overseas-built steam power – and it is exceptionally rare for such a private, operational collection to come to market.

➜ For enquiries or to arrange a viewing (by appointment only), contact buckrailwaycollection@gmail.com



David Buck's first locomotive was Peckett0-6-0St *Hornpipe*. BUCK COLLECTION



Barclay diesel shunter D352. BUCK COLLECTION

Could the Stockton & Darlington become a new World Heritage Site?

AN MP launched a bid for the Stockton & Darlington Railway to be made a UNESCO World Heritage Site during a debate in the House of Commons.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 338, more than 100,000 people attended the S&DR bicentenary celebrations around Darlington, Shildon and Stockton during September 26-28, with many visitors travelling from abroad to attend. Alan Strickland, Labour member for Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor, said: "I was proud to welcome thousands of visitors to my constituency to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the S&DR, but we want to build a permanent tourism legacy.

"Will the Leader of the House help me meet the relevant minister to discuss whether we could put forward this fantastic historic line to be a UNESCO World Heritage site?"

Responding, the leader of the House of Commons, Sir Alan Campbell, said that the MP was "absolutely right to champion such a worthy cause. As the house will know, the S&DR was the first public railway to use steam trains. I will ensure that he gets a meeting with the relevant minister to make his case."

S&DR200 festival director Niccy Hallifax said: "We are incredibly proud of this region and its pioneering heritage. This celebration was a fitting tribute to everything we stand for and once again showcased us to the world."

Saved routes

Meanwhile, four S&DR inclines have been removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register as the result of Durham Country Council's £7 million project to create

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Duke of Gloucester impresses with first public run

THE first public run of unique BR Standard 8 Pacific No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* since its overhaul, heading the 'Royal Scot' from Crewe to Carlisle on November 6, went faultlessly. It was its first run over Shap in 18 years, with modifications that owning group the BR Class 8 Steam Locomotive Trust believes designer Robert Riddles would have made had he been allowed the time on his prototype of a planned class of 50. Sadly, the Duke was withdrawn as the only unfinished prototype before Riddles had the chance to correct the faults that had become apparent.



No. 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* at Greenholme, storming Shap on November 6. DAVE WILSON

The performance on this run certainly showed what a capable locomotive it is now. Trust chairman Trevor Tuckley said: "The smiles on the faces of both the driver and fireman on arrival at Carlisle, along with their comments that it is an excellent performing locomotive, said it all." The Duke reached the summit of Shap at 48mph with a load of 10 coaches and no diesel on the back. During the climb, the coal pusher was used and the Duke still blew off at the safety valves. "During servicing at Carlisle, one of the engineers said he couldn't stop it blowing off and jokingly said he thought the only way would be to put the fire out," added Trevor. The return trip was equally faultless, and early indications showed that No. 71000's water and coal consumption has improved.

The trust has begun initiatives to raise the required significant funds to ensure the future of the locomotive and has appealed for more members; see www.theduke.uk.com for details.

Fenchurch in first capital return in a century?

LBSCR A1 'Terrier' 0-6-0T No. 72 *Fenchurch* returned to London on November 8 when it starred as part of the annual Lord Mayor's Show procession, marking possibly the first time it has been back to the city since 1898!

Built in 1872 and first allocated to local workings out of London Bridge and Victoria stations into the surrounding boroughs, from which many members of the class took their names, *Fenchurch* was sold to the Newhaven Harbour Company in 1898 with almost 600,000 miles to its name. Its light weight meant it was able to traverse the swing bridge between the NHC's east and west quays, and it remained employed there even after the company became part of Southern Railways in 1926 and subsequent Nationalisation in 1948. It ended its days on the Hayling Island branch.

Drawing huge crowds to witness a three-mile-long parade of some of the busiest inner-city streets, this year's event was a landmark as the first Lady Mayor's Show, with Dame Susan Wilson DBE having been sworn in the day before as only the third woman to hold the position in more than 800 years, while also being the first to ever hold the title Lady Mayor of London.

The procession contained exhibits, floats, horses, musicians and vehicles and more than 7000 participants from around the world. Bluebell Railway-based *Fenchurch* was collected and transported throughout by Railway Support Services. Its managing director, Andrew Goodman, said: "This was certainly one of the more unusual, and certainly the most public, tasks we have ever been called on to undertake.

"The route is quite winding and narrow in places, so we spent a day making sure we could actually take it around some of the bends.

"Everything went well on the day and the public clearly enjoyed the spectacle of a steam engine running round city streets!



***Fenchurch* pauses outside St Paul's Cathedral on November 8 during the first-ever Lady Mayor's Parade.** RAILWAY SUPPORT SERVICES

"I understand that Dame Susan specifically asked for this locomotive to be included in the show. The east end of Fenchurch borders Aldgate Ward, of which she was Alderman in 2018. She then went on to serve as Sheriff of the City of London for 2023/4. This was quite a challenging task as the movement was all organised within two weeks. I am very appreciative of Michael Bailey, City of London Engineer, and James Vernon, at TfL Bridges and Structures, for ensuring the necessary approvals.

"I'm also appreciative of the Bluebell Railway for asking us to transport *Fenchurch* for this very special occasion."

a 12-mile walking and cycling path along part of the 26-mile route of the original line.

Inclines were an essential part of the first five miles of the S&DR because the two ranges of hills at Etherley and Brusselton were too high for early locomotives to travel over. George Stephenson installed stationary engines to haul waggons attached to ropes up the inclines.

Coun Tim McGuinness, the council's portfolio holder for rural, farming and transport, said: "It's really fitting that in this, the year the world has celebrated 200 years of the S&DR and passenger railways, we are ending it with the announcement that our work has allowed the inclines to be removed from the risk register, safeguarding these important parts of our history for many more years to come."

New pathways

The walking and cycling route starts at Phoenix Row, near Bishop Auckland, and ends at the county border, just south of Newton Aycliffe. A cycle hub with capacity to safely store 30 bikes has also been built at the Locomotion museum in Shildon.

The route is due for completion next spring, when a new footbridge is to be installed on the original stone abutments of the historic Gaunless Bridge, designed by Stephenson in 1823 as one of the first railway bridges constructed of iron and the first to use an iron truss. The overloaded bridge was removed in 1901, stored, and reassembled for the S&DR centenary in 1925.

From 1975, it was on display in the Leeman Road car park of the National Railway Museum and again dismantled in 2023 for re-erection at Locomotion.

In February 2023, Historic England gave the council £161,000 to repair the abutments to carry a new 47-yard bridge deck. The planning application for the new bridge was approved by the council on October 7.

Chinnor goes grand for second steam gala with a Castle and S160

By Owen Hayward

'GO big or go home' seemed to be the motto for the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway on October 31-November 2, when the line hosted only its second-ever steam gala which featured two of the largest steam locomotives to ever grace the GWR branch.

Once the domain of locomotives such as the 1400 0-4-2Ts, 5700 0-6-0PTs and 6100 2-6-2T large Prairies, in the heritage era the line has welcomed a plethora of different types.

Not having its own resident steam locomotive means that the C&PRR relies on seasonal hires. Until this year, the largest locomotive to have appeared there was WR 4-6-0 No. 7820 *Dinmore Manor*. That changed in the spring when, in a break from its tradition of hiring former Swindon empire locomotives, USATC S160 2-8-0 No. 6046 arrived in the Chiltern Hills on hire for the season.

Built in 1945 by the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, it was first shipped for use in France, before later transferring into the Hungarian State Railways. When withdrawn, it was intended to be preserved as part of the Hungarian National Collection, but an administrative error saw it despatched for scrapping. Thankfully, it was saved by enthusiast Martin Haines, who brought it to the UK. Later sold to Greg Wilson in 2006, it was returned to working order at the Churnet Valley Railway in 2012, where it is now normally based alongside classmates Nos. 5197 and 3278 *Franklin D Roosevelt*.

Although it missed out on the hire of a GWR visitor for the duration of the 2025 season, the C&PRR welcomed two such locomotives to the line for the gala weekend. Having run for the majority of the year at Didcot Railway Centre with a smaller 3500-gallon tender borrowed from GWR 2-6-0 No. 5322, reflecting the condition it appeared alongside A3 No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* at the 1925 British Empire Exhibition, GWR 4-6-0 No. 4079 *Pendennis Castle* brought some express elegance to the line-up, coupled to its own larger 4000-gallon tender which had recently undergone a repaint.

Fresh from repairs at the Avon Valley Railway, GWR 0-6-2T No. 6695



GWR No. 4079 *Pendennis Castle* approaching the fixed distant as it climbs Chinnor Bank with the second service of the day from Princes Risborough. RICHARD MCVEIGH

showed just what these mid-sized tank engines could do to support the two larger locomotives. Unfortunately, having run successfully for the first two days, it was failed on the Saturday evening and therefore missed the final day of the gala.

The weekend also made use of the railway's newest resident sentinel locomotive; in May this year, Sentinel 0-4-0VBGT No. 7109 *Joyce* departed the Somerset & Dorset Railway at Midsomer Norton and joined the C&PRR resident fleet of locomotives. While not able to work full line service trains, it will regularly make appearances giving brake van rides, a duty it served at Princes Risborough station throughout the three days.

Presently, the four-mile branch affords itself to a one-train operation only, but this enabled a regular pattern of departures, with locomotives being swapped at both Chinnor and Princes Risborough stations on Friday and Saturday, while Sunday saw the Castle and S160 changing over at Chinnor following the failure of No. 6695.

Press officer Andy Freeman said the weekend had been incredibly successful and that trains were very well-loaded throughout, although he did not have an exact passenger count at the time this issue went to press.

No. 6046 will remain on the line through the festive season before returning to its Staffordshire home in the new year. As such, the C&PRR is looking for a locomotive to take it through the 2026 operating season, with hopes that will also include a steam gala.



Above: On October 31, No. 6695 passes Bledlow Cricket Club with a lunchtime service to Chinnor. RICHARD MCVEIGH



Right: Sentinel No. 7109 *Joyce* (left) pauses the brake van rides while USATC S160 No. 6046 departs Princes Risborough for Chinnor on November 2. RICHARD MCVEIGH

Unique GER 'Coffee Pot' will return to home territory

GER 'Coffee Pot' 0-4-0ST No. 229 wilbe displayed outside the front of its parent company's Liverpool Street station on December 8/9 to both mark Railway 200 and to raise money for charity.

The Permanent Way Lodge of the Freemasons is holding a funraising event in the former Great Eastern Hotel at Liverpool Street to raise money for Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Lifelites and The Railway Children charities.

George and Robert Stephenson were Freemasons, as were many directors of the GER, including Sir Claude Hamilton, and the hotel was built with two rooms for Masonic Lodges to meet in. One of these, the Grecian Room, is fully restored and will host a gala event and dinner in what is now the Andaz Hotel.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 338, 1876-built No. 229, the sole survivor of the LNER Y5 class, appeared at Hopetown Darlington's Titans of Steam event as part of the Stockton & Darlington 200 festival, steaming for the first time, it is thought, since the 1960s. Owner Bill Parker has held talks with the Freemasons lodge and confirmed that the locomotive will be displayed for the event.



Right: GER 0-4-0ST No. 299 back at its Flour Mill workshop home at Bream in the Forest of Dean on October 28 after its visit to Darlington. BILLPARKER

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Severn Beach Miniature revival plans called off

THE scheme to restore the Severn Beach Miniature Railway, helping to revive the 'lost' seaside resort near Bristol, has halted in its tracks.

Lead project engineer Joe Nemeth, a local resident, has pulled out of the project, citing frustration with the handling by South Gloucestershire Council of planning issues since he launched the scheme 18 months ago, selling his own collection of vintage vehicles and railwayana to fund it.

The first miniature line at Severn Beach was opened in 1936 and ran until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, and then afterwards in various guises until 1976. The era of Severn Beach as a holiday and pleasure resort ended in the mid-1970s.

Mr Nemeth, of Joe Nemeth Engineering Ltd, has been designing, building, installing and operating miniature railways for more than 20 years.

With the aid of a team of volunteers, he laid a new 10¼-in line on the route of the original one in Promenade Gardens, with the aim to have it running this year, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 326.

However, the plans have hit a series of unexpected delays in getting planning permission. In a letter to Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council dated November 3, he said: "It is with a sad and heavy heart I write the following: after careful consideration, I now have no option other than to withdraw from the Severn Beach Miniature Railway project.

"I was transparent throughout the whole project on how the line would be built and how I would personally fund it without burdening the taxpayer. I even set up a community group of volunteers, in which many locals became involved."

However, he said that issues with South Gloucestershire Council were "causing me so much stress and anxiety it was making me ill."

He said that the miniature line and its stock would now be sold.

Historic Cumbrian bridges saved

TWO Cumbrian bridges have been granted Grade II-listed status by English Heritage.

Cowran Bridge, Skellion Bridge and Cowran Cutting were a part of the biggest civil engineering project on the Newcastle to Carlisle line, forming the biggest railway cutting in the UK when it opened in 1836.

In 2023, one of Cowran Bridge's walls collapsed onto the line.

Network Rail planned to knock down one of the remaining walls, replacing them with aluminium picket fencing.

However, a campaign launched to save the structures proved successful.

Historic England said the Newcastle to Carlisle railway was one of the pioneering lines of the first phase of the development of the network and was also the first cross-country line built in England.



We will remember them: On November 11, Railway Touring Company ran its annual 'Armistice Steam Express' out of London Victoria and through Kent to Sheerness-on-Sea. Aside from the town's seaside connections, Sheerness was an important Royal Navy dockyard until its closure in 1960, and the port today is still a significant importer of cars, fruits and vegetables. The train was worked by Southern Locomotives Limited's SR West Country 4-6-2 No. 34028 *Eddystone*, which returned to main line service at the end of the summer after an absence of 61 years, as reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 337, and is pictured awaiting departure from the capital that morning. The Bulleid light Pacific also has a busy festive season ahead, with several tours booked throughout December. SIMON TROY/SLL

Ruislip Lido adds 1970-built *Dougal* to steam locomotive fleet

THE Ruislip Lido Railway Society has bought *Dougal*, a coal-fired 0-6-2T+T steam locomotive built by Severn-Lamb Ltd in 1970, which has recently been based at The Valley Railway Adventure, formerly known as Evesham Vale Light Railway, in Evesham.

Dougal will leave Evesham before Christmas and be transported to a specialist contractor, where it will be regauged from 15in to 12in and undergo a series of upgrades and modifications to make it fully compatible at Ruislip. The tender process to select a contractor for the work is currently underway.

Society chairman Matthew Streeton said: "Having a second steam locomotive at Ruislip running alongside our current steam locomotive, *Mad Bess*, is something the society has aspired to achieve for many years.

"It's fantastic news for securing the future of the locomotive."



Built by Severn-Lamb Ltd, of Stratford-upon-Avon, for MiniRail Ltd at Longleat House, *Dougal* ran there until it moved to Evesham in 2004. RLRS

North Norfolk's Fiftieth Finale was a taste of Finsbury Park

By Owen Hayward



A diesel reunion on October 24 as D9000 *Royal Scots Grey* (right) passes Class 31 D5631 at Weybourne during a test run. The two locomotives were both based at Finsbury Park depot in the late 1960s, although not at the same time. STEVE ALLEN/NNR

A VISITING Class 55 Deltic, starring alongside BR Standard Class 7 Pacific No. 70000 *Britannia*, helped the North Norfolk Railway round off its golden jubilee anniversary year – and coincidentally brought together two locomotives that were once based at one of London's diesel depots.

D9000 *Royal Scots Grey*, built in 1961, initially entered traffic at Haymarket depot but six years later was moved to Finsbury Park TMD, the first purpose-built diesel depot to be opened in England which had been completed the year prior to the Deltic's entry into service. Its time based there brief as it returned to Haymarket the following June and remained there until withdrawn on January 2, 1982. The following year it was preserved when purchased by the Deltic 9000 Fund, which had been established to save the locomotive owing to it being the first production-run example of the 55s.

Finsbury Park would later become home for Class 31 D5631. Built a year earlier than the Deltic, initially as a Class 30 but reclassified to 31 after a rebuild in 1966, its first few years were spent between Norwich Thorpe and Ipswich before moving to March in September 1962. Its transfer to Finsbury Park came on June 2, 1973, and that was where it remained based. Withdrawn on February 8, 2001, it languished at Old Oak Common amid other classmates until being purchased by the NNR's supporting charity, the Midland & Great Northern Society, on January 29, 2003.

On October 25-31, *Britannia* ran four round trips of the line each day, aboard which dedicated seats could be booked, with tickets allowing travel on all other standard services operating alongside. These were worked by centenarian Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway 7F 2-8-0 No. 13809 (which is on the final few months of its boiler certificate and will be withdrawn in the new year pending overhaul) and a Class 104/108 hybrid DMU.

Mix of traction

During the weekend of November 1/2, the Deltic came out to play, joining *Britannia*, the 7F, and Hunslet Austerity 0-6-0ST No. 3809 throughout, with D5631 appearing on the Saturday and Class 37 D6732 on the Sunday, all working to an intensive passenger timetable. The 'Brit', Deltic, Class 31 and Gresley quadart stock gave a slight Eastern Region flavour to proceedings.

Although predominantly a main line locomotive, D9000 has not worked any tours this year, so its appearance on the Poppy Line for the gala enabled fans of the class and diesel traction as a whole the first opportunity to enjoy travelling behind it in 2025.

The week-long celebration performed exceedingly well. NNR general manager Graham Hukins said: "The nine days have performed about 15% ahead of budget, clawing back some of the ground we lost through high fire risk earlier in the year. I should like to thank everyone involved with the event for helping round off the season in style."

With its main operating season now concluded, the railway began



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Centenarian 7F No. 13809 leads *Britannia* away from Sheringham on November 1 as the first day of the Fiftieth Finale gala draws to a close. DAVE BALLARD/NNR



preparing for its festive services. These commenced on November 14 with the Norfolk Lights Express, which is this year entitled A Golden Journey and will tell the story of saving the railway through a light show and accompanying soundtrack.

It will be staged on various dates until January 4, 2026.

Meanwhile, Santa specials will run from November 22 until December 23. From December 27 through to January 4, mince pie specials will provide an opportunity to blow away the post-Christmas blues, with adults being served mulled wine and mince pies at their seats aboard a 70-minute steam-hauled journey.

Left: The Class 104-108 DMU approaches Weybourne station on October 28, passing a sea of poppies which bloomed in a field adjacent to the station. OWEN HAYWARD

Below: Carrying a flying thistle headboard and the 1A35 headcode for the Up working of 'The Flying Scotsman,' D9000 catches the light of the setting sun as it emerges from Deadman's Cutting on November 2. DAVE BALLARD/NNR





With the still North Sea and clear sky as a backdrop, *Britannia* skirts the Norfolk coastline on October 28 as it approaches Bridge 303. OWEN HAYWARD

On October 28, No. 70000 passes the outer distant signal as it heads towards Weybourne with 'The Irish Mail.' OWEN HAYWARD

The 'last' 2MT prepares for new year revival at Wansford

By Owen Hayward

WINTER services at the Nene Valley Railway will be in the hands of BR 2-6-0 2MT No. 78019 – with the locomotive set to revive a long-scrapped classmate for a photographic charter during its brief visit to the line.

Following its appearance at the Great Central Railway's November 15/16 Last Hurrah gala, the 2MT will move to the NVR in time to debut there on Santa specials that commence on November 29 and run until Christmas Eve, including three quiet trains on December 17 for those with special sensory needs.

Following a break for Christmas and the new year, driver experience courses will run on January 2/3, allowing a small number of people the opportunity to take the controls of No. 78019. Participants will receive one hour of tuition before stepping onto the footplate for a further hour of driving and firing the locomotive light engine across a distance of about 12 miles, the journey being split between two participants each taking a turn at the different roles. These courses are priced at £350 per person, and spaces were still available as this issue went to press.

Evening diner

On January 3, an evening diner will additionally see the 2MT head 'The Winter Jolly Fisherman.' Departing Wansford at 7pm, a fish and chips supper will be served at your seat following arrival at Peterborough NVR station, with an on-board bar open and serving a range of alcoholic and soft drinks. A non-stop run will see the train then head to Yarwell, before finally arriving back at Wansford at 9pm. Tickets cost £35 per person, with vegetarian menu options available. January 4 will be a 'Winter Warmers' day, with three round trips of the line on offer for those looking to blow away the festive cobwebs.

Before the locomotive returns to Leicestershire, it will make one final appearance as the star of an NVR Wagon Group photographic charter on January 11, which will see the developing goods yard at Overton strongly feature as one location being used. Furthermore, No. 78019 will adopt the guise of No. 78064, the last example of the class to be built by Darlington Works and entering service at Wigan Central in November 1956. It served a decade in service before being withdrawn at Toton in December 1966, two months after being moved there from Derby, and was cut up by TW Ward scrap merchant at Killamarsh, Derbyshire, three months later.

Coupled to the group's restored rake of BR-livery wagons, photo opportunities will be made available during the daytime at locations along the line, including over the iconic river bridge at Wansford and the Yarwell tunnel.

Returning to the goods yard at Overton, reenactors will portray scenes of wagon loading and unloading to create human interest scenes as the sun begins to set, with appropriate vintage road vehicles adding to the ambience.

The day will start and end at Overton, and places cost £100 per person.

For further details of all services and to book, visit nvr.org.uk

➜ Nene Valley Railway-based Danish State Railways Frichs 0-6-0T No. 656 *Doc* has been modified to haul up to four Mk. 1 carriages. The locomotive, previously unofficially known as Tinkerbell, had hitherto been restricted to hauling the line's continental rolling stock.

When the Royal Forest turns to autumnal gold…

By Martin Creese

THE first weekend in November saw the Dean Forest Railway's annual Royal Forest festival of steam gala take place. This year's guests were Great Central Railway-based BR Standard 2MT No. 78019 and Hunslet 0-6-0ST No. 1589 of 1929 *Newstead*.

The home fleet of WR 0-6-0PT No. 9681 and Peckett 0-4-0ST No. 2147 of 1952 *Uskmouth No. 1*, recently returned to traffic, completed the line-up. While 2MTs were not seen on the railways in the Forest, they were no strangers to Gloucestershire, with four members of the class allocated to Gloucester Barnwood and later Gloucester Horton Road and were regularly seen on the former Midland Railway Stroud and Nailsworth branches and towards the end of steam venturing onto the Newent branch on goods workings. No. 78004 also featured in some memorable Ben Ashworth images on these workings.

The timetable saw goods and passenger workings through to both Parkend and a shorter trip to Norchard Low Level, with locomotives rotating on the sets. *Uskmouth No. 1* operated brake van rides at Norchard and enjoyed an afternoon run to Parkend double-heading with *Newstead*.

Included in one set was the Dean Forest Locomotive Group's Hawksworth inspection saloon W80943, which visitors could travel in for a small premium. Another feature of the timetable was blocks of three departures or arrivals in quick succession at Lydney Junction, which made for great railway theatre.

The event also saw the Worcester and District Engineers bring their portable 5in gauge railway, which was set up at Norchard.

The steam gala followed on from more modern traction visitors, with Class 50's 50021 *Rodney* and 50008 *Thunderer,* which featured on a very successful day with the National Wagon Preservation Groups Tank wagon rake, and Deltic 55009 *Alycidon,* which visited with No. 50021 for September's diesel gala. The railway has also seen the commissioning of new signals at Middle Forge Junction where the line to Norchard Low Level branches off from the line to Parkend; an attractive GWR Bracket signal now controls the junction.



WR 0-6-0PT No. 9681 departs from Norchard on the Dean Forest Railway on November 2. DYLAN CREESE



Visiting No. 78019, which is booked to haul festive season services on the Nene Valley Railway, passes Whitecroft on the Dean Forest on November 2. MARTIN CREESE



***Uskmouth No. 1* and *Newstead* departing Lydney Junction.** MARTIN CREESE

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The footings for the new locomotive servicing pit in place outside the Ruddington running shed on the Great Central Railway (Nottingham). The stainless-steel pit was due to be dropped into a hole dug in early November during the following fortnight. The availability of the pit is seen as a real game changer as it will open the door for locomotives to come in from the Midland Main Line for servicing. TOM INGALL

Left: GWR 2-8-0 No. 3802 departs Glyndyfrdwy along the autumnal Dee Valley on November 8 during the last weekend of regular service. JOHN TITLOW

Vintage Trains builds new link with rail study centre

VINTAGE Trains hosted a visit of 25 MSc students from the University of Birmingham's Centre for Railway Research and Education on October 23.

All are studying rail-related courses at the university, and they were able to understand the engineering and operational aspects of running heritage trains on the national network, contrasting with those of VT's Tyseley depot neighbour, West Midlands Trains, which hosted a visit immediately beforehand.

Topics discussed included the early acquisition of steam locomotives for preservation, initially still operated by BR, VT learning how to maintain and operate by itself, growing to manage the increasing engineering, safety and operational requirements, National Railway Group Standards, regulatory aspects, and emerging commercial opportunities, commencing new business, designing and building new steam locomotives for the UK heritage railway industry, the challenges of managing a declining supply chain for materials, and encouraging and training young engineers in the skills of heritage railway engineering.

Explanations were given of the engineering standards used by Tyseley Locomotive Works as an entity in charge of maintenance for a licenced charter train operator, with the opportunity to ask questions covering any aspect of engineering, operations and approvals. The group focused on the rebuild and operation of GWR 4-6-0 No. 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe*, and they had the opportunity of looking over the locomotive to understand the details, as well as an insight into other projects currently underway at the site. The visit paved the way to establish ongoing cooperation between the Vintage Trains Charitable Trust and BCRRE, which will provide students with volunteering opportunities and enable them to offer assistance to VT in development projects.

BCRRE has been helping transform the rail industry for more than half a century.



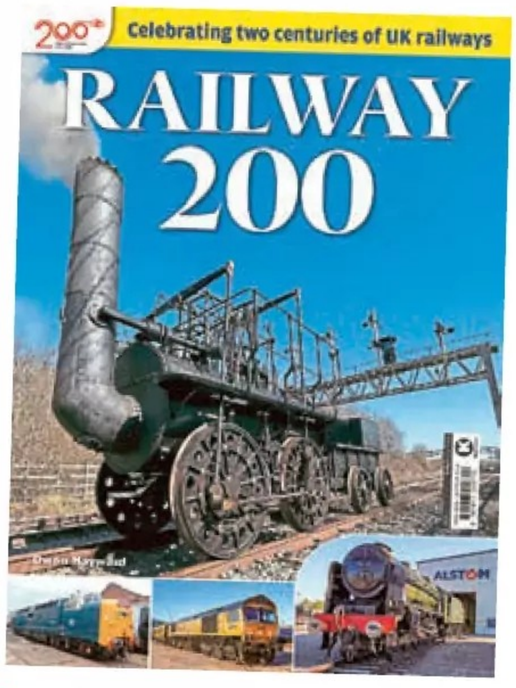
University of Birmingham's Centre for Railway Research and Education students in front of *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe*. VT

Railway 200: highlights from the UK network's great year of celebration

THIS year was a momentous one in the history of rail travel, marking the bicentenary of the world's first passenger railway which ran between Stockton & Darlington. Although railways had existed before then in some form or other, this occasion denoted the start of modern rail travel and, as time has gone on, innovation has shaped and expanded the railway network in the UK and worldwide.

Throughout the year, the UK's main line operators, heritage railways, museums and more came together for a year of unified celebrations. From locomotive parades to the largest gathering of rolling stock in a generation, and from galas to exhibitions, there was barely anywhere with an historic railway connection that did not celebrate in some way.

This publication recounts many of the numerous highlights that played out across the industry throughout the year, with a plethora of photographs capturing each moment for posterity. Whether your allegiance is to the earliest days of the story, the modern age of rail travel or anywhere in between, it will have you covered.



➜ To buy a copy, priced £9.99, with free UK delivery, visit https://mortonsbooks.co.uk/book/railway-200

Waterman may now sell his steam

POP mogul Pete Waterman OBE has been considering selling his steam locomotives.

GWR 2-6-2T No. 5553 is in storage at the Bodmin Railway, having been withdrawn from service this year with leaking boiler tubes.

The Waterman Railway Trust also owns under-overhaul 2-8-0T No. 5224, 0-6-2T No. 5224 and South African Railways 2ft gauge NGG16 articulated Garratt No. 109, the latter two both unrestored.

In August, he sold Class 46 Peak No. 46035 *Ixion* and Class 25 D7659 to Harry Needle Rail Ltd.



The final photographic charter with SR Merchant Navy No. 35006 *Peninsular & Oriental S.N. Co.* on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway before overhaul ended. The locomotive is silhouetted against the setting sun at Manor Lane, near Cheltenham, on October 31. JACK BOSKETT

Sun sets for 'P&O' following Cotswold Autumn Showcase

By Robin Jones

THE Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway has rounded off its main 2025 season in fine style with visitors flocking to see Merchant Navy Pacific No. 35006 *Peninsular & Oriental SN Co* performing its final duties before withdrawal for overhaul.

The locomotive had been running on an extension to its boiler certificate, which expired on November 2, following 10 years of reliable operation.

Before then, on October 25/26, 'P&O' took part in the Autumn Showcase, which highlights the railway's steam and diesel fleets and throws open its doors for a final gala.

G/WR press officer Ian Crowder said: "This was, if you like, an opportunity for volunteers to get the 'toys out of the box' for one last time and at the same time give enjoyment to the public. All the ingredients were there: an intensive timetable, variety in operations, including double heading and non-stop runs, brake van rides with the goods train, and an opportunity to explore behind the scenes.

"What's more, the trains generally ran on time, the odd slippage by only a few minutes being caught up. The small team of volunteers organising the railway's gala considered the weekend to have been a resounding success."



Nos. 7903 *Foremarke Hall* and 6880 *Betton Grange* cross at Winchcombe on October 25. REV MARTYN SMITH



Class 24 No. 24081 leaves Greet Tunnel on the approach to Winchcombe on October 25. REV MARTYN SMITH



No. 35006 about to go on shed for the last time on November 2, running into Toddington yard in a sharp shower of rain, as a rainbow arches over the locomotive – highly appropriate as it begins its overhaul, hopefully 'gold' will be found, with minimal work required to return it to service. IAN CROWDER



WR 4-6-0 No. 7903 *Foremarke Hall* on the morning goods on October 25. IAN CROWDER

Star of the show

The star of the weekend was clearly No. 35006, which for several years was the only member of its class working on a heritage line until its sister, No.35005 *Canadian Pacific*, re-entered service on the Mid-Hants Railway.

On the Saturday evening, 'P&O' ran a round-trip special from Broadway which, like most services during the weekend, proved popular. The locomotive carried a splendid London-Paris 'Night Ferry' headboard. However, to the best of the owner's knowledge, the 35006 Locomotive Society has no records indicating that 'P&O' ever worked this service in BR days and was much more likely to be found at the head of the 'Atlantic Coast Express,' given that its home depot was Salisbury for its entire SR and BR life.

The evening was tinged with poignancy as many passengers were experiencing their last ride behind what many regard as the G/

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WR's 'flagship' locomotive. The entire event was blessed with good weather, and a kids go free promotion attracted many families who might not otherwise have come. Overall, more than 1,500 tickets were sold for the weekend.

Ian added: "There's no doubt that as volunteers, the weekend was a lot of fun. What was particularly rewarding was to see so many youngsters clearly enjoying themselves too."

After the Autumn Showcase, 'P&O' worked the remaining normal days of service before the line ended its regular timetable alongside new-build GWR 4-6-0 No. 6880 *Betton Grange,* which had returned to its home base on October 23 following several visits to other heritage lines, including the Bluebell Railway (see feature, pages 62-65).

Sailing into the sunset

The last day of operation for 'P&O' saw well-filled trains as the sun set on the engine's starring role on the railway.

Usually, the Train 1 service collects a diesel locomotive at the rear of the train at Toddington for the last run to Broadway. This locomotive then becomes the train engine on the return, with the rostered steam locomotive at the rear, in a top-and-tail fashion. The steam locomotive is then dropped off at Toddington for servicing while the diesel continues to take the service to Cheltenham.

However, on this occasion, 'P&O' ran round and piloted Class 24 No. 24081, coming off the front at Toddington.

Ian said: "As I was brought up on the Southern and experiencing the end of SR steam in 1967, I had enjoyed several startling runs behind Merchant Navies.

"It was, to be honest, an emotional experience seeing No.35006 returning to the shed to cool down for the last time, and it reminded me very much of those final SR glory days."

"Of course, predictions of how long the overhaul will take are impossible until the actual state of the boiler is discovered.

"However, the 35006 team is hopeful that there are no nasty surprises, given the extremely comprehensive restoration the locomotive originally received before entering public service in May 2016.

"This followed the unveiling of the nameplates at a rededication ceremony, which was performed by Pete Waterman, although the engine first steamed in preservation the previous year."

KESR volunteers' pump trolley challenge for pannier restoration

By Owen Hayward

KENT & East Sussex Railway volunteers undertook a unique fundraising challenge when they set out to travel 200 miles back and forth along the heritage line on November 1/2, although they had to revise their ambitious target to 200km during the event, the figure representing Railway 200.

The challenge was to help raise funds for the ongoing overhaul of resident GWR Hawksworth 0-6-0PT No. 1638, which is part way through an overhaul at Leaky Finders workshops in Devon. It started in 2022 but stalled when the extent of work required was found to be greater than first expected.

Volunteers formed teams of four, which included a qualified driver, and took it in turns to operate the trolley, which largely took place over the flatter section of line between Wittersham Road and Rolvenden following the initial departure from Tenterden Town station at 7am on November 1. After finishing at 5pm for an overnight break and resuming the challenge at 7am the next morning, the weekend concluded with it arriving back there at 5pm the following evening, which saw operators having to power the trolley up the steep 1-in-50 gradient between Cranbrook Road and the terminal station.

The pump trolley has recently been refurbished and returned to full working order, but this was not its first time in the spotlight. It shot to international fame in 1989 when it was used to set a new world record for the fastest pump trolley to run over a measured distance of 300 metres and set the record at 32.61 seconds, which it is believed to still hold to this day. The attempt was filmed for the BBC TV programme Record Breakers.

Something different

The idea for the challenge came from 29-year-old KESR volunteer Sarah Tagart. She said: "I wanted to combine a volunteer effort to raise money for the 1638 Appeal with doing something to mark Rail 200 and I thought using the pump trolley would be a fun way to do that.

"This year is also the 125th anniversary of the opening of the original Rother Valley Railway between Robertsbridge and Tenterden. The return to the rails of No. 1638 is a key part of plans for passenger services once the extended line from Bodiam and Robertsbridge Junction reopens."

Heavy rainfall each day saw the originally planned target of 200 miles revised to the more achievable 200km, which the teams, made up of volunteers including teenagers and one who was 84 years old, were more than able to hit.

Throughout the two days, about 50 people had a go on the trolley, and the final team arrived back at Tenterden Town to be greeted by supporters including general manager Robin Coombes and the Deputy Mayor of Tenterden, Coun Jane Milles.

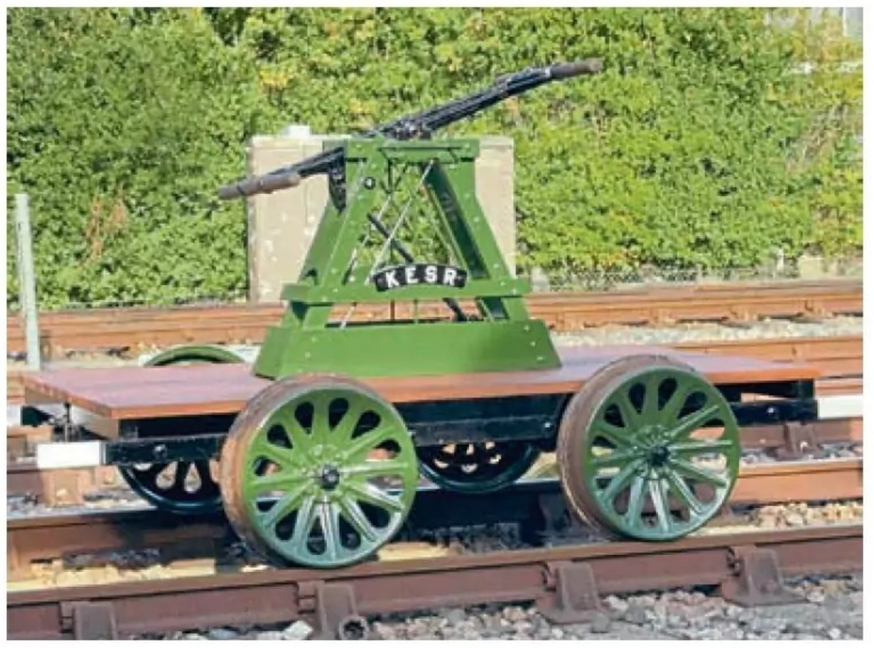
The 1638 Appeal has a fundraising target of £163,800. So far, about £56,000 has been donated or committed in regular giving, representing about 35% of the target.

It is hoped the money raised by the challenge will make a significant contribution to funding further work of the locomotive, which remains in Devon.

Anyone wishing to pledge their support the challenge is invited to visit kesr.org.uk/donate/anniversary-appeal/ or donate via www.justgiving.com/campaign/kesrpumptrolleychallenge



Pump trolley challenge volunteers, including Sarah Tagart (right) who came up with the idea, prepare to depart Tenterden Town on November 1. ALISON MILES/KESR



The newly refurbished KESR pump trolley, which is known to have been used on the line as far back as 1912. KESR

Class 37 back at Mid-Norfolk after eight years

CLASS 37 No. 37003 has returned to the Mid-Norfolk Railway after being away for eight years for an engine rebuild.

Originally numbered D6703, it was outshopped by Vulcan Foundry on February 28, 1960, and began its working life at Stratford depot. During its main line service, it was given the unofficial name of Tiger Moth.

Withdrawn in 1994, it was stored at Bescot and then Crewe, before being bought by the Class 37 Locomotive Group in 1998. Since then it has appeared at several heritage venues, including the East Anglian Railway Museum, the Wensleydale Railway and Locomotion at Shildon, finally arriving on the MNR in 2009.



Class 37 No. 37003 back at Dereham on the Mid-Norfolk Railway. MNR

In 2012, it was officially named *Dereham Neatherd High School*.

No. 37003 was withdrawn from service in 2016 due to a leaking cylinder liner. Sent to UK Rail Leasing Ltd at Leicester in 2017 for repairs, further inspection revealed a major engine fault. Since then, it remained at Leicester undergoing extensive restoration work.

It was returned to the MNR by low-loader on November 3/4. Back on the MNR, it will undergo a cosmetic overhaul, with the owning group planning to return it to service next year.

Museum Wales makes rolling stock available to new homes

By Owen Hayward

A PAIR of Andrew Barclay fireless locomotives and carriages dating as far back as 1895 have been offered for disposal by Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales – and they could face scrapping if no suitable homes are found.

A collection of rolling stock has been in storage at the National Collection Centre in Nantgawr since the closure of the Welsh Industrial & Maritime Museum in Cardiff Bay in 1998. The majority of it had been acquired for the purpose of display and interpretation in the proposed Wales Railway Centre, which was to be located at what is now Cardiff Bay station. It was envisaged that this centre would assume responsibility for the rolling stock, including restoration and making it accessible.

Unfortunately, the proposed plans fell through and Amgueddfa Cymru continued to store the rolling stock in the hope that it might be displayed at the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea, which opened in 2005. A combination of the constrained city centre location of that museum and the narrative of its displays precludes the movement of the rolling stock to that location.

As part of its active collection management, a rationalisation programme was initiated with the primary purpose being to increase the public benefit that can be derived from under-used objects in Amgueddfa Cymru's collections through rehoming them. It is intended that this will enable these objects to enjoy a new lease of life through being displayed and/or used in different contexts where they can once again be enjoyed.

On October 15, the museum trustees published a list of 14 railway items that it had identified no longer fitted into its collection plans, with the available items being shared on the Museums Association disposal webpage for two months. However, recognising that railway rolling stock is far more likely to be successfully rehomed to heritage railways than to other museums, a rehoming application invitation was also sent to all Welsh standard gauge lines a day before, with a requirement that any interested parties responded by November 14, following which any such applications would be considered. Should any rolling stock not be successfully rehomed in Wales, it would be offered the wider UK heritage sector.

Multiple gauges

The fireless pair are Nos. 1966 of 1929 *Delta* and 2238 of1948, both built at Kilmarnock works. *Delta* completed in 1929 for the Carrow Works of J & J Coleman, moving to Newport in 1948 to work the Monsanto Chemicals Ltd plant, where it was used until withdrawal in 1990, as the last regular working commercial industrial locomotive in Wales. No. 2238 was supplied new to the British Resin Products Ltd works at Barry Docks and was withdrawn when the plant closed in 1986.

Unrestored Ruston & Hornsby 3ft gauge 4WDM No. 187100, built in 1937/38 for the Taff Fechan Water Supply Board, and 2ft gauge



Andrew Barclay 0-4-0F No. 1966 *Delta* at Nantgarw on June 11. AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

Greenwood & Batley Ltd battery locomotive, built in 1962/63 for the Llanharry Haematite Mine and externally restored by the museum in the 1980s, are also available.

Carriage bodies on the disposals list include Cambrian Railways composite No. 238, built in 1895 by the Metropolitan Carriage & Wagon Co Ltd which ended up being owned by a railway historian. Now externally restored with one first and third class compartment complete, it is mounted on its finanl (non-original) ex-MOD/GER bogie underframe which was cut-and-shut to size.

Taff Vale Railway composite No. 51 is also a largely complete example. Built in 1883 by Brown Marshalls & Co, it saw residential use on Hayling Island, from where it was rescued, and it now also sits on a GER carriage chassis.

Steam crane No. 10373 (Thomas Smith & Sons (Rodley) Ltd, Leeds, 1925), GWR six-ton hand crane No. AWD 230 and accompanying match truck (unknown builder, est 1926), BR(E) six-wheel carriage chassis No. E70670 (BR Engineering, 1950), NCB tar tanker No. 7328 (Cambrian Wagon Company, 1940), plus an unknown Rhymney Railway passenger brake and parcels carriage, GWR shunter's truck and Cambrian Railways brake third, are also available.

Deadline approaches

Amgueddfa Cymru has committed funding in the current financial year to support a rehoming programme to organise and cover costs for the removal of asbestos where containment in situ is not possible, and the loading, unloading and road transport of objects between the National Collection Centre and the receiving organisation's premises. In order to access this, rehoming must be completed by February 2026.

Available assets can be found by searching at www.museumsassociation.org/find-an-object and interested charitable parties should email post@museumwales.ac.uk

GNR 'invalid' saloon moves to Embsay & Bolton Abbey

A CARRIAGE once used in the transportation of medical patients has moved to the Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway following a lengthy restoration that will see it resume life as an observation saloon for a return to service next year.

Designed by Nigel Gresley and built at the Doncaster Works of the Great Northern Railway in 1909, No. 3087 was originally furnished with an invalid bed, fitted with a bed-rest which could be removed when not in use, to enable it to more easily transport patients by rail.

Also present were a couch, three easy chairs, one portable table, and two flap-tables for those travelling with them. It was later converted into an observation saloon for use by engineering departments.

Following initial restoration under private ownership, initially at Steamtown, Carnforth, it was used on the teak set at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway from 2005 until 2019, by which time it needed refurbishment.

It was transferred to the LNER Coach Association by its former chairman, the late Nick Stringer, who was instrumental in funding the enlargement of the saloon's seating area by Rampart Engineering.

Now nearly ready to welcome passengers once more, on November 7 it moved from the NYMR carriage works at Pickering to Skipton to take up residence at the EBASR, on long-term hire to the Yorkshire Dales Railway Museum Trust, joining an already extensive collection of heritage carriages based there. It will be used for weddings, special occasions, and cream teas.



Great Northern Railway invalid saloon No. 3087 at Embsay station at the start of its long-term loan. ROB SHAW/EBASR

EBASR finance manager Rob Shaw said: "We are delighted to reach agreement for the use of the wonderful 110-year-old GNR saloon. It will join the 1948-built Thompson Buffet coach as part of our exclusive special events rake of carriages."

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Presenting The Golden Gorse

Plans unveiled for new M&GN 4-4-0 locomotive project

By Chris Eden-Green

A GROUP of Norfolk railway enthusiasts and volunteers have established the Golden Gorse Group and revealed plans to undertake construction of a new example of a Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway C class 4-4-0 locomotive – filling the gap in pre-Grouping era steam locomotive representation, while simultaneously providing something appropriate for the region through which the NNR operates.

With 183 route miles to its name, the Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway was the biggest 'joint' rail network in the UK. The name derived from the Midland supervising operations and providing influence of the motive power, while civil engineering and permanent way became a Great Northern responsibility. But the network's christening in 1893 was little beyond an amalgamation of existing railway enterprises in East Anglia, including the Bourne & Lynn, the Peterborough Lynn & Sutton Bridge, and the Eastern & Midlands Railway; itself formed through amalgamation of the Lynn & Fakenham and Yarmouth & North Norfolk companies in 1882.

Often nicknamed the 'Missed and Greatly Needed' by enthusiasts and locals, particularly those who, despite the reliance on bus services in East Anglia, the M&GN was also cruelly referred to as the 'Muddle and Go Nowhere'. The latter, sadly, reflected the network's low traffic numbers in later years.

While each route can be retraced on land in several places today, precious little of the M&GN legacy remains upheld, and while rails are in use between Cromer and Holt, albeit switching over from national to heritage operation in Sheringham, no pure-bred M&GN locomotives have been preserved to run on them. The nearest of note are the preserved LNER B12 No. 8572, LNER J17 No. 8217 and Ivatt 4MT No. 43106. The only surviving rolling stock are two coaches, a wagon and a brake van to make up a mixed train of sorts.

> "We're not just about building an M&GN loco – we are banging the drum for the M&GN because it is not well-enough represented."

Four workings

There is a theory going round the heritage fraternity that a steam locomotive which has worked through three operational tickets in preservation is considered near life-expired; while it could potentially work through a fourth ticket and beyond, the end of its third working stint may require the most extensive and costly overhaul of its life. Such examples include the Ffestiniog Railway's 1979-built double Fairlie *Earl Of Merionith*, which was mothballed in 2018 having worked for 39 years with three overhauls beforehand. Part of the decision not to immediately overhaul the engine further was due to the estimated level of work involved, arguably being the highest in its life so far. A similar case could be argued for John Cameron's two LNER express engines – K4 2-6-0 No. 61994 *The Great Marquess* and A4 Pacific No. 60009 *Union Of South Africa*. While the former has only had two overhauls and two tickets since 1967, the latter had been through three of each before withdrawal in 2021.

So why a pre-Grouping machine over a more familiar BR Standard? Besides all the gaps being arguably filled by other new-build projects, there are both emotional and practical reasons behind building something older. You only have to drive into the village of Melton Constable, the former operating hub of the M&GN system, to see illustrations of the network's most fondly remembered locomotive design: the A-class 4-4-2Ts. These were constructed in-house at the railway's workshops (albeit classed as rebuilds for accountancy purposes). So, surely the most visibly iconic design would be an obvious choice for a new build? But, according to Golden Gorse Group media representative Tom Crouch, the A-class tank wasn't as powerful nor reliable as people may remember. "The C has larger six-foot driving wheels, which puts it in the same driving wheel capability as the preserved LNER B12," Crouch recalled. "But the size of the locomotive means that it's going to be more thermally efficient and working at a higher boiler temperature, which makes it more suitable for a small heritage railway."

"Our tagline is 'a 19th century loco for the 21st century,'" chairman Daniel Mason added. "An Austerity bangs you all around the room with a small boiler that's very efficient and very simple. A C-class meets that similar requirement, but it has the grace and elegance of an interesting loco. It will plod along quite happily at 25mph with a reasonable load and turn the heads of both the general public and the rail enthusiasts".

Fellow founding group member Nico Atkins echoed this testimonial: "There are accounts of these locomotives waiting at South Lynn for Midland holiday excursions that would come in double-headed, pulling 12-14 coaches. Then, one of these 'little brown engines' would come on the front and tow the lot over what is a particularly hilly route."

Enlightening yet sustainable

The idea of a 'best' new-build steam locomotive for railway preservation is a myth. However, while the specific requirements for heritage lines vary from one to the next, they have all faced similar challenges over time: to continuously recruit and retain a regular volunteer workforce, reduce their overhead costs, source appropriate quality fuel, improve their general attraction, maintain a good public image and recreate their own period in history. Therefore, any new steam locomotive for heritage railway use has to make the best of multiple worlds; something that historically fits its unique selling point, is cost-effective to run, brings in a high enough footfall, and encourages fresh interest from the both membership and the public. An M&GN loco spiritually belongs somewhere in Norfolk, but economically there is nothing to prevent it being a valuable asset to



M&GN C class No. 80 at Melton Constable on January 14, 1924. MICHAEL MORANT COLLECTION/GOLDEN GORSE GROUP

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The C class did survive into the Grouping era, being absorbed into the LNER. On March 13, 1939, LNER No. 043 passes Melton West signalbox near Melton Constable. MICHAEL MORANT COLLECTION/GOLDEN GORSE GROUP

other heritage railways around the country.

As opposed to raising the money and building the loco within a five-to-10-year timeframe, a more realistic time allowance of 20 years has been projected for construction to take place. About £2 million is needed to complete the project, which the group acknowledges cannot be raised only through second-hand trade stands.

"You're not going to get the funds through selling bric-a-brac on a station during a gala," admitted group secretary Robert Ewles. "You need a constant cashflow, so generous donations from our membership scheme, those who just write a cheque and say 'here you are,' those who are interested but sadly no longer with us, and corporate companies who think 'that would suit us.' As nice as merchandise would be, and it does encourage people, you need serious money for a new-build."

Despite it not being top priority, the group does recognise the benefit of spreading awareness through group-branded merchandise sales. "We're not just about building an M&GN loco – we are banging the drum for the M&GN because it is not well-enough represented,"said Daniel Mason.

Membership for this project starts from £2 per month, which rewards people with a regular e-newsletter, an invitation to the group's Annual General Meeting, and a special charter train (location to be arranged).

The aim to keep entry prices deliberately low is to help engage with junior groups aged 10-16. Given that a volunteer at this age will likely be in their 30s by the estimated completion of the locomotive, their progression can come full-circle if they end up driving and firing a locomotive whose construction they've helped to finance. Higher membership levels at £5-10 per month include more perks, with the highest at £100 per month giving priority to visit the locomotive during its construction and a mention in the group's roll of honour.

As opposed to building frames and cylinders, the first five years of this project is to focus on building the 2950-gallon tender. "The tender is a big steel box with three axles on – it's pretty simple," Daniel Mason pointed out. "That's then something that isn't a burden. If you buy the frames for the locomotive first, you have these big slabs of metal that you plonk down in a shed and can't move around very easily." Compared to the cutting and fabrication of large frame sections, casting expensive driving wheels and cylinders, a large painted steel box on wheels can be fabricated and manoeuvred more easily, and they area useful for displaying in a bay platform at events – or even mocking up a cab on a wagon chassis to give people an idea of what it would be like to stand on the footplate of the completed engine.

Like any new-build project, the feasibility of a Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway C Class is based on variables and projections, some of which may play out differently in reality, but the taste and practical case for a new Victorian engine has never been stronger.

While skeptics may argue that railway preservation looks more likely than ever to be priced out in the coming decades, there's much to be said for proving them wrong over time. The Golden Gorse Group succeeding in its venture will be down to attracting enough backers to the business case and long-term economic findings, but one thing is for sure – it would definitely be a fitting sight for East Anglian railway preservation.

➜ **To learn more about the Golden Gorse Group, visit www.goldengorse.org**



An artist's profile of how the proposed C class 4-4-0 might look when completed, including its M&GN brown livery. NIGEL DIGBY/GOLDEN GROSE GROUP

Volks Electric Railway station refurbished by water company

BRIGHTON'S award-winning Volks Electric Railway's ticket office and toilets at Black Rock station have been refurbished by Southern Water at a cost of £366,000.

The ticket office in the station at the marina end of Madeira Drive on the seafront had become rundown, with leaky roofs and an unusable public toilet. While Southern Water was undertaking work to improve its vital pumping station below the station, it took the opportunity to rectify the problems above ground.

Coun Birgit Miller, Brighton & Hove City Council's cabinet member for culture, heritage, and tourism, said: "We've heard loud and clear from residents how frustrating it's been not having access to public toilets in this area and how crucial they are to ensuring older people, children, and anyone with health needs can get out and enjoy the seafront.

"Reopening them wasn't as simple as fitting them out; Southern Water needed to carry out significant operational work to make it possible.

"I'm really pleased we've worked together to find a solution that means residents and visitors will have access to facilities again, as well as a fantastic new station for the VER."

Support shown for Leicester North facelift

THE Great Central Railway has raised nearly half of a £30,000 appeal to give its Leicester North southern terminus a facelift in a month since it was launched.

A reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 337, a donor has offered to match donations pound for pound up to £15,000. Other donations topped £6000 in four weeks and grant aid has added a further £750, with hopes to undertake the work this winter. To donate, visit www.gcrailway.co.uk/news/leicester-north-appeal-2025/

GCR Stanier 8F back in the new year?

GREAT Central Railway-based Stanier 8F 2-8-0 No. 48305, which has a firebox crack after spending a summer on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, as reported last issue, is now scheduled to be back in service in the new year, said a spokesman. BR Standard 2MT 2-6-0 No. 78018 will come out of traffic for a 10-year overhaul after the January 23-26 winter gala.



Bagnall 0-6-0ST No. 401 and Bagnall 0-6-0ST No. 401 *Ashington No. 5* double-heading on October 25. AADIL MAJUMDER/NTSR

Big Rail 200 gala a success for North Tyneside line

By Robin Jones

THE North Tyneside Steam Railway held its biggest-ever event in the shape of its October 25/26 Railway 200 Gala.

It was held at the museum in Middle Engine Lane, in West Chirton, North Shields, a building shared with the Stephenson Steam Railway,˜which takes its name from the chief engineer of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, and featured talks by guest speakers, stalls, a visiting locomotive and every operational engine, carriage and wagon running on the railway.˜

The gala itself was preceded by an evening of talks on early railway history˜by local historians˜on October 23, held in the shadow of *Killingworth Billy*, the world's oldest surviving standard gauge steam locomotive, which dates from 1816.

Followed by a day of shunting and setting up, the gala began early on Saturday morning when crews arrived to prepare six locomotives for the day ahead.˜The first train of the day was a demonstration coal train top-and-tailed by Siemens-Shucker Bo-Bo electric *Harton E4* on the south end and Peckett 0-6-0ST No. 1970 of 1939 *Ashington˜No.5* on the front.˜

First outing

Having been on static display in the museum since 2017 and not having ventured˜down the line since 2009,˜E4 received a thorough check-over and oil/grease-up ahead of the˜gala, including a test run on the south end of a freight train on October 12.˜The pair, a trademark of the haulage of coal in the˜North East, worked a˜rake of hoppers to the delight of lineside photographers.

Three steam locomotives˜–˜Bagnall 0-6-0ST No. 401 of 1950 *Thomas Burt MP 1837-1902*,˜*Ashington˜No.5* and Teeside-built Head Wrightson 0-4-0VB 'Coffee Pot'˜of 1871, visiting from˜Beamish˜Museum– and three diesels in Class 03 No.˜03078, Class 08 No. 08915 and Consett Iron Company 0-6-0DM No. 10˜took turns to haul trains and shunt around the Middle Engine Lane yard.˜

A last-minute visitor, 'Coffee Pot', the second oldest operational steam locomotive in the UK, became a key part of the gala's proceedings, shunting around the yard, with one of Beamish's˜chaldron˜wagons.On the Saturday,˜Beamish curator of transport Paul Jarman accepted an offer to take 'Coffee Pot' for a trip to Percy Main˜–the longest sustained run that the locomotive has ever undertaken!˜

Live freight recovery

The Saturday afternoon witnessed a freight train failure and rescue. Consett No. 10 and No. 03078 arrived with a rake of five tank wagons.˜However, the train failed south of the coast road bridge with No.10 struggling with fuel issue, and No. 03078's radiator had boiled over as it tried to push the train back to Middle Engine Lane.˜

200 Years of Train Travel 1825–2025



The day ends with a line-up of the three steam locomotives and some of the volunteers standing in front for a photograph. JOE STUART/NTSR

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Left: Head Wrightson 0-4-0VB 'Coffee Pot' from Beamish Museum. JOE STUART/NTSR

Below: Harton Electric E4, which was being propelled down the line by *Ashington No. 5*. MATTHEW DITCH





No. 401 at the head of a mixed freight including a Conflat wagon carrying a dumper truck. JOE STUART/NTSR

To the delight of visitors, *Ashington No. 5* made its way through the platform, returning 10 minutes later with the full train.

The final demonstration freight train on the Saturday was more of a mixed freight containing a Salmon, tool van and Conflat – the latter making its debut following its restoration by the railway's youth group and carrying a dumper truck which had been loaded the previous weekend. This freight train had been planned to be a steelworks double-header of No. 401 and Consett No.10, the latter being replaced by No. 08915. That made for seven different locomotives and three different freight trains running on the Saturday.

The 03's radiator was refilled, and it undertook yard shunting on the Sunday afternoon. No. 10 recovered in time for its only timetabled train on the Sunday, a full-line brake van ride at 4pm. *Ashington No. 5* shunted the carriages into the loop and No. 10 pulled in with the brake van with 26 passengers for a round trip – comprising No. 10's first ever timetabled passenger train!

A total of 350 rover tickets were sold for the gala.

➜ Thanks for Joe Stuart for help with compiling this article.

Right: *Consett No. 10* and 03078 near the coast road bridge. Due to an issue with the train, the pair were awaiting No. 5 to rescue them. MATTHEW DITCH





No. 132 (known as the Cavell van) returned to the Port of Dover for remembrance services 105 years after it carried the body of the Unknown Warrior from there to the capital in 1920. PORT OF DOVER

Cavell van returns to Dover for remembrance service

By Owen Hayward

A SECR luggage van that was used in the repatriation of First World War heroes went on display at the Port of Dover, 105 years after it carried the body of the Unknown Warrior from there to London in 1919.

In a collaboration between the Port of Dover, South Eastern Railway and the Kent & East Sussex Railway, SECR prototype PMV utility van No. 132, normally based at Bodiam Station, was brought back to Dover for a remembrance service, following which it remained open for public viewing on two consecutive weekends. Some 300 guests attended the service, which was held inside Cruise Terminal 1, formerly the Dover Western Docks/Marine railway station and the location from where the Unknown Warrior's final journey began.

The van holds a unique place in British history as it was involved in the repatriation of three First World War heroes.

Firstly, in May 1919 it carried the body of British nurse Edith Cavell from Dover to London after she was executed by German firing squad for assisting in the escape of more than 200 Allied soldiers. From that point on, railway workers referred to all vans of this type as Cavell vans. Two months later, in July 1919, the van transported the body of civilian merchant mariner Capt Charles Fryatt, who was executed by the Germans in 1916.

However, the van's most significant journey came just over a year later when, on November 10, 1920, it carried the body of the Unknown Warrior from Dover to Victoria Station.

It then stood vigil overnight before a ceremonial internment at Westminster Abbey the next day.

The van is now a permanent museum space containing a replica of the Unknown Warrior's oak wood coffin, which has on it metalwork created by the grandson of the original craftsman who worked on the commission in 1920.

Chris Jackson, curator of the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum, at the Kent & East Sussex Railway, said: "We are privileged to look after this historic vehicle under the auspices of the Colonel Stephens Railway Museum at the KESR and to make it available to visitors as a place for quiet reflection.

"We are extremely grateful to Southeastern and the Port of Dover for the opportunity to take the van back to the port for the remembrance season in this anniversary year when we are also marking Railway 200."



A remembrance service was held a Dover's Cruise Terminal 1 on November 5 after the Cavell van returned there. KESR

East Somerset makes the switch to two-train operation

By Robin Jones

THE East Somerset Railway has taken a major step forward with the completion of an interim signalling project that facilitates the operation of multiple trains and brings the second platform at Cranmore into customer use.



The signalling ground frame and panel currently in place at Cranmore. ESR

The new platform was built with Heritage Lottery funding from 2018. Beginning in 2022, the line's volunteers have designed, built, and installed a signalling system to enable trains to be safely operated from both platforms for the first time.

Ending the two-and-a-half-mile line's era of one-train operation, colour light signals have been installed prior to the intended transfer to classic semaphores. Track sensors will indicate train movements.

Ground was broken on October 25, with a service hauled by GWR 2-6-2 No. 4555, with Class 108 DMU No. L231 also in operation. Large prairie No. 4110 was used for shunting on the day.

The historic occasion extended into the evening, with The Station Café serving food on board the DMU.

Following the commissioning of the signalling, a major aim of the railway is to return Cranmore signalbox back to its original purpose and function.

Signalling and telegraph volunteers have been locating and bringing together the many pieces of signalling equipment to be found around the railway, reorganising the 'box and refurbishing the interior, restoring the first of many signals, a BR(W) ground signal preparing the lever frame for relocation so that the lever movements will no longer interfere with the floor joists and also to provide for any extra levers to be added in the future and restoration of lever Cams, used to connect the levers to the interlocking.

Anyone who would like to volunteer with the signalling˜and telegraph team is invited to email volunteers@eastsomersetrailway.com˜or telephone 01749 880417. Donations to the signalbox restoration may be made at https://eastsomersetrailway.digitickets.co.uk/category/47877



Two-train operation with both platforms at Cranmore in use on October 25. ESR



Above: A colour light signal in operation, pending the line's eventual transfer to semaphores. ESR

Buckinghamshire Railway Centre-based WR 4-6-0 No.6989 *Wightwick Hall* has returned to the Bluebell Railway on long-term loan at the end of its current filming schedule as *Hogwarts Castle* for the new Harry Potter TV series. It is pictured at Ketches Wood on October 26 during its first weekend of operation with the 11.45am service to East Grinstead. PETER HOLLANDS



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Swanage Railway and Network Rail sign new mutually-beneficial deal

By Robin Jones

A LANDMARK agreement between the Swanage Railway and Network Rail's Wessex Route enabling closer cooperation and mutual benefit was signed at Corfe Castle on October 24.

A new arrangement will see the SR receive donations of redundant railway assets including rail and sleepers that are no longer required on the national network. Rather than be recycled elsewhere, these materials will instead be sustainably repurposed on the heritage line, helping to ensure its continued operation for future generations.

The agreement also paves the way for hands-on training and skills development, with NR using SR facilities to deliver practical coaching for employees and apprentices, focusing on maintenance, inspection, and fault-finding on a range of railway assets. In return, the SR will benefit from NR's in-kind expertise and volunteer support, as staff are encouraged to use their volunteering leave to assist with maintenance and operations on the heritage line.

The agreement also commits both organisations to regular meetings to deepen their partnership, align activities, and explore new opportunities for collaboration, including the potential for trialling new railway technologies on the Swanage Railway.

Wessex Route director Mark Goodall said: "Wherever we can, we will work with heritage railways on our network to forge a new partnership so material that would otherwise be recycled elsewhere are reused and can find a new purpose.

"In turn, the SR also has some excellent facilities which, because they are separate from the main line network, provide the perfect opportunity for our colleagues to contribute to the local community.

"Working together through this agreement provides a clear framework and we are excited about the possibilities it brings, not only to NR and the SR, but wider society – and what better time to do it than in 2025, the bicentenary of the railway."

Frank Roberts, of the Swanage Railway Trust, a volunteer of more than 40 years, said: "It has been a real pleasure to work with our NR colleagues over the past months and I am very grateful for the guidance received from them.

"A decade ago, I led the project to reconnect the track from Swanage with the South West Main Line at Wareham, which was successfully achieved, and the signing of this framework agreement with Network Rail will help us strengthen our working arrangements.

"It is almost 50 years since volunteers started the restoration of the Swanage branch line. We have recently delivered an internal governance review which will streamline the SR organisation just as NR moves forward towards the new Great British Railways."



The signed agreement between Network Rail and Swanage Railway displayed at Corfe Castle station on October 24. ANDREW PM WRIGHT



The first agreement meeting between Network Rail and Swanage Railway representatives at Corfe Castle on October 23. ANDREW PM WRIGHT

Bumper entries for national heritage awards

NEARLY 60 entries were received for the National Railway Heritage Awards 2025, with more than half of them making the shortlist.

The awards were to be presented by the Minister for Rail, Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill, at a ceremony at the Merchant Taylors Hall, London, on December 3.

Chairman of trustees Andy Savage MBE said the strength of the entries "shows how much success we have had in encouraging the conservation and reuse of our built railway heritage since we were founded 1979.

"In the year that we celebrate 200 years of the modern passenger railway, it is remarkable to note that the awards have been part of that industry for 46 years, almost a quarter of the time."

Several of those on the shortlist were from heritage lines and venues.



An overview of Boston Lodge top yard on July 16. As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 333, the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways has completed a £55 million National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported project to refresh it as an anchor attraction in North Wales, including major works to revive the historic buildings at Boston Works, the oldest in the world still fulfilling its original function having built locomotives in three centuries.
Building work valued at £3.3 million and led by local contractors included the restoration of the blacksmiths' building to create space for volunteer projects and a new extension to house a training and research centre, plus a new small locomotive shed, repairs to the iron, electrician's workshop and oil store with better mess facilities. NRHA

The shortlisted entries are:
Aberdeen Ferryhill: railway offices restoration by Ferryhill Railway Heritage Trust; Awe Viaduct: restoration by Story Contracting and Network Rail; Battersea Park: station canopy by Benedict O'Looney Architects & Network Rail; Bishopstone: Art Deco ladies WC and lobby by Friends of Bishopstone Station CIC; Blackheath station restoration by Southeastern Trains and Network Rail; Bonnington: Overbridge DMB/5 restoration by National Highways; Bootle: station platform shelter by Network Rail and Northern Rail; Burntisland: viaduct restoration by AmcoGiffen and Network Rail.

Dalwhinnie: station clock by Highland Main Line Community Rail Partnership; Ebberston: station canopy and waiting area by Carol and Mark Benson; Filey: station trainshed roof repairs by Colt Construction Ltd and Network Rail repairs; Glenfinnan: viaduct restoration by AmcoGiffen & Network Rail; Gobowen: station restoration by Oswestry Station Building Trust; Haltwhistle: station water tower by Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership;

Hopetown Darlington: historic buildings by Darlington Borough Council; Keighley: station renovation by Network Rail, AmcoGiffen and Keighley & Worth Valley Railway; Keighley: water tank house by KWVR; Knightsbridge: station step-free access by Transport for London; Leeds: Wellington wagon lift hoist and museum by MEPC Ltd; London Bridge: 4&5 Crucifix Lane by The Arch Company; London Road Guildford: toilet restoration by South Western Railway; London Victoria: Line map restoration by Benedict O'Looney Architects and Govia Thameslink; Manchester, Science & Industry Museum Manchester: new warehouse roof and gantry by Science & Industry Museum; Monk Bridge Viaduct: Gardens at The Junction by The Junction; Oswestry, Cambrian Station: external restoration by Shropshire Council; Pitlochry: semaphore signal by Highland Main Line Community Rail Partnership; Ponts Mill: viaduct restoration by BAM Nuttall and Network Rail; Porthmadog: Boston Lodge historic buildings restoration by Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway; Richmond: station canopy and booking hall restoration by South Western Railway, Network Rail and London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames; Stoke-on-Trent: glazed trainshed screens by Network Rail; Taunton: Centenary Lounge waiting room by The Centenary Lounge; Whitley Bay: station canopy refurbishment by Nexus.



The restoration of Oswestry station by local building conservation specialist Phillips and Curry Ltd was funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Shropshire Council. The Grade II-listed building, opened in 1866, ceased operating as a station in 1966.

Following years of neglect, the council took possession of the building in early 2023.

From July 2024 to May 2025, craftsmen worked to restore the building's exterior, remove asbestos tiles, and replace them with Welsh slate. Windows and doors also received a new coat of the Cambrian Railway's colours. The ground floor is to Cambrian Heritage Railways.

Roger Evans, Shropshire Council's cabinet member for finance, said: "We are delighted that our work to restore this important building has been shortlisted for a prestigious national award.

"This building holds significant cultural value for our community, and these essential repairs will ensure it remains safe and usable for future generations." NRHA



Like a Tardis-style time machine returning to the original Cirencester Town station which it last served in 1964, AC Cars lightweight railbus W79978 stands alongside the platform on October 25. EMILY CROWTHER/RAILBUS W79978



AC cars railbus W79978 in the platform at Cirencester Town in the early 1960s. COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL, COURTESY OF CORINIUM MUSEUM

Railbus survivor back at the station it last served in 1964!

By Robin Jones

AN AC Cars lightweight railbus returned to Cirencester Town station 61 years after its last visit.

The Old Station Experience at the station in Sheep Street, which closed to passengers on April 6, 1964, and freight on October 4, 1965, was held on October 25/26 as part of Cirencester History Festival, which ran from October 24 to November 2 in 17 venues, with talks, film, music, crafts and immersive activities.

For the weekend, 1958-built W79978 – which is being restored by owner Martin Rouse at the Swindon & Cricklade Railway – was displayed alongside the original station platform it used while running services on the four-mile branch from Kemble.

Jonathan Rixon, from Rixon Architects, which is leading the Grade II-listed station's current restoration to use as his offices, and festival producer Jess Yarrow worked with Martin, Travis Perkins, Cirencester Town Council, Cotswold District Council, Pete Briddon Transport, the S&CR and the Daniel Bingham Foundation to make the visit possible. AC Cars Ltd of Thames Ditton, Surrey, previously known as Auto Carriers Ltd, and which in 1949 had supplied four trains for the Southend Pier Railway, built five examples of the type when, following the Modernisation Plan, BR looked at replacing branch line steam trains with railbuses and invited firms to provide specifications and quotes.

Preservation travels

Withdrawn in February 1968 after an unsuccessful BR career, W79978 is the one of three AC Cars railbuses which were preserved to carry passengers in the heritage era.

Bought in 1968 for use on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, it arrived at Grosmont from Grangemouth. It was then sold to the Kent & East Sussex Railway in 1979 and subsequently purchased by the Colne Valley Railway.

Bought by its current owner and moved to the S&CR for a comprehensive restoration in November 2019, it carried passengers for the first time in many years when it ran shuttles on the line's extension during its September 2023 diesel gala.

Following the completion of its restoration, W79978 is set to run in S&CR service, in an area close to which it worked in BR days.

The wider Old Station Experience included guided tours of the Brunel-era station building, archive exhibitions, audio memories of the station before closure, a VR recreation by students from Cirencester College, and 1950s-style refreshments under a new canopy on the platform.

Designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the station was built by the Cheltenham & Great Western Union Railway and opened in 1841. It was renamed Cirencester Town on July 1, 1924, to avoid confusion with Cirencester Watermoor.

Cirencester Town was the terminus of the 4/¼-mile branch from Kemble. In an attempt to save the branch from closure, railbuses were introduced in February 1959 to cut costs. The service was increased to 14 trains per day and halts were opened at Chesterton Lane and Park Leaze.

Results were encouraging: 130,000 passengers yearly, an average of about 13 per train, and particularly on Saturdays, the railbus was overcrowded. The original intention was to run railbuses through to Swindon to avoid a change of trains at Kemble, but this proved impossible as the lightweight vehicles did not reliably operate the signalling track circuits on the main line.

Nevertheless, despite the initial success, the passenger service was not financially viable and the branch was closed, although the station building survived. The station was subsequently used for storage for about 30 years, and because it needed repairs to bring it back into use, Cotswold District Council decided in 2024 to sell it.

Ongoing work

Donations towards the continuing restoration of W79978 may be made at https://swindon-cricklade-railway.org/ac-railbus-w79978/

The surviving sister railbus is No. 79976, for which scrapping had begun on the Great Central Railway before a new owner was found, with it being transferred Nemesis Rail's Burton-on-Trent depot where it remains in storage.

The other one preserved was No. 79979, which was saved as a grounded body minus a chassis for use as staff facilities at Boat of Garten on the Strathspey Railway. Asbestos contamination led to it being scrapped in 1992.

Listed Brunel goods shed is purchased by resident arts group

STROUD'S Grade II*-listed Brunel Goods Shed has been sold to Stroud Valleys Artspace, cementing its future as a vibrant cultural venue in the heart of the Gloucestershire town.

Earlier this year, Stroud District Council purchased the building from Network Rail. The SVA had been using the building for arts and community activities for more than a decade, but its lease was due to expire next year.

A council statement said: "This marks a key milestone in the regeneration of the Stroud Station Quarter, a strategic area connecting the canal to the high street. Together with our partners, we are working to create a welcoming gateway to the town that celebrates heritage, culture, and community. SVA's ownership will unlock opportunities to restore the building, improve accessibility, and expand its cultural programme, ensuring the goods shed continues to inspire for years to come."

The sale follows Network Rail's recent refurbishment of Stroud station's footbridge and canopies – early signs of exciting investment in the area.

The goods shed was opened in 1845 to serve the Cheltenham & Great Western Union Railway. It remained in use until 1966, and between 1985 and 2012 it was restored in stages by Stroud Preservation Trust Ltd with help from the Railway Heritage Trust.

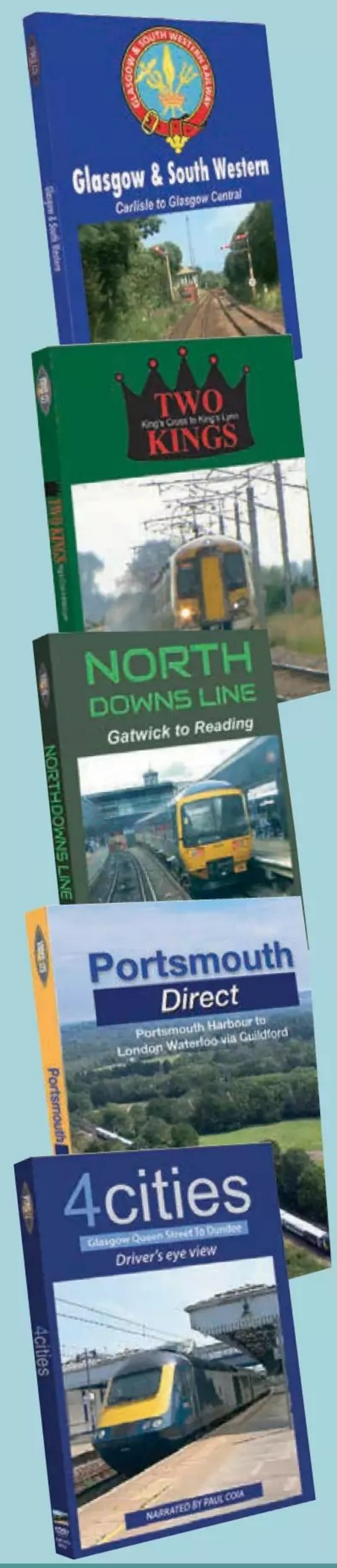


The Brunel Goods Shed alongside the main line in Stroud. STROUD DC

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East Somerset appeal for vintage carriage shed as 'twins' reunited

By Robin Jones

AN appeal for up to £200,000 has been launched to build a two-road shed to house a growing fleet of Victorian and Edwardian carriages being stored at the East Somerset Railway.

Three projects are currently undergoing restoration, with the aim of creating a complete wooden-bodied train as a significant tourist draw on high days and holidays and an educational resource.

One is a combination of a Midland Railway Third Class five-compartment coach body, No. 255 of 1890, and an MR six-wheel chassis, No. 1753, acquired from the Swindon & Cricklade Railway. The chassis is of a similar vintage and identical to one that would have been under No. 255.

The second is a twin coach with the same history, with the chassis being restored and the body in storage awaiting the completion of the chassis. The third is Barry Railway six-compartment third No. 61 of 1896, but without a chassis at the moment.



Above: The body of Brecon & Merthyr Railway coach No. 111 being delivered to the East Somerset Railway on August 29. STEVE EHRLICHER



Right: Under-restoration Midland Railway Third Class five-compartment coach body No. 255 at Cranmore on June 2. STEVE EHRLICHER

From home to heritage

The railway has just taken delivery of the twin coach body – one of two gifted to heritage lines by John and Trudie Hopcroft, the new owners of a house in Armscote, near Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire. The property came with two coaches in the garden, and they hoped to restore the pair by themselves until they realised the amount of work, time, and expertise it would take, and so offered them to the heritage sector.

The coaches had for decades been home to two women, Mabel Webb and her lifelong friend Hilda Friday, who lived there until at least the mid-1970s. Mabel, a domestic worker, bought the first carriage for £10 in 1928 when she was aged in her 20s, and added a second one for £11. The carriages were then joined into an L shape and converted into living quarters.

The discarded doors and fittings were stored underneath the carriages which were raised up on bricks.

The vehicle numbered 111 has now been donated to the ESR – which discovered, to its delight, that it is the twin of the abovementioned No. 255!

The original restoration base of No. 255 was the Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust's Midsomer Norton station.

ESR vintage carriages project organiser Steve Ehrlicher said: "Shortly after work started on restoration, we uncovered proof of the earlier history. On many old coaches, the original number is stamped on certain items, sliding ventilator panels (known as hit and miss) being a case in point. From studying all the ones found on this coach, we were able to say that it was originally MR Third Class coach No. 255.

"Later, when taking off the last piece of external sheet metal, we saw that paint remained on the original panel underneath. Some large flakes had also fallen down.

"Piecing this very delicate jigsaw together showed just enough of the figure 8. This was found with a 'BM,' proving that the paint was of GWR origin; they painted the original owning company initials of stock taken over by them in 1923. We were therefore able to confirm that our coach was one of the eight sold by the MR to the Brecon & Merthyr Railway in 1920.

Identifying links

"The only coach of this batch that carried a figure 8 in GWR days was No. 4318, which was originally Brecon & Merthyr No.112. This is the first proof of any link between the Midland numbering and the B&M numbering, as all the relevant records were lost in the Second World War. To railway historians, this seemingly insignificant discovery is an important piece of a larger jigsaw."

Regarding the new arrival, Steve said: "Yes, it is a twin of No. 255. The GWR number 4317 shows that it was taken over from the Brecon & Merthyr, who numbered it 111." No. 111 was delivered to the ESR on August 29 and will remain in store until the chassis is complete early next year.

The site for the building to house these restored coaches has been identified and the two-road shed is at the design stage. Substantial finance in the order of £160,000 to £200,000 will be required.

Steve said: "We already had a generous offer of £50,000, and materials for the groundworks have been offered at minimal cost by local industry. Working in the open, with tarpaulin covers, does not create the best conditions and also restricts what work can be done.

"Working at height is virtually impossible, but a shed will allow for safety devices to be installed and regular working days. The current site is known locally as Siberia and rain frequently stops play."

➜ **Anyone who would like to contribute to the project is invited to visit https://eastsomersetrailway.digitickets.co.uk/category/52610. For significant donations, email business@eastsomersetrailway.com**

Gwili gets the other coach

THE other coach owned by John and Trudie Hopcroft has been donated to the Welsh Railway Trust at the Gwili Railway.

Built in 1882 by the Oldbury Carriage and Wagon Company, the 36ft Third Class coach, which had an eight-wheeled Cleminson wheel arrangement, was Taff Vale Railway No. 112.

It was renumbered by the GWR as its No. 1323 on March 24, 1923, and was withdrawn on February 18, 1928.

There is no plan to return it to traffic, but it will be protected from the elements and adapted so it can be used as a second-hand item shop to raise money for the railway.

Currently, the Welsh Railway Trust is restoring Taff Vale Third Class Brake No. 220, Barry Railway Composite No. 163, and Third No. 216. It has several other carriages awaiting their turn.



Above: Taff Vale Railway coach No. 112, which has been donated to the Gwili Railway. DEWI JONES



Right: The GWR No.1323 plaque survives inside the coach nearly a century after its withdrawal. DEWI JONES

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The night-time local goods is rekindled at Parkend on the Dean Forest Railway with WR 0-6-0PT No. 9681 at the head of a short period freight during a Mike Tyack/David Williams night photographic shoot on October 22. KARL HEATH

Green light for Dickens' The Signalman at Drayton Arms

A NEW adaptation of Charles Dickens' railway ghost story The Signalman is to be staged at the Drayton Arms Theatre in West London for the coming festive season.

In this new full-length take on the story by Mudlark Creative, written by a career railway signaller and set in a lonely outpost of the Bristol & Exeter Railway, the railway world is recreated as faithfully as possible.

Directed by Jennie-Mae James and starring Helen Bang and Peter Rae, The Signalman runs for 17 performances from December 10 to January 2.

The theatre is situated above the Drayton Arms public house in Old Brompton Road, a short distance from either Gloucester Road or South Kensington stations. Audiences will be transported



MUDLARK CREATIVE

into the haunted railway cutting at Clayton signalbox, where the line between the living and the spectral blurs in a deeply atmospheric staging.

A chance encounter brings together two strangers: The Visitor, newly freed from the monotony of office life, and The Signalman, a solitary figure tormented by terrifying premonitions. As the story unfolds, dread seeps through the air, building to a haunting climax that will leave audiences questioning what they've seen – and what lies beyond.

For details and to book tickets, visit www.thedraytonarmstheatre.co.uk/faq.php



STEAM monoloco 0-2-0ST No. 146 successfully returned to steam at the Tanat Valley Railway, near Oswestry, during October 25/26. Part of the Richard Morris Monorail collection originally based in Blaenau Ffestiniog, what is thought to be the only operating one of its type in the world was built in 1997 to the design of John Vineers by Century Millwrights on an island in the River Thames. After spending eight years in storage, it was overhauled at the Rudyard Lake Railway workshops and returned in time for the TVR's inaugural monoloco steaming event. "It was a proud and memorable moment to see the monoloco in motion once again, marking an important milestone in our ongoing journey to bring this project to life," said a TVR statement. TVR

Aln Valley extension drive gets £255k boost for key bridge repairs

By Robin Jones

THE Aln Valley Railway has been handed a major step forward in its aim to extend to Alnmouth with a £255,000 funding boost to repair Eden Hill Bridge, removing one of the biggest obstacles to progress.

The bridge, which stands to the immediate west of the heritage line's western terminus at Greenrigg Halt, was adopted by Northumberland County Council from owner the Historical Railways Estate, part of National Highways, earlier this year.

Historic Railways had previously refused to allow the railway to extend beneath the overbridge because of essential waterproofing and structural repairs and maintenance costs. However, the council has agreed to part-fund the repair with £125,000, and a further £130,000 is coming from Historic Railways.

The council will this year begin a 12-week programme of repairs which, when completed, will allow the railway to extend its track and greenway beneath the bridge and on towards Alnmouth.

The funding is a significant step in the Aln Valley Railway Trust's aspirations to restore the line between Alnmouth and Alnwick, coming 30 years after the Aln Valley Railway Society was formed. Having begun work on its western terminus of Alnwick (Lionheart) in February 2012, it aims to run a heritage/modern shuttle service to link with the main line at Alnmouth.

Passenger services on the original branch to Alnwick were withdrawn in January 1968 and the line closed completely in October that year

Coun Mark Mather, the council's cabinet member for roads and highways, said: "We have worked to support this group for a number of years, and the funding presents a fantastic opportunity, not only for educational purposes, but also for wider leisure and tourism benefits."



Mark Hayton, general manager at the Aln Valley Railway, with councillors Martin Swinbank, Mark Mather and Gordon Castle in from of Eden Hall Bridge. NCC

Local councillor for Alnwick Castle, Coun Gordon Castle, said: "This is a major step forward for Aln Valley Railway to progress the line to Alnmouth station.

"Eden Hill Bridge has been a major obstacle to future extension and paves the way for the AVR to realise its long-standing ambition of reopening the line for its full original length."

AVR trustee Adam Hogg added: "We are extremely grateful to Northumberland County Council for their help and support with Eden Hill Bridge and the wider Aln Valley Railway project.

"This will allow the AVR to progress beyond Greenrigg and towards our goal of getting to Alnmouth which will provide a heritage attraction to Alnwick and safe and sustainable greenway for the area alongside the railway."

➜ **Anyone interested in volunteering at the railway is invited to visit www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk/support-us/volunteering/**

Strathspey given £1 million by anonymous Stateside fan

By Robin Jones



LMS 2MT 2-6-0 No. 46512 *E.V. Cooper, Engineer* heads a Strathspey servicepast Croftnahaven. JONATHAN GOURLAY

THE Strathspey Railway has been given a boost of more than £1 million by an anonymous benefactor in the USA.

He visited the railway several years ago and was impressed by what he saw. Apart from expecting the railway to use the donation in a way which best benefits the organisation as a whole, he has not stipulated how this money should be spent, nor has he placed any restrictions on the type of strategic projects which might be favoured.

A statement said: "During what are difficult times for many heritage railways, the Strathspey Railway continues to cover its operating and maintenance costs but does not in itself generate the level of funding required for major projects, nor the future expenditure needed to sustain, life-extend and refurbish all of its current fleet of steam and diesel locomotives, associated rolling stock and other assets.

"Accordingly the Strathspey, which is a not-for-profit third sector organisation which precludes any return to shareholders, has always been, and will continue to be, dependent on fundraising undertaken by its volunteers, together with donations and bequests from supporters, for the finance needed to maintain and expand operations.

"Like many tourist-related businesses, the railway was badly affected by Covid-19. Its financial reserves were so severely depleted that spending in recent years has had to be carefully controlled, particularly during periods when the railway is not running trains and generating income.

"This exceptionally generous and unexpected donation will allow the railway to rebuild its financial reserves while being able to invest in a number of projects which will underpin the sustainability of the railway quicker than otherwise planned.

" The Strathspey Railway Company board is currently taking financial advice to ensure that the donation is invested effectively for both the short and long term. The generosity of our anonymous benefactor should secure the railway's future and will allow the Strathspey to continue providing volunteers and employees with opportunities to pursue a fulfilling and very worthwhile hobby/career while maintaining what is recognised as a key tourist attraction in the Spey Valley, known as 'the home of Highland steam'."

The railway, which has featured in several TV series including Monarch of the Glen, is currently one of the locations used by BBC1's popular programme The Traitors.

Elsewhere, another anonymous donor has promised to contribute half of the £2 million needed to restore 'Brunel's other bridge' in Bristol.

The 176-year-old Grade II-listed wrought iron swing bridge in the Cumberland Basin, designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, was closed 57 years ago and replaced by the Plimsoll Bridge.

The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group wants to restore it in time for its 180th anniversary in 2029. It was opened in 1849, 15 years before Clifton Suspension Bridge.

The charity's secretary, Geoff Wallis, said: "We are thrilled to have been promised £1 million towards restoring this incredibly important bridge.

"Although it is severely rusted in places, I am confident we can rescue it and bring it back into use."

The restored bridge will be used as a link between the north and south sides of the docks for walkers, runners, cyclists and wheelchair users.

Brunel descendent 'comes home' to Didcot centre

ON Sunday, October 26, Didcot Railway Centre was visited by Jim Noble, the great, great, great, grandson of GWR engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel,

Jim, who lives in Oxford, inspected the National Railway Museum's on-loan replica of Daniel Gooch's 4-2-2 *Iron Duke*, an 1847 broad gauge design that was capable of unimaginable speed at the time, achieving the 53 miles from London to Didcot in 47 minutes! He also saw the 2005 replica of Gooch's 2-2-2 *Fire Fly* of 1840, which was completed at Didcot by the Fire Fly Trust in 2005.

Jim also took an interest in the project to rebuild the Heyford station building, which dates from the opening of the railway from Oxford to Banbury in September 1850 and is a typical early GWR structure, based on Brunel's design for the station at Box. Heyford was taken apart stone by stone in the 1980s and moved to Didcot, although the station itself remains open.



Jim Noble with the stone walls of Heyford station being rebuilt. FRANK DUMBLETON

After being in storage for 40 years, funds have now been raised to re-erect the building at Didcot, using the original material as much as possible. It was built with solid stone walls, but it will now have an insulated cavity wall, with blockwork inside that being hidden by plaster when complete.

This incarnation incorporates a steel frame for strength and to support the canopy which will run all round the building. The original canopy was removed by BR because the building had become too weak to support it. The cast canopy brackets are attractive items of Victorian ironwork, capped with decorative lion's head masks.



Jim with the replica broad gauge *Iron Duke*. FRANK DUMBLETON

Jim said: "I had another fabulous day out at the Didcot Railway Centre with friends. We spent a good deal of time with the broad gauge locos, got up-to-date on the progress of the Heyford station reconstruction, travelled up and down the line in a luxury carriage, and got to stand on the engine footplate and ask the fireman and driver lots of questions about how you drive a steam train!

"We also popped into the archive, which is always a treat. This time we saw a very rare return train ticket issued e pecially for passengers returning from Southampton to London by train after disembarking from the *Titanic*. A great day, much enjoyed by all. We are already looking forward to our next visit!"

Jim is descended though Brunel's granddaughter, Lady Celia Brunel Noble (1872-1962), who married Sir Saxton William Armstrong Noble (1863-1942).

Sir Saxton's father, Sir Andrew Noble, was a Scottish physicist noted for his work on ballistics and gunnery. In 1860, Sir Andrew joined Armstrong's armaments works and eventually became chairman of the arms, shipping and locomotive building company. GWR 0-6-2T No. 6697, which is part of the Didcot collection, was built by Armstrong Whitworth.

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‘New’ HST set steals the show at Mid-Norfolk 30th anniversary

THE ROMIC Group has officially launched its reliveried Inter City 125 High Speed Train for UK charter work and spot hire on the Mid-Norfolk Railway.

Class 43 power cars Nos. 43094 and 43122 and three Mk. 3 HST carriage were unveiled in their new red livery at a well-attended private event Dereham on October 7.

The set appeared in public for the first time when it formed the star attraction at the MNR Preservation Trust’s 30th anniversary weekend on October 22/23, which marked the end of the 2025 public running season before festive services, including the Polar Express, begin.

The anniversary weekend also saw Class 47 No. 47580 *County of Essex* and Class 33202 *Dennis G. Robinson* running with Mk. 3 DVT 82112 and three Mk. 3 carriages, while other ROMIC HST Class 43 power cars, Nos. 43194 and 43153, ran with four Mk. 3 HST carriages. Stored HST power cars at Dereham station, Nos. 43027, 43311 and 43315, were available to view.

Sunday saw the popular Driver for a Fiver experience at Dereham, featuring Class 03 No. 03063 *Paul A. Mobbs* running

ROMIC, a Wellingborough-based specialist in the procurement and sale of new, used, and overhauled/remanufactured locomotives and rolling stock, has been buying spare HST vehicles from Angel Trains, Porterbrook and FirstGroup, and has run a successful export business. So far, 11 Class 43s have been shipped abroad.



The ROMIC HST in public service during the Mid-Norfolk Railway’s 30th anniversary weekend. MNR



Still in its Great Western Railway livery, ROMIC Class 43 No. 43194 carries a headboard marking the 30th anniversary of the Mid-Norfolk Railway Preservation Trust. MNR



The newly-liveried ROMIC HST set at Mid-Norfolk Railway on 7 October. COLIN TURNER/TURNER PHOTOGRAPHY

Keeping options open

The red-liveried set will be made available to the market with RailAdventure as the operator and maintenance undertaken by Nemesis Rail at Burton-on-Trent.

“Impeccably maintained, this trainset is ideal for railtours, charters, and corporate events, as well as providing stand-in service around engineering works,” said a ROMIC statement.

“We provide a flexible service, with the option to charter the full trainset or just the power cars, with or without drivers and train crew (provided through our operating partner).”

More details can be obtained at www.romicgroup.com

Live steam comes to Donegal!

By Hugh Dougherty

LIVE steam has arrived at Donegal Railway Heritage Museum – but only in model form. Celebrated Irish railway enthusiast Lord Raymond O’Neill presented the museum with a model Londonderry & Lough Swilly Railway 4-8-4T, built by Hudswell Clarke in 1912 for the steeply graded line out to Burtonport.

The model, which was built in Derry by engineer Lester Jackson, was restored to working order by Dublin modelmaker Harry Connaughton. It represents the largest and most powerful steam locomotive to run on Irish narrow gauge; when built, it was more powerful than many 5ft 3in gauge engines in Ireland. The museum is looking at how the locomotive might be operated in steam as the nearest thing yet to having its own full-scale County Donegal Railways 2-6-4T *Drumboe* back in action.

Niall McCaughan, the former museum manager who struck up the liaison with Lord O’Neill, said: “I was delighted to come back to Donegal town with this impressive model of a very striking prototype.

“Lord O’Neill has been most generous to the museum, and he also donated a nameplate from Sligo Leitrim and Northern Counties 0-6-4t, *Lough Gill,* which is a first for the museum, as we have not represented this railway before.”

The museum has also ‘signalled’ another first by launching what is believed to be the first badge based on a railway signal. Manager Marty Gilroy said: “Every year we’ve produced an exclusive badge on a CDR theme. This year, rather than a locomotive or railcar, we’ve brought out a badge based on the starter signal at the north end of Donegal station. We believe we are the first heritage railway to do this.”



Left: Former manager Niall McCaughan (left), Lord Raymond O’Neill, and museum board member Mark McDaid welcome the Swilly giant of steam into the museum. DRHM



Right: Signalling an interest in Donegal railways is the starter from Donegal station in badge form. HUGH DOUGHERTY

The lapel badge, which, Marty said, can also double up as a tie tack, depicts the somersault signal which was produced by the CDR signal fitters using components from various manufacturers.

The CDR had several somersault signals as signalling was the responsivity of the LMS Northern Counties Committee. As joint owners of the CDR, the NCC used somersault signal throughout its network, and it was inevitable that they made their way on to the narrow-gauge Donegal railway as well.

Priced at €11, with postage included, the limited-edition badge is available to purchase from the Donegal Railway Heritage Museum’s internet shop – for more information, head to the web and visit https://donegalrailway.com

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Santa Express grounded at Weardale

THE Weardale Railway has cancelled this season's Santa Express services following "serious and unforeseen mechanical problems" affecting the line's two operational locomotives.

Despite extensive efforts by the team to resolve the issues and secure suitable replacements – including contacting more than 30 locomotive owners and organisations in the UK – the railway has been unable to source alternative locomotives for the much-loved Christmas experience which was due to start at the end of November.

In April, the railway invested significantly in refurbishing one of its key locomotives, Class 31 No. 31459, which was due to return to service in October. However, additional mechanical problems were identified during the overhaul at Higham Heritage Engineering which caused delays to its completion.

Meanwhile, the second operational locomotive, Class 31 No. 31465, suffered a major generator fault, rendering it inoperable.

Unfortunate outcome

WR general manager Claire Gibbons said: "After what has been a hugely successful year for Weardale Railway, with sold-out Gin and Cheese Trains, popular stargazing experiences, and a range of well-attended community events, we are sad and frustrated to have to make this decision.

"The Santa Express is a highlight of our calendar and a cherished tradition for many families in the region. Our priority has always been to deliver high-quality experiences that our visitors can rely on. We have explored every possible option to keep the event running, but the mechanical challenges we're facing simply cannot be resolved in time.

"By communicating early, we hope to give families the opportunity to make alternative festive plans, and we look forward to welcoming everyone back for an even bigger and better programme next year."

All customers with existing Santa Express bookings will receive a full refund.

GCR needs £900K to build next Reunification stage in 2026

By Robin Jones

THE Great Central Railway is aiming to raise £900,000 to build the new stage of its Reunification project in 2026.

The overall scheme involves the construction of 550 yards of a new formation to link the Loughborough heritage line with its Great Central Railway (Nottingham) counterpart, creating an 18-mile main line-connected heritage railway corridor.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 334, Charnwood Borough Council approved planning permission for the entire scheme at the culmination of an 11-month process.

Next summer, a further 65 yards of new formation will be built, including crossing a factory car park on a viaduct and a bridge over Railway Terrace, a minor road in Loughborough, adding to the three phases of the project which are already complete.

GCR general manager Malcolm Holmes said: "Now we have planning consent to build all the remaining infrastructure needed to complete Reunification, we want to move forward with physical work.

"It shows everyone we mean business while ticking off more of the job and locking the funds we've raised into concrete.

"There is a little more work to do before we can begin, like the final design of the new structures, but we are confident of starting to build the next sections in 2026, providing we can raise another £900,000."



Computer animation of Cass Hayward's outline design plans for the section of the Reunification link which the Great Central Railway hopes to build next year. GCR

The estimated cost of the next two sections is £3.5 million. Fundraisers and supporters have already secured £2.6m for this work, leaving £900,000 to find. Already, more than £5m has been invested into delivering the scheme, including all the building work so far, securing the planning consent, and ground investigation work.

Donations were made at The Greatest Gathering Railway 200 event at Alstom's Litchurch Lane works in Derby in August, at which thousands of fundraising leaflets were handed out. The GCR(N)'s Andy Fillingham said: "We are moving forward all the time with our plans to reunify, but we know everyone wants to see more railway appearing – and so do we!

"Building in 2026 is a really exciting prospect as we chase the remaining funds we need.

"Thank-you to everyone who makes a donation because every pound will really count towards getting contractors on site".

Supporters can donate online and set up regular standing orders at www.gcrailway.co.uk/unify

➜ The latest project news is available at the GCR's YouTube channel GCROFFICIAL, to which subscriptions are free.

Preservation pioneer's collection on display at Worth Valley

THE Roger Bell Collection of locomotive nameplates and other railwayana was unveiled at the Engine Shed Museum of the Bahamas Locomotive Society at Ingrow, on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, on October 25. This impressive group of items of LNWR and LMS origin was a bequest from the estate of Mr Bell, the man who was instrumental in purchasing LMS Stanier 4-6-2 No. 6201 *Princess Elizabeth* in 1963, and who died last year.

It had been his wish that the collection should go on public display, the museum providing an ideal and appropriate setting.

His long-term partner, Brenda Lawson, who unveiled the collection, said: "I am delighted to see the care and enthusiasm with which Ingrow Museum and the Bahamas Society have received



Carrying a Roger Bell headboard, LNWR 0-6-2T Coal Tank No. 1054 at Oxenhope with guests following the unveiling of the collection on October 25. BLS



Now exhibited at Ingrow: As well as nameplates, the collection also includes the sample LMS express engine livery panels created for David Jenkinson who, with Bob Essery, wrote the standard reference work on LMS locomotive liveries. LMS

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Unique British Fell system survivor is 150 years old!

By Robin Jones

CELEBRATIONS to mark the 150th birthday of a Bristol-built 0-4-2T which is the world's sole-surviving locomotive to use the Fell rack system have been held at its New Zealand home.

New Zealand Railways H class No. 199 *Mont Ceris* is the centrepiece of the Fell Locomotive Museum in Featherston, in the South Wairarapa District of the Wellington Region of North Island. No. H199 is also that country's only surviving rack locomotive.

Built in 1875 by the Avonside Engine Company of Bristol, No. H199 was one of the original four Fell locomotives shipped to New Zealand for working between Cross Creek and Summit on the Rimutaka (now Remutaka) Incline Railway, an engineering marvel in itself.

Before the 1955 opening of the existing rail tunnel, the Wairarapa line crossed the rugged Rimutakas, with gradients as steep as 1-in-15. To tackle the incline, engineers installed a system designed by British engineer John Barraclough Fell (1815-1902), which involved a raised centre rail gripped by four horizontally-mounted wheels underneath the locomotives.

Unlike rack railways with toothed wheels, the Fell system used smooth rails and wheels, relying on a heavy spring mechanism for grip.

The first test application was alongside the Cromford & High Peak Railway's cable-hauled incline at Whaley Bridge, in England, in 1863/64. Only three railways worldwide ever used the Fell centre-wheel system.

No. H199 was named *Mont Cenis* after the first Fell railway in the French and Italian Alps, a temporary one which had been built in 1866/67 over the Mont Cenis Pass, the landscape which had been Fell's inspiration for the concept. New Zealand's Fell system was the longest-lasting, with the Rimutka incline opening in 1878.

No. H199 retired in 1955 alongside five other H class members when the new tunnel opened and the incline closed.

Retired and saved

Made redundant, No. H199 was gifted to Featherston in 1958 and became a much-loved climbing frame for children in the park at Clifford Square. It remained part of the playground until 1981 when the newly formed Friends of the Fell Society moved it for static restoration due to deterioration. Three years later in 1984, the Fell Locomotive Museum was constructed to house No. H199 adjacent to the playground. The locomotive was fully restored in 1989 and joined by a Fell brake van in 1997.

Although on static display, H199 is mounted on rollers powered by electric motors to allow people to see how its moving parts work.

Author Joy Cowley immortalised the engine in her 2013 children's book Hero of the Hill. The playground that once housed H199 has since been renamed the Joy Cowley Children's Playground, bringing the story full circle. After donating all her royalties to the museum, Joy granted it exclusive rights to publish the book in 2024.

Developed in the 1860s and was soon superseded by various types of rack railway, some Fell systems survived in use until the 1960s. The Snaefell Mountain Railway still uses the Fell system for braking but not for traction.

On November 1, the museum staged a public celebration to mark the 150th birthday of No. H199, which was decked out in balloons and a birthday banner. South Wairarapa Mayor Fran Wilde cut a commemorative cake.

The celebrations continued the following weekend as part of the Wellington Heritage Festival.

The museum highlights the history of the famous Rimutaka Incline railway. Visitors can learn about it through film, photographs, and first-hand accounts from those who worked the line.

For more information about the venue, visit www.fellmuseum.org.nz



A unique British-built survivor of the other side of the world: New Zealand Railways H class 0-4-2T No. H199 at the Fell Locomotive Museum in Featherston. WAIRARAPA ARCHIVE 07-46/1

Roger's gift, and the skill and imagination they have put into providing his magnificent collection with a new home."

Society chairman Keith Whitmore said: "We are grateful to Brenda for making this possible and privileged to have this iconic collection in our care, available for all to see."

Nameplate pairs

Among the collection are 19 LNWR nameplates and five of LMS origin. Of the latter it pairs the LMS memorial engine Patriot with British Legion. These, together with Private E Sykes VC, from the LNWR Claughton locomotive, were dedicated during the event as a memorial by Jeff Gantschuk ISM, county vice-chairman of the South & West Yorkshire Royal British Legion, as a means to continue the role originally provided by these locomotives.

The creation of this permanent exhibition at Ingrow in the year of both Railway 200 and the 80th anniversary of VE/VJ Day is seen as the largest and most important addition to the society's collection since the museum opened in 2003.

It is also seen as heralding a refresh to the existing exhibition display, together with the creation of a new archive to house the ever-growing collection of paper-related objects.

Guests, which included many of Mr Bell's friends, enjoyed a return trip from Ingrow to Oxenhope behind LNWR 0-6-2T Coal Tank No. 1054 in the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Trust's L&Y Club Car.

A 44-page guide to the collection has been produced and is available from the museum's shop priced £4.



Unveiling by Brenda Lawson of the Roger Bell Collection in the Engine Shed Museum at Ingrow. BLS



The dedication of the memorial nameplates by Jeff Gantschuk, of the Royal British Legion. BLS

Strathspey top of the ratings

THE Strathspey Railway was seen by more than 11.1 million TV viewers who turned in for the final of Celebrity Traitors reality series on November 6, the most-watched TV programme of the year so far.

Boat of Garten station, near to the Traitors' Ardross Castle, has appeared in every series so far.

The final challenge involved a steam train journey in which the contestants had to retrieve five gold bars in 20 minutes before it exploded. They escaped, adding £20,000 to the prize fund, which reached £87,500 and was won by comedian Alan Carr, who donated it to a children's cancer charity for neuroblastoma.

An SR statement said: "For the third consecutive year, the railway is proud to provide the steam locomotives and heritage carriages that, along with the beautiful scenic landscape, transport viewers to a bygone era, significantly enhancing the visual allure of the show."



The sign from outside the Prince of Wales Colliery signalbox being handed over to the Prince of Wales Colliery Memorial Group. NETWORK RAIL

Mining group given local signalbox sign

A SIGNALBOX nameboard has been presented by Network Rail to a coal mining heritage group

The sign from outside the Prince of Wales Colliery 'box in Pontefract had been kept in storage since the structure was demolished in 2024, when the level crossing was upgraded to one with automated technology.

Prince of Wales Colliery Memorial Group member Garry Foreman, who worked at the pit for more than 30 years, approached Network Rail to ask about the sign's fate, fearing that it might end up in a skip. The group wanted to add it to their growing collection of local historical memorabilia.

The 'Ponty Prince' pit operated for more than 130 years and produced 1.5 million tonnes of coal annually until its 2002 closure due to geological issues.

Garry said: "It was brilliant to be presented with the signalbox sign by Network Rail.

"I was in the middle of doing my shopping when I got the telephone call to say we could have it!

"It's important that we preserve items like this. It's the same reason why we campaigned for 20 years to get our mining memorial and why we have a pit reunion every year.

"We have been speaking to an engineering firm and are going to get the missing letters on the sign replaced."

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Success is blooming golden!

By Sally Clifford



Going for gold: Some of the beautiful planters arranged by Middleton Railway's volunteers beside Hunslet 2-6-2T No. 1540 of 1927 *Picton* and around the Moor Road site. SALLY CLIFFORD

THE Middleton Railway is on a winning streak after clinching its sixth gold award at the prestigious Yorkshire in Bloom Awards.

The Middleton Railway Trust picked up its latest award in the Small Business category of the competition. Last year, it collected its fifth gold when it was joint winner in the Tourist Attractions Stately Homes and Pay-on-Entry Gardens category.

Middleton's vice-president, Ian Smith, who, along with the railway's commercial manager, Janet Auckland, prepared the application for the contest, paid tribute to Mick Jackson and his fellow volunteers who are responsible for the planting and horticultural upkeep of the Moor Road site. "If it wasn't for them it wouldn't happen," said Ian.

Yorkshire in Bloom is a voluntary regional organisation that administers the RHS Britain in Bloom campaign in North, South, East, West and North Yorkshire.

Elsewhere, the Weardale Railway has earned top honours at the Northumbria in Bloom competition, also part of Britain in Bloom, for a horticulture project which brought together students, charities, and the wider community to create four eye-catching planters shaped like iconic locomotives at Stanhope station to celebrate the bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR200).

The station won gold and best in class awards for the planters, which represent a journey through rail history, from *Locomotion No. 1* to the modern Hitachi Lumo. Students from Bishop Auckland College's joinery department built the planters, which were transported by Teescraft, installed by Weardale Railway engineers, and filled with plants by volunteers ahead of the judges' visit.

Nigel Bryson, of the charity Cultivate 4 Life, which coordinated the initiative, said: "This project shows what can be achieved when the community comes together.

"From funding to building, installing, and planting, everyone played their part – and the award is a wonderful recognition of that teamwork."

Gresley teak appeal halfway there in four months!

AN £80,000 appeal to restore a Gresley teak carriage which spent 18 years as a secret mobile control carriage for use in a wartime scenario has reached its halfway stage.

The London & North Eastern Railway Coach Association aims to restore 1935-built LNER third class corridor carriage No. 23896, one of the express train type hauled by the likes of A3 *Flying Scotsman* and A4 *Mallard*.

Launched in July, the appeal's aim is to fund the restoration of historically important coach to operational condition; so far, more than £40,000 has already been contributed in just four months.

Built at York Carriage Works to LNER Diagram 115, once restored, No. 23896 will feature original teak exterior panelling, refurbished bogies, and a fully restored interior recreating the authentic elegance of the 1930s LNER.

LNERCAR chairman Bill Monks said: "Reaching the halfway point is a tremendous boost for everyone involved.

"It demonstrates the generosity, enthusiasm and commitment of our supporters in preserving these historically significant Gresley coaches. Every donation, large or small, helps secure the future of our unique collection of heritage vehicles, which are made available for the public to travel in.

"Once outshopped, TK No. 23896 will once again carry passengers as part of a complete Gresley set.

"It's another step toward our goal of operating a full rake of prewar LNER carriages, restored to the same superb standard."

LNERCA volunteers are in the advanced stages of restoration planning at their Kirby Misperton base, combining skilled craftsmanship with traditional restoration methods.

Supporters can contribute at various sponsorship levels, including: a full compartment – £6000 one-off or £250 per month standing order; half-compartment – £3000 or £125 p/m; and bogie overhaul – £1000 or £83 p/m. Every contribution directly funds materials, components, and restoration work.

Donations to the TK 23896 Appeal can be made via www.lnerca.org or by post to: LNER Coach Association, Unit 10, Beansheaf Industrial Park, Tofts Lane, Kirkby Misperton, Malton YO17 6BG.



Gresley Corridor Third No. 23896 in the LNERCA's Kirby Misperton workshop. MURRAY BROWN

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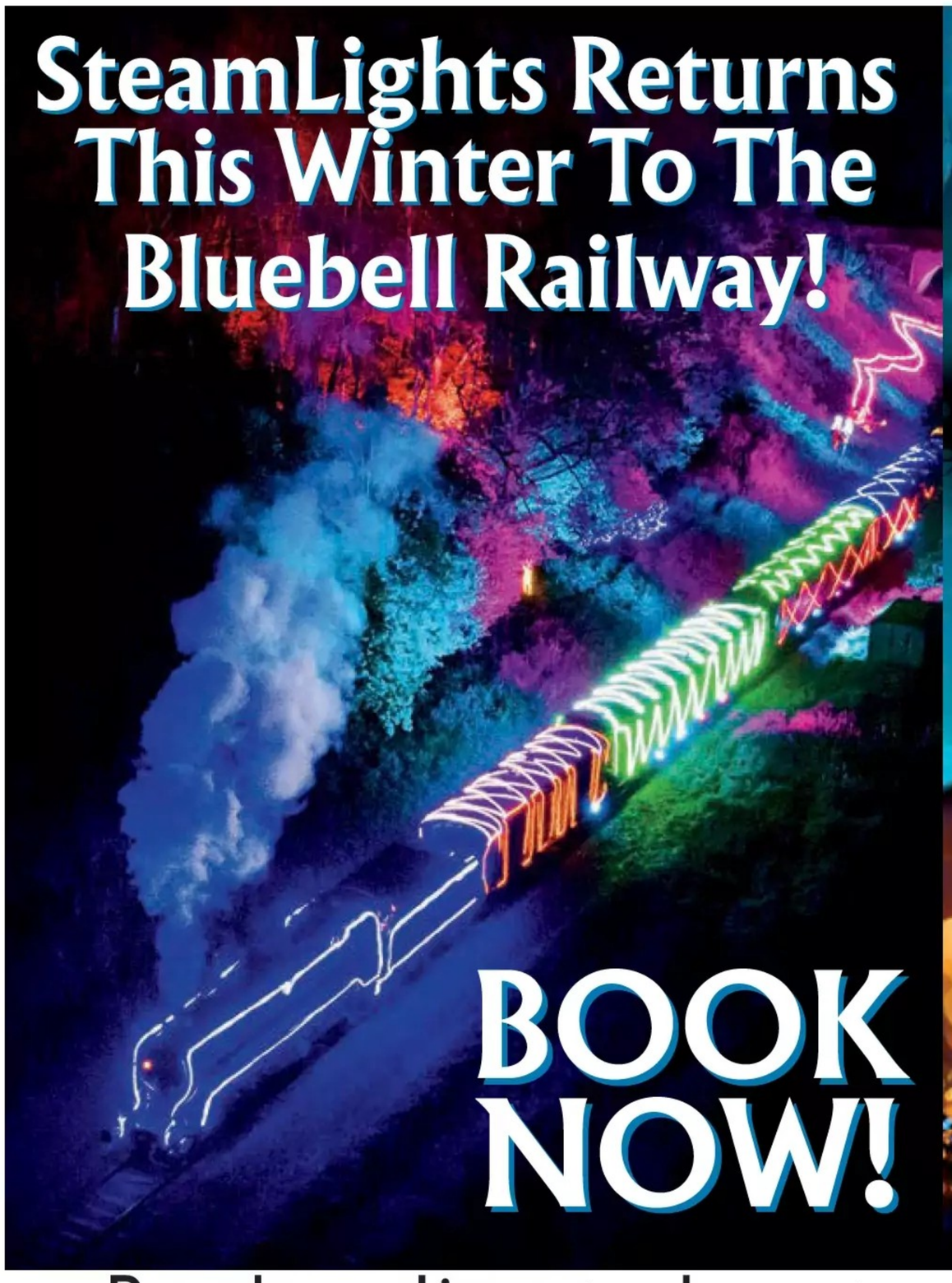
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Historic Class 58 sent for scrap in Spain despite repatriation efforts

By Robin Jones

A BID to save the last of the 50 Class 58 diesel-electrics to be built has failed after it was sent to be scrapped in Spain.

The Class 58 Locomotive Group tried for more than two decades to save No. 58050, which was outshopped from British Rail Engineering's Doncaster Works in March 1987. In 2002, it was designated for preservation by the Railway Heritage Committee (now the Railway Heritage Designation Advisory Board) as part of the National Collection due to its historical significance.

Withdrawn from UK service on August 5, 2002, No. 58050 was exported first to France, where it ran from November 2004 to October 2006, and then to Spain in September 2008. It was used alongside several sister locomotives by EWS, now DB Cargo, on high-speed rail lines in the south of the country.

In 2012, nine members of the fleet in Spain were transferred to Transfesa ownership, while DB Cargo UK retained ownership of Nos. 58025, 58027 and 58050. The last-known working of a 58 in Spain was recorded in 2016. Transfesa scrapped its own 58s at Monforte del Cid in early 2020. In 2023, fearful for the future of No. 58050, the C58LG started looking into returning No.58050 to the UK for display. Earlier this year, it approached the RHDAB and the National Railway Museum with a serious repatriation proposal, drawing on the enthusiasm that Railway 200 events were generating.

Although the C58LG offered to launch a fundraising drive to cover shipping costs, it was subsequently told that due to the presence of asbestos in some 58s, DB Cargo UK was unable to sell, transfer, or otherwise pass on the ownership of No. 58050 due to stringent EU REACH (registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals) regulations. DB Cargo UK decided that the only safe and legally compliant course of action was to dispose of No. 58050. It stated in a letter of October 16 that it had sent it to a specialist and approved third party contractor to dispose of it in its entirety in Spain.

A C58LG statement said: "Given the hard work and determination we had shown – admittedly, not much of this was made public due to the sensitivity of the project, we are extremely disappointed by this outcome and face the reality that the likelihood is that the locomotive is to be scrapped.

"The C58LG understands that asbestos is a serious concern not only within the rail industry, but also in many sectors. The health risks associated with asbestos exposure are well-documented; according to the Health and Safety Executive, asbestos-related diseases are responsible for about 5000 deaths in the UK each year. We also recognise that the REACH regulations are in place to prevent the reintroduction of such hazardous materials into circulation and to safeguard both workers and the wider public.

"DB Cargo claims it has done everything possible within its power to repatriate the locomotive and for this, we commend it."

The C58LG will continue to focus its efforts on the four remaining 58s in the UK by supporting their preservation for future generations. DB Cargo UK has donated the *Toton Traction Depot* nameplate from No. 58050, removed before it left the UK, to Doncaster's Danum Gallery, Museum and Library where it has just been officially unveiled.



Class 58 No. 58050 *Toton Traction Depot* light engine at Eastleigh on September 1, 2001. STEVE JONES/CREATIVE COMMONS



The refurbished village sign. MELTON CONSTABLE PARISH COUNCIL

New steam age signs for Melton Constable

MELTON Constable – once the hub of the Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway – has a new set of village signs celebrating its proud steam age past.

Four feature locomotives, while an archway features metal from the station which was closed in 1964, demolished in 1971, and since refurbished.

The project was commissioned by signwriter Warren Drew, who charged less than £2000 for the work.

Parish clerk Amanda Yacoubian said: "These new signs are a testament to the village's commitment to preserving its heritage while embracing positive change."

Austrian observation carriage to run on Welshpool line

FIFTY˜SEVEN years after the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway acquired four vintage carriages from Austria's Zillertalbahn, giving the revived Welsh line a distinctive heritage-era character, it has acquired a fifth.

The railway has agreed the purchase of a high-windowed observation carriage from the Zillertalbahn. Carriage No. B4-43 *Glaswagen*, which is expected to enter service in mid-Wales during 2026, is of 1950s vintage and was built originally to allow visitors to admire the alpine surroundings of Tyrol but is now surplus to requirements. The W&LLR will use it to provide visitors with an alternative way to enjoy the scenery.

The W&LLR and Zillertalbahn have enjoyed a close relationship since the Austrian line donated four of its balcony carriages to its Welsh counterpart in 1968.

The Llanfair Caereinion line also operated steam locomotive *Zillertal* on hire from the Zillertalbahn between 2019 and 2024.

While the carriage is mechanically suited to W&LLR operations, with compatible braking systems, it will require coupling modifications and fitness to run inspections before entering service. In the medium term, it is hoped that the vehicle will provide a good platform for an interior upgrade to enable it to play a role in the line's popular on-train catering services.

The carriage is due to make the journey to Wales during the autumn.

W&LLR general manager James Brett said : "It is a great opportunity to acquire a historic vehicle which will complement our current fleet, giving us more operating capacity and flexibility as we continue to enhance and diversify our visitor offering. We would like to thank the Zillertalbahn for offering us the opportunity to purchase this carriage and its transport partner, the Pressnitztalbahn, which is bringing it to Welshpool for us."

Zillertalbahn CEO Andreas Lackner said: "With this vehicle now surplus to our requirements, we are glad it has found a home where passengers can continue to enjoy its panoramic travel experience."



Panoramic carriage No. B4-43 Glaswagen in Jenbach, Austria, prior to its transfer to the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway. W&LLR

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No. 60103 and footplate crew shine at exhibition

By Geoff Courtney

A fantasy scene of No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* and a painting of a footplate crew at Birmingham after a day's shift were among the public's favourites in the Guild of Railway Artists' 2025 Railart exhibition at Kidderminster Railway Museum which ended on September 28.

A painting by Malcolm Root of Princess Coronation Pacific No. 46231 *Duchess of Atholl* on the West Coast Main Line in Cumbria topped the poll held among visitors to the six-week exhibition, as reported last month, while the exhibition's organiser, Anna Bastin has announced that the runner-up was the illustration of No. 60103, the work of guild president John Austin, who had originally painted it for a personal Christmas card, and in third place the painting of the footplate crew by Rob Roland.

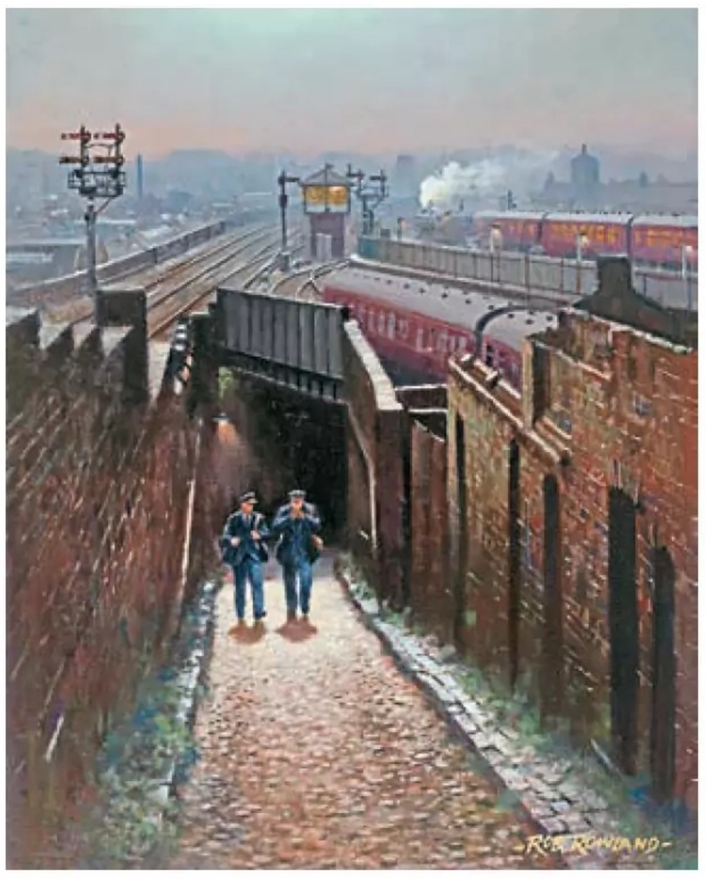
Explaining his distinctive painting, Rob said it illustrated the railwaymen enjoying a chat as they walked up a narrow, cobbled lane once known as Shut Lane, a path from Birmingham Moor Street to Park Street. The view, he said, looked south and took in the industrial landscape of the city at a time when the tracks from Snow Hill station ran parallel on the left in his illustration.

On the right, Rob depicted a train departing from what he described as "the now beautifully and sensitively restored Moor Street station," while standing between the two sets of track was the "sentinel appearance of Moor Street signalbox guarding a scene which is now just a memory."

Anna, who said visitors had found it difficult to vote for their favourite due to the high standard of the works on display, said the exhibition was well attended, especially at weekends when members of the guild demonstrated their skills. Of the 66 paintings on display, 64 were for sale and 29 were sold.



Flying success: The painting by John Austin of No. 60103 that came second in a poll held among visitors to the Guild of Railway Artists' annual exhibition at Kidderminster Railway Museum.



Shift work: Railwaymen discuss their day's work in a painting by Rob Roland that came third in a public poll at the Guild of Railway Artists' 2025 Railart exhibition held at Kidderminster Railway Museum.

South Staffordshire route becomes the latest greenway

FOUR miles of the South Staffordshire Railway have been reopened as a public greenway walking and running route.

Officially opened on October 20, the new greenway runs from Chesterfield Road in Lichfield, next to Sandfields Pumping Station to Chasewater, crossing the M6 toll road at one point.

Accessible at various points along the route, McClean Way has been developed by Lichfield District Council in partnership with volunteer group Back The Track, whose members have spent the past 18 months helping to clear vegetation and restoring the route to prepare it for safe public use. The route had previously been used by walkers for some time but has now been made safer and more accessible.

The railway was opened in 1849 and provided passenger and freight connections between Lichfield, Walsall, Dudley, and the industrial areas of the Black Country.

Regular passenger services were withdrawn in 1965 as part of the Beeching cuts, but freight continued for several decades, serving local industry, latterly Charrington's Oil Terminal, with petroleum products transported until the late 1990s. The line was closed to all traffic in 2001, although the track and infrastructure have remained under the ownership and maintenance of Network Rail.

In 2022, the council began working closely with Network Rail to secure a lease on the moribund line and create a green corridor linking Lichfield to Chasewater and the surrounding settlements of Burntwood and Hammerwich.

Extensive works have now been completed along the route, including the removal of rail track and sleepers, with the existing ballast graded to remove larger stones, then crushed and compacted to create a safe, level walking surface.

Hazardous tree removal has been undertaken, along with key safety works, including the installation of fencing in areas with potential fall risks, improved access points, and the installation of signage along the route. "The project will provide a safe route for recreation and active travel, while celebrating and preserving an important piece of the area's historic transport heritage," said a council statement.



The new greenway created along four miles of the closed South Staffordshire Railway. LICHFIELD DC

The launch event at Sandfields Pumping Station was attended representatives from the district council, Back The Track, Lichfield City Council, Burntwood Town Council, Hammerwich Parish Council and Lichfield Litter Legends.

The ribbon was officially cut by district council chairman Coun Keith Vernon, who was joined by Coun Doug Pullen and Coun Janice Silvester-Hall, while Back The Track volunteers, councillors, and guests looked on.

An amusing call that led to a GWR 'gold mine' donation

By Geoff Courtney

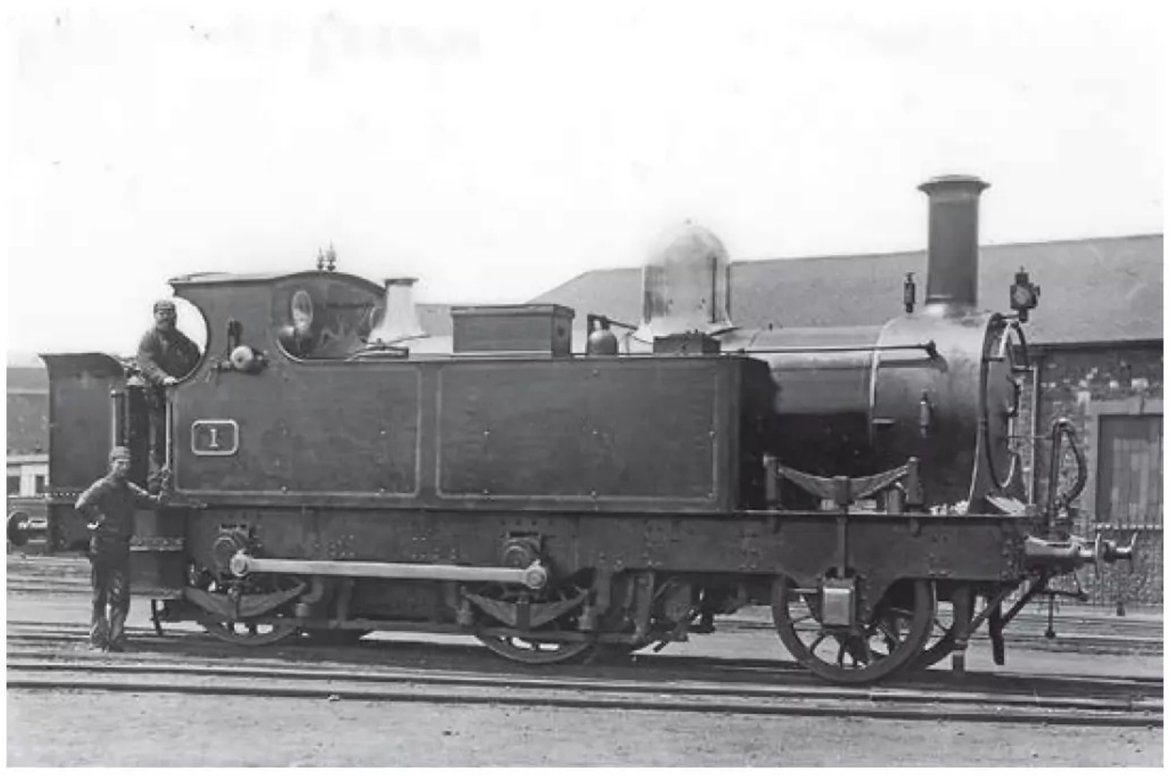
A PREVIOUSLY hidden archive of 27,000 GWR photographs in the library at Swindon's STEAM Museum has been described as a 'gold mine' by volunteer Kevin Robertson, who is so impressed by its contents that he has written a book on the collection.

No stranger to railway publications, Kevin's first such venture was in 1982 when he was co-author of a book on the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway, and since then he has been involved with many more, while in 2012 he was invited to run Ian Allan Publishing, which he says was a 'privilege' that he enjoyed until 2017.

In 2019 he started working with Robin Fell, of Transport Treasury, and this has led to The Unseen Great Western, a 104-page book that features photographs from the archive, which is known at STEAM as the Harry Collection. An amusing explanation of how the collection ended up at the museum is provided in the book by collections officer Elaine Arthurs.

"It was normal day in the autumn of 2011 when the curatorial department at STEAM took a telephone call regarding a bequest of railway items," she wrote. "The executor of the will (who was not an expert in railway memorabilia) tried to describe some of the items over the telephone. He mentioned that there were some very heavy crescent-shaped items that were part of the donation. He didn't know what they were, but there were several of them.

"He also described some heavy rectangular objects with numbers on them. To the curatorial team, these items sounded very much like the name and numberplates from locomotives, but donations of such are very rare, and on this scale unheard of."



First in line: The footplate crew poses with GWR No. 1, an experimental design that was built as a standard gauge outside-framed 4-4-0T in 1880 and rebuilt as a 2-4-0T in 1882 with, among other modifications, shortened side tanks. In this form it operated Bristol to Taunton and Salisbury trains before being reallocated to Plymouth and then Chester and was withdrawn in the Big Four era in 1924 with 530,000 miles on the clock. Ahead of the driver on the cabside is a warning bell, an early means of emergency communication. The image is published in The Unseen Great Western. STEAM – MUSEUM OF THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY



High rise: The art of successful publicity is not new – the Big Four companies were masters of it 100 years ago, as this image at Swindon from The Unseen Great Western illustrates. Taken on June 28, 1927, it features then newly built No. 6000 *King George V* and above it the replica 2-2-2 *North Star*, the original of which ran from 1837 to 1871 and was cut up in 1906. STEAM – MUSEUM OF THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY, SWINDON

Bated breath

Elaine said the museum asked for photographs to establish what was being offered. "The team waited with bated breath, and it wasn't long before an email came through that confirmed their suspicions. These *were* name and numberplates from Great Western locomotives, and the executor had found more! They were everywhere – under beds, in wardrobes, in the garage – it was unbelievable."

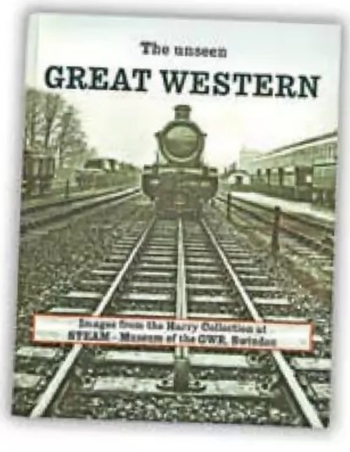
Astonishingly, the collection, which comprised the largest number of objects, archive material and photographs ever gifted to the museum in a single lot, included nine nameplates, 73 cabsides, four totems, nine signalbox nameplates, 15 locomotive tenderplates, more than 27,000 photographs, and hundreds of other GWR-related objects and archive material.

The collection was amassed over many years by Brian Harry, who Elaine said obviously knew the significance of what he was collecting.

It took a whole day, two vans, and four cars to transfer the items to the museum, and then about five years to catalogue the photographs, which Harry had put away in boxes that were hidden for years from outside view.

Kevin, who lives in Lambourn, 14 miles from Swindon, said his book came about following a study of the images. "Despite having been a Great Western devotee for many years, although I actually like all railways, so many of the images were new to me, and I felt they deserved a larger audience," he said. "The collection is a veritable gold mine, countless images compiled from a variety of sources."

He describes the publication as "not unduly technical, not full of reminiscences and anecdotes; instead, a small tribute to one man who was an avid collector of images and hardware." The book, he said, had been some time in the gestation. "I wanted to get it as right as possible. I do not for one moment profess to be an expert, instead one who has a working knowledge in various subjects and perhaps a greater or lesser appreciation in others. I also wanted it to be a book of some surprises."



➜ **The Unseen Great Western-Images from the Harry Collection. Text by Kevin Robertson (softback, Transport Treasury Publishing, 104pp, £14.95. ISBN 978-1-915281-20-3).**

Pre-order Issue 340: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Surprising Swilly survivors emerge from the past

By Hugh Dougherty

DONEGAL Railway Heritage Museum manager Marty Gilroy was astonished when an enthusiast arrived at the museum's door with the nameboard from the Londonderry & Lough Swilly Railway's Manorcunningham station to donate it to the collection.

"The sign disappeared after the station, known locally as Manor, situated between Tooban Junction and Letterkenny, was closed and the line dismantled in 1953, and it was presumed lost," said Marty. "Imagine my surprise when the enthusiast arrived with the 14ft metal sign and gave it to us.

"He acquired it in the 1990s and kept it in storage elsewhere in Ireland, before deciding to ensure that it would be well looked after at the museum. We are very grateful as it's a rare Swilly survivor."

Manorcunningham station, named after the Plantation of Ulster family, the Scottish Cunninghams, who occupied the fertile Lagan area, also giving their name to the next station along the line, Newtoncunningham, was opened in 1883 and served the area until the end of Swilly rail services. The village continued to be served by L&LSR buses until the company was wound up in 2014, while the station building survives in good condition as a private house.

The museum is now faced with the eternal dilemma of preservation: to keep the sign in its current, worn condition or to restore it to its original state. Metal station signs were in general use on the Swilly's Letterkenny section, but stations on the Letterkenny & Burtonport Extension Railway relied on cheaper painted-on names. "We will certainly ensure that it's properly conserved and displayed appropriately," said Marty.



The Manorcunningham station nameboard, all 14 feet of it, temporarily on display outside Donegal Railway Heritage Museum. DRHM



Manorcunningham station in about 1900 with the sign in place. MONREAGH HERITAGE CENTRE



Ballymagans station today, where the rail has been found. HUGH DOUGHERTY



The length of Swilly rail sitting on the bridge parapet at Ballymagan Station, 90 years after the line closed. HUGH DOUGHERTY

Meanwhile, another remarkable Swilly survivor has shown up at Ballymagan station, the first stop north out of Buncrana on the Carndonagh line, in the shape of a length of Lough Swilly rail, seemingly abandoned on the parapet of a former bridge at the site, despite the line being closed in 1935.

It has come to the attention of Buncrana-based sculptor and Swilly enthusiast John McCarron, whose iconic work, The Ghosts of Tooban Junction, marks the site of the junction with a replica of the original signals in use when the line was open.

John said: "This piece of rail is a remarkable find, but I have no idea who owns it. It's sitting on a bridge parapet where the road used to cross the line. That seems to be public property as it's outside the station site itself. I feel that it should be taken to Donegal Railway Heritage Museum for display or, alternatively, used in a future sculpture celebrating the Swilly, for example. Just leaving it there to rust further seems unacceptable and I hope, as an amazing survivor from a line that closed 90 years ago and was lifted shortly after, that it can be saved."

Successful debut means historic tunnel rides to return in 2026

A MINIATURE railway inside Leicester's historic Glenfield Tunnel is to run again next year after a successful debut season.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 335, the Leicestershire Industrial History Society marked Railway 200 by laying a 165ft 7¼in gauge line through the mile-long tunnel, built by the Leicester & Swannington Railway with Robert Stephenson as engineer. Opened in 1832, it was the long railway tunnel in the world in its day.

Used to transport coal from the west Leicestershire coalfields into the city, and one of the world's first underground rail routes, and until now the last passengers carried through the tunnel had been on September 24, 1928.

When the line closed to freight on May 2, 1966, the tunnel was bought by Leicester City Council for £5.

The society said it had welcomed thousands of visitors since June, and that the rides had been far more popular than the volunteers had anticpated. Tickets for a ride on the miniature line are free, but visitors are asked to make a donation. This year, the society gave a cheque for £500 to LOROS Hospice Care and also used some of the donations to provide safety equipment for visitors. It received a grant from Glenfield Parish Council to provide a defibrillator on site.

The tunnel will be vacated at the end of October until May so long-eared brown bats can hibernate for the winter.

Farewell tour for South Western Railways' long-serving EMUs

A SPECIAL farewell tour for South Western Railway's Class 455 EMUs will take place on Sunday, December 21.

Built by British Rail Engineering in 1982-85, they have run on SWR routes since March 1983, making them among the oldest trains still in use on the national network.

However, they have been phased out in favour of the company's new £1 billion Class 701 Arterio fleet, with each 10-car train carrying more than 50% passengers than the 455s.

SWR is running the 'Class 455 Farewell' tour in conjunction with the Branch Line Society, which sold all 400 allocated tickets on November 10 when they were released. Profits are being split between charities The Alex Wardle Foundation, Macmillan, and The Railway Children.

The tour will depart Waterloo just after 9.30am and visit familiar locations on the SWR network, plus a number of rare track routings including the Point Pleasant-East Putney connection, Epsom Up Sidings and Guildford North Box Sidings, before the finale of Waterloo Carriage South Sidings.

SWR engineering and infrastructure director Neil Drury said: "While customers are getting used to the many benefits of our new fleet of Arterio trains, we know there are many enthusiasts out there who will be sad to see our classic red trains go.

"The farewell tour will be a fitting tribute to these trains, which have been a staple of our railway and have worked incredibly hard for more than four decades."

Two Beamish locos transferred to Tanfield

By Robin Jones

TWO Victorian steam locomotives have been handed over to the Tanfield Railway by Beamish Museum, including the oldest working locomotive in the UK to be built by the Newcastle firm of Robert Stephenson.

Stephenson 0-6-0T No. 2730 of 1891 No. 3 *Twizzell* recently underwent a £100,000 overhaul at Tanfield. It was employed hauling coal trains for James Joicey's large colliery empire in County Durham before being saved in the early 1970s.

After spending nearly 30 years on long-term loan at Tanfield, where it was cared for by volunteers, ownership has been officially transferred. To celebrate the move, *Twizell* featured in Tanfield's end-of-season gala weekend on October 18/19.

The second locomotive to be passed over to the Tanfield Railway is 0-4-0ST *Malleable Iron Co No. 5*, which was built for the South Durham Steel and Iron Company in 1873, although its builder remains a mystery. There is a strong suspicion that this would have been the South Durham Steel and Iron Company itself, albeit with some components bought in.

Malleable No. 5 was so named because it worked at the company's Malleable Iron Works in Stockton-on-Tees for its enitre commercial career before being preserved by Beamish in the 1970s.

In a bizarre twist of fate, *Malleable No. 5* was initially stored by Beamish at Marley Hill engine shed, which is now the Tanfield headquarters. Indeed, it was restored by volunteers at Marley Hill, becoming the first locomotive to run there since the shed was saved from demolition.

Return to Marley Hill

It later moved to Beamish but has not been in an operational condition for many years. Once back at Tanfield, it will be fully assessed and cosmetically restored in due course.

To complete the transfers, three vintage coal hoppers that have been stored at Tanfield have also been handed over.

Tanfield Railway Trust chairman Derek Smith said: "The Tanfield Railway was created to showcase the history of the North East's industrial railways. The unique history of *Malleable No. 5* means it fills a major gap in the collection, and *Twizell* has been a much-loved part of our operations for several years. To secure them both is a massive boost, but to do so in the year we celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Tanfield Railway is really special.

"We are really grateful to Beamish for entrusting the future of these vehicles in us."

Paul Jarman, director of development – transport, industry and design, at Beamish, said: "Working in partnership with those who have common goals only serves to enrich our heritage and ensure that it can be enjoyed, educate, and retain those established links to our past that we know are so important to the region.

Strong partnership

"We are delighted to continue the close cooperation with the Tanfield Railway and have enjoyed the visit by one of their locomotives to the museum this summer. Both *Twizell* and *Malleable* have secure futures with the Tanfield Railway, and it is a recognition that it is a healthy process for museums to review and reassess its collections and those artefacts within it.

"With *Twizell* having spent 30 years at Tanfield already, it makes complete sense to transfer it to the trust and ensure that the commitment to its long-term care, and the necessary investment that this entails, can be secured for it."

The transfers from Beamish follow asset review by the Tanfield to focus more closely on items which are most relevant to North East industrial railways. Several Tanfield-based vehicles have found new homes as part of this process.



Robert Stephenson 0-6-0T No.3 *Twizell*, with driver Ben Wilson, in charge pulling away from East Tanfield with the 10.40am to Sunniside on October 18. DAVE WILSON



Tanfield Trust secretary Angela Pickering handing over a painting of *Twizell* to Paul Jarman.



Tanfield Railway Trust chairman Derek Smith accepting the nameplates from *Malleable No. 5* (in the background) from Paul Jarman, Beamish director of transport and industry. TR

Remembering DPS vice president Michael S Baker – a true Deltic legend

THE Deltic Preservation Society has been in mourning following the passing of vice president Michael S Baker on October 10.

Mike lived at Colchester and for many years worked for Paxman Diesels, which undertook Napier power unit repairs for both BR and the Admiralty. Mike serviced Napier applications in the Middle East after the war as both India and Burma had vessels propelled by Napier technology.

He became closely involved with the society in autumn 1981 in the final months of the BR Deltic era.

A society statement said: "His knowledge of Napier power units was nothing short of extraordinary and he came to the 'rescue' of the DPS engineering volunteers on countless occasions. It was obvious he would be an unbelievable asset to what was then an enthusiastic, but somewhat naive group of would-be preservationists.

"Over many years, this senior engineer helped out on so many occasions, one such being during a trip to the Mid-Hants Railway where he managed to start one of the DPS machines which had a run-down battery with one of his 'tricks,'the start-up having defeated the volunteers.

"He really came to the fore when the engineers started to strip Napier power units – in the formative years of the society, the Napiers were not touched, nor was there any reason to do so.

"Mike was of enormous help when a quill shaft was replaced on power unit 538 when in the workshops at Castle Donnington power station to which the DPS had been granted access. This was the first notable engine repair. Since then, his expertise has been put to good use and so appreciated on many occasions.

"This engineer had a remarkable library of manuals and documents. Simply, he was always the 'go to' person when any problem manifested itself, the ultimate authority in all things Napier.

"He invariably attended the DPS annual general meetings, with son Stephen, when there would always be a queue wishing to talk to him. This continued until recently when the distance and health considerations intervened.

"It's fair to state that because of Mike Baker, the DPS has all three Deltics in operational order some 64 years after being built. No problem was too great for him to solve and advise.

"The board passes on sincere condolences to his family, his good lady Kate, and son Stephen for their – and our – loss, a remarkable, highly respected engineer who will long be remembered."

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Five miles of long-closed Letterkenny & Burtonport railway is opened as a new walk – 78 years on

By Hugh Dougherty

A FIVE-MILE section of the former Letterkenny & Burtonport Extension Railway has been opened to pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders. It is called the Muckish Railway Walk as the line traversed this wild and remote section of Donegal country under the shadow of Muckish Mountain.

The walk, which includes refurbished cuttings, culverts, embankments, and the L&BER's characteristic round stone gateposts, reopens a part of the county which had been inaccessible to people since the closure of the line in 1947, as no public roads penetrate the area.

A two-mile length of the railway track has been surfaced, with the remaining three miles to Falcarragh station passable but still to be brought up to full standards.

An existing section of what is badged as the Burtonport Railway Walk stretches on past Falcarragh towards the first section of the route to be restored, from Burtonport itself to Dungloe Road station. Local groups and Donegal County Council plan to have the whole 50-mile route from Letterkenny to Burtonport reinstated as a greenway.

On the Muckish Railway Walk, safety fences have been installed along raised embankment sections of the route, further defining the railway's presence in the bleak landscape, with traditional names restored to cuttings to commemorate the foremen who supervised the navvies building the line between 1901 and 1903.

Walkers and cyclists experience the steep 1-in-50 gradients taking the line to its summit at Lough Agher, once visible only from a train. Information boards show pictures of the railway in action, featuring the Lough Swilly's massive 4-8-0 tender and 4-8-4T locomotives built specially for this challenging railway, which was constructed with British Government money, both to aid the Burtonport fishing industry and to kill Irish nationalism with kindness.



Restored railway gates and gateposts at the start of the walk with the trackbed looking towards Muckish Mountain. HUGH DOUGHERTY



A well-defined cutting looking towards Dunfanaghy Road station. HUGH DOUGHERTY



The railway's heyday is illustrated well on the information boards. HUGH DOUGHERTY

Closed, revived, and reused

Closed between Burtonport and Gweedore in 1940, the remaining section between Gweedore and Letterkenny was revived during the Second World War as the Lough Swilly Railway's replacement buses were short of fuel. Final closure came in 1947, with the track lifted in 1949, and the trackbed lying derelict until its current restoration.

Donegal County Council heritage officer Dr Joe Gallagher said: "We are celebrating the heritage of the narrow-gauge Letterkenny & Burtonport Railway by restoring the Muckish Railway Walk and by conserving some of its most prominent features.

"Visitors will get an impression of just how remote this railway was amid the grandeur of Donegal mountain scenery, and it's easy to imagine the trains, dwarfed by Muckish Mountain itself, battling their way up the gradients to and from Burtonport.

"The ultimate goal is to restore the trackbed all the way from Letterkenny to Burtonport."

New Somerset & Dorset greenway extends eastwards

A SECTION of Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway trackbed has been officially reopened to the public as the latest part of a walking and cycling greenway to the east of Shepton Mallet.

The initial section of the greenway begins near the A37 Whitstone Hall on the eastern edge of town, following the trackbed on top of the Bath Road and Ham Wood viaducts and passing through Windsor Hill tunnel.

Following an intensive work camp in September, the newest extension to the greenway, of about half a mile, was opened on October 17, taking the route as far as Thrupe Lane.

A ceremony to open the extension was held at Ham Wood viaduct, attended by local volunteers and representatives from Somerset Council, landowner the Dinder Estate, Greenway and Cycle Routes, and contractor MP & KM Golding Ltd.

Coun Ros Wyke, who represents Mendip West on Somerset Council, stood on a tree stump near the viaduct to address the crowds.

"Rural paths are something we all believe in," she said, "and I am delighted that we actually have someone here from the Department for Transport who can actually see in the flesh how even a path 'in the middle of nowhere' is actually really being supported.

"This is a really important section of the Somerset Circle. This continuous route of 76 miles is rapidly becoming a reality.



Couns Ros Wyke and Richard Wilkins open the Windsor Hill Greenway new extension near Shepton Mallet on October 17. GREENWAYS AND CYCLE ROUTES

"Already, 50 miles of it have been completed and people are using it."

The extension to the greenway will make it easier to travel to Chilcompton, Midsomer Norton and Radstock.

Film archive highlights changeover years for rail in Northern Ireland

By Hugh Dougherty

NORTHERN Ireland Screen wants to spread the word about its unique treasure trove of films showing railways and tramways in Northern Ireland at a crucial time in history, when line closures and service rundown were the order of the day in the 1950s and 1960s, and the railway preservation movement there was taking its first tentative steps.

Featuring a variety of sources which include news footage shot by Ulster Television, BBC Northern Ireland and private professional and amateur film makers, the freely accessible archive covers footage of the Great Northern Railway of Ireland's Fintona horse tram in action on its Fermanagh branch in 1957 and its subsequent arrival after withdrawal at the original Belfast Transport Museum at Witham Street.

On offer too is film of former Great Southern Railway of Ireland 4-6-0 *Maeve* being brought by rail from Dublin, also for display at Witham Street, while other films show everyday life on the Ulster Transport Authority lines around the old Portadown station, with steam and diesel in evidence, at a time of great transition and change on the railway system. Even the Hill of Howth Tramway, Belfast trams, and their replacement trolleybuses merit coverage.

Trips are also made over the border to see the Cavan & Leitrim Railway in grimy, all-steam action shortly before closure in 1959, with a captivating sequence shot from a train on the famous Arigna roadside tramway. Also on the narrow gauge, a UTV news film from December 1959 charts the events leading up to the closure of the County Donegal Railway, with rare shots of passengers on a diesel railcar. There is poignant footage of diesel tractor *Phoenix* working over Letterkenny line track between Lifford and Strabane, while workers start to lay the road surface which would supersede the trains on this section to allow the replacement CDR Buses and lorries, also featured in the film, to run directly into Strabane station.

> "There are what were once everyday scenes in plenty, now lost to time..."

The CDR also has colour film shot by skilled amateur cameraman James Houston, of Strabane, with two features. Old Scouts sees a group of now grown-up Scouts charter a railcar to take them to Inver on a day trip. The other follows members of Strabane Presbyterian Church on a day trip to Portrush in 1953, via an 11-coach CDR special steam train to Derry, as they steam from there over the UTA main line to Coleraine and Portrush, spending a day at the beach in hats and best dresses, sports jackets and flannels, and a UTA and CDR train home.



A County Donegal Railway Class 5 locomotive brings a mixed train into Lifford station immediately before closure in December 1959.

Evan Marshall, broadcast archivist with Northern Ireland Screen's heritage and archive department, said: "We want as many *Heritage Railway* readers as possible to enjoy our archive. These films show our railways at a crucial stage in their development and at a time when, with the threat to so many lines evident, the railway preservation movement began in Northern Ireland.

"There are what were once everyday scenes in plenty, now lost to time, and one of our most popular hits on Youtube has been the UTV Sixties NI series, episode five in particular, which has footage of the CDR, the mothballed Antrim-Knockmore line, and the Belfast & County Down Railway.

"Heritage railway fans will also be interested to know that we have a feature on the earliest days of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland, which we have still to digitise and will release in due course. It's interesting that even railway preservation itself is part of history, and it's right that it should be recorded and made available."

Evan is inviting readers ready for a free ticket to the past on track to access the collection via Northern Ireland Screen website at https://northernirelandscreen.co.uk; click on the digital archive section of the website to access the collection. "You won't be disappointed," he said. "This is a resource for railway historians, preservationists and modellers alike.

"My own favourite sequence is from film taken from a diesel railcar driver's cab at the now-closed Aldergrove station. There's now serious proposals to reopen the Antrim-Lisburn line and to build a spur line into Belfast International Airport from Aldergrove station. There's no irony there!"

➜ Pictures copyright ITV, courtesy Northern Ireland Screen Digital Archive, unless otherwise stated.



The Old Scouts from Strabane had their chartered railcar, much like a bus private hire, stop in the Barnesmore Gap on their way to Inver. NISDA

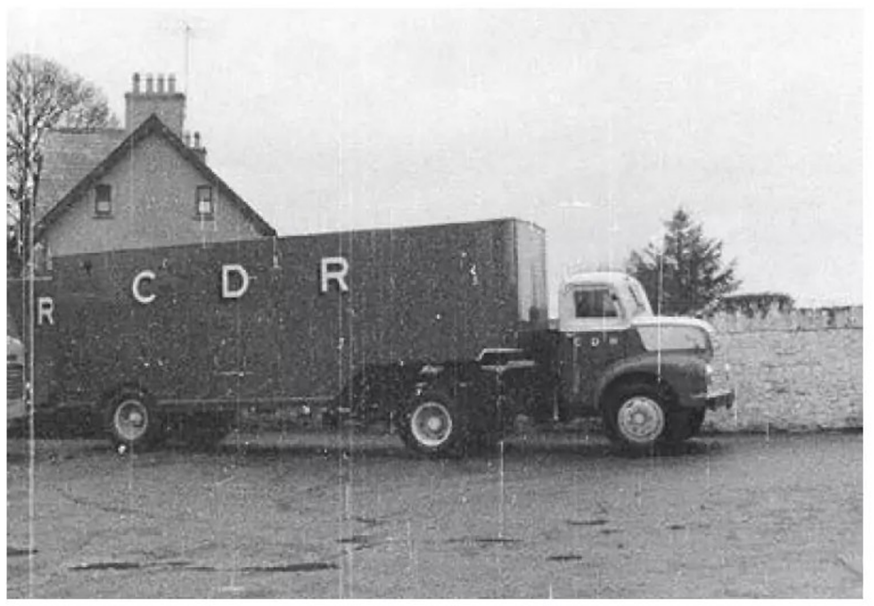


A rare view of passengers inside a busy CDR railcar stopped for customs examination at Castlefinn in December 1959, immediately before closure of the line.



Left: CDR diesel tractor *Phoenix* runs over soon-to-be-lifted track between Lifford and Strabane as track workers prepare the road bed for conversion to a roadway for the replacement buses and lorries.

Right: One of the CDR's newly delivered goods train replacement tractor and trailer units poses for the camera at Stranorlar before going into service immediately after the railway closed on December 31, 1959.



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MOORSLIFE ON THE MOORSLINE: BIG LINE, BIG ENGINES, BIG EXPENSES

With the concurrent visit of two icons of steam bringing the curtain down on its main 2025 calendar, **Owen Hayward** speaks to North Yorkshire Moors Railway CEO Laura Strangeway, who reflects on what is an incredibly challenging time for the line.

There's no denying the fact that the North Yorkshire Moors Railway is a big railway. Not only does it run for 24 miles through the national park from Pickering to Grosmont, but in 2014 it gained access to the Esk Valley line to run into the coastal town of Whitby. This year has, however, been one fraught with challenges. A number of large fires saw steam services curtailed several times throughout the year, with 16 weeks given over to diesel operation in all.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been a challenge for the railway to recover, carrying over a deficit each year. For its 2024/25 financial year, it posted a loss of £278,000. Behind the scenes, CEO Laura Strangeway has been working to get the railway into a much stronger position again, although this has not been easy.

"We started the season well, about 12% up on budget – and with inflation, these are obviously pretty hard budgets to meet – but then we had the big lineside fire in April, and it has been a struggle since," she explained. "That said, July and August did much better than we initially thought they would. We brought in a load of extra initiatives, including *Flying Scotsman*, which has helped get us 'back on track,' and these should certainly have helped us to make a dent in the deficit for this year.

"The big issue has been the costs rising. It's not that the railway is failing, it's that costs have risen so much, just like they have for every railway. We are having to essentially reinvent the railway to make it work with where the economy is now, and that's a pretty hard thing to achieve.

"Visit York has shared its car parking statistics, which is something it uses to measure visitor footfall, and that has been down about 30% this year."

Star visits

Despite the reduction in footfall to the region, the visit of several star locomotives throughout the year has helped top the numbers up. In March, LNER A4 No. 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* spent nine days working trains, while April saw the same of LMS Jubilee No. 45596 *Bahamas*. Although the visit of Peppercorn A1 No. 60163 *Tornado* was disrupted by a steam ban, it too proved a hit and drew in the crowds. The appearance of NER electric autocar No. 3170 also proved incredibly popular, initially brought in to offer something extra in February when track work prevented trains from running further south than Goathland, but it stayed on until August.

These all paled in comparison to the attendance numbers for the visit of A3 No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman*, which operated on dates from October 25 through to November 12. Visitors enjoyed full round trips of the line between Grosmont and Pickering from allocated seats behind the visiting Pacific, with many of these trains selling out and Grosmont becoming gridlocked as people flocked to catch a glimpse of 'the world's most famous locomotive.'

Running concurrently with this was the visit of the replica of *Locomotion No. 1* and the 1825 Stockton & Darlington Railway opening train, fresh from its main line run and appearance at Hitachi's Newton Aycliffe factory open day. For the first time on a heritage railway, members of the public could enjoy a trip aboard the replica carriage *Experiment*, with short journeys taking place between Pickering station and New Bridge depot; just as with *Flying Scotsman*, these almost entirely sold out.

"I said to Paul Middleton, 'go and get me big engines and let's make this year work' – and he's done really well and nailed every one of



History meets: The replica of *Locomotion No. 1* sits in the yard as *Flying Scotsman* passes by while running round its train at Pickering on October 25. RODNEY TOWERS

them," Laura explained. "That does mean next year is now a bit of a challenge in finding how we can beat it, but we have some plans in the pipeline.

"While having these visiting engines has been brilliant for the Moors, you could easily be caught out by having all your eggs in one basket. If that locomotive fails, you put the whole event at risk, but fundamentally the NYMR just leads itself well to do them. *Flying Scotsman*'s visit has performed exceptionally well too and we're really grateful to the Science Museum Group and Northern Steam for making that happen.

"The September 27-29 steam gala also did really well. We were asked why we kept it on the same dates as the main line run as *Locomotion No. 1*. One reason was that we felt it was worth the risk – and it did pay off – but also the scope to move it was very little. It's a time of year when nearly every other heritage railway is having a gala; to move it would have either clashed with one of those (which is in nobody's interests), reduced the options for visiting locomotives, or perhaps even both. As it was, it worked out really well and the place was heaving. Secondary spend did particularly well too."

Viability and value

One thing Laura is all too aware of is that people want value for money when they come to a heritage railway. With the fare for a family being £110 on the day, the railway must ensure it is meeting such expectations. "We are an expensive attraction, there's no doubt about it, but that's because we are expensive to run. Our bank loans are the lowest they have ever been; we did a lot of work to reduce those, and then Covid hit and we've struggled to bounce back. That's a big frustration for us at the moment."

In a bid to reduce operating costs, this year has seen the Moorsline drop the daily operations from its calendar and has instead operated just five days a week for the most part, which does not appear to have had too drastic an impact.

"Generally, that's worked well," said Laura. "It has reduced cost, but has not necessarily reduced income, as the people who would travel on the days we are now closed have tended to move to other days, helping to fill up those other trains better.

"On the face of it, the five-day-a-week pattern has worked. It's also taken some of the pressure off the various departments and enabled them to do key work they might not otherwise have been able to. For example, it gives two full days back to permanent way teams to maintain our track and it is extra time for the locomotives to be serviced.

"We are quite an intense railway with lots of locomotives. Running all of that on a seven-day service is a hard ask and tiring, so this also feeds into looking after our people.

"It's been a year of exploration, trying different events and offerings. We've obviously done a lot of enthusiast events this year, such as the diesel and steam galas, which have done well. I still think it's that bulk of day visitors who we need to pitch better to, though, and bring the railway to life beyond the train ride. There's a lot more work to do around this to curate their experience.

"We did some visiting characters such as Paddington to help us reach out to different audiences. They covered their costs and generated some good publicity, but they weren't big earners. They're not going to revolutionise the railway.

"Typically, we are a tourist railway. People come here because they want to catch a train through to Whitby, which makes bringing the heritage aspect to life harder because of that.

"We are trying to play around with more of that destination-led angle, trying to package up these offerings a little better. Grosmont has its big TV and film connections, for example, so can we make more of that? We've tried to do that this year but there's definitely more we can do to make that clearer.

"Heritage railways are generally quite hard to communicate; you've got timetables and different pricing – if we can make that more succinct, that will really help the visitor experience, and the team here are conscious of that.

"Longer railways like us carry higher costs, which makes this wholly more challenging. One of the big things we're trying to work through is that about 61% of our traffic starts at Pickering and runs straight to Whitby and back, so there is an aspiration to see if we can enhance our internal services on the heritage line and do more to bring that section to life.

"How do we bring the heritage and history of our stations and rolling stock to the forefront and do more with it?"





Above: SR Schools class No. 926 *Repton* passes the boatyard on the Whitby waterfront as it departs from the coastal town on September 28.

Right: Recently outshopped in its end of BR steam condition, LMS 'Black Five' No. 45428 *Eric Treacy* passes through Moorgates on September 28. In the immediate foreground is the trackbed of a former coal line that led to the rope-worked Beckhole incline.
BOTH: OWEN HAYWARD

Fire control

As mentioned, this year has seen one of the longest periods of diesel operation on the line following fires as early in the year as April. A larger fire at Langdale Moor broke out in August, and while it was not started by the line's steam locomotives, Laura pointed out that the suspension of steam operations was a difficult choice but necessary when considering the responsibilities towards the surrounding landscape and pressure on the attending fire services, with which they have fostered strong relationships.

"This year, patrols have run pretty intensively for 16 weeks – the longest we've ever done, but then it was the biggest fire we'd ever seen. We've done a lot of work to build up our relationship with the local fire service over the last 18 months, and it is very supportive of the railway. Earlier this year we had about

"The big issue has been the costs rising – it's not that the railway is failing, it's that costs have risen so much..."

15 of their senior members visit and we took them on the NER Autocar up to the fire site to help them understand how we fit into the landscape, why we are special, and that it's not just us running trains that start fires. It was a really good day as we all got something out of it, such as identifying easier access points along the line for fire crews.

"I feel we've made some good headway there, but then the other difficult part about all this is people's perception of us. We then had the Langdale Moor fire, which wasn't caused by us, but that's how it could have been perceived. We did the right thing by stopping steam operations because we didn't want to risk further burdening the fire crews at an already difficult time.

"It's a long period to be managing fire control; this year we achieved it with about 40% volunteer coverage. There's still more to do as I'd like to get that up to about 50-60%, though the ideal would always be 100% volunteer-resourced, but you would still need someone to manage and roster it.

"To be fair, I thought that number was going to be much lower, so I'm pleased with how it stands. It's still a relatively new position to have been introduced, and it's only recently that we've established a good team, which we've done wildfire training with and put some investment into.

"The fact is, though, that the moment we go to all-diesel, we are now looking at a 40% reduction of our income.

"That was only 20% in 2022, when we ran that way for six consecutive weeks, so that has meant this year has been particularly hard, but the team have done really well to get us through it all.

"Even if we can move our deficit forward, I'll take that as a win for this year."



An admiring crowd watches as No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* arrives at Pickering on November 6. KENNY FELSTEAD



LMS 'Black Five' No. 44806 passes visiting BR 4MT No. 80078 (masquerading as Whitby-based classmate No. 80116) at Grosmont MPD. KENNY FELSTEAD

"With something like the DMU or autocar, it opens an avenue to run some sort of service on what would otherwise be a closed day, if that is financially viable."

Time of great change

Laura is very keen to stress that this is an experimental time at the NYMR as it tries to identify what works best for it, given its unique challenges. This doesn't necessarily mean just the front-facing service operation but can also include back office processes to help ensure the best value for money out of the equipment it has already, as well as making things easier for volunteers to progress.

"We've multi-skilled many of our staff over the last 18 months, meaning we can call on staff from a range of departments rather than just one. This has carried all the way from the operating team as far as catering department and means we're just that bit more flexible to respond as a railway," she said. "As an example, we now have mobile operations managers that can drop into fire marshals, guarding and signalling. For catering, we can now move people better from trolleys to cafes or the dining service, which makes managing these roles easier, meaning you can offer a much better service and perhaps, for some, this makes their role a little more interesting, as you won't be in the same place day in, day out, doing the exact same thing.

"One of the next big areas to look at is volunteering: how we make processes around it more enjoyable and make sure that they are much better supported. Whether they come to the railway to become a ticket inspector, guard or footplate crew, we can have more of a mentored approach rather than having to leave them to self-mentor, which leaves them seeking approval rather than automatically being given it. We must make things easier to get people in and through, to embrace them, and be open to being more diverse.

"One of the big challenges we're facing which many people don't seem to realise is from compliance and good governance. This takes a lot of time and effort to manage. Making sure we protect our people, having the right signage in place to ensure we're legally compliant... there's sometimes a lack of appreciation, not just for the work that goes into coming up with new ideas to take us forward, but also to professionalise, such as implementing a fully embedded purchase ordering system so our managers can keep up-to-date with what they are spending. They're not necessarily new things, but sometimes existing ones that are linked better. We have data coming straight into the finance system; it all takes time to put in place, and it takes us forward. Like many organisations, we had packages that you end up adapting to the point you're working for them, rather than the other way around.

"I hope people will support us through this time of transition. We are very mindful that we keep changing and swapping things, but the reason is because we are trying to reinvent ourselves, become financially sustainable, and get into a position where there is a surplus to enable us to reinvest back into the railway. It's really frustrating not being able to say, 'yes, let's do that' or 'we can spend money on this.'

"Currently we are very much only spending where we must to keep going, and that will start to hurt at some point.

"The phrase 'be more than just a train journey' regularly gets mentioned and it is absolutely right. Historically, that's how heritage railways have been set up, and I think that is now the change we are all seeing – you need to offer your visitors more and be value for money, or make it feel like a visit has lots of value with added touchpoints. I get frustrated knowing that there is so much we can do, but we are limited by time and finance."



Visiting Battle of Britain class No. 34072 *257 Squadron* stands at Goathland with the 2.55pm from Grosmont to Pickering on September 25. GRAHAM NUTTALL



Peppercorn A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado* climbs the steep grade towards Goathland on Augst 22 during its summer visit to the Moorsline. It was just one of many high-profile visiting locomotives to feature this year, with *Sir Nigel Gresley* and *Bahamas* being two other examples. KENNY FELSTEAD

What of Whitby?

Operating over a stretch of Network Rail infrastructure presents its own challenges. Rolling stock has to meet certain standards and a fitness-to-run (FTR) exam has to be conducted every day and submitted before trains can venture out onto the Esk Valley line. While there is no doubt the inclusion of the Whitby section has added a unique selling point to the Moorsline, could it be detracting from the rest of the heritage line? Would it therefore make sense to axe it from the timetable? This is a decision far from a simple yes or no answer.

"If we were to choose not to run to Whitby, financially that would very much hurt us," Laura pointed out. "From a funding point of view, the fact that we go in and out of Whitby and that we invested into doing so would reduce the NYMR if we dropped it, I think. If you ask some of our engineers at the shed, however, they would love to stop running there, no doubt about it. It is a huge undertaking. We do two FTR exams, one in



257 Squadron **rounds the curve at Darnholme with a Pickering-bound service during its appearance at the Moorsline's September steam gala.** OWEN HAYWARD

the morning and another at night, which is a huge cost and use of resource. It also reduces your locomotive use options as they can only run for seven years on the main line.

"We then have the same challenges as some of the main line TOCs and use of Mk. 1 stock without central door locking; we have to provide door stewards, which is yet another ask of our operating teams.

"Dropping Whitby operations is not an option to us at this time, but I do think we can be cleverer with how we make use of that within our timetable. Can we run longer trains, or work it so there aren't such long layovers there, which take a locomotive out of use on the rest of our line? There's a balance to be struck that will make the engineers' lives easier but still give our passengers what they want – at least while we develop our internal offering. That's got to be part of a longer-term strategy.

"Generally speaking, Whitby does pose a risk to the NYMR, particularly if we can't find a way around door locking or the tighter restrictions that get imposed on us over time. It regularly gets talked about and the question of what the NYMR would look like if we couldn't run there is asked. It may happen, and we need to be mindful of that."

One consideration would be having a dedicated Whitby set rather than use the same train that continues on there as part of an all-line trip. You then face the question of running it with steam, or diesel.

"With any decision like this, it's never going to be perfect or simple. Already, I'm aware that if we went to just running diesel to Whitby, what does that mean when we have high fire risk? The least at-risk area to run steam during these times is that particular section of Network Rail line, so we need to think it all through carefully. The national park is a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), so a priority is to protect it and avoid fires there.

"Whitby is less of a risk in hot weather, and we try to keep steam on that section when there are diesels on the rest of our line."

Rolling stock

Speaking of steam and diesel traction, the railway has recently committed to overhauling its three-car Class 101 DMU, with vehicles being sent away in turn for contract overhaul off-site. The return of this valuable asset will provide a cheaper alternative to a diesel locomotive with a rake of carriages.

"With something like the DMU or autocar, it opens an avenue to run some sort of service on what would otherwise be a closed day, if that is financially viable. We must make sure that we are not flogging our assets and devaluing them in a short period, though – they are expensive to overhaul.

"We are very conscious that in 2028/29, a lot of our current locomotives are coming out of traffic, so we need to protect against that period. We need adequate locomotives to run a service while we try and turn out a high number of overhauls in a short window of time. The appeal for 4MT No. 75029 *The Green Knight* is part of that, but despite the belief that people typically want to donate towards locomotive projects more than infrastructure ones, it hasn't quite seen the response we were hoping for and has not yet achieved the level of fundraising we need. We'll keep plugging away with it, of course – we both need and want to see it back in steam – but we're learning from that.

"One of the big things for next year is the oil conversion of USATC S160 2-8-0 No. 2253 *Omaha* to help mitigate against fire risk. That's key for next year and the sustainability of having hotter seasons. One of the big wins this year was the NER Autocar. We loved having that, and it went down really well;



9F No. 92134 drifts away from Newtondale Halt towards the speed restriction at Fen Bog. The charring on the hillside behind is a remnant of one of the largest fires the national park has seen in recent years and one of the many factors NYMR CEO Laura Strangeway is mindful of during lengthy hot and dry spells. OWEN HAYWARD

it's a beautiful set-up, a high-quality visitor experience, and is relatively cheap to run."

One notable absence in recent years has been the LNER Carriage Association's rake of Gresley and Thompson teak-liveried carriages, which are currently stored in the carriage shelter at Pickering. An agreement between NYMR and LNERCA splits responsibility for managing these, with the former in charge of their mechanical condition, which is unfortunately the current obstacle to their use.

"We are in continuous dialogue with the LNERCA. This is where the talk of difficult decisions and not being able to invest comes into effect. There is a goal to get the teak set back into operation, and how they sit within the timetable at a time when we're reinventing the railway is at the forefront of our thoughts. There's currently outstanding maintenance on them, but we're not able to commit to when we hit 'go' on delivering that. I'm wary that I always have to prioritise where money is spent because we're not flush with it at the moment. The priority must be in making sure we have an operational railway; we had track work at Goathland last year, we've got a bridge at Grosmont we've been quoting works for this coming winter, but we definitely want to see the teaks back.

"They come with a lot of emotion because people are rightfully passionate about them. The challenge is that while it is a stunning set to see, it is expensive to maintain. It feels a disservice to just simply flog the carriages as part of a normal timetable as it devalues them. How can we therefore make them special, something premium for our passengers, rather than run them into the ground and then put them to one side and forget them?"

Seizing all options

Adjusting the method of operation is one way of saving money, but just having a general tidy-up can also generate some cash. Laura said that heritage lines are typically good at hoarding stuff, and that a simple scrap drive could have multiple benefits.

"One of the initiatives started this year was to clean up the railway. I found out recently we had an entire bridge deck somewhere which needed scrapping.

"Just from cleaning up the side of the line of scrap rail and so on, we've generated in the region of £20,000, and there's still more we can do. Again, that allows us to reinvest in things."



Lampton, Hetton & Joicey Colliery 0-6-2T No. 29 climbs through Water Arc with a Grosmonth to Goathland shuttle working on September 27. OWEN HAYWARD

This doesn't necessarily mean that the railway will be having a major clear-out of its rolling stock, although BR 4MT No. 76079 has quietly been for sale for a while. "We're just looking at redundant scrap at the moment," Laura clarified, "but having stock piled up that we're not preserving or doing anything with it is not good either. We haven't heavily pushed the sale of No. 76079, but it is available. We've had a couple of offers but want to make sure it will go somewhere to be restored and cared for.

"I wouldn't want to say there are no discussions to have, but there are no plans at the minute to get rid of anything else.

"For every 100 ideas you come up with, there will only be a few that really work, but you need to let people try new things or revisit previous ones – what didn't work before might be more successful with a different angle or approach. I'm always encouraging people to come up with new ideas, and a lot of what has been done already this year has been to put stuff in place with a view of moving it forward and growing it continuously.

"One of the new revenue streams introduced was to monetise our social media channels. It's a slow burner but has potential – we want to be the number one digital heritage railway online. We've got a new Mutual Improvement Course (MIC) classroom being installed at Grosmont and the idea for that is we try to become a world-class centre for training which can be hosted virtually from there, which then ties back into that online presence. It all fits into the charitable aims, enabling new people to reach us, including those who can't necessarily travel to get to us."

Clearly, just as with every other railway, there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes, some of it apparent, other parts less so, but it is all in aid of ensuring the NYMR continues to exist for many years to come. Laura concluded our conversation by saying: "These are very expensive attractions to run, so we have to ensure the return is there. At the very least, they need to be covering their cost, but there have been days where they simply weren't. That's a hard thing to take when you are carrying a deficit budget; realistically, it should be turning a profit. There's always the counter argument that you could throw more money at things to help fill them up, but we've done that and even gone down the route of working with third parties this year, the question being is it better to have a seat bring in £20 rather than £50 through this means.

"The whole railway has worked exceedingly hard this year and we have some really caring, passionate people who want this place to be back being sustainable and thriving. I think we can get there.

"We are not alone, though; the whole sector is having a difficult time, and you sometimes need to remind yourself of this." HR



With the remains of Whitby Abbey visible on the cliff behind, No. 45428 departs from Whitby on September 30. How the NYMR implements services to this coastal town into its timetables are just one of the many aspects being considered for its future operations. OWEN HAYWARD



***Locomotion No. 1* arrives at Pickering on October 29, passing NER Third open No. 945, which is undergoing restoration in the carriage workshops there. The inclusion of vintage carriages such as this and the LNER teak vehicles is another of the many aspects the railway is seeking to address to ensure it provides the best value for money without having the vehicles flogged in normal service, where they won't necessarily be appreciated for what they are.** RODNEY TOWERS

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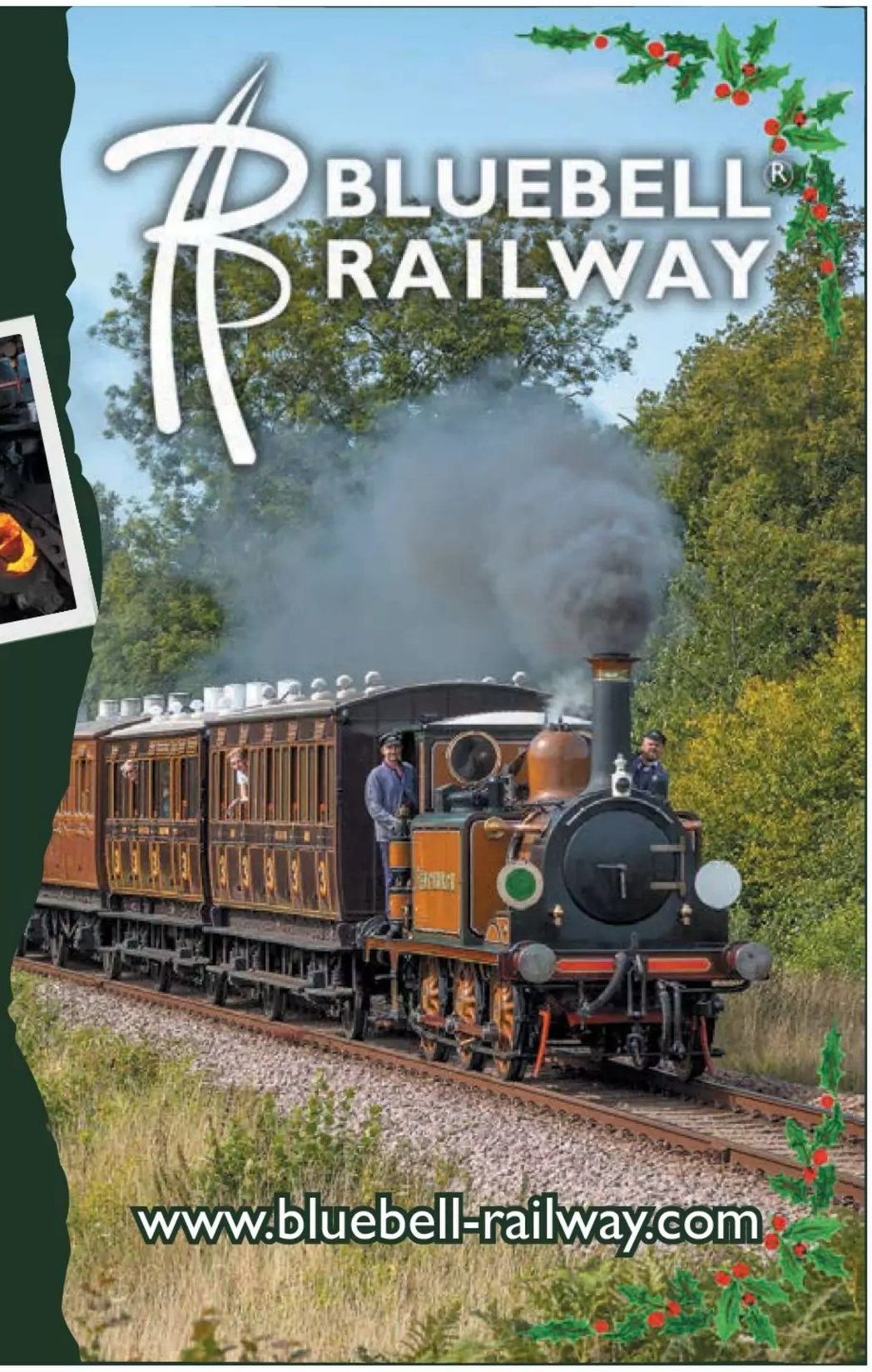


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HERITAGE RAILWAY
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Steam icons come together at Pickering: the simultaneous visits of the *Locomotion No. 1* replica and LNER A3 4-6-2 No. 60103 *Flying Scotsman* to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway enable two different eras of railway history to meet just outside Pickering station on November 5. The replica 1825 train was offering rides as far as New Bridge depot, while the A3 was running trips across the full length of the line from Grosmont. KENNY FELSTEAD


THE FLYING SCOTSMAN
60103

Portishead branch revival gathers pace

ANOTHER step forward to reopening the GWR Portishead branch line to passengers for the first time in 64 years has seen final phase of enabling works now underway, ready for construction to start in 2026.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 335, the multi-million-pound project was given the green light by the Department for Transport in July after Government funding of more than £47 million was granted. New stations will be built at Portishead and Pill, with trains initially running hourly along the line to and from Bristol Temple Meads in 2028. The aim is to slash travel times in half and help reduce road congestion.

This new phase of preparatory works includes clearing vegetation and trees along sections of the disused line to create the space needed to build temporary construction compounds, car parks, the two new stations, and the railway line itself. The clearances follow on from comprehensive ecological works which have helped to protect local wildlife and their habitats. The works will continue to be closely monitored by qualified ecologists.

'Long time coming'

Coun Mike Bell, leader of North Somerset Council, said: "I know trains from Portishead have been a long time coming, which is why it's great to be able to announce a start to works that will pave the way for construction in 2026. It is really happening!

"When journeys to Temple Meads make a return to train timetables, the reopened Portishead to Bristol line will transform our region as 50,000 people are connected back into the rail network. This makes the line more than just the new stations at Portishead and Pill, because when passengers finally pull into platforms at Temple Meads, they will also be able to enjoy all the benefits of onward travel.

"These are journeys that will unlock the west and the rest of the country, while also creating inward and outward investment that's key to an estimated £43 million of economic growth each year."

Clun Castle replays its last steam tour with second return to Paddington

By Owen Hayward



Showing it can run shoulder-to-shoulder with today's traction, WR 4-6-0 No. 7029 *Clun Castle* runs alongside a Great Western Railway Class 800 Intercity Express Train at Taplow on the 'Farewell to Steam' special on November 1, one of its last tours before its upcoming boiler retube. EDWARD J DYER

SIXTY years after it departed Paddington with the final steam-hauled service, WR 4-6-0 No. 7029 *Clun Castle* recreated the historic service by returning to the GWR's London terminus for only the second time in the heritage era, while simultaneously celebrating its own 75th birthday.

Entering service in May 1950, *Clun Castle* saw only 15 years in service but has several achievements to its name. On May 9, 1964, it achieved a top speed of 96mph on the descent of Wellington Bank in Somerset while working an enthusiast special to commemorate the end of express steam working in the Western Region. This feat resulted in the fastest-ever recorded timing over the arduous route from Plymouth to Bristol, completing the journey in 133 minutes and nine seconds. It also has the claim of working the last train out of the original Birmingham Moor Street station before that was closed, and the final steam-hauled departure from Birmingham Snow Hill.

Paddington steam swansong

On November 27, 1965, it hauled the final steam departure from Paddington station, which departed the capital and travelled via Didcot, Swindon and Bristol Temple Meads to Gloucester Eastgate. Upon arrival there, Class 52 D1006 *Western Stalwart* took over and worked the train to its booked destination of Cheltenham St James. Arriving back at Gloucester later that day, *Clun Castle* took the train on as far as Swindon before a pair of Class 37s took the service back to Paddington.

The last of the Castles to be in service, while technically withdrawn on December 31, 1965, No. 7029's final duty was working the 5pm Gloucester-Cheltenham service the following day. In early 1966, it was bought by Patrick Whitehouse and kept at Tyseley for use on enthusiast specials, although for its first few months it was still employed on freight duties. It became the locomotive to start off the preservation era at the former GWR depot, now being operated by Vintage Trains as Tyseley Locomotive Works, hauling its first main line tour to Didcot in 1972.

Although having been preserved for almost a full six decades, being based in Birmingham has meant that *Clun Castle* had returned to Paddington only once since then. To celebrate the anniversary of its record-setting Plymouth to Bristol run, on May 11, 2024, *Clun Castle* retraced that route before continuing onwards to the capital, from where it was towed back to Birmingham by a diesel.



Bristol Temple Meads, with its impressive trainshed roof, is the evening setting for No. 7029 *Clun Castle*. JACK BOSKETT/VT

Sixty years later

On November 1, it was time to celebrate the anniversary of the 'Farewell to Steam' special. In a reverse of the end of the previous visit, *Clun Castle* and its train was led by a Class 37 from Birmingham to Paddington where, after a short break, the GWR locomotive took over to retrace some of the route of the original tour, travelling via Maidenhead, Reading, Didcot and Swindon on its way to Bristol Temple Meads.

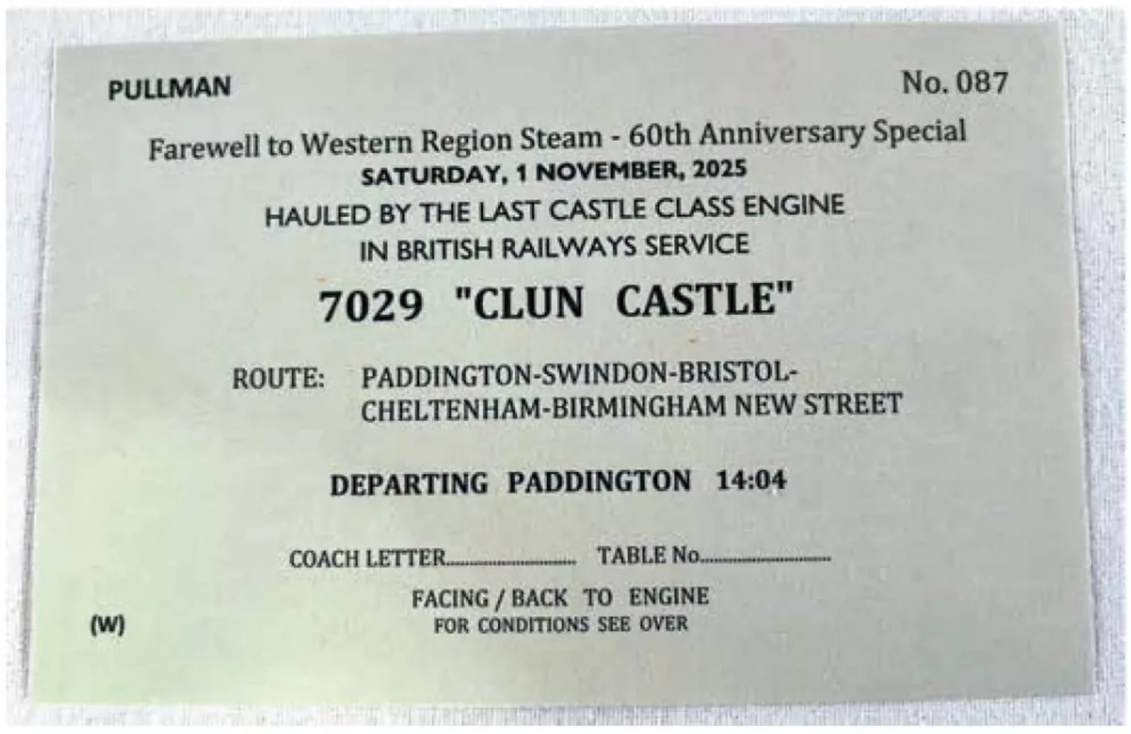
After servicing in Bristol East Depot, the train then headed back for Birmingham.

Although it departed Bristol 52 minutes late against its booked time of 7.47pm, its arrival back at Widney Manor station at 11pm was just 11 minutes behind schedule thanks to reduced wait times on booked stops.

Pre-order Issue 340: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.



No. 7029 *Clun Castle* back in Paddington on November 1. VT


PULLMAN No. 087

Farewell to Western Region Steam - 60th Anniversary Special
SATURDAY, 1 NOVEMBER, 2025
HAULED BY THE LAST CASTLE CLASS ENGINE
IN BRITISH RAILWAYS SERVICE

7029 "CLUN CASTLE"

ROUTE: PADDINGTON-SWINDON-BRISTOL-
CHELTENHAM-BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET

DEPARTING PADDINGTON 14:04

COACH LETTER..... TABLE No.....

FACING / BACK TO ENGINE
FOR CONDITIONS SEE OVER

(W)

A reproduction of the 1965 ticket given to 2025 passengers. VT

A VT statement said: "Only Vintage Trains could have done this as no other steam locomotive currently registered for use on the national main line railway has such a pedigree of hauling last trains.

"There was great attention to detail; *Clun Castle* is painted in authentic BR Western Region livery and retains all its original name and number plates. For this recreation, it also wore an exact copy of the 1965 headboard and had GWR style 7029 numbers repainted on the buffer beam, as carried on the original tour. Passengers were given a reproduction of the 1965 ticket."

Managing director Nick Ralls added: "The trip was super, with some excellent running from *Clun Castle*. Once we arrived at Paddington, the locomotive had a swarm of admirers around it who seemed to appear from both the train and the station in general.

"It did feel special in the recreation of this small but important part of history, marking the anniversary of the original run in 1965."

➜ **As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 336, Vintage Trains will be running its 'Polar Express' 90-minute trips from Birmingham Moor Street starting on Friday, November 21. From November 22, there will be four opportunities on each weekend, at 12.30pm, 2.30pm, 4.30pm and 6.30pm, with an additional 10.30am train on Saturday, December 20, and Sunday, December 21. For more details and to book, visit vintagetrains.co.uk**

Double Bulleid bookings for RTC's Christmas steam outings

By Tim Hobman

THE Railway Touring Company is offering two separate steam-hauled tours with a festive theme in the run-up to Christmas.

The first excursion will see Merchant Navy Pacific No. 35028 *Clan Line* haul 'The Sherborne Christmas Carol' on Wednesday, December 3 to either Sherborne or the Yeovil Railway Centre.

Steam-hauled from London Victoria, the train will head via Clapham Junction and onto the Waterloo-Reading Line for the next passenger pick-up at Staines. From here, it will run via the Chertsey Branch Line to pick up the South West Main Line for more passenger pick-ups at Woking and Basingstoke.

At Worting Junction, the train takes the West of England Main Line, passing through Andover and Salisbury, to the first destination of Sherborne. Here, passengers are expected to have just over three-and-a-half hours to explore the historic market town. There will also be the opportunity to take part in a specially arranged carol service at Sherborne Abbey.

Museum turning visit

Those who choose to stay on the train will be taken to Yeovil Junction and the Yeovil Railway Centre, where the locomotive will be turned and serviced. There will be three hours for passengers to look around the centre before the return trip via the same route.

After passengers are collected from Sherborne, the trip back to the capital will see passengers set down at their joining stations.

The next tour is planned for Saturday, December 6 under the title of 'The Rochester Dickensian Christmas Express,' with West Country 4-6-2 No. 34028 *Eddystone* in charge of the train from Newbury.

Taking the route north-east on the Reading-Taunton line from Newbury, the next passenger pick-up is planned for Reading as the train joins the Great Western Main Line. There will be more pick-ups at Maidenhead and then Slough, before the tour leaves the Great Western Main Line at Acton and takes the West London Line for the final passenger pick-up at West Brompton.

Beyond the suburbs

After negotiating the south London suburbs, the train is planned to head into Kent on the Chatham Main Line to Rochester. There is expected to be just over three hours to explore Rochester, with the city centre being Dickensian themed for the festive period.

The return journey is planned to be via the same route as the outward trip, setting down passengers at their joining stations on the way back to Newbury.

As an added treat, Father Christmas is expected to make an appearance on the train at some point during the day.

Tickets are available in Premier Dining, First Class and Standard Class for both tours, with a discount for junior travellers.

For more information and to book seats, visit www.railwaytouring.net

Britannia on the 'Santa Steam Express'

BR Standard Class 7 No. 70000 *Britannia* will head Steam Dreams' 'Santa Steam Express' on Saturday, December 20 and Monday, December 22 from London Victoria.

Each tour will last 90 minutes and involve a circular route out through the London suburbs, with plenty of Christmas festivities onboard. There are four tours scheduled to run each day, all set to be behind *Britannia*, departing at 9.15am, 11.45am, 3.15pm and 5.15pm.

Tickets are available in Coach Class, Club Class, or a private compartment for these tours. Each guest will receive refreshments and children will get a gift from Santa.

For more details and to book, visit steamdreams.co.uk

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Brexit licence glitch sees RPSI trains shunted into sidings

By Hugh Dougherty

TRAINS operated by the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland on Irish Rail track have been temporarily shunted to the sidings by a Railway Undertaking Licence glitch occasioned by Brexit.

An immediate effect was the cancellation of the society's 'Mighty Kingdom,' the 071 Class diesel-hauled railtour. Using the RPSI's Dublin-based heritage Cravens coaches on Saturday, October 18, it was booked from Dublin Connolly to Killarney and Tralee, with return to Dublin Houston, via Portarlington. The society issued refunds to participants.

RPSI chairman Peter Rigney said: "We must have a Railway Undertaking Licence issued by the Commission for Rail Regulation to operate on Irish Rail. Our existing licence expired on October 8 and the CRR informed us that it had received legal advice to the effect that it couldn't be renewed as we had done previously.

"To do so, we must be registered as a company in the Republic of Ireland as a European Union state. As it is, we are registered in Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and are therefore unable to renew our licence at present. It is a direct result of Brexit, and it also affects many non-railway companies headquartered in the UK doing business in the Republic of Ireland.

"It has nothing to do with our safety accreditation for operating on Irish Rail."

Peter added that the CRR, with which the society has excellent relations, has been very helpful, but that there are complexities around establishing an RPSI operating company domiciled in Dublin which are taking time. "We are taking the same route at Translink, the Belfast-based bus and rail operator," said Peter. "Translink has an operating company address in Dublin which allows it to run its buses and trains, such as its share of the 'Enterprise' service across the border, and we now have to follow the same route. We are confident that all the procedures can be complete in time for us to run our popular Santa steam trains out of Dublin this year."

Catriona Keenahan, CRR's head of governance and regulation, told *Heritage Railway*: "A Railway Undertaking Licence lasts five years. The RPSI licence expired on October 8, 2025, and the society is currently applying for a new licence which requires that it is established in a member state of the European Union. As soon as the full application is received from RPSI, the licence will be issued."



***Slieve Gullion,* shown here after restoration at Whitehead, is in store at Dublin Connolly shed, awaiting the outcome of the licence application process.** RPSI

In the meantime, two RPSI steam locomotives are stored in Dublin Connolly locomotive shed, the society's Dublin operating base, pending the granting of the new licence. Both are Great Northern Railway of Ireland 4-4-0s, Q class Nos. 131 and 171 *Slieve Gullion*. No. 131 has been in action on Irish Rail tracks and *Slieve Gullion* was moved, after extensive restoration, from Whitehead to Dublin in January for running-in and return to service. As there are currently still no arrangements for operating steam trains on Northern Ireland Railways lines, the Dublin operation has carried the flag for RPSI steam over the last few years.

The only RPSI steam trains in Northern Ireland are limited to operations within the society's trackwork at Whitehead station and a full programme of Santa trains is planned there for the festive season.

Wine and dine to Edinburgh Christmas market via Midland Pullman

MIDLAND Pullman is running the 'Edinburgh Christmas Pullman' from North Wales to Edinburgh on its restored HST set.

Departing from Bangor on Monday, December 1, the train will head east along the North Wales Main Line, picking up additional passengers at Llandudno Junction, Colwyn Bay, Rhyl, Flint and Chester. From here, the tour will take the Chester -Warrington Line for more passengers at Frodsham and Warrington Bank Quay. Picking up the West Coast Main Line, the next pick-up point is planned to be Wigan North Western, followed by Preston.

With all passengers on board, the train will then head north through Carlisle and across the border at Carstairs South Junction, taking the route via Kirknewton and Haymarket and into Edinburgh's busy Waverley station.

Passengers will have about three hours to explore the city, which will be transformed into a winter wonderland and host a Christmas market for the season. The return journey will take the same route as the outward trip, setting down passengers at their joining stations en route back to Bangor.

Tickets are available in Pullman Dining or First Class non-dining. For more details and to book, visit midlandpullman.com

Original sign gifting means return to new Willenhall station

A HERITAGE sign from the original Willenhall station is to be installed at the Black Country Town's new station.

Willenhall History and Heritage Society gifted the red sign to West Midlands Mayor Richard Parker for use on the new station, one or two being built on the Walsall to Wolverhampton line, the other being Darlaston.

The Willenhall Bilston Street railway station was built by the Grand Junction Railway and closed in 1965 during the Beeching Cuts.

The sign, which dates from Nationalisation in 1948, was given to the heritage society after being discovered among debris at the local Masons Sawmill following a fire. The group cleaned it, strengthened it, and replaced the damaged end to bring it back to a useable condition.

Society chairman Brian Read said: "We repaired it in the hope it could be displayed and the new railway station is the perfect place."

Coun Adrian Andrew, deputy leader of Walsall Council and West Midlands Rail Executive board member, said: "It's great to see this historic sign preserved and proudly displayed as part of the new station development in Willenhall. As we invest in the future of the borough, it's important to honour our past and be proud of our heritage."



West Midlands Mayor Richard Parker (centre) with members of the Willenhall History and Heritage Society and the historic sign which will welcome passengers again at the new Willenhall station when it opens in 2026. WMCA

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‘Chester Christmas Explorer’ behind Class 37 pair is booked for Pathfinder Tours’ penultimate offering

By Tim Hobman

PATHFINDERTours is to run a pre-Christmas excursion from Oxfordshire to Shrewsbury or Chester on Saturday, November 22 behind two Class 37s.

Starting out from Oxfordshire Parkway, the tour will head along the Cherwell Valley Line for more passengers at Oxford, then south onto the Great Western Main Line heading west. The next passenger pick-up point is Swindon, before diverting onto the Golden Valley Line for further passenger pick-ups at Kemble, Stroud, Stonehouse and Gloucester.

Taking the Gloucester-Newport Line, the final stations for passengers to join the tour are scheduled to be Lydney and Chepstow. Continuing on to Newport, the tour will turn north on the Welsh Marches route through Abergavenny, Hereford, Leominster and Ludlow, before arriving at Shrewsbury.

At Shrewsbury, passengers have the option of alighting here for a stop of just under seven hours. Those who choose to stay aboard have the option of heading to Chester via Wrexham General for about four hours to explore the city.

There is a third option on the tour for a small supplementary fare, which involves remaining on the train for a mini-tour around the Manchester area. After leaving Chester, the tour will head along the Warrington Line, via Frodsham and Warrington Bank Quay to the West Coast Main Line, then via Eccles to Manchester.

Heading for Rochdale on the Calder Valley Line, the circular tour will run via Burnley and Blackburn to once again pick up the West Coast Main Line to Warrington Bank Quay, and retrace the route to Chester.

Once back at Chester, passengers who alighted earlier in the day will rejoin the train, before it takes the route back to Shrewsbury and retracing the outward route, setting down passengers at their joining stations.

At the time of writing, Premier Dining and First Class tickets were fully booked, but some Standard Class tickets remained.

For more information and to book seats, visit www.pathfindertours.co.uk



The second steam trip over the ‘Varsity Line’ was the Railway Touring Company’s ‘The Chiltern Explorer’ from Manchester Piccadilly to Reading on November 1, seen passing through Pangbourne. JAMES TAVINER

First steam trips on new ‘Varsity Line’

THE first steam passenger service over the new East West Rail route between Bicester and Milton Keynes ran on October 25 behind Bulleid West Country light Pacific No. 34028 *Eddystone*, hauling the Railway Touring Company’s ‘Varsity Explorer’ from Slough to Chester.

The last steam passenger train over the line was in 1967 and the last steam run over it was in September 1988 when LMS 4-6-2 No. 6201 *Princess Elizabeth* went west with its support coach from the Wolverton Works 150th anniversary open day.



Right: Fireman Josh Young and driver Bill Monteith are seen with No. 34028 *Eddystone* at the new East West Rail water stop in in the former Down platform area at Claydon station, which closed on January 1, 1968. The Claydon LNER signalbox is now preserved on the Swindon & Cricklade Railway. PHIL MARSH

Book for festive Beamish and Durham trip

A UK Railtours tour to the North East will offer passengers the chance to visit either Beamish Museum or Durham just before Christmas.

Under the title of ‘Beamish at Christmas and Festive Durham,’ the tour will run from Finsbury Park on Saturday, December 20 behind a GB Railfreight Class 66.

The first part of the tour is scheduled to head south on what would have been an empty coaching stock move from Finsbury Park to King’s Cross. From King’s Cross, the tour will head north on the East Coast Main Line, picking up at Potters Bar, Stevenage, Peterborough and York.

Off-train options

On arrival at Durham, passengers will have the option of being transferred to road coaches to spend three hours at Beamish. Those who choose not to attend Beamish will have the opportunity to explore the city of Durham, which will be in full swing with seasonal festivities.

The journey home is planned to be via the same route as the outward trip, setting down passengers at their joining stations.

At the time of writing, tickets for First Class Dining were sold out, but there was still availability in First Class Non-Dining and Standard Class for this tour. There is also a supplementary fare for those that choose to visit Beamish.

For more details and to book, visit www.ukrailtours.com

Doncaster's new rail training centre named after LNER's chief engineer

By Robin Jones



Sir Nigel Gresley, who designed *Flying Scotsman*. GRESLEY SOCIETY TRUST



Network Rail's The Gresley Institute training centre. NR

NETWORK Rail's new railway training centre has been named in honour of LNER's iconic locomotive designer, Sir Nigel Gresley. The Gresley Institute, near Lakeside, in Doncaster, where his legendary locomotives were built, is set to train up to 1000 workers in the rail industry each year and was named in a public competition.

The name was a clear winner, receiving 57% of the vote from a shortlist of four, the others being Flying Scotsman House, Duddington and Bray House, and The Corridor. The competition was organised jointly with City of Doncaster Council and attracted more than 3500 responses, and the winning name was revealed at a ceremony held with rail industry and South Yorkshire dignitaries on October 31.

Gresley Society Trust chairman Philip Benham said the group was "delighted" to see such a clear result from the vote. "Sir Nigel Gresley lived in Doncaster for many years, and his greatest engineering achievements were created here – including in his streamlined trains of the 1930s, Britain's first high-speed trains.

"Development and innovation were at the heart of Sir Nigel's designs, so it is entirely appropriate that his name should be associated with the institute where the rail industry's future professionals will learn their skills."

NR business change manager Sarah Newman said: "The Gresley Institute will become a cornerstone for training the next generation of rail industry professionals," adding that the name reflected Doncaster's "proud railway legacy."

The college was built to train engineers for High Speed 2 but was taken over by NR after the scheme was partially scrapped. It has 21 classrooms across two floors, with equipment including signalling simulators – both traditional lever-pull models and modern systems.

With strong links to existing educational provision and a focus on STEM learning (science, technology, engineering and maths), the centre will support training both for Network Rail and the wider rail industry.

The first delegates began attending the centre on October 6.

Doncaster's Mayor, Coun Ros Jones, said: "It is truly fantastic to see this site that was established to support training in the rail industry continuing in that dedicated purpose.

"Doncaster has a long and noble history of rail and an even brighter one with this facility, and the range of expertise in rail companies that call Doncaster home. Doncaster is the newest city in the north of England and has so many opportunities being developed to boost our economy, grow our industry specialisms and create a jobs, training, and ambition."

Branch Line Society's ECML Christmas tour

THE Branch Line Society will run a festive excursion along the East Coast Main Line behind a Class 66 on Friday, December 19 under the title of 'The Christmas Train.'

Starting from King's Cross, the tour will head north to the next passenger pick-up at Peterborough.

It will head to Doncaster to collect more passengers and then York. After York, the train is bound for the first stop of Durham, where passengers have the option to spend three hours in the city. Those who choose to stay aboard can continue on to Newcastle for about two-and-a-half hours there. In both cities, Christmas festivities will be well underway.

The return journey is planned to initially follow the outward route back to York and Doncaster, setting down passengers at each station after collecting those who choose to alight at Durham.

From Doncaster, there is a small diversion planned to take in Down Decoy Yard, and a swap of locomotive is also on the cards.

The Class 66 is scheduled to be exchanged with a Class 69 to take the train back to the capital. Having departed from Down Decoy Yard, the route home is planned to take the East Coast Main Line south, back to Peterborough to set down passengers, and then on King's Cross.

It is expected that both locomotives will not have worked a passenger train before.

On board, a raffle supporting Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity will be held.

Tickets remain available in all classes; for more details and to book, visit branchline.uk

Petersfield's listed 'box is safe!

PETERSFIELD'S Grade II-listed LSWR Type 3a signalbox, which on October 26 signalled its last train, bringing 141 years of history to an end, has been reprieved by Network Rail after earlier being earmarked for demolition as part of major upgrades of the Portsmouth Direct Line.

The signalbox replaced an earlier structure when it opened in 1884. The last service to signalled manually on the Farncombe to Petersfield section was the 2P77 southbound South Western Railway service.

The day afterwards, Farncombe 'box was reduced to rubble. However, NR has changed its mind regarding the Petersfield one and will retain it as a training facility.

As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 337, Haslemere 'box will be turned into a heritage centre, but its Petersfield counterpart is considered to be too close to the tracks to be opened for public use.

Signalling on this stretch is now controlled digitally from a central hub in Basingstoke.



The reprieved signalbox at Petersfield crossing. NRF

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Running 18 minutes ahead of schedule, Battle of Britain Pacific No. 34067 *Tangmere* heads south at Stockber on its way from Carlisle to Carnforth fith the return journey of a Northern Belle Settle and Carlisle excursion. JOSEPH JENNER

November

21 York Excursion
Colchester North, York, and return. Diesel-hauled between Colchester and Peterborough.
Loco: 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley*. SD

22 'The Chester Christmas Explorer'
Oxford Parkway, Chester, and return.
Locos: 2x WCR Class 37s. PT

22 'The Edinburgh Christmas Market'
York, Edinburgh, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

22 'The Christmas Cheshireman'
Bristol Temple Meads, Chester, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

24 'Edinburgh Christmas Pullman'
Swindon, Edinburgh Waverley, and return.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

26 'Edinburgh Christmas Pullman'
Oxford, Edinburgh Waverley, and return.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

27 'The York Yuletide Express'
Norwich, York, and return. Diesel-hauled from Peterborough-Norwich.
Loco: 44871. RTC

27 Edinburgh Christmas Markets (Day 1, outward)
King's Cross-Edinburgh only.
Loco: 60532 *Blue Peter*. SD

28 'Edinburgh Christmas Pullman'
Cardiff Central, Edinburgh Waverley, and return.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

29 'The Bath & Bristol Christmas Express'
Paddington, Bristol Temple Meads, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 34028 *Eddystone*. RTC

29 'The Capital Christmas Express'
Newcastle, King's Cross, and return. Electric-hauled return.
Loco: Steam: TBA. Electric: 86259 *Les Ross*. RTC

29 Edinburgh Christmas Markets (Day 3; Forth Excursion)
Circular tour from Edinburgh Waverley.
Loco: 60532 *Blue Peter*. SD

29 'The South Wales Industrial Explorer'
Derby, Swansea, and return, including rare track routings.
Locos: 50008 *Thunderer* + 1x DB Cargo Class 66. UKRT

30 Edinburgh Christmas Markets (Day 4, return)
Edinburgh Waverley-King's Cross only. Diesel-hauled from Carlisle.
Loco: 60532 *Blue Peter*. SD

December

1 'Edinburgh Christmas Pullman'
Bagnor, Edinburgh Waverley, and return.
Loco: Midland Pullman HST. MP

2 'The Bath Christmas Market Express'
Rugby, Bath, and return. Diesel-hauled between Rugby and Southall.
Loco: TBA. ST

3 'The Sherbourne Christmas Carol'
London Victoria, Yeovil Junction, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 35028 *Clan Line*. RTC

3 'The Christmas White Rose'
Birmingham New Street, York, and return.
Loco: 7029 *Clun Castle*. VT

4'The Bath Christmas Market Express'
Dorridge, Bath, and return. Diesel-hauled between Dorridge and Southall.
Loco: TBA. ST

6 'The Rochester Dickensian Christmas Express'
Newbury, Rochester, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 34028 *Eddystone*. RTC

6 'The Edinburgh Christmas Market'
York, Edinburgh, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

6'The Bath Christmas Market Express'
Ely, Bath, and return. Diesel-hauled between Ely and Southall.
Loco: TBA. ST

9 Bath Excursion
London Victoria, Bath, and return. Diesel-hauled from Salisbury-London.
Loco: 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*. SD

10 'The Canterbury Christmas Express'
London Victoria, Canterbury West, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

10 'The Christmas White Rose'
Dorridge, York, and return.
Loco: 60163 *Tornado*. VT

12 'The Bath Christmas Market Express'
Three Bridges, Bath, and return. Diesel-hauled between Three Bridges and Southall.
Loco: TBA. ST

13 'The Bath & Bristol Christmas Express'
Three Bridges, Bristol Temple Meads, and return.
Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: 34028 *Eddystone*. RTC

13 'The Worcester Christmas Express'
Manchester Victoria, Worcester Shrub Hill, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

14 'The Festive Flying Scotsman'
Finsbury Park, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and return. Steam-hauled between York and Newcastle.
Loco: 60103 *Flying Scotsman*. UKRT

17 'The Christmas White Rose'
Cambridge, York, and return. Steam-hauled outward only.
Loco: TBA. RTC

17 Oxford and Bicester Excursion
Southend Central, Bicester Village, and return. Steam-hauled between West London and Bicester Village.
Loco: 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*. SD

20 'The Pathfinder Finale'
Salisbury, Manchester Victoria, and return.
Loco: D1015 *Western Champion*. PT

20 'The Edinburgh Christmas Market'
York, Edinburgh Waverley, and return. Steam-hauled throughout.
Loco: TBA. RTC

20 'The Yuletide Express'
London Victoria, York, and return. Steam-hauled outward only.
Loco: TBA. RTC

20 'Santa Steam Express' (AM and PM)
Circular tour from London Victoria.
Loco: 70000 *Britannia*. SD

22 'Santa Steam Express' (AM and PM)
Circular tour from London Victoria.
Loco: 70000 *Britannia*. SD

30 'An Awkard Week Adventure'
Rare tracks tour from Peterborough.
Locos: 2x class 37s TBA. UKRT

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.

Regular Tours

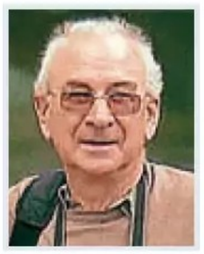
W/Es until Dec 21 + Dec 22/23 'The Polar Express'
Out and back trip from Birmingham New Street.
Loco: 7029 *Clun Castle* or 5043 *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe*. VT

Fris-Suns Nov 29-Dec 21 + Dec 22/23 'The Polar Express'
Out-and-back trip from Euston.
Loco: 'Black Five' TBA. PNP

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
PNP PNP Events londonthepolarexpressride.com
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
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WCR West Coast Railways 0333 996 6720

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In his latest column, **Don Benn** completes his look at the work of 4-6-0s Nos. 7029 *Clun Castle* and 45596 *Bahamas*, this time on 'The Mayflower' return trip from Plymouth, a good run behind West Country Pacific No. 34013 *Okehampton* on the 6pm Waterloo to Salisbury and with the identical locomotive on a summer extra in 1965, plus No. 34026 *Yes Tor* and finishes with the same engine on the footplate on a snowy night in 1966.

I START by continuing my report of 'The Mayflower' on September 6, 2025. Alan Rawlings set out a description o the return runs from Plymouth last issue and Table One shows the detail of this, notable for the very fast start including a minimum of 24mph on Hemerden bank. With 415 tons shared between the two locomotives, in performance terms it wasn't outstanding, but it was the acoustics which made it so enjoyable.

I now move on to some good work by rebuilt West Country class Pacific No. 34013 *Okehampton* on two runs, both in 1965. First, in Table Two is a very good run on the 6pm Waterloo to Exeter Central as far as Salisbury on Wednesday, June 2. With the usual 11-coach load for 400 tons, driver Hooper of Salisbury shed got us to Basingstoke in 47 minutes net for the 47.75 miles, the actual time being just a fraction outside even time. We got adverse signals in the distance from an Up Portsmouth train crossing over at Woking and then held 61-62mph up the 1-in-314/298/304 to milepost 31. Then followed a fine piece of running in the 70s until the slight check outside Basingstoke where we arrived eight minutes early. The restart up the 1-in-249 to Worting Junction was very good, which helped us to get to Andover early, but two checks meant we were two and a half minutes late into Salisbury despite a good climb to Grateley. My notes state that the starts were fast, with the engine being thrashed, especially from the Andover restart to get up to 60mph, falling only to 57 at the top of the 1-in-165 climb. It was also blowing off steam coming away from Andover.

Next is another run with the same engine, this time on another of the 1965 summer extra trains between Waterloo and Exmouth; all were booked for Warship diesel haulage, though all but one were worked by steam. Table Three shows an outstanding run with No. 34013 *Okehampton* on the 11.15am from Exmouth on Saturday, July 24, 1965. I had gone down to Sidmouth Junction on the 8am from Waterloo behind BR Standard Class 5 4-6-0 No. 73022 (HR 338), so that's where I joined the 11.15am back all the way to Waterloo; Table Three shows the detail. The crew were driver Bevan and fireman Jones, from Exmouth Junction, and they had 10 coaches for 355 tons full. All was normal as far as Axminster, but then we made two stops to sort out dragging brakes on one of the coaches. From the restart at Chard Junction, we ran the 56 miles to Salisbury in 55 minutes 51 seconds, at an average of 60.2mph. We had a clear road as the Warship-hauled 11.30am from Exeter was well ahead due to our delay. The running was superb throughout, but especially the climb from milepost 130 to milepost 126¼, cleared at 72½mph. The 86mph down Templecombe bank was unusual and I calculate that the net time would have been about 58 minutes, the fastest I can find on the Rail



Nos. 45596 *Bahamas* and 7029 *Clun Castle* at Plymouth on September 6. ALAN RAWLINGS

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No. 34013 at Woking on May 10, 1967, with the 6.54pm Waterloo to Salisbury. DON BENN

Performance website. From Salisbury, Bill Kiff and Jim Martin took over and made what I think is a record time to Andover with steam on a good load, minimum 60mph up Porton bank; see HR 337.

No. 34013 was not finished yet though, as it reached 100mph at Hurstbourne on the 6pm Down on December 1, 1965 (HR 336). *Okehampton* was built at Brighton in 1945, rebuilt in 1957, and lasted until the end of steam in July 1967, by which time it had done a total of 944,928 miles. From new, it was allocated to Plymouth Friary, then Exmouth Junction, Bricklayers Arms, Brighton in July 1962, and finally to Salisbury in September 1963. This is the main reason why it was such a great performer; it was always well-maintained and looked nice as Salisbury had a reputation for looking after its locomotives.

Finally in this section, Table Four shows an impressive run on the 11.15am from Exmouth to Salisbury on Saturday, August 21, 1965. The locomotive was rebuilt West Country class Pacific No. 34026 *Yes Tor* and the crew Jury and Johnson of Exmouth Junction, again with 10 coaches for 355 tons full. We left Axminster just four minutes late and ran well until catching the 11.30am from Exeter at Sherborne but did not see it again thereafter. The schedule of the 11.15am allowed extra time due to the 11.30am from Exeter in front, so it was no surprise that we caught it as we were two and a quarter minutes early through Yeovil Junction in pouring rain. Net time of this run was 63 minutes.

High speed in the snow

I finish this time with a high-speed dash with No. 34026, timed from the footplate; details in Table Five. This run was one of three on a cold and snowy week in January 1966, when Dave Parsons, a friendly Nine Elms number four link driver, worked the 5.30pm Down for most of that week. He had wanted me to ride from Waterloo but at that time of day there were still too many people in authority around and it would have been easy to spot a civvie on the footplate, even in the dark, so I had to be content with riding from Basingstoke. Throughout the week, we had the standard 11-coach load of about 410 tons full and a different locomotive each evening, each with its own characteristics.

On Tuesday, January 11, we had No. 34036 *Westward Ho!* After leaving just over a minute late, we got checked at the start and again at Surbiton, the recovery from which prompted Dave to use full regulator and 40% cut-off, which produced 78mph in the Byfleet dip before the engine was eased at Woking. This was during the period of slow line running between Farnborough and Hook, so the time to the Basingstoke was more than 60 minutes, though we were slightly early on arrival. There I joined the crew up front and we were away just over three minutes late in the snow. It was soon clear that the engine was steaming well, though heavy on coal but quite clean, unlike some Bulleids. It was, however, very rough riding, and this was probably why Dave eased off after regaining speed following the severe signal check at Micheldever, the cause of which was unknown. The 15-20lb difference between boiler and steam chest pressure was maybe a little on the high side for a Bulleid on full regulator.

On the Wednesday, Dave had a rest day and the 5.30pm Down was worked by No. 35017 *Belgium Marine* with driver Aplin, Nine Elms number

➔

> "No words can adequately describe the thrill of this never-to-be-forgotten total steam experience on a dark and snowy night."

TABLE ONE: PLYMOUTH TO EXETER ST DAVIDS

Date	Saturday, September 6, 2025
Train	The Mayflower
Locos	Castle Class 4-6-0 No. 7029 *Clun Castle* LMS Jubilee 4-6-0 No. 45596 *Bahamas*
Load	11 coaches, 387 tons tare, 415 tons gross
7029 crew	Andy Taylor and Sam Perry
45596 crew	Kevin Cronin and Steve Matthews
Timed by	Alan Rawlings
Position	First coach
Weather	Fine

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Plymouth	0.00	0.00	00	00	
Mutley Tunnel	0.40		01	51	20
Lipson Jct	1.54	3.00	03	24	59
Laira Jct	1.92		03	53	62
Tavistock Jct	2.97	6.00	04	51	63/64
Plympton	3.97		05	46	63
MP 241	4.97		06	51	46
MP 240	5.97		08	22	29
MP 239¾	6.22		08	53	24
MP 239½	6.47		09	28	25
Hemerden Sdgs	6.72	11.00	09	57	36
Cornwood	8.34		12	08	51
Ivybridge Stn	10.68		14	15	49
Ivybridge	11.65	16.00	17	42	15*
Bittaford Viaduct	12.94		20	24	40
Wrangaton	13.98		21	43	54
Aish Crossovers	15.48	20.00	23	08	65
Brent	16.33		23	58	64
Marley Tunnel	17.70		25	18	58
Rattery	18.48	23.30	26	03	60/57*
Tigley	20.48		28	05	63
MP 224	21.98		29	29	67/61*
Totnes	23.13	28.00	30	35	66
MP 221	24.98		32	27	58
MP 220	25.98		33	37	56
MP 219	26.98		34	43	52
Dainton Smt	27.98	34.00	36	10	31
Stoneycombe SB	29.05		37	26	55/63
Aller Jct	30.91		39	13	55
Newton Abbot WJct	31.48	41.00	39	56	59
Newton Abbot	31.93	43.00	40	21	62
Bishopstainton	34.98		43	19	61
Teignmouth	37.06	48.30	47	02	18* sigs
MP 208	37.98		48	34	37
Clerk's Tunnel	39.04		50	41	5*/11* sigs
Kennaway Tunnel	39.44		51	45	23
Dawlish	39.83	56.30	52	40	27/5* sigs
Dawlish Warren	41.48	59.00	57	54	27
			sigs stop		
Signal E25	42.20		59	49	0*
			64	15	
Cockwood	42.76		65	57	41
Starcross	43.53		66	55	62
Powderham FB	45.36		68	47	67
Exminster	47.29		70	27	74
M5 O/B	48.10		71	07	75
Marsh Barton	49.95		72	36	71
St Thomas	51.15		73	54	32
Exeter St Davids	52.08	73.30	77	17	

* brakes or speed restriction

TABLE TWO: WATERLOO TO SALISBURY

Date	Wednesday, June 2, 1965
Train	6pm Waterloo to Exeter Central
Loco	West Country class 4-6-2 No. 34013 *Okehampton*
Load	11 coaches, 371 tons tare, 400 tons gross
Driver	Hooper, Salisbury MPD
Weather	Fine
Recorder	Don Benn from first coach

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed	
Waterloo	0.00	0.00	00	00		R/T
Vauxhall	1.29		03	24	38	
Queens Road	2.81		05	12	51	
Clapham Junction	3.93	7.00	06	59	37*	
Earlsfield	5.58		09	18	50	
Wimbledon	7.24		11	10	56½	
Raynes Park	8.64		12	34	62	
New Malden	9.78		13	38	65	
Berrylands	10.98		14	45	63	
Surbiton	12.04		15	45	65	
Hampton Court Jct	13.34	18.00	16	55	71½	
Esher	14.39		17	47	74	
Hersham	15.91		19	01	75½	
Walton	17.08		19	57	73	
Oatlands Box	18.12		20	48	71½	
Weybridge	19.15		21	37	74½	
Byfleet	20.40		22	40	77½	
West Byfleet	21.68		23	43	72/60*	sigs
Woking	24.29		26	15	61	
Woking Jct	24.75	28.00	26	39	61½	
Brookwood	27.99		29	49	62	
Pirbright Jct	29.49		31	22	62	
MP 31	31.00		32	44	61	
Sturt Lane Jct	32.15		33	57	62½	
Farnborough	33.20		34	57	63½	
Fleet	36.48		37	44	73/77½	
Winchfield	39.83		40	22	76/75	
Hook	42.16		42	13	78/75½	
Newnham Siding	43.70		43	25	76/* sigs	
Basingstoke	47.75	55.00	47	53		8 early
	0.00	0.00	00	00		¾ early
Worting Jct	2.55	5.30	05	03	43½	
MP 51	3.35		06	02	47½	
Oakley	4.63		07	36	57	
Overton	7.80		10	38	70½	
Whitchurch	11.35		13	36	74/72	
Hurstbourne	13.39		15	11	75	
MP 62½	14.85		16	25	68½/72½	
Andover	18.60	23.00	20	32		
	0.00	0.00	00	00		½ min late
Red Post Jct	1.30		03	31	44	
MP 68¾	2.50		04	55	57½/60	
Grateley	6.35		08	50	58½/57	
Allington Box	9.25		11	36	70	
Porton	11.90		14	28	32*/62	tsr half mile
Tunnel Junction	16.21	19.30	22	08	7*	sigs
Salisbury	17.31	22.00	25	26		2½ late

* brakes or speed restriction
net time to Basingstoke 47 minutes
Andover to Salisbury 20½ minutes



***Okehampton* passing Clapham Junction on May 14, 1965, with an Up semi-fast train from Salisbury** COLOUR RAIL

TABLE THREE: SIDMOUTH JUNCTION TO SALISBURY

Date	Saturday, July 24, 1965
Train	11.15am Exmouth tomWaterloo
Loco	West Country Class 4-6-2 No. 34013 *Okehampton*
Load	10 coaches, 324 tons tare, 355 tons gross
Crew	Bevan and Jones, Exmouth Junction
Recorder	Don Benn
Weather	Fine

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Sidmouth Junction	0.00	0.00	00	00	4¼ late
MP 157	2.30		07	15	47/42
Honiton	4.60		10	36	35/38
MP 153½	6.80		12	33	36½
MP 150	9.30		16	17	74
Seaton Junction	11.50	18.00	17	30	
	0.00	0.00	00	00	
MP 146¼	1.55		02	59	55/58
Axminster	3.30	6.30	05	16	
	0.00	0.00	00	00	1¼ late
			2 stops#		53/0*
Chard Junction	5.10		16	01	restart
Hewish LC	10.60		25	01	52½
MP 133¼	11.40		25	59	51
Crewkerne	13.15		27	45	74
MP 130	14.65		28	52	83
Hardington Sdg	16.65		30	20	80
MP 126¼	18.40		31	45	72½
Sutton Bingham	19.70		32	51	77½/80
Yeovil Junction	21.95	29.00	34	35	78/67½
Sherborne	23.55		38	26	73
MP 115½	29.15		40	51	51
Milborne Port	30.20		42	11	57
MP 113¼	31.40		43	21`	58½
Templecombe	32.60	39.30	44	28	75
MP 110	34.65		45	56	86
MP 107½	37.15		47	58	63
Gillingham	39.40		49	56	79
Semley	43.50		54	00	47½
Tisbury	48.10		58	45	70½
Dinton	52.80		62	23	76/77½
Wilton South	58.60	64.30	67	21	41*
MP 85¼	59.40		68	37	45/47
Salisbury	61.10	69.00	71	52	4 late

Booked for Warship DL
net time 58 minutes
Start to stop average Chard Junction to Salisbury 60.2 mph
dragging brakes on one coach
* brakes or speed restriction

three link in charge. Although this train was booked for Merchant Navy haulage, on Thursday, January 13 our locomotive was No. 34012 *Launceston*. After leaving more than four minutes late, we reached Basingstoke on time after 77mph at Byfleet and the usual checks after Woking, not helped by a boat train in front at 5.23pm.

Once again, I joined the crew at Basingstoke and soon realised that this was a very different engine to No. 34036. It was very smooth riding and clean, plus firing was light, but the locomotive had a tendency to be light-footed and slipped a couple of times.

No. 34012 was a bit sluggish and inclined to shake the fire towards the front of the firebox. The difference between boiler and steam chest pressure was only 10-15lb and despite the light firing, the engine blew off steam twice. We were just getting going off the long track relaying slack when Dave spotted adverse signals through the other side of Wallers Ash tunnel, and so the brakes came on.

My final run with Dave Parsons that week was on Friday, January 14, and it proved to be the best with an engine in tip-top condition – No. 34026 *Yes Tor*. The prelude was just under 80mph in the Byfleet dip, which took us past Woking in 26 minutes 53 seconds despite a very slow Windsor lines start and eight minutes 35 seconds to Clapham Junction. We topped milepost 31 at 65mph, but checks ensured that we were more than an hour to the Basingstoke stop. Up front again and this time with my tape recorder, I made sure that the rough and tumble of the footplate was recorded for my archives, with the initial section to Wootton consigned to tape. No. 34026 was rough riding but free steaming and strong, with little difference between boiler and steam chest pressure, truly a tribute to the design of Bulleid's boiler. We made the fastest start of the week to Worting and then took the two-and-a-half-mile-long track relaying check a little less slowly than on the two previous nights, recovering well to be doing just over 70mph at Micheldever. I



On July 7, 1962, No. 34026 *Yes Tor* arrives at Salisbury with the 12.42pm from Templecombe. DON BENN

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TABLE FOUR: SEATON JUNCTION TO SALISBURY

Date	Saturday, August 21, 1965
Train	11.15am Exmouth to Waterloo
Loco	West Country Class 4-6-2 No. 34026 *Yes Tor*
Load	10 coaches, 324 tons tare, 355 tons gross
Crew	Jury and Johnson, Exmouth Junction
Recorder	Don Benn
Weather	Cloudy, heavy rain at Yeovil Junction

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed
Seaton Junction	0.00	0.00	00	00	4½ late
MP 146¼	1.55		02	54	61½
Axminster	3.30	6.30	05	21	
	0.00	0.00	00	00	4 late
Chard Junction	5.10		07	06	62½/67½
Hewish LC	10.60		12	38	63
MP 133¼	11.40		13	28	57
Crewkerne	13.15		15	10	74½
MP 130	14.65		16	18	80
Hardington Sdg	16.65		17	51	75
MP 126¼	18.40		19	27	65½
Sutton Bingham	19.70		20	42	74
Yeovil Junction	21.95	29.00	22	42	61
Sherborne	23.55		28	53	19* sigs
MP 115½	29.15		33	25	38/35
Milborne Port	30.20		34	58	49
MP 113¼	31.40		36	17	53½
Templecombe	32.60	39.30	37	31	68
MP 110	34.65		39	13	74½
MP 107½	37.15		41	46	50
Gillingham	39.40		44	03	68½
Semley	43.50		48	30	47/70½
Tisbury	48.10		53	18	63
Dinton	52.80		57	17	71/75
Wilton South	58.60	64.30	62	33	40*
MP 85¼	59.40		63	33	38
Salisbury	61.10	69.00	67	43	2¼ late

Booked for Warship DL
net time 63 minutes
Caught Warship on 1130 am from Exeter at Sherborne
* brakes or speed restriction

TABLE FIVE: BASINGSTOKE TO WINCHESTER

Date	Friday, January 14, 1966
Train	5.30pm Waterloo to Weymouth
Loco	West Country class 4-6-2 No. 34026 *Yes Tor*
Load	11 coaches, 374 tons tare, 410 tons gross
Driver	Dave Parsons, Nine Elms
Fireman	Harrington, Nine Elms
Weather	Snow
Recorder	Don Benn from the footplate

	miles	sched	mins	secs	speed	regulator	cut off %	boiler lb	steam chest lb
Basingstoke	0.00	0.00	00	00		¾	55	225	200
Worting Jct	2.51	5.30	05	07	46	full	20	220	215
Wootton	4.75		07	54	48/54½	¾	27	215	200
Steventon	6.20		11	37	trs 19*	shut	30	220	0
Waltham	7.35		14	18	trs 23*	¼	30	220	80
Roundwood	8.45		16	14	53	full	30	220	215
Micheldever	10.31		18	10	70½	full	22	225	220
Weston	12.45		19	55	81	full	20	220	210
Wallers Ash	13.95		21	00	86	full	20/15	225	210
MP 63	15.20		21	50	90	full	22	220	215
Winchester Jct	16.70	21.30	22	48	95	full	22	210	200
Winchester City	18.80	25.00	25	42					

net time 19½ mins



No. 34013 *Okehampton* arriving at Salisbury on July 17, 1962, with a Brighton to Plymouth service DON BENN

was hanging on grimly and praying for a clear road as Dave had kept the regulator 'in the roof' and so despite only 22%, reducing to 20% cut-off, speed was up to 86mph at Wallers Ash.

As we approached the tunnel, the fireman made sure the blower was on and Dave eased *Yes Tor* and told me to stand behind him as we had a slight blow back through the closed firehole doors when we entered the tunnel. Out in the open and back to 22% cut-off, speed soon lifted to 90mph. With clear signals and still on full regulator, speed was allowed to reach 95mph past Winchester Junction to give us a net time from Basingstoke of 19½ minutes, the fastest of the week. No words can adequately describe the thrill of this never-to-be-forgotten total steam experience on a dark and snowy night.

As we went past Winchester Junction, the fireman came across the footplate to look at the speedometer; it was just touching the 100mph mark, probably something that he too would never forget. At Winchester, after I had got down from the footplate, a 'city gent' came up to the front of the train and asked what our speed had been. Reg Elliot, who had been timing from the train, told him with a straight face: "85mph, guv"! Table Five shows the detail of this wonderful run.

We got 78mph before the Eastleigh stop and then made the minus 12-minute connection onto the 'Club Train' back to London, which was hauled by No. 35026 *Lamport & Holt Line,* driven by Pearce, of Eastleigh MPD, who was the driver who gave me my last run before the end of steam in July 1967.

Next time, more about Classes 47 and 52 and No. 35019 on the 'Atlantic Coast Express. HR



No. 34013 at Southampton Central in June 1965 with a train from Bournemouth to Waterloo.
TERENCE JACKSON

21ST CENTURY STEAM IN SUSSEX

The Bluebell Railway's annual autumn event celebrated the giants of the steam world in a rather unusual way: a locomotive line-up where the collective age was just 25 years old! **Owen Hayward** explores the unique theme underneath this particular gala.

If there is one principle that has been absolutely clear in railway preservation, it is that nearly anything is possible. Whether it has been facing daunting engineering challenges, restoring locomotives once thought to be beyond saving, or recovering after being on the brink of collapse, the determination and can-do attitude that fuels many enthusiasts and volunteers has been behind so many astonishing accomplishments. But where some were content with overhauls, to see something already saved given a fresh chance of running again, our heritage sector saw those determined to plug the holes which the scrapping of swathes of locomotives left by starting from zero.

The Bluebell Railway's annual Giants of Steam gala, which this year took place on October 17-19, shone the spotlight on four of these impressive accomplishments of the 21st century. With the youngest operating barely more than a year old, there are few places or events you can visit where the age of a locomotive (and a steam one, in particular) is so drastically less than the line on which it is running.

A first – but not *the* first

BR 9F 2-10-0 No. 92220 *Evening Star* is well-known for being the last steam locomotive built for British Railways in 1960, while the final standard gauge locomotive built for use in the UK was Hunslet Austerity 0-6-0ST works No. 3890 (NCB No. 66), which was completed in 1964. Commercial steam locomotive production would, however, continue for narrow gauge, with the last of these again being built by Hunslet, in 1971, namely 0-4-2ST *Trangkil No. 4*, which was exported to the Trangkil Sugar Mill at Pati, Central Java.

Arguably, perhaps the most high-profile standard gauge locomotive to be completed since the end of commercial production in the UK is Peppercorn A1 Pacific No. 60163 *Tornado*, although depending on how you determine what makes a new-build locomotive, the accolade of the actual first example of this may be claimed by double



***Tornado* catches one of the only glimpses of sunshine to grace the weekend as it approaches Horsted House Farm on October 17.** OWEN HAYWARD



Fairlie No. 11 *Earl of Merioneth* at the Ffestiniog Railway in 1979. That particular locomotive did utilise components from an earlier one of the same name, but even if you count ones built entirely from scratch, the A1 was not the first, with Hunslet saddle tanks completed for Statfold Barn Railway and a Kerr Stuart 'Tattoo' at the Corris Railway in 2005.

Those points aside, what *Tornado* is for certain is the first standard gauge locomotive completed both with main line operation in mind and not to reuse existing parts. The seeds of the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust were sown in 1990 when a small group of enthusiasts wanted to right the wrong of no example of the A1 surviving – considered to be the most cost-effective express passenger locomotive to ever operate in Britain. The fundraising principle of 'an A1 for the price of a pint' (where supporters were encouraged to donate £5 per month to see the dream become a reality) was an early example of a crowdfunding initiative before the term entered common usage. Construction began in 1994 with the rolling of the frames at British Steel's Scunthorpe works.

In 1997, the components moved to the new Darlington Locomotive Works, established in the former Stockton & Darlington Railway carriage works building, and it was there in 2008, after having received a boiler from Deutsche

On October 18, a brief window of opportunity saw all four new-build locomotives lined up at the northern end of Horsted Keynes station. From left to right are *Beachy Head* (completed 2024), *Tornado* (2008), *Betton Grange* (2024) and *Lady of Legend* (2019). OWEN HAYWARD

Bahn works in Meiningen in 2006, that the locomotive moved for the first time under its own steam along a 150-yard stretch of track outside the works. Having completed testing and running-in at the Great Central Railway, in November 2008 it successfully passed main line testing, becoming the first A1 to grace the national network in 53 years.

Since then, *Tornado* has clocked up more than 100,000 miles in main line service, undertook a 100mph test run in 2017 (the first steam locomotive to reach this speed on the British main line since 1968), and has been a guinea pig for in-cab European Train Control System signalling along parts of the Cambrian earlier this year.

On December 10, it will return to the main line once again, hauling Vintage Trains' 'The White Rose' from Birmingham New Street to York, ahead of making more regular appearances on the national network from next year. One thing *Tornado* did do was show that new-build standard gauge proposals had feet, with a fair number started since.

The GWR story

Eight years after the A1SLT was formed, the 6880 Society was established, later becoming the Betton Grange Society. Although there is a plethora of GWR 4-6-0s in preservation, the Grange was one of the less fortunate designs of which none survived. Eighty members of the class were built, and No. 6880 was chosen as it



Above: On October 18, *Betton Grange* worked the first passenger service out of Horsted Keynes' Platform 1 in more than 100 years. OWEN HAYWARD



Right: Following the line-up later that same day, *Lady of Legend* also departed from this platform; the yet-to-weather ballast of the relayed platform road and adjacent sidings is a clear indication of how recently work to bring this line into use has been completed. PHIL BARNES



***Lady of Legend* drifts through Rock Cutting on October 17 with a mixed rake of pre-Nationalisation era Southern Region coaching stock.** OWEN HAYWARD



On the Saturday evening, night shoots took place at Sheffield Park station which saw *Tornado* (pictured) and *Betton Grange* each take a turn positioned in the platform with a rake of blood and custard-liveried Mk. 1 carriages. DANIEL SAWYER

would have been the next in the sequence, A decade after the frames were cut for the A1, so too were those for the Grange.

Unlike *Tornado*, construction of *Betton Grange* saw parts salvaged and borrowed from elsewhere: the boiler comes from GWR Hall No. 7927 *Willington Hall*, while the leading bogie and tender are borrowed from No. 5952 *Cogan Hall* (which the society bought in 2010 with a long-term aim to restore to operational condition).

It took 26 years before the completion of No. 6880, making its first moves under power in April 2024. Its first year in service saw it in high demand, spending the summer at the North Norfolk Railway and making gala appearances at the Battlefield, Great Central and Severn Valley railways. Its public debut was at the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway that May, where a contract has since been signed that now sees it based there. At that event, it first ran alongside another new-build locomotive, Saint class No. 2999 *Lady of Legend*.

Proposals to construct a Saint were first mooted as far back as 1971, although at the time these were rejected by the Great Western Society's council for fear of it being too much to take on while simultaneously trying to restore other locomotives in its collection. Despite this, two years later, No. 4942 *Maindy Hall* was purchased with the proposal in mind and was moved to Didcot Railway Centre.

A second attempt at drumming up interest was made in 1982 with a £150,000 appeal launched but later saw pledged donations returned and the idea mothballed again. The project was revived once more in 1995, this time successfully, raising £70,000 to set things in motion. No. 4942 was dismantled to provide parts, including the frames (which were heavily modified and strengthened) and boiler. There is a slight irony in that the process which had created the Hall class prototype in 1925 was executed in reverse to revive the class that set the groundwork for its existence.

As with No. 6880, *Lady of Legend* takes its number as the next in sequence for the class, the name chosen to evoke the GWR practice of naming early members of the class after mythological or historical women, the completed locomotive being revealed to the world in 2019.

An Atlantic is born

When it comes to new-build projects, locomotives from the GWR are fairly well-represented. In addition to the Grange and Saint, there is both a 4-6-0 and a 4-4-0 County project progressing; the former at DRC, while the latter is based at the GW/R. A 4-4-2T version was once considered at Didcot, where a 4700 class 2-8-0 'Night Owl' construction is also underway.

Meanwhile, the A1SLT is progressing on another LNER design – the 2-8-2 P2 No. 2007 *Prince of Wales*. Representation for this region is also set to be boosted in future by 4-6-0 B17 No. 61673 *Spirit of Sandringham*, GER 2-4-2T F5 No. 789 and NER 0-4-4T G5 No.1759. The LMS will soon see a Patriot revived thanks to construction of No. 45551 *The Unknown Warrior*. There are even projects to build BR-era standard classes such as 2-6-2T 3MT No. 82045 at the Severn Valley Railway. Yet amid all the new-build proposals, the SR and its constituents seem be absent – save for one.

After the discovery of three ex-GNR Atlantic boilers in a yard in Essex in 1986, plans began forming at the Bluebell Railway to reconstruct an example of the ex-LBSCR H2 4-4-2 locomotives using one of them.

While many of these other projects have sought to create new members of a class, this particular one has revived a scrapped example in No. 32424 *Beachy Head*, the final example which was cut up in 1958 just before the formation of the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society.

Although parts for this recreation were being amassed after the acquisition of the boiler, the project would not be publicly launched until 2000.

A small piece of the original locomotive is present on this new *Beachy Head* – the original regulator handle survived and was donated to the new-build project in 2006. *Beachy Head* debuted in the summer of 2024 and Bluebell footplate crews have been recorded as saying it feels like it has always been there.

Where 0-6-0s, 4-6-0s and 4-6-2s are ten a penny, the Atlantic stands out from the crowd for being unique; as well as currently being the only operating example of a locomotive derived from the LBSCR, it is also the only working standard gauge 4-4-2 locomotive here in the UK.

***Beachy Head* and *Tornado* approach Horsted Keynes on October 18 with the final service of the day bound for East Grinstead.** OWEN HAYWARD





On October 19, No. 2999 *Lady of Legend* leads No. 6880 *Betton Grange* through West Hoathly with the penultimate service of the gala. STEVE LEE



No. 60163 gives an convincing impression of speed as it bursts out of Sharpthorne Tunnel. OWEN HAYWARD

A great gathering

It was a question of when, not if, a gala themed around these pinnacles of engineering achievements would take place, and where that would happen. The date for the gala had previously been set as the weekend before; however, to accommodate *Tornado*'s expected availability, this was changed, thus facilitating all four locomotives coming together in Sussex – and the crowds came with them.

It was a gala that focused on offering as much mileage as possible behind each of the four locomotives, with a 45-minute cycle of departures off Sheffield Park and East Grinstead stations with no complicated changes or set swaps at Horsted Keynes as is often found at the springtime branch line galas. There was, however, one exception to this rule when on Saturday, October 18, all four were to be found at the northern end of this station, spread out across all four platforms for a brief 15-minute window. Near enough every available space that offered a view down into this end of the station was taken, with some speculating somewhere in the region of 1800 being present to witness the moment. The collective age of all four locomotives is just 25 years, with *Tornado* solely responsible more than half of that – what other gala line-up could make a similar boast?

One particular occurrence, the significance of which may have gone unnoticed by some, was the first departure of a scheduled passenger service from Horsted Keynes Platform 1, also on October 18. Those who studied the timetable closely would have noticed that following the line-up, *Lady of Legend* was set to depart from there bound for East Grinstead. A late alteration necessitated by the need for the Saint to run round there on the Friday evening during a 'Golden Arrow' working saw stock shunted from Platform 2 into Platform 1 overnight, with *Betton Grange* therefore pipping it to the post with the first actual departure the following morning – the first passenger train to depart from here in more than 100 years!

Once a busy junction station, the line through Platform 1 was predominantly used by goods services, so much so that in 1914 it was turned into a siding. While the southern end has been used as a departure point for brake van rides up the Ardingly spur during preservation, the deteriorating platform edge meant it was never used for scheduled passenger services, with a carriage shop and other vehicles instead being stabled along it.



No. 6880 storms an autumnal Freshfield Bank with an afternoon departure from Sheffield Park. NICK GILLIAM

A £250,000 National Lottery Heritage Fund grant was awarded in 2024 to help cover the cost of repairs to the platform edging and relaying the track ahead of the visit of the Railway 200 exhibition train's visiting over the summer.

Tornado's services were mostly scheduled as non-stop workings in the northbound direction, allowing people a full run of the line behind the express locomotive. The final service each day saw it double-heading with *Beachy Head*, while on Sunday the two GWR 4-6-0s also paired up for a final run of the line.

Marketing officer James Cummins said: "We are delighted to say that this year's gala was an extremely successful and well-attended weekend, with strong visitor numbers across all three days. At its peak, the crowds at Horsted Keynes for the line-up were indeed huge and it was wonderful to see so many people sharing that memorable moment.

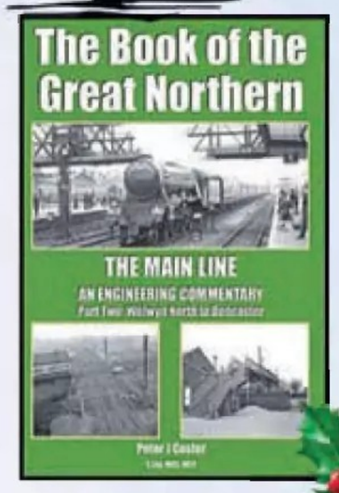
"While Railway 200 has been an important milestone, the focus for the new-builds theme came from a desire to celebrate the achievements of modern preservation, showcasing the skill, dedication and innovation involved in bringing new steam locomotives to life in the 21st century." HR

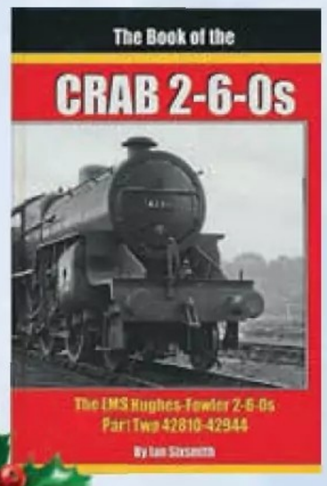
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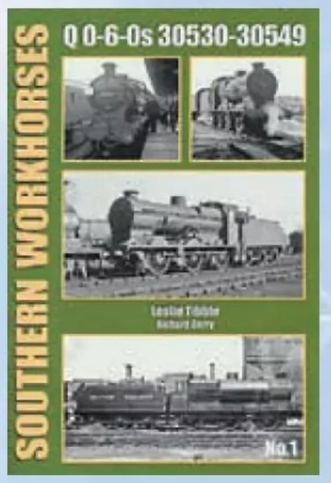
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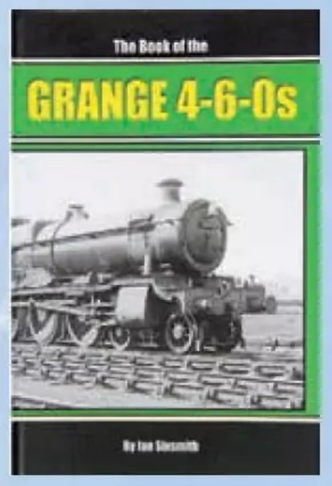
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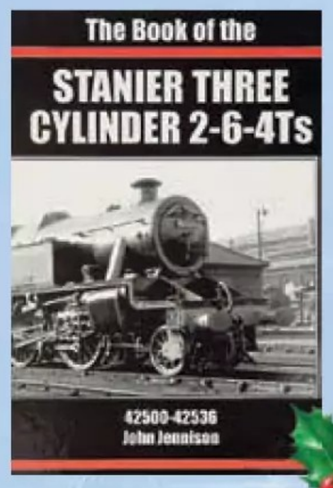


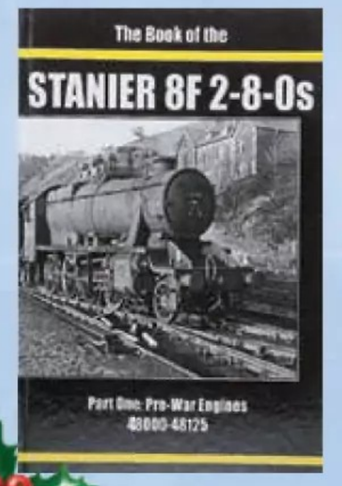


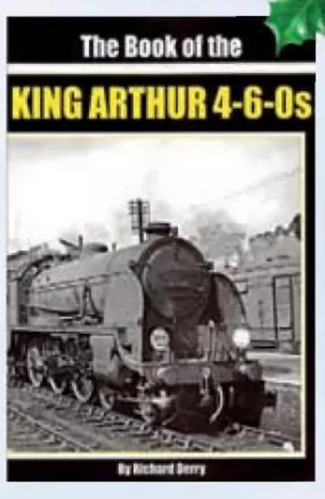


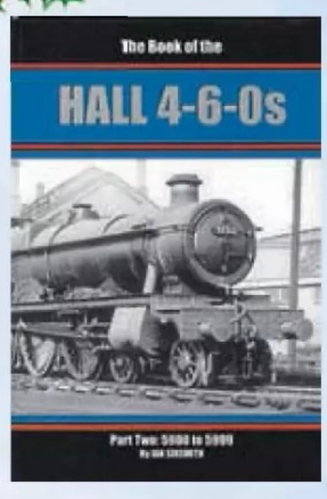


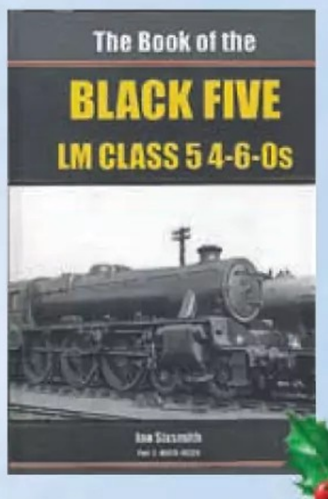


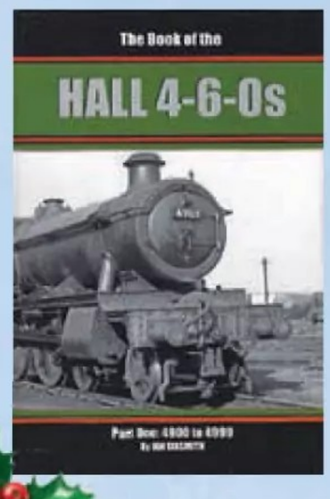




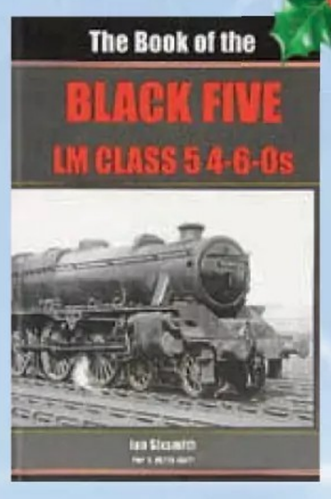


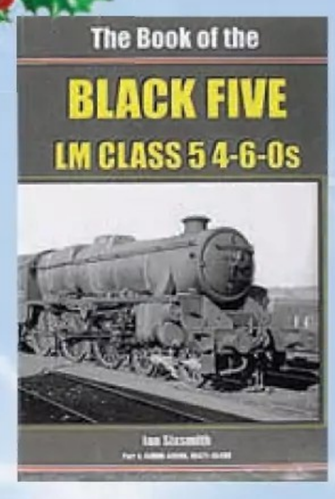


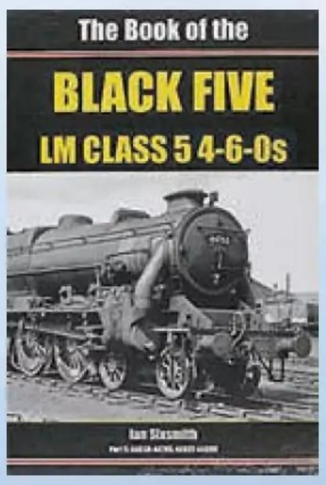


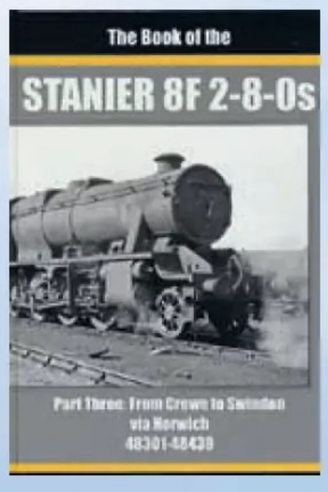


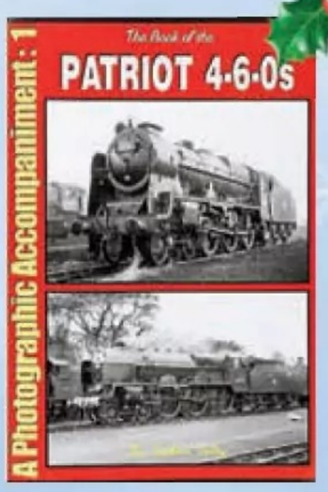




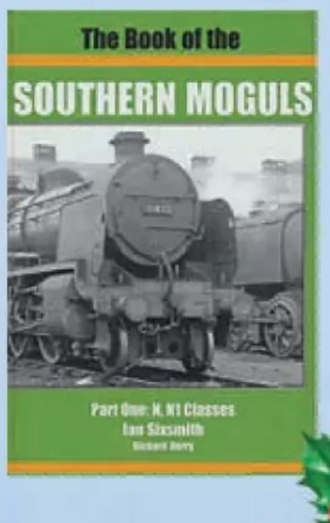


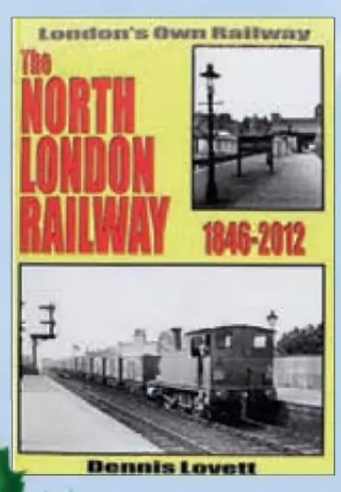


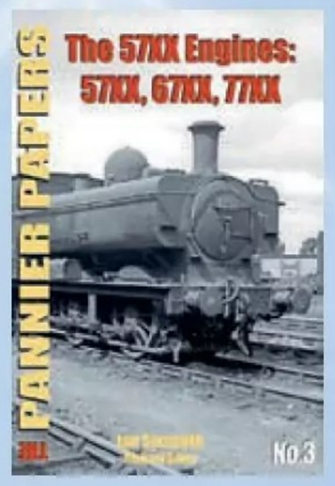




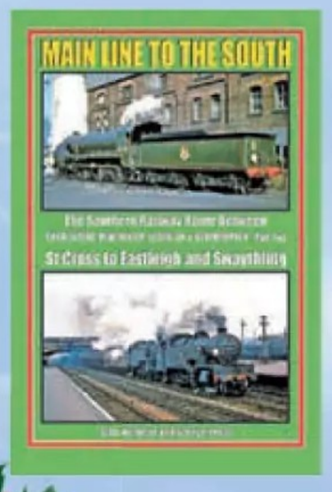


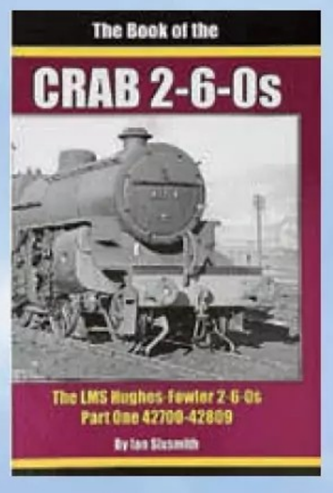


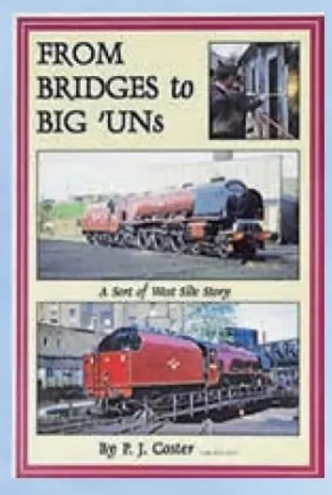


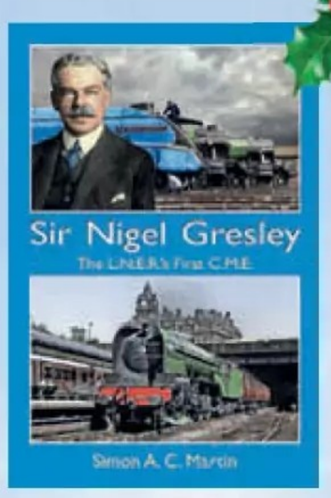


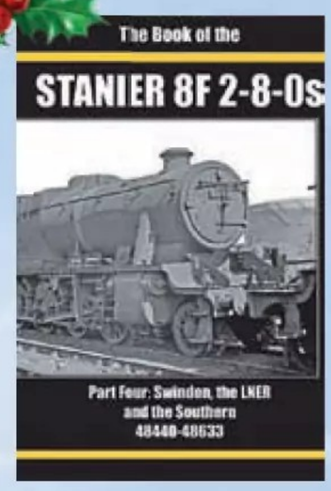


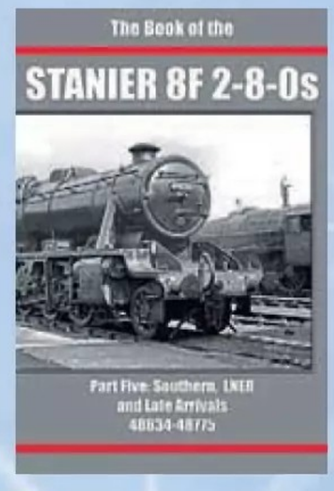


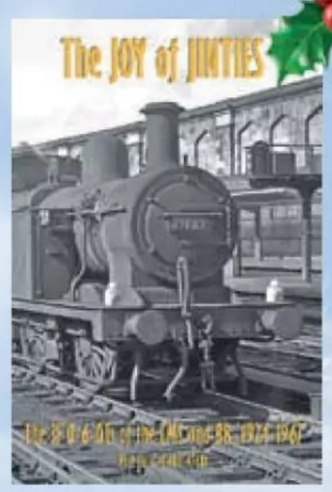




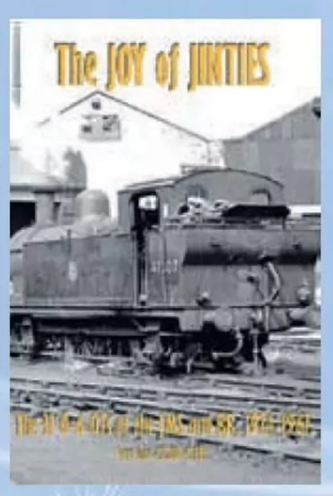


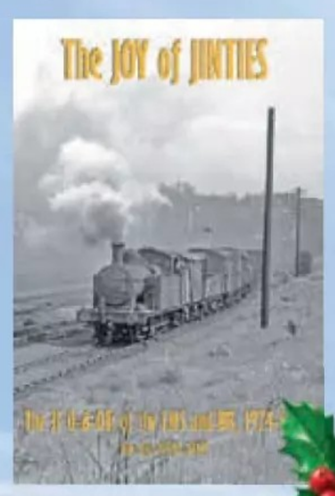




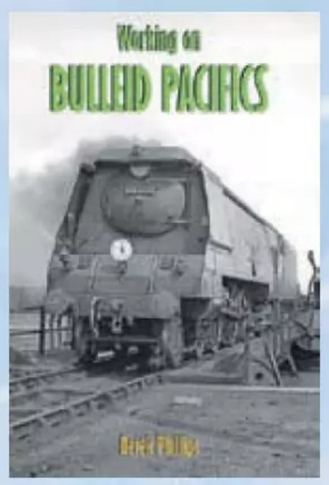














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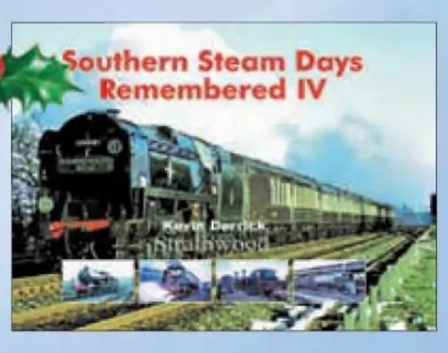
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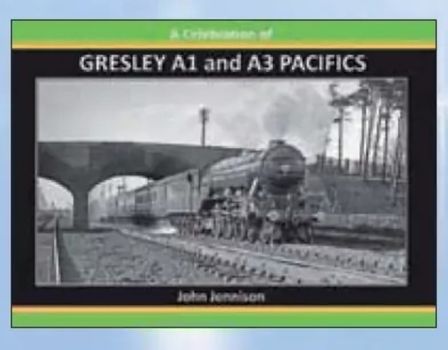
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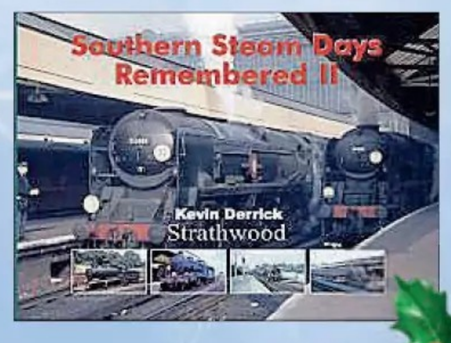
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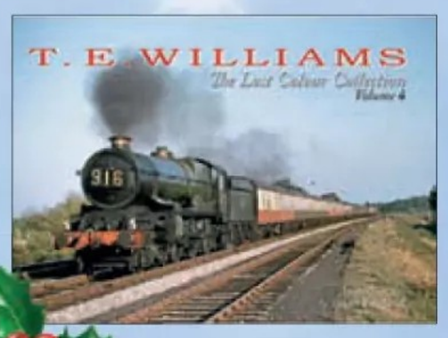




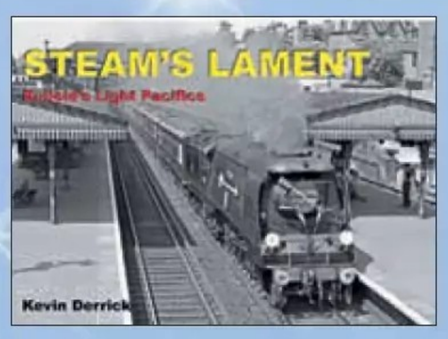




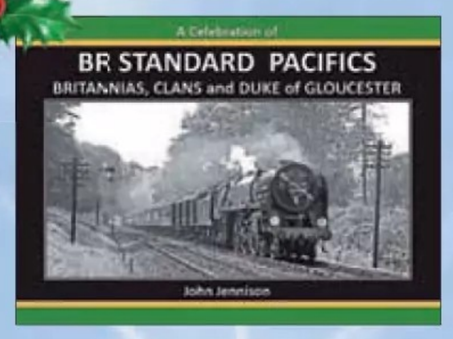


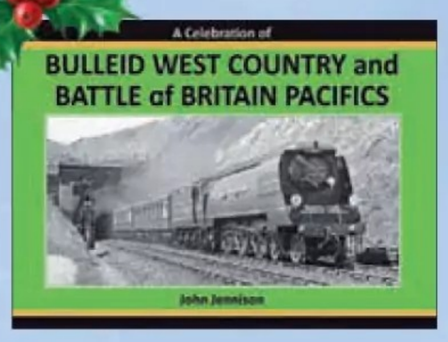


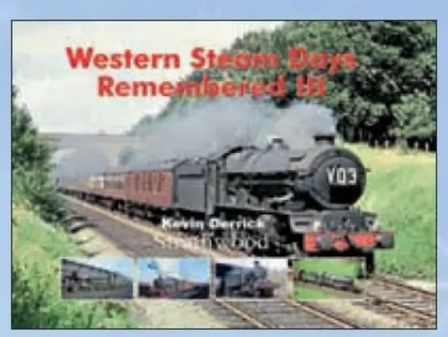




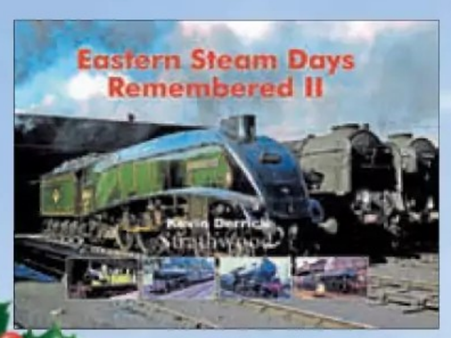


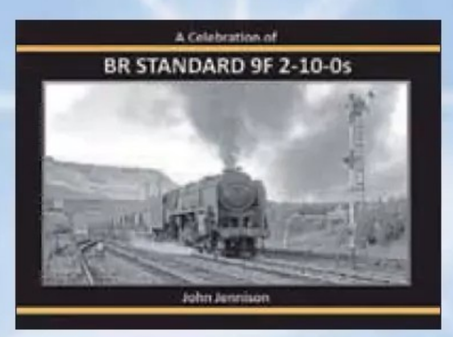


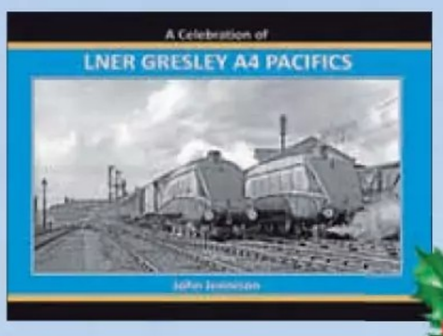




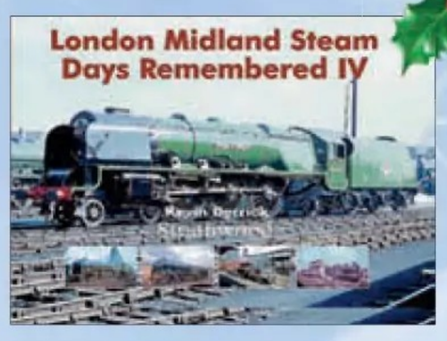


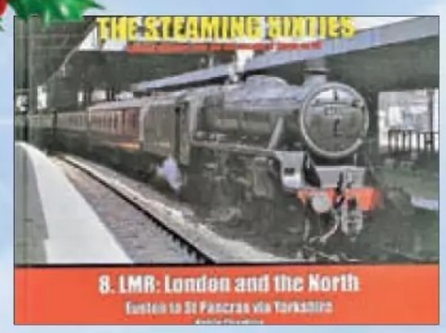


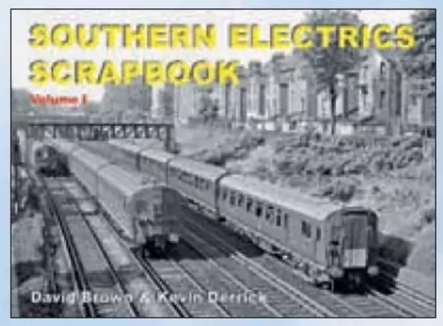


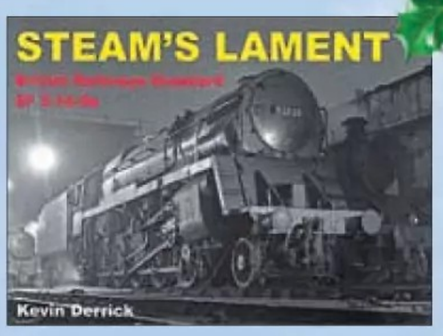


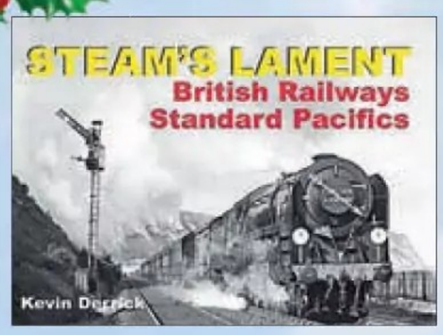


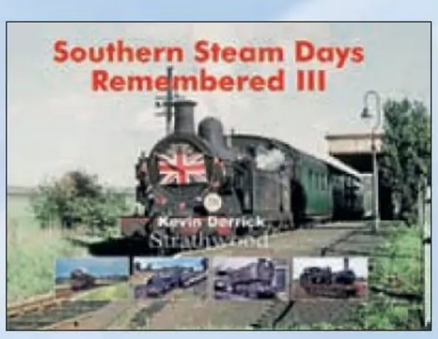


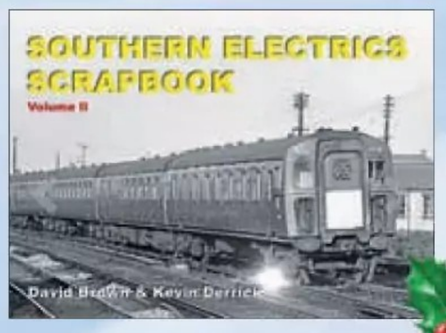


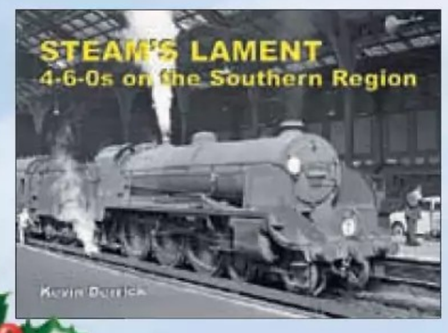


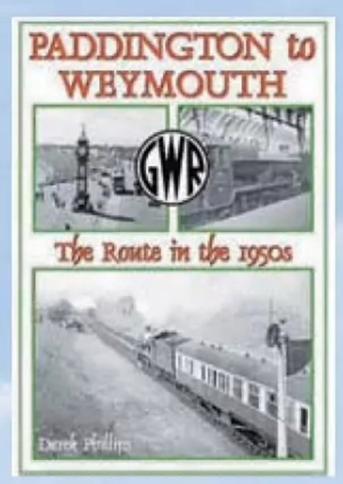


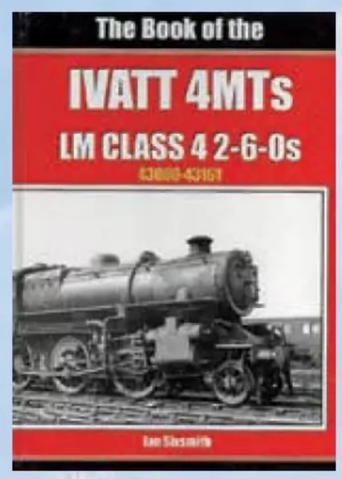


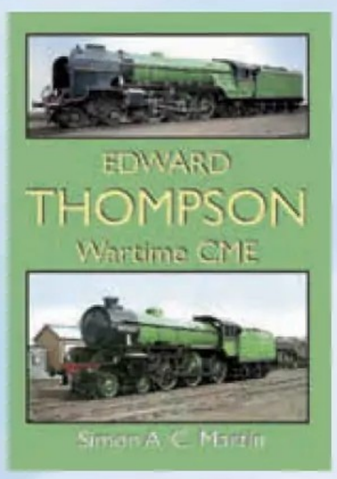


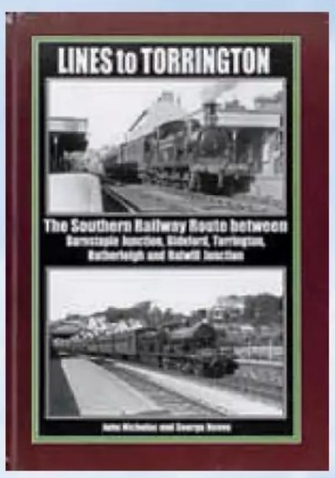


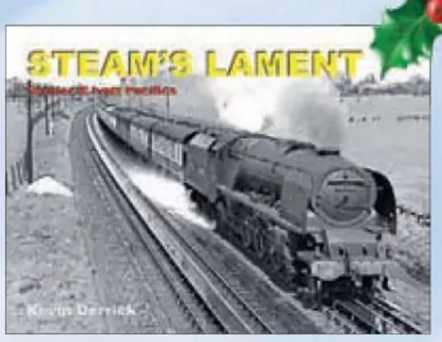


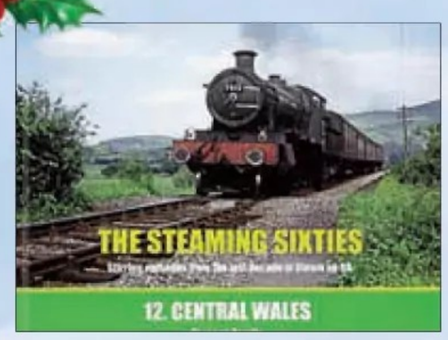












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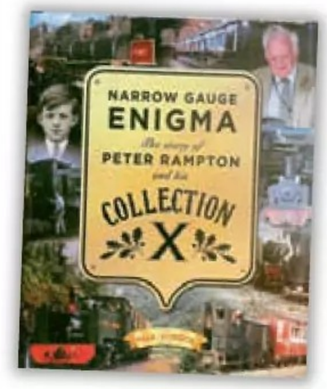


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THE WELSH TREASURE TROVE OF WORLD RAILWAY HERITAGE

BR lined Corporate Blue livery, complete with double arrow insignia, has made its long-awaited reappearance on the Vale of Rheidol Railway – and a new 'must read' landmark book lifts the lid on the catalogue of myths and legends surrounding the man who helped make privatisation of this heritage line possible, reports **Robin Jones.**



GWR 2-6-2T No. 9 *Prince of Wales* was one of final last steam locomotives to operate under BR and last carried the company's BR blue livery in 1982. As reported in *Heritage Railway* issue 337, it reappeared in the colours at the line's October 25/26 Steam Festival, alongside its sisters carrying two different BR liveries – a superb way in which to celebrate Railway 200 and the line's history as part of the national network.

No. 7 *Owain Glyndŵr* has been freshly repainted in BR lined green and reunited with its original nameplates, while No. 8 *Llywelyn* carried BR black with lion-holding-wheel crest.

No other UK steam locomotives other than the Rheidol tanks ever authentically carried the blue corporate image, making No. 9's repaint a one-off. It also ran for the first time with its air-pump concealed in the water tanks. Together, the trio recreated the look of the railway in its closing decades as the last steam-only outpost of BR – before the line was sold in 1989.

Meanwhile, a ground-breaking new 416-page hardback volume from the VoRR,

> "A fascinating book where Peter's enth usiasm and passion shine through."

Narrow Gauge Enigma: The Story of Peter Rampton and Collection X, unveils one of Britain's biggest-ever private locomotive and rolling stock collections – that of a pivotal figure not only in the purchase of the line, but also in the establishment of the Brecon Mountain Railway, and an influential figure in early moves to found the Launceston Steam Railway

Peter John Rampton (1934-2019), heir to the successful Freemans mail order business, became legendary in the heritage sector for amassing a private collection of about 40 locomotives from around the world, storing them at his private Surrey Farm where he had built his own 2ft gauge line. For decades, wild speculation regarding which locomotives he had saved was rife, with many suggesting his extraordinary collection included ones which had seemingly disappeared forever, often in mysterious and inexplicable circumstances.

Well out of the public gaze, Collection X, as it came to be widely referred to, was protected by a web of rumours, myths, anecdotes, and even ingenious booby traps to deter intruders.

The only steam locomotive ever to authentically carry the BR Corporate Blue livery and double arrow logo, GWR 2-6-2T No. 9 *Prince* of Wales leads the line-up of sister 2-6-2Ts Nos. 8 *Llywelyn* and 7 *Owain Glyndŵr,* also in BR colours, at Aberystwyth. VORR





Above: Greeting visitors to the Engine Shed museum is this 7¼in gauge model of F2 4-4-0 No. NG104 *Zulu*, built by Brush Falcon on Loughborough in 1895 for the 2ft gauge Beira Railway in Mozambique – a type which was a particular favourite of Peter Rampton. The model was bought from the Bredgar & Wormshill Railway in 20020. ROBIN JONES



Right: In two BR liveries, No. 7 pilots No. 8 on the final climb to Devil's Bridge on October 25. JOHN TITLOW

VoRR chief engineer and managing director Ll˜r ap Iolo headed an ambitious project to research and record Peter's life and work before vital knowledge was lost forever. Author Stephen Phillips spent years delving into Peter's private archives, surveying and drawing the locomotives and coaches in the collection.

In the book's foreword, Launceston founder Nigel Bowman said it was the purchase in 1965 and subsequent restoration of Dinorwic Quarry Hunslet 0-4-0ST No. 317 of 1883 *Lilian* that seemed to ignite Peter's enthusiasm for narrow gauge locomotives.

After trying without success to buy a UK locomotive for himself, in March 1968 Peter bought eight 600mm gauge steam locomotives from the Hulleras de Saero y Anexas coal mine railway, in northern Spain, and had them shipped to his Surrey farm.

In 1977, Peter agreed to make a loan to Tony Hills to set up the Brecon Mountain line, which he had described as an "exceptional" idea.

South African Railways 2ft gauge Garratt No. 82 arrived at Peter's farm the following year, the first of its class to arrive in the UK. By 1980, when the first Brecon trains could run, Peter's collection had grown to 13 locomotives, seven coaches and two heavy lifting cranes.

In 1985, the Phyllis Rampton Narrow Gauge Trust, named in honour of Peter's mother, was formed to oversee his collection.

In 1988, Tony persuaded Peter to take an interest in the sale of the VoRR. The two men completed the watershed purchase of the line from BR on March 31, 1989, with funds from the trust. Peter became chairman of the VoRR and in the 1990s acquired 19 more locomotives after scouring India for suitable candidates for purchase.

Both the trust and the VoRR continued to acquire more locomotive exhibits after Peter's death. As highlighted in *Heritage Railway* issue 318, a new museum to display exhibits in the GWR locomotive shed at Aberystwyth, including some from Collection X which had not been seen publicly for four decades, was officially opened on March 23 last year. Some items in the collection are still stored off-site and not yet on public display.

The book is splendidly illustrated throughout, with an avalanche of photographs from Peter's extensive



Right: Henschel & Sohn 0-4-2T No. 16073 of 1918 *Hulleras de Sabero y Anexas No. 101*, one of the complete fleet of eight bought from the Spanish line by Peter Rampton in 1968. ROBIN JONES



Pete Waterman OBE's Making Tracks layout displayed inside the Engine Shed museum. VORR





Above: No. 9 takes on water at Devil's Bridge. JOHN TITLOW

Left: Unrestored Bagnall Pacific No. 2460 of 1932 No. 765NM, part of the Gwalior Light Railway, bought by Peter Rampton in 1992 and now at Aberystwyth. VORR



During the gala, visitors were invited to take a mini driver experience course on Kerr Stuart *Wren* 0-4-0ST No. 3114 of 1918 in Aberystwyth yard. Delivered new to the Ministry of Unitions in Driffield, it worked on the Ashover Light Railway before being sold for scrap in 1944 and bought to heat chicken coops. Preserved in May 1959, it was exhibited at the former Gloddfa Ganol museum in Blaenau Ffestiniog and restored at the Bala Lake Railway. It was sold to the VoRR/Phyllis Rampton Narrow Gauge Railway Trust in 1998 and later ran at the Amerton Railway, Beamish Museum, Devonn Railway Centre, the London Museum of Water and Steam at Kew Bridge, the Dorset Steam Fair and the Hollycombe Steam Collection. ROBIN JONES



The line's NGG13 Garratt No. 60 *Drakensberg* leaks steam on approach to Devil's Bridge on October 25. JOHN TITLOW

archive and detailed expert drawings of each of the locomotives. It cannot be highly recommended enough.

Trust chairman Nick Acomb said the volume is "a fascinating book where Peter's enthusiasm and passion shine through," while Nigel described it as "a remarkable book about a remarkable and reclusive man."

On BBC Breakfast on October 27, local historian and member of the VoRR team Ioan Lord talked with author Stephen Phillips about his friendship with Peter and the creation of his extraordinary collection. The interview, which featured unseen cine film from Peter's archive and personal recollections, can be seen at https://youtu.be/62WvJR8OtRk

Narrow Gauge Enigma: The Story of Peter Rampton and Collection X book is priced at £80 and can be ordered at vor.wales

Pete Waterman OBE's world record-breaking 208ft-long model railway, Making Tracks, was display in the Engine Shed museum from October 25 until November 2. Closed after the show, the Engine Shed will reopen in 2026. Despite the patchy weather, the gala attracted about 1000 visitors during the two days.



No. 9 has just arrived at Devil's Bridge station and is about to run round on October 25. JOHN TITLOW

The next special event will be held in the Engine Shed museum on December 13-23.

No trains will run, but A Ticket to Christmas will see the museum transformed into a festive wonderland with steam locomotives as the backdrop. Visitors can experience becoming trainee elves at the Passport Office, make creations in the Toymaker's Workshop, write wishes in the Elf Mailroom, and decorate cookies in Mrs Claus's Kitchen – all before meeting Santa himself in his grotto.

For more details, visit https://vor.wales/a-ticket-to-christmas/ HR

First female guard in Rheidol's history

THE Vale of Rheidol Railway appointed its first female guard since the line opened 123 years ago.

Commercial manager Claire Stott, who joined the railway in March, passed out as a guard in August.

She has a background in hospitality and management from her time as general manager of Nanteos Mansion and was given the remit to lead commercial development. However, Claire also decided to become involved with operating trains too. "In my first season, I have worked on projects such as launching Caffi Cledrau at Aberystwyth station and introducing the Cledrau Picnic for First Class passengers, both of which have been exciting developments for our visitors," she said.

"But from the start, I also wanted to get involved with the railway at a deeper level.

"Training as a guard was a challenge I set myself because the role is so central to the visitor experience, as well as to the safe running of the line.

"The guard is the person visitors see and speak to most during their journey. It is a role that combines operational discipline with customer service, and I am proud to be the first woman in the railway's history to take it on."

VoRR managing director Llyr ap Iolo said: "Claire's determination to contribute across both commercial and operational areas is inspiring, and her appointment as the railway's first female guard is an important chapter in our story."

Claire is also a charity volunteer at Aberystwyth Cats Protection and a nature and wildlife photographer at Grey Feather Photography.



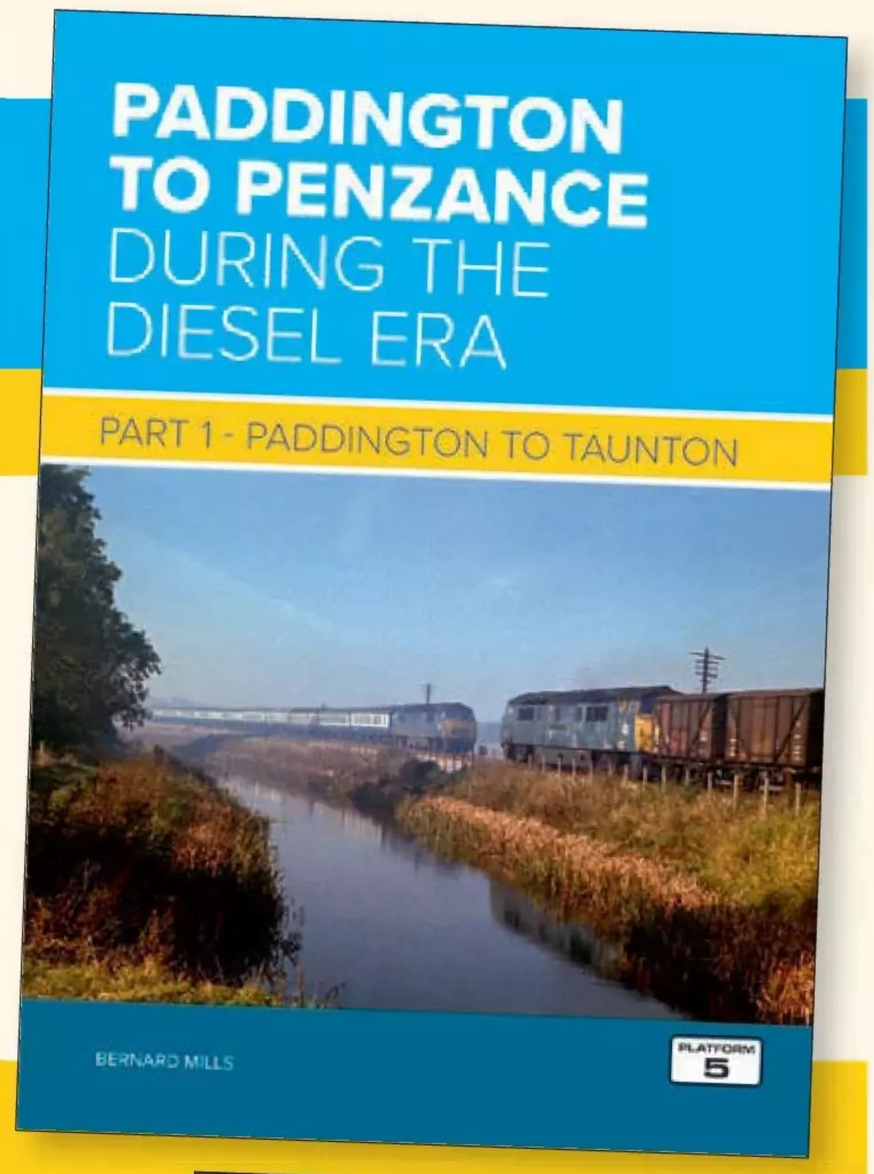
Commercial manager Claire Stott has officially passed out as a guard. VORR

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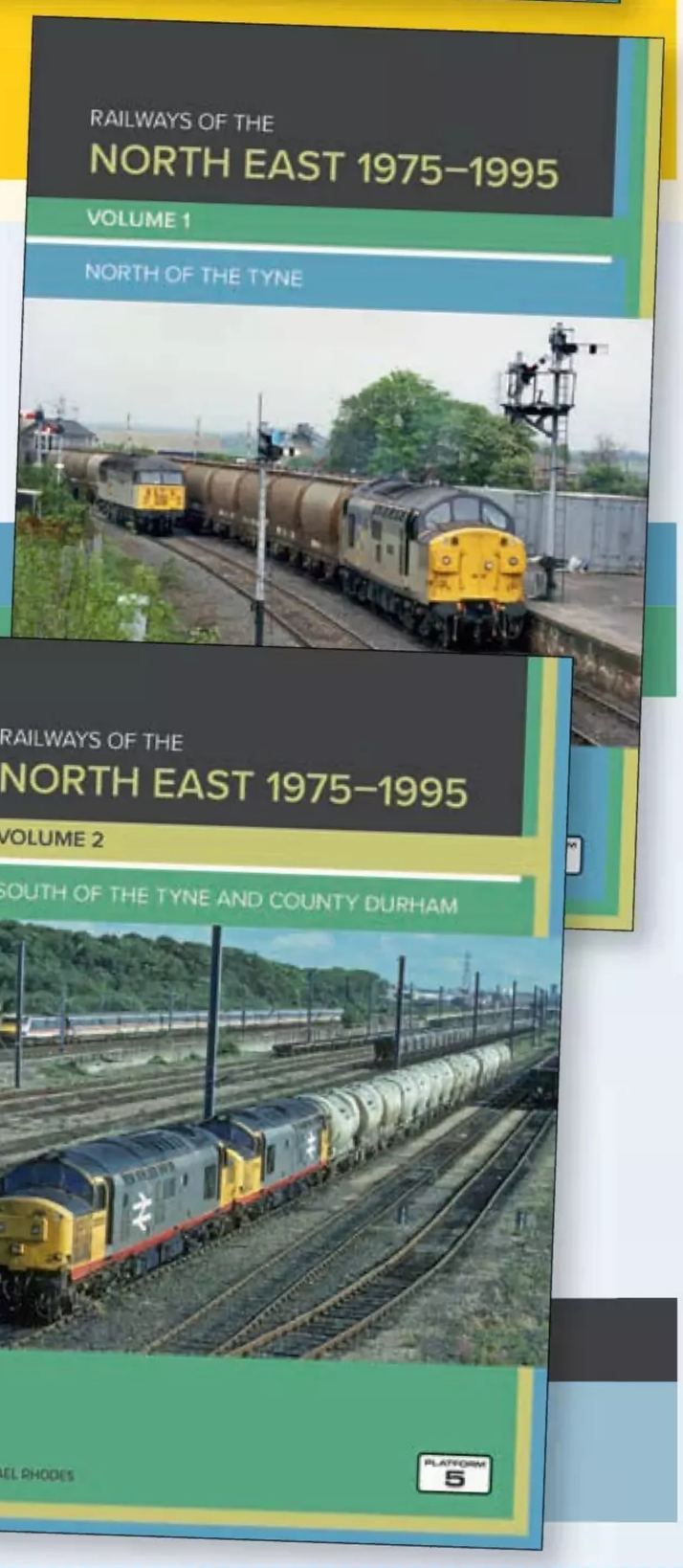
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One-off diesel among steam selection

LONDON, East Anglia, the Midlands, the North West and the Welsh valleys are among the locations in the spotlight in JustaClickAgo's online week-long sale of photographs, negatives, slides and paperwork that ends on November 23.

Negatives include a selection taken in East Anglia in late 1981 by John Baker, a member of the Phoenix Railway Photographic Circle, and a collection from mainly the late 1950s of LMS locomotives and scenes at such locations as Camden, Cricklewood, Bedford, Rose Grove, Canklow and Burton. Among the colour slides is a country-wide selection from the dying days of steam, and there are also 1980s and 1990s Welsh valley scenes by the late Gareth Shadbolt and heritage steam slides by Neil Harvey and Peter Herring.

Early 1970s Western Region diesel-hydraulic negatives are also on offer, and so too three original colour slides of D1200 *Falcon*, a 100mph Co-Co prototype built by Brush Traction in 1961 that was withdrawn in October 1975 and cut up in May the following year after the failure of preservation attempts.

One of the highlights of the paperwork in the auction is 12 handwritten train log books compiled by Henry and Richard Casserley during 1950-74 and containing such information as dates, locomotive numbers, shedcodes, train details, mileage, and coaching stock numbers.

The logs were started by Henry in 1916, and between that year and 1959 he recorded a total of no fewer than 23,266 runs – an average of 540 per year – covering 434,477 miles.



London-Glasgow express on track

BR˜W° totems Highbridge for Burnham-on-Sea, BR(M) Dane Road and BR(E) Dovercourt Bay are among items set to go under the hammer in Main Line Railwayana's November 29 auction, as is a diesel era headboard for the London Euston-Glasgow Central 'Caledonian' express.

Within the nameplate selection is *Bagisu* with cabside and smokebox numberplates from East African Railways' Class 31 2-8-4 No. 3105, while a Midland Railway Signal Department Derby maker's plate dated 1894 will also feature. The auction is live online and starts at 10am.

TRA anniversary delight as the numbers add up

TALISMAN Railwayana's Roger Phipps describes himself as a number-cruncher, which is quite handy for someone who sells railwayana, so he was in his element when he was discussing his and his wife Sandra's sale on October 18. It was the couple's 100th auction, he explained proudly; they have sold 55,000 lots over 24 years, attracting more than 400 enthusiasts and collectors to each of its live saleroom sales at Newark Showground. Oh yes, and he's looking forward to what 2026 will bring, especially at a single collection sale in March.

But back to the here and now, and an overview of the events on October 18. To say the market is currently unpredictable is stating the obvious, but I'll state it anyway. There are bargains to be had in most categories, but then something may pop up that defies predictions and logic, one way or the other.

To their credit, Roger and Sandra, who shared auctioneering duties, presided over a steady ship that was in reasonably calm waters. Nothing spectacular, but neither was there anything that sank without trace. Nameplates were headed by *Herringbone* from LNER Class A2 Pacific No. 60524 and *Dunraven Castle* from GWR No. 4092, each selling for £4200, and *Mendip* (GWR Duke Class No. 3288) for £1800. One of the Doncaster worksplates from No 60524 sold immediately after its nameplate for £2100 and the smokebox numberplate for £2000.

Non-sellers under the hammer were *The South Durham* with fox from LNER D49 No. 62773 and *Firdaussi* from another LNER Nigel Gresley locomotive, A3 Pacific No. 60038, but each went to new homes after close of play for £6000 and £3750 respectively.

As the dust settled, the top steam worksplate to emerge was an LNER 1924 Doncaster example (works No. 1602) from A3 No. 60047 *Donovan* (£5050), which easily outsmarted another Gresley locomotive, A4 No. 60029 *Woodcock*, one of whose 1937 Doncaster plates (works No. 1858), fetched £3800, while the leader of the smokebox pack at £2700 was 60512 from LNER Class A2 *Steady Aim*.



Ancient and modern: Type 2 D5511 offers a stark contrast to 73-year-old ex-Caledonian Railway Class 0F 0-4-0ST No. 56011 at Inverness (60A) during the diesel's visit to Scotland in the summer of 1958. One of the worksplates from the A1A-A1A was a category winner in Talisman Railwayana's October 18 auction with a realisation of £1550. DAVE BRENNAND COLLECTION



Before departing the steam scene, I will highlight 6842 from GWR *Nunhold Grange*, which headed the cabside numberplate selection (£2600), and the chime whistle from an unidentified A4 Pacific that went for £1050.

Busy marketplace

The heritage modern traction camp was another busy marketplace, and the nameplate spotlight immediately homes in on *Sir Rowland Hill* from Class 47 D1602/47474, which achieved £3000, and *Titan Star* from classmate D1652/47068, which wasn't far behind with a realisation of £2500. Diesel worksplates is another category gaining a following, and top dog in this sector was a 1958 Brush Traction example from Class 31 D5511/31011 (£1550).

This A1A-A1A was delivered new to Stratford (30A) in June 1958 but within a month undertook a 450-mile journey to Inverness (60A) for evaluation trials, spending a couple of months there before travelling all the way back to Stratford, where it remained until withdrawal in July 1976. Railwayana enthusiast and ex-Stratford driver Dave Brennand has in his photograph collection a fascinating image of D5511 on Inverness shed in the company of former Caledonian Railway 1885-built Class 0F 0-4-0ST No. 56011 during its sojourn north of the border.

I logged the Class 31 at Ilford on July 13, 1960, heading an Up Clacton express on a busy summer's morning, during which I noted in one two-hour spell no fewer than 10 'Brits' on a variety of expresses, including No. 70003 *John Bunyan* on the Up 'Broadsman' and No. 70040 *Clive of India* on the Down 'Norfolkman.'

Within two years they were but a memory for East London trainspotters.

Top totem sign at the auction was BR(W) Barry Dock, which sold for £3150, ahead of North Eastern Region duo Pocklington and Huddersfield at £2100 apiece, and other items in four-figure territory included a Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway No. '3' plate from a bridge over the GWR main line at Bath (£1650), an ex-Cole station handlamp from the same railway, (£1100), a Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway lamp at the same price, and a Botanic Gardens seatback from the station in Hull that was the location of engine depot coded 53B by BR (£1000). Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).

"We could not have wished for a better celebration of our centenary auction," said Roger post-sale.





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Paperchase was a unique concept that will be missed

UNIQUE is a word often used out of context, especially by we journalists. Occasionally, however, it is exactly the right word to use, so I'll go for it. The Paperchase auction held quarterly by Brian Moakes, and the catalogue that accompanies it, are unique.

I say are, but that's the wrong tense. I should say were, for the two-week email and postal auction that ended on October 28, the results of which are reported in this issue's column, was Brian's last. And in typical Brian style, I, and doubtless many of his followers, were unaware of his intention to retire until we received the catalogue for that valedictory auction which contained the information that it was to be his last after 27 years.

For those readers to whom Paperchase is unfamiliar, a few words of explanation. As its title indicates, historical paperwork was its raison d'être. Mainly UK and overseas railway paperwork, although road transport, especially buses – one of Brian's interests – aircraft, and inland waterways such as canals, also featured.

Brian, who is 66, produced a printed and online catalogue for each sale. Always 800 lots were to go under the hammer (except the last one, which was 801 lots!), and the reserve of each and every item was listed. The usual reserve was – wait for it – £2, but recently £5 or even £10 became increasingly evident, while the descriptions of each lot were straightforward and always accurate without a typo in sight. Oh yes, and buyer's premium was introduced only recently.

Mixed topics

Subjects ranged from the pre-Grouping companies through to the Big Four and BR, and anything relevant to those companies was available. Accident reports, Acts of Parliament, books, handbills, Ian Allan ABCs, London Transport, luggage labels, tickets, brochures, posters and carriage prints, photographs, timetables, Pullman and Royal trains, signalling and waterways – they all came within Brian's Paperchase remit.

Apart from the variety of paperwork on offer, one aspect that has always intrigued me is the age of some of the items, and this can be illustrated by a lot in the auction that finished on October 28, a Parliament Act for building a canal from Harecastle to Froghall in Staffordshire that dated from 1776, making it 249 years old.

As both a vendor and buyer in his auctions over almost their entire existence, I'll miss dealing with Brian, for his laid-back, easy-going and open style of doing business was always a delight. As he lives just a couple of villages from me, we'll doubtless occasionally bump into each other, and maybe he might telephone or email sometimes, having learned of a piece of railwayana or London Transport memorabilia that he believes may appeal to me.

I think retirement will suit him fine, but doubtless his ears will still be finetuned to the marketplace.

Railwayana Auction Calendar

- **Ends November 23**
  JustaClickAgo *(photographs, negative, slides, and paperwork)*
- **November 26-27**
  Vectis *(model trains)*
- **November 29**
  Main Line Railwayana
- **December 5**
  Onslows *(posters)*
- **December 6**
  Great Central Railwayana
- **December 12**
  Lacy Scott & Knight *(railwayana and model trains)*
- **December 16**
  Special Auction Services *(model trains)*
- **December 18**
  Thirsk Railwayana



GREAT SCOT: A classic poster painted for the LMS by Bryan de Grineau (1883-1957) is to go under the hammer at an Onslows' vintage poster auction on December 5. Issued in 1937, it illustrates Royal Scot No. 6110 *Grenadier Guardsman* passing another WCML express at high speed and is estimated to sell for up to £2500. The auction will be live online, starting at 2pm.

TAL travels from UK to the Far East via Algeria

A COLLECTION of railway tickets from a variety of overseas countries including Algeria, Morocco, Malaysia, Japan and Hong Kong topped the realisations list in a Transport Auctions of London live online sale on October 25 by selling for £950.

Occupying the runner-up spot at £750 was BR(S) platform totem sign for Wivelsfield. A selection of nearly 450 pre-Grouping and pre-Nationalisation and pre-London Transport tickets, including examples issued by the GER, GNR, LNWR and Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway, took third place at with a price of £700.

More than 1300 GWR, LMS and LNER tickets sold as a single lot for £650, and BR's Southern Region returned with a second totem, Ash Vale, that realised £500.

Prices exclude buyer's premium of 15% (+ VAT).

Navigating in the 19th century

A COLOURED geological map of England and Wales published in 1835 that showed inland navigation by way of railroads, principal roads, canals and rivers, sold for £960 in the Paperchase auction that ran from October 14-28, and a GWR 'Picturesque Wales Tourist Tickets' poster card went for £550.

Not far behind at £510 each were a House of Lords volume of the evidence in committee on the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Bill, dated 1895, and an October 1965 BR(S) poster announcing the withdrawal of all passengers services on the Isle of Wight.

Prices exclude buyer's premium of 12½%.

As reported on this page, this was the final Paperchase auction to be held by Brian Moakes, who is retiring 27 years after founding the auction house.

Children's favourite is top-selling poster

A BR(S) Folkestone poster by one of the nation's favourite children's artists, Ronald Lampitt (1906-88), sold for £1900, more than 30 times its middle estimate of £60, at a Lacy Scott & Knight of Bury St Edmunds railwayana and model trains auction on October 24.

Worcester-born Lampitt, who also produced work for the GWR, SR, and LMS, never received formal art training, but style, as a Ladybird Books' illustrator in particular appealed to young and old alike. The price excludes buyer's premium of 22 ½% (+VAT).

GCRA launches industry-first three-day auction

GREAT Central Railwayana's quarterly winter auction, which will be spread over no fewer than three days from December 6-8 with 1500 lots going under the hammer, will see four pre-Grouping locomotive nameplates and representatives of all of the Big Four in a head-to-head involving 11 locomotives.

The oldest competitor by a matter of months will be *Tawstock Court* from March 1913-built GWR Saint class No. 2951, followed by *Sir Edward Fraser* from GCR October 1913-built Class D10 No. 62653, *Princess Alice* from June 1914-built GWR Star class No. 4050, and *Loch Quoich* carried by August 1921 GNR-built K2 class No. 61787.

From the post-Grouping era are LNER duo *Merry Hampton* (A3 No. 60066 constructed in July 1924), and *Roxburghshire* (D49 No. 62715 built in March 1928), *Arethusa* from LMS Jubilee No. 45696 built in April 1936, and four 1940s products comprising *Yeovil* with badge and West Country Class scroll from SR June 1945-built No. 34004, *County of Caernarvon* (GWR No. 1010 which entered traffic in January 1946), *Pallah* from April 1947 LNER-built B1 No. 61025, and *East Asiatic Company* from SR-designed, November 1948 BR-built Merchant Navy No. 35024.

Two nameplates from across the Irish Sea will also be going under Martin Quartermain's hammer: *Letterkenny* from 3ft gauge County Donegal Railways Joint Committee 2-6-4T No. 19 and *Gabriel* from another 3ft gauge locomotive, Schull & Skibbereen Railway 4-4-0T No. 1.

Martin will start the auction marathon at 10am on December 6 and follow it up on Sunday and Monday, December 7/8, starting at 9am on these two days, when he will be sharing duties with colleague Phil Rogers. All three days will be live online, surely making this the first such three-day live online auction in railwayana history.



GWR £34,000 Castle heads model sale – with a Pacific in pursuit

TWO GWR locomotives built by world-renowned modelmaker David Aitken to exhibition standard in 7¼in gauge live steam outpaced the opposition in a railwayana and model trains saleroom and live online auction held by Harper Field of Stonehouse, Glos, on October 9. First past the post was No. 4082 *Windsor Castle*, which went for £34,000, followed at £22,000 by 2-8-0 No. 3822.

Behind these two five-figure successes came another 7¼in live steam model, of LBSCR Class G 2-2-2 No. 334 *Petworth* (£8000), and a 5in gauge live steam Britannia No. 70039 *Sir Christopher Wren*, complete with a 'Hook Continental' headboard, which fetched £6800. A quartet of 5in gauge models hovering above £3000 was led by GWR 4-2-2 *Bulkeley*, for which the successful bid was £3800, an unnumbered LMS 'Black Five' (£3700), and GWR No. 4935 *Ketley Hall* and GNR 'Single 2-2-2 No. 5, each at £3600. Snapping at their heels were a 3½in gauge LMS No. 6200 *The Princess Royal* (£3100), an O-gauge SR West Country No. 34003 *Plymouth* (£3000), gauge one GCR 4-4-2 No. 363 (£2700), and 5in gauge 0-6-0PT No. 5711 which sold for £2600.



The railwayana selection resulted in a top bid of £2800 for a cabside numberplate from GWR No. 5011 *Tintagel Castle*, with the runner-up being a BR(S) totem Barnham that fetched £800. Prices exclude buyer's premium of 20% (+ VAT).

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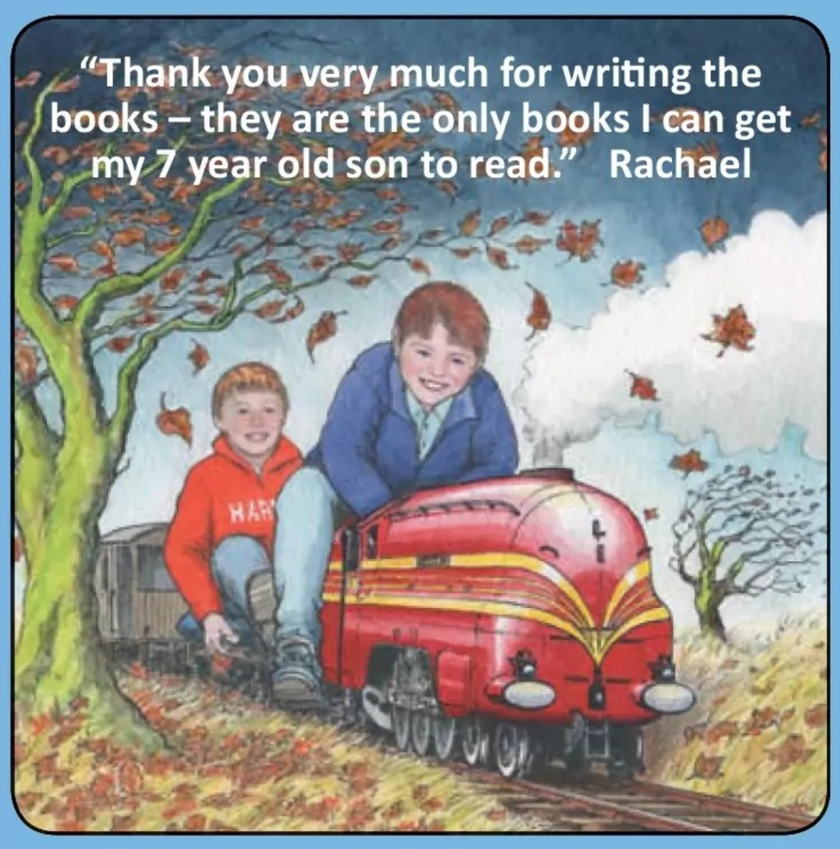
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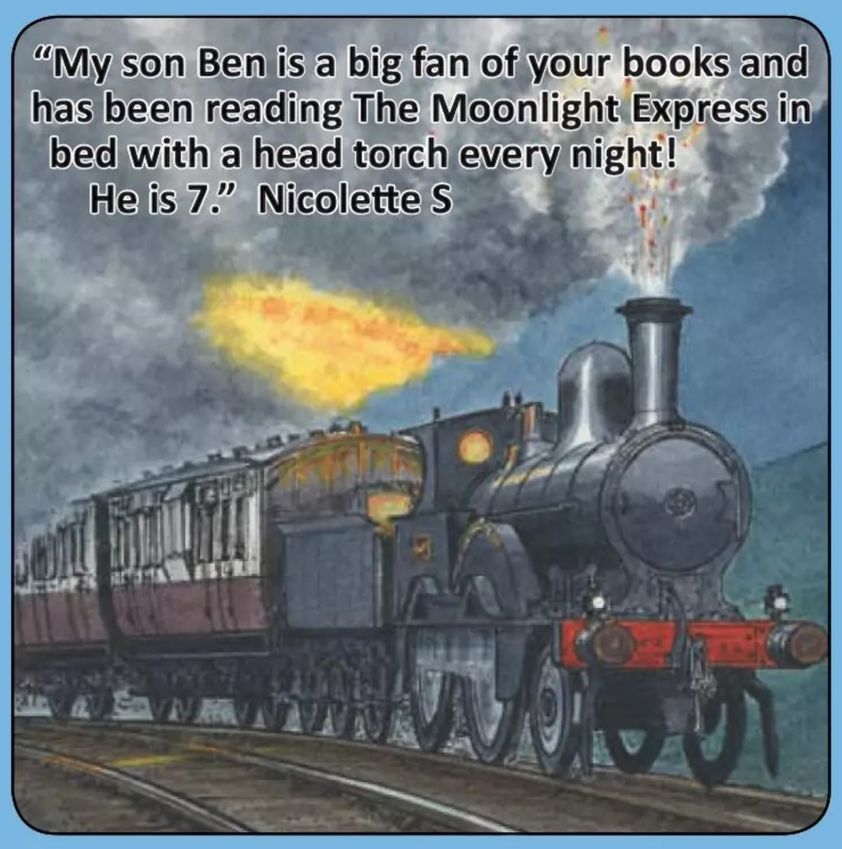
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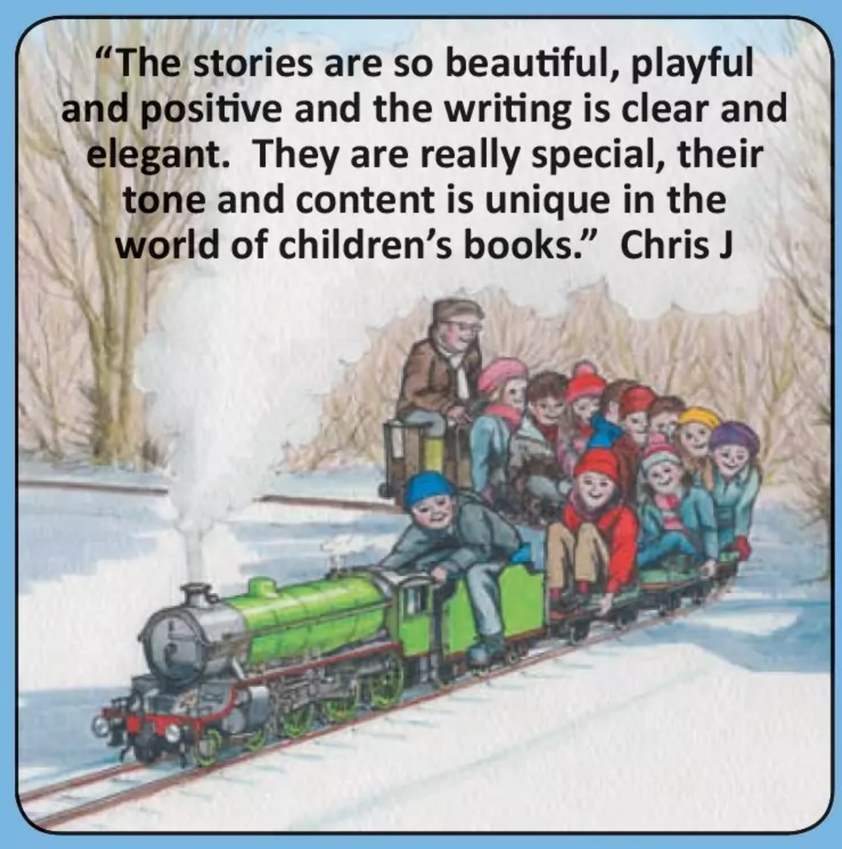
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THE GREAT (MIDLAND) GATHERING!

The LMS gala at the East Lancashire Railway became one of the stand-out events of the autumn, with the majority of locomotives in service donning the Grouping era company's branding making it one of the – if not *the* – largest gatherings of such locomotives to take place, as **Owen Hayward** details.

London Midland Region enthusiasts would have no doubt been delighted by the line-up offered by the East Lancashire Railway for its October 17-19 autumn steam gala, for not only did it bring together five locomotives that were under LMS ownership, but they all carried that company's livery too! Add into the mix a BR era-built locomotive that also served the region, and visitors were really being spoilt.

Fresh from its appearance at the Great Central Railway's gala two weeks previously (as covered in issue 338), Stanier gul No. 13268 was battling for the title of headline guest with Ivatt 2MT No. 46441. The former, carrying LMS lined black, has been highly sought-after and looked right at home in the landscape of this former Midland Region route. The sole survivor of a class once 40 in number, its first two outings since its most recent overhaul was completed in 2023 have seen it curry favour with footplate crews at both lines, who praised its capabilities, and visitors too, who have been impressed by its immaculate condition and impressive performance.

Seeing red Ivatts

The livery of No. 46441 is a bone of contention to some. In preservation, it has long carried shades of LMS reds – and has done so for far longer than it was in BR service. Built in 1950, it was constructed to a design of LMS origin, with George Ivatt completing it in 1946, two years before Nationalisation. They appeared in connection with the 2-6-2T s, both being classed as 2MTs, but neither class ever carried the LMS's iconic red liveries, the pre-BR examples instead carrying black with LMS lettering.

The origin of No. 46441 's livery dates back to 1968. Having been withdrawn at Carnforth the year before, it was bought by Dr Peter Beet, who had it painted into the striking crimson lake livery as No. 6441. It remained based at Carnforth and even put in a number of main line appearances before moving to the ELR in the early 1990s, where it remained in use until the expiration of its boiler certification in 2002. It departed shortly after and went on static display in Preston at the Ribble Steam Railway.

It moved again in 2018, this time to the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway in the



No. 7138 works a short LMS goods set through Burrs Country Park bound for the sidings at Ramsbottom. MATT DITCH



A night shoot outside the Buckley Wells locomotive sheds at Bury took place on October 16 with (left to right) Nos. 46441, 13268, 12345, 7138 and 11456 (behind which was 'Pug' No. 11243). ROB BATTY

Lake District, a route where it regularly ran during its BR career and for which it had originally been intended in preservation. In the autumn of 2023, it was moving under its own steam once more, entering revenue-earning traffic the following spring.

As with the mogul, which is based at the Severn Valley Railway, No. 46441 had not left its home line since completing overhaul, and so it is somewhat fitting that its first trip away was to a place it formerly called home.

No. 46441 will remain in Bury until the start of 2026. During its time there, it will receive a refresh of its current livery.

Change of identity

Having been predominantly running in recent years as BR No. 52322, L&YR Aspinall 0-6-0 class 27 No. 12322 reverted to LMS branding, but rather than carry its own identity it instead carried that of classmate No. 12345. Built in 1896 as No. 360, it was based at both Newton Heath and Bolton during its working life before being scrapped in 1963, and so the opportunity was seized to temporarily revive it for the weekend.

Another locomotive to receive a fresh look was Fowler 3F 'Jinty,' which had also been running under its BR guise of No. 47298. For the first time since the 1930s, it reverted to its early LMS livery, with the number 7138 carried on its water tanks and an LMS 'lozenge' on the bunker, a livery seldom represented in preservation.



Back on the East Lancs for the first time in more than 20 years, No. 46441 approaches Irwell Vale on October. ADAM ASHFORD

L&YR 0-4-ST 'Pug' No. 19 was in action carrying its LMS identity of No. 11243; a popular feature of ELR galas has been shunting demonstrations which take place in Castlecroft Yard, outside the Bury Transport Museum. Additionally, this year saw a viewing gallery opened alongside the sidings at Ramsbottom on October 17, where the 'Pug' could be observed shunting throughout the day, as well as undertaking parallel runs with passenger trains departing the station towards Ramsbottom.

The fifth and final LMS-liveried locomotive was another product of the L&YR and Aspinall, Class 23 0-6-0ST No. 752, which currently carries its



The Stanier mogul departs Ramsbottom with a train bound for Rawtenstall, passing No. 11243 which was shunting the adjacent sidings on October 17. MATT DITCH



'Pug' No. 11243 shunts wagons at Castlecroft yard on October 18. KENNY FELSTEAD

LMS identity of No. 11456. Originally built in 1881 with a tender to a Beyer Peacock design, it was converted (along with others of the class) to a saddle tank configuration in 1986 when there was a demand for smaller shunting locomotives.

While the LMS-liveried locomotives and visiting 2MT were the undoubted stars of the show for many, they were supported by the oldest working steam locomotive in Britain.

Built for the Furness Railway in 1863 by Sharp Stewart & Co, No. 20 never made it into LMS ownership, having been made obsolete on the FR by 1870. It was sold to the Barrow Haematite Steel Company, for which it was converted into a saddle tank and remained in use there until 1960.

Originally presented to a local school, it ended up at Carnforth in 1983 where a restoration was started but stalled following the death of one of the owners.

In 1990, the dismantled components were purchased by the Furness Railway Trust, and following the awarding of a £150,000 grant by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 1996, No. 20 was restored to its original configuration.

A pair of industrial locomotives also put in appearances, including Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0ST No. 32 *Gothenburg*, which has regularly received repaints over the years to portray the character of Thomas the Tank Engine but was turned out in the lined grey livery of the Manchester Ship Canal Railway, for which it worked between 1903 and 1959.

By stark contrast, Andrew Barclay 0-4-0ST No. 1969 *JN Derbyshire* turned heads with its 'Tudor Violet' livery with wasp stripe marked bufferbeams.

Huge success

A mix of shuttle services with the smaller locomotives, combined with full-line trains with the larger ones, meant it was a weekend of constant action. On October 17, a photography special was run, as has become a tradition of the ELR galas. No. 7138 departed Bury Bolton Street with a short goods set (including several vehicles repainted in time for the LMS-themed weekend) and performed a number of runpasts at Burrs Country Park, before continuing to onwards to Ramsbottom to deposit the wagons in the sidings.

During the evening of October 18, No. 12368 starred in another photography special which saw a recreation of night mail services, including reenactors posing at stations to evoke scenes of when post was carried by rail across the country.

The final train on Sunday afternoon saw a quadruple-headed departure from Bury Bolton Street station starring Nos. 11456, 7138, 12345 and 13268.

General manager Lee Kenny said the event had been a tremendous success, adding: "Across the three days we welcomed just over 2000 visitors, an increase of about 270 on the previous year, with income up by approximately £10,000. The weekend offered a fantastic variety of activities, including early-morning photographic runpasts, the popular night mail event and driver experience sessions at Rawtenstall.

"Visiting Stanier mogul No. 13268 proved to be a major attraction, received well by crews and visitors alike, while it was also wonderful to see No. 46441 return to the ELR after 20 years away. The whole event was well-planned and delivered by our dedicated gala team and volunteers, to whom we owe huge thanks." HR





Above: Visiting from the Severn Valley Railway, No. 13268 storms through Burrs Country Park on October 17. MATT DITCH

Left: Now carrying its MSC grey livery, No. 32 *Gothenburg* departs Ramsbottom with the vintage set on October 17. The L&YR Saloon would unfortunately be failed later that day and replaced by a GWR inspection saloon for the remainder of the weekend. ADAM ASHFORD



Throughout the event, Class 27 No. 12322 ran as scrapped classmate No. 12345, which was once shedded at Bolton. ADAM ASHFORD



Nos. 20 and 11456 pause outside Bury Bolton Street. Both underwent rebuilds in their working lives, with the former starting as a tender locomotive, becoming a saddle tank, and then reverting to its original configuration in preservation, while the latter started as a tender locomotive and was later made into a saddle tank, the condition it which it has remained since. MATT DITCH

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A 'PEP' in Bachmann's step with new 'modern era' EMU

FOR many, it is steam and diesel locomotives that come to mind when thinking of heritage traction – but as time marches on, even modern units are becoming classed this way by some enthusiasts. To that end, Bachmann's revelation of its planned Class 313 and 314 EMUs in OO will appeal to those who grew up travelling on these now withdrawn trains.

Both classes were developments of British Rail's prototype Standard Suburban Train, for which three prototype units were built at the start of the 1970s. Designated 2-PEP and 4-PEP, which stood for Prototype Electro Pneumatic, these spawned a family of units known as the PEP family.

The Class 313 were the very first production units to appear from this family, which eventually spanned five classes and encompassed some 755 individual vehicles.

The Class 314s comprised a smaller fleet of just 16 three-car units and these were constructed two years after the Class 313 build programme had been completed. Unlike their earlier counterparts, the Class 314s went north of the border to work on the then newly-opened Argyle Line. The units collected power from 25kV AC overhead lines only, for which they were equipped with a pantograph on the central PTSO (Pantograph Tourist Second Open) vehicle, and they did not have the third rail pick-up of their Class 313 siblings.

The final Class 313 service ran on September 30, 2019, departing at 11.33pm from Hertford North to Moorgate, with a farewell railtour taking place on October 23. One unit is preserved at the Fife Heritage Railway in Scotland (No. 313121), while another (No. 313201) resides at Arlington Fleet Works under the ownership of the 400 Series Preservation Group.

The final Class 314 service was on December 14 the same year, again followed by a farewell tour four days later, with one unit saved for a hydrogen conversion initiative by ScotRail.

The Bachmann model will form part of its EFE range of models; power will unusually be provided from the centre car (as opposed to the driving ends), with a coreless motors powering each bogie and mounted within a diecast metal chassis to give a strong drive mechanism and low centre of gravity.

Both outer cars are fitted with directional lighting, illuminated headcode and destination blinds, and high-intensity headlights where applicable. These functions, together with the warm interior and cab lights, can be enjoyed by analogue and DCC users. On DCC, much of the lighting can be controlled independently, while door interlock lights can be turned on using a function key.

The interiors are moulded to replicate the different versions of the 3+2 seating used on the two classes; high-backed on the Class 313 and low-backed on the 314s, with each set of seats featuring defined seat cushions.

Delivery is scheduled for early 2026, with RRP starting at £349.95 for DCC-ready models; no DCC-fitted examples are currently planned.

Decorated samples and tooling revisions for Rapido releases

AUTUMN was a busy time for Rapido as a number of projects advanced, among them being the Midland Railway 483 4-4-0s and GNR J52/2 locomotives, which have seen decorated samples received, all of which are under review ahead of entering full production. Flaws were discovered with the Andrew Barclay 0-4-0 Fireless locomotives following delivery of stock to the firm's offices in Kent, necessitating their return to the factory in China to be corrected, meaning this has notably delayed their delivery to customers.

New liveries have also been announced for some of the various wagons across Rapido's range, while its Evolution range of coaches has seen the tooling modified to enable London Transport livery examples to offer the curved door tops that were common on vehicles across many of the wooden bodied vehicles seen on the network.









You're nicked! Within an autumn catalogue announcement for Hornby was this OO gauge police-liveried Class 37. Many will recognise it from a 1985 British Rail advertisement to promote rail travel, in which it was used to 'flag down' a speeding HST power car. The model forms part of the Railroad Plus range, coming fitted with Triplex sound. RRP is £149.99, with delivery expected this winter.

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ADAMS T3 CHANGES COASTS FOR GALA SUCCESS!

The West Somerset Railway's Autumn Steam Gala provided the perfect crowd-pulling destination for LSWR T3 No. 563 and GWR Castle No. 5029 *Nunney Castle*, the latter making its first gala apearance following overhaul, reports **Robin Jones.**

THREE visiting locomotives helped make the West Somerset Railway's October 17-19 Autumn Stea Gala "a fantastic success," according to the line's chairman, Jonathan Jones-Pratt.

LSWR Adams T3 4-4-0 No. 563 was joined by GWR 4-6-0 No. 5029 *Nunney Castle* from Locomotive Services Limited and GWR ex-Port Talbot Railway & Docks Company 0-6-0ST No. 813 as NCB Backworth No. 11 from the Severn Valley Railway. The saddle tank hauled the 1938 Collett Brake Corridor Composite carriage as part of a short set over the line. In action from the home fleet were WR 4-6-0 No. 7828 *Odney Manor*, WSR mogul No. 9351 and Class 33 D6575, with Williton-based Barclay 0-4-0ST No. 1219 of 1910 *Caledonia Works* giving shunting demonstrations at Minehead, days before its 10-year boiler ticket was to expire.

On extended hire to the West Somerset Railway, Severn Valley-based GWR No. 7812 *Erlestoke Manor* missed the gala while awaiting inspection and steam testing after the rectification of a washout plug thread defect. The repair was successful and No. 7812 was able to re-enter traffic on October 21.

Sadly, and unrelated to that defect, the following day, No. 7812 suffered a piston failure while working out of Bishops Lydeard. Operational and mechanical investigations were held, and it was discovered that a piston had failed; repairs have since begun at Minehead.

About 2400 passengers were carried during the gala despite the wet weather, generating revenue of £61,050, yet again

LSWR T3 4-4-0 No. 563 on Castle Hill heading the long goods rake on October 16 during driver familiarisation the day before the gala started. MIKE LANNING





No. 5029 *Nunney Castle* heads a service train past Castle Hill. MIKE LANNING



T3 No. 563 alongside WR 4-6-0 No. 7828 *Odney Manor* at Crowcombe Heathfield on October 18. MIKE LANNING

Right: West Somerset Railway plc chairman Jonathan Jones-Pratt and his daughter Elena on GWR 4-6-0 No. 5029 *Nunney Castle* carrying 'The Bristolian' headboard at Minehead station. WSR



reinforcing the huge value of heritage lines to resorts outside the summer season.

"It was a fantastic gala and the feedback has been really positive," said Jonathan. "This has been a particularly challenging year and yet we got to end it on a high.

"What has been encouraging was the really high percentage of children travelling on the line."

Jonathan had the privilege of driving *Nunney Castle* in a packed Mineheadad station. "It made my year," he added. The line's next major event is the visit of *Inspiration*, Railway 200's travelling exhibition train, to Bishops Lydeard on November 24-29.˜Therewill be a free shuttle train on˜November25 and 28 only˜between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard for those who have pre-booked an exhibition train ticket.

The WSR Christmas Market will take place from 10am to 4pm on November˜29/30,with a steam service exclusively for those who have pre-booked departing from Bishops Lydeard at 10,30am˜headingto Minehead. A new festive season event is Fish and



Contrasting British locomotive designs separated by about 46 years were seen in harness together at the West Somerset Railway on October 21, when Adams T3 4-4-0 no.563 was unusually paired with WR 4-6-0 No.7812 *Erlestoke Manor* to work the 4.35pm Minehead to Bishops Lydeard, which was captured shortly after departing Williton at Castle Hill. The T3 and stayed on in Somerset for a few more days after the gala, working regular timetabled services. RUSSELL AYRE

Chipmas, a decorated service which will run from Bishops Lydeard to either Williton or Minehead on November 30 and December 7 and 12.

The Festive Quantock Belle on November 30 and December 7, 13 and 20 offers a four-course Christmas meal on a First Class dining train provided by chef Sam le Roux. Passengers will enjoy delicious food while travelling through the beautiful scenery of the Quantock Hills between Bishops Lydeard and Williton and back. The Santa Express will run on December 6/7, 13/14, 20/21 and 23/24 from Bishops Lydeard to Williton and back, with the man himself visiting during the journey and leaving gifts on the tables.

The annual Carol Train will run between Bishops Lydeard and Williton on December 13 and 20. At each station along the route, passengers can disembark and join in with a brass band to sing carols.

The Bad Santa adults-only comedy train returns for a second year on the Quantock Belle from Bishops Lydeard to Williton and back – an evening of tasty food combined with inappropriate jokes and stories on December 12 and 19.

For more details of the programme, visit www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk/events

Meanwhile, Tiverton and Minehead Liberal Democrat MP Rachel Gilmour held talks with Rail Minister Lord Peter Hendy on October 22 regarding the possibility an initial main line link between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard as a "crucial first step in the larger project of linking Minehead to Taunton."

She described the discussion as "constructive." HR



GWR 4-6-0 No. 5029 *Nunney Castle* approaches Leigh Woods level crossing with the late-running 3.58pm Minehead to Bishops Lydeard service at dusk on October 19. DON BISHOP



T3 No. 563 double-heading with No. 7828 with its last departure from Minehead on October 22 before heading home. MIKE PERALTA



Framed by autumn colours, No. 5029 *Nunney Castle* approaches Blue Anchor. MIKE LANNING

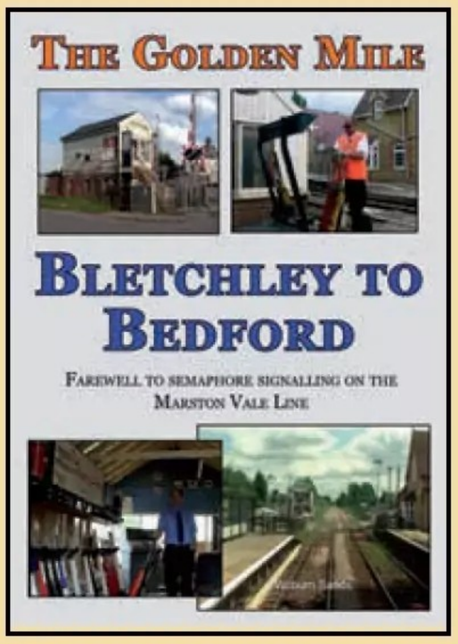


Port Talbot 0-6-0T No. 813, running as NCB Backworth No. 11, at Crowcombe Heathfield with a Williton shuttle on October 18. DON BISHOP



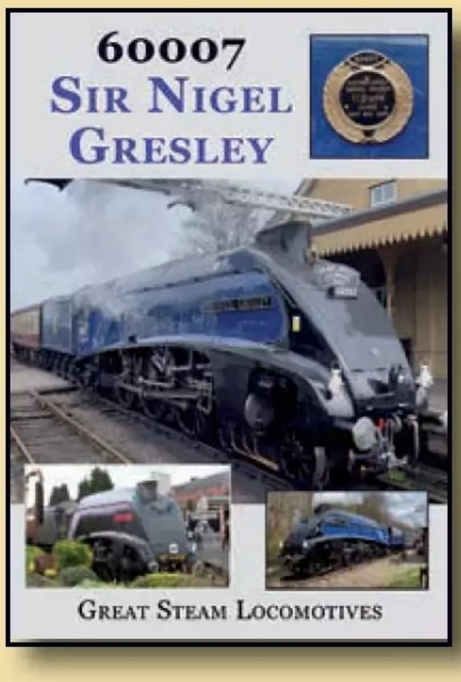
Barclay 0-4-0ST No. 1219 of 1910 *Caledonia Works* shunting at Williton on October 17. RICK KELSEY

New DVD and Book Titles from Kingfisher



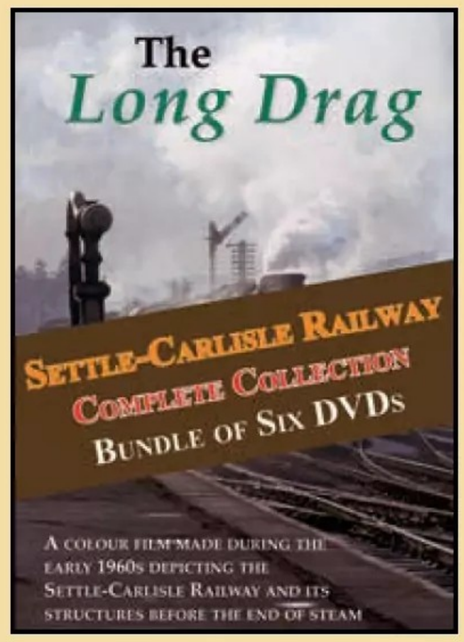
'The Golden Mile - Bletchley to Bedford' After 150 years of traditional signalling along the Bletchley to Bedford route, all was to change in 2004 with the introduction of modern electronic systems and crossing gates. This film is a journey aboard one of the last services before the upgrade was put in place showing all the old mechanical signalling and hand-controlled level crossing gates before new barriers were put in place. We hear stories from signallers of the past and show the interiors of some signal boxes before they were demolished virtually overnight. Additional footage of the 1996 steam 150th Anniversary with No. 80079.

DVD 1 hour 36 minutes duration £16.95



'60007 Sir Nigel Gresley' This new edition in the Great Steam Locomotive series witnesses the A4 following its overhaul between 2105 and 2021. We see it in service and on test at the Severn Valley Railway in 2022 where it was turned out in wartime black and numbered 4498. After a repaint into early BR blue livery, the locomotive attended an Easter event at the Nene Valley Railway in 2023 followed by main line charters in the north west and south west which took the engine to Kingswear on several occasions. We see *Sir Nigel Gresley* at work on main line duties, as well as performing on some of our most prestigious preserved lines. Also featured the locomotive in 1988 lined up for a photographic call alongside *Mallard* and *Bittern* as *Silver Link*, to mark its sister locomotive *Mallard*'s 50th anniversary.

DVD 58 minutes duration £14.95

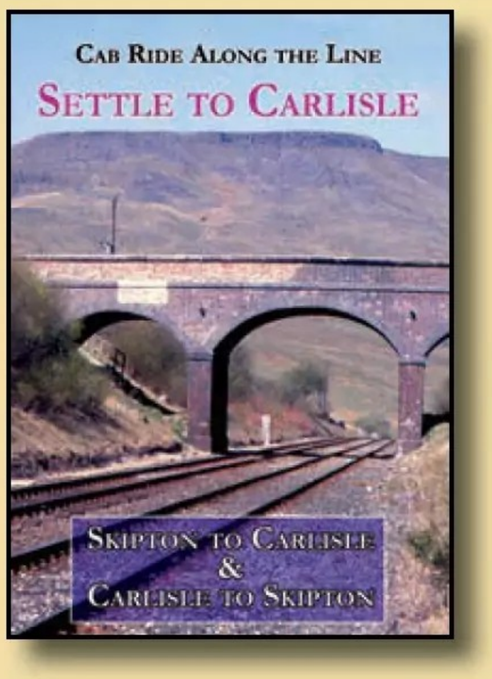


'Celebrating 150 Years of the Settle to Carlisle Railway'

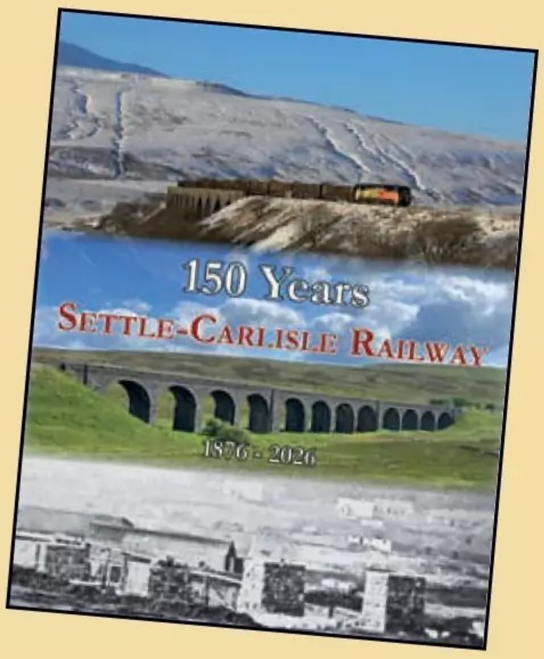
As our passenger railway system in Britain celebrates 200 years since the first public train ran on the Stockton to Darlington line, another major anniversary is being marked; that of the famous Settle-Carlisle Railway which is now 150 years old. To mark the great event we are producing a special 'bundle' of DVDs, a one-off book and our new Guide Book to the line.

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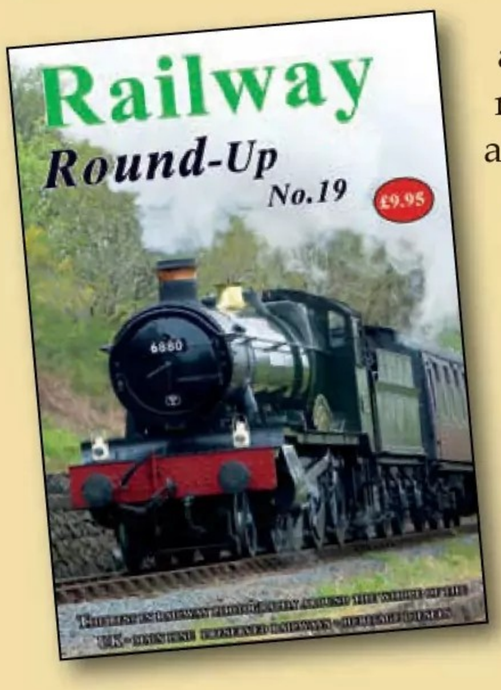


Titles include - **'The Story of the Settle Carlisle Railway' £13.95 'The Long Drag' £14.95 - 'The Secrets of Blea Moor & Ribblehead' £14.95 - 'S&C The Line that Refused To Die' £14.95 'Tales of the Settle-Carlisle' £12.95 'The Royal Settle-Carlisle' £14.95**



New Lead Title '150 Years of the Settle-Carlisle Railway'
This special tribute book covers the 150-year history from its 6-year construction showing very rare new photographs from that period, through to operations and gradual decline. The line made headlines in the early 1980s when it was announced for closure. Efforts were made by the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line and other local organisations and the line was reprieved. It is now a vibrant route with huge numbers of people travelling and a large freight train business. The book is full of colour and black & white images. Special articles by the S&C Trust and Friends of the S&C plus a freight train analysis right up to date.

Large format, colour and B&W images, 48 pages £9.95



'Cab Ride from Skipton to Carlisle' A new edition of our cab ride along the line. This digitally improved and full commentary DVD (2 hours 16 minutes) with Class 47 444 on 31st January 1990 also includes a cab view in the southerly direction from Carlisle to Skipton on a snow-covered line. Hauled by No. 47 474 it departs Carlisle on the 10.40 passenger train filmed in January 1986. Both cab rides show the run-down state of the line which would soon be upgraded. **DVD 2 hours 37 minutes £19.95**

'Railway Round Up No. 19' This latest edition is packed with steam and some heritage diesel footage. *East Lancs with 70000 *Britannia* and 60007 *Sir Nigel Gresley* and Bury Transport Museum *Worth Valley Spring gala - 6990 *Witherslack Hall*, 4079 *Pendennis Castle*, 1054, 75078, 45596 *Bahamas*, 52044 *Salisbury with 35028 *Clan Line* first charter since overhaul and 50th anniversary of first main line train *GCR and 48305 in operation with line up of locos at Loughborough *Gloucester Warwickshire Railway Cotswold Festival of Steam *Main line action in the south west - D1015 *Western Champion*, 61306, 34046 *Braunton*, 7029 *Clun Castle* and 35028 *Clan Line* *SVR - Lampton tank, 7812, 7714, *Fenchurch*, 60532 *Blue Peter* *WSR 150th anniversary of Minehead with Furness No. 20 *North Norfolk Railway *Great Britain with 45407 and 44871 *Lakeside - 45690 and 46441 * Two Castles, 7029 and 5043, to Plymouth plus much, much more. **105 minutes duration DVD just £9.95 **Issue No. 20 out in the New Year**





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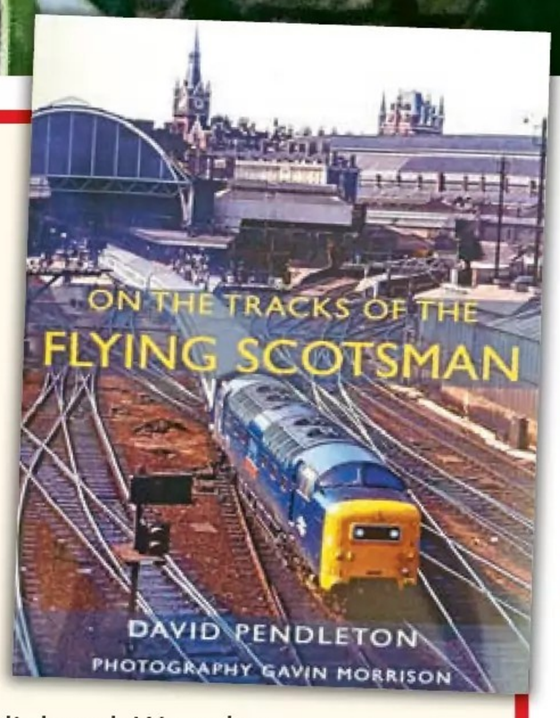
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On the Tracks of the *Flying Scotsman*

By David Pendleton (hardback, Great Northern Books, 144pp, £22.50, ISBN 978-1-914227-80-6).



THE heading for this book's first 10 chapters sums it up: 'A famous train – and a world-famous locomotive,' writes **Geoff Courtney**. That says it all, although there could be a suffix to the heading: 'And a publisher's dream.'For no other locomotive, and thus by connection the eponymous named express, has such a worldwide following. Whether that is justified and well-earned or something of a mystery is a debate for another day.

An important element of this publication is that the images were taken by top photographer Gavin Morrison, who in his lengthy career has recorded the East Coast Main Line from the days of steam to today's Azuma trains that cover nearly 400 miles in a little over four hours. So, the book isn't about *Flying Scotsman* the locomotive nor 'The Flying Scotsman' express, but about the line itself and the motive power that has run over it for many decades. Still with me? I'm sure you are.

Great Northern Books' editor David Joy writes in his foreword that David Pendleton, who left a railway career to open a gin distillery in the North Yorkshire seaside resort of Filey, provides a rich mix of anecdotes and observations after regularly travelling on the line as a schoolboy, and Pendleton explains that as the son of a Northumbrian mother and Yorkshire father, his family history stands astride these two counties that led to rail journeys between them being a constant in his life.

The book starts, unsurprisingly, at King's Cross, which we are told stands at an area once known as Battle Bridge. Not many know that, but as David writes, many do know of the battles between luggage-hauling pedestrians trying to cross the road between the station and St Pancras and the incessant stream of black cabs. This is accompanied by a two-page image of Class 47 No. 47543 departing from 'The Cross'for the north in July 1976, and also by a photograph of the station's frontage in 1990, about which the reader is told that the 112ft-high clock tower once held treble, tenor, and bass bells.

Then we travel to Peterborough, Doncaster, York, Darlington, Newcastle, Berwick and Edinburgh Waverley on a journey interspersed with photographs of steam, diesel and electric motive power. There is, for example, among a plethora of images, A3 No. 60039 *Sandwich* at Grantham in 1959, Class 55 Deltic No. 55008 *The Green Howards* in another two-page image en route to Edinburgh at Doncaster taken from an overlooking multi-storey car park in 1977, and bringing us right up to date is an Azuma at Darlington in 2023.

The book's back cover draws attention to the variety on offer, with images of A1 Pacific No. 60156 *Great Central* passing through York with the Down 'Flying Scotsman,' Class 55 No. 55004 *Queen's Own Highlander* at Burnmouth on Scotland's east coast, Class 91 electric No. 91101 at Newcastle, and an Azuma EMU entering Edinburgh Waverley.

One element of the book I particularly enjoyed was the juxtaposition of the contents, not knowing what motive power or era would be on the next page. Thus, within a couple of pages of the image at Darlington of the Azuma – a class of which I know very little, I was transported back into my comfort zone by a two-page photograph of 'Black Five'No. 45363, 9F No. 92206, A4 No. 60019 *Bittern*, V2 No. 60831, and WD No. 90358 grouped round the main turntable in a smoky York shed in October 1966.

The good old days? You bet.

A PICTORIAL JOURNEY FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF ALL AGES



Celebrate 200 Years of Rail History

By Lucy Pittaway (www.lucypittaway.co.uk, mounted and framed art from £85, stationery and gifts from £7.95 plus p&P, but free delivery on orders of £99 and above).

MARKING 200 years of the world's first passenger railway, award-winning artist Lucy˜Pittaway, as reported in the last issue of *Heritage Railway*, has created artwork celebrating the moment the first passenger train crossed Skerne Bridge in Darlington, the oldest working railway bridge in the world, in 1825.

Inspired by John Dobbin's painting for the Stockton & Darlington Railway's 50th anniversary, the piece reflects a defining milestone in British – and global – engineering and the region's proud industrial heritage.

Available as mounted, framed and canvas prints, the commemorative range also includes a notebook, to-do list, bookmark, cushion and tea towel.

EVOCATIVE CELEBRATION OF A LANDMARK YEAR

Let the Bells Ring Out

by Milly Johnson (hardback, Simon & Shuster, 394pp, £16.99, ISBN 978-1-3985-4706-3).

SUNDAYTimes bestseller Milly, who lives in Barnsley, is one of the UK's top 10 female fiction authors, and her 23rd novel is a classic romance for Christmas in a steam railway setting.

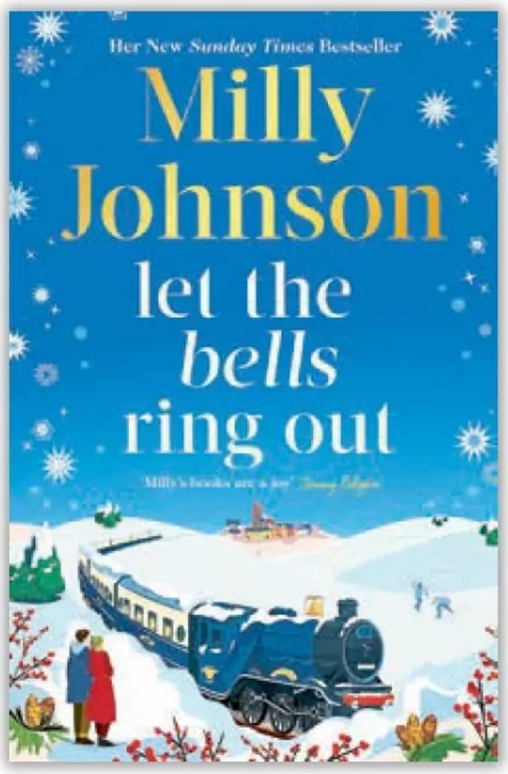
Seven strangers find themselves marooned on a snowbound platform days before Christmas and take shelter in the 'Yorkshire Belle' steam train, forced by circumstances to spend the festive season together.

Each of them is locked in a separate emotional turmoil of their own: one, for instance, has to bear with the thought of her former partner getting married on Christmas Eve. The group is joined by a mysterious stranger who is lost in the snow – but is there more to his story?

With snowstorm relentlessly raging on, each of the group opens up to another on board, with fresh joy to be found in the kindness of strangers.

Getting away from it all big time, might this Christmas bring second chances and the gift of true happiness again?

FRESH HOPE IN THE DEPTHS OF WINTER



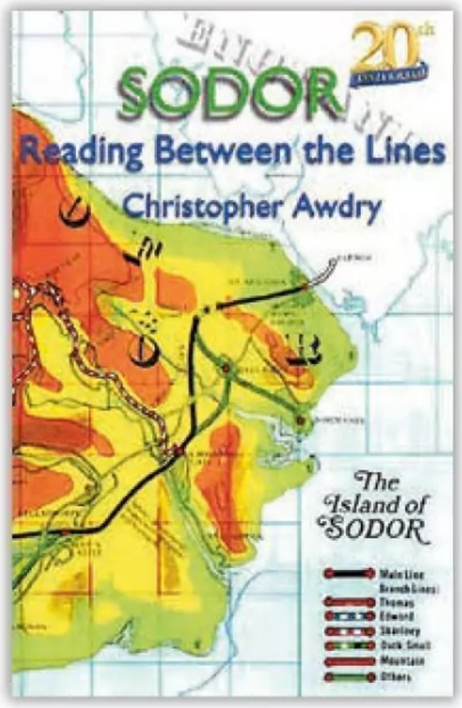
Sodor: Reading Between The Lines

By Christopher Awdry (Full Steam Ahead, 202pp, £6.99 digital, paperback £11.99, ISBN 978-1-0687-3129-7).

THERE are few works of fiction that have such extensive lore around them – particularly for ones largely aimed at younger readers.

Between The Lines was first published in 2005 and answered many of the regular questions that the Rev Wilbert Awdry, author of The Railway Series books about Thomas the Tank Engine and his friends, received from readers, ranging from the simple (such as which book did Percy first appear in) to the more complex (why is Thomas blue?). It also contains a history of the fictional railways on which the stories are set, helping to

Pre-order Issue 340: Order your copy from mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr or call 01507 529529.



anchor some of them in context for the reader.

Wilbert was always conscious of never speaking down to children in his writing, believing them to be more intelligent than publishers often gave them credit for, and so he was meticulous about ensuring continuity in many areas. He is recorded on many occasions voicing displeasure about artist representations of his characters varying between illustrations (often within the same book), and creating the backstories and history helped address some of these disagreements.

In the 80th anniversary year of the publication of Wilbert's first book, this publication was written by his son Christopher, for whom the first stories were created when ill with measles. The first short print run has long since sold out and books have often commanded high prices on the resale market. This 20th anniversary edition is packed with lots of useful information that any fan of the Railway Series would love to see, such as the real-life events that shaped the stories, and never seen before notes and thoughts, written in Wilbert's own hand.

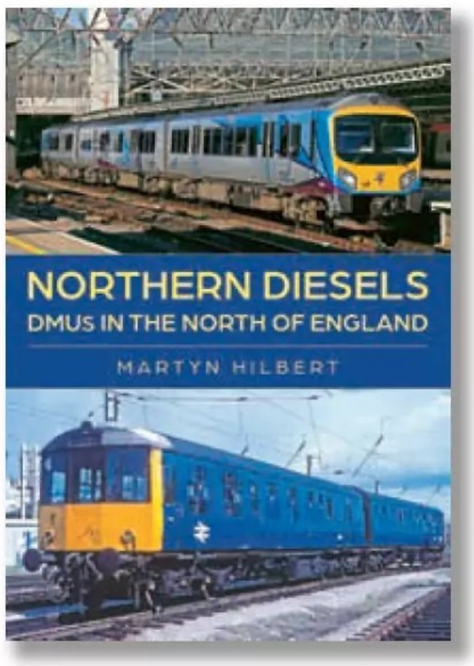
This book pulls no punches as the author highlights key moments that shaped the creation of a series that became a household name and inspired a generation into taking up an interest in railways.

INTERESTING INSIGHT TO A BELOVED AUTHOR'S WORLD˝ BUILDING

Northern Diesels: DMUs in the North of England

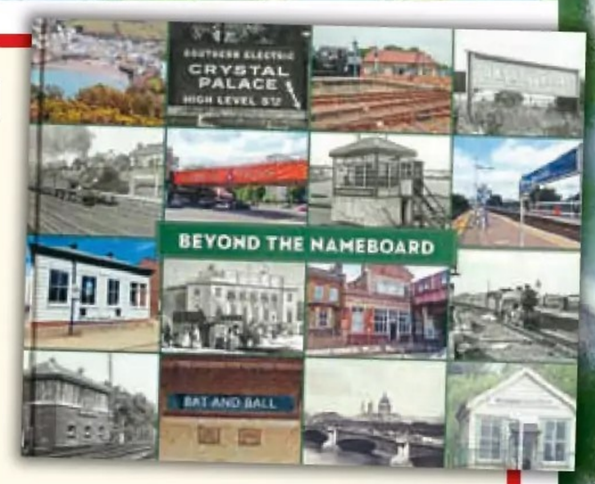
By Martyn Hilbert (softback, Amberley Publishing, 96pp, £15.99, 978-1-3981-2443-1).

COMPANIONto a previous publication by the author that focused on EMUs in the region, here he looks at the timeline and progression of DMUs once found running commuter and inter-regional services through destinations such a North Staffordshire, Cheshire, Merseyside, and more.



Beyond The Nameboard

By Will Adams (hardback, Transport Treasury Publishing, 112pp, £22.50. + £3 p&p. ISBN 978-1-915281-10-4). Cheques payable to Transport Treasury Publishing and sent to 16 Highworth Close, High Wycombe HP13 7PJ.



HOW often it is that something which initially seems odd to us eventually becomes so familiar that it no longer causes a second thought? A new mate's unusual first name for example, or perhaps Aunt Matilda's choice of headgear, writes **Geoff Courtney**.

Or maybe a station name. Will Adams reckons that's an odd enough subject to justify a book, and the hierarchy at Transport Treasury agrees. In his preface he explains that the publication, which he describes as unusual, takes a slightly sideways look at railway history by investigating the origins of the names of a variety of railway locations.

More than 40 across the former Southern Railway network are listed – indicating that there may be more in the series covering other areas – and while I'm prepared to list some of those locations whose unusual names are included, I'm not going to reveal how those names came about. That would be like reviewing a new crime novel and identifying the murderer.

Having said that, some are obvious and I am therefore not being a spoilsport by explaining their origin. Bat and Ball, for instance, in Sevenoaks, which is named after a local pub that no longer survives, and ditto Bricklayers Arms in south London, also of course the location of shed 73B. Stewarts Lane is another name that will resonate with trainspotters due to its shed (73A), which was named after a local thoroughfare.

There are others that aren't so obvious. Bungalow Town Halt is one, Fort Brockhurst another. How about Martello Tunnel, and were there really nine elms or three bridges? Then there is Point Pleasant Junction, and Pouparts Junction is a good one. And what has William Shakespeare got to do with a tunnel west of Dover?

Throughout the book are photographs of the locations mentioned, and I was especially enamoured of an image of Class 9F No. 92210 bursting out of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway's Devonshire Tunnel, whose name has no connection with the county.

RAILWAYODDITIES EXPLAINED

London Transport Museum's exclusive Bachmann L98 pannier tank

Bachmann Branchline for London Transport Museum, 1:76 OO gauge, £135 plus £5 p&p, online or instore at°https://www.ltmuseumshop.co.uk/ or visit www.ltmuseumshop.co.uk/models/london-transport-l98-pannier-tank for more details

THIS exclusive model has been produced for the Covent Garden-based museum by Bachmann.

In the 1950s, London Transport faced challenges maintaining an ageing fleet of steam locomotives for engineering, so in 1956/57, LT received two 0-6-0PTs from the Western Region successful trials which led to the acquisition of a further 11 panniers by London Transport between 1958 and 1963, numbered L89 to L99.

The use of steam on works trains began to wind down in the 1960s. The steam era ended symbolically on June 6, 1971, with a commemorative run on the Metropolitan line by an engineering train hauled by L94 from Moorgate to Neasden Depot.

Finished in authentic LT maroon livery, the model depicts L98, originally GWR No. 7739, which was built by the North British Locomotive Company in Glasgow in 1930. It joined the LT engineering fleet in late 1962 and was broken up at LT Neasden works in 1970.

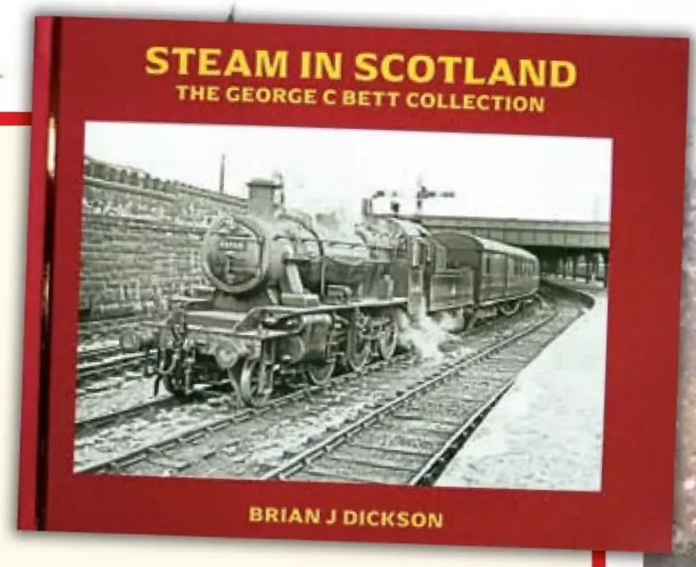
Equipped with sprung buffers and NEM coupling pockets and water filler caps with screw closure, the model boasts a powerful three-pole motor and an eight-pin DCC decoder socket. It commemorates the twilight of London's steam operations, and its historical accuracy and mechanical detail is superb.



➜ **Note:** The museum is unable to deliver this to the EU and Northern Ireland.

Steam in Scotland

By Brian J Dickson (hardback, Transport Treasury Publishing, 80pp, £13.50 + £3 p&p. ISBN 978-1-913893-60-6). Cheques payable to Transport Treasury Publishing and sent to 16 Highworth Close, High Wycombe, HP13 7PJ.



SCOTTISH steam was the Holy Grail for southern-based trainspotters, writes **Geoff Courtney**, although those of us for whom London was the epicentre of our hobby at least had King's Cross producing a Haymarket (64B) A4 daily during the summer on 'The Elizabethan' and Euston the very occasional Polmadie (66A) Princess Coronation.

And so this newcomer from the ever-busy Transport Treasury publishing house acts as a guide of what we missed, although the one small caveat is that with the book being based on the George C Bett photograph collection, by far the majority of the images were taken in and around Dundee, so it's not a broad canvas of the whole of Scotland.

But no matter. This geographical limitation doesn't lead to a narrow viewpoint, and the frontispiece image emphasises that by featuring GWR-designed, BR-built 0-6-0PT No. 1646 during its spell, shared with classmate No. 1649, on The Mound to Dornoch eight-mile branch line north of Inverness.

George acquired his first camera in the late 1940s, and while working in the insurance industry from the early 1950s he moved to a house near the Tay bridge, which allowed him to record the steam scene and its subsequent demise around Dundee, and indeed further afield, as his image of No. 1646 illustrates.

It is, however, Dundee West station that is central to the book and the location of many photographs, but certainly not all. The original station of this name opened in May 1847, but it would have been the third, which was opened by the Caledonian Railway in 1890 and closed by BR exactly 75 years later, in May 1965, from which George took his photographs.

The period covered is 1954-66, and higher-level classes seen are Standard Britannia and Clan Pacifics and Class Five 4-6-0s, and ex-LMS 'Black Fives,' along with former LNER representatives. No. 70053 *Moray Firth*, the only member of the class I failed to 'cop', leaped out early on to show me what I had missed, and two pages later there is Royal Scot No. 46145 *The Duke of Wellington's Regt. (West Riding),* one of just five in that class not underlined in my Combined Volume, to add more salt into my London-centric wound.

Other pedigree classes that feature are ex-LMS Jubilees, and former LNER classes A1, A2 and A3, while an A4, No. 60031 *Golden Plover*, also make an appearance, and there's even a selection of Nigel Gresley 'namers' on freight workings, including A3 Nos. 60052 *Prince Palatine* and 60090 *Grand Parade*, and D49 No. 62744 *The Holderness*.

It's not only thoroughbreds that are seen at work, for bread-and-butter workhorses also catch the eye, ranging from former LMS and LNER passenger and freight classes to Standard representatives. Photographs are of course this book's raison d'être, and so a full page is given to most images, but compiler Brian Dickson's captions aren't remotely lacking in detail, resulting in a worthwhile exercise that could have had limited appeal but one that emerges with credit.

SKILFUL PHOTGRAPHY SUPPORTED BY WELL RESEARCHED CAPTIONS

Predominantly a picture-led publication, it does not limit itself to the early generations of these units, nor does it focus exclusively on modern variants either. It is instead a fairly comprehensive visual timeline of their introduction in the region and how they have changed in the more than 50 years since. DMUs are often regarded as the 'Cinderellas' of heritage lines and the same could perhaps be said of main line duties too; where locomotive development saw steam and diesel traction become hefty machines of might and power, the humble DMU may have changed in exterior, but beneath the surface things are much the same as they ever were.

Perusing the pages, there are several interesting images contained within, such as Derby lightweight railcar *Iris* in Railway Technical Centre red and blue livery as it wore before entering the heritage sector. Likewise a rather unusual shot of the Class 100 two-car unit which was converted for use as the Eastern Region general managers inspection saloon, which was the only first-generation DMU to be painted in the Provincial Services Sprinter livery as was carried by the Class 150 and 151 fleet when new.

Any publication that captures and clearly demonstrates the changing face of the UK's rail network will always evoke strong memories for some as they identify traction, places, or liveries with which they were once familiar but which have also long since vanished, and undoubtedly this will prove the case for any reader who opts to pick up a copy of this for themselves.

THE CHANGING FACE OF BRITAIN'SDMU TRACTION

RC Riley's Western Steam calendar 2026



STEAM Museum of the Great Western Railway (www.steam-museum.org.uk/shop/ or tel 01793 466626 or email steamsales@swindon.gov.uk, £10 plus £1.95 p&p).

THIS calendar offers one page a month, faced by a series of inspirational A4 sized colour images taken by photographer Dick Riley (1921-2006) during the Western Region steam age. The calendar page comprises a series of one-inch squares for each day, sufficient for basic notes.

SPLENDID ANNUAL OFFERING

Railway Atlas: Then And Now

By Paul Smith and Keith Turner (hardback, Crecy Publishing, www.crecy.co.uk, 128pp, £20, ISBN 978 - 1- 80035 -348-0).

EVERY enthusiast needs an atlas, and here is the fourth edition of one of Crecy's most popular. The big draw here is that it comprises a set of 48 pairs of maps which facilities comparisons between today's railway network and the one of 1923.

The modern-day maps include information about lines that have been converted into heritage railways on greenways for walking and cycling.

Other information includes the locations of all BR steam sheds, museums, and modern commercial narrow gauge lines and miniature railways.

There is a detailed gazetteer and a list of all stations, halts, and workers' platforms that existed since 1901, stations under construction, plus the locations of surviving turntables.

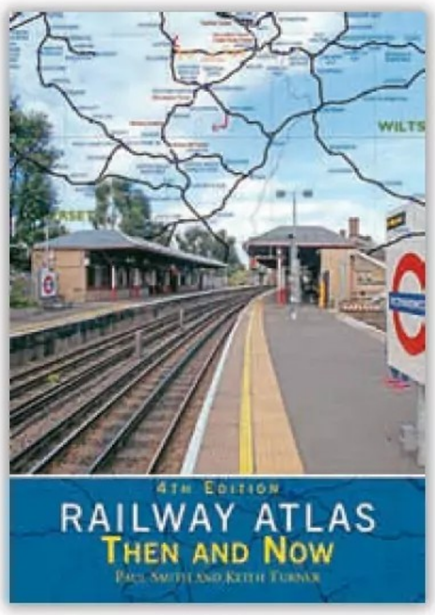
APPEAL FOR BOTH CASUAL BROWSERS AND ACCOMPLISHED RESEARCHERS

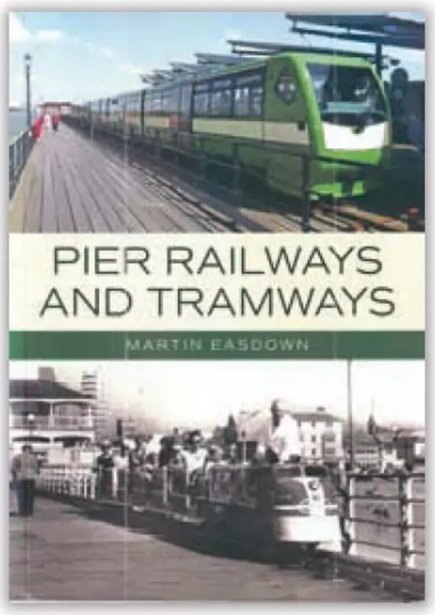
Pier Railways and Tramways

By Martin Easdown (softback, Amberley Publishing, 96pp, ISBN978-1-3981-2407-3).

THE 19th century was not only the great age for the development of the railway network, but also the building of pleasure piers around the coast as railways turned fishing harbours into popular tourist destinations by the score.

Several piers were equipped with their own railways to convey visitors to their ends, with some of these lines still existing today, including the longest of all at Southend-on-





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Sea, served by an electric line since 1890, and the oldest pleasure pier of all, the one at Ryde on the Isle of Wight.

This abundantly illustrated survey divides the subject into self-contained pier railways and tramways and those lines which were connected to the main line.

Some of the pier railways have long since vanished, such as those at Rhyl, Minehead, Margate and Hunstanton, which met their demise for a variety of reasons.

The author, a member of the National Piers Society, has condensed his survey into an entertaining guide which will fascinate all who love traditional seaside resorts and finding out more about them.

A DAY OUT BY THE SEA FROM YOUR ARMCHAIR

For The Love of Trains

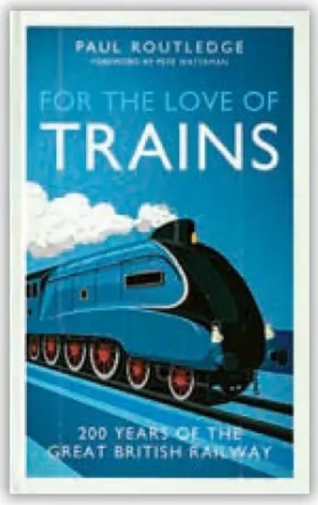
By Paul Routlege, foreword by Pete Waterman (hardback, Mirror Brooks, 304pp, £12.99, ISBN 978-1-9174-3950-3).

LIFELONG railway fan Paul Routlege has written regularly about the joys of train travel during nearly 60 years as a journalist, including 27 as a *Daily Mirror* columnist.

While Britain is celebrating Railway 200, Paul has written what is labelled as a "love letter to trains," beginning with the dawn of rail transport, the year of Railway Mania, and the century of mass expansion of the network leading to the Grouping of 1923.

He looks at how the railways adapted to the fresh challenges presented by the First World War and the women who performed roles that had always been rigidly the domain of men. The impact of the Beeching Axe, the end of steam, privatisation under the Conservatives, the saving of the Settle to Carlisle line (the railway that refused to die), the Woodhead Route (the railway they threw away in 1981, how *Flying Scotsman* became a legend, railways in books and on TV – the writer offers his positive thoughts and feelings towards an awesome variety of topics within the subject.

ENTERTAINING AND THOUGHT˜ PROVOKING READ





Talyllyn Railway 2026 Calendar and Christmas cards

The Railway Shop, Talyllyn Railway, Wharf station, Tywyn, Gwynedd LL36 9EY (01654 711012, www.talyllyn.co.uk, calendar £8, packs of five cards £3.99, both plus £3.95 p&p).

PRESENTED in a folded A3 landscape format, the pictures which feature most of the steam fleet at various locations are A4 size. The cover picture is of a recreation of an 1895 image of the owner's trip to Nant Gwernol.

The months and days of the week are bi-lingual in English and Welsh, and the diary pages highlight the different services and attractions available – ideal for a year in which the line will celebrate 75 years since it became the world's first volunteer-run heritage railway.

Meanwhile, the Christmas card depicts No. 2 *Dolgoch* in an idyllic snow-covered setting near Brynglas.

PLENTY OF VARIETY FOR THE PRICE

Railways in Devon and Cornwall in the Late 20th Century˚

By Peter J Green (hardback, Pen & Sword, 206pp, £25, ISBN 978-1-3990-3429-6).

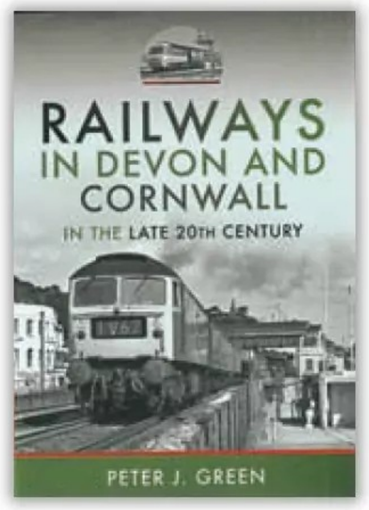
THE railways of the far south west have always had a particular attraction to many railway enthusiasts, whether it's for the wonderful viaducts of Cornwall or the busy junctions of Cowley Bridge and Aller, the rolling Devonshire hills or the wonderful branch lines like Looe or St Ives.

There is something for everyone in this book, which covers them all and more. Diesel rules during this period, with many large diesels, DMUs, and also the odd shunter covered by the numerous photographs.

The black-and-white images are high-quality and echo the period superbly. There are interesting pictures of the now-closed North Devon & Cornwall line through Meeth and Torrington stations and a good mix of passenger and goods trains exemplified by a 1984 view of an expanded Meldon Quarry at the height of its business. While the map at the front of the book does not include freight or heritage lines, they are still in this book.

˜For Colonel Stephens enthusiasts, there are some photographs of goods trains at Meeth and Torrington stations and also a chapter with seven images of the Gunnislake branch.

Peter Green's passion for Devon's railways was ignited when he was



holidaying with his family in 1959 and travelling by train along the Dawlish Wall to Teignmouth, while later holidays in the 1980s expanded his interest into Cornwall.

WONDERFUL PICTORIAL JOURNEY HR

British Army Ambulance Trains

By Brian Robertson (softback, Amberley Publishing, 128pp, £16.99, ISBN 978-1-3981-2343-4).

WHILE we may all too easily think of railways transporting people in a commuter or leisure scenario, one area of the story that's perhaps often overlooked is the conveyance of people with ambulance trains. Admittedly, their introduction was not necessitated through glamorous circumstances, wagons first being used by the British to transport the sick and wounded during the Crimean War in 1855, but they were nonetheless a vital cog in the wheels of the Army and Navy.

Developed to offer on-board medical facilities to treat patients while on the move, it is highly likely that many injured in battle were able to survive long enough to reach better facilities thanks to their initial treatment received while travelling aboard one of these trains. Often only given a few short lines in historical recounts, Robertson has here undertaken meticulous research to shed some well-deserved light onto their story.

In his opening preface, the author draws attention to the famous quote by Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana, who said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Such a phrase could not be more applicable to the ambulance trains, which were often done away with after each major conflict, only to be 'reinvented'when the next started. This is true even today, where their reintroduction is being considered owing to the war in Ukraine and potential wider European conflict. War was the primary reason for the development of these trains, and perhaps being so connected to such conflict and their resulting loss of life is one reason they are not often thought about.

Roberston takes through an in-depth story of their development and use, including patient-carrying tramways in 1910, the more familiar complete trains, and even points out where hospitals had their own stations for the rapid transfer of casualties.

Chapters are accompanied by a plethora of archive photography, and while the use of ambulance trains was global, it is interesting to note how they primarily all followed a similar set up – why fix what isn't broken, perhaps?

A LIGHT ON AN OVERLOOKED CHAPTER OF RAIL HISTORY

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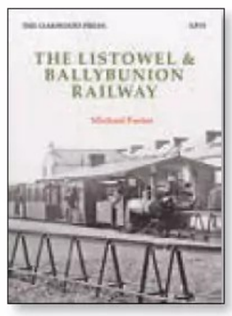
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In this lovely book, artist & writer Robin Barnes looks at locomotive development around the world over the years, considering and illustrating some 25 locomotives which actually were built, and a further 14 which never saw the light of day. There is also an 'Interlude' devoted to the trams of Robin's home town of Edinburgh. Robin's ability to paint pictures of locomotives which were never built is extraordinary, and well to the fore in this entertaining and informative book. 96 large format pages. Hardbound. A book to enlighten and entertain in equal measure for many years to come! ***(Original price - £33.90 inc UK P & P; LOW STOCK: BUY WHILST YOU CAN)***

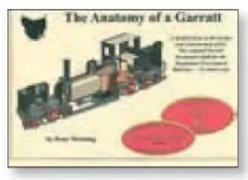
The Listowel & Ballybunion Railway • Foster • £17.98



The railway between Listowel & Ballybunion in County Kerry, Ireland opened in 1888. Uniquely it was a monorail built by the French Lartigue Construction Company. Until World War I, the railway remained financially viable thanks to local and tourist traffic. However, the war and subsequent turbulence severely affected its finances. When Ireland's Free State government considered grouping railways into the Great Southern Railway, the Listowel & Ballybunion line was not included. By 1924, the line had ceased operation, and its last train had run. But despite being unique, it had survived for 40 years. A very interesting history. 112 pages, 100 B&W illustrations. Paperback. ***A GOOD READ!***

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We were delighted when John Snell agreed to our reprinting his novel, originally published in 1958, shortly after he graduated, and following his experiences helping to keep the Talyllyn running. This is the only family saga ever written set on a narrow gauge railway - not surprisingly a Welsh one in this case. The Gwernal Valley Railway is fictitious, but embodies the characteristics of many Welsh narrow gauge lines, and is a truly delightful book chronicling four generations of the Roberts family, and their adventures as they work on the railway. The 22 drawings compliment the story beautifully. Suitable for ages 14 or so upwards. 184 pages. Paperback. ***A CHRISTMAS TREAT IN EVERY WAY!***

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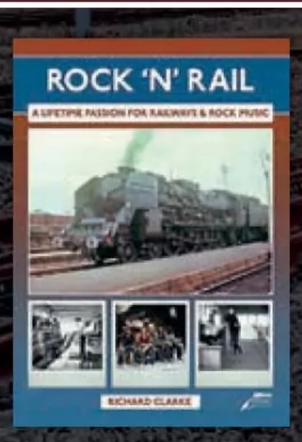
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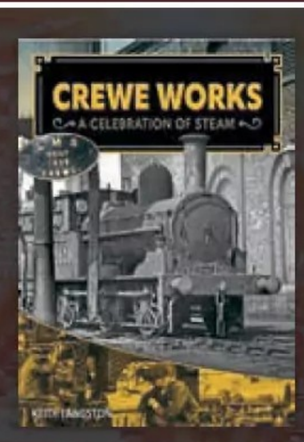
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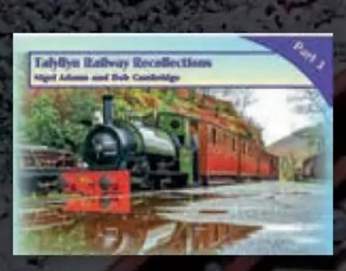
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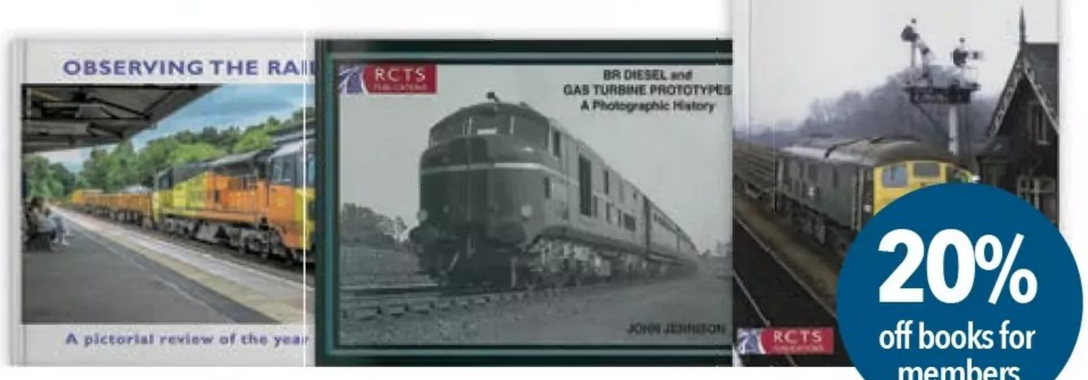
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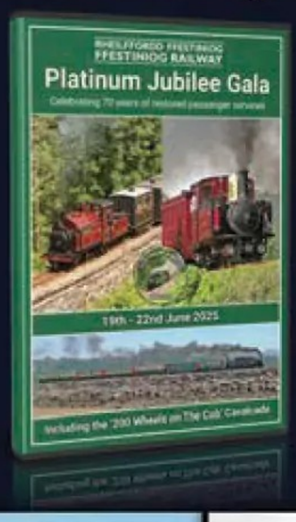
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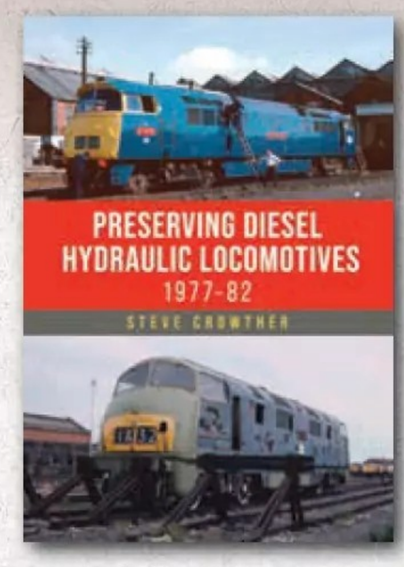
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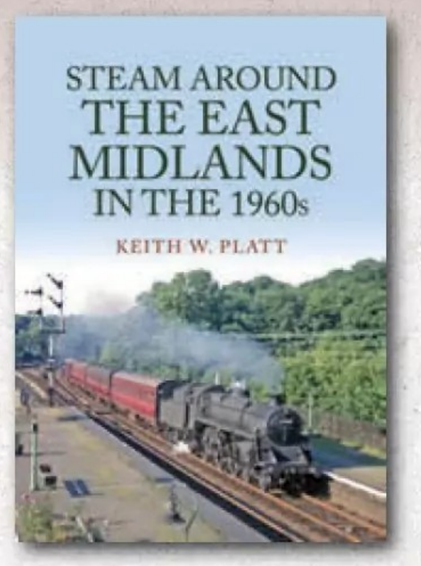
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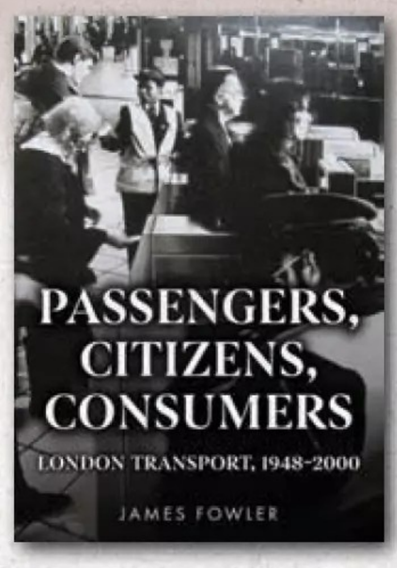
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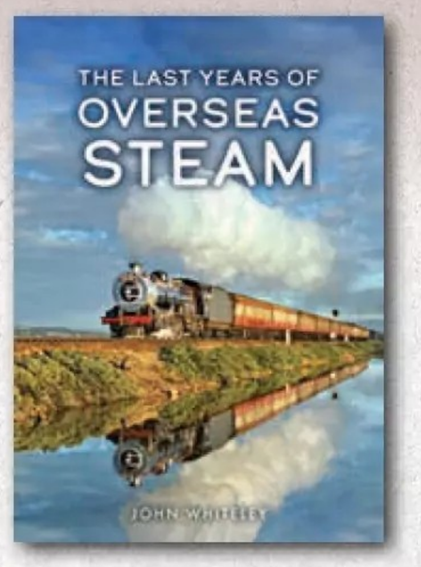
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SOUTH EAST

Amberley Museum
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Arundel, West Sussex.
Tel: 01798 831370.
Open: Weds, W/Es until Dec 22.

Bluebell Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Sheffield Park, East Sussex TN22 2QL.
Tel: 01825 720800.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 1.

Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bredgar, Sittingbourne, Kent. Tel: 01622 884254.
Running: Jan 24.

Chatham Historic Dockyard
Standard gauge, one mile. Chatham, Kent.
Tel: 01634 820800.
Reopens Feb 12, 2026

East Kent Railway
Standard gauge, two miles. Shepherdswell, Kent. Tel: 01304 832042.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Eastleigh Lakeside Railway
10¼in & 7¼in gauge, 1¼ miles.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Exbury Gardens & Steam Railway
12¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Exbury, Southampton. Tel: 023 8089 1203.
Reopens March 7, 2026.

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 spring 2026.

Isle of Wight Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Havenstreet, Isle of Wight.
Tel: 01983 882204.
Running: Weds until Dec 18 + Nov 23, 29/30, Dec 26, Jan 1.

Kent & East Sussex Railway
Standard gauge, 10½ miles.
Tenterden, Kent. Tel: 01580 765155.
Running: Dec 29-Jan 1.

Lavender Line
Standard gauge, one mile. Isfield, East Sussex. Tel: 01825 750515.
Reopens: Feb 22, 2026.

Mid-Hants Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Alresford, Hants SO24 9JG.
Tel: 01962 733810.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 4.

Mizens Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Woking, Surrey.
Tel: 07962 400922.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Old Kiln Light Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Farnham, Surrey.
Reopens spring 2026.

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
15in gauge, 13½ miles.
New Romney, Kent. Tel: 01797 362353.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

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.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Spa Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.
Tel: 01892 300141.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Volk's Electric Railway
2ft 8½in gauge, one mile. Brighton.
Reopens spring 2026.

SOUTH WEST

Avon Valley Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Bitton, Bristol. Tel: 0117 932 5538.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Bodmin Railway
Standard gauge, 6½ miles, Bodmin, Cornwall. Tel: 01208 73555.
Running: Dec 29.

Bristol Harbour Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Princes Wharf, Bristol. Tel: 0117 352 6600.
M Shed Museum open Tues-Suns.
Running resumes 2026.

Dartmouth Steam Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles.
Paignton, Devon. Tel: 01803 555872.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Devon Railway Centre
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Bickleigh, Devon.
Tel: 01884 855671.
Reopens spring 2026.

East Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Cranmore, Somerset. Tel: 01749 880417.
Running: Dec 30.

Gartell Light Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Yenston, Templecombe, Somerset.
Tel: 01963 370752.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Helston Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles. Helston, Cornwall. Tel: 07901 977 597.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Lappa Valley Railway
7¼in, 10¼ and 15in gauge, one mile.
Newquay, Cornwall.
Tel: 01872 510317.
Open: Thurs & Fris until Dec 18 + Dec 28-31.

Launceston Steam Railway
1ft 11½in gauge, 2 ½ miles.
Launceston, Cornwall.
Tel: 01566 775665
Reopens spring 2026.

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Woody Bay, North Devon. Tel: 01598 763487.
Running: Dec 28-31.

Moors Valley Railway
7¼in gauge, one mile. Ringwood, Hants.
Tel: 01425 471415.
Running: W/Es + Dec 29-Jan 2.

North Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, 1200ft. Shillingstone, Blandford Forum, Dorset.
Tel: 01258 860696.
Open: Weds, W/Es.

Plym Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Marsh Mills, Plymouth. Tel: 01752 345078.
Running: Dec 27/28.

Seaton Tramway
2ft 9in gauge, three miles. Harbour Road, Seaton, Devon. Tel: 01297 20375.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 4.

Somerset & Dorset Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Midsomer Norton station, Silver Street, BA3 2EY. Tel: 01761 411221
Running: Jan 1.

South Devon Railway
Standard gauge, seven miles.
Buckfastleigh, Devon. Tel: 01364 644370.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 4.

Swanage Railway
Standard gauge, six miles.
Swanage, Dorset. Tel: 01929 425800.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 4.

Swindon & Cricklade Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Blunsdon, Wiltshire.
Tel: 01793 771615.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

West Somerset Railway
Standard gauge, 20 miles.
Minehead, Somerset.
Tel: 01643 704996.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Yeovil Railway Centre
Standard gauge, ¾ mile.
Yeovil Junction station, Somerset.
Tel: 01935 410420.
Open: Suns.

EAST ANGLIA

Bressingham Steam Museum
Narrow and standard gauge, one mile.
Diss, Norfolk. Tel: 01379 686900.
Reopens spring 2026.

Bure Valley Railway
15in gauge, nine miles. Aylsham, Norfolk.
Tel: 01263 733858.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 4.

Colne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, ¾ mile. Castle Hedingham, Essex. Tel: 01787 461174.
Running: Dec 28.

East Anglian Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Wakes Colne, Essex. Tel: 01206 242524.
Open: Weds, W/Es.
Running: Jan 1.

Ferry Meadows Railway
10¼in gauge, ½ mile. Peterborough, Cambs.
Tel: 01733 398 889.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

Mangapps Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ¾ mile.
Near Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex.
Tel: 01621 784898.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Mid-Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 11½ miles. Dereham, Norfolk. Tel: 01362 851723.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.



On select dates until December 19, underground walking tours of the Postal Museum are offering a rare chance to explore just some of the myriad of tunnels underneath London, including a section normally closed to the public.

Through the help of expert guides, visitors will learn surprising stories about the staff who built, operated, and maintained the underground railway over the course of the 100 years from its construction in the early 1900s, through the heyday in the middle of the century, right through to the eventual closure in 2003.

Places cost £58 per person, and two evening start times are available to choose from each day. The route of the tour involves walking on uneven ground in low-light conditions for about 1.2km (0.75 miles), including stepping across rails and up onto platform areas, so it may not be suitable for those with mobility difficulties.

Visit www.postalmuseum.org/event/tunnel-walks to book your places.
POSTAL MUSEUM

Pre-order Issue 340: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

Mid-Suffolk Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Brockford, Suffolk. Tel: 01449 766899.
Regular: Jan 1.

Nene Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 7½ miles. Wansford, Peterborough, Cambs.
Tel:01780 784444.
Running: Jan 3/4.

North Norfolk Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles.
Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8RA.
Tel: 01263 820800.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 4.

Wells & Walsingham Railway
10¼in gauge, four miles. Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk. Tel: 01328 711630.
Reopens spring 2026.

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.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Chinnor, Oxon. Tel: 07979 055366
Running: Dec 28/29, Jan 1, 4.

Cholsey & Wallingford Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Wallingford, Oxon. Tel: 01491 835067
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Didcot Railway Centre
Standard gauge. Didcot, Oxon.
Tel: 01235 817200.
Open: Jan 1. Running: Jan 1.

Epping Ongar Railway
Standard gauge, six miles.
Ongar, Essex. Tel: 01277 365200.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Great Whipsnade Railway
2ft 6in gauge. Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable.
Tel: 0344 225 1826.
Reopens spring 2026.

Hampton & Kempton Waterworks Railway
2ft gauge. Hanworth, Middlesex.
Tel: 01932 212235.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Leighton Buzzard Railway
2ft gauge, three miles. Leighton Buzzard, Beds. Tel: 01525 373888
Running: Dec 27-29

London Museum of Water & Steam
2ft gauge, 400 yards. Brentford, London.
Tel: 0208 568 4757.
Open: Thurs-Suns.

MIDLANDS

Abbey Pumping Station
2ft gauge, ¼ mile. Corporation Road, Leicester, LE4 5PX.
Tel: 0116 299 5111.
Reopens spring 2026.

Amerton Railway
2ft gauge, one mile.
Stowe-by-Chartley, Staffs.
Tel: 01889 271337.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Apedale Valley Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Apedale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs.
Tel: 0845 094 1953.
Running: Dec 27.

Barrow Hill Roundhouse
Standard gauge. Barrow Hill, near Chesterfield. Tel: 01246 475554.
Open: W/Es.

Battlefield Line
Standard gauge, five miles.
Shackerstone, Leics.
Tel: 01827 880754.
Running: Dec 30-Jan 1.

Cambrian Heritage Railways
Standard gauge, 1¾ miles (Oswestry), ¾ mile (Llynclys). Oswestry and Llynclys, Shropshire. Tel: 01691 728131.
Running: Dec 27/28.

Chasewater Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Walsall, West Midlands. Tel: 01543 452623.
Open: Daily.
Running: Jan 1.

Churnet Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Cheddleton, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 360522.
Reopens: Feb 7, 2026.



Lighting up the Hampshire Alps this festive season

Illumination trains have become a popular new fixture of winter offerings from heritage lines, and the Mid-Hants Railway will be incorporating these into a busy winter programme that includes festive diners and more.

With its Father Christmas Express trains already booked out, Steam Illuminations will run on select dates from November 28 through to December 28 with a Christmas Vibes party theme on board, before returning from December 29 through to January 4, 2026, as the Pop Anthems Party Train.

These will see trains transformed into a dazzling spectacle of colour, music and festive cheer, this year benefitting from a reimagined experience but still featuring immersive entertainment, enhanced light displays and more onboard fun with narration from TV's voiceover man, Peter Dickson, to make your journey truly unforgettable.

Those looking for a more subdued celebration can pick from a range of on-board dining services. 'The Festive Countryman' will run on November 27 and December 3/10 with a three-course turkey lunch served on board as you travel through the Hampshire countryside, while festive afternoon teas run earlier in the afternoon on the same dates.

Full details and booking can be found by visiting https://watercressline.co.uk/

Railway Museums

Beamish
County Durham. The Living Museum of the North. Open: Daily until Dec 24.
Tel: 0191 370 4000.

Blythburgh Station
Suffolk, off A12 in Blythburgh.
Open: Tuesdays 07379 789665

Coleford GWR Museum
Coleford, Gloucestershire.
Open: Fris and Sats.
Tel: 01594 832032/833569.

Crewe Heritage Centre
Vernon Way, Crewe. Reopens Spring 2026.
Tel: 01270 212130.

Hopetown Darlington
North Road Station, Darlington.
Open: Tues-Sun in term time, daily in school holidays. Tel: 01325 405060.

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: Weds-Suns in term time, daily in school holidays. Tel: 033 0058 0058.

National Railway Museum
Leeman Road, York. Open: Daily.
Tel: 033 0058 0058.

Rail Story
Ingrow, West Yorks.
Open: Tues-Suns in term time, daily in school holidays.
Tel: 01535 690739
or 01535 680425.

Railworld Wildlife Haven
Peterborough.
Open: Weds, W/Es and school holidays.
Tel: 01733 344420.

Riverside Museum
Glasgow.
Open: Daily. Tel: 0141 287 2720.

Southworld Narrow Gauge Railway
Southwold, Suffolk.
Open: TBA.

STEAM - Museum of the GWR
Swindon. Open: Daily.
Tel: 01793 466637.

Tiverton Museum
Tiverton, Devon.
Open: Thurs-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

Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
Cultra, Co. Down.
Open: Tues-Suns.
Tel: +44 (0)28 9042 8428.

Crich Tramway Village
Standard gauge, one mile.
Crich, Derbyshire.Tel: 01773 854 321
Reopens spring 2026.

Dean Forest Railway
Standard gauge, 4½ miles.
Norchard, Lydney, Glos.
Tel: 01594 845840.
Running: Dec 27/28, 31.

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway
Standard gauge, nine miles.
Wirksworth, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 823076.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Echills Wood Railway
7¼in gauge, 1¼ miles.
Kingsbury Water Park, Sutton Coldfield.
Reopens spring 2026.

Foxfield Railway
Standard gauge, 5½ miles.
Blythe Bridge, Staffs. Tel: 01782 396210.
Reopens spring 2026.

Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway
Standard gauge, 15 miles.
Toddington, Glos. Tel: 01242 621405.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 1.

Great Central Railway
Standard gauge, eight miles.
Loughborough, Leics LE11 1RW.
Tel: 01509 632323.
www.gcrailway.co.uk
Running: Dec 31.

Great Central Railway (Nottingham)
Standard gauge, 10 miles.
Ruddington, Notts. Tel: 0115 940 5705.
Open: W/Es.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Midland Railway – Butterley
Standard gauge, 3½ miles. Ripley,
Derbyshire. Tel: 01773 570140.
Reopens spring 2026.

Northampton & Lamport Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
Pitsford, Northants.
Tel: 01604 820327.
Running: Dec 28, Jan 1.

Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Hunsbury Hill, Northampton.
Tel: 01604 702031.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Peak Rail
Standard gauge, four miles.
Matlock, Derbyshire.
Tel: 01629 580381.
Running: Dec 26, Jan 1.

Perrygrove Railway
15in gauge. B4228, Coleford,
Gloucestershire. Tel: 01594 834991.
Open: Tues, W/Es.

Rocks by Rail
Standard gauge, ¼ mile. Cottesmore,
Rutland. Tel: 07974 171068.
Reopens spring 2026

Rudyard Lake Railway
10¼in gauge, 1½ miles. Leek, Staffs.
Tel: 01538 269948.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Rushden Transport Museum & Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Rushden,
Northants.
Tel 0300 3023 150.
Reopens spring 2026.

Severn Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 16 miles. Kidderminster,
Worcs DY10 1QR.
Tel: 01562 757900.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 4.

Statfold Country Park
Multiple gauges, one mile. Tamworth,
Staffs B79 0BU. Tel: 01827 830389.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Tanat Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Nantmawr,
Shropshire SY10 9HW. Tel: 01691 780042.
www.tanatvalleyrailway.co.uk
Open: TBA.

Telford Steam Railway
Standard gauge, one mile. Telford,
Shropshire.
Running: Dec 28.

Toddington Narrow Gauge Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile.
Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway,
Toddington.
Reopens spring 2026.

Valley Railway Adventure
15in gauge, 1¼ miles. A46 north of
Evesham, Worcs.
Tel: 01386 422282.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

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: Dec 26/27, 31, Jan 1.

Eden Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 2½ miles.
Warcop, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 342309.
Reopens spring 2026.

Great Laxey Mine Railway
19in gauge, ¼ mile. Laxey, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 862007/670386.
Reopens spring 2026.

Groudle Glen Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 670453.
Reopens spring 2026.

Heaton Park Tramway
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Manchester. Tel: 0161 740 1919.
Running: TBA.

Isle of Man Steam Railway
3ft gauge, 15½ miles. Douglas, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 662525.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Kirkby Stephen East
Standard gauge, ½ mile.
Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 371700.
Open: W/Es.

Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles. Near Ulverston,
Cumbria. Tel: 01539 531594.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Manx Electric Railway and Snaefell Mountain Railway
3ft gauge, 17 miles (MER), 5½ miles (SMR).
Douglas, Isle of Man.
Tel: 01624 697473.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway
15in gauge, seven miles. Ravenglass,
Cumbria. Tel: 01229 717171.
Running: Dec 28-Jan 3.

Ribble Steam Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Preston, Lancs. Tel: 01772 728800.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

South Tynedale Railway
2ft gauge, 4¾ miles.
Alston, Cumbria. Tel: 01434 338212.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Threlkeld Quarry & Mining Museum
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Threlkeld, Cumbria.
Tel: 01768 779747.
Reopens March 28, 2026.

West Lancashire Light Railway
2ft gauge. Hesketh Bank, Lancs.
Tel: 01772 815881.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

NORTH EAST

Aln Valley Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles. Alnwick,
Northumberland.
Tel: 0300 030 3311.
Running: Dec 27-29.

Appleby Frodingham Railway-Scunthorpe
Standard gauge, 15 miles.
British Steel Steelworks, Scunthorpe.
Tel: 07889 297271.
Reopens spring 2026.



The UK's first steam Train of Lights returns to the Dartmouth Steam Railway this winter, starting on November 28 and running on select dates until December 30.

The festive journey starts at Paignton's Queen Park Station and over the course of the journey to Kingswear will take in the 450-metre Greenway tunnel leading into Long Wood, which will be transformed by a multitude of lights with brand-new feature displays. The stunning show ends as visitors leave the forest, only to be greeted by the twinkling lights of Dartmouth reflected on the river Dart.

To book, visit www.dartmouthrailriver.co.uk/tickets/christmas-train-of-lights DSRRBC

Pre-order Issue 340: Order your copy from **mrtns.uk/pre-order-hr** or call **01507 529529**.

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: Dec 31, Jan 1.

Derwent Valley Light Railway
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Murton, near York. Tel: 01904 489966.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Embsay & Bolton Abbey Steam Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Embsay, North Yorks.
Tel: 01756 710614.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Heatherslaw Light Railway
15in gauge, two miles. Ford Forge, Northumberland.
Tel: 01890 820244.
Reopens March 30, 2026.

Keighley & Worth Valley Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Haworth, West Yorks, BD22 8NJ.
Tel: 01535 645214.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 4.

Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway
2ft gauge. Skegness, Lincs.
Tel: 07407 500884.
Reopens May 23, 2026.

Lincolnshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Ludborough, Lincolnshire.
Tel: 01507 363881.
Running: Jan 1.

Middleton Railway
Standard gauge, 1½ miles.
Hunslet, Leeds. Tel: 0845 680 1758.
Running: Jan 1.

North Yorkshire Moors Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles. Grosmont, North Yorks. Tel: 01751 472508.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 4.

Scarborough North Bay Railway
20in gauge, ⅞ mile. Scarborough, North Yorks. Tel: 01723 368791.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Stephenson Steam Railway
Standard gauge, two miles.
North Shields.
Tel: 0191 277 7135.
Open: Dec 27/28.

Tanfield Railway
Standard gauge, three miles.
Near Gateshead, Tyne & Wear.
Tel: 07508 092365.
Running: Dec 27/28, 31.

Weardale Railway
Standard gauge, 18 miles.
Stanhope, Co. Durham.
Reopens spring 2026.

Wensleydale Railway
Standard gauge, 22 miles.
Leeming Bar, North Yorkshire.
Tel: 01677 425805.
Running: Dec 28-30.

Whistlestop Valley Railway (Kirklees)
15in gauge, four miles. Huddersfield, West Yorks. Tel: 01484 865727.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Yorkshire Wolds Railway
Standard gauge, 1,000ft.
Fimber, East Yorkshire.
Tel: 01377 338053.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

WALES

Bala Lake Railway
2ft gauge, 4½ miles.
Llanuwchllyn, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01678 540666.
Reopens spring 2026.

Blaenavon's Heritage Railway
Standard gauge, 3½ miles.
Blaenavon, Torfaen.
Tel: 01495 792263.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Brecon Mountain Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, five miles.
Pant, Mid-Glamorgan.
Tel: 01685 722988.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Corris Railway
2ft 3in gauge, ¾ mile.
Corris, near Machynlleth.
Tel: 01654 761701.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Fairbourne Railway
12¼in gauge, two miles.
Fairbourne, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01341 250362.
Reopens spring 2026.

Ffestiniog Railway
2ft gauge, 13½ miles. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 516000.
Running: Dec 28-31, Jan 1, 3.

Gwili Railway
Standard gauge, four miles. Bronwydd Arms, Carmarthenshire.
Tel: 01267 238213.
Running: Dec 31.

Llanberis Lake Railway
2ft gauge, three miles.
Llanberis, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01286 870549.
Reopens spring 2026.

Llanelli & Mynydd Mawr Railway
Standard gauge, ¼ mile.
Cynheidre, Carmarthenshire.
Tel: 07956 082305.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Llangollen Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Llangollen, Denbighshire.
Tel: 01978 860979.
Running: Dec 27-30.

Rhyl Miniature Railway
15in gauge. Rhyl, North Wales.
Tel: 01352 759109.
Running: W/Es, sch hols.

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...

Throughout November and December, many heritage railways will also be running festively themed special events, including Polar Express, Santa specials and Train of Lights. For full details of these services, you are advised to check the websites of the railway or museum you are intending to visit.

NOVEMBER
- 29 Kent & East Sussex Railway Quiet Train
- 30 Abbey Pumping Station Christmas Steam Day
- 30/31 Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway Black Bun Specials
- 31 Great Central Railway The Nightrider

DECEMBER
- 6 Talyllyn Railway Tinsel & Turkey
- 13 Talyllyn Railway Tinsel & Turkey
- 20 Talyllyn Railway Carol Train
- 26 Groudle Glen Railway Mince Pie Trains
- 26 Peak Rail Mince Pie Trains
- 27-30 Great Central Railway Betwixmas Steam
- 29-31 Kent & East Sussex Railway Steam into the New Year
- 30/31 Battlefield Line Mince Pie Trains

JANUARY 2026
- 1 Bluebell Railway New Year Steam Up
- 2/3 Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway Black Bun Specials
- 3/4 Severn Valley Railway Winter Gala
- 3/4 South Devon Railway Winter Steam Gala
- 3/4 Swanage Railway Winter Warm Up

Organising a gala or other big event? Email the details to Owen Hayward at owen.hayward@kelsey.co.uk

Snowdon Mountain Railway
800mm gauge, 4½ miles. Llanberis, Gwynedd. Tel: 01286 870223.
Reopens spring 2026.

Talyllyn Railway
2ft 3in gauge, 7½ miles.
Tywyn, Gwynedd. Tel: 01654 710472.
Running: Dec 26-Jan 3.

Teifi Valley Railway
2ft gauge, ½ mile. Henllan, Ceredigion, SA44 5TD. Tel: 01559 371077.
Running: TBA.

Vale of Rheidol Railway
1ft 11¾in gauge, 12 miles.
Aberystwyth, Ceredigion.
Tel: 01970 625819.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway
2ft gauge, one mile. Porthmadog, Gwynedd. Tel: 01766 513402.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Welsh Highland Railway
2ft gauge, 26 miles.
Caernarfon, Gwynedd.
Tel: 01766 516000.
Running: Dec 27-Jan 1.

Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway
2ft 6in gauge, eight miles. Llanfair Caereinion, Powys. Tel: 01938 810441.
Running: Dec 28-30.

SCOTLAND

Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway
Standard gauge, five miles.
Bo'ness, West Lothian.
Tel: 01506 825855.
Running: Dec 28-30.

Caledonian Railway
Standard gauge, four miles.
Brechin, Angus.
Tel: 01356 622992.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Doon Valley Railway
Standard gauge.
Dunaskin, Ayrshire.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Keith & Dufftown Railway
Standard gauge, 11 miles.
Dufftown, Banffshire.Tel: 01340 821181.
Running: Dec 31.

Lathalmond Railway Museum
Standard gauge, ½ mile. Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, Lathalmond, near Dunfermline. Tel: 07379 914801.
Reopens spring 2026.

Leadhills & Wanlockhead Railway
2ft gauge, ¾ mile. Leadhills, South Lanarkshire.
Reopens spring 2026.

Royal Deeside Railway
Standard gauge, 1¼ miles.
Banchory, Kincardineshire.
Tel: 01330 844416.
Reopens spring 2026.

Strathspey Railway
Standard gauge, 10 miles. Aviemore, Inverness-shire. Tel: 01479 810725.
Running: Dec 27-30, Jan 1-4.

IRELAND

Cavan and Leitrim Railway
3ft gauge. Drumod, Co. Leitrim.
Tel: +353 71 963 8599.
Reopens spring 2026.

Downpatrick & County Down Railway
5ft 3in gauge. Downpatrick, Co. Down. Tel: 028 4461 5779.
Regular running resumes spring 2026.

Railway Preservation Society of Ireland
5ft 3in gauge. Whitehead, Co. Antrim.
Tel: +44 28 9358 6200.
Museum open: Thurs-Sats.
Running: TBA.

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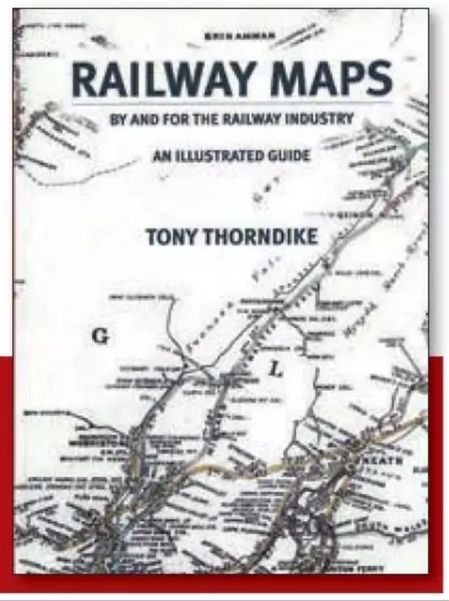
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WANTED Your lighter takes

If you've got a quirky photo, tale, poem, or anything else you think might be appropriate, please email staff writer Owen Hayward on owen.hayward@kelsey.co.uk





Above: D5512 at Stratford on March 17, 1959, being prepped for its next turn of duty. The Brush Traction-built locomotive was delivered new to Stratford in June 1958 and spent its entire 18 years in service there. The A1A-A1A, an OO-gauge model of which was made by Hornby, would have carried 30A identification early in its life, and later SF. GEOFF COURTNEY

Right: East London memories: A Stratford (30A) shedplate and a Hornby model of lifelong Stratford resident Class 31 D5512 form a display in a private railwayana collection. The plate carries the steam era shed code for Stratford but is in the different font adopted by BR for diesel locomotives. Insert: The 'cockney sparrow' Stratford diesel depot plaque that sold for £1800 at auction in September. BARBARA PRINCE/GREAT NORTHERN RAÍLWAYANA

BR coded message as diesels take over

By Geoff Courtney

THE report in last month's issue of the sale in a Great Northern Railwayana auction of a 'cockney sparrow' Stratford diesel depot plaque for £1800 brought into focus the difference in the methods used by BR to identify a locomotive's home shed in the steam, and later diesel, eras.

Steam locomotives carried the well-known shedplate, which were very straightforward and informative, albeit in about as brief a way as could be imagined. That for Stratford, from Nationalisation in 1948 until 1973, was 30A. As a point of interest, this vast depot had over the years no fewer than 16 sub-sheds, almost certainly the most of any depot.

Despite their brevity and purely functional design, the plates have been one of the mainstays of railwayana auctions over several decades due to their association with engines remembered by collectors or because they represent depots that were 'bunked' in far-off days.

When diesel traction replaced steam, BR initially still used the steam identification, but by the introduction of TOPS (Total Operations Processing System) in August 1973, it had been changed to two-letter codes, with Stratford initially being SX for some obscure reason, although within months this was changed to a more logical SF.

In 1987, some depots also started using officially sanctioned plaques as well as their two-letter codes, and imaginative examples were soon prevalent. Stratford was one such, with this depot adopting the 'cockney sparrow' wearing a railwayman's stylish grease top hat and waistcoat, and it was one of these that was sold by Great Northern in its September auction.

The 'cockney sparrow' is believed to have originated long ago from the chirpy and cheeky London bird that frequented parks and gardens in East London, and which to many epitomised the cheerful and talkative cockney local residents.

Climb aboard the Oz Express!

A RED GWR 4-6-0 Hall is not the only locomotive benefitting from the media spotlight at the moment.

While Modified Hall No. 6989 *Wightwick Hall* might be stealing glances in its vibrant red livery, which is being carried for its appearance in the forthcoming HBO Harry Potter television series, on November 5, however, it was the turn of the Merchant Navy Locomotive Preservation Society's SR Merchant Navy Pacific No. 35028 *Clan Line* to see a little bit of Oz magic weaved.

Ahead of the UK release of Universal Studios' movie Wicked: For Good later in the month, starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, the 'Belmond Pullman' set was chartered for a VIP experience that saw guests from Universal Studios, the Barnardo's children's charity and Sky VIP given a unique Ozian experience onboard.



The *Clan Line* crew with the Oz branding. MNLPS



Heading the Oz Express: Merchant Navy No. 35028 *Clan Line*. MNLPS

To add to the atmosphere, *Clan Line*'s nameplate roundel was replaced by Oz branding.

The train departed London Victoria at 6.37pm bound for Maidstone West, arriving back at the starting station at 11pm.

NEXT ISSUE
Issue 340 out Dec 19
Owen Hayward talks to Jonathon 'Gus' Dunster about the continuing challenges the Severn Valley Railway is facing.

PLUS
FIVES AND FOURS
Former engineman Dave Wilson looks at two of the most ubiquitous and numerous of the BR Standards: the 172 5MT 4-6-0s and the 80 4MTs 4-6-0s – and their heritage sector survivors.



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